



Economic Commission for Europe**Inland Transport Committee****Eighty-sixth session**

Geneva, 20-23 February 2024

Item 10 (o) of the provisional agenda

Strategic questions of a horizontal and cross-sectoral policy or regulatory nature:**Strengthening border crossing facilitation (TIR Convention, eTIR project, Harmonization Convention and other cross-border and customs transit facilitation measures)****Strengthening Border Crossing Facilitation (TIR Convention, eTIR procedure, Harmonization Convention and other customs transit facilitation Conventions)****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

This document summarizes the activities in 2023 of the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30), the Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, 1975 (AC.2), the Technical Implementation Body (TIB) (for contracting parties bound by Annex 11 of the TIR Convention), the Administrative Committee for the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 1982 (AC.3) and the TIR secretariat in the area of border crossing.

The Committee will be informed about the main outcome of the 162nd, 163rd and 164th sessions of WP.30 (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/324, ECE/TRANS/WP.30/326 and ECE/TRANS/WP.30/328) and will be invited to **take note** of the activities of AC.2 in the year 2023, including, but not limited to amendments adopted (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/161 and ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/164).

In particular (but not limited to), the Committee will be informed about:

- (a) The latest developments of the eTIR international system and the ongoing eTIR interconnection projects, leading up to the first eTIR transport;
- (b) The outcome of the fourth and fifth sessions during 2023 of the Technical Implementation Body (TIB) (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/TIB/8 and ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/TIB/10);
- (c) The latest developments in the International TIR Data Bank (ITDB) and the electronic tools of TIR;
- (d) The workshops organized in order to promote accession to the TIR Convention in other regions, especially in Central Asia and Africa, as well as to inform and encourage customs

authorities about interconnecting their national customs systems with the eTIR international system;

- (e) The twelfth revised version of the TIR Handbook;
- (f) The latest developments in the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls for Goods, 1982;
- (g) The preparation of a practical guide to cross border facilitation (in collaboration with OSCE);
- (h) The latest developments in the Convention on the Facilitation of Border Crossing Procedures for Passengers, Luggage and Load-luggage Carried in International Traffic by Rail;
- (i) The activities undertaken in 2023 by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the International Touring Alliance / International Automobile Federation (AIT/FIA) within the framework of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on the revitalization and digitalization of relevant United Nations inland transport conventions and, in particular the development of an eCPD (Carnet de Passage en Douane) system;
- (j) The follow-up actions taken by WP.30 in 2023 in aligning its work with the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) Strategy until 2030.

I. Background and Mandate

1. This document has been prepared in accordance with the 2023 Programme of Work of the ITC (ECE/TRANS/328, paragraph 33 and ECE/TRANS/2023/11, programme activity 4 (1): Customs Questions affecting Transport). Progress in 2023 is reported for the contracting parties, the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30), the Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, 1975 (AC.2), the Technical Implementation Body (TIB) (for contracting parties bound by Annex 11 of the TIR Convention), the Administrative Committee for the Harmonization Convention, 1982 (AC.3) and the ECE and TIR secretariats in the area of border crossing facilitation, including among others:

- Activities and developments of the TIR Convention and the functioning of the TIR system.
- Progress made in the eTIR interconnection projects.
- Developments in the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 1982 (Harmonization Convention).
- Developments in the Convention on the Facilitation of Border Crossing Procedures for Passengers, Luggage and Load-luggage Carried in International Traffic by Rail.
- Developments in the 1954 Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation of Private Road Vehicles and the 1956 Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation of Commercial Road Vehicles.
- Requests from ITC to align the activities of WP.30 with the ITC Strategy until 2030.

II. Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets, 1975 (TIR Convention)

A. Amendment Proposals to the Convention

2. Since 27 September 2023, the TIR Convention, 1975 entered into force for Iraq. The convention now has 78 contracting parties and since the activation of the system for Qatar, TIR operations can now be established with sixty-five countries.

