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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Dematerialization of documents attached to the TIR Carnet

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Note by the secretariat

I. Background

1. At its eighteenth session, the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure, further referred to as 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.
2. The Expert Group requested the secretariat to contact World Customs Organization (WCO) to obtain more information on a 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.
3. The secretariat contacted the WCO secretariat before the survey was launched and agreed with them that sub-questions specific to the TIR procedure could be introduced in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent out to all WCO members on 18 April 2011 and the deadline for response was set at 15 June 2011.
4. Section II and III of this document present preliminary results of the questionnaire and possible options to deal with attached documents in the eTIR project.

II. Preliminary results of the questionnaire

5. The preliminary results of the questionnaire, as made available by WCO to UNECE secretariat, show that, so far, 35 countries have replied to the questionnaire, among which 15 are Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention with an active TIR system. Those countries are: Azerbaijan, Albania, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Moldova, Mongolia, Norway, Switzerland and Ukraine.

6. Table 1 shows how many countries request the attachment of various documents to the TIR Carnet, in absolute numbers and as a percentage of TIR Countries having replied.

Table 1
Replies to the questionnaire related to TIR

<i>Document</i>	<i>Number of TIR countries requesting the document</i>	<i>Percentage of responding TIR countries</i>
Commercial invoice	8	53%
Packing list	3	20%
Bill of lading/way bill	7	47%
Certificate of origin	3	20%
Certificates of inspection (phytosanitary certificate/Animal health certificate)	5	33%

III. Options

7. The results above show that today, in various countries, documents need to be attached to the TIR Carnet. These preliminary results do not clarify at what moment Customs — or other governmental agencies (OGA) through Customs — require these documents. However, the following cases could be envisaged: (a) prior to the start of the TIR operation for risk assessment, (b) at the start of the TIR operation for in-depth documentary controls or (c) after the TIR operation for enquiry or claim procedures. Depending on when attached documents are required, the necessity to dematerialize attached documents and submit them together with the declaration will vary. Furthermore, this will also have a consequence on the way the dematerialization should take place. Indeed, a scanned copy of a document can be used for a manual enquiry procedure but is of little use for an automatic risk assessment procedure. Therefore, it is important to differentiate between “machine-readable” documents, i.e. documents from which a computer program can extract information, and other documents, like scanned documents, which require a human intervention.

8. As highlighted by the Expert Group at its eighteenth session, the way attached documents are dealt with in the eTIR project are of utmost importance to design the technical specifications if the eTIR international systems and will also have serious consequences on national and regional IT Customs systems. Consequently, in order to design the adequate architecture for the eTIR international system, Contracting Parties have to decide explicitly how attached documents should be dealt with. A non exhaustive list of options is presented below.

1. Option 1 – No dematerialization

9. In this option, attached documents are only identified (referred to) in electronic messages using the current “attached documents” class in the eTIR data model. No

dematerialization takes place as attached documents will only be presented in their paper form together with the goods directly at Customs offices.

2. Option 2 – Hash code of scanned documents included in the declaration

10. Attached documents are identified (referred to) in electronic messages using the “attached documents” class in the eTIR data model, also indicating the hash codes of the scanned copies of the attached documents. The transport operator keeps the scanned copies at his premises and provides them to Customs upon request (e.g. by email). The hash codes ensure that the transport operator will not be in a position to change the document after having sent his declaration.

3. Option 3 – Hash code of “machine-readable” documents included in the declaration

11. Attached documents are identified (referred to) in electronic messages using the “attached documents” class in the eTIR data model, also indicating the hash code of the “machine-readable” attached documents (e.g. Extensible Markup Language (XML), Portable Document Format (PDF) forms, ...). The transport operator keeps the documents in electronic form at his premises and provides them to Customs upon request (e.g. by email). The hash codes ensure that the transport operator will not be in a position to change the document after having sent his declaration.

4. Option 4 – Links to scanned documents in the declaration

12. Attached documents are identified (referred to) in electronic messages using the “attached documents” class in the eTIR data model, also indicating a link to a repository containing the scanned copies of the attached documents. In order to ensure that the document would not be changed after the submission of the declaration, the hash codes of the documents will also have to be indicated. To ensure the confidentiality of documents made available, online access codes could also be added to the declaration.

5. Option 5 – Links to “machine-readable” documents in the declaration

13. Attached documents are identified (referred to) in electronic messages using the “attached documents” class in the eTIR data model, also indicating a link to a repository containing the “machine-readable” copies of the attached documents. In order to ensure that the document would not be changed after the submission of the declaration, the hash codes of the documents will also have to be indicated. This option requires the establishment of a list of acceptable formats for the various attached documents, or that the Conventions regulating those documents already provide detailed guidelines on the format of those documents. To ensure the confidentiality of documents made available, online access codes could also be added to the declaration.

6. Option 6 – Scanned documents included in the declaration

14. Attached documents are identified (referred to) in the messages using the “attached documents” class in the eTIR data model and are also included as image objects (binary), which will result in a considerable increase in the size of the messages to be transferred and stores.

7. Option 7 – “Machine-readable” documents included in the declaration

15. Attached documents are identified (referred to) in the messages using the “attached documents” class in the eTIR data model and are also included in an accepted “machine-readable” format. This option requires the establishment of a list of acceptable formats for the various attached documents, or that the Conventions regulating those documents already provide detailed guidelines on the format of those documents.

8. Comparison of the options

16. Table 2 compares the various options from the point of view of availability of information and the possibility to use the information for automated risk assessment.

Table 2
Comparison of the options

Option	Availability of the information			Usable for automated risk assessment
	In advance	at the Customs office	After (e.g. enquiry)	
1	no	yes	Upon request	no
2	Upon request	Upon request	Upon request	no
3	Upon request	Upon request	Upon request	yes
4	yes	yes	yes ¹	no
5	yes	yes	yes ¹	yes
6	yes	yes	yes	no
7	yes	yes	yes	yes

IV. Further considerations

17. In its consideration, the Expert Group may also want to recall the survey undertaken back in 2002, which results are presented in document TRANS/WP.30/2002/15. As a consequence of the survey and considering the principles of both the TIR Convention and the Kyoto Convention, WP.30 decided to include best practice 5.6 in the TIR handbook. Best practice 5.6 underlines that “where the Customs authorities require additional documentation in connection with a TIR transport, this should not be required to contain more than the information necessary to identify the goods and the road vehicles.”

18. The Expert Group may wish to consider the results of the questionnaire and the various options described above, bearing in mind that other Conventions which deal with documents that could be attached to the TIR Carnet, e.g. the CMR Convention, might also be in a process towards computerization.

¹ Transport operators should be obliged to leave the document available for at least the period during which claims can be raised.