
Economic Commission for Europe

Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, 1975

Seventy-fourth session

Geneva, 11 February 2021

Item 4 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda

Activities and administration of the TIR executive board (TIRExB):

Report by the Chair of TIRExB

Self-evaluation

Review of the TIRExB programme of work for 2019-2020

Note by the secretariat

A. Background

1. On the basis of the approved TIRExB reports for 2019-2020, the secretariat prepared for endorsement by the Committee this informal document, summarizing main accomplishments of the Board in its term of office and, in Annex I, main results of the Board's activities against each work programme item (as contained in ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2019/15). Annex II of the document reproduces the consolidated replies to a self-evaluation survey among TIRExB members, together with recommendations for future compositions of TIRExB.

B. Main accomplishments of TIRExB in its term of office

2. TIRExB scheduled seven meetings in its term of office with seven meeting days (two meetings scheduled for December 2020 and February 2021 included). TIRExB postponed its session in June 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic. Members agree that COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges in relation to the organization of meetings, however all efforts were sustained for the continuation of the work in 2020.

3. TIRExB considered the discussions on the computerization of the TIR procedure, supervising and promoting the International TIR Data Bank (ITDB) as building block of the future eTIR system and the study on the intermodal use of the TIR procedure as the major achievements of the current term of office, followed by drafting a proposal for an early warning mechanism and the study on the reasons for decreasing number of TIR Carnets. During its term of office, TIRExB also had extensive discussions on the audit report on the

management of the TIR Trust Fund issued by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and provided substantive support to the TIR Administrative Committee (AC.2) in the application of the recommendations by the audit. Further, the Board finalized a study on the reasons resulting in the decreasing number of the TIR Carnets used and prepared a well-advanced draft of study on the intermodal use of the TIR procedure. Finally, the Board had discussions on the implementation of the TIR procedure during COVID-19 pandemic.

4. TIRExB drafted amendment proposals on the mandatory use of the ITDB as a method of publication of information on customs offices according to Article 45 and an early warning mechanism related to Explanatory Note to Article 6 of the TIR Convention. The Board supported the training of all relevant actors via seminars and online training tools, subject to limitations by the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. The details of activities and main accomplishments may be found in Annex I.

6. The consolidated replies of the personal evaluation forms filled-in by five members of the Board are in Annex II.

C. Considerations by the Committee

7. The Committee is invited to endorse the activities of TIRExB during its current term of office in Annex I as well as consider the self-evaluation and recommendations in Annex II.

Annex I

I. Activities of the TIRExB in 2019–2020

Outputs expected in 2019 and 2020

Main accomplishments

A. Ongoing activities

(1) Support the adaptation of the TIR procedure to modern business, logistics and transport requirements, including intermodal transport

- Monitor guidelines for the TIR Administrative Committee on how to promote the intermodal use of the TIR procedure.
- Continue studying further mechanisms to modernize the TIR system (taking into account the needs of the business sector).

Implementation of the intermodal aspects of the TIR procedure

- At its eighty-first session (April 2019)¹, with regard to the study on the intermodal use of the TIR procedure, the secretariat informed the Board that, since the last session, in addition to continuing cooperation with IRU, it had contacted organizations working on modes of transport other than road to identify the market conditions, benefits of using TIR in other modes of transport and also the challenges for the use of TIR, if any. The secretariat reiterated that this would be a feasibility study which could feed efforts for more extensive use of the TIR procedure for the intermodal transport in following years. The Board welcomed the progress and requested the secretariat to present a comprehensive document on the study to its October 2019 session. Mr. H. R. Mayer (Austria) requested taking into consideration various tools developed by the World Customs Organization on different modes of transport during that study.
- The Board also emphasized the importance of concluding the discussions on the use of subcontractors without further delay due to its relevance to the intermodal transport. Mr. F. Valiyev (Azerbaijan) drew attention to the importance of the use of subcontractors for the coastal countries, and, as an example, he indicated a recent request they received for the use of subcontractors during TIR transport on the Lapis Lazuli Corridor which included a sea leg due to the use of Ro-Ro lines via Caspian Sea. Mr. P. J. Laborie (European Commission), referring to the pilot intermodal transport between the Czech Republic and United Arab Emirates, indicated that the key to a successful intermodal TIR transport was a clear-cut chain of responsibilities before customs authorities. Mr. M. Ayati (Islamic Republic of Iran) stated that the first intermodal transport from India had been completed with the transport of twenty-three containers on the India- Iran (Islamic Republic of)-Afghanistan route in February 2019. Mr. Y. Guenkov (IRU) informed the Board that there was a preparation for another intermodal transport with India as well as a prospect of China's opening more inland

¹ See ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2019/13.

Outputs expected in 2019 and 2020

Main accomplishments

- customs offices for the TIR procedure, which could result in a higher potential for intermodal transport. He added that it was also necessary to consider the shortcomings identified during the pilots to improve the conditions for the intermodal transport.
- The Board underlined that the intermodal use would be one of most outstanding features of the TIR system in the forthcoming years and decided continuing consideration of the item as a priority.
 - At its eighty-third session² (October 2019), the Board considered the results of the study on the intermodal use of the TIR procedure in Informal document No. 12 (2019). The secretariat emphasized that the study dealt with the market conditions per transport mode, potential for the intermodal use of the TIR procedure and possible counterparts for promotion, applicable legislation to modes of transport other than road and results of the pilot projects. The secretariat requested the Board to consider especially the need for drawing conclusions and recommendations from the study.
 - The Board appreciated the work done by the secretariat and considered the study as a good starting point for its work. The Board highlighted following points from the study:
 - core value of the subcontractor concept for the intermodal use of the TIR procedure, hence the urgent need for introducing this concept in the TIR Convention
 - importance of completing the eTIR project to eliminate the use of the paper TIR Carnet
 - importance of introducing authorised consignor/consignee concepts to facilitate the process
 - dependency of some new contracting parties on the intermodal use of the TIR procedure
 - need for promotion and awareness-raising, both for customs officers and holders, on the use of the TIR procedure in intermodal transport, particularly on how to handle the TIR Carnet.
 - Mr. Guenkov (IRU) supported the document and mentioned their availability to further contribute in it. He stated that the document could be improved by an emphasis on the need for promotion and, to that end, the benefits of the pilot projects could be further emphasized.
 - The Board requested the secretariat to revise the document for its next session with a focus in highlights and by including:
 - Reference to the provisions of the Revised Kyoto Convention on postal items
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² See ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/13.

Outputs expected in 2019 and 2020

Main accomplishments

- Information on other regions, particularly on Africa and Latin America, when possible.
- TIRExB decided to continue discussions at its next session to identify the core issues and draw recommendations.
- At its eighty-fourth session³ (February 2020), the Board welcomed a presentation by the secretariat about ongoing work on the intermodal use of the TIR procedure. The Board noted that a new document had not been issued since the secretariat was working on a pilot project that could possibly be included in the final study. The Board underlined that such a project would require the consent of Contracting Parties concerned and urged the secretariat to establish necessary contacts before proceeding with the project. The Board requested to be informed once the pilot project was realized.
- Mr. Y. Guenkov (IRU) informed the Board about a meeting between IRU and the International Maritime Organization held on 30 January 2020 in London (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). He mentioned that two organizations had discussed how to leverage each other's experience and expertise to further facilitate and secure containerized movements in the supply chain. He added that both organizations had recognized that a joint focused approach on organizing efficient logistics from the point of origin, in the ports and to the destination by streamlining the data and documentation flows could bring tremendous benefits to all actors across the supply chain. He also expressed their willingness to coordinate further actions with the TIR secretariat to that end.
- The Board requested the secretariat to submit the final study at its June 2020 session taking into account the requests for revision made at its previous session.
- At its eighty-fifth session (October 2020), the secretariat informed the Board that, following the previous session, it had initiated many pilot projects involving the private sector in order to further enrich the study on intermodal aspects of the TIR procedure with concrete case studies. These efforts included the discussions on the road-maritime and road-rail transports with China Ocean Shipping Company Limited (COSCO) and on the road-rail transport with Hupac Intermodal Ltd and Sinotrans Ltd as well as discussions with the International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA) and International Union for Road-Rail Combined Transport (UIRR) for strengthening cooperation and initiating more projects. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic priorities, especially for the private sector, changed and therefore none of these discussions resulted in the actions.

³ See ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2021/1.

