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**Economic Commission for Europe****Inland Transport Committee****Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport****153rd session**

Geneva, 15–18 October 2019

Item 3 (b) (ii) c 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****Conversion of the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on  
Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the  
TIR Procedure into a formal Expert Group****Note by the secretariat****I. Background**

1. At its 140th session (June 2015), the Working Party endorsed document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2015/4, containing an overview of the activities of the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (GE.1) and, in particular, the recommendations of GE.1. It requested the secretariat to reflect some of those recommendations in the Work Plan and the Programme of Work of the Working Party. The Working Party thanked all those who had, over the years, participated in the work of GE.1 for their dedication and tenacity to bring the mandated tasks to a good end. For the future, the Working Party requested the secretariat to reconvene GE.1 whenever issues related to maintaining or amending the eTIR specifications would so require (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/280, para. 10).

2. Since then, six sessions of the GE.1 have been organized, with the view to improving the eTIR specifications on the basis of the results of eTIR pilot projects and of the work carried out by the Expert Group on the Legal Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (GE.2). At the request of WP.30, the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) prolonged the mandate of GE.1 every year from 2016 to 2019.

3. While, over the years, GE.1 sessions have had a relatively steady number of contracting parties participating and a significant number of participants (see table), some contracting parties that extensively use the TIR system did not take part in the work of GE.1 or, at least, not in recent years. The Working Party, at its 151st session, at the request of the Russian Federation, mandated the secretariat to submit the next version of the eTIR specifications, once finalized by GE.1, as official documents for consideration at one of its future sessions. While this would allow French and Russian speaking delegations to better consider the latest version of the eTIR specifications, it will not facilitate the participation of

their experts in the work towards finalizing the next version of the eTIR specifications. Bearing that in mind, the secretariat proposes to formalize GE.1 in order to be in a position to provide improved secretariat services, such as the availability of documentation and interpretation at sessions in the three official United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) languages.

#### **Number of contracting parties that participated in GE.1 sessions**

<i>Session</i>	<i>Number of contracting parties</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>
18th	12	31
19th	10	27
20th	14	29
21st	12	29
22nd	10	26
23rd	11	27
24th	11	33
25th	10	20
26th	10	26
27th	10	26
28th	6	15
29th	13	22

4. The formalization of GE.1 should allow for a broader participation in the preparation of a new version of the eTIR specification in the wake of the entry into force of Annex 11, which will, inter alia, establish the Technical Implementation Body (TIB) as a formal technical body under the Convention. A broader participation in GE.1 meetings aims at facilitating the faster adoption of the eTIR specifications by those contracting parties that will be bound by Annex 11 and, consequently, by the TIB.

## **II. Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of teams of specialists within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

5. At its thirty-fifth session (March 2010), the Executive Committee (EXCOM) approved revised guidelines for the establishment and functioning of teams of specialists (ECE/EX/2/Rev.1).<sup>1</sup> A team of specialists (or “advisory group”, “ad hoc group”, “task force” etc.) is established through a procedure set by an ECE Sectoral Committee (ITC) and supervised either directly by it or by one of its Working Parties (WP.30).

6. The main characteristics of a team of specialists is that it (a) addresses a specific area of activities, (b) has an advisory or operational nature or a combination of the two, and (c) it normally has a two-year duration but can be extended after careful evaluation.

## **III. Draft Terms of Reference of GE.1**

7. During its mandate, GE.1 will focus its work on preparing a new version of the eTIR specifications, pending the formal establishment of TIB upon the entry into force of Article 58 quater and Annex 11 of the TIR Convention. Based on the provisions of Annex 11 and the agreed eTIR concepts, GE.1 shall:

<sup>1</sup> See: [www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/commission/EXCOM/Key\\_documents/02-Rev1-GuidelinesTOS\\_ECE\\_EX\\_2-Rev1-E.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/commission/EXCOM/Key_documents/02-Rev1-GuidelinesTOS_ECE_EX_2-Rev1-E.pdf)

- (a) prepare a new version of the technical specifications of the eTIR procedure, and amendments thereto, ensuring their alignment with the functional specifications of the eTIR procedure;
- (b) prepare a new version of the functional specifications of the eTIR procedure, and amendments thereto, ensuring their alignment with the conceptual specifications of the eTIR procedure;
- (c) prepare amendments to the conceptual specifications of the eTIR procedure, upon requests by WP.30;
- (d) follow and provide feedback on the development of the eTIR international system.

#### **IV. Method of work**

- 8. The Group of Experts of GE.1 will be established and function in accordance with the ECE Guidelines for teams of specialists approved by the Executive Committee of ECE on 31 March 2010 (ECE/EX/2/Rev.1). At its first meeting, GE.1 shall adopt a work plan, clearly defining its objectives and activities, including a time schedule for their implementation.
- 9. Subject to the availability of meeting facilities and interpretation, GE.1 is expected to meet twice in 2020, at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, and twice in 2021, before concluding its activities with the transmission of a report to WP.30 at its February 2022 session. This report shall also contain proposals for monitoring procedures and follow-up activities.
- 10. Translation of pre-, in- and post-session documents and simultaneous interpretation of sessions in English, French and Russian shall be provided by the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) services for the four sessions to be held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.
- 11. Participation in GE.1 is open to all contracting parties of the TIR Convention, 1975. Concerned intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as concerned experts from the industry are invited to participate and provide expert advice, in compliance with United Nations rules and practices.

#### **V. Secretariat**

- 12. ECE shall provide secretariat services for GE.1 and shall ensure close cooperation with all stakeholders and concerned regional commissions of the United Nations.

#### **VI. Considerations by the Working Party**

- 13. The Working Party is invited to consider and, possibly, adopt, the proposal to convert the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure into a formal Expert Group and request the secretariat to transmit the proposal for endorsement to ITC and subsequent approval by EXCOM.
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