



TIR EXECUTIVE BOARD (TIRExB)
COMMISSION DE CONTROLE TIR (TIRExB)
ИСПОЛНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ СОВЕТ МДП (ИСМДП)

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Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, 1975

TIR Executive Board (TIRExB)

Sixty-seventh session
Paris, 27–28 April 2016

Report of the sixty-seventh session of the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB)

I. Attendance

1. The TIR Executive Board (TIRExB) held its sixty-seventh session on 27 and 28 April 2016 in Paris, at the kind invitation of the French customs administration.
2. The following members of TIRExB were present: Mr. S. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation), Mr. G. Andrieu (France), Mr. M. Ciampi (Italy), Mrs. D. Dirlik (Turkey), Mr. S. Fedorov (Belarus), Mrs. B. Gajda (Poland), Mrs. L. Jelínková (European Commission), Mr. V. Milošević (Serbia) and Mr. S. Somka (Ukraine).
3. The International Road Transport Union (IRU) attended the session as observer and was represented by Mrs. O. Rodel.

II. Opening statement on behalf of the French customs administration

4. Mr. C. Le Coz, Head of customs clearance policy, delivered an opening statement on behalf of the French customs administration. He underlined the ongoing relevance of the TIR Convention as a global customs transit system, as long as it was willing to take on board modern-day concepts such as, but not limited to, simplifications both at departure and at destination, computerization or the dematerialization of documents. Furthermore he advocated the use of TIR for intermodal transport and pointed at the relevance of expanding the system to other regions and continents of the world.

III. Adoption of the agenda

Documentation: Informal document TIRExB/AGE/2016/67 + Add. 1

5. TIRExB adopted the agenda of the session as contained in Informal document TIRExB/AGE/2016/67 and its Addendum 1.
6. With reference to the restricted status of the draft agenda, TIRExB recalled its previous decision, taken at its first, second, seventh and thirteenth session, that, unless decided otherwise, only approved reports of sessions of the TIRExB were subject to general distribution (see TRANS/WP.30/AC/2/2002/6, para. 38).

IV. Adoption of the report of the sixty–sixth session of TIRExB

Documentation: Informal document TIRExB/REP/2016/66 draft with comments

7. The Board adopted the draft report of its sixty–sixth session (Informal document TIRExB/REP/2016/66draft with comments), subject to the following amendments:

Page 2, new agenda item VI

After paragraph 8 insert a new agenda item VI “Various issues with regard to the TIR Carnet; *renumber* all following agenda items accordingly

Page 2, paragraph 9, first line

Before Mrs. Kasko delete Under this agenda item,

Page 3, first line

Before Because insert As repeatedly requested by the Board, IRU finally provided information on the breakdown of the prices of TIR Carnets, as contained in Informal document No. 1 (2016).

Page 3, second line

For Informal document No. 1 (2016) substitute the document

Page 4, paragraph 16, last line

Before decision insert final

Page 5, paragraph 19, last sentence

After examples insert addressing, in particular, complications related to the use of a TIR Carnet as a single customs document throughout an intermodal transport

Page 5, paragraph 22, last sentence

Substitute sentence for In fact, four of them were located in so-called “anti-terrorist operation” regions, where no border crossing of goods was authorized; one of them was closed according to a decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, three others had the intergovernmental status (meaning that they could only be used by Russian and Ukrainian transporters); five of them were situated outside international transport corridors and located on regional roads and only, in fact, two border crossing points were actively used by international carriers. At the same time, in the view of Mr. Somka, FCS had not taken into due account proposals from the Ukrainian side to include in the list of border crossing points those with the greatest capacity, the highest level of technical equipment or most actively used by international road carriers.

Page 5, paragraph 23, line 5

Replace all essential consultations had taken place *by* consultations with all interested parties, including Ukraine, had taken place. In October 2015, FCS had sent letters and the Ukrainian authorities had replied by November 2015.

