



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
7 July 2023

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport

163rd session

Geneva, 8 and 9 (a.m.) June 2023

Report of the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport on its 163rd session

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I. Attendance

1. The Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) held its 163rd session on 8 and 9 June 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), Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands (the), Norway, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan. Representatives of the European Union were present. The following organizations were represented: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). 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.30/325.

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 considered Informal document WP.30 (2023) No. 14 which includes a letter sent to the Chair of the Working Party by the Chair of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Sustainable Transport Division director. The purpose of the letter was to invite the Chair's support and contribution to key decisions of ITC on its subsidiary Working Parties. These decisions referred to the assessment of the alignment of the Working Party Rules of Procedure (ROP)/ Terms of Reference (TOR) with the ITC revised ROP/TOR and to the marking during 2023 of the fourth cycle of reviews of Working Parties' mandates by their parent sectoral committees. For the latter, two annexes were included in the letter. The first provided the proposed modalities of the 2023 review of ITC Working Parties mandates and the second, the recommended information for this review in the form of a survey.

4. The Working Party mandated the TIR Secretariat to draft a response to the survey included in annex II of the letter. The draft response should be submitted for approval at the 164th session of the Working Party in October 2023. Once approved, the response can be sent to ITC, in time for it to be considered at its February 2024 session.

5. Furthermore, the Working Party continued its discussion on the proposals in annex III of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/1, containing suggestions for alignment of the WP.30 ToR with the revised ToR of ITC. For this purpose, the Working Party also considered Informal document WP.30 (2023) No. 14 which contained suggestions by the European Union.

6. The Working Party took note of the information provided by the secretariat mainly on the fact that the Working Party's ToR and RoP are almost aligned with those of ITC. However, the secretariat suggested to delete the reference to ECE's ToR and insert a reference to the ToR of ITC. This would enable all contracting parties to participate as full members at Working Party sessions independently whether they are United Nations member States or not. Furthermore, the secretariat suggested that border crossing facilitation should be included in the new name of the Working Party. The Working Party also agreed on the suggestions proposed by the European Union.

7. The Working Party requested the secretariat to prepare a revision of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/1 including the discussions that took place and the suggestions proposed by the European Union and circulate it to all participants within one week of the date of the current meeting. The Working Party also requested to include footnotes with justifications for a better understanding in the reading of the document.

8. In relation to the above topic, the Working Party took note of decisions 5–7 taken by ITC at its eighty-fifth session (February 2023) (ITC Informal document No. 6/Rev.5).

9. Under this agenda item, the Working Party noted that, on 17 March 2023, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, acting in his capacity as depositary, issued depositary notification C.N.76.2023.TREATIES-XI.A.12, informing that, on 17 March 2023, Switzerland denounced the Customs Convention concerning Spare Parts Used for Repairing EUROPE Wagons, of 15 January 1958. The denunciation shall take effect for Switzerland on 17 September 2023. With this action, the Convention will have five remaining contracting parties: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. 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 three.

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 of changes in the status of the TIR Convention, 1975 and the number of contracting parties. In particular, the Working Party noted that, on 27 March 2023, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, acting in his capacity as depositary, issued the following depositary notification: C.N.92.2023.TREATIES-XI.A.16, informing that, on 27 March 2023, Iraq deposited its instruments of accession to the TIR Convention, 1975. In accordance with its Article 53, paragraph 2, the Convention will enter into force for Iraq on 27 September 2023. With the accession of Iraq, the TIR Convention will have seventy-eight contracting parties. Since the activation of the system for Qatar, TIR operations can 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.

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

2. eTIR

(a) eTIR international system: interconnection projects

13. The Working Party was informed by the secretariat on the latest developments in the interconnections of eTIR international system with the national customs systems and IRU. Furthermore, efforts by the secretariat this year will be focused on transforming the middle corridor to an eTIR corridor. For this purpose, letters have been sent, through diplomatic channels, to the customs authorities of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan inviting them to interconnect their national customs systems to the eTIR international system. The secretariat indicated that it stands ready to provide technical and financial assistance to these countries, if required. To date, only Kazakhstan had accepted this invitation and a meeting has already been held in Astana.

