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Working Party on Inland Water Transport

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Workshop “Climate Change Mitigation Activities in Inland Water Transport”

Background and Main Objectives of the Workshop

Note by the secretariat

I. Mandate

1. This document is submitted in line with the proposed Programme Budget for 2023, part V, Regional cooperation for development, section 20, Economic Development in Europe, Programme 17, Economic Development in Europe (A/77/6 (Sect. 20), table 20.6).
2. At its eighty-fifth session, the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) decided to strengthen its role and contribution on the critical matter of climate change and requested the secretariat, in close cooperation with the ITC Bureau and relevant subsidiary bodies, to develop an ambitious strategy document for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in inland transport, based on international United Nations legal instruments under the ITC purview, with priority actions for ITC and its relevant subsidiary bodies and supported by a strong action plan with milestones (ECE/TRANS/328, paragraph 60). The draft strategy will be considered and possibly adopted by ITC at its eighty-sixth session in February 2024.
3. ITC further requested the secretariat to report biennially through in-depth reports on climate change and inland transport, starting at its eighty-sixth session.
4. As a follow-up of the ITC decision, the ITC Chair and the Director of the Sustainable Transport Division invited the Chairs of ITC working parties, and among them SC.3, to:
 - (a) Participate in the development of the strategy document and take note of the proposed outline of the climate change strategy (see the annex to this document);¹
 - (b) Transmit the updated information on the climate change mitigation activities in inland transport to the secretariat for inclusion in the 2024 biennial report.

¹ Ref. UNECE/2023/TRANS/40 of 9 May 2023.



II. Background

5. In recent years, the impact of climate change and associated events on a smooth and reliable operation of inland water transport has become one of the priority issues for the sector. Low water situation on some European rivers, in particular, on the Rhine and the Danube, has brought to considerable negative consequences in the sector.

6. In the Ministerial declaration “Inland Navigation in a Global Setting”, adopted on 18 April 2018 in Wroclaw (Poland), Transport Ministers (a) called upon the sector to create, where necessary, new types of vessels and introduce innovations and modern technologies to ensure safety, reducing the risk of accidents, minimizing environmental impact and combatting climate change, and (b) agreed that actions should be undertaken to ensure the resilience of the sector to climate change and supported the work on determining the climate trends affecting navigation to allow the planning of business activities for longer periods.²

7. The Mannheim Declaration “150 years of the Mannheim Act – the driving force behind dynamic Rhine and inland navigation” tasked the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) “to develop a roadmap in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 35 per cent compared with 2015 by 2035, reduce pollutant emissions by at least 35 per cent compared with 2015 by 2035, and largely eliminate greenhouse gases and other pollutants by 2050”.³

8. The core objectives of the European Union strategy for a green and environmentally safe inland water transport, set out in the action plan “NAIADES III: Future-proofing European inland waterway transport”,⁴ are (a) shifting more freight transport to inland waterways and (b) setting the sector on an irreversible path to zero-emissions, underpinned by a paradigm shift towards further digitalization, as well as accompanying measures to support the current and future workforce. NAIADES III builds on the European Green Deal⁵ and the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy,⁶ which set the goal of increasing transport by inland waterways and short sea shipping by 25 per cent by 2030, and by 50 per cent by 2050.

9. Actions proposed in Policy recommendation No. 4 “Encouraging the modernization and greening of the fleet and infrastructure to better tackle environmental challenges” of the *White Paper on the Progress, Accomplishments and Future of Sustainable Inland Water Transport*, aimed at climate change mitigation in inland water transport, include:

(a) Continue exchanging best practices and support programmes and pilot projects aimed at modernization and greening of the fleet, new and enhanced vessel types, low and zero emission propulsion systems and monitor their implementation;

...

(d) Support and encourage research studies and activities, aimed at maintaining and further increasing the inland water transport competitive edge in environmental performance, including research on the measures to reduce the emissions by inland vessels and on alternative fuels for inland vessels;

(e) Support the initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 35 per cent compared with 2015 by 2035, reduce pollutant emissions by at least 35 per cent compared with 2015 by 2035, and largely eliminate greenhouse gases and other pollutants by 2050 set out in the Mannheim declaration. Encourage other member States to do so;

(f) Promote the role of water transport using alternative fuels or electromotion in an urban environment. Support the development of clean and sustainable, enhanced or

² https://unece.org/DAM/trans/doc/2018/sc3/Ministerial-declaration_e.pdf, strategic actions 12 and 15.

