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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Inland Transport Committee

#### Eighty-second session

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Item 4 (k) of the provisional agenda

**Strategic questions of a horizontal policy or regulatory nature:**

**Strengthening border crossing facilitation (Harmonization Convention, TIR Convention, eTIR Project and other Customs transit facilitation measures)**

### **Strengthening border crossing facilitation (Harmonization Convention, TIR Convention, eTIR Project and other Customs transit facilitation measures)**

#### Note by the secretariat\*

##### *Summary*

This document contains a summary of the activities of the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) and its subsidiary expert group, the Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, 1975 (AC.2), the Administrative Committee for the Harmonization Convention, 1982 (AC.3) and the ECE/TIR secretariat in the area of border crossing. This includes the computerization of the TIR system in the framework of the eTIR project.

The Committee will be **informed** about the main outcome of the 151st, 152nd and 153th sessions of WP.30 (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/302, ECE/TRANS/WP.30/304 and ECE/TRANS/WP.30/306) and will be invited to **take note** of the activities of AC.2, including, but not limited to, amendments adopted (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/141, ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/143 and ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/145) and of AC.3 (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.3/22), in the year 2019, as contained in this document.

In particular, the Committee will be **informed** about progress in the discussions at AC.2 on the eTIR legal framework, leading up to the agreement on a final text which will be tabled for adoption at the February 2020 session of AC.2, and will be asked to **express its support** for continuing the eTIR project, and to this end: (a) **decide to prolong** the mandate

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\* This document was scheduled for publication after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.

of the Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (WP.30/GE.1) to the year 2020 until its conversion into a formal Expert Group, (b) **urge** contracting parties and relevant stakeholders, once more, to secure the funds required to operationalize the eTIR project, (c) **urge** contracting parties to not raise an objection to the proposals for a new Annex 11 to the TIR Convention, introducing the computerization of the TIR procedure into the legal text of the Convention, but instead, if deemed necessary, to use the opt-out clause introduced together with Annex 11, and (d) **request** the secretariat to continue pilot applications of the eTIR International System based on the eTIR technical specifications, in cooperation with the Member States expressing interest and IRU.

At the same time, the Committee will be **invited to consider** ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2019/9 and its Corr.1 which contains a proposal to convert WP.30/GE.1 into a formal Group of Experts, together with its Terms of Reference, adopted by WP.30 at its 153rd session. The Committee **will be requested to endorse** the Terms of Reference of the Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (WP.30/GE.1) as well as **approve its establishment** as a new formal Group of Experts (with the same acronym, i.e. GE.1). The Group will be expected to meet, at least, twice in 2020 and, at least, twice in 2021 before concluding its work with its final report, to be submitted to WP.30 at its February 2022 session.

The Committee will be **invited to take note** of follow-up actions by WP.30 on aligning its work with the ITC strategy, in particular its road safety related aspects. To this end, WP.30 conducted a survey, to which 29 countries had replied. The Working Party confirmed the preliminary conclusions by the secretariat underscoring, in particular, the impression that the roles and tasks of customs authorities in the field of road safety enforcement are extremely limited, with the exception of the inspection of the technical status of vehicles upon exportation or importation or the involvement of customs in controls of tachographs, weight and dimensions of vehicles or in checking for compliance with dangerous goods regulations.

Finally, the Committee will be **invited to take note** that, at its 153rd session, WP.30 considered proposals to align the work of the Working Party with the ITC strategy. WP.30 considered the list of tasks that it should undertake in the coming years in addition to its regular work. The Working Party expressed its readiness, in principle, to support the implementation of the ITC strategy and, thus, tentatively agreed with the proposed timetable for the tasks to be undertaken, subject to further assessment at any time in the future. At the same time, the Working Party expressed caution that these tasks (a) should not intervene with its regular tasks; (b) should not lead to mechanical changes for the simple sake of alignment with the ITC strategy and that (c) it would be the sole prerogative of WP.30 to establish the relevance of proposing or adopting amendments to the legal instruments or to undertake any further related action. As a word of caution, the delegation of the European Union advised ECE not to let its efforts to be considered as a global actor for legal instruments in the field of transport become detrimental to its task as guardian of the interest of the ECE region. The delegation of Ukraine recalled the extensive set of questions and answers developed by the TIR Executive Board as training material for the various stakeholders of the TIR system, inviting the Working Party to review and, where required, amend or update them, in order to reflect the latest state of play of the TIR Convention.

