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Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport

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Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Activities of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe bodies and other United Nations organizations of interest to the Working Party:

Alignment of the work of the Working Party with the Inland Transport Committee strategy

Working Party input into the Inland Transport Committee Climate Change Mitigation Strategy

Note by the secretariat

I. Background and mandate

1. The Working Party may wish to recall that the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) at its February 2023 session requested the secretariat, in close cooperation with the Committee's Bureau and relevant subsidiary bodies, to develop an ambitious strategy document for reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions on inland transport based on international United Nations legal instruments under the Committee's purview with priority actions for the ITC and all its relevant subsidiary bodies, supported by a strong action plan with milestones. The strategy document was considered and adopted at the eighty-sixth plenary session of ITC in 2024.

2. The Working Party at its previous session requested the secretariat to prepare a document for its 166th session, considering the exchange of views and information provided, as well as the adopted ITC strategy document, for consideration and possible approval, as the Working Party's contribution to the ITC strategy.

II. ITC strategy on Climate Change Mitigation

A. ITC vision and mission for climate action

3. The Inland Transport Committee's vision for climate action is as follows: The Inland Transport Committee and its subsidiary bodies take urgent action to assist its member States and Contracting Parties to United Nations legal instruments under its purview in achieving the aspirational goal of net zero GHG emissions from inland transport by 2050.



4. ITC mission is to contribute to decarbonization of inland transport by its member States and Contracting Parties to United Nations legal instruments under ITC purview through enhanced regulatory support, intergovernmental policy dialogue, and increased coordination and partnership among all relevant stakeholders.

5. In doing so, the ITC draws from a broad decarbonization framework that draws on avoid-shift-improve measures which Member States may implement in any of or across the following areas:

(a) Avoid unnecessary vehicle kilometres through compact development, increasing accessibility to services, and reducing the need to travel as much as we do today.

(b) Shift to low and zero carbon, sustainable transport modes and/or operations; By shifting to low- and zero-carbon and sustainable modes of operations, transport will make the best use of existing low carbon modes and operations. This could comprise prioritizing intermodal or multimodal transport for both freight and passengers at different levels - international, national, regional or local, where appropriate.

(c) Improve vehicles, infrastructure, and operations. By improving vehicles, infrastructure, and operations, including border crossing operations, inland transport sector will become more efficient. Targeting improve measures is expected to spur innovation to decouple transport use from GHG emissions.

6. There is no one-size-fits-all prescription on which decarbonization action and in which area, or combination of areas, helps to achieve most progress. This would depend on a number of variables including individual context, economic imperatives of developing countries, availability of strategies and action taken in the past on the basis of which the right mix of sectoral but also cross-sectoral measures is selected for the future.

B. Strategic objectives

7. ITC, through its unique intergovernmental framework, provides comprehensive support to its members and Contracting Parties to United Nations inland transport legal instruments for amplified action to reduce GHG emissions from inland transport, making use, as necessary and where possible, of the full range of available decarbonization options, resulting in:

(a) Increased inter- and intra-regional governance;

(b) Enhanced and more coordinated climate actions by and among ITC subsidiary bodies;

(c) Increased intergovernmental support for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

C. Reference to WP.30 work

8. ITC administered legal instruments in the field of border crossing facilitation, including the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention, 1975) and the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, not only provide guidance on streamlining administrative procedures and remove cross-border technical barriers, but also refer to the infrastructure related lay-out of border crossings, which impact the levels of traffic congestion induced emissions at respective national borders and in border regions. The climate change mitigation relevance of these instruments could be strengthened through including additional provisions or recommendations related to the mandatory use of electronic documents and digital solutions as well as through infrastructure-related adaptations such as the introduction of fast lanes for heavy-duty vehicles (HDVs) equipped with low- and zero-carbon powertrain.

