



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
9 December 2021

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Eighty-fourth session

Geneva, 22-25 February 2022

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

**Seventy-five years of the Inland Transport Committee:
Connecting countries and driving sustainable mobility**

Concept note and draft programme of the Ministerial Meeting of the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Inland Transport Committee (Geneva, 22 February 2022)

“75 Years of Inland Transport Committee: Connecting Countries and Driving Sustainable Mobility”

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The Inland Transport Committee was founded in 1947, so its 84th session in 2022 will mark its 75th anniversary. This document outlines the concept and main themes for the panels of the Ministerial Meeting on *75 Years of ITC: Connecting Countries and Driving Sustainable Mobility*. This document also contains information on planned activities. The Bureau of the Inland Transport Committee, at its June 2021 meeting, agreed on the broad themes of the panels of the ministerial meeting. The ministerial meeting is planned to conclude with the adoption / signing of the Ministerial Resolution on “Ushering in a decade of delivery for sustainable inland transport and sustainable development”, to recognise and validate the long-standing work and accomplishments of the ITC and its role in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.



I. Background

1. The Inland Transport Committee (ITC) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) was founded in 1947, so its eighty-fourth annual session (22-25 February 2021) will mark its seventy-fifth anniversary. In the last 75 years, the ITC and its subsidiary bodies provided an intergovernmental forum for Member States to forge tools for economic cooperation and negotiate and adopt international legal instruments on inland transport. Due to unique historical circumstances, ECE/ITC is the custodian of both global and regional transport conventions that form the basis of regulatory governance for sustainable inland transport and mobility. More than half of the Conventions serviced by the Committee have Contracting Parties that are non-ECE member States. In fact, of the 193 United Nations Member States, 151 States (78 per cent) are Contracting Parties to at least one legal instrument on inland transport, in addition to two Permanent Observers and one non-State Contracting Party. These legal instruments are considered indispensable for developing efficient, harmonized and integrated, safe and sustainable inland transport systems.
2. The time is right to reflect on how the work and responsibilities of the Committee evolved over time and what its future trajectory will be.

II. Ministerial session: 75 Years of ITC: Connecting Countries and Driving Sustainable Mobility

3. Building on recommendations by the ITC and Bureau debates, the Ministerial Session's theme will be on 75 Years of ITC: Connecting Countries and Driving Sustainable Mobility. This theme will create space for reflection of the Committee's past achievements, current performance and future trajectory, highlighting its evolution and underlying its future potential.
4. The draft programme of the Ministerial Meeting, which will be held with simultaneous interpretation in the six official UN languages (A/C/E/F/R/S) on Tuesday, 22 February 2022 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.,¹ includes:
 - (a) Opening statements and launch of Anniversary Publication *75 Years of Inland Transport Committee – 75 Documents that Changed the World of Transport*;
 - (b) A ministerial keynote speech by the host country on the past achievements of ITC and the future role of inland transport and the ITC for sustainable mobility and sustainable development;
 - (c) Three consecutive moderated panel debates with 4 speakers and a discussant each, followed by limited scheduled interventions and Q&A from the floor;
 - (d) At the end of the day, signing of a ministerial resolution on "Ushering in a decade of delivery for sustainable inland transport and sustainable development".

A. Opening, launch of 75th Anniversary publication and ministerial keynote speeches

5. The traditional opening statements will be followed by the official launch of the Anniversary Publication *75 Years of ITC – 75 Documents that Changed the World of Transport*. This publication provides a coherent narrative and "deep dive" into key moments of the history of the Committee, from its establishment in 1947, including the key legal instruments that paved the way for sustainable inland transport systems and transformed the world of transport.
6. After the opening statements and launch of the anniversary publication, a ministerial keynote speech by the host country and a keynote by the United Nations Secretary General (tbc) will follow. The keynote speeches will take stock of the Committee's long history of

¹ Subject to restoring of standard operations by UNOG's Conference Management Services.

achievement, before considering the challenges and uncertainties of the fast-paced and often unpredictable strategic environment within which Governments need to find lasting, sustainable solutions. Within this environment, the keynote speeches will also place an emphasis on the strategic role of the Committee in providing a reliable, time-tested and comprehensive cooperation platform to forge concerted solutions and enhance international collaboration. Based on the Committee's achievements in the past 75 years, what role should the ITC play in the 2030 Agenda and horizon?

