

Report of IRU activities in CAREC region

TIR related activities

IRU's aim has always been to remove trade barriers between countries and regions. TIR – a customs transit and guarantee system enabling goods to flow easily, securely and reliably across borders – has been responding to the need for a multilateral, mutually recognised trade facilitation tool since it was created by IRU in 1949. Over the last 70 years, TIR has developed into the only globally applicable international customs transit and guarantee system.

TIR IN China

Making history China's launching of TIR operations in 2018 presented significant growth opportunities for the road transport sector in the region. Since then, TIR transports have become one of the cornerstones of China's Belt and Road initiative as the country seeks to further increase trade by ramping up secure interconnectivity. In April 2019, the first TIR transport was performed from an inland point of departure in China to Russia. It marked both trade and historical milestones by taking place in the same year as the 70th anniversary of the TIR system and the forging of diplomatic relations between China and Russia. With China and Russia signing a new international road transport agreement, transport operators can now freely access each other's territories in the two countries and select routes according to business needs. They can also transport goods without transshipments, which has resulted in journeys that are as fast as air transport, but up to 10 times cheaper. Following the 2017 strategic agreement between the China customs authorities and IRU to collaborate on the promotion of building international logistics corridors as well as implementing TIR across China, in June 2019 China opened 1,235 customs offices for TIR. Indicative that China continues to open its markets, the move is pivotal in connecting China to Central Asia, West Asia, Russia and Europe

TIR in Afghanistan

Cross-regional links were forged by the introduction of TIR at Chabahar Port, facilitating the first Afghanistan-Iran-India transport corridor. Offering connectivity for landlocked countries and drawing on intermodal capabilities, the establishment of new TIR corridors passing via Iranian ports also serves to activate the International North-South Transport Corridor, which connects India to Russia, Central Asia, and eventually, Europe. The first TIR operation from Nemroz in Afghanistan via Iran to India successfully saw 23 containers shipped under the TIR procedure from Afghanistan to Chabahar Port and onto the Indian ports at Mumbai and Mundra. Marking the first time that a TIR transport terminated in India, the Chabahar Agreement under TIR established a new reliable intermodal access route for regional trade.

TIR in Central Asia

A pilot TIR operation was conducted along the KTAI corridor, which is a corridor initiated by the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) between Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. This first successful pilot from Bandar Abbas (Iran) to Tajikistan via Afghanistan opened the KTAI corridor under TIR. The corridor offers the shortest possible route between Iran and Kyrgyzstan, with TIR saving up to five days on the usual transit time.

Following this successful TIR pilot operation from Iran to Tajikistan via Afghanistan, the ECO approved an action plan to improve the required soft and hard infrastructure along the new

Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) and Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) corridors. This will include the roll-out of eTIR and visa procedure harmonisation, with the introduction of one-year multiple entry visas for TIR drivers. “The results of the ECO-IRU studies highlight the importance of keeping pace with new technologies and using eTIR to ensure a faster and more secure exchange of information regarding the carriage of goods across the ECO region.” – Dr Hadi Soleimanpour, Secretary General, ECO.

IRU continued digitalisation of TIR transport in the region. The first eTIR transport between Iran and Azerbaijan was successfully conducted. This milestone eTIR transport – supported by IRU members ICCIMA, the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, and ABADA, the Azerbaijan International Road Carriers Association, as well as the respective Iranian and Azerbaijani Customs administrations – was a resounding success.

Furthermore, in cooperation with our development partners, the technical adjustments of TJK / KGZ customs systems for TIR-EPD and eTIR were undertaken in 2019.

TIR’s potential in combating illicit cross-border trade has been recognised by Kazakhstan. Local authorities issued Order no. 619 prioritising TIR transports at Kazakh borders, including through TIR-EPD Green Lanes. A tried and tested facilitator of safe and legal goods transport, the TIR system likewise benefits the trade security and economy of Kazakhstan’s neighbours and sets a precedent for customs administrations throughout Eurasia.

The continued development of routes along the ancient Silk Road will boost global trade. Countries of Central Asia have even explored new sustainable routes linking them with China. Uzbek transport operators have been testing three routes between China and Uzbekistan. Notably, six trucks drove from Termez, Uzbekistan, through Tajikistan and on to the final destination of Kashgar, China, to test the overall efficiency and performance of transports along the corridor, and to see how current border processes and infrastructure would work. Discussions for the ongoing roll-out of TIR transports in the territory continued at the first Caspian Economic Forum held in Turkmenistan in August 2019.

Projects supported by IRU in CAREC region

ABADA IRU member association in Azerbaijan put in place an upgraded training environment delivering the Certificate of Professional Competence Manager (CPCM) programme. Next is to make driver training mandatory in order to increase know-how and advance knowledge of, and across, the sector.

In Mongolia IRU member association increased capacity for training, services and TIR operator support through the acquisition of a home office; create online learning centres in a minimum of five provinces; strengthen training activities across branches in 21 provinces; and develop transport information logistic network and software. NARTAM has opened nine online training centres so far and is in the process of developing a transport information logistic software and network, as well as mobile applications and online testing programmes across its branches. As a result, NARTAM was awarded the sole regional rights to train professional and consulting engineers. Next is to expand distance learning facilities.

There is a project underway by AIRCUZ, IRU member association in Uzbekistan on development of training centre to strengthen and promote eTIR, eCMR and additional member services.

Activities planned and underway in 2020

Continued digitalisation of the TIR system, in particular to mitigate the impact of Covid-19, is at the top of IRU's agenda in 2020. Following the adoption of Annex 11 of the TIR Convention by the TIR Administrative Committee, IRU is working closely with TIR contracting parties and its development partners to move towards eTIR projects, in particular in South, West and Central Asia.

Implementation of TIR IT tools in ASYCUDA (customs system) is underway in Afghanistan and Turkmenistan in cooperation with development partners.

IRU is working closely with public and private sectors in the Chabahar corridor to make the corridor fully TIR digital in 2020.

Uzbek and Kazakh customs are also interested in undertaking eTIR pilot transports in 2020. In this respect, IRU, in cooperation with its members in both countries and development partners, are coordinating the necessary actions.

To improve TIR transport and transit in Uzbekistan, a high-level video conference has been organised with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Transport and Customs of Uzbekistan on 1 July 2020 to discuss different issues including eTIR implementation in Uzbekistan.

To activate the Pakistan-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan corridor under the TIR system, IRU and ADB are organising a virtual TIR workshop on 9 July 2020 between the three TIR national associations and TIR transport operators to discuss how to develop a business model for transport and transit in this corridor.

IRU is also working with development partners to organise a TIR Train the Trainer programme for public and private sectors, including customs officers in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.

For more information, refer to to <https://www.iru.org/what-we-do/facilitating-trade-and-transit/tir>