Election 2008
Portrait of the candidates

› INTERVIEW
UPU – WCO, common objectives

› WORLD FORUM
WCO in the 21st Century

› POINT OF VIEW
Customs/Private Sector Dialogue
because trucks and containers can be guided weapons

Containers and trucks can carry weapons, explosives, drugs and people. Yet less than 1% of them are inspected as they travel between countries.

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• World Customs Forum 2008, “The WCO in the 21st Century”, Brussels (Belgium)
• EastWest Institute, Brussels (Belgium)
• Origin Task Force, Brussels (Belgium)

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Pictures: Our sincere gratitude also goes to all who kindly provided photos, logos and drawings to illustrate this issue.
## Calendar of Events

It should be noted that these meetings are mentioned for information purposes and are not all open to the public. Training Workshops are devoted to Private sector. Unless otherwise indicated, all meetings are held in Brussels. **Please note that these dates are indicative only and may be subject to change.** This document is regularly updated on the WCO Members’ web site, under the “Information for delegates” section, and on the WCO public web site: www.wcoomd.org

### JUNE

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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>European Commission’s Open Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 - 10</td>
<td>Meeting of the Global Facilitation Partnership for Transportation and Trade (GFP), Cape Town (South Africa)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 - 11</td>
<td>WCO Conference on “The future of 100% scanning”</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 - 12</td>
<td>Expert Training Workshop for Rights Holders on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 - 17</td>
<td>WCO Conference on Rules of Origin</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 - 25</td>
<td>Policy Commission (59th Session)</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 - 28</td>
<td>Council Sessions (111th/112th Sessions)</td>
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### JULY

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>40th Anniversary of the European Customs Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 – 12/08</td>
<td>24th Universal Postal Congress, Geneva (Switzerland)</td>
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### SEPTEMBER

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>17 - 19</td>
<td>Harmonized System Committee Working Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 – 03/10</td>
<td>Harmonized System Committee (42nd Session)</td>
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### OCTOBER

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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>International Donor Conference, London (UK)</td>
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<td>6 - 7</td>
<td>Working Group on Publications</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Private Sector Consultative Group Business Meeting</td>
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<td>13 - 17</td>
<td>Data Model Project Team</td>
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<td>14 - 15</td>
<td>Harmonized System General Interpretative Rules Training Workshop</td>
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<td>14 - 15</td>
<td>SAFE Working Group (3rd Meeting)</td>
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<td>16 - 17</td>
<td>Harmonized System for High-tech Products Training Workshop</td>
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<td>20 - 24</td>
<td>Technical Committee on Customs Valuation (27th Session)</td>
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<td>27 - 28</td>
<td>Finance Committee (85th Session)</td>
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<td>28 - 30</td>
<td>Expert Training Workshop on Rules of Origin</td>
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<td>30 - 31</td>
<td>SECURE Working Group (4th Meeting)</td>
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### NOVEMBER

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<tr>
<td>5 - 6</td>
<td>Administrative Committee for the Customs Convention on Containers, 1972 (11th Session)</td>
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<td>10 - 11</td>
<td>Revised Kyoto Convention Management Committee (5th Meeting)</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>WCO/ICAO/IATA API Working Group (3rd Meeting)</td>
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<td>12 - 14</td>
<td>Permanent Technical Committee (183rd/184th Sessions)</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>WCO/UPU Contact Committee (29th Meeting), Berne (Switzerland)</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 - 28</td>
<td>Harmonized System Review Sub-Committee (38th Session)</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 - 19</td>
<td>Expert Training Workshop on Customs Valuation &amp; Transfer Pricing</td>
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<td>25 - 27</td>
<td>Training Workshop on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 - 28</td>
<td>Integrity Sub-Committee</td>
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### DECEMBER

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<tr>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>Global RILO Meeting (7th Meeting)</td>
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<td>4 - 5</td>
<td>CEN Management Team, CENMat (8th Meeting)</td>
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<td>9 - 11</td>
<td>Policy Commission (60th Session)</td>
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<td>16 - 18</td>
<td>Working Group on Commercial Fraud (4th Meeting)</td>
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Dear reader,

This first half of 2008 seems to have flown by in the blink of an eye, punctuated by meetings and events following on from each other, both standard and those driven by the immediate needs of issues that come to hand. All these events feel like they only happened yesterday, yet are already long gone.

In six months’ time, the Secretary General appointed at the forthcoming Council Sessions will take up his post, and a chapter will close on the ten years I have spent serving the international Customs community.

We have reached a turning point whereupon we must meet a multitude of challenges, whilst seizing the opportunities offered by today's global environment which is undergoing massive upheavals. The economic, social, environmental and technological changes that are occurring should spur us on to conduct a critical review of our organizational and operational methods as this will facilitate constructive deliberations and help us to chart the way forward.

Participants attending “The WCO in the 21st Century” Conference organized by the Secretariat in March 2008 in Brussels were unanimous on this point. The key word must be "evolution" if we are to fully meet the current results and performance targets expected of us. Evolution or extinction is the stark challenge we face!

The 21st Century will be a period in which Customs modernizes its activities. The Customs community must demonstrate strength, take up its position and role, work on the basis of strategic partnerships and launch groundbreaking initiatives in the field.

Our future can only be built together in a spirit of solidarity, co-operation, sharing and innovation, and not in an unsystematic manner. The bridges between what used to be the totally separate worlds of the public and private sectors are now gaining in number and strength. We must grasp the opportunities offered, learn from our diversity, defend our shared values and common interests and express our concerns with one voice.

The future scenarios we may imagine will shape the Organization’s work over the next five years. It will consequently fall upon the new team taking up office over the coming months (new Chairperson of the Council, regional Vice-Chairs, Secretary General, etc.) to combine synergies so as to ensure the international Customs community effectively adapts to an ever-changing environment, and to give Customs the impetus it needs to be fully efficient the world over.

This edition gives you the latest news on global Customs issues and on the nine candidates for the post of Secretary General, and offers some thoughts on current programmes and future topics.

I trust you will enjoy reading it, and I look forward to catching up with you again after the summer break.

Michel Danet
Secretary General
Our four-legged friends will vie to be European champion

Latvia’s State Revenue Service and National Board of Customs will host the 6th European Championship of Customs Drug Searching Dogs from 15-20 September 2008. Aimed at promoting cooperation among dog handlers from European Customs services and enhancing awareness among the public about the important role played by drug sniffer dogs in countering the illegal spread of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, this popular event will witness dogs and their handlers from across Europe competing in two disciplines, namely, drug searching and obedience. During the drug searching section, the dogs will search for drugs such as heroine, cocaine, hashish and marijuana in trucks, cars, premises and luggage whilst the obedience section will entail eight exercises, including endurance tests and reaction to gunshot.

To register your participation, contact the organizers without delay.

A photo of the winner will appear in a future edition of WCO News.

More information
Anita.ezis@vid.gov.lv
customs@vid.gov.lv

Multimedia training becomes part of everyday life in Customs

The e-learning programme continues to enjoy great success with WCO Members.

Since our last issue, two Administrations have benefited from an e-learning roll-out mission.

Let’s start at the regional level: the Regional Training Centre in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), the first Centre for the Americas/Caribbean region, has been equipped with the e-learning programme since the very outset. A substantial proportion of the modules which have been translated into Spanish have been installed, in order to fast-track the availability of e-learning in the region.

This roll-out mission also provided an opportunity to train representatives of the CCLEC (Caribbean Customs Law Enforcement Council) Secretariat, who will be able to manage, independently, a training platform hosted by the Dominican Customs Administration.

Moving on to the national level, Cuban Customs has also benefited from the integration of the programme into its local network. Adaptations and translations are already being planned. The technical environment of the Customs Administration of the Republic of Cuba, based on free technologies, provides further confirmation that the e-learning system can be adapted to suit administrations’ specific requirements, and that the technical characteristics of the system do not give rise to any particular restrictions where its installation is concerned.

Finally, on 28 March 2008, a Memorandum of Understanding on the intended roll-out of the e-learning programme was signed between the WCO and the Customs Administration of Paraguay.

More information
www.wcoomd.org
learning@wcoomd.org
Welcome
The WCO has welcomed the Republic of Djibouti and Belize into the international Customs family. The WCO now has 173 Members*.

* European Communities are not a WCO Member but they have, as an interim measure, rights akin to those of a WCO Member for matters falling within their competence, pending the entry into force of the amendments to the CCC Convention.

www.wcoomd.org

Coming soon
The WCO’s Annual Reports for 2007 on “Customs and Tobacco”, “Customs and Drugs” and “Customs and IPR” will be published in late June 2008.

www.wcoomd.org

Protecting the environment
New Zealand is the host country for World Environment Day, celebrated on 5 June 2008. The theme for 2008 is: “Kick the habit! Towards a low carbon economy”. World Environment Day is commemorated in a different city each year. This is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action.

www.unep.org/wed/2008

News
Open Day at the European Commission
Have you always wanted to know what goes on behind the scenes at the European Commission? Here is your chance! On 7 June 2008, the European Commission – together with other EU institutions – opens its doors. The Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union, in co-operation with Belgian Customs, will be organizing various indoor and outdoor activities at the Berlaymont Building on Rue de la Loi, Brussels (Belgium).

http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/index_en.htm

For your diary
Don’t forget the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, on 26 June. The WCO will be commemorating the Day during the 111th/112th Council Sessions. This forms part of the WCO’s Action Programme under its theme for the year 2008, the aim being to make as many people as possible aware that drugs pose a threat to society as a whole, and that no-one is safe from their affects.

www.wcoomd.org

Love it!
From 15 to 20 September 2008, the Latvian Customs Administration will organize the 6th European Championship for Customs drug detector dog teams.
anita.ezis@vid.gov.lv

Buy online
The WCO has set up an online bookshop, so all our publications are just a click away. You can pay online or by bank transfer.

http://publications.wcoomd.org/index.php

WTO accession
On 5 February 2008, the WTO General Council approved the accession package of Ukraine. Ukraine’s membership will be effective 30 days after its acceptance of its membership terms. Ukraine became the 152nd member of the WTO on 16 May 2008. Ukraine has until 4 July 2008 to ratify its accession package.

www.wto.org

Notepad
On 22 January 2008, the United Republic of Tanzania deposited with the Secretary General of the World Customs Organization its instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS). The Convention entered into force in Tanzania on 1 January 2008. This brings the number of HS Contracting Parties to 133.

www.wcoomd.org

What’s new
The 3rd Capacity Building Trends and Patterns Report has been published. It is available on the WCO Website, along with an up-to-date map showing the progress made with the Columbus Programme.

www.wcoomd.org

Appointments
Recent appointments of Directors General of Customs:
- Silvina Tirabassi (Argentina); James Sagbo (Benin); Guangzu Sheng (China); Alphonse Mangly (Côte d’Ivoire); Grigol Gobejishvili (Georgia); P. C. Jha (India); Dott. Giuseppe Peleggi (Italy); Hur Yong-Suk (Korea); Amadou Togola (Mali); Viorel Melnic (Moldova).

A step forward
The People’s Republic of China will host the Games of the XXIXth Olympiad in Beijing, from 8 to 24 August 2008. The Paralympic Games will take place from 6 to 17 September.

The use of ATA carnets for the temporary importation of goods intended for the Summer 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Games has been authorized by the Government of the People’s Republic of China. Detailed guidelines describing, in particular, the clearance provisions, can be consulted (in English only) via the following link:

Thailand steps up its fight against drug trafficking

Thai Customs officers, in cooperation with the local Narcotics Control Board and the Food and Drug Administration, conducted export security operations that resulted in the seizure of 50.4 tons of illicit Safrole, a precursor chemical used in the illegal production of Ecstasy. Ecstasy, a popular drug in youth club culture, is a psychotropic drug that affects the brain’s use of the naturally-produced serotonin chemical which regulates mood and aggression. Safrole is a controlled substance under the terms of the UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

As a result of shared intelligence, the Safrole was discovered at Laem Chabang Port in Thailand while the cargo awaited export clearance. One container with 80 drums was destined for the US and two containers with 160 drums were destined for the People’s Republic of China.

Illicit trafficking in drugs and narcotics is an extremely damaging international phenomenon, adversely affecting all nations. Being a top priority for the Thailand, the Thai Government is determined to combat drug smuggling using various measures and strategies at its disposal: risk management, cooperation; operational plans; profiling; intelligence and information; awareness campaigns; and the use of hi-technology.

