


Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport
158th session

Geneva, 12–15 October 2021

**Report of the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting
 Transport on its 158th session**

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I. Attendance

1. The Working Party held its 158th session on 12 and 15 a.m. October 2021, virtually and in-person, in Geneva. The session was attended by representatives of the following countries: Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Representatives of the European Union were present. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: Turkic Council and World Customs Organization (WCO). The following non-governmental organizations were represented: Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU). The Working Party welcomed Dr. A. Mirvokhid, Deputy Secretary-General of the Turkic Council, and took note of his presentation (see agenda item 9 (f)).

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

2. The Working Party adopted the provisional agenda, prepared by the secretariat (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/315).

III. Activities of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe bodies and other United Nations organizations of interest to the Working Party (agenda item 2)

Alignment of the work of the Working Party with the Inland Transport Committee strategy

3. The Working Party recalled its ongoing discussions of the topic, which were initiated at its 154th session (February 2020) (Please refer to ECE/TRANS/WP.30/308, paras. 6–9, ECE/TRANS/WP.30/310, paras. 3 and 4, ECE/TRANS/WP.30/312, paras. 5–8 and ECE/TRANS/WP.30/314, paras. 4–10) on the basis of documents ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2020/1 and ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2020/8.

4. The Working further recalled the following statements made at its 157th session (June 2021):

(a) Customs Convention concerning Spare Parts Used for Repairing EUROPEAN Wagons, 1958.

With regard to this Convention, the European Commission informed the Working Party that various member States (Austria, Belgium, Germany, France Italy and Netherlands) had expressed an intention (in the long term) to withdraw from this Convention, whereas some others considered it obsolete, without being able to provide a final position. (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/314, para. 5). The Working Party further took note of the denunciation of this Convention by Luxembourg on 6 April 2021 and by Denmark on 22 July 2021 (see para. 10),

(b) Convention on Customs Treatment of Pool Containers Used in International Transport, 1994.

With regard to this Convention, the European Commission informed the Working Party that it had started internal consultations, which were still ongoing (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/314, para. 6).

5. In the context of its discussions, the working Party took note of the Istanbul Convention on Temporary Importation, of 26 June 1990. This Convention contains a set of Annexes, some of which contain so-called rescinding provisions, meaning that, upon their entry into force, they terminate and replace other legal instruments in the field of temporary importation or some provisions thereof (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/314, para. 8).

6. In general, the Working Party established that, although there seemed limited interest of delegations in this exercise, it had nevertheless led to some important insights and that, therefore, it seemed appropriate to continue the exercise at its next session. The secretariat requested delegations to further pursue their assessment of the future relevance of the legal instruments under the aegis of the Working Party and report back any development at the next session (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/314, para. 10).

7. The Working Party continued its deliberations. The delegation of the European Union informed the meeting that, with regard to the Customs Convention concerning Spare Parts Used for Repairing EUROPE wagons, in addition to Denmark and Luxembourg having denounced the convention, Austria, Belgium, Germany, France, Italy and Netherlands had expressed their intention to do so in the short or long run. This would leave Switzerland as only remaining contracting party, meaning that it would cease to have effect. With regard to the Convention on Customs Treatment of Pool Containers Used in International Transport, any decision to withdraw would be taken at a later moment in time.

8. The Working Party confirmed that this had been a useful exercise, which had highlighted issues in the application of various legal instruments, leading to a review of their relevance at national level, including, at times, up to denunciations. Although it had been established that some legal instruments had lost their relevance or seemed to have been overtaken by more recent legislation, developed under the aegis of the United Nations or other international organizations, such as, in particular, the World Customs Organization (WCO), the Working Party was of the view that these legal instruments should continue to exist, as they may very well have served as the basis for more recently developed legal instruments and, therefore, continued to be of relevance. At the same time, and exactly for the same reason, the Working Party felt that there was no reason, or it could even be risky, to amend or adjust them to current realities as, by doing so, they might undermine the construction of more recent legislation that has been based on them.

9. The Working Party was of the view that this exercise should now be considered finalized and requested the secretariat to report this to the Inland Transport Committee at its February 2022 session.

