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The Policy Commission in Buenos Aires

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• The WCO Secretary General visits Africa and attends a press conference organized on Operation “Cocair” about strengthening control in terms of combating cocaine trafficking in airports, Dakar (Senegal)
• Celebration of International Customs Day at WCO, Brussels (Belgium)
• 3rd Training session on Rules of Origin applicable to European Union trade relations for the private sector, Brussels (Belgium)
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• 3rd Meeting of the Regional Offices for Capacity Building (ROCB), Brussels (Belgium)

50 From the pen of the Chair
WCO Events calendar

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

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Dear Reader,

The global economy is undeniably in a state of crisis, and the impact on the international Customs community is manifold. The word “crisis” crops up in every speech and appears on all our television screens. However, if we wish to pull ourselves out of the prevailing slump then we ought to veto the use of this word until the global economy picks up again. We will then be able to refer to the “crisis” in the past tense and stop blaming the state of the economy for all the evils in the world.

Even during this period of turmoil there are achievements being made, local and regional initiatives being taken, systems which are working, projects which are moving forward and programmes which are developing.

Jean Monnet, one of Europe’s founding fathers, said that “people only accept change when they are faced with necessity, and only recognize necessity when a crisis is upon them”. We cannot escape the fact that we have to change and modernize. It is only by thinking positively, by building brick by brick, by showing respect for the values of efficiency, modernity, transparency and honesty that we will create conditions conducive to greater efficiency, weather the storm, change the course of events and grasp the opportunities afforded to us by international trade. Success begets confidence, and confidence begets success!

The process is underway. As you have undoubtedly noticed, a great many documents are being uploaded onto the WCO Web site describing the daily activities of the Secretariat, the WCO, its Members and the international Customs community. I hope that this visibility and dynamism will be the main thread running through 2009 and all the years to come. Of course we need to plan ahead, innovate and create, but this has to take place in an atmosphere of sharing, exchange, synergy and boldness!

The theme for 2009 is protection of the environment. Stepping up the fight against environmental crime is a huge challenge requiring resources, determination and willpower commensurate with the scale of the environmental threat facing us. I am counting on you to convey your enthusiasm.

Together anything is possible!

Kunio Mikuriya
SECRETARY GENERAL
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SNIPPETS

• Not to be missed!
Coordinated border management under the spot light in the next issue of WCO News. Contact us!
wconews@wcoomd.org

• News
The WTO has launched a new Regional Trade Agreements Information System (RTA-IS). The RTA-IS contains all the notified RTAs, links to the text of relevant RTAs, legal cover and information on considerations of RTAs by the WTO. RTA-IS users can conduct searches by country, by region, by legal cover, by notification date or by date of entry into force of the RTA. They can easily download summary tables showing all the RTAs in force and a variety of additional information.
To access the RTA-IS:
http://rtais.wto.org

• What’s new
The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the UNEP/UNESCO Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP) and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) have joined hands and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) have joined hands and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) have joined hands to declare 2009 the Year of the Gorilla (YoG). YoG is supported by UNEP and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) have joined hands and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) have joined hands to declare 2009 the Year of the Gorilla (YoG). YoG is supported by UNEP and UNESCO and is part of the UNESCO “Decade of Education for Sustainable Development”.
www.yog2009.org

• Info
Make a note in your diary of 7 and 8 April 2009 for the European Forum on Intellectual Property organized by the Union des Fabricants (UNIFAB) to be held in Paris (France) and which will focus on the following theme: “Economic crisis, Pan-European plan, selective distribution versus INTERNET: Will 2009 see a change in the way counterfeiting is tackled?”.
www.unifab.com

• Accessions
On 24 September 2008, the Ambassador of Mauritius deposited his country’s instrument of accession to the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures, the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), which entered into force on 3 February 2006 and now has 59 Contracting Parties.

On 22 October 2008, the Republic of Ecuador became the 135th Contracting Party to the Harmonized System Convention. This Convention will enter into force in Ecuador on 1 January 2010, unless Ecuador decides to specify an earlier date.

On 5 January 2008, the Republic of Armenia became the 136th Contracting Party to the Harmonized System Convention. The Harmonized System Convention will enter into force in Armenia on 1 January 2011, unless Armenia decides to specify an earlier date.

• For your diary!
22 March: ”World Water Day 2009: Transboundary Waters”. In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Resolution declaring 22 March of each year “World Water Day”, starting in 1993. This Resolution invites States to devote the day to activities to promote public awareness related to the conservation and development of water resources.
www.unesco.org/

26 April: World Intellectual Property Day. In 2000, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Member States decided to designate an annual World Intellectual Property Day. To that end they chose 26 April, the date on which the Convention establishing WIPO entered into force in 1970. Each year, WIPO and its Member States celebrate World Intellectual Property Day with activities, events and campaigns. These events seek to increase public understanding of what intellectual property really means.
www.wipo.int

5 June: World Environment Day. The United Nations flagship environment event is commemorated each year on 5 June in over 100 countries. It was established in 1972 by the United Nations General Assembly to draw the international community’s attention to the importance of the environment and to stimulate the interest of policymakers and a desire to act.
www.unep.org

16 September: International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer. This event is aimed at encouraging the international community to maintain its momentum in terms of hastening the progressive phasing out of ozone depleting substances. Citizens from all around the globe are encouraged to take initiatives to maintain public and political interest in this issue until the objective set is achieved.
http://ozone.unep.org/Events/

• Appointments
Recent appointments of Directors General of Customs:
Mr. Y. A. Basim (Bahrain); Mr. H. Djegou (Benin); Mr. F. V. Coutinho (Brazil); Mr. R. Yakoro (Central African Republic); Mr. M. Daoudou (Comoros); Mr. C. Me- laku Fenta (Ethiopia); Mr. G. Kassem (Jordan); Mr. Dato’I. Bin Jaapar (Malaysia); Mr. M. Aswam (Maldives); Mr. S. Galea (Malta); Mr. B. R. Niroula (Nepal); Mr. M. A. Bhatti (Pakistan); Mr. C. E. Posada Ugaz (Peru); Mr. U. Tamwatin (Thailand), Mr. A. Makarenko (Ukraine).
Security Scenario
no. 24

It is 10:30 p.m. at a border crossing. A man waits in a late-model cargo van, a cigarette dangling from his mouth. Instructed to drive through the screening system, the driver, a regular, confidently complies. He grins, shifts into gear, and directs the vehicle through the portal. A Customs officer carefully analyzes three X-ray images on the system’s monitor. Several anomalies are clearly visible in the front tire, driver’s side. The officer immediately knows he is looking at a large quantity of drugs. “Could you step out, sir?” says another official. The man’s grin vanishes.

Would your cargo inspection system find the drugs? If you don’t have the Z Portal® system, it won’t. AS&E’s Z Portal three-sided screening system uses proprietary Z Backscatter technology to detect stowaways, drugs, explosives, and other contraband, which appear bright white in the image for easy image interpretation.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT Z PORTAL, GO TO WWW.AS-E.COM/ZPORTAL.
Customs administrations play a vital role in environmental protection at borders. They ensure compliance with the provisions of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and national legislation, are tasked with monitoring the trade in certain environmentally sensitive goods and endangered species, with identifying and detecting smuggling and other offences, and with helping to raise users’ awareness of this illicit trade.

For a long time now, and at its Members’ request, the WCO has been involved in efforts to combat environmental crime. The Secretariat is operating on all fronts in this domain. Not only are all the technical Directorates participating, but also the WCO’s regional structures (RILOs and ROCBs).

Likewise, close co-operation has been forged with other international organizations having responsibility for environmental issues, such as the CITES and Basel Convention Secretariats and UNEP.

Lastly, in order to raise users’ awareness of the importance of protecting the world’s natural heritage, the WCO has chosen “Customs and the environment: protecting our natural heritage” as the theme for 2009. As a result, International Customs Day on 26 January 2009 focused on protecting the environment (see the “Events” section).

The articles in this Special Report describe this action and highlight Customs’ efforts to combat environmental crime.
Environmental crime affects all of our society, for example poaching of endangered species affects the income of rural populations and has driven some species to the brink of extinction. Deforestation caused by illegal logging is a major contributor to climate change -- up to 20% of greenhouse gas emissions. Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) destroy the ozone layer thus suppressing the human immune system, causing skin cancer and even cataracts. Hazardous waste causes long-term poisoning of soil and water, affecting people’s health and living conditions. Increasingly unscrupulous trade in waste which is criminal under the Basel Convention has become a serious concern.

Environmental crime by its nature is trans-boundary and in many cases involves cross-border criminal syndicates. Globalization at the same time facilitates movement of environmentally harmful commodities unpunished. A tiger skin or an ivory tusk passes through many hands from the poaching site to the final buyer. A tree sawed down illegally can travel around the world to end up as luxury furniture. In many cases, endangered species and tropical timbers are shipped from less developed countries to the developed world, and hazardous waste vice versa.

Environmental crime is not new for Customs. We have done a lot of work in this area for more than a decade.

The WCO Council Sessions have adopted several Recommendations on fighting against environmental crime, and the latest Recommendation approved in June 2008 calls for all Members to continue their efforts to combat environmental crime and to ensure that the environment remains a priority issue for Customs across the globe.

Headings and subheadings in the Harmonized System (HS) for environmentally sensitive commodities have also been amended or inserted with a view to identifying and monitoring the most traded commodities. Data elements for hazardous wastes will be incorporated in V.3 of the WCO Data Model to facilitate not only Customs in their control and identification of imported and exported hazardous wastes but also to disseminate this information via the Single Window environment to the responsible government agencies. Inclusion of data elements for endangered species is also under consideration.

