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Report of the Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics on its fifty-fifth session

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I. Attendance

1. The Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics held its fifty-fifth session on 6 and 7 November 2012 in Geneva.
2. The session of the Working Party was attended by the following countries: Austria; Belgium; Czech Republic; France; Germany; Netherlands; Poland; Slovakia; Switzerland and Turkey.
3. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: European Association for Forwarding, Transport, Logistics and Customs Services (CLECAT); European Intermodal Association (EIA); Groupement européen du transport combiné (GETC); International Bureau of Containers (BIC); International Union of Combined Road/Rail Transport Companies (UIRR). The European TK'Blue Agency, ETS Consulting and Plaske JSC participated upon invitation by the secretariat.
4. In accordance with the decision taken at its fifty-fourth session (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/129, para. 72), the session was chaired by Mr. M. Viardot (France).

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)¹

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.24/130

5. The Working Party adopted the provisional agenda prepared by the secretariat (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/130).

III. New developments and best practices in intermodal transport and logistics (agenda item 2)

A. Trends and performance in the intermodal transport and logistics industry

6. On the basis of presentations made by the representatives of UIRR, EIA and BIC, the Working Party had an exchange of views on recent developments and trends in intermodal transport and logistics in UNECE member countries.
7. On the basis of data provided by UIRR (the 18 UIRR companies carry out half of international intermodal road-rail transport operations in Europe), the Working Party noted that, intermodal road-rail transport had recorded, since the late 1990s and until 2008, an annual growth rates in the order of 6–7 per cent. Due to the financial and economic crisis, 2009 saw a dramatic decline in traffic in the order of 17 per cent while in 2010 traffic increased again by around 8 per cent. In 2011, unaccompanied (containers, swap bodies and semi-trailers) and accompanied transport (Rolling Road) continued to grow by 6 per cent amounting to total shipments in the order of 3.21 million consignments or 6.43 million TEU equivalents (5.58 million TEU for unaccompanied and 0.85 million TEU for accompanied traffic).² Thus, post-crisis levels had now again been attained in terms of shipments and even surpassed in terms of tonne-kilometers (for details see past reports,

¹ All documents and presentations made at the session are available on the following website: www.unece.org/trans/wp24/welcome.html.

² One consignment is equivalent to two twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU).

such as ECE/TRANS/WP.24/129, paras. 6–13; ECE/TRANS/WP.24/127, paras. 6–13; also www.unece.org/trans/wp24/wp24-trends/2012-10-03.html).

8. Unaccompanied traffic increased in 2011 by 8 per cent, whereas accompanied road-rail transport decreased by 5 per cent, mainly due to very important reductions in national traffic in Austria and Switzerland.

9. International intermodal road-rail traffic, two-third of which passes across the Alps, increased in 2011 by 10 per cent, amounting to 3.89 million TEU, whereas national traffic stagnated at 2.56 million TEU.

10. Ninety-four per cent of intermodal road-rail transport operations were carried out over distances of more than 300 km. The average distance for such traffic was 600 km. In international traffic the average distance went up to 900 km.

11. Intermodal road-rail traffic continued to grow in the first half of 2012. However, this upward trend was already slowing down in the second half of 2012 and the performance outlook is bleak as economic growth in Europe is negatively affected by the economic down-turn and the austerity measures taken in several European countries.

12. Another factor hampering intermodal transport is the increase in prices for rail haulage in spite of still unsatisfactory performance: Around 30 per cent of intermodal transport trains still arrive later than scheduled and more than 20 per cent are delayed by 3 to 24 hours. The traffic interruptions on the Brenner (rehabilitation) and Gotthard (rock slide) in summer 2012 did not seem to have a noticeable negative impact on intermodal transport services, except for accompanied transport (Rolling Road) that was severely hampered by the partial closure of the Brenner route.

13. The Working Party was also informed by the representative of EIA of a number of projects within the European Union that promote the exchange of best practices in freight transport, including an increase of load factors, identification and benchmarking of green transport corridors, investigation of the potential for new rail intermodal markets and identification of the possibilities to link airports to high-speed railway systems for passenger and cargo transport.

