



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
4 December 2020

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Rail Transport

Seventy-fourth session

Geneva, 18–20 November 2020

Report of the Working Party on Rail Transport on its seventy-fourth session

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Attendance.....	1–5	3
II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)	6–7	3
III. Workshop on “The development of international passenger rail transport in the context of ITC Resolution No.264” (agenda item 2).....	8–10	4
IV. European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (agenda item 3)	11–20	4
V. Railway financing and Public-Private Partnerships (agenda item 4)	21–24	5
VI. Towards unified railway law in the pan-European region and on Euro-Asian transport corridors (agenda item 5).....	25–31	6
VII. Rail Security (agenda item 6).....	32–36	7
VIII. Euro-Asian rail transport (agenda item 7).....	37–40	8
IX. Trans-European Railway project (agenda item 8).....	41–42	8
X. Master Plan on High-Speed Trains (agenda item 9).....	43	8
XI. New Convention on the facilitation of crossing of frontiers for passengers and baggage carried by rail (agenda item 10)	44–45	9
XII. Innovation in Rail Transport (agenda item 11)	46	9
XIII. Productivity in Rail Transport (agenda item 12).....	47	9
XIV. Climate Change and Rail Transport (agenda item 13)	48–49	9



XV.	Railway Reform (agenda item 14)	50	9
XVI.	Facilitation of international rail transport in the pan-European region Railway Reform (agenda item 15)	51	10
XVII.	Rail Review (agenda item 16)	52	10
XVIII.	Rail statistics (agenda item 17)	53	10
XIX.	Improving safety in Rail Transport (agenda item 18)	54	10
XX.	Activities of Inland Transport Committee and its subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (agenda item 19)	55–56	10
XXI.	Activities of the European Commission in rail transport (agenda item 20)	57–59	10
XXII.	Activities of international organizations in rail transport (agenda item 21)	60	11
XXIII.	Programme of Work and Terms of Reference (agenda item 22)	61–64	11
XXIV.	Other business (agenda item 23)	65–66	11
XXV.	Date and venue of next session (agenda item 24)	67	11
XXVI.	Adoption of decisions (agenda item 25)	68–69	11
Annexes			
I.	Terms of reference for the Group of Experts on International Passenger Rail Hubs		13
II.	Revised Terms of reference for the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2)		15

I. Attendance

1. The Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) held its seventy-fourth session from 18 to 20 November 2020 in Geneva and online.
2. The session of the Working Party was attended by representatives of the following countries: Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, France, Georgia, Greece, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The following non-ECE member States attended the session: Mongolia. Representatives from DG Move of the European Commission, from Shift2Rail of the European Union, and from the European Investment Bank (EIB) were present. The following United Nations specialized agency was present: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.
3. The Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF), International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) and the Project Central Office of the Trans-European Railway (TER) were represented.
4. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) AISBL, European Passengers' Federation, International Rail Transport Committee (CIT), International Union of Railways (UIC), Rail Working Group, Italian Transport Regulation Authority and International Union of Wagon Keepers. The Reform support team, Ministry of Infrastructure, Ukraine were represented.
5. Representatives of the following organizations, private sector and academia attended the session: Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane, PKP Polish Railway Lines (PKP PLK), TRA Consulting and Russian University of Transport. A representative from the German National Safety Authority was present.

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)¹

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/233 and Corr 1

6. The Working Party adopted the revised agenda as contained in ECE/TRANS/SC.2/223 and Corr 1 with the addition of agenda item 7 to the discussions with interpretation. This report highlights those agenda items that were discussed in English only and those that were postponed to the seventy-fifth session of the Working Party as a result of the reduced interpretation resources available to the Working Party.
7. The Working Party regretted that its current session suffered from a considerable reduction in the allocation of the conference service by the United Nations Office in Geneva versus the previously accepted service level which has led to some agenda items being covered only "for information" and others being postponed to the next session. SC.2 stressed the importance the official intergovernmental deliberations have to the promotion of railway transport and to increasing sustainability in countries of the ECE region. To this end, SC.2 expressed dissatisfaction that the cuts impacted its deliberations. It expressed a hope that such a situation would not be repeated in the future.