III. Working Party possible input into the Inland Transport Committee Climate Change Mitigation Strategy

A. Shift measures

9. Shift measures could include:

(a) Electronic systems for documentation. Customs officers require a series of documents from trucks, private cars and trains depending on the cargoes they carry, the country of origin, the country of origin of the company, their risk analysis parameters, the region etc. Those documents in many cases are parts of international conventions (TIR, CMR, CPD, CIM, SMGS, Phytosanitary, etc.) where some of them are being administered by the Working Party. In order for the vehicles to cross the borders without queuing and stopping therefore generating GHG emissions, all these documentations and related data could be online / electronic and have been sent to customs in advance. Therefore, Customs Authorities as first measure could start asking for electronic data, implementing the existing electronic solutions (eTIR, eCMR, eCPD, ePhyto, etc.), participate or require the existence of platforms that integrate this information. (TIR Convention, CMR Convention, Temporary Importation Conventions, Harmonization Convention, etc.). WP.30 might further promote this work by preparing a resolution to be adopted by ITC and possibly to be brought by a government to the attention of United Nations General Assembly.

(b) There are also a series of indirect benefits connected with the introduction of electronic documents / data exchange further contributing to the reduction of CO2 emissions such as the production and the logistics of the papers involved and distributed. For instance, the stages of the life-cycle of the paper TIR carnet will be removed contributing to the decarbonisation effects, as the shipments of TIR carnets from the International Road Transport Union (IRU) to TIR associations and of used TIR carnets from TIR associations to IRU, normally made by air, will not be necessary. Moreover, transport companies won't need to drive to TIR associations issuing stations to receive TIR carnets and return the used ones. In some countries this means over 100 km of journey saved. Those challenges further increase when TIR system is used for intermodal transport and the TIR carnets need to be physically sent to the ports of entry for instance.¹

(c) Queuing systems and trucks waiting to secured parking spaces. Customs should introduce / adopt practices and systems such as queuing systems that permit to trucks the booking of the time and the day that they will cross the borders having in parallel sent electronically the documentation required. Therefore, the trucks instead of queuing in kilometres along the roads before the borders can wait at safe parking spaces and reach the customs only at the time and date booked (future amendment of the Harmonization Convention). Stop-and-go cycles increase energy consumption. They typically occur at the truck's least efficient operating points, when the energy demand to start the truck is highest, only to be followed by a quick stop.²

(d) Promote intermodality – no customs or other controls at borders for trains (future amendment to harmonization convention). Customs could adopt practices or assist in implementing practices that promote intermodality by eventually completely reducing any controls to trains fully permitting their customs control in inland stations.

(e) Priority lanes for eco-friendly trucks (future amendment to the harmonization convention). Priority lanes could be created for ECO friendly trucks (electric, hydrogen, etc.).

(f) Priority lanes for eTIR eco-friendly trucks with possible insurance premium – to be analysed – (future amendment to the TIR Convention). Eco-friendly trucks could have improved insurance rates and dedicated lanes.

(g) Customs authorities and border crossing guards are implementing of national or regional policies authorities. Implement national, regional and international Climate

¹ IRU Green Compact

² IRU Green Compact

Change mitigation strategies. A good example could be the European Union Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. The European Union Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is a landmark tool to put a fair price on the carbon emitted during the production of carbon intensive goods that are entering the European Union, and to encourage cleaner industrial production in non-European Union countries. In that sense, WP.30 and therefore customs authorities have a role to play as the implementing partners of the ITC strategy on Climate Change Mitigation whenever applicable. In that sense, WP.30 may wish to further analyse the action plan adopted in the ITC strategy to review whenever could contribute to its implementation.

B. Improve measures

10. Improve measures could include:

(a) Eco-friendly – low energy customs / border crossing buildings with the inclusion of photovoltaics, vehicles charging stations etc.

(b) Ensure the safe and secure deployment of low- and zero-carbon modes, technologies for electric vehicles' charging infrastructure.

