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30 April 2020

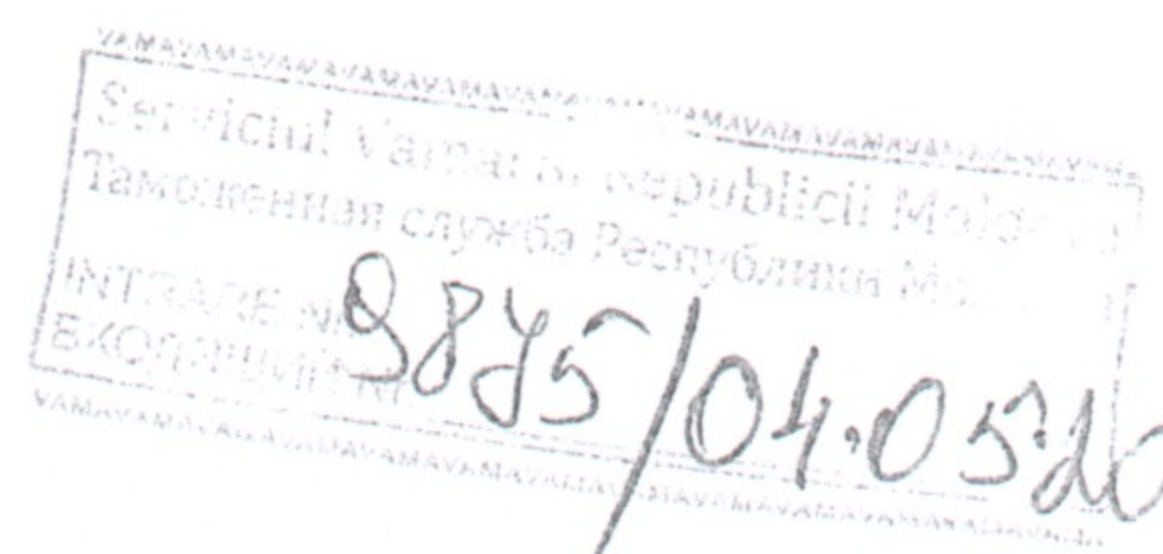
Dear Mr. Burduja,

I take the liberty of addressing myself to you in these challenging times for all of us, where the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus continues to structurally hamper our lives and economies, to transmit to you, at the request of the international transport sector, a letter by the International Road Transport Union (IRU), asking that you temporarily accept certificates of approval of TIR trucks even after their expiry and that you will allow transport companies to present a print@home version of a TIR Carnet, rather than insisting on a genuine paper TIR Carnet, due to the reasons and under the strict conditions carefully explained by IRU in its letter. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) supports the proposals made by IRU, but fully understands that only governments are competent to endorse and implement them. Regarding the use of print@home, it is necessary to clarify that it was used between Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Turkey on the basis of an eTIR pilot project with a limited scope, that is to say for only a limited number of companies and a limited number of customs offices.

Although, of course, it goes without saying that the TIR system is based on the strict application of the legal provisions of the TIR Convention, these exceptional times ask for exceptional measures and exceptional tolerance from all of us in order to ensure a slow but steadily return of road and intermodal transport to a beginning of normality. In the meantime, UNECE is also doing its utmost to collaborate with you to start deploying pilot eTIR applications as soon as possible.

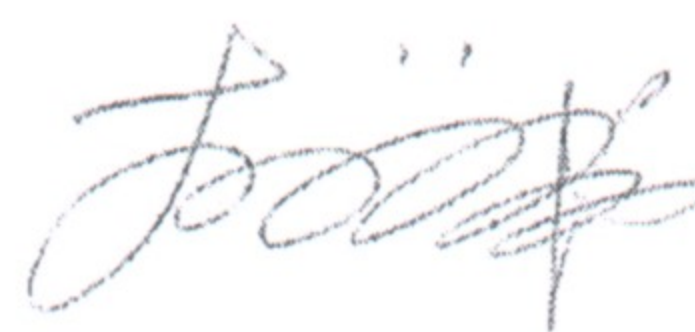
For the sake of transparency for all stakeholders in the TIR system, I would appreciate if you could inform the UNECE secretariat by return of email (to konstantinos.alexopoulos@un.org) if you can accept these exceptional measures so that IRU can inform its transporters accordingly.

