eCITES:
Simplification and automation of CITES permit processes to strengthen the implementation of the Convention
CITES in a Nutshell
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

- Multilateral Environment Agreement
- Addresses sustainable management of wildlife and trade
- Legally binding instrument for 183 Parties
- Trade is controlled through exchange of CITES permits
- Permits issued/controlled by CITES Management Authorities & Customs
- Framework to control trade along the supply chain
The CITES permit is the key instrument for the implementation of the Convention.

Customs has a key role in controlling legality, sustainability and traceability of CITES trade.
CITES enables trade

- Over 36,000 species regulated by CITES
- Vast majority (97%) of CITES species can be commercially traded
- Timber, fish, ornamental & medicinal plants, leather, luxury products, cosmetics,..
- Collected from the wild, farmed, nurseries, fisheries,..
- Over 1 mio CITES permits issued per year
- ..controlling multi billion dollar trade
Illegal trade in wildlife

- Estimated 5 – 20 billion USD illegal trade in wildlife (excluding marine & timber)

- Illegal trade in wildlife is now ranked 4th in transnational crime

- Frequent patterns:
  - Organized crime
  - Laundering of illegal trade with legal trade
  - Trades through main ports and airports
  - Often use of fraudulent paperwork

- Criminals exploit gaps in the control systems (manual procedures, lack of electronic information exchange & collaboration mechanisms)

➡ Need to fully take advantage of the electronic Customs control systems to strengthen control of CITES trade
eCITES: simplified and automated processes to strengthen the implementation of CITES
eCITES – better processes and controls

Improve the implementation of the Convention through:

- simplified and automated processes in the MAs
- electronic information exchange - national and cross border
- collaboration between Gov’ agencies for improved controls

eCITES stepwise implementation strategy

- **ePermit**: Automated, simplified and transparent processes in Management Authorities
- **eControl**: Electronic information exchange and collaboration with Customs for electronic CITES Risk Management
- **eExchange**: Electronic exchange of permits between government agencies along the supply chain

Vision: End-to-end transparency and control in the CITES supply chain
eCITES and international trade standards

- Convention provides a fundamental framework for the processes in the exporting, importing and transit countries
- Encourages Parties to adopt electronic permit procedures and exchanges
- Permits aligned to UN Layout Key and UN code lists
- eCITES permit in UN/CEFACT eCERT and WCO DM standard
- Use UNECE Recommendation 14 for the electronic signatures in CITES permits
- Pilots on cross border exchange of electronic CITES permits
- Exchange of experiences: WTO/IPPC ePhyto, UN/CEFACT, ..
The aCITES electronic permit system

Developed under a joint MoU with UNCTAD

Off-the-shelf electronic permit system for CITES Management Authorities:

- Provides Management Authorities with all relevant functions to manage and control the permit process
- Configurable to national requirements and extensions
- Uses all relevant international standards (WCO, UNECE, ISO, ..)
- Easy integration with Customs and Single Window system: electronic permit exchange and validation, integrated Customs Risk Management
- Full electronic integration with the 90+ Customs Administrations that use the ASYCUDA

Parties now have a system to exchange electronic information with Customs
Role of Customs for CITES controls

Customs is the key agency to control shipments of CITES specimen

I. Trade declared as CITES:
   - Customs assess risk of counterfeited CITES permit
   - Checks consistency of declaration and CITES permit data
   - Decides on targeted controls
   - Endorses the CITES permit and reports actual trade to the Management Authority

II. Trade not declared as CITES:
   - Assess potential of illegal trade in wildlife
   - Decide on targeted controls

Takeaway:
- Customs needs to control all export and import for CITES
- Fully integrating CITES into the Customs Risk Management procedures is essential
A roadmap for risk based CITES border controls

Initial workshop to discuss CITES and electronic Customs control procedures (Gibraltar, May 2018)

- Management Authorities, Customs Administrations, WCO, international organizations
- Collaboration required to identify specific trade patterns and risk profiles
- Need assessment of current practices and initiatives
- There is a need for guidance and training
- Exchange of experience and best practice

Recommendations to the 18th Conference of Parties (CoP18, Colombo, May 2019):

- Support Parties in implementation of electronic permit systems and electronic permit exchanges
- Organise internal meeting to assess potential of modern Customs to facilitate legal trade and combat illegal trade
- Seek collaboration with WCO and others to develop guidelines and training materials for CITES Risk Management in Customs
- Work with WCO and others to support MAs and Customs to implement CITES Risk Management Systems
- Report back to CoP19
Thank you!

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