

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE MINISTERS OF TRANSPORT OF THE ECMT

[CEMT/CM(98)26]

At its meeting in Berlin, the Council of Ministers of the ECMT adopted a Statement on general transport policy. In this Statement, which was the ECMT's contribution to the Third Pan-European Transport Conference (Helsinki, 23-25 June 1997), the Council defined the ECMT's current role in an enlarged Europe and in that context set out guidelines for transport policy in the coming years.

Based on the Crete Declaration (Second Pan-European Transport Conference, Crete, March 1994) but also on initiatives taken to date in other for to promote a pan-European transport policy, the Statement focuses on a number of basic principles that should now be an integral part of such a policy, in addition to those contained in the Crete Declaration. It goes on to identify areas in which substantial progress remains to be made and the relevant provisions that the ECMT intends to put in place within its own institutional framework.

Given the general interest of this Statement, it was felt appropriate to reproduce it in full below, as delivered at the Helsinki Conference.

PREAMBLE

In response to the radical geopolitical changes that have taken place in Europe over the past decade, several initiatives have been launched in order to start preparing the ground for a new European transport system. While in most cases these initiatives have resulted, quite logically, in modification of existing forms of co-operation in order to adapt them to the change in circumstances, some of them have led to the emergence of new arrangements aimed at bringing all the current players in the transport sector together, on a very large scale, within the framework of Pan-European Transport Conferences.

Having already presented its views at the first such Conferences in Prague, on "Guidelines for Transport Policy in an integrated Europe", the ECMT, in its role as a forum for transport policy co-operation at pan-European level, has prepared the attached document for consideration at the Helsinki Conference, to be held in June 1997.

The ECMT shares the overall vision that lies behind the Crete Declaration and fully subscribes to all the basic principles set out in it. The ECMT considers, however, that these principles should be developed further, and in some areas updated in order to take account of recent developments, the needs and constraints arising from such developments, and the specific concerns of certain European Member countries that are not Member States of the European Union.

There is now a well-established consensus regarding both the general objective to be achieved, that of a coherent, efficient and safe pan-European transport system consistent with the principle of sustainable development, and the economic model on which the operation of this system should be based, namely the liberalised access to competitive transport markets. There are nonetheless some major problems to be overcome before such a transport system can be put in place. It is obvious that the various countries or groups of countries which will become part of the enlarged Europe do not all start from comparable levels of development. Major disparities will continue to exist for many years to come in terms of transport infrastructure, equipment and the quality of services. The geography and even the history of these countries also pose problems. The partners currently involved will not necessarily all derive the same benefits from the process now under way and changes to the rules applicable to transport in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe will result in short-term adjustment costs which will vary both from one country to another and from one operator to another. Any practical measures introduced must be drawn up and implemented in the specific context of each country. They must also strike a balance between the priorities adopted by that country (e.g. social and fiscal measures, protection of the environment, regional development, etc.) and the ensuing conflicts and constraints in terms of resource allocation.

Since it will not be possible in the short term to achieve this general objective in all countries, we need to put in place initial frameworks that will allow all the countries concerned, despite the difficulties at least, to move in the same direction and to take concrete steps towards the ultimate goal.

The duties incumbent on Ministers of Transport include not only the formulation of policy in the area for which they are responsible, but also the implementation of that policy. It is for this reason that the ECMT has focused its attention on the practical steps that need to be taken in order to achieve, by building on the existing common foundation, the outcome desired.

The present statement draws particular attention to the course of action which the ECMT considers to be most appropriate, in the light of the situation described above, and the provisions to this effect which the ECMT intends to put in place within its own institutional framework.

JOINT STATEMENT

The Council of Ministers of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT), meeting in Berlin, on 21st and 22nd April 1997:

1. **Welcomes the steps taken so far to promote a European-wide transport policy** by the institutions of the European Community as well as by the intergovernmental organisations responsible for transport in their respective fields of competence, particularly through the establishment of the Community legislation applicable to the sector, through various Agreements between the Community and other European countries, through the Conventions and Agreements elaborated in the framework of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE), the relevant Resolutions adopted by the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC) and by the ECMT itself¹.

2. **Emphasises the role of the ECMT**

- **in helping to create, in its capacity as political forum, an integrated transport system throughout the enlarged Europe** that is economically and technically efficient, meets the

highest possible safety and environmental standards and takes full account of the social dimension, and

- **in helping also to build a bridge between the European Union (EU)/the European Economic Area (EEA) and other parts of the continent at a political level.**

It recalls that, in pursuance of this latter role, it has already adopted a wide range of resolutions intended to extend the Community patrimony to all the Member countries of the Conference².

Furthermore, the multilateral quota of licences for the international transport of goods by road introduced within the framework of the ECMT and extended over the last few years to all of its new Member countries is working towards achieving the gradual integration of transport markets at the pan-European level³.