The WCO Customs Enforcement Network (CEN) has been widely used for information exchange and the seizure database for border environmental enforcement. Seizures of endangered species and hazardous waste reported globally by Customs are stored in the CEN. The ODS seizure database will also be available in the near future. Alerts, trend analysis, as well as information from other organizations keep global Customs officers alert on emerging illegal trafficking trends. Detailed Risk Indicators on endangered species, ODS and hazardous waste developed by the Secretariat support frontline officers in their daily work for identifying illegal trafficking.
The WCO Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO) network has been very active in collecting, analyzing seizure information, and hosting training on environmental border protection.

The first lesson of “Customs and CITES” is now available on the WCO E-learning platform. The course benefits not only Customs officers, but also other parties involved in the trade in CITES. The ODS e-learning programme jointly developed by the Secretariat and the UNEP will also be available in 2009.

The Secretariat has been working very closely with international organizations based on Memoranda of Understanding, such as the CITES Secretariat, the Basel Convention Secretariat and UNEP, to maximize our joint efforts in the fight against environmental crime.

Since 2001, the WCO has been an active Partner with the Green Customs Initiatives (GCI), which is a series of collaborative activities such as workshops, training materials, and joint actions, by partner organizations aimed at raising the awareness of Customs officers to environment issues.

A joint Project Sky-Hole Patching launched in 2006 by 20 Customs administrations in Asia Pacific and supported by the RILO AP and UNEP regional office in Thailand led to seizures of 155 tons of ODS, and 116 seizures of almost 20,000 tons of hazardous wastes, ranging from e-waste to used clothing and waste oil.

The Secretary General decided to dedicate International Customs Day on 26 January 2009 to the environment with the theme “Customs and the environment: Protecting our natural heritage” as this will provide Customs administrations with an ideal opportunity to highlight the role they play in protecting the environment. The global Customs community will also celebrate this symbolic day with the same theme.

All WCO Members launched a one-day intensive control operation targeting trafficking in endangered species. The Secretariat set up the CEN COMM for the operation to facilitate smooth and secure transmission of information.

The Secretariat has proposed to launch a joint operation in 2009 to intercept illegal movement of hazardous and other waste. The operation will involve more than 100 Customs administrations.

“The Secretariat of the Basel Convention believes that cooperation with the World Customs Organization can play a significant role in assisting Parties to the Basel Convention to combat illegal traffic of hazardous wastes across frontiers”.

Katharina Kummer Peiry
SBC Executive Secretary
in Europe, Asia/Pacific and Africa, with the support of seven WCO Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices (RILOS), and national environmental authorities as well as several international organizations.

In the wake of the 21st century, Customs is faced with enormous challenges, but one thing is for sure, we have to take things seriously and engage ourselves more in the fight against environmental crime at the border. The Customs community shares the responsibility to protect the only planet we live on for our next generation. Luxuries can be reproduced, but endangered species like tigers cannot afford to wait too long. When they are gone, they are gone forever. If we do nothing, more waste dumping like the tragedy in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire in August 2006 might happen again.

Customs, has done a lot, but more action is needed to stop environmental crime and protect our natural heritage.

More information www.wcoomd.org

ROCB AP’s contribution to Customs and the environment

Regional cooperation and capacity building for enforcement officers are playing a very important role in dealing with illegal traffic of environmentally hazardous goods, such as Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS), Hazardous Waste, endangered animal and plants etc.

Since July 2005, WCO ROCB AP has established a very close relationship with UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) to support their networking and capacity building for enforcement officers. ROCB AP also became a member of the Regional Partner’s Forum from the beginning with UNEP, UNODC, RILO AP, the NGO Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) and Interpol etc., the forum has exchanged information relating to the MEAs (Multilateral Environmental Agreements), illegal trade trends, and discussed about future plan for capacity Building etc.

Using these occasions, ROCB AP has tried to promote awareness and capacity building on environment protection among customs administrations in the region. An important activity of WCO ROCBs is organizing seminars/workshops on the Harmonized System (HS) which thanks to the close cooperation between UNEP and WCO, now always draw attention to specific Harmonized System codes (HS codes) for ODS and other environmental goods. Furthermore, how to control the illegal movement of goods in Free Trade Zones, and how to share the information through intelligence networks, were topics also covered at the workshops.

To raise higher awareness of Customs Training departments, the ROCB invited UNEP to attend
the Regional Training Center meetings in 2006. This became an important avenue for enhancing training on enforcement for the illegal trade in environmental goods and gains their support for the Green Customs Initiative, Project Sky Hole Patching etc. Actually, this helped to establish a close relationship between UNEP and the Shanghai Customs College (SCC). The SCC hosted the Green Customs train-the-trainer workshop in May 2007 which was attended by regional customs experts and MEA secretariats.

Workshops organized by UNEP and other related organizations were actively attended by the ROCB AP who introduced the enforcement tools developed by the WCO.

By contributing to capacity building and regional cooperation to control ODS trade, ROCB AP received the Ozone Protection Award 2008 from the US government.

R ILO A/P is determined to protect our environment. The success of Project Sky-hole Patching has marked an important milestone to curb illegal trade in Ozone depleting substances (ODS) and hazardous waste in the Asia Pacific region. Though the Project was completed on 1 November 2007 after 14 months' operation, it does not end the reporting and monitoring mechanism. The reporting and monitoring mechanism is still on-going and continually contributes to huge numbers of detection of hazardous waste detections - 2,677,164 kg in 126 seizures since November 2007. Already we are making an impact. The project has a high international reputation and our influence has extended across the globe. In 2008, RILO A/P continued its active participation in international seminars and has begun discussion on the expansion of international cooperation. International cooperation is paramount to the effectiveness of on-going protection of the environment globally.

More information
ril0-ap@customs.gov.cn

For 2008/2009 program, ROCB AP will schedule to organize a Regional Seminar on Green Customs Initiative in India under the CCF/Japan.

More information
matsumoto@rocb.org
No more hazardous waste trafficking on the Baltic Sea!

A joint operation on environmental matters is planned in 2009 by the member countries of the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS). This group includes following: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden.

Customs authorities and environment protection agencies of the involved countries will target illicit cross-border shipments of hazardous waste in container traffic. In order to support the decision making process for this operation, the Danish Presidency of the CBSS decided to analyze the current situation related to this issue.

In this framework, RILO Western Europe was mandated by Denmark to produce an analysis about seizures of hazardous waste in the CBSS states, based on the Customs Enforcement Network (CEN) database. This analysis was presented to the CBSS and is also available on the WCO’s Web Site.

RILO Western Europe will actively support the CBSS initiative during the entire operation. WCO’s communication tool CENCOMM will be used for this operation.

German Customs uses specially trained endangered species detection dogs

Hundreds of tiny turtles in a wash-bag, parrot eggs hidden in underwear, birds squeezed into narrow plastic tubes or poison dart frogs in drinks bottles – along with drugs and weapons, endangered species make for some of the most lucrative smuggling worldwide. Interpol estimates the volume of illegal trade in plants and animals at around USD 20 billion a year. German Customs has responded to this phenomenon with specially-trained endangered species detection dogs.

At Frankfurt Airport alone, the year 2007 witnessed 561 seizures encompassing some 111,838 items. These included 5,599 living animals as well as products such as snake-leather bags, caviar, furs or cobras preserved in alcohol. The damage done by this smuggling is clear: it is a threat to the very survival of rare species.

To stay a step ahead of the highly-professional wildlife mafia, German Customs has trained a number of specialised endangered species detection dogs in ten-week courses at one of its customs dog training centres. The dogs are able to detect even very faint-smelling objects and so are ideal for quickly controlling luggage, packages or entire shipping containers.

More information
www.zoll.de
Boost for hazardous waste management in Côte d’Ivoire

Designated to answer several shortcomings that were highlighted by the dumping of hazardous waste from the vessel “Probo Koala” in Abidjan’s residential areas in August 2006, the two-year project will be implemented by the Basel Convention Regional Center for French-speaking Countries in Africa, based in Senegal, and executed by the Ministry of Environment in Abidjan, in cooperation with the Basel Convention Secretariat.

Funded under the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) Quick Start Program, this project will develop tools for the analysis of gaps in national legislation as related to international agreements for Parties in Africa possessing port facilities. It will aim to enhance the capacity of Côte d’Ivoire to implement and enforce, through a comprehensive and integrated approach, international and national laws relating to the control of transboundary movements (in particular import and transit) of hazardous waste and chemicals in compliance with the obligations, standards and objectives of the Basel Convention, the International Health Regulations (WHO 2005), MARPOL 73/78, the Rotterdam Convention, and the Stockholm Convention.

A series of training seminars for customs officials and other enforcement officers will be carried out in Côte d’Ivoire. This pilot project is intended to be replicated in three other African Countries in the framework of the activities funded by the UNEP Special Trust Fund for Côte d’Ivoire.

The 1989 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal has two pillars; first, it regulates the transboundary movements of hazardous and other wastes. Second, the Convention obliges its Parties to ensure that such wastes are managed and disposed of in an environmentally sound manner. To this end, Parties are required to minimize the quantities that are moved across borders, to treat and dispose of wastes as close as possible to their place of generation and to prevent or minimize the generation of wastes at source.

Strong controls have to be applied from the generation of a hazardous waste to its storage, transport, treatment, reuse, recycling, recovery and final disposal.

The Basel Convention has 14 Regional and Coordinating Centres, with one or more operating on every continent.

More information
www.basel.int
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The RAScargO™ container screening system.
Your perfect solution for fighting contraband smuggling.