³ www.ccr-zkr.org/files/documents/dmannheim/Mannheimer_Erklaerung_en.pdf.

⁴ ECE/TRANS/SC.3/2021/1.

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52019DC0640&qid=1635856456244>.

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0789>.

alternative propulsion systems for inland navigation vessels and other environment-related issues.

10. The impact of climate change on inland water transport networks and mitigation activities were addressed at the workshops of the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (SC.3/WP.3):

- Encouraging the realization of a modern fleet, enhancing navigation safety and fostering innovations (19 June 2019)⁷
- Sustainable Development Goals and how they can be achieved in inland waterways (12 February 2020)⁸
- Climate change and the extreme water situation on European waterways and its impact on inland water transport (17 February 2021)⁹
- Prevention of Pollution from Inland Waterway Vessels and Greening of the Inland Water Transport Sector (16 February 2022).¹⁰

III. Suggested Priorities for the Inland Transport Committee of Relevance to the Working Party

11. At its eighty-fifth session, ITC considered possible priorities for its future activities in this field, based on the existing activities and areas to be explored further to support ITC members as set out in ECE/TRANS/2023/21, paragraphs 13–19. The following priorities can be relevant for the inland water transport sector:

(a) Regulatory priorities for ITC and its subsidiary bodies:

- Developing of the harmonized international regulatory framework for facilitating the transition to alternative fuels and greening
- Support the acceleration of electrification
- Infrastructure to support deployment of electric and hydrogen vehicles
- Mitigation measures for road and inland water transport
- Accelerated regulatory framework for digitalization of the sector, and integration of innovations and new technologies;

(b) Policy support priorities:

- Maintain regular high-level policy dialogue on new targets, strategies, plans, challenges and solutions in the inland water transport sector
- Improvement of transport operations like better fleet management
- Supporting sectoral activity changes such as a reduced demand for fossil fuels, increased energy efficiency and circular economy
- Innovating on ownership and usage behaviour
- Optimizing infrastructure and operations for countries which have already established advanced freight transport and logistics systems
- Increasing efficiencies in the freight transport and logistics systems
- Development of more tools, such as:
 - Develop and deploy a CO₂ emissions reduction initiatives tracker tool for inland transport that would monitor and provide a wide range of information

⁷ ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/110, paragraphs 8–39.

⁸ ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/112, paragraphs 11–39.

⁹ ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/116, paragraphs 8–34.

¹⁰ ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/120, paragraphs 12–35.

relevant to initiatives for reducing the environmental footprint of inland transport

- Develop an inland transport emissions toolkit, which would provide a structured framework along with decision support tools for the evaluation of emission reduction opportunities in the inland transport;
- Lead the digitalization effort as this can prove to be a powerful tool to provide multimodal integration;
- (c) Institutional arrangements:
 - Enhanced cooperation/coordination between working parties and review/assessment of current institutional support for the climate change mitigation workstream, including possible central coordination
 - Developing “Nexuses” of cross sectoral work within the Division and potentially with other subprogrammes or major players that could support accelerated work;
- (d) Intergovernmental support, with emphasis on regional/interregional priorities and needs:
 - Support to member States for accelerated modal shift
 - Promotion of cooperation between ITC members; development of cross-border cooperation in planning and timely introduction of the policy measures
 - Sharing experience and elaboration of best practices
 - Capacity building
 - Projects to support ITC members.

IV. Topics for Discussion at the Workshop

12. The purpose of the workshop is to:
 - Highlight the ongoing climate change mitigation activities in inland water transport, strategies, programmes and projects in this field
 - Consider actions that could be undertaken by SC.3 to assist countries in addressing this challenge
 - Provide a feedback for the draft ITC Strategy on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Inland Transport until 2050.
13. SC.3 may wish to discuss the following topics:
 - International conventions and agreements to assist in mitigating climate change
 - Progress made by countries, international organizations and other key stakeholders and lessons learned
 - Priorities for future activities in this field
 - Milestones for the ITC Climate Action Plan in the field of inland water transport.
14. Participants are invited to take part in the round table discussions and share their experience, best practices and developments in this field, consider further steps and provide comments to the draft outline of the ITC strategy or any of its chapters.

Annex

Draft Outline of the Strategy on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Inland Transport until 2050

- I. Inland transport and climate
 - II. ITC vision and mission on 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 mobilization for the delivery of this Strategy
 - VIII. Strategic partnerships for the delivery of this Strategy.
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