<i>Outputs expected in 2019 and 2020</i>	<i>Main accomplishments</i>
<p>(2) To facilitate the computerization of the TIR procedure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the computerization of the TIR procedure, in close collaboration with the Ad hoc Expert Group on Technical and Conceptual Aspects of the Computerization of the TIR Procedure (GE.1), the International Road Transport Union and countries involved in various pilot projects. • Offer its good offices to achieve consensus among all stakeholders on the finalization of the eTIR Project. • Contribute to the adoption of the legal framework for the computerization of the TIR procedure. • Promote the eTIR Project as part of the Board’s training and capacity building activities, including the promotion of the use of EDI standards. • Encourage IT and legal experts to participate, either as eTIR focal point or as national representatives, in the activities undertaken by GE.1. • Supervise and promote the ITDB as building block of the future eTIR system, with a focus on the improvement of the availability of the data in the ITDB. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board requested that the study was completed until December 2020 considering it takes place in the programme of work of the Board for 2019-2020. The secretariat mentioned that in case the same situation continued, in order to ensure that the study was finalized in 2020, it would include the analysis of those cases as potential intermodal TIR transports in the study. The Board also requested that the study reflected the COVID-19 impact on the transport. The secretariat informed the Board that the final study would be submitted at its next session, including with an update according to the comments and suggestions provided by the Board at its current and previous sessions. <p>eTIR projects and eTIR pilot projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At its eighty-first session (April 2019), the Board took note that countries involved in the eTIR intermodal project between Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine were making progress amending their customs IT systems. The board further noted that the restructuring of the customs administration in Ukraine might lead to slight delays from their side. Furthermore, the Board noted that Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Azerbaijan met on 27 March 2019 in Astara to prepare an action plan for the Azerbaijan- Iran eTIR project and agreed on 1 June 2019 as a target date to start the first eTIR transport. After a first bilateral phase, parties expected to extend the project along the North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC). With regard to the Iran-Turkey eTIR pilot, the Board noted that Turkey was still considering comments of Iran (Islamic Republic of) on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) prepared to extend the pilot to all Customs offices and all TIR carnet holders. • The Board further noted that efforts were put to ensure that the eTIR project be presented at the 2019 World Customs Organization (WCO) IT Conference to be organized in Baku on 12- 14 June 2019. • The Board stressed the importance of the adoption of Annex 11 to the TIR Convention. It also took note that the Russian Federation had sent concrete amendment proposals to the draft text of Annex 11 and that a “friends of the chair” meeting was organized in Moscow, possibly on 16-17 April 2019, to discuss the amendment proposals. The Board members also took note that they were kindly invited to take part in that meeting in their capacity as TIR experts. • At its eighty-third session (October 2019), the Board noted that GE.1 held its thirtieth session on 18 and 19 September 2019 in Budapest at the invitation of the Hungarian customs administration. It welcomed the participation of the Russian Federation and noted that GE.1 discussed, inter alia, some issues on which contracting parties could not reach an agreement when discussing draft Annex 11.

Outputs expected in 2019 and 2020

Main accomplishments

- The Board took note that GE.1, while trying to clarify which customs offices should receive advance TIR data, made proposals to slightly amend Article 2 (b) and Article 6 of Annex 11 to incorporate the concepts contained in Explanatory Note 11.6.2, which could then be deleted. It also noted that further to the proposals made by GE.1, the secretariat circulated the proposals to all TIR contracting parties in preparation to the October 2019 session of AC.2, together with a suggestion for improvement and additional amendments in other articles for consistency.
- The Board took note that on the issue of the authentication of the holder, GE.1 welcomed a presentation by the Russian Federation on the use of trusted third parties (TTP) for cross border recognition of electronic signatures. The presentation raised interest and numerous questions, in particular 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 the TTPs. The Board took note that GE.1 decided to continue considering this issue at its next session.
- Moreover, regarding the MoU between ECE and IRU in the field of computerization of the TIR procedure and its CA, the Board welcomed the recently launched eTIR project between Azerbaijan and Iran (Islamic Republic of). The Board took note that the first eTIR transport from Iran (Islamic Republic of) to Azerbaijan took place on 18 June 2019 and that, since then, seven more similar eTIR transports took place. The Board noted that both countries decided to follow a corridor-based approach for the future of the project.
- The Board further noted that the eTIR project between Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Turkey was still ongoing and that both countries were still discussing to finalize an MoU, which would allow extending their eTIR pilot project to all customs offices and all TIR Carnet holders from both countries. Further, the Board noted that the eTIR pilot project between Georgia and Turkey was continuing to the satisfaction of both countries.
- Finally, the Board took note of the progress made on the development of the eTIR international system, parallel to the eTIR pilot projects, and on the priority given by the secretariat to the reliability, security and ease of connectivity for the contracting parties to the system.
- At its eighty-fourth session (February 2020), the Board recalled the signing of a five-year MoU on 6 October 2017 on the cooperation between ECE and IRU in the field of computerization of the TIR procedure and of the supporting Contribution Agreement towards enhancing full computerization of the TIR procedure. In this regard, it noted that within the eTIR pilot project between Azerbaijan and Iran (Islamic Republic of) only one transport had taken place since October 2019, mainly due to the fact that transit movements in bilateral trade operations between the two countries were subject to some further simplifications. Furthermore, the Board welcomed the efforts to

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include Georgia in this project and took note that a tripartite meeting was planned to take place on 26–27 February 2020 in Bilasuvar (Azerbaijan) to finalize an action plan on establishing an eTIR corridor between three countries. Moreover, the Board noted that the stakeholders of the eTIR project between Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Turkey would meet on 4 February 2020 to discuss the way forward for the project.

- The Board further took note that thirty-first session of GE.1 would take place on 10–11 March 2020 in Geneva. It further noted that the meeting would focus on several amendment proposals to be possibly included in version 4.3 of the eTIR specifications.
- The Board welcomed a presentation by the secretariat on recent developments regarding the eTIR international system. The Board noted that the secretariat had completed the implementation of all messages of the version 4.1 of the eTIR specifications and had developed a non-regression system to ensure the sufficient reliability of that software. Mr. F. Valiyev (Azerbaijan) asked to what extent it would be possible for contracting parties that were already participating in the eTIR pilot projects as per the MoU to start applying the procedure described in the eTIR specifications. The secretariat answered that there was no impediment in doing so and that following the principles of Annex 11 it was ready to accompany all contracting parties to perform this transition.
- The Board also took note of the progress in other aspects of the computerization, namely clarification of several points in the eTIR specifications, review of the eTIR database and actions taken towards finding a new hosting location for the eTIR international system and the ITDB. Finally, the Board was also informed about the priorities of the secretariat for the following period, namely implementation of the changes to follow the latest version of the eTIR specifications and production of the documentation for the customs authorities to connect their information technology (IT) systems to the eTIR international system.
- At its eighty-fifth session (October 2020), the Board took note that on 7 April 2020, ECE Executive Secretary send a letter to all contracting parties to the TIR Convention inviting them to contact the TIR secretariat in case they would be interested to connect their national customs system to the eTIR international system, in preparation to the entry into force of Annex 11. The following countries have indicated an interest in such interconnection project, either in the form of a request for additional information or the willingness to start a connection project: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, Pakistan, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine. To date, project kick-off meetings have been organized with Azerbaijan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Tunisia and Turkey. Furthermore, the secretariat has been working with the European Commission and some of the European Union Member States on an New Computerised Transit System (NCTS)- eTIR Proof of Concept, aimed at identifying the most effective method to

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connect European Union customs administrations to the eTIR international system. The secretariat also informed interested countries about the availability of assistance funds for interconnection projects to hire Information and Communication Technology (ICT) experts who could assist customs administrations.

- Referring to the funds raised through the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project (see para. 13), the secretariat informed the Board that assistance funds were available to interested countries for interconnection projects to hire ICT experts which would assist customs administrations.
- The Board also noted that GE.1 held its thirty-first session on 10 and 11 March 2020 in Geneva and that the report had already been submitted to the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2020/5). It noted that GE.1 asked the advice of TIRExB regarding the forms in which a national itinerary (Box 22 of the TIR Carnet) could be prescribed by the customs office of departure or entry (en route). However, in the absence of documentation submitted ahead of the meeting and taking into account that the members of the Board do not represent their administrations, the Board did not provide comments on the question.
- Further, the Board noted that, in May 2020, Executive Committee of ECE (ExCom) agreed to the conversion of GE.1 into the formal “Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure” (WP.30/GE.1). However, due to a liquidity crisis at the United Nations and the COVID-19 pandemic, the secretariat could not obtain slots in 2020 to organize sessions of WP.30/GE.1 with interpretation in the three ECE official languages. In order to make progress on the preparation of the crucially needed version 4.3 of the eTIR specifications, the secretariat, after consultation with TIR and eTIR focal points, decided to organize a virtual informal (English only) first session of WP.30/GE.1 on 3-4 November 2020. For the year 2021, sessions of WP.30/GE.1 are planned for 27-29 January 2021, 25-27 May 2021 and 13-15 September 2021.
- The Board also noted that an eTIR meeting planned between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Iran (Islamic Republic of) had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, with regard to the extension of the Iran-Turkey eTIR project, Iran (Islamic Republic of) sent comments on the MoU and is awaiting feedback from Turkey.
- Finally, the Board noted following developments regarding the eTIR international system:
 - Implementation and tests of all messages according to the version 4.1 of the eTIR specifications were finalized and work on the updates according to the versions 4.2 and 4.3 had started,
 - Important changes were applied to the eTIR database and the number of internal automated tests tripled,

Outputs expected in 2019 and 2020

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- Efforts continued on the development and maintenance of the eTIR data model, including the submission of amendment proposals to the next session of GE.1,
- Three guides were published on the eTIR documentation portal and preparations continued for additional technical guides to assist the customs authorities.
- The Board also noted the next priorities of the secretariat as finishing the implementation of the changes according to the eTIR specifications version 4.3, supporting the customs authorities in the context of the eTIR interconnection projects and preparing the conformance tests.

International TIR Data Bank (ITDB)

- At its eighty-first session (April 2019), the Board took note that the secretariat continued efforts to eliminate discrepancies with data imported from existing data bases of contracting parties for the customs office module. The Board reiterated its decision to make the data public once the work is completed (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2019/2, para. 21). The Board welcomed the increase of the number of customs authorities using ITDB from forty-six to forty-nine since its last session.
 - Mr. Y. Guenkov (IRU) stated that there were some malfunctionings of the ITDB which caused problems for the transporters and that IRU had requested access to contribute in the improvement of the ITDB. He requested an update from the secretariat about the steps taken further to the decision of AC.2 at its session in February 2019 session. The secretariat reminded that regarding granting IRU access to the ITDB, AC.2 had decided, provisionally, to adopt two options to work on, on the understanding that the Committee would be provided with a full report of the progress achieved (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/141, para. 45). The Board was further informed that, despite resource constraints due to vacant posts, the issue was considered in the secretariat and some relevant information was already shared with IRU, and that IRU would be communicated immediately with additional information to avail a data comparison between its systems and the ITDB. The secretariat added that as for creating a role in the ITDB for IRU under conditions set by the Board (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2019/11, paras. 23-24) it would be necessary to wait for the completion of the recruitment process. In terms of status check from the ITDB by customs authorities, the secretariat mentioned that some complaints had been received from the associations and all were analysed with due attention to give support when necessary. The Chair noted that she was aware of some of these cases and that the analysis revealed other factors as the cause of problems encountered by the transporters at the borders. The Board pointed out its availability to consider problems with regard
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Outputs expected in 2019 and 2020

Main accomplishments

to functioning of the TIR system any time and indicated the importance of identifying the nature of the cases before submission to the Board to prevent time losses in solving issues.

