



Economic Commission for Europe
Inland Transport Committee
Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport
166th session

Geneva, 5 (p.m.), 6 and 7 (a.m.) June 2024

**Report of the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting
 Transport on its 166th session**
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I. Opening remarks

1. The Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe, Mr. D. Mariyasin addressed the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) and the remarks of Mr. Mariyasin are included in annex 2 of the report.

II. Attendance

2. The Working Party held its one-hundred-and-sixty-sixth session on 5(p.m.), 6 and 7 (a.m.) June 2024 in Geneva. The session was chaired by the elected Chair of the Working Party Mr. A. Şenmanav (Türkiye). The session was attended by representatives of the following countries: Belgium, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Kuwait, Latvia, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), North Macedonia, Poland, 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), EuroMed TSP and UND-International Transporters Association. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) secretariat attended the meeting.

III. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/331

3. The Working Party adopted the provisional agenda, as prepared by the secretariat, in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/331.

IV. 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

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/1/Rev.1; ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/6; Informal document WP.30 (2024) No. 8

4. The Working Party recalled that, at its previous session (February 2024), it was informed that a request had been submitted to the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) to adopt its revised Terms of Reference (ToR) and Rules of Procedure (RoP) – rule 1 –including the new name of the Working Party at its session in February 2024.

5. The Working Party was informed that the ITC, at its eighty-sixth session in 20-23 February 2024, adopted the updated Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure (Rule 1 on participation) of WP.30 as contained in annex IV to ECE/TRANS/2024/10 (Draft ECE/TRANS/344, paras. 32 (d), 115) / Informal document No. 6/Rev.4, decisions 9,18, 64). Also, the ITC welcomed the decision of WP.30 to change its name to “Global Forum on Customs questions affecting transport including border crossings facilitation”. At its 133rd meeting (25 March 2024), the ECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) approved the updated terms of reference (ECE/EX/2024/L.6, para 7(h)).

6. Furthermore, the Working Party recalled that, at its previous session, it was informed that the ITC at its eighty-fifth session in 21–24 February 2023, requested its 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 on 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 strategy document was considered and adopted during the eighty-sixth plenary session of ITC in February 2024 (Informal document WP.30 (2024) No. 8).

7. The Working Party recalled that, at its previous session, it welcomed presentations made on this topic by experts and requested the secretariat to prepare a document as the Working Party's possible contribution to the ITC strategy for its next session, taking into account the exchange of views and information provided during the session, as well as the draft ITC strategy document.

8. The Working Party considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/6, which includes Working Party's possible contribution to the ITC strategy on reduction of GHG and proposed the following amendments:

(a) Paragraph 9 (a) about electronic systems for documents, it is proposed that the WP.30 prepares a resolution to be adopted by ITC and possibly brought by a government to the attention of the United Nations General Assembly. According to European Union, the principle to draft a resolution is not an issue, however, the scope of the resolution seems to include issue beyond WP.30's competence such as eCMR or ePhyto initiatives. Therefore, if such a resolution is needed, it should be drafted by ITC or another group, not by WP.30,

(b) Paragraph 9 (d) to replace "no customs or other controls at the borders for trains" with "more efficient and targeted controls tailor made for the mode of transport including as far as possible to shift any necessary checks to inland border stations",

(c) Paragraph 9 (g) "authorities" in the end of the sentence should be deleted,

(d) paragraph 10 (l) on cycling infrastructure to be deleted,

(e) reference to capacity building activities for customs administrations regarding more effective tracking of illegal transport of waste material and trade of endangered species should be included in the document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/6.

9. The Working Party took note of Informal document WP.30 (2024) No. 8 and of a presentation made by IRU on IRU Green compact and digitalization. The Green Compact is an IRU project leveraging datasets and modelling to determine a realistic and cost-effective pathway to fully decarbonise the commercial road transport industry. With five pillars, the Green Compact covers a comprehensive set of actions with a holistic approach, factoring in growing transport demand, regional flexibility, and energy availability.

10. The secretariat informed the Working Party that the ITC strategy will be reviewed every five years, with the next review to take place in the ITC session in February 2029. However, the action plan included in the ITC strategy will be subject to review every two years, with the next review to take place in the ITC session in 2026. Therefore, if the Working Party wishes to consider and adopt new actions for the ITC strategy action plan, then specific actions could be prepared, adopted by the Working Party and then submitted to the ITC Bureau for its consideration.

11. The Working Party requested the secretariat to prepare a revised version of ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/6 following comments and proposals suggested including possible actions to be included in the ITC strategy action plan for its consideration at its next session.