10. Under this agenda item, the Working Party took note that, on 14 June 2021, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, acting in his capacity as depositary, has issued the following depositary notifications: (i) C.N.170.2021.TREATIES-XI.A.15, informing that, on 14 June 2021, Turkmenistan has deposited its instruments of accession to the Customs Convention on Containers, 1972. In accordance with its Article 19, paragraph 2, the Convention will enter into force for Turkmenistan on 14 December 2021. With the accession of Turkmenistan, the Container Convention will have forty-one contracting parties; (ii) C.N.171.2021.TREATIES-XI.A.18, informing that, on 14 June 2021, Turkmenistan has deposited its instruments of accession to the Convention on Customs Treatment of Pool Containers Used in International Transport, 1994. In accordance with its Article 16, paragraph 2, The Convention will enter into force for Turkmenistan on 14 December 2021. With the accession of Turkmenistan, the Pool Container Convention will have fifteen contracting parties; (iii) C.N.240.2021.TREATIES-XI.A.12 of 26 July 2021, informing that, on 22 July 2021, Denmark has denounced the Customs Convention concerning Spare Parts Used for Repairing EUROPE Wagons, of 15 January 1958. The denunciation shall take effect for Denmark on 22 January 2022. With this action, this convention will have seven remaining contracting parties: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and Switzerland. In accordance with its Article 8, the Convention will cease to have effect if, for any period of twelve consecutive months after its entry into force, the number of contracting parties is less than five.

IV. Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention, 1975) (agenda item 3)

A. Status of the Convention

11. The Working Party was informed that, since the entry into force of the accession of Egypt, on 16 June 2021, the Convention has seventy-seven contracting parties and that, since the activation of the system for Qatar, TIR operations can now be established with sixty-five countries.

12. The Working Party recalled that the Secretary-General of the United Nations, acting in his capacity as depositary, issued the following depositary notifications: (i) C.N.513.2020.TREATIES-XI.A.16, of 4 November 2020, informing of the submission of various proposals to amend the body and annexes of the TIR Convention, 1975, including those that make the electronic submission of data to ITDB obligatory. In accordance with the provisions of Article 59 (3) of the Convention, the amendments shall enter into force on 4 February 2022, unless an objection has been communicated to the Secretary-General not later than by 4 November 2021; (ii) C.N.99.2021.TREATIES-XI.A.16 of 25 March 2021, informing of the submission of a proposal to amend Article 18 and Annexes 1 and 6 of the TIR Convention, 1975. In accordance with the provisions of Article 59 (3) of the Convention, the amendments shall enter into force on 25 June 2022, unless an objection has been communicated to the Secretary-General not later than by 25 March 2022; (iii) C.N.158.2021.TREATIES-XI.A.16, of 3 June 2021, communicating that certain errors in the English, French and Russian texts of Annex 11 as contained in Annex I to the report of the Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, 1975, at its seventy-second session held in Geneva on 5 and 6 February 2020 (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/147) and circulated in depositary notification C.N.71.2020.TREATIES-XI.A.16 of 25 February 2020 (reissued on 26 February 2020) had been brought to his attention. Objections to these corrections should be communicated to the Secretary-General no later than by 1 September 2021; (iv) C.N.268.2021.TREATIES-XI.A.16, of 8 September 2021, communicating that, by 1 September 2021, no objection to certain errors in the English, French and Russian texts of Annex 11, as circulated in depositary notification C.N.158.2021.TREATIES-XI.A.16 of 3 June 2021, had been brought to his attention. Consequently, the Secretary-General has effected the required corrections to the Convention. More detailed information on this issue as well as on depositary notifications is available on the TIR website.¹

B. Revision of the Convention

Amendment proposals to the Convention

13. The Working Party took note that, at present, no amendment proposals to the Convention, had been submitted for its consideration.

