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**Economic Commission for Europe****Inland Transport Committee****Eighty-sixth session**

Geneva, 20-23 February 2024

**Report of the Inland Transport Committee on its eighty-sixth session****Addendum****Contents**

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## Annex I

### **High-level segment on "Taking ambitious climate action – Moving towards decarbonized inland transport by 2050"**

(Salle XIX, Palais des Nations, Geneva, 20 February 2024)

#### **I. Introduction**

1. Transport ministers and high-level delegations with more than 360 participants from 73 countries and the heads of relevant inland transport organizations gathered in person for the high-level segment on "Taking ambitious climate action – Moving towards decarbonized inland transport by 2050" (20 February 2024, Geneva) to reflect on the unique assets of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC), highlighting its value added and underlining its future potential in curbing greenhouse gas emissions trends from inland transport.

#### **II. Opening**

2. H.E. Ms. Tatiana Molcean, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commissions for Europe (ECE) opened the 86th session of the ECE ITC by stressing the importance of taking action to combat climate change as the year 2023 saw 12 months of temperatures 1.5C hotter than the pre-industrial era for the first time on record. Highlighting the large share of inland transport in global transport emissions, the Executive Secretary acknowledged ITC's unique role in supporting the inland transport sector in its fight against climate change and stressed the importance of strong partnerships. She emphasized the importance and ambition of the ITC Strategy for Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Inland Transport and its immense potential for mitigating climate change, and commended delegations for their vision and political will.

#### **III. Keynote speeches**

3. H.E. Mr. Mark Harbers, Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management of the Netherlands started his keynote speech by recognizing that global connectivity and supply chains are under pressure due to geopolitical tensions and conflicts and stressed the need to invest in cooperation and global connectivity. The Minister emphasized ITC's important role and wide impact and stressed the importance of taking steps towards a future-proof inland transport system that takes account of climate-related challenges, energy security and road safety. He highlighted the importance of the ITC Strategy on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Inland Transport and called upon the Committee to embrace it. The Minister further stressed the need to improve international rail transport, to ensure a just transition towards clean transport and to keep a sharp eye on road safety. The Minister closed his speech emphasizing the ITC's role in making the world safer, more sustainable, and more connected.

4. H.E. Mr. Pete Buttigieg, Secretary of Transportation of the United States of America, opened his speech by acknowledging the importance of transportation systems to all countries. The Secretary emphasized the compounded damage to transportation systems as a result of the invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine and highlighted the growing importance of the Committee's work to help reconstruct Ukraine's transportation infrastructure. Collaboration and ongoing communication were identified as key to saving lives and to minimizing and managing supply chain disruptions that could raise the price of goods globally. The Secretary noted the United States' national plan to decarbonize transportation and reach net zero by 2050 and emphasized the first binational EV charging corridor in partnership with Canada as well as the funding of America's first true high-speed rail. The Secretary closed his speech by highlighting the critical need for safety data to advance the safety of new and developing transport technologies, and the need for continued engagement, coordination and partnership for the climate.

5. H.E. Mr. Balarabe Abbas Lawal, Minister of Environment of Nigeria, opened his speech by calling upon States to collectively acknowledge the adverse effect of greenhouse emissions to our environment. He emphasized that emissions from the transport sector, particularly from road, rail, and inland waterways pose a great threat to public health and humanity. The Minister stated that therefore, it is our collective responsibility to take decisive actions to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions for a more resilient, sustainable transport sector. He emphasized the importance of propelling global cooperation and knowledge sharing of stakeholders. Nigeria has great issues with roads and drying rivers. The Minister closed the speech by expressing Nigeria's strong commitment and enthusiasm to support initiative by the Committee and take action for sustainability in the transport sector.

6. H.E. Mr. Saleh Al-Jasser, Minister for Transport of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, began his speech by emphasizing that collaboration and leading experiences are key to achieving efficient, safe and sustainable transport systems. He then shared Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, including carbon neutrality by 2060. The Minister highlighted that the transport and logistics sector accounts for one fifth of Saudi Arabia's total emissions, with inland transport accounting for around 83 per cent of total transport emissions. The Minister introduced the National Transportation and Logistics Strategy (NTLS), which sets a target of two per cent per capita emission reduction year-over-year throughout 2030 and highlighted three actions to combat climate change: Avoiding unnecessary motorized trips, shifting to less carbon intensive modes of transport and improving carbon efficiency of vehicles and modes of transports. The Minister closed his speech by stressing the importance of collaboration to create a more sustainable, prosperous and responsible transport sector.

#### **IV. Panel I: National visions and policy ambitions to move towards decarbonized inland transport by 2050**

7. Panel I was moderated by Mr. Young Tae Kim, Secretary General of the International Transport Forum (ITF).

8. H.E. Mr. Annadurdy Kosayev, Chairman of the Agency "Türkmendeňizderýaýollary" of Turkmenistan, highlighted Turkmenistan's commitment to global processes aimed at sustainable development and the adoption of six UN General Assembly resolutions on sustainable transport at the initiative of Turkmenistan over the past decade. The Chairman emphasized Turkmenistan's important geographic position, enabling Turkmenistan to play a central role in the creation and development of East-West and North-South transport corridors. The Chairman highlighted Turkmenbashi International Sea Port as an example of Turkmenistan's efforts to protect the ecology of the Caspian Sea within the framework of sustainable development while strengthening economic prosperity. He further informed the audience about the action plan developed at the State level aimed at reducing carbon dioxide and methane emissions and introducing environmentally friendly technologies.

9. H.E. Ambassador Jérôme Bonnafont, Permanent Representative of France to the UN in Geneva delivered his speech on behalf of H.E. Mr. Christophe Béchu, Minister for Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion of France. The Ambassador highlighted the triple planetary crisis and the importance of delivering on the commitments taken up by the UN. He stressed France's inclusive approach to development, in particular towards the African continent, and presented the Paris Pact for People and the Planet, which affirms the principle of international solidarity. The Ambassador encouraged bilateral assistance, mobilizing the private sector and an increased use of multilateral development banks to benefit the most vulnerable countries. He highlighted the historic agreement at COP 28 to phase out the use of fossil fuels and stressed that this must be the top priority for the most advanced countries. The Ambassador closed his speech by emphasizing the importance of the new ITC Strategy and stressed the importance of supporting it unreservedly.

10. Mr. Daniele Violetti, Senior Director of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC), opened his speech by highlighting key outcomes of COP 28, including its call on Parties to transition away from fossil fuels, to triple renewables and double energy efficiency globally by 2030 as well as to accelerate and reduce emissions from road transport. Mr. Violetti stressed the unique responsibility of the inland transport sector

for reducing emissions and contributing to climate change mitigation. He stressed the crucial role of ITC in this endeavour and commended the ITC on the development of the ITC Strategy on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Inland Transport, underpinned by a strong action plan with milestones. Mr. Violetti expressed his eagerness to follow the development of “inland transport decarbonization action plans”, which could potentially feed into the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). UNFCCC further welcomed the inclusion of transport adaptation to climate change in the Strategy. Mr. Violetti concluded by sharing expectations for COP 29 in Azerbaijan in 2024 and COP 30 in 2025 and urged delegates to work together towards a cleaner, greener and climate-resilient future.

11. Mr. Anouar Benazzouz, President of the International Road Federation (IRF) started by emphasizing the relevance of the ITC and the launch of the new Strategy. He then highlighted two challenges in global efforts to reduce emissions from the transport sector: the lack of institutional capacity to plan and deliver change and the inadequacy of traditional funding and financing instruments. As opportunities, he identified the adoption of new technologies and digitalization. The President welcomed the new Strategy and its commitment to support the adopting of new technologies and innovations, while also acknowledging that it responds to the collective call from the road industry to act with pragmatism, ensure a just transition and embrace innovation. The President presented the theme of the 2024 IRF World Congress and concluded his speech highlighting the common goal of delivering better mobility systems for all and the importance of collaboration.