V. Application of specific provisions of the TIR Convention

Consideration of amendment proposals

a. Proposals to introduce more flexibility in the guarantee system

Documentation: Informal document No. 7 (2016)

8. TIRExB took note of the considerations of the secretariat as contained in Informal Document No. 7 (2016) on, namely, the financial and other possible implications of introducing full guarantee coverage as described in scenario 3 of the TIRExB assessment

(either full guarantee coverage for all Contracting Parties or, alternatively, that each country is free to set its own maximum guarantee amount or could decide not to set a maximum at all) (see also ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2016/7, Part VI). The Board was of the view that the main concern would be the impact on the prices of TIR Carnets; in this regard, the representative of IRU was requested to provide information on how the scheduled increase of the guarantee level per TIR Carnet to 100,000 euros as of 1 July 2016 would affect the prices, as this would perhaps provide an indication on the basis of which further discussions could take place. The representative of IRU clarified that, further to extensive negotiations with the insurers and mainly due to the low overall number of claims, IRU had been able to secure the increase of the guarantee level without any effect on the current TIR Carnet prices. However, IRU also indicated that, from the insurers' perspective, a calculation of risks for unlimited guarantee coverage would not be possible and that, in such a case, a dramatic increase in premiums – which would be reflected in the TIR Carnet prices – would be unavoidable. TIRExB took note of this, but invited IRU to provide, nevertheless, as much information as possible on the scenario of unlimited guarantee coverage as contribution to the Board's assessment.

9. Furthermore, questions were raised with regard to the possible implications of scenario 3bis namely, that some countries may opt for not setting a maximum amount at all, while others would operate on the basis of a fixed maximum amount. In this regard, the issue at stake was that the fact that the unlimited guarantee risk would be distributed evenly over all countries and, ultimately, reflected in the TIR Carnet price for all operators, i.e. the entire system would be equally contributing to the higher risks/insurance premiums of few Contracting Parties. Against this background, questions on fairness and equitability were raised. In addition, the increased complexities of managing the guarantee chain under scenario 3bis were also highlighted. As a result, several Board members were of the view that any change in the guarantee level should follow a harmonized approach, i.e. be applicable in all Contracting Parties as per scenario 3. The Board also was of the view that it may be useful to invite insurance specialists at a future session, in order to obtain a clearer understanding of the risk calculation processes.

10. The Board also considered the potential implication of full guarantee coverage compromising the principle of seeking payment from the person(s) directly liable. In this respect, the Board was of the view that this principle would not and should not be compromised, as the provisions of the Convention in this respect are clear: customs authorities ought to direct any claim firstly to the responsible TIR Carnet holder, before seeking payment from the guarantor. On the other hand, several Board members recognized the difficulty of finding the directly liable TIR Carnet holder when he is registered/domiciled in another Contracting Party, which makes resorting to the guarantor the only realistic solution. Such difficulties, according to several members, have occurred for various reasons but mainly due to either refusal to pay/refusal to acknowledge receipt of notification, or – quite often – because the person(s) directly liable cannot be found. In this respect, TIRExB was of the view that, on the one hand, ensuring a fully updated ITDB should become a priority, whereas, on the other hand, it seemed warranted to strengthen cooperation between customs authorities in different countries and explore mechanisms to find and notify foreign TIR Carnet holders as well as to secure payment from them.

b. Proposals to introduce authorized consignor

Documentation: Informal document No. 8 (2016)

11. The Board considered Informal document No. 8 (2016), in which the secretariat reproduced examples of the practical application of the concept of authorized consignor and consignee in various countries, as collected by IRU. Mrs. Gajda (Poland) informed the Board that, further to the entry into force of the Union Customs Code (UCC) in the European Union (EU) per 1 May 2016, changes to the legal basis for the EU member States would be introduced. This will also impact the national legislation of Poland. New conditions to become authorized consignor/consignee would be further aligned with the