The WCO dedicated the year 2008 to the fight against this illegal trade at its annual International Customs Day launch in January.

More information
communication@wcoomd.org
The second term of office of the Secretary General, Mr. Michel Danet, will expire on 31 December 2008. The Council will appoint a new Secretary General on 28 June 2008, during its 111th/112th Sessions. The candidate who is elected by his peers will take up his post on 1 January 2009.

Interested parties were invited to submit their candidature to the Council Secretariat. Applications have been received from nine candidates.

Based on information submitted by each of the candidates and their answers to two questions (limited to a maximum number of words), the WCO News Editorial Board has prepared an information sheet on each of them. These make up this issue’s Special Report.
Netherlands

- Family name: van Bodegraven
- First name(s): Hans
- Sex: M
- Date of birth: 21 February 1949
- Place of birth: The Hague
- Nationality: Dutch
- Language skills
  - Mother tongue: Dutch
  - Other language(s): English, French, German

Professional experience
Since 2005 I fulfil the post of Director for Customs and Consumer Taxes, responsible for customs policies and legislation as well as policies and legislations in the field of indirect taxation, generating more than half of the Dutch state revenue from taxes (more than € 70 billion).

Before that I fulfilled the post of Director for Customs Policy and Legislation, one of the most senior management posts in Dutch Customs, responsible for all general policies, legislation, international relations and EU matters.

Until 1993, I was Director for Customs Affairs, responsible for operational and strategic Customs policies of the Tax and Customs Administration.

Prior to that, from 1976 onwards, I held a number of (senior) management posts within the Customs service and the Ministry of Finance, covering almost all operational and policy areas of Customs.

What I would like to achieve during my term of office
The WCO is a global institution, belonging to and working for all countries. However, the current functioning does not allow every country equal possibility for making its voice heard, though the importance of Customs for those countries might be greater than for some better heard countries. The relative influence depends on the possibility to be present. For instance by financial restrictions, lack of language skills or financial importance, some countries are not in a position to fully participate in the work of WCO. Since its start circumstances and the membership have changed.

A re-consideration of the way in which the institutions function, and the languages used is imperative.

The composition of the secretariat staff should also be a more accurate reflection of the international context.

More over, some “traditional” Customs issues, such as commercial fraud, protection of society (health, cultural heritage, environmental issues) has received less attention due to the focus on safety and security issues. More attention should be given to these issues, which are of critical importance for many of the members.

My vision for the future of the WCO
Expanding world trade mounts prosperity, but at the same time globalisation and sharply increasing trade flows are presenting customs services with new challenges.

Customs administrations are being pushed to speed up their work, at the same time maintaining their quality. Citizens are demanding that they will be protected from whatever danger coming from outside their countries, regardless which organisation will do that. Any Customs administration, regardless of its size, will be able to meet the challenges on its own.

International cooperation is imperative, cooperation between Customs administrations, with other governmental organizations and the business community.

The WCO will be the most effective instrument for formulating a response to these challenges. The WCO is not only the platform where Customs meet, but also the natural contact for other international organizations whose sphere of work is trade, transport, security and law enforcement.

As such WCO will be taking the lead in building bridges between all parties involved to arrive at a truly international cooperation, giving Customs its legitimate place in international trade and protection of society.
Senegal

- Family name: Camara
- First name(s): Boubacar
- Sex: M
- Date of birth: 26 June 1958
- Place of birth: Dakar
- Nationality: Senegalese
- Language skills
  - Mother tongue: Wolof
  - Other language(s): English, French, Arabic

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<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Fairly well</td>
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Professional experience

Mr. Camara, who has a doctorate in Customs law, is a State Inspector General in Senegal. He was Senegal’s Director General of Customs from 2000 to 2004.

A former soldier, he has been a Customs officer, a Customs examiner and then a Customs inspector. As Patrol Squadron Leader, Head of Brigade, Chief Inspector, Examiner, Head of a Trade Fair Customs office, Investigator, he has worked in the areas of surveillance, commercial operations and post-clearance valuation control.

A former Merchant Navy officer, he is also a maritime assessor and valuer. He participated, as Trade Point Senegal consultant, in the design of the ORBUS 2000 Customs facilitation tool.

He is a trainer in Customs proceedings, clearance procedures, international trade, maritime operations and Customs valuation. He is co-founder of the International Academy of Advanced Studies in Security, in Dakar.

Mr. Camara has been Permanent Secretary of the Mutuelle des Douanes.

What I would like to achieve during my term of office

- Speed up the implementation of the SAFE Framework of Standards as a tool for the modernization of Customs through, firstly, world-wide ratification of the Revised Kyoto Convention and the adoption of appropriate risk management tools and, secondly, practical measures to take care of the demands of international supply chain security.
- Continue with the Columbus Programme of capacity building, technical assistance and training, taking greater account of the wide range of situations in which developing country Customs administrations find themselves, in some cases confronted by a post-war environment, often by organizational and human resource problems, and always by the need to collect revenue for the State;
- Promote the Johannesburg Convention in order to significantly improve information exchange between Members and combat commercial fraud more effectively.

My vision for the future of the WCO

The WCO has reached a crossroads. Its course must be steered in the light of an appropriate vision. The WCO must “learn not to keep waiting”. The Organization needs to adapt itself constantly, modifying its instruments and creating new ones; it must be more responsive and forward-looking, to ensure that it remains ever more useful to its Members.

In the Customs administration of the future, information will be exchanged in real-time using modern communication technology tools; this means that the capacity building programme and the promotion of all languages are essential.

The task of making the international supply chain secure is one of the most significant challenges facing world trade. In order to deal with it appropriately, and in all circumstances, the WCO must act faster. The SAFE Framework of Standards allows all the concerns of the different regions of the world to be combined harmoniously, from security to facilitation, via capacity building.

In the field of good governance and combating corruption, the WCO must support its Members steadfastly and help them to improve the image of Customs.

Greater openness of the WCO towards the private sector has become an absolute necessity, for the production of suitable standards for passage through Customs, and to combat counterfeiting and illicit drug trafficking.
Belgium

- Family name: Colpin
- First name(s): Noel, Leon
- Sex: M
- Date of birth: 25 December 1948
- Nationality: Belgian
- Place of birth: Dendermonde
- Language skills
  - Mother tongue: Dutch
  - Other language(s)
    - Read Write Speak
      - English: Very well Well Very well
      - French: Very well Very well Very well
      - German: Fairly well Fairly well Fairly well

Professional experience
I’ve been working 36 years for the Belgian Administration of customs and excise. As Director General, I’ve been leading 4,500 customs officials since 2003. My experiences include:

- professional management, thanks to an in-depth MBA programme. This includes strategic planning and control management within Customs and Excise.

- managing major change projects: implementation of e-Customs, installation of modern detection equipment in ports and airports, testing of Secure Trade Lanes with India, South Africa, South Korea and Russia, scanning projects for the ports of Antwerp and Zeebrugge.

- structured consultation with trade and other public authorities

- vast international experience as member of the international bodies: Policy Commission of the customs union of the EU, Policy Commission of the WCO, President of the Audit Committee of the WCO, President of the Customs Council of the Belgian Economic Union and President of the European Corporate Security Association are just a few of my numerous international experiences.

What I would like to achieve during my term of office
- Building a broad consensus between members on a new direction for customs in general and WCO in particular.
- Creating ‘SWIFT* of Customs’, a global system that leads to an integrated management of the international supply chain, facilitates trade, optimises revenue and improves security.
- Arranging FUNDING to implement this SWIFT* model on a sustainable GLOBAL BUSINESS MODEL, based on cost savings, reduced throughput and incremental revenue.
- Ensuring that capacity building is real and substantive, not just diagnostic. To this end, it’s necessary to focus on E-CAPACITY BUILDING for the Customs in the DEVELOPING and LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES to achieve the ultimate objective of Paperless Customs by 2020.
- Restructuring WCO to make it more balanced in geo-economic representation, to adapt it to the large growth in membership and face challenges of 21st century.
- Managing WCO professionally, according to the best international standards of governance, audit & accountancy.
- Positioning WCO as an international Centre of technical EXCELLENCE, as well as a repository of STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE, not only in the matters of customs, but in the international supply chain management.

My vision for the future of the WCO
In a world of globalising trade and an increasing demand for security, I believe that Customs has to change its operating model from local to global. In this changing world, the Customs of a country can not function in isolation. Every import is an export from somewhere else.

For that reason, I strongly believe that - more than ever - we must see export and import as the two ends of the same trade chain, with not only a flow of goods and money, but also a flow of information and trust. If we can connect import and export in a better way, we can avoid ineffective control, lack of transparency, mismatches, repetitive submission of the same data sets. Simply put: we can avoid higher costs and improve trade and security.

How can we do that? The new operating model of Customs has to be based on an integrated management of the international supply chain, supported by a seamless flow of online real time information and mutual recognition of controls. What is needed is ‘SWIFT* of Customs’ - a generalised information exchange mechanism between customs. The WCO has to become the global hub that leads Customs in a new era of integration, security, transparency and e-customs.

* SWIFT is the trading name of S.W.I.F.T. SCRL
Sweden

- Family name: Karlsson
- First name(s): Lars
- Sex: M
- Date of birth: 29 April 1964
- Place of birth: Tommarp
- Nationality: Swedish
- Language skills
  - Mother tongue: Swedish
  - Other language(s)
    - English: Read, Write, Speak
      - Very well, Very well, Very well
    - French: Read, Write, Speak
      - Fairly well, Fairly well, Fairly well

Professional experience
Lars Karlsson has demonstrated strong and modern leadership throughout his career and an ability to bring words into action. In 2004 he was appointed Deputy Director General of the Swedish Customs Service.

Prior to this, he served for 15 years as National Director of IT & Developments, director and manager within Swedish Customs. He is also the founder of the Future Centre for innovations and trend analysis.

During his years within Swedish Government, Lars Karlsson was the driver behind numerous modernisation programmes in the Swedish Public Sector and he has been working internationally in projects and committees for many years.

He is a well-known and respected speaker. He has been Chairman and Key Note Speaker at many International Conferences.

In 2001 Lars Karlsson received Her Royal Highness the Crown Princess’ Gothia Prize for the best innovation of the year. In 2003 Lars Karlsson was nominated Swedish Manager of the Year.

What I would you like to achieve during my term of office
Together, we shall reform and strengthen the WCO Secretariat, as well as the regional structure, to make us prepared and able to take on any challenges of the 21st century. This is a prerequisite for making the WCO conventions, instruments, tools and systems work on the ground in all Member countries.

An implementation plan and a Capacity Building Programme, focusing on the core business of Customs; valuation, classification and rules of origin, as well as key areas like enforcement, security and trade facilitation; should always follow to support this process.

The WCO should provide the right services at the right time with the right competence and the right resources, treating every Member as an important and unique client.

The WCO is a member-driven organisation, a fact that should be reflected in our daily operations, balance of staff as well as applied language regimes.

Furthermore, Customs, and the WCO, should be able to master the exchange of data between countries in relation to international trade, and by doing so becoming the leading organisation on risk management in the world. We need practical standards that can be used for the benefit of all stakeholders, transforming words into action and deliver results.

Finally, the introduction of the next generation of partnership with Trade and Industry and a Global Network for the Global Village is a high priority of mine. This should include a global AEO model, managed by the WCO.

I firmly believe the WCO should provide open source standard specifications for IT Customs system, and a standard interface for connectivity between systems. We should do things, not only talk about them.

My vision for the future of the WCO
The WCO should be a pro-active global leader, recognized for its capacity to develop, deliver and implement international standards for Customs and Trade.

We shall build sustainable institutions that can manage change and which will be recognised as key institutions contributing to safe and efficient trade, poverty reduction and a more prosperous world.

The true values of transparency, efficiency and good governance shall permeate all of the WCO.

Ultimately, all Customs administrations should become the leading national administration within their Governments.
France

• Family name: Kearney
• First name(s): Philippe Arnaud
  Brendan
• Sex: M
• Date of birth: 26 March 1965
• Place of birth:
  Neuilly sur Seine
• Nationality: French
• Language skills
  - Mother tongue: French
  - Other language(s)
    Read Write Speak
    English Very well Very well Very well
    German Fairly well Fairly well Fairly well
    Spanish Beginner Beginner Beginner

Professional experience

• I worked in the Office of the French Prime Minister from 1991 – 1995 where I oversaw human resource policy and labour relations. I have been a Customs officer since 1995.

• From 1995 - 1998, I served as Customs Attaché to the European Union in Brussels.