C. Application of the Convention

1. Comments to the TIR Convention

14. The Working Party resumed its consideration of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2021/2, containing various proposals to adjust the comment to Article 18 to the new reality of allowing, maximally, up to eight places of loading and unloading per TIR Carnet. The representative of Uzbekistan as well as IRU stated that they were in favour of a generic formulation of the comment, as contained in Annex III to the document. However, considering that the majority of the meeting was in favour of the proposal in Annex II (a new comment to Article 18, entitled: "Possibilities of increasing the total number of loading and unloading places to more than eight in exceptional cases"), the Working Party

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

requested the secretariat to forward this proposal to the Administrative Committee for endorsement at its next session.

2. eTIR

(a) eTIR international system: interconnection projects

15. The Working Party was informed about the latest developments in the eTIR international system and in the eTIR data model, based on version 4.3 of the eTIR specifications. The Working Party was also informed about the completion of all technical guides describing the eTIR messages² and about the next steps foreseen by the secretariat, in particular the preparation of conformance tests.

16. The Working Party recalled that, further to the adoption of Annex 11 by the TIR Administrative Committee (AC.2) at its February 2020 session, the Executive Secretary of ECE, Ms. Olga Algayerova, had invited contracting parties to start projects to interconnect their national customs systems with the eTIR international system. The Working Party was informed that, so far, the following countries had 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, Belarus, Georgia, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, Pakistan, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. It also took note that the following ten countries had already started an interconnection project: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

(b) Activities of the Group of Experts on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure

17. The Working Party welcomed a presentation by Mr. P. Arsic (Serbia), Chair of the Group of Experts on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (WP.30/GE.1) on the outcome of WP.30/GE.1 and, in particular, the third and last session, which took place on 13–15 September 2021. It took note that the reports of the four sessions were contained in documents ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2 (first session), ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2021/39 (extraordinary session), ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/4 (second session) and ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/6 (third session).

18. The Working Party, recalling WP.30/GE.1's Terms of Reference (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2019/9 and Corr.1) as well as its workplan (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2021/2/Rev.1), welcomed the fact that WP.30/GE.1 had completed its mandate within the set timeframe and that WP.30/GE.1 had agreed on a complete version 4.3 of the eTIR specifications, which is consolidated in Informal documents WP.30/GE.1 (2021) No. 11 (Introduction), No. 13 (concepts), No. 14 (functional specifications) and No. 12 (technical specifications). The Working Party also noted that WP.30/GE.1 could not agree on one issue regarding the level of detail to be provided by holders about the itinerary. It agreed with the recommendation of WP.30/GE.1 to transmit this issue to the Technical Implementation Body (TIB), established as per Article 58 quater of the Convention.

19. Consequently, the Working Party mandated the secretariat to transfer version 4.3 of the eTIR specifications (including the remaining open issue about the itinerary) to AC.2 and to TIB. It recalled that, in line with Annex 11, Article 5, AC.2 and, more specifically, the countries bound by Annex 11, have to adopt the eTIR concepts and the eTIR functional specifications and TIB has to adopt the eTIR technical specifications.

20. The delegation of the Russian federation stressed that version 4.3 of the eTIR specifications does not take into account the rules of the transit procedure in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The secretariat explained that WP.30/GE.1 had already discussed this issue but, considering the timing of the submission and the very broad nature of the requirements of EAEU, it had recommended the countries of EAEU to carry out, with the

² See <https://wiki.unece.org/display/ED/Technical+Guides>

ECE secretariat, an exercise such as a gap analysis or a proof of concept, to finetune their request to amend the eTIR specifications. The results of the such an exercise should then be submitted to TIB or AC.2, with the aim to include changes in version 4.4, in order not to delay the developments and deployment of systems on the basis of version 4.3 in all countries interested to implement the eTIR procedure as early as possible.

21. The delegation of the Uzbekistan customs authorities clarified that, in the course of the project aimed at interconnecting their customs system to the eTIR international system on the basis of version 4.3 of the eTIR specifications, they had established that, in line with the provisions of Annex 11, Article 9, they intend to request transport companies to provide information, required by national legislation and not yet contained in eTIR messages. At the same time, they stressed that the inclusion of additional information in the eTIR messages of future versions of the eTIR specifications will reduce the need for customs to request additional information from transport companies.

