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Geneva, 17 October 2007

IRU Position on the need to facilitate the issuance of visas to professional drivers

IRU Position adopted by the IRU Liaison Committee to the CIS (IRU LC to the CIS) in Chisinau on 11 October 2007

I. BACKGROUND

Professional drivers of trucks and coaches play an indispensable role in the development of foreign trade and tourism in a globalised world. Therefore, to enter the territory of a foreign state where such visas are applicable, the necessity for professional drivers to receive visas by means of a facilitated procedure is undeniable.

By contrast, slow and bureaucratic visa issuance procedures regularly involving the physical presence of driver applicants, the submission of a high number of supporting documents, the restricted issuance of annual or longer multi-entry visas, limitations on the use of issued visas, etc., do not only cause economic losses at macro and company, including transport operators' levels and limit market access by transport operators contrary to the principles and legal provisions on free trade and personal mobility but also restrict the individual right to work.

II. IRU POSITION

Therefore, the IRU

- reiterates all previous positions adopted by the IRU over the last decade seeking facilitation measures from multilateral instances like the World Trade Organisation, the UNECE, International Transport Forum (ECMT), European Union institutions, International Labour Office, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, etc. according to which
 - the special status of professional drivers of coaches/buses and trucks should be recognised as one deserving facilitated visa treatment
 - the intermediary role of transport associations should be promoted as part of facilitation measures
 - long-term (minimum one year) multi-entry visas should be issued
 - the visa application procedures should be simplified (rapid delivery, reduced number of application documents, reasonable fees, limited need for application in person, etc.)
 - no limitations on the use of issued visas should be applied (as regards time or routes permitted)

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- requests the European Commission (EU) and the EU Member States as well as other organisations and Governments not to turn visa issuance procedures into neo-protectionist and discriminatory barriers to transport operators
 - welcomes the conclusion of bilateral agreements on the facilitation of visa issuance, including for professional drivers, between the European Union and non-EU States, such as the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Moldova and States of the Western Balkans and in this context it requests
 - a rapid, smooth and harmonised implementation of these agreements by embassies and consulates of all the countries concerned
 - IRU member associations to fulfil their intermediary role with due diligence thus helping professional drivers employed by their member operators to obtain their visas, maintaining the right of professional drivers to submit visa applications on an individual basis if they so wish.
 - requests the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council (EU) to introduce facilitation measures for professional drivers also in the new EU Visa Code under preparation
 - invites other international organisations and Governments in other geographic regions and relations to seek bi- and multilateral solutions for improving the conditions of issuing visas to professional drivers. In particular, it encourages Governments of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) region to sign, ratify and implement the Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for Professional Drivers Nationals of the BSEC Member States as rapidly as possible.
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