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Generic RAScargO™ Process:

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2. Filter analyzed by 2 canines in the detection center
3. Decision taken and data recorded
4. Clearance
The RILO supports trade-related MEAs and coordinates input of data on seizures of relevant goods into the CEN system by customs services of the region. Co-operation is maintained with UNEP and the Regional Ozone Network for Europe and Central Asia in combating illegal trade in ozone-depleting substances. The RILO translated the “Guide for Enforcement Officers on Combating Illegal Trade in ODS” and prepared the brochure “Illegal transportation of ODS in 2007”.

In 2005–2008 two bulletins and a brochure on CITES seizures were published.

For 2009 the RILO plans bulletins on seizures of CITES and nuclear, radioactive and hazardous goods.

More information rilo-moscow@gubk.customs.ru
AEO Seminar, the first one for the East and Southern Africa region!

The first East and Southern Africa regional seminar on Authorized Economic Operators was convened in Maputo, Mozambique from 1 to 3 December 2008 by the WCO in cooperation with the East and Southern Africa Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB). The seminar was sponsored by Japan under the sponsorship of Japan through the Customs Cooperation Fund.

AEO Seminars are part of the ongoing implementation of the WCO Capacity Building Strategy and the SAFE Framework of Standards programme. The purpose of this seminar was to develop national and regional advisors to support their management in the national and/or regional reform process for implementing an AEO programme.

The event was attended by representatives from sixteen (16) East and Southern Africa member countries as well representatives from the private sector in Mozambique. It was facilitated by experts from the WCO, Japan Customs and JICA. The participants were given examples of how to conduct the several stages of an AEO programme implementation such as identification of relevant risk, assessing risk and eventually responding and setting up a tailor made control programme for treating risk.

More information
www.wcoomd.org

Huge demand for training in CEN use!

The Uruguay National Customs Directorate has hosted the first Seminar on the use of the Customs Enforcement Network (CEN).

This training activity was organized jointly by the Uruguay National Customs Directorate and the Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB) for the WCO Americas and Caribbean Region, with the support of RILO South America.

Discussions benefited from the presence of the Directors General of Customs of Uruguay, Mr. Luis Salvo, and Argentina, Mrs. Silvina Tirabassi.

During the course of this week-long seminar, the WCO facilitators Anette Bonde and Giorgio Sincovich from the Enforcement and Compliance Sub-Directorate shared their knowledge of and expertise in CEN use with participants.

The spotlight focused on the importance of inputting data into the CEN as well as information and intelligence sharing to make the most of what the CEN can offer.

This effective analysis, risk assessment, targeting and communication tool must be incorporated within a systematic enforcement mechanism at national and regional level. In this respect, it is vital that CEN users have an intelligence background and are not averse to using new technologies.

More information
www.wcoomd.org
The first official agreement under the Capacity Building Columbus programme

Thursday the 4th December 2008 the Director General of the Customs General Administration of Mongolia Mr. D. Tseveenjav, the Deputy Director General of the Dutch Tax and Customs Administration Mr. Willy Rovers and the Secretary General elect of the WCO Mr. Kunio Mikuriya signed a three years Technical Cooperation Agreement on Capacity Building.

This agreement is a guiding document for a very close cooperation on improving the Capacity Building in Mongolia within the Columbus programme. The content of the agreed programme covers during the period 2009-2011 the following topics:

• Three seminars on risk management. The focus will be on the practical implementation of a risk management system in the Customs General Administration of Mongolia.
• Two training sessions in the use of non-intrusive equipment, more specifically the reading and interpretation of scan images and the link with risk management.
• Two seminars on post-clearance audit in the context of trade facilitation.
• One seminar on the prevention of fraud by means of a communication and service provision/compliance strategy.
• One management training seminar based on the WCO Capacity Building Development Compendium.
• Every year a top-management delegation will visit the Netherlands/or Mongolia to review the execution of the Agreement, discuss the specific cooperation activities for the following year, sign the annual work plan and discuss other topics of mutual interest.

More information capacity.building@wcoomd.org
Customs administration of the Ukraine

Mission
The State Customs Service of Ukraine (SCSU) is a specially authorised central body of executive power in the area of Customs practice that was created in 1991 with the mission to direct, co-ordinate, and control the activities of Customs authorities, specialised Customs institutions and organisations in implementing the laws of Ukraine on Customs practice.

Basic tasks
Ukrainian Customs is oriented towards the efficient fulfilment of the following basic tasks:
• Implement and control compliance with Ukraine Customs legislation
• Protect Ukraine’s economic interests
• Secure implementation of obligations prescribed by international agreements on Customs practice to which Ukraine is a party
• Implement Customs control and Customs clearance of goods and vehicles crossing the Customs border, and improve the means and forms of this implementation
• Implement, in cooperation with other authorised state bodies, measures aimed at securing the interest of consumers, and in ensuring that participants in foreign economic relations adhere to state interests in respect of the external market
• Create favourable conditions for speeding up the turnover of goods and flow of passengers through the Customs border
• Develop international cooperation in the area of Customs practice.

Goals
To comply with its mission the Customs administration of the Ukraine has been working towards the following important goals, among others:
• Simplification and harmonisation of Customs procedures
• Trade supply chain security
• Facilitation of international trade
• Enhancement of Customs enforcement and compliance activities
• Anti-counterfeiting and piracy initiatives
• Public-private partnerships

Contact
Chairman: Mr. Anatoliy Makarenko
Appointed on 28 January 2009

Official address: The State Customs Service of Ukraine
11-g, Dehtiarivska Str.
Kyiv 04119 / Ukraine

Date of establishment: 1991
General contact point:
Mr. Oleh Ovchinnikov
Director, International Activities Department
Tel: +380 44 247 2606 / 247 2706
Fax: +380 44 247 2851 / 489 0212
inter@customs.gov.ua
dmsu@customs.gov.ua
www.customs.gov.ua

Member of the following international/regional organisations:
WCO, WTO, BSEC, GUAM, CIS.

General information
Official name: Ukraine
Capital: Kyiv
Official language: Ukrainian
Area: 603 700 km²
Population: 46 263 079
Currency: Hryvnia
National Day: 24 August
ISO code: ISO UA

More information
www.customs.gov.ua
The Korea Customs Service (KCS), for the first time in the world, successfully produced 7 cloned drug detector dogs from Oct. to Nov. 2007, opening a new chapter in nurturing quality detector dogs which safeguard Korean frontiers against drug smuggling and terrorist attacks.

Drug sniffer dogs, with excellent sense of smell, can effectively spot in a short time illegal narcotics hidden in secret places people can hardly find. However, training drug detector dogs is not easy. It requires a huge amount of money (40 million Won per head), and no more than 3 out of 10 heads trained pass the final test to become drug detectors.

Against this backdrop, Korea Customs, in an effort to secure superior detector dogs, had the College of Veterinary Medicine of Seoul National University clone Korea’s top drug detector dog Chase’s body cell using its world-class animal cloning technology to produce 7 Chase Juniors. In general, dogs go through 3 stages of training and tests over 16 months to become drug sniffers.

Those 7 cloned dogs all passed the first stage training Campbell Test on detector quality, Toman Litter Test and Mirror Test on sociality with excellent grades. They, at the age of 15 months now, are also showing remarkable performance in the second stage training course for 3 to 12 months old dogs, brightening the prospect of becoming top detector dogs. These cloned dogs will receive “formal training” at the Detector Dogs Training Center in the Customs Border Control Training Center from Mar. to Jun. 2009 and if passing the final test, will be sent to regional customs offices at ports and airports for drug detection.

If this government-university partnership project connecting “the training infrastructure of the KCS” and “the world proven cloning technology of Seoul National University” is completed successfully, its economic ripple effect is also expected to be huge.

More information
http://english.customs.go.kr
Connect to the international customs knowledge

WCO E-Learning programme on global Customs Standards

Trade operators and other institutions and organizations are now granted access to the WCO E-Learning program, used daily to train Customs Officials in more than 110 countries.

This shared learning tool brings the unmistakable added value of basic standards and common language for Customs administrations, trade operators and institutions in their day-to-day collaboration.

Accessible for single users or large groups, flexible and interactive, the e-learning helps them structuring and managing the training progress.

In several countries, customers benefit from the proximity and the tailored services of a local e-learning distributor.

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- Customs Valuation
- Transfer Pricing - NEW
- Harmonized System, notes & amendments to the HS 2007
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- ATA Carnets
- TIR Carnets*
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Hungarian environmental tax is a success

In 1995, Hungary introduced an environmental tax on certain products with the aim of reducing environmental pollution. The range of taxable products has changed several times since then. In 2008 the product fee is payable on various crude oil products, tires, refrigerants, packaging, batteries, paper-based advertising materials, and electrical and electronic equipment.

As of 1 January 2008, an important change has taken place: the customs authority has replaced the tax authority as the responsible agency for the assessment, payment, reclaim and control of the product fee and the tax returns.

This immediately lead to better control of legal obligations. Indeed, the Customs and Finance Guard has fullscale authorization over the imported products and products produced in Hungary.

The Customs administration devoted the first half of the year 2008 to the registration of economic operators and by the end of September 2008, more than 87 000 declarations on behalf of about 16 300 clients had been received.

To make the follow-up more effective, additional measures were introduced to enhance the controls carried out by Customs. These imply confiscation and seizure. Also, as many potential tax payers were still not registered in the system, the administration had to increase the amount of the default penalty.

In 2008 the Hungarian Customs authority had exceeded the environmental income collection target determined by the Ministry of Finance.

The authority has also taken measures to increase environmental awareness within the administration itself such as collection of batteries and neon lamps, reducing printing and developing a paper free environment.

More information
http://vam.gov.hu

Environmental Protection, a challenge at the borders!