14. Furthermore, the TIRExB fully supports the effort to transform the middle corridor into an eTIR corridor and a “friends of the chair meeting” will be organized in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, on 21 and 22 June in cooperation with the customs authority of Uzbekistan. The single objective of this meeting is to make progress with Central Asian countries as well as Afghanistan and Pakistan on the interconnection project and to agree on the next steps toward their interconnection to the eTIR international system.

15. Under this agenda item, the Working Party took note of the main findings of the fourth session of the Technical Implementation Body (TIB) which had taken place on 6 and 7 June 2023.

16. The customs authorities of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), present in the session, expressed their eagerness to interconnect their national customs system to the eTIR international system. They further added that, at present, various impediments to this, inter alia, the additional requirements set by the EEU’s customs code as well as the legal nature of documents such the use of electronic signatures or similar mechanisms need to be addressed and served by the eTIR international system. As such, they need to be included in the technical specifications of the eTIR international system. The secretariat informed the customs authorities of the EEU that it stands ready to provide the funds to hire an expert on EEU custom codes plus other mechanisms and suggested to organize meetings this year with all five member States of the Union to identify the technical solutions required. The secretariat added, it would contact each of the customs authorities in the very near future in order to initiate this project. The Working Party took note of the information provided by the customs authority of Uzbekistan on pilot projects being undertaken by some Central Asian countries. These pilot projects are financed by GIZ and supported by IRU. The secretariat stated that since Annex 11 entered into force in May 2021 with the eTIR international system now operational together with a number of customs authorities already interconnected that, Customs authorities' efforts should fully focus on interconnecting their national customs systems with the eTIR international system. The secretariat suggested that a meeting should be organised between the secretariat, GIZ and IRU together with Central Asian states in order to discuss the next phase of these pilot projects to enable interconnection to the eTIR international system based on the TIR Convention.

17. The secretariat informed WP.30 that it had held three coordination meetings with IRU on deployment of the eTIR international system. The secretariat and IRU agreed to cooperate for the successful deployment of the eTIR international system as soon as possible with a priority for Central Asia, and to ensure smooth transition to the fully electronic system. The secretariat also thanked GIZ for their support to countries in the region.

(b) International TIR Data Bank

18. The Working Party was informed about developments related to the International TIR Data Bank (ITDB) and other information about technology projects managed by the TIR secretariat. The Working Party also took note of the latest achievements and of the current status of data recordings in ITDB and, in particular noted that the secretariat continues to collaborate closely with Customs Offices and provides support and training as required.

3. New developments in the application of the Convention

19. No new developments were raised under this agenda item.

4. TIR-related electronic data interchange systems

20. 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 (2023) No. 9).

5. Settlement of claims for payments

21. The Working Party was informed by customs authorities and 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. 10).

6. Other matters

22. Under this agenda item, the Working Party recalled that the secretariat, in close collaboration with the delegation of the European Union and IRU, had prepared a draft survey, contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/3. This survey was sent on 14 March 2023 to customs TIR focal points with a deadline for reply of 31 May 2023. A reminder had been sent on 20 April 2023. The Working Party considered the consolidated replies, as contained in Informal document WP.30 (2023) No. 12 and requested the secretariat to submit it as a formal document for its next session, including the remarks of the replies received.

23. The Working Party further took note that IRU also issued a similar survey among its associations, with results presented in Informal document WP.30 (2023) No. 11. The Working Party also mandated the secretariat to submit the results of this similar survey, for consideration at its next session.

24. Considering the ongoing discussions of TIRExB on the possible computerization of the process of issuance of certificates of approval, the TIR Secretary will forward the results of both surveys to TIRExB.

25. The Working Party took note of the statements read out by the IRU on behalf of the German association Bundesverband Güterkraftverkehr Logistik (BGL) and the Association of International Road Transport Carriers in Poland (ZMPD). A representative of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and the delegation of the Republic of Moldova also read out statements. The four statements are included, as submitted, in annex II, at the request of the delegations. The Working Party regretted that these statements had not been transmitted in advance for the attention of the Working party. It further decided to transmit them to the relevant fora and discuss them at their next session. A number of delegations highlighted the need for an analysis or study to be carried out which would look at the different costs and provide a calculation, as a percentage, for the cost of operations of the TIRExB included in the price of the TIR Carnet in relation to the total costs for a transport. The Working Party further took note that similar discussions were also under discussion at AC.2.

