SPECIAL REPORT

Customs Modernisation

› E-LEARNING
  Quality training

› FRAMEWORK OF STANDARDS
  Group dynamics

› INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMS DAY
  No to counterfeiting and piracy!
Containers and trucks can carry weapons, explosives, drugs and people. Yet less than 1% of them are inspected as they travel between countries.

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Design: www.inextremis.be
Calendar of Events

It should be noted that these meetings are mentioned for information purposes and are not all open to the public. 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 “Meetings” section, and on the WCO Events web site: [http://events.wcoomd.org](http://events.wcoomd.org)

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<td>Intellectual Property Rights Workshop (English/French)</td>
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<td>28 - 30</td>
<td>Council (109th/110th Sessions)</td>
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### Upcoming events:

- **September 2007**: Seminar on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Legislation and Risk Analysis, South America
- **October 2007**: Seminar on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Legislation and Risk Analysis, Malaysia
Dear reader,

Acknowledging that our understanding of problems is in essence imperfect or fallible and that the remedies are not always the most suited or appropriate is a major step forward. In 2007 I hope that the international Customs community will be forward-thinking and innovative with respect to recurrent difficulties and the challenges ahead and will discuss and devise a plan for the future together.

A year ago:

• The Capacity Building Directorate came into being: this was the appropriate response to the challenges of the Customs environment in the 21st century.
• The WCO launched the Columbus programme: this was an innovative initiative for building sustainable capacity in Customs administrations specifically aimed at assisting Members to implement the SAFE Framework of Standards.
• The Revised Kyoto Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures entered into force: this is a model instrument for trade facilitation, particularly in the framework of the WTO Doha Round of trade negotiations.
• The Private Sector Consultative Group initiated its work: this is a dynamic example of synergy in action between the private sector and the WCO.
• The WCO strengthened its status and defined its strategic position on combating counterfeiting and piracy following detailed reflection and quality debate.
• A whole series of events relating to the international Customs environment were in the works with a wide variety of conferences, seminars, exhibitions, fairs and training events programmed throughout the year for WCO Members, the private sector, the WCO’s partners and, in certain cases, the general public.

2006 flew past! 2007 will be as busy or busier. International Customs Day on 26 January set the tone for a year of strong commitment to the fight against counterfeiting and piracy. Together we must mobilise our resources and improve our foresight in evaluating the challenges ahead and thus become more competent and effective in order to ensure greater consistency and co-ordination of our strategies. These should not be empty words or a simple declaration of intent. We must all participate in orchestrating our strategies in order to achieve their successful implementation. By acting in concert we will succeed if we wish to avoid others deciding on our priorities and choices.

I wish you an excellent, peaceful and happy 2007.

Michel Danet
Secretary General
Conclusions of the Policy Commission

The 56th Session of the Policy Commission (PC) was held in Chennai (India) from 5-7 December 2006.

Seven key points were discussed:

- trade facilitation
- security and facilitation of the international trade supply chain
- Customs capacity building
- combating counterfeit and pirated goods
- Customs in the 21st Century
- the Harmonized System
- governance, budgetary and financial matters relating to the WCO

During the suspension of trade facilitation negotiations at the WTO, the WCO will pursue its trade facilitation initiatives and will endeavour to find the best way of assisting the WTO and the negotiators. Each administration should support the national authority responsible for negotiating in Geneva and must continue to highlight the role of Customs in the trade facilitation domain.

The WCO has adopted instruments and taken technical initiatives that support trade facilitation, especially the revised Kyoto Convention and the SAFE Framework of Standards. Consequently, the WCO's work has to move forward to that end, especially in assisting Members, particularly developing countries, without waiting for the WTO Doha Round to recommence.

The Policy Commission examined the work of the High Level Strategic Group (HLSG) and took note of the practical suggestions made by the Private Sector Consultative Group (PSCG). The HLSG must pursue its action plan, especially with regards to the data elements, the amendment of the Framework of Standards, mutual recognition, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It will hold its last meeting in April 2007 in accordance with the decision of the Council.

Customs capacity building was discussed as a whole, with a detailed examination of the Columbus Programme (see the “Instruments” heading in this issue). An initial Capacity Building Trends and Achievements Report will be published in the first quarter of 2007, and a second will be discussed during the Council Sessions.

The Policy Commission also examined the proposed Framework of Standards on Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) containing the WCO Customs Kit and Action Plan to combat counterfeiting and piracy, and approved it. Certain amendments will have to be made to reflect more accurately the responsibilities of rights hold-
ers. Other areas of action will also have to be pursued by both Customs administrations and Customs’ partners (action at the level of producer countries, implementation of export controls, enhanced capacity of Customs administrations in this domain, increased co-operation with other entities responsible for combating counterfeiting and piracy, as well as with rights holders).

The item on Customs in the 21st Century gave rise to very lively discussions based on the Environmental Scan and the working document which took account of Members’ replies. The latter document will be revised and discussed at regional level in early 2007. This topic will then be addressed at the HLSG meeting (April 2007). During the June 2007 meeting of the Policy Commission, the amended document and a draft action plan will be examined prior to being submitted for adoption at the June Council sessions.

With regard to the Harmonized System (HS), the issue of whether the decisions of the HS Committee should be made binding will be discussed more fully within the framework of the broader problem relating to the non-binding status of WCO instruments. The possibility of establishing an advanced tariff ruling system and related issues will be examined in detail by the High Level Ad Hoc Group on HS Matters.

Finally, with regard to governance, the WCO Secretariat will prepare a reporting matrix showing the implementation status of WCO instruments. It will then be submitted to the next session of the Policy Commission to be held from 25-27 June 2007 at WCO Headquarters in Brussels.

The draft Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee, which has been slightly modified, was approved and the Committee will hold its first meeting in April 2007.

The PC Meeting in Chennai (India) was a resounding success thanks to the excellent organisation and programme laid on by the Indian Customs Administration.
New Commissioner for the Ghana Customs, Excise & Preventive Service

Mr. Emmanuel Nmashie Doku is a product of the University of Ghana. In 1975, he joined the Ghana Customs administration where he subsequently worked at various Customs offices, several of which he headed. He was promoted to the rank of Assistant Commissioner in 1991.

In 1997, he led a Ghanaian Customs delegation to Liberia to assist the country to restructure its Customs procedures and in 2004, once again, at the request of the Liberian Government, he was reappointed as the Customs Adviser to the Liberian Bureau of Customs and Excise. He returned to Ghana in March 2006 to take charge of the newly created Customs Reforms and Modernisation Unit. On 18 July 2006 he was appointed as the new Commissioner of Ghana’s Customs, Excise & Preventive Service.

The WCO looks forward to his active contribution on international Customs issues.

More information
www.cepsghana.org

A new educational tool for using the CEN

The CEN is an effective tool thanks to the functions it offers. Despite being user-friendly, it is nevertheless worth providing users with some detailed explanations so that they can take full advantage of the options available, especially for data analysis purposes.

To that end, an Audio Visual Training Support (AVTS) has been produced.

This CEN instructional aid was designed using screen shots, audio explanations and active keys to make the training interactive, user-friendly and fun. It is easier for users to memorise procedures if they actually have to go through them step-by-step, progressing from inputting data through to analysing data in order to draft analytical reports.

The easy-to-use AVTS offers three hours of interactive assistance in total. It supplements the electronic manual available in the CEN system as well as the specialised CEN training course, without actually replacing them.

The English and French versions of the AVTS were launched in May 2006 and sent to WCO Members and will shortly be the subject of an e-learning module.

More information
cen@wcoomd.org
The Workshop for WCO Diagnostic Framework facilitators, held at the WCO Regional Training Centre in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) from 20-24 November 2006, was the first Workshop of this type held in Africa for French-speaking countries of the West and Central African Region. Ten of the Region’s countries were represented by high-level Customs officials who greatly appreciated the quality of the training programme.