#### **Documentation**

ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2019/7/Rev.1; ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2019/8,  
ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2019/8/Corr.1 (English only), ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2019/9,  
ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2019/9/Corr.1

## I. Background and mandate

1. This document has been prepared in accordance with the 2016–2020 Programme of Work of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) (ECE/TRANS/254, para. 156 and ECE/TRANS/2016/31, programme activity 02.10: Customs questions affecting transport). It reports on the progress made in 2019 by the contracting parties, the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30), the Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, 1975 (AC.2), the Administrative Committee for the Harmonization Convention, 1982 (AC.3) and the ECE/TIR secretariat in the area of border crossing facilitation, including among others:

- Developments in the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 1982 (Harmonization Convention), as well as monitoring and capacity-building initiatives to assist in the proper application of this convention at the national level.
- Activities and developments of the TIR Convention and the functioning of the TIR system.
- Progress made in the eTIR project, the finalization of the text of draft Annex 11 to the convention to legally frame the operationalization of the computerized TIR procedure and the status of the five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation between ECE and the International Road Transport Union (IRU) in the field of computerization of the TIR procedure and its ensuing pilot projects.
- Developments in the Convention on the Facilitation of Border Crossing Procedures for Passengers, Luggage and Load-luggage Carried in International Traffic by Rail.
- Ongoing issues in the application of the 1954 Customs Conventions on the Temporary Importation of Private Road Vehicles in Egypt and Jordan.
- Requests from ITC to align the activities of WP.30 with the ITC strategy until 2030.

## II. Harmonization Convention

2. The Committee may wish to note that in 2019 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.

### A. Amendment proposals to the Convention

3. At its eleventh session (June 2019), AC.3 took note that WP.30, at its 151st session (February 2019), had requested the secretariat to prepare an amendment proposal to Annex 8, Article 7 on the frequency of the reporting mechanism which would be extended from two to five years. AC.3 took note that the European Union and its member States could agree to the proposal, pending confirmation by means of a formal Council decision and, therefore, could only tentatively adopt the proposal. At the 153rd session of WP.30 (October 2019), the delegation of the European Union reported that the formal adoption process was well under way and that the secretariat could arrange for AC.3 to meet. Thus, the Working Party mandated the secretariat to make the necessary arrangements to convene the twelfth session of AC.3, including the preparation of pre-, in- and post-session documents in conjunction with the 154th session WP.30, to be held on Wednesday 5 February 2020 from 5 to 6 p.m.,

with the formal adoption of the proposal as only agenda item (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/306, para. 27).

## **B. Biennial survey on the implementation of Annex 8 on road border crossings**

4. At its eleventh session (June 2019), AC.3 took note of the outcome of the biennial survey on Annex 8 to the convention, conducted in 2018. In particular, AC.3 took note that 25 countries had replied to the survey, though some were incomplete. The conclusions from the analysis indicate that contracting parties are successfully implementing several provisions of Annex 8. However, the need remains for improvement on topics such as: use of the International Vehicle Weight Certificate (IVWC), facilitation of visa procedures, transfer of control procedures from border crossing points to places of departure and destination, accession to the Agreement Concerning the Adoption of Uniform Conditions for Periodical Technical Inspections of Wheeled Vehicles and the Reciprocal Recognition of such Inspections (1957) and acceptance of the International Technical Inspection Certificate, etc. AC.3 established that, so far, the surveys only constituted a limited source of comparable data on progress in the application of Annex 8 and, therefore, requested the secretariat for the next survey (to be conducted in 2023) to establish a list of dedicated focal points who should coordinate national replies. AC.3 also agreed that the results of future surveys would no longer be anonymous, in order to be in a better position to assess and, where possible, act on them, on a country-by-country basis (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.3/22, paras. 18–19).