status of Authorized Economic Operator (AEO). Other common factors for facilitations include the use of electronic data exchange and the application of automated risk analysis. Mr. Fedorov (Belarus) noted that, whereas the TIR Convention applies to authorized TIR Carnet holders, some countries granted the status of authorized consignor/consignee for TIR to other persons. In his view, it is not possible to transfer the legal responsibility under the TIR Convention from the TIR Carnet holder to somebody else, unless there would be a legal basis (provision) which would enable this. The Board further discussed the issue whether it would be necessary to formulate detailed conditions and requirements in the text of the Convention and whether all competent authorities of Contracting Parties should be involved in the granting of any authorization. The majority of the Board was of the view that, first of all, it was not necessary to include conditions and requirements in the text of the Convention, considering that the authorizations would be delivered as a national facilitation by competent national authorities. As a consequence, involvement of competent authorities of other countries was not required. Mrs. Gajda informed the Board that any irregularity discovered at destination should immediately be reported back to the country of departure, in order to intervene with the authorized consignor (who, in such case, could see his authorization revoked). So far, this had not happened, nor had there been major irregularities detected for cases where Poland had been the country of destination.

12. As a first step towards further pursuing the issue, TIRExB decided to limit its discussions to the TIR Carnet holder as authorized consignor, linking the activity to the liability of the TIR Carnet holder under the TIR Convention. In such concept, the fact of being authorized TIR Carnet holder would serve as a prerequisite to become authorized consignor. The authorization could be implemented from various premises.

13. Various TIRExB members explained that granting a ‘simplification’ actually did not mean the lifting of criteria or obligations for operators. On the contrary: authorized TIR Carnet holders benefiting from any simplification were obliged to fulfil stricter criteria than for the regular application of the TIR procedure. It was further noted that the concept of AEO and mutual recognition agreements, though related to the issues at stake, go beyond the scope of the current discussions, which is focused on applying the concepts of authorized consignor/consignee as national simplifications.

14. In conclusion of the current discussions, TIRExB agreed to pursue its discussions at a future session, based on the following aspects: (a) the application of facilitations as a national concept, with reinforced customs control; (b) limited to TIR Carnet holders only; and (c) describing a strict set of minimum conditions and requirements.

c. Proposals to amend the comment to Article 23 of the Convention

Documentation: Informal document 9 (2016)

15. Further to the Committee’s request to review the proposal to amend the comment to Article 23, the Board considered Informal document No. 9 (2016), containing a proposal for a new comment specifically aimed at promoting the use of tracking systems as an alternative to escorts. The Board further took note that, considering that the purpose of introducing the use of tracking systems is to provide an alternative for the prescription of customs escort, the forthcoming raise in the recommended guarantee amount to 100,000 euros does, as such, not have any influence on its application, other than there will be less situations where customs will prescribe customs escort or, alternatively, agree that it be replaced by the use of a tracking system. The majority of the Board supported the new comment. Two Board members, however, were of the view that the current text of the comment does not prevent the use of tracking systems or e-seals and that the new comment would broaden the scope of Article 23. Therefore, they were of the view that the new comment was not necessary. In conclusion, the Board requested the secretariat to transmit the new comment, together with the remarks made, to AC.2 for consideration.

d Proposal to amend Annex 9, Part I, paragraph 5

Documentation: Informal document No. 13 (2016)

16. At its sixty-third session, AC.2 was informed that the Working Party had considered the proposal submitted by the Russian Federation on amending Annex 9, Part I, paragraph 5, to expressly specify that non-compliance with the duties of the association under paragraph 3 of Annex 9, Part I constitute grounds for termination of the agreement between the national association and the customs authorities (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2015/1/Rev.1 -ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2015/7/Rev.1). The Committee noted that the Working Party was of the view that such an amendment is not warranted, due to sufficient clarity of the existing text. However, at the request of the Russian Federation, the Working Party had transmitted this proposal to AC.2 with the request to consider whether referring the question to TIRExB would be warranted. The Committee considered the amendment proposal and the information provided by the delegation of the Russian Federation on the details of this proposal and decided that there would be merit in further consideration by TIRExB. Therefore, the Committee decided to revert to this issue at a future session when TIRExB has transmitted its findings (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/129, para 37).

