



COVID-19 Crisis Meeting Joint Statement

The Secretaries General of the International Road Transport Union (IRU), the Permanent Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Commission TRACECA (PS IGC TRACECA), the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (Turkic Council) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) met in a virtual meeting on 15 March 2021.

Deeply concerned by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health, communities and livelihoods of people in all countries, the aforementioned Secretaries General emphasised that a coordinated and robust approach is the only way to address the ongoing sanitary, social and economic challenges that confront the world's governments, which risk losing hard-won development gains from recent years.

Taking stock of the pandemic's impact on regional economies, the aforementioned Secretaries General, with great regret, took note of the significant economic decline of between -7% and -8% of GDP in 2020, alongside the related decline in road transport operator revenues of between -18% and -22% (IRU COVID-19 Impact Report, Geneva, 2020).

Unilaterally imposed restrictions on trade in goods, especially those targeting truck drivers at borders, have severely affected supply chains and driver health, without helping stop the virus spreading. Restrictions have also drastically affected road passenger transport services, notably for cross border services and mandatory passenger sanitary requirements that are not mirrored in other modes.

Many road transport operators, the majority of which are small and medium-sized firms, are already on the brink of insolvency. Financial support measures are clearly not reaching them, preventing them from driving recovery efforts and risking the fabric of mobility and logistics networks, especially in developing areas.

Aligned with IRU's COVID-19 Call for Action, the aforementioned Secretaries General therefore ask governments to:

- Keep national and international mobility and supply chains operational, while ensuring safe working conditions for transport workers.
- Encourage targeted financial support measures for road transport operators to address the current liquidity crisis and prevent mass bankruptcies.
- Encourage the use of digital tools that already exist, including eTIR, e-CMR and e-ticketing, which facilitate the flow of goods and passengers across borders without physical human contact.
- Recognise road transport workers as key workers and award them the same protection as other vital service workers during the COVID-19 response, including vaccination priority. Consider coordinated approaches for a digital COVID-19 negative test / vaccine passport for commercial drivers.
- Investigate the possibility of creating a network of designated focal points among Member States for enhanced coordination and collaboration.

Endorsed by:

Asset Assavbayev
PS IGC TRACECA
Secretary General

Umberto de Pretto
IRU Secretary General

Baghdad Amreyev
Turkic Council
Secretary General

Michael B. Christides
BSEC Secretary General

Hadi Soleimanpour
ECO Secretary General