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

A. Status of the Convention

26. 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.²

B. Issues in the application of the Convention

27. Under this agenda item, the Working Party recalled that, at its previous session (February 2023), it had mandated the secretariat to circulate the 5-year survey on the application of Annex 8 of the Convention among the regular delegates from governments (and, in the absence thereof, TIR focal points) as addressees in April 2023 with 1 July 2023 as deadline for reply (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/324, para. 26). The Working Party took note that the survey had been sent out on 3 April 2023 and that, so far, insufficient replies had been received for the survey to be representative. The Working Party urged delegations to provide replies in the coming weeks.

28. The Working Party also took note of a statement made by the delegation of Belarus, which is reproduced in annex III.

29. Finally, the Working Party recalled, under this agenda item, that the ECE secretariat, in collaboration with OSCE, is preparing with the assistance of an external consultant being funded by OSCE “A practical guide to cross-border facilitation”. Informal documents WP.30 (2023) Nos. 4–8, were prepared containing the first four chapters and an annex of this publication, for comments or additional input by the Working Party. The Working Party took note of the presentation made by the representative of OSCE on the draft publication. Delegations were invited if they wish to provide comments, good practices and case studies on the publication and submit them to the secretariat in order to be included in the publication.

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

30. 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 a signatory to the Convention.³ No further developments were reported under this issue.

31. Under this agenda item, the Working Party also noted that ITC, at its eighty-fifth session (February 2023) “requested the secretariat to hold consultations with the Committee of the Organization for Cooperation of Railways (OSJD), as well as the Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF), with a view to initiating the preparation of an action plan on the facilitation of border crossing by rail transport in both freight and passenger traffic” (Decision No. 72, ITC Informal document No. 6/Rev.5). No further developments were reported.

² <https://unece.org/transport/border-crossing-facilitation>.

³ <https://unece.org/transport/border-crossing-facilitation>.

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 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.⁴

B. Issues in the application of the Conventions

33. The Working Party recalled that, at its October 2022 session, it was informed that the team had started preparing the concepts of the future system, which would be submitted for consideration by the Working Party at one of its future sessions (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/322, para. 30). The Working Party took note of the latest developments.

34. The Working Party also noted that ITC, at its eighty-fifth session (February 2023) “Invited the secretariat and the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) to accelerate work on the digitalization of Carnet de Passages en Douane (CPDs) ensuring its application as soon as possible” (Decision 71, ITC Informal document No.6/Rev.5). The Working Party supported this invitation.

35. The Working Party took note of Informal document WP.30 (2023) No. 15 and the intervention made by the representative of FIA which included an overview of the electronic carnet de passage system (eCPD), the protocols regarding the exchange of messages, the implementation process as well as the workflow of the system. Moreover, the Working Party agreed to keep this item for further discussion at the next meeting where FIA proposed to present a more detailed presentation.

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

36. No delegation raised an issue under this agenda item.

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

37. 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

38. The European Union informed the Working Party about ongoing work on a far-reaching reform of its customs rules. This will include the extensive use of ICT for instance a European Union Customs Data hub; it will also include a new partnership with business and the most trusted traders will be called “Trust and Check” traders. Further information can be provided at upcoming sessions when the reform develops.

⁴ <https://unece.org/transport/border-crossing-facilitation>.

39. The Working Party took note of the information provided by the European Union.⁵

B. Economic Cooperation Organization

40. There was no intervention from the Economic Cooperation Organization under this agenda item.

C. World Customs Organization

41. There was no intervention from the World Customs Organization under this agenda item.

X. Other business (agenda item 9)

A. Dates of the next session

42. The Working Party tentatively decided to hold its 164th session on 10 October 2023 (10 a.m.–1 p.m. and 3 p.m.–6 p.m.) and 13 (p.m.), subject to potential adjustments due to the ongoing United Nations liquidity crisis.

43. The Working Party took note of the European Union comment on the duration and Uzbekistan's comment on the format, i.e., for back-to-back meetings, and mandated the secretariat to identify better arrangements including improving the separation of the different meetings and allocation, specifically for WP.30 sessions, of more time.

