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Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure

Report of the informal ad hoc expert group on conceptual and technical aspects of computerization of the TIR procedure on its seventeenth session (8–9 March 2010)

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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 seventeenth session on 8–9 March 2010 in Helsinki at the kind invitation of the Finnish National Board of Customs.
2. The session was attended by experts from Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden, Turkey and Ukraine as well as from the European Union (EU). An expert from the International Road Transport Union (IRU) also attended the session.

II. Adoption of the agenda (Agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2010/1

3. The Expert Group adopted its provisional agenda as contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2010/1 with the inclusion of Informal Documents GE.1 No.1 (2010) under item 3(a) of the agenda.

III. Election of officers (Agenda item 2)

4. The Expert Group elected Mr. Predrag Arsic from Serbia as chair of the Expert Group for the year 2010 and Mrs. Nurcan Özyazıcı from Turkey as vice-chair.

IV. Reference model of the TIR procedure (Agenda item 3)

A. New information and communication technology developments in the TIR system

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 1 (2010)

5. The Expert Group conducted this part of the session by means of a set of presentations delivered by various participants, covering recent national and international developments to facilitate the electronic submission of declarations to Customs, as well as the electronic management of TIR related information from the perspective of both the public and the private sector. All presentations are available on the UNECE website (<http://border.unece.org>).
6. The presentations on the declaration mechanisms for transport operators to submit their declarations stressed the existing divergence of national requirements and called for the need of global standardization of the eTIR data requirements across all Contracting Parties of the TIR Convention. The presentations made clear that, even though standard web applications provide a useful tool to small and medium enterprises (SME) to provide the required data to Customs, the use of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) technologies, based on standard United Nations/Electronic Data Interchange For Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT) or Extensible Markup Language (XML) messages, is required to significantly facilitate the submission of information by companies with high transport volumes, whose internal data management has already been computerized.

7. As part of their presentation, the Finnish authorities introduced Informal document GE.1 No. 1 (2010), providing a comparison between the eTIR system and the New Computerised Transit System (NCTS) with regard to the design of the E9 and IE15 declaration messages. The comparison highlighted, on the one hand, the many similarities which exist between the messages but pinpointed, on the other hand, the few differences which still would need to be addressed before NCTS applications could accommodate eTIR declarations. In doing so, it would also be ensured that NCTS would better reflect the latest developments of the World Customs Organization (WCO) transit data model (version 3), which serves as basis for the eTIR messages.

8. With regard to the electronic management of TIR related information by Customs and the guarantee chain, the various presentations showed that both sides have already largely computerized their parts of the TIR procedure. Thus, it is mainly the exchange of TIR related data between the various actors which still requires further development. Two presentations specifically highlighted the growing necessity for Customs authorities to exchange electronic TIR data among themselves (C2C). It appeared that some Contracting Parties have already started C2C pilot projects based on a number of bilateral agreements in order to circumvent the absence of an international platform allowing for the exchange of electric information between Customs and in the absence of the required amendments to the TIR Convention to provide the legal basis for the secure C2C information exchange. Despite their limited scope, the Expert Group welcomed such developments, as they may provide a potential basis for the introduction of future interfaces between national IT systems and the eTIR international system.

9. In conclusion, the Expert Group welcomed the many information and communication technology (ICT) developments which are being undertaken within the framework of the current paper based TIR procedure, but, at the same time, established that the key strategic elements to ensure full computerization of the TIR procedure are still missing. Thus, it confirmed the validity of the eTIR project, as it particularly addresses these elements.

B. Chapter 3 – Analysis

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2010/2

10. The Expert Group welcomed the final version of Chapter 3 of the eTIR Reference Model, contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2010/2, and took note of the amendments brought to the messages thanks to the kind assistance of Mr. Hans Greven from the Dutch Customs authorities, thus ensuring full alignment with version 3 of the WCO transit data model. Taking into account that there were no further comments on the content of Chapter 3, the Expert Group requested the secretariat to circulate the adopted text one last time through the newly created network of eTIR focal points for comments before submitting an update of the eTIR Reference Model, including Chapter 3, to the WP.30 for endorsement.

C. Chapter 4 – Design

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2009/4; ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2010/3

11. The Expert Group welcomed document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2010/3 presented by the Government of the Netherlands. Despite the fact that the document contains the implementation of just two messages and limits itself to the UN/EDIFACT Message Implementation Guidelines (MIG) only, it provides a realistic idea of the extent of work which will need to be accomplished before the technical documentation can be

finalized. At the same time, considering that Chapter 4 will closely follow the analysis of Chapter 3, no new or additional conceptual inputs should be required. The Expert Group confirmed the opinion, expressed at its sixteenth session, that input from external experts will be required to ensure completion of the technical documentation. The secretariat was requested to explore various options how to achieve this goal.

V. Financial implications of the national implementation of eTIR (Agenda item 4)

12. The Expert Group when revisiting the issue of the questionnaire on the financial implications of the national implementation of eTIR, was of the view that, in the light of the ongoing developments of Customs IT systems at the national level, the few preliminary results received so far – though at times very detailed and useful – might have lost some of their relevance. In addition, the Expert Group generally questioned the usefulness of gathering information on investments at the national level in the framework of the eTIR project and decided to seek guidance from WP.30 on this aspect of its mandate. At the same time, the Expert Group mandated the secretariat to investigate the financial aspects related to the development and the maintenance of the eTIR international system, both in terms of costs and financing options. With regard to financing the project, the secretariat referred to the “fee for use” principle as a possible option. This could take the form of an administrative fee per TIR transport which should not exceed the printing and handling costs per TIR Carnet. All parties involved in the eTIR project were kindly invited to actively contribute to this discussion, both in the Expert Group as well as in WP.30.

VI. Other business (Agenda item 5)

A. World Customs Organization transit data model

13. No additional information regarding the WCO transit data model was brought to the attention of the Expert Group.

B. Other activities of interest

14. No other activities were brought to the attention of the Expert Group.

C. Date and place of next session

15. The Expert Group agreed not to fix the dates of its next session and decided for the time being to continue its deliberations at distance. It asked the secretariat to circulate information and documents through the newly created network of eTIR Focal Point and to propose a date for the eighteenth session when plenary discussions would again become necessary.