¹ Information on the session is available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=53503>.

III. Workshop on “The development of international passenger rail transport in the context of ITC Resolution No.264” (agenda item 2)²

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2020/5

8. A Workshop on “The development of international passenger rail transport in the context of ITC Resolution No.264” was convened on the first day of the Working Party on Rail Transport. About 100 participants were registered for the event. The Workshop discussed at length the role of international rail passenger transport and the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the future evolution of rail passenger transport. Speakers from national and international institutions as well as from the railways shared their experiences on the subject and identified challenges and possible solutions going forward.

9. The Chair of the Working Party concluded by summarizing the workshop. Member States and other delegates commented positively on the importance of this workshop which provided examples and good practice for growing international passenger transport and agreed that the workshop had been very useful and a great success.

10. In its decision, the Working Party welcomed discussions at the Workshop “The development of international passenger rail transport in the context of ITC Resolution No.264” and requested that the secretariat prepare a UN publication as a summary document in three languages of the workshop in order to continue discussion on this topic at future sessions of the Working Party.

IV. European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (agenda item 3)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2020/2, ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2020/3, ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2020/4 ECE/TRANS/63/Rev.4, C.N.107.2020.TREATIES-XI.C.3

11. The European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC) currently has 28 contracting parties.³ Detailed information on AGC, the up-to-date and consolidated text of AGC (ECE/TRANS/63/Rev.4), a map of the AGC network, an inventory of minimum standards stipulated in AGC and the Depositary Notifications are available on the website of the Working Party.⁴ The Working Party noted the importance of having the current consolidated version of the AGC published and available in all official ECE languages.

12. The Working Party took note of the efforts of the secretariat to increase the number of contracting parties to AGC and noted the accession of Turkmenistan to AGC in August 2020. In particular, the secretariat presented document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2020/2 setting out the background, benefits and accession requirements for the AGC. This followed a request from the Working Party to prepare such a document. Future copies of the consolidated version of the AGC (ECE/TRANS/63/Rev.4) will be shared with this document as an attachment.

13. The Working Party welcomed the accession of Turkmenistan to the AGC. The Working Party welcomed the preparation of the explanatory document to the AGC as an

² Presentations from the workshop are also at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=53503>.

³ Albania, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Poland, Republic of Moldova, North Macedonia, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Ukraine.

⁴ www.unece.org/trans/main/sc2/sc2_AGC_text.html.

important tool for facilitating further accession and the continued efforts being made to modernise the AGC.

14. The Working Party recalled that at its seventy-third session in November 2019, it had requested the secretariat to proceed with the depositary notification for the amendments set out in ECE/TRANS/2019/9 in relation to changes proposed by the Russian Federation to Annex I of the AGC and adopted at its seventy-third session. These amendments were notified to the depositary in New York on 24 March 2020 (C.N.107.2020.TREATIES-XI.C.3). The secretariat informed the Working Party that no objections were received before the September 2020 deadline and thus the amendments will enter into force on 24 December 2020.

15. The Working Party was informed that the secretariat had received a proposal for amendment to Annex I of AGC from the Republic of Serbia (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2020/4). The secretariat noted that these amendments were in line with similar amendments made by the Republic of Serbia to the European Agreement on Main International Combined Transport Lines and Installations (AGTC). The Working Party approved these amendments.

16. The Working Party noted that the amendments agreed in ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2019/9 had been notified to the depositary and that they will enter into force on 24 December 2020 as no objections had been received. It asked the secretariat to send the amendments included in ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2020/4 to the depositary.

17. The secretariat proceeded to introduce document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2020/3 on International Railway Passenger Hubs following on from discussions included in the Workshop under agenda item 2. The secretariat explained that while the AGC covers all rail infrastructure, including technical parameters and there is a specific agreement focusing on freight transport, the AGTC, there is no similar agreement in relation to infrastructure and operations for international rail passenger transport. The secretariat explained how this document also includes the terms of reference for a potential Group of Experts to explore a way forward on this matter. The Working Party discussed the necessity of creating such a mechanism and the need to create a Group of Experts to assess what form a potential legal agreement could take. The Netherlands, Romania and the Russian Federation confirmed the importance of the creation of such a Group of Experts to look into this further. In supporting the creation of the Group of Experts, the Russian Federation requested that the scope be widened to cover sustainable mobility elements around these hubs and intermodal connections to other forms of passenger transport.

