


Economic Commission for Europe
Inland Transport Committee
Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport
154th session

Geneva, 4–7 February 2020

**Report of the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting
 Transport on its 154th session**
Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Attendance.....	1	3
II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)	2	3
III. Election of officers (agenda item 2)	3	3
IV. Activities of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe bodies and other United Nations organizations of interest to the Working Party (agenda item 3).....	4–9	3
A. The Inland Transport Committee recommendations for enhancing national road safety systems	4	3
B. Alignment of the work of the Working Party with the Inland Transport Committee Strategy	5–9	3
V. Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention, 1975) (agenda item 4)	10–33	7
A. Status of the Convention.....	10	7
B. Revision of the Convention	11–21	8
1. Amendment proposals to the Convention	11–14	8
2. Preparation of Phase III of the TIR revision process.....	15–21	8
(a) eTIR pilot projects	15–17	8
(b) Activities of the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure.....	18–20	9
(c) Conversion of the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure into a formal Group of Experts.....	21	9



C.	Application of the Convention.....	22–33	10
1.	New developments in the application of the Convention	22	10
2.	TIR-related electronic data interchange systems	23	10
3.	Settlement of claims for payments	24	10
4.	Other matters	25–33	10
(a)	Issues in the application of the TIR Convention in the Republic of Belarus	25–28	10
(b)	Decline in the sale of TIR Carnets	29–32	11
(c)	Other matters.....	33	11
VI.	Convention on the Facilitation of Border Crossing Procedures for Passengers, Luggage and Load-Luggage carried in International Traffic by Rail (agenda item 5).....	34	11
VII.	Customs Conventions on the Temporary Importation of Private Road Vehicles (1954) and Commercial Road Vehicles (1956) (agenda item 6)	35–38	12
A.	Status of the Conventions	35	12
B.	Issues in the application of the 1954 Convention in Egypt and Jordan	36–38	12
VIII.	Introduction of new technologies in rail, road, road-based mobility, inland waterway, logistics and intermodal transport until 2030 (agenda item 7)....	39	12
IX.	Activities of other organizations and countries of interest to the Working Party (agenda item 8).....	40–48	12
A.	European Union	40	12
B.	Economic Cooperation Organization.....	41–46	13
C.	Eurasian Economic Union	47	13
D.	World Customs Organizations.....	48	13
X.	Other business (agenda item 9)	49–51	14
A.	List of decisions	49	14
B.	Dates of the next sessions	50	14
C.	Restriction on the distribution of documents	51	14
XI.	Adoption of the report (agenda item 10)	52	14
Annex			
	List of decisions taken at the 154th session of the Working Party		15

I. Attendance

1. The Working Party (WP.30) held its 154th session from 4 to 7 February 2020 in Geneva. The session was attended by representatives of the following countries: Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Uzbekistan. Representatives of the European Union were also present. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC). The following non-governmental organizations were represented: Alliance Internationale de Tourisme / Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (AIT/FIA), International Road Transport Union (IRU).

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

2. WP.30 adopted the provisional agenda, prepared by the secretariat (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/307).

III. Election of officers (agenda item 2)

3. In accordance with the Commission's rules and procedures and established practice, WP.30 elected Mr. R. Kristiansson (Sweden) as Chair and Mr. O. Fedorov (Ukraine) as Vice-Chair for its sessions in 2020. In his introductory statement, Mr. Kristiansson informed the Working Party that 2020 was the last year that he would be available as Chair, considering his upcoming retirement in 2021. The secretariat called upon delegations to actively solicit candidates to step forward to become Chair or Vice-Chair of WP.30 as of the year 2021.

IV. Activities of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe bodies and other United Nations organizations of interest to the Working Party (agenda item 3)

A. The Inland Transport Committee recommendations for enhancing national road safety systems

4. The secretariat informed WP.30 that the results of the survey among TIR customs focal points, with copy to WP.30 delegates, soliciting national experiences with customs-related activities in the field of road safety, contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2019/7/Rev.1, had been tabled as part of the reporting to the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) on border crossing activities (see ECE/TRANS/293/Add.1, agenda item III, 4 (k) and ECE/TRANS/2020/14, paragraph 28).

B. Alignment of the work of the Working Party with the Inland Transport Committee strategy

5. The secretariat informed WP.30 that document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2019/8 and its Corr. 1, containing a list of tasks that the Working Party should undertake in the coming years in addition to its regular work to support the implementation of the ITC strategy, had been tabled as part of the reporting to ITC on border crossing activities (see ECE/TRANS/293/Add.1, agenda item III, 4 (k) and ECE/TRANS/2020/14, paragraph 29).