Three main areas were examined in detail during this Workshop, which was also aimed at identifying experts capable of assisting the WCO to implement the Columbus Programme: firstly, ensuring that participants properly understood and mastered the Diagnostic Framework and grasped the different aspects of diagnostic missions within the context of Phase 1 of the Columbus Programme; secondly, the training was intended to directly contribute to Phase 2 of the Programme, namely, managing change within administrations through projects; and finally, special emphasis was placed on the problematic issue of integrity which is a stumbling block to many reforms.

Participants were made aware of the different WCO reference instruments throughout the course of the Workshop. They also had an opportunity to test their new-found knowledge through various practical case studies (situation analysis, recommendations, interviews, action plans, etc.). The participatory and interactive nature of this training enabled these future facilitators to share their knowledge and to better their understanding of specific problems linked to diagnostic issues.

The Workshop received first class support from the Burkina Faso Customs administration through the use of its Regional Training Centre infrastructure which contributed to the success of this event.

More information: capacity.building@wcoomd.org
The WCO’s Regional Training Centre for West and Central Africa was officially inaugurated on 6 November 2006, in the presence of a number of national and regional public figures and the WCO Secretary General.

The ceremony, presided over by Burkina Faso’s Minister of Finance, provided an opportunity to tour the Centre’s facilities and to name the classrooms after a meritorious Customs official from the region. The aim of this new Centre will be to catalogue Customs administrations’ training needs and to meet the latter through regional seminars. This type of training, which is broader in scope than training for individual countries, makes it possible to pool and optimise a region’s resources.

The resolve demonstrated in Ouagadougou should lead to the forging of close bonds between Customs officials from neighbouring countries. An action plan has already been drawn up to hold three regional workshops between now and the end of June 2007 on combating counterfeiting and piracy, the Harmonized System amendments and Customs valuation.

More information
http://learning.wcoomd.org
New e-learning modules

In November 2006, work began on a new e-learning course entitled “The Customs, wild fauna and flora”. From an international crime perspective, only the illicit trades in drugs and counterfeit goods precede the illicit trade in wild fauna and flora in terms of value.

Consisting of seven modules, this course will deal with the legal aspects of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES Convention), various related documents and procedures as well as purely operational aspects such as risk analysis and control methods. The lessons will be supplemented by evaluations and practical exercises and will take some twenty hours of training to consult all this material. The first module on the CITES Convention is already accessible and the complete training course will be available in June 2007.

The drafting of a course presenting the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards to secure and facilitate global trade has also been finalised. Lasting approximately three hours, this module will list the different standards laid down in this instrument and will provide an understanding of the benefits to be gained from its implementation. The course is expected to be available in March 2007.

These two new courses will complement the 250 or so hours of training currently available via the WCO e-learning programme and will be followed in 2007 by courses on rules of origin and transfer pricing.

More information
http://learning.wcoomd.org

>> Catch this...

News
The international Customs community dedicates 2007 to combating counterfeiting and piracy.
www.wcoomd.org

Available
“WCO in brief” is available in pdf format on the WCO Website.
www.wcoomd.org

For your diary
The French National Institute for industrial property (INPI), in co-operation with its partners, has created an “anti-counterfeiting zone” in Lille (France). Its inauguration will take place in the second quarter of 2007.
www.inpi.fr

Heard
The WCO 2005 Report on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy will be released in February 2007 and will be followed in June by the 2006 report.
www.wcoomd.org

Ongoing
Within the framework of its G8 Presidency, Germany will create an IPR nominal data base using existing WCO tools i.e. CEN and CEN COMM.
www.wcoomd.org

Announcement
The 2nd WCO Anti-Counterfeiting Trophy will be awarded in June 2007.

Coming
The WCO is working on an “IPR Framework of Standards” in partnership with the private sector. This instrument will contain a Customs kit of “standards and best practices” and an action plan to take account of the aspirations of stakeholders. Validation is expected in June 2007.
A must see

The Counterfeiting Museum created by the Union des Fabricants (UNIFAB) in 1951 is unique. This didactic museum, situated in Paris (France) in a listed town house, provides visitors with detailed concrete information on counterfeiting. A range of both authentic and counterfeit products are on show to enable visitors to distinguish between the two.

www.unifab.com

Post-it

- The WCO now has 171 Member Customs administrations.
- At 12 January 2007, there were 128 Contracting Parties to the Harmonized System (HS) Convention following accession by the Republic of Paraguay.
- On 5 January 2007, the Kingdom of Thailand became the 51st Contracting Party to the Convention on Temporary Admission (Istanbul Convention).
- Norway became the 52nd Contracting Party to the Revised Kyoto Convention on 9 January 2007.

www.wcoomd.org

“Project Lion”

In June and July 2006, 49 WCO Members linked to the Western Europe Regional Intelligence and Liaison Office (RILO), the Asia/Pacific RILO, the Central and Eastern Europe RILO and the CIS RILO participated in “Project Lion” which was aimed in particular at strengthening co-operation between Customs administrations and rights holders to enable effective action to be taken against counterfeit goods during the 2006 Football World Cup in Germany.

Another main objective of the project was the optimisation of the exchange of intelligence, and the promotion of the WCO’s CEN COMM system for enforcement initiatives targeted at other major sports events such as the 2007 Rugby World Cup, the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing (China), and the 2010 Football World Cup in South Africa.

144 seizures involving a total of 747,290 World Cup-related articles were made between 1 June and 31 July 2006 by the Customs administrations who participated in “Project Lion”.

The Western Europe RILO conducted an analysis of this operation and prepared a summary of the results. The report is available to WCO Members only on the CEN Web site.

More information
pierre.bertrand@wcoomd.org

Significant counterfeit cigarette seizures in Ghana

Between August and November 2005, the Customs service at Tema seaport in Ghana made 12 seizures involving a total of 160,646,640 counterfeit Marlboro and Excellence King Size cigarettes.

These cigarettes, which had been exported from China, were being transported by container in boxes labelled “shoes”. 30% of the load was in transit, its final destination being Mali, and the remaining 70% was intended for the local market.

In November 2006, the Ghanaian authorities destroyed the stock of seized cigarettes with press coverage of the event.

More information
pierre.bertrand@wcoomd.org
For the first time, the WCO participated as an exhibitor at the Frankfurt Book Fair in Germany. This is the world’s biggest publications fair and serves as a vital annual meeting point for authors and editors, booksellers and librarians, agents and journalists, advertising executives and readers: 7000 exhibitors, 100 participating nationalities, and 380 000 titles were on display to the 300 000 visitors who poured into this massive book fair that was held over a five-day period from 2-6 October 2006.

This was an ideal opportunity for the WCO to present its activities and publications to the general public and players in this sector, as well as to potential partners who are sometimes unfamiliar with the Organization. The WCO was able to describe how it functions, its objectives and its activities in order to raise its profile. It was also an opportunity to be part of the extended family of international organisations as the WCO exhibit was part of the 180m² United Nations stand bringing together, inter alia, the UN, the World Bank, the WHO, UNESCO, the OECD, the FAO, UNICEF and the Council of Europe.

The event was a unique occasion for the WCO Secretariat to meet other heads of publications services, to share experiences about the ever-evolving publications market, to discuss current developments and to anticipate change within the sector which will enable the WCO to ensure that its publications continue to meet market expectations.

See you at the 2007 book fair!

More information
www.frankfurt-book-fair.com
WCO Trainer accreditation

The WCO’s basic aim is to increase assistance to Members and develop the Secretariat’s external training resources. Within the context of the WCO’s capacity building strategy and in an attempt to provide members with increased, better adapted and high quality training, a Train-the-Trainer Workshop was organized at WCO Headquarters in Brussels from 27-30 November 2006 in order to create a pool of experts to independently conduct WCO training activities.

At the end of the 4 day event, 9 experts received accreditation to run courses in specific fields using the WCO’s training material.

Trainers accredited for the Harmonized System:
- Mr Emad ARSLAN, Jordan
- Mr Loua Alain DJOMANDE, Cote d’Ivoire
- Mr Aage GLEMMING, Norway
- Mr Feng GU, China
- Mr Ignatius LERON, Canada

Trainers accredited for Customs valuation
- Mrs Hakima AZIZI, Morocco
- Mr Ian CREMER, United Kingdom
- Mr Mamadou GUEYE, Senegal
- Mr John MALONE, European Commission

More information
http://learning.wcoomd.org

2007 Russian Customs Calendar

The message reads: I love you all, but the Customs most of all!