12. Furthermore, the Working Party recalled that at its previous session, it considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/1, containing the Working Party's draft strategy and action plan that is based on the new ToR and the discussions undertaken since the approval of the new ToR, for consideration by the Working Party. The Working Party further recalled that it requested the secretariat to prepare a revision of the document based on the comments received at its previous session.

13. The Working Party considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/1/Rev.1 which included comments received at its previous session. The working party requested the following changes to be included in the document and the secretariat to prepare a new revised version of the document for its consideration at the next session:

(a) In paragraph 9 of the document to:

Delete the following text: “while six legal instruments had lost their relevance or seemed to have been overtaken by more recent legislation and 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 to the Working Party”, and replace it by the following text: “In June 2022, WP.30 recalled that the revision of its instruments started in October 2021 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. 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 (ITC) at its February 2022 session (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/316, paras. 8 and 9). At its 159th session (February 2022), the Working Party confirmed its findings at its previous session and took note that they had been transmitted to ITC for consideration, in document ECE/TRANS/2022/25 (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/318, para. 6)”.

(b) update paragraph 19 of the document with the main proposals included in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/6, if adopted, on working party’s contribution to ITC greenhouse emissions strategy.

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

A. Status of the Convention

14. 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

15. 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

16. 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/

2. eTIR

(a) eTIR international system: interconnection projects

17. Iran (Islamic Republic of) became the sixth country to interconnect its national customs system with the eTIR international system by installing and making ready the eTIR National Application developed by the secretariat. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are in the process of finalizing the requirements analysis projects that have been initiated, where national consultants have been hired using funds from the United Nations Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC) account. Considering also that India has already expressed interest to interconnect this year and that other four contracting parties in the region have already completed the interconnection,² the Working Party noted that there is possibility to have some eTIR corridors operational this year. Furthermore, the secretariat informed the Working Party that it will be able to hire an eTIR coordinator / customs expert, based on funds received by Islamic Development Bank, to accelerate the interconnection of certain Central Asian states with the eTIR international system, and that the project proposal was approved by ECE EXCOM.

(b) International TIR Data Bank

18. The Working Party welcomed the status report on the International TIR Data Bank (ITDB) and other ICT projects delivered by the secretariat. It was informed about the current status of data recordings and usage figures in ITDB (1,181 web application users, 30,263 authorized TIR Carnet holders, 295 customs stamps and seals records and 2,754 customs offices operational for TIR procedures). It was further informed about the recent achievements of the TIR secretariat, in particular of the finalisation of the eTIR National Application (NA) API and of the eTIR NA language support extension. It was also informed of the implementation of a proof of concept for the ITDB API to allow national customs systems to update TIR Carnet holder and customs office records via web services in response to a request from the Uzbek customs authorities, for which it mandated the secretariat to start tests with interested customs authorities. The Working Party was also informed about a request made by the IRU for the creation of a query mechanism that would allow the private sector applications to obtain correct customs office codes that is under discussion by the TIR Executive Board.

3. New developments in the application of the Convention

19. No new developments in the application of the convention were reported.

4. TIR-related electronic data interchange systems

20. The Working Party took note of the latest statistical data on the performance of contracting parties in the control system for TIR Carnets — SafeTIR system as contained in Informal document WP.30 (2024) No. 12.

5. Settlement of claims for payments

21. The Working Party took note of the current situation on the settlement of claims for payments made by customs authorities against national guaranteeing associations as contained in Informal document WP.30 (2024) No. 13.

6. Other matters

22. The Working Party at its previous session recalled that it had considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/3, which was prepared by the secretariat, that includes a consolidated and more concise version of the replies received from both the Customs Authorities and the National Associations on certificates of approval, with the aim to receive guidance from the Working Party on the possible next steps to be followed. The Working

² Azerbaijan, Georgia, Pakistan, Uzbekistan

Party acknowledged that, in some of the replies to the questions, considerable discrepancies existed between the replies of Customs Authorities and the National Associations.

23. Furthermore, the secretariat informed the Working Party that the digitalization of the Certification of Approval by means of a new module in ITDB requires significant business processes and legal clarifications from the contracting parties before its development can start, following an analysis by the TIRExB. For this reason, the secretariat suggested to the Working Party to prepare a survey for its approval at the next session, requesting from customs authorities all relevant information concerning those business processes and legal clarifications required.

24. The secretariat informed the Working Party that the issue at stake is not about the processes concerning the authorization of approval or the digitalization efforts at national level. The main challenge is about the life cycle of a certificate of approval, since from the moment it is published until the moment it expires, several changes might be introduced by several different stakeholders / Ministries, which might be difficult to be monitored, for instance in a module developed in ITDB.

