



## **Message from the World Customs Organization International Customs Day 2010**

In these early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, there is no alternative other than co-operation between all those involved in international trade, which is the key to development and the engine which drives the global economy forward, and we must stand together as we look to the future.

The international Customs community is unanimous: it is time to sweep away the non-essentials and the artificial synergies and engage in dialogue, innovating together and acting in concert to work out a course of action with optimism and determination in the face of the challenges to be confronted. The futures of all those involved in the supply chain are closely related, and depend on their ability to work together.

Customs cannot continue to act independently, without taking into account the interests of its partners; it must decompartmentalize its relations with international trade operators, develop consultation, dialogue, the exchange of expertise and know-how, promote information exchange and co-operation, and reduce the barriers that impede the smooth flow of trade by remedying shortcomings, doing away with duplications and organizing interactions. Customs must review its fundamentals, as must its partners who need to gain a better understanding of Customs, its missions and its challenges. In order for this partnership approach to be a balanced one, the private sector must take on board the two facets of the Customs role, which entails both collecting revenue and protecting society, whilst facilitating legitimate trade by means of the benefits granted to operators who commit to a process of transparency built on trust.

This period of change should prompt all stakeholders to work more closely together, redouble their efforts to practice international co-operation, establish a new dynamic and take bold initiatives aimed at simplification, speed, flexibility, predictability, effectiveness and fairness of procedures.

In many of its instruments, tools and best practices, the WCO recommends that Customs administrations press forward with the establishment of partnerships with legitimate commercial operators, and forge links with the business network and with professional associations. Through its SAFE Framework of Standards and Authorized Economic Operator status, Private Sector Consultative Group, Revised Kyoto Convention, Revised Arusha Declaration on Integrity, Customs Data Model and "Customs in the 21st Century" (C21) document (which employs ten building blocks to define a new strategic direction for Customs), and finally through the participation in the WCO's work - as observers - of international organizations, international trade operators and professional associations, the WCO has built up the "Customs-Business Partnership" as the cornerstone of its actions in a spirit of consultation, dialogue and openness.

This partnership provides a means of taking into account the concerns of each party, gaining a better understanding of the different interests involved, and arriving at solutions which offer advantages to each protagonist.

Therefore, I feel it is essential to make the point that in its day-to-day operations Customs must work closely with business in a shared endeavour to enhance performance. With this in mind I have decided that our theme for International Customs Day on 26 January 2010 will be "Customs and business: improving performance through partnerships" - partnerships built on dialogue, consultation, trust, transparency and the optimization of resources, partnerships which are essential as drivers of international trade and economic development.

I am counting on your full support to pass on this message, in order to give further credence to our commitment to continue to engage positively with our private sector partners. Against that background I am delighted that Customs officers, businesses and professional associations that are working to implement, enhance and strengthen the "Customs-Business Partnership" are being honoured on 26 January 2010.

By working together we will be able to further strengthen and sustain the "Customs-Business Partnership", leading to enhanced performance by Customs and other global trade actors.

Let us make the decision to take action and pool our talents, remembering that every journey must begin with a single step.

I wish you all a very happy International Customs Day!

Kunio Mikuriya  
Secretary General  
*26 January 2010*