Picture painted by Lev (11 years) and Alex (9 years), children of Russian customs officer and singer Yulia Khubieva
Customs modernisation essentially means a broad strategy and goal to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, and predictability of an administration’s operations so that it can better meet the demands of modern times. Capacity building means activities which strengthen the knowledge, abilities, skills and behaviour of individuals and improve institutional structures and processes such that the organisation can efficiently meet its mission and goals in a sustainable way. Thus, Customs modernisation is the idea and goal; capacity building is the means or action.
Why is Customs Modernisation

The desire for Customs modernisation and capacity building is generally assumed but it is worth asking periodically why this is so. This article will consider the distinction between the two concepts. It will look at why Customs modernisation is necessary; why it can differ from administration to administration; why it should be balanced; and its linkage with capacity building.

Customs modernisation is not a "one size fits all" concept. Within administrations goals diverge. It is true that Customs’ role is primarily about the control of goods crossing borders. There is, however, nuance in this because Customs administrations have varying additional roles, resources, and authority. While all Customs collect duty, for some it is their raison d'être. If a Customs administration collects over 50% of a country’s income, the Customs Director General’s political masters will demand emphasis on duty collection. For others, governmental income is not the sole emphasis, as non-financial matters like narcotics trafficking and security take priority. On the other hand, nations with low import tariffs and who are attempting to increase participation in international trade are determined to improve trade facilitation. If Customs revenue is a de minimis percentage of overall government income, political leaders will demand something else, like fast clearance times.

Does over emphasizing one role affect other responsibilities? For example, some administrations do not use risk management and post audit control, and instead attempt to physically inspect every consignment, which in turn constrains trade facilitation. There can be other reasons for high controls and low facilitation; for example, on one Columbus Programme diagnostic, WCO experts learned that 100% inspection is conducted because the police have the authority to punish low-level Customs officers who did not detect non-payment of duty!

We do not live, however, in an ideal world, meaning that pure trade facilitation (no screening or inspection) will lead to low revenue collection and easy entry of illegal goods. The government will be unable to meet its revenue targets and dangerous goods like weapons of mass destruction or counterfeit products will slip over borders easily. Thus, Customs must strive to achieve balance. As David Widdowson has written¹, Customs should seek a balanced approach that achieves high control and high facilitation through the use of effective risk management. The WCO’s view is that risk management or selectivity will lead to higher revenues because it makes the process more efficient and facilitates trade, leading to stronger businesses. But this is easier said than done.

Implementing a balance in Customs controls and modernisation faces many challenges. Are the highest levels of government supportive of change management in Customs?

Does the Customs administration have a strategic plan to chart out its objectives? Do Customs officers have the necessary skills to use risk management, consider classification, valuation, and rules of origin, conduct post-audit control, and inspect high-risk cargo? Is the coordination and cooperation with related government agencies (immigration, police and agriculture for example) adequate? Is the level of integrity high enough to ensure competence does not erode? Does the administration have an automated system that allows modern Customs principles to be applied quickly? If the answers to these questions is not a resounding yes, Customs modernisation is necessary.

Customs modernisation must also carefully consider process or a freewheeling non-strategic approach with improper sequencing leading to wasted energy and misapplied resources will ensue. There are examples of failed capacity building programmes littered all over the world. Capacity building should be carefully planned with a systematic road map of where the Customs administration wants to go. Thus, while some tactical actions will be required, the organisation must think and act strategically if the capacity building is going to be sustainable.

The aforementioned Customs modernisation themes of purpose and role are addressed by several WCO tools and actions, most prominently the WCO Diagnostic Framework, the WCO Revised Kyoto Convention, the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards, and the WCO Columbus Programme. The Diagnostic Framework guides an analyst in reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of an administration from a strategic perspective. It can also be used by administrations to produce a self-portrait of where they are and where they are going. The Revised Kyoto Convention provides a road map on what an administration in the 21st Century should look like. The Framework of Standards presents the need for a balance between security and trade facilitation, and how this balance can positively affect all roles and responsibilities. Finally, the Columbus Programme is capacity building in motion, modelled on the Diagnostic Framework, the revised Kyoto Convention, and the SAFE Framework of Standards.

The WCO Columbus Programme takes an all encompassing and strategic management approach to promote modernisation in all areas of Customs roles and responsibilities, including revenue collection, trade facilitation, enforcement, and security, in order to strike the right balance. It is self-evident that an administration that focuses on revenue collection can still learn from an administration that focuses on trade facilitation or security, and consequently boost revenue collection. An administration that focuses on security can learn from an administration that focuses on trade facilitation or revenue collection, and strengthen security, and so on. The theme of different roles and responsibilities are not diametrically opposed but rather inextricably linked. Thus, a facilitated Customs process leads to security. At the same time, a secured Customs process leads to facilitation.
The WCO Columbus Programme: One Year On

The WCO Columbus Programme celebrates its first anniversary in January 2007 and the myriad accomplishments are immense. This dynamic initiative, which aims to assist WCO Members with comprehensive Customs modernisation and implementation of the SAFE Framework of Standards to secure and facilitate global trade, consists of three phases: Phase 1 involves needs assessment of WCO Members’ capacities, Phase 2 involves implementation activities, and Phase 3 involves monitoring of the programme. The Columbus Programme is making considerable progress in all three phases (latest updates and statistics below).

Latest News
Related to Phase 1 of the Columbus Programme, 53 diagnostic or site assessment missions have been completed by the WCO and its partners; 100 missions are projected to be completed by July 2007.

Ultimately, it is implementation that matters and that is the most difficult to achieve. While the first year of the Columbus Programme concentrated on needs assessment, implementation activities are underway and accelerating (see related article). Examples include facilitating the development of national action plans; helping to reconfigure organisational structures; consulting on implementation programmes; training; conducting time-release studies; and developing a compendium of implementation tools.

Implementation must also be monitored by collecting and analysing performance indicators. Measuring target goals is essential to confirm the ultimate objective: achieving results.

Customs modernisation is necessary. It enables Customs administrations to better meet the needs of the country and the international community of nations by increasing revenue collection to pay for critical government programmes, facilitating trade, and providing security. And the WCO is there to support this need.

Each of the 53 diagnosed Customs administrations has a strategic report with comprehensive needs assessment findings and recommendations on how to close capacity gaps.

The 53 countries are: Angola, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bermuda, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon,
Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Hong Kong China, India, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Ukraine, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe.

With regards to Phase 2 of the Columbus Programme, the WCO is working closely with the diagnosed countries, many of which have already crafted action plans based on their diagnostic reports. Some countries are already engaged in real implementation through pilot projects. The WCO now estimates that 23 countries have reached Phase 2 of the Columbus Programme.

Implementation is the key phase of the process and the WCO is adding value by:

- facilitating the action planning process by conducting Phase 2 missions in countries,
- completing a model Columbus Programme Phase 2 Action Plan Workshop in Shanghai (China) during October for Asia/Pacific Members who have received diagnostics,
- developing a compendium of tools for Phase 2 activities,
- conducting security/facilitation seminars which assist Members with the technical information needed for implementing the SAFE.

The WCO’s central strategy for Phase 2 is to use the experience from the pilots to create a basic model for the future. This model, developed during the Phase 2 Workshop in...
Shanghai (China), and tested in Mongolia, will then be used for further development.

The WCO is also in the process of finalising a standardised capacity building trends and patterns report of needs assessment results based on the findings and recommendations from Phase 1 diagnostic missions. The first report will be distributed in early 2007.

Concerning Phase 3 of the Columbus Programme, 98 countries have submitted the SAFE monitoring matrix report, which is 70% of the countries that have formally committed to implement the SAFE Framework of Standards.

