

The Harmonization Convention

Key principles

Lebanon National Workshop on TIR & Harmonization Conventions

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The problem

On some major routes:

- 57 % of transport time is lost at border crossings
- 38 % of transport costs are due to unofficial levies
- Long waiting times at borders result in major human suffering for drivers blocked in queues for hours/days
- Harmful impact on the environment
- Border waiting times cost billions annually => increasing the cost of goods for the end consumer and lost business opportunities.

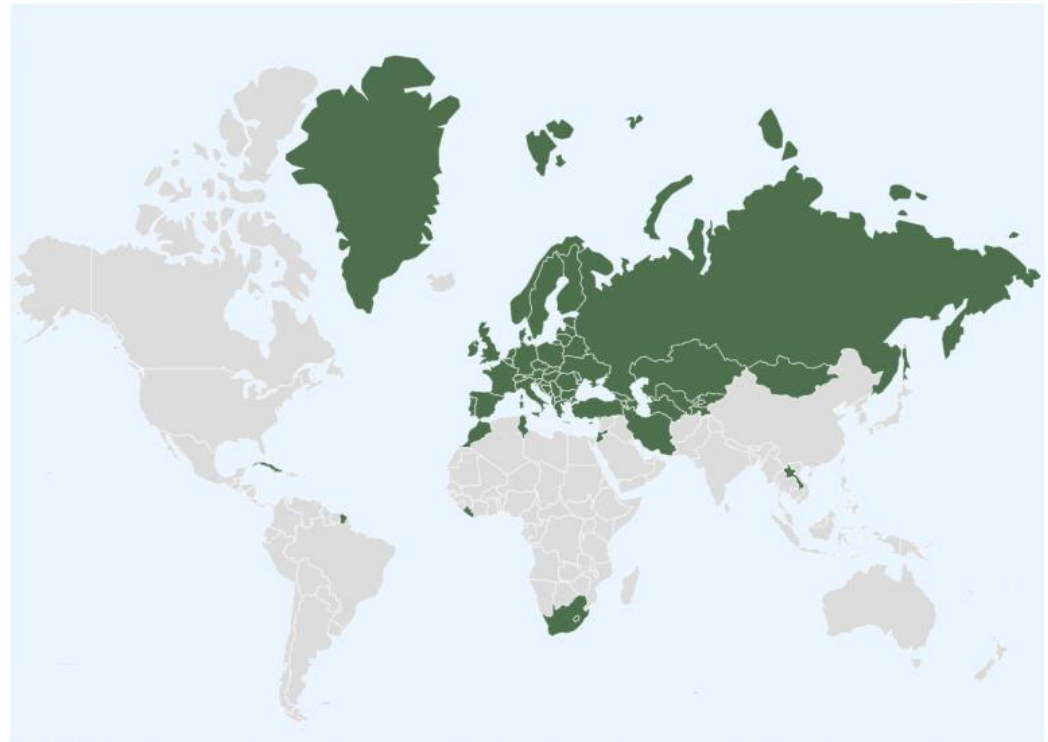
Border crossing facilitation is:

- Key to international trade, exports and imports
- Essential for growth and competitiveness
- A driver of regional integration



The Harmonization Convention, 1982

- International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods
- 58 Contracting Parties
- Latest accessions: Morocco, Turkmenistan
- Expressed interest to join: China, Pakistan



International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 21 October 1982

Objective and Scope

To facilitate cross border transport of goods through nationally coordinated, internationally harmonized, shorter, reduced formalities and controls of goods at borders

It covers:

- All goods moved across borders (exported, imported or in transit)
- All control services
- All modes of transport
- Specific provisions for certain transport modes and goods
- Also addresses certain issues with regard to vehicles and drivers



Main characteristics

The Convention provides a framework that enables:

- Harmonization of formalities
- Reduction of the number and duration of controls
- Standardization of documentation
- Co-ordination of national and international control procedures

Leading to :

- Reduction of border delays
- Reduction of transport cost
- Reduction of trade transaction cost
- Reduction of border operating costs for State budget
- More efficient investments in border facilities

Structure

- Chapter I: General provisions incl. definitions
- Chapter II: Harmonization of procedures
 - Co-ordination of controls
 - Resources of the services
 - International co-operation
 - Co-operation between adjacent countries
 - Exchange of information
 - Documents
- Chapter III: Goods in transit
- Chapter IV: Miscellaneous
- Operational annexes

Main aspects for border crossing facilitation

- Infrastructure
- Procedures
- Documents and information
- Personnel

Infrastructure

- Necessary equipment and facilities at frontier points
- Common facilities and shared use of equipment, both domestically and with neighbor countries
- **To the extent possible, controls should be moved from the border to other locations (e.g. departure or destination)**
- **At border crossing points, controls should be replaced by verification of internationally standardized documentation**

National and international coordination

- **Joint controls** (domestic and international)
- Delegation of authority
- Conclusion of additional bilateral or multilateral agreements (if necessary)

