



WOMEN IN CUSTOMS, TRADE AND LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

“Opening up opportunities for women through Customs reform and modernization”

JULY 1, 2013

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM



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CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

This document highlights the proceedings of the World Customs Organization's inaugural Women in Customs, Trade and Leadership Conference, which took place on 1 July 2013 in Brussels, Belgium. The Conference organizers would like to extend thanks to the Government of Finland, the World Bank and SICPA for their generous support of this event. The World Customs Organization also extends its heartfelt thanks to the speakers, panelists and moderators whose insights, knowledge, perspectives and enthusiasm brought life to the multi-faceted issue of women in trade, Customs and leadership. Finally, a note of thanks to the participants of the Conference, whose interest in this topic offered a clear demonstration of the commitment within the global Customs community to increasing opportunities for women's economic and empowerment through trade and leadership.

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“A message from the Secretary General ”

On behalf of the World Customs Organization (WCO), it was my honour to have welcomed you to the WCO in Brussels on 1 July 2013 for the Women in Customs, Trade and Leadership Conference. This was the first time that the WCO has hosted a Conference focused specifically on women and Customs. The Conference was an excellent opportunity to gather a wide range of perspectives from more than a dozen high-profile speakers from within and outside the Customs community.

As a traditionally male-dominated institution, Customs is now proactively adapting to the present realities where women are increasingly engaged in international commerce and travel, and filling the senior ranks of private and public institutions, including Customs administrations. During the Conference, we learned about the extensive challenges that women face in the international trade community and, more importantly, were apprised of practical solutions to overcome those challenges. Presentations on the inspirational leadership that women bring to the Customs community and how organizations can benefit from and manage greater diversity, was another impressive Conference achievement.

The WCO has already made a number of remarkable strides in supporting women in Customs leadership. For example, we are increasingly targeting the WCO's innovative leadership and management development programme to women audiences, while also adding modules on organizational diversity. The four-day Women in Leadership workshop which followed the Conference helped to build the foundations for a gender assessment tool that is specific to the needs of Customs. Moving forward, the WCO will be developing a Women in Customs Action Plan based on the lessons learned from the Conference that will be presented to the next Capacity Building Committee for review and recommendation for future action.

I take this opportunity once again to congratulate the speakers, panelists and participants of this Conference and offer my commitment to sustained action in furthering the “Women in Customs, Trade and Leadership” agenda.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Kunio Mikuriya". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kunio Mikuriya



FIRST KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Mrs. Margaret Saner
Vice President of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration



After a successful career in the UK Civil Service Margaret is now an independent professional adviser specializing in Governance, Leadership, Change and Institution Building. Margaret is Vice President of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (UNCEPA). Throughout her career Margaret has encouraged Diversity, including running specialist programmes for women; most recently she was a keynote speaker at a UN sponsored international conference in Morocco on rural women's development. She is also adviser to an Australian programme on barriers to progress for senior women.

Ms. Margaret Saner, Vice-President of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration, opened the morning session by speaking about the challenges faced by women traders and the importance of sound public administration in addressing those challenges. Noting the underrepresentation of women in business and the labor force, as well as the continued existence of discriminatory laws and regulations, Ms Saner spoke of the importance of including perspectives of diversity and inclusion in public policies and public services. With a myriad of challenges facing women traders, including harassment, cultural barriers, lack of education and limited finance options, it is important for national governments and the international community to bring a diversity of perspectives and options to the table.

In devising public policies for this and other issues, Ms. Saner spoke of the importance of participation and influence, noting that participation does not necessarily equate to influence. She also noted the importance of voices of reason being heard over the powerful and vocal, while also encouraging vigilance over unconscious discrimination. In conclusion, Ms. Saner spoke of the importance of women leaders taking a greater role in issues of regulation, policy and process. This is critically important when looking at issues of women's economic empowerment, trade and Customs.



