



Message from the World Customs Organization

International Customs Day 2020

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Once again, the Customs community comes together, united in celebrating International Customs Day, which officially falls on 26 January of each year. This special day enables WCO Members, the WCO Secretariat and Customs' worldwide partners to dedicate themselves to taking forward a particular theme. Thus, throughout 2020, under the slogan "Customs fostering Sustainability for People, Prosperity and the Planet," the Customs community will be focusing on the contribution of Customs towards a sustainable future where social, economic, health and environmental needs are at the heart of its actions.

Indeed, Customs is uniquely mandated and positioned at borders to play a prominent role across the international supply chain, ensuring a sustainable, secure, and inclusive future for all. Therefore, with only 10 years left to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and given the direct links between Customs' strategic mission and several of the SDGs, it is important for Customs to meet all the environmental, economic, health and social challenges while scaling up its ongoing efforts to respond effectively in a more proactive manner. Against this background, Customs' contribution to sustainability can be categorized as follows:

- Serving the **People** by building safe and secure societies. Customs plays a critical role in implementing regulations addressing the major social and economic challenges facing societies across the globe. They do this by promoting innovation through the protection of intellectual property rights (IPR) and preventing sub-standard or counterfeit goods and products that infringe regulations from entering local markets, by fighting against transnational organized crime and terrorism, and by taking action against the trafficking of people, drugs, weapons and money laundering, among other serious offences.
- Ensuring **Prosperity** by reducing trade barriers for just and inclusive societies. International trade plays a tremendous role in supporting a prosperous, sustainable and resilient society and economy. By streamlining its operations, Customs can reduce the time and cost of moving goods across borders and stimulate trade activities, thus increasing income and employment, as well as promoting national and foreign investment. Furthermore, by improving border effectiveness and, thus, trade operators' competitiveness, Customs contributes to strengthening governance and stability. By taking strong action against commercial fraud and tax evasion, Customs also ensures that national governments are not deprived of critical revenues necessary to fund public infrastructure and services.
- Protecting the **Planet** and ensuring its sustainability for future generations. Customs can contribute to the fight against climate change and provide enhanced environmental sustainability by supporting the effective implementation of various Multilateral Environmental

Agreements (MEAs). Their objectives include addressing the illicit trade in hazardous waste and ozone-depleting substances, combating the illicit trade in endangered species, and preventing the spread of plant and animal diseases, as well as invasive alien species. Additionally, Customs may be tasked to ensure the effective collection of excise taxes on carbon emissions.

These various dimensions of sustainability underpin Customs' contribution to achieving the 17 SDGs outlined in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In fact, the new vision of the WCO – “Bringing Customs together for a safer and more prosperous world: Borders divide, Customs connects” – that is enshrined in the Organization's Strategic Plan 2019-2022, highlights the role of Customs in securing borders, thereby contributing to economic prosperity, and unifying all actors along the entire supply chain.

Moreover, the 2019 WCO Environmental Scan highlights the fact that, in order to move towards a sustainable society whose development promotes a deep respect for the environment, Customs, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, must, wherever possible, perform its activities with a strong, sustainable mindset, and the WCO must focus, in particular, on setting a good example in this area. Thus, by means of various tools and specific programmes, the WCO is calling for various actions to be taken:

- The implementation of the latest version of the WCO Harmonized System and related recommendations, the consistent and transparent application of Customs procedures and a pro-active approach by Customs to promote and facilitate simplification and harmonization of these procedures, while strengthening inter-agency cooperation.
- The implementation of the international trade-related provisions of MEAs such as the Basel Convention, the Montreal Protocol, the Cartagena Protocol, the Rotterdam Convention, the Stockholm Convention, the World Heritage Convention, and the CITES Convention.
- The implementation of risk management techniques and data analytics to facilitate trade, stimulate economic growth and attract foreign investment, thus contributing to the reduction of poverty.
- The enlargement of the “Digital Customs” agenda with greater emphasis on the use of modern technologies, including a high-performance, paperless Single Window environment and a solid IT infrastructure.
- The expeditious implementation of the WCO Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce to leverage e-commerce opportunities in an inclusive manner, while effectively tackling the associated challenges.
- The reduction in the impact of counterfeiting and piracy to prevent unfair competition and create an enabling environment where innovation and creativity can thrive.
- The implementation of targeted approaches to improve integrity in Customs.
- The promotion of gender equality as an enabler for sustainable change and recognition of its multiplier effect in accelerating sustainable development.

By fulfilling its vision, mission and mandate, Customs can effectively contribute to the achievement of all 17 SDGs at the national level. Thus, Customs' practices and methods should be aligned with the WCO's tools and instruments, which have been incorporated into several packages: the Revenue Package, the Economic Competitiveness Package, the Compliance and Enforcement Package, and the Organizational Development Package.

As in previous years, I am fully convinced that Customs administrations and the wider Customs community will rise to the occasion, fully committed to actively promoting their efforts and activities aimed at fostering “Sustainability for People, Prosperity and the Planet” that includes

sharing relevant practices and activities with others at WCO meetings and in key WCO publications.

Wishing you all a happy International Customs Day!

Dr. Kunio Mikuriya
WCO Secretary General
24 January 2020