18. The Working Party welcomed document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2020/3 and agreed to the setting up of a Group of Experts on International Railway Passenger Hubs, reflecting the additional points identified by the Russian Federation. It asked that the proposal be sent to ITC for endorsement.

19. The updated Terms of Reference for the Group of Experts is included in Annex I of this report.

20. Finally, under this agenda item, the secretariat explained that work continues on the modernization of the AGC through the gathering of data in collaboration with the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) in order to provide accurate information on the AGC network in GIS format. The secretariat will inform the Working Party of progress on this point at its next session.

V. Railway financing and Public-Private Partnerships (agenda item 4)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2019/10

21. The Working Party was informed about the establishing of the Group of Experts on the Permanent Identification of Railway Rolling Stock following the decision of SC.2 at its seventy-third session, subsequently endorsed by the ITC and approved by the Executive Committee of ECE. The secretariat explained that discussions had started well on this topic and that detailed technical issues had already been raised. The Working Party was informed that the Russian Federation had agreed to Chair the Group and had nominated Mr. Grigoriev to be the Group's Chair.
22. The Working Party welcomed progress on the The Group of Experts on Permanent Identification of Railway Rolling Stock and the appointment of Mr. Grigoriev as Chair of the Group.
23. The Working Party recalled the discussions at previous sessions on good practices in implementing Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in railway infrastructure development, and on the development of standards aimed at facilitating the implementation of PPP projects. On this subject, presentations were made by the EIB on railways and PPP projects that it is funding as well as its role as the EU's Climate Bank and by Reform support team, Ministry of Infrastructure, Ukraine on their station investment and upgrade programme.
24. The Working Party welcomed the presentations from EIB and Reform support team, Ministry of Infrastructure, Ukraine.

VI. Towards unified railway law in the pan-European region and on Euro-Asian transport corridors (agenda item 5)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2018/13/Rev.1,
ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/4, ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/5,
ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/6

25. The Working Party recalled that, at its last session, it had decided to extend the mandate of the Group of Experts on Unified Railway Law for two more sessions, to be held in 2020, under the current Terms of Reference, as set out in document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2018/13/Rev.1. to conclude on tasks (c) and (d) and to report to the Working Party at its seventy-fourth session in November 2020.
26. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and UNOG liquidity issues restrictions had been placed on the ability of ECE to hold meetings as scheduled. These limitations had led to the July session of the Group of Experts being postponed to September 2020 and the September 2020 session being postponed until 13–15 January 2021. The mandate of the Group has therefore not been completed in time for the report to be sent to this, the seventy-fourth session of the Working Party.
27. The secretariat updated the Working Party on progress to date. The Group of Experts discussed ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/4 and ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/5 submitted respectively by Germany and the Russian Federation, which are relevant to conclude on task (c). The Group considered the alteration to the draft provisions for the contract of carriage for goods by railways proposed by the Russian Federation as well as the proposal by Germany to focus the remaining time of the mandate's extension on the consolidation of existing results. The Group agreed to request the secretariat to prepare for the next session a consolidated version of the components already established by the Group, based on the text of the draft substantive legal provisions; modifications to Article 4 of the draft legal provisions; the draft preamble; the draft final provisions. At the same time, the Russian Federation believed it would be premature to prepare a consolidated version until the Group of Experts would be in position to agree on the scope of Unified Railway Law (URL). The Group also discussed issues which the URL should potentially deal with in

addition to contract of carriage based on secretariat's document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/6. This discussion is relevant to closing on task (d). While the Group was not able to conclude these discussions yet, it formulated a number of important questions regarding both tasks, which the experts should respond to in writing before their next meeting. The questions had been compiled by the secretariat and distributed to the experts on 13 November 2020. The experts were requested to send their submission by 11 December.