SESSION I

External Perspectives: Women's Economic Empowerment and Trade Facilitation

Women are becoming increasingly engaged in the international trading system, although there is a particularly high concentration of women operating in the informal sector. For example, by some estimates, women-led informal cross-border trade represents 25 to 30 percent of all trade on the African continent. Challenges at formal border crossings, ranging from illegitimate fees to harassment and gender based violence, have led many women traders to seek informal routes for cross-border trade. Such trade deprives the state of much-needed revenues for economic and social development. As these traders are also consumers and users of public services, it is important to engage in a meaningful discussion with this large trading community to ensure that a constructive relationship between women traders and Customs is built.

During the Conference, speakers discussed the range of challenges facing women traders, along with a number of initiatives that the international donor community is undertaking to address these challenges. Most importantly, Conference speakers highlighted the need for gender-based analysis as a means to understand the multi-dimensional challenges that women traders face. Such analysis needs to take into account a full range of economic and social perspectives that account for the broad range of activities that women carry out in their economies and societies. The Conference also heard about the importance of systematic performance measurement as a means of better understanding the gendered impact of trade facilitation initiatives. As well, Conference speakers discussed the importance of engaging men in discussions on gender equality and ensuring that a broad range of women's organizations are engaged in discussions with the international trade community, including Customs, if women are to fully contribute to the social and economic development of their communities and societies.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS OF SESSION I

1. Informal trade and women's role therein, represent a very important element of the overall international trade volume in developing countries. There is a strong need for trade practitioners, including Customs, to understand the underlying challenges of this type of trade through the increased use of gender analysis.
2. Women traders face a number of challenges at the border, including harassment, intimidation, confusing procedures, insecurity and violence. These challenges have forced many to circumvent Customs procedures, with the state forgoing the potential revenue.
3. Women traders need to be analyzed through a variety of lenses, taking into account the broader social and economic context in which they live and work. Women traders are also producers, consumers, tax payers and users of public services. These additional perspectives need to be incorporated into a gendered analysis of the impacts of trade facilitation and Customs reform initiatives.
4. Consultations with women's organizations as well as the engagement of men in discussions of gender equality are essential precursors to understanding and taking action on initiatives that will support women traders.





Mr. Alan Hall

Senior Border Management Specialist, World Bank

Mr. Hall opened the discussions with an assessment of the extent of women's involvement in informal trade in Africa, along with an overview of the challenges facing such informal traders, including discrimination, corruption and harassment. Mr. Hall surmised that informal cross border trade represents 43 percent of African gross domestic product, and that women represent 60 – 70 percent of this volume. As such, it was argued that 25 to 30 percent of African trade is informal trade carried out by women.

Mr. Hall highlighted the importance of integrating gender considerations in trade facilitation initiatives, along with some practical ideas to this end. In this respect, the gendered analysis of the constraints, along with a gendered analysis of the impact of trade facilitation initiatives was noted a key precursor in supporting greater gender equality and further trade expansion. In practical terms, Mr. Hall suggested training for female traders on Customs procedures and processes, along with gender training for Customs and border management issues. Other practical interventions included public information campaigns and more secure border infrastructure, including initiatives to improve policing and prosecution of corruption, harassment and violence at border crossings.

Mr. Hall concluded his remarks with a discussion of the importance of engaging men in gender equality. The Australia-based Male Champions of Change concept, where senior executives and board members share their experiences of elevating the representation of women in senior roles in their companies, was noted as an example. In the Customs context, this could include an enhanced role for women traders in Customs to business consultation fora, along with a greater attention to gender equality among Customs organizations and the WCO.





Ms. Päivi Kannisto

Senior Adviser, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland

Similar to the issues noted by Mr. Hall, Ms. Kannisto noted that women are challenged by cumbersome procedures at the border, along with the risks of harassment and violence. These formalities, along with a wide range of the social, cultural and informational barriers, combine to inhibit women's full participation in international trade. This comes at a great loss to the economy as well as to women. This reality underpins the need for a wide range of reforms in border systems and procedures, which must take the specific needs of women traders into account.

