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Item 4 (b) (ii) of the provisional agenda

**Customs Convention on the International Transport of
Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention, 1975):
Revision of the Convention:
Preparation of Phase III of the TIR revision process**

Report of the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure on its twenty-fifth session

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Attendance.....	1-3	3
II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)	4	3
III. Election of officers (agenda item 2)	5	3
IV. New information and communication technology developments in the TIR system (agenda item 3)	6	3
V. eTIR pilot projects (agenda item 4).....	7-9	3
A. UNECE-IRU eTIR pilot project between Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Turkey	7	3
B. eTIR pilot project between Georgia and Turkey	8-9	4
VI. Findings of the Group of Experts on Legal Aspects of the Computerization of the TIR Procedure (agenda item 5)	10	4
VII. Reference Model of the TIR procedure (agenda item 6).....	11-24	4
A. Contributions by the network of eTIR focal points	11	5
B. Amendments	12-24	5
1. Turkish proposal to amend the eTIR Reference Model.....	15	6
2. Mutual recognition of electronic signatures	16	6

3.	UN/EDIFACT message format	17	6
4.	Metadata class and Core data types	18	6
5.	Changes to Table 0.3	19	6
6.	Code lists	20	7
7.	Sequence of messages	21	7
8.	Holder and guarantee information in TIR operation related messages...	22	7
9.	Minor Changes	23	7
10.	Latest versions of WCO data model	24	7
VIII.	Other business (agenda item 7)	25-27	7
A.	World Customs Organization activities	25	7
B.	Other activities of interest	26	7
C.	Date and place of next session	27	8
 Annex			
	Delays at Pregny Gate on 19 September 2016		9

I. Attendance

1. The Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (further referred to as “the Expert Group”) held its twenty-fifth session on 19 and 20 September 2015 in Geneva (Switzerland).
2. The session was attended by experts from Finland, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine. Experts from the European Commission (EC) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU) also attended the session.
3. Due to excessive delays at security, the session could only start at 13.00 hours. Delegations expressively instructed the secretariat to lodge an official complaint with the competent services of the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) (copy in Annex) and to report back at its next session.

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 1 (2013)

4. The Expert Group adopted its provisional agenda as contained in Informal document GE.1 No. 1 (2016).

III. Election of officers (agenda item 2)

5. The Expert Group elected Mrs. N. Özyazıcı Sunay from Turkey as Chair of the Expert Group for the year 2014 and Mr. P. Arsic from Serbia as Vice-Chair.

IV. New information and communication technology developments in the TIR system (agenda item 3)

6. No new information and communication technology developments in the TIR system were brought to the attention of the Expert Group under this agenda item.

V. eTIR pilot projects (agenda item 4)

A. UNECE-IRU eTIR pilot project between Iran and Turkey

7. The Expert Group welcomed the information provided by the Turkish delegation, IRU and the secretariat about the UNECE¹-IRU eTIR pilot project between Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Turkey. It welcomed the successful conduct of the first step of the project, in which 31 eTIR transports had been successfully conducted, and requested to be informed about the second step (starting) on 20 August 2016, which broadened the scope of the project by including additional customs offices, transport companies and opens the possibility of multiple places of loading and unloading, including amending the declaration. The Expert Group noted that the pilot project allowed, inter alia, a first important step toward a fully-fledged eTIR international system, namely the development and deployment at UNECE of a first lightweight version of the eTIR international system. At the same time,

¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

the Expert Group noted that the operational exchange of messages between the customs administration and IRU was not using the standard eTIR messages and that, as long as eTIR messages will not include optional data elements requirements, such as those that arise from national safety and security policies, eTIR messages alone will not be sufficient to allow transport companies to submit the required information to customs.