3. New developments in the application of the Convention

22. Under this agenda item, the delegation of Iran (Islamic Republic of) informed the Working Party that, recently, two new corridors had become operational in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) region, in cooperation with IRU: the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI-ECO) road transport corridor and the Pakistan-Iran-Azerbaijan corridor. It should be noted that these corridors reduce the travel time by half. All ECO member States, as contracting parties to Annex 11 are interested to apply eTIR. Iran (Islamic Republic of) stands ready to start implementing real eTIR operations with any of these countries.

4. TIR-related electronic data interchange systems

23. The Working Party was informed by IRU about the latest statistical data on the performance of contracting parties in the control system for TIR Carnets — SafeTIR system (Informal document WP.30 (2021) No. 7).

5. Settlement of claims for payments

24. The Working Party was informed by IRU about the current situation on the settlement of claims for payments made by customs authorities against national guaranteeing associations (Informal document WP.30 (2021) No. 8).

6. Other matters

25. Under this agenda item, the delegation of the Association of international Road Carriers of Ukraine (AsMAP-UA) raised a question on the financing of TIRExB and the TIR secretariat. At the proposal of the secretariat, the Working Party agreed to transfer this question to AC.2 where the budget of TIRExB and the TIR secretariat for the year 2022 was on the agenda.

V. International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls for Goods, 1982 (Harmonization Convention) (agenda item 4)

A. Status of the Convention

26. The Working Party was informed about the status of the Convention. Since the tenth session of the Committee in 2014, only Turkmenistan has acceded to the Convention, in 2016, becoming the fifty-eighth contracting party to the Convention. More detailed information on the status of the Convention as well as on various depositary notifications is available on the ECE website.³

³ <https://unece.org/depositary-notifications>.

B. Issues in the application of the Convention

27. Under this agenda item, the Working Party considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2021/4 by the Secretaries of the Working Party on Rail Transport and WP.30, containing a draft survey on Annex 9 of the Harmonization Convention. The Working Party also took note of Informal document WP.30 (2021) No. 6 by the Organization for Cooperation between Railways (OSJD) with some additional proposals for questions to add to the draft survey.

28. The Working Party accepted the survey, as outlined in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2021/4 and was of the opinion that it should be distributed among participants in the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) and interested railway partners, such as, but not limited to, the International Union of Railways (UIC) and the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER). With regard to the additional proposals by OSJD, the Working Party was of the view that points one to four (implementation of the New Computerized Transit System (NCTS); delays due to COVID; language barriers and availability of advance cargo information) could be added to the survey, as yes/no questions, The Working Party felt that point 5 (use of CIM/SMGS consignment note as customs document) and point 6 (obstacles in the use of the CIM/SMGS consignment note as customs document) could be covered by question fifteen (reformulated) and agreed with the OSJD proposal in point 7 to split question fourteen of the draft survey in two, distinguishing between the railway consignment note and the customs declaration. The Working Party requested the secretariat to revise the draft survey and submit it to SC.2 for further consideration.

29. Under this agenda item, the Working Party further recalled that, at its previous session, due to a lack of time, it did not consider another decision of ITC, taken at that same session, in which it “encouraged interested countries to accede to the United Nations Conventions in the field of border crossing facilitation, to foster digital information exchange, and promptly implement the provisions of Annex 11 to the TIR Convention, launching the eTIR system, and urged all contracting parties to comply with the provisions of the Harmonization Convention, 1982 for the sake of addressing the COVID-19 pandemic (ITC Informal document No. 8/Rev. 5 (2021), decision No. 58).” The Working Party decided to revert to this issue at its next session (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/314, para. 38).

30. The Working Party was of the opinion that the issues raised in the decision were sufficiently covered by the ongoing activities in the field of eTIR, whereas Article 12 of the Harmonization Convention deals with emergency measures.

