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Dear Mr Stelmaszczyk,

LONGER SEMI-TRAILERS

I am writing to set out the United Kingdom's position on the relationship between Directive 96/53 and our recent proposal to allow semi-trailers with a loading length of 15.65 metres to circulate in national traffic. This follows my meeting on 12 May with Roberto Ferravante.

At that meeting, Mr Ferravante stated the Commission's opinion that the United Kingdom's proposal to allow these longer semi-trailers in national traffic was not in conformity with Directive 96/53. He stated that Article 4.4 b) of that Directive, on which we had been relying as the legal basis for our proposed derogation, was intended to cover the case of 25.25 metre "gigaliners" and allow other operators visiting the Member States which permit these vehicles in their territory to achieve the same loading length through the modular concept.

Whilst we agree that the wording of Article 4.4 b) covers the case of gigaliners, we do not agree that the article covers **only** such vehicles.

Article 4.4 b) provides that if a Member State allows a vehicle or vehicle combination to be used, which is longer than the maximum length set out in Annex I, then that Member State must also allow motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers to be used in a modular concept that would allow the increased loading length to be matched. In this way, the conditions of competition would be equalised.

In the case of the United Kingdom, we are proposing to allow semi-trailers with a loading length of 15.65 metres. The same loading length is achieved by a motor vehicle with trailer ("road train") which is in conformity with paragraph 1.7 of Annex I of the Directive. Therefore, we believe that our proposal would satisfy the condition in Article 4.4 b), viz that we also permit Annex I compliant modules to match the 15.65 metre loading length.

There is nothing in either Article 4.4 or the corresponding recitals which limits the application of this possibility to "gigaliners" or other very long vehicles.

I would be very happy to meet you to discuss the United Kingdom's proposals in more detail if that would be helpful. I would also like to renew our invitation (Paul Hayes's e-mail

of 13 February refers) to you and Mr Ferravante to visit the United Kingdom to receive a presentation on longer semi-trailers from the contractors who carried out the research, and to see a mock-up of the vehicle concerned.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Denton