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**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**

Report of the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure on its twenty–fourth session

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I. Attendance

1. The Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (further referred to as “the Expert Group”) held its twenty-fourth session on 25 and 26 September 2014 in Antalya (Turkey), at the kind invitation of the Ministry of Customs and Trade of the Republic of Turkey.

2. The session was attended by experts from Czech Republic, Finland, France, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Turkey. Experts from the European Commission (EC) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU) also attended the session. An expert from the Russian National Certification Centre delivered a presentation at distance using web conferencing software.

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 1 (2013)

3. The Expert Group adopted its provisional agenda as contained in Informal document GE.1 No. 1 (2014), and decided to discuss Informal document GE.1 No. 7 (2014) under agenda item 3.

III. Election of officers (agenda item 2)

4. The Expert Group elected Mrs. N. Özyazıcı Sunay from Turkey as Chair of the Expert Group for the year 2014 and Mr. P. Arsic from Serbia as Vice-Chair.

IV. New information and communication technology developments in the TIR system (agenda item 3)

5. IRU presented its continuous efforts to further computerize the private aspects of the TIR procedure. More specifically, IRU presented the latest developments of its CUTE-Wise, TIRCUTEweb and AskTIRweb, Real Time SafeTIR (RTS) and TIR-EPD (Electronic Pre-Declaration) applications as well as the intention to regroup the functionalities of those applications around three portals, i.e. a holder portal, an association portal and a customs portal. To date, twenty-nine countries accept pre-declarations made through TIR-EPD and eighteen countries transmit termination data using RTS. IRU also informed GE.1 that it has migrated most of its Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure to data centres of a large Swiss telecom company to increase the reliability and availability of its systems.

6. The Expert Group welcomed a French project to dematerialize attached documents and its positive contribution to the computerization process. It noted that the project forms part of a wider goal to develop a government-wide single window. The system has not only been developed to dematerialize government-issued documents, by means of establishing electronic connections with the entities responsible for issuing those document, but could, in the future, also connect to private archiving platforms, where commercial documents, such as the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) consignment notes or invoices, would be stored.

7. The Expert Group also took note of a presentation on the mutual recognition of electronic signatures delivered at distance by Mr. Aleksandr Sazonov (Deputy Director, Russian National Certification Authority). It noted that the use of trusted third party

services could allow circumventing the absence of recognition of certification authorities (CA) across borders. The Expert group decided to bear this in mind when considering agenda item 4.b on international declaration mechanisms.

V. Reference Model of the TIR procedure (agenda item 4)

A. Contributions by the network of eTIR focal points

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 2 (2014), Informal document GE.1 No. 3 (2014)

8. The Expert Group took note of Informal document GE.1 No. 2 (2014), in particular that thirty-one countries had nominated one or more eTIR focal points.¹

9. The Expert Group welcomed the revised roles and responsibilities of eTIR focal points as described in Informal document GE.1 No. 3 (2014). It took note that eTIR focal points had no further objections to the document and that the document would be submitted to WP.30 for endorsement in October 2014. It also reiterated the importance for those Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention that have not yet nominated an eTIR focal point, to do so at their earliest convenience.

B. International declaration mechanisms

10. The Expert Group welcomed the instructions by WP.30 regarding the international declaration mechanisms, in particular that the principle of a single TIR declaration in the country of departure should be respected and that the declaration mechanisms contained in the eTIR Reference Model should not be amended. Considering that safety and security data requirements have their own legal basis and in view of the difficulty in agreeing on common requirements, the WP.30 had also decided that, even though related to TIR transports, safety and security requirements should be left optional in the standard eTIR declaration (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/274, para. 15). In light of the above, the Expert Group confirmed that the E9 declaration message does not need to be further amended at this stage. When Contracting Parties would make specific modification requests or ask for the inclusion of new optional data elements, eTIR focal points or the Expert Group would assess those requests and deliver the appropriate recommendations to WP.30.

11. The Expert Group considered a proposal by Turkey to amend the E9 message by: (a) making total gross weight, consignee (name), consignor (name) and HS code mandatory and (b) including driver information (first and last name, nationality) as optional. It was of the view that since the Turkish request partly changes the current TIR data requirements, it should be considered both from a technical and conceptual perspective. Therefore, the Expert Group requested the secretariat to circulate the proposals to eTIR focal points for the sake of seeking their technical opinion. The views of eTIR focal points will then be transmitted to WP.30, which will consider if the eTIR data requirements should be changed in line with the Turkish proposal.

