	Economic and Social Council	Distr. GENERAL ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2006/1 27 December 2005 ENGLISH ONLY

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

<u>Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport</u>
(One-hundred-and-twelfth session, 31 January-3 February 2006
agenda item 9 (b) (ii))

CUSTOMS CONVENTION ON THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT
OF GOODS UNDER COVER OF TIR CARNETS (TIR CONVENTION 1975)

REVISION OF THE CONVENTION

PREPARATION OF PHASE III OF THE TIR REVISION PROCESS

<u>Note by the secretariat</u>

A.   BACKGROUND

1.   At its eighth session, the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (further referred to as: "the Expert Group") mandated the secretariat to seek guidance from WP.30, by submitting a short document on the various options that would allow for the exchange of advance cargo information (TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2005/2, para. 12).

2.   This request was prompted by the fact that the Expert Group, when analyzing the results of the eTIR questionnaire, had noted that General Directors of Customs had expressed a strong interest with regard to real time information, advance cargo information and prior notification systems. In the course of the discussion on document TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2005/2, containing a

description of the future eTIR system, the Expert Group was of the opinion that the sub-chapter dedicated to advance cargo information not fully reflected this interest expressed by Director Generals of Customs in the questionnaire. After having discussed the issue at length, the Group could not reach agreement on how to either propose amendments to the existing sub-chapter or to draft a new sub-chapter. Therefore, it mandated the secretariat to seek guidance from the Working Party.

B.   PROPOSALS

3.   As elaborated in document TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2005/2, it is the main objective of the eTIR international database to centrally store information on guarantees, TIR transports and TIR operations. This information is available to Customs authorities without delay. However, in case the system would only be a repository of information, the issue remains outstanding as to how countries involved in the TIR transport become aware, prior to the arrival of a truck at the Customs office, that information on that transport is available to them.

4.   The Expert Group was of the opinion that there are two approaches in addressing this issue, by "pulling" or by "pushing" the information.

"Pull" approach

5.   Firstly, the so-called "pull" or "mailbox" approach, which basically consists of creating in the eTIR international system a mailbox for each Contracting Party. When information on a TIR transport is provided to the eTIR international system, the system will post a notification in the mailbox of the countries involved in the transport. For such a system to work, it is required that Customs regularly check their mailbox in order to know if new information is available to them.

"Push" approach

6.   The second approach would be that the international database, when it has received information on a TIR transport, sends a message directly to the Customs authorities' computer systems informing them that new information is available and, possibly, providing them with the information.

C.   ADVANTAGES AND INCONVENIENTS

7.   Both approaches allow Customs authorities to obtain advance information. However, the second approach is closest to real-time information exchange, whereas the mailbox approach has, de facto, a delay in the information exchange, since it depends on the frequency with which Customs authorities query the mailbox.

8.   Another aspect to be taken into account is the size of the central eTIR system that would allow for each of these approaches. Considering, on the one hand, that about 3'000'000 TIR transports are carried out each year and that each average TIR transport is composed of 4 TIR operations involving, on average, 4 countries, then the number of messages which would have to be sent each year to inform Customs authorities that new TIR transport information is available would be: 3'000'000 * 12 = 36'000'000 messages[1]. Envisaging, on the other hand, that, on top of the exchange of messages containing information, each Contracting Party using the TIR system (55 Countries) would query its mailbox every 5 minutes, this would mean that the central system should be capable of replying to 55 [Countries] * 288 [5 minutes periods in a day] * 365 [days in a year] $\approx$ 5'800'000 queries per year. In case Contracting Parties would query their "mailbox" every minute, in order to get closer to real time information, the number of queries would increase to almost 30 million.

9.   The above calculations are based on the assumption that only one national central point per country queries the eTIR international system and that queries are not sent by individual Customs offices. If all Customs offices would query the eTIR international system, then the number of queries to be answered could amount to billions.

10.   The major advantage of the mailbox-approach seems to be that countries, because they "pull" the information themselves, will not have to deal with unsolicited messages.

11.   A final issue for consideration concerns the possible links between the two approaches and the responsibilities in case of the dysfunction of the eTIR international system. This issue is twofold. On the one hand, technical problems can arise, despite high security measures, and impede the direct transmission of messages ("push" approach) as well as prevent countries from accessing their "mailbox" ("pull" approach). On the other hand, the information which is sent or which can be accessed, may be incorrect. As the issue of responsibilities is not directly linked to the approach taken, it will need to be addressed separately. Thus, it may be a topic for consideration by the Ad hoc Expert Group of Legal Experts.

---

[1] This calculation is made on the assumption that each Customs office involved in a TIR Operation updates the central database and that the eTIR international system would inform all the following countries involved in the TIR transport that new information is available.

	"Pull" approach	"Push" approach
Real-time information	Delayed	Real-time
Server size and bandwidth	Smaller	Bigger
Unsolicited messages	No	Yes
Responsibilities	to be defined	to be defined

Table 1. Summary of pros and cons of "pull" and "push" approaches

D.   CONCLUSIONS

12.   In the light of the arguments laid down above, the Working Party may wish to provide guidance to the Expert Group on which approach to follow in its future work.

- - - - -