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**Economic Commission for Europe**
**Inland Transport Committee**
**Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport**
**162nd session**

Geneva, 7, 8 and 10 (a.m.) February 2023

**Report of the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting  
 Transport on its 162nd session**
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## **I. Attendance**

1. The Working Party held its one-hundred-and-sixty-second session on 7 and 8 February 2023 in Geneva. The session was attended by representatives of the following countries: Armenia, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Jordan, Latvia, Lithuania, Morocco, Niger, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uzbekistan. Representatives of the European Union were present. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The following non-governmental organizations were represented: Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU).

## **II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)**

2. The Working Party adopted the provisional agenda, as prepared by the secretariat, in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/323.

## **III. Election of officers (agenda item 2)**

3. In accordance with the Commission's rules and procedures and established practice, the Working Party (WP.30) elected Ms. V. R. Boeg (Denmark) as Chair and Mr. H. Azzgaldyan (Armenia) as Vice-Chair for its sessions in 2023.

## **IV. Activities of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe bodies and other United Nations organizations of interest to the Working Party (agenda item 3)**

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

4. Recalling the new Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) (E/2022/L.4) (see ECE/TRANS/316) and, in particular, that ITC now adopts the so-called hybrid approach for membership, meaning that non-ECE member States can participate as full members in segments of ITC sessions that deal with legal instruments to which they are contracting parties and remain in a consultative capacity in other parts (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/320, para. 10), the Working Party, at its previous session (October 2022), requested the secretariat to prepare, for consideration at the current session, a document comparing the new ITC ToR with the existing ToR of the Working Party, in order to assess whether any adjustment seemed appropriate (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/322, para. 6).

5. Further to this request, the secretariat had prepared document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/1, for consideration and, possibly, adoption by the Working Party.

6. The Working Party considered the proposals in annex III of the document, containing suggestions for alignment of the WP.30 ToR with the revised ToR of ITC.

7. The Director of the Sustainable Transport Division introduced the topic by clarifying the global dimension of the seventeen legal instruments that are under the auspices of the Working Party. By rebranding its name, the Working Party would have an opportunity to exceed its regional dimension, that could scare off countries from outside the region.

8. In a first reaction, various delegations expressed their concern about dropping 'customs' from the name of the Working Party. This could, potentially, lead to a shift to more

generic transport matters, at the detriment of the customs-related expertise of the delegates attending sessions of WP.30. It was also felt that such change might disregard the coordinating role of customs in matters such as, but not limited to, immigration (visa) or the performance of various controls on behalf of other border agencies. Keeping the name of WP.30 as it stands today would not limit the possibility to work on extending and modernizing the concerned legal instruments, for example by focusing more on Information Technology.

9. Wrapping up this first round of discussions, the Working Party concluded that it was not yet in a position to take any decision on the revised ToR. However, the first discussions on the matter had shown that there was large support that customs should stay at the core of the activities of WP.30 and that this should remain properly reflected in its name. The Working Party further decided to only revert to the proposed strategy and action plan (as proposed in ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/2) once agreement on the ToR had been reached.

## **V. Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention, 1975) (agenda item 4)**

### **A. Status of the Convention**

10. 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. Detailed information on this issue as well as on depositary notifications is available on the TIR website.<sup>1</sup>

### **B. Revision of the Convention**

#### **Amendment proposals to the Convention**

11. 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**

12. The Working Party took note that, at present, no proposals for comments to provisions of the Convention had been submitted for its consideration.

#### **2. eTIR**

##### **(a) eTIR international system: interconnection projects**

13. The Working Party was informed about the latest developments in the eTIR international system, based on version 4.3 of the eTIR specifications. The Working Party was also informed that Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan have finalized the interconnection and the conformance tests and are now ready to start using the eTIR procedure, based on the legal text of the TIR Convention. In addition, Pakistan and Tunisia have finalized the interconnection and they are in the process of finalizing the conformance tests. The Working Party further took note that, on 27 December 2022, the first electronic TIR (eTIR) had taken place between Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan. Four packages of dried and fresh fruits were transported, first by truck and then by plane, from the airport of Tashkent to the airport of Baku, following the eTIR procedure and thus paving the way for a new, digital era of the TIR system. Under this agenda item, the delegation of Armenia informed the Working Party that

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<sup>1</sup> [www.unece.org/tir/tir-depositary\\_notification.html](http://www.unece.org/tir/tir-depositary_notification.html).

it was ready to start discussions on interconnecting its national customs system with the eTIR international system.

**(b) Activities of the Technical Implementation Body**

14. The Working Party took note that the outcome of the third session of the Technical Implementation Body (TIB), which took place on 19–20 December 2022 (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/TIB/6) would be discussed during the seventy-ninth session of the TIR Administrative Committee (AC.2).

