

3rd IRU/EU Road Transport Conference



“ The Road Transport Market Competitiveness & Partnership. Transforming Challenges into Effective Solutions for Growth ”

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High Level Panel Discussion: Road Transport Solutions to Ensure Efficient Market Operations Between the EU and its Neighbours

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

It is a pleasure for me to be here with you today, as a member of this highly respectable panel of Ministers and colleagues.

Today, I will be speaking on behalf of the organised private bus, coach and taxi industries in Europe and beyond, which are represented, through their national trade associations by the IRU Passenger Transport Council and the IRU Taxi Group. And since our discussions this afternoon will take the form of a panel debate I will keep my opening comments brief, but would like to highlight how working in partnership we can further facilitate mobility in the EU and beyond.

Firstly, however allow me to express our sincere gratitude to the European Commission, the European Parliament and all our public and private partners, who were involved in the recently completed work of the EU public-private Smart Move High Level Group. This first of its kind initiative, recognising buses, coaches and taxis as the most dynamic element of the public transport chain, proposed 16 concrete recommendations on how to double their use by 2025, as a strategic EU policy and business objective.

I would like to take this opportunity to ask you to support wholeheartedly the outcomes of the High Level Group. In particular, and extremely important for our industry, is the increase of the weight of two-axle coaches to 19.5 tones to allow for more environmentally friendly engines, an issue which is currently being discussed by the Council of the EU and the European Parliament. Similarly I would urge you to back the Smart Move Citizens' Mobility Forum that aims to monitor the implementation of the High Level Group recommendations.

We also believe that the public-private partnership model established by the EU Smart Move High Level Group, should be used as a model for Nation States and other regions beyond the EU to work out specific, concrete long term plans to achieve the objective of doubling the use of collective land passenger transport in close partnership with the private bus, coach and taxi industries. I would commend this approach to you all.

This panel discussion will focus on efficient market operations between the EU and its neighbours. As you may know, the IRU has submitted to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe a proposal for a global multilateral agreement on international scheduled bus and coach services, called "OmniBUS". The proposal was supported by many Governments, and it is now in the final stages of preparation before a final debate at the UN headquarters in Geneva at the end of October this year.

Unfortunately, the European Commission has not been able to fully participate in this debate as Member States have refused to give the European Commission a mandate to negotiate on this important agreement. Hence my appeal today to policy and decision makers at EU level is to find an URGENT solution to their disagreement, so that the European Commission could join the final debate and contribute in the most constructive way possible.

Allow me also to state publicly the IRU's strong support for the European Commission's request for a mandate to extend the geographical coverage of the existing Interbus Agreement on international occasional services by coach and bus, concluded between the EU and several of its neighbouring countries. By expanding the geographical scope of Interbus, the largest global area of group tourism by coach can be created. The tremendous facilitation potential of both OmniBUS and Interbus should be enthusiastically embraced for the benefit of citizens, businesses and the economy as a whole.

Finally, and this may be a surprise for many of you, the IRU Taxi Group is currently finalising the work on a model bilateral agreement on cross-border taxi services between EU Member States. The objective is to have it adopted this year and to propose it, through the IRU Taxi Member Associations, to the individual Governments and groups of States, who want to facilitate cross-border taxi services between themselves. It would be based on common rules, including rules on access to the profession and training. Once this work has been finished, it is also the intention of the IRU Taxi Group to propose a similar model bilateral agreement covering third countries, which are not Members of the European Union.

As you see, colleagues, friends, we have been at the forefront of the international facilitation process, most of the time in close cooperation with other competent authorities. Yet a lot still remains to be done, so that we could jointly contribute to the sustainable mobility of all at the lowest cost to society.

I look forward to the discussion to come and I thank you for your attention.