In relation to donor activities, Norway, Japan, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States have made voluntary financial contributions to the WCO capacity building fund. Canada, France, Japan, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States have conducted or participated in diagnostic or site assessment missions. Canada, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United States have seconded Technical Attachés to the WCO to provide support for capacity building activities. The WCO has also received tremendous financial and technical support from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB).

The WCO has concluded its first agreements with donor institutions, regional development banks, and the international development agencies concerning donations for the second phase of the Columbus programme. The WCO is also planning a donor conference (second quarter of 2007), followed by regional donor meetings to further raise the profile of the Columbus Programme.

**Latest Statistics**

These are the statistics of the Columbus Programme:

- 53 diagnostic Phase 1 missions by 31 December 2006
- 100 diagnostic Phase 1 missions will be completed by June 2007
- 20 countries engaged in Phase 2 activities so far
- 98 countries have submitted the monitoring matrix report
- 16 Diagnostic Framework workshops completed
- 350+ capacity building experts trained
- 100+ diagnostic facilitators accredited
- 5 SAFE Seminars completed
- 4 train-the-trainer workshops completed

**More information**
capacity.building@wcoomd.org

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**Editorial note**

If you found this Special Report expressing the WCO Secretariat’s point of view on Customs Modernisation of interest, then please feel free to share your administration’s experience in this respect with the Editorial Team. You may send your articles, which should not exceed 1100 words, as well as photos (JPEG with a minimum 300 DPI resolution) to the following e-mail address for consideration: communication@wcoomd.org. They will be published in the next issue of WCO News.
As of 15 September 2006 the investigative powers of the Hungarian Customs and Finance Guard (HCFG) have been expanded to include numerous economic crimes such as illegal bankruptcy, tax fraud, and violations of financial interests pertaining to the European Communities. Transferring the investigation of economic crimes to the HCFG is a clear demonstration of the esteem in which the Government of Hungary holds the HCFG due to its enforcement successes that have grown admirably year by year.

The HCFG intends to gradually increase its staff complement following the expansion of its investigations mandate to ensure a smooth transition and to enable the administration to continue investigating approximately 3,500 current criminal cases whilst preparing it to speedily tackle any new cases. Plans are also underfoot to strengthen mobile control units and other customs and excise control functions whilst investigation offices will be reorganised and reinforced with additional employees. As a first step, investigators with relevant expertise in investigating economic crimes have been engaged by the HCFG and a programme to retrain current staff members is to be introduced.

Besides its key role protecting the Hungarian economy, these additional powers enable the Hungarian Customs and Finance Guard to more effectively protect the economy of the European Union as a whole.
Cultural objects, including ancient books, icons, pieces of art, paintings, and military decorations which had been seized by Customs as part of their operations to prevent the illegal exportation of the country’s cultural heritage, were given to museums and religious organisations for permanent use and storage on 17 October 2006 by the Ukraine Customs Service.

Thanks to the alertness of Customs, the collections held by the Ukraine Museum of Historical Value, the State Museum of Ukrainian Decorative Folk Art, the National Museum of Ukraine History, the National Museum of Ukrainian Literature, the Ukraine State Book and Printing Museum, the Kyiv Saint Michel Church, the Kyiv Saint Preobrazhensky Monastery, and the Chernigiv Saint Trinity Cathedral have been replenished and enriched.

This annual ceremony has become a traditional event in the Ukraine since the independent State Customs Service was created.

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Intelligence service representatives from 28 countries in the region and the Asia/Pacific RILO National Contact Points met in Islamabad (Pakistan) from 31 October to 2 November 2006.

One of the key items on the agenda was the implementation of the Asia/Pacific RILO’s action plan to more effectively combat all types of organised fraud facing every country, and especially those in the region, and to strengthen co-operation between regional Customs intelligence services. This fraud involves duties and taxes, and the under-valuation and under-invoicing of imported goods, including major drug trafficking in Afghanistan in particular, money laundering, smuggling of nuclear materials, hazardous goods and chemicals, and other environmental crimes.

In his opening speech, Dr. Salman Shah, Adviser to the Prime Minister of Pakistan for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, stressed that the globalisation of trade together with the rise in transnational organised crime and terrorism have forced Customs administrations to change their priorities and review their working methods in order to become more efficient and to curb this global problem. Drug trafficking and the trade in counterfeit goods remains a cause for concern in the Asia/Pacific region whilst commercial fraud and tax evasion continue to be a growing problem as well, especially when one considers the potential links between commercial fraud and money laundering.

Mr. Shahid Rahim Sheikh, Director General of Pakistan Customs, stressed that without technical assistance and capacity building, some Members would be unable to meet the new challenges facing the Asia/Pacific Region. He felt that it was necessary to be proactive in understanding the environment in which Customs services were operating, especially with respect to developing suitable responses and to implement the requisite measures.

Mr. Usman Ali Shah, Director General of Pakistan’s Investigation and Intelligence Service who chaired the meeting, felt that Customs intelligence services could become more effective by enhancing information sharing and the quality of information provided. The Asia/Pacific National Contact Points will be assigned greater and more diverse responsibilities to that end.

WCO Technical Officer, Mr. Kazunari Igarashi, presented the WCO’s Strategic Plan and the priorities for 2006-2007. The implementation of the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards and the controls this will permit on international supply chain security will make it possible to confront the threats facing society. This will be done through enhanced information exchange and the further development of the CEN. The objective is now to ensure that the majority of WCO Members implement the enforcement action plan.

More information
kazunari.igarashi@wcoomd.org
In 2003, the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) set up, as part of its project to modernise customs operations, a Customs Reform and Modernisation (CRM) committee with the view to acquiring "a world class computer system".

One year later, the KRA authorities went on a world tour to identify the customs computer system most likely to meet their requirements. The Dakar stage in April 2004 became a watershed during the tour, as the prospectors eventually decided to opt for the customs automation system in operation in Senegal, another country of the South. The two countries later entered into a government-to-government agreement and GAINDE 2000 was commissioned by the Senegalese government to steer the project and implement its solutions in Kenya.

The system went live in July 2005 after 8 months of unremitting customisation and stabilisation efforts, and is currently in stride to the great satisfaction of Kenyan clearing and shipping agents.

This landmark example of bilateral cooperation helped to accelerate clearance procedures, markedly reduced red tape, and facilitated direct contact among different stakeholders in the clearance chain. The cooperation is still in progress, with other facilitation systems developed by GAINDE 2000 in the pipeline.

The cooperation between Kenya and Senegal should serve as an example for other countries, particularly those in Africa. In fact, the collaboration between the two Customs administrations and its satisfactory results are illustrative of Africa’s abilities to make great strides by mobilising its skills and by fostering the sharing of experience.

More information
contact@gainde2000.sn
www.gainde2000.sn

The international trade environment is changing dramatically as a result of two developments – computerisation; and the requirement for secure and traceable documentary and physical processes. Against this background, business finds it increasingly hard to stay competitive in the international trade arena. Any change requires investment in both staff and infrastructure, and has to be properly evaluated and programmed.

The current challenge for business is to make a whole series of paperless systems work together without jeopardising either its competitiveness or the legitimate roles of public administrations responsible for controlling trade. In the field of customs, this requires the implementation of a set of customs standards and tools that are legally appropriate for their purpose (BTI, AEO, Origin, etc).

International supply chains need a common language based on a grammar and IT syntax defined by UN-CEFACT standards and WCO recommendations.

But there is still a lack of trust and confidence on the international stage, and above all no system for the mutual recognition and validation of authorisations and simplifications granted at different points in the global supply chain.

* Office of development through automation and simplification of foreign trade
The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the technical cooperation agency of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) for operational, enterprise-oriented aspects of trade development. The ITC supports developing economies and economies in transition, in particular, their business sector, in their efforts to realise their full potential for developing exports and improving import operations.