3. In 2023, no amendments entered into force for all contracting parties to the Convention.

4. More information on the depositary notifications is available on the TIR website.¹

B. International TIR Data Bank and Electronic Tools of the TIR secretariat

5. At its eighty-first session (October 2023), AC.2 was informed about developments related to ITDB and other information technology projects managed by the TIR secretariat. AC.2 took note of the current status of data recordings in ITDB and, in particular, of the following figures: 1,156 web application users, 30,089 authorized holders recorded, 282 stamps and seals recorded, 2,991 customs offices recorded of the web service usage for the past years. The Committee also took note of planned improvements to ITDB, by the increased number of languages both for ITDB and eTIR Portal. Work continues on eTIR National Application, with 95 per cent of work completed. Testing is underway and is due to be completed shortly. Additional language support has been added for the Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Persian languages (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/165, paragraph 18).

C. National and Regional TIR Workshops and Seminars

6. On 21 and 22 June 2023 the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB) organized a friends of the Chair meeting in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The Chair of TIRExB, with the support of the ECE secretariat and at the kind invitation of the customs administration of Uzbekistan, organized the meeting with the aim to promote the implementation of the eTIR procedure along the middle corridor. The meeting was supported by the European Commission, International Road Transport Union (IRU), Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA), Islamic Development Bank and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). Representatives from the customs authorities and the national associations of Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan were invited to participate.

7. A training workshop on the Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets, (TIR Convention (1975)/eTIR) and the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR/eCMR) in member States of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) took place on 1 and 2 March 2023 in Djibouti. The main objective of the workshop was to present the TIR and the CMR conventions in the IGAD region explaining all advantages and benefits from their implementation. The organization of the workshop was supported by IGAD and the Islamic Development Bank.

8. On 8 February 2023 in the framework of the TIR Administrative Committee, a workshop took place on the implementation of the TIR Convention, 1975: challenges and opportunities. The workshop had a series of objectives, inspired by the history of the TIR system but also from the opportunities that exist for the future: assist newcomers to the system (new contracting parties) to better understand the services and potentials of the TIR system; make the countries that have not yet acceded to the TIR Convention aware of the benefits and multiple advantages that the TIR system brings for both customs authorities and the private sector; share experience and knowledge with the contracting parties that are using the TIR system in full; share experience and knowledge with those contracting parties that are mainly using another system for their border crossing operations; exchange views about the future of the TIR system.

9. The TIR secretariat organized a series of capacity-building workshops with Customs Authorities to further facilitate the interconnection of the eTIR international system with the national customs systems including the implementation of the conformance tests. Meetings were organized with Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Tajikistan.

¹ www.unece.org/tir/tir-depositary_notification.html.

10. The TIR secretariat participated in different workshops organized to further promote accession to the TIR Convention and use of the eTIR procedure:

- Forty-first meeting of the Union of Road Transport Associations in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Region (BSEC-URTA) general assembly (Batumi, Georgia, 9 June 2023);
- Seventeenth meeting of Council of the Regional Customs Transit Guarantee (RCTG) Scheme, of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) (Lusaka, Zambia, 14 and 15 November 2023);
- Transforming the SPECA Region into a Connectivity Hub with Global Outreach, 2023 SPECA Economic Forum (Baku, Azerbaijan, 21 and 22 November 2023).

D. eTIR

1. eTIR International System: Interconnection Projects

11. The status regarding the interconnections of eTIR international system with the National Customs Systems stands as follows:

- Azerbaijan, Georgia, Pakistan, Tunisia and Uzbekistan have finalised the interconnection of their national customs systems with the eTIR international system,
- IRU has finalised the interconnection of its information technology systems with the eTIR international system,
- For Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, funds were made available by Regular programme of technical cooperation (RPTC) budget, national consultants have been hired and the interconnection projects have started,
- Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Ukraine have expressed interest to interconnect to the system. Funds will be secured for the interconnection projects to start in January 2024.

2. Technical Implementation Body

12. AC.2 was informed about the outcome of the fourth session of TIB, which took place on 6 and 7 June 2023, and endorsed the report of the session as contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/TIB/8. It took note, in particular, that Mr. P. Arsic (Serbia) and Ms. L. Jacobs (Belgium) were elected, respectively, as Chair and Vice-Chair of the sessions in 2023.