6. Further to the task to consider amending legal instruments with geographical or procedural barriers, the secretariat prepared document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2020/1, summarizing the main scope of the seventeen legal instruments under the auspices of the

Working Party, reviewing the final clauses and proposing, where required or deemed appropriate, amendments.

7. The delegation of the European Union informed the Working Party that it had started its assessment of this comprehensive document, but that more time was needed to collect and analyse feedback from Member States. The delegation of Ukraine invited the Working Party to also refer to other legal instruments, such as the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement, and various World Customs Organization legal instruments, such as the Revised Kyoto Convention and various temporary importation conventions, in its assessment of the relevance of the various legal instruments under its purview.

8. The Working Party decided to go through each of the seventeen legal instruments, providing a first assessment.

(a) Convention concerning Customs Facilities for Touring, signed in New York on 4 June 1954

The objective of the Convention is to facilitate the development of international touring. The Convention provides both tourists and customs authorities with precise harmonized conditions for the temporary importation by tourists of personal effects and other goods, together with harmonized maximum admissible quantities of such goods, that can be imported free of duties and taxes.

The Working Party recalled that, already in 2006, it had decided not to consider or amend this Convention, unless there would be a specific request from a contracting party. In the absence of any such request, the Working Party decided that no attention was required within the scope of the current exercise.

(b) Additional Protocol to the Convention concerning Customs Facilities for Touring, relating to the importation of tourist publicity documents and material, signed in New York on 4 June 1954

The objective of the Protocol is to facilitate the admission (free of import duties and taxes) of (a) documents encouraging the public to visit foreign countries; (b) lists and year-books of foreign hotels and (c) technical material by national official tourist agencies, including material intended for display.

The Working Party considered that, due to the outdated nature of the topics addressed by the Protocol, no attention was required within the scope of the current exercise.

(c) Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation of Private Road Vehicles, signed in New York on 4 June 1954

The objective of this Convention is to facilitate international road traffic through facilitating the temporary admission into a country, Contracting Party to the Convention, of private road vehicles registered in another country, also Contracting Party to the Convention, without payment of import duties and taxes for the vehicles.

The representative of AIT/FIA, which was administering this Convention, informed the Working Party that this Convention, as well as the 1956 Convention, were still expanding its geographical coverage and still triggered much interest. In addition, both Conventions were currently under review, in view of efforts to computerize the use of the Carnet de Passage en Douane (CPD). Based on this information, the Working Party established that no attention was required within the scope of the current exercise.

(d) Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention), of 15 January 1959

Objective of this Convention is to facilitate the international transport of goods by road vehicles.

The Working Party established that this Convention had been overtaken by the 1975 TIR Convention, which introduced the possibility to apply the TIR system for multimodal transports. Because this Convention only applies in relationship to Japan, which has not (yet) acceded to the TIR Convention of 1975 and where the TIR system

is not even active, the Working Party was of the opinion that no further attention was required within the scope of the current exercise.

(e) Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention), of 14 November 1975

The objective of the TIR Convention of 1975 is to facilitate the international carriage of goods by road vehicles or containers across one or more borders through the establishment of a simplified border crossing procedure and an international guarantee chain.

In view of the fact that the TIR Convention of 1975 has global application and is consistently under review, both by the Working Party as well as the TIR Administrative Committee, the Working Party was of the opinion that no further attention was required within the scope of the current exercise.

(f) Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation for Private Use of Aircraft and Pleasure Boats, of 18 May 1956

Objective of this Convention is to facilitate the temporary duty-free importation of aircraft and pleasure boats other than kayaks and canoes in use and under 5.5 metres in length.

The representative of AIT/FIA informed the Working Party that this Convention also deals with the CPD and that it continued to be applied in countries of South-East Asia, such as, in particular, Indonesia, though not being a contracting party.

The Working Party considered the limited usefulness of this Convention, in particular since its scope seemed to have been widely overtaken by European Union legislation. The Working Party decided to continue assessing the relevance of this legal instrument at its next session, based on feedback from delegations.

(g) Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation of Commercial Road Vehicles, of 18 May 1956

The representative of AIT/FIA, which was administering this Convention, informed the Working Party this Convention, as well as the 1954 Convention were still expanding its geographical coverage and still triggered much interest. In addition, both Conventions were currently under review, in view of efforts to computerize the use of the Carnet de Passage en Douane (CPD). Based on this information, the Working Party established that no attention was required within the scope of the current exercise.