17. Further to this request, the Board considered Informal document No. 13 (2016) by the secretariat, containing the Russian proposal, as well as an assessment by various Contracting Parties and the secretariat. Mr. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation) explained that the application of the term “duties” in Annex 9, Part I, paragraph 3 versus the use of the term conditions and requirements in the title of Annex 9, Part I, as well as in paragraphs 5 and 7, had led Russian courts to the conclusion that the non-compliance with the duties as set out in paragraph 3 would not (automatically) lead to the revocation of the authorization, as stipulated by paragraph 5. Mr. Fedorov (Belarus) supported this view. Other TIRExB members disagreed with this interpretation and, after having consulted with legal experts, confirmed that Annex 9, Part I should be read in its full context, as was supported by the use of the word “above” in paragraph 7 of the text of Annex 9, Part I. Thus, the term “conditions and requirements” referred to all provisions of Annex 9, Part I, including paragraph 3. Therefore, there was no need to include a specific reference to it in paragraph 5. On the contrary, such inclusion could frustrate the understanding that the provision of paragraph 5 referred to Annex 9, Part I as a whole and not just to some of its provisions. Finally, such understanding of the text was supported by the wording of paragraph 1 (d) of Annex 9, Part I, which stipulated that the conditions and requirements as contained in that sub-paragraph (as well as in the rest of that paragraph) included the unequivocal acceptance by the national associations of its duties as set out in paragraph 3.

18. In conclusion, the Board agreed to transmit the above assessment as a majority opinion back to AC.2, with the proposal that, possibly, AC.2 could clarify the understanding of the text of Annex 9, Part I in its report. Mr. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation) was invited to submit examples of court decisions, based on a different understanding of Annex 9, Part I, paragraph 5, to the Board for further assessment.

VI. Various issues with regard to the TIR Carnet

Documentation: Informal document No. 1 (2016)

19. The Board recalled that, at its previous session, it had taken note of Informal document No. 1 (2016) by IRU, containing information on the TIR guarantee level, types and price of TIR Carnets, as well as the components of the TIR Carnet price. Because of the late availability of Informal document No. 1 (2016), Mr. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation) requested that further discussions be postponed until the next session.

20. The Board resumed its discussions of the document. Mr. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation) was of the view that the information given was not sufficiently concrete to allow a fair assessment. Therefore, he repeated his request to IRU to provide more detailed

information on the composition and break-down of the prices of TIR Carnets. In this context, the secretariat reiterated that detail information of the IRU accounts (of 2014 and 2015) are available at the secretariat and can be consulted by Contracting Parties under application of the procedure approved by AC.2 at its sixty-third session (February 2016).

21. Mrs. Rodel (IRU) informed the Board that, in order to simplify the administration and to reduce costs for the printing and handling of TIR Carnets, IRU had decided to issue, for the future, only two types of TIR Carnet, viz. 6 and 14 vouchers. There would be no influence on the price, the price for a 6-voucher TIR Carnet having been set at 25 Swiss francs and for a 14-voucher TIR Carnet at 59 Swiss francs. In addition, some minor visual changes would be applied: (1) introduction of the new IRU logo; (2) the embossed truck in the red circle at the top right was replaced by a printed globe with the words "TIR" in the middle; (3) boxes 4 and 5 had been slightly restructured in to order to increase the space below box 11. Finally, IRU informed the Board that its auditors had obliged IRU to find a second printing company in order to reduce dependency of a single printing source, while maintaining a single standard of quality. The new TIR Carnets would be put into circulation when the existing stocks would be exhausted. In reply to a question from the Board, IRU confirmed that the TIR secretariat and WP.30 would be officially informed of these changes, as well as all TIR focal points. Finally, in reply to a question from Mrs. Jelinkova (European Commission), IRU informed the Board that internal discussions about reintroducing – in one form or other– the so-called Tobacco-Alcohol TIR Carnet (for high value goods, in particular alcohol), was still ongoing.

