



**WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DES DOUANES**

Established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council
Créée en 1952 sous le nom de Conseil de coopération douanière

The Secretary General

09.HL-0122/R.P.

Brussels, 5 June 2009.

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

I am writing to invite your Organization to participate in the 2009 PICARD Conference, which will be organized by the World Customs Organization (WCO) in co-operation with the PICARD Advisory Group, the International Network of Customs Universities (INCU) and the Universidad de Costa Rica. The Conference will take place at the Hotel Barcelo San José Palacio, San José, Costa Rica, from 28 to 30 September 2009.

The WCO is an independent international organization with 174 Member countries representing 98 per cent of world trade. Its primary objective is to develop international standards for Customs and to enhance Customs modernization for the benefit of international global trade, the development of emerging economies and poverty reduction.

Well-functioning Customs services are a vital asset for any country's trade and economy. To cope with the challenges of globalization and to successfully implement a modern agenda on trade facilitation and trade security, there is an essential need for strategic management ability to meet the broadened economic challenges facing Customs services in the 21st Century.

The WCO has recognized this need for professional Customs management standards and to raise the academic profile of the Customs profession through the development and promotion of educational programmes, academic and applied research and intellectual input to strategic decision-making.

The WCO PICARD Programme (Partnership in Customs Academic Research and Development) was therefore launched in 2006 to provide a framework for co-operation between Customs and the academic world. In parallel, through PICARD, academic institutions have created the International Network of Customs Universities (INCU) and, working together, the WCO and INCU have progressed a range of initiatives in the areas of educational programmes, professional standards and academic research and development.

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This year's PICARD Conference, in Costa Rica, will build on the success of the previous Conferences (Brussels 2006 and 2007, and Shanghai 2008) and will provide participants with an opportunity to interact with their government, commercial and academic counterparts from around the world.

The Conference is intended for Customs services; representatives of universities and research institutions with an interest in Customs-related research and education; trade executives and consultants; representatives from donor institutions and other international organizations.

Nominees from Customs administrations should be senior Customs executives responsible for Human Resource development, Customs reform and modernization strategies, strategic management and planning, and trade policy issues.

A key aim of the Conference is to provide a truly global representation of the issues and, consequently, it is intended to include presentations that represent diverse geographic views.

The 2009 PICARD Conference will focus on the following specific issues :

- Current and planned academic research activities of particular relevance to Customs and international trade, including those areas of research interest identified during PICARD 2008.
- The impact of the economic crisis on Customs and international trade.
- The impact of Regional Trade Agreements on Customs and trade, with specific reference to the proliferation of such Agreements.
- The impact of environmental protection on Customs and trade.
- Procedures for seeking WCO recognition of university education programmes.
- Ongoing research needs and opportunities to address those needs.

I would like personally to invite your Administration/Organization to participate in the PICARD Conference 2009.

For further information and for registration please visit the WCO Web site <http://www.wcoomd.org/event.htm>. Registration will remain open until 4 September 2009.

Should you have any questions regarding the Conference, please ask your staff to contact my Director of Capacity Building, Mr. Lars Karlsson, lars.karlsson@wcoomd.org or the PICARD Programme Manager, Mrs. Riitta Passi, Riitta.passi@wcoomd.org, Tel: +32 2 209 9641, mobile: +32 498 56 63 84.

I do hope that you will be able to be represented at the PICARD Conference.

Yours faithfully,



Kunio Mikuriya.