28. The Russian Federation confirmed that their document (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/5) should be the basis of discussions in the finalisation of the task (c). It stated that a comprehensive railway law should be developed and that agreement on the contract of carriage was only the first step. Furthermore it highlighted the importance to consider the possibility of establishing a joint OTIF/OSJD working group in order to develop a consolidated position of international organizations on the unified legal system for the Eurasian space. Finally, the Russian Federation stated that if consensus on this could not be achieved then a framework Convention could be an option to be considered with the participation in the discussions of a broader set of stakeholders along the Euro-Asian network.

29. The European Commission referred to the document submitted by Germany (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/4) reflecting the position of the majority of the experts in finalising the agreement on the contract of carriage. In the view of the EC, the consolidated text would meet the requirements of the Terms of Reference and possibly be included in the final report which the Group of Experts would produce on completion of its mandate at its January session.

30. The secretariat noted that, in accordance with current planning, any conclusion or report from the January 2021 session would only be considered by the Group's parent body at the next session of SC.2 in November 2021. This essentially means a delay of one year in any actions that would follow from that report. As a result of this, and given the high importance of this work, the Chair and Vice-Chair of SC.2 proposed that any conclusion identified, or report prepared, by the Group of Experts could be considered for adoption by the Group's parent body, SC.2 through a silence procedure in January 2021. This would allow for any subsequent decision of SC.2, following that silence procedure, to be sent to ITC for consideration at its session in February 2021.

31. The Working Party noted that deliberations on URL had not been completed during 2020 as originally planned due to the COVID-19 and UNOG liquidity issues. It asked that the report and the conclusions of the Group of Experts be transmitted to SC.2 focal points immediately after the URL session in January 2021 so that the report and the conclusions can be potentially adopted by SC.2 member States through a silence procedure. This would allow it to be transmitted for final decision to the ITC session of February 2021.

VII. Rail Security (agenda item 6)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2018/2

32. This agenda item was discussed for information only as it was only possible to discuss it in English.

33. The Working Party recalled that in 2018 the "Workshop on Rail Security" had been organized with UIC and the International Transport Forum (ITF) at the ITF Annual Summit in Leipzig, Germany. The main conclusions are in ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2018/2. The workshop was well received, and the secretariat received positive feedback as a key area of cooperation between ECE, UIC and ITF.

34. The Working Party recalled that the secretariat had developed an advanced web-based platform on rail security which can operate as an international observatory on rail security issues (hence the Rail Security Observatory), where stakeholders can:

- (a) Disseminate ad hoc knowledge and best/good practices;
- (b) Exchange information about projects and other initiatives/proposals; and
- (c) Seek cooperation on specific rail security projects/tasks/studies and research initiatives agreed upon during SC.2 sessions and other events and focus on developing definitions.

35. The interface of the Observatory was displayed during the session.

36. During this agenda item UIC updated the Working Party on its work in the security field as well as on the activities of the COVID-19 Task Force that is helping railways share good practice in combatting the virus and facilitating a rail focused recovery.

VIII. Euro-Asian rail transport (agenda item 7)

37. The secretariat informed the Working Party about the progress of work on the Euro-Asian Transport Linkages Project (EATL), in particular on the upcoming seminar planned for 26 November on this subject.

38. The Russian Federation welcomed the presentation made by the secretariat and updated the Working Party on developments in Euro-Asian freight transportation. In particular, it highlighted that container traffic had grown by about twenty-four per cent in 2020 compared to 2019 volumes along the Trans-Siberian Corridor and by 59.2 per cent across the China to Europe route. It was noted that the growth in the volume of Euro-Asian container traffic became possible due to the high stability of rail transport in the context of a pandemic and quarantine restrictions, a decrease in tariffs and the digitalization. In particular, on 4 September 2020, within the framework of the INTERTRAN Project, the first fully paperless intermodal delivery from China to Belarus was successfully completed. The Russian Federation further informed participants of the lack of international regulation in container transport and that a draft agreement regulating container transport on container trains and rules for the loading and securing of cargo in containers were being prepared by OSJD. It was noted that the recommendations for EATL have been almost seventy per cent implemented. The Russian Federation also called on SC.2 to coordinate its activities on EATL with other international organizations and internally with the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics.