22. Mr. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation) raised the issue of the signature of the secretary of the international organization in box 5 and wondered if it was acceptable that it was printed. The Board requested the secretariat to look into this issue as well as into the proposed changes to boxes 4, 5 and 11 and report back to the Board at its next session.

VII. Computerization of the TIR procedure

a. Current status of the eTIR Project

23. The Board took note of the status quo in the eTIR Pilot Project between Italy and Turkey and of the most recent developments in the UNECE/IRU eTIR Pilot Project between Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Turkey, in particular, that:

- (a) Since November 2015, as part of the first phase, more than twenty pilot transports have been successfully conducted between Izmir and Teheran;
- (b) The light weight version of the eTIR international system has been successfully deployed at the UNOG data centre and tested on the development environment and also successfully deployed on the production environment. Both customs administrations will shortly be provided with a detailed description on how their systems can securely access the data stored in the eTIR international system;
- (c) Parties are about to start the second step, for which they are actively looking for more transport operators and customs offices interested.

24. The Board also took note of the progress made in the framework of the Georgia-Turkey eTIR pilot, in particular,

- (a) A first version of the central exchange platform (CEP) has been successfully deployed at the UNOG data centre and tested on the development environment and also successfully deployed on the production environment;
- (b) Consultants are assisting Georgia customs in developing the necessary interfaces to connect their IT system with the CEP;

25. Furthermore, the Board also took note of the successful conduct of a meeting between Moldova and Ukraine in February 2016 to kick-start the work on their own eTIR pilot project.

b. Activities of the Group of Experts on Computerization of the TIR procedure

26. TIRExB was informed about the outcome of the second session of the Group of Experts on Computerization of the TIR procedure (GE.2). The session had been well attended (11 countries, EU and IRU), and the Group had identified ways forward on several issues. More specifically, GE.2 had decided to conduct a survey on electronic methods of authentication, including electronic signatures; the Group had also concluded that it would be necessary to identify the potential financing mechanisms as a matter of priority and to this end decided to develop a substantiated document that would eventually be transmitted for further consideration to the competent TIR intergovernmental bodies. Furthermore, GE.2 concluded that the eTIR Reference Model should be kept as a separate document with a relevant technical body to update, amend and maintain it with an established simplified procedure. Finally, GE.2 reviewed the possible formats of the eTIR legal framework and weighed the advantages and disadvantages of each option. In order to make progress, the main outcome of the session was that GE.2 requested to start reviewing draft legal text, to be prepared by the secretariat in both formats under discussion, in order to start concretely developing the legal framework at the next session. TIRExB noted that the detailed report of the session would become available as ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.2/4.

c. ITDB / Central database on certificates of approval / Central database on customs offices

Documentation: Informal document No. 10 (2016)

27. The Board took note of Informal document No. 10 (2016), presenting various concerns about the status of data contained in the ITDB and the usage of the tools available, i.e. the ITDBonline+ and the ITDBonline web services. The Board discussed the possible reasons that had led to the limited use of the ITDB tools and was of the view that customs administrations and national guaranteeing associations of TIR Contracting Parties should be reminded about the availability of the ITDB tools, encouraged to make use of them more actively and, possibly, asked about any obstacle they would have in using those tools.

28. In order to improve the quality of the data contained in the ITDB, the Board was of the view that a comparison with the TIR Carnet holder data maintained by IRU would be welcome. It kindly requested IRU to provide the TIR secretariat with the latest list of active TIR Carnet holders, including contact information, to allow the TIR secretariat to undertake a comparison with a view to informing customs administrations and national guaranteeing associations about discrepancies encountered and of their legal obligation to inform TIRExB of any changes in the status or contact information of TIR Carnet holders. IRU informed the Board that it had to consult with its member associations before being in a position to share data but that, from a technical perspective, there would be no problem. The Board requested the secretariat to proceed with the comparison as soon as IRU would be in a position to provide the required data to the TIR secretariat.

29. Furthermore, the Board agreed with the idea that queries made by means of the ITDB web services about TIR Carnet holders who do not exist in the database could be notified to the customs administrations concerned.

