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Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and
Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure

Eighteenth session

Geneva, 9–10 March 2011

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

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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 eighteenth session on 9 and 10 March 2011 in Geneva.
2. The session was attended by experts from Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, Sweden, Turkey as well as from the European Union (EU). Experts from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU) also attended the session.

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/1

3. The Expert Group adopted its provisional agenda as contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/1 with the inclusion of Informal document GE.1 No.1 (2011) and Informal document GE.1 No.2 (2011) under item 3 (c) and 4 of the agenda. It also welcomed the secretariat’s proposal to include two additional sub-items under agenda item 5 (Other business), i.e. 5 (c) eTIR in a Single Window environment and 5 (d) Dematerialization of documents attached to the TIR Carnet.
4. The Expert Group noticed, with regret, that despite efforts by the secretariat and the availability of Russian translation, no Russian speaking experts attended the session.

III. Election of officers (agenda item 2)

5. The Expert Group elected Mr. P. Arsic from Serbia as Chair of the Expert Group for the year 2011 and Mrs. N. Özyazıcı Sunay from Turkey as Vice-Chair.

IV. Reference model of the TIR procedure (agenda item 3)

A. Network of eTIR focal points

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/2

6. The Expert Group took note of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/2 and confirmed the replies from the network of eTIR focal points to the question posed by the secretariat on 19 August 2010, i.e. that the United Nations/Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UNEDIFACT) standard should only be used for messages E9 and E10. The Expert Group also invited eTIR focal points to provide inputs for GE.1 meetings at their own initiative and stressed the importance of all Contracting Parties’ participation in the eTIR project through the network of eTIR focal point, considering that the project will ultimately affect all countries involved in the TIR system. Finally, the Expert Group invited those countries, which have not yet done so, to nominate a national eTIR focal point.¹

¹ The list of eTIR focal points is on the eTIR web site : www.unece.org/trans/bcf/eTIR/focals.html.

B. New Information and Communication Technology developments in the TIR system

7. The Expert Group conducted this part of the session by means of presentations delivered by various participants. Presentations are available on the eTIR website (<http://etir.unece.org>).

8. The presentation and demonstration by the Turkish delegation made it clear that it would be feasible to conduct a pilot project based on the analysis contained in Chapter 3 of the eTIR Reference Model. The Expert Group welcomed this significant contribution to its work. It also welcomed the presentation by France that shed light, on various recent developments in the French Customs and, in particular, on the implementation of the real-time Safe TIR (RTS) system and its benefits. It also underlined that every step made towards computerization and real-time treatment of information ultimately contribute to the future implementation of the eTIR system.

9. In conclusion, the Expert Group confirmed that should remain a forum where experts can share information about developments and experiences regarding information and communication technology (ICT) usage in the framework of the TIR procedure.

C. eTIR Reference Model, version 3.0

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/3; Informal documents GE.1 No.1 (2011)

10. The Expert Group extensively discussed version 3.0a of the eTIR Reference Model, as contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/3, as well as the additional amendment proposals contained in Informal document GE.1 No.1 (2011).

11. The Expert Group took note of the two amendments proposals. It decided to further discuss the first proposal, i.e. to include international declaration mechanisms, at its next session on the basis of a revised document to be prepared by the secretariat. The Expert Group decided to forward the second proposal, i.e. to make use of the guarantee chain's database to validate guarantees which have not yet been accepted by Customs, to the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30), together with version 3.0 of the eTIR Reference Model. Furthermore, the Expert Group mandated the secretariat to request the views of the network of eTIR focal points on the second proposal, which then, after review, could be transmitted to WP.30 as a technical recommendation by the network of eTIR focal points.

D. Chapter 4 – Design

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/4

12. The Expert Group welcomed document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/4 containing the revised UN/EDIFACT E9 and E10 messages. It supported the secretariat's proposal that XML Schema Definition (XSD) files should not be included in the eTIR Reference Model but rather be made available on the eTIR web site. The Expert Group also reiterated that input from external experts will be required to ensure completion of the technical documentation and invited Governments to contribute to this task by means of providing either human or financial resources.