#### **Scheduled high-level interventions from the membership and partners.**

- Mr. Armen Simonyan, Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of Armenia
- H.E. Ambassador Marc Pecsteen De Buytsverve, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Belgium<sup>1</sup>
- H.E. Ambassador Lazăr Comănescu, Secretary General, Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization
- Mr. Jan Hoffmann, Head, Trade Logistics Branch, Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD

12. The moderator opened the floor for interventions from the floor.

13. The Russian Federation made a statement in reaction to the keynote speech of the Secretary of Transportation of the United States of America as well as the statement of the Ambassador of Belgium. The full statement is contained in Annex V to this document.

14. Azerbaijan welcomed all countries to COP 29 that will take place in Baku in 2024. The Netherlands emphasized the importance of public and private collaboration and the involvement of civil society in national action plans. The United Kingdom stated its support for the new ITC Strategy and the importance of collaboration with UNFCCC in its implementation. Türkiye emphasized the possibility to reduce emissions by reducing modal share of road transport.

15. The moderator closed the panel by emphasizing the importance of focusing on action and the implementation of strategies rather than expressing ambitions and highlighted important upcoming events of ITF.

## **V. Panel II: Accelerating climate change mitigation in inland transport: Reaping synergies with urban development, environment and energy policies**

16. Panel II was moderated by Mr. Umberto De Pretto, Secretary General of the International Road Transport Union (IRU).

<sup>1</sup> The full statement is contained in Annex V to this document.

17. Hon. Mr. Felix Tapiwa Mhona, Minister of Transport and Infrastructural Development of Zimbabwe, opened his speech by highlighting Zimbabwe's commitment to cooperation under the UN System. The Minister emphasized the challenges and vulnerabilities of the global south. He highlighted Zimbabwe's policies to address challenges related to climate change, including the development of the National Electric Mobility Policy, a framework towards the adoption, use and disposal of electric vehicles in the country. The Minister stressed the potential of digital solutions for safe and clean transport models. He emphasized the limitations by lack of capacity and concluded his speech by highlighting Zimbabwe's ambition to embrace win-win partnerships for sustainability through its "enemy to none and friends to all" foreign policy.

18. H.E. Mr. Arzybek Kozhoshev, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), opened his speech by introducing the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and its recent achievements, such as communicative GDP growth of 28.7 per cent and an increase in trade volumes between the state parties by a factor of 1.9. The Minister emphasized that ecological matters form a priority for EEU's external activities and trade policy. He stressed the importance of taking into account the international climate agenda in order to reach the goal of net zero by 2050. The EEU intends to introduce measures involving science, innovation, digitalization, renewing rolling stock, maintenance of road equipment and smart transport systems to reduce the harmful impact of transport. The Minister further noted EEU's focus on environmental aspects of the development of railway transport in the region. He concluded his speech by emphasizing the need to join forces in order to protect the future of the next generations.

19. Mr. Gerhard Müller, President of the International Motor Vehicle Inspection Committee (CITA), focused on one aspect he identified as fundamental for the success of vehicle decarbonization: social acceptance. He stressed that changes always pose a reaction, and habits must be changed in the population to get rid of fossil fuel-burning vehicles. Transparency is key, as citizens must be provided with the correct information regarding the mobility transformation to avoid frustration of missing expectations. The President highlighted the importance of bridging the gap between theoretical and actual fuel consumption values as well as an impartial assessment of the batteries' state of health, to ensure a fair trade of hybrid and used electric vehicles. He acknowledged the work of WP. 29 and closed his speech by emphasizing the importance of transparency to facilitate efforts to move towards an electric road vehicle fleet and its decarbonization.

#### **Scheduled high-level interventions from the membership and partners**

- Mr. Dmitry Zverev, State Secretary - Deputy Minister of Transport of the Russian Federation
- Mr. Amani Tehrani, Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Islamic Republic of Iran
- Mr. Yury Dubina, Director, Ministry of Transport and Communications of Belarus
- Mr. Christoph Nolte, Executive Vice President, Dekra SE

20. The moderator opened the floor for interventions. Namibia made a statement on their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The moderator then closed the panel by urging participants to collaborate and make use of best practices. He invited delegates to join the side event including a hydrogen truck demonstration, which took place between panel II and III.

## **VI. Panel III: International cooperation, intergovernmental support and partnerships for climate action**

21. Panel III was moderated by Ms. Hannie Meesters, Chair of ITC.

22. H.E. Mr. Ali Hamie, Minister of Public Works and Transport of Lebanon, opened his speech by acknowledging road safety as a global crisis. The Minister highlighted the impact of climate change on road accidents, as Lebanon has been experiencing an increasing number

of extreme weather events in recent years, with serious consequences for road safety. He further stressed the serious negative effects of attacks by the Israeli occupation forces on roads and infrastructure and, as a result, on road safety and the safety of citizens and residents. The Minister highlighted measures Lebanon has taken, such as increased road maintenance, improved drainage systems, driver training and enforcement of traffic regulations and concluded by urging the international community to support reconstruction, provide technical and financial assistance and strengthen regional cooperation.

23. A representative of Nigeria delivered the speech on behalf of H.E. Hon. Mr. Sen. Said Ahmed Alkali, Minister of Transportation of Nigeria. The representative acknowledged the vital role of transport for the economy and highlighted the fact that most of the negative impacts of transportation can be classified as Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (SLCPs), the major contributors to global warming after long-lived greenhouse gases. He noted Nigeria's initiative to utilize domestic natural gas resources to alleviate its current dependency on PMS/diesel to gas (CNG) for powering the transport sector as well as other efforts such as policy developments. Nigeria further prepared a National Action Plan including 22 mitigation measures targeted at reducing long-lived greenhouse gases.

24. Mr. Khusrav Noziri, Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) opened his speech by emphasizing ECO's primary objective of enhancing transport connectivity among member nations and its aim to drive regional decision-making towards ambitious emissions reduction targets within the transport sector while promoting the adoption of clean and energy-efficient transportation modes. The Secretary General stressed the importance of recognizing the distinct geographical and infrastructural challenges that are hindering decarbonization efforts in developing countries. This warrants a tailored approach as developing nations are facing hurdles balancing climate action with their economic advancement. We must offer essential support and resources, such as technology transfer and investment, to facilitate their shift towards cleaner and more sustainable transport systems, and take a collaborative, inclusive and equitable approach. Regional organizations can play a vital role in facilitating collaboration.

#### **Scheduled high-level interventions from the membership and partners**

- Ms. Shoista Saidmurodzoda, Deputy Minister of Transport of Tajikistan
- Mr. Saysongkham Manodham, Deputy Minister of Transport of Lao PDR
- Mr. Wolfgang Küpper, Secretary General, Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF)
- Mr. Gennady Bessonov, Secretary General, International Coordinating Council on Trans-Eurasian Transportation (CCTT)
- Mr. Eric de Seynes, President, International Motorcycle Manufacturers Association (IMMA)
- Mr. Manuel Marsilio, General Manager, Confederation of European Bicycle Industry (CONEBI) and World Bike Industry Association (WBIA)

25. The moderator allowed additional interventions from the floor. Israel took the floor to respond to the speech by Mr. Ali Hamie, Minister of Public Works and Transport of Lebanon.<sup>2</sup> Nigeria appealed to CONEBI to collaborate and support NGOs and the Ministry of Transportation in Nigeria to sensitize the youth on cycling. Lebanon made a statement in response to the statement by Israel.<sup>3</sup>

## **VII. Closing**

26. The meeting was closed with remarks from the ITC Chair. The Chair informed the Committee about the number of countries that had requested to be added to the list of countries endorsing the High-level Statement of Support to the ITC Strategy on Reducing

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<sup>2</sup> The full statement is included in Annex V to this document.