Finland is supporting a broad range of initiatives that allow developing countries to benefit from international trade, including regional integration, employment creation, public-private partnerships and entrepreneurship. Of note is Finland's aid-for-trade action plan which includes a specific focus on the development of employment, entrepreneurship and leadership opportunities for women and youth. Ms. Kannisto also presented a particularly important set of performance metrics for analyzing the outcomes of women's economic empowerment and trade initiatives, including net export revenues, time spent undertaking border formalities, number of women-led enterprises and number of women participating in economic value-chains.

Ms. Kannisto shared Finland's own experiences in promoting gender equality as well as open trade and stated that this journey from a poor developing country to one of the most competitive economies in the world could provide inspiration to women's economic empowerment in the developing world. Finland, although being a small country, benefits from both women and men being in the labor force, women forming a slight majority. The perspectives of this larger workforce have greatly benefited the Finnish economy. It should also be noted that diversity brings better economic results: researches show that women-led companies and companies with women in the Board are reported to be at least 10% more profitable than male led companies or companies with male-only boards.





Ms. Irene Musselli

Associate Legal Affairs Officer (Trade and Gender), Division on Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development(UNCTAD)

Ms Musselli built on the previous two presentations and expanded the Conference’s understanding of the women traders’ concept and demonstrated that the “women as cross-border traders” concept is but a single facet of a multidimensional linkage between trade facilitation and women’s economic empowerment. In addition to the previously discussed women as cross-border trader’s perspective, where the oft-mentioned issues of gender-based harassment and violence at the border were highlighted, Ms. Musselli also brought forward the perspectives of women traders as producers, consumers, beneficiaries of public services and payers of taxes. These additional four perspectives served to highlight the multi-faceted complexity needed to understand the impacts of trade facilitation measures on women. Ms. Musselli noted that at the producer level, trade liberalization can benefit or undermine women’s economic empowerment, depending on the commodity in question and the nature of the emerging international demand and competition that emerges. From a consumer perspective, trade liberalization can change the relative price of women’s basic consumption basket – differences that have a real impact on economic and social development. Similarly, the public services and taxpayers’ perspective highlighted that changes in trade tariffs can impact the levels of domestic taxes paid and the levels of public services received. Again, Ms. Musselli noted that these changes can impact on a women’s ability to access the needed public services and revenue needed to support economic and social development.

Ms. Musselli went on to describe UNCTAD’s approach to supporting women’s economic empowerment through trade. Key among UNCTAD’s activities was the gender-based analysis of trade facilitation at the country level, along with national-level workshops, seminars, research and consensus-building activities. Such activities are essential for stakeholders in the international trade community to understand the divergent and multi-faceted impacts of trade facilitation initiatives on women in the developing world.



SESSION II

External Perspectives: How Customs Can Support Women's Economic Empowerment

Customs administrations play an important role in either supporting or hindering women's economic empowerment. Those administrations that have implemented modernized technology-driven procedures, that consult with traders – especially women's business associations, that provide clear information on Customs procedures and that implement specific Customs clearance avenues for women traders can play a very constructive role in supporting women's economic empowerment through trade. On the other hand, Customs administrations can inhibit women's economic empowerment by imposing burdensome and complex clearance procedures, limiting women's security at the border and failing to provide appropriate information and guidance that specifically meets women traders' needs.

Consultations between Customs and business were also highlighted at the Conference as a key precursor for supporting trade-driven women's economic empowerment. Women's trade associations, such as women-led chambers of commerce, were noted as particularly important stakeholders, as were industry sector associations where women dominate the trade market. Conference speakers also noted the importance of training on Customs procedures, the international trading systems and entrepreneurial skills. It was noted, however, that many such training programs have strong ingrained male biases, necessitating more targeted programs for women traders. It was also highlighted that women traders should understand that Customs contributes revenue to their societies that funds important social and economic activities.