- Mr. Y. Guenkov (IRU) stated that the cooperation by the secretariat was appreciated, however for the data comparison what was relevant for the transport industry was the status of the TIR Carnet holder rather than other information on the ITDB. He stated that IRU would prefer having the possibility of access to that data immediately instead of reviewing the whole database. In this regard, he stated that IRU requested the possibility of querying the ITDB when a TIR Carnet was issued to transporters by the associations. The secretariat stated that such access could be immediately provided by creating a country account for IRU (since the web service connection to the ITDB was currently available only for the countries). The Board underlined that the distinction between the roles of the competent authorities, associations and now the international organization in the ITDB should be maintained and no unauthorized access should be possible. The Board also reiterated its view that, irrespective of the type of mechanism to compare the data, the correction of the data on the ITDB would not be via communication between international organization and competent authorities, and that the structure in Annex 9, Part II of the Convention would be maintained (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2019/11, para. 24).
- The Board recalled its decision on the submission of the issue to AC.2 for clarification of the technical aspects with a supporting document that elaborated various options (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2019/11 para. 24). In this regard, the Board decided waiting for the outcome of the consideration of AC.2, and, in line with the decision of AC.2 at its February 2019 session, the secretariat and IRU start comparing data in two databases. Mr. Y. Guenkov (IRU) requested the Board members to examine the document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2001/13 from the year 2001 which pointed out the issues that were materialized today and raising concerns.
- TIRExB, taking into account the recommendation of the previous composition of the Board, instructed the secretariat to draft an amendment to Article 45 of the TIR Convention to avail the submission of information on customs offices to the ITDB for consideration at its next session.
- At its eighty-third session (October 2019), the Board noted that fifty contracting parties were registered in ITDB and, since the beginning of 2019, forty contracting parties logged in the application to update data.
- At its eighty-fourth session (February 2020), the Board welcomed the status report by the secretariat on the ITDB. The Board took note of the information about the web service usage in previous two years and the status of data recordings in the ITDB, particularly following figures: 1,038 web application users, 33,944 authorized holders, 232 stamps and seals and 2,439 customs offices.

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- Further, the Board was informed about recent achievements such as the completion of security upgrades on the ITDB servers, emails sent to TIR Focal Points to share the ITDB data status, improvements to the ITDB Service Desk processes, progress in liaising with customs authorities regarding the Customs Offices Module and completion of the Holders Module improvements (i.e. management of user notifications using regions). Finally, the Board was informed about future releases and other activities planned for 2020, namely rolling out the improvements on the Holders Module (i.e. notifications using regions), addressing remaining discrepancies on data in the Customs Offices Module, supporting the launch of the eTIR international system prototype and starting the design of the Certificates of Approval Module.
- At its eighty-fifth session (October 2020), TIRExB welcomed the status report on the ITDB, delivered by the secretariat, in particular and in particular the following figures on data recordings: 32,362 authorized holders, 252 stamps and seals, 2,474 customs offices and 1,063 web application users. The Board also noted that the secretariat had completed the security upgrades on the ITDB servers, invited TIR Focal Points by email to review the ITDB user accounts related to their countries, improved ITDB Service Desk processes, deployed customs office code validation web services to the test environment, deployed region based notifications and other minor improvements to production, fulfilled tasks associated to the support of the eTIR international system development and created nine read-only accounts in the ITDB web application for IRU staff.
- Further, the Board was informed about future releases and other activities planned, namely rolling out the customs office code validation web service, supporting contracting parties wishing their customs office data to be imported in the ITDB and developing the certificate of approval module. The Board took note of the progress in the ITDB and requested the secretariat to complete its work on the ITDB customs offices module and the new module on the certificates of approval until December 2020, considering both activities take place in the programme of work of the Board for 2019-2020. The secretariat mentioned that even though all efforts are focused on the finalization of the eTIR international system and its interconnection with national customs systems, it would do everything possible to accomplish the above-mentioned tasks especially the long-lasting ones.

(3) To supervise the functioning of the TIR international guarantee system

- Monitor the settlement of Customs claims, on the basis of information provided by national Customs authorities and the IRU.

Survey on customs claims

- At its eighty-third session (October 2019), the Board requested the secretariat to distribute to the competent authorities the survey on customs claims for the years

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- Conduct a survey on Customs claims and the TIR guarantee level covering the years 2015–2018.

2015–2018 in English, French and Russian, requesting them to reply before 15 December 2019.

- At its eighty-fourth session (February 2020), the Board took note that the survey on customs claims and the guarantee level for the period 2015–2018 had been launched on 2 December 2019 and that, until then, twenty customs administrations had replied. It also noted that various customs administrations had informed the secretariat that the deadline of 15 December 2019 would not allow them to gather all the required information and reply on time. Taking note of the above, the Board requested the secretariat to send a reminder asking customs administrations, which had not replied yet, to reply before 1 March 2020.
- At its eighty-fifth session (October 2020), TIRExB considered Informal document No. 3 (2020) containing the results of the survey on customs claims and the guarantee level for the period 2015–2018. It was regretted that only thirty-five customs administrations had replied to the survey. The Board stressed that the absence of responses from contracting parties, particularly the important users of the TIR system, did not allow a proper comparison with the results of previous years or assess adequately the complete situation with regard to the claims in the TIR system. It requested the Chair to bring this matter to the attention of AC.2. However, it highlighted that those countries that had responded seemed satisfied with the functioning of the guarantee system and that, also in line with the information provided by IRU to the WP.30 (Informal document WP.30 (2020) No. 9), the TIR system was subject to less customs claims. Finally, the Board requested the secretariat to make a few corrections to Informal document No. 3 (2020), including inserting the data for Turkey.

(4) To support training activities on the application of the TIR Convention, mainly in contracting parties where difficulties are experienced or might be expected in this area.

- Organize and substantially contribute to regional and national workshops and seminars on the application of the TIR Convention, taking into account the need to empower women as addressed by Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality.
- If required, update and distribute the TIR Handbook in the six official United Nations languages.
- Prepare an action plan to provide the required training and support to countries that have

- Capacity-building workshop in Ulaanbaatar on TIR, eTIR and the European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles engaged in International Road Transport (AETR) (18 and 19 June 2019), in cooperation with IRU;
- Twenty-fifth Border Management Staff Course organized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (24 October 2019, Dushanbe);
- The TIR training webpage was updated (<https://www.unece.org/tir/training/english.html>)
- See also activity 5.

<i>Outputs expected in 2019 and 2020</i>	<i>Main accomplishments</i>
<p>recently acceded to the TIR Convention in the establishment of administrative procedures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and distribute, also via Internet, training material on the application of the TIR Convention. 	
<p>(5) To promote the geographical expansion of the TIR system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the TIR Convention at regional and national workshops, seminars and conferences on transit, trade and transport facilitation or related issues, in particular, in regions where countries have recently acceded or expressed an interest to accede to the TIR Convention in the near future (such as, but not limited to, Argentina, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia). • Provide technical assistance and advice to interested parties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Side event during the United Nations General Assembly on the eTIR international system and the benefits that its application would bring to landlocked countries (5 and 6 December 2019, New York) in cooperation with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; • High-level round table on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development along the trans-continental Eurasian Transport Corridors during the eighty-second session of the Inland Transport Committee (27 February 2020, Geneva), in cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. • See also activity 4.
<p>(6) To supervise the centralized printing and distribution of the TIR Carnets, including the monitoring of the price of TIR Carnets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the annual numbers of TIR Carnets distributed to various Contracting Parties, broken down by type (i.e. 4-, 6-, 14- or 20-voucher TIR Carnets). • Monitor the price of TIR Carnets at international level (i.e., as charged by IRU) on the basis of information to be reported by IRU annually or when modified. • Analyze the data on prices of TIR Carnets at the national level, as provided by national associations in line with the Annex 9 Part I, paragraph 3 (vi), and publish them on the TIR website. 	<p>Analysis of the prices of TIR Carnets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At its eighty-first session (April 2019), the Board was informed that until then thirty-one associations replied to the 2019 TIR Carnet prices survey. The Board requested the secretariat to send a reminder to association TIR focal points and IRU to urge the remaining associations for replying to the survey. • At its eighty-third session (October 2019), the Board took note of 2019 TIR Carnet prices and their analysis in Informal document No. 14 (2019). Further, in connection with the previous agenda item, the Board stressed that, while in numerous countries the prices of TIR carnets went down in the past five years, the number of TIR Carnets issued kept declining, thus indicating that the price did not seem to be a key factor in the declining usage of TIR Carnet. The Board pointed out that Part III of the analysis was rather technical and, for the analysis of the 2020 TIR Carnet prices, some additional explanation for non-economists could be beneficial. The Board also requested the secretariat to publish 2019 TIR Carnet prices on the TIR website and transmit them to AC.2 together with the analysis for consideration at its February 2020 session. • Finally, for the collection of the 2020 TIR Carnet prices, the Board requested the secretariat to launch a survey before 31 December 2019.