**(c) International TIR Data Bank**

15. The Working Party was informed about developments related to the International TIR Data Bank (ITDB) and other related information technology projects, managed by the TIR secretariat. The Working Party took note of the current status of data recordings in ITDB and, in particular, of the following figures: 1,160 web application users, 29,663 authorized holders recorded, 271 stamps and seals recorded, 2,856 customs offices recorded and of the web service usage for the past years. The Working Party also took note of the latest achievements related to ITDB, in particular the deployment in production of the eTIR Portal and the completion of the eTIR mobile apps development. Finally, it was reminded of the principles ruling the access to the newly launched eTIR Portal, and in particular, of the importance of the contact email address information in ITDB holder records.

**3. New developments in the application of the Convention**

16. No new development was raised under this agenda item.

**4. TIR-related electronic data interchange systems**

17. The Working Party was informed by the International Road Transport Union (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 (2023) No. 1).

**5. Settlement of claims for payments**

18. 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 (2023) No. 2).

**6. Other matters**

19. The Working Party recalled that, at its previous session, the delegation of the European Union proposed to conduct a short survey on various aspects related to the issuance and renewal of certificates of approval and provided a list with some possible questions. From its side, IRU supported the proposal and expressed its willingness to contribute by providing some additional questions that were of specific interest to the private sector (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/322, para. 19).

20. Further to a request from the Working Party, the secretariat, in close collaboration with the delegation of the European Union and IRU, prepared a draft survey, contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/3. The Working Party considered and adopted the survey, confirming that it should be sent, in March 2023, to customs TIR focal points with 31 May 2023 as deadline for reply, subject the following changes:

Question 15 should be deleted;

Question 1 – 11 should be preceded by a header “Part I – Approval of road vehicles”;

Question 12 – 13 should be preceded by a header “Part II – Approval of containers”;

Question 14 – 16 (renumbered) should be preceded by a header “Part III – General questions related to the certificate of approval”;

Question 15 (renumbered) should be amended with a line “Remarks”.

21. In reply to a question whether TIR focal points from associations should be included in the survey, IRU informed the Working Party that it intends to conduct a separate, but similar, survey among TIR focal points from associations and that it would share the results with the Working Party.

22. Under this agenda item, the delegation of Belarus delivered a statement, which is attached as annex II to the final report of the session.

23. The delegations of the national associations of Iran (Islamic Republic of), Turkmenistan and Ukraine raised the issue of the financing of the TIR Executive Board and the TIR secretariat, which was increasingly becoming a burden for the transport sector due to a decrease in the use of TIR Carnets and transport companies' margins. The secretariat proposed and the Working Party agreed to transmit the issue to the TIR Administrative Committee (AC.2) at its seventy-ninth session (9 February 2023), for discussion under agenda item 4 (b) (ii) (Procedure for financing the operation of the TIR Executive Board and TIR secretariat).

24. The delegation of Türkiye recalled its statement at the previous session of the Working Party about problems in the application of the provisions of the TIR Convention by the customs authorities of the Russian Federation (ECE/TRANS/WP30/322, para. 22). The secretariat proposed and the Working Party agreed to transmit the issue to AC.2 at its seventy-ninth session (9 February 2023), for discussion under agenda item 10 (Other business).

## **VI. International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 1982 (Harmonization Convention) (agenda item 5)**

### **A. Status of the Convention**

25. The Working Party was informed that, since the tenth session of the Administrative Committee for the Harmonization Convention (AC.3), 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.<sup>2</sup>

### **B. Issues in the application of the Convention**

26. Under this agenda item, the Working Party recalled that, at its previous session, it reviewed document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2009/8 and mandated the secretariat to circulate the survey in the spring of 2023, among the regular delegates from governments (and, in the absence thereof, TIR focal points) as addressees (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/322, para. 26). The Working Party requested to circulate the survey in April 2023 with 1 July 2023 as deadline for reply.

27. Under this agenda item, the Working Party recalled the survey on the application of Annex 9 of the Harmonization Convention (contained in Informal document SC.2 No. 3 (2021), conducted by the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) with a deadline of 31 March 2022. The Working Party took note of document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2022/10 by the secretariat of SC.2 and containing the responses to the survey, together with the findings of SC.2 at its seventy-sixth session (November 2022) (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/322, para. 27). In this context, the Working Party took note that, when discussing the results of the survey, the secretariat of SC.2 and the Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) noted the importance of comments on the responses to question 5 of the survey on the role and use of the CIM/SMGS consignment note (see ECE/TRANS/SC.2/238, paragraphs 77 and 78). Although appreciative of the information provided by the survey results, the Working Party regretted the absence of conclusions or recommendations for

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<sup>2</sup> [www.unece.org/tir/tir-depositary\\_notification.html](http://www.unece.org/tir/tir-depositary_notification.html).

future actions. The secretariat recalled that the survey had been conducted at the request of ITC and not as a result of a need for information from the sectors concerned (customs and rail authorities).