12. The Expert Group also discussed the use of a hash code to secure the integrity of the declaration data from the time it is sent to the country of departure until it is used by the office of final destination. The purpose of the hash code is to ensure that the data submitted by the holder is not altered when forwarded from the country of departure to all countries

¹ The list of eTIR focal points is on the eTIR web site: www.unece.org/trans/bcf/eTIR/focals.html.

involved in the TIR transport. Taking into account that the declaration can be sent in both United Nations Directories for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT) and eXtensible Markup Language (XML) formats, but that later exchanges between customs administrations are in XML only, the hash code cannot be calculated on the basis of the complete declaration message. Therefore, the Expert Group, acknowledging that an algorithm calculating a hash code solely on the data content is required, requested the secretariat to prepare a document proposing a format neutral hash code algorithm. Finally, the Expert Group requested the secretariat to seek the advice of eTIR focal points on the various issues related to the declaration mechanisms, i.e. the mutual recognition of electronic signatures, the hash code algorithm as well as the confirmation that some countries still need the UN/EDIFACT format for the E9 and E10 messages.

C. eTIR Reference Model, version 4.1a

13. The Expert Group approved version 4.1a of the eTIR Reference Model. It took note that the new eTIR messages, as well as the new XML Schema Definitions (XSDs) are now in line with version 3.5 of the World Customs Organization (WCO) data model. The Expert Group expressed its great appreciation for the extensive contributions by Mr. Hans Greven (Netherlands) in preparing the descriptions of the new eTIR messages. The Expert Group requested the secretariat to circulate version 4.1a of the eTIR Reference Model and the new XSDs among eTIR focal points before submitting them to WP.30.

14. Moreover, the Expert Group discussed the inclusion of a metadata class for the XML messages that would encompass all the required message routing information, equivalent to the UN/EDIFACT UNB (Interchange header) and UNH (Message header) segments. The Expert Group requested the secretariat to make a proposal for a sub-set of the attributes contained in the WCO Data Model Metadata class and circulate it among eTIR focal points for comments.

15. Furthermore, the Expert Group considered the need to select which attributes should be used from the core data types used in the eTIR data model. It mandated the secretariat to prepare a proposal to that extent and circulate it among eTIR focal points for comments.

16. Finally, the Expert Group decided that only the code lists that are specific to eTIR will be made available online for direct validation and that the responsibility regarding other code lists, such as those from UN/EDIFACT, would remain with the responsible agencies.

VII. Next steps (agenda item 5)

17. The Expert Group considered Informal document GE.1 (2014) No.5 and, on a general note, supported the main findings of its activities as summarized by the secretariat. However, the Expert Group requested the secretariat to amend certain parts of the document before submitting it to WP.30 for endorsement. In particular, the Expert Group was of the opinion that a more in-depth description of the structure of the eTIR Reference Model should be included. In addition, the recommendations from the Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) should be included in the recommendations to WP.30. With regard to the recommendation on the financing of the eTIR international system, some experts expressed the view that also other options should be explored. The Expert Group also requested to add the facilitation and support of pilots to the list of recommendations. Finally, the Expert Group requested the secretariat to include its current session into the general statistics as

well as to enumerate the various (Vice) Chairs that had successfully conducted the sessions of the Expert Group.

VIII. Other business (agenda item 6)

A. World Customs Organization activities

18. The Expert Group took note of the recent activities of the Data Model Project Team (DMPT), in particular its work towards the finalization of version 3.5 of the WCO Data model and the objective to provide a single standard for advance electronic information (incl. safety and security data requirements). It also took note of the outcome of the eATA meeting that took place in Brussels on 3 September 2014 and discussed similarities and differences of the eATA project with the eTIR project.

B. Other activities of interest

19. The Expert Group took note of the progress made with regard to the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project: “Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate border crossing, regional cooperation and integration”. In the ECE region, the gap analysis for Georgia, identifying the technical and legal obstacles in undertaking Customs-to-Customs (C2C) electronic exchange of transit data, has been finalized. Two other regional commissions (Economic Commission for Africa and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) have also finalized their gap analysis. The Expert Group took note that the first interregional expert group meeting will be organized in Geneva on 8 December 2014.

C. Date and place of next session

20. The Expert Group, considering that WP.30 first had to provide its comments on the latest version of the eTIR Reference Model, was not yet in a position to agree on a date for its next session. It requested the secretariat to propose dates to the participants when the need for a next meeting would arise but, in any case, not before the February 2015 session of WP.30.
