DANGEROUS GOODS PANEL

MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP OF THE WHOLE

Frankfurt, 16 to 20 September 2002

Agenda Item 2: Development of recommendations for amendments to the Technical Instructions for incorporation in the 2005/2006 edition

DISCUSSION BY UNCOE ON SEQUENCE OF INFORMATION

(Presented by the Secretary)

Extract from the Report of the UN Sub-Committee of Experts on its seventeenth session (6-15 December 1999)

TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS DOCUMENTATION

Documents: ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/1998/20 (United Kingdom)
ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/1999/58 and -/Add.1 (United States of America)
ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/1999/67 (UIC)
ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/1999/69 (CEPE)
ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/1999/91 (Netherlands)

Informal documents: INF.5 (CEPE)
INF.16 (United States of America)

28. The Sub-Committee welcomed the work carried out in particular by CEPE and the United States of America on the revision of Chapter 5.4 of the Model Regulations.

29. The question had arisen as to whether an in-depth revision of this chapter should be made during the current biennium or a revision with a view to harmonizing the various existing modal regulations.

30. The expert from the United Kingdom expressed the hope that an in-depth revision would be made, in accordance with his document ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/1998/20, following an analysis of the real utility of the present requirements, bearing in mind the imperatives of safety. The work done by CEPE was a useful starting point. These documents, however, should rather be studied by an informal working group which FIATA had proposed to convene.

31. The expert from the United States of America considered that the present requirements stemmed from well-justified safety imperatives and that there was no need to call them into question again without detailed justification on the sole basis of surveys of transport document users concerning their utility. He preferred a revision of the wording so as to harmonize the various requirements of current modal regulations, as proposed in his document.

32. It was, however, pointed out that the proposal by the United States of America introduced a large number of new requirements which did not exist in the current international regulations, such as, for example, that of an emergency telephone number in the transport document.

33. The expert from the United States said that the new requirements on emergency response in his document could be the subject of separate proposals. The Sub-Committee therefore made an informal drafting group, which met between meetings, responsible for considering the proposal for Chapter 5.4 prepared by the United States of America.

34. The representative of CEFIC expressed disappointment at the procedure adopted since he would like an in-depth revision of this chapter in order to make possible an international multimodal transport operation in which the particulars to be included in the transport document would be the same whatever transport mode was used or whatever the country through which the transport passed.

35. With reference to the sequence of information to be included in the transport document (ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/1999/67, -/C.3/1999/91 and INF.16), a matter of frequent debate between those in favour of information beginning with the official shipping name as currently prescribed in the Model Regulations, the IMDG Code and the ICAO Technical Instructions, and those in favour of putting the UN number first (as in ADR and RID) since it was more easily comprehensible in international transport operations between countries using different languages, opinions remained very divided. After a close vote, it was decided to keep to the currently prescribed sequence.

36. The expert from Belgium said that the present problems of consignors derived from the fact that different sequences were prescribed. In his opinion, the sequence was not of great importance since the important facts were grouped together in any case; he would prepare a proposal removing the requirement of a given sequence, and this should solve the practical problems.

37. The proposal by UIC concerning the specification of the subsidiary risk for Class 2 in document ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/1999/67 received no support and was withdrawn.

Extract from the Report of the UN Sub-Committee of Experts on its eighteenth session (3-12 July 2000)

TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS DOCUMENTATION

Documents: ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/1999/58 and -/Add.1 (United States of America)
ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/1999/69 (CEPE)
ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/2000/6 (Belgium)
ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/2000/11 (Belgium and Netherlands)
ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/2000/5 (IMO)
ST/SG/AC.10/1998/6 (India)

Informal document: INF.54 (CEFIC)

23. In the absence of the expert from India, document ST/SG/AC.10/1998/6 was not discussed.

24. The Sub-Committee carried out a second reading of the texts adopted at the previous session (see ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/34, annex 3); the amendments adopted can be found in annex 2.

25. Several experts supported the proposal by Belgium that provision should be made for two acceptable alternative sequences of information in the transport document (paragraph 5.4.1.4.2), one corresponding to the present conditions of the Model Regulations (proper shipping name, class, subsidiary risk, UN number and packing group), and the other applying to transport by land in Europe (UN number, proper shipping name, class, etc.).