3. Supports the initiatives taken so far in other for a for a comprehensive approach to the integrated and sustainable development of transport services and systems, and in particular the following:

- The European Commission's White Paper on the future development of the common transport policy and the conclusions of the Council of the European Union on the subject.
- The European Commission's Action programme 1995-2000 for the common transport policy.
- The European Commission's White Paper on the preparation of the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe for integration into the internal market of the Union.
- The different Conventions and European Agreements affecting transport, drawn up within the framework of the UN/ECE.
- The Declaration by the Second Pan-European Transport Conference (Crete, March 1994).

4. Stresses the view expressed in the Crete Declaration that a European-wide transport policy must be developed as a comprehensive whole, with the principles defined in section B 1-5 being fully taken into account.

5. Endorses the approach set out in the Crete Declaration for further work on framing a Europe-wide transport policy and for developing a coherent transport system in Europe (points listed in C 1-9).

6. Considers it appropriate for the further development of pan-European Transport policy, to supplement the principles of the Crete Declaration with the following additional elements:

- To acknowledge that within the framework of a market-oriented economy a good balance must be struck between the overall contribution of transport to economic and social development on the one hand and environmental protection and safety on the other in the interests of **sustainable mobility**.
- To underline the relevance of the **subsidiarity principle**. According to this principle, action is taken at multilateral level only if the objectives of the proposed measure cannot be achieved satisfactorily at individual country level or below.

- To stress the importance of **promoting** an appropriate framework for an efficient development of environment-friendly and safe modes, such as rail, inland waterways transport, short sea shipping and **intermodal transport**, in particular combined transport.
- To recognise the essential role played by **road transport** owing to its flexibility, efficiency and the fact that it is a particularly suitable mode for short distances, in sparsely populated areas and as a connecting link between different modes.
- To highlight the importance of encouraging **interoperability** within and between different transport modes to create efficient transport systems that guarantee extensive access possibilities and interconnections.
- To recall the need to promote economic and social cohesion and help reduce regional disparities by taking into account **the particularities of island, landlocked and remote regions**, where the transport systems and connections with major transport networks still have to be improved.
- With regard to **government subsidies**, and taking into account the special characteristics of the transport sector, to stress the need for transparency in the funding of both private and public operators so that inefficiencies and distortion of competition can be avoided.

7. To facilitate trade and economic development of the continent in a sustainable way, with reference to the previously mentioned basic principles, it considers that further substantial progress has to be made in the following areas:

- General Transport Policy formulation and co-ordination.
- Gradual development of European transport infrastructure with the aim of achieving an integrated and coherent system.
- Improvement of the protection of the environment, safety and accessibility of the transport system.
- Progressive liberalisation of market access and adjustment of market structures to foster competition.
- Harmonisation and improvement of competitive conditions, including social aspects, and the equal and non-discriminatory application of corresponding provisions.
- Removal of obstacles to closer integration of all countries in Europe, in particular withdrawal of obstacles at border crossings, and guarantee of the security of transport operations.

8. Considers that it is particularly important in the coming years

- **In relation to general Transport Policy Formulation and Co-ordination**

To continue to work towards co-ordinated policies and practices in all European countries and the elimination of distortions and inefficiencies. This will require anticipation of and rapid reaction to new problems based on a solid, well-founded analysis of existing questions.

In this regard, the ECMT will:

- *continue to support integration in a variety of ways, i.e. political contributions, providing a forum for open and forward-looking policy dialogue and through studies, policies reviews and information exchange;*
- *continue to carry out economic research on a Europe-wide basis through Round Tables and symposia. Research findings will be brought into the policy discussion at an early stage so that solutions to emerging problems can be considered in good time. This will be supported by developing improved transport statistics.*

- **In relation to Infrastructure**

To develop transport infrastructure further through improvement and intelligent use of networks, better traffic management, interconnection of the EU/Trans-European network with the other parts of Europe and adequate funding. An intermodal approach to co-ordinate Member countries' investment plans of international importance more efficiently is required, in accordance with the principles and procedures established jointly by the different international organisations concerned, with a view to integrate both economic development needs and environment consequences. The ECMT welcomes the initiative taken by the European Commission to promote infrastructure systems as an important step towards a pan-European transport network; it will endeavour to ensure that the EU network is properly connected with the other ECMT countries.

In this regard, the ECMT which has made its contribution, in close co-operation with the EU and the UN/ECE in connection with the preparation for the Helsinki Conference, will:

- *continue to produce periodic policy reviews of European traffic trends, traffic forecasts, market developments, investments in transport infrastructure and extend the analysis to the current key policy issues facing decision makers;*
- *contribute to a better understanding of issues surrounding the allocation of infrastructure costs and harmonisation of the approach to allocation internationally, building on a short overview of the tax systems for road transport in the ECMT countries and on an analysis of the concrete effects of the separation of rail infrastructure and operations once this separation has taken place.*

The ECMT urges those Member countries which have not yet done so to accede to the AGTC (European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations), AGR (European Agreement on Main International Arteries) and AGC (European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines) agreements of the UN/ECE. It recommends that the AGN (European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance) be ratified in the near future.