During the Conference, speakers highlighted a number of initiatives that have been taken by Customs administrations to ensure that women traders are treated fairly and that they understand proper Customs procedures. Targeted training programs, technology-driven simplified Customs procedures, special women's clearance channels and innovative information tools were among the initiatives that were discussed. Further initiatives that were suggested at the Conference included commodity-specific information, focusing on commodities that are largely traded by women.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS OF SESSION II

1. Customs can play an influential role in supporting women's economic empowerment. Administrations that modernize and engage actively with the private sector can make a positive contribution to women's economic empowerment, while this that fail to do so can inhibit the same.
2. Customs modernization initiatives, especially those that reduce direct interactions between traders and Customs, can benefit women, as they remove potential avenues for abuse, while ensuring that traders have the most accurate information to facilitate their transactions with Customs.
3. The creation of women-led trade associations is an important development in supporting women's economic empowerment. As part of a stakeholder relations strategy, Customs should ensure that these stakeholders are engaged on a regular basis.
4. Technology is an important tool in supporting women's economic empowerment. Simple, technology-driven solutions can be customized to the specific needs of women traders and ensure that women have the knowledge and resultant confidence to transact with Customs.





Ms. Carol West

President of the Canadian Society of Customs Brokers / Founding Director and the Secretary of the International Federation of Customs Brokers Associations.

Ms. West began her discussion with a reminder of the stereotypes that women often face in business, while also noting that questions of discrimination persist in many workplaces, both in the developed and the developing world. In the developing world in particular, Ms. West highlighted the key role that women play in generating economic, educational and social growth for their families and communities, despite the discrimination and stereotypes that permeate many societies. In short, despite the ever-present discrimination, Ms. West spoke of the importance of entrepreneurial initiatives entrepreneurship as a path towards women's economic empowerment and further economic and social growth.

Business plan development, market information research and professional development were highlighted as key skills / approaches for women to undertake in support of entrepreneurship. The development of partnerships in support of women's entrepreneurship is critical – in order to succeed, women entrepreneurs need information, markets, financing and technology. Women also need the support of state authorities, including that of Customs in the promotion of their success.

With respect to Customs' role in supporting women's economic empowerment, Ms. West highlighted the need to invest in training and professional development, while also strategically engaging the private sector. Customs can play a key role in the provision of market information, given the wide range of trade data possessed by Customs administrations. Ms. West also highlighted the importance of Customs' understanding of how its actions directly influence investment decisions, competitiveness and prosperity.



Ms. Gertrude Nimako-Boateng

Executive Director, International Trade Institute for West Africa

Ms. Nimako-Boateng spoke of her organization's work on training a broad range of stakeholders on international trade, with a particular focus on WTO law. Over the course of this work, Ms. Nimako-Boateng noted that five times as many men participate in such training programs, versus their female counterparts. It was argued that this low level of turnout could be attributed to traditional encumbrances, lack of resources or cultural biases that view trade as the domain of men. During the training sessions themselves, women were often shy about asking questions in front of male trainees, possibly as a result of feelings of intimidation. Despite this shyness, Ms. Nimako-Boateng noted the wealth of knowledge that women participants demonstrated in her organization's training programs, and the great potential that these individuals would have with regards to economic and social development of their countries, as well as for mentoring and inspiring other women.

Beyond her organization's own training programs, Ms. Nimako-Boateng highlighted the importance of regular training on Customs procedures and formalities, as well as organized periodic visits to border crossings and ports. Training, along with a proper understanding of Customs procedures, was highlighted as a key to the development of confidence among women traders, as well as an appreciation of the role of in providing the revenue needed to support social and economic development of their societies.





Ms. Sarwat Tahira Habib

Chief, International Customs, Federal Board of Revenue, Pakistan

Ms. Habib was a panelist in session II and discussed the challenges faced by women traders in the Pakistani context, along with some practical solutions from within and outside of Customs.

Ms. Habib opened her presentation with a discussion on the challenges faced by Pakistani women traders, including the perception that trade is a male dominated sector and domestic engagements that reduce the time that women have for entrepreneurial activities – particularly those that involve cross-border / international travel. In Pakistan, Ms. Habib highlighted a number of national initiatives which support women’s economic empowerment through trade. One of the most important initiatives was the creation of Women Chambers of Commerce and Industry, along with a Women in Trade Portal to support on-line networking. The Pakistan Trade Development Authority includes a women entrepreneur section.

