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

Geneva, 20-23 February 2024

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

**Theme: Taking ambitious climate action -
Moving towards decarbonized inland transport
by 2050****Concept Note of the High-level Segment “Taking ambitious
climate action – Moving towards decarbonized inland
transport by 2050”****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

This document outlines the concept and main themes of the high-level segment organized around taking ambitious climate action – Moving towards decarbonized inland transport by 2050. This document also contains information on planned activities. The Bureau of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC), at its June 2023 meeting, agreed that the themes of the panels of the first day of the eighty-sixth session of the Committee would focus on this topic. The high-level segment will conclude with the endorsement of the High-level Statement of Support to the adoption of the ITC Strategy on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Inland Transport (ECE/TRANS/2024/2) by Ministers and Heads of Delegation of United Nations Member States attending the eighty-sixth session of the Committee.

I. Background and Policy Context

1. At the twenty-seventh meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) (CoP-27, Sharm-el-Sheik, Egypt, 6–20 November 2022), the Parties re-affirmed their commitment under the Paris Agreement¹ of pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above and holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing the need to reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.² They resolved to implement “ambitious, just, equitable and inclusive transitions to low-emission and climate-resilient development,” acknowledging that limiting global warming to 1.5°C requires rapid, deep and sustained reductions in Global Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions of 43 per cent by 2030 relative to the 2019 level.

2. The United Nations Secretary-General has made achieving net zero by 2050 the world’s most urgent mission, having called before the twenty-sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC in Glasgow (CoP-26, 31 October–13 November 2021) on “every country, city, financial institution and company to adopt plans for net zero”, to cut global emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 compared with 2010 levels.³

3. Tragically, the ambitions declared by Member States within the framework of the UNFCCC are in stark contrast to current realities and trajectories. In 2019, inland transport accounted for 72 per cent of global transport GHG emissions, with 69 per cent originating from road transport, 2 per cent from inland shipping and 1 per cent from rail.⁴ The International Transport Forum (ITF) predicts that passenger demand will increase by 79 per cent by 2050 compared to 2019, while freight demand will roughly double under the current trajectory.⁵

4. While there has been an increased commitment to transport decarbonization over the years and most countries mention transport in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, few draw on the full range of available solutions, and less than a fifth specify quantitative targets for transport. For instance, 84 per cent of the 192 signatory countries of the Paris Agreement include transport measures in their NDCs, but only 18 per cent of the NDCs set concrete CO₂ emission reduction targets.⁶ Most NDCs do not specify measures to avoid unnecessary travel by carbon-intensive modes of transport, shift to low-carbon modes of transport such as public transport or cycling and improve vehicle technology, particularly through electrification or fuel efficiency. NDCs prioritize “Improve” over “Avoid-Shift” solutions, and within the “Improve” category, only a small share address electrification and rarely mention freight. Furthermore, the NDCs do not sufficiently link transport to national policies and strategies, align with national transport plans or strategies, enable local and national city planning policies, and work with other sectors such as health and urban development.⁷

5. Several ECE and other United Nations Member States have set aspirational national visions and targets on GHG emission reductions in the transport sector through the introduction of low and zero emission vehicles and fuels (biofuels, hydrogen, and e-fuels). However, ITF predicts that, even if current policies and commitments are implemented which

¹ Adopted by 196 Parties at UNFCCC CoP-21 in 2015.

² Sharm-El-Sheik implementation plan, para. 7, available from: [CMA4_AUV_TEMPLATE \(unfccc.int\)](#).

³ See [Carbon neutrality by 2050: the world’s most urgent mission | United Nations Secretary-General](#).

⁴ Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2022), Working Group III, Chapter 2.4.2.4, Figure 2.20, p. 252, available from: https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6/wg3/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_Full_Report.pdf

⁵ ITF (2023), ITF Transport Outlook 2023, Chapter 2, p. 65, OECD Publishing, Paris, accessible at: [ITF Transport Outlook 2023 | ITF Transport Outlook | OECD iLibrary \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#)

⁶ [Transport Climate Action Directory maintained by the ITF \(itf-oecd.org\)](#).