B. eTIR pilot project between Georgia and Turkey

8. The Expert Group took note of a presentation of the results of the United Nations Development Accounts project “Strengthening the Capacities of Developing Countries and Countries with Economies in Transition to Facilitate Legitimate Border Crossing, Regional Cooperation and Integration”. More specifically, it welcomed the information provided by the Turkish delegation and secretariat about the eTIR pilot project between Georgia and Turkey. The Expert Group noted that, at this stage, this project does not involve the private sector as the project focuses on testing the customs-to-customs part of the eTIR Reference Model. At the same time, it noted that the project allows for the exchange of data on all TIR transports between both countries. The Expert Group noted that preliminary tests had been carried out but the actual exchange of data had not yet started. Nevertheless, the Expert Group welcomed the signature by both countries of a protocol related to this project, demonstrating the political willingness to complete this project.

9. The Expert Group noted that the central exchange platform (CEP) used for this project was different from the one used for the UNECE-IRU pilot project and acknowledged that the CEP, which was financed in the framework of a global project, had to be developed for data exchanges not limited to the TIR procedure. However, the Expert Group questioned the necessity to maintain two separate platforms for eTIR pilots. The secretariat offered to look into possible synergies between the project, including, possibly, on ways to bring the private sector on board of this project.

VI. Findings of the Group of Experts on Legal Aspects of the Computerization of the TIR Procedure (agenda item 5)

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 2 (2016)

10. The Expert Group took note of Informal document GE.1 No. 2 (2016), containing a summary of the activities and the findings of the Group of Experts on Legal Aspects of the Computerization of the TIR Procedure (GE.2) at its first two sessions. The Expert Group emphasized the importance for both expert groups to coordinate their activities. With regard to a suggestion to split the eTIR Reference Model in functional and technical parts and the difficulties encountered with regard to the legal aspects related to the international use of electronic signatures, the Expert Group decided to deal with those questions under agenda item 6.b.

VII. Reference Model of the TIR procedure (agenda item 6)

A. Contributions by the network of eTIR focal points

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 3 (2016)

11. The Expert Group took note of Informal document GE.1 No. 3 (2016), in particular that thirty-one countries have nominated one or more eTIR focal points², and decided to address the specific contributions by eTIR focal points while discussing the different amendments presented in Informal document GE.1 No. 5 (2016). The Expert Group regretted that, despite the fact that WP.30 had endorsed document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2014/6/Rev.1, containing the roles and responsibilities of eTIR focal points (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/276, para. 13), few eTIR focal points replied to the requests by the Expert Group or the secretariat. As a first step toward resolving this problem and before formalizing the requests to eTIR focal points by channelling them via the heads of customs, the Expert Group requested the secretariat to copy TIR focal points in all communications to eTIR focal points.

B. Amendments

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 4 (2016), Informal document GE.1 No. 5 (2016)

12. The Expert Group welcomed Informal document GE.1 No. 4 (2016) by the European Commission (EC) and noted that it will also be submitted to GE.2 for consideration. The Expert Group discussed the proposal to split the eTIR Reference Model into functional and technical parts and, in order not to revert to the decision on the modelling methodology used for the project but to, however, facilitate the consultation and maintenance of the reference model, it requested the secretariat to prepare a separate document for each chapter, also including the annexes that are specific for that chapter. The Expert Group further decided to add an annex to the introduction to include the Joint Statement on the computerization of the TIR procedure, as endorsed by AC.2 on 11 June 2015. The Expert Group questioned the need of chapter 1.1.4 and requested the secretariat to consider its deletion in future versions. It instructed the secretariat to consider the need to amend chapters 1.1.6, 1.1.7 and 1.1.8. Furthermore, it welcomed various minor amendments proposed by EC and requested the secretariat to make the necessary changes in the next version. Finally, it requested the secretariat to look into the possible replacement of the Unified Modelling Language (UML) activity diagrams by diagrams following the Business Process Model and Notation (BPMN) standard.