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Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Inland Transport, as contained in ECE/TRANS/2024/2 and Annex II to ECE/TRANS/344. The Committee was also informed that, following requests by some Member States for extension of the deadline, the Declaration would remain open for other countries interested in endorsing the High-level Statement.

**Annex II**

[English only]

**Report of the High-Level Side Event on the Inland Transport Committee Forum for Road Safety****I. Introduction**

1. The high-level side event of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) Forum for Road Safety took place at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 20 February 2024 from 13:15 to 14:00 in the margins of the eighty-sixth annual session of the ITC. The panel focused on national road safety management success stories and supporting low and middle-income countries in achieving their road safety goals.

**II. Opening**

2. Ms. Jane Doherty, Director, International Policy, Fuel Economy and Consumer Programs, U.S. Department of Transportation, United States of America, moderated the event. She welcomed the participants and gave the floor to H.E. Ms. Tatiana Molcean, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

3. H.E. Ms. Tatiana Molcean, Executive Secretary of ECE, opened the event by urging the audience to remain focused on the unfolding road safety crisis, despite the reported decline of 5 per cent in total numbers of global road deaths since 2010. She highlighted that this development is mixed – while there are success stories among low and middle-income countries, road deaths have increased by more than 15 per cent in the African region. The United Nations will continue stepping up its support both through the UN Road Safety Conventions under its purview and the needed tools and technical regulatory framework to strengthen countries' national road safety systems. The Executive Secretary stressed that much more must be done to achieve the goal of 50 per cent reduction of road fatalities and closed her speech by highlighting the importance of the ITC Forum for Road Safety as a platform to convene key worldwide stakeholders for a regular and strategic discussion on progress, challenges and the way forward for the success of the second Decade of Action.

4. Mr. Jean Todt, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety, stressed that despite collective efforts and despite encouraging news from the recent WHO Global Status Report, which shows a slight decrease in annual fatalities to 1.19 million, we need to do much more. The Special Envoy noted that the improvement only represents a 5 per cent decrease, while the goal of the 2021-2030 Decade of Action is to reduce the number by 50 per cent. The Special Envoy emphasized that we must strengthen capabilities of low- and middle-income countries and urged experts to stay connected and bridge the gap between the ECE region and the global south. He noted that ITC and its member States can contribute to safer transport worldwide by implementing international standards for safe and sustainable inland transport systems. The Special Envoy highlighted the launch of the first UN Global campaign on road safety specifically targeting Southern cities across 80 countries. He closed by emphasizing that we must take impactful action and raise awareness on this crisis to achieve our goal and end the devastating toll of 3,260 lives lost daily.

**III. Panel discussion**

5. The moderator opened the discussion by introducing the panellists and emphasizing that the panel session would help with regaining momentum and charting the way forward in order to achieve the goals under the second Decade of Action.

6. H.E. Mr. Mark Harbers, Minister for Infrastructure and Water Management of the Netherlands, highlighted that there have been improvements in road safety as a result of cooperation in areas such as driving laws, requirements for vehicles and infrastructure, and road signs and signals. He stressed the need for continuous commitment to increase road



safety. The Minister confirmed the Netherlands' support of the goals of the Second Decade of Action and noted that the Netherlands have worked on improving road safety since the 1970s. He stressed that road safety is a joint responsibility that requires cooperation by governments on national, provincial and municipal level and that we must also involve drivers, businesses and civil society. In response to increasing and changing traffic, the Netherlands have developed a strategic road safety plan involving all levels of government, NGOs and social partners. The Minister noted that nearly all EU countries now have such plans which are already providing good results. In addition, ITC has a proven track record in improving road safety. The Minister closed by sharing his excitement and determination to collaborate with other countries and learn from one another to bring concrete results.

7. Hon. Mr. Felix Tapiwa Mhona, Minister of Transport and Infrastructural Development of Zimbabwe, acknowledged the leadership of ITC on improving road safety and reaffirmed Zimbabwe's commitment to cooperation under the UN system. According to Zimbabwe's 2022 road safety report, traffic crashes occur every 15 minutes and average of 5 people are killed every day, over 1,800 people die and over 10,000 people are injured annually. In response to this, Zimbabwe has introduced a new driver's license regime and made it compulsory for public-service vehicles to install speed monitoring and limiting devices. The Minister further highlighted that Zimbabwe is reviewing its policies and laws, seeking to establish a lead road traffic management agency. He concluded by emphasizing that Zimbabwe is embracing win-win partnerships and sustainable cooperation with multilateral stakeholders within the UN system to address challenges remaining in global road safety and reiterated Zimbabwe's commitment towards the Second Decade of Action.

8. H.E. Mr. Saleh Al-Jasser, Minister of Transport of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, shared Saudi Arabia's road safety transformation as part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. The Minister noted that Saudi Arabia was able to reduce road fatalities by more than 50 per cent from 2016 to 2023 through a comprehensive program. Saudi Arabia established a Road Safety Committee, chaired by the Minister of Health, handling enforcement, infrastructure, education, response and many other disciplines. The Minister noted that the number of fatalities was reduced from 28.8 per 100,000 inhabitants to less than 13.3 per 100,000 inhabitants, with a current goal of less than 5. This was achieved through reviewing and improving infrastructure and road quality, education and raising awareness through the media, as well as enforcement and the use of technology. The Minister concluded his speech with determination that he projects Saudi Arabia to achieve even the heightened objectives on road safety in the near future.

9. The moderator thanked the panellists for sharing their national targets and commitment to road safety. She emphasized the importance of resources and highlighted the work of the UN Road Safety Fund, which is supporting 88 countries in 5 regions. The moderator asked the panellists to elaborate on how individual countries can work together through a global partnership to tackle road safety, and to share their experience with the Road Safety Fund.

10. H.E. Mr. Saleh Al-Jasser reiterated the importance of resources to tackle the road safety crisis. He emphasized that Saudi Arabia is providing financial support for road infrastructure and education in other countries.

11. Hon. Mr. Felix Tapiwa Mhona thanked the Special Envoy for the support on road safety in Zimbabwe. The Minister underscored that road safety cannot be achieved from a single source of funding and emphasized limitations by sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe. He called for a holistic approach as a team.

12. H.E. Mr. Mark Harbers shared actions taken by the Netherlands, such as regulation, vehicle safety and cycling. The Netherlands have developed a safe system approach focusing on safe infrastructure, safe vehicles and safe behaviour, including guidelines for all road authorities. With regard to vehicle safety, the Netherlands' Vehicle Authority regularly receives international delegations and organizes workshop to exchange knowledge on vehicle safety. The Netherlands also participates in international fora on vehicle safety and regulation to improve road safety. The Netherlands further have experience with developing safe infrastructure and policies for active mobility. The Minister highlighted the Dutch Cycling Embassy that is promoting safe active mobility worldwide and a recent initiative with

Belgium and Luxembourg called ACTIVE. The aim is to train 10,000 experts over the next 10 years, with a specific focus on low and middle-income countries to promote cycling policies and active mobility worldwide.

13. Lastly, the moderator introduced Mr. Jonas Bjelvenstam, Director-General of the Swedish Transport Agency, to share Sweden's leadership on vision zero and how we can align traditional models and projects into a global framework. Mr. Bjelvenstam started by emphasizing the importance of road safety in Sweden. In 1997, the Swedish Parliament decided that vision zero should be the foundation for Sweden's work related to road safety. Mr. Bjelvenstam highlighted the importance of access to data and statistics to provide us with tools to develop road safety. Sweden has developed a platform that includes data on fatalities and injuries related to road traffic accidents, which makes it possible to prioritize and implement fact-based measures and see the effects of such measures. Mr. Bjelvenstam emphasized the importance of knowledge sharing as an essential point to improve road safety and noted that Sweden is running the Vision Zero Academy as part of Sweden's efforts to share knowledge about vision zero. He also highlighted the initiative 'Road Safety Experts without Borders' by the UN Road Safety Fund and the importance of collaborating with the private sector and NGOs.

