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## **Working Party on Rail Transport**

### **Seventy-seventh session**

Geneva, 15-17 November 2023

Item 18 of the provisional agenda

### **Activities of the Inland Transport Committee and its Subsidiary Bodies**

## **Working Party input into the Inland Transport Committee Climate Change Mitigation Strategy**

### **Submitted by the Chair of the Working Party**

#### **I. Introduction**

The Chair of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) has written to all Working Party Chairs to obtain input into the new ITC Climate Change Mitigation Strategy. In particular, the Chair provides an outline of what the strategy should look like and encourages input into these chapters. The outline is set out below:

- I. Inland transport and climate;
- II. ITC vision and mission for climate action;
- III. Strategic objectives;
- IV. ITC-administered instruments to assist in mitigating climate change;
- V. ITC Climate Action Plan with milestones – ITC to help deliver on climate goals;
- VI. List of priorities;
- VII. Resource requirements for the delivery of this Strategy;
- VIII. Strategic Partnerships for the delivery of this Strategy.

The Working Party will recall that the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) has long been working on climate change mitigation and has long espoused the climate change friendly credentials of the rail sector, also seeking to facilitate modal shift to the railways to further reduce the environmental impacts of transport.

As recently as the seventy-sixth session of the Working Party, SC.2 had a dedicated workshop on “The impact of climate change on the railways: how to protect, adapt and mitigate”. This workshop highlighted many of the difficulties faced by the sector as a result of climate change as well as the steps that are being taken to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Based on the information the workshop and the result of the standing agenda item within the sessions of SC.2, the Working Party would like to highlight the following high-level comments in support of the development of the strategy:

- The strategy should put at its centre rail as the most environmentally friendly mode of transport.
- The strategy should focus on encouraging modal shift and especially to rail as only efforts to move traffic to less polluting modes of transport will provide a long term solution to reducing the negative effects of the sector as a whole on the environment.
- For many freight and passenger movements, rail remains the most efficient mode. As such the strategy should also ensure that there is emphasis placed on avoiding inefficient transport.
- Given the regulatory nature of the Inland Transport Committee, the strategy should focus on developing regulatory solutions that support climate change mitigation with the aim of improving transport operations across all modes. Each Working Party should concentrate on its relative strengths and comparative advantage in this area to develop “local” (transport mode specific) solutions that can have “global” (transport sector as a whole) impact. Given the cross-cutting nature of climate change mitigation, it would not be appropriate to have one overarching body looking at climate change nor to allocate single working parties priority over certain areas of implementation.

The remainder of this document sets out some possible considerations on the individual sections of the strategy based on the overarching themes mentioned in the bullet points above. The Working Party may wish to consider these points and whether it should be submitted to ITC as the contribution from the Working Party on Rail Transport.

## II. Main strategy headings

### I. Inland transport and climate

The Working Party would suggest that this section provides background data on inland transport and climate and the projections going forward.

### II. TC vision and mission for climate action

The Working Party suggests that this section refers to and links strongly to the ITC strategy to 2030 agreed by member States as the basis for all ITC activities. It should also highlight those aspects that are already being addressed within Working Parties drawing on the annual reporting that was provided last year.

### III. Strategic objectives

The Working Party suggests that, in developing any strategic objectives for the document, strong emphasis should be placed on encouraging modal shift to rail as well as ensuring that sufficient attention is placed on ensuring that rail is resilient to climate change. Furthermore, sufficient attention should be placed on making rail more competitive especially in the transportation of freight, but also for passengers. Any strategic objectives should focus on capitalising on the comparative advantage of individual Working Parties within ITC. Therefore, ensuring that the sector specific experts (in the case of the Working Party, rail specific experts) are left to decide on how best to respond to climate challenges using their specific skillsets, leaving ITC to ensure that there are no conflicts or inconsistencies between them.