14. The representative of BIC reported that 2,304 container prefixes had been registered in the official register for container BIC codes. BIC has now also proposed concrete procedures for monitoring the compliance with the provisions for container safety as stipulated in the Convention for Safe Containers (CSC) of 1972.

15. The secretariat was requested to continue monitoring new developments and best practices in intermodal transport and logistics and report on new trends at its next session.

B. Activities of the European Commission in intermodal transport and logistics

16. In view of the absence of a representative from the European Commission (DG MOVE), no information could be provided.

C. Pan-European developments in intermodal transport and transport policies

Documentation: Informal document WP.24 No.1 (2012) Turkey

17. The representatives of Austria, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Slovakia and Turkey provided specific information on latest developments in intermodal transport in their

countries. In all these countries, intermodal road-rail transport had continued to recover in 2011 from the dramatic decline of traffic in 2009, but a decrease in traffic was expected for 2012 and possibly in 2013. In the Netherlands, ratification of the so-called “Rotterdam Rules” was underway.

18. The representative of Turkey presented an interim report on the development of intermodal transport, following publication in 2009 of a peer review on intermodal transport in Turkey undertaken by the International Transport Forum (ITF) with the assistance of the UNECE secretariat. A complete report, including also the results of a twinning project with the Ministry of Transport of Spain, will be presented at the next session of the Working Party.

D. Sustainable development and intermodal transport

Documentation: A/CONF.216/L.1, paras. 132–133

19. The Working Party was informed by the representative of the European TK’Blue Agency that this organization was the first rating agency set up to evaluate and monitor the environmental footprint of transport operations in logistics chains. TK’Blue was an industry initiative with the objective to promote the use of environmentally-friendly transport by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other externalities, such as noise.

20. The Working Party also took note of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio de Janeiro, 20–22 June 2012) which assigns a central role to transport and mobility in sustainable development and supports the development of energy efficient multi-modal transport systems (A/CONF.216/L.1, paras. 132–133).

21. The Working Party was informed that UNECE was the lead agency in a global United Nations project For Future Inland Transport Systems (ForFITS). Under this project, a tool was developed that would allow, in a transparent and uniform manner, monitoring and assessment of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions in inland transport, including a policy converter to facilitate climate change mitigation.

IV. National policy measures to promote intermodal transport (agenda item 3)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2012/6, ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2012/7, ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2012/8, ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2012/9, ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2012/10

22. In accordance with a decision of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee (ITC), the Working Party is continuing work of the former European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) in (a) monitoring and analysis of national measures to promote intermodal transport and (b) monitoring enforcement and review of the ECMT Consolidated Resolution on Combined Transport (ECE/TRANS/192, para. 90).

23. The Working Party welcomed the creation of a new UNECE website providing online information on 11 national policy measures to promote intermodal transport (<http://apps.unece.org/NatPolIWP24/>). Comparable and up-to-date information for 15 UNECE member countries was currently available in English (French and Russian versions are under preparation).

24. The Working Party reviewed the new UNECE website and invited countries to transmit updated information to the secretariat whenever appropriate. The secretariat was requested to transmit, at 3–4 year intervals, pre-filled questionnaires to UNECE member

countries to ensure a consistent, comparable and comprehensive picture of Governmental support measures for intermodal transport. The next survey should be undertaken in 2015.

V. Follow-up to the 2011 Theme: Role of terminals and logistics centres for intermodal transport (agenda item 4)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2011/3 and Add.1

25. The Working Party was informed that a technical visit to terminals and logistics centres as a follow-up to the 2011 theme had not been organized in May 2012 due to an insufficient number of participants. The Working Party felt, however, that the secretariat should continue to ensure the necessary guidance and moderation of these follow-up activities and report on results at its next session.

VI. 2012 Theme: Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS): Opportunities and challenges for intermodal transport (agenda item 5)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2012/1

26. On the basis of a secretariat document (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2012/1), the Working Party considered opportunities and challenges of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) for the organization and management of intermodal transport chains. ITS stands for information and communication technologies applicable within transport modes and for the interfaces between these modes, providing electronic information exchange between transport infrastructure, rolling stock, transport users and regulatory authorities.

