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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Customs Questions
affecting Transport

Informal Ad Hoc Expert Group on the
Computerization of the TIR Procedure

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE FIRST SESSION

**to be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
starting at 10.00 hours on Monday, 19 February 2001***

* Full simultaneous interpretation services will be provided during the session (English, French and Russian).

* For reasons of economy, delegates are requested to bring copies of the documents mentioned in this provisional agenda to the meeting. There will be no documentation available in the meeting room. Before the meeting missing documents may be obtained directly from the ECE Transport Division (Fax: +41-22-917-0039; e-mail: artur.bouten@unece.org). During the meeting, documents may be obtained from the UNOG Documents Distribution Section (Room C. 111, 1st floor, Palais des Nations). In accordance with the accreditation procedures applicable for all meetings held at the Palais des Nations, delegates are requested to fill-in the attached registration form (also available from the web site of the UN/ECE Transport Division (www.unece.org)) and to transmit the duly filled-in form at the latest one week before the session to the UN/ECE Transport Division, either by fax (+41-22-917-0039) or by e-mail (artur.bouten@unece.org). In Geneva, prior to the session, delegates are requested to present themselves at the Pass and Identification Unit of the UNOG Security and Safety Section, located at the Villa Les Feuillantines, 13 Avenue de la Paix (see attached map), for issuance of an identification badge. In case of difficulties, please phone the UN/ECE secretariat (Int. 72433).

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1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

In accordance with the Commission's rules of procedure, the first item to be considered is the adoption of the agenda (Informal Document No. 2 (2001)).

2. MANDATE

The Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30), at its ninety-sixth and ninety-seventh sessions, considering the work to be undertaken under Phase III of the TIR revision process decided that the following elements should be studied:

- (a) Revision of the TIR Carnet, including the insertion of additional data elements (ID number, HS code, value of goods, etc.) (TRANS/WP.30/188, para. 31);
- (b) Increase in the number of places for loading and unloading under Customs seal (TRANS/WP.30/186, paras. 42 and 43);
- (c) Possibilities for the reduction of the legally required delays for notification of non-discharge of TIR Carnets (TRANS/WP.30/188, para. 38);
- (d) Use of new technologies in TIR operations also with a view to reducing the delay in notification of non-discharge (TRANS/WP.30/188, para. 31).

Elements (a) to (c) could be prepared and considered by the Working Party in plenary session. Activities under element (d) would however require the assistance of an ad hoc expert group (TRANS/WP.30/192, paras. 33 and 34). These views were endorsed by the TIR Administrative Committee at its twenty-ninth session (TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/59, paras. 51 and 52).

The Working Party recalled in this context that, at its ninety-fourth and ninety-fifth sessions, it had considered Informal Documents No. 1 and 7 (2000) prepared by the secretariat and Informal Document No. 8 (2000) prepared by the European Commission which provided some reflections on the necessary steps to be taken and the elements to be considered in order to arrive at a consistent and target-oriented package of amendment proposals under Phase III of the TIR revision process, focusing on EDI procedures. In particular, Informal Document No. 1 (2000) listed a number of Customs requirements which would need to be addressed by EDI procedures in the framework of the TIR Convention as well as some remarks on possible approaches that might be taken into

account in the computerization of the TIR procedure (TRANS/WP.30/190, paras. 25-30; TRANS/WP.30/188, paras. 31-38).

In order to make progress in this complex field, the Working Party decided to convene a first session of the ad hoc group of experts on the computerization of the TIR regime already in early 2001 which should be attended by experts from interested countries, international organizations and EDI industry groups.

The group of experts, after having highlighted weaknesses and limitations of the current system, should, in particular:

- (a) identify the objectives, procedures and required resources for the computerization of the TIR procedure and determine the role of the various actors (secretariat, Governments, IRU, etc.) in this process;
- (b) analyze all administrative and legal requirements relevant for the computerization of the TIR regime;
- (c) study suitable technological solutions in this respect; and
- (d) take account of experiences made with similar automated systems at the national as well as sub-regional levels, such as the NCTS, with a view to preparing possible alternative solutions and scenarios, specifying the benefits as well as the disadvantages of the various approaches.

The findings of the expert group should be considered by the Working Party and/or the TIR Contact Group during the course of 2001 (TRANS/WP.30/192, para. 37).

3. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION BY THE EXPERT GROUP

The Working Party, at its ninety-fifth session, taking account of Informal Documents No. 1 and 8 (2000), had been of the view that, following the conclusion of Phases I and II of the TIR revision process, the next logical step was to provide the TIR regime with the legal and administrative basis to allow for the use of modern information, management and control technology based on highly automated and secured electronic procedures.

The Working Party recognized that computerization of the TIR procedure was inevitable:

- (a) in the light of today's extremely rapid technological developments, based on Internet and Smart Card technologies, particularly affecting international transport and trade,
- (b) the ever increasing need for improved efficiency of Customs transit procedures and
- (c) the fight against fraudulent activities which must be conducted with the most appropriate and effective means.

For this purpose, the strategy, the structures and the electronic platforms to be used during the computerization process of the TIR regime had to be identified and determined at an early stage in close consultation with all national Customs authorities and transport interests in order to provide national Customs authorities and the transport industry with the necessary long-term stability in its administrative procedures and the underlying legal framework.