B. Ministerial panels

7. Three panel debates will follow with themes on critical cross-cutting issues of direct relevance to the debate on the future of sustainable mobility and the role of inland transport and the ITC and its subsidiary bodies in achieving sustainable development. The panel themes are:

- (a) Panel I: ITC – The United Nations Platform to promote inland transport connectivity;
- (b) Panel II: ITC – Achieving a decade of delivery for Road Safety;
- (c) Panel III: ITC – Inland transport as a catalyst of sustainable mobility and sustainable development

1. Panel I: ITC – The United Nations Platform to promote inland transport connectivity

8. When in 2019 the Committee adopted its Strategy until 2030, which identified connectivity as one of the four pillars of its role as the UN platform for inland transport, nobody could have foreseen the centre stage connectivity would take in the next two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The unprecedented for peace time experience of disruptions and recovery efforts, further reinforced the importance of inland transport as a key economic sector that provides access to markets and supply chains for exports and imports. As such, it is essential for economic growth, for alleviating poverty and overall for promoting sustainable development.

9. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 challenged all existing international frameworks involving international transport, showcasing in unequivocal terms the critical role of robust and resilient connectivity, especially in hard times. But long before the pandemic, another process disrupting seamless connectivity has been unfolding: in its 2019 special report Climate Change and Land, IPCC noted the disruptive effect of extreme weather events on food supply chain infrastructure. Flooding, earthquakes, road damage due to heatwaves and other weather events have been increasingly disrupting important transit routes. Challenges of this type are particularly important for developed and developing countries alike.

10. This ministerial panel will revisit through the shorter-term prism of the pandemic but also the longer-term trends impacting international connectivity, the continued and increasingly urgent need to improve international connectivity both through (a) “hard”, smart and resilient transport infrastructure and (b) “soft” border-crossing facilitation/digitalization innovations. The focus of the panels will be on key aspects of innovation, infrastructure efficiency, facilitated connectivity, environmental sustainability and resilience that relate to the role of the ITC as custodian of related legal instruments.

11. Since its establishment in 1947, the ITC has played a pioneering role in facilitating the international movement of persons and goods by inland transport modes and improving the competitiveness of their economies. This has been achieved primarily through the development, maintenance and implementation of international legal instruments that promote the development of coherent international infrastructure networks, the construction of sound transport infrastructure and reliable services, uniform and simplified border-crossing procedures and standardized rules and regulations for ensuring a high level of efficiency, safety and environmental performance of inland transport. Projects such as the Trans-European North-South Motorways (TEM), the Trans-European Railways (TER) and the Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) aim to enable economies of member countries,

businesses and people, to better integrate into the global economy and to benefit from changing economic conditions and opportunities. Furthermore, in keeping with the long-term needs of the transport industry but also the short-term imperatives triggered by the pandemic, the Committee is spearheading the computerization of customs procedures thus increasing the speed, quality and efficiency of transport across borders.

2. Panel II: ITC – Achieving a decade of delivery for Road Safety

12. Despite strong and consistent efforts by Member States, the international community was not able to achieve by 2020 target 3.6 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals on road safety to halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents. In response, there were three milestones in 2020 and one in 2021 for the global community's and United Nations' efforts to recognize the shortcomings and address this challenge, namely: the third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety (Stockholm, 19–20 February 2020); the adoption by ITC at its 82nd session (Geneva, 25–28 February 2020), effective 1 April 2020, of the ITC Recommendations on Enhancing National Road Safety Systems; the adoption by General Assembly on 31 August 2020 of Resolution 74/299 on "Improving global road safety", inaugurating the second Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030; and the launch in 2021 of a Global Plan for the Decade of Action. The launch of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030 set the ambitious target of preventing at least 50 per cent of road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030. To realize this vision, ECE partnered with WHO and its sister UN Regional Commissions to develop the Global Plan for the Decade of Action.

13. All four milestones recognize the unique and critical role of ECE and ITC in the global efforts to improve road safety in a sustainable manner.

14. This ministerial panel will ask a question that is among the top policy priorities for governments around the world: how can we turn the second decade of action into a decade of delivery for Road Safety? How can ITC best contribute to this noble goal?

15. The Inland Transport Committee has a 360-degree approach to road safety. First and foremost, it has a unique role globally as custodian of United Nations road safety conventions. There are eight key legal instruments under five categories: traffic rules, road signs, vehicle regulations, the transport of dangerous goods, and professional driver fatigue. Seven of them are named in General Assembly Resolution 74/299 on "Improving global road safety". General Assembly resolutions over the years have consistently encouraged United Nations Member States to accede to all core United Nations road safety legal instruments, and beyond accession, to implement and apply their provisions or safety regulations.

16. ITC subsidiary bodies include the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety (WP.1), the World Forum for the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29), the Working Party on Road Transport (SC.1) and the Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (WP.15). These bodies administer and keep the UN road safety conventions up to date.

17. The ITC Strategy until 2030 mandated the Committee to support contracting parties in developing, improving and sustaining their national road safety systems. In response to this mandate, the Committee adopted in 2020 the ITC Recommendations on Enhancing National Road Safety Systems, that help contracting parties to systematically develop their national road safety systems, following the safe system approach.

