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IRU POSITION PAPER ON ECMT MULTILATERAL PERMIT SYSTEM

*adopted unanimously by the IRU General Assembly
in Geneva on 4 November 2011*

IRU Position on ECMT multilateral permit system.

PREAMBLE

The ECMT system of multilateral permits for international road transport, distributed among the International Transport Forum (ITF) member states¹, has been the focus of attention of ITF governments and international road transport associations of Eurasian countries. Due to the dramatic changes in Europe, the system started to experience serious problems resulting from the deficiencies in the functioning of the ECMT multilateral permit and the imbalanced allocation of the quota among the ITF member states.

Through this Position Paper, the IRU international road transport associations, from ITF member states, appeal to the ITF, which operates the ECMT multilateral permit system, and to the competent national government agencies in the ITF member countries, to undertake the necessary reform of the ECMT multilateral permit system to meet the needs of trade and international road transport.

As proposed in this IRU Position Paper, the reform of the ECMT multilateral permit system should ensure an efficient use and a balanced distribution of the quota of ECMT permits by the ITF member states to international fleet operators in all the member countries concerned, whilst guaranteeing its proper functioning, without market distortion, according to the objectives set and as the most efficient multilateral instrument to ensure high quality, sustainable international road transport in the whole ITF region.

BACKGROUND

The ECMT multilateral permit system has always played a very positive role in facilitating international trade and integrating international road transport markets in the whole ITF region, while at the same time reducing the number of empty trips over long distances and promoting the most advanced vehicles from the point of view of road safety and environmental technology as well as the improvement of social conditions for drivers.

¹ Only those member states of ITF which are involved in the ECMT quota system

From the outset in 1974, the IRU, on behalf of all its national Member Associations, has played an active role in the promotion of the numerous benefits of the ECMT multilateral permit system for trade, for the road transport industry and for each ITF member state. Indeed, this system facilitated road transport services in foreign trade and increased significantly the productivity of international road transport while at the same time improving road safety and reducing its environmental footprint on the Eurasian landmass.

For all these reasons, over the years, the ECMT multilateral permit system became a much appreciated tool for numerous ITF member states, which complemented, in a very efficient manner, the permit system based on bilateral agreements regulating market access for the international transport of goods by road.

However, in the last few years, the ECMT multilateral permit system was facing some difficulties as a result of the following factors:

- The allocation of ECMT permits among countries was not based purely on economic needs and trade statistics but above all on arbitrary technical or political criteria;
- The deficiencies in methods of calculating quotas for each country leads to unfounded and sometimes discriminatory distribution of quotas in relation to certain countries;
- Moreover, in recent years deficiencies emerged in the implementation of the fundamental principles of development of ECMT quota system adopted by the ministers of transport of ITF Members in 2005.

The distribution of permits at national level should be managed under the supervision of the Ministry of Transport and, if so required, the Ministry of the Economy, by – or at least with the joint support of – the road transport organisations which are the most experienced in international road transport and competent to evaluate not only economic development but also the requirements of trade and international road transport of every country and thus the quota of the ECMT multilateral permits.

PROPOSALS

To allow an evolution of the system in order to become once again a promotional instrument of market integration and to solve the current very penalising ECMT quota crisis, IRU international road transport associations from ITF member states address the following proposals to the ITF and the governments of ITF member states:

1. To undertake, as soon as possible, the necessary ECMT quota reform to overcome the current unacceptable imbalance in quota allocation, while at the same time adapting and harmonising the conditions of distribution in order to meet the resulting needs of trade development and to simultaneously increase road safety, environmental protection, vocational training and professional qualifications as well as the implementation of social regulations.
2. To ensure that the ECMT quota is and remains the symbol of high quality international road transport. This high quality of international road transport must be ensured by a bonus system of granting permits in accordance with concrete improved conditions related to vehicles, drivers and road transport companies. Concerning vehicles, the EURO-NORM system is already in place but may be improved as a result of developments in engineering technologies. Concerning drivers, the improvement can be obtained by specific training qualifications and national certification. Concerning road transport companies the situation could be improved by implementing appropriate access rules to the profession.

3. To maintain the quota system as a key factor contributing to greater road transport efficiency in order to provide a step-by-step opening of the transport market, preventing empty return and discrimination. This objective can be obtained notably by the development and effective implementation of the Basic principles of further development of the ECMT quota system.
4. To strive, in the true spirit of the ECMT quota system, for the facilitation of international road transport while integrating markets concerned and for the cancellation of improper limitations in the ECMT system through introduction of a new single general principle aimed at guaranteeing multilateral usage of ECMT permits and not allowing to use it exclusively on the domestic market of one or several countries.
5. To manage the quota system in order to facilitate the strengthening and harmonisation of controls including the verification and the sanctions to be applied. This objective should be attained by reinforcing the role of the ITF Secretariat and the cooperation with the national competent authorities and National Associations working together under the IRU aegis.
6. To actively involve the road transport industry and the national associations representing international road transport operators both in the required ECMT quota reform and in the distribution of ECMT permits at national level.

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