(h) International Convention to Facilitate the Crossing of Frontiers for Passengers and Baggage carried by Rail, of 10 January 1952

The objective of the Convention is to facilitate the crossing of borders for passengers and baggage carried by rail.

The Working Party recalled that, between 2008 and 2013, it had extensively discussed the lack of effectiveness of this Convention and the fact that, due to the absence of amendment clauses, it was not really possible to amend this Convention. At the same time, none of its contracting parties were in favour of terminating the Convention, as it was considered as still providing a base for current legislation. The Working Party was of the view that no further attention was required within the scope of the current exercise.

(i) International Convention to Facilitate the Crossing of Frontiers for Goods Carried by Rail, of 10 January 1952

The objective of the Convention is to facilitate the crossing of frontiers by goods carried by rail.

The Working Party considered that, similar to the 1952 Rail Passenger Convention, there did seem much sense in trying to open up this Convention or to bring it in line with modern technical and logistical requirements. Therefore, the Working Party established that no attention was required within the scope of the current exercise.

(j) Customs Convention concerning Spare Parts Used for Repairing EUROP Wagons, of 15 January 1958

Objective of this convention is to facilitate the use of EUROP wagons in traffic between railway administrations pooling these wagons.

The delegation of the European Union informed the Working Party that it seemed that this Convention no longer fulfils any practical need and that it has been replaced by contractual arrangements between railway companies. As such, the concept of EUROP Wagons no longer seems to exist. It suggested that the secretariat would seek the advice of the International Union of Railways (UIC) and the International Rail Transport Committee (CIT). The Working Party decided to continue assessing the relevance of this legal instrument at its next session, based on feedback from delegations.

(k) Customs Convention on Containers, of 18 May 1956

The objective of this Convention is to develop and to facilitate the use of containers in international traffic.

The Working Party recalled that the 1972 Container Convention, under application of its Article 20, terminates and replaces the 1956 Container Convention. At the same time, it noted that a twenty-six countries, contracting parties to the 1956 Convention have not (yet) acceded to the 1972 Convention. This may be due to the fact that, although with slightly different structures, both conventions cover the same topic, thus not leaving much room for improvement for contracting parties to the 1956 Convention to exchange it for the 1972 Convention. The Working Party decided to continue assessing the relevance of this legal instrument at its next session, based on feedback from delegations. In particular, delegations were invited to clarify the reasons, if any, why their country, contracting party to the 1956 Convention, had not (yet) acceded to the 1972 Convention.

(l) Customs Convention on Containers, of 2 December 1972

The objective of the Convention is to facilitate the temporary use of containers in international transport.

For 18 countries the 1972 Container Convention replaces the 1956 Container Convention.: Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Cuba, Czechia, Finland, Hungary, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, United States.

In view of the above, The Working Party decided to continue assessing the relevance of this legal instrument at its next session, based on feedback from delegations.

(m) European Convention on Customs Treatment of Pallets Used in International Transport, of 9 December 1960

The objective of this Convention is to extend the use of pallets in international transport, resulting, in particular, from the pooling of pallets.

The Working Party considered the limited application of this Convention. The delegate of Sweden informed the Working Party that, prior to the accession of Sweden to the European Union, this Convention was widely used, but that it now was replaced by European Union legislation. The Working Party decided to continue assessing the relevance of this legal instrument at its next session, based on feedback from delegations.

(n) International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 21 October 1982

The Convention aims at facilitating border crossing in the international transport of goods through the harmonization and reduction of the requirements for completing formalities as well as the number and duration of controls at borders.

The Working Party considered that, although the Convention is widely applied, there has been repeated criticism about, in particular but not limited to, its repetitive

structure and the absence of provisions dealing with Information and Communication Technologies. Thus, the Working Party invited the Administrative Committee for the Harmonization Convention (AC.3) at its twelfth session (February 2020) to discuss preliminary ideas or comments how and where the Convention could benefit from improvement.

(o) Convention on Customs Treatment of Pool Containers Used in International Transport, 21 January 1994

The objective of the Convention is to facilitate further the international transport of goods carried by containers belonging to a Container Pool.