Aiming at upgrading regional Customs enforcement capacity on combating cross-border environmental crime, and in echo to the theme of “Customs and Environment” at WCO in 2009, RILO A/P held a regional seminar in Sanya, China, between 18 a 22 November with the theme “Environmental Border Protection”. The event drew the attention of around 20 member countries within our region with almost 40 delegates participating.

The five-day seminar provided an overview of the global environmental crime situation, especially in terms of illicit trade in hazardous wastes, smuggling of ODS and illicit trade in wildlife. Experts from the Basel Convention’s Beijing Office, UNEP ROAP, the UK Border Agency, China Customs, Hong Kong Customs, US Customs, TRAFFIC and EIA contributed their expertise in the above mentioned fields. Delegates from Australian Customs, Japan Customs, Maldivian Customs, Pakistan Customs and other member Customs supported the seminar by delivering excellent presentations on domestic enforcement and experiences in the environmental protection field.

The delegates praised the seminar for offering them a very good platform to exchange opinions and promote communication in the field of fighting against environmental smuggling.

More information
rilo-ap@customs.gov.cn
The PTC is the most appropriate and most convergence point for drawing up standards and instruments at a global level

The Permanent Technical Committee (PTC), under the general responsibility of the WCO Council, contributes to the strategic orientation of the WCO's work on trade facilitation. In particular the PTC deals with numerous 21st century challenges such as the global Customs network, better coordinated border management, recourse to new technologies and modern procedures or increased Customs-business partnerships. Through its activities the PTC greatly contributes to the harmonization and uniform application of simplified customs procedures and provides strategic support to the WCO's capacity building programmes.

To provide a greater understanding of the role and activities of the PTC, WCO News interviewed both the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson.

WCO News: What is your opinion on current developments within the PTC in terms of the range of subjects addressed, touching on Customs in the 21st Century in particular, and on the PTC's role within the Organization?

Kameswari Subramanian: The current development, introducing an agenda which covers a range of topics and provides for greater inputs from other organizations as well as from other Directorates within the WCO whose work is linked to that of the PTC, is a very welcome move. The extent of participation and the depth and quality of discussions at the recent PTC meeting on the new agenda reflects that there was a need to review the scope of topics to be addressed at this committee. This also clearly
We should first remember that the PTC is one of the key technical committees of the World Customs Organization (WCO) and it has, in the past, met the need of Members, both intergovernmental as well as private sector, who attend the meetings.

Referring in particular to Customs in the 21st Century and how it impacts on the subjects to be considered by this Committee, I would first like to indicate that concepts embodied in the vision document will provide strategic direction to both national administrations and the WCO in structuring their work and prioritising the areas of critical interest. The fact that the PTC agreed that the key focus areas in the document should be linked to the action plan for the Committee reflects the linkage between the 21st Century document and the topics for consideration by the committee. I am positive that this will give direction to some of the areas of work of relevance to this Committee.

Coming to the issue of the role of the PTC within the WCO, the fact that the PTC is one of the key technical committees is clearly demonstrated by both the number and quality of instruments and documents that have been developed by it to date. This committee can play a pivotal role in ensuring that topical issues of relevance are examined and useful guidance is provided, both to the Council and to the Members, in a timely manner. This is because it is only the PTC which can provide the link between the other areas of technical work and how these will be translated into actual procedures to be implemented by Customs officials. We have to acknowledge that whether it is classification, valuation or enforcement and security, all of these have to be implemented by officials in the form of Customs procedures and the PTC would be the most logical convergence point for this work at a global level.

Ismail Diop: We should first remember that the PTC is one of the oldest WCO Committees. In 2008 we held the 183rd/184th sessions. The original role of the PTC was to undertake technical studies for the Council and to contribute to the strategic orientation of WCO work (drafting, promotion and management of facilitation instruments and tools).

Given the diversity of subjects dealt with and in particular Customs in the 21st Century, the PTC’s role within the Organization must be strengthened and in June 2008 the Council decided that the PTC would report directly to the Policy Commission and the Council rather than via the rapporteur during the parallel session on technical matters. The PTC must from now on draft a priority action matrix relating to different subjects referred to in the Customs in the 21st century document. The PTC must convert this vision into an operational strategy and fully contribute during the implementation phase. The following topics must therefore be discussed in depth by our Committee:

- Coordinated border management
- Single Window
- WCO Data Model
- Time Release Study
- Update of the SAFE framework of standards.

A practical approach, in line with the strategic plan, must be adopted as was the case at the last sessions.

W. N.: To what degree does the PTC meet Members’ needs, and how do you view participation by Members as well as by the private sector?

K. S.: The PTC has, in the past, met the need of Members, whether it was to produce a temporary admission convention with the cooperation of trade bodies or a purely enforcement related convention. It was also the PTC which provided immediate inputs to address the concerns of the UN to streamline procedures for providing relief materials for natural or other disasters. When the UNCTAD in 1994 identified Customs procedures as one of the major non-tariff barriers to trade, it was the PTC which met the deadlines for revising the Kyoto Convention. The PTC also developed procedures for immediate clearance of goods and advance passenger information guidelines when these new developments had to be introduced. All of these were developed with the active cooperation of Members and the private sector. These are a few examples to indicate that this Committee has always been able to meet the expectations of both Members and the private sector. Both Members and Private sector have always been proactive and have participated actively in the work of this Committee and this relationship has been one of the factors for the development of instruments or standards by the PTC which provide effective Customs controls and are facilitative to the trade.

I. D.: Given its composition and horizontal nature, the PTC takes care of Members’ concerns. At its sessions, whilst dealing with traditional questions, the Committee listens to Members concerns and even anticipates their needs. Important questions dealt with at the last sessions include:

- WTO trade facilitation negotiations
- Informal trans-border trade
- Trade Logistics in the Global Economy
- Questions relating to the Standard Audit File

At the meetings Members and the private sector are able to voice their concerns and the PTC’s task is to relay these matters to the Secretariat for examination.
W. N.: Is the action plan a tailored response to anticipated changes and is it intended to offer guidance to the Policy Commission and Council?

K. S.: Yes, I think the new action plan will be tailored to meet the new challenges before us and respond to these in a timely and effective manner. If we are able to achieve this in the PTC there is every reason for it to be able to offer timely guidance to the Policy Commission and the Council.

I. D.: Absolutely. The PTC Action Plan, particularly for the next sessions, constitutes a real response to anticipated changes. This is borne out by the way in which our Committee is dealing with issues relating to Customs in the 21st Century.

The PTC will, in the future and at the next sessions of the Policy Commission and the Council, provide a strategic solution through the drafting and promotion of different tools intended to improve trade (e.g. Time Release Study Guide). In this way, the PTC will be able to significantly influence and contribute to the direction chosen by the Policy Commission and the Council; this represents a change for these bodies which will thus be provided with concrete elements which take account of the concerns of Members and the private sector.

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Responsibilities include overseeing Customs policy and legislation related to procedures for movement of goods across borders, audit, document standards, airport policy for Customs, baggage related matters, classification of goods and interpretation of notifications, Customs issues at major ports and airports as well as inland container depots. The work responsibilities also include dealing with all international Customs matters including multilateral negotiations relating to various international organizations as well as some multilateral regional groupings.

W. N.: Is closer co-operation between the various WCO Committees necessary and, if so, by what means?

K. S.: Closer cooperation between various WCO Committees is absolutely necessary. This will ensure that the work is not duplicated, resources within the secretariat are effectively utilized and that any instrument that emerges is in complete conformity with the overall mandate of the work of WCO, even when the work is appropriately dealt with in separate technical committees. The last meeting clearly reflected how a tool developed for enforcement programmes could be used for sharing information for implementing the AEO procedures. Sharing of information on important developments in general, such as reporting on the issues decided by a special working group or another technical group enables each committee delegate to not only broaden their knowledge base but also analyse how this will impact on the work of the particular technical committee that they participate in. Wherever the work of a particular committee is felt to impact on the work of another committee there should be an automatic mechanism to ensure that it is also reported to that committee. The Secretariat is uniquely positioned to ensure this since they have an overview of the agenda and work of the various committees. Given the convergence of the work of Customs in many administrations, I feel that this should be an area of importance for consideration within the Secretariat. To some extent I think the PTC has already ensured this in the past and was pleased to note that the Procedures Sub Directorate has already noted many such issues for being included in the agenda of forthcoming meetings of the PTC.

I. D.: Co-ordination is absolutely necessary. When drafting its agendas the PTC attempts as far as possible to take into account what is happening in other Committees; this was the case when our Committee invited the Enforcement Committee to make a presentation on the communication tool and its application i.e. CEN and CENCOMM.

The Compliance and Facilitation Directorate which houses the Secretariat responsible for our Committee, ensures coordination with other Committees whenever necessary. The Secretariat also provides other Committees with information on PTC related issues.

“PTC Action Plan constitutes a real response to anticipated changes”
O. A.: What are your ambitions for the PTC during your term of office?

K. S.: My aim is to see how best the work of the PTC can be restructured so as to restore it as the premier technical committee within the WCO. The Committee should be able to view the current developments in the global trade environment to see how these will impact on the work of Customs. As I have mentioned earlier, all aspects of various specialized areas whether related to classification, valuation or enforcement and security, have to be implemented through efficient and effective Customs procedures and processes. This will in turn impact on how expeditiously goods can move across borders. From my experience I feel that the PTC would be the most appropriate and logical convergence point for developing standards and instruments for this at a global level. While all of this may not be achieved during the term when I Chair the meetings, I would hope to have been the beginning of the process.

I. D.: During my term of office I aim to provide my full support and assistance to the Committee Chairperson. The mandate is both about continuity and change with new working methods for the Committee and greater attention paid to the expectations of Members and the private sector.