• During 1998 - 2001, I was the Head of Unit responsible for agricultural exportations, sanitary controls, and commercial policy controlling the trade in arms, dual-use goods, embargoes, etc.

• Since 2002, I have been Deputy Director of International Trade. As the Head of 100 officers, I am responsible for international co-operation, policy and computerization (DELTA) of clearances, sanitary and commercial questions, nomenclature, valuation, origin and intellectual property.

What I would you like to achieve during my term of office

I will be a strong, listening and achieving secretary general. I build my platform through discussions with director generals. If I’m elected, our common platform will be turned into WCO’s Strategy for five years.

• Capacity building will be my mandate’s top priority: I will bridge the gap between the need and the money through Eurocustoms donation, renewed partnerships with international organization, new members’ fees and Public private partnerships… I will create a customs rapid deployment force to intervene when a crisis requires. Under my mandate, no customs would be left behind.

• I will enhance customs fiscal role in order to secure budgetary resources and to prepare fiscal transition: corruption has to be addressed. A statistical team will scrutinize trade balances to detect discrepancies and frauds. Exchange of statistical and operational information will be increased. Major frauds will be notified without delays. The exchange on values issue will be addressed as a top priority. Post clearance controls will be made more efficient.

• I will make us strong on our core business: I will build a global plan with a view to eradicate drug smuggling by 2020. I will fight counterfeiting. I aim at 100% safety of the supply chain from criminal and terrorist intrusions, more than focusing on the 100% scanning tool.

• I will make Customs easy for traders: I will establish a customs – trade council with the main business organizations and main global companies. I will build a global interoperable computerized systems and a simplified common set of documents and required information.

• I will strengthen customs global mission: I will have the WCO acknowledged as the experts and delegate agency on customs related issues.

• Democracy and efficiency will progress within WCO: Linguistic regime will be extended to Arabic, Russian and Spanish. The policy commission will represent 15 – 20% of WCO members. A Board including all regions will follow up strategies on a monthly basis. I will have the WCO convention modified so that SG and deputy SG could not be reelected. I will follow-on Mr. Danet’s efforts toward better management and governance.

My vision for the future of the WCO

WCO is facing critical years. If it can’t at the same time keep the high level of political visibility achieved under Michel Danet, build an efficient answer to global challenges strengthen internal democracy and integrate all customs issues, WCO faces the risk to be torn out by other organizations.

My vision I will devote my mandate to, is that of an active and inclusive organization: WCO will serve all its members; it will address all the customs issues now widespread all over other international organizations.

My platform is also inclusive in offering strong consistency between the vision and its practical implementation. WCO will be forward looking. It will build a framework helping globalization to deliver its promises and fighting its side effects. WCO will help innovations to be shared by its members.
What I would like to achieve during my term of office

As Secretary General, I would:

**WCO**

- Strengthen and develop WCO Capacity Building to establish a comprehensive approach providing every Member with assistance according to their needs.
- Develop WCO’s capacity to provide support to Customs Administrations, especially in the area of customs computerization, electronic data interchange and technology.
- Establish the WCO as the internationally recognized customs standard setting organization.
- Prioritize support for the implementation of WCO standards and other instruments to ensure they are implemented worldwide and applied by all.
- Develop WCO’s strategic capacity and strategic planning to ensure proactive approach towards future challenges and opportunities.
- Enhance co-operation in the interest of trade facilitation, fight against fraud and to ensure the efficiency and security of international supply chains.

**Secretariat**

- Restructure Secretariat: following the discussion and analysis on the Customs in the 21st century, ensure that the structure, functional organization and allocation of resources throughout the Secretariat correspond adequately to the needs and priorities.
- Complement the existing language regime by other languages, such as Arabic, Spanish and Russian, bearing in mind Members real needs, budgetary impact and efficiency. Use these other languages as official languages at least at higher level meetings.
- Strengthen the regional representation and national participation in WCO’s work in order to guarantee the efficiency of the WCO and keep the organization close to its Members.
- Establish a “Board of Directors” consisting of the Chairperson of the Council and Vice-Chairs to hold regular meetings (e.g. through video-conference) to direct the implementation of strategic decisions taken by the Council.
- Ensure the WCO as an organization with good governance, transparency and accountability with high-level ethical principles.

**My vision for the future of the WCO**

- WCO as a centre of customs expertise where Customs, international business and international organizations develop common solutions to common challenges, share experience and best practices.
- WCO as the internationally recognized customs standard setting organization.
- Provider and coordinator of Capacity Building: providing Members with assistance and instruments according to their needs in a large scale, to developed, developing and emerging economies and customs administrations.
Professional experience

- Since 2002 – Deputy Secretary General of the WCO (re-elected in 2007 for a 2nd term)
- 1999-2001 – Director: International Affairs, Customs and Tariff Bureau, Ministry of Finance (MOF), Japan - (WCO [ratification of the Revised Kyoto Convention, Chairperson of the WCO Finance Committee], World Trade Organization, free trade agreements, mutual administrative assistance, technical assistance to developing countries, customs-to-customs cooperation, etc.)
- 1997-1999 – Director: Enforcement Division, Customs and Tariff Bureau, MOF, Japan - (Intelligence, investigations, inspection of conveyances, etc.)
- 1996-1997 – Director: Budget Bureau, MOF, Japan - (Formulation and coordination of budgets for the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Official Development Aid)
- 1995-1996 – Director: Salary and Allowance Division, Budget Bureau, MOF, Japan - (Control of emoluments and related issues for all public sector employees in Japan)
- 1993-1995 – Director: International Negotiations, Customs and Tariff Bureau, MOF, Japan - (GATT Uruguay Round, drafting legislation to incorporate the results of the trade negotiations into Customs law)
- 1990-1993 – First Secretary and Counsellor, Mission of Japan to the WTO, Geneva - (Directly responsible for the GATT Uruguay Round negotiations)

What I would you like to achieve during my term of office

To create a truly efficient Member-driven and Member-responsive Organization that is dynamic in nature and action, using an inclusive management approach based on flexibility and transparency, underpinned by good governance, accountability, fairness, corporate integrity, and responsibility.

My vision for the future of the WCO

Customs administrations play a central role in improving investment climate by facilitating and securing trade. A well-functioning Customs is necessary to deal with international trade issues and to integrate developing countries into the world trading system as this will encourage social and economic prosperity and alleviate poverty.

However, Customs is confronted with new challenges, including the growing trade in counterfeits and environmentally hazardous goods. Through re-energized cooperation, Customs can jointly improve its competencies and assure the consistency and overall efficiency of trade procedures.

To realize my vision, implement cutting-edge transformation, and ensure that the WCO takes the lead in these efforts, I will personally follow through by implementing some key initiatives:

- Firstly, I will enhance governance by strengthening the participation of Members from setting the agenda to overseeing its execution, underscored by the principle that sharing information, rather than withholding it, is the source of the Secretariat’s power. Reviewing the Secretariat’s structure, making its recruitment policy more accountable, and addressing transparency, communication and language issues is essential to better serve Members.

- Secondly, I will establish a Capacity Building Centre, mobilizing all the Secretariat’s resources and regional structures, as well as the network of development partners to address the real needs of Members and the regions, and most importantly to secure the necessary funding. Capacity building assistance must take into account revenue-related issues too.

- Thirdly, in order to enhance human resource development, I will launch a WCO internship programme to ensure that Members gain valuable work experience over a six-month period at the Secretariat and within ROCBs.

- Fourthly, I will create a Centre of Excellence in Customs Matters, supported by research-based expertise, especially in the area of emerging issues, including regional integration, environmental protection and border agency cooperation. This will enable Customs to further develop its role as the leading agency for border management and address its expanding responsibilities in close dialogue and cooperation with public and private stakeholders.
United Kingdom

- **Family name:** Tweddle
- **First name(s):** Douglas
- **Sex:** M
- **Date of birth:** 23 February 1948
- **Place of birth:** United Kingdom
- **Nationality:** British
- **Language skills**
  - Mother tongue: English
  - Other language(s):
    - Read
    - Write
    - Speak
    - French: Fairly well
    - Not very well

**Professional experience**

I am currently the Director, Customs and International, within HM Revenue and Customs in the UK.

I have a very broad experience of nearly all aspects of Customs work beginning my career as a front line officer deployed on anti-smuggling work, later as a ‘fast stream’ manager in Headquarters and a two year secondment to a major container shipping company.

I was responsible for the UK’s Customs processing systems and was Head of Customs Investigation for over 5 years.

I managed all Customs work at the busiest international airport in the world.

During five years as WCO Director Compliance and Facilitation, I delivered the revised Kyoto Convention and completed the global RILO network.

I chaired the WCO’s Supply Chain Security Task Force which led to the development of the SAFE standards.

On my return to the UK I have managed over 17,000 compliance staff and budgets of over £600 million pa.

**What I would you like to achieve during my term of office**

- Maintaining and developing global standards for Customs work.
- Enable the WCO to be seen as the lead agency and primary inter-governmental organisation dealing with border matters.
- Providing opportunities for Customs Administrations to learn from one another and to share best practices.
- Encouraging and facilitating the exchange of information between Customs Administrations and other law enforcement organisations.
- Supporting and developing Customs Administrations with capacity building and modernisation programmes.
- Work with other organisations to ensure that the necessary support and funding for Capacity Building are available.
- Analyse why Customs Administrations have not adopted WCO instruments and create an environment where more of them do.
- Represent Customs at the global and regional level with other international organisations.
- Improve the way the WCO secretariat operates with modern governance arrangements, more transparency and more effective resource deployment.

**My vision for the future of the WCO**

We will build on the success and progress of recent years in particularly with the development and promotion of standards to increase the security of the international supply chain and in supporting Customs Administrations with their development initiatives.

The voice of Customs must be heard more strongly at the global level and with Governments and I will continue this while maintaining a balanced WCO budget.

The WCO will be seen as the primary inter-governmental organisation dealing with border matters. Customs will be the lead agency for government at the border.

We will study best practices with integrated border management and provide advice and support to Member Administrations. We will support the modern international global trading environment by assisting government agencies to develop single window operations, Authorised Economic Operators and a global data model for international trade.

Capacity building will remain a key part of WCO activities but alongside the technical and operational strengths of the wider WCO organisation. Capacity building, management and technical development will be delivered in partnership with other organisations to ensure that the necessary support and funding are available.

The WCO will be a centre of excellence and act as a catalyst in assisting Members with their development programmes.
People’s Republic of China

- Family name: Zhu
- First name(s): Gaozhang
- Sex: M
- Date of birth: 1 May 1955
- Nationality: Chinese
- Place of birth: Beijing
- Language skills
  - Mother tongue: Chinese
  - Other language(s): Read Write Speak
    - English: Very well
    - French: Fairly well
    - German: Fairly well
    - Russian: Fairly well

Professional experience
Since 2000 Deputy Director General & Director General, Department of International Cooperation, GACC. Take the leading role in the areas including:
- Promoting China’s adoption and implementation of Revised Kyoto Convention and SAFE Framework of Standards;
- Launching the China-EC Pilot Project on Smart and Secure Trade Lanes;
- Undertaking the strategic planning and management of China Customs’ bilateral cooperation with over 100 Customs Administrations;
- Leading the negotiations on Customs mutual assistance agreements;
- Developing China Customs International Capacity Building Strategy, resulting in the provision of technical assistance for nearly 50 countries from which almost 1000 customs officials have benefited;
- Pushing forward the formulation and implementation of 2005-2006 Regional Strategic Plan.

1996-2000: Customs Counsellor, the Mission of China to EU in Brussels Counsellor, responsible for all Customs matters related to the WCO and the European Community and its member states.  
1992-1996: Deputy Director & Director, Bilateral Cooperation, Department of International Cooperation, GACC  
1982: Joined China Customs

What I would like to achieve during my term of office

If elected, I will accomplish the following actions:

Assisting
- To further field researches and diagnosis to identify the most desirable needs of the Members, especially those of developing and less developed countries;

Coordinating
- To provide tailor-made solutions and tangible benefits and assistance to improve the developing Members’ capacity building by means of soliciting more funding and better allocation of the resources;

Targeting
- To maintain and develop an equal, mutually beneficial and inter-dependent relationship with relevant international organizations;
- To strengthen the Customs-to-Customs, Customs-to-Business and Customs-to-Public interaction and cooperation through developing widely accepted models of information exchange and mutual recognition;

Innovating
- A Customs culture with professional uniqueness and comprehensive recognition;
- An international Customs Expert Reservoir;

Optimizing
- The decision-making process through reasonable enlargement of membership of Policy Commission in line with the increasing number of WCO Members;
- The management of the Secretariat in a more transparent, cost-effective and responsible manner;

Navigating
- To develop innovative and proactive approaches to promote the adoption and implementation of the standards, tools and instruments of the WCO and other related international organizations;
- To improve enforcement competence of the Members over trade facilitation and security, IPR border control, environment protection, anti-corruption and other newly emerging Customs offences.