## **III. The TIR Convention**

### **A. Amendment proposals to the Convention**

5. In 2019, the TIR Convention, 1975 entered into force for Argentina and Oman. With these latest accessions, the TIR Convention has 76 contracting parties. In addition, the TIR system is active in 62 countries. Saudi Arabia announced, in October 2019, that it was in the final stages of operationalizing the TIR system for its territory.

6. In 2019, WP.30 and AC.2 continued their efforts towards considering and finalizing various of amendment proposals to the TIR Convention. Over the year 2019, AC.2 accepted various amendment proposals (pending formal adoption), which include:

- To amend Article 6, paragraph 1, Explanatory Note 0.6.2 and Annex 9, Part I, paragraph I, adjusting the existing wording to become “customs authorities or other competent authorities of a Contracting Party may” and to replace, in Explanatory Note 0.6.2., the term “may approve” by “may authorize”.
- To amend Article 18, increasing the total number of customs offices of departure and destination from four to eight, with the accompanying new Explanatory Note 0.18.3, obliging contracting parties to make any limitation in the application of the said article publicly available as well as to the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB).
- To substitute, in Annex I (Model of the TIR Carnet Version 1 and Version 2) No. 5 of the Rules regarding the use of the TIR Carnet, “four” by “eight” for the maximum number of customs offices of departure and of customs offices of destination.

7. In addition, WP.30, at its 151st session (February 2019) adopted and AC.2 at its seventy-first session (October 2019) endorsed, by consensus, a comment to Article 1 (o) to the Convention, while taking note of a reservation by the delegation of the Russian Federation. The comment allows countries to accept, with the consent of the TIR Carnet

holder, that other persons perform a TIR transport or part thereof with the TIR Carnet issued to that same TIR Carnet holder. The comment also provides instructions how to indicate the use of subcontractor(s) in the TIR Carnet.

8. In the course of 2019, AC.2 continued its considerations of proposals by TIRExB for a new Explanatory Note and comment to Article 49 of the convention, so as to widen the scope of greater facilities that contracting parties may grant to transport operators, in particular, but not limited to, authorized consignor and consignee. In her opening statement at the occasion of the seventy-first session of AC.2 (October 2019), the Executive Secretary of ECE, Ms. O. Algayerova, reminded delegations, inter alia, of the historical possibility to allow the TIR system to fulfil its function as global customs transit system for the next decade of the twenty-first century, urging them to adopt the Explanatory Note and comment to Article 49. She stated that, in her view, the argument that such facilities would weaken the position of customs did not hold. On the contrary, considering that the task of customs to secure the system was replaced by an intricate set of conditions and requirements for the users, including the use of advanced electronic tools, customs would even be able to increase their supervision over the system. At the session, various delegations reiterated their support for the proposals, whereas the delegation of the Russian Federation maintained its opposition, arguing that transferring some customs tasks to operators, even if duly authorized and under strict conditions, would undermine the security of the TIR system. Not being able to make any progress, AC.2 decided to revert to the issue at its February 2020 session (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/145, para. 42).

## **B. International TIR Data Bank and electronic tools of the TIR secretariat**

### **1. Functioning of the International TIR Data Bank**

9. At its sixty-ninth session (February 2019), AC.2 took note that the International TIR Data Bank (ITDB) module on customs offices had been completed, but that for now, TIRExB had decided to restrict access to customs only, until certain noted discrepancies between various data sources had been resolved (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/141, para. 27).