13. The Expert Group was of the view that a number of issues raised by EC would also require legal expertise. The Expert Group particularly referred to the fact that Annex 10 of the TIR Convention is considered out-of-scope for the eTIR project, whereas countries which would fully implement eTIR, in particular the sending of termination messages (I11), would automatically comply with it. Furthermore, the Expert Group discussed the possibility of using the paper TIR Carnet as a fall back procedure. On this issue, it was pointed out that if, in future, the eTIR legal provisions would be included in a legal instrument that would be separate and unconnected to the original TIR Convention of 1975, it would be impossible for Contracting Parties to use the paper TIR Carnet as a fall-back unless the whole paper procedure would be included in the new legal instrument. In this context, the Expert Group recalled that Annex VIII chapter 3.1 should contain the printing guidelines for the paper accompanying document, which would function as a fall-back document, and mandated the secretariat to start working on a template for the paper accompanying document. Finally, the Expert Group recalled that the development and deployment of the eTIR international system was not part of the current eTIR project, as defined in the eTIR Reference Model. These activities would require a specific project for which adequate financing would need to be secured. The Expert Group requested the

² The list of eTIR focal points is on the eTIR web site: www.unece.org/trans/bcf/eTIR/focals.html.

secretariat to recall WP.30 and AC.2 that only when the financing will be clarified, the development and deployment of the eTIR international system could be scheduled, thus allowing countries to plan and finance the necessary amendments of their national systems.

14. The Expert Group also carefully considered the various amendment proposal contained in Informal document GE.1 No. 5 (2016) and took the following decisions.

1. Turkish proposal to amend the eTIR Reference Model

15. The Expert Group considered the Turkish proposals and highlighted that, since the proposals are about changes to data requirements, they first should be considered at the procedural or legal level. Even though some data elements could be extremely useful, in particular for risk assessment (e.g. the HS code), making those data elements mandatory would require the addition of those data requirements to the eTIR legal provisions. With regard to the inclusion of additional optional elements, the Expert Group acknowledged, in the light of the findings related to the UNECE-IRU eTIR pilot project (see para. 6), in particular the fact that eTIR messages do not yet allow the transmission of required safety and security information, that using solely the standard eTIR message would not be possible. However, gathering each and every specific national data requirement might require the assistance of IRU which has already gone through this process while devising TIR-EPD. The Expert Group requested the secretariat to submit the proposal to WP.30.

2. Mutual recognition of electronic signatures

16. After thorough analysis of the various options listed in the Annex of Informal document GE.1 No. 5 (2016) as well as a new option proposed by the Turkish customs administration., the Expert Group decided to maintain its recommendation on this issue, i.e. that, on the basis of the TIR Convention principle of mutual recognition of customs controls, the authentication of the transport operator shall be performed in the country of departure and, since the information will then be transmitted in a secure customs environment (including the eTIR international system), other countries shall recognize that this authentication was performed correctly and that the holder whose name is contained in the electronic messages is the person liable for the TIR transport. The Expert Group acknowledged that this would need to be included specifically in the eTIR legal provisions.

3. UN/EDIFACT³ message format

17. In view of the answers received from eTIR focal points, the Expert Group decided that all eTIR message will be only exchanged in XML format and that the UN/EDIFACT message descriptions will be taken out of the next version of the eTIR Reference Model.

4. Metadata class and Core data types

18. The Expert group accepted the proposal contained in Informal document GE.1 No. 5 (2016) and requested the secretariat to amend the next version of the eTIR Reference Model accordingly.

5. Changes to Table 0.3

19. The Expert group accepted the proposal contained in Informal document GE.1 No. 5 (2016).

³ United Nations/Electronic Data Interchange For Administration, Commerce and Transport

6. Code lists

20. The Expert group accepted the proposal contained in Informal document GE.1 No. 5 (2016). However, further to indicating the responsible agency for the code lists in the eTIR Reference Model, the Expert Group requested the secretariat to keep those complete code lists on the eTIR website for reference.