#### **IV. Closing remarks**

14. Ms. Doherty closed the session by thanking the panellists for their participation and for sharing their experience and good practices and for emphasizing the importance of resources and education to the public. Ms. Doherty closed the panel by summarizing the key takeaways and emphasized the need for global partnerships, cooperation and collaboration, as well as the importance of good data and science-based regulations.

## Annex III

### Report of the Meeting of Heads of Delegation from Countries of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia

1. At their summit on 24 November 2024 in Baku, Azerbaijan, the Presidents of the participating States of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) adopted the SPECA Roadmap for the digitalization of multimodal exchange of data and documents along the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor using United Nations legal instruments and standards. UNECE contributed to the development of the Roadmap.

2. The eighty-sixth annual session of ITC provided an opportunity to advance the discussion on the implementation of the Roadmap. Tajikistan, the Chair of SPECA in 2024, convened the heads of delegations of the SPECA member states for a meeting on the implementation of the Roadmap on during the eighty-sixth ITC session on 21 February 2024 in Geneva. Ms. Shoista Saidmurodzoda, Deputy Minister of Transport of Tajikistan, chaired the meeting on behalf of the SPECA Chairmanship. The meeting was also attended by a representative of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

3. Mr. Dmitry Maryasin, Deputy Executive Secretary of UNECE, opened the meeting, thanked Azerbaijan for raising SPECA to a new level in 2023 and expressed confidence that Tajikistan would also lead in the development of SPECA in 2024. He emphasized three points:

- Countries need to discuss how to link the digitalization of the corridor and existing agreements;
- Link the work on the corridors in SPECA with other platforms, as the EU Global Gateway;
- Serious resources and capacity-building projects are needed. The SPECA States should finish their comments on the Terms of Reference for the SPECA Foundation as soon as possible.

4. Azhar Dzhamurzina, Head of Section in the Transport Department of ESCAP, noted that ESCAP is engaged in the digitalization of transport. Sub-regional cooperation and cooperation with UNECE are useful for connecting different regions of the world, including in the field of digitalization of transport.

5. Mr. Nenad Nikolić, Regional Adviser of the Sustainable Transport Division of UNECE, presented the work on the connection of SPECA Member States with eTIR International, on the Group of Experts on operationalization of eCMR, informed the meeting on developments in unified railway law, emphasized benefits of further engagement of SPECA member states in of the SPECA Working Group on Transport and informed participants about the goals of the Coordinating Committee on the Trans-Caspian Corridor and the Almaty-Tehran-Istanbul Corridor.

6. Mr. Mario Apostolov, Regional Advisor of the Economic Development and Trade Division of UNECE, presented the work on the application of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) package of standards for the digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange in the Trans-Caspian Corridor, a pilot project with the intergovernmental Commission of the Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA) on the digitalization of the Uniform Rules concerning the Contract of International Carriage of Goods by Rail / Agreement on International Freight Traffic by Rail (CIM/SMGS) consignment note in accordance with UN/CEFACT standards. He highlighted the problem of fragmentation of digitalization efforts in the supply chain, and the solution of a seamless multimodal information chain based on UN standards that will ensure interoperability between modes of transport, documents, legal regimes and sectors in the supply chain.

7. Following the introductory remarks, a tour de table of the heads of delegations of the attending SPECA countries was held.

8. Ms. Shoista Saidmurodzoda, Deputy Minister of Transport of Tajikistan, emphasized the priority of building up trade and economic cooperation between the countries of the SPECA region and that the implementation of the Roadmap will require a strong capacity-building component for the public and private sectors, the development. Ms. Saidmurodzoda highlighted that the Government of Tajikistan has approved the National Target Program for the Development of the Transport Sector (NCPRTC) for 2011-2025, transforming the country into a transit country while minimizing the negative impact of transport on the environment and human health. This will serve as a basis for promoting sustainable trade, economic growth and sustainable development of multimodal transport and transit between the countries of Central Asia. Ms. Saidmurodzoda further provided information on Tajikistan's efforts of digitalizing the country's transport system and emphasized that countries in Europe and Central Asia can use cross-border e-logistics platforms to exchange information paperless and improve efficiency at checkpoints by introducing automated payment systems. The Deputy Minister highlighted that Tajikistan is interested in clean energy in transport and is planning to reach "zero emissions" of CO<sub>2</sub> by 2037. To develop transport links between the countries of Central Asia and Europe, Tajikistan further called on international financial institutions and development partners to invest in the:

- Creation of integrated information and logistics and transport and logistics centers in the countries of Central Asia and Europe;
- Creation of transport and logistics centers in the territory of the Republic of Tajikistan;
- Creation of integrated infrastructures for the maintenance and repair of environmentally friendly modes of transport;
- Simplification of the process of transportation and transit by land transport; and
- Introduction and use of innovative technologies, including digitalization of the land transport process.

9. Mr. Bakhtiyar Mammadov, Deputy Head of Administration of the Ministry of Digital Development and Trade of the Republic of Azerbaijan, noted that many departments are responsible for digitalization along transport chains, and that it is necessary to cooperate with governments to coordinate national departments and businesses. Mr. Galib Israfilov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the UN Office at Geneva, noted that it is necessary to concentrate on the practical application of the elements of the Roadmap and invited UNECE to indicate what needs to be done at the political level.

10. Mr. Altay Ali, Chairman of the Committee on Motor Transport and Transport Control of the Republic of Kazakhstan, noted that Kazakhstan is a party to 11 multilateral conventions. Mr. Ali emphasized that, as Chairman of the SPECA Working Group on Transport, Transit and Sustainable Connectivity, Kazakhstan is ready to take an active part in the implementation of the Roadmap and looks forward to constructive interaction with all interested parties. He noted that Kazakhstan is working on the digitalization of the exchange of forms of bilateral entry and exit permits, and that Kazakhstan has intergovernmental agreements on road transportation with 42 countries in Europe and Asia. Almost all road transport with partner countries is carried out on the basis of permit forms, 250 thousand units of forms are exchanged annually on a parity basis, which creates an additional bureaucratic and environmental burden. The Chairman emphasized that in this regard, one of the areas of cooperation within the framework of the implementation of the Roadmap could be the consideration of issues related to the transition to an electronic format of forms.

11. Mr. Aidarbek Samykbaev, Head of the Customs Policy Department of the Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic, emphasized that the Kyrgyz Republic attaches great importance to the development of the East-West transport corridor, including the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor. He highlighted that the Kyrgyz Republic is taking measures within the framework of trade facilitation to digitalize customs processes and simplify administrative procedures at borders in order to speed up transport and develop the country's transit potential. A pilot project is being implemented on the application of e-TIR at the border crossing point with the Republic of Uzbekistan. Mr. Samykbaev emphasized that one of the components of digitalization is the introduction of an electronic queue management system - the project "Electronic system for managing the flow of trucks at

border checkpoints (export) - "Electronic queue", which is one of the strategic priorities defined by the Concept for the Development of the Customs Service of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2022-2024. To implement the Roadmap, the Kyrgyz Republic proposed:

- The organization of capacity-building workshops by UNECE with closer involvement of representatives of economic authorities as well as customs administrations of the countries of the SPECA region; and
- Developing a step-by-step Action Plan aimed at the implementation of the priority activities of the Roadmap for the digitalization of multimodal data and the exchange of documents on the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor, including the use of UN/CEFACT standards.

The Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic finally supported the proposal of the Ambassador of Azerbaijan to focus the efforts of countries on the practical application of the Roadmap and to receive support on digitalization from the UNECE.

12. Mr. Annadurdy Kosayev, Chairman of the Agency “Türkmendeňizderýaýollary” of the Republic of Turkmenistan, expressed the full governmental support for the implementation of the Roadmap. He highlighted that the "Concept for the Development of the Digital Economy in Turkmenistan for 2019-2025" and the "State Program for the Development of the Digital Economy in Turkmenistan for 2021-2025" have been approved and are being consistently implemented in Turkmenistan. The documents provide for the improvement of digital education and healthcare, personnel training, as well as the phased placement of digital services on a single portal of public services. Mr. Kosayev noted the agreement between the Caspian ports on the exchange of information and the introduction of Terminal Operation System (TOS) electronic data interchange system. He highlighted that in 2018, an agreement on Automated Data Exchange was signed between the Turkmenbashi International Seaport and the Port of Baku. An electronic system for receiving goods has been introduced and accession to the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (FAL Convention) is under way. Mr. Kosayev proposed to hold a working meeting at the expert level in March 2024 in order to identify the most problematic aspects and gaps for the synchronization of the parties involved, and to identify practical steps to implement the points of the Roadmap, to link SPECA, the Global Gateway of the EU and CAREC, as well as the needs and priorities of countries, and to study the experience and practice of the EU countries and China.

13. Mr. Askar Mirsaidov, Acting Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the United Nations Office at Geneva, proposed to involve UNECE's Global Forum on Customs Questions affecting Transport including Border Crossings Facilitation (WP.30) the eTIR Administrative Group in the work on the implementation of the Roadmap. He further highlighted the 11th Asia-Pacific Forum on Trade Facilitation on 1 – 5 April 2024 in Samarkand, where UNECE organized an event on the implementation of the Roadmap and the implementation of UN/CEFACT standards for the digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange.

14. Azerbaijan and Tajikistan offered to involve the private sector in the work on the implementation of the Roadmap. It was noted that the data that is exchanged is collected from trading operators and that it is also necessary to involve customs and cargo control authorities at the border.

15. It was concluded that, following the adoption of the Roadmap, a UNECE proposal, an action plan and a timetable for implementation are needed. It was emphasized that the representatives of the participating countries are ready to push the application at the political level and that planned capacity-building activities are good, but regular meetings on specific issues should be organized, also involving experts and politicians. The importance of involving the private sector in the implementation of the Roadmap was also emphasized.

**Annex IV**

[English only]

**Report of the Side Event Roundtable on "Towards Sustainable Transportation: Best Practices, Challenges and Solutions"****I. Introduction**

1. The side event roundtable took place at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 22 February 2024 from 13:15 to 14:30 in the margins of the eighty-sixth annual session of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC). It was jointly organized by the Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan to the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). The side event discussed the role of transport in sustainable development and provided a forum for the exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices on making transport more sustainable.

**II. Opening**

2. H.E. Mr. Vepa Hajiyeu, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan, who moderated the event, opened the roundtable by thanking ECE and welcoming the panellists. The Ambassador noted that the transport sector is a backbone element of the economy of all states. Without its improvement, modernization and the introduction of advanced technologies, progressive economic growth, improvement of people's welfare and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals will be difficult to achieve. The Ambassador highlighted the importance of coordinated and responsible approaches to the strategy of global transport development on the basis of equality, mutual respect, multilateral benefit, consideration and balance of interests. He emphasized Turkmenistan's commitment to international cooperation in the transport sector and highlighted the adoption by the General Assembly of six transport resolutions initiated by Turkmenistan, the most recent being the UN Resolution on World Sustainable Transport Day (A/RES/77/286). The Ambassador concluded by inviting panellists to share interesting proposals, useful ideas and assessments on sustainable transport.

3. H.E. Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin, Deputy Executive Secretary of ECE, joined H.E. Ambassador Hajiyeu in welcoming the panellists and participants to the side event. He emphasized the vital role transport plays in our everyday lives and that, over the past decades, the passenger and goods transport has constantly and exponentially increased. With transport accounting for about a fifth of global energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and inland transport alone accounting for 72 per cent of global transport greenhouse gas emissions in 2019, we are at a pivotal moment to take action towards decarbonization of transport by 2050. The Deputy Executive Secretary highlighted the results of COP 28 and the crucial role of ITC in supporting sustainable transport. Finally, he emphasized the need for collaboration of all stakeholders to achieve sustainable, resilient, safe, affordable, and accessible transport systems.

**III. Panel Discussion**

4. The panel discussion was moderated by H.E. Mr. Vepa Hajiyeu.

5. Statements were made by:

- H.E. Mr. Annadurdy Kosayev, Chairman of the Agency "Türkmendeňizderýaýollary"
- H.E. Mr. Daryoush Amani, Deputy Minister of Transport of the Islamic Republic of Iran, President of the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization (RMTO)

- H.E. Ms. Shoista Saidmurodzoda, Deputy Minister of Transport of Tajikistan
- Mr. Umberto De Pretto, Secretary General of the International Road Transport Union (IRU)
- Mr. Yuwei Li, Director of the Sustainable Transport Division, ECE
- H.E. Mrs. Lotte Knudsen, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Head of the EU Delegation to UNOG

6. H.E. Mr. Annadurdy Kosayev emphasized the vital role of sustainable transport systems in fostering environmental, social, and economic sustainability within the communities they serve. He stressed that it is crucial to weigh the benefits of increased mobility against the social, economic, and environmental costs associated with transportation systems. The Chairman highlighted Turkmenistan's engagement at the forefront of promoting sustainable transport on the global stage and the resulting six UN General Assembly Resolutions on sustainable transport. He emphasized that, given Turkmenistan's geographical position, the country plays a pivotal role in creating and developing vital East-West and North-South corridors. Turkmenistan hosts the largest seaport in the Caspian region, which further enhances its significance in international trade and connectivity. Mr. Kosayev ended by highlighting Turkmenistan's vision of enhanced collaboration with European organizations in the maritime transport sector, enhancing its global reach and impact for decarbonization.

7. H.E. Mr. Daryoush Amani expressed his gratitude to Turkmenistan for organizing the event and underscored the key role Turkmenistan plays for Iran's cooperation with neighbouring countries in transport partnerships as its gateway to Central Asia. The Deputy Minister emphasized Iran's efforts towards successful, prosperous, and promising future for sustainable transport by highlighting the Joint-venture project with India. A video was shown of Chabahar Port, a symbol of collaboration between India and Iran for mutual prosperity along with Central Asian countries. In 2016, India, Iran and Afghanistan joined hands to create an international transit corridor, giving rise to Chabahar Port which manages 8.5 million tons of goods annually. The video concluded by highlighting Iran's determination towards connected transport systems in collaboration with neighbouring countries, particularly with India.

8. H.E. Ms. Shoista Saidmurodzoda, Deputy Minister of Transport of Tajikistan, highlighted the importance of adaptation measures to effectively counter the negative consequences of climate change and emphasized the importance of interregional cooperation in the transport and logistics sector. The Deputy Minister noted that Tajikistan highly appreciates Turkmenistan's initiatives such as the "Sustainable Transport Corridors" project and highlighted that Tajikistan aims to leverage its transit potential given its geographical location within the framework of international programs for regional economic cooperation. Tajikistan has been paying great attention to the development of multimodal transport corridors connecting the countries of the region with Europe and access to seaports in collaboration with Turkmenistan, Iran, Türkiye and Europe. The Deputy Minister invited development partners and international financial institutions to consider the possibility of financing a project related to the transport and logistics industry and concluded her speech by emphasizing Tajikistan's determination to create synergy for the trans-European transport network and contribute to effective movement of people and mobility across borders.

