

Jamaica Customs Agency participates in the 2017 WCO Annual Council Sessions



INTERNATIONAL & INDUSTRY LIAISON UNIT

TRADE BEAT



Jamaica Customs Agency's CEO/Commissioner Velma Ricketts Walker (light blue, front & off-centre) flanked by other Heads of Customs Administrations representing the Members of the World Customs Organization, along with Secretary General of the WCO, Kunio Mikuriya, at the recent 129th/130th Sessions of the WCO Council.

The 129th/130th Annual Sessions of the World Customs Organization (WCO)'s Council were held at the organization's headquarters in Brussels, Belgium from 6 to 8 July, 2017. The CEO/Commissioner of the Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA), Velma Ricketts-Walker, represented Jamaica at the Annual Council Sessions, supported by the Senior Director of International and Industry Liaison, Shandilayne Davis.

The WCO's Council is the Organization's highest decision-making body, consisting of the Directors General of Customs administrations representing the 182 Members of the WCO. Decisions made by the WCO Council are based on a two-thirds majority, giving each attending Member one vote, except for rules of procedure. The Annual Sessions were led by Ruslan Davydov, the Chairperson of the Council and First Deputy Head of the Federal Customs Service of the Russian Federation, with the support of Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, the WCO Secretary General.

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"Directors General of Customs have agreed on the road ahead,"

"their clear and helpful decisions will guide the Secretariat's activities and work programmes, enabling it to deliver positive results and meet the expectations of the WCO's worldwide membership, including Customs' global partners."



Dr. Kunio Mikuriya
Secretary-General
World Customs Organization

2017 WCO Annual Council Sessions

In recognizing the significant role that trade facilitation plays to effective and efficient flows of global trade, discussions in the Annual Council Sessions focused on this topic, making it a key issue among the WCO Council. It has been widely accepted that the simplification, modernization and harmonization of Customs procedures such as import, export and transit processes enhances the world trading system, which aims for international trade to flow as smoothly, as predictably and as freely as possible. Therefore, capacity building initiatives that support trade facilitation were discussed, of significance, being the WCO Mercator Programme.



Launched in June 2014, the Mercator programme was designed to promote the use of WCO instruments and tools to ensure that a uniform implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO)'s Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) occurs. The TFA, which entered into force on 22 February 2017, primarily sets out Customs-related provisions regarding trade facilitation, compelling the WCO to support the full implementation of the Agreement. Upon the TFA's entry into force, a formal communiqué was issued by the

WCO, highlighting the support of the international Customs Community in facilitating the Agreement's full implementation. The Mercator Programme aligns all relevant tools, instruments and standards of the WCO that relate to trade facilitation, to enhance the capacity of its Members who account for over 98% of global trade. As part of the Mercator Programme, trade facilitation experts from the WCO have also been positioned to provide assistance to its Members in developing their administration's capacities in all relevant areas.

Additional discussions of the Council focused on security initiatives, combating illicit financial flows and leveraging the customs-related challenges and opportunities that can be derived from customs-tax cooperation. The issue of coordinated border management was also discussed, highlighting the importance of using data analysis, and other technology-related trade management tools that would enhance the management approach. Members of the Council also acknowledged the significance of research; the sharing of intelligence and information and reiterated the importance of capacity building for enhancing international collaboration with businesses and all relevant trade facilitation agencies.

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Highlights of the Annual Council Sessions

Key Note Speakers - Acknowledgement of WCOs leading role in International Trade:

- **Pierre Moscovici** - the European Union's Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, invited in the context of the 10th anniversary of EU's accession to the WCO.
- **Inna Kuznetsova** - President and Chief Operating Officer (COO) of INTRATA, the ocean shipping industry's largest electronic transaction platform, software and information provider.

Election of Chairperson of the Council

- Mr. Eric Canon, Director General of Uruguay Customs was elected Chairperson of the WCO Council.

Signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between the WCO and:

- Mexico Customs - on the establishment of a WCO Regional Customs Laboratory in Mexico;
- Turkey Customs - on the establishment of a WCO Regional Dog Training Centre (RDTC) in Ankara; and
- US Customs and Border Protection on the establishment of a WCO RDTC in the United States.

Parallel MOUs (signed on the sidelines of the Council Sessions) between the WCO and:

- China Customs - on a revised MoU regarding the WCO Regional Training Centre (RTC), expanding the RTC in Shanghai to also cover the Customs Training Centre in Xiamen.

Accession to the Revised Kyoto Convention

Burkina Faso is the 111th Contracting Party to the Revised International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures, known as the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC). Delegates at the Council Sessions witnessed Burkina Faso deposit its instrument of accession to the RKC. The RKC is a global WCO standard for Customs modernization and is recognized internationally as a trade facilitation tool.

WCO Photo Competition

Heads of Delegations at the Council Sessions voted on the annual WCO photo competition which was won by Kyrgyzstan Customs. The winning photo depicts a Customs officer checking the shipping documents of a truck at Torugart, the Kyrgyz-Chinese road border at 3,550 metres above sea level.



65th Anniversary of the WCO

The WCO also celebrated its 65th anniversary at a special reception. It should be noted that the WCO has grown from 17 Members who attended the inaugural session in 1953 to over 180 Members in 2017, making the WCO the global centre of Customs excellence and expertise, and an important player in the international trade landscape. On this occasion, an alumni reunion of the WCO-Japan Career Development Programme was organized. The projects submitted by former Professional Associates as a precondition for participation at the reunion were evaluated by the WCO Senior Management and the Donor. The WCO Secretary General and the Director General of Japan Customs handed the awards to the winners during this anniversary event.

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The International and Industry Liaison Unit is committed to raising the level of awareness on topics relating to the Caribbean Community, as well as issues concerning the wider topic of international trade, to both our internal and external stakeholders. Our monthly newsletter seeks to highlight global trade topics and their importance to Customs Administrations worldwide and specifically how they affect the Jamaica Customs Agency. As we realize our vision of becoming a modern Customs administration delivering excellent service, we recognize the importance of knowledge transfer in delivering our objectives and use this forum as our way of contributing to the vision of the JCA. The International Liaison Unit is located at the Myers Wharf head office and our officers are available to respond to your queries and clarify any points of concern.

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