With regard to multilateral trade treaties, the ITC recently developed LegaCarta, a programme offering legal analysis and technical assistance. LegaCarta comprises a core group of some 230 treaties and different instruments (model legislation and trade usage) that have a practical impact on trade, plus an additional group of approximately 450 referenced amendments and protocols in the following domains: contracts, Customs, dispute resolution, environment, finance, illicit trade, intellectual property, investments, transport, law of treaties and WTO rules. Thanks to this information, decision-makers in developing country economies as well as their national legal community (business lawyers, law professors, etc.) now have an overview of the advantages and costs of acceding or not acceding to the main multilateral trade treaties. They will consequently be better placed when making decisions regarding the ratification of these treaties, taking into account their national priorities.

Among the main multilateral trade treaties identified by the ITC as being a priority for business are the revised Kyoto Convention, the Istanbul Convention on Temporary Admission and the Harmonized System Convention. In this connection, the ITC regularly calls upon the WCO, in its technical assistance programmes, to promote these instruments in developing country economies both at national level (national workshops) and international level (symposiums).

Finally, to further strengthen co-operation between these two Organisations, a link to LegaCarta will shortly be included on the WCO Members’ Web site.

More information
http://www.intracen.org
http://www.legacarta.net

On 15 November 2006 an international group of industry and government representatives attended the Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) Conference that was held at the headquarters of the WCO in Brussels. The event explored the scope and potential of the European Union’s future maritime policy, particularly the international dimension of the European Commission’s efforts to establish a holistic maritime policy for the bloc. Discussions centred on the benefits gained from similar initiatives in other parts of the world and the “lessons learned” from projects undertaken in Australia, Canada, Singapore, and the United States.

BIMCO Chairman, Mr. Knud Pontoppidan, illustrated shipping’s key role in fostering global trade and economic growth which led to the unquestionable need for an integrated European maritime policy based on harmonised international regulations.

Key speakers included Lord Kinnock (former EC Commissioner and current BIMCO advisor on European maritime affairs), Mr. John Richardson (Head of the EC Maritime Policy Task Force), Dr. Rosalie Balkin (IMO Director of Legal Affairs and External Services), Mr. David Koo (Chairman of the Hong Kong Shipowners’ Association), Mr. Lennart Simonsson (President of the European Community Shipowners’ Association) and Sir Robert Coleman (BIMCO European Liaison Officer).

More information
www.bimco.org
On 12 January 2007, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and the World Customs Organization (WCO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in Lisbon (Portugal) with the aim of enhancing international drug control efforts.

The agreement, signed by EMCDDA Director, Wolfgang Götz, and the WCO Director of Compliance and Facilitation, Michael T. Schmitz, builds on over a decade of cooperation between the two organisations.

More information
www.emcdda.europa.eu
www.wcoomd.org

>> Cooperation on drug control enhanced

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Mission Statement
The mission of the Mexican Customs Administration is to control the entrance and exit of goods in the country by offering an honest, transparent, fair and quality customs service to facilitate compliance with national legislation by clients.

Strategy
The administration has undergone a modernisation process that comprises:
- Implementation of an Automated Customs Integral System (SAAI);
- Improvement of Custom clearance documental post-revision to eliminate slow traffic and to locate with precision any infraction of customs law without affecting the flow of commercial traffic;
- Partnership with the private sector: Mexican Customs and the private sector work jointly in order to achieve the same objective - to stop smuggling and to facilitate and improve the security of international trade. The private sector has also donated equipment to assist Mexican Customs in this regard;
- Co-operation agreements on foreign trade matters: 88 co-operation agreements have been signed with 144 Chambers of Commerce, as well with national industrial and agricultural associations with the aim of preventing, detecting and fighting customs fraud;
- Use of technology to achieve a correct balance between security and efficiency. The facilities at the international airport have been improved, all customs offices reorganised, and customs inspection stations enlarged;
- New equipment including non-intrusive inspection technology systems: the Gamma Rays System used in physical inspections of goods, the Vehicle Supervision and Control System (SSCV) for optimal inspection of vehicles, surveillance systems, and Customs laboratory equipment;
- Customs Prototype Project: A modernisation project that has to date been implemented in four ports of entry, namely, Manzanillo, Veracruz, Nuevo Laredo and Reynosa. It includes the use of new technology as well as the implementation of simplified clearance processes and paperwork, and a human resource strategy;
- Advanced Electronic Signature "Tu Firm@": All documents signed electronically will have the same guarantee and function as physical documents thus eliminating paperwork (Electronic Invoice, Digital Fiscal Receipt, etc.).
Modernising an administration: a quest for excellence

The Customs administration of Côte d’Ivoire currently employs approximately 2300 officers. WCO News spoke to Mrs Agnes M’LANHORO, Deputy Director General and former Acting Director General.

WCO News: Not many women, especially in Africa, occupy such senior positions within a Customs administration. Tell us about your journey and how you got here?

Mrs Agnes M’LANHORO: It is true a woman at such a high level in a Customs administration in Africa is not common, however, I believe there will be many more. As far as Côte d’Ivoire is concerned it must be said that women have for some time now been part of the decision-making process. I would in fact like to take this opportunity to thank my government for its open-minded attitude towards women and for having chosen me as Acting Director General of Customs.

You asked how I got here. Basically I came up through the ranks. I graduated from the Ecole Nationale d’Administration (ENA) in Côte d’Ivoire and went on to the National Customs Academy in Neuilly (France). I worked as an examining officer in Abidjan Port for 10 or so years, then rose up through the ranks of our Customs administration as Head of the Examination Section, Deputy Head of Office, Head of Economic Procedures, and Head of the Central Office at Abidjan Port. After a term as Regional Director of Customs in Abidjan, I was designated Director of Customs Revenue. It is from this last position that I was promoted to the post of Deputy Director General, which has enabled me to perform the functions of Acting Director General.

W.N.: What are the current priorities for Customs in Côte d’Ivoire?

A.M.: Mr Gnamien KONAN, the Director General who I am currently replacing, set a very high standard for our Customs administration which must be maintained. We therefore have a huge amount of work to do and all questions are of equal importance.

We must also prepare our administration for the fiscal transition which the WAEMU wishes to implement by 31 December 2008 at the latest. This will mean free trade within our community and the opening up of our economy to the rest of the world. With this in mind there will be a shift in the tax approach with an increase in internal taxes and a reduction in import duties.

In addition to these priorities, I have set my heart on improving the working conditions of our staff. This will further motivate our officers who are constantly being asked to do more.

Furthermore, the quest for excellence in Customs is one of my major pursuits.

W.N.: What can the WCO, of which you are a Member, do to help you achieve your objectives?

A.M.: Implementation of the WAEMU Fiscal Transition Programme will require adaptation on the part of our staff. This means additional training and the restructuring of our Customs administration. That is where the WCO can play a useful role, especially since something similar must already have been done within other Customs Unions.

Moreover, I previously referred to the quest for excellence. The WCO, through its policy of harmonisation and promotion of Customs best practices, has put in place instruments and tools enabling administrations to evaluate the conformity of their procedures with international standards. The Framework of Standards adopted in June 2005 provides us with a glimpse of the “Customs Service” of the future.

With the help of the WCO we hope to benefit from a detailed diagnostic linked to our quest for excellence and develop partnerships with administrations which have already implemented these instruments in order to benefit from their experience. This is of vital importance to us and I know I will be able to count on the WCO for assistance.

Finally, I would like to thank WCO News for letting me voice my views and on behalf of my administration, I would also like to express my gratitude to Mr. Danet and all his staff for their tireless efforts to promote Customs activities.

More information
www.douanes.ci
Let’s talk about the Framework of Standards

At its last sessions in June 2006, the Council adopted a Resolution on the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards to secure and facilitate global trade. This Resolution, which takes account of progress in implementing the Framework of Standards, tackles a number of unresolved issues.

Michael Schmitz, WCO Director of Compliance and Facilitation answered some questions posed by the Editorial Team.

WCO News: The High Level Strategic Group (HLSG) met on 19 and 20 October 2006. Could you tell us more about the content of the discussions on Authorized Economic Operators (AEOs), mutual recognition, and Customs controls?