28. Under this agenda item, the Working Party was informed that the ECE secretariat, in collaboration with the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE), is preparing “A practical guide to cross-border facilitation”, which will be available, in English, by mid-2023. The focus of this publication, which builds on the earlier joint OSCE-ECE Handbook of best practices at border crossings (published in 2012), is on transport facilitation in inland transport and it presents a good opportunity to promote some of the United Nations transport and border crossing facilitation tools, including TIR/eTIR, CMR/eCMR etc. The Working Party took note that the ITC would be requested to mandate the secretariat to prepare this publication as an official United Nations publication in the three ECE working languages, and to explore ways to do this by 2024, if possible. The secretariat informed the Working Party that a draft of the publication will be shared with delegations, with a request for comments or additional input.

## **VII. Convention on the Facilitation of Border Crossing Procedures for Passengers, Luggage and Load-Luggage carried in International Traffic by Rail (agenda item 6)**

### **Status of the Convention**

29. 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 being undertaken at the level of the Ministry of Transport in order to facilitate signing the Convention in New York (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/312, para. 32). The Working Party further recalled that, on 26 September 2019, Chad had become signatory to the Convention.<sup>3</sup> No further development was reported under this agenda item.

## **VIII. Customs Conventions on the Temporary Importation of Private Road Vehicles (1954) and Commercial Road Vehicles (1956) (agenda item 7)**

### **A. Status of the Conventions**

30. The Working Party was informed that the status 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 have eighty and twenty-six contracting parties, respectively. More detailed information on this issue as well as on depositary notifications is available on the TIR website.<sup>4</sup>

### **B. Issues in the application of the Conventions**

31. Under this agenda item, the Working Party was briefed about any latest development in the context of 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, if any.

<sup>3</sup> [www.unece.org/tir/tir-depositary\\_notification.html](http://www.unece.org/tir/tir-depositary_notification.html).

<sup>4</sup> [www.unece.org/tir/tir-depositary\\_notification.html](http://www.unece.org/tir/tir-depositary_notification.html).

32. Against this background, the Working Party recalled that, at its previous session (October 2022), it was informed that the secretariats of ECE and FIA had started preparing the concepts of the future system, which would be submitted for consideration by the Working Party (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/322, para. 30). The Working Party took note that the team had been unable to finalize document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/4, announced in the draft agenda, but that a document would now be submitted for consideration at one of its future sessions.

33. Under this agenda item, the secretariat informed the Working Party that it had just received a proposal by the Australian Border Force to bring together the ECE secretariat, FIA and experts from customs administrations in a virtual informal working group to digitalize the CPD (see Informal document (2023) WP.30 No. 3).

## **IX. Introduction of new technologies in rail, road, road-based mobility, inland waterway, logistics and intermodal transport until 2030 (agenda item 8)**

34. No delegation raised an issue under this agenda item. Delegations were encouraged to raise any initiative or 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 on its efforts to contribute to the digitalization of the TIR Convention, to do so under this agenda item (see also ECE/TRANS/WP.30/312, para. 15).

## **X. Activities of other organizations and countries of interest to the Working Party (agenda item 9)**

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

### **A. European Union**

36. The European Commission informed the Working Party that the European Union and its partner countries were engaged in the roll-out of the New Computerized Transit System (NCTS) Phase 5, to be completed by the end of 2023. Mention was also made of a reform of the Union Customs Code. This far-reaching initiative should lead to a major overhaul of customs procedures. More information would be provided at future sessions.

### **B. Economic Cooperation Organization**

37. There was no intervention from the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) under this agenda item.

### **C. World Customs Organization**

38. Under this agenda item, the secretariat informed the Working Party that, on 23 January 2023, it had participated as observer in the nineteenth session of the Administrative Committee for the Container Convention, 1972.

## **XI. Workshop (agenda item 10)**

39. The Working Party took note that, on 8 February 2023, the secretariat would organize, under the auspices of the Administrative Committee of the TIR Convention (AC.2), and in close collaboration with WP.30, a workshop dedicated to training new contracting parties and interested countries in correctly applying the provisions of the TIR Convention. The



agenda of the workshop had been circulated as document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/5-ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2023/2.