30. Finally, the Board agreed that a test/demonstration version of the future version of the ITDB would be very useful, not only for the training of national associations but also for the training of customs officials, as well as for its promotion. Such version should, however, not be connected to the actual TIR Carnet holder data, but merely provide any interested parties with credentials to test and learn about the functioning of the ITDB.

VIII. Adaptation of the TIR procedure to modern business, logistics and transport requirements

Implementation of the intermodal aspects of the TIR procedure

Documentation: Informal document No. 11 (2016)

30. The Board decided to revert to this issue at its next session.

IX. Settlement of disputes between Contracting Parties, associations, insurance companies and international organizations

31. IRU informed the Board that, further to the establishment of the list with forty-five border crossing points open for TIR transports, it saw a slow increase in the number of TIR Carnets treated at the concerned customs offices of entry.

X. Problems reported by transport companies from the Republic of Moldova in Ukraine

32. Pending the adoption of a new law by the Parliament of Ukraine, lifting restrictions for the transport of alcohol and tobacco products on the territory of Ukraine under cover of TIR Carnets, this issue will remain on the agenda of TIRExB, for information purposes.

XI. Functioning of the TIR international guarantee system

Survey on customs claims

Documentation: Informal document No.12 (2016)

33. The Board took note of preliminary results of the survey on customs claims and on the guarantee level for the period 2011–2014, as contained in Informal document No. 12 (2016). The Board regretted that only 36 countries had responded to the survey and, in particular, the absence of responses from important TIR countries such as Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine, which prevented a comparison with data from previous years. The Board noted that the reply of the Russian Federation, which had been submitted shortly before the meeting, was not included in the preliminary results. The Board requested the secretariat to send an official letter to the Director Generals of those customs administrations that have not yet replied, urging them to respond to the questionnaire before 15 May 2016 so that their data could be inserted in a revised version of the document.

34. The Board welcomed the new presentation of the aggregated survey results, i.e. with no differentiation between EU and non-EU countries, as well as the detailed country data presented in the Annex of the document. The Board acknowledged that the figures from certain countries appear to contain mistakes, i.e. average claims to the associations exceeding the maximum guarantee amount and requested the secretariat to clarify those data with the respective TIR focal points.

35. With regard to the results of the survey, the Board noted that the rate of withdrawn claims had reduced significantly but that still 54 per cent of payments were made after the 3 month deadline stipulated by the TIR Convention. It also noted that the differences between the IRU statistics and the data obtained by means of the survey still diverged significantly, and requested the secretariat, once again, to refer to those differences when launching the next survey.

36. Finally, the Board noted that only a few countries had raised concerns about the current guarantee limit. While pointing at the forthcoming general increase of the guarantee limit announced by IRU, the Board was hopeful that the situation would further improve

and that, in the future, even fewer countries would impose additional control measures, in particular additional national guarantees. In order to identify the countries that impose additional control measures, the Board requested the secretariat to indicate the country names in the part presenting the results of the survey on the guarantee level.

XII. Example agreement

Documentation: Informal document No. 6 (2016)

37. The Board decided to revert to this issue at its next session.

XIII. Activities of the secretariat

a. General activities of the secretariat

38. The Board was informed about further activities of the TIR secretariat that have been carried out in accordance with its mandate, in particular:

- follow-up actions to previous decisions by TIRExB;
- maintenance of the ITDB and of the UNECE Register of Customs Sealing Devices and Customs Stamps;
- IT-projects managed by the secretariat;
- the organization of TIR related events.

39. The Board took note that the TIR secretariat had contributed to the discussions, by means of pre-recorded video conferencing, at the side event on promoting the ratification and implementation of trade and transport facilitation legal instruments in Africa at the ninth Joint African Union Commission (AUC)–Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Annual Meeting of the AU Conference of Ministers of the Economy and Finance and ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (3 April 2016; Addis Ababa)

40. The TIR secretariat had participated in the National Workshop on the Mainstreaming of the Vienna Programme of Action for landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), which took place on 27 and 28 April 2016 in Ulaanbaatar. The national workshop was the occasion for UNECE to highlight the importance for landlocked countries of the United Nations border crossing facilitation agreements, in particular the TIR Convention and the Harmonization Convention. The workshop served as an opportunity for UNECE to present the relation between border crossing facilitation and the Sustainable Development Goals. Also, the relevance of United Nations agreements on border crossing facilitation to the implementation of the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement was brought up during the event.