3. Panel III: ITC – Inland transport as a catalyst of sustainable mobility and sustainable development

18. Seven years after the signing of the Paris Climate Agreement and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations General Assembly, climate change and environmental challenges remain a global challenge whose negative impacts — from compromised infrastructures, to undermined access and connectivity, to road safety and beyond — can be felt in every region in the world.

19. Inland transport, in particular road transport, contributes to, and is disrupted by, climate change caused in part by the sector's significant carbon footprint. The process of making transport more environmentally friendly and energy efficient, therefore, can lead to

significant reductions on the sector's carbon emissions, thereby mitigating the more pernicious effects of climate change and reducing the likelihood of climate change-related transport disruptions.

20. Furthermore, despite the fact that emissions of air pollutants from transport have generally declined over the past two decades, due to significantly more stringent vehicle regulations that resulted from the work of Committee and its subsidiary bodies, the problem persists and more needs to be done. The 2030 Agenda's urgent call for action on air pollution, comes as no surprise.

21. This Ministerial panel will ask the hard questions: How can inland transport be turned into a catalyst of sustainable mobility and sustainable development? What role can ITC play in achieving this? To answer these questions, this panel will explore the topic of climate change and the necessity of reducing local emissions in the transport sector. It will also discuss the unique problems that climate change causes for transport systems and will debate adaptations that are necessary to confront this global issue. What are the best practices of reducing emissions in the transport sector? What can be learned from the examples of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) in the cases of the other two pillars of international transport, namely civil aviation and maritime transport? How can ITC promote or develop the use of alternative fuels or modes of transport? What adaptations are necessary to deal with transport disruptions due to extreme weather events and how can those responses be sensitive to differences in geography, resources and the needs of the people and places impacted? Furthermore, the panel will focus on the innovations needed to address efficiently environmental and climate challenges. It will explore policy responses to technological changes and the conditions for creating an environment open to innovations, as well as how ITC can provide international regulatory support to help move faster towards greener forms of transport not only on roads, but also in other inland modes, increased use of automated driving and autonomous vehicles and their impact on road safety; intelligent transport systems and the growing use of information and communication technologies.

22. Since its creation in 1947, the Inland Transport Committee has provided a framework for intergovernmental cooperation and concerted action in order to facilitate international transport while improving its sustainability and environmental performance. Nowhere are the main results of this work reflected better than in the 59 United Nations transport agreements and conventions under the purview of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies which provide the international policy, legal and technical platform for the development of international road, rail, inland waterway and combined transport. The work of the Conventions is complemented by policy tools such as ForFITS (For Future Inland Transport Systems) that is capable of assisting countries in making informed choices between available Transport policy options and measures, on the basis of their impact on CO₂ emissions reductions.

23. At the eighty-first session of ITC in 2019, the Committee adopted its strategy until 2030, a strategy for sustainable inland transport and mobility, which expanded the scope of work of ITC and established it as the United Nations platform for inland transport, performing functions comparable to ICAO or IMO. This strategy, organized in four pillars, is meant to harmonize inland transport in order to advance sustainable transport and mobility, and represents a real opportunity to impact transport systems worldwide.

24. The goal of this panel debate is to offer different perspectives and vision by top policymakers around the world on the role of the international institutional and regulatory frameworks in improving the national and international governance of inland transport, while contributing to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda, and the implementation of the Paris Agreement. It will offer a space to interrogate the role of ITC as the UN platform to cooperate on issues of climate change and environment in inland transport. How can the Committee facilitate the accession to legal instruments that promote sustainability? How can the Committee support the development of regulations that can keep pace with technical innovations or with new information? How can ITC be sensitive to the needs of developing countries or of regions that are affected differently by climate change?

C. Ministerial resolution

25. At the end of the day, the debates will be followed by the adoption and signing by Ministers and other Heads of Delegations of a ministerial resolution on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Committee on “Ushering in a decade of delivery for sustainable inland transport and sustainable development”.

III. Scheduled high-level side events

A. Award ceremony of the Global Road Safety Film Festival (21 and 22 February 2022)

26. The Global Road Safety Film Festival will take place in the Palais des Nations, in conjunction with the Committee’s Anniversary session. The Festival will be organized by the Laser International Foundation, in partnership with the UN Road Safety Fund and will contribute to raising awareness and promoting the visibility of the work of the Committee on road safety to specialized and general audiences. The award ceremony for the best films will take place during the Ministerial lunch on 22 February 2022.