26. The representatives of ICCA, AISE and FIATA said that the proposal was a good compromise for industry, but that it would only be acceptable if it was effectively implemented for all transport modes.

27. The representative of ICAO said that for transport by air a single accepted sequence would be preferable.

28. Several experts also considered that a single sequence would be preferable.

29. A vote was taken on the proposal by Belgium, but the proposal was not adopted since the votes were equally divided.

Extract from the Report of the UN Committee of Experts on its twentieth-first session (4-13 December 2000)

Sequence of information in the transport document

Document: ST/SG/AC.10/2000/36 (IATA)

Informal documents: INF.5 (HMAC)
INF.7 (United States of America)
INF.27 (Canada)
INF.36 (CTIF)
INF.62 (New Zealand)

33. The representative of IATA asked that the Committee should go back on the Sub-Committee's decision to modify the sequence of information required in the transport document, since he considered that the sequence was of little importance from the safety point of view but that the change would entail enormous expenses for the air transport sector, partly because of the updating of computing systems and partly because of training programmes.

34. This opinion was shared by the experts from the United States of America and Canada who had given detailed arguments in their respective informal documents. They said that it must be possible to justify any amendment to their national regulations on grounds of safety, particularly if such amendments gave rise to costs for industry; in the case in question there was no real justification. They therefore reserved the possibility of not applying the new sequence if it was adopted by the Committee.

35. In informal documents INF.5 and INF.36, HMAC and CTIF also supported IATA's proposal, and the representative of ICAO said that her organization was similarly not in favour of the change recommended by the Sub-Committee.

36. The experts from Norway and the United Kingdom expressed surprise at the stance taken by CTIF and said that the national CTIF committees in their respective countries had not been consulted and did not share that point of view. Like several other experts and observers, they considered that putting the UN number first in the transport document was an important safety feature in the context of international transport in multilingual regions like Europe, where the language used in the transport document, which was not necessarily English as in the United States or in air transport, was not always understood by the emergency services.

37. The expert from Belgium recalled that he had submitted a proposal to the Sub-Committee not to prescribe a specific sequence, but that it had been rejected. The expert from France and the representative of ICCA had considered that this would be an appropriate solution to the dispute caused by divided opinions regarding the sequence of information.

38. The Committee took note of the information submitted by the observer from New Zealand who supported the IATA proposal but noted that in his country a specific sequence was not obligatory.

39. The representative of UIC said that for international rail transport putting the UN number in first place was a safety factor, since during a first emergency response to an accident railway workers and the emergency services were not in a position to understand a chemical name, particularly if it was in a foreign language. It was only during the second stage of the response that specialists could make use of the information stemming from a chemical name. He also said that the Committee had adopted amendments to the information to be included in the transport document, in particular as regards the subsidiary risk, and that this would in any case force industry, for clearly justified safety reasons, to modify its computing systems and train staff. A simultaneous modification of the sequence of information would not therefore entail additional expense. He proposed that initially both sequences should be authorized.

40. The representative of IATA said that he was amending his proposal to permit the optional use of both sequences. The representatives of Germany, Canada and the United States of America said that, in view of the discussion, they supported the revised IATA proposal.

41. The representative of the United Kingdom said that this compromise was not desirable since his country's industry would like there to be no possible differences between the various modal or national regulations and that a single sequence, applicable worldwide, should be used for all transport modes.

42. The experts from Belgium and France and the observer from the Bahamas said that this compromise was liable to leave the choice of prescribing one or other of the two sequences to each country and each international organization and that this would not settle the ongoing problem. If the compromise was to be effective from the point of view of the facilitation of international transport, it would be essential that all national and international regulations should authorize the optional use of each of the two sequences. They therefore asked ICAO and IATA what their intentions were in that regard.

43. The representative of ICAO said that her organization had not discussed that option and that she could not therefore state a position. The representative of IATA said that as a matter of principle the IATA regulations would be brought into line with ICAO's Technical Instructions.

44. The compromise proposal was adopted by a large majority (see annex 2).