Documents and information

- Internationally standardized (UN Layout Key) documents and certificates
- Use of technical/commercial documents
- Use of ICT
- Exchange of information
- Transparency with respect to legislation, regulations and procedures

Personnel

- Qualified personnel in sufficient numbers should be available
- Officers should get instructions for acting in accordance with international agreements and national provisions
- Joint controls
- Delegation of functions

Annex 1

Harmonization of Customs controls and other controls

- Organization of controls (simultaneous control, opening hours, availability of facilities and personnel, delegation to Customs)
- Communicate result of controls

Annex 2

Medico-sanitary inspection

- Protection of life and health of persons
- Information (types of goods, offices, requirements)
- Organization of controls (availability of facilities, storage)
- Goods in transit and co-operation

Annex 3

Veterinary inspection

- Transport of animals and animal products
- Information (types of goods, offices, requirements)
- Organization of controls (availability of facilities, storage, working hours)
- Goods in transit and co-operation

Annex 4

Phytosanitary inspection

- Relating to transport of plants and plant products
- Information (types of goods, offices, requirements, restrictions/prohibitions)
- Organization of controls (storage, disinfection, working hours)
- Goods in transit and co-operation

Annex 5

Control of compliance with technical standards

- Relating to technical standards of goods (conformity, PSI)
- Information (types of goods, offices)
- **Harmonization of standards**
- Organization of controls
- Goods in transit and co-operation

Annex 6

Quality Control

- Information (offices, procedures)
- Organization of controls (facilities, working hours)
- Does normally not apply for goods in transit
- Co-operation

Annex 7

Rules of Procedure of the Administrative Committee

- Members: Contracting Parties
- Meets at dates fixed by the Committee but at least once every five years or at the request of at least 5 States

11th session of the Administrative Committee of the Harmonization Convention (AC.3) Thursday 13 June 2019 (Geneva)

- Quorum consisting of not less than one third of the States which are Contracting Parties
- Serviced by the ECE secretariat
- If an objection to a proposed amendment has been communicated to the SG of the UN, the amendment shall be deemed not to have been accepted and shall have no effect whatsoever.
- Languages of the convention: English, French, Russian and Spanish

Annex 8

Facilitation of border crossing procedures for international road transport

- Facilitation of visa procedures for professional drivers
- Information on border control requirements, in force and planned
- Vehicle inspection by means of acceptance of the **International Technical Inspection Certificate**
- **International Vehicle Weight certificate**
- Organization of border crossing points
- Biennial survey on progress in implementation

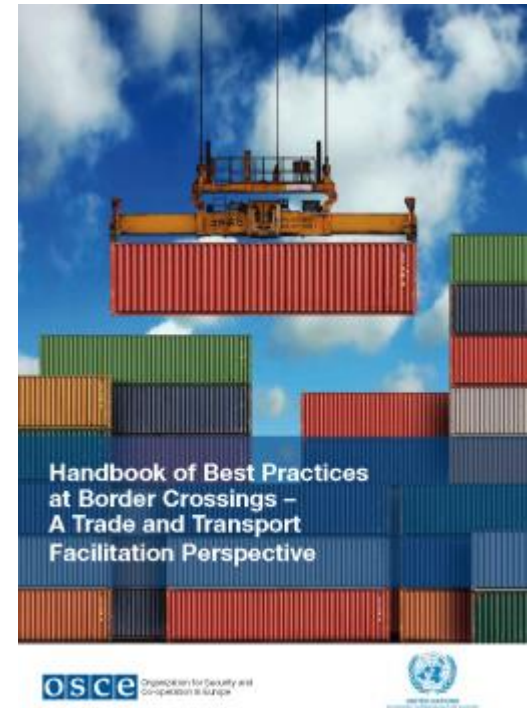
Annex 9

Facilitation of border crossing procedures for international rail freight

- Granting of visas for crews, accompanying persons and staff at border interchange stations
- Organization of border interchange stations
- Cooperation between adjacent countries at border interchange stations
- Controls
- Time limits
- Reduction of paper documents and increased use of electronic systems to exchange information
- Use of CIM/SMGS railway consignment note as customs document.

Handbook of Best Practices at Border Crossings

- Reference material and more than 120 best practice examples at border crossings.
- It covers available legal instruments, inter-agency and international co-operation, balancing security and facilitation measures, processing of freight, risk management, design of border crossing points, use of ICT technologies, human resource management and benchmarking.
- Available at
http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/bcf/publications/OSCE-UNECE_Handbook.pdf



References

- Harmonization Convention
 - <https://www.unece.org/trans/bcf/welcome.html>
 - https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XI-A-17&chapter=11&clang=_en

Thank you

André Sceia PhD
UNECE TIR SECRETARIAT
Transport Division

8-14, Avenue de la Paix
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland
Phone: +41 22 917 1313
Fax: +41 22 917 0614
Email: etir@un.org
Web: <http://etir.unece.org>