

WASHINGTON DECLARATION

(July 1989)

DECLARATION OF THE CUSTOMS CO-OPERATION COUNCIL
CONCERNING HARMONIZATION/COMPUTERIZATION OF CUSTOMS
PROCEDURES AND A STRATEGY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

(Washington Declaration)

NOTING that progress has been made towards achievement of international uniformity in the classification of goods (the Harmonized System), in Customs valuation (the GATT Valuation Code), in Customs procedures (Kyoto Convention) and in enforcement (Nairobi Convention),

RECOGNIZING that one of the principal objectives of the CCC is to secure the highest degree of harmony and uniformity in Customs systems,

REALIZING that the Ottawa Declaration provides for standardization, simplification and harmonization of Customs processes, procedures and documents,

RECOGNIZING that the major members of the international trade community are committed to replacing paper with electronic information management and that Customs administrations have to follow suit,

NOTING the important role of Customs administrations in facilitating, monitoring, reporting on, and controlling the movement of world trade,

REALIZING that by the year 2000 Customs administrations which still rely on paper records might be able to maintain their role in world trade only with increasing difficulties and risks,

ACKNOWLEDGING that the CCC is already working on many different areas that relate to the request for more standardization and automation,

FURTHER acknowledging that Customs administrations vary in their ability to adapt to modern data management technologies, and that more needs to be done to ensure that Customs administrations keep up with advancing trade volume and technology,

THE CUSTOMS CO-OPERATION COUNCIL,

DECLARES that the Council should immediately undertake a comprehensive, structured, co-ordinated initiative in the area of simplification, standardization and harmonization of Customs procedures,

DECLARES further, insofar as automation is concerned, that the Council should,

- (1) evaluate, and keep Members informed of, the impact of new developments,
- (2) provide advice and guidance and launch special programmes for those Members still dependent on paper records to assist them in streamlining current procedures, in adopting progressively automated techniques and in resolving difficulties (e.g. with electronic signatures and other legal issues),

- (3) seek access for Members to additional resources to implement automation and EDI by co-operating closely with other governmental and non-governmental international organizations,
- (4) urge Members now using automation to move towards adoption of full electronic data interchange, based on modular hardware that allows for efficient updating of technology,
- (5) continue to take the lead, in close co-operation with the UN Economic Commission for Europe, in promoting and enlarging EDIFACT as a standard for the electronic interchange of Customs information among its Members, international organizations and other participants in international trade,
- (6) identify standard Customs requirements for EDI in all international fora,
- (7) stress the importance of working closely with commerce and transport organizations at the national and international level in promoting EDI initiatives,
- (8) help to develop and promote affordable, routine electronic exchanges between and among traders and Customs organizations,
- (9) identify Members' training needs in automation and seek to arrange for this training with the assistance, where necessary, of Member administrations and other international organizations, and
- (10) assist Members in enhancing their enforcement efforts by employing EDI,

DECIDES that, given the number, complexity and variety of Customs procedures in existence worldwide, the development of guidelines or harmonized procedural frameworks should be pursued in addition to existing standards,

DIRECTS that, having regard to the resources available and the priorities set out in the Plan for the '90's,

1. the Permanent Technical Committee should undertake a new task of standardization and go beyond the Kyoto Convention in this area, while building on the foundations laid in that Convention, and
2. the ADP Sub-Committee should develop concrete work-plans for the tasks in automation described above,

INSTRUCTS the Secretary General to take such further steps as may be necessary to implement this Declaration.

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