⁷ See https://climatepromise.undp.org/sites/default/files/research_report_document/enhancing-ndcs-opportunities-transport.pdf.

will eventually lead to transport CO₂ emissions falling slightly by 2050, it will not sufficiently reduce the transport sector's CO₂ emissions to deliver against the Paris Agreement goals.⁸

6. The Committee can play a key role in bringing to the forefront Member States taking ambitious climate action and discussing necessary policy, regulatory and institutional approaches to move towards a large scale of decarbonization by 2050, the necessary means and partnerships, as such, inspiring the taking of more ambitious action by others. For 77 years, the Inland Transport Committee has provided a framework for intergovernmental cooperation and concerted action to facilitate international transport while improving its sustainability and environmental performance. The main results of this work are reflected in the 60 United Nations inland transport legal instruments 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.

7. At the eighty-first session of the Committee in 2019, the Committee adopted its Strategy until 2030, establishing it as the United Nations platform for inland transport, performing functions comparable to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Both ICAO and IMO have set specific goals and adopted strategies or specific measures for the reduction of CO₂ emissions from civil aviation and maritime transport respectively. The time is ripe for the inland transport sector to follow suit.

8. At its eighty-fifth annual session, ITC expressed its concern for the worsening situation globally due to the increasing frequency and severity of impacts from climate change and recognized the urgent need for inland transport to become part of the solution's mix. The Committee requested the secretariat, in close cooperation with the ITC Bureau and relevant subsidiary bodies, to develop an ambitious strategy document for reducing GHG emissions in inland transport (the ITC Strategy for Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Inland Transport (ECE/TRANS/2024/2)) (ECE/TRANS/328, paragraphs 58 and 60 (a)).

9. The Committee also requested the secretariat to align its work programme to the Ministerial Declaration "Harnessing the full potential of inland transport solutions in the global fight against climate change", which was endorsed by the Committee at its eighty-fifth session and to accord priority to its implementation (ECE/TRANS/328, paragraph 60 (h)). By endorsing the Ministerial Declaration, 29 Ministers and other Heads of Delegations also declared their "steadfast support for the goals and objectives of the 2030 Agenda and, inter alia, the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, to deliver on our climate change solutions and to accelerate the transition to decarbonized mobility and net zero or low emissions in the inland transport sector", "fully supporting efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degree C above pre-industrial level," with a "grave concern on the continued rise of GHG emissions in the transport sector."

10. ITC will "maintain regular high-level policy dialogues at future Committee sessions on new targets, strategies, plans, challenges and solutions aimed at reducing GHG emissions in the inland transport sector to ensure that the Committee addresses this topic in a systematic way," as called for by the above-mentioned Ministerial Declaration. Among others, member States will be able to discuss opportunities to enhance NDCs via transport: accelerating electrification while addressing fuel economy; strengthening "avoid and shift" measures that support travel by low-carbon modes; and seizing new opportunities to address freight emissions via electrification.

11. The high-level policy segment of the eighty-sixth plenary session of ITC can potentially capitalize on the important mandates and ITC decisions generated at the Committee's eighty-fifth session to help turn aspirational visions and targets into concrete action and outcomes. This theme aims to address the hard questions: How can inland transport be turned into a catalyst of climate change mitigation? What ambitious actions are needed and what role can ITC as the United Nations platform for inland transport play in

⁸ ITF (2023).

achieving this? To answer these questions, the panels will explore the topic of climate change and the necessity of reducing GHG emissions in the inland transport sector.

12. Furthermore, the panels will focus on the technological, financial and regulatory innovations needed to efficiently address challenges arising from climate change. They will explore policy responses to technological changes and the conditions for creating an open and enabling environment for innovations. The panels will also explore how the Committee and its subsidiary bodies can provide international regulatory support to enable a more rapid transition to greener forms of transport not only on roads, but also in other inland modes, such as through the increased use of automated driving and autonomous vehicles, intelligent transport systems and information and communication technologies.