39. Under this agenda item the secretariat also informed the Working Party on the work of the Group of Experts on the Benchmarking of Infrastructure Construction Costs and the UNDA funded project: “Sustainable Inland Transport Connectivity Indicators”.

40. The Working Party took note of the information provided on developments related to the EATL project and asked delegates to submit information to the secretariat in relation to the Group of Experts on the Benchmarking of Infrastructure Construction Costs. The Working Party welcomed the information provided by the Russian Federation and reiterated its commitment to collaborate with other relevant ITC Working Parties and international organizations on this topic.

IX. Trans-European Railway project (agenda item 8)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2020/6

41. The Deputy Project Manager of Trans-European Railway (TER) project, Ms. M. Kopczynska reported on the activities of the TER Project for 2020 (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2020/6). The work of the TER Steering Committee had focused on facilitation and development of coherent and efficient international railway and combined transport system in the Central and Eastern European countries (through the territories of the TER countries and between them and other European countries) as well as on the completion of a High Speed Masterplan for the region and the initiation of three important projects: on setting up a GIS based platform for the AGC and AGTC for the TER region, on assessing the technical compliance of TER country networks to the AGC and AGTC and on preparing a new strategy for the TER project.

42. The working party took note of the information provided by the TER Deputy project manager and welcomed the continued progress on the TER High Speed Masterplan Phase 2.

X. Master Plan on High-Speed Trains (agenda item 9)

43. This agenda item was covered under agenda item 8: Trans-European Railway project.

XI. New Convention on the facilitation of crossing of frontiers for passengers and baggage carried by rail (agenda item 10)

Documentation: C.N.126.2019.TREATIES-XI.C.7, C.N.127.2019. TREATIES-XI.C.7

44. This agenda item was discussed for information only as it was possible to discuss it only in English.

45. The Working Party recalled that, this Convention is of significant importance to facilitating international passenger transport by rail and that the Convention had been adopted 22 February 2019, and the opening for signature in Geneva was announced on 4 April 2019.

XII. Innovation in Rail Transport (agenda item 11)

46. Discussion on this agenda item was postponed to the seventy-fifth session of the Working Party on Rail Transport.

XIII. Productivity in Rail Transport (agenda item 12)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2019/6, ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2020/7

47. The Working Party recalled that at its seventy-third session that data had been received on rail productivity and that this information was included in document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2019/6. During that session, the Working Party welcomed the document and thanked member States for contributing to it. It asked the secretariat to keep this item on the agenda and to renew efforts on gathering information in 2021. Following the seventy-third session, the secretariat prepared document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2020/7 updating the questionnaire and incorporating comments received by respondents. The secretariat presented the questionnaire during the seventy-fourth session and explained how it would be available on an online platform as last time, but this time it would be available in the three official languages of ECE. The secretariat confirmed that it would be sending out the updated questionnaire in 2021.

XIV. Climate Change and Rail Transport (agenda item 13)

48. Part of this agenda item, relating to the Group of Experts on Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for Inland Transport was discussed for information only as it was possible to discuss it only in English. The secretariat updated the Working Party on the setting up of this new Group of Experts, following on from the previous Group of Experts on Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for Transport Networks and Nodes. The secretariat explained the work programme for the coming year and the expected areas where work would be focused going forward.

49. Aspects relating to For Future Inland Transport Systems tool and Green logistics, eco-scoring and related matters were postponed to the seventy-fifth session of the Working Party on Rail Transport.

XV. Railway Reform (agenda item 14)

50. Discussion on this agenda item was postponed to the seventy-fifth session of the Working Party on Rail Transport.

XVI. Facilitation of international rail transport in the pan-European region (agenda item 15)

51. Discussion on this agenda item was postponed to the seventy-fifth session of the Working Party on Rail Transport.

XVII. Rail Review (agenda item 16)

52. Discussion on this agenda item was postponed to the seventy-fifth session of the Working Party on Rail Transport.

XVIII. Rail statistics (agenda item 17)

53. Discussion on this agenda item was postponed to the seventy-fifth session of the Working Party on Rail Transport.

XIX. Improving safety in Rail Transport (agenda item 18)

54. Discussion on this agenda item was postponed to the seventy-fifth session of the Working Party on Rail Transport.

XX. Activities of Inland Transport Committee and its subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (agenda item 19)

55. This agenda item was discussed for information only as it was possible to discuss it only in English.

56. The Working Party was informed about progress in the implementation of the ITC strategy.

XXI. Activities of the European Commission in rail transport (agenda item 20)

Documentation: Informal Document No.2 (2020)

57. This agenda item was discussed for information only as it was possible to discuss it only in English.

58. The Working Party was informed by the representative of European Commission of the European Union (EC) about its most recent developments (Informal Document No.2 (2020)).