The Working Party established that, since its entry into force, this Convention has not attracted much interest. So far, no session of the Administrative Committee of this Convention (AC.4) has ever been organized, despite its Article 19. The delegation of Ukraine recommended the secretariat to liaise with the Bureau of International des Containers (BIC) and WCO in order to obtain more information on the relevance of this Convention.

(p) Convention on International Customs Transit Procedures for the Carriage of Goods by Rail under Cover of SMGS Consignment Notes Geneva, 9 February 2006

The objective of this Convention is to simplify administrative formalities in international transport by rail with a view to reducing, in particular, border controls, by means of using the SMGS¹ consignment note as customs document.

The Working Party established that this Convention, which had been developed over a timespan of more than ten years upon request from the Inland Transport Committee, had not attracted much attention from countries and still had not a single contracting party. The delegation of Ukraine advised the secretariat to liaise with the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) and the Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24) about the present use of the combined CIM²-SMGS consignment note, based on other legal instruments.

(q) Convention on the Facilitation of Border Crossing Procedures for Passengers, Luggage and Load-Luggage carried in International Traffic by Rail, 19 February 2019

The objective of this Convention is to facilitate and expedite the crossing of borders in the international carriage by rail of passengers, luggage and load-luggage in order to reduce the running times of trains and increase the competitiveness of rail transport.

The Working Party established that this Convention has, so far, only obtained one signatory, Chad, whereas 5 contracting parties are required for its entry into force.

9. In conclusion, the Working Party invited delegations to make enquiries at the national level on the level of application of those legal instruments to which their country was contracting party and to share experiences at the next session, where the Working Party would continue its considerations of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2020/1.

V. Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention, 1975) (agenda item 4)

A. Status of the Convention

10. The Working Party was informed that, since its previous session (October 2019), the status of the Convention and the number of contracting parties had not changed. Thus, the TIR Convention has seventy-six contracting parties. But, since the activation of the TIR

¹ SMGS stands for "Agreement on International Goods Transport by Rail of 1 November 1951.

² CIM stands for "Uniform Rules concerning the Contract of International Carriage of Goods by Rail.

system for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 23 January 2020, TIR operations can now be established with sixty-three countries. More detailed information on this issue as well as on depositary notifications is available on the TIR website.³

B. Revision of the Convention

1. Amendment proposals to the Convention

11. The Working Party recalled that, at its previous session, it noted that no amendment proposals had been submitted for its consideration (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/306, para. 7).

12. Against the background of proposals adopted by the Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, 1975 (AC.2), at its seventy-first session (October 2019), to increase the number of loading and unloading places in Article 18 of the Convention from four to eight, the Working Party considered Informal document WP.30 (2020) No. 1 and its Add. 1 by IRU, containing a proposal to accommodate up to eight customs offices in the TIR Carnet.

13. The Working Party noted the changes in boxes 2, 8, 12, 16 and 17, in order to accommodate the increase in the number of loading and unloading places from four to maximally eight. The Working Party took note of proposals to align boxes 2 and 16 by cross-referring to a, b, c until g. In addition, delegations felt that, due to the restructuring of the layout, boxes 8 and 17 had become too small to be of use. Reference was made to the United Nations Layout Key as a possible tool to assist in improving the layout. The delegation of IRU informed the Working Party that, in its experience, the limited space in boxes 16 and 17 did not constitute any problem in getting a well-readable seal as well as an easily identifiable stamp, despite their overlap. IRU was invited to review the design, taking account of the comments made and, if possible, provide a realistic example of the overlap between the seals and stamps in boxes 16 and 17. The Working Party decided to revert to the issue at its next session.

14. Under this agenda item, the Working Party recalled that, in the past, it had discussed, but never finalized, the issue of introducing more flexibility in the guarantee system. Against this background, the Working Party took note of Informal document WP.30 (2020) No. 6 by IRU, providing a map and a list with the different guarantee levels (50,000 United States dollars, 60,000 euros and 100,000 euros) that currently apply. The Working Party mandated the secretariat to prepare, for consideration at the next session, a document providing a succinct overview of its past discussions of the issue. In this context, the delegation of the Russian Federation requested the secretariat to include in the document its proposals to introduce full guarantee coverage and to also refer to recommendation No. 3 from the audit report of the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). In reply to a comment from the delegation of the European Union that 100,000 euros had become the guarantee amount for its Member States, IRU informed the Working Party that, as yet, not all national agreements between national competent authorities and their national associations had been updated accordingly. The delegation of Greece confirmed that, indeed, due to some pending issues related to controls of the financial statements of the national association, this had not yet been the case. The delegation of the European Union established that, with regard to other Member States, (Cyprus, Ireland, Malta and Portugal), this was due to the fact that, for various years now, no TIR Carnets had been used by them.