13. The high-level segment will also set the scene for the envisaged adoption of the ITC Strategy on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Inland Transport (ECE/TRANS/2024/3) during the restricted session for government delegates on the second day of the eighty-sixth session of the Committee.

II. High-level Segment

14. Building on recommendations from ITC and Bureau debates, the general theme of the policy segment will be on Taking ambitious climate action – Moving towards decarbonized inland transport by 2050. This theme will provide an opportunity to reflect on the unique assets of the Committee, highlighting its value added and underlining its future potential in curbing GHG emissions from inland transport and mitigating social and economic costs of climate change, both regionally and globally.

15. The draft programme on Tuesday, 20 February 2024, includes:

- (a) Opening statements;
- (b) Two keynote speeches on the importance and urgency of ambitious climate action, harnessing the full potential of inland transport solutions and the role of the Committee as a catalyst for action and delivery;
- (c) Three thematic panel debates with up to four panellists each and followed by scheduled interventions from the floor;
- (d) A high-level side event of the ITC Road Safety Forum (ECE/TRANS/2024/7);
- (e) The conference will conclude with the opportunity for attending Ministers and Heads of Delegations of United Nations Member States to endorse the High-level Statement of Support to the adoption of the ITC Strategy on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Inland Transport (ECE/TRANS/2024/2).

A. Opening and Keynote Speech

16. The traditional opening statements will be followed by two keynote speeches from major recognizable leaders in the global fight against climate change. The keynote speeches will focus on the vital need of taking ambitious and effective action and finding solutions to enable governments around the world to learn, improve and deliver on their climate commitments. A key factor for a successful way forward, in addition to member States setting ambitious targets, is the preparedness of the international regulatory system to provide mature solutions to support member States in their efforts and in reaching their targets. Thus, the keynotes will also place an emphasis on the strategic role of the Committee in providing a comprehensive cooperation platform to forge concerted solutions and enhance international collaboration.

B. Panel Debates

17. Three high-level panel debates will follow, with themes on critical policy and regulatory issues of direct relevance to the challenge of tackling climate change for ITC, its subsidiary bodies and member States. The panel themes are:

(a) National visions and policy ambitions to move towards decarbonized inland transport by 2050;

(b) Accelerating climate change mitigation in inland transport: Reaping synergies with urban development, environment and energy policies;

(c) International cooperation, intergovernmental support and partnerships for climate action.

18. The panels will, inter alia, address the following questions: What are national visions, policy ambitions and best practices to reduce GHG emissions in the inland transport sector? What challenges and opportunities does the transition to sustainable inland transport entail? What role do strategic partnerships and international cooperation play, and how can they foster a just and equitable transition? How can ITC support ambitious climate action and help ensure compatibility of actions aimed at decreasing GHG emissions and actions prioritizing transport affordability, safety, security and inclusion?

19. Each panel debate will accommodate up to four high-level panellists.

20. Each debate will be moderated starting with short statements by the panellists, followed by scheduled high-level interventions from the floor and an open discussion.

C. Endorsing the Adoption of the Inland Transport Committee Strategy on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Inland Transport

21. At the end of the meeting, Ministers and Heads of Delegations of United Nations Member States will be invited to endorse the High-level Statement of Support to the adoption of the ITC Strategy on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Inland Transport (ECE/TRANS/2024/2). The Strategy, as contained in ECE/TRANS/2024/3, includes the aspirational goal of net zero GHG emissions from inland transport by 2050. The Strategy was elaborated following the Committee's request at its eighty-fifth session (ECE/TRANS/328, paragraph 60 (a)). It is focused primarily on climate change mitigation and sets out priority actions for the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, including an ambitious initial climate action plan with milestones. The Strategy will be reviewed and potentially adopted by the Committee during the restricted session for Government representatives only on 21 February 2024.

22. The deliberations of the high-level segment can be captured (a) either directly in the meeting report, in line with previous practice, or (b) in a Chair's summary to be annexed to the meeting report.