VI. Convention on the Facilitation of Border Crossing Procedures for Passengers, Luggage and Load-Luggage carried in International Traffic by Rail (agenda item 5)

Status of the Convention

31. The Working Party recalled that, at its 156th session (February 2021), the delegation of the Russian Federation informed the meeting that, at the national level, all required procedures in preparation of signing the Convention had been completed and that a Government decree to that extent had been issued. Steps were currently being undertaken at the level of the Ministry of Transport in order to facilitate signing the Convention in New York. The delegation requested the Chair to repeat the call on interested countries to sign the Convention at the forthcoming session of ITC (23–26 February 2021) (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/312, para. 32). More detailed information on this issue as well as on depositary notifications is available on the ECE website.⁴ No further information on the issue was presented at the session.

⁴ <https://unece.org/depositary-notifications>

VII. Customs Conventions on the Temporary Importation of Private Road Vehicles (1954) and Commercial Road Vehicles (1956) (agenda item 6)

A. Status of the Conventions

32. The Working Party was informed that the status of and the number of contracting parties to the Customs Conventions on the Temporary Importation of Private (1954) and Commercial (1956) Road Vehicles had not changed and that the Conventions had 80 and 26 contracting parties respectively. More detailed information on this issue as well as on depositary notifications is available on the ECE website.⁵

B. Issues in the application of the Conventions

33. The Working Party recalled that, at its 157th session (June 2021), it endorsed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ECE and the Alliance Internationale de Tourisme / Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (AIT/FIA) on the revitalization and digitalization of relevant United Nations inland transport conventions and, in particular, the development of an eCPD (Carnet de Passage en Douane) system (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/314, paras. 41 and 42).

34. The secretariat of AIT/FIA informed the meeting that (i) the e-CPD distribution system rollout remains on schedule, with more than thirty registered issuing organizations; (ii) FIA has been in contact with WCO regarding the MoU between ECE and AIT/FIA. This is done in goodwill, with further hopes of establishing a similar MoU between AIT/FIA and WCO; (iii) FIA has been in touch with the private sector to progress the e-CPD distribution system in the framework of the ATA (Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission) Carnet; (iv) FIA visited Jordan customs authorities in late September 2021 and plans a field study there in the coming six months and (v) the MoU signing ceremony between ECE and AIT/FIA will take place on 20 October 2021.

VIII. Introduction of new technologies in rail, road, road-based mobility, inland waterway, logistics and intermodal transport until 2030 (agenda item 7)

35. No delegation raised an issue under this agenda item. Delegations were encouraged to raise any initiative of national, sub-regional or regional interest in this regard at future sessions of the Working Party. In particular, the secretariat invited delegations wishing to report, at future occasions, on its efforts to contribute to the digitalization of the TIR Convention, to do so under this agenda item (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/312, para. 15).

IX. Activities of other organizations and countries of interest to the Working Party (agenda item 8)

36. The Working Party took note of activities by various regional economic commissions or Customs Unions as well as by other organizations, both intergovernmental and nongovernmental, and countries as far as they relate to matters of interest to the Working Party.

⁵ <https://unece.org/depositary-notifications>

A. European Union

37. The representative of the European Commission informed the Working Party that the text of new Explanatory Note 0.49 (Amendment 37) had been published in the European Union Official Journal, volume L 193, of 1 June 2021⁶ and the amendments to the TIR Convention introducing Annex 11 (Amendment 36) in the European Union Official Journal, volume L 331, of 20 September 2021 and were available in all official languages of the European Union, free of charge.^{7, 8}

B. Economic Cooperation Organization

38. There was no intervention from the Economic Cooperation Organization under this agenda item. Written comments, received after the session, are, exceptionally, attached as Annex I, for information of the Working Party.

C. Eurasian Economic Union

39. There was no intervention from the Eurasian Economic Commission under this agenda item.

D. World Customs Organization

40. The Working Party was informed about relevant activities and ongoing projects carried out by WCO. In particular, the Working Party was informed that, early 2021, WCO had published its Compendium of best practices in the area of transit (in English⁹ and French¹⁰). It features a best practice on the TIR Convention and a submission by Turkey on eTIR pilot projects. The Compendium contains a total number of 34 best practices, grouped per WCO region. On 10 and 11 November 2021, the WCO will hold its annual technology event – the 2021 WCO TECH-CON. Session IV of the TECH-CON will discuss electronic transport documents – eTIR, eCMR, eATA, eCPD. Registration is free of charge and open to Member Customs administrations, partner international organizations, private sector and academia.¹¹