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- At its eighty-fourth session (February 2020), the Board noted that, until then, twenty-six associations had responded to the 2020 TIR Carnet prices survey launched on 26 December 2019 and requested the secretariat to send a reminder ten days before 1 March 2020 about the obligations related to Annex 9, Part I, para. 3 (vi) of the TIR Convention.
- At its eighty-fifth session (October 2020), the Board considered Informal document No. 2 (2020) containing the prices of TIR Carnets for the year 2020 together with an analysis by the secretariat. Taking note that no significant changes had arisen since the last survey, the Board instructed the secretariat to publish 2020 prices on the TIRExB website and submit the prices and analysis to AC.2 at its February 2021 session.

Modifications on the TIR Carnet forms

- At its eighty-first session (April 2019), Mr. Y. Guenkov (IRU) stated that there occurred a need for making slight changes in the TIR Carnet forms, as submitted in Informal document No. 3 (2019), in order to speed up the printing process as there might be need for increased number of TIR carnets after a possible Brexit.
- TIRExB decided considering this agenda item at its next session since the members did not have time to examine the document due to late submission.
- At its eighty-second session⁴ (June 2019), TIRExB recalled that, at its previous session, IRU provided information on the need for making slight changes in the TIR Carnet forms, as submitted in Informal document No. 3 (2019), in order to speed up the printing process as there might be need for increased number of TIR Carnets after a possible Brexit. The Board had decided considering the issue at its next session since the members did not have time to examine the document (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2019/13, paras. 31-32).
- Mr. Guenkov (IRU) informed the Board that modifications were related to changing the ink colour of page numbers inside the TIR Carnet from red to black and removing the tape from the lower part of the TIR Carnet. The Board noted that the TIR Convention did not specify the colour of ink to be used on the pages of the TIR Carnets. As for the tape at the lower part of the Carnet, some members pointed out the security implications as it covered the staples and made it difficult to disassemble the Carnet without leaving visible traces. In this regard, the Board recalled the comment on the “Model of the TIR Carnet and TIR Carnet forms actually printed and distributed” in Annex 1 of the TIR Convention which says:
“In order to impede falsification of TIR Carnet forms and to facilitate their distribution and registration, TIR Carnet forms actually printed and distributed may contain

⁴ See ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/1.

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additional details and features which do not appear in the model of the TIR Carnet reproduced in Annex 1, such as identification and page numbers, bar-coded as well as other special protective features. Such additional details and features shall be approved by the TIR Administrative Committee”.

- Further to the questions, Mr. Guenkov (IRU) clarified that the red ink colour did not include any security features. With regard to removing the tape, he stated that the estimated cost-saving would be insignificant as SwF 0.3, but it would ease filling-in the TIR Carnet by transporters who complained about not being able to use printers while filling the goods declaration or already removed the tape in practice for ease of use. He also stated that the tape was introduced in the past as a technological process proposed by the printing company to keep the integrity of the Carnet and that it did not represent a security measure.
- In this regard, while taking note of the modifications to the TIR Carnet forms, the Board requested IRU to submit the modifications to AC.2 for further consideration.
- At its eighty-fifth session (October 2020), TIRExB took note of the model of the TIR Carnet prepared by IRU to accommodate the amendments to the TIR Convention on increasing the number of loading and unloading places from four to eight. Mr. Y. Guenkov (IRU) informed the Board about the changes made according to the comments raised by WP.30 and mentioned that the final format seemed to be the optimal solution for accommodating higher number of customs offices without restraining the practical use of the TIR Carnet. The Board noted that the new model of the TIR Carnet would be considered by WP.30 and AC.2 at their meetings the same week.

(7) To facilitate the settlement of disputes between contracting parties, associations, insurance companies and international organizations without prejudice to Article 57

- Analyze and monitor disputes referred to the Board and make recommendations (if necessary) to facilitate their settlement.

Draft new Explanatory Note to Article 6, paragraph 2 of the TIR Convention

- At its eighty-first session (April 2019), with regard to the mandate by AC.2 to assess whether and to which extent it would be possible to include provisions on the relation between the international organization and its national associations in the text of the TIR Convention (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/137, paras. 16 and 39), the Board noted the conclusion of the previous composition of the Board that, in order to address the issues raised by the Romanian customs authorities or similar cases, it seemed more appropriate to develop some type of early warning mechanism or a guideline. It was also noted that through that mechanism all stakeholders (international organization, national associations and customs authorities) would be urged to inform each other as well as TIRExB well in advance of any change in circumstance that could run the risk of leading, potentially, to the termination of the relation between the international

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organization and a national association on the one hand, and the termination of the agreement between the customs authorities and the national association on the other hand (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2019/2, para. 29).

- The Board requested the secretariat to draft a document in line with its conclusion to its next session.
- At its eighty-third session (October 2019), TIRExB recalled the mandate by AC.2 to assess whether and to which extent it would be possible to include provisions on the relation between the international organization and its national associations in the text of the TIR Convention. Further, TIRExB recalled that it concluded, in order to address the issues raised by the Romanian customs authorities or similar cases, it seemed more appropriate to develop some type of early warning mechanism or a guideline, and accordingly, requested the secretariat to draft a document in line with its conclusion (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2019/13, paras. 25–26).
- TIRExB considered the document that comprised a draft text for an early warning mechanism and guidelines. The Board was of the view that the issue was a sensitive one and the draft by the secretariat reflected a balanced approach. The Board expressed its readiness to transmit the document to AC.2.
- Mr. Guenkov (IRU), while noting that the document was well drafted, considered that it could be improved and accordingly, provided a paper during the session suggesting amendments to the text. The Board, as a preliminary remark, considered that the proposals by IRU were introducing too many details. It expressed its preference with the text drafted by the secretariat.
- TIRExB asked the secretariat to distribute the proposals by IRU to comment on them at its next session.
- At its eighty-fourth session (February 2020), TIRExB recalled that, at its previous session, it considered Informal document No. 7 (2019) that comprised a draft text for an early warning mechanism and guidelines and expressed its readiness to transmit the document to AC.2. Further, the Board recalled that IRU had suggested amendments to the text during the session and that it requested the secretariat to distribute them to comment on at its next session.
- Mr. Guenkov (IRU) stated that the text in Informal document No. 7 (2019) could be further improved, especially based on the lessons drawn from the case with the Romanian association. TIRExB observed that suggestions by IRU mainly related to introducing following points in the text:
 - National association’s putting TIRExB and the international organization in copy of the correspondence with its competent authorities.
 - A statement about the private nature of the relationship between the international organization and its member associations.

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- TIRExB pointed out the purpose of the early warning mechanism as to urge stakeholders inform each other as well as TIRExB well in advance of any change in circumstance that could run the risk of leading, potentially, to the termination of the relation between the international organization and a national association on the one hand, and the termination of the agreement between the customs authorities and the national association on the other hand. In this regard, it did not consider appropriate to remark on the nature of the relationship between the international organization and national associations in the text. Further, the Board underlined the need to respect also the privacy of the relationship between a competent authority and its national association. Finally, regarding the lessons referred to by IRU from past cases, TIRExB stressed that it had always provided its good office to all stakeholders for the settlement of disputes and that it would continue to consider any information provided by the stakeholders as per Annex 8 of the TIR Convention.
- TIRExB concluded that the wording of the early warning mechanism in Informal document No. 7 (2019) was more appropriate to give place in the TIR Convention, thus requested the secretariat to submit it to AC.2 at its October 2020 session.

(8) To study specific measures (both legal and practical) to combat fraud resulting from the misuse of the TIR procedure

- Identify possible weaknesses in the legal basis of the TIR Convention which could make it prone to fraud and recommend appropriate solutions.
- No specific measures were reported to TIRExB during the current mandate.

(9) To increase transparency and facilitate the exchange of information between competent authorities of contracting parties, national guaranteeing associations, IRU and other Governmental and non-governmental organizations. To coordinate and foster the exchange of intelligence and other information among competent authorities of contracting parties

- Elaborate adequate instruments and find measures to improve international cooperation among Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention and their national associations, and the international organization in order to prevent and combat fraud.
- Improve transparency between all stakeholders by means of, but not limited to, monitoring IRU's financial statement.
- Taking into account the views of other international governmental and non-governmental bodies, and in consultation with the IRU, identify fraud prevention measures, including risk analysis tools.
- No Fraud Report Form (FRF) was received from TIR customs focal points during current mandate.
- See also activity 2.

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- On the basis of information provided by the TIR international guarantee chain, study the situation with regard to the new trends of fraud, the notifications of non-discharge and TIR infringements as a contribution to an "early-warning system" for identification and prevention of fraud.
- Expand the scope of the ITDB to include, inter alia, certificates of approval of vehicles and containers.

(10) To supervise the national/regional customs control measures introduced in the framework of the TIR Convention

- Identify national/regional customs control measures introduced in Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention and check their conformity with the provisions of the TIR Convention.
- Address the respective national authorities in order to modify or abolish measures which are in contradiction to the TIR Convention for the sake of ensuring proper application of the TIR Convention in all Contracting Parties.

New measures introduced by the Republic of Belarus

- At its eighty-second session (June 2019), TIRExB took note of the information submitted by IRU in Informal document No. 9 (2019) with regard to new measures introduced by the Republic of Belarus applicable as of 1 July 2019 and related to the use of electronic services for advance cargo information. The Board recalled that, at its eightieth session, IRU informed about new regulations entering into force in Belarus as of 1 July 2019 which covered measures as the payment of a fee for handling electronic information and registration of transport operators to obtain an electronic signature. The Board had taken note of this information and, while recommending the submission of this issue with further information to WP.30 where Belarus was also represented, expressed its availability to consider the matter in case there were aspects related to its mandate (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2019/12, para. 25).
- Mr. Guenkov (IRU) stated that a unified system of transmission of pre-declarations would be introduced in Belarus which would mean that all advance cargo information including the one transmitted by the IRU application TIR-EPD (Electronic Pre-Declaration) would be sent to the Belarusian customs exclusively through this unified platform operated by the "National Centre for Electronic Services" (NCES). He added that, according to the Presidential Decree No. 515 dated 8 November 2011, NCES would provide electronic services to state bodies, other organisations and citizens, both on a paid and unpaid basis. At the same time, services linked to the transmission of advance cargo information to the customs offices of Belarus would be carried out exclusively on a paid basis. He added that, according to the inquiries, non-residents of Belarus would not have direct access to the unified platform. He also stated that this application would also increase the costs of the use of eTIR system once operational. Finally, Mr. Guenkov (IRU) requested the Board to address the customs authorities of Belarus on the issue before the entry into force of the measures.