27. The Working Party noted that intermodal transport chains are characterized by long and complex operations involving numerous actors with different interests and responsibilities depending on their contractual, operational or regulatory obligations. The different views and priorities for ITS applications in intermodal transport chains were exposed in presentations made by Mr. D. Vankemmel and Mr. M. Onder, UN/CEFACT Domain Coordinators, Transport and Logistics; Mr. F. Janin, ITS Task Force Manager, Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy (France); Mr. R. Frindik, MARLO Consultants; Mr. M. Burkhardt, Director General of UIRR and Ms. N. van der Jagt, Director General of CLECA..

28. Consensus existed on the key role of ITS for seamless and efficient intermodal transport operations, for the optimum use of existing and often already saturated transport infrastructure, including terminals, and for the achievement of high-levels of safety and security in intermodal transport chains.

29. Examples of ITS applications for intermodal transport, already extensively used in road and rail transport, were online tracking and tracing of cargo and intermodal loading units, just-in-time operations, measurement of emissions, paperless transport documents and so-called single-window operations including Customs declarations, transport permits, control of driving hours and roadworthiness checks.

30. Effective ITS solutions for intermodal transport require well-functioning and internationally acceptable data exchange systems that allow online access at affordable costs. It was noted that an effective framework for the development and maintenance of ITS, addressing the requirements of all stakeholders, would require nationally and internationally coordinated action at 5 different levels:

- Technical interoperability: Linkage of computer systems and services;
- Semantic interoperability: Correct and well-defined meaning of exchanged data and information understood by all involved systems;
- Organizational interoperability: Collaboration of different private and public stakeholders to arrive at mutually agreed processes and objectives in line with the “language of business” (i.e. completion and acceptance of a Customs declaration);
- Legal (contractual) interoperability: Development of the appropriate national and international legal framework to ensure that data in electronic information exchange systems are recognized as legally valid; and
- Political interoperability: Good governance in the development and application of electronic data exchange systems based on a shared vision and compatible priorities.

31. The Working Party took note of the multitude of government- and industry-driven ITS projects measuring the carbon footprint of transport and enhancing efficiency of transport chains and combined road-rail operations (such as COFRET, Greenfreight Europe, iCargo, E-Freight, e-rail Freight, CESAR). However, it was recognized that these initiatives had not yet overcome the patchwork of fragmented and proprietary systems and had strong uni-modal features.

32. It was recognized that, in particular, freight forwarders had an important role to play towards more transparent, clear and robust European or, even better, global ITS solutions for data exchange and data storage, preventing unauthorized use of sensitive commercial information by the many stakeholders in international transport chains. This was of particular importance for intermodal transport operations which often required the sharing of common ITS and electronic data interchange platforms among operators.

33. The Working Party agreed that Governments and regulatory authorities should provide good governance as well as the necessary political and legal framework conditions for affordable and secure ITS solutions as a key element for efficient trade and transport. In particular, they should endeavour to:

- Obtain, in the simplest possible way, all required information for monitoring compliance with regulations and for the exchange of information with other authorities for collaboration in security, environmental risk management, sustainable mobility, social regulations, etc.;
- Provide the necessary framework conditions for discrimination-free access to information by all parties involved in intermodal transport operations; and
- Oversee and foster a neutral governance process to allow transport and supply chain partners to keep their data exchange standards viable and effective.

34. Finally, the Working Party invited Mr. Vankemmel and the secretariat to follow up on these issues and to address in particular the following questions: How to overcome the gap between ITS research (UN/CEFACT) and its large-scale application? Who are the key drivers of ITS solutions in international transport chains, and why? How to surmount the patchwork of uni-modal and proprietary ITS solutions? What are the incentives to make this happen? The Working Party welcomed the offer of Belgium to host a workshop on these issues in the first half of 2013 focusing on concrete solutions towards seamless intermodal transport chains. A report on such follow-up activities should be submitted at the next session of the Working Party

VII. Selection of theme for substantive discussion in 2013 (agenda item 6)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/5

35. In line with its road map on future work and operation adopted by the Working Party in 2009 (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/5, ECE/TRANS/WP.24/125, para. 21) and following consideration of the previously discussed themes “Inland water transport” (2010), “Intermodal terminals” (2011) and “Intelligent transport systems” (2012), the Working Party decided to take up in 2013 the theme: “Weight and dimensions of intermodal transport units (containers, swap bodies and semi-trailers) in a pan-European context”. Other possible themes, such as city logistics and the role of freight forwarders in intermodal transport chains could be taken up in the following years.