9. H.E. Mr. De Pretto opened his remarks by highlighting the need for drivers to be trained for both eco-friendly and safe driving practices. He emphasized that 85 per cent of accidents are caused by human error, not by road infrastructure, making driver training essential for safe road transport. Mr. De Pretto emphasized that the digitalization of border processes requires collaboration across all agencies to share data effectively. He noted that UN instruments can expedite border processes by significantly reducing delays. Mr. De Pretto concluded by noting the importance of considering UN instruments and collaborate with ITC, including on the implementation of the new ITC Strategy on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Inland Transport.

10. Mr. Yuwei Li expressed gratitude to the government of Turkmenistan for organizing a significant high-level event in the context of the ITC. He acknowledged Turkmenistan's

leadership on a global level, citing Turkmenistan's sponsorship of several UN General Assembly resolutions on transport, including inter-modal transport. Director Li noted that addressing the definition of sustainable transport contains three dimensions: Economic, social, and environmental. Economically, transport should offer efficient, convenient, and affordable services, including infrastructure. Challenges include city congestion leading to inefficiency and high transport costs, as well as long truck lines at borders causing delays. Environmentally, vehicle pollution and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions impact climate change. Socially, over 1.5 million road deaths annually highlight the sector's responsibility for road safety. Integrating all three aspects of sustainable transition in the transport sector, ECE has taken a holistic approach for decarbonization of the transport sector.

11. H.E. Mrs. Lotte Knudsen emphasized that there is still a lot to be done on the development of transport infrastructure. The EU delegation to the United Nations Office of Geneva is eager to enhance the corridors between Europe and Asia to facilitate more sustainable modes. The Ambassador noted the geopolitical situation and underlined the need to accelerate the process of diversification of transport corridors. She noted that there has already been a massive increase in the volume in recent years, but that there is a lot more potential. The Ambassador highlighted the EU proposal of a network of trans-Caspian connection that will connect central Asian countries better with Europe and shared information on a big global gateway investors' forum for central Asian transport connectivity, which identified a number of concrete projects with stakeholders and international financial institutions. Finally, the Ambassador highlighted the importance of the new ITC Strategy for decarbonizing inland transport.

#### **IV. Closing Remarks**

12. Ambassador Hajiyev closed the event by expressing his gratitude to all the panellists for their enriching contributions to the side event.



**Annex V**

[English only]

**Statements delivered during the eighty-sixth Annual Session of the Inland Transport Committee for inclusion in the ITC report****I. Agenda item 2****A. Statement by Belgium**

The Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Belgium, Mr. Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, made a scheduled intervention following panel I during the high-level segment:

“Madam Chair, Madam Executive Secretary,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Ukraine, the European Union and its Member States, the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia and Norway.

We recognize the urgency and importance of taking action on climate change and the destabilizing effect of global warming to natural systems and decarbonization of inland transport must be one of the element of such action.

At the same time, in a few days, on 24th February we will mark two years since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

It is important to remind that the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe adopted during its latest biennial meeting on 18-19 April 2023 Resolution ECE/2023/L.1/Rev.1 regarding the Economic and Social Effects of Russia’s Aggression Against Ukraine.

In the face of continued Russian attacks against Ukraine’s civil and critical infrastructure, it is important to recognize their effect also in the area of transport, be it by road, rail or ships. These are precisely the topics that the Inland Transport Committee is supposed to discuss this week.

Therefore, we reiterate our resolute condemnation of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a manifest violation of the UN Charter, and reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and its inherent right of self-defence against the Russian aggression.

We demand the Russian Federation immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

We stand united in the face of Russian aggression. We are steadfast in our unwavering support for Ukraine and its people to succeed. And we will do everything we can to ensure that happens.

I thank you.”

**B. Statement by the Russian Federation**

The Russian Federation responded to the statements made in the keynote speech of the Secretary of Transportation of the United States of America, Mr. Pete Buttigieg, as well as the Ambassador of Belgium: “Good morning distinguished colleagues, Chairman. The Russian Federation is compelled to use its right to reply in connection with the statement made by the representative of the United States and also the representative of Belgium on behalf of a group of countries. We regret that these countries used the Forum of a sectoral meeting of the UN to politicize these discussions. Such actions undermine the constructive

and professional dialogue we should have on questions under consideration, and these are aimed at creating a confrontational atmosphere and pursuing geopolitical goals, which have nothing to do with our deeply professional forum. We reject the statements that were made, and we recall that the resolution made by Belgium was adopted by a vote contrary to the Rules of Procedure and Terms of Reference of the Commission. To go into arguments about the situation in Ukraine is something we will not do. This issue is not on the agenda of today's event. It is discussed in other fora, including the UN Security Council where there have been explanations provided on multiple occasions. The Russian Federation once again urges everyone to respect the mandate of our forum and to refrain from the politicization of its work and from undermining its work. We will not come back to this topic and in order to try and rebuild bridges in our professional discussions, I would like to say that this morning we have been discussing very important issues, issues which require careful attention, and which have long term implications. In the conditions of the sanctions carried out by certain countries and in the conditions of the disrupted supply chains and the closure of air space, to talk of achieving carbon neutrality in the foreseeable future is extremely ambitious and daring. The very complicated roots for passenger transport and for the transport of cargo are leading to a significant increase in emissions and the pollution of our atmosphere and bans and the lack of equal access to low carbon technologies are leading us backwards and it is undermining the motto of leaving nobody behind. We are having to use old technologies which are also having a negative impact on the environment. The work we have done to decarbonize the economy should take into account the interests and possibilities of all countries, of all parties, and it should also ensure a non-discriminatory approach to new, smart transport solutions. I thank you for your attention.”

### **C. Statement by Israel**

The representative of Israel responded to the speech by Lebanon's Minister, Mr. Ali Hamie: “This forum is gathered here today to discuss vital issues of decarbonization of inland transport, not to suffer attacks of a delegate representing a state controlled by a terror organization seeking to destabilize the whole middle East. A state that uses its transport abilities to transfer bombs and weapons. Since October 7, Hezbollah has fired thousands of rockets at civilians in Northern Israel, causing displacement and large-scale destruction. The state of Israel will continue to respond to the security threats on its borders and take full actions to ensure the safety of its people. In the meantime, Israel would like to suggest that Lebanon takes actions to free itself from the terrorist grip which is causing its economy to spiral out of control and damage the lives of its people instead of acting as a mouthpiece of a terror regime and its state's backers.”

### **D. Statement by Lebanon**

“I would like to thank the ECE for its invitation. My presentation was about the road safety and the road infrastructure in Lebanon. But since we've heard a political statement, for us, Lebanon is a sovereign country within its territory, over ten thousand square kilometres. Israel is an enemy that occupied Lebanon and still occupies land within Lebanon and, as such, the Lebanese government and the Lebanese army and the Lebanese population are defending Lebanon and defending every centimetre of Lebanon. Lebanon is a sovereign state. And as such, Lebanon is a key player in the Middle East, and I just meant to clarify our stance vis-à-vis what has been said by someone. Thank you.”

## **II. Agenda item 6**

### **A. Statement by Belarus**

The delegation of Belarus informed the Committee about the governmental efforts towards road safety. It stressed that over the past fifteen years, there has been a steady decline in road accident rates in Belarus. During that time, the number of deaths as a result of road accidents

has decreased by more than three times. Back in 2018, the government developed and approved the respective package of measures “Good Road” on the basis of the global concept “Vision Zero”. To support the efficient implementation of the “Good Road” the annual action plans are being developed and the traffic safety commissions are established at the local (regional) level. Multisectoral expert groups have been also established to analyse specific road accidents with a view to prevent their causes. The Government of Belarus is constantly working on road safety legislation improvement and law enforcement. The Government’s measures have indicated positive changes in the road accident rate structure in Belarus.