B. Side Event on Automation, Connectivity and E-Mobility (21 February 2022)

27. ECE, together with Austria and other countries will organize a high-level side event in the margins of the Anniversary session of the Inland Transport Committee. The topic of the Side Event will be “Automation, Connectivity and E-Mobility”. The event intends to raise the profile of the work within ECE on the new frameworks and regulations for automated/autonomous vehicles and their safe use in traffic.

C. Side Event on used cars (24 February 2022)

28. A high-level side event will be organized by ECE together with UNEP to explore the advantages and challenges of ensuring access for low- and middle-income countries to safer and cleaner used vehicles that contribute to the sustainable development of countries and cities around the world. The side event will build on lessons learned from a successful United Nations Road Safety Fund project on used cars jointly implemented by UNEP and ECE. The main benefits of safer, cleaner and more energy efficient used vehicles are improved road safety, reduced emissions (climate and air quality), improved fuel consumption, and costs savings (healthcare, rescue services, vehicle maintenance, fuel consumption, etc.). The side event will contribute to a better understanding of the role of used vehicles in meeting national, regional and global goals, including those stemming from the Sustainable Development Goals, the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030 and its Global Plan of Action, and the Paris Climate Agreement.

D. Side Event on Euro-Asian transport links (23 February 2022)

29. A high-level side event will be organized by ECE, together with the Russian Federation and other countries during the eighty-fourth session of the Inland Transport Committee. The side event will take stock of progress achieved through the Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) project and explore ways to enhance Euro-Asian transport connectivity in the future.

Annex I

Draft weekly programme (21–25 February 2022)

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|---|---|
| Monday 21 February | 3–6 p.m. | ITC Bureau meeting | Side event 1: Global Road Safety Film Festival |
| | | | Side event 2: Automation, Connectivity and E-mobility |
| Tuesday 22 February | 10 a.m.–1 p.m. | ITC Ministerial (A/C/E/F/R/S) | |
| | 1–3 p.m. | Award ceremony of Global Road Safety Film Festival | Lunch break |
| | 3–6 p.m. | ITC Ministerial (cont'd) (A/C/E/F/R/S) | |
| | 6–8 p.m. | Cocktail/Reception (Palais des Nations) | |
| Wednesday 23 February | 10 a.m.–11 a.m. | ITC Annual Session - Restricted session* (*Government representatives only) (E/F/R) | |
| | 11 a.m.–1 p.m. | ITC Annual Session Regular session (E/F/R) | |
| | 1–3 p.m. | Side event 3: Used Cars side event | |
| | 3–6 p.m. | ITC Annual Session Regular session (Cont'd) (E/F/R) | |
| Thursday 24 February | 10 a.m.–1 p.m. | ITC Annual Session Regular session (Cont'd) (E/F/R) | |
| | 1–3 p.m. | Side event 4: Euro-Asian transport links | |
| | 3–6 p.m. | ITC Annual Session Regular session (Cont'd) (E/F/R) | |
| Friday 25 February | 10 a.m.–1 p.m. | ITC Roundtable: On the road to sustained and full recovery: Post-COVID-19 initiative for inland transport and the role of the Committee (E/F/R) | |
| | 1–3 p.m. | Break | |
| | 3–6 p.m. | ITC Bureau meeting | |

Annex II

Draft Programme

Ministerial segment (A/C/E/F/R/S)

“Seventy-five years of ITC: connecting countries and driving sustainable mobility”

22 February 2022, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Palais des Nations, Geneva

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| 10–10.30 a.m. | Opening statements and official launch of 75th ITC Anniversary publication |
| 10.30–10.55 a.m. | Keynote speech 1: Ministerial keynote by host country |
| 10.55–11.20 a.m. | Keynote speech 2 (tbc) |
| 11.20–11.50 a.m. | <i>Coffee Break</i> |
| 11.50 a.m.–1 p.m. | Panel I: ITC – The United Nations Platform to promote inland transport connectivity <i>Discussion and scheduled interventions (3' each max; 5' for Ministers)</i> |
| 1–3 p.m. | Lunch break and Award ceremony of the Global Road Safety Film Festival |
| 3–4.15 p.m. | Panel II: ITC – Achieving a decade of delivery for Road Safety <i>Discussion and scheduled interventions (3' each max; 5' for Ministers)</i> |
| 4.15 – 4.45 p.m. | <i>Coffee Break</i> |
| 4.45 – 5.45 p.m. | Panel III: ITC – Inland transport as a catalyst of sustainable mobility and sustainable development <i>Discussion and scheduled interventions (3' each max; 5' for Ministers)</i> |
| 5.45 p.m.–6 p.m. | Signing ceremony of ITC Ministerial Resolution and closing statements |
| 6–8 p.m. | Reception to mark the 75 th anniversary of the Inland Transport Committee |