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- Mr. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation) stated that the measures did not seem to be addressing the TIR transports particularly or discriminating against the users of the TIR procedure. He added that whereas duties and taxes introduced by the countries might have indirect impact on the TIR operations, they did not fall under the TIR Convention. The Chair reminded the requirement for notification to TIRExB on the national control measures according to Article 42 bis and the Explanatory Note thereto of the TIR Convention and underlined the value of informing all relevant stakeholders well in advance when a new application that might have impact on the TIR operations would come into force.
- The Board concluded that, taking into account the request of the international organization, it would be appropriate to get further information on the measures introduced by the Republic of Belarus to understand their possible impact on the TIR operations. With this, the Board requested the secretariat to send a letter to the customs authorities of the Republic of Belarus to inform about the request from the international organization and, reminding the Article 42 bis and the Explanatory Note thereto, to ask for information about new regulations introduced in its territory and their impact on the application of the TIR Convention.
- At its eighty-fourth session (February 2020), TIRExB noted that WP.30 at its 153rd session in October 2019, considering a letter from the Lithuanian National Road Carriers Association, had expressed its concern about the provision of the electronic advance cargo information service in Belarus on a paid basis and had requested the secretariat transmit its conclusions to Belarusian authorities (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/306, paras. 20-21). The Board further took note of the letter by Belarusian Customs as in Informal document WP.30 (2020) No. 4.
- TIRExB noted that the issue was also at the agenda of WP.30 at its 154th session on 4–7 February 2020 (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/307, item 4(c)(iv)) where all the stakeholders, including Belarus, were represented. TIRExB decided revisiting the issue only in the case of a request by AC.2 for further examination.

(11) To monitor the application of the EDI control system for TIR Carnets

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue activities, in cooperation with IRU, towards the full implementation of an international EDI control system for TIR Carnets, as foreseen by Annex 10 to the TIR Convention. • Monitor performance and give feedback to Contracting Parties. • Study, with the support of IRU, how the EDI control system for TIR Carnets is being used by | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No problems reported regarding functioning of the EDI control system during current mandate. |
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the national issuing associations and Customs authorities for the purposes of fraud prevention.

(12) To maintain the central record for dissemination to contracting parties of information on all rules and procedures prescribed for the issue of TIR Carnets by associations, as far as they relate to the minimum conditions and requirements laid down in Annex 9

- Input to be provided by IRU in case of changes

(13) To provide support in the application and strengthening of the TIR Convention

- Consider opportunities and, when necessary, proposals to strengthen the TIR Convention, taking into account the changing conditions of the customs transit regime.
- Study the reasons resulting in the decreasing number of the TIR Carnets used and make recommendations to improve the TIR System.
- Consider options to introduce more flexibility in the use of guarantees in the TIR Convention.
- Consider a proposal with regard to making the use of the ITDB mandatory as a method of publication of information on customs offices according to Article 45 of the Convention.
- When required, draft recommendations and/or examples of best practice on the application of specific provisions of the TIR Convention.

Proposals to introduce more flexibility in the guarantee system

- At its eighty-first session (April 2019), TIRExB reiterated its decision to commence considerations of the matter only subsequent to the deliberations of AC.2 (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2018/4, para. 7). Nevertheless, the Chair requested the new composition of the Board to make themselves get acquainted with the previous analysis and conclusions of the Board that were also submitted to AC.2 (see documents ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2016/7 and Informal document No. 7 (2016)).
- At its eighty-third to eighty-fifth sessions, TIRExB reiterated its decision to commence considerations of the matter only subsequent to the deliberations of AC.2.

Audit report on the management of the TIR Trust Fund issued by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)

- At its eighty-second session (June 2019), the Board noted that the audit requested by AC.2 from the competent United Nations services on the accounts of TIRExB and the TIR secretariat at its sixty-fourth session in October 2016 (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/131, para. 22) was undertaken by OIOS and completed in March 2019, and that the audit report was presented in Informal document No. 4 (2019). The Board also took note that the audit report would be submitted to AC.2 at its October 2019 session as an official document for consideration. The TIR Secretary briefly introduced the findings of the report and, underlining that he was responsible for the fulfilment of the recommendations within specific deadlines, asked for the input and support of the Board in this demanding and challenging responsibility.
- The Board considered each recommendation and presented its initial remarks and mandate to the secretariat.
- Recommendation 1: The Board noted that the secretariat would submit possible options of mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the documentation submitted by the international organization to AC.2 for consideration. Mr. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation) stated that the recommendation was a very important one and OIOS identified a problematic area that needed to be worked on particularly with regard to access to and examination of this documentation. He was of the view that the existing

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procedure should be reviewed and also the documentation should be analysed by an expert on financing.

- Further to a question from Mr. Mayer (Austria) on whether the latest amendments to the TIR Convention regarding Annex 9, Part III, Article 2, paras. o-q were taken into account during the audit, the secretariat clarified that the auditors took into account those provisions and recommended the secretariat to start working also for reflecting those provisions in the new agreement with the international organization (see Recommendation 4), whereas Recommendation 1 was related to the documentation submitted by the international organization according to Annex 9, Part III, Articles 1 and 2.
- The Board questioned the content of the documents submitted by the international organization. The secretariat suggested drafting a document to the Board for its next session, taking into account the existing list of documentation and the procedure set in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2015/12. The document would elaborate on the documentation to be submitted, and when and how it would be examined. The Board decided that the informal document to be drafted by the secretariat would be submitted both to TIRExB and AC.2 at October sessions. The TIR Secretary requested the Board members also to share their contributions, if any, during summer period.
- Further to a suggestion by Mr. Laborie (European Commission), the Board highlighted the importance of the language regime of the documentation, especially in connection with the examination thereof, and requested the secretariat to cover also this aspect in the draft document. The Board, while acknowledging the importance of a harmony in the language regime and availability of the documentation in three official languages of ECE, noted that making such a request with regard to all the documents to be submitted by the international organization might be cumbersome and unnecessary. The Board added that, instead of the documentation, the results of the expert examination could be provided in three official languages. The Board decided assessing the language issue together with the list of documentation.
- Mr. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation) suggested that support to the secretariat by an expert while drafting the document could help for identifying the content of the documentation to be submitted and how to move forward on this issue. The Board agreed that the document drafted by the secretariat would not include only the titles of the documentation but give a summary of the content of each document. The Board concluded that this list would not be an exhaustive one, thus the number of documents could be increased or reduced according to results of the discussions and the expert view. The Board recalled that the confidentiality of the documentation and the access procedure also made it difficult for the contracting parties to have an examination of the documentation in the past and requested the secretariat to take into account this aspect, for the sake of transparency, in suggesting new mechanisms for the

examination of the documentation. In this regard, the Board recalled the limitations for the competent authorities and the national associations in accessing and examining the full report of the “Review of governance and compliance areas and fact-finding investigation” of IRU (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/135, paras. 52-54).

- The Board concluded that the monitoring and examination of the documentation submitted by the international organization was an important matter and a more effective mechanism needed to be established reflecting on what, when and how questions. The Board highlighted the importance of revisiting the list of documents provided by the international organization and checking whether the list was satisfactory, or a revision would be necessary. The Board requested the secretariat to provide a document that would include the list of documents for a review and the possible mechanism of monitoring and examination of documentation. The Board was also of the view that the examination could be better fulfilled by an expert. The Board, while acknowledging that the issue needed to be considered and decided by AC.2, decided providing input to assist it.
- Recommendation 2: The Board noted the need for preparing updated terms of reference for TIR focal points taking into account the tasks undertaken by them since the adoption of the Resolution No. 49 (1995) which constituted the basis for the establishment of focal points. The Board supported the suggested course of action by the secretariat, namely the submission of a draft terms of reference to AC.2.
- Recommendation 3: The Board took note of the need to develop appropriate procedures concerning the selection of the international organization and the periodic assessment of the international organization’s compliance with the stipulated conditions and requirements. The secretariat mentioned that since the regulation on this topic might require an amendment to the convention the deadline for the implementation was set as October 2021. Mr. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation) indicated that, considering the importance of the actions recommended by OIOS for the TIR system and the time required for the implementation, it would be better to submit the issue to AC.2 at October session with a supporting document. The secretariat replied that as this recommendation might require an amendment to the convention it would be more appropriate that AC.2 considered the recommendation first and mandate the secretariat for follow-up actions. Further to the reminder by the secretariat that the authorization for the next three years was already done by AC.2, Mr. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation) asked the possibility of signing the current agreement for a shorter period, i.e. 1 or 2 years, and renewing once all the recommendations of OIOS were reflected. Mr. Mayer (Austria) reminded that three years period for the authorization was a compromise solution from five years in the past considering the needs of the international organization for the planning and financial assessment of its operations.