Within Customs, Ms. Habib highlighted how Pakistan has simplified and automated procedures, allowing for e-filing and minimizing interactions with Customs officials. More information on Customs procedures has been made available on-line and Customs is providing training on new Customs procedures. Pakistan Customs has also supported dialogues and consultations with some of the previously noted stakeholders, especially the above noted Women Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and has contributed to national-level discussions on removing gender biases from the country’s trade policy.

In terms of future short-term solutions, Ms. Habib noted the development of sector-specific Customs procedures guides (including guides for largely women-dominated economic sectors), training sessions for women entrepreneurs and special service points for women, when face-to-face interaction with Customs is required. Over the medium- and long-term, Ms. Habib suggested special concessions for women entrepreneurs, accelerated clearance processes, the deeper integration of women in Customs clearance / brokers’ associations and the further development of a gender-sensitive policy framework for international trade in Pakistan.





Ms. Valentina Mintah

Director, West Blue Consulting

Ms. Mintah was a panelist in session II and spoke about how simplification, automation, technology and other practical interventions can empower women traders.

Ms. Mintah built on the presentation made by Ms. Habib and outlined both the challenges faced by women traders as well as some practical technology-driven solutions that have been proved to overcome many of these challenges. Similar to the previous speakers, Ms. Mintah spoke of the challenges women traders face, including lack of information and awareness, limited advocacy capacity, lack of access to finance, abuse and extortion.

As a leading expert in trade facilitation, Ms. Mintah outlined a number of practical measures to support women traders, including simplified border procedures, dedicated information resources, associational and advocacy organizations, business linkages, training and capacity building. Ms. Mintah also spoke of the need to support communications campaigns targeted at both traders and Customs. On a more concrete level, Ms. Mintah highlighted a number of information and communication technologies have already been proved to support women traders in more efficient and transparent dealings with Customs. The Nigeria Trade Mobile App was presented as one example by which women could obtain up-to-date information. The provision of tailored information through mobile telephony and social media was presented as a means to inform and educate women traders through commonly available technology. The Nigeria Trade Mobile App was presented as an example of a means by which women traders could access accurate information on classification, Customs procedures and duty rates. Ms. Mintah argued that these tools enable women traders to present themselves as professional businesses, rather than as individuals, thereby reducing their vulnerability in border / trade environments.



SECOND KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Mrs. Allen Kagina
Commissioner General, Uganda Revenue Authority



Ms. Kagina has been the Commissioner General of the Uganda Revenue Authority since November 2004. Prior to this appointment, she was the Commissioner for Customs at the same organization. She has been at the helm of the transformation of the authority into a modern client centric service organization. She is a founder member of the African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF) a forum that brings together Heads of African Tax Administrations and their representatives to share experiences, challenges faced and possible new direction for African tax policy and administration. She holds a Master Degree in Public Administration from the University Of Liverpool, United Kingdom.

Mrs. Allen Kagina opened the afternoon sessions with an inspiring keynote address on *Gender Intelligence – Building a Diverse Talent Pipeline*, where she described her leadership approach through "head, heart and hand", which has resulted in significant improvements in organizational performance and staff motivation within the Uganda Revenue Authority. Mrs. Kagina highlighted Uganda's longstanding female affirmative action programmes that have allowed women like her to break the glass ceiling, which has inhibited the leadership aspirations of many women in other countries. Mrs. Kagina then delved into some of the advantages that she saw in female leadership, including a strong ability to sense the overall organizational environment and to emphasize with staff. The fact that Mrs. Kagina has met with every staff member in the Uganda Revenue Authority on two occasions since her 2004 appointment speaks directly to her ability to connect with, and emphasize with her staff. Mrs. Kagina also discussed the means by which she maintained a cultural sensitivity, which is particularly important among Uganda's 28 diverse tribes, while also speaking of the diversity of the management team that she leads. She reported that the increasing diversity of the management team, including women, has resulted in tangible gains in the organization's performance, which is being driven by a strong "brand value", focused on respect, integrity, teamwork and excellence, as well as an openness to new approaches in management, embodied in an innovative "business unusual" approach.