2. Preparation of Phase III of the TIR revision process

(a) eTIR pilot projects

15. The Working Party noted that, so far, within the eTIR project between Azerbaijan and Iran (Islamic Republic of) only one transport had taken place, mainly because, in the case of bilateral transport between both countries, more facilitated transit procedures are available in Azerbaijan. Furthermore, the Working Party welcomed the efforts to include Georgia in this project and took note that a tripartite meeting is planned on 26–27 February 2020 in Bilasuvar (Azerbaijan) to finalize an action plan on establishing an eTIR corridor between the three

³ www.unece.org/tir/tir-depositary_notification.html.

countries. Moreover, the Working Party noted that the stakeholders of the eTIR project between Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Turkey would meet on 4 February 2020 to discuss the extension of the project to all customs offices and all TIR Carnet holders from both countries.

16. The Working Party further noted that the State Customs Committee of Uzbekistan is working on its Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems to include functionalities required to launch eTIR projects. Uzbekistan expressed an interest in launching pilot projects with China and Kazakhstan, as well as with other neighbouring countries and that it planned to launch a pilot eTIR project before the end of 2020.

17. The Working Party welcomed a presentation on recent developments in the eTIR international system by the secretariat. The Working Party took note that the secretariat had completed the implementation of all messages of version 4.1 of the eTIR specifications and had developed a non-regression system to ensure good reliability of this software. The Working Party was also informed about further progress made: namely the clarification of several details in the eTIR specifications, the review of the eTIR database and actions taken towards finding a new hosting location for the eTIR internal system and the International TIR Data Bank. Finally, the Working Party was also informed about the next priorities for the secretariat: namely the implementation of changes to follow the latest version of the eTIR specifications and the production of documentation for customs authorities to connect their information systems to the eTIR international system.

(b) *Activities of the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure*

18. The Working Party endorsed the report of the thirtieth session of the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (GE.1), convened in Budapest on 18–19 September 2019, at the kind invitation of the Hungarian customs administration, as contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2020/2. In particular, the Working Party took note of the final results of the GE.1 survey on the connection to the eTIR international system and the “opting out” of Annex 11, as contained in Annex III of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2020/2.

19. The Working Party took note that the thirty-first session of GE.1 would take place on 10–11 March 2020 in Geneva. It further noted that the meeting will focus on (1) several amendment proposals to be possibly included in version 4.3 of the eTIR specifications, (2) considerations on the introduction of the concept of trusted third parties (TTP) as proposed by the Russian Federation and (3) considerations of a list of questions, prepared by the European Commission, on the application of various provisions of the TIR Convention for TIR transports carried out under the eTIR procedure, together with tentative answers.

20. The Working Party decided to open the list of questions mentioned, so that other customs administrations and national associations could add their questions with regard to the application of various provisions of the TIR Convention (including Annex 11) for TIR transports carried out under the eTIR procedure. It requested the secretariat to invite, by email, customs and associations TIR focal points as well as eTIR focal points, to send questions to the secretariat and to publish these as documents for consideration of GE.1 or the Working Party (depending on the nature of the questions), together with tentative answers. Furthermore, in order to ensure the involvement of all TIR contracting parties, the Working Party requested that, as long as GE.1 remains an informal group working in English only, all questions and answers should be published as official documents for the Working Party, thus ensuring their translation in all ECE working languages. Finally, the Working Party proposed to publish the list of questions, together with the answers, on a new question and answer (Q&A) page of the eTIR website.

(c) *Conversion of the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure into a formal Group of Experts*

21. The secretariat informed WP.30 that the request to prolong the mandate of GE.1 to the year 2020 together with the request to endorse the establishment of GE.1 as a formal

Expert Group had been included in the agenda of ITC at its eighty-first session (see ECE/TRANS/293/Add.1, agenda item 4, (k)).

C. Application of the Convention

1. New developments in the application of the Convention

22. No new developments were raised under this agenda item.

2. TIR-related electronic data interchange systems

23. IRU informed the Working Party about the latest statistical data on the performance of contracting parties in the control system for TIR Carnets — SafeTIR system (Informal document WP.30 (2020) No. 2). The delegation of Belgium informed the Working Party that previously reported long periods for transmission and reconciliation, due to a bug in the national system, had been resolved and that IRU had confirmed receiving the data now again within normal deadlines.

