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**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

eTIR Project summary

Note by the secretariat

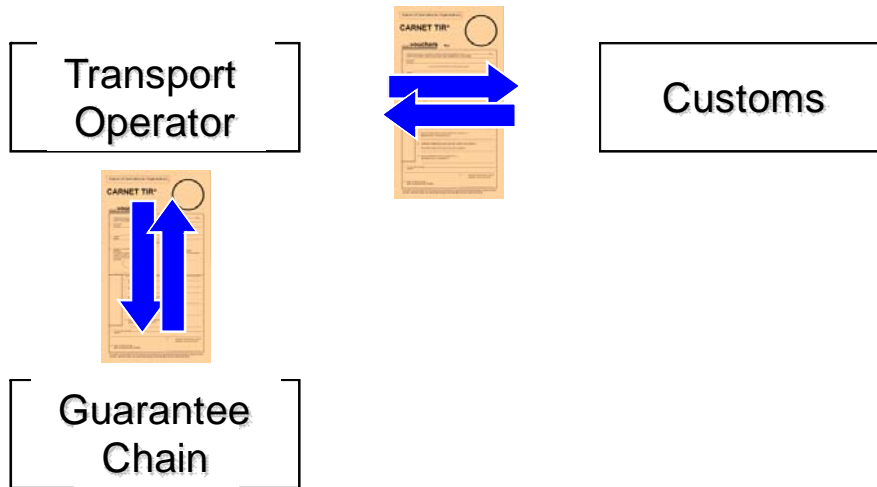
I. Mandate

1. At its 128th session, the Working Party (WP.30) recalled that all necessary information on the eTIR project is contained in the eTIR Reference Model, a comprehensive document of more than 500 pages. WP.30 acknowledged that a first-time reader of the eTIR Reference Model may have difficulties in grasping the substance and main objectives of the eTIR project. Consequently the WP.30 requested the secretariat to prepare, for information purposes, a short document outlining the essence and goals of the project.

II. Background

2. For many years the TIR Convention proved to be an efficient facilitation tool. However, with the progress in technology, the use of the paper TIR Carnet is increasingly becoming archaic, in particular when it comes to linking it to the electronic procedures applied by national Customs administrations. At each border crossing, Customs officers are faced with additional work of having to key in up to 50 data elements into their national electronic Customs system. In addition, the current situation does not enable Customs authorities to effectively apply risk management procedures based on advance cargo information, as demanded by an increasingly more security-conscious environment.

Figure 1
The use of the TIR carnet



3. Figure 1 shows that the TIR Carnet is currently the only link between the various actors of the TIR system. Customs authorities from different countries involved in a TIR transport also use various parts of the TIR carnet to exchange Customs to Customs (C2C) information and rely on the holder to transport this information, thus increasing the risk of fraud. Indeed, the paper TIR Carnet, despite its multiple security elements, is prone to falsification and misuse. The computerisation of the TIR procedure and the replacement of the paper carnet by electronic messages will further secure the TIR system to the benefit of Customs administrations, honest transport operator and the guarantee chain.

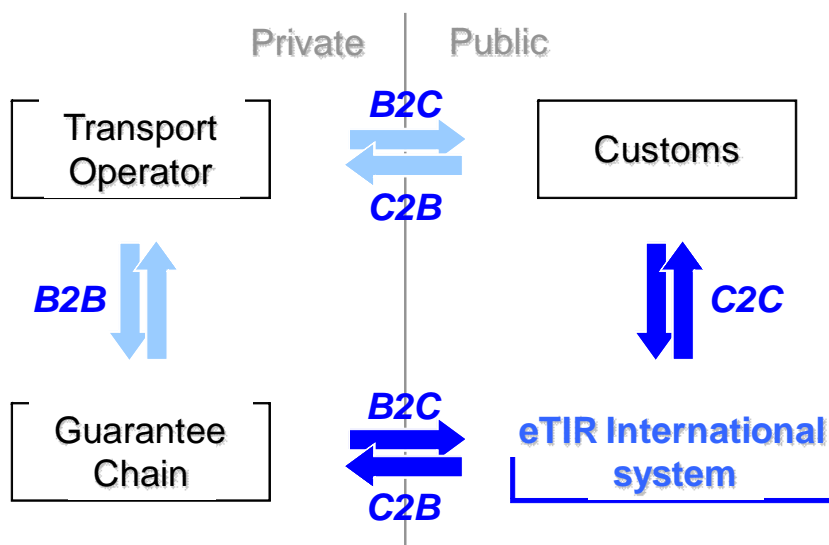
4. Pending the introduction of a full-fledged computerized TIR system at the international level, various Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention have already started introducing national requirements regarding the delivery to and the processing of TIR Carnet data in their national computerized Customs system. The guarantee chain has also progressively introduced various Information Technology (IT) systems to streamline the organization and functioning of the guarantee system.

