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Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport

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Report of the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport on its 164th session

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I. Attendance

1. The Working Party held its one-hundred-and-sixty-fourth session on 10 and 13 October 2023 in Geneva. The session was attended by representatives of the following countries: Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Italy, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, , Türkiye, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Representatives of the European Union were present. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: International Automobile Federation (FIA) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU).
2. The ex-Chair of the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30), Mr. Oleksander Fedorov, addressed the session.

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

3. The Working Party adopted the provisional agenda, as prepared by the secretariat, in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/327 including the corrigendum to the agenda.

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

4. The Working Party recalled that, at its previous session (June 2023), it considered the proposals in annex III of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/1, containing suggestions for alignment of the WP.30 Terms of Reference (ToR) with the revised ToR of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC). The Working Party requested the secretariat to prepare a revision of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/1, to incorporate the discussions that took place and the suggestions proposed by the European Union.
5. The Working Party considered the proposals included in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/7, which contains suggestions for the alignment of the WP.30 ToR with the revised ToR of ITC. The Working Party decided to tentatively adopt the revised ToR pending finalization of the European Union Council decision. The Working Party also decided to adopt its new name to “Global Forum on Customs Questions Affecting Transport including Border Crossing Facilitation”. The Working Party requested the secretariat to inform ITC about these decisions for its endorsement.
6. Furthermore, and following a request of the ITC chair on the 2023 review of working party mandates, the Working Party considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/6. The document includes a questionnaire that collects the recommended information for the review of ITC working parties. The Working Party adopted document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/6, with the following amendments: first amendment on page 4, item III A. heading should read “Transport facilitation (including customs and border-crossing facilitation) with second bullet “main work area (customs and border-crossing facilitation); second amendment on page 7, item VI Main partners (b) fourth line European Commission should be replaced by “European Union”. With these changes the Working Party was requested to propose changes, if any, within 10 days to the secretariat and thereafter requested the secretariat to submit the amended document to ITC for its endorsement.
7. The Working Party took also note of the information provided by the secretariat on the decision taken during the last session of ITC on developing a strategy for reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. ITC requested the secretariat, in close cooperation with the Committee’s Bureau and relevant subsidiary bodies, to develop an ambitious strategy document for reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions in inland transport based on

international United Nations legal instruments under the Committee's purview with priority actions for the ITC and all its relevant subsidiary bodies, supported by a strong action plan with milestones. The Strategic document would be considered with possible adoption at the ITC eighty-sixth plenary session in 2024. The Working Party also noted informal document 16 prepared by the secretariat, including a first attempt to provide the Working Party's input into the Inland Transport Committee Climate Change Mitigation Strategy.

8. The European Union delegation informed the Working Party about its Green Deal initiative, and the European Union climate law that included transport. Therefore, it reassured delegations that any compatible measures are likely to have the European Union support. The European Union further mentioned a good example of Switzerland work on automatization of border crossings that worked with geo-fencing technologies and would inform customs once a truck enters its area. Customs could then decide whether the truck would have to stop or could pass the border without a halt.

9. The Working Party requested to be further informed on developments on this topic at its next session and invited interested delegates to present good practices.

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

10. The Working Party was informed that, since the entry into force of the accession of Iraq, on 27 September 2023, the Convention now has seventy-eight 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.¹

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 TIR Executive Board (TIRExB) friends of the chair meeting which took place in Samarkand, Uzbekistan 21-22 June 2023. The Chair of TIRExB, with the support of the UNECE secretariat at the kind invitation of the customs administration of Uzbekistan and the support of European Commission, IRU, TRACECA, Islamic Development Bank and GIZ, organized a Friends of the Chair meeting. The aim of the meeting was to promote the implementation of the eTIR procedure along the middle corridor. Representatives from the customs authorities and the national associations of Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan were invited to participate.

14. The Working Party noted the following steps to the TIRExB meeting in Samarkand, i.e., that Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan already provided national consultants that would be hired in order to interconnect their national customs systems with the eTIR international system. Moreover, the secretariat stated it had finalized the contracts of the national consultants from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Depending on availability of funds, this will also be the case for the national consultant from Tajikistan.