- **In Relation to the Environment**

It is especially important to develop transport in line with best environmental practices and in line with the principle of cost efficiency as well as with the concept of sustainable development. Definition and implementation of stricter environmental standards for vehicles, internalisation of external costs and the reduction of air emissions, especially in urban areas, requires rapid progress.

In this regard, the ECMT will:

- *continue to work on the basis of the report on internalising external costs submitted in Berlin, and in close co-operation with the OECD and EU, on harmonised approaches to solutions;*
- *examine possibilities for further action in the context of the multilateral quota scheme, to encourage the use of vehicles that meet the highest environmental and safety standards;*
- *update its work on CO₂ emissions from transport and provide analysis of cost effective means of reducing them;*
- *continue its dialogue with the vehicle manufacturing industry to monitor progress in implementing the joint declaration adopted in 1995 and report on this dialogue every two years;*
- *follow-up its work with OECD on Urban Travel⁴ and will extend the analysis to new member countries and cities.*

The ECMT urges that the UN/ECE Conference on transport and the environment planned for November 1997 makes practical progress in the introduction of harmonised environmental standards. The ECMT will make an active contribution to this Conference.

- **In Relation to Safety and Accessibility of the Transport System:**

The provision of safe and accessible mobility are important objectives of transport policy. While there have been significant recent reductions in the toll of people killed and injured on European roads, the numbers involved are far too high and must be reduced.

In relation to accessibility, there has also been constructive progress in improving the transport system for people with mobility handicaps. The number of people concerned is growing steadily and much remains to be done to achieve a barrier free transport system for all people.

In this regard, the ECMT will:

- *continue to emphasise the importance of improving safety and urges its Member countries to implement fully its many recommendations on safety⁵. In particular, the ECMT will organise a Seminar in Poland in September 1997 on Communication Strategies in Road Safety and will continue its work on vulnerable road users;*
- *continue to foster access to transport for people with reduced mobility on the lines set out in the Declaration on Vulnerable Users and urges the implementation of the Comprehensive Resolution on this topic, adopted by its Council of Ministers in Berlin.*

- **In Relation to Market Access and Competition**

Market access and competition in all modes must be enhanced in the interests of efficiency. More particularly, in road transport, and where this has not already occurred, an orderly change to private ownership is required. It is also necessary to make rail and intermodal transport efficient and competitive and therefore to take steps to enable rail to develop its full potential, for example, through taking further measures to open-up rail networks to competition taking into account the experience gained from the first process of liberalisation which is in progress. Rail, inland waterway and short sea shipping operators must co-operate with their road haulage partners to contribute to the development of intermodal transport.

In this regard, the ECMT:

- *will continue its work on privatisation and deregulation to ensure an efficient and well-managed road sector, especially in the countries in transition, monitoring progress and providing policy advice;*
- *will continue to use its multilateral quota system as an important instrument of transport policy in an enlarged Europe;*
- *welcomes the initiative taken by the European Commission to further develop railway policy and will consider appropriate measures to supplement the existing railway Resolutions in this regard;*
- *will review the progress of railway reform, including the separation of infrastructure from operations, in Member countries and will report to its Council of Ministers in 1998, on the basis of the obtained results;*
- *urges that its Resolutions 94/6 and 97/2 on combined transport and in particular the extension of the EU/EEA regulation on initial and terminal road haulage be implemented in the entire ECMT area;*
- *suggests that short sea shipping issues be included in the UN/ECE's current work for an agreement on combined transport (AGTC) in the same way as was done for inland waterways.*

- **In Relation to Harmonisation of Competitive Conditions**

It is necessary to speed up on a complementary and parallel basis the convergence of legal and administrative provisions and their application in a uniform and non-discriminatory way, to promote market integration by building upon high-level criteria. To minimise competitive distortion, the following measures are necessary: stricter enforcement of existing provisions, especially of the rules for driving times in road haulage, as well as for weights and dimensions; examination of new rules on harmonisation of working conditions. It is indeed necessary to bear in mind the social issues of transport (harmonisation of provisions, accession to existing agreements and further development of technical instruments).