III. The eTIR Project

5. The Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention launched in 2003 the so-called “eTIR Project”, aimed at providing an exchange platform for all actors (Customs authorities, holders,¹ guarantee chains) involved in the TIR system, known as the “eTIR international system”. The eTIR international system aims to ensure the secure exchange of data between national Customs systems related to the international transit of goods, vehicles or containers according to the provisions of the TIR Convention and to allow Customs to manage the data on guarantees, issued by guarantee chains to holders authorized to use the TIR system. The eTIR international system will be carrying some of the functions currently pertaining to the TIR Carnet.

¹ Holder = a legal or natural person authorized under the provisions of the TIR Convention to use the TIR system.

Figure 2
Information flow between the actors of the eTIR system²



6. Figure 2 graphically represents the information exchange between the actors in the eTIR system. It shows that only a part of the information flow, required for the functioning of the TIR procedure, will pass through the eTIR international system. It also indicates that the eTIR international system does not extend to the submission of a TIR declaration by the holder. At the request of Contracting Parties and industry, the technical realization of electronic declaration systems will be left up to initiatives at private or national level. However, the eTIR Project will define the content and format of the national declaration messages. The figure also shows that the eTIR international system will allow the exchange of information between Customs authorities of different countries (C2C information).

7. The establishment of the eTIR system will require parallel efforts from Contracting Parties and the guarantee chains to develop, update and interconnect national and private IT systems.

IV. Example of an eTIR transport

8. In the eTIR system, a holder first requests a guarantee from a guarantee chain to perform a given TIR transport. If the request is granted, the guarantee chain provides the holder with a guarantee reference number. The guarantee chain then registers the issued guarantee with the eTIR international system. As a next step, the holder sends a standard advance cargo information message (i.e. all information contained in the declaration) to the Customs authorities of the office of departure, using a national declaration mechanism, allowing them to perform any required risk assessment procedures. Then, the holder presents vehicle, goods and guarantee reference at the Customs office of departure for the purpose of lodging the declaration, based on the advance cargo information message already available in the national Customs system. Customs inspect vehicle and goods according to the results of the risk assessment and verify the status of the guarantee with the eTIR international system. If all checks are in order, Customs accept the declaration and

² Business to Business (B2B); Business to Customs (B2C); Customs to Business (C2B); Customs to Customs (C2C)

forward the relevant TIR transport data (declaration data, results of the checks, seals numbers, etc) to the eTIR international system. The eTIR international system provides all Customs administrations involved in the TIR transport (according to the itinerary as declared by the holder) with the TIR transport information, thus serving as advance cargo information for the subsequent Customs authorities. The guarantee chain will be notified of any changes in the status of the TIR transport covered by its guarantee and can consult, at any time, the eTIR international system to obtain the latest information about guarantees it has issued.

9. Upon arrival at a consecutive Customs office of entry, the procedure is repeated, based on the advance cargo information available through the eTIR international system and the risk assessment performed by the Customs authorities involved. Specific steps are foreseen in case the TIR transport consists of multiple places of loading or unloading.

10. Each time the TIR transport reaches a Customs office of exit or destination, the Customs authorities inform the eTIR international system of the termination of the concerned TIR operation.³ The same procedure applies for the notification of the discharge of each TIR operation.⁴

V. Benefits and challenges

11. The eTIR system offers benefits to all actors involved in the TIR system. First, it brings additional security and risk management opportunities, thus reducing the risk of fraud. Second, advanced international cooperation will allow all actors to significantly reduce their administrative burden and to maximize the benefits of integrated supply chain management. Finally, the provision of advance cargo information and the exchange of information in real time will speed up the TIR procedure.

12. However, before the establishment of the eTIR system, a number of steps still need to be undertaken, such as, in particular:

- The finalization of the eTIR Reference Model, defining requirements, concepts and envisaged technical solutions;
- The adoption of amendments to introduce eTIR into the legal text of the TIR Convention;
- The establishment and the financing of the eTIR international system.

VI. Further information

13. A full description of the eTIR project is contained in the eTIR Reference Model. The latest version (version 3.0a) is available at the United Nations Economic Commission for

³ The information on termination is shared with the guarantee chain, providing it with more data than is requested by Annex 10 of the TIR Convention. At present, the SafeTIR system, developed by the International Road Transport Union (IRU) to collect the data mentioned in Annex 10, only receives data on the termination of those TIR operations where a partial or final unloading has taken place. As a consequence, terminations of other TIR operations are currently not reported to that system.

⁴ Currently, the TIR Convention does not contain provisions that enable the guarantee chain to obtain information on the discharge of TIR operations. Having in mind that it is the discharge of the TIR operation that relieves the guarantee chain from its obligations toward Customs (and not the termination), this new feature of the eTIR system will certainly help to improve the management of the guarantee system.

Europe (UNECE) website.⁵ The eTIR Reference Model is a work in progress, which is updated each time that a work phase in the project has been finalized.

14. Currently the eTIR project design phase is taking place. In the course of this exercise United Nations/Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT) and Extensible Markup Language (XML) messages will be devised and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) architecture as well as adequate technical fallbacks will be designed.

⁵ <http://live.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/bcf/wp30/documents/ECE-TRANS-WP30-2011-4e.pdf>