

JCA Welcomes WCO Secretary General



INTERNATIONAL & INDUSTRY LIAISON UNIT

TRADE BEAT



The inaugural visit of Dr. Kunio Mikuriyo, the Secretary General of the World Customs Organization (WCO), took place in Kingston, Jamaica, between May 18th and 19th, 2017. The visit is of significance, as it marks the first occasion that a WCO Secretary General has been hosted by the island. With a comprehensive schedule over his two day visit, Dr. Mikuriyo met with key government officials, the private sector and observed operations at Port Bustamante, in Kingston. During his visit, Dr. Mikuriyo met with Mrs. Velma Ricketts-Walker, CEO/Commissioner of the Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA), and her senior management team. Discussions among the Customs officials covered Trade Facilitation (TF), as well as other Customs-related issues, including Jamaica’s participation in the Mercator Programme, E-commerce, Customs Tax Cooperation, Security, Compliance Management, Customs-to-Customs Cooperation, Integrity in Customs, and Regional Integration in the Caribbean area. Much of the discussions focused on the implementation of the TF measures, which are outlined in the World Trade Organization (WTO)’s Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), and are prioritised based on their categories of commitment. Signalling its commitment, Jamaica submitted Category A Notifications under the TFA, in February 2015 to the WTO. Category A Notifications are especially relevant now, as they have become binding on WTO members like Jamaica, due to the recent entry into force of the TFA, in February 2017.

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“I intend to work closely with the Jamaican Customs Agency to make sure that they will be a showcase in this region.”

“The Caribbean area is my next focus and your country is the leader in Caribbean.”

Dr. Kunio Mikuriyo
Secretary-General
World Customs Organization



Mrs. Velma Ricketts-Walker, CEO/Commissioner JCA;
Dr. Kunio Mikuriyo, Secretary-General, WCO.

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As Jamaica and other Members of CARICOM prepare to meet their commitments under the TFA, the Secretary General's visit to Jamaica comes at an opportune time. Having worked closely with Jamaica in the past and being familiar with our Customs profile the Secretary General indicated that Jamaica would be used by the WCO as a model for other Caribbean countries. As the WCO furthers its push for regional integration and its drive on security matters, it is keen on providing the necessary support required to advance the TF and Customs profile of the Region.



During his visit to Jamaica, Dr. Mikuriya also met with the Honourable Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Audley Shaw, at the offices of the Ministry. This courtesy meeting, was also attended by the Honourable Karl Samuda, Minister of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries; the Honourable Lester Michael Henry, Minister of Transport and Mining; Commissioner/CEO Ricketts-Walker, as well as other senior representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade and the Ministry of National Security.

The officials discussed several key issues relating to the JCA, highlighting the efficiency and effectiveness of its improved Customs processes. The JCA was also lauded for its role in trade facilitation, revenue collection and for its contribution to the protection of safety and security of citizens. Dr. Mikuriya emphasized the particular need for attention to security, noting that "without security you can't collect revenue," and that the "issue (of security) has become very important." Minister Shaw affirmed that "we are committed to change, for efficiency, security and revenue" and that the country stands ready to be used as a model, even as it works to further enhance systems.



The Caribbean, being the next area of focus for the WCO, is being targeted to implement the proper use of WCO standards and systems, to facilitate connectivity inside and outside of the Community. Secretary General Mikuriya, divulged that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the WCO and CARICOM will be signed, in a bid to encourage more regional communities to use its systems to ensure connectivity. In speaking about the WCO's intentions, Dr. Mikuriya noted that political will is critical to any successful change process, commending the leaders that participated in the discussions for their clear support and commitment to the efforts of both the local and international Customs community.

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Noting that trade is the driving force behind economic development, Dr. Mikuriya highlighted that “we (the WCO) increased the number of our experts that we send to this country (Jamaica) because I feel that this country has a great potential” to better integrate into the international trading system. CEO/Commissioner Ricketts-Walker affirmed the sentiment, by highlighting that Jamaica has been a member of the WCO since 1963 and that it has benefitted from significant technical assistance and capacity building (TACB) from the WCO. She intimated that although the majority of systems, based on their requirements, speak to more first world countries, Jamaica uses many WCO tools and standards, despite their challenges. CEO/Commissioner Ricketts-Walker, went on to say that “we are not daunted by this”, as the JCA has worked tirelessly to integrate these practices into its operations. She continued: “We are now looking at their anti-corruption guidelines and their harmonized customs procedures. If we want to move to being a modern Customs Agency applying international best practices, then the WCO sets the lead for that.”



A tour of Port Bustamante in Kingston was arranged for Dr. Mikuriya by the JCA. This visit allowed the Secretary General to get a first hand view of the scope of the port’s operations and the responsibilities of front line customs officers at work. The experience also facilitated a meet and greet between the Secretary-General and members of the senior management team of the Kingston Wharves Limited (KWL) and the Kingston Freeport Terminal Limited (KFTL), which are key stakeholders of the JCA.

To complete the visit, a closing reception was held in honour of the Inaugural visit of the WCO Secretary General. Present at the reception were The Honourable Fayval Williams, Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service and Mrs Patricia Francis, Chairman of the Trade Facilitation Task Force (TFTF), who both addressed the attendees. Secretary General Mikuriya, CEO/Commissioner Ricketts-Walker, members of the JCA executive management team and other key trade-related government officials, used the opportunity to review the activities of the past two (2) days and to toast a successful visit. Members of the JCA choir provided entertainment for the evening and joined in the activities, which were emceed by Mr Sean Barrow, Senior Customs Officer at the JCA.



The strengthened relationship between the WCO and Jamaica, along with the WCO’s desire to sign an MOU with CARICOM signals their intent to forge deeper partnerships in the Caribbean and to integrate more small island developing states into the WCO. Ultimately, this should be to the benefit of the Region, helping to build the capacity of our Customs Administrations to meet the challenges of the international trading system.

On behalf of the management and staff of the JCA, Commissioner Ricketts-Walker presented Dr. Kunitada Mikuriya with a plaque, in recognition of the Inaugural visit of a WCO Secretary General to Jamaica and the significant contribution of the WCO to the modernization process of the JCA.

Jamaica Welcomes WCO Secretary General



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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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