My vision for the future of the WCO

In response to the unprecedented challenges in the 21st century, the WCO, as the hub of world Customs community, will have to change and should transform itself into:

- A techno-strategic organization that maintains high responsiveness to the challenges and plays a proactive role in trade facilitation, community protection, national security and world peace;
- An outward-looking organization that wins wide recognition and support of stakeholders, inspires the confidence of donors and attracts maximum resources worldwide; and
- A member-oriented organization that provides service to all its Members for common development, and fosters a unique culture with Customs service respected by the society and Customs officers proud of and committed to their mission.
A new invention in Customs IT simplifies the life of traders, enables Customs authorities to implement the newest security measures, and provides previously unseen ways for information sharing.

As trade volumes have skyrocketed over the last decades, the issue of coping with the increasing workload without sacrificing speed or control has become one of the main considerations of Customs authorities.

Globalization has had a major influence in developing international trade, such that Customs authorities now have to handle a mountain of paper-based documents lodged by traders of various credibility. Under stress, mistakes are easy to make.

The lock. Could you imagine the world without it? Could you imagine your life without it? The earliest mechanical locks were used as early as 4,000 years ago in Egypt, and from a sturdy padlock to high-tech biometric locks, this device has since been synonymous with reliability and trust.

To keep up with increasing reliability requirements, Cybernetica has invented Customs Engine, a software solution that helps Customs authorities to automate processes, decrease fraud, reduce or eliminate paperwork, and implement the newest security measures while meeting the highest standards for dependability.

Customs Engine is a comprehensive package for creating paperless Customs offices and addressing safety and security issues. Like a quality lock, Customs Engine is something you can count on, and when business is on the line, you want a system that delivers solid performance, no matter the circumstances.

To learn about an invention that will change the world of Customs forever, visit www.customsengine.eu.
On 1 July 2008, the European Union (EU) will celebrate the 40th anniversary of its Customs Union. This is a very considerable achievement of which we can be proud. We have gone very far during these 40 years in building a unified Customs entity. Now, what does the future hold? How will the role of Customs change? Can Customs continue to evolve to meet new challenges, as well as the expectations of our nearly 500 million citizens? I suggest that we should not be passive spectators to the events around us, but that we should actively respond to change.

The Customs Union of the EU

The Customs Union was formed on 1 July 1968 by the then 6 Members of the European Community. Since then, the membership has grown steadily, up to 27 Member States, and the Customs Union has witnessed a constant evolution, with major steps like the adoption of the Community Customs Code and, in 1993, the creation of the single market.

A common feature of all Customs unions is the adoption of a common external tariff, but the EU’s Customs Union today is much more than that. From Dublin to Bucharest, the same Customs rules and procedures apply. Thus, the 27 Customs administrations of the Member States implement a single Customs code, supported by a number of instruments and coordination mechanisms which ensure a common approach and equivalent treatment. In addition, the single market entails that, once cleared; imported goods may travel freely between all the Member States. This benefits EU citizens and companies and also the trading partners of the EU. At the same time, Customs administrations bear a joint responsibility for the efficient and effective administration of the external borders of the European Union.

The role and competence of our Customs Union in multilateral Customs policies has been recognised at the international level through WCO membership. This will in the longer term, help to improve international Customs cooperation. We are supporting the promotion of quality standards and we benefit from the experience gained by other WCO members. We are also willing to share our valuable knowledge in respect of technical assistance for capacity building, which was acquired through the enlargement processes, by contributing to the WCO Columbus Programme.

With a population of nearly 500 million, the European Union is the largest trading block in the world: in 2007, there were around 175 million Customs declarations – 5.5 every second! Behind these statistics, the challenges that face us are similar to those facing Customs administrations throughout the world: how do we address the dual challenge of facilitating international trade while protecting our citizens against the risks it poses to their security, their safety and their environment? Whilst our approach will, in many ways, be unique to the conditions of the EU, I believe it is also relevant to many other members of the WCO.

From a position of strength

As we reflect on Customs’ role in the context of a globalised economy, it is perhaps worth reminding ourselves that, like many of our sister Customs administrations throughout the world, we start from a position of strength. The Customs administrations of the EU function at the centre of the dynamic international supply chain and are uniquely equipped to play a central role in the management of the EU’s external borders.

Customs are also in the front line in combating smuggling, counterfeiting, organised crime and even terrorism, in implementing a wide range of restrictions and prohibitions and in providing essential consumer protection, thus exerting a profound influence on the stability and progress of society. This explains why the EU is promoting the development
of international enforcement standards, and contributes actively to global approaches for the alignment of Customs procedures, such as the implementation of the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade, as well as to the formulation of the multilateral Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA).

Facilitation: our challenge

Together with economic operators, EU Customs have a role to play in stimulating international trade and ensuring the competitiveness of the economy. This commitment is not based on a self-centred concern for our own well-being, but in a belief that a vibrant world economy will benefit all countries. This places facilitation at the heart of our work: we must minimise Customs intervention in the flow of goods for legitimate trade. This is reflected in our policies both outside and within the EU.

At the international level, we are supporting our trading partners in streamlining their customs procedures while performing the necessary controls. This is the case for our aid to developing countries and it is also the subject of the Customs cooperation with our neighbours like Russia, to eliminate traffic congestion at our common borders. We are also developing mutual recognition agreements of security controls and trade facilitation programmes with the EU’s main trading partners like Switzerland, the US and China. The objective is to find ways of reducing the administrative burden on reliable and known traders, with the benefit that resources can be focussed where they are most needed. At EU level, we are following the same approach to trade facilitation and controls.

Future developments in the EU

Two scenarios have been developed, which I am certain will also be familiar to other Customs organisations in the world:

(a) Current and planned developments for the next 5 years

There are three closely related developments-

• The Security and Safety Amendment to the Community Customs Code, which reflects the WCO SAFE Framework and introduces a number of measures leading to faster and better-targeted checks, benefiting Customs authorities, citizens and industry. In particular, the Amendment requires traders to provide Customs authorities with information on goods prior to import or export into or out of the European Community, to provide trade facilitation to reliable traders in the framework of the AEO concept, and to set up common risk selection criteria for controls.

• The electronic Customs initiative aims to establish a pan-European paperless environment, thereby reducing compliance and administrative costs.

• The Modernised Customs Code will simplify legislation and streamline Customs processes and procedures for the benefit of both Customs authorities and traders.

(b) The longer term from 2013 onwards

We recognise that, in order to achieve a structured, planned implementation, preparatory work for the future, including, possibly, new procedures, systems or actions will need to begin before 2013.

With this in mind-

• Our vision for the future builds on Customs’ unique control overview of the international supply chain and aims to achieve the right balance between facilitation and control.

• We believe it would be possible to move towards controls based on systems rather than transactions, which implies a change in working methods. In parallel, we must also enhance risk management and provide for the continued evolution of ICT systems.

• Through international cooperation and bilateral agreements, we will further develop the possibilities for sharing information with our major trading partners, and contribute to the development and application of international standards.

Optimism and confidence for the future

Within the EU, the Customs administrations of the 27 Member States are operating in a context of common purpose and mutual trust. There is a high level of cooperation and coordination. That is not to say that we are complacent: like any other administration, we can always do better and we are certainly looking at continuous improvement. However, I am confident that we are building on a basis strong enough to better equip us to face the challenges ahead.

I hope that all around the world, Customs will continue to work together, everyday, to contribute to the management of globalisation and the safety of the world’s citizens.

More information
http://ec.europa.eu/40Customs
Improving dialogue between Customs and the private sector…the East African perspective

...by Creck Buyonge

Like all human relationships, private-public dialogue is complex. For instance, contact between Customs and the private sector is sometimes characterised by mutual suspicion, even hatred [an adversarial relationship] or involves under-the-table dealings that confer benefits to Customs officials and private sector players at the expense of the larger public interest [an immoral relationship]. However, we also know that in spite of the risks, there are benefits to be derived from structured dialogue between customs and the private sector. Through such dialogue, it is possible to achieve legitimacy for Customs reform, benefit from the experience and skills of the private sector in such areas as project management, and collectively work towards reducing the costs of doing business. This requires a high level of transparency and openness to avoid the risk of such partnerships being captured by corruption networks.

The founder Member countries of the East African Community (EAC), Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda saw the need to include a whole chapter on “The Private Sector and the Civil Society” in the Treaty Establishing the East African Community (1999). In that chapter, the Partner States agree to provide an enabling environment for the private sector and civil society to take full advantage of the Community (Article 127), to strengthen the private sector (Article 128) and to strengthen linkages among business organisations, employees’ and employers’ organisations, and professional bodies (Article 129).

At the regional level, the East African Business Council (EABC) represents the interests of the private sector in the EAC Partner States. In 2003, in anticipation of the formal admission of Burundi and Rwanda into the EAC, a high level EABC delegation visited Burundi and Rwanda where they separately met the Heads of State of both countries and signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Rwanda Private Sector Federation. Burundi and Rwanda joined the Community in June 2007. The EABC has therefore positioned itself as “the voice of the private sector in East Africa”. Professional associations, such as the Association of Professional Societies in East Africa (APSEA) and the East African Law Society (EALS) regularly engage with the Secretariat and the administrations of Partner States on issues of interest.

The Northern Corridor Stakeholders’ Forum (NCSF), which is chaired by the Commissioner General of the Kenya Revenue Authority, twice a year brings together government officials including Heads of Customs and private sector representative bodies from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda to discuss issues related to improving the movement of goods along the Northern Corridor served by the Port of Mombasa. The Forum meets under the auspices of the Transit Transport Coordination Authority of the Northern Corridor.

Some of the issues that have been dealt with at the forum include elimination of illegal fees by government departments, review of documentation and clearance procedures at the Port of Mombasa and the land borders, harmonisation of working hours between government departments, and the use of information technology in the goods clearance process. It is partly due to the work of the NCSF that the World Bank is financing a Single Electronic Window project at Mombasa with Kenya Ports Authority and the Kenya Revenue Authority as anchor stakeholders, and a joint border post has been established at Malaba on the Kenya-Uganda border.

In Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, the relationship between Customs and the private sector has developed beyond consultation and is now seen more as a partnership. In these countries, the Customs administrations regularly schedule meetings with representative private sector organisations, and generally seek their buy-in in the process of implementing reform projects. In Burundi however, more work needs to be done to improve the dialogue. Unlike in the other countries, Customs in Burundi is still under the central government, and
representative private sector organizations are less efficient.

Structured dialogue between Customs and the private sector at the national and regional level is one of the key requirements for implementing the WCO Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade. The Business Action for Improving Customs Administration in Africa (BAIFICAA) initiative has begun mobilising the private sector towards this end. A genuine partnership requires that the private sector be organised, and that the partners are aware of their obligations and the limits to what they can achieve.

While much has been achieved in the current circumstances, the time has come for Customs and the private sector to establish formal structures for consultation on Customs issues, perhaps in the style of the NCSF. After all, Kenya regularly conducts research on service delivery, Uganda has published Client Service Standards, and Tanzania’s Customs Modernisation Plan places a lot of emphasis on enhancing relationships with stakeholders. If the private sector takes the initiative to organise themselves for consultation with Customs at the national level, implementation of the Authorised Economic Operator scheme is more likely to be done at less cost in terms of lost time and mistakes that can be avoided.

More information
Creck.Buyonge@canberra.edu.au

>> Transnational crime and the global implications for Customs administrations

The Australian Customs Service is undertaking a joint research project with the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) to develop a global picture of transnational crime from a Customs perspective. The project is aimed at enabling Customs administrations to develop strategies designed to individually or collectively combat international crime groups. The research should benefit Customs targeting activities and help to inform consideration given to issues such as resources, policy and legislation.

Today, more than ever before, crime has no boundaries and Customs’ role in border protection is becoming more challenging and complex. Customs needs to be at the forefront of innovative approaches in combating transnational crime, leading the way in developing international partnerships to ensure cargo security and compliance.

