

Opening Remarks

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United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Capacity Building Workshop

"Implementation of the eTIR international system in the ESCWA region"
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Dear delegates, dear friends,

It is my honor and privilege to address this important capacity building workshop on the implementation of the eTIR international system in the ESCWA region, which has been co-organized by ESCWA – ECE – IRU – and the EuroMED project.

In February of this year, a historical moment for the TIR Convention took place, marking the end of the so-called Phase III of the TIR revision process: the adoption by the TIR Administrative Committee of a new Annex 11 to the Convention, introducing the eTIR international system. A phase which started way back in 1998 (as an activity of a limited duration) with the aim to initiate a modernized, EDI-based customs administration and control system. I will not go into the reasons why it took more than 20 years to get to the point where we are now but I guess that you are all familiar with the complex and, at times, complicated process to arrive at a consensus decision in the international level playing field. But we are here now today, and that is what counts, discussing already the implementation of the eTIR international system in the ESCWA region.

Of course, the adoption of Annex 11 only marks a first step in an ambitious and vast project to realize the full computerization of the TIR Convention. But it provides contracting parties the required momentum to start making realistic and tangible plans at the national level. At the

same time, I encourage all member States of the ESCWA region to express their interest in interconnecting their national customs systems with the eTIR international system, already today, even though Annex 11 is not yet in force, thus paving the way for a smooth transition from the paper-based TIR procedure to the paperless and contactless electronic guarantees that the eTIR international system provides.

In addition, there is another big opportunity that ESCWA member States could take advantage of and this is the right moment to do so. I am fully aware that, up to now, the use of the TIR procedure was not so advanced in the ESCWA region, despite the fact that the majority of ESCWA member States are contracting parties to the TIR Convention. However, the need for smooth and efficient border crossing procedures exists, also for this region. Connecting to the eTIR international system will bring flexibility, less cost and time for all stakeholders, while increasing security and enhancing risk management. eTIR can adapt to your needs and requirements and become the single border crossing tool for the whole region, fully advancing trade and transport facilitation. The TIR secretariat at ECE, with the help of the ESCWA commission and, of course, IRU stands ready to help and guide you with this endeavor.

To end my speech, I would like to explicitly express my heartfelt thanks to all governments of the ESCWA region, our colleagues from the ESCWA commission, IRU and national associations as well as the Euromed project for organizing this workshop yesterday and today, which is a concrete step towards the full implementation of the eTIR international system in the region.

I thank you all for your attention and I give the floor back to the secretariat to proceed with the rest of the agenda.