36. The Working Party invited volunteers, assisted by the secretariat, to prepare a note on this theme for its October 2013 session that should contain issues for consideration and proposals for policy action by UNECE Governments.

VIII. European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC) (agenda item 7)

A. Status of the AGTC Agreement and adopted amendment proposals

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/88/Rev.6

37. The Working Party noted that, at present, the AGTC Agreement has 32 Contracting Parties.³ Detailed information on the AGTC Agreement, including the up-to-date and consolidated text of the Agreement (ECE/TRANS/88/Rev.5), a map of the AGTC network, an inventory of standards stipulated in the Agreements as well as all relevant Depositary Notifications are available on the website of the Working Party at www.unece.org/trans/wp24/welcome.html.

38. So far, eight amendments to the AGTC Agreement have come into force, the latest on 10 December 2009.

B. Amendment proposals (updating and extension of the AGTC network)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/4, ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/1

39. The Working Party recalled that, at its fifty-fourth session in 2011, the representatives of Contracting Parties present and voting had adopted amendment proposals to Annex I of the AGTC submitted by Kazakhstan (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/129, paras. 34–35 and annex). Awaiting the adoption of further amendment proposals, the secretariat had not yet transmitted these proposals to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his capacity as depositary of the AGTC Agreement.

³ Albania, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine.

40. The Working Party noted that no further information, as part of the required consultation process among concerned Contracting Parties, on the amendment proposals affecting Armenia, Georgia, Hungary and Turkmenistan (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/1) and Denmark, Germany and Sweden (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/4) had been received. Recalling its discussions on this subject at its fifty-second session (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/125, paras. 29–31), the Working Party decided to revert to this issue at its next session, as appropriate.

C. Amendment proposals (minimum infrastructure and performance standards)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2012/5; ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2010/2, ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2010/3

41. The Working Party recalled that, as indicated in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/2, several of the 15 countries that had responded to a secretariat survey on the relevance of the minimum infrastructure and performance standards and parameters in annexes III and IV to the AGTC Agreement, had felt that some of them might need to be reviewed and updated.

42. It also recalled that, based on secretariat documents (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2010/2, ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2010/3) the Working Party undertook in 2010 and 2011 a first review of possible new minimum infrastructure and performance standards and parameters for inclusion into annexes III and IV to the AGTC Agreement (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/129, paras. 37–41; ECE/TRANS/WP.24/127, paras. 37–42).

43. The Working Party reviewed once more the minimum infrastructure standards contained in the AGC and AGTC Agreements taking account of comments by the European Commission referring to the Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSI) applicable in the European Union (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2012/5).

44. The Working Parties confirmed its view on the applicability of the TSI for the AGTC Agreement as expressed during its last session (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/129, para. 40) and invited experts to prepare, in cooperation with the secretariat, appropriate amendment proposals to the AGTC Agreement, in close cooperation with the Working Party on Rail Transport.

IX. Protocol on Combined Transport on Inland Waterways to the AGTC Agreement (agenda item 8)

45. The Working Party recalled that the objective of the Protocol is to make container and ro-ro transport on inland waterways and costal routes in Europe more efficient and attractive to customers. The Protocol establishes a legal framework that lays down a coordinated plan for the development of intermodal transport services on pan-European inland waterways and coastal routes in line with those in the AGN Agreement, based on specific internationally agreed parameters and standards.

46. The Protocol identifies some 14,700 km of E waterways and transshipment terminals that are important for regular and international intermodal transport in Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland and Ukraine. The Protocol stipulates technical and operational minimum requirements of inland waterways and terminals in ports that are required for competitive container and ro-ro transport services.

A. Status of the Protocol

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/122, ECE/TRANS/122/Corr.1, ECE/TRANS/122/Corr.2

47. The Working Party noted that the Protocol had come into force on 29 October 2009 and had been signed by 15 countries. So far, 9 countries have acceded to the Protocol.⁴ Its text is contained in document ECE/TRANS/122 and Corrs.1 and 2.⁵ Detailed information on the Protocol, including the text of the Protocol and all relevant Depository Notifications are available on the website of the Working Party.⁶

48. The Working Party recalled that the ITC had encouraged concerned Contracting Parties to the AGTC Agreement to accede to the Protocol as soon as possible.