3. Settlement of claims for payments

24. IRU informed the Working Party about the current situation on the settlement of claims for payments made by customs authorities against national guaranteeing associations (Informal document WP.30 (2020) No. 5).

4. Other matters

(a) Issues in the application of the TIR Convention in the Republic of Belarus

25. The Working Party recalled that, at its 153rd session (October 2019), it considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2019/11, containing a letter from the Lithuanian National Road Carriers Association (LINAFA) on the introduction of the mandatory payment for electronic services in Belarus.

26. The secretariat informed WP.30 that, on 22 November 2019, it had transmitted the concerned excerpt of the report of the Working Party to the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Belarus. In its letter of reply (contained in Informal document WP.30 (2020) No. 4, Belarus customs clarified the background of the requirement to submit electronic advance information to customs, through the unified platform on a paid basis. In this context, Belarus customs had notified IRU, in February 2018, that the IRU application TIR-EPD needed to be upgraded in order to pass through the unified platform. Belarus customs further informed the Working Party that, presently, preparations were underway in order to allow non-residents access to the unified platform. Finally, Belarus customs did not agree with the statement that charging for the submission of electronic advance information constitutes a violation of Article 46, as the submission of electronic advance information is not regulated by provisions of the TIR Convention.

27. In a first reaction, the representative of the national association of Lithuania confirmed that, since the previous session of the Working Party, nothing had changed. Despite various requests to meet with a delegation from Belarus customs, this had not yet happened. The representative of the national association of Germany mentioned the ongoing practice in Belarus as an important factor for the recent decline in the sale of TIR Carnets, and even having led to the bankruptcy of some TIR operators. The delegation of the European Union stated that, even if not against the wording of Article 46, it certainly was against the spirit of the TIR Convention for countries to ask fees for regular and obligatory customs services. It called upon the Belarus authorities to ensure that there are no additional costs for foreign users as this may be considered as discriminatory and not being in line with the principles of free transit enshrined in the World Trade Organization. The delegation of the Russian Federation warned the Working Party not to consider this issue in isolation, as an act by Belarus authorities against the TIR Convention, but as an issue of international transport at large. The delegation of Uzbekistan also noted that the introduction of fees contradicts the spirit of the Convention and could lead to non-transparent application of the Convention.

28. The Working Party requested the secretariat to transmit its findings to the Belarus authorities, while also inviting its Chair (or Vice-Chair) when reporting to ITC about recent developments in the field of border crossing facilitation, to bring this matter to the attention of the Committee.

(b) *Decline in the sale of TIR Carnets*

29. Under this agenda item, the Working Party was informed that AC.2, at its seventy-first session (October 2019), took note that the secretariat had prepared a study on the reasons for the decline in sale of TIR Carnets. IRU had requested the secretariat to bring the results of the study to WP.30, where the transport industry was also represented. The Committee agreed that the study be first submitted to WP.30 (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/145, paras. 76 and 77).

30. Against this background, WP.30 took note of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2020/3, as well as Informal document WP.30 (2020) No. 3 by the association of international road transport operators of Kyrgyzstan, AIRTO-KR).

31. In a first reaction, the delegation of the Russian Federation expressed its support for the study, which, however, required further work. In particular, with regard to the SWOT⁴ analysis, it pointed at repeated statements about the lack of competition, flexibility and transparency in the guarantee system, which merited further study, also within the context of recommendation No. 3 of the OIOS audit, as well as the call to study the establishment of a decentralized guarantee system by national financial institutions. In the view of the delegation of the European Union, the main reasons for the decline could be found in the recent 2013–2016 crisis in the TIR system, the extension of the common transit system as well as the fact that the latter functioned as a modern, robust and fully paperless procedure already for more than a decade. Contrary to the TIR system it offers a number of powerful simplifications such as authorized consignors and consignees and a flexible guarantee system which even has the possibility of a guarantee waiver. With regard to the proposed action plan, it would revert to this in the future. The delegation of Turkey was thankful for the efforts undertaken to conduct the study, but saw serious room for improvement, in particular with regard to clarifying that the main reason for the decline in the sales of TIR Carnets in Turkey was related to Turkey joining the New Computerized Transit System (NCTS).

32. To wrap up discussions at the current session, the Working Party requested the secretariat to distribute the study among TIR focal points of customs and associations, seeking their views no later than by 30 March 2020. At the proposal of the secretariat, the results and the further progress of the study would then first be further assessed by the TIR Executive Board before bringing the study again to the table of WP.30, AC.2 or both.