V. Financial implications of the national implementation of eTIR (agenda item 4)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2010/5; Informal document GE.1 No.2 (2011)

13. The Expert Group welcomed the first assessment of the cost of implementation of the eTIR international system, contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2010/5 and expressed its gratitude to Turkish Customs for having provided a platform where public and private sector ICT experts could gather information necessary for this assessment. It also welcomed the demonstration by UNCTAD of the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) World system as well as the presentation of Informal document GE.1 No.2 (2011) and took note, in particular, of the figures on the costs to implement the RTS and TIR-EPD in ASYCUDA. Finally, the Expert Group welcomed the updated information by Serbian Customs on developing the Systematic Electronic Exchange of Data (SEED) project, the resources required for its development and the envisaged interoperability of SEED with the eTIR international system. Furthermore, the Expert group took note of the IRU presentation on the progress made in the RTS and TIR Electronic Pre-Declaration (EPD) projects.

14. The Expert Group recognized the importance of all information provided, together with expected inputs from the EU New Computerised Transit System (NCTS), the World Customs Organization (WCO) Customs Enforcement Network (CEN) and the Globally Networked Customs (GNC) project, as well as the IRU RTS, to further refine the assessment of the investment and running costs of the eTIR international system as well as, possibly, the national costs to connect national Customs systems to the eTIR international system.

VI. Other business (agenda item 5)

A. World Customs Organization transit data model

15. The WCO Information Management Sub Committee (IMSC) and UN/CEFACT Technical Business Group on Customs issues (TBG4) Chair, who is also the ad interim Chair of the Data Model Project Team (DMPT), extensively briefed the Expert Group on the Data Model history and its recent developments, in particular the forthcoming version 3.2. of the WCO Data Model. He also informed the Expert Group about other WCO activities, like the joined legal task force on Single Window with UNCITRAL. He further briefed the Expert Group on the GNC project, which will be presented to the WCO Council in June 2012 and on the collaboration of the UNECE secretariat in the project. He finally recalled the latest activities of the DMPT and the possible synergies with the Expert Group's work, particularly on Single Window and the dematerialization of documents.

B. Other activities of interest

16. The secretariat informed the Expert Group that UNECE has submitted a project related to the eTIR project to the United Nations Development Accounts (UNDA) for funding. The project has been included in a shortlist of 40 UNDA projects to be approved by the UN General Assembly by the end of 2011. This UNECE driven project could possibly be implemented in cooperation with other regional commissions and is aimed at strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate border crossing, by means of increased exchange of secure electronic information between Customs administrations.

C. eTIR in a Single Window environment

17. The Expert Group agreed that the recent developments on implementing national Single Windows deserve to be analysed in the framework of the eTIR project. It took note of existing UNECE recommendations related to the Single Window concept, in particular UN/CEFACT recommendations No. 33, 34 and 35². It decided to revert to this issue at its next session, on the basis of a document to be prepared by the secretariat.

D. Dematerialization of documents attached to the TIR Carnet

18. The Expert Group stressed the importance of the dematerialization of attached documents in the framework of the computerization of the TIR procedure and the influence it may have on the design of the eTIR international system. In this context, it welcomed the forthcoming entry into force of the eCMR protocol on 5 June 2011, following its ratification by Lithuania on 7 March 2011.

19. Finally, the Expert Group requested the secretariat to contact WCO to obtain more information on a recent WCO survey on the use of attached documents and, in case the requirements regarding documents to be attached to the TIR Carnet had not been identified by the survey, to launch a similar survey among TIR Contracting Parties and to present the results at one of its future sessions for further consideration.

E. Date and place of next session

20. The Expert Group, not being in a position to agree on a specific date for its next session, requested the secretariat to propose tentative dates for its next session, possibly in September 2011, and transmit them to the Group at the first opportunity.

² The text of the recommendations is available on the UNECE web site www.unece.org/cefact/recommendations/rec_index.htm.