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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Inland Transport Committee

#### Working Party on Inland Water Transport

##### Fifty-fifth session

Geneva, 12–14 October 2011

Item 5 (c) of the provisional agenda

##### Inland waterway infrastructure

## Strategic Development of Inland Waterway Infrastructure

### Note by the secretariat

#### I. Mandate

1. As a follow-up to the UNECE White Paper on Efficient and Sustainable Inland Water Transport in Europe (hereafter, the UNECE White Paper) (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/189) and in the context of the ongoing revision of the UNECE Inventory of Main Standards and Parameters of the E Waterway Network (“Blue Book”) (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/144/Rev.1), the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (SC.3/WP.3) held a special discussion on strategic development of inland waterway infrastructure during its thirty-ninth session (15–17 June 2011). During this discussion, SC.3/WP.3 agreed that the role of the UNECE Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3) in the area of inland water transport (IWT) infrastructure should be further discussed. To that end SC.3/WP.3 invited the delegations to submit their comments on this issue and asked the secretariat to prepare a strategic note for the SC.3 fifty-fifth session (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/78, paras. 22–23)

2. In accordance with the decision of SC.3/WP.3, the current note presents an overview of the current work of SC.3 in the area of inland waterway infrastructure (Part II), the comments received from member States (Part III) and some preliminary proposals on how these activities could be further pursued (Part IV).

3. The Working Party may wish to discuss its activities on inland waterway infrastructure and bring appropriate modifications, if any, to its programme of work for the next biennium to be adopted under agenda item 11.

## II. Current work of the UNECE Working Party on Inland Water Transport in the area of inland waterway infrastructure

4. According to the programme of work for 2010–2014 (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/183/Add.1), adopted by the SC.3 fifty-third session (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/183, para. 32) the main activity of SC.3 in inland waterway infrastructure is monitoring the implementation of the European agreement on main inland waterways of international importance (AGN) and consideration of possible amendments to the agreement. To that effect, the Working Party is expected to:

(a) Prepare action plans on eliminating concrete bottlenecks and completing missing links on particular E waterways crossing the territory of more than one State Party to AGN and preparing proposals on the development of concrete river-sea routes in the context of the AGN;

(b) Update the lists of ports and waterways of international importance in annexes I and II of the agreement;

(c) Revise the UNECE Blue Book in order to enable Governments to monitor the progress in the implementation of the AGN;

(d) Update maps of European inland waterways in order to avail Governments with up-to-date data concerning inland waterway infrastructure in Europe.

5. The Working Party has achieved the expected results in most of the areas above. The last revision of annexes I and II of the AGN was carried out in 2008 when the amendments to the annexes were adopted by the fifty-second session of SC.3 (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/181, para. 14). The amendments entered into force on 15 October 2009. In addition, the UNECE White Paper presented an updated analysis of the AGN network and an assessment of the remaining bottlenecks and missing links (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/189, paras.19–114). The White Paper also listed a number of projects which could be further reviewed for completing the AGN network (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/189, para. 203). The second revision of the UNECE Blue Book began in 2010 and is expected to be finalized at the fifty-fifth session of SC.3 from 12 to 14 October 2011. The updated map of European inland waterways will be finalized in 2011 based on the revised Blue Book.

6. Further work is needed on preparing proposals on developing concrete river-sea routes in the context of the AGN. At its fiftieth session, SC.3 agreed to keep this item on its agenda and come back to it after consideration and possible outcome of discussion of the Russian Federation's proposal to elaborate specific technical requirements for sea-river vessels (ECE/TRANS/ SC.3/174, paras. 24–25). The adoption of the special technical requirements for river-sea navigation vessels is expected to take place at the fifty-fifth session of SC.3.

7. In addition to these activities, during its annual sessions SC.3 is regularly presented with information by member States and other stakeholders on inland waterway infrastructure projects planned or under way. During its last three SC.3 sessions the following projects were presented: the Dnieper-Vistula-Oder project (Belarus), revitalizing the Ferenc' distribution channel in Hungary (Project manager), the project on Danube-Oder-Elbe water corridor (Czech navigation and waterways association) and the work on Seine-Europe Nord Canal (Voies Navigables de France).

8. Furthermore, the Working Party received a request from Belarus for support in assessing the feasibility and socio-economic implications of restoring of the Dnieper-Vistula-Oder waterway. An expert discussion on this issue took place back-to-back with the

thirty-third session of SC.3/WP.3 in June 2008 (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/66, para. 31). At its fifty-second session, SC.3 invited countries and organizations to inform Belarus about their interest in the project and requested that the secretariat assist Belarus in organizing an expert meeting on the feasibility study of the project (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/181, para. 9). Due to the lack of expert nominations from the countries the expert meeting has yet to take place.

9. In the UNECE White Paper, several policy recommendations addressed UNECE's role in the area of inland waterway infrastructure. Policy recommendation No. 1 advised full use of pan-European mechanisms coordinating the development of the E waterway network, and, in particular, of the AGN and its monitoring mechanisms (Blue Book and the Inventory of most important bottlenecks and missing links in the E Waterway Network (Resolution No. 49)). The recommendation also stated that UNECE could host a forum in close coordination with other international bodies to avoid any duplication, for ad hoc committees, expert groups or round tables to further coordinate the development of the E waterway network (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/189, para. 205 (a)). In addition, Policy recommendation No. 4 called for responding effectively to new market requirements by promoting the relevant international agreements on intermodal transport, such the Protocol on Combined Transport on Inland Waterways to the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC), supporting initiatives aimed at improving the role of IWT in secure intermodal transport chains and addressing the issue of inland waterway infrastructure pricing (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/189, para. 216).

