

Brussels, 2 July 2007

International affairs, Customs: The European Community joins the World Customs Organisation

The European Commission welcomes the World Customs Organisation's (WCO) decision to give membership rights to the European Community as from 1 July 2007. This decision underlines the international recognition of the role and competence of the Community in customs policy and will effectively improve the international customs cooperation. It will strengthen the Community's ability to achieve its objective of implementing modern customs policy combining appropriate control at the external borders with trade facilitation and development.

"I welcome the WCO decision on the European Community joining that organisation. The WCO is an international organisation managing very important international conventions and standards that affect customs administrations everywhere. WCO's objective being the promotion of modern and efficient customs around the world, the Community is willing to play a central role in its activities for the benefits of citizens and business." said László Kovács, Commissioner responsible for Taxation and Customs.

One of the earliest achievements of the European integration is the customs union which makes the freedom of movement of goods possible inside the EU. Customs policy is the competence of the European Community.

The World Customs Organization's objective being the development, the promotion and implementation of modern and secure Customs systems and procedures around the world, Community membership will help to promote quality standards and to benefit from experience from other WCO members. The WCO manages important customs policy and technical conventions in the field of trade facilitation, tariff classification, valuation and origin.

Multilateral cooperation in the framework of the WCO will also promote mutual recognition of measures for security, intellectual property right enforcement, capacity building and trade facilitation promoted by the WCO. On a more operational level, membership will fully acknowledge the competence of the European Community in customs matters and therefore improve the international customs cooperation.

Background

The World Customs Organization is an independent intergovernmental body with more than 170 members, whose mission is to promote cooperation and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of Member Customs administrations, thereby assisting them to contribute successfully to national development goals, particularly in the areas of trade facilitation, revenue collection, ensuring safety and security of citizens, and fight against counterfeiting.

Further information on Community role in customs policy:

http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/common/about/welcome/index_en.htm#

The WCO website is available at this address:

<http://www.wcoomd.org>