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- TIRExB was of the view that the recommendation was important for the TIR system and there needed to be an appropriate mechanism in place concerning evaluation of qualified organizations and the periodic assessment. The Board was also of the view that it was a sensitive matter and that it would be more appropriate to take action on the issue further to the instructions from AC.2. In this regard, considering also the time limitations, it requested the secretariat to bring this matter to AC.2 immediately so that sufficient time would be available for consideration. Further, the Board requested the secretariat to start consideration of possible mechanisms while waiting for instructions from AC.2.
- Recommendation 4: The Board, recalling the amendments to the TIR Convention related to Annex 9, Part III, Article 2, paras. o-q which entered into force in July 2018, acknowledged the need to reflect the amendments in the new agreement with the international organization. The Board decided taking into account the recommendation in consideration of the new agreement under agenda item 5.
- Recommendations 5 and 6: TIRExB took note of Recommendations 5 and 6 which were interconnected. With regard to Recommendation 5, the secretariat mentioned that the project under the MoU with IRU in 2017 was approved by ExCom according to the internal directive which required that all extra budgetary projects be approved by ExCom. The secretariat pointed out that OIOS recommended that the review and approval of the projects be performed by convention bodies either with a complementary ExCom approval or not. In this regard, the secretariat explained that the reason for submission of that project to ExCom was that it required the use of ECE resources, and it was doubtful how AC.2 would decide on a project that required the use of ECE resources which then could be refused by ExCom. It would be more difficult to implement this recommendation considering that not all ECE member States were represented at AC.2. With this, the secretariat pointed out that it was unclear how this recommendation could be implemented.
- The Board acknowledged that there would be value in terms of transparency in the submission of a TIR related project to AC.2 beforehand and that would enforce the mechanism, however, taking into account the practical constraints raised by the secretariat with regard to the approval, AC.2 could involve in the process by supporting the projects. The TIR Secretary drew attention to the fact that Recommendation 5 implied that the full transparency could be achieved only by the approval of the convention governing bodies since they had the expertise to assess the convention related issues in the projects and ExCom could approve only after the governing body. Some Board members expressed that AC.2 was informed only after the conclusion of the MoU, which they thought might have led to this problem.
- Mr. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation), reiterating the close connection between two recommendations, stated that one of very obvious signs of this connection was that the

international organization which was authorized by AC.2 for three years signed an MoU with ECE for five years and this would not happen in case both instruments were decided by the same authority. He asked what the consequences of these recommendations with regard to the MoU might be and whether there was a possibility of cancellation. The secretariat explained that, following Recommendation 6, the issue would be raised to the Ethics Office which might suggest different courses of action including such an option as of next year. It was added that, irrespective of the recommendations, the vital importance of the MoU for the future of the eTIR project, and thus for the TIR system, needed to be acknowledged. In this regard, the secretariat mentioned that, whereas the issue was going to be raised to the Ethics Office which would make its assessments according to the audit report and internal rules, what AC.2 could do at this stage was to recognize the recommendation and the good arguments behind, however to further support the project since it was closely connected with the future of the TIR Convention. Board members were requested to take this point into account while representing their governments at AC.2.

- The Board recalled that the MoU was supported by the contracting parties as part of efforts for the computerization of the TIR system, however during the discussions at the WP.30 and AC.2, transparency concerns were also raised especially since the Contribution Agreement, an integral part of the MoU, was not provided by the secretariat. Mr. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation) stated that it would not be appropriate to expect the AC.2 support to MoU without having the whole picture. The secretariat expressed that the Contribution Agreement was not provided due to limitations set by the ECE management, but the request would be submitted to the management again.
- The Board noted that Recommendation 5 was addressing ECE management for revising its internal directive and concluded that there needed to be an effort to fulfil the recommendation whereas AC.2 might also wish to reflect on the issue during its consideration of the report. Regarding Recommendation 6, highlighting the importance of the principle of transparency, the Board requested the secretariat to present the MoU together with the Contribution Agreement in three official languages to AC.2 in its October session to get support to MoU to facilitate the procedure at the Ethics Office.
- Recommendation 7: TIRExB noted that Recommendation 7 (a) was overlapping with an activity in its programme of work for the years 2019-2020 and decided taking into account the recommendation in consideration of agenda item 10 on that activity.
- With regard to Recommendation 7 (b), the Board noted that the financing mechanism defined in the agreement with the international organization would be under consideration also under agenda item 5. The secretariat stated that the recommendation was related to the concerns about the sustainability of the TIR Trust Fund due to the declining number of TIR Carnets and the deficits accumulated in the last couple of

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years. It was recalled that AC.2 had also concerns about possible consequences of the deficits (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/137, para. 27). The secretariat reminded that pursuant to the Annex 8, Article 13, para. 1 of the TIR Convention, there had been efforts in the past by ECE to finance the operation of TIRExB and the TIR secretariat from United Nations regular budget, but it did not yield results.

- Mr. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation) mentioned that the recommendation was an important one and connected with Recommendations 8 and 9. He pointed out that, whereas the distribution price of TIR Carnet by the international organization was far beyond the amount per TIR Carnet, starting from 2018 IRU decided not to collect the amount approved by AC.2 claiming that it was too high to charge from the transporters. He added that the information on the combination of the price of TIR Carnet, which could help in understanding the impact of the TIRExB and TIR secretariat budget on the TIR system, could not be accessed despite several requests in the past. He was of the view that in consideration of the future of the TIR Trust Fund and the possibilities of funding sources, the price of the TIR Carnet needed to be requested again from the international organization. Other Board members, while raising concerns also about the validity of justification in collecting a lower amount considering the difference between two amounts was only 50 cents (2019) and the appropriateness of diverging from the amount approved by AC.2, did not agree that it was necessary to look into the price of TIR Carnet in more detail in connection with this recommendation.
- Mr. Mayer (Austria) did not agree with the conclusion in the audit report that the existing financing mechanism was not a sustainable model, as it worked for many years properly, and was of the view that there was no need for considering a new mechanism.
- The Board, considering that Recommendation 7(b) was about the budget of TIRExB and the TIR secretariat, concluded that the appropriate body to consider this recommendation was AC.2, therefore preferred not giving opinion on the matter.
- Recommendation 8: The Board took note of the recommendation and concluded that it needed to be considered at AC.2 level. The Board also noted that the secretariat would submit proposals to AC.2 to settle the accumulated deficits. The Board was of the view that, this issue needed to be taken on board while drafting the new agreement to be concluded between ECE and the international organization.
- Recommendation 9: TIRExB took note of the need to refine the budget and cost plans and noted that the recommendation would be taken on board by the secretariat while drafting the 2020 budget. TIRExB also highlighted the importance of consideration of resource needs for activities such as promotion of the TIR Convention and hosting of the ITDB in preparation of the refined budget and cost plans.

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- Recommendation 10: The Board took note of the recommendation and considered that priority should be given to it as there were many new accessions to the TIR Convention. The Board, while appreciating the efforts by IRU and some contracting parties so far, was of the view that there needed to be an organized approach by the secretariat to the activation of the TIR system in new contracting parties. It also recalled that its programme of work envisaged preparation of an action plan to provide the required training and support to countries that have recently acceded to the TIR Convention in the establishment of administrative procedures in line with Article 8 (f) of its Terms of Reference. The secretariat clarified that an action plan would allow the follow-up with the newly acceded countries for the establishment of the administrative procedures. The secretariat added that there were new challenges ahead as the eTIR and the intermodal use of the TIR procedure, and thus the intention was to draft a more strategic document covering plans about the events to be organized to promote those topics. Mr. Laborie (European Commission) suggested that the secretariat, while drafting the action plan, takes into account Recommendation No. 2 related to the roles of focal points and explores the possibility of a linkage between two recommendations.
- At its eighty-third session (October 2019), the Board took note of the follow-up actions by the secretariat to the decisions taken at its previous session on the recommendations by OIOS (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/1, paras. 9–33).
- Regarding Recommendation No. 1, the Board took note of the recommendations by the consultants in Informal document No. 10 (2019) about the monitoring and evaluation of the documentation and agreed all recommendations in principle. The Board reiterated its conclusion that the evaluation would be better fulfilled by an expert (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/1, para. 16). The Board added that while the Board members could get support from their national experts while assessing the documentation, such a support would be informal since they act in their personal capacity at the Board. Therefore, it was of the view that in case the national experts would be involved, that should be via AC.2 where the government authorities were represented. Regarding the recommendation by the consultants to hire a consultant to evaluate the documentation, the Board underlined the cost of such a regular activity as a limiting factor. The secretariat drew attention also to administrative procedures for hiring consultants as a limitation. TIRExB concluded that, given the cost factor, the best option would not be hiring a consultant, but search for support form national governments.
- TIRExB requested the secretariat to revise the document according to comments from previous and current sessions and submit to AC.2 for consideration at its February 2020 session.
- Regarding Recommendation No. 5, the Board requested the secretariat to clarify how the project approval mechanism would work with the amendments to the Directive.

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The secretariat mentioned that the referred recommendation was under the responsibility of the ECE Programme Management Unit (PMU) and that the secretariat had limited knowledge of its implementation. It added that the amendments were going to be submitted to ExCom for approval. Further, the secretariat highlighted the impact of this issue on all ECE conventions and stated that ECE explored a regulation that would respond to the needs of all the instruments. It explained that, according to latest information, the projects related to the TIR Convention would need to be addressed first to AC.2 as recommended by OIOS. It added that this might be followed by an ExCom review, but the practicality and the necessity of that was under consideration. The Board noted the ongoing work at ECE on the recommendation and expressed that, for the sake of transparency and to ensure in-depth discussions, any project about the TIR Convention should be considered at AC.2 level in the first place. The secretariat assured that it would share the conclusion with ECE PMU.