SESSION III

Internal Perspectives: Equality as a Driving Force for Improved Organizational Performance

While the issue of gender equality has been long recognized as an integral part of the international economic development agenda, the subject has gained renewed attention as companies and organizations begin to realize the business benefits of women's empowerment and participation. Many companies and organizations have already recognized that balanced relations between male and female leadership can be enormously beneficial in terms of organizational performance. The diverse range of perspectives that women, along with different nationalities, cultures, sexual orientations, abilities / disabilities and generations can drive fresh thinking, new concepts and ultimately better performance. There is also a wide body of research that suggests increasing women's participation at all levels of an organization contributes to improved performance and reduced corruption.

During the Conference, speakers highlighted the positive attributes of female leadership and how feminine approaches, which tend to embody characteristics like empathy and participation can contribute to both better organizational performance and reduced corruption. The link between feminine leadership and corruption was debated extensively and a number of explanations were offered, demonstrating the positive, yet complex correlation between these two areas. The Conference benefited from specific examples of how feminine leadership plays out at an organizational level both within and outside of the Customs community, including discussions of reduced corruption, increased employee engagement and greater teamwork. Most importantly, the Conference heard a number of perspectives on how diverse organizations – those that bring out the best of both masculine and feminine traits – can benefit enormously from the wider range of talents and perspectives. While the Conference also heard that the management challenges of diverse organizations and teams are arguably greater, it was also noted that creative, inclusive and participatory management approaches can overcome these challenges and create even stronger organizations.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS OF SESSION III

1. There is a positive, yet complex correlation between female leadership and reduced corruption, which can be applied in the Customs context. Hiring more women can contribute to reduced corruption, provided there is an appropriate organizational environment for feminine attributes to mesh constructively with existing masculine attributes in the organization.
2. Organizations that integrate diversity and inclusiveness perform better as a result broader perspectives and new ideas; although they require a more sophisticated management approach to best align the talents of employees with the organization's goals. Considering the wide diversity of tasks within a Customs organization, there is an excellent opportunity to mobilize the talents of diverse employee groups.
3. Emphasis on the positive attributes of people is a far more constructive management approach than focusing on negative / lacking attributes. Women leaders, with generally their more participatory and inclusive style, are well-positioned to oversee such processes in organizations, including Customs organizations.





Dr. Gudrun Vande Walle

Assistant Professor at Ghent University College (affiliated Ghent University) Department of Business and Public Administration.

Dr. Vande Walle's presentation focused on the hypothesis that greater female leadership within an organization contributes to lower levels of corruption. There are a number of real world examples of women have been specifically hired as a means to reduce corruption – traffic police forces in Latin America were cited as examples in this regard. Dr. Vande Walle's presented these real-world examples, along with literary perspectives, and the following conclusions were offered as potential explanations for the gender gap in corruption:

- Different socialization patterns, where women are socialized to be more caring;
- The concentration of corruption at the upper echelons of an organization, where women may be less present;
- Lower levels of risk-taking behavior among women, linked to fears of negative perceptions or job loss;
- Women being concentrated in positions that offer fewer opportunities for corrupt activities.

When women do break into higher management positions, where opportunities for corruption may be greater, Dr. Vande Walle argued that women's management approaches, which are generally more participatory and less self-interested also contribute to a lower level of corruption. Overall, Dr. Vande Walle surmised that there are a wide range of external and internal factors that contribute to differing levels of corruption in male- and female-led organizations, and that the analysis needs to be multi-dimensional.



