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(Item 6(d) of the provisional agenda)

"BLUE CORRIDOR" PROJECT

**On the use of natural gas as a motor fuel in international
transboundary goods traffic**

Note by the secretariat

1. The "Blue Corridor" project was initiated by the non-governmental Vernadsky Ecological Foundation (Russian Federation) in the year 2000 with the main objective of establishing European transport infrastructure/transport corridors for vehicles using gaseous fuels in the transboundary transport of goods.
2. The volume of international goods and passenger traffic will increase annually in line with the substantial development of transnational corporations and the fitting-out of vehicle fleets with modern tractor-trailer units and coaches designed for international travel, that offer enhanced carrying capacity and operational features.
3. The environmental and economic advantages of gas in relation to other fuels augur well for its extensive use in various sectors of industry, agriculture, public utilities and transport. Road transport is a particularly promising area.
4. The rapid increase in vehicle numbers has resulted in an extraordinary high level of atmospheric pollution. Exhaust gases from motor vehicles account for approximately 60-80% of all toxic atmospheric emissions in major cities. The substitution of alternative forms of fuel

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(especially gas) for petrol or diesel could play a significant role in cutting emissions. Gaseous motor fuel has a high octane number and high calorific value. Motor vehicles powered by natural gas emit significantly less carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and gas-borne particles. Many years' experience of the use of gaseous fuel has demonstrated the significant environmental and economic advantages of gas-powered motor vehicles.

5. Today there are about 2 million natural-gas-powered motor vehicles (NGVs) in the world and over 3,500 natural gas fuelling stations.

The main parameters of the project may be summarized as follows:

- Economic benefits of gaseous motor fuel (reduced operating costs, especially of the fuel component);
- Gradual reduction of environmental and noise pollution;
- Sufficient resource provision of gaseous motor fuel;
- Developed gas pipeline infrastructure;
- Gradual increase in the volume of transboundary vehicle traffic;
- Significant technical progress in the field of gaseous fuel systems and gas-cylinder equipment for motor vehicles;
- Expansion and improvement of the network of gas fuelling stations;
- The geopolitical dimension-globalisation.

6. The project is designed to address issues connected with, inter alia, plotting of routes across the continent of Europe, development of the network of fuelling stations, harmonization and standardization of technological and communications equipment, elaboration and coordination of laws and regulations, and provision of gas supplies to areas along transport corridors. Participants in the project are:

- Government bodies (Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Transport, Energy, Resource Management and Environmental Protection, etc);
- Gas sector enterprises;
- Transport companies.

7. The project was presented at the annual sessions of the UNECE Committee on Sustainable Energy, Inland Transport Committee and Working Party on Gas.

8. Following discussion at the fifty-sixth session of the Commission in May 2001 and decision of the Inland Transport Committee and the Working Party on Gas, a special Task Force representing experts from both gas and transport sectors was set up with a view to assessing the technical and economic viability of the ""Blue Corridor"" project and modalities of its implementation.
9. The first meeting of the Task Force was held in Warsaw (Poland) on 27-28 June 2002. It was attended by 25 participants from 13 ECE member countries and non-governmental organizations.
10. Participants in the meeting made presentations on the current state and future developments of NGVs in their respective countries. They also expressed their views regarding the proposed project and made proposals concerning its evaluation. There was a general consensus with regard to the importance and attractiveness of the project. All participants underlined their interest in and intention of working on the project. The meeting identified two pilot corridors for the assessment of the project, "Moscow-Berlin" and "Berlin-Rome", however other proposals were also invited.
11. The next meeting of the Task Force will examine and decide on the parameters that will be used for the assessment of the pilot corridor.