- Regarding Recommendation No. 10, TIRExB welcomed the draft action plan in Informal document No. 11 (2019) and considered that it would bring a fresh momentum to the effort to make the TIR Convention more attractive. Further, it considered that the action plan was ambitious including actions with tight timings, however warranted. The Board requested the secretariat to take into account following points while implementing the action plan:
 - Activities related to eTIR and the intermodal use of the TIR procedure should be given priority.
 - WCO accredited transit experts could be benefited in delivery of the activities.
 - Contracting Parties that are not operational for long time should also be paid attention.
 - Countries that show interest for accession and those that are neighbouring current Contracting Parties, such as Iraq, should be given priority.
 - Need for continuing capacity building activities for better application of the TIR Convention should be kept in mind.
 - Cooperation with regional initiatives, particularly with corridor-based initiatives, could be beneficial.
- Mr. Guenkov (IRU) stated that seeking synergies of what had already been developed would help saving time while realizing the action plan. He added that IRU signed an MoU with WCO and published training materials on the TIR Convention both for customs authorities and transporters at WCO e-learning platform. He also stated that, based on the workshops with the newly acceded countries, they noted the need for customs experts, particularly in the field of vehicle controls according to the TIR Convention.

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- TIRExB agreed with the action plan and requested the secretariat to submit it to AC.2 at its February 2020 session for consideration and approval as also recommended by OIOS.
- At its eighty-fourth session (February 2020), the Board took note of the progress in the implementation of the audit recommendations since its previous session. Regarding the letter sent to the Ethics Office in line with Recommendation No. 6, Mr. P. J. Laborie (European Commission) pointed out that reference was made to a statement by the delegation of the European Union in the letter without giving the context of the statement. TIRExB underlined that while such reference is made, the statement should be given together with its context. The Board requested the secretariat to bear this methodological point in mind for future references.
- At its eighty-fifth session (October 2020), the Board took note of the progress in the implementation of the audit recommendations since its previous session.

Study the reasons resulting in the decreasing number of the TIR Carnets used and make recommendations to improve the TIR system

- At its eighty-second session (June 2019), the Board recalled that, at its previous session, during consideration of the draft programme of work for its 2019-2020 term of office, it was suggested that further attention paid to the decline of the number of TIR Carnets distributed in the last couple of years. Further to the discussions, the Board decided to include studying the reasons for the decline of the number of TIR Carnets used and making recommendations to improve the TIR system in its programme of work. The Board clarified that this analysis would be a TIRExB analysis, it would not cover issues which fall out of the scope of its work (e.g. economic crisis) and it would be complemented with recommendations to address the identified issues (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/13, paras. 9-10). The Board recalled that Recommendation No. 7 (a) by OIOS also addressed the need for such a study.
- The Board took note of Informal document No. 8 (2019) elaborating on possible methods of the study as follows:
 - A quick and informal study limited to the Board members, being TIR experts, to achieve an initial, concise and well-documented draft which may constitute the concrete basis to work on the topic,
 - A more comprehensive study extended to all competent authorities, national guaranteeing associations and the international organization possibly through a questionnaire,
 - Outsourcing the study to a research entity that would provide a more professional, in-depth and independent analysis.
- Majority of the Board members were of the view that their expertise would allow specifying the reasons of the decline and a study with Board members would also

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provide immediate result. However, they also acknowledged the importance of the input from all contracting parties, particularly from the private sector, which could provide access to also more solutions in addressing the reasons. The Board, while noting the value of a professional analysis, was not in favour of outsourcing at this stage in view of time and cost factors. Nevertheless, the Board acknowledged the complementary nature of all these options.

- The Board concluded that it would be appropriate to start an analysis with the input from the Board members and extend it to a wider audience after having the first results of this analysis. The Board also decided including IRU as the observer of TIRExB in this study. In this regard, the Board requested the secretariat to start the study with the Board members and IRU as defined in Informal document No. 8 (2019), reflect the findings in a document and circulate via email for feedback. The Board further decided that depending on the results of informal contacts, the document would then be submitted either to TIRExB for further consideration or to AC.2 which might then decide distributing the document to competent authorities and private sector to ask their views. The secretariat assured also trying to include some statistical data in the document about the use of TIR Carnets in the last decade in the country or region basis.
- At its eighty-third session (October 2019), TIRExB welcomed the document drafted by the secretariat based on the survey conducted with the Board members and IRU. The Board noted that the study provided substantial input to discuss the reasons of decline; however, the document contained too much emphasis on alternative systems, mainly the NCTS. The Board considered that the focus should be shifting preferences of transporters, thus looking for answers to “why” question instead of explaining “how” the decline happened. The Board underlined that, without identifying and addressing the reasons for shifting preferences, the expansion of the TIR system to other regions would not help reversing the decline. Nevertheless, the Board emphasized the ongoing relevance of the TIR Convention as a global transit tool and the complementary nature of alternative systems. Further, the Board requested the secretariat to review the structure of the document, especially to eliminate duplications and set links between inputs. The Board also considered it an asset if further data could be accessed about the quality of the movement to alternative systems such as the size of enterprises.
- The secretariat mentioned the importance of complementing the study with an action plan initially to stop and then reverse the decline. In this regard, referring to difficulties in introducing new concepts to the TIR Convention, TIRExB underlined the need for a more simplified decision-making process for the Convention.
- TIRExB requested the secretariat to revise the document taking into account its comments and circulate via email for feedback. The Board further decided that

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depending on the results of informal contacts, the document would then be submitted either to TIRExB for further consideration or to AC.2.

- At its eighty-fourth session (February 2020), TIRExB continued consideration of the survey conducted with the Board members and IRU for studying the reasons of the decreasing number of TIR Carnets used. The Board took note that AC.2, while considering the OIOS audit report at its seventy-first session in October 2019, had noted that Recommendation No. 7 (a) overlapped with the ongoing study by TIRExB conducted in line with its programme of work for 2019–2020. AC.2 agreed with a request from IRU on submitting the results of the TIRExB study first to WP.30 (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/145, paras. 76-77). The Board also took note that the secretariat submitted document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2020/3 comprising a revised version of the study to WP.30 for consideration at its session on 4–7 February 2020.
- TIRExB, while acknowledging the submission of the study to WP.30 by the secretariat further to a request by AC.2, emphasized that the Board was yet to have a final review of the study before submission to other TIR bodies. Reminding the decision at its previous session on the distribution of the revised study to the Board members for a final review (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/13, paras. 36-38), the Board requested the secretariat to pay further attention to conforming with the meeting reports in the future.
- In consideration of the document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2020/3, the Board concluded that there was room for improvement even though the secretariat had reflected some of the comments done at its previous session. However, since the study was going to be considered at WP.30, the Board preferred not to revise the document further at that stage. Finally, TIRExB requested the secretariat to clarify, while presenting the document at WP.30, that the Board did not have a final review of the study.
- At its eighty-fifth session (October 2020), TIRExB took note that WP.30, at its 154th session, had requested the secretariat to distribute the study on the reasons of the decreasing number of TIR Carnets used among TIR focal points of customs and associations for their views and, at the proposal of the secretariat, agreed that the results and the further progress of the study would first be assessed by TIRExB before bringing the study again to the table of WP.30, AC.2 or both (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/308, paras. 29-32).
- The secretariat stated that, following the decision of WP.30, it had distributed the survey to all TIR Focal Points and that the survey had been replied by only one customs administration (Portugal) and three associations (Iran (Islamic Republic of), Poland and Turkmenistan) to date. The secretariat added that it would suggest WP.30 sending a reminder, and, under any circumstances, it would submit the final study at the next session of the Board. The Board emphasized the completion of the study until

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December 2020 since it takes place in the programme of work of the Board for 2019-2020.

Publishing information on customs offices using the International TIR Data Bank

- At its eighty-third session (October 2019), TIRExB considered the amendment proposal in Informal document No. 6 (2019) which aimed at the submission of information on customs offices to ITDB. The Board noted that the draft explanatory note to Article 45 would stipulate how contracting parties should fulfil their obligation on publishing information on customs offices. TIRExB assessed the merit of adding a deadline for the submission of this information. It concluded that, due to long administrative procedures undertaken to open or close customs offices, except in unforeseen circumstances, authorities would have sufficient time to share this information. Therefore, it decided that no fundamental need existed to amend the text of the Article, where a deadline could be reflected, for the time being. The secretariat explained that the authorities could enter data into ITDB well in advance both on the start and end date of the service and the working hours.
- Mr. Guenkov (IRU) stated that IRU received the information on customs offices from the associations in new contracting parties. He added that this information was sent to the secretariat and the associations in other contracting parties, requesting transmission to customs authorities. He indicated that IRU supported the module on customs offices. However, he mentioned that the information on customs offices could have legal implications related to claims procedure. Therefore, he requested that the information be submitted to ITDB with the date and time of the start and end of the service. He also requested that information on customs offices be made publicly available. The secretariat clarified that, in line with Article 45 that required publishing information on customs offices, information on customs offices would be publicly available via ITDB website. Mr. Guenkov (IRU) also asked if the holders were able to access ITDB Holders Module to check their data or if such access was foreseen. The secretariat clarified that only customs authorities and associations had access to data on holders in ITDB and that there was no discussion on holders' accession in the past.
- TIRExB endorsed the draft amendment proposals in Informal document No. 6 (2019) and requested the secretariat to submit them to AC.2 for adoption. The Board also highlighted the importance of informing TIRExB and the secretariat immediately about any changes in the application of the TIR Convention in contracting parties, including changes related to customs offices available for the TIR procedure.

Recommendation to Annex 3 on a code system to report defect remarks in the certificate of approval

- At its eighty-fifth session (October 2020), TIRExB took note of the results of the survey of a Recommendation to Annex 3 on a code system to report defect remarks in the certificate of approval, contained in Informal document No. 1 (2020). It noted that 25 countries (including Azerbaijan, which, by mistake, had not been included in the results) had replied to the survey, with 19 countries replying that they were familiar with the Recommendation, whereas 6 reported they were not. On the other hand, 15 countries reported not applying the code system, whereas 10 reported positively about their national experience with the Recommendation.
- TIRExB established that, although most reporting countries seem to be familiar with the Recommendation, not many apply the code system. The Board requested the Chair to transmit its findings to AC.2 for further consideration, leaving it up to the Committee to assess whether or not it seems appropriate, at this point in time, to continue the code system as a Recommendation or that the time had come to introduce the code system in the legal text of the TIR Convention, possibly as an Appendix to Annex 3.