Michael Schmitz: Much of the future development of the mutual recognition concept depends upon assurances of standardised and predictable requirements. As such, the matter of data elements required by Members to be submitted plays a pivotal role in Customs-to-Customs recognition programmes. A good deal of discussion centered on this aspect in the October 2006 HLSG meeting, and the topic can be expected to occupy the centre spot in upcoming discussions as well. It is well understood by all that mutual recognition is evolutionary rather than revolutionary in character. It will develop over time, probably first through bilateral agreements which can mature into multilateral and even groups of interconnecting multilateral pacts. Until then, it is left to each administration to foster its own population of Authorized Economic Operators. Perhaps through the execution of pilot projects or by some other means of their choosing, these populations can be recognised by other Member administrations.

W.N.: Still on the subject of AEOs, during the Council sessions a number of delegations raised the problem of adapting the Framework of Standards to all types of businesses. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) do not necessarily have sufficient technical and human resources to satisfy the Framework’s requirements. How are the discussions progressing in this respect?

M.S.: This is very much an area which is still in development. The Secretariat has identified and will soon be in direct contact with an international organisation which represents the interests of the SME community. One matter on which the HLSG was clear is that the established Standards appearing in the SAFE Framework are not to be diluted in any way to accommodate the SMEs. There may, however, need to be a degree of flexibility permitted by Customs administrations evaluating applicant AEOs from the SME community.
IN CONVERSATION

W.N.: There was also talk of setting up an Expert Group to develop proposals concerning the implementation of Customs-to-Customs co-operation, one of the pillars of the Framework of Standards. Are the channels for co-operation already open and has the Group already met?

M. S.: The referenced Expert Group has indeed been established and has already met once, just prior to the last meeting of the HLSG. There are preliminary plans to convene the group for another session sometime before the next and final HLSG meeting. The format allowed for unfettered discussion between Customs representatives and industry participants who otherwise serve on the Private Sector Consultative Group (PSCG). There is value seen in maintaining this group into the foreseeable future to deal with SAFE implementation issues as they arise.

W.N.: How is the work of the HLSG and that of the PSCG interlinked, at what stage do they consult to achieve greater synergy of efforts, and what issues does the Group examine?

M. S.: The PSCG was formed in order that the HLSG might have the benefit of informed opinion from the trade sectors affected by the terms of the SAFE and AEO programmes. The Group has met on several occasions, and as previously described participates on an equal footing with Customs in the group of experts on security. The interlinkage comes in the form of direct meetings with the HLSG during the scheduled meetings of the latter. These meetings have taken place during the last two HLSG meetings, and will continue into the concluding HLSG session. The PSCG has made a valuable contribution to the development of the AEO concept and guiding document, and the PSCG will continue to serve in a valued advisory capacity even beyond the remaining tenure of the HLSG.

W.N.: Significant progress in implementing the Framework of Standards has doubtless been made, but monitoring and updating will be required to keep pace with probable developments on the international scene. Who will take over when the HLSG’s mandate comes to an end, which will certainly be in June 2007 according to the Council Resolution?

M. S.: This is very much an open question. The Policy Commission will recommend to the Council that although the life of the HLSG should not be extended, the model utilised in its formation and work progress be retained for the future developmental needs of the SAFE Framework. The Policy Commission commented extensively and positively on the speed and agility of a small ad hoc group operating with the participation of senior officials. The actual structure or continuing mandate of any successor group has not yet been determined and must necessarily await consideration by the Council in June 2007.

More information
www.wcoomd.org

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Since June 2003, all Members have had the option of “à la carte” incorporation of the e-learning mechanism within their training policy. This enables each administration to enhance the Customs training dispensed to its staff according to its needs and resources.

To date, 112 administrations have chosen to connect up via Internet, to the WCO server hosted in Brussels. More and more administrations are adopting a voluntary policy of holding e-learning sessions led by their own national experts. In this way, each administration can benefit from a mechanism managed by the WCO yet instantly accessible which enhances WCO training through national expertise. The benefits of blended training in terms of more effective teaching and lower organisational costs are within the reach of all Customs administrations.

Roll-outs in Member administrations are also proving increasingly successful. The Canadian and Tunisian Customs administrations have been hosting their own version of the WCO e-learning system since September 2006. In addition to faster connection times, they are completely free to manage the mechanism, enabling them to devise their own national e-learning and blended training programme. The Secretariat continues to receive many such requests, meaning an ambitious national roll-out schedule for 2007.

Each Member’s method for incorporating the mechanism corresponds to its specific requirements and consolidates the benefits gained through its human resource management policy. This lends weight to the conclusion already drawn by 6 other administrations that chose to host this mechanism, namely that there is complete flexibility when incorporating the programme.

The Canada Border Services Agency has also chosen to promote two objectives in terms of the e-learning roll-out: not only the progressive incorporation of the WCO tool at national level, but also the co-ordination, by the Vice-Chairperson of the Americas and the Caribbean Region, of the programme’s translation into Spanish. The region has consequently embarked upon an unprecedented translation operation covering 250 hours worth of courses and involving 6 countries, namely, Argentina, Chile, Cuba, Mexico, the United States and Venezuela.

The Secretariat has developed a regional capacity building strategy in tandem with the increased training being offered. The Melakka Regional Training Centre (RTC) in Malaysia has consequently had its own e-learning platform since November 2006. Its inclusion in regional seminars held at the Centre will make it possible, through the adoption of a blended training approach, to assess participants more effectively before and after the sessions and to make the best use of the experts’ time during the seminars.

Eight of the RTCs are now equipped with the e-learning mechanism and the Secretariat will continue its activities throughout 2007 in order to consolidate the unique position of RTCs as satellites permitting tailored delivery of WCO training to Customs staff.

The WCO’s training initiatives continue to promote the full provision of Customs training to a wider audience. This training meets the reference standards set by the Organization as well as each Member’s specific needs.

More information
http://learning.wcoomd.org
Launch of the 2007 version of the HS

For the first time, the WCO has held a two-day international Conference in Brussels (Belgium) to explore the HS and the major amendments contained in the latest version implemented on 1 January 2007. A broad range of representatives from the public and private sectors participated in this event.

Following an official ceremony to launch the 2007 version of the HS, various speeches, demonstrations and presentations of sample products gave rise to lively discussions.

The conference provided an opportunity for participants to listen to detailed presentations by experts from the WCO and other international organisations, on the various changes made to the HS and their impact on international trade, including statistical, social and environmental programmes.

Discussions between participants and professionals from the WCO, the OECD, the United Nations, the WTO and the ICC focused on technical information as well as policy issues relating to international statistics and tariffs.

The next international conference on the HS 2007 will be held in Brussels (Belgium) from 17-18 April 2007.

More information
http://events.wcoomd.org

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Strengthened ties between the Oceanic Customs Organisation and the WCO

The Oceanic Customs Organisation (OCO) and the WCO signed a Statement of Principles and Action Plan between the two organisations strengthening their relationship in areas of mutual interest on 6 November 2006 in New Zealand.

OCO Head of Secretariat (formerly Policy Manager with New Zealand Customs), Robert Taylor, and the WCO Director of Capacity Building, Lars Karlsson, signed the agreement at a ceremony in Wellington.

The Comptroller of the New Zealand Customs Service, Martyn Dunne, announced the signing at the December 2006 WCO Policy Commission: “The WCO and the OCO have recognised the benefit of joint co-operation to enhance the facilitation and security of trade and travel at the global and regional level. The two organisations aim to cooperate more fully to promote WCO standards, and increase efficiency and effectiveness within Customs administrations in the Oceania region” said Mr Dunne. “New Zealand and Australia are very enthusiastic about the increased relationship between the WCO and OCO, and are committed to the WCO capacity building programme,” he added.

Robert Taylor is also enthusiastic about the growing strength of the relationship. “It makes sense for the WCO and OCO to increase their cooperation since the WCO promotes the facilitation and security of trade and travel with its Members at the international level, and the OCO does the same at the regional level. Both organisations aim to strengthen Customs cooperation between their Members, including the promotion of precise and harmonised standards” he said. Mr Taylor added, “The nations of the South Pacific, including those that make up the OCO, are small economies with limited resources. These nations run the risk of marginalisation during this century of globalisation. Innovative methods to enhance cooperation with world organisations such as the WCO will assist the region in its development”.

