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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Inland Transport Committee

#### Seventy-fifth session

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Item 5 (b) (i) of the provisional agenda

#### Strategic questions of a horizontal policy nature:

#### Climate change and transport – ITC follow-up to Rio+20

## ITC follow-up to Rio+20 and new developments in the field of transport

### Note by the secretariat

1. Transport was not earmarked as a specific Millennium Development Goal (MDG) in 2000, yet its relevance for attaining several MDGs is undeniable — ending poverty (access to markets and jobs), education (access to schools), child and maternal health (access to medical services), environmental sustainability, traffic safety etc. Without adequate and affordable access to transport services for all, achievement of most of the MDGs would be much more unlikely. All three dimensions of sustainability — economic, social and environmental — have been recently assessed with transport in focus in the recent UNECE study *Transport for Sustainable Development*.

2. There is evidence of a growing consensus within the transport community to include sustainable transport as an additional priority area under the section on Green Economy and to include sustainable transport as a topic to be covered by a future Sustainable Development Goal, if governments agree on setting SDGs for the post MDG era.<sup>1</sup> The inclusion of a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on transport was supported by the Inland Transport Committee of the UNECE at its recent session in February 2012.

3. The inclusion of sustainable transport as a priority in the Chapter V - Framework for Action and Follow-up of the Outcome Document for Rio: “The Future We Want” positioned the Rio+20 Conference as a pivotal event for scaling up and mainstreaming sustainable transport.

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<sup>1</sup> The agreement on MDGs focuses on helping developing countries. SDGs are under consideration for all countries.

4. The text adopted in the Rio Outcome document contains the following passage on sustainable transport “We note that transportation and mobility are central to sustainable development. Sustainable transportation can enhance economic growth as well as improving accessibility. Sustainable transport achieves better integration of the economy while respecting the environment. We recognize the importance of the efficient movement of people and goods, and access to environmentally sound, safe and affordable transportation as a means to improve social equity, health, resilience of cities, urban-rural linkages and productivity of rural areas. In this regard, we take into account road safety as a part of our efforts to achieve sustainable development. We support the development of sustainable transport systems, including energy efficient multi-modal transport systems, notably public mass transportation systems, clean fuels and vehicles, as well as improved transportation systems in rural areas. We recognize the need to promote an integrated approach to policy-making at the national, regional and local levels for transport services and systems to promote sustainable development. We also recognize that the special development needs of landlocked and transit developing countries need to be taken into account while establishing sustainable transit transport systems. We acknowledge the need for international support to developing countries in this regard”.<sup>2</sup>

5. Earlier this year, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced that, as part of his Action Agenda for his second 5-year term, he would like to establish consensus around a post-2015 sustainable development framework. This would include defining a new generation of sustainable development goals, building on the MDGs, and outline a road map for consideration by Member States. It also includes mobilizing the UN system to support global, regional and national strategies to address the building blocks of sustainable development: (a) energy, (b) food and nutrition, (c) water, (d) oceans and (e) transport. Sustainable transport was identified as one of the key building blocks. His action plan calls for the United Nations to “convene aviation, marine, ferry, rail, road and urban public transport providers, along with Governments and investors, to develop and take action on recommendations for more sustainable transport systems that can address rising congestion and pollution worldwide, particularly in urban areas.”

6. The inclusion of transport in the 5-year Action Agenda is a major step forward in promoting sustainable transport and it could be expected that it will lead to a stronger leadership role by UN organizations on the topic of sustainable transport. This can also help in raising the profile of sustainable transport in the Rio+20 process.

7. The United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) took the lead in coordinating input to this action plan and formed a technical Working Group to propose a plan to the Secretary-General on how to best convene the stakeholders on sustainable transport and to make suggestions on the outputs of this process. Along with the relevant UN bodies and other international organizations, Member States of the United Nations are represented in the technical Working Group by countries having a prominent role in the development of environmentally sustainable transport that links national development aspirations to the Secretary-General’s Action Agenda.

8. Inland transport is the main thrust of the work, with a special activity planned at a later stage, to address international road, rail and intermodal transportation issues. A first preparatory meeting of this technical Working Group was held on 7 and 8 June 2012 and the second meeting on 29 and 30 October 2012, in New York.