### **III. Agenda item 9**

#### **A. Statement by the Russian Federation**

The representative of the delegation of the Russian Federation made the following statement regarding the election of officers and other members of the Bureau: “Thank you Madam Chair for giving me the floor. Regarding item 9 of the agenda on the election of the Bureau, I would like to make the following comment: Unfortunately we note that the list presented today cannot be recognized as sufficiently inclusive as it does not reflect all subregions of the pan-European region. This is due in part to the lack of a constructive position from the part of some of the members of the UNECE and the decisions which were not lawful as they went through a vote in violation of the Terms of Reference and the Rules of Procedure of the Commission. Practice has shown that this merely leads to a reduction in the effectiveness of the work and in fact complicates the tasks of the Committee. In line with rule 18(a) and 18(b) of the Rules of Procedure of the ITC, its Bureau must ensure effective and transparent work. In order to prepare the session ahead, it must consult with all members, and it must also achieve an agreement on decisions and recommendations. In this connection, we expect of the Bureau that it works in the interest of all member States of the ITC and furthermore that it provides professional and non-politicized activities for the Committee. In this context we would ask the secretariat to reflect this position in the report of the session. And we would also like to thank the acting Chair for the constructive and productive work. Thank you.”

#### **B. Statement by Belarus**

The delegation of Belarus shared the concerns of the Russian Federation regarding the list of candidates for the Bureau for the next two years. It referred to the *Guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies* and in particular of their paragraph 8 and regretted that the list of candidates for the Bureau did not ensure a wide geographical representation of the member States of the region.

### **IV. Agenda item 10(g)**

#### **A. Statement by the Russian Federation**

“Good morning, colleagues. First and foremost I would like to thank Ms. de Wit for a very detailed appropriate report on the main activities and trends and economic forecast for the transport sector. It’s not just a think tank but it’s also a group that has been for practically 2 decades determining the priorities and the development of international transport corridors or as the ITC says the Eurasian transport links and it is precisely on the corridors that I would like to draw your attention. In fact rather on the creation of a coordinating Committee for managing their activities. We know very well that we have the European Union, TRISECA, the Trans-Caspian Corridors, we have ESCAP and the OSJD involved. So we can see from that that these mechanisms are very effective and active in order to create the appropriate conditions for all players, for persons and companies involved in the transport sector. And so I would like to thank the secretariat of the ITC, of the UNECE and the Chair of the Group for the decision adopted in 2023 at the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics. Like we do for the TMTM, we could create a coordinating Committee. There is one for the

Tbilisi-Baku-Kars corridor and there is another corridor that basically which also coincides with the trans-Asiatic rail of the ESCAP and the OSJD these are the key organizations which are involved in the development of that particular transport corridor and that is an issue of great importance for us. I would also like to say that the mechanisms that the ITC has developed are methodologies which allow us to operate in real time and determine what bottle necks we can identify and overcome and remove them. So colleagues, with respect to the proposal made by the Russian Federation at WP.5, we would like this to be reflected in the report of the ITC meeting of this session. It is very important for us, not just for us, because the priority indeed given the increasing volumes of transcontinental transport and the management of cargo flows in connection with the green priorities is a matter of the greatest importance. Thank you.”

## **B. Statement by Belarus**

“Thank you, Madam Chair, for giving me the floor. Belarus would like to support the initiative of the Russian Federation to establish a working group to manage rail corridor OSJD number 1. This is a very appropriate decision. It is necessary very frequently to take quick decisions to resolve various issues and this could specifically become the appropriate platform to address any problems. It would also probably be advisable to establish it for addressing questions relating to development so all together here we should be working on the development of these corridors. Thank you.”

## **C. Statement by Armenia**

“We thank the Chair of the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics for the presentation of the analytical work carried out by WP.5 in 2023. We took note of the information provided verbatim as well as in the brief overview of activities per cluster contained in the note of the secretariat in the document ECE/TRANS/2024/20 which is certainly of a general nature and not a detailed update. Given the above, Armenia would like to ask to streamline the text to make it more relevant to the information provided to us. For the sake of transparency and true reflection of the facts, we suggest to change the para as follows, which is even on a more positive note as it puts the emphasis on efforts aimed at enhancing the interoperability and facilitation and I will read our proposal: “Considered the information provided by the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics as per its various clusters of work, including the one on operationalization of existing transport links and encouraged the countries involved to continue their coordination efforts aimed at enhancing the interoperability and facilitation of border crossings enabling fast and seamless transit of goods, and requested that a further progress report be provided at its next session.” Thank you.”

## **D. Statement by Poland**

“Good morning. Regarding the Russian proposal at point 45bis, we would like to mention that in the opinion of Poland currently the situation in the region of Eurasia is not in favour of discussing the development of OSDJ Corridor number 1, therefore we propose to change the word “welcomed” to phrase “took note of”. And we would like to emphasize that at the current stage, Poland will not participate in the discussion about the development of this corridor and establishing its coordination bodies. Thank you.”

## **E. Statement by the Russian Federation**

“Thank you, Madam Chair, for giving us the floor. We can agree with Poland with respect to writing and “took note of” but not on OSDJ corridor number 1. There is a partial overlap, but there is a branching out of the OSDJ corridor which isn’t the same as that of the EATL number 1, so I just want to make sure that we are clear about these distinctions. And in my own brief statement earlier I forgot to say that certainly that coordinating council which will be established I hope for EATL number 1 should certainly include structures such as the

OSDJ, the Economic Commission for the Asia Pacific Region and ESCAP because this is an area that the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics is looking at. Thank you.”

## **V. Agenda item 10(l)**

### **A. Statement by Belarus**

Belarus stated that the provisions of the Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) are fully applied to the international carriage of dangerous goods through the territory of Belarus, the national legislation is harmonized with ADR. Inspections and tests of vehicles are being conducted, relevant personnel are being trained, documents of international standard are being issued in due course. The accession of Belarus to the 1993 Protocol to ADR is under consideration.

## **VI. Agenda item 10(q)**

### **A. Statement by the Russian Federation**

“Dear Madam Chair, currently, the Russian Federation is facing difficulties related to the implementation of the AETR Agreement. The provisions of this agreement provide for the delivery by the Joint Research Center (JRC) of services to contracting countries for the certification of national keys and the assessment of equipment for interoperability. However, despite the signed Memorandum, JRC does not fulfil its obligations. At the regular session of the Group of Experts on AETR held on 19 February, the representative of the European Union did not mention the reasons for JRC ignoring our request for certification of national keys. Also, representatives of the JRC did not give any response. Unfortunately, the AETR Agreement does not work without appropriate technological services. As a result, we are a hostage of the JRC, and we cannot fully ensure the control of the work and rest regime of drivers, which ultimately poses a threat to road safety. We call on the parties to the administrative agreement (UNECE, European Commission services, JRC) to deal with the current situation and fulfil their obligations. We propose that the decisions of the ITC include information from the Russian Federation on the inaction of the JRC, and a call for the need for strict implementation of the provisions of the Memorandum concerning the work of the Joint Research Center in such a way as to ensure its coverage of all Contracting Parties to the AETR on a non-discriminatory basis.”

### **B. Statement by Belarus**

Belarus expressed its serious concerns about the inaction of the Joint Research Centre and its failure to fulfil the commitments under the respective MoU between UNECE and European Commission Services to Belarus as the AETR contracting party and as the UNECE member State. Belarus regretted that its requests to the JRC were ignored, and expressed its hope that they would receive positive consideration. Belarus stressed the importance of strict implementation of the MOU provisions in respect to all AETR contracting parties on an equal basis. Belarus also reminded the Committee of the arbitrary decision of the Bureau of the Group of Experts on AETR, which contradicted the UNECE rules and UN practice, about the cancellation of the 32nd session of the Group of Experts on AETR scheduled for June 2023.