One such cooperative measure is seeing the OCO actively exploring with the WCO Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB) ways to enhance cooperation on regional initiatives.

Lars Karlsson also has positive expectations for the relationship. “The signing of the Statement of Principles and the Action Plan now places the WCO OCO relationship on a strategic footing, with positive expected outcomes. We look forward to reporting back at future meetings on how this relationship is progressing. Like all our capacity building programmes, we want to work with practical and concrete actions to achieve real results. We now have the basic requirements in place for successful capacity building cooperation in the Pacific. I am grateful for the very positive work carried out by the OCO Secretariat, the New Zealand Customs Service and the Australian Customs Service to develop this partnership platform together. It has been a pleasure working together in the design of this cooperation platform. Now it is time for action” he says.

The key areas of mutual interest agreed to by the WCO and OCO include:

- Implementation of the revised Kyoto Convention and the SAFE Framework of Standards;
- Risk management;
- Integrity;
- Training;
- E-learning;
- Intellectual property rights;
- Liaison;
- Regional training;
- Management development programme;
- Border Security/Law Enforcement programme.

More information
www.wcoomd.org
www.ocosec.org
As the date drew closer for implementation of the 2007 HS changes, the intensification of private-sector interest in understanding the major changes that will occur in the technology area of the Nomenclature led the WCO to offer concentrated private-sector training in those products.

From 7-8 November 2006, 20 highly-motivated customs brokers, attorneys and representatives from business gathered at WCO Headquarters in Brussels for a special seminar on the 2007 HS changes in Chapters 84, 85 and 90. Three WCO staff members delivered a detailed explanation of the changes and held several workshops in which the participants could obtain hands-on experience classifying articles in the 2007 HS. Participants were also introduced to the PC-based e-learning module, “Amendments to the Harmonized System 2007” (available at http://learning.wcoomd.org), which they could use to obtain detailed training on the entire range of changes that will occur across the HS.

The participants commended the WCO for hosting such a useful training opportunity for the private sector and urged the WCO to offer more such courses in the future. To meet the growing private sector demand for training, the WCO has scheduled a seminar on the General Interpretative Rules for February 2007, and training in the Chemicals area is planned for the second quarter of 2007. Watch the pages of the WCO News for further information on these and other specialised courses.

More information http://events.wcoomd.org
Thirty-two customs officers from 22 countries in the WCO Asia Pacific Region met from 13-17 November 2006 in Malacca (Malaysia) to “break the code” by gaining a better understanding of the Harmonized System and its 2007 amendments. The seminar was arranged by the Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB) in Bangkok (Thailand). The ROCB took the initiative to invite Laos (not yet a WCO Member at the time) and Kenya (host of the East and Southern Africa ROCB) as observers.

The new code includes some 354 changes that came into effect on 1 January 2007. Participants provided a progress report on their implementation of the HS 2007 in their respective countries. According to their report, of the 22 countries represented at the seminar, 14 expected to implement HS 2007 by January 2007, 4 expected to implement it by July 2007, 2 were not in a position to implement during 2007, and 2 did not provide any information. The main problems faced during the preparatory work related to the translation of technical texts, alignment and integration of statistical codes and coordination with other concerned authorities.

Participants were offered the opportunity to prepare for the seminar by using the WCO e-learning modules on the HS, and the 2007 amendments. A majority of the seminar attendees used the training tool and found it helpful and relevant to their needs.

The Harmonized System Convention has 128 Contracting Parties and is used by approximately 200 countries and Customs and economic unions across the globe.

More information
www.wcoomd.org
The WCO and the Senegalese Customs administration organised a National Seminar on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy in Dakar from 8-10 November 2006, in conjunction with Interpol and the World Intellectual Property Organization.

The Minister of the Interior presided over the opening ceremony at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended by almost 200 participants, with the Secretary General of the WCO and the Director General of Senegalese Customs among the distinguished guests.

The three-day Seminar focused on three particularly sensitive issues for Africa - a preferred target for the fake goods industry - namely, medicines, music and the arts, and everyday products.

The aim was to take stock of the seriousness and complexity of the counterfeiting and piracy issue and to highlight the need to rethink policies in this respect.

In addition to rights holders and national associations who described the problems confronting them in detail, consumer associations and artists sounded the alarm about the consequences of this pandemic. The latter (international singers, figures from the world of theatre, fashion designers and film producers) joined forces at this event to stress the need to follow up the Seminar with strengthened controls.

This Seminar, which was welcomed by all participants, enjoyed a great deal of media coverage. In particular, the media reported the Secretary General’s strong message about the WCO’s new policy in this respect, which is more in tune with what is actually happening on the ground.

Buoyed by the recommendations made, the “impetus of Dakar” was the start of the process to launch 2007 as the year dedicated to anti-counterfeiting and piracy. This process will continue in 2007 when the WCO holds another two-phase Seminar in the region: the general aspects of the problem will be discussed in Burkina Faso and the operational aspects will be discussed in Senegal.

More information
http://events.wcoomd.org

The impetus of Dakar

Michel Danet, WCO Secretary general, and Armand Nanga, Director general of the Senegalese Customs administration

From left to right: Michel Danet, the Senegalese Minister of the Interior, Chief Ousmane Ngom, and Armand Nanga
Origin questions answered!

The first specialized training event on Rules of Origin for the private sector was held on 21 and 22 November 2006 at WCO Headquarters, with 20 participants from various European countries, Kuwait and Mexico.

The session dealt mainly with the preferential Rules of Origin applicable to European Union trade relations and in particular the progressive implementation of Paneuromed cumulation which will facilitate the creation of a free trade zone for Mediterranean countries. The WTO negotiations on the harmonisation of non-preferential rules of origin were also discussed.

Participants greatly appreciated this two day training event run by Jacqueline Cutzach from the French Customs administration and Pierre-Paul de Vaucher from the WCO.

More information
http://learning.wcoomd.org
From 23-24 November 2006, the Workshop on Customs Valuation for the private sector was held at the WCO headquarters in Brussels (Belgium). This workshop was the third one on “Mastering the Transaction Value” since the first one took place in November 2005. Led by members of the WCO’s Valuation team with contributions by professionals from the private sector (multinational enterprises, customs and trade consultants, legal advisors, and customs brokers), this event proved to be a great success. In total the three workshops have attracted nearly 60 business professionals.

The workshop, which was a combination of e-learning modules and face-to-face sessions, was designed to enhance understanding of customs valuation with presentations, case studies and interactive discussions. It covered all aspects of the most important customs valuation method used worldwide to value imported goods, offering the latest developments and professional insight into valuation complexities.

Like the previous two workshops, the participants showed a high degree of satisfaction with the quality of the course. Participants increasingly found the workshop very useful, practical and interactive with good networking opportunities. All participants were awarded WCO certificates on successful completion of the workshops.

The event also provided the WCO with invaluable insight into trade practices and perspectives in the field of customs valuation and helped to foster better application of the WTO Agreement on Customs Valuation among the trade community. Most importantly, it was one of the various original initiatives by the WCO Secretariat to encourage fruitful exchanges between Customs and the business world as a means to re-enforce this essential partnership.
Keeping up the tradition!

As has been the case since the opening in 2003 of the National Customs Academy in Tourcoing on the outskirts of Lille (France), a new group of aspiring French Customs Inspectors (140 French and French-speaking foreign students) and their teachers came to the WCO for a morning visit on 17 October 2006.

WCO Secretary General, Michel Danet, took the opportunity to meet the next generation of Customs officers and talked about the WCO and international Customs matters. His remarks were followed by a question and answer session with the students. This was greatly appreciated by both Mr. Danet and the visiting students.

WCO experts: Marc Declunder; Pierre Bertrand; Tadatsugu Matsudaira; Kishan Singh; Pierre-Paul de Vaucher; and Lucie Dorchies, then presented the activities of the Capacity Building Directorate and the Compliance, Facilitation, Valuation, Origin and Nomenclature Sub-Directorates and answered specific questions relating to their sphere of activity.