(b) 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: 1,156 web application users, 30,089 authorized holders recorded, 282 stamps and seals recorded, 2,991 customs offices recorded and of the web service usage for the past years. The Committee also took note of planned improvements to ITDB, by the increased number of languages both for ITDB and eTIR Portal. Work is continues on eTIR National Application, with 95% of work completed. Testing is underway and is due to be completed shortly. Additional language support has been added for the Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Persian languages.

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. 17).

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. 18).

6. Other matters

19. The Working Party recalled that the secretariat, in close collaboration with the delegation of the European Union and IRU, prepared a draft survey on the certificate of approval for TIR vehicles, contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/3. The survey was sent on 14 March 2023 to customs TIR focal points with 31 May 2023 as deadline for reply. (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/324, para. 20). The Working Party considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/8 and ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/9 incorporating consolidated replies including remarks received from Customs Authorities and National Associations respectively.

20. IRU commented on the survey it conducted among TIR associations in relation to the procedure of vehicle approval and the issuance and renewal of the Certificate of Vehicle Approval. The replies to the survey underlined once again that having the related procedures facilitated is of key importance for transport companies, which aim at reducing their vehicles idle time. The private sector proposes using all appropriate facilitation measures, such as conducting vehicle inspection in specially equipped premises of the association or having the possibility to approve vehicles at any customs office in the country. Moreover, in new TIR operational countries, where demand for approved vehicles is high and where customs capacities might not be sufficient, delegating this function to a specialised private entity can be also an option. The survey results also highlighted the need to digitalise the Certificate of Vehicle Approval. Based on the survey results and the clearly detected need of further simplifications related to the Certificate, IRU proposes working on further facilitation measures, including those that can further advance the principle of mutual recognition of customs controls.

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

A. Status of the Convention

21. 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.

B. Issues in the application of the Convention

22. The Working Party considered Informal documents WP.30/2023/4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 containing the first 4 chapters and an annex of the publication prepared by ECE secretariat, in collaboration with the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE), “A practical guide to cross-border facilitation”. The secretariat invited interested delegates to provide good practices/case studies in order to be included in the publication. The publication will be published in English, French and Russian towards the end of the year.

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

23. The Working Party noted that since 26 September 2019, only Chad had become signatory to the Convention.³ No further development was reported under this agenda item.

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

24. 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 WP.30 website.

B. Issues in the application of the Conventions

25. The Working Party was briefed about the latest developments 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 the conventions and, in particular, the development of an eCPD (Carnet de Passage en Douane) system.

26. Following a request from customs authorities and depending on the availability of extra budgetary funds, the secretariat with the assistance of the FIA secretariat will organize an informal ad hoc and online meeting to host the first session of the informal working group

to digitalize the CPD. The proposed time by the secretariat for this meeting is between 11 and 22 December. Once the dates are fixed, including the online facilities, the secretariat will send an invitation to all contracting parties to the conventions including experts from other digitalization efforts seeking their active participation.

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

27. No delegation raised any issues 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).

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

28. Under this agenda item, the secretariat informed the Working Party that it had reached out to WCO, WTO and ECO, however, did not receive word in time for the current session.

A. European Union

29. There was no intervention from the European Union under this agenda item.

B. Economic Cooperation Organization

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

C. World Customs Organization

31. There was no intervention from the World Customs Organization (WCO) under this agenda item.

X. Other business (agenda item 9)

A. Dates of the next session

32. The Working Party decided to hold its 165th session in the week of 6 and 9 February 2024, subject to confirmation and subject to potential adjustments due to the ongoing United Nations liquidity crisis.

B. Restriction on the distribution of documents

33. 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

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

XI. Adoption of the report (agenda item 10)

35. In accordance with established practice, the Working Party adopted the report on its 164th session on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat.

Annex

List of decisions taken at the 164th session of the Working Party

<i>Reference in final report (para.)</i>	<i>Short description of decision</i>	<i>Actor</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
3	The Working Party adopted the provisional agenda, as prepared by the secretariat, in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/324 together with corrigendum.	WP.30	
5	The Working Party adopted its new ToR and its new name as global forum on customs questions affecting transport including border crossings facilitation pending finalization of the European Union Council decision and submit to ITC for its endorsement.	Secretariat	
6	The Working Party adopted the 2023 review of working parties' mandates questionnaire. The Working Party was requested to submit comments, if any, within 10 days to the secretariat and, thereafter, submit to ITC for its endorsement.	WP.30 Secretariat	10 days