My administration is currently Vice-Chair for the West and Central Africa Region. In the role with which I have been entrusted, I hope to avail the international community of my limited experience and ensure that questions specifically related to my region are dealt with in the best possible manner.

More information
www.wcoomd.org

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"Staff training is the key to any change and modernization process"

A modern Customs administration capable of facing the multiple challenges of the 21st century is possible only if all the links in the chain have the required capacity and aptitudes to carry out their allotted tasks whilst making maximum use of new methods and existing technology. Within the overall context of capacity building, training is a priority for the WCO. The Secretariat therefore does its utmost to respond positively to requests from Member Administrations and many of its partners to ensure that staff are aware of the challenges facing the international customs community.

The WCO Secretariat regularly receives requests from Belgium’s neighbour countries and specifically the French Customs Academy in Tourcoing, for both basic training and continuous training activities. In this context, every year approximately 150 trainee Customs officers, both from France and abroad, representing more than 10 nationalities, come to WCO headquarters in Brussels to attend a session on the Organization, the way it operates and its activities.

WCO News asked Georges Claustres, Director of the French Customs National Directorate for Recruitment and Professional training (DNRFP) and of the Customs Academy in Tourcoing, to explain the role of French Customs Academies within the context of modernization of the administration and their activities in the field of international co-operation.

WCO News: The Academy in Tourcoing is not the only French customs school. It is part of the human resources management and capacity building mechanism of French Customs. Can you explain how this mechanism is structured and functions?

Georges Claustres: As is the case in most countries, the policy for recruitment and training of officers is laid down by the central services of the General Customs Directorate. The National Directorate for recruitment and professional training, which I head, deals with practical implementation of this policy.

It therefore consists of a recruitment service which organizes all the Customs’ competitive examinations and oversees written and oral tests.

There are also three national academies which ensure basic training of new recruits and continuous training of officers during their career. The Tourcoing Academy trains all middle and upper management staff. In Rouen clearance officers and trade operations officers are trained and the National Academy for Customs Units (Brigades des Douanes) in La Rochelle trains surveillance staff and specialists (dog handlers, marine officers, motorcyclists, shooting instructors…). About one thousand trainees go through basic training in these schools every year.

The training is a mix of theory and practical courses using both permanent and occasional trainers with experience in the field. Of course this academy training also entails introductory sessions and placements in the field.
W. N.: Within the framework of the training policy implemented by the DNRFP international co-operation and technical assistance are of great importance. What can you tell us about these activities?

G. C.: International co-operation and our desire to share our know-how are a major concern and we carry out many initiatives in this field, first and foremost of course by welcoming foreign trainees from all continents to the Academy in Tourcoing, as we have been doing for more than 60 years. Twenty or so foreign officers follow the same courses for trainees as their French counterparts which last almost a year.

Within the context of continuous training, specific courses are also organized in our schools for foreign trainees (senior management, fraud in commercial freight, heads of surveillance divisions, train the trainer...).

Study missions from all over the world also come to our schools looking for tools and methods to improve their training structures.

The Customs Academy in Tourcoing also develops specific partnerships and co-operation activities with its counterparts in other countries. Agreements have been put in place with the Training Centre in Casablanca, the National Customs School in Tunisia and more recently, since the agreement was signed on 26 November last by the two Directors General, with the National Customs School in Oran, Algeria. These partnerships entail, in particular, the very fruitful exchange of trainers and the provision of training resources (modules, course material, kits...).

W. N.: Customs is an administration which must constantly adapt and modernize, in other words be flexible. Schools must meet new requirements. What are the latest developments in the field of training as regards organization, methods and performance measurement?

G. C.: It is true to say that training is without a doubt the key to the success of a modernization process such as that facing French Customs today. Training must be closely linked to the development of this process and constant measurement of the effectiveness and relevance thereof is essential. In order to face this challenge, the best adapted methods and tools were required.

Within the DNRFP we have therefore set up a “quality in training” hub responsible for the ongoing and resourceful coordination, evaluation and adaptation of all the courses provided by the three schools. This new and original structure is made up of “training project leaders” fully acquainted with the inner workings of training and each of whom has expertise in one or other of the main Customs fields (clearance, accounting, enforcement, taxation, IT and management). Their task, in close and permanent contact with the General Directorate, is to evaluate new training requirements, to design the course and teaching methods, to create and support a trainers’ network and to coordinate the training activities of each of the Customs Academies.

We have set up a mechanism to evaluate the quality of the training activities of the schools which enables us to measure the resourceful, relevant and up-to-date nature of our teaching. We also have indicators relating to the creation or renewal of training modules and training material. Furthermore, and this is most important, we immediately evaluate trainees’ level of satisfaction, straight after the course, and then again six months later. The trained officers’ line supervisors also take part in the deferred evaluation process since their assessment of the progress of their staff after training is considered as a vital and reliable indicator of the quality and relevance of our teaching.

Finally, as regards the methods we use, the DNRFP is actively pursuing an e-training and “blended learning” strategy. The WCO’s support in this field is extremely useful given its extensive resources and platform. However, we have set up a fully equipped and technically competent production unit to draw up the story boards and, with the help of the training project leaders, design e-training modules specifically adapted to our organization, regulations and working methods.

W. N.: You have been Director of the DNRFP for just over 3 years, which events would you highlight over this period?

G. C.: I would highlight two events.

First and foremost, the first day of a new trainee inspectors’ session when you enter the auditorium for your welcome
speech and you are faced with 140 or 150 pairs of eyes. That moment when you say to yourself that these young people who only yesterday were still at university are taking their first tentative steps in their professional career and that it is up to you to shape them to become civil servants, Customs officers and finally Customs managers.

Another touching event is when our foreign trainees from all over the world finish their training and leave the School to return home. It is very moving but also extremely rewarding to take part in their farewells when amongst the laughter and tears they exchange addresses, photos and the promise to see each other again soon...

Georges Claustres, Inter-regional Director of Customs, Head of the National Directorate for Recruiting and Professional Training, has been Director of the National Customs Academy in Tourcoing since 2005. He started in French Customs in 1975 and has held senior posts in different departments, both in the field (Lyon, Paris, Guadeloupe, Rouen and Marseille) and at Headquarters (Office of Co-operation, Inspectorate of Services, Chef de Cabinet to the Director General). He has vast experience. During his career he has carried out numerous audit missions abroad (Senegal, Cote d’Ivoire, Algeria and Vietnam) but also at the internal level within the French Customs Inspectorate Service. He led a Ministerial Working Group (French Ministry of Economy and Finance) on modernization of the organizational structure of competitive examinations and has put in place numerous bilateral co-operation activities in the training field.

He graduated from the Institute of Political Studies in Toulouse, has a Masters Degree in Public Law and is a graduate (Auditeur) of the Cycle des Hautes Etudes du Développement Economique (CHEDE) and the Institut National des Hautes Etudes de La Sécurité (INHES). Georges Claustres is a Knight of the Legion of Honour and a Knight of the National Order of Merit.

Richard Delattre, trainer at the Customs Academy in Tourcoing takes part in training activities abroad within the framework of a cooperation agreement. He delivers his reflections on being a “training globe trotter” to WCO News.

WCO News: What led you to become a trainer, how long have you been doing the job and what do you teach?

Richard Delattre: My main reason for becoming a teacher was to share my knowledge and more particularly my professional experience.

I have been teaching here in Tourcoing since 2006; I had already given courses from time to time and regularly ran workshops. I also give an undergraduates course on international trade at IUT in Lille.

I teach all courses relating to clearance (pre-clearance formalities, economic regimes, IT applications and a logistics module).

W. N.: You have chosen to be part of a team of trainers who, in the framework of international co-operation and partnership agreements, take part in training activities abroad. Which countries have you been to, what type of training do you run abroad and what methods do you use?

R. D.: In the 90s, I gave training courses in Turkey, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Romania on investigation techniques and risk analysis, simplification processes linked to the EU Internal Market and methods and means of control relating to the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy). Since 2007 I have been to Mali and Algeria to run training courses on Post Clearance Audit and Customs Valuation.
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I make presentations and ask questions. My lectures are accompanied by Power Point presentations, multiple choice question and answer papers (review of previous day’s course) and practical cases. For Post Clearance Audit, for example, the aim of the exercises is to cast oneself in the role of an ‘investigator’ and to participate in all aspects of the investigation. I therefore attempt to provide my foreign colleagues with practical tools for their first investigations.

At the end of the training course the participants have the basic and necessary knowledge (accounting, legal and practical) to carry out Post Clearance Audit.

W. N.: How is a foreign trainer perceived in the countries where you have been?

R. D.: The foreign trainer is usually considered to be a technician and a professional and countries’ expectations are high. The subjects dealt with are often new concepts for the participants and considered of great interest.
"Customs matters are at the very heart of our negotiations, making the engagement of the customs community an absolute sine qua non"

The World Trade Organization (WTO) launched Trade Facilitation Negotiations in 2004 as part of its new Round known as the Doha Development Agenda. These Negotiations should result in the development of new WTO commitments on trade procedures and will most certainly have an impact on the day-to-day operation of Customs administrations.

Against this backdrop, Customs administrations will be called upon to play a key role in the implementation of future WTO commitments on trade facilitation. This means that Member Customs administrations need to engage in the WTO negotiation process, at national level and in Geneva, in order to reflect Customs’ interests in the negotiations and their outcomes, including maximizing the synergies between the work of the WCO and that of the WTO to the greatest extent possible.

The WTO Trade Facilitation Negotiating Group (TFNG) is currently focusing its efforts on drafting texts concerning the negotiation mandates decided upon, namely the negotiations on Articles V, VIII and X of the GATT, Customs co-operation and implementation mechanisms of future WTO commitments. The work of the TFNG is constantly developing, with proposals being reviewed to allay the concerns of other WTO Members.