Organised crime and criminal networks are widely recognised as significant threats to global security and economic stability. Globalisation, along with the expansion of information technology and the increased sophistication of criminal networks has made targeting of transnational crime issues increasingly more difficult for Members of both the WCO and the OCO.

Research is currently being conducted via an international survey, which was sent to all WCO and OCO Customs Directors General in May 2008. The survey (available online in 5 languages: Arabic, English, French, Russian, and Spanish) is also accessible from the WCO, OCO and Australian Customs websites until 10 July 2008. To access the online survey, participants will require their unique identification number which was provided in the letter sent to Directors General.

This project will benefit global Customs administrations by providing a strategic overview on Customs related transnational crime, by identifying patterns, trends and modus operandi of transnational crime, by attempting to tackle the issues of transnational crime from a united Customs front, and by developing international strategies to combat transnational crime.

More information
Mrs. Claudine Lupton
Senior Analyst
Australian Customs Service
claudine.lupton@customs.gov.au
www.customs.gov.au
www.ocosec.org

More information
Creck.Buyonge@canberra.edu.au
International Customs Day celebrations around the world

In Ghana, Customs officers on a float passing through the principal streets in Accra, bearing placards, banners and distributing flyers.

Thai Customs exhibition on drug trafficking.

Indonesian Minister of Finance congratulates Customs Officers awarded WCO Certificates of merit.

Thai Customs Deputy Director General addressing officers.

South African Revenue Service anti-smuggling teams holding their Certificates of Merit in recognition of their success in detecting illegal substances.

Ghanaian officers awarded WCO Certificates of merit.

The celebrations in Indonesia included sport and charity events, and blood donation programmes.

Ghanaian officers awarded WCO Certificates of merit.
New Zealand Customs officers demonstrating x-ray machines

New Zealand students get acquainted with a Customs officer and his drug detector dog

New Zealand Customs officers demonstrating x-ray machines

Open day on the Hawk IV - a New Zealand Customs patrol vessel

Exhibition of prohibited drugs in Slovenia

Slovenian customs officers displaying their WCO Certificates of Merit
WCO NEWS I N° 56 I JUNE 2008

Customs administration of Ecuador

Mission
The Ecuadorian Customs Corporation is an independent institution that was created 10 years ago with the mission to administer Customs services in a fast and transparent manner. Ecuador Customs is oriented towards the efficient collection of taxes, and to facilitate and control Customs activities in the current foreign trade market on the basis of integrated and automated processes. It encourages a culture of competitiveness and uprightness that guarantees service excellence to both external and internal users, which in turn contributes actively to the development of Ecuador.

Goals
To comply with its mission, the Customs administration of Ecuador has been working towards the following important goals, among others:

- **Reforms to the General Regulations of the Constitutional Law of Customs**
  One of the main changes was the elimination of the Origin Certificate of Inspection. This change generated savings of USD 70 million per year for the import sector. Other improvements included: the exclusion of Central Bank approval for every transaction; strengthening risk management by eliminating unnecessary controls determined by law; and, for the first time, the creation of a regulation that controls the activity of Customs agents with the purpose of holding them responsible for the procedures that they carry out under the name of importers and/or exporters.

- **Implementation of an X-ray system**
  The system is designed to reduce the number of physical inspections and the time taken to centralize merchandise. In addition, it constitutes a tool to determine types of evasion.

- **Control of markets, airports, and highways**
  The Department of Post-Control was created with the purpose of controlling whether products that have already entered the country fulfill all the required endorsement documents. In the same way, the work of the Customs Guard Services has been fortified to control contraband being transported on highways, which has resulted in a great number of seizures. Controls have also been increased at airports and with respect to couriers, and for this a new regulation was developed and approved. This regulation will control and set a norm for the admission of products into the country thus closing a loophole utilized in the past to evade taxes. These new controls have resulted in the apprehension of all types of merchandise, narcotics and guns.

- **Training**
  Permanent training is one of the fundamental cornerstones of the Ecuador Customs administration and in this regard, Customs constantly concludes agreements with important institutions such as the WCO aimed at strengthening the administration’s training capacity.

- **Intellectual property rights**
  Vital importance has been given to the intellectual property rights issue. In this regard, the law is now applied in a firm and strong way which guarantees fair competence in the market.

- **Creation of a Customs laboratory**
  With the purpose of fighting the contraband trade in substances that harm the environment and human beings, the first Customs central laboratory in the country was inaugurated. This laboratory has some of the most advanced technology, including a section dealing with the “chromatography of gases”.

Main aim
The Ecuadorian Customs Corporation is working towards becoming one of the best Customs administrations in the world and its achievements thus far show that it is on the right track.

Contact

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<tr>
<td>Director General</td>
<td>Mr. Santiago León Abad</td>
<td>9 February 2007</td>
<td>Aduana de Ecuador Km 4 1/2 Av. 25 de Julio Via Puerto Maritimo Guayaquil / Ecuador</td>
<td>+593 4 250 0100 +593 4 248 4251</td>
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Date of establishment: 13 July 1998 as an independent institution

Member of the following international/regional organizations:
- COMALEP
- WTO
- INTERPOL
- IDB

International Conventions signed by Ecuador relating to Customs matters:
Member of WCO: 16 December 1997
Convention on scientific equipment: 23 September 1969

General information

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More information

www.aduana.gov.ec
The Universal Postal Union (UPU), a specialised agency of the United Nations, is responsible for facilitating communication between peoples, based on the principles of free circulation and the right of all citizens and businesses to communicate via postal services. The UPU, established in 1874, implements policies aimed at modernizing and developing the postal sector world-wide, for the benefit of its 191 Member countries.

Its roadmap for the future is based on a strategy combining interconnection, development and good governance. Thus, the UPU shares many elements and values with the WCO, and is facing the same challenges in its role as a facilitator of global trade.

Mr. Edouard Dayan, Director General of the Universal Postal Union’s International Bureau, has kindly offered WCO News his thoughts about the common challenges facing the UPU and the WCO.

WCO News: Co-operation between the WCO and the UPU has taken shape over the years, driven by issues of common interest. What are the major factors which have brought the two Organizations together?

Edouard Dayan: The UPU was established in 1874 to meet a need which is perhaps even more relevant today than it was then: interconnection. Its creation gave rise to a single postal territory within which the universal postal service and freedom of transit are assured. Therefore it was perfectly natural for the UPU to turn to the WCO as soon as it was set up in 1947. This is a natural partnership: close links between the postal services and Customs, and therefore between the WCO and the UPU, go back a long way. The relationship predates the 1973 Kyoto Convention (subsequently revised in 1999), which recognizes the specific nature of the universal postal service. Relations between the WCO and the UPU have developed over more than half a century, on a foundation built on mutual trust and shared interests.

A WCO/UPU Contact Committee has been active for many years, and I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Michel Danet, under whose leadership the WCO has continued and extended its co-operation with the UPU. One significant illustration of this shared commitment was the signing, in 2007, of a partnership agreement between us, covering practical projects of interest to both our Organizations. Globalization has meant that our two Organizations play a key role in “physical” trade, which is growing apace. We see this, in particular, with the dramatic growth of e-commerce worldwide. In this connection, during February 2008 the UPU Council of Administration adopted a proposal to adjust our Mission to reflect this dimension of facilitating international trade. The proposal will be discussed by our Congress when it meets this summer in Geneva.

W. N.: The global environment is evolving all the time and international structures must adapt to change, or better still remain a step ahead, if they wish to flourish. What is the UPU’s strategy for establishing the postal sector of the future?

E. D.: For a number of years the postal sector has had to deal with many changes, all of which present challenges for the UPU. There is the tendency for electronic media to replace hard copy, as well as changes in communication habits. There have also been changes where the markets are concerned. National monopolies are disappearing in many countries, leading to greater internationalization of markets, operators and even customers. The UPU pursues a policy of openness towards the international environment and now, in its activities, it is taking account of all the players in this sector.

Our future strategy is built on three pillars: interconnection; development; and governance. This strategy addresses the three dimensions of the global postal sector: the physical dimension (i.e. the supply chain and the physical network); the financial dimension for money transfers; and finally, the electronic dimension. In my view, the postal sector’s ability to make its mark in the future will depend on the successful...
In Conversation

The fusion of these three dimensions. Armed with an ambitious strategy, as well as an effective inter-governmental and sectoral organization, the global postal sector is perfectly placed to meet the needs of its Members, of economic operators, and of populations. And the postal supply chain, with more than 650,000 contact points world-wide, is based on an extensive distribution network. The postal network is unique in this respect. It offers local access to a global network even in the most far-flung parts of the planet, and therefore has an important role to play in the development of trade, particularly where small and medium-sized enterprises are concerned.

W. N.: The WCO and the UPU operate on the basis of similar concepts, namely the multilateral approach, increased co-operation - especially with the private sector and with other international organizations - and, finally, development through embracing new technologies. Can you identify any best practices that could be of benefit to our two Organizations?

E. D.: International organizations like the WCO, the UPU and others are sometimes accused of being blocked by the influence of governments, held back by decision-making mechanisms and by the fact that the wide spectrum of interests we represent must be allowed to have their say – in other words, we stand accused of operating under democratic governance principles. What some disgruntled souls perceive as being weaknesses, I see as assets and strengths. Our status as an inter-governmental organization allows us to operate in a framework of strict neutrality, and we know how much importance is attached to the confidentiality of data and the neutrality of technological choice. Our multilateral nature enables us to offer global responses to global issues, to the major challenges of the modern world which are unconfined by borders. We need organizations of this kind to establish standards which apply right across a given sector, addressing issues of general interest and serving the purposes of interconnection. If we were not inter-governmental and multilateral, would we be able to ensure that every voice was heard – public sector, private sector, developing and industrialised countries – so that we can help economies move forward for the benefit of all?

The regionalization of trade and economies is also having an impact on how we operate. The WCO has established a regional set-up, and the UPU has drawn up regional development plans which give structure to our activities in the field, taking account of the specific features of each region. One example of this would be the regional projects to set up road transport networks in West Africa and Southern Africa. In a move to address the infrastructure problems of developing countries, we have set up the Quality of Service Fund (QSF). All UPU Member countries, except for the least developed countries, contribute to this Fund through an increase in the compensation payments made between countries. In 2007, this enabled us to fund 75 projects in more than 50 countries, for a total of 15.8 million US dollars.

I would also like to mention an example which has its counterpart in the WCO: interaction with the private sector. Like the WCO, in 2005 the UPU introduced a Consultative Committee bringing together postal stakeholders other than governments and universal postal service operators. This is a necessary development for organizations such as ours, which are designed to be inclusive and representative. The advantages of opening up in this way are obvious, although the ground rules for doing so must be clearly set out. In this connection, for the UPU, many issues relating to governance, funding and representation still need to be fully explored.
WCO News: What are the challenges facing your sector where Customs is concerned?

Facilitation, security and technology are key elements for effective cooperation between the postal and Customs sectors. As I mentioned earlier, the UPU’s mission is to ensure a quality postal “supply chain” worldwide, giving access to everyone everywhere, including both private and business customers. The value of this chain is being increased by globalization and emerging eCommerce activities. The Customs process is one of the most important links in the postal chain to facilitate the speedy and secure clearance of postal items of which more than 5 billion cross international borders every year. Furthermore, only through effective postal and Customs processes can we ensure that the supply chain is not being abused for criminal or dangerous activities.

New technology is paramount in ensuring the quality of the supply chain and compatibility between postal and Customs processes. State-of-the-art technology is also paramount in strengthening the physical postal network and from the side of the UPU; we are making good progress and have included it in our strategic actions. The UPU’s Postal Technology Centre has developed a number of software solutions to facilitate the smooth management of the mail stream from posting to final delivery. The solution known as the International Postal System (IPS and IPS Light) allows postal operators to track and trace postal items throughout the mail stream. The UPU’s electronic communication network Post*Net further ensures the inter-exchange of electronic data captured by the system solutions. Currently, more than 150 postal operators are interconnected through the systems and the electronic network.

However, interconnection between postal operators is not enough to achieve perfection. Customs also need to be connected, equal to other natural partners in the transportation chain such as airlines. To achieve this goal, we have to progress in the following three areas: the development of exchangeable data standards; the development of data capture solutions; and ensuring the inter-exchangeability of data between Customs and postal operators. In fact, the UPU and WCO are already in the process of developing common data standards and, on the side of the UPU, we have already determined the development of a new functionality in our IPS solutions. I would like to see that we accelerate our cooperation in order to achieve the interconnection of postal and Customs solutions as soon as possible.