### **C. Statement by the European Union**

“Thank you very much, Miss Chair and good afternoon to all. From the European Union, in particular the European Commission, perspective, we would like to react to the indication that has been given by two delegations in particular and we would like to state that we reject the remarks that have been done regarding the ongoing implementation of the AETR. Indeed,

as we have heard at the end of this morning on the report of the Group, we are glad that a solution was found to sign the administrative arrangement and therefore to resume the services to non-EU countries that are parties to the convention. The Commission Services have already clarified in the Expert Group meeting on Monday, that they are analysing the current requests from Russia and Belarus, so this is an ongoing work. In this respect, we think that the indications given in the text of the decision for 61 is reflected well on the current latest developments. Thank you.”

#### **D. Statement by the European Union**

The representative of the EU made the following final statement: “Thank you Madam Chair and I also apologize for continuing the discussion at such a late moment on this specific aspect, but I do appreciate also all the points made and the research of a possible solution into this including the involvement of the secretariat of course. The European Commission services do not recognise the statements made by Belarus and the Russian Federation on this topic over the past months. We strongly reject the claims by the Russian Federation and Belarus that the European Commission services are not complying with their obligations under the AETR or the Administrative Arrangement. We reiterate our full commitment to continue participating in the smooth implementation of AETR and to play our part, as has been the case for more than the past decade by providing digital tachograph services to non-EU AETR Contracting Parties, several of which are free-of-charge. The Working Party on Road Transport (SC.1) in October 2022 clearly decided and mandated the Secretariat to sign the tabled Administrative Arrangement. An Administrative Arrangement is currently in place and being implemented by the UNECE secretariat and the European Commission services. So I think this is clear. Again, I am a bit sorry that we have to reiterate several times the positions but on that I do not see the possibility of a compromise. So a text on this agenda item would be acceptable only if it refers to the factual state of play on the implementation of the AETR.”

#### **E. Statement by the Russian Federation**

The Russian Federation made the following final statement: “Thank you for your patience, Madam Chair. I just have a few comments. We would like to thank you for your patience in the discussion of this issue. We would also like to thank the representative of the delegation of the European Union because now in his last statement he finally stated through the microphone to the whole Committee that the delegation of the EU does not support the principle that we were discussing here, and this is something that we have asked him to do for several hours. We finally heard it. I think all members of the Committee including countries from other regions not just the pan-European region, have heard very well what was said. So I don’t think this needs any further clarification as is said in English its self-explanatory. We are in favour of working on the basis of consensus so if the Committee cannot reach any other decision today, then on our part we are prepared to adopt the wording in paragraph 61c. And one more question, if I may, to the secretariat. Colleagues from the secretariat: If you could reflect the discussion that we have had here just now in the report, including the position expressed by the delegation of the European Union. Thank you.”

### **VII. Agenda item 12(b)**

#### **A. Statement by the Russian Federation**

“Thank you, Madam Chair, for giving me the floor. The Russian Federation would like to state that to talk about the political independence of the organization is inappropriate as a minimum and we can say that based on the presentation. Some of the participants were engaged in the adoption of an unlawful decision. Regardless of the fact of the unlawful nature of this decision, states continue to fully pay their contributions. Moreover, the scientific research now underway does not fully reflect the full picture as it does not take into account

the results of all members of the organization and in this connection the Russian Federation once again requests that the decision adopted in 2022 in violation of the present general rules of the Transport Forum be withdrawn.”

## **B. Statement by Belarus**

“Madam Chair thank you for giving us the floor. We would also like to indicate that we align ourselves with the position of the Russian Federation and we would like to emphasize that the International Transport Forum should allow for Belarus and the Russian Federation to participate in all events, not just the virtual ones but the in-person formats as well. As you well understand, during the Covid virus, many meetings took place virtually, but that is not the same as being present physically in person. Thank you.”

## **Report of the ITC Round Table on "Fostering the digital and green transition for inland transport in support of the Sustainable Development Agenda"**

### **I. Introduction**

1. The roundtable was scheduled to take place on 23 February 2024 from 15:00 to 18:00 and was opened by Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin, Deputy Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). It was set up to convene member States and international organization experts along with other interested stakeholders to share best practices in the digital and green transition and discuss areas where further work is necessary in the framework of the activities of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) and its subsidiary bodies.

2. The Deputy Executive Secretary opened the session by noting the importance of the digital and green transition and its relevance for the work of ECE and ITC. He stressed that, while the technology itself is important, what the technology is used for is even more important. In the transport sector, the digital tools we use need to provide solutions for 1) making transport more accessible, 2) creating better economic opportunities, 3) reducing emissions and 4) improving road safety. The Deputy Executive Secretary closed by emphasizing the importance of strong digital foresight elements as part of the discussion and understanding megatrends and the impact of artificial intelligence on the sector, economies and societies.

### **II. Panel I: The Digital Transition in Freight Movements**

3. Panel I was moderated by Francesco Dionori, Chief of Section, Transport Networks and Logistics, Sustainable Transport Division of ECE. Participants exchanged views on how digitalization has influenced the effectiveness and functioning of the international transport system and how it has contributed to sustainability goals.

4. Presentations were made by:

- Ms. Tatiana Rey-Bellet, Director – TIR and Transit, International Road Transport Union (IRU)
- Mr. Stéphane Graber, Director General, International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA)
- Ms. Valentina Ferraro, Technical Attaché, World Customs Organization (WCO)
- Mr. Romain Hubert, Chief of Section, Transport of Dangerous Goods, ECE
- Mr. Pascal Delisle, EU Delegation to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva
- Mr. Mario Apostolov, Regional Adviser, Trade Division, ECE

5. Panellists discussed the potential benefits that the digitalization and electrification of trade documents can bring to the multimodal transport system. For instance, the impact of TIR and eTIR on high congestion and traffic and related emissions was highlighted. According to a study conducted by IRU, refrigerator trucks can save up to 1t kg/CO<sub>2</sub> per truck per journey and significantly reduce travel time. The speaker introduced the Green Compact Roadmap with its five pillars and its impact on the reduction of energy consumption, which can amount to a possible reduction of 28%. It was emphasized that a transition to eTIR can further amplify these benefits, as it can significantly contribute to reducing pre-border crossing and documentation processes.



6. Speakers highlighted that SPECA's digitalization roadmap also takes into account CMR and eCMR, and that WCO has implemented the Green Customs Action Plan around its three main pillars: greening Customs administrations, greening trade and innovation. It was emphasized that, while climate change is a risk factor for supply chains and the transport sector, new opportunities for businesses are also emerging. Speakers shared that initiatives are underway on the electronification of documents related to the transport of dangerous goods, which account for 4-5% of all transported goods. It was further highlighted that the EU Regulation on electronic freight transport information (eFTI) allows operators to use electronic means rather than paper documents, not only for road but also rail.

7. Speakers further highlighted the issue of fragmentation in digitization efforts and underscored the importance of creating synergies, while urging that data should be evaluated cautiously. In their presentations, speakers shared roadmaps for further digitalization in the transport sector and expressed excitement about future results.

8. ECE welcomed the discussions and emphasized that the Committee had just adopted the ITC Strategy on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Inland Transport, which touches on many of the issues referred to during the panel.

### **III. Panel II: Digital and Green Mobility**

9. Panel II aimed to draw a close link between the digitalization of the transport sector and its green credentials. Due to extensive negotiations during the ITC session and the resulting time constraints, the panel did not take place.

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