The Working Party felt that the existing and widely varying national Customs procedures, administrative practices and legal requirements in the Contracting Parties to the Convention should be taken into account during this process. Computerization of the TIR procedure, based on the TIR regime as revised during Phases I and II of the TIR revision process, would therefore have to focus on the possibility of linking national Customs transit procedures via a standard electronic and/or paper-based data file containing all information of the TIR Carnet. The newly to be created electronic data file would need to be compatible with most if not all possible technical EDI solutions applied or yet to be applied in the Contracting Parties to the Convention.

The link between national Customs procedures and the transfer of data files should be possible via:

- (a) international EDI systems, as is being done in the New Computerized Transit System (NCTS),
- (b) Smart Cards that could be filled-in and carried along by the transport operator as well as filled-in, read and validated by Customs authorities, or
- (c) the present paper-based TIR Carnets, possibly supplemented by bar-code and TIR Carnet holder identification systems.

The Working Party was of the view that, whatever system is to be used, the approach taken in computerization of the TIR regime must be courageous and forward looking and should be able to

accommodate all possible technological solutions likely to be implemented in the years ahead (TRANS/WP.30/190, paras. 25-29).

Following these discussions in the Working Party, it is proposed that the first session of the informal ad hoc group of experts should focus on the available technologies and on experiences already made by Customs authorities and international organizations in computerizing Customs procedures, particularly transit procedures. The objective of this first session of the group of experts is therefore to create awareness among Customs officials on possible approaches and procedures in this field. To achieve this objective, the session is held just prior to the spring session of the Working Party to allow a large number of participants from Governmental authorities to attend.

4. TECHNOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND SOLUTIONS

In accordance with the above considerations of the Working Party, the secretariat has invited representatives of some EDI groups as well as international organizations to present briefly existing technologies which may assist Customs authorities in obtaining the objectives of Phase III of the TIR revision process in this respect, i.e. the introduction of efficient and secure automated management and control procedures in line with present and future data capture used by Customs authorities and international transport and trade. A short statement transmitted by FIATA is contained in Informal Document No. 5 (2001).

(a) **Electronic documents based on bar-code systems**

Example: Smart Document

The group of experts will be informed by representatives of TATIS Ltd. of the so-called Smart Document technology and its possible application in the framework of the TIR system (Informal Document No. 3 (2001)).

TATIS Ltd. has developed the Smart Document technology to bridge the gap between a paper-based system such as the TIR system and the digital world of electronic data exchange by introducing the use of a two dimensional bar code technology. With the use of this technology an electronic version of the TIR Carnet could be produced in addition to the existing paper carnet, thus allowing the traditional TIR system to continue until it is fully computerized.

(b) **Smart Card**

The group of experts will be informed by representatives of the 3T Project of their proposal to introduce modern technology into the TIR system (Informal Document No. 4 (2001)).

The 3 T (Transnational Telematics Transactions) Project envisages the replacement of the paper based TIR Carnet by a micro circuit smart card, which creates a seamless chain of information between consignor and consignee, thus linking trade and Customs.

(c) **NCTS approach**

The group of experts will be informed by representatives from the European Commission of the New Computerized Transit System (NCTS) which is currently being introduced in the 22 Contracting Parties of the Common Transit Convention (European Community, Czech Republic, Hungary, Iceland, Norway, Poland, Slovak Republic, Switzerland) (Informal Document No. 6 (2001)).

Based on the use of advanced computer systems and electronic data processing the NCTS will serve as an important tool to manage and control both the external and internal Community transit and common transit, thus replacing the current paper based system carried out using the Single Administrative Document (SAD), made out as either a 'T1-' or 'T2-document'. It is estimated that the NCTS will eventually link some 3000 Customs offices and is fully operational by 2004.

(d) **ASYCUDA**

The group of experts will be informed of the latest developments in ASYCUDA, the Automated Systems for Customs Data, launched by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (Informal Document No. 8 (2001)).

ASYCUDA is a computerized Customs management system which covers most foreign trade procedures. The system handles manifests and Customs declarations, accounting procedures as well as transit and suspense procedures. At present ASYCUDA covers Customs procedures in over 80 countries world-wide.

The latest version of the program, ASYCUDA ++, contains a module for the treatment of all major customs procedures, enabling, inter alia, the control of movements under cover of a TIR Carnet.

5. THE IRU SAFETIR APPROACH AND ITS PERSPECTIVES

The group of experts will be informed by the representatives of IRU about the IRU SAFETIR system based on the Recommendation adopted by the TIR Administrative Committee on 20 October 1995 and its possible future perspectives, covering the distribution of TIR Carnets, issuance by the national associations, the start of the TIR transport until its termination as well as the return of the TIR Carnet to the national association and its delivery for storage to the IRU (Informal Document No. 7 (2001)).

6. FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES BY THE EXPERT GROUP, THE TIREXB AND WP.30

In line with the decisions of the Working Party at its ninety-sixth session (TRANS/WP.30/192, para. 37), the group of experts, taking account of the considerations at its present session, may wish to consider concrete steps to be taken at further sessions, by the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB) or the Working Party in order to make progress in the application of new technologies in TIR operations as part of Phase III of the TIR revision process.

Following the session of the expert group, the secretariat will prepare a short report for transmission to the Working Party.



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