59. The Working Party was also informed by Reform support team, Ministry of Infrastructure, Ukraine about its investment plans and its work to align its railway related laws to EU acquis.

XXII. Activities of international organizations in rail transport (agenda item 21)

60. This agenda item was discussed for information only as it was possible to discuss it only in English. The Working Party was informed by CIT about their activities in 2020.

XXIII. Programme of Work and Terms of Reference (agenda item 22)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2019/2, ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2020/1

61. The Working Party noted that at its eighty-first session in February 2019, the Inland Transport Committee adopted its new strategy to 2030. The strategy confirms the key role of ITC as the UN platform for inland transport to help efficiently address global and regional needs in inland transport.

62. The Working Party adopted, at its previous session, document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2019/2 looking at the current activities of SC.2 and its role in relation to the new ITC strategy. The document highlighted that the current activities of SC.2 were already significantly aligned to the requirements of the ITC strategy. It also identifies in section V a number of specific actions to be undertaken. It also asked the secretariat to prepare an update of the Working Party's Terms of Reference to reflect these changes.

63. The secretariat presented document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2020/1 setting out the new Terms of Reference for the Working Party. Following discussion on the contents of the Terms of Reference a small number of changes proposed by the Russian Federation and the European Union were introduced into the text.

64. The Working Party endorsed, as amended, its new terms of reference based on the Implementation of the ITC Strategy for SC.2 document and asked that it be transmitted to ITC for adoption. The updated Terms of Reference are included in Annex II of this report.

XXIV. Other business (agenda item 23)

65. The Working Party decided that the workshop for its seventy-fifth session should discuss the following two topics:

- Railways at the centre of the post-pandemic recovery: setting up the next seventy-five sessions; and
- Connectivity and the role of railways.

66. The Chair, Vice-Chair and the secretariat would identify an appropriate name for the workshop in due course.

XXV. Date and venue of next session (agenda item 24)

67. The Working Party agreed to tentatively schedule the next session of SC.2 from 17 to 19 November 2021 in Geneva.

XXVI. Adoption of decisions (agenda item 25)

68. As agreed and in line with the Working Party decision of its fifty-second session (TRANS/SC.2/190, para. 6), the Working Party reviewed the main decisions of the session, and the secretariat, in cooperation with the Chair and Vice-Chairs prepared the present report.

69. The Working Party adopted its list of decisions which, as per recent EXCOM decision, would be subject to a 72-hour silence procedure in the event of technical connection difficulties of member State representatives.

70. Following the special procedures to take decisions in formal meetings with remote participation adopted by EXCOM on 5 October 2020, the decisions made at the session were circulated through all Geneva Permanent Representations for approval by silence procedure of 72 hours by the participating delegations of the session. The silence procedure closed on Thursday, 26 November 2020 at 18:00 (CET) and concluded without objections. The decisions of the above meeting are thus considered adopted. Related information is available on the UNECE website under www.unece.org/info/about-unece/executive-committee-excom/silence-procedure.html.

Annex I

Terms of reference for the Group of Experts on International Passenger Rail Hubs

Terms of reference

Group of Experts on “International railway passenger hubs”

Scope of issues and achievements expected

1. The Group of Experts will focus its work on the following issues:
 - (a) Identify the technical and service parameters necessary for the definition of an “International railway passenger hub or hubs”;
 - (b) Identify which stations on the AGC network should be defined as an “International railway passenger hub” and its type as appropriate;
 - (c) Identify what legal instrument or tool should be used to define and implement these “International railway passenger hubs” and draft the necessary legal provisions;
 - (d) Analyse the legal framework governing international passenger transportation in order to identify restrictions hindering the development of international passenger transport by rail in East – West traffic and prepare recommendations for its improvement;
 - (e) Prepare a document (recommendations, joint action plan, UNECE ITC resolution) on measures to support international rail carriers in the context of the crisis caused by the pandemic of the new coronavirus infection COVID-19;
 - (f) Propose a way forward in the form of a report to the Working Party on Rail Transport for consideration.