10. At the special discussion on inland waterway infrastructure which took place during the thirty-ninth session of SC.3/WP.3 (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/78, paras. 22–23), SC.3/WP.3 considered a background note for the meeting, elaborated by the secretariat in consultations with the leader of the infrastructure work package of the Platform for the implementation of the EU NAIADES programme (PLATINA). The note invited the UNECE member States to recognize the need for gathering more information in order to make decisions in prioritization and phasing of infrastructure improvements and to agree on the questions regarding infrastructure development and insights to follow from assessing the information. The paper also suggested that SC.3 consider elaborating a coherent IWT infrastructure strategy through establishing regional assessment teams under its strategic guidance (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/18, paras. 21–27). During the discussion, SC.3/WP.3 took note of presentations on infrastructure development in several of its member States and on the strategic studies on the EU inland waterway infrastructure carried out by PLATINA. SC.3/WP.3 also took note of the progress of revising the UNECE Blue Book. SC.3/WP.3 concluded that SC.3's role in dealing with infrastructure issues should be further discussed and invited the delegations to submit their suggestions on this possible role by the SC.3 fifty-fifth session, (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/78, para. 23). The comments received from member States are contained in the next chapter.

### **III. Comments by member States on the future activities of SC.3 in the area of inland waterway infrastructure**

#### **A. Russian Federation**

11. In the opinion of the Russian Federation, the role of SC.3 in infrastructure issues, should primarily focus on coordinating the activities aimed at infrastructure development, collecting relevant statistical information from member States and identifying, based on the analysis of this information, recommendations on the most efficient measures and activities,

harmonized at the pan-European level, which could be carried out by member States, including elaboration of a comprehensive strategy for IWT infrastructure development.

12. In addition, the Working Party plays a connecting and harmonizing role between member States of the European Union, on one hand, and other UNECE member States and River Commissions, on the other, enabling them to act in a more harmonized and coordinated manner, achieving better results. The tasks of the Working Party are described in its programme of work for 2010–2014, as well as the relevant policy recommendations (Nos. 1, 4 and 7) of the new UNECE White Paper.

13. In light of Policy Recommendation No. 1 (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/189, para. 205), the first actions for SC.3 are the completion of the Blue Book revision and then bringing the appropriate modification to Resolution No. 49 and to the Protocol on Combined Transport on Inland Waterways to AGTC. The policy recommendation also refers to the possible role of SC.3 as a forum for further coordinating the development of the E waterway network. To this end, it would be appropriate to:

- (a) Consider establishing a permanent working group composed of the national experts from the member States;
- (b) Study possible cooperation with the International Transport Forum;
- (c) Fully utilize the expertise of River Commissions as infrastructure development is a regular item of their work programme;
- (d) Continue consultations with the European Commission (EC) on this issue.

14. The modalities of such a forum/working group should be properly discussed, including the composition of the group (independent experts, high level group, forum for River Commission and other organizations), frequency of meetings and the proper mechanism for cooperation with EC.

15. Moreover, in light of Policy Recommendations Nos. 1 and 4, it would be appropriate to consider a joint work/consultations/common expert group with the UNECE Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24), which is currently discussing intermodal transport operations, using IWT, and the tasks of the Governments in this area. The finalization of the proposal on special technical prescriptions for river-sea navigation vessels, during the thirty-ninth session of SC.3/WP.3, is a significant step in the development of intermodal transport and this proposal should be transformed in a practical instrument, effectively applied by member States.

## **B. Serbia**

16. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy of Serbia supports idea of adopting an Integrated Pan-European Strategy for inland water transport infrastructure development based on top-down and bottom-up approaches and use this opportunity to inform Working Party on Inland Water Transport that the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy will take all measures necessary to obtain answers on questions on the approaches proposed in the secretariat's discussion note (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/2011/18) if SC.3 adopts this proposal.

## **IV. Conclusion: Future activities of SC.3 in the area of inland waterway infrastructure**

17. The 2011 UNECE White Paper and the additional comments received from the delegations reaffirmed the relevance of the current work of SC.3 on facilitating a pan-

European intergovernmental dialogue on the coordinated development of the pan-European inland waterway network.

18. It is, therefore proposed that in the next biennium SC.3 focus on its core activities, i.e. maintenance of pan-European instruments on the coordinated development of E-network of inland waterways and ports. Two specific activities which could be adopted as indicators of achievement for 2012–2013 are as follows: promotion of the second edition of the Blue Book and updating AGN (and, if needed, other relevant UNECE instruments) based on the information received during the revision of the Blue book.

19. In addition, as recommended by the UNECE White Paper, SC.3 should consider addressing other issues related to infrastructure, and, notably:

- (a) Resuming the consideration of inclusion of river-sea routes in the AGN;
- (b) Acting as a pan-European forum to coordinate the development of the E waterway network;
- (c) Supporting initiatives aimed at improving the role of IWT in secure intermodal transport chains;
- (d) Addressing at the expert and policy levels, the issue of inland waterway infrastructure pricing and its impact on IWT use and competitiveness;

20. These activities could be carried out by SC.3 in close cooperation with other UNECE Working Parties and, in particular, with the Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24), the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) and Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5). Options for possible joint activities include:

- (a) A joint study on the issues of common interest (multimodal infrastructure development, infrastructure financing, assessing the feasibility of transport corridors);
- (b) A joint expert meeting at the occasion of one of the next sessions of SC.3/WP.3 or SC.3.

21. Based on this information, the Working Party may wish to discuss what activities, if any, could be undertaken in 2012–2013, issue specific instructions to the secretariat and make the modifications, if needed, to its programme of work for 2012–2013.

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