The Permanent Technical Committee has been closely monitoring the progress of the Negotiations since the very outset of the process, in order to assess their impact on Customs and to ensure complementarity between the work of both Organizations. In particular, the PTC held lengthy discussions on this question at its 183rd/184th Sessions, with very active participation by the WTO Secretariat.

Nora Neufeld, responsible for the Trade Facilitation Negotiating Group at the WTO, has agreed to share her point of view on the progress of the negotiations and the importance of customs’ participation in the discussions.
WCO News: What is the current status of the Trade Facilitation (TF) Negotiations?

Nora Neufeld: The Trade Facilitation negotiations continue to make good progress, moving ahead at a steady pace. We have seen some encouraging developments, both in terms of substantive advancements and with respect to maintaining the constructive working environment. This has brought us to a stage where the envisaged TF Agreement is beginning to take clear shape. We now have a fairly good idea of what it is likely to contain.

W. N.: How do you think the TF Negotiations will unfold over the coming months?

N. N.: They will continue to move forward and intensify. There is still a considerable amount of work to be done. Proposals have to be refined and brought to a point where they become acceptable to everyone. We have to consolidate the remaining areas with multiple texts and merge them into a single proposal. And work on the implementation mechanism has to step up. This is particularly important as Members consider a satisfactory outcome on this pillar indispensable to the acceptability of the overall package. Agreement in this area is also likely to unlock many of the open questions elsewhere.

To do all this, we are going to hold a series of meetings in a variety of formats, revising existing texts and building additional common ground. This will happen in the framework of Chair-led activities, complemented by exchanges amongst the Membership.

W. N.: What contribution do you think Customs administrations should make to the negotiations process, both nationally and in Geneva? Do the Geneva negotiators consider Customs involvement to be a vital factor in the TF Negotiations?

N. N.: They certainly do. Customs matters are at the very heart of our negotiations, making the engagement of the customs community an absolute sine qua non. And the Geneva negotiators are perfectly aware of that.

Useful – and indeed necessary – contributions can take several forms. Customs administrations need to be aware of what is happening in the WTO as they have to provide the Geneva negotiators with the necessary technical expertise. They are also the ones who will have to carry out the bulk of the negotiated reforms, which makes their constant involvement even more essential. Awareness of the Geneva negotiations should further be raised within the various government agencies where customs could play a useful role as a technical advisor.

At the Geneva level, customs is well placed to facilitate consensus building by steering the discussions from political considerations to pragmatic decision-making in line with the realities on the ground. We could also benefit from the shared understanding amongst customs administrations that transcends borders and national differences.

W. N.: How do you assess the WCO’s contribution to the current TF negotiations process? How do you see its future involvement?

N. N.: The WCO’s contribution has always been a very positive factor – right from the very start. The relationship between the two organizations is a complementary one with the WCO providing a rich universe of technical norms and the WTO offering a means to see them implemented more broadly. Cooperation has been most constructive and produced good results.

The importance of the WCO’s involvement is likely to increase further once the WTO negotiations are completed and we move into the implementation phase. Putting all the new measures into practice will be no small undertaking and will require a collaborative effort from everyone involved. We always saw this as a joint undertaking and look forward to continuing our cooperation with the WCO and the entire customs community in that regard.

More information
www.wto.org

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Against the backdrop of the current global financial crisis affecting business, African countries have to safeguard fiscal revenue whilst facilitating trade and promoting private sector growth” recalled Kunio Mikuriya, the WCO Secretary General at the ROCB inauguration ceremony on 16 January 2009.

Twenty-one West and Central African countries* decided to build their Customs capacities by equipping the region with a WCO Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB). This regional structure, located in Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire), has a sole objective: to foster regional initiatives and assist Customs administrations with their reform and modernization efforts, which will promote the economic development of the countries in question as a result.

The President of the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire, Laurent Gbagbo, who received Customs representatives at the Presidential Palace, highlighted the importance of Customs in Africa by expressing his personal support for the WCO’s regional approach.

Armand Nanga, the WCO Regional Vice-Chairperson and Director General of Senegalese Customs, stressed that “since the region now has a Regional Office, it is important that Members support it with the requisite human and financial resources”.

Now more than ever, Customs modernization forms part of economic development strategies, and in this context regional integration offers a wide range of opportunities.

The region is actually the most appropriate and best placed structure to seek and find joint solutions which will serve as a basis for Customs reform projects. Synergy also exists at regional level between services, players and partners from the private and public sectors with financial and human resources at their disposal.

European and Japanese Customs are supporting the WCO with the project launch. The Organization will continue to raise awareness among potential donors in the interests of African development.

More information capacity.building@wcoomd.org

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* List of Member countries of the West and Central Africa Region: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Republic of), Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.
On 9 January 2009, Secretary General Kunio Mikuriya held a briefing session with Brussels-based Ambassadors or their representatives as well as high-ranking officials from international organizations and associations. The press was also invited. The briefing was attended by some 100 persons, including 18 Ambassadors.

The briefing session provided an opportunity for the international community to become acquainted with the vision and programme of the new Secretary General as he assumed the leadership of the Organization for the next five years.

His leadership will be based on two main pillars covering all aspects of the Customs domain, namely greater responsiveness to the needs of WCO Members and enhanced co-operation with our international partners from both the public and private sectors.

The first pillar relating to Members’ needs should maintain a balance and afford a certain degree of flexibility faced with global events which currently include the harsh financial crisis affecting international trade and Customs operations. We must do all in our power to resist protectionist policies.

The WCO Policy Commission, which met in Buenos Aires, issued a communiqué urging the Customs community to join the global effort to sustain confidence in the international trading system.

In more detail, Customs measures supporting security and revenue collection should not be used as new barriers or generate additional delays.

The second pillar covers co-operation with our partners. The WCO will have to assume the role of a catalyst by working in alliance with other global and regional players. The WCO Columbus Programme, the Organization’s vehicle for capacity building, will enhance collaboration with donors and business by assisting them to implement Customs reforms.

With the regional approach becoming imperative, this aspect should be incorporated fully in the WCO’s capacity building activities, with the support of the Vice-Chairs and all the WCO’s regional structures.

Co-operation is also required with other border agencies and business to reduce waiting times prior to the release of goods, and also to respond to society’s extremely varied needs. An example of this is protection of the environment, which was chosen as the theme for this year’s

“I will work enthusiastically with my team to achieve tangible results!”
International Customs Day celebrated by the WCO on 26 January. Protection of the environment is often regarded as a policy matter for other ministries, however the Customs community has the effective means to contribute to this increasingly important policy objective.

These two pillars will reinvigorate the WCO based on a number of core values. Good governance built on principles of transparency and openness is the prerequisite for increasing participation by Members. Spanish and other languages used in international trade will progressively be introduced at WCO meetings. In this connection, Embassies in Brussels were asked to support better communication between their national administrations and the WCO Secretariat.

The other keystone which is vital in creating innovative instruments and research-based solutions is the active pursuit of knowledge. The WCO “Customs in the 21st Century” policy document establishes a strategic link between all the WCO’s activities. It serves as a unifying force bringing together skills and efforts in the interests of the Customs community.

Dynamic and enthusiastic action coupled with co-operation will yield tangible results that will enhance the WCO’s reputation and benefit all the stakeholders from both Customs and the private sector.

The ensuing discussions concentrated on:

• The WCO’s endeavours and approaches to the United States Congress and Administration in respect of the 100 % scanning legislation, the aim being to propose valid risk-management-based alternatives to that legislation.

• The impact of the global financial crisis and the need to avoid a protectionist response whilst taking steps to ensure revenue security, inter alia through a special package of tools currently being developed by the WCO Secretariat in this respect.

• Trade facilitation and the importance of the partnership approach in this respect, including the enhancement of relations with other border agencies in the context of co-ordinated border management, and close co-operation with the WTO with a view to the implementation of any future WTO Agreement on trade facilitation. The key importance of the Revised Kyoto Convention was emphasized in this connection.

The initiative to hold such briefing sessions was widely welcomed as an example of transparency and public accountability.

More information www.wcoomd.org
Topics discussed at the 60th Session of the Policy Commission

The Policy Commission met in Buenos Aires (Argentina) from 9 to 11 December 2008 at the invitation of the Customs Administration of Argentina, under the chairmanship of Mr. Martyn Dunne (New Zealand). The key items discussed related to:

Global financial crisis

The Policy Commission agreed on the need to focus on trade facilitation in the current climate, taking care not to introduce new barriers to trade or generate additional delays. It is also important that the work on Authorized Economic Operators (AEO) and mutual recognition arrangements continue and that, as far as possible, these arrangements be implemented with broadly similar standards world-wide. Another important factor is the need to adapt the costs and benefits of such arrangements to reflect the current climate, and also to recognize the importance of budget security for developing countries in particular.

The Policy Commission reached agreement on a Communiqué from the international Customs community concerning the global financial crisis, which was circulated both to the membership and the public via the WCO’s Web sites.

The Secretariat was instructed to co-ordinate the collection of information on lessons learned and initiatives taken by Customs during this crisis, and the Vice-Chairs were invited to bring this information forward from the countries in their respective regions. The topic of the crisis in all its aspects (food crisis, financial crisis, etc.) will be included on the agendas of the regional meetings and the conclusions will be presented by the Vice-Chairs at the next Policy Commission and Council sessions in June 2009.

Security and facilitation of trade

The SAFE Data Element Maintenance Mechanism and the draft Terms of Reference of the SAFE Working Group drafted by the Group itself were approved.