10. At its seventy-first session (October 2019), AC.2 welcomed the completion of the recruitment process for a new Information Systems Officer in the secretariat. Consequently, various pending operational and development tasks of ITDB could now be taken up again. Furthermore, efforts would be taken to increase the number of contracting parties using ITDB and its web services, and to ensure the validity of the data. AC.2 took note that 50 contracting parties are registered in ITDB and that, as of 1 January 2019, 40 contracting parties actively use the application (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/145, para. 11).

### **2. Proposals on the mandatory submission of data to the International TIR Data Bank**

11. In the course of 2019, AC.2 continued its consideration of proposals drafted by TIRExB, which introduce the mandatory submission of data to ITDB. The Government of Uzbekistan and IRU also submitted amendment proposals related to the use of ITDB. At its seventy-first session (October 2019), AC.2 considered the proposals by TIRExB to advance the use of ITDB by means of the mandatory submission of data in electronic format as an appropriate way forward to confirming the status of ITDB as a reliable database. AC.2, by majority, accepted the proposals pending formal adoption at its February 2020 session. The delegation of Uzbekistan was ready to support the TIRExB proposal if due account was taken of the Uzbek and IRU proposals and requested their joint consideration at the February 2020 session. AC.2 established that, whereas the proposals by TIRExB covered the mandatory submission of data to ITDB, the proposals by the Government of Uzbekistan and IRU related to information in ITDB on the temporary or permanent exclusion of TIR Carnet holders (Explanatory Note 0.38.2) and the consequences of the absence of data in ITDB (Explanatory

Note 9.II.4). Various delegates reminded the meeting that the absence of such data related to non-compliance with the provisions of Annex 9, Part II, paras. 4 and 5 of the TIR Convention, which require competent authorities to transmit information on the authorization of TIR Carnet holders to TIRExB within one week from the date of authorization. AC.2 requested the secretariat to continue its efforts to update ITDB, particularly addressing those contracting parties which do not regularly use ITDB and decided to revert to the issue at its February 2020 session (ECE/TRANS/WP.30AC.2/145, paras. 43–46).

### **C. National and regional TIR workshops and seminars**

12. Since the Committee's previous session in February 2019, the secretariat has participated in: (a) a capacity-building workshop in on TIR, eTIR and AETR<sup>1</sup> (18 and 19 June 2019, Ulaanbator); (b) the twenty-fifth Border Management Staff Course organized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (24 October 2019, Dushanbe); (c) a workshop on the 1954 and 1956 temporary importation conventions and other legal instruments in the field of border crossing facilitation, organized by the Alliance Internationale de Tourisme / Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (AIT/FIA) (2 and 3 November 2019, Cairo); (d) a side event during the United Nations General Assembly in New York, organized by the secretariat in cooperation with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, on the eTIR international system and the benefits that its application would bring to landlocked countries (5 and 6 December 2019, New York).

## **IV. Developments in the implementation of the TIR Convention**

### **A. Election of members of the TIR Executive Board**

13. At its sixty-ninth session, AC.2 elected or re-elected nine members of the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB) for the term of office 2019–2020. The nine members are (in English alphabetical order of their last names): Mr. Sergey Amelyanovich (Russian Federation); Mr. Mostafa Ayati (Islamic Republic of Iran); Mr. Marco Ciampi (Italy); Mrs. Didem Dirlik Songür (Turkey) (Chair); Mr. Pierre-Jean Laborie (European Commission); Mr. Hugo Richard Mayer (Austria) Mr. Sergiy Somka (Ukraine); Ms. Elisaveta Takova (Bulgaria) and Mr. Farid Valiyev (Azerbaijan).