9. The UNECE Transport Division has been servicing the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) and the ECOSOC Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and

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<sup>2</sup> A/RES/66/228

the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals for more than six decades. It is the only body in the UN Secretariat with such longstanding experience and rich expertise in addressing many challenges in inland transport. ITC is a unique body specialized in inland transport. International transport agreements and conventions, developed under the auspices of the UNECE, have either started with a global mandate (e.g. in the area of road safety) or have, over time, obtained global relevance, as, in many instances, their Contracting Parties now include UN member countries from all over the world. The UNECE Inland Transport Committee (ITC) has developed the intergovernmental structure to address challenges in the development of sustainable transport and to respond to them in the most effective way. By having this range of policy and institutional coordination mechanisms, ITC is well placed to address the future challenges of developing more sustainable transport in all countries.

10. Therefore, it would only seem natural that the UNECE takes a more prominent role in preparing and organizing the event envisaged in the Secretary General's Action Agenda. With the long-lasting collaboration established with Governments, experience in organizing Ministerial and high-level international transport meetings, contacts with international organizations, international financial institutions as well as rail, road and urban public transport providers, we believe that ITC can provide support for the implementation of recommendations, which the Secretary-General's Action Agenda is designed to produce. However, its visibility and recognition do not always match with the unique work either within the UN or among its Member States.

11. In the note by the Secretary-General – “Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A future worth choosing”, the High-level Panel on Global Sustainability listed 56 recommendations for a global community. Recommendation 48 calls Governments to: develop a set of key universal sustainable development goals, covering all three dimensions of sustainable development as well as their interconnections. Such goals should galvanize individual and collective actions and complement the Millennium Development Goals, while allowing for a post-2015 framework. An expert mechanism should be established by the Secretary-General to elaborate and refine the goals before their adoption by Member States of the United Nations. More concretely, the Panel recommends that when defining sustainable development goals the framework should be based on the following principles:

- It should be universal in character, covering challenges to all countries rather than just developing nations;
- It should express a broadly agreed global strategy for sustainable development;
- It should incorporate a range of key areas that were not fully covered in the Millennium Development Goals, such as food security, water, energy, green jobs, decent work and social inclusion, sustainable consumption and production, sustainable cities, climate change, biodiversity and oceans, as well as disaster risk reduction and resilience;
- It should be comprehensive, reflecting equally the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and the interconnections between them;
- It should incorporate near-term benchmarks while being long-term in scope, looking ahead to a deadline of perhaps 2030;
- It should engage all stakeholders in the implementation and mobilization of resources, including local communities, civil society and the private sector, along with Governments;

- It should include progress metrics alongside absolute targets, in order to focus policy attention as a means of driving development outcomes and to reflect various development priorities and conditions across countries and regions;
- It should provide scope for the review of these goals in view of evolving scientific evidence.

12. If a SDG on transport is defined so that it complies with recommendations outlined by the High-level Panel on Global Sustainability and is well supported by governments, the inclusion of a SDG on transport would underline the widespread recognition about important links between sustainable transport, "greening" of economy and poverty alleviation, as well as that sustainable transport is core to and embedded within sustainable development goals.

13. However, for this to happen, a close coordination between the transport community (Ministries of Transport) and Ministries of Foreign Affairs of all UNECE countries is warranted. Both the UN General Assembly (UNGA) open working group on sustainable development goals and a High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the post-2015 Development Agenda will be composed of diplomatic representatives of member countries. They may not be aware of the strong consensus built to support inclusion of transport as one of Sustainable Development Goals for post-2015 and, therefore, Ministries of Transport as well as representatives of civil society, academia and business sector may need to intensify their efforts to advance and support the case of transport.

14. This document is meant (i) to keep ITC informed about the Rio+20 developments relevant for transport; (ii) to call for continued and re-confirmed support towards an SDG on transport and (iii) to seek guidance for the secretariat concerning the role ITC may wish to play in the preparation of the High Level Global Transport Meeting to be convened by the Secretary-General.

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