The Secretariat’s constructive engagement with the United States Congress in respect of the new United States legislation requiring 100% scanning at export of all maritime cargo and containers bound for the United States should continue with the new Congress and the new Administration, particularly with the Department of Homeland Security. The importance of a new Pillar III for the SAFE Framework relating to co-operation between Customs and other border agencies and covering co-ordinated border management and the Single Window concept was recognized.

The Policy Commission expressed its support for the work being done on the development of a model Trade Recovery Programme to accompany the SAFE Framework, and recognized the valuable contribution of the private sector in this connection, particularly the work of the Private Sector Consultative Group, and encouraged the Secretariat and Members to continue to work with the private sector on trade matters.

With regard to the Revised Kyoto Convention, Members are urged to become Contracting Parties to that instrument and to ensure that its provisions are implemented. An update regarding the assistance needed by Members in order to accede to the Convention will be provided in June 2009.

WCO IPR activities

The Policy Commission was informed that the SECURE Working Group, established by the Council in June 2007 to deal with IPR issues, is deeply embroiled in difficulties relating to its Terms of Reference, essentially because of a fear that the Group’s work on standard-setting might be used as a means of enlarging the obligations imposed on countries by the WTO TRIPS Agreement.
The Policy Commission therefore agreed that the SECURE Working Group will not meet again pending a decision by the Council at its June 2009 sessions on the way forward. Draft Terms of Reference for a new WCO body to deal with Customs IPR issues will be presented to the Council. Technical assistance and capacity building activities will continue to be provided pending the Council’s consideration of this proposed new approach. In this connection, the Japanese Customs Administration announced the establishment of a new fund of about 200 million Japanese yen (approximately 1.6 million euros) for the purposes of capacity building and technical assistance in the area of IPR.

**Customs in 21st Century**

The work done by the Secretariat to develop the inventory and the preliminary work plan to move forward with the 21st Century paper was appreciated. The Secretariat was invited to promote the concepts embodied in the paper, in particular by drafting introductory notes to the paper aimed at deepening the understanding of how those concepts could be used to inform strategic thinking at global, regional and national levels.

The Vice-Chairs should continue to table discussions about Customs in the 21st Century at their regional meetings, with a view to identifying their regional needs and priorities so that these can be properly reflected in the Secretariat’s future work plans.

The need to re-establish the linkage between the strategic vision offered by the Organization’s governing bodies and the specific expertise of its technical committees was recognized. Each Committee should look at all ten building blocks in the Customs in the 21st Century paper and state which products it envisages delivering to support their implementation, and in what time-frame.

The input received from the Vice-Chairs and the technical committees will be used to present a strategy and an action plan incorporating priorities and time-frames to the Policy Commission and the Council in June 2009.
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Customs capacity building

The Policy Commission recommended to the Council that a Capacity Building Committee be established to replace the existing High Level Working Group on Capacity Building, Training and Technical Assistance. Draft Terms of Reference for the proposed new Committee will be prepared. They will be submitted in the first instance to the High Level Working Group and thereafter to the Policy Commission and the Council in June 2009. The Integrity Sub-Committee will function as a separate body reporting directly to the Policy Commission. The regional structures will have to co-operate closely in relation to capacity building, especially to help identify potential donors for human and financial resources.

Composition of Policy Commission

The Policy Commission will propose to the Council in June 2009 that each of the six WCO regions be allocated one additional seat on the Policy Commission as a short-term, interim arrangement applicable with effect from 1 July 2009. A small working group composed of representatives of all the WCO regions shall conduct a review of the overall composition of the Policy Commission, with guidance from the Secretariat, and propose a solution at the June 2010 sessions.

Election of a Deputy Secretary General

Regarding the election of a new Deputy Secretary General, the Policy Commission acknowledged that an appointment to this post will be made by election in June 2009, in accordance with the usual procedures and with reference to the existing post description. Input should nevertheless be sought by the regions, through the Vice-Chairs, on a number of issues which warrant a review during the period leading up to the subsequent elections (Will the post of Deputy Secretary General be required for the future? Should the post descriptions of the Directors and the Deputy Secretary General be amended? Should the existing practice of filling the Deputy Secretary General and Director posts by election be maintained?).

Negotiations at WTO

The Policy Commission reaffirmed the importance of Customs administrations maintaining contact with, and influence on, their country’s national trade negotiators involved in the WTO Trade facilitation process. It was decided that in the event of a conclusion of the negotiations, the research capability currently being established by the incoming Secretary General should focus as soon as possible on what the implications of this new Agreement would be for Customs and the Customs environment.

Regional Trade Agreements

Progress has been made with the establishment of the database on preferential agreements and their related rules of origin, which was due to be launched in April 2009. The many Members which have not yet responded to the Secretariat’s request for verification of the data collected for that database are urged to do so rapidly.

The first findings of the comparative study on preferential rules of origin are expected in spring 2009, for presentation to the Council in June 2009.

Palestine’s involvement in the WCO

The Policy Commission recognized that, at this time, Palestine cannot become a Member of the WCO since it is not a State. The Secretariat will nevertheless proceed with a tripartite exchange of letters between the WCO, the Palestinian Authority Customs and Excise (PACE) and the Israeli Customs Directorate, in order to formalize the relationship in the area of training and technical assistance.

The Secretariat will draw up an action plan for training and technical assistance for PACE, based on the requirements identified. It will play a co-ordination role regarding training and technical assistance for PACE.

A donor conference should be held to allow international stakeholders already involved in providing development assistance to Palestine to give their views on the proposed action plan, to identify where they can continue providing assistance and where they wish to assist the WCO in promoting Customs development. The European Union offered to sponsor the donor conference.

Review of Code of Conduct for elections at the WCO

The Policy Commission agreed that there should be a Code of Conduct for elections and that the existing text of the Code should be subject to improvement and refinement on an ongoing basis, in particular with reference to the specific issues raised during the discussion.

In early 2009, the Chairperson of the Council, in consultation with the Secretary General, the guardian of the last election process Mr. Alain Jolicoeur, and the incoming Chairperson of the Audit Committee Mr. Abdellatif Zaghnoun (Morocco), will make a few adjustments to the Code of Conduct in readiness for its application to the forthcoming election of a Deputy Secretary General in June 2009. As the Deputy Secretary General is called upon to play a supporting role essentially, it was not deemed necessary to invite candidates to attend the various meetings of the WCO regions to present their vision for the post.

The Policy Commission expressed its gratitude to the Director General of Argentine Customs and all her staff for the excellent organization of the session which contributed, in no small measure, to the productive discussions and successful outcomes.

More information
www.wcoomd.org
Mr. Kunio Mikuriya's first visit to Dakar (Senegal) in his capacity as Secretary General of the WCO took place from 13 to 15 January 2009.

A very full three-day programme was organized by the Director General of Senegalese Customs and Vice-Chairperson for the WCO West and Central African Region, Mr. Armand Nanga, including an audience with the national political authorities: the Prime Minister, the Minister for the Economy and Financial Affairs and the Minister-Delegate for the Economy and Financial Affairs in charge of the Budget. This audience was preceded by a business meeting with the Steering Committee of the Directorate General of Customs bringing together the Director General's close colleagues. This meeting was later opened up to members of the private sector, and provided the Secretary General with an opportunity to present his vision and the way forward in order to meet the key challenges facing the WCO, its Members and the international Customs community.

Kunio Mikuriya then took part in the official graduation ceremony for students from the Customs School's 33rd graduating class. During the ceremony, Kunio Mikuriya was presented with the Senegalese Customs Medal of Honour by Mr. Mamadou Abdoulaue Sow, Minister-Delegate for the Economy and Financial Affairs in charge of the Budget.

The afternoon concluded with a press conference focusing on the results of Operation COCAIR and the regional strategy to be implemented to combat drug trafficking more effectively. Guests at the press conference included Ambassador Gilles Hervio, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission in Dakar, and Mr. Antonio L. Mazzitelli, Regional Representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

From 8 to 14 December 2008, the WCO Secretariat carried out a Pilot Operation named "COCAIR" in 15 West and Central African countries, working in partnership with the European Commission, Interpol, the UNODC and the two Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices (RILOs) concerned, namely Western and Central Africa, as well the Western Europe RILO. This Operation was intended to strengthen anti-drug trafficking measures in 22 international airports, its goal being to intercept Europe-bound consignments of cocaine and other drugs.

Operation COCAIR, the first of its kind in Africa, was carried out thanks to the implementation of a three-phase action plan: modification and use of the CEN-COMM (Customs Enforcement Network), tailored to the Operation’s requirements; establishment of an Operational Co-ordination Unit (OCU) located in Dakar, and training of officers and the provision of detection kits. This Operation proved to be a resounding success.

Over 250 messages (warning messages, feedback messages and seizure messages) were exchanged using the CEN-COMM secure communication system.

15 significant seizures made during this Operation deserve special mention:
Drug seizures:
➢ Cannabis: 3 seizures amounting to a total quantity of over 5 kg.
➢ Cocaine: 33 seizures (2.31 kg on the body, 1 kg swallowed and 1 kg in shoes)
➢ Heroin: 1 seizure of 0.348 kg

Seizures of capital:
➢ 5 discoveries totalling over 395,000,000 CFA francs (675,000 US dollars and 100,000 euros). There are strong suspicions that the source of these funds could be linked to organized crime activities.

Seizures of arms and ammunition:
➢ 2 discoveries (25 rifle cartridges and two (2) handguns).

Seizures of African art objects:
➢ 88 kg of African art objects whose export is prohibited.