### **B. Authorization of IRU and ECE/IRU agreement**

14. At its sixty-ninth session (February 2019), AC.2 authorized, in accordance with the provisions of Article 6.2 *bis*, Annex 8, Article 10 (b) and Explanatory Notes 0.6.2 *bis*-2 and 8.10 (b), IRU to organize the functioning of an international guarantee system and to centrally print and distribute TIR Carnets for the period 2020–2022 inclusive. AC.2 decided to provide a preliminary mandate to the secretariat to conclude the new ECE/IRU agreement with a view to continue financing the operation of TIRExB and the TIR secretariat as of the year 2020, subject to official confirmation at its October 2019 session. (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/141, para. 37). At its seventy-first session (October 2019), AC.2 adopted the new ECE/IRU agreement for the period 2020–2022 inclusive and mandated ECE and IRU to proceed with signing the new agreement at their earliest convenience, but, in any case, well before 15 November 2019 (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/145, para. 57).

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<sup>1</sup> Accord Européen sur les Transports Routiers.

## **C. Office of Internal Oversight Services of the TIR Trust Fund**

15. At its seventy-first session (October 2019), AC.2 noted that the audit of the accounts of TIRExB and the TIR secretariat that it had requested at its sixty-fourth session (October 2016), had been undertaken by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and completed in March 2019. AC.2 took note that the secretariat had already submitted the audit report to the eighty-second session of TIRExB (June 2019) and, based on comments from the Board, had started working on the ten recommendations made by OIOS. AC.2 considered the recommendations and presented its initial remarks and mandate to the secretariat to prepare supporting documentation, when necessary, for consideration at the seventy-second session of AC.2 (February 2020) (ECE/TRAN/WP.30/AC.2/145, paras. 61–83).

## **V. eTIR**

### **A. eTIR pilot projects and new steps towards the full computerization of the TIR procedure**

16. In the framework of the five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation between ECE and IRU in the field of computerization of the TIR procedure and of the supporting Contribution Agreement (CA) towards enhancing full computerization of the TIR procedure, signed on 6 October 2017, Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Iran launched a new eTIR project. The first eTIR transport from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Azerbaijan took place on 18 June 2019 and, since then, more transports took place. Both countries are working towards the inclusion of other countries in the project to computerize the TIR procedure along some major transit routes in the region.

17. The eTIR project between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey continued in 2019 and both countries were discussing a revision of their existing MoU to extend the eTIR pilot project to all customs offices and all TIR Carnet holders from both countries. The eTIR pilot project between Georgia and Turkey continued to the satisfaction of both administrations.

### **B. Developments in the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure**

18. At its 153rd session (October 2019), WP.30 took note that the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (GE.1) held its thirtieth session on 18 and 19 September 2019 in Budapest, at the kind invitation of the Hungarian customs administration. It welcomed the participation of the Russian Federation and noted that GE.1 had discussed, inter alia, some issues on which contracting parties had not yet reached consensus when discussing draft Annex 11. At the session, the Expert Group also discussed a survey on the connection to the eTIR international system and the so-called “opting out” clause, noting that Montenegro, Norway and Switzerland had indicated that they might make use of the “opting out” clause, due to the low volume of TIR transport versus the costs of linking up to the eTIR international system.

19. WP.30 took note that GE.1, while trying to clarify which customs administrations along a TIR transport should receive advance TIR data, had made proposals to slightly amend Article 2 (b) and Article 6 of Annex 11. The Working Party also took note that on the issue of the authentication of the holder, GE.1 welcomed a presentation by the experts from the Russian Federation on the use of trusted third parties (TTP) for cross border recognition of electronic signatures. The presentation had raised interest and numerous questions, particularly on the mandatory usage of electronic signatures by all contracting parties, the

costs for setting up national and central TTPs as well as roles and responsibilities of TTPs. The Working Party took note that GE.1 had decided to continue considering this issue at its next session (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/305, paras. 10–12).