Ms. Christina Horckmans

*Executive Director Customs & International Trade – EMEIA Strategic Trade Advisor
Ernst & Young Tax Consultants, Belgium*

Ms. Horckmans discussed Ernst & Young's approach to building an organizational culture that embraces diversity and inclusiveness. Diversity was defined as a workforce mix, which includes differences in gender, ethnicity, national and sub-national cultures, sexual orientation, disability, generation among others. Ms. Horckmans emphasized that diversity and inclusiveness at Ernst & Young is not a programme per se, but more of an ingrained organizational culture where diverse individuals are valued and are positioned to perform at optimal levels. The challenges of managing diverse and inclusive teams were highlighted, and Ms. Horckmans highlighted some of the initiatives that Ernst & Young has taken to support managers of such teams, such as the creation of a female workers network, where senior female managers can link directly with women at lower levels to give the latter more visibility.

Beyond her organization, Ms. Horckmans discussed Ernst & Young's analytical work on issues related to women's leadership. Of particular note was Ernst & Young's recently study on the increased impact that women and their discretionary spending will have on the global economy in the next ten years. The study notes that women are poised to control three quarters of global discretionary income by 2018, creating enormous economic and leadership potential for women in the coming decades.





Ms. Petra Hoogendoorn

*Programme Manager Inclusion, Dutch Tax and Customs Authority
Ministry of Finance*

Ms. Hoogendoorn built on the previous discussions of organizational diversity and highlighted the approaches that the Dutch Tax and Customs Authority takes managing its diversity programme. Key to the Dutch approach is a commitment to teamwork and in focusing on the skills employees have, rather than the ones that are lacking. She emphasized the importance of maintaining an open-mindedness and positive mindset in organizational development. Further to earlier discussions regarding the positive attributes that women can bring to a workplace, Ms. Hoogendoorn noted that feminine attributes, such as empathy, are most effective when constructively combined with – rather than replaced by – masculine attributes, when women reach senior levels of an organization. can be replaced with masculine attributes in environments. Ms. Hoogendoorn argues that this combination results in more effective decision-making, as problems are seen with a broader and multi-faceted perspective. Ms. Hoogendoorn also suggested that a more diverse management team with a mix of masculine and feminine perspectives can contribute to the mobilization of all positive talents of a team, rather than a focus missing attributes.



SESSION IV

Practical Considerations: Helping Women to Work Effectively in Male Dominated Organizations

As largely male-dominated business, Customs and international trade present an interesting case study for the analysis of gender biases in the workplace. By means of example, one of the world's largest Customs administrations – U.S. Customs and Border Protection – employs a workforce that is 80 percent male. Nevertheless, the Conference heard of numerous examples of women succeeding in this business along with specific means by which they overcame underlying biases in the workplace.

During the Conference, speakers discussed the success factors that have helped women to succeed in male-dominated workplaces, including Customs. Many of the success factors centered on the achievement of a work-life balance and the presentation of a confident self-image in the workplace – in some cases, the confidence factor was needed to overcome ingrained gender biases. Examples were also presented of how women leaders have succeeded in mentoring aspiring women leaders, right from the level of the girl child. Much of the Conference's discussions in this session focused on means by which women can better understand their own strengths and weaknesses and mobilize this self-assessment towards workplace success.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS OF SESSION IV

1. Women can and have succeeded in a wide range of occupations in the international trade. Whether in Customs or related international trade industries, women have proven themselves to be highly successful – in many respects, women have succeeded with a greater sense of work-life balance than their male counterparts.
2. One of the greatest success factors for women in male-dominated workplaces is an honest self-assessment of one's own strengths and weaknesses, and the mobilization of that knowledge into specific leadership initiatives that inspire confidence.
3. There is a great deal that successful women leaders can do to support those women that aspire to leadership. The provision of networking and mentoring opportunities, as well as other confidence-building measures is key in overcoming ingrained biases and positioning the next generation of women for leadership success.





