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Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics

Sixty-fifth session
Geneva, 17 and 19–21 October 2022
Agenda item 8
Activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Inland Transport Committee and its subsidiary bodies

Issues for attention of the Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics

Note by the secretariat

I. Background

1. The Chair of the Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24) received a letter from the Chair of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) and the Sustainable Transport Division's Director on the follow-up to the ITC eighty-fourth session (Geneva, 22-25 February 2022).

2. This letter, in addition to the reference made to the endorsement of the revised ITC Terms of Reference by ECOSOC and the entry into force of the ITC Rules of Procedures on 16 February 2022 as elaborated in ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2022/13, requests contributions from WP.24 to elaboration of:

(i) ECE Road Safety Action Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030 for adoption by ITC at its eighty-fifth session in 2023,

(ii) ECE document on the activities in the field of information and computerization technologies and intelligent transport systems, and

(iii) ITC paper on climate change mitigation activities and action-oriented options for ITC and its subsidiary bodies.

3. This document provides background information with regard to points (i) to (iii) above. This information is provided with the intention to facilitate WP.24 discussion on its possible contributions.

II. ECE Road Safety Action Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030

4. ITC requested that a revised ECE Road Safety Action Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030 is developed and invited all Working Parties to provide inputs to this new plan.

5. WP.24 may wish to note that its work was referred to in ECE Road Safety Action Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. Among the 11 objectives in the old plan, as follows:

(1) Boost Political Will and Support Government Strategies,

(2) Protect Road User,

(3) Make Vehicle Safer,

(4) Improve Safety of Transport of Dangerous Goods,

(5) Make Technologies Work for Safer Mobility,

(6) Make Roads Safer,

(7) Improve Cargo Safety,

(8) Turn Road Safety Training, Education and Behaviour into Knowledge Management,

(9) Learn from Road Crashes,

(10) Mitigate the Impact of Road Crashes,

(11) Raise Awareness, Fundraise, and Advocate for Road Safety).

WP.24 work was referred to in:

- Objective 5: with regard to the focus on innovation and Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), and
- Objective 7: with regard to safe packing and handling of intermodal transport units.

6. The current Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030, which is to possibly serve as a reference material for the new ECE Road Safety Action Plan, can be consulted at global-plan-for-road-safety.pdf (who.int)

7. This plan in its section on recommended actions refers to actions in areas such as:

(1) Multimodal transport and land use planning,

(2) Safe road infrastructure,

(3) Vehicle safety,

(4) Safe road use,

(5) Post-crash response.

8. The area on multimodal transport is novel to the global plan. While for some reasons, it is focused on passenger transport only rather than transport in general, intermodal freight transport, both at city as well as intercity levels, should be part of any national strategy for improving road safety record. In this regard, WP.24 may wish to suggest inclusion of actions into ECE Road Safety Action Plan for 2021-2030 that would”

- promote modal shift for freight transport from road to rail or inland waterways, and
- set and implement targets for the market share of intermodal transport in freight sector.

9. The modal shift should be supported through the enhanced accession to and implementation of the United Nations infrastructure transport agreements under the WP.24's purview, such as European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC), and Protocol on Combined Transport on Inland Waterways to the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC Protocol).

10. It is noted that the point on target setting has been included already in the ITC-adopted resolution for strengthening intermodal freight transport and it calls upon WP.24 to work out the targets and to prepare a plan for achieving them.

11. WP.24 may then wish, as it was the case in the old ECE plan, to include actions on safe packing and handling of intermodal transport units (ITUs/CTUs), so that traffic crashes can be prevented from inappropriately packed ITUs/CTUs. In this regard, the work undertaken by WP.24 on updates and promotion of the Code of Practice for Packing of Cargo Transport Units is imperative and should be referred to. Also, the elaboration of a CTU Code app, and so facilitation of access to safe packing provisions, could be referred to.

III. ECE activities in the field of information and computerization technologies and intelligent transport systems

12. ITC requested an overview of current activities in the field of information and computerization technologies and intelligent transport systems carried out by Working Parties of ITC and link it, where appropriate, with the 70th ECE central theme in 2023 which will be on "Digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the UNECE region".

13. WP.24 is mandated to work in the fields of digitalization, computerization and automation further to the actions included in the ITC-adopted resolution for strengthening intermodal freight transport. However, to better explore these fields and to further identify its specific role or roles in these fields, WP.24 decided at its 64th session to hold two workshops during the current session, one of them on National experience and challenges faced with intermodal transport document/information digitalization, and the second on Automation in freight transport and logistics.

14. WP.24 may wish to consider the outcomes from these two workshops and, on this basis, prepare an overview of its specific activities in these fields for sharing with ITC.

IV. Climate change mitigation activities and action-oriented options for ITC and its subsidiary bodies

15. ITC requested that a comprehensive paper is developed by its secretariat to detail action in accelerating climate change mitigation worldwide that would cover as widely as possible inland transport.

16. In this regard, and as far as freight transport is concerned, WP.24 may wish to underline the importance of intermodal freight transport to mitigating climate change from transport. In the end, intermodal freight transport offers the possibility for moving freight in an effective and efficient way by modes of transport whose use generates lower external costs for human health and the environment and thus also lowest greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).

17. WP.24 may again stress the importance of setting up and implementing ambitious targets for market share of intermodal transport.

18. WP.24 may also refer to actions aimed at increasing efficiencies in the freight transport and logistics systems as well as those aimed better protecting environment and minimizing GHG emissions. For the first set of actions, they are focused on optimizing infrastructure and operations for countries which have already established advanced freight transport and logistics systems. The following actions, which have been included in the WP.24 Handbook for national master plans for freight transport and logistics can be referred to:

(a) Infrastructure:

- optimization of infrastructure network by better utilization of ITS and telematics by industry (traffic management systems and intelligent traffic information, image identification/recognition for directing vehicles),
- segregation of freight transport from passenger transport (segregation on busy sections to reduce pathing conflicts, flexibilization of moving schedules or adjusting slots),
- adjustment and development of infrastructure supporting new city logistics developments (micro hubs and last mile delivery by electric cargo cycles and electric vans)
- adjustment of infrastructure to allow for optimization of transit traffic (loading gauges, sidings).

(b) Operations:

- optimization of shippers' operations (flexible cargo delivery times)
- optimization of transit traffic (longer or double-decker cargo trains, standardized high-profile route),
- development and application of technologies and policy solutions for minimization of empty runs,
- internalization of external costs for supporting environmental and social optimization (intelligent tolling systems based on emissions and route/time of the day, differentiation of track access charges on routes/time of the day),
- incentives for use of low emission vehicles.