Security is another area where we should work together and specifically the enhancement of security measures in order to prevent the distribution of counterfeit, illegal and dangerous goods through the use of the postal network. Joint efforts on capacity enhancement such as the sharing of e-publications and the organization of training sessions should also be on our common agenda.

I believe we are on the right track and together we can meet the challenges within our respective mandates given to us by our Members.
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Money laundering and terrorist financing, there is still a lot to be done!

As part of the “Inventing Our Future” Forum on “The WCO in the 21st Century”, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), represented by Mr. Hassan Baage from the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), was asked to speak on the topic “Security: A challenge for the WCO?”.

WCO News took this opportunity to interview Mr. Baage about CTC proposals to increase co-operation between the WCO and the CTC. This co-operation manifests itself, throughout the year, in the WCO’s participation in the CTC’s missions to evaluate countries’ progress with the implementation of Resolution 1373 in respect of controls on the cross-border movement of persons and their property, and of goods.

WCO News: Your proposals on how the WCO could support anti-terrorism efforts relate, in particular, to money laundering, especially the illegal cross-border movement of monetary instruments referred to in Resolution 1373, and the detection of illicit international trade transactions which could be used to finance terrorist activities. Why?

Hassan Baage: The two key issues addressed in this question relate to the illegal cross-border movement of funds that are either derived from, or are intended to support terrorist activity.

At the outset, I would like to note that the provisions of two United Nations instruments form the basis for the proposals made by CTED at the WCO Forum. First, paragraph 2 (g) of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) requires United Nations Member States to prevent the movement of terrorists or terrorist groups, through effective border controls. The intention of this paragraph of the resolution is to control not only the cross-border movement of persons, but also their property - in particular cash, other monetary instruments and goods that either derive from support for terrorist acts, or are susceptible to diversion for that purpose. Second, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which was adopted by all 192 Member States in September 2006 in the form of a resolution and annexed Plan of Action, stresses the need for Member States to step up their efforts to prevent and detect the movement of terrorists and prevent and detect illicit trafficking in a variety of goods.

With respect to the physical cross-border transportation of currency and bearer negotiable instruments, the objective is to ensure that appropriate and effective controls are in place to deny terrorists and other criminals (e.g. money-launderers) the possibility of physically moving or carrying their funds across international borders to support their murderous or felonious activities. “Cash couriers” are known to play a key role in money-laundering operations, but there is also increasing evidence that they play a significant role in international terrorist financing.

Similarly, the financiers of terrorism move money through the international trade process. This practice, known as trade-based money laundering (TBML), allows terrorist financiers and money-launderers to move money across international borders at reduced risk of detection, because it enables them to circumvent the heavily regulated formal financial sector. The main goal of our proposal in this area is therefore to respond to the need for Member States to take the necessary steps to detect and prevent the cross-border movement of money in order to deprive terrorists and money-launderers of their funds and disrupt their operations.

W. N.: What can the WCO contribute in this area?

H. B.: We believe that, with respect both to cash couriers and to TBML, WCO can play an important role by working with its Member Customs administrations to develop and implement a systematic capacity to detect and prevent the illegal movement of cash and other monetary instruments.
In the near future all customs procedures will be dealt with electronically. The intention of the European Commission is very clear: implement electronically streamlined processes between Customs Authorities in order to become less susceptible to fraud.

But there is a clear difference between dream and reality. Although based on the same EU legislation, Member States use different data requirements, messaging formats, communication protocols and different certification processes. In short, too many worries for companies dealing with international trade.

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In the area of cash couriers, the relevant counter-terrorist financing and anti-money-laundering laws require that a declaration or disclosure regime be put in place to regulate the cross-border movement or transfer of sums of money exceeding pre-determined thresholds. They also require that a competent body - normally Customs - be vested with the legal authority to administer such a system. In the course of monitoring the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001) on behalf of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, CTED has generally found (where the physical movement of cash is concerned) that where Customs administrations have put into place a system for the administration of a declaration or disclosure regime in compliance with the relevant laws, they have not taken the required control measures, such as the introduction of targeting methodologies, the development and use of risk indicators, or the exchange of information, its analysis, and its use as intelligence to detect cash couriers and smugglers. We believe that WCO can make a significant contribution to the development and continuous updating of practical control/detection methods, including through interaction and cooperative work with specialized units such as the financial intelligence units (generally found within Finance Ministries) and by assisting its Members with their implementation efforts through training and capacity building.

In the case of TBML, WCO can lend support by working with its Member Customs administrations to identify and catalogue the various schemes and fraudulent commercial transactions used by terrorist financiers and money-launderers to move money or its value from one country to another, as well as by developing the risk indicators required for their detection and training Member Customs administrations in their application. TBML methodologies are largely the same as Customs commercial fraud schemes, and include falsely described goods, multiple invoicing of goods and services, over and under shipment of goods, and over and under invoicing of goods and services. WCO can help its Members develop and use methodologies for monitoring and analysing trade data in order to detect anomalies in trade transactions that may be associated with terrorist financing and money-laundering and thus require investigation. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) can be a valuable partner in both these areas, as it has acquired significant relevant expertise.

W. N.: Customs administrations have major technical assistance needs where the fight against money laundering is concerned. In June 2005 the WCO adopted a Recommendation on the need to develop and strengthen the role of Customs administrations in tackling money laundering and in recovering the proceeds of crime. This instrument was complemented, in February 2008, by Customs Enforcement Guidelines on Countering Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, incorporating best practices being employed by Customs administrations and some model cases of Customs enforcement practices. I am sure you are aware of the difficulties facing the WCO in terms of human and financial capacity, so how can the CTC, through the CTED, help the WCO in this area which is of such critical importance to the fight against terrorist financing?

H. B.: One of CTED’s most important functions is to identify, as part of its monitoring function, the vulnerabilities encountered by States in implementing resolution 1373 (2001), the technical assistance they require in order to address those vulnerabilities, and how and by whom such assistance may be provided. The CTC and CTED are not assistance providers; rather, they play a facilitating role by identifying needs and matching them with the assistance available. CTED, through its matrix of donors and assistance providers, might, therefore, be able to locate a provider willing to fund certain capacity building activities in the two areas discussed above.

More information
baageh@un.org
www.un.org

Mr. Hassan Baage currently serves as a Senior Legal Officer with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) of the United Nations Security Council. His principal area of responsibility is border control, including immigration and customs controls, and aviation and maritime security. CTED was established to assist the Counter-Terrorism Committee to monitor implementation by Member States of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), which calls on States to implement a number of measures to enhance their legal and institutional capacity to combat terrorism.

Prior to joining the United Nations, Mr. Baage served from 1998 to 2005 as Senior Technical Officer with the World Customs Organization, where his work included helping to develop the SAFE Framework of Standards, developing bilateral and multilateral agreements to facilitate mutual administrative assistance in customs matters, and working with WCO Members to achieve harmonization and increased effectiveness in their compliance programmes.

Before joining WCO, Mr. Baage held a variety of posts with the Canada Border Services Agency in Ottawa, working in areas such as programme evaluation, management and coordination of national anti-smuggling programmes, and policy development for compliance.
Money laundering, WCO initiatives

Money laundering has a considerable adverse impact on the social stability and economic development of a nation. It is not a stand-alone crime, but is intertwined with other crimes, which are called “predicate offences”. These offences include transnational organized crimes such as the smuggling of drugs, arms, stolen vehicles and artworks, the trade in counterfeit goods, and so on. This criminal trade generates a significant amount of illegal proceeds that need to be laundered, hence the need to find more avenues in which to do so.

UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1373, which was adopted soon after the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, points out the close connection between international terrorism and transnational organised crime. Terrorist financing has a direct impact on and relevance to the work of Customs especially the WCO’s ongoing efforts to secure the international trade supply chain. Current global security concerns and the possibility that this “dirty money” could finance terrorist activity, money laundering is now drawing more political attention than before and remains firmly under the spotlight.

The WCO’s response
Money laundering has been included in WCO work programmes since the early 1990s. In order to respond to mounting concerns from its Members, the WCO adopted the “Recommendation on the need to develop and strengthen the role of Customs administrations in tackling money laundering and recovering the proceeds of crime” in June 2001. This Recommendation was revised on 25 June 2005 to include the prevention of terrorist financing.

How it’s done and the links to commercial fraud
While money laundering is closely linked with drug smuggling and other organised crime, it also often involves Customs fraud operations, particularly the under- and over- valuation of goods and invoice manipulation. Criminal groups use the international trading system to transfer their illegal proceeds to other countries – this is known as trade-based money laundering. In this scheme, dirty money is transferred across the border by distorting the value of traded goods. For example, by importing over-valued goods and paying for them by remitting more money than the actual value of the goods, a money launderer acting as an importer could transfer the money to a partner in an exporting country.

Customs does have unique experience, knowledge, resources and legislative authority to detect, investigate and suppress these forms of trade fraud. The mandate of the WCO Commercial Fraud Working Group includes studying the nature and extent of commercial fraud and analysing its linkages with money laundering. As a result of the studies undertaken, the current WCO definition of “commercial fraud” was revised to include trade-based money laundering and this proposal will be presented to the WCO Council in June 2008 for approval.

Activities on the ground
Recently, the WCO Secretariat compiled a report on the outcomes of the global survey on the implementation of best practices in countering money laundering and terrorist financing, which was conducted during the summer of 2007. This survey led to the WCO producing “Customs Enforcement Guidelines against Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing” after evaluating contributions from its Members. The Guidelines contain a series of law enforcement tactics currently being exercised by WCO Member Customs administrations. Both the report and the Guidelines were adopted by the WCO Enforcement Committee in February 2008.

Additionally, a set of collective initiatives to be pursued by both the WCO Secretariat and WCO Members was accepted by the Enforcement Committee with a view to further improving knowledge about money laundering and terrorist financing schemes, and fully mobilising existing Customs competence to counter the challenge. These initiatives include, among others:

- Collection of national reports on money laundering and terrorist financing.
- Collection of the x-ray images showing the concealment of cash.
• Collection of training material on enforcement measures against money laundering and terrorist financing.
• Updating a list of risk indicators to detect cash couriers at the border.

The Warsaw-based Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO) for Eastern and Central Europe initiated “Project SEZAM” and produced a global analytical report on currency smuggling, based on seizure data accumulated in the WCO’s Central Enforcement Network (CEN). This analytical project was meant to draw the attention of WCO Members to the on-going currency smuggling scheme and its link to money laundering and terrorist financing and to provide WCO Members with strategic intelligence on key transshipping and courier routes as a means to identify intelligence and risk indicators that may assist Customs controls against currency smuggling at the border. The Project is expected to continue, with a report being produced annually. A copy of the report (English only) is available on the CEN webpage.

Collaboration at the international level
The WCO maintains a close cooperative relationship with other specialised intergovernmental organisations with a view to supplementing each other’s expertise. An example of this is the decision by the WCO to join the Financial Action Task Force’s (FATF) typology study on trade-based money laundering, which is aimed at studying the extent of the use of trade-based systems (such as the over/under-invoicing of imports and exports), as an alternative method of transferring money internationally. Visit http://www.fatf-gafi.org for more details.

In addition, the WCO co-hosted the International Conference on Illicit Cash Couriers with INTERPOL from 13-14 May 2008 at INTERPOL’s General Secretariat in Lyon (France). The Conference provided participants with an opportunity to further strengthen existing cooperation between law enforcement authorities towards collective efforts and actions against the growing threat of illicit cash couriers in accordance with internationally agreed best practices. Outcomes of this Conference will be reported to the Enforcement Committee in February 2009.

More information
kazunari.igarashi@wcoomd.org

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Columbus, the voyage from recognition to realization

The Columbus Programme, Aid for SAFE Trade is the largest and most comprehensive Customs capacity building initiative on record. Its aim is to implement the SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE Framework), the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), and to prepare WCO Members for the possible outcome of the WTO negotiations on trade facilitation. 152 WCO Members have committed to implementing the SAFE Framework. Out of the 110 Members that have sought assistance from the WCO under the Columbus Programme, 105 have already received a diagnostic mission under Phase 1, or have a confirmed plan to do so. Almost 70 Members are now in Phase 2 (Implementation). 110 national missions and 14 regional missions have already been completed and a Phase 2 Action Planning Facilitators Workshop has taken place. Columbus working languages include English, French, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic and Chinese.