### **C. Conversion of GE.1 from informal to formal group of Experts**

20. At its 153rd session (October 2019), WP.30 recalled that, since the end of the originally mandated tasks of GE.1 in 2015, the secretariat had convened sessions whenever issues raised in the framework of the eTIR pilot projects or in the elaboration of new Annex 11 could, possibly, have implications on the eTIR specifications, which would require their amendment. This was, de facto, once or twice per year. At the request of WP.30, ITC had prolonged the mandate of GE.1 every year from 2016 onwards. The Working Party considered that formalizing GE.1 would facilitate finalizing the eTIR specifications, which would have to be adopted by the contracting parties once Annex 11 has entered into force. For this purpose, a formal group of Experts, which would work with official documents in the three ECE languages and have interpretation during sessions, could lead to increased participation of French and Russian speaking delegations and, thus, lead to faster progress towards finalizing the eTIR specifications. The Working Party adopted the Terms of Reference of GE.1 and requested the secretariat to seek endorsement of its establishment as a new formal Group of Expert (with the same acronym, i.e. GE.1), before seeking the approval of the Executive Commission (EXCOM). At the same time, in order not to frustrate the excellent work of GE.1 in its current setting, the Working Party requested the secretariat to also request from ITC the continuation of GE.1 as an informal group until it would become a formal Group of Experts. At the request of the delegation of the European Union, the secretariat was asked, upon submission of the proposal for conversion to ITC, that GE.1 would meet, at least, twice in 2020 and, at least, twice in 2021, so that more sessions of GE.1 could possibly be organized, with shorter intervals. The delegation of Ukraine stressed the importance of providing pertinent reasons to warrant the conversion (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/305, paras.13–14). The rationale behind the conversion and the Terms of Reference of GE.1 are contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2019/9 and its Corr.1.

### **D. Annex 11 of the TIR Convention**

21. During its sessions in 2019, including an extra-ordinary session dedicated solely to the topic (June 2019), AC.2 extensively considered and, ultimately, reached agreement on the final wording of amendments to the TIR Convention, 1975 and a new Annex 11, introducing eTIR into the legal text of the Convention, pending formal adoption at its February 2020 session.<sup>2</sup>

22. For the first time, AC.2 decided to deviate from the normal procedure, where amendments, if accepted according to the applicable provisions, enter into force for all contracting parties to the Convention. To allow contracting parties, not interested or not yet ready to start implementing eTIR a possibility to opt out, new Article 60 bis offers them the opportunity to notify the Secretary-General of the United Nations of their non-acceptance of Annex 11. This possibility was introduced to avoid that such countries would raise an objection against the proposals, considering that already one single objection suffices to render the complete package null and void. Thus, if no objection is raised, Annex 11 will enter into force only for those contracting parties to the Convention, which have not informed the Secretary-General of their non-acceptance of Annex 11.

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<sup>2</sup> For the consolidated draft of the eTIR legal framework, please refer to the final report of the seventy-first session of the TIR Administrative Committee (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/145, Annex I).



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

23. The Committee may wish to recall that WP.30, at its 151st session (February 2019) finalized its deliberations of the draft text of a new Convention on the facilitation of border crossing procedures for passengers, luggage and load-luggage carried in international traffic by rail and moved to a vote by means of a roll call of ECE member States in the English alphabetical order. Four countries (Azerbaijan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Turkey) voted in favour, with no countries objecting. The remaining ECE member States either abstained or were not present during the vote. The Working Party adopted the text of the new Convention and looked forward to its final adoption by ITC. At its eighty-first session (February 2019), the Committee considered the text of the new convention, as agreed by WP.30 at its 151st session and adopted, with the abstention of European Union member States, the text of the new convention and requested the secretariat to transmit the text to the depositary to be opened for signature (see ECE/TRANS/288, para. 87).

24. At its 153rd session (October 2019), the secretariat informed WP.30 that, on 26 September 2019, at the annual Treaty Event, held at the occasion of seventy-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, Chad had signed the convention. The delegation of the Russian Federation informed WP.30 that, at the proposal of the Ministry of Transport, the Russian Government, on 30 September 2019, had approved the signing of the convention. The Ministry of Transport had been instructed to sign the document on behalf of the Russian Federation. Recalling the importance of the new Convention for the development of international rail passenger traffic, he called on countries to accede to it (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/306, paras. 29–30).

