

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE CUSTOMS CO-OPERATION COUNCIL  
CONCERNING ACTIONS AGAINST CROSS-BORDER ENVIRONMENTAL  
OFFENCES  
(28 June 2008)**

THE CUSTOMS CO-OPERATION COUNCIL<sup>1</sup>,

NOTING the deteriorating situation involving cross-border environmental offences, and the serious concern of the international community,

NOTING also instances of links between environmental offences and organized crime,

HAVING REGARD for trade-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), which regulate or prohibit international trade in environmentally sensitive items,

BEING AWARE of the need for States to preserve and protect the environment from adverse effects of human activities,

RECOGNIZING that illegal international trade in environmentally sensitive commodities potentially has a grave impact on human health and the environment, drives endangered species to extinction, depletes the ozone layer, contributes to climate change, and results in revenue loss for governments,

RECOGNIZING also that the Customs community shares responsibilities under the MEAs to control international trade in environmentally sensitive commodities and combat illicit traffic therein,

MINDFUL that there is a need for maximum awareness and safety measures for Customs officials and other people who might be exposed to these potentially dangerous items,

CONSIDERING the importance of urgent and concerted actions by Customs,

CONVINCED that actions against illegal international trade in those items can be conducted more efficiently through awareness raising and information exchange among Customs, competent management authorities and other enforcement agencies at national and international levels,

BEARING IN MIND the various Council Recommendations and other instruments that relate to environmental offences and mutual administrative co-operation,

ACKNOWLEDGING the importance of co-operation and exchange of information between the Customs Co-operation Council and other international organizations involved, such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Interpol, the CITES Secretariat and the Basel Convention Secretariat, with whom the Customs Co-operation Council has signed Memoranda of Understanding,

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<sup>1</sup> Customs Co-operation Council is the official name of the World Customs Organization.

NOTING the success of specialized units, or specialized officials in existing units with specific responsibilities to fight against cross-border environmental offences,

EXPRESSING the hope that where any aspect of the practical steps needed to implement this Recommendation is not the sole responsibility of Customs, there will be maximum co-ordination at the national level between the authorities concerned,

**RECOMMENDS** that Members of the Customs Co-operation Council and other relevant organizations should:

1. Ensure that combating environmental offences be promoted or remain as one of the priorities of Customs administrations, with particular emphasis on the prevention, detection and repression of such offences,
2. Raise awareness of Customs officials, in particular frontline officials, via various means, including basic and specialized training programmes, and by making full use of the resources of the Green Customs Initiative<sup>2</sup> (GCI), as well as the E-Learning Programme of the Customs Co-operation Council,
3. Play an active role in the drafting and implementation of pertinent national legislation and administrative guidelines applying international obligations covered by the MEAs,
4. Include environmental programmes in the basic and refresher training courses for Customs at the national and regional level,
5. Implement risk assessment in the control of international trade in environmentally sensitive commodities and fight against their illegal trafficking,
6. Apply intelligence and investigation techniques to identify entities engaged in cross border environmental offences and support prosecution activities by competent authorities,
7. Apply available modern technological instruments to identify and detect possible illicit trafficking of environmentally sensitive items,
8. Identify potential illicit trafficking with a view to urgently advising the concerned Customs authorities in order to facilitate an interception, or to further monitor movements, as may be most appropriate in each case,
9. Ensure that maximum awareness and safety measures are adopted for Customs officials and other persons who might be exposed to these potentially dangerous materials or risks associated with certain species,
10. Report seizures which relate to environmental offences to the Customs Enforcement Network (CEN) to enable global and regional analyses,
11. Increase efforts to co-operate and to exchange information with competent national authorities, as well as with other Customs administrations. Customs

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<sup>2</sup> The Green Customs Initiative (GCI) is a series of collaborative activities by partner organizations, aimed at raising the awareness of Customs and border control officers in respect of MEAs. Please refer to [www.greencustoms.org](http://www.greencustoms.org) for more information.

administrations should also develop best practices for co-operation with these authorities at national levels,

12. Explore opportunities for co-operation with international organizations dealing with trade-related MEAs and for combating cross-border environmental offences.

REQUESTS Members of the Customs Co-operation Council and Customs or Economic Unions which accept this Recommendation to notify the Secretary General of their acceptance, and of the date from which they will apply the Recommendation and the conditions of its application.

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