Ms. Karine Langlois

New Media Officer, International Maritime Organization

Ms. Langlois gave a brief history of the International Maritime Organization's programme on the integration of women in the maritime sector and explained how it is the vehicle to support the United Nations' Millennium Development Goal to promote gender equality and empower women. Her perspective on the maritime and shipping industry showed clear parallels with the male-dominated environment of Custom administrations. The lessons learned in the shipping sector may serve to highlight some key guidelines to be applied to the Customs and trade industry. Ms. Langlois then screened the International Maritime Organization's recently released video *Women at the Helm* – a film promoting the role of women in the maritime sector, which was originally launched during a April 2013 Conference on the Development of a Global Strategy for Women Seafarers.

The video is available at the following address:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-9LGMxHMGY>



Ms. Alessandra Zocca

Secretary General, Professional Women International (Brussels)

Ms. Zocca spoke about how men and women perceive each other in the workplace and how each gender has a different “language” in which they perceive the world, including the workplace. Ms. Zocca stressed that to be successful, both women and men must be “gender bilingual”, in that they need to understand the divergent means by which men and women view the world and the workplace. In this respect, Ms. Zocca noted that women need to know and appreciate themselves, and to understand their own strengths and weaknesses. From a general point of view, Ms. Zocca spoke of challenges women face in proving and promoting themselves and their ideas. For example, Ms. Zocca suggested that women are more hesitant than men to advertise themselves, possibly leading to more limited opportunities. As a contrasting example, Ms. Zocca suggested that men may claim that they have complete knowledge of a subject, when they in fact do not, as a means to actively promote themselves. While the above was presented as generalizations, it did provide the Conference with ample material for discussion and debate.

Ms. Zocca presented a number of best practices for women to succeed in male-dominated workplaces, including senior-level sponsorship, mentoring, networking, broader exposure, speaking opportunities. Many of these best practices are designed to boost confidence and allow women to become increasingly “gender bilingual”. Ms. Zocca's own organization centers its activities around networking, which are designed to boost personal and professional competences, while also helping women leaders to strengthen their teams and organizations.





Ms. Agnes Katsonga Phiri

Commissioner Customs and Excise - Malawi Revenue Authority

Ms. Katsonga spoke of her personal experiences as a woman leader as the Commissioner of Customs of the Malawi Revenue Authority. Ms. Katsonga focused on the underlying familial, social, cultural and religious factors that underlie the development of women in leadership positions. Ms. Katsonga also highlighted the multiple pressures that women leaders face, especially given the multiple roles that many such women play. In this respect, Ms. Katsonga encouraged women leaders to maintain a balance, which includes a “wheel of life” between work, family, society and health / exercise.

Ms. Katsonga concluded her discussion by advising aspiring women leaders to empower themselves academically, professionally, to have a vision and to achieve results despite the challenges by working smart and effectively. Further to the final point, Ms. Katsonga spoke about the higher expectations that women face to perform, especially in the face of male resistance to female leadership. She also spoke of the need for today’s women leaders to shape the leaders of the future, including female staff and children, by imparting messages of inspiration and confidence. In this respect, she spoke extensively about the girl child and the critical importance of ensuring that every girl child has a good start in life through positive messages to grow with confidence, mentoring and role models.



Mrs. Maria Luisa (Olivieri) Eichhorst

International Relations Specialist – U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Mrs. Eichhorst outlined the long history of women in Customs in the United States, dating from the mid-18th century. Many such women had a direct role in shaping the history of Customs in the United States. Further to earlier presentations regarding women in non-traditional occupations, Mrs. Eichhorst proceeded to outline the wide range of Customs positions occupied by women in her administration, including border patrol agents, agriculture specialists, intelligence analysts, computer specialists, skilled trades, accountants / auditors, among others. With more than 12,000 women in a workforce of almost 60,000, Mrs. Eichhorst spoke of a workplace that continues to be male-dominated, but one in which women have been able to succeed in a wide range of occupations. Mrs. Eichhorst concluded her presentation with some remarks on her own experience in U.S. Customs and Border Protection, where she encouraged other young women in Customs to demonstrate skill and confidence in the workplace as a means to overcome the underlying gender biases that exist within the Customs world.