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

25. The Committee may wish to note that, in 2019, no changes have occurred in the status of the Customs Conventions on the Temporary Importation of Private (1954) and Commercial (1956) Road Vehicles and that the conventions, currently had, 80 and 26 contracting parties, respectively.

26. In 2019, WP.30 continued dealing with ongoing issues in the application of the 1954 convention in Egypt and Jordan, particularly because customs authorities did not seem to respect the deadlines and procedures laid down in the convention. At its 151st session (February 2019), WP.30 was informed that, as per request from the Customs Council of the Alliance Internationale de Tourisme / Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (AIT/FIA), the Executive Secretary of ECE had, once more, addressed the competent authorities of Jordan through diplomatic channels, soliciting a reply to a letter from 2017 in which the problems in the application of the 1954 Convention in the Kingdom of Jordan had been elaborated. The Working Party requested the secretariat to also inform ITC (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/302, para. 40 and ECE/TRANS/288, para. 86).

27. At its 152nd session (June 2019), the secretariat informed WP.30 that, at its February 2019 session, ITC had urged all stakeholders in the 1954 Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation of Private Vehicles to respect the provisions of the convention, and so, ensure that the Carnet de Passage en Douane (CPD) could continue to exist for Egypt and Jordan. The secretariat further informed the Working Party of two letters received from the Jordanian mission in Geneva. In its letters, the mission, at the request of the customs

authorities of Jordan, requested (a) the termination of the authorization the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan, (b) information about new bodies to authorize for the territory of Jordan and (c) information about the Arab International Association of Automobile Clubs (AIA). In its letter of reply, ECE explained that, in accordance with Article 6 of the 1954 convention, it is up to competent national authorities to authorize national associations or to revoke their authorization and that they were free to authorize any new association, as long as this association is affiliated to FIA. Furthermore, ECE informed the mission that it does not dispose of information about AIA and referred the authorities to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to see if AIA has been registered in its database of non-governmental associations with consultative status. Finally, ECE requested the mission to remind Jordanian customs authorities that a reply to a letter from ECE of 14 July 2017, that sought clarifications on a number of claims due to the alleged non-observance of the 1954 convention by Jordanian customs, was still outstanding. 26. The observer from AIT/FIA informed the Working Party that the authorization of the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan had been revoked and AIT/FIA was in the process of admitting another association (but not AIA) to become an issuing association for Jordan (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/304, paras. 25–26). At its 153rd session (October 2019), FIA/AIT informed WP.30 that discussions were still ongoing with both countries (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/306, para. 32).

## **VIII. Requests from the Inland Transport Committee**

### **A. The Inland Transport Committee recommendations for enhancing national road safety systems**

28. On 24 April 2019, the Chair of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) and the Director of the Sustainable Transport Division, in a joint letter, had invited the Chairs of Working Parties and Administrative Committees of ITC to take follow-up actions on aligning their work with the ITC strategy, in particular its road safety-related aspects. To that end, the ITC secretariat had prepared draft ITC recommendations for enhancing national road safety systems for comments by Working Parties and Administrative Committees (Informal document WP.30 (2019) No. 4 – restricted). At its 152nd session (June 2019), WP.30, while fully supporting the scope of the recommendations in recognizing that road safety in its aspects affects the activities of the legal instruments under the purview of the Working Party, in particular when it comes to safe vehicles or drivers' behaviour, did not see any avenue for direct intervention in the field of customs other than, possibly, in the area of enforcement. To factually establish this, WP.30 requested the secretariat to send a short survey to TIR customs focal points, with copy to WP.30 delegates, soliciting their national experience with customs-related activities of the draft recommendations and to prepare a document for its consideration at the current session (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/304, para. 6). At its 153rd session (October 2019), WP.30 considered the results of the survey, expressing its satisfaction with the fact that 29 countries had replied to the survey. WP.30 confirmed the preliminary conclusions by the secretariat underscoring, in particular, the impression that the roles and tasks of customs authorities in the field of road safety enforcement are extremely limited, with the exception of the inspection of the technical status of vehicles upon exportation or importation or the involvement of customs in controls of tachographs, weight and dimensions of vehicles or in checking for compliance with dangerous goods regulations. WP.30 requested the secretariat to transmit the outcome of the survey to ITC for information (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/306, paras. 3–4).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For the complete outcome of the survey, please refer to document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2019/7/Rev.1.