E. Bureau International des Conteneurs

41. There was no intervention from the Bureau International des Conteneurs (BIC) under this agenda item.

F. Turkic Council

42. Under this agenda item, Deputy Secretary-General of the Turkic Council informed the Working Party of the activities of the Council, emphasizing the importance attached to enhancing transport cooperation among its Member States, particularly through promoting innovation in transport and customs operations by using digitalization and e-documents. On 10 April 2020, the Heads of States of the Turkic Council discussed measures they could collectively take in the fight against the pandemic. This was the first meeting held by an international organization at the level of leaders dedicated to the pandemic. Based on the

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L:2021:193:TOC>

⁷ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:22021A0920\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:22021A0920(01)&from=EN)

⁸ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:22021A0920\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:22021A0920(01)&from=EN)

⁹ http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/transit/transit-compendium_2020_en.pdf?db=web

¹⁰ http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/fr/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/transit/transit-compendium_2020_fr.pdf?db=web

¹¹ For more information and registration: <https://na.eventscloud.com/website/30658/>

instructions of the Heads of State, efforts have been put in place to implement contactless transport and transit procedures, which have become, nowadays, more critical in sustaining uninterrupted international freight transport and maintaining the supply chain and to address the grim economic picture emerging in the wake of Covid-19. In November 2020, as part of the efforts towards digitalization, a digital TIR pilot project between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was launched, in partnership with IRU. The project will be extended to the Kyrgyz Republic by the end of October 2021. In addition, Turkey and Uzbekistan are currently conducting a pilot project on e-permits. The aim of the Turkic Council is to facilitate this pilot project and to extend the initiative to other members, believing that the e-permit system will decrease costs, expedite operations, and contribute to the trade relations among the countries. On 14 October 2021, the fifth Meeting of Ministers in charge of Transport of the Turkic Council will be held in Budapest, where the ministers will discuss, among other issues, the cooperation perspectives of implementing the Electronic Consignment Note (e-CMR) among Member States.

43. The Turkic Council has been closely following the activities of WP.30. The Working Party has made outstanding achievements in adopting the Annex 11 of the TIR Convention, in which its Member States also actively participated. The implementation of e-TIR pilot projects between Turkey and Iran and between Azerbaijan and Iran (Islamic Republic of) have become crucial steppingstones towards the development of a fully computerized global eTIR system. Annex 11 to the TIR Convention entered into force on 25 May of this year. However, the current situation leaves much to be desired, as the global eTIR system has not yet been implemented. Member States of the Turkic Council, being parties to the TIR Convention with its Annex 11, are eager to connect their national systems to the eTIR international system.

44. He called on the TIR secretariat and ECE Member states to make joint efforts to speed up the implementation of eTIR. Considering eTIR as one of the most successful and efficient instruments to facilitate international transport and goods in transit, the Turkic Council Member States are ready to become pioneers in introducing eTIR in the region. The Turkic Council firmly believes that digitalization of customs and transport procedures are essential to facilitate the movement of goods in a world, hit by the pandemic. This ranks high among the priorities of the Council, and it will further concentrate its efforts to foster positive developments in this field. To this end, he expressed readiness to closely cooperate with ECE, IRU and other relevant organizations to successfully apply digital tools in transport and transit operations.

X. Other business (agenda item 9)

A. Dates of the next sessions

45. The Working Party tentatively decided to hold its 159th session on 8 (full day) and 11 (a.m.) February 2022, subject to potential adjustments due to the ongoing COVID pandemic and the United Nations liquidity crisis. Prospective participants were encouraged, within the existing sanitary and organizational restrictions, to consider attending the session in person.

B. Restriction on the distribution of documents

46. The Working Party decided that there would be no whether or no restrictions on the distribution of documents issued in connection with its current session.

