

Customs of the XXI century
Таможенная служба XXI века

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We live in a rapidly changing world. International trade is a key driver for economic growth and development. It raises living standards in both developed and developing countries, contributes to the reduction of poverty as well as creates a more stable, secure and peaceful world. International trade is governed by the rules of the regional and multilateral trading systems, preferential trade arrangements and national governments.

The organization which is responsible for establishing such rules, collecting taxes paid on goods entering or leaving a country as well as for preventing threat from illegal trafficking in prohibited and restricted goods is called Customs.

The traditional Customs responsibilities of collecting duties and taxes and preventing smuggling still remain with us but Customs cannot afford to ignore the changing world conditions which have a major impact on their work.

Governments throughout the world recognize the value of Customs Services in their national economies and realize that the service being provided by Customs is one they cannot easily dispense with. The challenge is to facilitate the international trade process at a minimum cost to economy, and without compromising the collection of revenue or the protection of the community from illegal cross-border movements of goods.

The world- class Customs organization of the future should be more efficient, more effective and able to provide a better service.

In our work we've made an attempt to show the role of Customs in the fast-changing global environment and international trading system.

In the past, most of the changes in Customs have been brought about by process improvement or process simplification. But a new approach is needed- one that would challenge the existing situation and result in a profound and radical change. Resources are to be concentrated on activities that will give the best results. They can help -first to identify and

then abandon processes that are obsolete. On the one hand, Customs deals with fraud, smuggling and criminal organizations, on the other hand – it works with business to help them comply with their obligations. Key to much of this is the need to take maximum advantage of technological progress and increase the professionalism of staff.

The commercial control of the imports and exports should be based on advanced electronic reporting of individual transactions, periodic returns of fiscal liabilities, periodic payment, application of risk, assessment techniques and ex-post audit of commercial systems.

Technology is currently used to support the Customs organization through such activities as data management and electronic data interchange.

In the future the use of technology will include the following items: artificial intelligence, video conferences, bar coding, radio frequency identifications devices and document imaging. Thus, the electronic exchange of data between Customs administrations will be as early as possible in the international movement of goods.

The globally accepted mission of Customs is to develop and implement an integrated set of policies and procedures that ensure increased safety and security, as well as effective trade facilitation and revenue collection. This is achieved through efficient and effective use of tools and information in dealing with the international movement of goods, conveyances and people connected with the goods.

The objectives that underpin the mission are

(a) Promoting certainty, predictability and security of the international movement of goods and people accompanying goods by establishing clear and precise standards;

(b) Eliminating duplication and delays in international supply chains such as multiple reporting requirements and inspections;

(c) Supporting the international trading system by creating level playing fields for business at global, regional and national levels;

(d) Strengthening cooperation between Customs administrations as well as between Customs and business and Customs and intergovernmental organizations.

The WCO is an example of such intergovernmental organizations, which represent its members at global level.

The WCO initiative has deliberately focused on the entire international trade supply chain, rather than restricting Customs' interest to that

aspect of the international trade transaction, when goods move across a border. The approach taken by WCO is to improve the security of borders, without unduly hindering legitimate international trade. The purpose of the WCO is to create an international mechanism for customs Administrations to gain access to relevant information relating to international trade well in advance, for the purposes of risk management and risk assessment.

Whatever the Customs individual goals and objectives, all Customs administrations need professional staff who are experts in the fields concerned.

They will communicate frequently and in a different manner than they do today. More attention should be given to developing and maintaining the ability of future professionals to work as a team. It means that a greater emphasis should be placed on interpersonal skills such as active listening, stating ideas freely, making decisions democratically, accepting responsibilities for one's behavior, sharing tasks, trying to understand others' perspectives etc. Developing and using these skills helps group members to trust, accept, and support each other, to communicate accurately and effectively, and to resolve conflicts constructively. At the same time technical competence will continue to be essential. They should have a greater awareness and understanding of the Customs organization's goals and vision and will be able to plan and prioritize accordingly.

This substantial change will only happen if Customs organizations develop further the cultural shift from a command- and-control style to one that releases the talents of Customs personnel. This means changing behavior and attitudes and encouraging creativity and innovation. In its recruitment Customs will give high priority to the ability of doing a lot of hard work to get a deep understanding in such fields as electronic data processing, accounting, law and interpersonal communication.

The trend for international trade to grow faster than total worldwide production will continue. If customs organizations are to remain competitive in the global economy and changing political environments they must change. Customs is and will continue to be the expert authority on the movement of goods across national boundaries. Customs authorities are finding ways of carrying out their enforcement activities whilst, at the same time, reducing burdens on legitimate trade.