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## Visualising a Greener HS

*A series of symposia on enhancing the HS to support  
environmentally sustainable trade*

### The Concept

#### Background

In September 2015, world leaders adopted the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and its 17 goals (SDG) that cut across disciplines, sectors and institutional mandates, acknowledging the integrated nature of the many challenges that humanity faces.

In the preamble to the 2030 Agenda, world leaders affirmed that they are: “Determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.”

Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the UN General Assembly, Customs Administrations acknowledge the part they play in meeting the challenge of ensuring that globalization becomes a positive force for all people across the world.

For the year 2020, the WCO Secretariat chose “sustainability” as its theme for the year, with the slogan “**Customs fostering Sustainability for People, Prosperity and the Planet**”. In announcing this, Dr. Mikuriya remarked that “this theme is more topical than ever before” and “2019 was the year when public debate was dominated by sustainability issues and problems linked to climate change”. Fast forward to 2022 and these statements still apply today.

The inclusion of the SDG perspective in all WCO tools and instruments that focus on issues related to facilitation and Customs procedures may also make it necessary to review the existing strategies to make them more responsive to the SDGs and ensure that they also fully support the accomplishment of the relevant SDGs. It is vital to identify sensitive products at the border, both to combat fraud and to achieve the SDGs. The key tool for the identification and classification of goods at the global level is the **Harmonized System (HS)**.

The 2022 edition of the HS, which entered into force on 1 January 2022, takes account of – among other things – environmental issues and certain goods which are subject to specific controls under various conventions. The task of examining the HS in the light of the SDGs is continuing, with the aim of satisfying international requirements where the trade in goods is concerned; **the 7<sup>th</sup> HS Review Cycle**, which is under discussion in the bodies responsible for managing the HS, constitutes **a historic opportunity to make the 2027 edition of the HS increasingly green.**

Customs plays a pivotal role working with other agencies at the border contributing to the fight against climate change and to ensuring greater environmental sustainability by supporting effective implementation of various **Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)**, whose objectives include among others, addressing the illicit trade in hazardous waste and ozone-depleting substances, combating the illicit trade in endangered species, etc.

The world in facing transformations and production is organized into global value chains trying to produce more sustainable goods not only for today, but for tomorrow. Trade and trade policy can effectively support a circular economy transition extending the product life cycle, repairing, recycling and/or reusing products at different stages of the value chain.

The HS is called to help trade by identifying these environmental goods for statistical purposes, for establishing specific trade policies, to help countries restrict trade in products that can harm the environment or conversely, to facilitate trade in environmentally friendly goods. Given the role of trade in facilitating a circular economy transition, the HS does not actually distinguish used, recycled or refurbished goods.

The HS has been successful in identifying trade in environmentally harmful products, however the Secretariat has not received proposals to identify environmentally friendly goods or sustainably produced products to facilitate trade in them.

## Future Possibilities

As the key tool for the identification and classification of goods worldwide, **the HS has a vital role** in the implementation of green policies, including global policies such as under the United Nations Environment Programme. Trade promotes development and economic growth; however indiscriminate trade without effective environmental policies in place may lead to environmental degradation. By facilitating trade in environmental goods, countries and their Customs administrations can contribute to achieving sustainable development.

However, for Customs administrations, identifying the priorities of environmentally focused administrations within their government and converting these into HS proposals is a complex matter.

Involving Customs administrations, HS stakeholders and users in a series of symposia gives another way for the HSC and the WCO Secretariat to engage in the necessary conversations to support this work. The stakes are high as the need for HS support of green policy measures is being increasingly identified by Members and other Intergovernmental Organisations.

Greening the HS, using a carefully framed method for separately identifying goods which are of environmental significance, will make it possible to bring more transparency and predictability to commercial operations involving these types of goods, and support policy measures to **reduce the impact of trade on the environment.** The effective application of environmental regulations protects people, the planet, and everything that lives on it.

Another objective of monitoring such goods would be to **combat threats to sustainable development**, the illicit trade in wild fauna and **flora**, the illicit exploitation of **forestry, fisheries and**

mining resources, and waste which threatens international safety as well as economic growth and development.

**Format:** Hybrid. The Symposium will be held in person at the WCO Headquarters in Brussels. An online link will also be provided allowing the possibility for participants who are unable to travel to observe the Symposium remotely via an online Zoom platform.

**Participants:** The Conference is a multi-stakeholder event that brings together not only Customs administrations but also, representatives of OIs, trade negotiators and environmental policy makers, academia, private sector, civil society, NGOs, and international experts. Free of charge, **open to all.**

**Language:** EN, FR and SP

## Session 2

### **Chemicals - reflecting the good, the bad and the revolutionary**

Tuesday 25 October 2022 (13:00 – 16:00 CET)

**Chemicals with a negative environmental impact that** are controlled under international conventions have always been reflected within the HS. However, the pace of change is such that these only touch on a fraction of the chemicals which governments either control or are considering controlling. The question of how the HS can respond to this need is a major issue. In addition to chemicals with a negative impact, there is also the question whether there are **chemicals with a positive impact**, for example chemicals used in cleaning dangerous substances from wastes, which should be reflected in the HS.

## Symposium 2

### Chemicals - reflecting the good, the bad and the revolutionary

Tuesday 25 October

TIME	ACTIVITY
13:00-13:15	<b>Opening</b> <b>Mr. Konstantinos Kaiopoulos</b> Director Tariff and Trade Affairs Directorate World Customs Organization (WCO)
13:15-13:30	<b>Introduction by Ms. Gael Grooby</b> Deputy Director Tariff and Trade Affairs Directorate World Customs Organization (WCO)
13:30-15:50	<b>Panel Discussion</b> <i>Moderator : Ms. Gael Grooby</i>  <b>Mr. Roy Santana</b> Senior Counsellor World Trade Organization (WTO)  <i>"Greening the Harmonized System: What are the limits and the alternatives?"</i>  <b>Ms. Jacqueline Alvarez</b> Head Chemicals and Health Branch UNEP <b>"TBC"</b>
14:10 – 14:30	<b>Individual presentations followed by panel discussion and Q&amp;A</b>  Coffee Break  <b>Ms. Melisa Lim</b> Programme management officer Secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions  <i>"Global regulation of hazardous chemicals: monitoring trade and increasing traceability using the HS"</i>  <b>Mr. Hervé Schepers</b> Head of Sector European Customs Inventory of Chemical Substances and coordination of the European customs laboratories DG TAXUD-B5 European Commission  <i>"Toward a greener HS and a greener society, a EU perspective"</i>

TIME	ACTIVITY
15:50-16:00	<p><b>Mr. Daniel Cardozo</b> Technical Officer Tariff and Trade Affairs Directorate World Customs Organization (WCO)</p> <p><i><b>“Reflections on Chemicals – the good, the bad and the revolutionary”</b></i></p> <p><b>Conclusion of the symposia</b></p> <p><b>Ms. Gael Grooby</b> Deputy Director Tariff and Trade Affairs Directorate World Customs Organization (WCO)</p>