C. List of decisions

47. The list of decisions is attached as Annex II to the final report.

XI. Adoption of the report (agenda item 10)

48. The Working Party adopted the report of its 158th session on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat.

Annex I

ECO Secretariat intervention for agenda item 8¹²

During 2021, the Secretariat was involved in assisting Member States through “ECO Practical Guidelines on Cross Border Facilitation Measures under conditions of COVID-19”, to adjust to the new realities of the pandemic. The Guidelines provide specific technical guidance for practical steps at border crossing points of ECO’s main transport routes and corridors and suggests that ECO regional border crossings should remain open for freight supply chains of medicine and foods supplies to support regional livelihoods and to make an effective and efficient regional response for countering the unpleasing effects of COVID-19. The guidelines were subsequently adopted by the ECO Ministerial Meeting on Transport on December 15, 2020.

Activation of ECO- ITI Road Corridor: The long awaited ECO-ITI (Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul) Road Corridor finally came into existence with the arrival of two loaded trucks from Karachi to Istanbul on 7th October 2021. The convoy of the two trucks travelled the distance of 5300 Km, transiting through the Islamic Republic of Iran and entered Istanbul Customs on 7 October 2021. The ECO-ITI project was first initiated at the eighth ECO Transport Ministerial Meeting in 2011 and, after consistent follow up and support by the ECO Secretariat, finally operationalized to serve the cause of regional connectivity and economic integration. A Study Project was also conducted in 2020 with technical assistance of IRU to sort out the details, opportunities, challenges and solutions of the important corridor. The trucks were the first transit operation for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan under the TIR system since that country acceded to this important transit convention.

The mentioned first commercial movement of trucks once more transpired that the existing visa regime between en-route countries is one of the restricting factors for transportation business. To tackle this problem, the ECO Secretariat is following up with the Member States for the implementation of the proposed “Visa Pilot Scheme for Drivers” in line with Article 12 of the ECO Transit Transport Agreement (TTFA), stipulating that “The Contracting Parties shall grant visas to the drivers of the vehicles and the persons engaged in international transit traffic operations, who are subject to visa requirements, multiple entry and transit visas valid for a period of one year.

The Scheme is to be conducted along the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) and Afghanistan-Tajikistan-Iran-Kyrgyz Republic (KTAI) road corridors to be implemented in 2021. The proposed mechanism will not limit the current national procedures of issuance of visa but will provide further facilitation to professional drivers who transport goods along these corridors. The Working Party is requested, herewith, to support the ECO Secretariat for the implementation of this important project in 2021. If successful, it could be extended to other members of TIR convention in the near future (a copy of the proposed Scheme is attached).

Further to ongoing real TIR operations along various routes and realizing also the significance of the CMR consignment note for carriage of goods, the ECO Secretariat has organized a number of workshops to promote and implement e-TIR and e-CMR for the ECO Member States in 2021, in collaboration with UNECE and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB).

On the new proposals of UNECE regarding joint cooperation on the issues such as: Pilot application of Unified Railway Law in one of the ECO Main railway routes i.e. Istanbul-Almaty railway and also the second phase of the joint ECO-UNECE-IsDB project on the development of GIS (Geo-Information-Systems) maps of the ECO Transit corridors of the ECO Region, I would like to welcome all proposals. ECO and UNECE will discuss the ways and means to implement these valuable proposals, in 2021 and 2022.

The ECO Secretariat has also organized the seventh Meeting of Customs Committee of the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (ECO regional transport legal framework) in August 2021, through which the developments of customs procedures, border crossing

¹² Reproduced as received.

procedures (BCP) improvements and programs and plans for future cooperation were discussed and various decisions adopted for further enhanced regional cooperation.

