

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE CUSTOMS CO-OPERATION COUNCIL<sup>1</sup>**  
**ON THE DEMATERIALIZATION OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

**(June 2012)**

**THE CUSTOMS CO-OPERATION COUNCIL,**

**ACKNOWLEDGING** that the Customs administrations by and large have introduced automated systems for cargo clearance and have committed to apply information technology to support Customs operations, where it is cost-effective and efficient for Customs and for the trade,

**CONSIDERING** that the use of paper-based documentation in international trade is expensive, time-consuming and prone to error and malpractice,

**HAVING REGARD** to provisions of Chapter 3 of the General Annex to the revised Kyoto Convention<sup>2</sup>, with regard to electronic lodgement of the supporting documents with Customs,

**RECOGNIZING** the rapid development of cost-effective, secure and trusted solutions for electronic document management and repository services, and extensive adoption of these solutions by the industry and administrations,

**RECOGNIZING** that international organizations, government agencies, and industry associations are increasingly introducing standard formats for electronic documents such as licences, certificates, and permits, and are promoting their use in the entire course of the international trade transaction,

**AIMING** to promote paperless transactions for Customs clearance as an alternative to paper-based documentary requirements,

**DESIRING** to reduce the cost of trade and to simplify trade procedures by alleviating the burden of delivering, storing, and presenting original paper-based supporting documents during Customs procedures,

and

**DESIRING** to enhance Customs control through the effective use of automated verification and by adopting the principle of risk management,

**RECOMMENDS** that Members of the Council and all members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies, and Customs or Economic Unions should as far as possible :

- (1)** identify supporting documents that are normally required to accompany the cargo and goods declarations and examine the need for those documents for Customs clearance with a view to eliminating them;
- (2)** discontinue the requirement of presenting supporting documents in hard copy, if they have already been presented in electronic form;

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

<sup>2</sup> International Convention on Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures (as amended).

- (3) process the release and clearance of cargo based only on electronic declaration and automated verification;
- (4) enable automated Customs clearance systems to automatically verify information contained in dematerialized supporting documents where such information is accessible electronically in :
  - (a) Other government agencies' databases
  - (b) Single Window environments (and Cargo Community Systems)
  - (c) Private repositories.

**REQUESTS** Members of the Council and members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies, and Customs or Economic Unions which accept this Recommendation to notify the Secretary General of the Council of the date from which they will apply the Recommendation and of the conditions of its application. The Secretary General will transmit this information to the Customs administrations of all Members of the Council. He will also transmit it to the Customs administrations of the Members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies and to Customs or Economic Unions which have accepted this Recommendation.

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