B. Amendment proposals

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2012/4, ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2010/6

49. The Working Party recalled that the ITC had requested the Working Party to consider and decide on amendment proposals to the Protocol that had been submitted earlier (ECE/TRANS/200, para. 93). It also recalled that, at its fifty-third session, it had considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2010/6 containing a consolidated list of amendment proposals submitted earlier by Austria, Bulgaria, France, Hungary and Romania as well as modifications to the Protocol proposed by the secretariat. So far, only an amendment proposal by Austria had been considered and accepted by the Working Party (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/127, para. 50).

50. The Working Party regretted that in spite of repeated requests, decisions on the amendment proposals contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2010/6 could not be taken as none of these parties had provided information on the status of their proposals. The secretariat was requested to contact once more all concerned countries. A decision on further steps would be taken at the next session.

51. On 12 October 2012, the Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3) had adopted a large number of amendment proposals to the AGN Agreement pertaining to inland waterways and inland navigation ports (ECETRANS/SC.3/2012/2). Already in June 2012, the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (SC.3/WP.3) had invited WP.24 to revise annexes I and II of the Protocol to bring them in line with the revised AGN Agreement (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/82, para. 10).

52. The Working Party took note of secretariat document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2012/4 showing the different lay-out of inland waterways and ports contained in the Protocol and in the AGN Agreement. In view of the different numbering systems, structures and denominations of inland waterways and ports in the two Agreements, alignment of the Protocol and the AGN Agreement would require considerable expertise and resources.

53. The Working Party was informed that the secretariat had now developed a new online database on main standards and parameters of the E waterway network (Blue Book

⁴ Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Romania, Serbia, Switzerland.

⁵ It should be noted that only the text kept in custody by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his capacity as depositary of the AGTC Agreement and its Protocol, constitutes the authoritative text of the Agreement.

⁶ www.unece.org/trans/wp24/welcome.html.

database)⁷ that, with its highly disaggregated data, might facilitate alignment of the two Agreements. The secretariat was requested to explore these new possibilities and to inform the Working Party at its next session on progress made.

X. Revision of the IMO/ILO/UNECE Guidelines for packing of cargo in intermodal transport units (cargo transport units) (agenda item 9)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2012/2, ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2011/5

54. The Working Party recalled that it had finalized in 1996, in cooperation with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), international guidelines for the safe packing of cargo in freight containers and vehicles covering also the requirements of land transport modes (TRANS/WP.24/R.83 and Add.1). The guidelines were to be updated and supplemented by additional elements, such as provisions on fumigation (TRANS/WP.24/71, paras. 32–36). In 1997, ITC had approved these guidelines and had expressed the hope that these guidelines would help reduce personnel injury while handling containers and would minimize physical hazard to which cargoes were exposed in intermodal transport operations (ECE/TRANS/119, paras. 124–126).

55. In March 2009, the Working Party agreed to contribute to a review and update of the guidelines initiated by IMO. It requested the secretariat to coordinate with ILO and IMO and to report back on any new developments and procedures (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/123, paras. 45–47). In November 2011, the Working Party adopted the terms of reference of a Group of Experts on this subject (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2011/5) and endorsed the proposal to elevate the guidelines to a non-mandatory code of practice.

56. Based on secretariat document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2012/2 and a report by ETS Consultants, the Working Party noted that a first draft code of practice had been nearly completed by the Group of Experts and would be submitted in early 2013 for a first review by the relevant bodies of IMO, ILO and UNECE. It was planned to have the final code of practice endorsed and published in 2014.

57. The Working Party welcomed the progress made in carrying out these complex activities and felt that the code of practice, while of a non-mandatory nature, would assist the industry to train staff in the safe stowage of cargo in containers, provide a global reference base for cargo insurance contracts and would assist Governments in enacting regulations, if necessary, based on best practices and internationally agreed technical provisions.

58. The Working Party requested the secretariat to make, to the extent possible, the draft code of practice available in all three UNECE working languages for decision at its forthcoming session in 2013.