B. Restriction on the distribution of documents

44. 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

45. The list of adopted decisions is attached to the final report.

XI. Adoption of the report (agenda item 10)

46. In accordance with established practice, the Working Party adopted the report on its 163rd session on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat.

⁵ https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/customs-4/eu-customs-reform_en

Annex I**List of decisions taken at the 163rd 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.30/325. | WP.30 | |
| 4 | The Working Party mandated the secretariat to draft a response to the survey included in annex II of the letter from the Chair ITC and Director, Sustainable Transport Division, ECE to the Chair of the working party. | Secretariat | 164 th session WP.30 |
| 7 | The Working Party requested the secretariat to prepare a revision of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2023/1 including the discussions that took place and the suggestions proposed by the European Union and circulate it to all participants within one week. The Working Party also requested to include footnotes with justifications for a better understanding. | Secretariat | June 2023 |
| 22 | The Working Party considered the consolidated replies, as contained in Informal document WP.30 (2023) No. 12 and requested the secretariat to submit it as a formal document for its next session, including the remarks of the replies received. | Secretariat | 164 th session WP.30 |
| 23 | The Working Party further took note that IRU also issued a similar survey among its associations, with results presented in Informal document WP.30 (2023) No. 11. The Working Party mandated the secretariat to submit the results of this similar survey, for consideration at its next session. | Secretariat | 164 th session WP.30 |
| 27 | The Working Party recalled that, at its previous session (February 2023), it had mandated the secretariat to circulate the 5-year survey on the application of Annex 8 of the Convention among the regular delegates from governments (and, in the absence thereof, TIR focal points) as addressees in April 2023 with 1 July 2023 as deadline for reply (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/324, para. 26). The Working Party took note that the survey had been sent out on 3 April 2023 and that, so far, insufficient replies have been received for the survey to be representative. The Working Party urged delegations to provide replies in the coming weeks. | WP.30 | |
| 29 | The Working Party took note of the presentation made by the representative of OSCE on the draft publication. Delegations were invited if they wish to provide any comments, good practices and case studies on the publication and submit them to the secretariat in order to be included in the publication. | WP.30 | |
| 40 | The Working Party tentatively decided to hold its 164th session on 10 (10 a.m.–1 p.m. and 3 p.m.–6 p.m.) and 13 (p.m.) October 2023, subject to potential adjustments due to the ongoing United Nations liquidity crisis. | | |
| 41 | The Working Party took note of the European Union comment on the duration and Uzbekistan's comment on the format, i.e., back-to-back meetings, and mandated the Secretariat to identify better arrangements including the improving the separation of the different meetings and the allocation, specifically for WP.30 sessions, of more time. | Secretariat | |

Annex II

Statements regarding application of the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention, 1975)*

I. Statement by the International Road Transport Union on behalf of the German association Bundesverband Güterkraftverkehr Logistik (BGL)

Dear Mrs Rey-Bellet, dear Tatiana,

In the absence of a German delegation to this WP.30 meeting, may we kindly ask you to read our the below BGL statement.

In February 2021, AC.2 was informed about *“the latest developments related to the International TIR Data Bank (ITDB) and other information technology projects managed by the TIR secretariat”*.

Allow me to mention some experiences from my association’s work with ITDB in the recent past.

- In August 2022, we noted a change in ITDB, notably in the automatic eMail notifications we received during the process of proposals for modifications of holders’ status. The mails’ content had been modified and there were more of them now. We also noted *“drivers problems when using ITDB – frequently, the application collapsed or the screen froze. After re-opening the application afterwards, it was typically difficult to find out whether a proposal had been submitted successfully or not”*. When reporting this to the ECE, we received the answer that our problems were due to the use of a wrong browser while the database itself was fine.
- Some weeks ago, problems escalated when we notified a holder’s “end of activity”. The successful submission of our proposal was confirmed on the ITDB screen. A short time later, *“we received automatic eMails from the system informing us:”*
 - (a) *“that the Holder’s status had changed to “end of activity” and*
 - (b) *“that our proposal had been approved by the German authorities.”*

“However, opening ITDB we found out that the holder’s status had not changed, it was still on “authorized”. We reported this to ECE and were informed that we had misinterpreted the mails:

It seems that a mail informing us that our proposal was approved actually did ***not*** mean that the proposal was approved. This was allegedly due to doubtful translation (the mails we receive are in German). We offered to check the translations and found that while the translations maybe were not brilliant, they were basically correct and *“the mistake seemed to lie with the timing when ITDB is issuing the automatic mails.”* We pointed this out in detail to ECE and hoped for the best.

