Message from the World Customs Organization

International Customs Day 2016

Embargo date: 26 January 2016, UTC 9:00 am

This year's International Customs Day heralds the launch of the WCO Year of Digital Customs, a year in which Customs administrations are encouraged to actively showcase and promote their use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in order to collect and safeguard Customs duties, to control the flow of goods, people, conveyances, and money, and to secure cross-border trade from crime, including international terrorism which continues to rear its head across the globe.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is everywhere in today's Customs workplace. From the use of ICT in office automation, to the use of the Internet to publish and disseminate information, to the use of automated clearance systems to make declarations, perform risk management, undertake validation and processing, and eventually to issue approvals, ICT has transformed the way that Customs and governments operate.

Under the slogan, "Digital Customs: Progressive Engagement", we, as a Customs community, are signalling our aspiration to further develop digital solutions and services, making life easier for the trading community, other border agencies and Customs officers, and to further adopt enabling technologies, such as the use of big data, telematics and the cloud, to help increase operational performance, and to facilitate the reinvention of the way we do business.

To support WCO Members in their efforts to further adopt Digital Customs, the WCO has developed an extensive portfolio of instruments and applications. It recently undertook a mapping exercise to gain an appreciation of these ICT-related tools and their intended purpose. This mapping exercise goes hand-in-hand with ongoing work being undertaken by the WCO on the IT Guide for Executives that has been developed as a short handbook which succinctly addresses key aspects of ICT solution development and deployment for senior-level Customs administration officials, as well as officials with direct responsibility for managing ICT projects.

The technology landscape is changing rapidly, with a number of key trends emerging, such as cloud computing, mobile technologies, advanced analytics, and information management. Each of these technologies affects the role of Customs in different ways, and provides numerous opportunities to drive connectivity among Customs administrations and with trade operators and other border agencies, thereby increasing productivity which leads to greater economic growth.

Part of our work in the months to come will be to monitor and communicate best practices in topics as diverse as change management, human resource policies or information management. Over the course of 2016, I therefore invite all WCO Members to promote and share information on how they are adapting to the digital environment, how they are leveraging the potential of IT, and how they are implementing and using digital technologies to advance and achieve their objectives and respond to the expectations of traders, transport and logistic operators, and governments.

Wishing you all a very successful International Customs Day!

Kunio Mikuriya
Secretary General