



7 September 2016

***Joint Statement:
EU Customs – Making a Difference in Modern Trade?***

On 7th September 2016, seven leading trade associations – the American Chamber of Commerce to the EU, CLECAT, EuroCommerce, the European Express Association, the Foreign Trade Association, the International Air Transport Association and the World Shipping Council – called on EU institutions to enhance the competitiveness of business and boost trade through more coordinated border management, additional benefits for economic operators and a harmonised implementation of the new European Customs Code (UCC) among the EU's Member States.

The original Customs Code that came into force in 1993 does not reflect the ways modern businesses and governments communicate with each other today.

The significant work undertaken by the Commission and other European institutions together with some input from the European Union Trade Contact Group (TCG) led in May 2016 to the new UCC which seeks to balance the urgent need for more business-friendly rules for trade alongside the need for efficient and effective safety and security requirements.

Whether the right balance between these objectives has been obtained was the focus of discussions at a major conference on 7th September in Brussels. While some progress has been identified in the early implementation of the UCC, it is clear that certain aspects of this balance still need to be addressed. The conference also focused on a vision of customs policy as an instrument of trade facilitation, driving competitiveness and how this vision can be achieved through the lessons learnt from the implementation of EU customs policy.

The conference concluded that the fact that the UCC has just entered into force does not mean that further improvements cannot be considered in the coming years. Moreover, new electronic customs systems are needed to implement several elements of the UCC by 2020, which business regards as a challenging deadline. To mitigate these risks and ensure the UCC succeeds as a tool of enhanced trade facilitation, the conference called on EU policy makers to consider the following:

- Strategic cross-government, coordination for EU customs policy development and delivery;
- Renewed efforts to rationalise, simplify and align EU customs procedures, data requirements and IT processes. These measures need to be more closely based on global standards such as the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards in order to reflect the global nature of Europe's trade;
- The implementation in the EU of IT systems with harmonised functional and technical specifications for receiving and reusing EU wide harmonised data. A fragmented approach in the implementation of such systems cannot work;
- The creation of new benefits for compliant operators including AEOs;
- Further improvements to centralised customs clearance, concrete support for the needs of small and medium sized enterprises to ensure they can maximise the benefits of the new UCC;
- Ensuring that customs treatment does not lead to market and competitive distortions and improving customs processes as essential elements for enhanced trade competitiveness.

Customs affects business fundamentally; shippers, importers, exporters, express deliverers, carriers, freight forwarders, logistics providers, terminal and storage operators, and retailers are all touched by customs at every part of the supply chain.

As we work towards the vision of customs as a facilitator of trade and competitiveness, as members of the Trade Contact Group we are ready to continue and indeed deepen our contribution as partner in all relevant areas to the challenging work of the EU Member States and EU institutions.

The implementation of the UCC is a chance for building further partnership between trade and the Commission, other EU Institutions, and among all stakeholders, joining forces for customs to play a more effective role in future EU trade policy and, ultimately, to facilitate competitiveness and growth.