59. More detailed information on the activities of the Group of Experts is available at: www.unece.org/trans/wp24/guidelinespackingctus/session_3.html.

⁷ www.unece.org/trans/main/sc3/bluebook_database.html.

XI. Weights and dimensions of loading units in intermodal transport (agenda item 10)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2012/3

60. The Working Party recalled the considerations at its previous sessions on the impact of “mega-trucks” with a maximum length of 25.5 m and weights of up to 60 tonnes on the European road network and on intermodal transport. It also recalled the various secretariat documents that provided an overview of the policy discussions and trials with such long and heavy vehicles in several UNECE member countries in 2008, 2010 and 2011 (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/8, ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2010/5, ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2011/6).

61. Based on a latest update of new developments in this field prepared by the secretariat (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2012/3) and on presentations made by GETC and EIA, the Working Party continued its exchange of information on the optimal size of intermodal transport units able to be carried without restrictions on the European road, rail and inland water networks. It took note of suggestions made by GETC that a length of 53 ft (16.15 m), corresponding to the dimensions of certain maritime containers utilized mainly in trans-Pacific trade, could be an optimal length for European intermodal transport units.

62. The Working Party also noted that, within the European Union, Council Directives 96/53/EC (maximum weight and dimensions of road vehicles) and 97/27/EC (masses and dimensions of motor vehicles and their trailers – type approval) were under review and could possibly lead to greater permissible width and lengths of road motor vehicles and vehicle combinations.

63. The secretariat was requested to continue monitoring this matter and to report new developments at its next session (see also para. 35 above).

XII. Activities of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee and its subsidiary bodies (agenda item 11)

64. The Working Party was informed about current activities within UNECE relating to intermodal transport and logistics, in particular within the:

- Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5): Progress made on Euro-Asian transport links (EATL) and the impact of climate change on transport networks (ECE/TRANS/WP.5/52) – www.unece.org/trans/main/wp5/wp5.html;
- Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2): Work towards unified railway law in the pan-European region (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/217) – www.unece.org/trans/main/sc2/sc2.html;
- Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3): Further development of the European inland waterway network and harmonization of professional requirements in inland navigation in a pan-European context (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/193) – www.unece.org/trans/main/sc3/sc3.html.

XIII. Election of officers (agenda item 12)

65. On being informed that Mr. M. Viardot (France) would no longer be able to chair its sessions, the Working Party elected its present Vice-Chair Mr. H. Maillard (Belgium) as Chair of the Working Party for its session in 2013.

66. The Working Party expressed its sincere appreciation to Mr. Viardot for having chaired its sessions since 2003 in a most constructive and effective manner.

XIV. Date and venue of next sessions (agenda item 13)

67. The secretariat has tentatively scheduled the fifty-sixth session to be held on 21 and 22 October 2013 at the Palais des Nations (Geneva). This session would be held back-to-back with that of the Working Party on Rail Transport (23-25 October 2013).

68. The informal group of experts preparing the WP.24 themes is scheduled to hold two sessions in 2013 with the objective to follow up on the considerations of the 2012 theme and to prepare the 2013 theme.

(a) Follow-up to 2012 theme: Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS): Opportunities and challenges for intermodal transport

Tentative date: April/May 2013

Tentative venue: Brussels (see para. 34)

(b) Preparation of the 2013 theme: Weight and dimensions of intermodal transport units (containers, swap bodies and semi-trailers) in a pan-European context

Tentative date: June/July 2013

Tentative venue: to be decided.

69. Experts willing to participate in these informal expert groups are invited to contact the secretariat.

XV. Other business (agenda item 13 bis)

70. The Working Party noted that Mr. Chr. Seidelmann (Germany) would retire and, after more than 30 years, would no longer participate in the sessions of the Working Party. The Working Party thanked Mr. Seidelmann for his dedication and his many contributions to the cause of combined and intermodal transport in Europe.

XVI. Summary of decisions (agenda item 14)

71. As agreed and in line with the decision of the ITC (ECE/TRANS/156, para. 6), the secretariat, in cooperation with the Chair and in consultation with delegates, has prepared this report for transmission to the ITC at its forthcoming session (26–28 February 2013).
