

ICC and USCIB Customs & Trade Facilitation Symposium
Keynote Address by WCO Secretary General, Kunio Mikuriya
22-24 February 2015, Miami, Florida, United States

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is a great pleasure and honour to speak to the ICC and the USCIB members at this Symposium in Miami.
2. Thank you for your continued interest in the WCO and its 179 Member administrations. My agenda this year began with the visit of the ICC SG on 6 January 2015. I greatly appreciate the active role played by the ICC Commission on Customs and Trade Facilitation.
3. The ICC and the WCO have enjoyed a longstanding relationship that has proven mutually beneficial. The ICC has contributed to revenue collection topics such as Customs classification and valuation of goods, and has also been closely involved in the trade facilitation area.
4. The revision of the WCO's International Convention on Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures, known as the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) was open to the ICC and business for comment and consultation through participation in the WCO Committee meetings. The RKC, which was adopted in 1999, is a blueprint for modern Customs procedures with the use of technology, risk management and partnering with business.
5. It is natural that the WTO Doha Round negotiations launched in 2001 heavily relied on RKC and I was often invited to the WTO to brief negotiators on the RKC at the early stage of negotiations.
6. The WCO and the ICC have been supportive of the trade facilitation negotiations and to enshrine the outcome of RKC at the political level. I applaud the ICC for its unwavering support for the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).
7. In the meantime, the WCO has continued to produce tools to support the RKC as the Customs mission has evolved to focus on supply chain efficiency and Customs' contribution to economic development. These include measures to support less intervention with better targeting through various partnership approaches: to mention a few, AEO and other guides to enhance cooperation with business; interconnectivity among Customs to exchange information which is also a key to smooth clearance, in particular transit; standardised Data Model in support of the Single Window to enhance coordination with other government agencies.
8. With these tools the WCO launched the Economic Competitiveness Package (ECP) in 2012 to improve supply chain efficiency and the business climate at the national level but also at the regional level to support regional integration. Fortunately nowadays many regional economic communities and Free Trade Agreements have adopted, and encourage the use of, WCO global standards to ensure connectivity inside and outside their economic groups.

9. This fulfils the WCO vision: Borders divide, Customs connects. Customs is an integral part of so-called 'soft' infrastructure for trade, transport and investment.

10. When the WTO adopted the TFA in December 2013, the WCO immediately issued the Dublin Resolution to send a strong message of support and to urge Customs to seize this golden opportunity to gain political support for Customs modernisation and to enhance partnerships with business, other government agencies (OGA) and the development partners.

11. The WCO produced the TFA Implementation Guide, showing numerous WCO tools drawn from the ECP in support of each provision of the TFA.

12. It also established the WCO Working Group for the Trade Facilitation Agreement (WGTFa) to ensure that the TFA is implemented in a consistent manner through the use of WCO tools and programmes. Two weeks ago we had the 3rd WGTFa session where the WTO Preparatory TF Committee Chair reported the progress in the WTO and the participants, including Customs, trade negotiators, ICC and other business representatives, and other IGOs in charge of other border agencies, discussed the way forward to establish National Committee on trade facilitation where Customs should play a leading role in implementing the TFA in close coordination with trade ministry and other border agencies..

13. During the annual Council session last June WTO Director General Roberto Azevêdo addressed all of the heads of Customs present and emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation between the WCO and the WTO, as the WCO is the body which helps translate trade policy into implementation. At the same time the WCO launched the Mercator Programme to assist Members implement the TFA with WCO tools in a consistent manner, beginning by organizing awareness-raising seminars at regional and national levels, and then with tailor-made capacity building approach to individual Customs administrations.

14. Of course Customs wishes to facilitate only legitimate trade. Protection of consumers from hazardous goods such as narcotics, goods in infringement of intellectual property rights (IPR) and wildlife criminal goods is another pillar of the Customs mission. They are also funding sources of criminal and terrorist organizations. Especially in the IPR area, I wish to emphasise the importance of a collaborative approach with business through dialogue, using technology such as IPM and joining the CB activities.

15. Another pressing issue for Customs is security. Supply chain security including an adequate border control on weapon of mass destruction, firearms and passengers, is indeed part of economic competitiveness. The WCO SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade was adopted in 2005 in this respect.

16. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the SAFE Framework. It used to consist of two pillars of Customs to Customs and Customs to Business partnerships. This year we will review the SAFE and incorporate the third pillar of Customs to comprehend OGA cooperation. This pillar has been primarily the result of joint work with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and other partners to

strengthen air cargo security, but naturally we will extend this cooperation to other OGAs.

17. This addition of the third pillar to the SAFE Framework, together with the TFA's provision on border agency cooperation has prompted the WCO to choose Coordinated Border Management as this year's theme as, one which we believe reflects the importance of an inclusive approach to connecting stakeholders.

18. Of course you are vital stakeholders in this respect and I would like to see this Symposium as the first step towards strengthening cooperation and renewing dialogue between the WCO, the ICC and other stakeholders.

Thank you.