



**Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade
London, 13 February 2014
Statement by WCO Secretary General Kunio Mikuriya**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Customs are located at borders to ensure compliance of trade in goods while facilitating legitimate trade. We employ risk management techniques to assess risks posed by individual goods, using commercial data, information and intelligence. The major risk of illicit trade used to be high-tariff goods such as cigarettes, drugs and arms, but of late wildlife trade has been posing a growing risk. Customs seizures and contributions in this area were clearly shown at an exhibition during yesterday evening's reception and downstairs today, for which I thank the UK Government.

With this in mind, the World Customs Organization started the GAPIN Project in 2010, with Swedish funding, to train Customs officers in 17 African countries to seize goods protected by CITES, with a specific focus on great apes. Given its significant outcomes, the scope of the Project was subsequently expanded to more than 40 countries along the supply chain to include Asia, a frequent destination, and Europe, a frequent transit point.

What we learned from this experience is that we need 3Ps to build capacity. Firstly, political will which this Conference is expected to strengthen, including adequate legal frameworks.

Secondly, partnerships with governments and competent regulatory and law enforcement authorities, of which the ICC/WCF is a good example. Furthermore, the WCO has developed an Internet-based secure communication system to share information on the environment, called Environet, which is open to all competent authorities. Another necessary partnership is with the private sector, including shipping companies and logistic service providers.

Thirdly, people with adequate awareness and training. The WCO recently undertook a survey of its 179 Members on wildlife and the results show that Customs administrations around the world wish to raise the priority given to illegal wildlife trade, when empowered with sufficient knowledge, training and necessary resources, and are ready to increase cooperation by sharing information and best practices.

In conclusion, I look forward to continuing to work with you in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation.

Thank you.