“Phase 1 of the Columbus Programme has proven to be real value to our Members and donor organizations whilst Phase 2 has begun in earnest and its positive impact is already being felt throughout the trade chain. For the first time, a wave of strategic change is sweeping the Customs world, simultaneously bringing benefits to Governments, Customs administrations, traders and transporters. In Customs terms, it is an historic development”.

Michel Danet
WCO Secretary General

The following pages contain samples of early results of Columbus implementation. Significantly, the activities have been largely generated and undertaken by Customs administrations themselves, with support, on request, from the WCO Secretariat, assistance providers and donors. In effect, the WCO role has been to act as a catalyst in creating the circumstances that enable and support Customs modernization and the practical implementation of international standards. There are common threads but also diversity. Notably, the activities are strategic in nature and reflect the real needs of individual administrations.

Phase 2 will be more demanding than Phase 1. The challenges are diverse and vary in scope between one administration and another. Equally, Members have different roles and capabilities in introducing change. The key is to marshal all the forces to act together and in unison. The WCO Columbus Programme has already had a strong impact on Members and the WCO is committed to building on this success.

East African Community

“For me the regional development perspective creates structured synergies that will increase the results for the economies of the region in relation to enhanced EAC trade but also to external and main trade partners. By sequencing a regional EAC Programme based on national developments, the region can grow stronger and introduce initiatives such as regional mutual recognition of AEO”.

Allen Kagina
Chairperson of the EAC Programme Steering Group
Commissioner General of the Uganda Revenue Authority

The East African Community (EAC) has developed a regional plan for implementing the common recommendations from the Columbus Programme Diagnostic Mission Reports. A Strategic Plan has been agreed and a modernization programme set up, comprising 3 major projects and two support projects. The specific objective is to assist the Customs administrations in the EAC region (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda) to design and implement a comprehensive regional reform programme with a focus on:

• Enhanced trade management including a sequenced implementation of an AEO Programme.
• Progress in line with the EAC desire for a Customs Union.
• Introduction of a broader approach towards border and risk management.

These objectives are underpinned by two support projects which develop and implement an HR strategy and communication strategy for the region.

A five year assistance plan, fully financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) has already been established and will be rolled out in a sequenced manner. Components include a Steering Group, a Regional Programme Manager, Terms of Reference, and traders and other stakeholder involvement.
Brazil

“The WCO’s holistic approach has made a significant impact on the future direction of Brazilian Customs.”

Cley Lionco
Deputy Secretary for Customs, Federal Revenue Secretariat of Brazil

Brazil has established a project to conduct internal and external surveys and interviews of staff and all relevant stakeholders, to benchmark administrative and procedural models and prepare a Customs Modernization Plan.

The process adopted complies with the WCO Capacity Building Strategy and follows the recommendations and structure of the WCO diagnostic. The Columbus Programme is providing management support and quality assurance for the modernization programme.

Implementation has already begun with modernization projects concentrating on:
- Improved anti-smuggling and border protection functions.
- Implementation of a new cargo control system with advance electronic information.
- Development of a new risk management IT solution.
- Revision of integrity strategies to align them with the WCO Arusha Declaration and WCO Integrity tools.

The revised Customs mission has allowed significant investments in operational and tactical equipment.

Guatemala

Another success story in the Americas’ region is Guatemalan Customs which falls within the Superintendency of the Tax Administration (SAT).

A SAFE Framework diagnostic was conducted in 2005 and Customs has methodically and progressively implemented changes using an holistic approach including process redesign, installation of new IT applications, human resource development and ethics. Recognizing the importance of human resources, SAT has implemented a scheme that sets a strong foundation to professionalize the service. Currently under development are:
- Key performance indicators.
- Definition of the parameters of the AEO Programme.
- Professional requirements for specific jobs.
- Additional education and training.
- A thorough screening process that requires voice stress analysis.

The Superintendent of SAT has recognized the importance of this agency to Guatemala and has been proactive in Customs development, enhancing the status of the organization and showing leadership in the region.

United Arab Emirates

Based on the Federal Customs Authority (FCA) Strategy, which was derived from recommendations of the WCO Phase 1 diagnostic study, comprehensive HRM and HRD plans have been developed.

Work has begun on analyzing current job descriptions, and identifying required changes.

Further work is planned to define personal, functional and technical competencies necessary for present performance and to assess the competencies of current FCA employees in order to formulate a transition and development plan.

Performance management, measurement, monitoring and evaluation systems are being designed and the FCA will benchmark its organizational structure with best practices.

Other plans include identifying training and development needs, setting a financial management policy, standards and procedures, and designing an evaluation system, to measure the impact and cost effectiveness of training.
**Argentina**

Argentine Customs’ visionary approach has led to the development of what is called “the laboratory” which is essentially a centralised risk management and rapid response centre. Headquartered in the main offices of Customs in Buenos Aires, it serves as the nerve centre for viewing all activity throughout the nation. Through an impressive array of closed circuit cameras, GPS tracking devices on trucks and a risk management system that is constantly updated, this system is responsive to any situation.

Close involvement by the Director General and Deputy Director General supports strong decision-making and has resulted in very informed and very engaged executive management.

Cargo tampering has been substantially reduced following the introduction of GPS electronic seals, which have cut tampering and theft and enabled Argentina to export its containers with a high level of credibility to other nations. Effective communication with other countries’ Customs reduces the number of inspections of their goods. Another part of the multidimensional approach that encompasses “the laboratory” is the use of scanners to secure goods being exported from the country.

This initiative has led to better working relations and stronger communication with other Customs authorities. Argentine Customs has a non-confrontational working relationship with the private sector and has developed an AEO Programme that forms part of their Strategic Plan to facilitate and secure trade.

Argentina has used the SAFE Framework to gain the political support necessary to effect change. It remains a committed and proactive Customs administration, helping to lead the Americas into the 21st Century.

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**Nigeria**

With support from the WCO Secretariat, the Nigeria Customs Service has produced a comprehensive development plan for reform to meet the requirements of the SAFE Framework and the ECOWAS development agenda. The programme has been fully costed and a National Programme Management Team has been established.

A time release study was completed in 2007, enabling priority development areas to be identified. Using expertise from the Secretariat, current contracts with service providers have been refocused to provide funding support for the development programme, largely in the human resource development area. In January 2008 a comprehensive needs analysis was conducted which will lead to an HR strategy and a training strategy to support both the organisational and technical developments.

Working with the service providers, the Programme Management Team continue to roll out the ASYCUDA++ System according to plan and to position the national network of fixed and mobile cargo-scanning equipment.

**Morocco**

As a follow up to the diagnostic mission, Moroccan Customs initiated modernization steps to meet the WCO SAFE standards.

Investigations and intelligence functions have been introduced to enhance anti-smuggling work and the “SADOK” clearing system has been upgraded into “BADR”.

A transparent human resource management system to meet the needs of the Strategic Plan is being supported by the adoption of the WCO Arusha Declaration, the WCO integrity tools and a transparent Code of Conduct.

Customs legislation has been amended to meet the requirements of the security and facilitation of the trade supply chain.

The introduction of risk management and targeting has decreased clearance times while leading to more effective enforcement targeting.
Moldova

Moldavian Customs has launched a wide range of change initiatives based on the WCO recommendations. At the opening ceremony of the new Customs Training Centre in Chisinau during 2007, the Prime Minister of Moldova expressed his appreciation for the assistance provided by the WCO and expressed strong political will to support the Customs capacity building programme. Major donors and representatives of the WCO were also present.

Under Government approved Phase 2 plans, new divisions have been established for Risk Management and Analysis, Strategic Planning, and Goods Classification A dedicated Customs laboratory has been established and a Customs-to-Business Consultative Committee has been set up.

Customs and the Ministry of Interior have signed a Collaboration Agreement that provides for common mobile groups and other activities to counteract Customs frauds and smuggling.

Amendments have been introduced to the Customs Code on simplified Customs clearance procedures and on the Single Window concept. An electronic goods declaration procedure has been introduced.

Future activities include a programme of WCO training seminars and workshops.

Oceania Customs Organization

Columbus Discovers Pacific Islands

“The Columbus programme will help fundamentally in developing the Customs services needed to meet the often unique challenges of the region”.

Robert Taylor
OCO Secretary General

Under the terms of a new agreement between the WCO Secretariat and the Oceania Customs Organization, the Columbus programme has been extended to the Oceania region under the title “Fai Folau” which means “Voyager”.

The agreement includes training, quality assurance, and funding support to assist the region in its efforts to join the global Customs community by implementing the SAFE Framework. Diagnostic missions funded by the WCO have been completed in Papua New Guinea and Fiji and another is scheduled soon in Vanuatu.

With international and local accredited Columbus facilitators, trained in Nadi (Fiji) and in Auckland (New Zealand) in February 2008, the region is now equipped to launch Phase 1 of the Programme, followed quickly by Phase 2, in the period June to December 2008. The first Regional Trends and Patterns Report is planned for completion by the end of 2008.

The Secretary General of the OCO is enthusiastic about the engagement with the WCO so far and its co-operative approach.

Kazakhstan

“The Customs service of Kazakhstan is on a brand new level of its development. Implementation of a number of reforms, aimed at laying the foundation for further successful functioning, increase in the country’s total trade, improvement of the investment climate, and bringing the Customs Code in line with world standards prove that Kazakh Customs service is progressing well”.

Bolat Zhamishev
Minister of Finance, Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan will implement Phase 2 of the Columbus Programme fully as part of its comprehensive modernization programme that is jointly financed by the World Bank (US Dollars 18.5 million) and the Kazakh Government.

The Kazakh Customs Modernization Programme for 2007 – 2009 and the World Bank’s Customs Development Project for 2008 – 2012 have been developed based on WCO recommendations and will be implemented under a WCO/World Bank/Kazakhstan Customs Service Tripartite Agreement that was signed on 6 March 2007.

A new Modernization and Strategic Development Unit has been established to coordinate implementation. Pilot projects with China Customs have been initiated on joint Customs control (December 2007) and integrated border management (January 2008). In addition, a pilot project on Securing Customs and Shipping Documentation with Kyrgyzstan Customs was implemented in April 2008 (SAFE-Package).

Amendments to the Customs Code transferring all functions at the border from other agencies to Customs have been submitted to the Kazakh Parliament for approval.

Serbia

In January 2008 the Strategic Action Plan based on the WCO Phase 1 recommendations was drafted. A 30 month project on Risk Analysis Assessment in the Western Balkan Countries (RACWEB) started on 1 January.

WCO Phase 2 workshops were conducted in 2007 covering risk management and analysis and IT support, resulting in a risk management system being introduced.

An agreement has been signed with the WCO to introduce the WCO E-Learning Programme. In addition, Guidelines on Post-Clearance Audit Functions have been published and an Integrated Tariff System (TARIS) is partially implemented.

Agreement has been reached with neighbouring Customs administrations for the electronic exchange of Customs information lists.
Mongolia

Mongolian Customs is adopting best practices using the WCO recommendations and international legal instruments. It is already more transparent and less bureaucratic which has improved understanding between Customs and its stakeholders.

Customs has implemented a national automated risk management programme, introduced a compliant traders concept, identified baseline compliance and now exchanges data on cross border movements with other countries. Carriers must submit pre-arrival information which is assessed against WCO risk indicators. Juxtaposed controls at the Mongolia-China border are under consideration and there are also agreements with China and Russia about mutual recognition of Customs inspections and documents, and the use of harmonized e-manifests for transit goods.

Clearance times have been substantially reduced from several days to just a few hours through simplified procedures and by offering e-clearance to more clients.

The GAMAS Customs Automated Data Processing System has been upgraded to enable the development of a single processing system that can interface with other government agencies, banks, freight forwarders and Customs brokers which promotes e-Government through paperless clearance.

The implementation of client service standards, a code of conduct, integrity training for officers and a video monitoring system underlines the high priority Mongolia attributes to good governance.

Jordan

Jordan Customs has initiated a wide ranging modernization project under Columbus Phase 2, which includes implementation of the customs-related Border Management Task Force recommendations and the upgrading and integration of Customs’ infrastructure. Compliance management has been enhanced through the introduction of the single window approach, risk management, intelligence and post-clearance audit functions. An AEO Programme has commenced and a mutual recognition agreement with the US Customs Border Protection agency (USCBP) will be signed during the 2008 annual WCO Council sessions.

The SAT (Systems Approach to Training) is now being applied to ensure better targeted training. IT capability is also receiving attention with the introduction of ASYCUDA WORLD and access by all Customs Officers to the internet and intranet.