III. Scheduled High-level Side Events

A. High-level Side Event of the Inland Transport Committee Road Safety Forum

23. Despite strong and consistent efforts by Member States, the international community was not able to achieve by 2020 the target of the Sustainable Development Goals on road safety as evidenced by increasing, rather than decreasing, road fatalities and injuries globally. In response, the General Assembly adopted on 31 August 2020, resolution 74/299 on Improving global road safety, inaugurating the second Decade of Action for Road Safety, setting new ambitious goals, supported by the launch in 2021 of a new Global Plan of Action as a guiding document to support the implementation of its objectives. Both milestones recognize the unique and critical role of ECE and ITC.

24. The Inland Transport Committee Road Safety Forum's objective is to provide a structured platform that will bring together key worldwide stakeholders for a regular and strategic discussion on progress achieved, remaining challenges and the way forward for the success of the second Decade of Action and the implementation of its Global Plan of Action (ECE/TRANS/2023/36). The Road Safety Forum will capitalize on the key directions of the High-level Road Safety Forum Side Event in the areas of Road Safety Management and of Road Safety Financing (ECE/TRANS/2024/7). This event will be organized in conjunction with the High-level Segment of the eighty-sixth plenary session of ITC.

25. The high-level side event will bring together key worldwide stakeholders for a strategic discussion on the new course of action that is needed in order to make definitive progress in successfully addressing the continuing crisis. It will provide key directions and high-level insights for the ITC Road Safety Forum.

Annex I

Draft Programme (19–23 February 2024)

Monday 19 February	10 a.m.–6 p.m.	ITC Bureau meeting	
Tuesday 20 February	10 a.m.–1 p.m.	ITC High-level segment Salle XIX	
	1–2 p.m.	ITC Road Safety Forum Salle XIX	
	2–3 p.m.	<i>Lunch Break</i>	
	3–6 p.m.	ITC High-level segment (cont'd) Salle XIX	
	6–8 p.m.	Cocktail/Reception (Palais des Nations) (tbc)	
Wednesday 21 February	10 a.m.–1 p.m.	ITC Annual Session – Restricted session* Salle XIX (*Government representatives only)	
	1–3 p.m.	<i>Break</i>	
	3–6 p.m.	ITC Annual Session Regular session (cont'd) Salle XIX	
Thursday 22 February	10 a.m.–1 p.m.	ITC Annual Session Regular session (cont'd) Salle XIX	
	1–3 p.m.	<i>Break</i>	
	3–6 p.m.	ITC Annual Session Regular session (cont'd) Salle XIX	
Friday 23 February	10 a.m.–1 p.m.	ITC Annual Session Regular session (cont'd) Salle XIX	
	1–3 p.m.	<i>Break</i>	ITC Bureau meeting
	3–6 p.m.	ITC Round Table on Digital and Green Transition Salle XIX	

Annex II

Draft Programme

High-level segment
Taking ambitious climate action – Moving
towards decarbonized inland transport by 2050
20 February 2024, 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Salle XIX
Palais des Nations, Geneva

10–10.30 a.m.	Opening statements and welcome speeches
10.30–10.50 a.m.	Keynote speech 1
10.50–11.10 a.m.	Keynote speech 2
11.10–11.40 a.m.	<i>Coffee break</i>
11.40 a.m.–1 p.m.	Panel I: National visions and policy ambitions to move towards decarbonized inland transport by 2050 <i>Discussion and scheduled interventions (3' each max)</i>
1–2 p.m.	High-level side event on ITC Road Safety Forum
2–3 p.m.	<i>Lunch break</i>
3–4.15 p.m.	Panel II: Accelerating climate change mitigation in inland transport: Reaping synergies with urban development, environment and energy policies <i>Discussion and scheduled interventions (3' each max)</i>
4.15–4.45 p.m.	<i>Coffee break</i>
4.45–5.50 p.m.	Panel III: International cooperation, intergovernmental support and partnerships for climate action <i>Discussion and scheduled interventions (3' each max)</i>
5.50–6 p.m.	Announcement of the ITC Strategy on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Inland Transport, endorsement of the High-level Statement of Support to the adoption of the Strategy and closing statements
