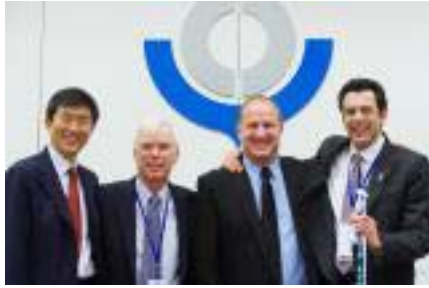


The Capacity Building adventure continues



Capacity Building report from the 63rd Policy Commission and the 115/116th session of the WCO Council

More than 150 countries from all around the world participated in the Policy Commission and 2010 Council Session taking place in Brussels from the 21st 26th of June. One of the most discussed items of the sessions was Capacity Building and the increasing need for implementation support to strengthen recovery from the Global Financial Crises through more trade facilitation and efficient revenue collection but also how to further develop the use of risk management for enhanced enforcement and security.

In his speech to the Policy commission, the WCO Director of Capacity Building, Mr. Lars Karlsson, said that the 2009/2010 business year had seen remarkable progress on Customs reform and modernization. Results indicated that many Members were taking considerable steps towards implementing the major WCO instruments and standards, and an increasing number were signing and ratifying instruments. Observations from WCO missions, as well as from other international institutions, indicated that Customs modernization was being realized in very real terms. As part of the Columbus Programme, 115 Customs administrations had received support, including diagnostic missions to 112 Members and Phase 2 missions to 80. Secretariat and donor Members had carried out more than 200 capacity building activities for the year - the highest delivery rate in the history of WCO capacity building efforts. The WCO Secretariat was currently managing a comprehensive plan of assistance that covered all subjects under each of the Directorates' portfolios. Over 350 requests had been received from Member administrations for capacity building for the next financial year. Expanding on the point of how to recognize change and progress, the Director referred to other global institution surveys before presenting some outcomes of a recently developed WCO tool, a Capacity Building implementation survey. The WCO had identified 14 key areas of implementing a modernization plan. Columbus Phase 2 Members had been invited to complete the survey and their results had been presented as total findings and as regional findings, to indicate progress at varying levels. In his presentation, the Director also displayed national and regional success stories and examples showing real progress on the ground leading to concrete positive results for Governments and society. In his address the Director also highlighted the work carried out during the year on following key programmes, namely *Professionalism of Customs Officers*, *Leadership and Management Development*, The development of the WCO accredited experts database, e-learning and integrity.

The PICARD programme is at the forefront of development right now. The WCO *Professional Standards*, developed by the WCO with support from the International Network of Customs Universities (INCU), is envisaged for use by administrations and academic institutions as a foundation for Customs professional education at the equivalent of Bachelor and Masters levels. These standards are available in five languages on the WCO Capacity Building Web site. The aim of the new WCO Management Development Programme that will be launched at the upcoming Capacity Building Committee meeting on the 27-29 September 2010 in Brussels, is to produce a standardized product for a management development model and package, based on the *Professional Standards*, that could be delivered by the WCO, by individual WCO Members or by any suitable external professional development provider.

On the fourth area, *e-learning* and the *use of technology*, the Director said that on-line courses were available in English, French and Spanish, and thanks to the Swedish Customs' language fund the existing e-learning courses would be translated into Arabic and Portuguese. Feedback from Members confirmed that the e-learning platform was a very valuable and cost-effective resource, useable as a core training instrument, for blended learning or as an additional reference to supplement training and cost-efficient on-the-job training. The new e-learning system platform uses open-source software, which reduced costs to the WCO and Members. The new platform would offer even more functions and would constitute a single Learning and Education portal. The Secretariat is setting up a complete, articulated tool, free of charge and ready to use.

Regarding the important area of *Integrity*, the Director reported that the Secretariat has been active in promoting pilot projects to implement the principles and goals of the Revised Arusha Declaration. With the active support and promotion of WCO Regional Vice-Chairs, six countries with an interest in furthering their integrity policy (Morocco, Costa Rica, Serbia, Rwanda, Tonga and Cameroon) had been identified to host pilot projects. Other countries were also prepared to host pilot projects, and they would be accommodated in the near future.

Members expressed their continued strong support for the Columbus programme, the PICARD programme and the overall Capacity Building agenda and portfolio.

During the session a large number of bi-lateral and regional meetings on capacity building were conducted in parallel with the official programme. In addition Tri-partite capacity building cooperation agreements (twinning) were signed by South Africa-Lesotho-WCO, South Africa-Mauritius-WCO, Israel-Ethiopia-WCO, FYROM-Ethiopia-WCO. A number of new Tri-partite capacity building cooperation agreements (twinning) are under negotiation.

In a comment to the sessions Director Karlsson says: "The bi-lateral meetings with individual countries and regions are vital for us in the Secretariat to discuss progress and additional needs and to update our planning accordingly. From the huge number of meetings we held last week I can also honestly say that I am deeply impressed by the consistency and progress showed and expressed by our Members. The requests are more mature and displaying clearly that member countries involved in the Columbus programme, have entered the more advanced stages of Customs reform and modernization. This is very encouraging. The meetings and the dialogue also show that our models are working, since Members are aware of the services offered

and the support available. I would like to send my gratefulness and the gratitude of our Members to all donors and sponsors involved as partners in our capacity building programmes for making this possible. Customs reform and modernization through real capacity building has taken a leap forward for the benefit of all and this could not have been possible without the active support from the donor community and WCO Member administration making their best experts available for WCO capacity building support. I am very pleased and happy with this year's council session. The Members showed very strong support and gave a continued strong mandate for the pro-active approach and for more implementation activities. We are making progress and the results are there to prove it".

At the Council session, a new Director, Mr. Erich Kieck from the Republic of South Africa was elected to replace Lars Karlsson that ends his five year term as the first Director of Capacity Building on December 31, 2010. In a comment Mr. Karlsson said: "I want to extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Kieck for his successful election. I know Erick since many years and I have the strongest trust in him and that he will be an excellent Director for Capacity Building, taking these important portfolios to another level for the benefit of all Members. I have had a fantastic time here in Secretariat working with a great team of professional and dedicated experts from all around the world. I am convinced that this team will continue to deliver on the highest performance level and that the new Director will be great for the WCO".