Mr. S. Burduja
Director General of Customs
Ministry of Finance
Chisinau



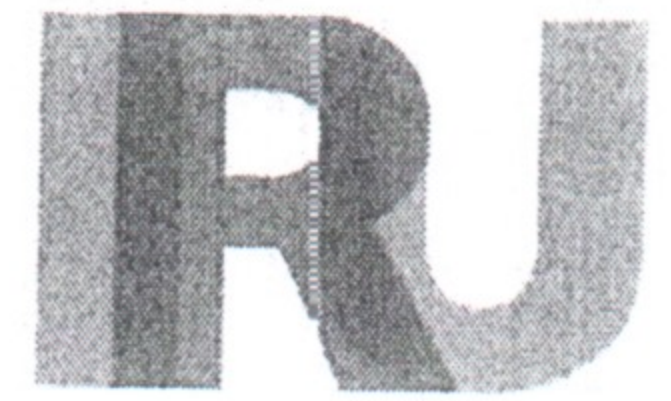
Finally, allow me to use this opportunity to bring to your attention a flyer, jointly prepared by UNECE and IRU, with recommendations how the TIR system (including eTIR) can contribute to facilitating the crossing of borders in the age of COVID-19:
<https://wiki.unece.org/display/CTRBSBC/Observatory+on+Border+Crossings+Status+due+to+COVID-19+Home?preview=/101548159/101553354/TIR%20during%20COVID-19-UNECE.pdf>

Yours sincerely,



Mr. Yuwei Li
Director
Sustainable Transport Division

Mr Yuwei Li
Director
Sustainable Transport Division
United Nations Economic Commission for
Europe (UNECE)
Palais des Nations
1211 - GENEVE 10
Switzerland



By email and post

AD/GE1047990/TRB

Geneva, 16 April 2020

COVID-19 - Urgent measures to address the impact on essential goods transport

Dear Mr Li,

As the COVID-19 outbreak continues, urgent measures are needed to mitigate its impact on supply chains, ensuring that the transport of essentials such as food and medical items is maintained in the safest way possible for transport operators and citizens, whilst respecting the latest relevant government guidelines.

IRU is doing its utmost to alleviate the issues encountered by transport operators during this difficult time. I have outlined some of these issues due to the imposed restrictions in different countries as follows:

- blockage of TIR carnets en route, especially intermodal routes, where TIR carnets are sent by post from port to port (in particular the route between India – Iran – Afghanistan – Central Asia);
- difficulties in receiving/picking up original TIR carnets due to the physical interaction required;
- delays in delivery times because of the cancellation of flights (notably, the TIR association in Tajikistan is running short of TIR carnet stock, while Austrian operators are experiencing delays in receiving TIR carnets by post from their association; IRU expects to face more problems with delivering TIR carnets to all destinations as long as the COVID-19 related restriction measures are applicable);
- difficulties in obtaining new approval certificates for vehicle fleets or renewing approval certificates (in particular Turkish and European operators are affected).

IRU is looking for ways to provide help and facilitation to TIR associations and to TIR transport operators in order to allow them to overcome these challenges. We propose that the UNECE, TIR contracting parties and the private sector jointly address the above mentioned issues and propose two rapid solutions:

- the extension of the validity of the vehicle approval certificates for 6 months;

- the use of the print@home TIR carnets.

Certificate of vehicle approval

It is quite often the case that transport operators face difficulties in either obtaining new approval certificates for their vehicle fleet or renewing their current approval certificates. This results in putting the vehicle fleet on hold bringing further financial losses, potentially even leading to bankruptcy. To address effectively the handling of the vehicle approval certificates, we kindly ask you to support the following extraordinary measures in the context of the current COVID-19 circumstances, bringing much needed improvements:

- to request the customs authorities of TIR contracting parties to automatically prolong the validity of vehicle approval certificates for 6 months if possible electronically. Furthermore, it is proposed that the last date on which the certificate of vehicle approval can be accepted should correspond to 6 months after the current validity date of the certificate;
- this prolongation should be made either by the customs authorities in the country of registration of the vehicle, or by foreign customs authorities provided the vehicle is compliant with the requirements set in the TIR Convention;
- to request the competent authorities of TIR contracting parties to ensure as large as possible a network of specialised units to deal with vehicle approval certificates on their territories and to inform national associations accordingly;
(Please note, in certain countries such units are mainly limited to either one central point, or very few points where the vehicle approval can be dealt with. This makes it difficult for transport operators to comply and necessitates travelling potentially long distances for that purpose)
- to recommend the use of electronic means to handle vehicle approval certificates to avoid the congestion of vehicles waiting at the authorised customs units able to deal with them, thus facilitating the procedure as much as possible.