In this regard, the ECMT:

- *has prepared, as a follow-up to its Vienna resolution on market access, a standard bilateral road transport agreement and recommends its use to Member countries as a first step towards further harmonisation;*
- *will further develop its multilateral quota system as an important instrument for market integration and the harmonisation of environmental and safety standards, at the same time taking measures to prevent falsification of licences;*
- *welcomes and supports the EU negotiations on occasional passenger transport by buses and coaches (follow-up of the ECMT resolution on this subject) and urges their rapid conclusion;*
- *will continue to examine possibilities for extending EU legislation throughout Europe and, where appropriate, will adopt suitable resolutions;*
- *will organise Round Tables on the social issues of transport and draw conclusions from them for further action;*
- *recommends that all its Member countries accede to the European Agreement concerning the work of crews of vehicles engaged in international Road Transport (AETR), if they have not already done so;*
- *urges its Member countries to abolish discriminatory border or road user charges and other measures which are based on the origin of vehicles, drivers or loads.*

- **In Relation to Removing Obstacles to Efficiency**

There are a variety of obstacles to more efficient transport that need to be removed. First, it is necessary to further reduce waiting time at border crossings and simplify the customs clearance and other boarder crossing procedures. Technical compatibility of the various transport systems, both within modes and at their interface, also needs to be enhanced. Second, it is important to tackle the problem of growing traffic and congestion, given the limited possibilities to expand the network, especially in densely populated areas of Europe. Improvements should be made by using telematic systems and advanced traffic management systems. Third, it is essential to ensure that transport is securely and safely carried out and that crime, fraud and law-breaking are reduced dramatically. Fourth, it is necessary also for efficiency reasons, to move progressively towards the internalisation of transport's external costs.

In this regard, the ECMT:

- *recalls its Resolution 94/5 on the removal of obstacles at border crossings for International Road Goods Transport and recommends that its Member countries implement the proposed measures if they have not already done so;*
- *will continue its work for this purpose; in 1998 it will analyse the situation at that time and, where appropriate, recommend further measures;*
- *urges to increase the co-ordination of aid provided by different Institutions and to improve their transparency;*
- *recommends that its Member countries accede to the UN/ECE Convention on the harmonisation of border controls (October 1982) if they have not already done so;*
- *will continue analysis of specific aspects of interoperability, especially with respect to rail transport;*
- *will more specifically be working, in the area of enhanced telematics and, in close co-operation with the EU and industry, towards the development of harmonised, interoperable and practical applications. The major issues to be dealt with are:*
 - a) *the exchange of information on the use of new technologies and the related legal, administrative, organisational and economic issues;*
 - b) *the setting-up of consistent traffic messages and traffic management instruments, including working towards the standardisation of various information elements;*
 - c) *the elaboration of codes of practice for the exchange of international traffic management messages;*
 - d) *the monitoring implementation of particular technologies.*
 - *submits to the Helsinki Conference a Declaration on Crime in Transport which has been adopted by its Council of Ministers at its Berlin Session. The ECMT will review progress in implementing this Declaration.*

Finally, Ministers emphasise the importance of international dialogue and discussion to monitor and review the implementation of the above principles, to find practical ways of overcoming difficulties. They confirm ECMT's role in contributing actively and constructively to this dialogue and thereby to the attainment of coherent and efficient sound transport system in the enlarged Europe, consistent with the goals of safety, environment and social policy."

NOTES

1. -- In particular Consolidated Resolution No. 94/4 on Road Goods Transport.
2. -- Resolution No. 90/2 on the Use of Vehicles Hired without Drivers for the International Carriage of Goods by Road.
 - Resolution No. 91/1 on the Weights, Dimensions and Certain Other Technical Characteristics of Certain vehicles.
 - Resolution No. 93/6 on the Development of International Rail Transport.
 - Consolidated Resolution No. 94/4 on Road Goods Transport.
 - Resolution No. 95/1 on the Access to the European Transport Markets.
 - Resolution No. 95/2 on the International Passenger Transport by Buses and Coaches.
 - Resolution No. 95/3 on the Extension of the Resolution on the Development of International Rail Transport.
3. -- Resolution No. 91/2 on the Situation with Respect to the ECMT Multilateral Quota for International Transport of Goods by Road as at 1st January 1992.
 - Resolution No. 92/1 on the ECMT Multilateral Quota of Licences for the International Transport of Goods by Road for Hire or Reward.
 - Document [ECMT/CM(93)12/Final/Rev1] on Proposals with respect to the Development of the Multilateral Quota.
 - Resolution No. 95/4 on the Introduction of the Greener and Safe Lorry in the Context of the Multilateral Quota System.
 - Document [ECMT/CM(96)5] on Proposals for a Distribution of the Quota from 1st January 1997.
4. Published as: ECMT/OECD (1995). 'Urban Travel and Sustainable Development', Paris.
5. Summarised in: ECMT (1986 and 1994), 'Principal Actions of ECMT in the Field of Road Safety', Paris.
See also:
 - Recommendations/Conclusions on Speed Moderation, adopted in May 1996.
 - Resolution on Vulnerable Road Users: the Cyclists.