13. AC.2 noted that TIB had considered a proof of concept for the possible access of TIR transport data by holders via the web and mobile applications dedicated to holders. TIB felt that this question, since it requires changes to the eTIR concepts, should be first considered by the contracting parties to the TIR convention bound by Annex 11 in the framework of AC.2. The Chair of TIB invited AC.2 to provide its views on the issue. AC.2 decided to revert to this issue at its next session.

14. AC.2 also took note of revision 2 of version 4.3 of the introduction of the eTIR specifications, as contained in documents ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/TIB/2022/2/Rev.2–ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2022/11/Rev.2 (introduction), ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/TIB/2022/3/Rev.2–ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2022/12/Rev.2 (eTIR concepts), ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/TIB/2022/4/Rev.2–ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2022/13/Rev.2 (eTIR functional specifications) ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/TIB/2022/5/Rev.2–ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2022/14/Rev.2 (technical specifications).

E. Prolongation of the Authorization of the International Road Transport Union for the Years 2023–2025

15. At its seventy-eighth session (October 2022), AC.2 mandated ECE and IRU² to proceed with signing the new agreement at the earliest convenience, but, in any case, well before 15 November 2022, on the understanding that annex I would contain exactly the same figures as for the budget of TIRExB and the TIR secretariat for the year 2023, contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2022/15 (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/159, paragraph 46).

16. At its seventy-ninth session (February 2023), AC.2 was informed that the new ECE-IRU Agreement for the years 2023–2025 had been signed on 15 November 2022.

F. Twelfth Revised Version of the TIR Handbook

17. The twelfth revised version of the TIR Handbook, to be issued in 2023, is under preparation. TIRExB is in the process of drafting a set of new examples of best practices to add to the already existing set of examples. These examples refer to Explanatory Note 0.49 and comment thereto on the use of authorized consignor and consignee and to a comment on article 1 (o) on the use of subcontractors. On top of a PDF version, the secretariat intends to produce a more interactive, online version.

18. AC.2 considered the draft text of a revision to a comment to Article 3 and four good practices transmitted by TIRExB (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2023/11) with the aim to have them included in the next revision of the TIR Handbook.

III. International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 1982 (Harmonization Convention)

A. Status of the Convention

19. The Committee may wish to note that, in 2023, no new accessions to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 1982 ("Harmonization Convention") took place. Thus, since the entry into force of the Convention for Turkmenistan, on 27 February 2017, the number of contracting parties to the Harmonization Convention stands at 58.

B. Issues in the Application of the Convention

20. At its 161st session (October 2022), WP.30 reviewed document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2009/8, containing a survey on the application of annex 8 of the Harmonization Convention. WP.30 mandated the secretariat to circulate the survey in the spring of 2023, with the regular delegates from governments (and, in the absence thereof, TIR focal points) as addressees. The initial date for responses was set as 1 July 2023. The survey was further extended as insufficient responses had been received and WP.30 urged delegations to provide replies.

C. Preparation of a Practical Guide to Cross Border Facilitation (in Collaboration with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe)

21. At its 164th session (October 2023), WP.30 considered Informal documents WP.30 (2023) 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 containing the first 4 chapters and an annex of the publication prepared by the ECE secretariat, in collaboration with the Organization for Security and Co-operation

² International Road Transport Union.

in Europe (OSCE), “A practical guide to cross-border facilitation”. The secretariat invited interested delegates to provide good practices and case studies for the publication to be issued in English, French and Russian towards the end of 2023.

IV. Convention on the Facilitation of Border Crossing Procedures for Passengers, Luggage and Load-luggage Carried in International Traffic by Rail, of 22 February 2019

22. Since 26 September 2019, only Chad had become signatory to the Convention and therefore the Convention has not yet come into force. No other developments were observed concerning the status of the Convention.

V. Customs Conventions on the Temporary Importation of Private Road Vehicles (1954) and Commercial Road Vehicles (1956)

A. Status of the Conventions

23. The Committee may wish to note that, in 2023, the status of the Customs Conventions on the Temporary Importation of Private (1954) and Commercial (1956) Road Vehicles had not changed, and that the Conventions currently have, 80 and 26 contracting parties, respectively.

