

Green Customs Forum and Workshop on the Harmonized System Jeju, Republic of Korea

3 to 6 November 2009

Report

From 3-6 November 2009 a Green Customs Forum and Workshop for the WCO Asia Pacific region took place in Jeju (Republic of Korea). The event was organized by the Korea Customs Service (KCS) under the initiative of KCS Commissioner Yong-suk HUR – who is also WCO Vice-Chair for the region – in cooperation with the WCO Secretariat and the WCO Regional Office for Capacity Building for the Asia Pacific region (ROCB/AP). Funding was provided by the Japanese Customs Co-operation Fund.



KCS Commissioner Hur Yong-suk (3rd from left) poses with WCO official Ed De Jong (2nd from left), Mongolian Customs Commissioner Derjee Tseveenjav (4th from left), New Zealand Customs Vice Commissioner John Secker (5th from left), and Hong Kong Customs Commissioner Yuen Ming-fai (right), during the Green Customs Forum.

The programme included two days of open forum, a field trip and a one-day workshop for Customs. For the Open Forum, participants representing all stakeholders concerned with environmental protection under “Green Customs” concept were invited. The Workshop was attended by delegates from WCO Members in the region. Discussions centered on the efforts made by Customs to protect the environment from its position as a forefront border control agency. Twenty-one of the region’s 32 Members attended the event, together with representatives of the WCO Secretariat, the ROCB/AP, the Oceanic Customs Organization (OCO), the UN Environment Programme’s Asia Pacific office (UNEP AP), the Basel Convention, the Interpol Liaison Office in Bangkok, and other environmental bodies such as the Korean Presidential Committee on Green Growth, the Korean Ministry of Environment and the Korean Environment & Resources Corporation (ENVICO).

A variety of trade-related environmental issues were discussed, including international trade in environmentally-sensitive commodities such as ozone depleting substances, toxic chemicals, hazardous wastes and endangered species. National and regional cooperation between Customs and “environment authorities” is crucial to facilitate legal trade, to prevent illegal trade and to improve the quality of reported export and import data. Delegates from Korea informed the forum of their implementation of a national “Low Carbon, Green Growth” strategy to ensure sustainable development and competitiveness in a globalized environment.

In session v of the forum, emphasis was put on the Harmonized System Nomenclature (HS) and the environment. As a multi-purpose classification tool, the HS also facilitates the monitoring and control of various products covered by international multilateral environmental agreements and other agreements like the Chemical Weapons Convention. Delegates from Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, Sri Lanka and Thailand also shared their experiences at the Forum.

The term “Green Customs” was also discussed; it could include trade facilitation on environmentally friendly goods and the fight against illegal trade in environmentally harmful goods across the borders. At the same time, it could also include administrative “Green” initiatives that would lead to Customs being recognized as the leading environment-friendly agency. This could be achieved through various measures, such as the 3R concept (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle). In that respect, under their Green Customs vision, the KCS has set and implemented two green strategies: “Green by Customs” and “Green of Customs”; and 14 specific Action Plans starting early this year. As a result, the KCS had detected 2.3 million dollars worth of environmentally harmful goods at the borders this year alone, and plans to double the figure next year.

The Workshop on the Harmonized System covered an overview of the HS Convention, the structure of the Nomenclature, its maintenance, and the work of the WCO HS Committee and sub-committees. Also, WCO HS-related Recommendations were given prominent place, especially the Council Recommendation on the insertion in national statistical nomenclatures of subheadings to facilitate the collection and comparison of data on the international movement of substances that deplete the ozone layer (ODS) and the new Council Recommendation of 26 June 2009 on the insertion in national statistical nomenclatures of subheadings for substances controlled under the international Chemical Weapons Convention. The HS 2007 amendments related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) were explained and a preview was provided on HS 2012, especially the recommended amendments related to the MEAs.

Furthermore, during the forum and workshop, presentations were also given by the WCO Secretariat on WCO enforcement instruments and successful joint operations.