(c) Optimize infrastructure usage (inspection and parking areas etc) therefore less movement of trucks in the border crossing / inspection area by better utilization of Intelligent transport systems, or traffic management systems including simulation models.

(d) Borders must be prepared to accommodate trucks powered by alternative fuels. Unlike traditional vehicles, electric or hydrogen-powered trucks do not idle. However, their energy needs remain the same and are met by batteries. Lengthy waiting times at the border can significantly reduce the operational range of these trucks once they leave the border. This necessitates the installation of charging and refilling stations near, if not at, border control checkpoints. These locations may not yet be equipped to handle hundreds of vehicles requiring 350 kW charging from electric grids. Streamlining border crossings is crucial for the successful implementation of alternative powertrains, which are necessary for advancing decarbonisation.³

(e) Use of satellite infrastructure for fast lanes similar to electronic tolls. Trucks and cars have the electronic card on their windshield. The card is scanned while crossing the green / fast lane which is connected with customs systems. All documentation has been sent in advance, electronically, (risk analysis has been undertaken) therefore the truck passes without stopping at all.

(f) Contribute to the elaboration and consequently to the implementation of policy solutions for minimizing 'empty runs' that create incentives for transport users to make informed choices and for operators to optimize their services.

(g) Contribute to the elaboration and consequently to the implementation of policy solutions for Mobility as a Service (MaaS) for cross borders passengers / workers movement.

(h) Promote systematically the collaborative customs management system resulting to one electronic check for adjacent countries.

(i) Systematically and based on customers and customs officers feedback improve the operations time schedules, procedures, introduce ad hoc operational hours in order to further facilitate perishable food or dangerous goods transportation avoiding queues and long waiting times.

(j) The Working Party to assess regularly actions taken in support of implementation of the ITC Strategy especially on the parts that are relevant to its program of work and address climate change whenever feasible, through annual sessions or dedicated seminars or workshops and report it.

³ IRU Green Compact

(k) The Working Party might wish to include this topic as a separate agenda item in order for the customs authorities to report / inform about possible measures implemented that contribute to the reduction of CO₂ emissions.

(l) Improve infrastructure regarding cyclists by including whenever possible lanes for cyclists.

C. Avoid measures

11. Avoid measures could include:

(a) customs clearance at the borders and transfer those procedures in inland stations. This is a good practice followed by many countries that considerably reduces congestion at the borders and therefore the CO₂ emitted by the congested vehicles.

(b) Avoid request for papers / change of procedures (might be a future amendment to harmonization convention). The rules are changing when customs are changing their requirements. Customs should stop asking for paper-based documentation and promote the electronic one.

(c) Avoid stopping or queuing any vehicle with power cooling units and perishable foodstuff while introducing procedures for their immediate release and transfer to inland stations. Idling is necessary to power cooling units, air conditioning, and accessories while the vehicle is awaiting border customs clearance. The longer the vehicle idles, the more energy it consumes, and consequently, the more CO₂ it emits into the atmosphere. Modelling results indicate that in GCC regions, idling could account for up to 50 per cent of the carbon dioxide a truck emits during its journey.

(d) National strategies on avoid measures. The Working Party may wish to invite member States to report any national strategies on avoid measures further sharing good practices implemented.⁴

(e) In terms of cycling infrastructure, a new Convention on cycling route networks, might be prepared in the framework of WP.5⁵ and THE PEP⁶. Furthermore, a pan European cycling master plan is being prepared on international and national cycling routes. Many border crossing points are included in this masterplan. WP.30 and customs authorities may wish to contribute on this work further facilitating the use of bicycles but also cyclists' passage at the borders.

IV. Considerations by the Working Party

12. The Working Party is invited to consider the possible input to the Inland Transport Committee Climate Change Mitigation Strategy and provide guidance on following up steps.

⁴ IRU Green Compact

⁵ Working Part on Transport Trends

⁶ Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme