



OPENING REMARKS
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION, MR
KUNIO MIKURIYA, TO THE JOINT CONFERENCE ON ENHANCING AIR
CARGO SECURITY AND FACILITATION

(Singapore, 5 July 2012)

Why is Customs involved in air cargo security? The WCO's mission is to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of Customs more concretely by setting standards, promoting international cooperation and providing capacity building assistance. Traditionally, Customs' role has been revenue collection, fighting against illicit trade and trade facilitation.

Following the 2001 terrorist attacks in US, Customs' mission evolved to include trade security. As a response, the WCO developed its SAFE Framework of Standards to facilitate and secure global trade – in cooperation with other relevant international organizations, including ICAO and the IMO, which had already developed its ISPS code for securing ships and maritime ports.

Initially, we focused on maritime security but the 2010 air cargo incident, where Yemen air cargo packages to the US involving explosives were intercepted in the UK and Dubai, made us turn our focus to air cargo security. While air cargo security is primarily the responsibility of aviation regulators, the WCO discussed the matter internally and agreed that in the same manner as maritime trade, Customs can provide help in enhancing security, as we have knowledge of trade and traders.

In 2011, at the WCO Council Sessions, we invited the ICAO Secretary General Raymond Benjamin, US Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and her counterpart Commissioner Algirdas Šemeta from the European Commission, as well as the President of UPS International from the private sector, showing cooperation among States, international

organizations and businesses. This was intended to send a strong message to the international community that aviation authorities and Customs can work together to enhance air cargo security and facilitation. From there, the WCO and ICAO started joint experts meetings in Brussels and Montreal. While SAFE is a framework of standards for multi-modal transport systems, consisting of Customs-to-Customs cooperation and Customs-to-Business partnership, as its two major pillars, a partnership between Customs and other agencies is also recognized as essential – in the context of this Conference, with aviation regulators. As the business partnership is important, the WCO also invites experts from industry to the experts' meeting, for example, IATA, GEA and another international organisation, the UPU, due to the huge number of small consignments being transported by air.

Since then, the WCO has been making progress, especially in the two areas which the ICAO Secretary General has just mentioned: firstly, sharing of advance information and data – this could be useful for assessing the risk of air cargo, for both Customs and aviation regulators; and secondly, seeking synergy between ICAO's air cargo programme and the WCO's AEO programme.

The WCO has continued to work on trade security and facilitation. Last week, during its annual sessions, the WCO Council:

- Noted progress made together with ICAO.
- Witnessed the conclusion of an MRA between Singapore and China on AEO programmes, as an example of Customs-to-Customs cooperation.
- Agreed to work on emerging and evolving risks including, reviewing tools and programmes with partner administrations and international organizations, like ICAO.
- Launched the Economic Competitiveness Package to show Customs' contribution to economic development, in the face of economic difficulties worldwide, including the Customs-Business Partnership and enhancing coordination among agencies in border management. And of course, security is part of competitiveness.

This Conference provides a platform for strengthening the efforts by ICAO and the WCO which should be supported and implemented at national level. I would like to encourage dialogue, understanding of each other, and cooperative ties among different players, including aviation regulators, Customs and business, for the benefit of better world. Finally, I thank Singapore for hosting this important forum.