

# **THE GREEN CUSTOMS INITIATIVE: BASIC ASPECTS**

## **ИНИЦИАТИВА «ЗЕЛЕНАЯ ТАМОЖНЯ»: ОСНОВНЫЕ АСПЕКТЫ**

Ламонина А. В.

Научный руководитель: канд. пед. н., доцент Веремейчик О. В.  
Белорусский национальный технический университет

Historically, Customs administrations all over the world were considered to be State "gatekeepers", taking jurisdiction on anything and everything that moves across the borders and serving as tax collectors, port managers and immigration agents all at the same time [1]. Nowadays within the framework of globalization the role of Customs has evolved in many respects. Customs authorities are responsible for such diverse tasks as the protection of national economies, development of trade policy, national and international crime prevention, etc. In this context particular attention should be paid to environmental protection.

Today there are a lot of unscrupulous individuals and companies to commit environmental crimes and deliberately evade environmental laws and regulations in the pursuit of personal financial benefit. Where there is movement of goods across boundaries (i.e. smuggling, etc.) or a transboundary impact to offences, so it is possible to speak of environmental or transboundary environmental crime. It makes Customs authorities be on the front line in efforts to prevent smuggling of illegal wildlife products, hazardous substances, etc. across international borders.

The international community has become increasingly aware of the danger it is facing and has realized that the issue should be addressed through commensurate and coordinated national, regional and international measures.

One of the best examples of international cooperation is the Green Customs Initiative. The Green Customs Initiative is a partnership of international organizations (the secretariats of relevant trade related multilateral environmental agreements, Interpol, OPCW, UNEP, UNODC, WCO, etc.) collaborating to prevent the illegal trade in environmentally-sensitive commodities and substances (ozone depleting substances, toxic chemicals, hazardous wastes, endangered species and certain living-modified organisms) and to facilitate the legal tradethrough raising awareness about the mutually-beneficial goals of all relevant international conventions, agreements (Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, Rotterdam

Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants) and enhancing existing Customs training efforts under the respective agreements [2].

There are 3 main instruments by means of which the goals of the Initiative are reached:

- Green Customs website and materials;
- Workshops to train customs officers;
- Green Customs Guide to Multilateral Environmental Agreements [3].

The third element is regarded as a basic one and can be defined as a unique guideline for Customs officers on how to do their daily work in the sphere of environmental protection. Moreover, besides general information and legislative provisions the Guide contains practical aspects of implementing multilateral environmental agreements, reporting cases of illegal trade related to multilateral environmental agreements and benefiting from international cooperation in combating illegal trade.

For example, under CITES while dealing with live animals and plants you must understand that safety is the first priority. All animals, even those supposedly tame, can inflict wounds that range from a simple scratch to a potentially lethal bite. Indeed, animals can transmit different infections to humans. Monkeys can be carriers of serious diseases such as hepatitis A and B, Ebola virus, Marburg disease and the simian immunodeficiency syndrome, a form of AIDS. Parrots can transmit psittacosis. Ducks and geese can be carriers of the bacteria that trigger botulism. And reptiles, more specifically turtles, are carriers of the bacteria that cause salmonellosis.

There are also chemical products, such as pesticides and fungicides, that are routinely used to treat hunting trophies and artificially propagated plants. Such chemical products can release harmful particles. Even plants, although easy to examine, may carry potential health and safety risks. That is why you should assess potential hazards before handling cages and boxes and shouldn't handle the specimens directly; it is better to inspect plants, especially artificially propagated ones, in a well-ventilated area; and you must be sure that only those people directly involved in the inspection are present.

So, it is vital for a Customs officer of today to be at the frontline not only of trade but also of environmental protection contributing to the greening of trade [4]. The Green Customs Initiative is one of the most comprehensible ways to enhance knowledge and skills of Customs officers in environmental sphere nowadays. In this respect the Green Customs module as one of the most rigorous and demanding practices should be incorporated into national Customs training curricula. Providing coordinated and purposeful studying opportunities the Green Customs Initiative will provide Customs officers with non-

fragmented and profound knowledge which in common will result in the increase of smuggling detection rate, collecting more revenue from counteracting duty avoidance and conserving fragile natural resources above all.

#### Литература

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