



Message from the World Customs Organization

International Customs Day 2012

As the World Customs Organization prepares to celebrate its 60th anniversary this year, it is only fitting that we use this opportunity to acknowledge the heritage that the founders of the Customs Co-operation Council bestowed on us, namely the importance of cooperation, particularly the value of inter-connectedness among Customs and its partners.

Our heritage is reflected in today's Customs in the 21st Century strategic vision which underpins the work of the WCO and whose building blocks promote the concept of connectivity, hence my decision to designate 2012 as the Year of Connectivity with the slogan "Borders divide, Customs connects".

For the international Customs community, connectivity connotes a vision of arrangements worldwide that support the smooth and lawful flow of goods, services, people, technologies, capital, culture, and ideas. It galvanizes the establishment of partnerships, the preparation of research, the sharing of knowledge, and the delivery of capacity building. Connectivity thus paves the way for community protection, modernization, and economic development.

Connectivity encapsulates strengthened coordination, cooperation, and communication between Customs administrations, with other government agencies and institutions, and with the private sector, at national, regional and international levels.

Because borders are synonymous with division, the main challenge for Customs administrations is to identify and pursue the best methods to increase connectivity, which refers to people-to-people, institutional, and information linkages, that underpin and facilitate the achievement of objectives.

In fact, Connectivity is a natural progression from previous International Customs Day themes: Knowledge in 2011, particularly the sharing of knowledge to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs authorities; Customs-Business Partnerships in 2010, with a focus on supporting and improving the connective, working relationships between Customs and the private sector; and Environment Protection in 2009, underscoring the need for coordinated border management to save our natural heritage.

It is, of course, important to emphasize that connectivity encompasses three main pillars: people connectivity, which includes a partnership with the business sector, and knowledge and professionalism; institutional connectivity, which includes Customs-to-Customs connectivity and Customs-to-other government agency connectivity; and information connectivity, which acts as an enabler and includes Globally Networked Customs, the electronic Single Window, and technology and knowledge solutions.

Given the vital role played by connectivity as the WCO prepares to celebrate 60 years of service to the global Customs community, it is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that we take the connectivity theme forward throughout 2012, using every possibility to put it into practice. By doing so, we will not only strengthen WCO Members but also others who engage with Customs administrations on a daily basis, thereby honouring our rich heritage together.

Wishing you all a joyful International Customs Day!

Kunio Mikuriya
Secretary General
26 January 2012