25. The delegation of Uzbekistan mentioned that recently a digital platform was introduced by the Customs authority of Uzbekistan which will automatically generate all certificates of approval required and that the certificates can be verified online.

26. The Working Party, taking into account a proposal made by the secretariat requested the secretariat to prepare the draft survey that would assist in determining the business processes of the countries during the life cycle of a certificate of approval, for its consideration at its next session. It also invited the delegation of Uzbekistan to present the online platform concerning the electronic certificates of approval to the Working Party, especially the parts that deal with the life cycle of the certificates.

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

A. Status of the Convention

27. 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.³

B. Issues in the application of the Convention

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/4/Rev.1; ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/7; Informal document WP.30 (2024) No. 9

28. The Working Party recalled that, at its last session it considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/4, which includes the results of the 5-year survey on Annex 8 to the Harmonization Convention. The secretariat informed the Working Party that it had followed its request and directly contacted the delegates from those contracting parties that have not responded so far, to ensure that the survey was well received. The Working Party took note of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/4/Rev.1 which includes the additional replies received from the contracting parties without drawing any conclusions based on those replies.

29. The Working Party further recalled that, at its last session, it took note of information provided by the secretariat on the Sustainable Inland Transport Connectivity Indicators

³ www.unece.org/tir

(SITCIN) developed by the secretariat in the framework of a United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project with the support of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the participation of Georgia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Paraguay and Serbia. The Working Party considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/7 prepared by the secretariat for the Working Party to discuss and examine if these indicators could be used also for monitoring the implementation of the Harmonization Convention itself. The secretariat clarified that there is a set of 215 Sustainable Inland Transport Connectivity Indicators to provide a self-assessment tool offering a universal set of measurable criteria enabling countries to monitor their degree of inland transport connectivity, both domestically and bilaterally/sub-regionally as well as in terms of soft and hard infrastructure. The document prepared includes only those that are relevant to border crossing facilitation, and they were inspired by the Harmonization Convention .

30. The Working Party took also note of the remarks provided by the secretariat and some delegates on the future role of Harmonization Convention. There are some countries that have outperformed the provisions of the Harmonization Convention with their regional integration efforts and therefore it would make sense to amend the Convention based on those contracting parties' good practices, case studies etc. On the other hand, there are other contracting parties that just initiated their integration efforts where the Convention could have a role to play. In that context, the secretariat suggested that the AC.3 might reconvene after many years and discuss possible measures to increase the value of the convention. Those measures could include, inter alia, the preparation of a Harmonization Convention handbook enriched with case studies, good practices, explanatory notes and comments, as well as the online SITCIN tool for the evaluation of border crossing points. The European Union said that the indicators could lead to a measurement of the effects of the Harmonisation Convention but might bring additional administrative work for European Union member states. Furthermore, it added it was doubtful if all effects could be attributed to the Harmonisation Convention. Therefore, the Commission is currently doing internal checks to see if part of the data requested in SITCIN indicators for the Harmonization Convention might be extracted from the TAXUD Customs Union performance report.

31. The Working Party decided that it needs more time in order to reflect on those proposals and take a decision. It requested the secretariat to include these proposals in the agenda for consideration at its next session.

32. The Working Party welcomed a presentation made by the delegation of Uzbekistan on a project on the evaluation of Uzbekistan international border crossing points where the SITCIN indicators were used, as well as the efforts that are initiated based upon the outcome of the evaluation. The presentation will be uploaded on Working Party's web site.

33. The Working Party considered Informal document WP.30 (2024) No. 9, which was submitted by IRU addressing several challenges on visa facilitation for professional drivers. Visa issuance for professional drivers is largely subject to bilateral agreements on visas. Unlike seafarers, professional drivers do not enjoy special global arrangements for issuance of visas or international transport. In some countries, there is no specific visa category for professional drivers. The difficulties for professional drivers to obtain a visa is widely known and recognised, and consolidated action is urgently needed. The document suggests, among others, the creation of a dedicated multi-stakeholder Task Force within the Working Party to address visa-related challenges for professional drivers and a visa facilitation pilot project for TIR transport operators.

34. There were some delegates that supported the idea considering that visa issuance in their regions is a quite challenging and cumbersome procedure against trade and transport facilitation principles and it has to be addressed in a more systematic and holistic manner.

35. On the other hand, several delegates expressed the opinion that even though the facilitation of visa is being mentioned in the Harmonization Convention, issues regarding visa administration are being handled by Ministries of Internal Affairs, police and border guard authorities and it is not within the expertise or administered by the Customs authorities. In addition, it was stated that the Working Party should not address this topic, since it is not within its mandate and workplan. Further, concerns were raised about the proposed visa

facilitation for professional drivers when many contracting parties to the TIR Convention are not contracting parties to the Harmonization Convention.