Methods of Work

2. The Group of Experts should take into consideration legal instruments, standards and guidelines already in place for the identification of different station types by the European Union Agency for Railways, OSJD, UIC, rail operators and infrastructure managers as well as industry experts. It should also look at good practice examples from other sectors with a particular focus on the aviation sector.
3. The Group of Experts will be established and function in accordance with the UNECE Guidelines for teams of specialists approved by the Executive Committee of UNECE on 31 March 2010 (ECE/EX/2/Rev.1). At its first meeting, the Group of Experts will adopt a work plan, clearly defining its objectives and activities, including a time schedule for their implementation.
4. The Group of Experts is expected to meet twice in 2021, at least twice in 2022 and at least twice in 2023 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva (when necessary also in hybrid form), before concluding its activities with the transmission of a report to the Working Party on Rail Transport at its seventy-seventh session (November 2023, Geneva).
5. Preparation of documents (at least 4 per session), translation of documents in the official languages of UNECE and simultaneous interpretation of its sessions in English, French, and Russian shall be provided by UNECE for all sessions held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

6. Participation in the Group of Experts is open to all concerned United Nations member countries and experts. Concerned intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as concerned railway administration authorities and companies, passenger associations and related entities are invited to participate and provide expert advice in compliance with United Nations rules and practices.

Secretariat

7. UNECE will provide secretariat services for the Group of Experts.

Annex II

Revised Terms of reference for the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2)

I. Mandate

1. The guidelines for the establishment and functioning of Working Parties within ECE stipulate that each Working Party prepares its terms of reference which must be adopted by its parent Sectoral Committee (ECE/EX/1, para. 3 (a)).
2. In accordance with this request, the Working Party on Rail Transport (hereafter SC.2) may wish to consider and adopt its terms of reference on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat.
3. This draft is based on the SC.2 programme of work and biennial evaluation for 2020-2021 (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2019/1) and the Implementation of the Inland Transport Committee Strategy document (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2019/2), as adopted by the seventy-third session of the Working Party in November 2019 (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/232, para. 73).

II. Terms of reference of the Working Party on Rail Transport

4. The Working Party on Rail Transport will act within the framework of the policies of the United Nations and the Economic Commission for Europe (hereafter ECE) and under the general supervision of the Inland Transport Committee (hereafter ITC) and in conformity with the Terms of Reference of ECE (E/ECE/778/Rev.5).
5. SC.2 will operate in accordance with the Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of Working Parties within ECE as approved by the ECE Executive Committee at its fourth meeting on 14 July 2006 (ECE/EX/1). These guidelines refer to its status and characteristics, including the review of its mandate and extension every five years, its membership and officers, its methods of work and its secretariat provided by the ECE Sustainable Transport Division.⁵
6. The activities identified below are in line with the objective of the ECE sustainable transport subprogramme to facilitate the international movement of persons and goods by inland transport modes and improve safety, environmental protection, energy efficiency and security in the transport sector to levels that contribute effectively to sustainable transport. They are also in line with the ITC Strategy to 2030 which identified the following four pillars where it should enhance its role going forward:
 - **Pillar A: The UN Platform for regional and global inland transport conventions.** By strengthening its role as the UN platform of inland transport conventions to all UN Member States and by remaining at the forefront of global efforts to curb the road safety crisis, through its 360° approach to road safety, cut emissions by setting and promoting its vehicle standards, and reduce cross-border barriers with its large set of facilitation conventions.
 - **Pillar B: The UN Platform for supporting new technologies and innovations in inland transport.** By ensuring that (i) its regulatory functions are keeping pace with cutting-edge **technologies** driving transport innovation - especially in the areas of

⁵ Working Party may wish to review this when the new Rules of Procedure for ITC are adopted.