- Some weeks later, a batch of seven proposals for Holders’ end of activity offered a chance to monitor the system behavior again. *“Actually, the first two proposals, while structurally identical, resulted in receipt of different, and differently timed, automatic mails”* so we pointed out as much to ECE again. As a result, we received the most astonishing answer that none of our seven proposals were registered in the database at all, despite the fact that we had actually screenshots showing the “successfully submitted” screens for all seven of them.

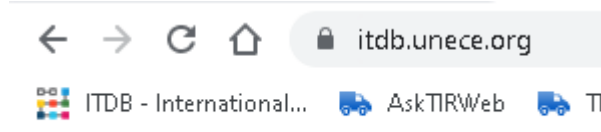
During the following day, a colleague from ECE looked into the matter and found out that the proposals were in the system after all, and they were duly handled and approved

* Annex II contains texts of statements submitted to the secretariat and reproduced as received without any changes.

by German Customs. However, there remains the problem of the odd behavior of the automatic mails. All we see is the association part and we truly hope that the information sent to Customs and holders is less haphazard.

I am not describing these issues in order to complain about the ECE officers, who are certainly doing their best to assist. However, **I must point out that there are still problems concerning the very core application of ITDB, which basically, in the one or other form, has been existing since 1999. Now that this application has been made mandatory, and will become a central part of eTIR, we must be able to rely upon its proper functioning to avoid that Holders are wrongly blocked and we kindly ask ECE to ensure that – as a top priority and actually, before any supplementary modules are being added!**

And by the way: At the very moment that I'm writing this (in the morning of 30.05.2023), any efforts to open ITDB result in the message "Http/1.1 Service Unavailable"... ●



Http/1.1 Service Unavailable

There is also another point which I must raise:

We know that ECE is working, and has already implemented, several extensions and new modules in the ITDB context (i.e., lists of Customs offices as well as information on stamps and seals). As a TIR association, we do not have access to these extensions but we feel that most of them are duplicates of information already available otherwise. Such duplication typically results in information being incomplete or less than up to date, which may imply in Holder's being blocked without any concrete reason

Lastly, I would like to make a remark with respect to the other information technology projects managed by the TIR secretariat, notably the eTIR Holder Portal mobile app.

- This app has been created to grant the private sector access to eTIR. However, in its present version, it does not show any eTIR features at all. Instead, it is said to give holders *"access to eTIR related information especially regarding TIR Carnet holder status, Customs offices and national association contact info.* All of this information is already available to holders otherwise.
- The app allows for creation of a QR code identifying the holder – which is by no means covered by the Convention but which might invite Customs officers to request it, meaning that all drivers of TIR transports need to be equipped with the app. This is not a facilitation but a complication.
- From being involved in the German translation of the eTIR Portal, I assume that there are plans to use this app also as a kind of "troubleshooter" enabling holders to contact ECE in case of any problems with a TIR transport, asking for support. May we point out that relative mechanisms for troubleshooting have been operative for decades, and successfully so, managed by the TIR Chains of guarantee and the national TIR associations who call upon the national authorities wherever need be. We do not recognize any need to duplicate this successful mechanism and we cannot recognize either how an ECE officer should be able to manage such requests better than the national and international TIR organizations concerned, who have all the relevant contacts, experience with national legislation and practices and who are also able to communicate with the holders and authorities in their relevant own languages.
- Update on this app may demand further financial/human resources. This may lead to an increase in TIR Secretariat costs which will have a severe impact in the industry who is already struggling to pay such a fee.

In all a.m. cases, we recognize an identical pattern that we feel is detrimental:

- The industry, resp. the TIR Chain of guarantee, have not been consulted prior to implementation.

- Instead, changes, new modules and developments to ITDB and/or eTIR Holder Portal mobile app are realized without the involvement of the private sector.