36. Delegates interested in the topic requested the secretariat to explore all possibilities that exist in the framework of ITC intergovernmental bodies or in the United Nations system where a task force could be established in order to discuss the topic in a systematic manner, inviting all different experts required. The secretariat responded that it will, initially, address the Chair of the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5), and the Chair of the Working Party on Road Transport (SC.1) to identify if they would be interested in including this topic in their agendas for discussion in the near future. If there is no such possibility, then the secretariat will explore other possibilities within the United Nations system. The secretariat will then inform the Working Party accordingly.

37. The delegation of Belarus informed the Working Party about the challenges faced by passengers and transporters, due to the closure of most of their border crossing points with the European Union member states and called for the normalization of the functioning of those border crossing points. The full statement is reproduced in annex III of this report.

VII. 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

38. The Working Party recalled that Belarus became the second contracting party to the Convention after Chad, having signed (23 September 2022) and ratified (21 August 2023) the Convention.

39. The Working Party also took note that, in accordance with article 22(1), this Convention shall enter into force three months after the date on which five States have deposited their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval, or accession. Therefore, the convention is not yet into force.

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

A. Status of the Conventions

40. 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-one 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.⁴

B. Issues in the application of the Conventions

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/8; Informal document WP.30 (2024) No. 10

41. The Working Party recalled that, at its last session, it was informed that the first session of the ad hoc informal group of experts on digitalization of Carnet de Passages en Douane (CPD) took place on 14 December 2023. The experts that had attended the meeting, among other issues, requested transforming the ad hoc informal group of experts on digitalization of CPDs to a formal group of experts, ensuring sessions with interpretation and

⁴ www.unece.org/tir/tir-depositary_notification.html

translated documentation in the three ECE official languages. The Working Party requested the secretariat to prepare a document for its next session that includes the draft Terms of Reference (ToR) of such a formal group of experts, for consideration and possible adoption by the Working Party.

42. The Working Party considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/8 which includes the draft terms of reference of such a formal group of experts on the digitalization of the carnet des passages. However, decision regarding the adoption of these terms of reference was postponed for the next session of the Working Party because:

(a) the Group during the second session of the informal group requested the secretariat that the sessions of the formal group of experts to be, if possible, hybrid, meaning in person and online with parallel interpretation in the three official languages of UN ECE. The secretariat requested more time to identify if such an option could be feasible and if affirmative to amend the terms of reference accordingly,

(b) the Group during its second session decided that digitalization of CPDs should include not only the data that exists in the paper CPDs, but also the procedures that are being described in the Conventions as well as the whole life cycle of the CPDs, with the aim of further streamlining them, therefore, the draft terms of reference should be checked against this request and amended accordingly if needed.

43. The Working Party also took note of Informal document WP.30 (2024) No. 10 that includes the draft report of the second session of the ad hoc informal group of experts on the digitalization of CPDs that took place on 21 March, online. The Group decided that, in order to be able to consider the best solution for amending the conventions, it should first consider the scope of the administration of the future system, the scope of the electronic CPDs including sustainability of its system and its financing, and also the tasks that should be fulfilled by the contracting parties. The Group requested the secretariat to prepare such a document for its next session for consideration. Furthermore, the Group requested the secretariat to prepare a second document which would describe in as many details as possible the life cycle of the CPD and eCPD procedures for its consideration at the next session of the group. This was because the digitalization efforts should include not only the data that exists in the paper CPD but also the procedures that are being described in the Conventions further streamlining those procedures increasing security and transparency. Finally, the Group requested the secretariat to prepare a survey to be distributed, if possible, to all contracting parties to the temporary importation conventions for their input and feedback on their needs and requests concerning the digitalization of eCPDs.

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

44. There were no interventions under this agenda item.

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

45. The representative of the European Union informed the Working Party that Georgia is in the process of acceding to the Common Transit Convention and finalising the implementation of the New Computerized Transit System (NCTS), which could further facilitate the procedures at border crossing points between Türkiye and Georgia.

XI. Other business (agenda item 9)

A. Dates of the next session

46. The Working Party tentatively decided to hold the 167th session on 9 and 11 (a.m.) October 2024, subject to potential adjustments due to the ongoing United Nations liquidity crisis.

B. Restriction on the distribution of documents

47. 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

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

XII. Adoption of the report (agenda item 10)

49. The agreement of India and Iran (Islamic Republic of) to the report is confined to the agenda items related to the Conventions under ECE to which they are contracting parties, i.e. agenda items 3 and 6 for India and agenda items 3, 4 and 6 for Iran (Islamic Republic of).

