www.unece.org/press/pr1998/98tran4e.html

The TIR Convention, which has been for decades now facilitating the international transit traffic of goods in Europe and in other areas throughout the world, will be revised. In effect, up to 17 November 1998, deadline for notification of objections, none of the 62 States Parties to the TIR Convention have lodged an objection to the modifications which had been proposed one year earlier.

The now accepted modifications to the TIR Convention, which will enter into force on 17 February 1999, are aimed at reducing significantly the abuses of the facilities provided by this important Customs transit system committed by internationally organized crime in recent years. This will be achieved through improved cooperation among all Customs authorities of the States Parties to the Convention and a careful selection of authorized TIR transport operators, among other measures.

The TIR Convention, administered by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE), establishes Customs transit procedures which provide for wide-ranging facilities for international goods transport by road. It allows for unhindered goods transport under Customs seal, based on an international guarantee, from Norway to Iran and from Portugal to Kazakhstan with only minimal Customs control at the borders. At present, nearly 3 million TIR transport operations are registered per year and it can be safely said that without the TIR regime the present volumes of land transport and trade, particularly between countries of the European Union and eastern Europe, would not be possible.

Like other Customs transit regimes (such as those in the European Union), the TIR regime has faced considerable difficulties as a result of the activities of international organized crime which abuses the facilities provided by the TIR Convention. Customs stamps have been falsified, false cargo declarations have been lodged and sometimes whole truck loads of sensitive goods (tobacco, liquor, etc.) have disappeared and have been sold on the black markets. National Customs authorities coping not only with smugglers and organized crime, but also with decreasing budgets and, in some countries, often with de-motivated and inexperienced personnel, have often only limited possibilities to combat effectively such criminal activities with all their consequences for State revenues.

.The States, Contracting Parties to the Convention have therefore decided to provide the TIR regime with a new intergovernmental structure, the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB), whose main objective is to coordinate better the activities of the national Governments in this field. The newly established TIRExB will monitor closely national administrative practices in the application of the TIR regime and will supervise the administration of the TIR Carnet system, currently under the responsibility of the International Road Transport Union (IRU) . Finally, the TIRExB will also provide for a well functioning international mechanism facilitating consultations between Customs authorities, the transport industry and the insurance groups providing the indispensable guarantee back-up for the TIR regime. An outline of the new administrative structure of the TIR regime is attached.

The approved modifications also restrict access to the TIR regime only to honest transport operators who must be approved not only by their national transport associations and also by the respective national Customs authorities. Strict reliability criteria for those national associations that are authorized to issue TIR Carnets have also been approved.

Lastly, the new TIR regime will also provide a legal basis for the so-called electronic SAFETIR system operated by the International Road Transport Union (IRU) which provides on-line EDI control for each of the more than 8,000 TIR transport operations carried out per day. Further improvements of this electronic control system are being planned in close cooperation with the transport industry.

Additional information on the above issues may be obtained directly from

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