## **XII. Other business (agenda item 11)**

### **A. Dates of the next session**

40. The Working Party decided to hold its 163rd session in the week of 5 to 9 June 2023, subject to confirmation and subject to potential adjustments due to the ongoing United Nations liquidity crisis. The Working Party agreed that future sessions would be organized in conjunction with the sessions of TIB, starting with the fourth session on 8 and 9 (a.m.) June 2023. The Working Party mandated the secretariat to make the required organizational arrangements.

### **B. Restriction on the distribution of documents**

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

### **C. List of decisions**

42. The list of adopted decisions is attached as annex to the final report.

## **XIII. Adoption of the report (agenda item 12)**

43. In accordance with established practice, the Working Party adopted the report on its 162nd session on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat.

## Annex I

### List of decisions taken at the 162nd session of the Working Party

<i>Reference in final report (para.)</i>	<i>Short description of decision</i>	<i>Actor</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
2	The Working Party adopted the provisional agenda, as prepared by the secretariat, in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/323.	WP.30	
3	The Working Party (WP.30) elected Ms. V. R. Boeg (Denmark) as Chair and Mr. H Azgaldyan (Armenia) as Vice-Chair for its sessions in 2023.	WP.30	
9	The Working Party concluded that it was not yet in a position to take any decision on the revised ToR. However, the first discussions on the matter had shown that there was large support that customs should stay at the core of the activities of WP.30 and that this should remain properly reflected in its name. The Working Party further decided to only revert to the proposed strategy and action plan (as proposed in ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/2) once agreement on the ToR had been reached.	WP.30	
20	The Working Party considered and adopted the survey, confirming that it should be sent, in March 2023, to customs TIR focal points with 31 May 2023 as deadline for reply, subject the certain changes.	Secretariat	March 2023
23	The secretariat proposed and the Working Party agreed to transmit the issue of the financing of TIRExB and the TIR secretariat to the TIR Administrative Committee (AC.2) at its seventy-ninth session (9 February 2023), for discussion under agenda item 4 (b) (ii) (Procedure for financing the operation of the TIR Executive Board and TIR secretariat).	WP.30/secretariat	AC.2 79th session
24	The delegation of Türkiye recalled its statement at the previous session of the Working Party about problems in the application of the provisions of the TIR Convention by the customs authorities of the Russian Federation (ECE/TRANS/WP30/322, paragraph 22). The secretariat proposed and the Working Party agreed to transmit the issue to AC.2 at its seventy-ninth session (9 February 2023), for discussion under agenda item 10 (Other business).	WP.30/secretariat	AC.2 79th session
26	Working Party requested to circulate the survey on Annex 8 of the Harmonization Convention in April 2023 with 1 July 2023 as deadline for reply.	Secretariat	
27	Although appreciative of the information provided by the survey results, the Working Party regretted the absence of conclusions or recommendations for future actions. The secretariat recalled that the survey had been conducted at the request of ITC and not as a result of a need for information from the sectors concerned (customs and rail authorities).	WP.30	
40	40. The Working Party decided to hold its 163rd session in the week of 5 to 9 June 2023, subject to confirmation and subject to potential adjustments due to the ongoing United Nations liquidity crisis. The Working Party agreed that future sessions would be organized in		Deadlines: Agenda: by 26 March 2023

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*Reference in  
final report  
(para.)*

*Short description of decision*

*Actor*

*Deadline*

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conjunction with the sessions of TIB, starting with the fourth session on 8 and 9 (a.m.) June 2023. The Working Party mandated the secretariat to make the required organizational arrangements.

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Documents: by  
10 April 2023

## Annex II

[Original: English and Russian]

### **Statement by the Republic of Belarus\***

We would like to draw the attention to the difficult situation with the international transportation of goods between the countries of the European and Asian regions, in connection with the decision of the Polish and Lithuanian authorities to significantly reduce the passage of vehicles through checkpoints on the border with Belarus.

These actions of our western neighbors have led to many kilometers of lines of vehicles at the border, serious interruptions in the delivery of essential goods, and deterioration of the environmental situation.

So, Poland closed three out of five road checkpoints back in 2021, citing the unfavorable epidemiological situation. In 2022, Poland lifted restrictions related to COVID-19, but did not open checkpoints.

As a result of these ill-considered politicized decisions of our Western neighbors, end-users and transport companies on both sides of the border, including European ones, are suffering. Drivers stand in line for days. The issue is especially acute at the present time, during the period of low temperatures and difficult weather conditions.

Further disregard by our western neighbors of the problem of many kilometers of queues at the border may be a catalyst for a new crisis with serious consequences for the entire region.

The Belarusian side calls on the Polish and Lithuanian colleagues to engage in dialogue to normalize transport and economic ties in the region and confirms its readiness for negotiations in any acceptable format.

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\* Annex II contains text submitted to the secretariat and reproduced without any changes.