41. The Board took note that UNECE and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island States (UN-OHRLLS) are co-organizing a global seminar on the importance of key Trade and Transport Conventions on 9 May 2016 in New York. The seminar will raise awareness and understanding of the process, potential benefits and implications of accession to international conventions related to facilitation of transport and trade. The meeting, in particular, will inform participants about the key Conventions that are relevant to the LLDCs that will be featured in the 2016 Treaty Event, with a view to encourage countries to ratify and implement the legal instruments.

42. In addition UNECE and UN-OHRLLS will co-organize another global seminar on the importance of key Trade and Transport Conventions, back to back with the meeting of Trade Ministers of LLDCs at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva in June 2016.

43. Finally, the Board took note that the TIR secretariat will participate in the third Global World Customs Organization (WCO)-Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Conference (11–13 May 2016; Cancun (Mexico)). More specifically, the TIR secretariat will participate in a panel discussion on transit and the AEO concept, which will provide the opportunity to promote the TIR Convention and other relevant legal instruments. In addition, UNECE and IRU will have a booth throughout the Conference, which will allow for in-depth discussions with visitors about the benefits of the border-crossing facilitation legal instruments.

b. United Nations Development Account

44. The Board took note of the recent progress in the implementation of the United Nations Development Account project: “Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate border crossing, regional cooperation and integration”, in particular, of:

- (a) the deployment of a first version of the central exchange platform at in the ICTS data centre and the continuation of the provision of technical assistance to Georgian Customs;
- (b) the organization of a seminar on Customs-to-Customs Electronic Exchange of Transit Data and the Adoption of Standard Electronic Messages (20-21 June 2016, Geneva); followed by
- (c) the second inter-regional expert group meeting (22 June 2016, Geneva).

XIV. Other matters

Documentation: Informal document No. 14 (2016)

55. The Board decided to revert to this issue at its next session.

56. Under this agenda, reference was made to articles in the Swiss press and emails that had been circulated, also among some members of TIRExB, with accusations of financial wrongdoings at the address of the management of IRU. On behalf of IRU, Mrs. Rodel categorically rejected all the accusations, stressing that the General Assembly, at its session of 8 April 2016, had expressed its full support of the IRU management and Secretary-General. The IRU Presidential Executive had instructed an external audit to clarify the situation. She could not provide any further information on the submission of an official complaint with the Swiss State Prosecutor. TIRExB invited IRU to provide more information on the issue at the forthcoming sessions of TIRExB and WP.30.

XV. Restriction in the distribution of documents

57. TIRExB decided to keep Informal documents No. 1, 7, 10, 12, 13 and 14, issued in relation to the current session, restricted.

XVI. Closing statement on behalf of the French customs administration

58. On behalf of the French customs administration, Mrs. H  l  ne Guillemet, deputy director for international trade, addressed TIRExB with a closing statement. Inter alia, she highlighted the role of the TIR Convention as precursor for transport and trade facilitation at the global level and as an important tool for the international cooperation between national customs administrations. She further referred to the need to modernize the TIR Convention, in order to take full account of computerization and introducing the necessary simplifications for authorized TIR Carnet holders, while, at the same time, maintaining a sufficient level of security for customs administrations. In this context, she was proud to report the launch of a container train service between Wuhan (China) and Lyon (France),

via Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Belarus, Poland and Germany. The train service covers the trip of 11,300 kilometres in 16 days instead of the 50–60 days required for a transport by sea.

XVII. Date and place of next session

59. The Board decided to conduct its sixty-eighth session on Monday 30 May 2016 in Geneva.