### IV. ITC-administered instruments to assist in mitigating climate change

The Working Party notes that the legal agreements that it administers (the AGC and the Model Rules) are already, intrinsically, contributing to climate change mitigations and the amendment modifications proposed this year to the AGC strengthen this contribution further by promoting changes that facilitate international passenger rail transport. SC.2 notes that additional modernisation of the AGC will contribute to these climate change goals further in future. The developments in relation to Unified Railway Law will also further contribute to climate change mitigation by facilitating border crossings and encouraging further modal shift.

The Working Party notes that this is also the case for a number of other Working Parties and the legal instruments that they administer directly or through Administrative Committees. Therefore, the Working Party strongly recommends to continue developing the existing conventions and agreements to better address climate change mitigation in the fields of their focus. At the same time, the Working Party would not support elaboration of an overarching instrument on climate change mitigation, should such be proposed, as it would be difficult to understand how such an over-arching legal instrument would interact with these existing agreements.

#### V. ITC Climate Action Plan with milestones – ITC to help deliver on climate goals

The Working Party recommends that the Climate Action Plan with milestones should seek to develop clear actions that implement what is being developed within the strategic objectives. Therefore, and building on what has been provided above, the Working Party recommends that the action plan highlight key actions towards encouraging modal shift to rail coupled with initiatives aimed at avoiding inefficient transport (highlighting the efficiency of increased rail transport). This should be supported by regulatory and policy initiatives that focus on improving transport movements and operations which are targeted at quick win solutions that can have a direct impact on climate change mitigation. In doing this, and, within this framework, ITC should consider calling on the expertise of SC.2 to develop possible actions to accelerate this process.

#### VI. List of priorities

The Working Party notes that an action plan and milestones that are envisaged in the previous section would be, by definition, multi-pronged and individual to the activities of each Working Party. This parallel approach, which also capitalises on the synergies between Working Parties, means that while creating an indicative list of actions would be useful, prioritising them would be counter-productive as this would create bottlenecks in the implementation of the Strategy. Having said that, the Working Party notes that the following actions could be included in the strategy relating to the activities of SC.2:

- Accelerate accession to and implementation of the rail related legal instruments that have a direct impact on the reduction of climate change impacts including the AGC and its harmonised technical parameters and standards, the Model Rules on the Permanent Identification of Railway Rolling Stock and other legal instruments currently under development.
- Encourage the optimisation of the rail infrastructure network in order to be able to absorb further traffic from other modes and further increase (improve) its efficiency through improved signalling, telematics, traffic management and other innovative solutions on the network and in stations.
- Encourage the improvement of capacity allocation for freight and passenger services, allowing the segregation of flows where possible and prioritising the more efficient, national and international flows on the network.

- Develop new and innovative solutions, supported by regulatory initiatives aimed and reducing empty running.
- Noting that there is always room for improvement, even in relation to the environmental impact of the rail sector, facilitate the introduction of track access charges that reward the use of more efficient and less polluting technologies in providing passenger and freight services.
- Encourage member States to set concrete targets for rail transport for both passenger and freight transport.
- Seek to further standardise the E-Railways (the routes of international importance) to further aid modal shift and efficiency.
- Extend the key E-Railway parameters included in the AGC to include the requirement for new infrastructure to be built to be either electrified or that it requires that the majority of trains running on it use alternative fuels or energy solutions.
- Ensure that the climate change impacts on rail are also considered to ensure the resilience of transport infrastructure whilst also developing robust contingency management and international crisis management strategies for rail.

VII. Resource requirements for the delivery of this Strategy

The Working Party reiterates that all the activities of SC.2 have a direct impact on mitigating climate change. As such it recommends that additional, new resources are allocated to the Working Party to ensure that all the areas mentioned above can be effectively implemented within the activities SC.2 to increase the direct impact of the railways on mitigation.

VIII. Strategic Partnerships for the delivery of this Strategy

The Working Party notes that it is already partnering with a number of external parties in all its activities and that it has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UIC that is also working extensively in sustainability aspects for the sector. The Working Party suggest that the secretariat may wish to update its MoU with UIC to include this aspect in more detail.

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