Annex II

List of decisions taken at the 158th session of the Working Party

<i>Reference in final report (para.)</i>	<i>Short description of decision</i>	<i>Actor</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
8 and 9	<p>8. The Working Party confirmed that this had been a useful exercise, which had highlighted issues in the application of various legal instruments, leading to a review of their relevance at national level, including, at times, up to denunciations. Although it had been established that some legal instruments had lost their relevance or seemed to have been overtaken by more recent legislation, developed under the aegis of the United Nations or other international organizations, such as, in particular, the World Customs Organization (WCO), the Working Party was of the view that these legal instruments should continue to exist, as they may very well have served as the basis for more recently developed legal instruments and, therefore, continued to be of relevance. At the same time, and exactly for the same reason, the Working Party felt that there was no reason, or it could even be risky, to amend or adjust them to current realities as, by doing so, they might undermine the construction of more recent legislation that has been based on them.</p> <p>9. The Working Party was of the view that this exercise should now be considered finalized and requested the secretariat to report this to the Inland Transport Committee at its February 2022 session.</p>	Secretariat	ITC (22–25 February 2022)
14	<p>14. The Working Party resumed its consideration of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2021/2, containing various proposals to adjust the comment to Article 18 to the new reality of allowing, maximally, up to eight places of loading and unloading per TIR Carnet. The representative of Uzbekistan as well as IRU stated that they were in favour of a generic formulation of the comment, as contained in Annex III to the document. However, considering that the majority of the meeting was in favour of the proposal in Annex II (a new comment to Article 18, entitled: “Possibilities of increasing the total number of loading and unloading places to more than eight in exceptional cases”), the Working Party requested the secretariat to forward this proposal to the Administrative Committee for endorsement at its next session.</p>	Secretariat	AC.2, 77th session (9–10 February 2022)
18-19	<p>18. The Working Party, recalling WP.30/GE.1 Terms of Reference (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2019/9 and Corr.1) as well as its workplan (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2021/2/Rev.1), welcomed the fact that WP.30/GE.1 had completed its mandate within the set timeframe and that WP.30/GE.1 had agreed on a complete version 4.3 of the eTIR specifications, which is consolidated in Informal documents WP.30/GE.1 (2021) No. 11 (Introduction), No. 13 (concepts), No. 14 (functional specifications) and No. 12 (technical specifications). The Working Party also noted that WP.30/GE.1 could not agree on one issue regarding the level of detail to be provided by holders about the itinerary. It agreed with the recommendation of WP.30/GE.1 to transmit this issue to the Technical Implementation Body (TIB), established as per Article 58 quater of the Convention.</p> <p>19. Consequently, the Working Party mandated the secretariat to transfer version 4.3 of the eTIR specifications (including the remaining</p>	Secretariat	TIB, first session, 18–21 January 2022

Reference in
final report
(para.)

Short description of decision

Actor

Deadline

	open issue about the itinerary) to AC.2 and to TIB. It recalled that, in line with Annex 11, Article 5, AC.2 and, more specifically, the countries bound by Annex 11, have to adopt the eTIR concepts and the eTIR functional specifications and TIB has to adopt the eTIR technical specifications.		
28	28. The Working Party accepted the survey, as outlined in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2021/4 and was of the opinion that it should be distributed among participants in the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) and interested railway partners, such as, but not limited to, the International Union of Railways (UIC) and the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER). With regard to the additional proposals by OSJD (contained in Informal document WP.30 (2021) No. 6, the Working Party was of the view that points one to four (implementation of the New Computerized Transit System (NCTS); delays due to COVID; language barriers and availability of advance cargo information) could be added to the survey, as yes/no questions, The Working Party felt that point 5 (use of CIM/SMGS consignment note as customs document) and point 6 (obstacles in the use of the CIM/SMGS consignment note as customs document) could be covered by question fifteen (reformulated) and agreed with the OSJD proposal in point 7 to split question fourteen of the draft survey in two, distinguishing between the railway consignment note and the customs declaration. The Working Party requested the secretariat to revise the draft survey and submit it to SC.2 for further consideration.	Secretariat	18 November 2021 (session of SC.2).
30	30. The Working Party was of the opinion that the issues raised in the decision were sufficiently covered by the ongoing activities in the field of eTIR, whereas Article 12 of the Harmonization Convention deals with emergency measures.		
45	45. The Working Party tentatively decided to hold its 159th session on 8 (full day) and 11 (a.m.) February 2022, subject to potential adjustments due to the ongoing COVID pandemic and the United Nations liquidity crisis. Prospective participants were encouraged, within the existing sanitary and organizational restrictions, to consider attending the session in person.	Secretariat	16 November 2021 – agenda 30 November 2021 – documents