B. Issues in the Application of the Conventions

24. At its 164th session (October 2023), WP.30 was briefed about the latest development in the implementation of a MoU between ECE and the Alliance Internationale de Tourisme / Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (AIT/FIA) on revitalising and digitalizing relevant United Nations inland transport conventions and, in particular, the development of an eCPD (Carnet de Passage en Douane) system. The secretariats had started preparing the concepts of the future system and would submit a document for consideration by WP.30 at one of its future sessions (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/328, paragraph 25).

25. Furthermore, at its 164th session (October 2023), WP.30 was also informed following a request from customs authorities and, depending on the availability of extrabudgetary funds, that the secretariat with the assistance of the FIA secretariat would organize an informal ad hoc and online meeting to host the first session of the informal working group to digitalize the CPD. The proposed time by the secretariat for this meeting is between 11 and 22 December. Once the dates are fixed, including the online facilities, the secretariat would send an invitation to all contracting parties to the conventions including experts from other digitalization efforts, seeking their active participation.

VI. Requests from the Inland Transport Committee

Aligning the Work of the Working Party with the Inland Transport Committee Strategy

26. At its 163rd session (June 2023), WP.30 recalled that, it had considered the proposals in annex III of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/1, containing suggestions for alignment of the WP.30 Terms of Reference (ToR) with the revised ToR of ITC. WP.30 requested the secretariat to prepare a revision of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/1 (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/7), to incorporate the discussions and suggestions of the European Union.

27. WP.30 considered the proposals in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/7, on the alignment of the WP.30 ToR with the revised ToR of ITC. WP.30 decided to tentatively

adopt the revised ToR pending finalization of the European Union Council decision. WP.30 also decided to adopt its new name as “Global Forum on Customs Questions Affecting Transport including Border Crossing Facilitation”. WP.30 requested the secretariat to inform ITC about these decisions for its endorsement.

28. Furthermore and following a request of the ITC Chair on the 2023 review of working party mandates, WP.30 considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/6. The document includes a questionnaire that collects the recommended information for the review of ITC working parties. WP.30 adopted document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/6, with the following amendments: first amendment on page 4, item III A. heading should read “Transport facilitation (including customs and border-crossing facilitation) with second bullet “main work area (customs and border-crossing facilitation); second amendment on page 7, item VI Main partners (b) fourth line European Commission should be replaced by “European Union”. With these changes WP.30 was requested to propose changes, if any, within 10 days to the secretariat and thereafter requested the secretariat to submit the amended document to ITC for its endorsement.

29. WP.30 took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the decision taken during the last session of ITC, requesting the secretariat, in close cooperation with the Committee’s Bureau and relevant subsidiary bodies, to develop an ambitious strategy document for reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions in inland transport based on international United Nations legal instruments under the Committee’s purview with priority actions for ITC and all its relevant subsidiary bodies, supported by a strong action plan with milestones. The Strategic document would be considered with possible adoption at the ITC eighty-sixth plenary session in 2024. WP.30 also noted informal document WP.30 No. 16 prepared by the secretariat, including a first attempt to provide WP.30 input into the Inland Transport Committee Strategy on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Inland Transport (ECE/TRANS/2024/3).

30. The European Union delegation informed WP.30 about the European Union’s Green Deal initiative, and the climate law including transport. European Union reassured delegations of WP.30 that any compatible measures are likely to have the support of the European Union. The European Union further mentioned a good example of Switzerland’s work on the automatization of border crossings. Geo-fencing technologies were used that could inform customs once a truck enters their area. Customs could then decide whether the truck would have to stop or could pass the border without a halt.

31. WP.30 requested to be further informed on developments on this topic at its next session and invited interested delegates to present good practices.

VII. Considerations by the Committee

32. The Committee may wish to take note of and support the above activities of contracting parties, WP.30, AC.2, AC.3 and the TIR secretariat in the year 2023.