Intelligent Transport Systems, autonomous vehicles and digitalization - thus improving traffic safety, environmental performance, energy efficiency, inland transport security and efficient service provision in the transport sector, (ii) the different amendment processes for the different conventions do not cause fragmentation, and (iii) the dangers of stifling progress due to too early regulation are avoided.

- **Pillar C: The UN Platform for regional, interregional and global inland transport policy dialogues.** By providing a platform for policy dialogue to review emerging challenges in **inland** transport, as well as proposals for improving infrastructure and operation at its annual session.
- **Pillar D: The UN Platform for promoting sustainable regional and interregional inland transport connectivity and mobility.** By providing a comprehensive, harmonized regulatory framework, as appropriate, and institutional reference point supporting international connectivity, developing new or building on existing initiatives, agreements, or corridors, as needed.

7. The main activities identified going forward are:

(a) update and extend the geographical scope of the European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC) network, increase the number of contracting parties to the AGC agreement, consider the AGC Agreement with a view to possibly implementing and, whenever feasible, improving existing standards and operational parameters; upgrading review the coherence between the AGC parameters and infrastructure standards established within the European Union (EU), the Eurasian Economic Union and other countries within the ECE region with a view to harmonizing them as appropriate. **(Pillar A)**;

(b) identify the need for new legal instruments in the rail sector for passenger and freight aimed at encouraging the further shift to rail as the most sustainable mode of transport and meeting the needs of the region's economies following the paradigm shift set in motion in the transport sector as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic. **(Pillar A)**;

(c) develop, improve and maintain constantly updated online tools, such as the web tool developed to monitor the AGC and the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC) network and its infrastructure standards and the Rail Security Observatory **(Pillar B)**;

(d) improve intermodal coordination and integration of railway with other transport modes with a view to contributing to the development of pan-European sustainable transport systems taking into account the interrelationship of the ECE E-Networks and in close cooperation with the Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24). **(Pillar D)**;

(e) foster the development of green transport through the review of technological advancements in rail transport aimed at increasing the efficiency of transport operations. **(Pillar B)**;

(f) assist in the development of harmonized safety approaches across the sector through constant discussions on rail safety issues. **(Pillar C)**;

(g) drive the development of a secure rail system through the exchange of best practice in this area. **(Pillar D)**;

(h) follow-up the developments of the ECE Trans European Railway (TER) Project, and explore further interaction between TER activities and that of SC.2; **(Pillar D)**;

(i) evaluate, study and review Euro-Asian rail traffic trends, developments and opportunities and explore possibilities for further contribution to and interaction with the

Euro-Asian Transport linkages (EATL) project and the preparation of relevant conclusions and recommendations in collaboration with the Working Party on Trends and Economics; **(Pillar C)**;

(j) facilitate international rail transport in the pan-European region through improved border crossing procedures and harmonization of technical specifications of different railway systems and their operations at borders in light of cooperation in the Contact Group between OSJD and the European Union Agency for Railways; **(Pillar A)**;

(k) support the implementation of expert group programmes and task forces as established by the Working Party and the Inland Transport Committee on technical and legal rail matters and review rail market trends, needs and challenges through the establishment of ad hoc expert groups and the elaboration of studies, as appropriate; **(Pillar A)**;

(l) monitor developments on the pan-European Rail Transport Corridors in cooperation with the European Commission; **(Pillar C)**;

(m) review general trends in rail transport developments and rail transport policy, analyze specific rail transport economic issues, assist in the collection, compilation and dissemination of rail transport statistics, in cooperation with the Working Party on Transport Statistics (WP.6), other governmental and non-governmental organizations, expert groups and task forces and prepare reports, reviews and publications concerning rail transport development and best practices; **(Pillar C)**.

8. SC.2 will promote and provide technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of rail transport.

9. SC.2 will encourage participation in its activities by fostering cooperation and collaboration with the European Commission, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other United Nations regional commissions and organizations or bodies of the United Nations system.

10. SC.2 will collaborate closely with other subsidiary bodies of ITC and other ECE body on matters of common interest.
