



## Message from the World Customs Organization

### International Customs Day 2023

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As is the case each year, the Customs community is coming together on this 26 January to celebrate International Customs Day. This year is even more special because we are also celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the WCO - a unique organization dedicated to international cooperation and the sharing of knowledge.

Each year, International Customs Day provides an opportunity for the WCO Secretariat to invite the Organization's Members to focus on a theme it considers relevant to the Customs community and its partners. In 2023, under the slogan "Nurturing the Next Generation: Promoting a Culture of Knowledge-sharing and Professional Pride in Customs", the Secretariat is inviting Members to look at how they support newly-recruited officers, facilitate the sharing of knowledge, and heighten the sense of pride in being part of this institution and of the global Customs community.

This is about placing human capital, and especially the new generation, at the heart of the transformation of Customs - an approach the WCO has been advocating for a number of years. Young Customs officers often have particular strengths, but they need to acquire specific, and often tacit, knowledge and know-how. This approach to learning must be rooted in the culture of the administration, holding true throughout the officers' careers. It requires not only dynamic inter-generational relationships, but also an outward-looking attitude, characterized by exchanges with the actors engaged in the movement of goods and passengers, as well as with service providers and with academia.

However, it has to be recognized that certain Customs organizations do not have the processes and methodologies in place for managing knowledge and ensuring that it is transmitted. In 2023, Customs administrations are therefore being invited to focus on this issue and develop a knowledge management system which fosters the identification and provision of knowledge and know-how in all their forms: reports and other documentation, training courses, whether online or in-person, forums, mentoring programmes, work placements, exchanges between services, magazines and newsletters, among others.

Another interesting approach is to extend collaboration among Customs stakeholders and collect multi-disciplinary views. For this purpose, some administrations collaborate with academia and participate in think tanks. This will ensure that Customs knowledge is acquired through the rigorous analysis of data, and is supported by expert opinion, skills and expertise. Knowledge acquired in this way can be a valuable resource for decision-making.

Customs must avoid the loss of organizational memory, to ensure that mistakes are not repeated and experience is transmitted between departments and to the next generation.

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By creating a stimulating work environment and offering learning opportunities to their officers, Customs administrations can not only attract and retain talent, but also enhance their officers' sense of professional pride. It is often said that the new generation are searching for meaning; working in Customs is a noble mission, whose fulfilment is essential for the wellbeing of nations.

As the reputation of an organization depends largely on its employees, it is important that they take pride in their work, and that the way their work connects with the government's vision is clearly explained. To achieve this, Customs administrations must increase their visibility, not only among their natural partners but also among those – such as decision-makers and the general public – who may be less familiar with the multi-faceted role of Customs, and less aware of the challenges faced by Customs and the constraints it has to manage.

I have every confidence that Customs administrations will get to grips with this year's theme and I invite them to present information, during meetings of WCO working bodies which address this theme, during the events we organize throughout the year and in our various publications, about practices and measures they have introduced.

I wish you all a happy International Customs Day!

**Kunio Mikuriya**

WCO Secretary General

26 January 2023