

Opening Statement
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“Implementation of the eTIR international system in the ESCWA region”
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Dear delegates, dear colleagues,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to this virtual Workshop on behalf of the EuroMed Transport Support Project.

The EuroMed Transport Support Project (ETSP) is a European Union funded regional project, supporting Southern Mediterranean Countries implement the regulatory aspects of the Regional Transport Action Plan 2014-2020 for the Mediterranean region.

Seven countries, members of ESCWA, are beneficiaries of the project: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia.

The project started in January 2017 and will end in December 2022, and is the continuation of a previous project, the EuroMed Road Rail Urban Transport, that was successfully implemented for 5 years, from 2012 to 2016. Both projects developed by a Consortium led by Suez Consulting and our team.

This offered us the unique opportunity and privilege of an uninterrupted continuation of efforts in cooperation with the distinguished officials and experts from EuroMed Partners, during the last 9 years, and Good’s willing, 2 years and perhaps even 3 more years to go, if the project will be finally prolonged by one year more, as planned.

The project is organized around two main Components: Component 1: Harmonization in road transport sector, and 2: Urban Transport.

The road transport component, includes the following priorities: Promotion of international legal instruments; Improvement of road safety; Assistance to develop Intelligent Transport Systems; Promotion of professionalization of road freight companies and drivers; and Development of National Strategies for improving land transport

It is therefore not by chance that our project considered ECE, ESCWA and IRU as its strategic partners from the early stage.

In 2015 jointly with ECE and IRU we have identified 13 most important UN legal instruments on road transport in order to focus our assistance to EuroMed Partners, in which obviously the TIR and the Harmonization Conventions were included.

During the past years and in cooperation with the ECE, ESCWA and IRU, a number of TIR workshops were organized by our project in all EuroMed partner countries. The last was held

in Lebanon in April last year, with the participation also of Palestinian and ECE, ESCWA and IRU experts.

Through these events, we have been able to inform experts of the concerned national authorities and the transport operators, on the main TIR objectives, principles, and pillars as well as on the key provisions and governance, and discuss the status of the implementation of the TIR in the region and main challenges.

The accession of Palestine to the TIR Convention, is considered among the highlights of our project.

The forthcoming accession of Egypt to the TIR, being the last Partner country of our project to accede to it, is a remarkable development with high relevance in the ESCWA region.

A general conclusion is that while TIR is well known in EuroMed region as an essential facilitator of international transport of goods, and with the accession of Egypt all EuroMed countries will be Contracting Parties to it, it is still underutilized.

Upon the request of Morocco and Tunisia a focused study was undertaken by our project to find out the reasons of the underutilization of the TIR. I will have the opportunity to report to you on the results of this study tomorrow.

The focus of our work in the next years will remain in upgrading road transport performance and in promoting cross-border transport and international haulage in the region (Stop).

With the eTIR International system in place and the accession of a number of Arab countries to the TIR, we believe that we are in front of a new era of the TIR system in the region, and therefore the organization of this workshop is considered pertinent and timely.

I wish for a successful workshop