7. Sequence of messages

21. Due to a lack of time, the Expert Group decided to revert to this issue at its next session.

8. Holder and guarantee information in TIR operation related messages

22. Due to a lack of time, the Expert Group decided to revert to this issue at its next session.

9. Minor Changes

23. The Expert group accepted the proposal contained in Informal document GE.1 No. 5 (2016).

10. Latest versions of WCO⁴ data model

24. Due to a lack of time, the Expert Group decided to revert to this issue at its next session.

VIII. Other business (agenda item 7)**A. World Customs Organization activities**

25. The Expert Group took note of the recent activities of the Data Model Project Team (DMPT), in particular the finalization of version 3.6 of the WCO Data Model, which includes in particular the amendments necessary for the European Union Customs Data Model (EU CDM) to implement the Union Customs Code (UCC). Because of the implementation of UCC, all functional messages should be based on the new EU CDM. It also took note that the eTIR messages remain compatible with version 3.6 of the WCO Data Model.

B. Other activities of interest

26. The Expert Group welcomed the publication of the “TIR and eTIR in the ESCAP region” policy brief prepared by UNECE, in collaboration with ESCAP, for the 2014 Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (Bangkok, 24-25 September 2014) and the joint UNECE-ESCAP-IRU publication “eTIR: Towards Paperless Cross-border Trade” published on 27 July 2016.

⁴ World Customs Organization

C. Date and place of next session

27. The Expert Group, was not yet in a position to agree on a date for its next session. It requested the secretariat to propose dates to the participants, possibly in the spring or autumn of 2017.

Annex

Delays at Pregny Gate on 19 September 2016

Email from Artur Bouten to Jorge Villanueva on 21/09/2016

Dear Mr. Villanueva,

I am writing to you, at the specific instruction of delegations participating in the twenty-fifth session of the Inland Transport Committee Working Party 30 Group of Experts (WP.30/GE.1), which took place on 19 and 20 September 2016 in Salle IX of the Palais des Nations. Due to important delays at security in the morning of 19 September 2016, the secretariat was forced to cancel the morning session of the two-day meeting considering that by 11.10 o'clock not even half of the participants had managed to obtain badges or even to enter the premises. As a consequence, the secretariat had to take the decision to start the session only at 13.00 hours, skipping lunch break.

When participants finally arrived, they complained, in particular, about:

(a) the long waiting times (some had been there since 8.30 a.m), partly outside the premises of the Pregny gate. Luckily, the weather was rather nice, but things would have been completely different if it had rained!

(b) some people skipping the queue, to the frustration of others, stating that they deserved preferential treatment due to, for example, their status or because they were/pretended to be important speakers.

(c) the extreme slow processing by the security staff, leaving the impression that the services were slowing down progress on purpose.

Of course, everybody (delegations and secretariat) is aware of the tight security measures in place at the Palais as well as (at times) the plethora of meetings and, on that particular day, the start of the Human Rights Council, but I fail to understand that it needs to take two to three hours to enter the building for delegates who have duly been pre-registered in the system, which should serve to 'facilitate their entrance' to the Palais. I suppose that on the basis of pre-registrations, your services are well aware in advance of the great number of people expected for registration and, thus, sufficient staff should be made available to process even large numbers and do so well before 10.00 o'clock. I believe that pre-registration should also lead to much faster issuance of badges than is currently the case, considering that people have provided the Safety and Security department beforehand with the required data, which should be easily extractable from the system. I believe that with appropriate measures this situation could be easily improved.

At the same time, we in the United Nations should treat all guests and visitors alike. Alternatively, you could perhaps consider creating a separate/additional entry lane for speakers or other high-level participants. Finally, experience shows that delegates with long-duration badges do not experience these problems and perhaps the procedure to provide delegates with long-duration badges (valid for, perhaps, even more than one year) could/should be reviewed and further facilitated.

I would appreciate it if you take due account of this honest and well-meant complaint in the hope that it allows you to introduce constructive measures that will avoid such situation from recurring in the future!

Your feedback would be much appreciated as I have been instructed to report back to the delegates at the next session of WP.30/GE.1.

In advance, I would like to thank you for your kind understanding and assistance.

Kind regards,

Artur Bouten