It is worth stressing that some of the seizures made in the course of the Operation are the first of their kind:
• the first seizure of drugs (340 g of heroin) at Libreville International Airport (Gabon);
• the first seizure of drugs (4 kg of cannabis) in postal freight at export at Dakar Airport (Senegal);
• the first seizure of African art at export (88 kg) at Bamako Airport (Mali).

Over and above the seizures made, Operation COCAIR made it possible to raise the awareness of international airport inspection services about smuggling risks, to heighten controls on these flights, to gather information on the status of cocaine trafficking from this sub-region, to assess and analyse this information and, finally, to promote information sharing between Customs and police services on this phenomenon, as well as co-operation and information sharing between the RILOs of the regions in question.

Kunio Mikuriya told representatives of the national and international press in attendance that the implementation of this Pilot Operation COCAIR, funded to a large extent by the European Commission, fell within the scope of a much wider-reaching sustainable capacity building project for Customs administrations and other services with competence for combating drug trafficking in this region. This project should take place over a minimum period of three to five years.

He stressed that although this project appears ambitious, it nevertheless remains commensurate with the seriousness of the problem facing WCO Members. He concluded by declaring that “considering the objectives presented and the results sought, this pilot project requires commitment on the part of all the stakeholders”.

Before leaving Dakar, the Secretary General visited the Senegalese Customs Museum located in the city centre, and was shown around by the curator, Mr. Amadou Lamine Ba.

The visitor is taken on a journey focusing on “Customs through the ages”, encompassing Customs uniforms, significant seizures, mobile technical devices and weapons. The library contains historical works and documents as well as old photographs. The Museum does not yet have a Web site, but will be linked up to the WCO Web site as soon as possible.

More information
www.wcooomd.org
International Customs Day 2009
...protecting our natural heritage

On 26 January 2009 the international Customs community and its partners gathered at the headquarters of the WCO to celebrate this annual event in style. With each year being dedicated to a specific theme of global importance, the WCO chose to highlight the environment in 2009 to raise awareness about the risks posed by illegal and uncontrolled trade in environmentally sensitive goods, and the crucial role played by Customs administrations and other competent authorities in protecting the earth's natural heritage. This theme will be echoed throughout the year in the form of various initiatives around the world.

With almost 200 invited guests in attendance, in his opening address the WCO Secretary General said that protecting the environment had become a common responsibility for mankind. With this in mind, it was imperative that the Customs community and its partners enhance, strengthen and combine their efforts nationally, regionally and internationally to protect the planet for future generations through more effective environmental border enforcement. The Secretary General's views were reinforced by three keynote speakers: Mr Rajendra Shende, Director at the UN Environment Programme (UNEP); Mr. Willem Wijnstekers, Secretary Gene-
ral of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); and Mr. Gerard Wolters, Chair of the EU Network for the implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL) and Co-chair of the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (INECE).

Guests were treated to an extensive first-class exhibition of seizures of endangered species courtesy of Belgian Customs and an excellent demonstration by German Customs of sniffer dogs in action which drew loud applause from the audience as the dogs discovered endangered items concealed in boxes and suitcases during a simulated exercise. Participants were also able to acquaint themselves with the successful WCO “Customs wild fauna and flora” CITES e-learning module, browse through a selection of publications from the WCO and its partners, and view the exceptional results of Operation COCAIR – a recent WCO anti-drugs initiative in West and Central Africa which took place last December within the framework of the action plan forming part of the WCO’s theme dedicated to the fight against drug trafficking.

The event was attended by a host of dignitaries representing Belgian Customs and other Belgian state agencies, the diplomatic corps, Customs administrations, the trade, other international organisations, the African Union, and the European Commission. They were joined by representatives from UNEP, CITES, the Basel Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depleting Substances, the Rotterdam Convention, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) – all WCO institutional partners involved in environmental issues.

A selection of photos depicting events organized by WCO Members to commemorate International Customs Day will be published in the June 2009 edition of WCO News.

More information www.wcoomd.org
Private Sector training on Rules of Origin

An expert training session on rules of origin applicable to European Union trade relations for the private sector was held from 25 to 27 November 2008 at WCO headquarters in Brussels. The experience from previous courses has shown that the knowledge level of the participants varies considerably and beginners often have difficulties to take full advantage of the expert training. Hence, a beginner’s day gave participants the possibility to become acquainted with origin terminology. The course dealt with preferential and non-preferential rules of origin and offered participants the opportunity to gain a clear insight into the complexity of rules of origin and their impact on a company’s financial performance.

More information
www.wcoomd.org

Private sector trained on Valuation and Transfer Pricing

The third Private Sector Workshop on Customs Valuation and Transfer Pricing was successfully conducted by the Valuation Sub Directorate at the WCO on 24 and 25 November 2008. Mr. Kisahan Singh, Technical Officer and Ms. Maki Kitaura from the WCO and Mr. John Malone & Mr. Stefaan de Baets from the EC & Belgian Tax administration respectively were the Resource Persons.

The Capacity Building Directorate provided E-Learning blended training prior to the Workshop.

A total of 20 persons from the Private Sector attended the Workshop and in their evaluation reports were very appreciative of the role of the trainers, as well as the contents of the course.

Mr. Antoine Manga, Director, Tariff and Trade Affairs Directorate thanked the trainers as well as the trainees for their keen participation and gave away Certificates to all the trainees who had successfully completed the course.

More information
www.wcoomd.org
Strengthening Regional Capacity – Building the region's institutions

Strengthening the Regional Offices for Capacity Building and the Regional Training Centres was the core theme of the 3rd Meeting of Regional Offices for Capacity Building held in Brussels from 24 to 26 November.

Attended by the Directors of the five regional offices and the Vice-Chair for the Europe Region, the meeting discussed proposals to maximize the use of regional structures for the implementation of capacity building projects and the promotion of WCO standards and instruments.

Under the Chairmanship of Mr. Takashi Matsumoto, the debate was wide ranging and constructive in clarifying the roles of the Secretariat, the Offices of the Vice-Chairs, and the ROCBs, the need for more interaction between them and the support needed to ensure that these offices had adequate trained and accredited staff and funding.

Also under discussion was the contribution the regional structures could make to the development of the WorldCAP information system, the Capacity Building Development Compendium and in supporting the Review of Regional Training Centres.

Addressing the meeting, the incoming Secretary General Mr. Kunio Mikuriya emphasized the important function of the ROCBs in development and dissemination of WCO tools and standards and also reflected upon the role of the ROCBs in assisting the RTC network to adopt WCO e-learning tools and training tools.

Following up, Mr. Lars Karlsson, Director of Capacity Building, recognized regionalization as key to moving forward with capacity building. The goal is that all capacity building should be delivered through regional structures and owned by the individual Member. Activity to support this goal would be a priority for the Directorate throughout 2009.

The ROCBs themselves were able to demonstrate the growth in stature of the offices and presented an impressive range of activities which had been successfully undertaken to date, and outlined a comprehensive range of future developments.

The input from the Office of the Regional Vice Chair was a welcome practical addition to the discussions and it is hoped that there will be wider representation of the Offices of the Vice Chair at the next meeting. This is planned for April 2009.

More information
capacity.building@wcoomd.org

1 A full report of the meeting is Available on the Members website.
This year’s theme for International Customs Day is ‘Customs and the environment: protecting our natural heritage’. Illegal trade in endangered species is a serious environmental concern for customs administrations throughout the world, and is something the WCO is focusing its attention on this year.

Criminal trafficking of wildlife undermines the conservation efforts of all nations and has driven species throughout the world to the brink of extinction. In New Zealand, protecting our unique array of wildlife is important to us, as we are a small nation with many endangered native species like the tuatara — a lizard-like reptile.

Globally, endangered species are often sold as food and pets; or are used in the manufacture of traditional medicines, while ornamental plants and timber can be found in markets the world over.

The illegal wildlife trade is threatening the fate of iconic creatures like the elephant and tiger, and stopping this trade is a high priority for the WCO. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) parties have adopted, by consensus, a decision to end large-scale captive tiger breeding and stopped breeding tigers for trade. However, there is still a lot to be done in terms of protecting other endangered species.

Cooperating and exchanging information between countries is important. The Customs Enforcement Network (CEN) is an effective tool which assists collaboration as it allows data to be securely entered and shared between countries.

Specialised units within a range of customs agencies have been set up to target environmental crime. New Zealand Customs is part of the Wildlife Enforcement Group (WEG), a multi-agency enforcement group consisting of Customs, the Department of Conservation, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. WEG specialises in intelligence gathering and investigations, and has responsibility for investigating the illegal wildlife trade.

Another important means of protecting our environment is to inspire CITES member nations from all over the world to effectively adhere to the Convention’s regulations. This Convention helps to regulate the trade in over 30,000 endangered plants and animals. Although CITES rules are legally binding for each member nation, it does not take the place of national laws. Disappointingly, there are still countries that do not enforce active measures.

This year, I hope all customs administrations will target the illegal trade in wildlife. Each of us as nations, communities, and individuals need to continue the fight together for our endangered species.

Martyn Dunne
CHAIRPERSON OF THE WCO COUNCIL
Inventing our future

Key international forum focusing on the vital role that technology can play in linking all parties operating at the border in the most effective manner

- **Explore** new ways that Customs might interact with other border regulatory agencies as a result of new information technology.
- **Review** the elements of the “Customs in the 21st Century” strategic template, in particular coordinated border management and the way each element might be enhanced through effective use of modern IT solutions.
- **Analyse** relevant international standards and their critical importance to border management in the 21st Century.
- **Take a glimpse** of what the future promises and where the major influences lie for Customs and other border stakeholders.
- **Meet** key IT partners in one place.
- **Understand** current best practice scanning and how the merging of technologies can lead to more effective non-intrusive intervention.

**Share your views and experiences: be part of a dynamic solution**

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