We feel that in order to avoid problems as described above,

- **Features that are to be added into the applications must be discussed with the private sector** prior to their implementation, to make sure that they are
 - useful
 - in line with practice
 - cost-efficient and
 - most of all, not causing new problems rather than solving existing ones.
- Also, there must be a clear **procedure for their approval for implementation**. It is not acceptable that useless, or “nice-to-have” features are being financed by the TIR Carnet holders without including the industry in the relevant decision-making process.
- This is even more true when the very core function of ITDB, the holders database, is still leaving much to be desired!!!

I thank you for your attention and I kindly ask that my full statement is included in the WP.30 report.

Many thanks Tatiana, for inviting us to give this statement and for your readiness to read it out.

Kind regards,

Bundesverband Güterkraftverkehr

Logistik und Entsorgung (BGL) E.V. i.V.

Ursula Nies

II. Statement by the International Road Transport Union on behalf of the Association of International Road Transport Carriers in Poland (ZMPD)

Dear Tatiana,

Due to public holiday in Poland, ZMPD will not participate in next WP.30 meeting. However, please be so kind and present to the WP.30 participants the following position of our association:

The private sector has been constantly raising the problem about the problems they are facing on the amounts paid annually for the budget of the TIR Secretariat/TIRExB, throughout a levy per each TIR carnet.

In 2020, this problem was also raised by OIOS report (Office of Internal Oversight Services) who made a recommendation on the sustainability of the operation of the TIR secretariat.

In October 2021, this problem was raised again by several national associations. It was then submitted to AC.2 who mandated the TIR Secretariat to start exploring additional sources of funds to fund the TIR secretariat/TIRExB costs. As we read in the report from that meeting:

"17. Under this agenda item, AC 2 expressed its concerns regarding the future financial situation and budget of TIRExB and the TIR secretariat, considering that the number of TIR Carnets used will continue to decline. The Committee invited the TIR secretariat, following also an OIOS recommendation on the sustainability of the operation of the TIR secretariat, to start exploring additional sources to fund the TIRExB and TIR secretariat's budget, in particular because, despite repeated efforts, financing through the United Nations regular budget seems unlikely. Such efforts should include also, if needed, activities to amend the existing TIR trust fund, in order to be able to receive, with the least administrative effort possible, earmarked and non-earmarked funds from several donors."

In February 2023, 3 national associations, great users of the TIR system: ICCIMA, THADA and ASMAP UA raised this matter again at WP.30 session. Once more, it was submitted to AC.2, who agreed with the TIR Secretariat's proposal to hire a lawyer to revise the current financing mechanism. Again, we can read in the report from that meeting:

"In a first reaction to a request from various national associations, during the 162nd session of WP.30, on problems faced by the private sector, further to the financing by the private sector of the operation of TIRExB and the TIR secretariat through an amount per TIR Carnet, the secretariat informed the Committee that it intends to also use the services of the hired legal expert to, in close consultation with the Executive Office of ECE, fine-tune the implementation of the current ECE/IRU Agreement and to propose options that pave the way for TIRExB and the TIR secretariat to receive additional funds, in parallel to the current mechanism by means of an amount per TIR Carnet. "

With all due respect to the TIR secretariat work, the problems faced by the industry are not been duly taking into account. A mandate was given in 2021. Nothing has been done. Now the TIR Secretariat proposed to have a lawyer hired, who will revise the ECE-IRU agreement and submit a proposal in October 2023. It is to say, the private sector had to wait for 2 years to have this important matter addressed and it may have to wait even longer since the lawyer's proposal may not be approved by AC.2 in its October 2023 session. Additionally, it's the private sector again who will have to pay for this lawyer's consultancy fee, if we correctly understand the idea.

Associations are struggling to pay the salaries of their employees, to assist transport operators and for the survival of the TIR System. It is obvious to all of us that the TIR system is shrinking and we are facing the biggest crisis ever. Just in Poland, which so far was the biggest TIR user in the EU, we have the following drop in TIR sale: in 2021 – 55 981 carnets were issued, in 2022 – 16 992 carnets and in 2023 so far only 5 000 carnets. It clearly shows other transit systems are taking over.