## B. Alignment of the work of the Working Party with the Inland Transport Committee strategy

29. On 26 June 2019, the Chair of ITC and the Director of the Sustainable Transport Division, in a joint letter, had invited the Chairs of Working Parties and Administrative Committees of ITC, to support the implementation of the ITC strategy by proposing a concrete plan aligning their work with the ITC strategy. The deadline for suggestions was set at 15 November 2019, after which date the ITC Bureau would prepare a concrete plan for presentation and, possibly, adoption at the eighty-second session of ITC (February 2020). Against this background, WP.30 considered the list of tasks that it should undertake in the coming years in addition to its regular work.<sup>4</sup> WP.30 expressed its readiness, in principle, to support the implementation of the ITC strategy and, thus, tentatively agreed with the proposed timetable for the tasks to be undertaken, subject to further assessment at any time in the future. As a first step, WP.30 requested the secretariat to prepare, for its next session, a document summarizing the main scope of the seventeen legal instruments under its auspices, reviewing the final clauses and proposing, where required, amendments. At the same time, WP.30 expressed caution that these tasks (a) should not intervene with its regular tasks; (b) should not lead to mechanical changes for the simple sake of alignment with the ITC strategy and that (c) it would be the sole prerogative of WP.30 to establish the relevance of proposing or adopting amendments to the legal instruments or to undertake any further related action. As a word of caution, the delegation of the European Union advised ECE not to let its efforts to be considered as a global actor for legal instruments in the field of transport become detrimental to its task as guardian of the interest of the ECE region. The delegation of Ukraine recalled the extensive set of questions and answers developed by TIRExB as training material for the various stakeholders of the TIR system, inviting WP.30 Party to review and, where required, amend or update them, in order to reflect the latest state of play of the TIR Convention (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/306, para. 5).

## IX. Considerations by the Committee

30. The Committee may wish to take note of and support the above activities of contracting parties, WP.30, AC.2, AC.3 and the ECE/TIR secretariat. In particular, the Committee may wish to **take note** of progress in the discussions at AC.2 on the eTIR legal framework, leading up to the agreement on a final text which will be tabled for adoption at the February 2020 session of AC.2, and will be asked to **express its support** for continuing the eTIR project, and to this end: (a) **decide to prolong** the mandate of the Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (WP.30/GE.1) to the year 2020 until its conversion into a formal Group of Experts, (b) **urge** contracting parties and relevant stakeholders, once more, to secure the funds required to operationalize the eTIR project and (c) **urge** contracting parties to not raise an objection to the proposals for a new Annex 11 to the TIR Convention, introducing the computerization of the TIR procedure into the legal text of the Convention, (d) **request** the secretariat to continue pilot applications of the eTIR International System based on the eTIR technical specifications, in cooperation with the Member States expressing interest and IRU, and (e) **approve the establishment of** the Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (WP.30/GE.1) and endorse its Terms of Reference. The Committee is also invited to take note of the various activities of WP.30 in 2019 to align its work with the ITC strategy until 2030.

<sup>4</sup> For the complete list of tasks and tentative timetable, please refer to document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2019/8 and its Corr.1 (English only).

