



Economic Commission for Europe**Inland Transport Committee****Working Party on Rail Transport****Seventy-eighth session**

Geneva, 13 (pm)–15 November 2024

Item 10 of the provisional agenda

Rail Security**Security of women on the railways****Note by the secretariat****I. Introduction and Mandate**

1. On 18–19 June 2024 a Special Session of the Working Party on Rail Transport was convened to address two areas of great importance to the railways, focused on vulnerable rail users, in collaboration with the International Union of Railways (UIC). Delegates were able to discuss and address the combatting of human trafficking on the railways and the security of women on the railways. At the end of the session, delegates agreed that, in addition to the report of the session (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/245, paragraph 34), a summary document would be prepared on the two subjects also highlighting possible ways forward based on the discussions at the session. This document covers those aspects related to the security of women on the railways.

II. Summary of proceedings

2. Session 3 of the special session discussed “Increasing the security of women in the rail environment”. The main themes addressed by the presenters included staff training, ensuring adequate representation of women in decision-making processes, redesigning railway stations to enhance visibility and accessibility, increased surveillance and assistance using modern technologies (mobile apps, QR codes, Closed Circuit Television (CCTVs)), implementing clear reporting mechanisms for harassment. Gender sensitive planning was noted as essential, considering that women have different needs and travel patterns for public transportation.

3. The UN Women highlighted that women are the ones at higher risk of experiencing violence and insecurity during the use of transportation services, while women often use public transportation longer, making multiple stops for care activities. They stressed the importance of ensuring women representation in all decision-making process and value chains within the transport sector, which are currently male dominated. The UN Women also emphasized the importance of the conditions of routes and the waiting places and the need to establish the social norms that ensure sexual assaults are not acceptable behaviour within communities and among individuals.

4. The representative of FGC presented their efforts to promote gender equality within the transport sector and to improve security of all users, especially vulnerable groups. Their initiatives include staff training, redesigning railway spaces, including halls, corridors, stairs and platform to enhance visibility and safety. They conduct public awareness campaigns advocating zero tolerance for sexual harassment, educate passengers and staff on identifying abuse and harassment situations, and equip individuals with effective response strategies.

5. The representative of SNCF adopts a client centred approach to improve railway experience, including waiting for the train, on train and after arrival. They conduct questionnaires to analyse user perceptions of insecurity and actual events of harassment, recognizing the importance of addressing both. The SNCF provides hotlines across all railway territories for 24/7 access, including via SMS. They established safe zones and developed a mobile app called UMay for navigating safe locations. The SNCF also stressed the importance of awareness campaigns and training.

6. The National Railways of Zimbabwe stressed that railway planning should be inclusive for everyone, considering the different needs and mobility patterns of all users. They have enhanced security with increased CCTV surveillance, monitoring, and designated women-only compartments and seating. Their initiatives include increasing the number of female officers, training staff, and encouraging the reporting of suspicious activities. Collaboration with women's organizations is crucial for providing tailored support for women, and they underscored the importance of policies and protocols to support victims.

7. The representative of UITP noted that women face greater challenges in using public transport, such as harassment and assaults, which result in reduced mobility, independence, economic disadvantages, and negative social effects. The UITP adopts a gender-based, holistic approach to improve infrastructure, decision-making processes, and company culture to empower women. UITP emphasized the importance of data collection and the use of technologies like CCTV, mobile apps, and real-time location tracking tools. Additionally, the significance of awareness-raising campaigns, educational programmes, and collaboration with local authorities and stakeholders was stressed.

8. The representative of EPF underscored the importance of raising awareness and education along with the careful design of stations to enhance safety. The importance of digital connectivity for immediate assistance and charging facilities for phones to ensure passengers stay connected was also stressed. Implementing appropriate legislation and providing clear guidance were also highlighted as crucial measures.

9. In the joint panel discussion and questions and answer segment that followed the presentations, delegates stressed again that collective efforts and shared responsibilities, among governments, police, private sectors, and legal frameworks are essential to enhance the security of women in the rail environment. They noted that, in addition to improving rail station environment, long-term approaches, such as education, public awareness campaigns, and improving safety measures, are crucial to building safe and secure transportation systems.

10. The Working Party welcomed the exchange of views on security of women in the railways. It asked that the secretariat, in discussion with UIC, to prepare a publication focusing on best practice guidelines on the security of women on the railways. The Working Party asked that those present at the meeting send any relevant inputs for this publication to the secretariat, or directly to UIC, by the end of September 2024. Following this, UNECE and UIC could proceed to prepare a document for publication on this subject.

III. Developing best practice guidelines and next steps

11. As identified in the previous section, a key output of the Special Session was a call from member States to prepare a publication focusing on best practice guidelines on the security of women on the railways. These guidelines are to be developed based on the information provided during the workshop, as well as information provided by stakeholders. At the time of writing this document, the deadline identified in paragraph 10 above had not been reached and an update on progress will be provided to the Working Party at its seventy-eighth session.

12. It is envisaged that a draft of the document would be prepared before the summer of 2025 to be shared for comment with SC.2 stakeholders and participants of the June 2024 workshop. The proposed outline for the document for consideration could be:

- Introduction: a scene setting section identifying the challenge and current problems;
- International experiences: a section identifying the actions and experiences in member States, sharing the experiences received from stakeholders;
- Recommendations: a section identifying common actions or investments that could be undertaken by member States, railway undertakings, infrastructure managers and other relevant stakeholders to increase the security of women on the railways.

13. The Working Party may wish to discuss this further and agree on a way forward.