If the private sector does not work hand in hand with the public sector, the TIR System will simply die. Why transport operators should continue to use TIR when there are alternative systems which are more competitive? The levy for paying TIR Secretariat/TIRExB costs cannot continue to be charged only from transport operators nor should they be increased. Otherwise, the TIR System has no future. I do believe colleagues from other associations share my view.

Distinguished delegates, the sustainability of the TIR System is really an important matter to be considered, which I would like to repeat, was even quoted in OIOS report. Therefore, I kindly ask you that my full statement is included in the WP.30 report and that it is submitted to AC.2 October session to be analyzed in conjunction with the clause that lawyer will propose. I will provide its copy to the TIR Secretariat.

Joanna Popiolek

Deputy Director

Department of Transport

III. Statement by the representative of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA)

Good morning to everyone, good afternoon to everyone.

I am Zahra Jalil Zadeh Mohammadi Senior expert in Int'l studies, transport and logistics of Iran Chamber of Commerce Industries, Mines and Agriculture, the national TIR Association in Iran.

Distinguished Members,

I would like to support the statements read on behalf of my colleagues and also add another important aspect that needs to be taken into consideration.

In today's global economy constrain, every single penny means a lot for our operators since their business is very marginal, so if the transport operator has to pay even 1 Dollar more, the business might not to be sustainable for them.

In order to support the industry, ICCIMA has not passed onto transport operators such an increase. This means that it is ICCIMA who has paid and is paying these charges. Please note that ICCIMA is the top issuing TIR Association and therefore the most important contributor to the TIR secretariat budget. I am sorry to say that, but we would like to know, how long more we in Iran are expected to pay for Geneva salaries? This financing mechanism cannot continue as it stands. Apart from the high cost imposed onto us and our transport holders, it effects all our efforts to further promote TIR. If we do not receive the support from the public sector, including from the TIR Secretariat, we will not be able to survive. This also may be the case for other national Associations. Should this happen, TIR may stop being used in several countries or have its usage decreased.

As precisely pointed out by my colleagues, this matter goes beyond the problems faced only by the private sector. It may have a domino effect which would ultimately even affect the TIR secretariat. If TIR is dismantled, the secretariat will no longer exist. I also kindly ask you that my full statement is included in the WP30 report and that it is submitted to AC2 October session to be analysed in conjunction with the topic of the agenda, whereby a hired legal expert should pave the way for TIREXB and TIR Secretariat costs, as decided by AC2 session in October 2022.

Thank you for your attention and consideration on this important matter.

IV. Statement read by the representative of the Republic of Moldova on behalf of the International Association of Road Hauliers of Moldova

1. We support the statement of our previous colleagues. With the current political and economic crisis, our operators are struggling to survive and to continue using the TIR system. We will be able to stop the TIR carnet decrease if carriers see cost advantages in using the TIR system. To that extent, all involved costs need to be reduced.
2. With all due respect, I believe that there is a misunderstanding to what has been said. No one questions the need of the TIR secretariat. The issue is to identify alternative sources of funding to reduce the TIR carnets costs. Price is the main factor why transport operators choose one guarantee system instead of another, and any additional charges on top of TIR Carnet price is a very considerable burden on transport operators.

Annex III

[Original: English and Russian]

Statement by the Republic of Belarus*

We would like to draw attention of the Working party to the difficult situation with the international transportation of goods between countries of the European and Asian regions due to the decision of the Polish authorities to close a number of road border checkpoints with Belarus.

The transportation of cargo across the almost 400 (four hundred) kilometers-long border of Belarus with Poland is now possible only through one checkpoint. Also, only one crossing for individuals continues to operate. Four of the six previously operating checkpoints were closed by the Polish side.

This creates bottlenecks at the borders. Often lorry queues stretch up to tens of kilometers, and the waiting time for crossing the border lasts days and weeks. As a result, end-users and transport companies on both sides of the border, including European ones, are suffering.

The present situation calls for urgent measures.

We call on our Polish colleagues to engage in dialogue to normalize transport and economic ties in the region. The leadership of the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Belarus confirms its readiness for negotiations on this issue.

* Annex III contains text submitted to the secretariat and reproduced as received without any changes.