

Thank you,

Mr Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

It is a great pleasure for me, as chair of the UNECE Working Party 5 on Transport Trends and Economics, to welcome you all at this virtual meeting of the 'Informal Multidisciplinary Advisory Group on Transport Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis'.

This crisis turns out to be a challenge for all stakeholders in the transport chain: from manufacturer till consumer. It may affect the demand for transport -both persons and goods-, but also influence logistics and modal split on the short and long term.

Therefore, I am happy to see that such a great number of participants is joining the meeting and that they are from different backgrounds, including from transport, customs and health. So we can truly speak of a multidisciplinary meeting.

As you may have read from the invitation, the purpose of this meeting is

To take stock of the challenges, experienced by the inland transport sector, in view of the current pandemic;

To discuss possible issues in scaling-up cross-border traffic; and last but not least

To exchange views on possible recommendations, to increase transport authorities' preparedness for, and resilience to, future outbreaks.

The results of this meeting will feed into the preparations of a working document, which will be discussed at the forthcoming session of Working Party 5, which will be held in Geneva, from 7-9 September 2020. The working document will be presented to the Inland Transport Committee, at its 83rd annual session in 2021.

I hope that the COVID pandemic will be lowered enough in September, to allow us to organize the upcoming session of Working Party 5 in a physical setting in Geneva, in a safe manner. I am looking forward to that, and I hope to meet you all at that occasion.

Dear delegates, our time today is short and I will take no more of it. I wish you all a very interesting and informative meeting, and I will hand back now to the chair.

Thank you.