(c) *Other matters*

33. The Working Party did not consider any other issues or difficulties in the application of the TIR Convention faced by customs authorities, national associations, the international insurers or IRU.

VI. Convention on the Facilitation of Border Crossing Procedures for Passengers, Luggage and Load-Luggage carried in International Traffic by Rail (agenda item 5)

Status of the Convention

34. The Working Party recalled that, at its 153rd session (October 2019), the secretariat informed WP.30 that, on 27 September 2019, at the annual Treaty Event, held at the occasion of seventy-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, Chad had signed the convention. The delegation of the Russian Federation informed the Working Party

⁴ Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

that, at the national level, all required procedures in preparation of accession had been finalized and that accession was expected in the course of 2020. Recalling the importance of the new Convention for the development of international rail passenger traffic, it called on countries to accede to the Convention. More detailed information on this issue as well as on depositary notifications is available on the TIR website.⁵

VII. Customs Conventions on the Temporary Importation of Private Road Vehicles (1954) and Commercial Road Vehicles (1956) (agenda item 6)

A. Status of the Conventions

35. The Working Party was informed that, since its previous session, the status and the number of contracting parties to the Customs Conventions on the Temporary Importation of Private (1954) and Commercial (1956) Road Vehicles had not changed and that the conventions had eighty and twenty-six contracting parties respectively. More detailed information on this issue as well as on depositary notifications is available on the TIR website.⁶

B. Issues in the application of the 1954 Convention in Egypt and Jordan

36. The Working Party recalled the ongoing issues in Egypt and Jordan in the application of the 1954 Convention, particularly due to the fact that customs authorities did not seem to respect the deadlines and procedures laid down in the Convention. The representative of the International Touring Alliance / International Automobile Federation (AIT/FIA) informed the Working Party that relationships with Egyptian and Jordan authorities had improved in recent months, leaving it optimistic that solutions could be found in the near future. The Working Party decided to take this item off its agenda, until further request from either Egypt or Jordan or AIT/FIA.

37. The secretariat briefed the Working Party about its participation in a seminar co-organized by FIA and the Automobile and Touring Club of Egypt (ATCE) “The Istanbul Convention and the United Nations transport conventions affecting customs” on 3 November 2019 in Cairo. The workshop raised much interest for, in particular, the TIR Convention from countries in the region. Various delegations called for an amendment of Article 64 of the Convention, making Arabic one of its authentic languages.

38. Under this agenda item, the secretariat of AIT/FIA presented its plans to launch an electronic version of the Carnet de Passage en Douane (e-CPD). The presentation is posted at the ECE website.

VIII. Introduction of new technologies in rail, road, road-based mobility, inland waterway, logistics and intermodal transport until 2030 (agenda item 7)

39. As part of the contribution of the Working Party to the ITC Strategy until 2030, delegations were invited under this standing agenda item to raise, at any future session, technological developments that could be introduced or applied within the context of the legal instruments under the auspices of the Working Party.

⁵ www.unece.org/tir/tir-depositary_notification.html.

⁶ Ibid.

IX. Activities of other organizations and countries of interest to the Working Party (agenda item 8)

A. European Union

40. The delegation of the European Union informed the Working Party that, as a consequence of Brexit, the European Union now consists of 27 Member States. During the transitional period (until 31 December 2020) the current customs rules and transit procedures, including the common transit and TIR Conventions, remain fully applicable, as if the United Kingdom was still a member State of the European Union.

B. Economic Cooperation Organization

41. The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) reported on its latest activities of interest to the Working Party.

42. As mentioned at the previous session of the Working Party, the key findings of a field study, conducted with IRU, of the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) and Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) road corridors had been approved by the High-Level Working Group (HLWG) in Tehran in November 2019. The HLWG also adopted an action plan to look at apparent physical and non-physical shortcomings in countries en route.