Use of print@home

IRU proposes that customs authorities accept TIR carnets printed out by the TIR holder or his/her representative, duly accompanied by the exchange of electronic messages ("print@home" version of the TIR carnets - hereinafter "print@home").

Print@home has already been used in the bilateral corridors and carried out between Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Turkey, and between Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Azerbaijan in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the UNECE and IRU in the field of the computerisation.

Print@home is to be handled in exactly the same way as the original yellow TIR carnets. Articles 48 and 49 of the TIR Convention, can be considered the legal basis for such a temporary facilitation.

The use of print@home will not imply any liability to customs authorities, nor imply further liabilities to the holder. The provisions of the TIR Convention will continue to be applied in the same manner as they are today. To this end, the global insurance certificate provided by the concerned TIR association to the national competent authority shall also cover, for the same guarantee coverage as the one provided for the TIR carnets, the liabilities of the association in connection with the related TIR operation.

Print@home is a secure measure because:

- it will be issued by IRU and TIR associations from a central digital platform;

- it will only be generated following the TIR-EPD submitted by the TIR carnet holder;
- only active and authorised TIR carnet holders or their representatives can use TIR-EPD to create and to submit advance cargo information;
- it will be presented to all customs offices in the declared itinerary;
- it should be stamped by customs authorities;
- customs authorities control its correctness (holder, validity, etc) directly through the related web services implemented in their customs system, or in the IRU Customs Portal;
- the TIR operation, including associated events such as exit, release for transit and termination, can be followed by customs authorities through the related web services implemented in their customs system, or in the IRU Customs Portal.

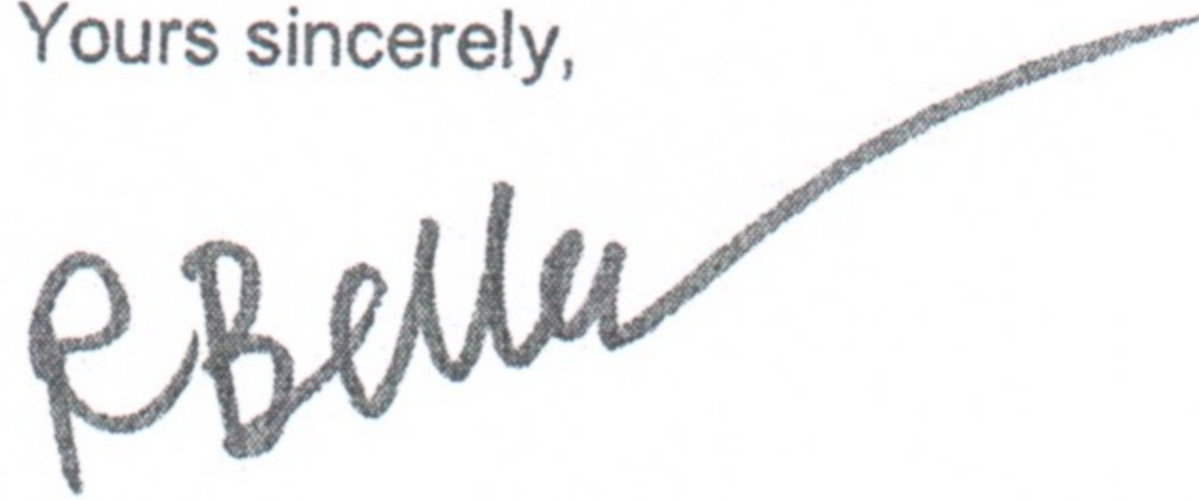
Please note that for the countries where TIR-EPD is not implemented, the use of the IRU Customs Portal can be temporarily allowed for the handling of TIR-EPD replies.

IRU requests the UNECE to support the initiative of the temporary use of the print@home solution to help TIR transport operators, in particular those operating in the following countries and regions: Afghanistan, India, Iran, Turkey, European countries and Central Asia.

Such a facility could be used during the COVID-19 pandemic, at the discretion of the related contracting parties.

I highly value our joint intention to talk to contracting parties with one voice, and I therefore look forward to hearing your opinion on the proposed temporary measures, and indeed the best way to communicate it to the targeted contracting parties.

Yours sincerely,



Tatiana Rey-Bellet
Director - TIR & Transit