To close the morning session the students were invited by the Secretary General for a cocktail and were thus able to continue discussions with the speakers in a more informal and friendly atmosphere.

A new batch next year!

More information
www.wcoomd.org
A wide range of visitors for the WCO

The WCO Secretariat is faced with an increasing number of requests for visits from various sources. Numerous delegations request half-day or whole-day visits throughout the year for awareness and training sessions relating to the WCO and its activities.

On 29 November 2006 a delegation of 15 Tunisian diplomats on placement with the European Studies Centre in Strasbourg (CEES) visited the Organization.

On 7 December 2006, a group of 30 law students in their 2nd year of a Masters programme relating to “European and international legal careers” at the University of Grenoble (France), accompanied by their tutor, spent the morning at the WCO where they learned about the WCO and more specifically about Rules of Origin.

On 13 December 2006 24 Colombian students accompanied by three representatives from the Colombian Embassy in Brussels, visited the WCO where they were briefed on the work of the Organization, in particular the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards to secure and facilitate global trade and the fight against drugs trafficking.

These encounters are always very enriching and provide the WCO with an opportunity for greater visibility vis-à-vis those who often have limited knowledge of Customs matters.

Finally, within the framework of the partnership with the Münster University in Germany, the WCO Secretariat received 15 students from 20-24 November. This group benefited from a number of technical presentations on the WCO’s activities and undertook research, with the assistance of WCO Customs experts, to prepare their master’s theses on different aspects of the international Customs environment. The University offers a Masters programme in Customs administration, law and policy. This 12-month diploma course is funded by the German Development Agency InWent, for young Customs officers from the countries of the Southern African Development Community and the East African Community.

More information
www.wcoomd.org
Protecting the spirit of enterprise and innovation

On the occasion of International Customs Day 2007, the World Customs Organization (WCO) welcomed representatives of various sections of society, as well as policy-makers, to reflect on the fight against counterfeiting and piracy.

There has been a dramatic rise in counterfeiting, although the phenomenon is poorly understood and its scale is difficult to comprehend. In the United States, for example, the number of seizures reached 15,000 in 2006, an 83% increase over 2005 whilst similar trends have been observed in the European Union. The range of products involved is alarming! Counterfeiting is a dynamic, rapid, responsive and ever-changing phenomenon, which is now affecting everything that can be bought or sold.

"Counterfeiting undermines the capacity and desire for enterprise, and as such it strikes at the very heart of human endeavour; we must defend our values" said the Patron of the event, Ms. Janelly Fourtou, Member of the European Parliament. "Customs deserves recognition for the amount of work it is doing in this area, as well as for its responsiveness, its ingenuity and its pragmatic approach". At the same time she added that "Consumers must be made aware of the danger. This educational effort could be compared to the campaign to highlight the dangers of smoking: a mammoth task indeed, but a vital one".

Faced with the massive scale of the problem, the WCO has developed:

• a Framework of Standards aimed at sustainable capacity building for Customs administrations in conducting controls, and
• a programme of assistance and support, intended in particular for the 60 countries in the world which have no IPR legislation.

These are practical proposals aimed at improving the effectiveness of Customs controls: working methods, risk analysis, international co-operation, partnership with the private sector, information exchange networks, training, etc. "Anything involving effective implementation and the exchange of best practices will have more effect than any new legislation could" explained Robert Verrue, Director General of Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD) at the European Commission.

Throughout 2007 the WCO is committed to promoting its initiatives and convincing policy makers in countries in the IPR "problem zones" to step up their controls and take effective action against this damaging phenomenon.

Dr. Dierk Hahn, Germany’s Deputy Director General of Customs, emphasised that combating counterfeiting is a priority for the German Government, which currently holds the Presidency of both the European Union and the G8. Japan, which will take over the leadership of the G8 from Germany in 2008, has indicated that this issue is to remain a priority during its Presidency too, so that the actions taken can be extended and developed.

As a means of conveying its message to consumers in particular, the WCO invited representatives of various sections of society to come and talk to participants about their experiences.

French singer-songwriter Jean Tournex explained how much effort goes into the creation of a musical work, and stressed the need to "offer the same protection to celebrities and unknown artists alike".

Senegalese businessman Douada Diouf described the devastating consequences of counterfeiting on his business, which manufactures batteries: a 40% market loss between 2000
and 2006; and a 30% decrease in production during 2006. At stake here are not only the lives of his 330 employees and their families (each worker on average supports an extended family of 20), plus the survival of his suppliers, but also the livelihoods of small businesses which rely on the presence of those 330 employees and their families. In a country whose industrial fabric is still delicate, if this business were to fail the impact would be considerable. Mr. Diouf further said that “Two months ago the WCO organised a National Seminar on Combating Counterfeiting in Dakar, since then Senegalese Customs has made a number of seizures of counterfeit batteries, and we are getting back on track”.

In his main address, WCO Secretary General, Michel Danet, underlined the need for collective action at all levels and between all stakeholders and said “I am confident that the international Customs community will rise to the occasion and lead the way in showing the world that it will no longer tolerate counterfeiting and piracy, and leave it unpunished”.

The ceremony ended on a high note with the nomination of Messrs. Jean Tourneux and Douada Diouf as “WCO Goodwill Ambassadors for the year 2007” in matters relating to the fight against counterfeiting and piracy.

More information
www.wcoomd.org

Third Global Congress on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy

The 3rd Global Congress on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy was held from 30-31 January 2007 in Geneva (Switzerland). More than 1100 participants from 110 countries attended this event, organised by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in partnership with the World Customs Organization (WCO), Interpol and the private sector.

The Congress brought together senior officials, business leaders, representatives of international organisations and other stakeholders. Participants heard presentations by WIPO Director General Dr. Kamil Idris, WCO Secretary General Mr. Michel Danet, Interpol Secretary General Mr. Ronald K. Noble and delegates representing the WTO, the OECD and the European Commission.

Representatives of the United States, Japan, China, India, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Brazil, Mexico, Germany, Italy, Pakistan, Kenya, South Africa, France and the United Kingdom, as well as several rights holders and the bodies which represent them (including in particular the co-organisers of the event: GBLAAC (Global Business Leaders Alliance Against Counterfeiting), INTA (International Trademark Association) and the ICC (International Chamber of Commerce), also described their approaches to the counterfeiting and piracy issue.

Five main themes ran throughout the 2-day Congress:
• cooperation and co-ordination between the private and public sectors, Governments and bodies responsible for the enforcement of intellectual property rights.
• improvement of IPR legislation and enforcement measures.
• capacity building targeting resources for maximum effectiveness.
• awareness about recent initiatives and examples of successful attempts to raise awareness of consumers and policy-makers
with regards to the importance of combating counterfeiting and piracy.
- health and safety risks posed by counterfeiting.

After all these themes had been introduced in the overall context of the event, a group discussion was held on each theme. During these discussions, public and private sector representatives exchanged views on existing programmes, new ideas and recommendations put forward by speakers, while identifying priorities for action.

Regional forums will be organised in the course of 2007, including one in Malaysia. The 4th Global Congress will take place in 2008, and will be hosted by the WCO, in partnership with WIPO, Interpol and the private sector. The place and date will be decided in due course.

The conclusions of the Congress will be available on the WCO Web site during February 2007.

In conjunction with the Congress, the WCO organised an exhibition entitled “Counterfeiting, no thanks” in partnership with the INPI (Institut national de la propriété industrielle: France’s national institute for patents) and the CNAC (Comité national anti-contrefaçon: France’s national anti-counterfeiting committee). The exhibition was aimed at informing the public of the risks which counterfeiting poses to the individual and to the community at large.

In addition to actual cases of counterfeiting and examples of counterfeit goods, the Exhibition presented this topic in twelve themes, from its earliest manifestations to the present day, revealing the new forms that this phenomenon is taking, the sectors affected, the potential risks and dangers to consumers, and the measures being taken to combat what is now being called the crime of the 21st Century by appealing to consumers to display civic responsibility, given that without necessarily being aware of it they are destroying the birthright of future generations.
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