50. In accordance with established practice, the Working Party adopted the report on its 166th session on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat.

Annex I**List of decisions taken at the 166th session of the Working Party**

<i>Reference in final report (para.)</i>	<i>Short description of decision</i>	<i>Actor</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
10	Prepare revised version of ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/6 following comments and proposals suggested including possible actions	Secretariat	Next Session
12	Prepare second revised to ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/1 applying changes to paras. 9 and 19	Secretariat	Next session
26	Prepare the draft survey that would assist in determining the business processes of the countries during the life cycle of a certificate of approval, for its consideration at its next session.	Secretariat	Next session
42	Prepare a revision of ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2024/8 on the draft ToR for formal group of experts on eCPDs based on comments provided during the session.	Secretariat	Next session

Annex II

Opening remarks

Thank you, Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it's my great pleasure to welcome you on behalf of UNECE. I do this in two capacities as the deputy executive secretary and also as acting director of transport division of UNECE. The executive secretary has assigned this really important task to me for the next few months. I look forward to working with all of you, with you, Mr. Chair, but also with the chairs and delegates of all other important subsidiary bodies of the Inland Transport Committee. However, I will tell you right away that I do not come to open every meeting under the ITC. Well, first of all, that would have meant that I only do that and nothing else, because they meet every day. But also because we need to prioritize and very honestly, TIR and eTIR is among the top issues of the Executive Secretary and myself. The TIR convention is probably one of the most famous conventions of UNECE. We call it a flagship. We really value the public good nature of this convention and the important job it has done over the decades. But there is no time for complacency or to just congratulating ourselves. It is very clear. We had the chance to discuss this with Mr. Chair, but also with several delegates over the past few days that the convention is in need of renewal, and it needs to be adapted to the times, realities of the market, realities of what is happening globally, both politically and economically. In this sense, it is very clear that the adoption of annex 11 already three years ago, was that very important step in that direction. It took decades to come to that point, and now it's taken us three years to move forward. We've done a lot in the past and interconnections are ongoing. We're very thankful to the member states that have found it possible to already interconnect. So, there are six member states and the IRU interconnected and I really would like to use this opportunity to call on all other parties to please consider interconnection to eTIR as an utmost priority. Needless to say, from the side of the Secretariat, we also need to up the game and to support you to the best of our capacity in the practical matters. And so here I also would like to express our openness to hear your views and your suggestions on where and how we should support you, on top of the already excellent work done by the TIR Secretariat in the section led by Kostas. Very importantly we need to be mindful that additional work under the TIR Secretariat does require additional funding and financing. That is why we welcome the discussion this morning in the administrative Committee, which I understand was quite rich. I have not yet heard about the outcomes of the discussion, but we definitely hope that a model will be found that allows us to maintain a stable level of support that is necessary for the functioning of the Secretariat, while additional resources can be made available to precisely increase the capacity support for the interconnection of eTIR and other urgent tasks. Of course, the Secretariat stands ready to work with the administrative committee, with TIRExB and with the global forum on all these tasks. If you require additional support from us, please do let us know. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Annex III

[Original: Russian]

Statement by Belarus*

Беларусь находится на стратегическом перекрестке общеевропейских транспортных коридоров «Запад-Восток» и «Север-Юг», что обеспечивает масштабные транзитные перевозки через ее территорию.

Начиная с апреля 2020 года соседние страны Евросоюза закрыли 9 из 14 автомобильных пунктов пропуска на белорусской границе. На пунктах пропуска, которые еще функционируют, ограничиваются проезд грузов и пассажиров, тем самым создаются очереди из автотранспорта как на выезд из Беларуси, так и на въезд. Эти очереди растягиваются на десятки километров, а время ожидания исчисляется уже не днями, а неделями.

Страдают обычные люди, водители грузовых автомобилей из разных стран, пассажиры рейсовых автобусов, не говоря про экологию, удорожание перевозок и стоимости перемещаемых товаров.

Логистический коллапс, создание искусственных препятствий на границе приводят к деформации транспортных коридоров. Нынешняя ситуация требует принятия срочных мер. Рано или поздно нам придется решать эту проблему. Надеемся, что здравый смысл возобладает, и мы сможем вместе двигаться к поиску выхода из проблемной ситуации.

Государственный таможенный комитет Республики Беларусь призывает наших европейских соседей к диалогу по нормализации транспортно-экономических связей в регионе и подтверждает свою готовность к переговорам по этому вопросу.

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