Awareness campaigns using different media means have been launched to introduce the work of Customs and the services it provides to all stakeholders. The Customs website has been enhanced to include information in both Arabic and English. A new Customer Service Unit has also been established.

A Code of Conduct for Jordanian Customs officials is one result of Jordan’s application of the WCO Arusha Declaration and WCO Integrity tools.

Lesotho

“The greatest thing about the Columbus Programme is that WCO member administrations are only a phone call away from the support they need in implementing the SAFE Framework of Standards. Members get access to world class support in implementing their change projects, without incurring any cost”

Thabo Letjama
Commissioner for Customs and Excise
Lesotho Revenue Authority

One of the earliest participants in the Columbus programme, the Lesotho Revenue Service’s Customs component continues to work with the WCO Secretariat to implement fundamental reforms in Customs. The entire management team, from operational team leaders to the Commissioner, produced and agreed to a priority change management programme based on the Revised Kyoto Convention and the SAFE Framework.

A strategic development plan has been created, which reviews and introduces new intelligence, risk management, IT, and operational procedures. This is supported by specific project plans including a project to refurbish and modernize border facilities. Progress is being made on trade and personnel profiles on which the detailed risk management strategy will be based.

South Africa

Following the diagnostic mission and supported by the WCO, the South African Revenue Service (SARS) has developed a strategic development plan for the implementation of the SAFE Framework. This plan has helped to position SARS Customs at the centre of the Government’s border management policy development initiative. In addition, as the plan rolls out, SARS has re-established an appropriate level of autonomy for SARS Customs. A newly created Customs Strategy Development Unit has determined the future direction of Customs.

To support this new direction, SARS Customs has:

- Completed a review of all Customs law and a new SAFE compliant Customs Act is currently undergoing the process required for enactment.
- Introduced a new National Anti-smuggling Division, providing new standard operating practices consistent with the SAFE Framework and supported by a new training programme for Customs staff.
- Developed, in partnership with the trade and other government agencies, an AEO strategy which will be piloted during the current financial year.
- Acquired cargo scanning equipment.
- Started a comprehensive review of IT requirements.

Under the Regional programme and as a Member of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), SARS Customs has also contributed to the development of a regional approach to policy development, risk management, IT, and Customs procedures, supported by joint action on communications and HR development.
To mark not only this year's International Customs Day dedicated to the fight against drugs and precursors, but also the Zollkriminalamt’s (ZKA) ceremony to present its activities, the President of the ZKA, Mr. Karl-Heinz Matthias, extended an invitation to the WCO Secretary General, Mr. Michel Danet, together with representatives of the German Federal Government, the German Ministry of Finance and ZKA officials.

Following a Press Conference with German newspaper and television journalists, Karl-Heinz Matthias invited Michel Danet to present WCO certificates of merit to three German Customs officials who had distinguished themselves in the fight against trafficking in drugs and chemical precursors.

This was also an opportunity for Michel Danet to present Mr. Harald Fröhlich, who is due to retire in summer 2008, with a crystal trophy on behalf of the WCO. This award was in recognition of his unfailing contribution to enhancing Customs enforcement worldwide, especially in his capacity as Head of the Regional Intelligence and Liaison Office Western Europe (RILO WE), and of his professionalism, effectiveness and dynamism as Chairperson of the Enforcement Committee for three years.

Michel Danet then toured ZKA premises and took the opportunity to meet the team making up the RILO WE, which initiated Operation "Fair Play" to combat trafficking in counterfeit and pirated goods manufactured to coincide with the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. This targeted action, for which the RILO WE will serve as the Operational Co-ordination Unit, is running from 1 November 2007 to 31 August 2008 and is aimed at enhancing co-operation and information exchange between stakeholders, including the private sector and, more specifically, rights holders. It is being implemented by the WCO’s eleven RILOs, and almost all the Organization’s Member administrations are involved.

The former Head of the RILO WE, Mrs. Heike Barczyk from German Customs, who was recently appointed to the International Customs Co-operation Unit within the German Ministry of Finance, was replaced by Mr. Stefan Kirsch on 1 April 2008. This senior official previously worked in the Directorate General of Customs and Indirect Taxation, and had special responsibility for European Customs co-operation in the enforcement domain (including Customs/police co-operation, OLAF and Europol as well as Memoranda of Understanding).

The entire RILO WE team posed for a souvenir photograph alongside the Secretary General.

The WCO News Editorial Board wishes Harald Fröhlich a very happy retirement, and would like to offer words of encouragement to Stefan Kirsch.

More information
www.zollkriminalamt.de
office@rilo-we.org
Mr. Karl-Heinz Matthias alongside Mr. Harald Frohlich (ZKA) Mr. Jürgen Thiel (Zollfahndung München), Mr. Oliver Bohlender (Zollfahndung Frankfurt) and Mr. Franz Kohler (Zollfahndung Stuttgart – German Customs Investigation Service) having received WCO certificates of merit.

Ms. Vesna Kadic (Assistant Director General, Croatia), SG Danet, Dr. Rainer Mellwig (ZKA) and Dr. Dierk Hahn (German Ministry of Finance).

Dr. Dierk Hahn (German Ministry of Finance), Ms. Vesna Kadic (Assistant Director General, Customs Directorate, Republic of Croatia) and Mr. Thomas Schoeneck (German Ministry of Finance).

SG Danet and officials from the RILO Western Europe (RILO WE): (from left to right) Mr. Brian Frederiksen (Denmark), Mr. Louis Moreau (France), Mrs. Hanne Sannerhaugen (Norway), SG Danet, Mrs. Linn Thier (Germany), Mrs. Martina Schick (Germany) and Mr. Peter Hauschild (Germany).
Dubai Congress strengthens global partnership

The Fourth Global Congress on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy which was held in Dubai from 3-5 February 2008 ended on a high note with Congress participants unanimously accepting that it was time to take even stronger action against those who disregard intellectual property rights by practising counterfeiting and piracy. Hosted by Dubai Customs and held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, delegates attending the Congress had the opportunity to listen to almost 60 top-notch speakers, whose presentations covered the critical challenges generated by the growing counterfeiting and piracy trade.

Attracting over 1,200 delegates representing 90 countries, the event provided a platform for leaders from government, business and international organizations to share their views and identify concrete actions to deal with the challenges faced in each of the priority areas identified by the Congress founding members: co-operation and co-ordination; legislation and enforcement; capacity building; raising awareness; and health and safety risks. In addition, special sessions on the challenges facing free trade zones and transhipment countries as well as the sale of counterfeit and pirated products over the Internet were also featured. The outcomes of the Congress have been developed into the Dubai Declaration, a series of key recommendations for specific actions.

The Congress partners representing INTERPOL, WIPO, the WCO, the ICC-BASCAP initiative, INTA and ISMA remain united in their effort to combat counterfeiting and piracy.

More information
www.ccapcongress.net
IT, the key to integrated border management

International experts in Customs and border management and IT business officials gathered in Seoul from 23 to 25 April to discuss what IT can offer to boost efficiency and security. Hosted by the Korea Customs Service (KCS) and the WCO, the 2008 WCO IT Conference & Exhibition with the theme “Integrated Border Management” was attended by about 500 participants.

Korea’s Vice Finance Minister Choi Joong-kyung said “the customs service should serve as the main artery of the global economy.” KCS Commissioner, Hur Yong-Suk, added “IT is an essential part of Customs innovation” and he hoped that the conference would help to set up a single global network to promote economic development around the world.

Participants had the opportunity to view the latest innovative information technologies and see where the future of customs is heading. The conference was also an opportunity for the WCO to share experiences and best technologies with member countries and the private sector.

More information
Allen.bruford@wcoomd.org
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Evolution or extinction, the challenge we face!

More than 150 experts gathered in Brussels from 27 to 28 March 2008 for discussions on “The WCO in the 21st Century”, as part of a series of global fora taking place under the banner “Inventing Our Future”. The purpose of the exercise: to conduct a critical assessment of the organization and functioning of the WCO and of its mission, in the light of the major challenges facing the Organization.

Belgium’s Minister of Enterprise and Administrative Simplification, Mr. Vincent Van Quickenborne, honoured the Forum with his presence at the opening session, delivering a dynamic address which provided the right impetus for this innovative exercise in projecting the future – the keynote being the need for Customs administrations to evolve towards the integrated management of the international supply chain using virtual information flows, in order to overcome time constraints and physical barriers so that we can deliver the results and performance expected of us in today’s environment.

In a bid to open up the discussions Mr. Christopher Gillis, Editor of American Shipper magazine who has been working in the Customs environment for more than a decade, was invited to lead the Forum. Under his leadership, some twenty experts spoke on one of five selected themes: the decision-making process and the nature of WCO instruments, supply chain security and trade facilitation, how the responsibilities of Customs are changing, and the importance of an appropriate capacity building strategy.

This Forum has provided an opportunity for representatives of the private sector, partner institutions and academia to come together for constructive deliberations, which will undoubtedly harness synergies to help the international Customs community adapt to an ever-changing environment and look ahead to changes which will need to be made.

More information
www.wcoomd.org
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The EastWest Institute’s 5th Worldwide Security Conference ended with the conclusion that while the past five years have seen some progress with worldwide security, the task of addressing the threat of terrorism, in its recurring and sometimes new forms, remains a challenge.

The Conference, held at WCO Headquarters from 19 to 21 February, focused in particular on the financing of terrorism, looking at all the methods used to launder money.

In relation to the transfer of funds outside the official banking system, there was discussion about parallel systems of transmitting funds, generally known as “hawalas”, the use of commercial transactions to launder money, and the use of cash couriers.

For Customs administrations, this is about taking measures to control the movement of capital: controls on natural persons, their baggage and their means of transport. Another issue is combating fraudulent commercial transactions which are concealing unjustified financial transactions between parties.

Michael Schmitz, WCO Director of Compliance and Facilitation, emphasized the importance of controls, not only at importation but also at exportation, in transshipment and in transit. Developing risk analyses in this area requires a global vision of the transactions as well as trained, specialized officers.

Other problems addressed included inadequate human resources (administrations are frequently under-staffed), the difficulty of detecting this type of fraud (even for the most experienced officers), and the lack of enthusiasm of certain countries, whose top priority is the collection of duties and taxes.

“Fighting money laundering is like searching for a needle in a haystack” participants said. “Getting the vital information is the key, but this requires better exchanges between those involved in combating money laundering”. A great deal remains to be done in terms of gathering, enriching and circulating information. Organized crime may be living up to its name, but unfortunately there is a degree of disorganization in the response of the enforcement authorities.

More information
www.ewi.info
A Task force to improve implementation of rules of origin

The dramatic rise in the number of preferential trade arrangements, together with complex and often confusing rules of origin are some of the increasing challenges facing both customs administrations and the business community.

It is anticipated that there will be over 400 preferential trade arrangements by 2010 covering more than 50% of world trade and showing a regional distribution of preferential trade that is relatively uneven with significant shares of preferential trade for developed countries.

The WCO is working closely with its members in examining the level and type of support that can be given to customs administration and the business community to ensure the correct management and application of rules of origin contained in preferential trade arrangements.

In January 2008, a Task Force of experts in rules of origin comprised of countries representing every region and who are involved in over 100 arrangements, met at the offices of the WCO. The experts exchanged information and experiences in the customs management of the rules and examined specific proposals on how customs can further improve their understanding and implementation of the rules of origin.

The WCO is launching a detailed and comprehensive study into the various preferential arrangements in force globally with a view to establishing a global framework of standards in the negotiation, drafting and implementation of preferential arrangements.

Other practical initiatives launched by the WCO include the development of a comprehensive database of trade arrangements with the relevant rules of origin targeted at customs services to support their work in this area, as well as technical assistance delivered to customs officials who are actively involved in dealing with rules of origin on a routine basis.

A constructive and open dialogue exists between the business community and the WCO and this will be further developed at a major conference to be held in the WCO in June 2008 in which customs administrations, the business world, international and regional organisations, and other players in the global trade community can openly express their concerns, expectations and new ideas in order to improve the administration and management of the rules of origin.

Training programmes aimed at the business community are provided by the WCO and supported by the active participation of experienced experts from WCO customs administrations. The most recent course took place at the WCO in April 2008 and involved participants from 12 countries. These training courses look to deepen the knowledge of how the rules of origin should be applied in order to facilitate the flow of legitimate traffic and to support the increased uptake of preferential duty rates by the international business community.

More information
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