Exchange of views on the implementation of the TIR procedure during COVID-19 pandemic

- The secretariat mentioned that, since the last session of the Board, it had taken considerable actions to promote the TIR system, particularly the eTIR, as a tool that would facilitate border crossings during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The report by the United Nations Secretary General in March 2020 on “Shared responsibility, global solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19” mentions the eTIR and eCMR as the tools that had to be used by the governments in order to ensure contactless and paperless borders operations . Further, in a joint statement by eight United Nations entities in September 2020 the critical role of the international transport for COVID-19 recovery was stressed, mentioning especially the role that eTIR could play.
- The Observatory on Border Crossings Status due to COVID-19 was established at the very beginning of the pandemic. The Observatory became the only source worldwide providing daily updates on the status of inland transport border crossing. During the period of 18 March–15 September 2020, the Observatory webpage had 106,624 unique page views from 208 States/regions, with a with a peak of more than 2,000 unique page views per day in April and May. Updated information was collected and provided for 174 United Nations Member States. The Observatory is supported by several international and regional organizations.
- The secretariat initiated the “Open the borders” campaign including special measures for the TIR Convention. The Executive Secretary of ECE and the Secretary General of the IRU sent a joint letter to all Heads of Customs authorities on 16 April 2020 calling on them to consider the application of specific measures and good practices to

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minimize the impact of COVID-19 on the international supply chains. The recommended measures were based on internationally agreed policies and conventions and included among other things the prevention of discriminatory measures, use of the TIR Convention and minimizing the controls and checks at borders.

- Further to observing, together with IRU, the difficulties in the distribution of the TIR Carnets, especially for intermodal operations where TIR Carnets were sent by post, and in obtaining new/renewed approval certificates for vehicles, ECE sent a letter to all TIR contracting parties offering the following temporary measures:
 - Extension of the validity of the vehicle approval certificates for 6 months;
 - Use of the print@home TIR carnets.
- ECE had participated in the UNDA project on “Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics: United Nations solutions for contactless, seamless and collaborative transport and trade”. The secretariat, through this project, managed to raise funds that would support the interconnection of national customs systems with the eTIR international system (see para.18).
- The Board also took note of a presentation on the results of the meetings of the Informal Multidisciplinary Advisory Group on Transport Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis held on 9 June 2020 and 8 September 2020. The Board welcomed the recommendations from the meetings, as summarized also in document ECE/TRANS/WP.5/2020/10, and requested the secretariat to inform about final outcome of the recommendations, particularly the consideration by the Inland Transport Committee.
- Further, the Board exchanged views on the state of play regarding TIR transports during the COVID-19. Mr. F. Valiyev (Azerbaijan) gave examples of the flexibility provided to transporters, emphasizing that all those actions remained unilateral. Mr. P. J. Laborie (European Commission) stated that flexibilities were provided to the transporters also within the European Union, including on the vehicle approval certificates. Mr. M. Ayati (Islamic Republic of Iran) informed about two new corridors launched during this period on the Iran-Afghanistan-Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan and Iran-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan routes. Ms. T. Rey-Bellet (IRU) explained the initiatives taken by IRU such as publishing information about the situation on daily basis through IRU Flash Info -an online service with real-time country information-, joint efforts with ECE and practical measures as extending the deadlines for the use and return of TIR Carnets. Mr. F. Valiyev (Azerbaijan) mentioned that, given the need for a harmonized approach during a pandemic or emergency situations, there would be merit in drafting a Resolution to the TIR Convention, which would elaborate a set of measures, to ensure unhindered and smooth TIR transports in such times.
The Board considered that the experience with the COVID-19 until then revealed the need for a global framework as well as a holistic approach. It considered that, in terms

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of border crossings, the Observatory and the Informal Multidisciplinary Advisory Group constituted a good basis and the computerization of existing tools was of great importance. Further, the Board agreed the need for mutually accepted measures to be applied at such times, however some members expressed concern about the appropriateness of introducing those measures in the form of a Resolution. Finally, the Board emphasized that introducing such measures in the TIR system could be decided at AC.2 by the contracting parties. The Board decided continuing discussions at its next session.

(14) Self-evaluation

- Prepare a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the Board's achievements during its 2019–2020 term of office in relation with its program of work and mandate for endorsement by the TIR Administrative Committee.
- Number of meetings: 2019: 3, 2020: 3, 2021: 1
- Number of participants: 2019: 27, 2020: 20 (85th session)
- Number of meeting days: 2019: 3, 2020: 3, 2021: 1
- Number of Informal documents: 81st: 3, 82nd: 8, 83rd: 7, 84th: 1, 85th: 3, 86th: 5
- Number of Explanatory notes adopted: 83rd: 1, 84th: 1
- Number of comments adopted:
- Number of recommendations adopted:
- Number of best practices adopted:
- Number of national control measures analysed: 1
- Number of surveys conducted: 3
- Number of seminars organized or attended: 4 (as at November 2020)
- Number of authorized TIR Carnet holders registered with the ITDB: 32,437 (November 2020)
- The Board prepared this self-evaluation report for endorsement by AC.2.

Annex II

Results of the self-evaluation survey

Question 1

If you could highlight individual activities, what would you consider the major achievements of the TIRExB during its 2019-2020 term of office (please, indicate max. 3)?

Consolidated reply:

TIRExB considered the discussions on the computerization of the TIR procedure, supervising and promoting the ITDB as building block of the future eTIR system and the study on the intermodal use of the TIR procedure as the major achievements of the current term of office, followed by drafting a proposal for an early warning mechanism and the study on the reasons for decreasing number of TIR Carnets.

Question 2

In your view, what are the areas of strength of the TIRExB and which areas could benefit from improvement?

Areas of strength:

Consolidated reply:

Members all agree that the Board's composition, i.e. limited number of members with expertise in TIR and customs matters and acting in personal capacity; effective coordination and cooperation between the members, the Chair and the secretariat; and the possibility of discussing major current issues and future challenges constitute the main assets of TIRExB.

Areas for improvement:

Consolidated reply

Members agree that COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges in relation to the organization of meetings. While they consider that the situation was very well handled by the Secretariat with the online meeting, they underline the impact of in-person meetings on successful sessions, e.g. the possibility of informal talks during breaks. The Board is of the view that, in order to overcome this challenge, further methods for continuous exchange of views and discussions among Board members might be further looked and tools for more frequent on-line meetings, informal meetings with interpretation, and availability of resources need to be further assessed.

Members also underline that full commitment of all members throughout the entire term of office is essential for having in-depth discussions.

Question 3

Are you satisfied with the support and assistance provided by the TIR secretariat to the TIRExB? If not please indicate in which areas you would like to see improvement.

Consolidated reply:

Members are fully satisfied with the support of and assistance by the TIR secretariat and underline its importance for the successful work of the TIRExB. Nevertheless, the Board requests paying attention to the timely submission of supporting documents to avail its decision/advice.

Question 4

Do you think the TIRExB resources are sufficient to fulfil its functions? If not please provide information which additional resources would be required.

Consolidated reply:

TIRExB is satisfied with the current level of resources. There are also suggestions for a closer cooperation with contracting parties and further opportunities to support the secretariat.

Question 5

Taking account of the fact that, in accordance with the provision of Explanatory Note 8.13.1-2, the respective government should finance the work of their TIRExB member:

Consolidated reply:

The Board is satisfied with the current DSA procedure (DSA for all TIRExB sessions).

Question 6

In your view, are there any changes required which would improve the effectiveness of TIRExB?

Consolidated reply:

- More attention should be paid by all stakeholders to the presentation of documents in time to allow Members to study/examine before the sessions, and to refrain from seeking urgent advice/decision of TIRExB without presenting a working document to the Board;
- Issues falling out of members' expertise should not be brought to TIRExB (i.e. finance and accountancy issues or technical details.);
- Issues being dealt under working groups (WP.30, GE.1 etc) should not be brought automatically to TIRExB for decision, solely because TIRExB meetings are more frequent and decision-making process of this governing body deemed quicker;
- More focused programme of work and agenda of sessions, eliminated from non-priority items, would help the Board accomplish in priority areas.

Question 7

In your view, does TIRExB communicate well with the other parties in the TIR system, and, in particular, with IRU, which participates in TIRExB sessions as observer? Please elaborate your answer.

Consolidated reply:

In general, TIRExB is satisfied with the way it communicates with other fora as well as with IRU. Particularly for the 2019-2020 term, members noted that the Board had responded to many requests addressed to it by different TIR parties (customs authorities, national associations, IRU etc.). They also noted that issues addressed to TIRExB by IRU had been taken on board and careful consideration had been provided. The Board was of the view that, for future sessions, to improve and strengthen the level of efficiency and cooperation, more attention could be paid to submit the documents well in advance of the meetings (i.e. latest 15 days prior to the session).

Question 8

In your view, which goals would be interesting for the next TIRExB to work towards?

Consolidated reply:

TIRExB recommends the next composition to continue focusing on issues such as, but not limited to:

- promote full computerization (i.e. eTIR, ITDB) and focus on questions that may rise from the functioning of the eTIR system;
- intermodal use of the TIR procedure;
- introduction of further simplifications to TIR System parallel to development of modern techniques and business needs;
- continue to follow the implementation of TIR procedure during pandemic and to assess to what extent TIRExB's involvement may be necessary for measures to be applied by Contracting Parties to ensure unhindered and smooth TIR transport during pandemic.

Question 9

In general, how would you rate the TIRExB at its current term of office?

Consolidated reply:

Most TIRExB members are fully satisfied with the current term of office of TIRExB.