43. The field study had also identified the existing visa regimes as an important factor that restricted the growth of transportation in the region. In order to address the issue, a so-called "Visa Pilot Scheme" for the ITI and KTAI corridors had been presented to the HLWG. The proposed mechanism aims at providing further facilitation to professional drivers conducting transports along both corridors. The mechanism is as follows:

(a) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of each country is responsible for issuing one-year multiple entry visa for professional drivers;

(b) Each Ministry of Transport will communicate, via the ECO secretariat, the list of professional drivers to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the other corridor countries. In first instance, the list will be limited to maximum 30 drivers per country;

(c) To ensure that the drivers work for approved international TIR authorized transport companies, the list will be transmitted by the national TIR associations of each corridor country to the national Ministry of Transport;

(d) The ECO secretariat will transmit the list of drivers to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of all corridor countries, with a request to issue one-year for them on a priority basis;

(e) In case any corridor country has, in accordance with its national legislation, any concern about any driver, it can, through the ECO secretariat, ask for a replacement driver;

(f) Drivers will apply for visa at the concerned embassies or consulates, which will issue one-year multiple entry visa accordingly.

44. WP.30 expressed its support for this important scheme and requested ECO to keep it informed about further developments, considering that, if successful, the scheme could be further studied for implementation among more TIR contracting parties or within the context of the TIR Convention.

45. ECO expressed an interest to organize, in collaboration with ECE and the Islamic Development Bank, workshops on eTIR and eCMR for ECO Member States as well as a national seminar on CMR for Afghanistan, possibly in the course of 2020.

46. ECO further expressed an interest to collaborate with ECE in areas such as (a) a pilot on the application of Unified Railway Law (URL) along any major ECO railway route, such as Istanbul-Almaty; (b) the International Transport Infrastructure Observatory, and (c) joint studies on impediments for transit cooperation in the ECO region.

C. Eurasian Economic Union

47. The secretariat of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) informed the Working Party that, as of 1 February 2020, the composition of the Eurasian Economic Commission had changed but that, for its forthcoming four-year mandate, digitalization and the automation of procedures remained one of its main priorities. Within the EEU, customs remained one of the most advanced areas, in particular when it comes to electronic documents. To further increase digitalization, it had been decided that no duplication of paper documents would be required in case corresponding information would be available in electronic customs databases.

D. World Customs Organization

48. Due to the absence of a delegation of the World Customs Organization at the session, no information was provided.

X. Other business (agenda item 9)

A. List of decisions

49. The Working Party reviewed the list of decisions without further comments and requested the secretariat to continue this practice. The list of decisions is attached as Annex to the final report.

B. Dates of the next sessions

50. The Working Party decided to conduct its 155th session from 9 June (3 p.m.) to 12 June 2020 (1 p.m.) reserving 11 June 2020 for eTIR-related meetings, and the 156th session in the week of 12–16 October 2020.

C. Restriction on the distribution of documents

51. The Working Party decided that there would be no restrictions on the distribution of documents issued in connection with its current session.

XI. Adoption of the report (agenda item 10)

52. In accordance with established practice, the Working Party adopted the report on its 154th session on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat. During the adoption of the report, French and Russian speaking delegations deplored that parts of the report were not available in all three official languages and underscored the importance of ensuring that the final report be made available in all three working languages well in advance of its next session.

Annex

List of decisions taken at the 154th session of the Working Party

<i>Reference in final report (para.)</i>	<i>Short description of decision</i>	<i>Actor</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
3	Solicit candidates to become (Vice)-Chair as of 2021	Delegations	
8	(f) revert at next session, based on feedback from delegations		Agenda
	(j) revert at next session, based on feedback from delegations + secretariat to contact UIC and CIT	Secretariat	Agenda
	(k) revert at next session, based on feedback from delegations		Agenda
	(l) revert at next session, based on feedback from delegations		Agenda
	(m) revert at next session, based on feedback from delegations		Agenda
	(n) invite AC.3	Secretariat	Done
	(o) Secretariat to contact BIC and WCO	Secretariat	
	(p) Secretariat to contact SC.2 and WP.24	Secretariat	
13	Working Party requested IRU to review TIR Carnet lay out and submit example	IRU	a.s.a.p.
14	Prepare document on past discussions on flexibility in guarantee system	Secretariat	31 March 2020
18	Working Party endorsed the report of the thirtieth session of GE.1	Working Party	
20	Distribute list with questions on eTIR among focal points and open list for all contracting parties	secretariat	a.s.a.p. and ongoing
27+28	Transmit findings to Belarus authorities + report to ITC	Secretariat	a.s.a.p.
28	Report to ITC	Vice-Chair WP.30	ITC
32	Distribute study among focal points for their views	Secretariat	By 30 March 2020
38	Post eCPD presentation on TIR website	Secretariat	Done
44	Keep WP.30 informed	ECO	
	Prepare 155th session 9–12 June 2020		17 March 2020 – agenda 31 March 2020 – documents