



## **Stockholm Declaration**

### **Implementation of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation**

The representatives of the Members of the World Customs Organization (WCO) Europe Region,

meeting in Stockholm (Sweden) on 1-3 June 2016 for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop on the Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA),

building on the conclusions of the 1<sup>st</sup> WCO Europe Regional Workshop on Strategic Initiatives for Trade Facilitation and the Implementation of the TFA, held in Budapest (Hungary) on 27-29 May 2015;

welcoming the growing number of TFA ratifications and notifications by WTO Members, in particular of those being Members of the WCO Europe Region, leading to the imminent entry into force of TFA;

recognizing the size, prominent role and responsibility of the WCO Europe Region and its Members with respect to the implementation of the TFA;

DECLARE the following:

An ambitious programme of implementation of the TFA will contribute to economic growth and prosperity. Trade facilitation measures also foster good governance by promoting transparency, predictability, standardisation and integrity.

TFA implementation must be pursued in a full and consistent manner fully taking into account international standards such as the WCO Revised Kyoto Convention and other supporting tools and instruments. Best endeavour commitments in the TFA are opportunities which deserve to be pursued, in a proper sequence, to the greatest possible extent.

While TFA is primarily applied through customs legislation by customs administrations, interaction between customs and other agencies, and the private sector, is indispensable.

Customs to business partnership is a key component in this ongoing process, which can be easily and quickly developed through targeted consultation of identified stakeholders, making optimal use of digital tools resulting in transparent information.

Considering the strong customs dimension in the TFA, customs should play a leading role in ensuring co-ordination and co-operation of all agencies and with business, to bring about the benefits and efficiency of trade facilitation. Trade facilitation and control are different sides of the same coin where each side can and should be applied in a coherent and complementary manner.

A National Committee for Trade Facilitation, involving business and where customs should play a leading role, is critical for successful implementation, by providing input to set the level of ambitions, to determine prioritisation (where necessary) and to maintain momentum and oversight as required.

To achieve such an ambitious programme, the WCO and other international organisations with a focus on trade facilitation, regional structures like the WCO Regional Office for Capacity Building and the Regional Training Centres along with the Members of the Region offer a wide range of technical assistance and capacity building tools. Their delivery and impact would benefit from enhanced co-ordination and increased contacts with donors and international organisations, assisted by suitable access and information platforms. This would facilitate assessments of implementation needs and results and prevent duplication of efforts. Sustainability of assistance will depend on commitment and strategy planning of beneficiaries.

The Members of the Europe Region have the capacity and experience to contribute in the on-going work on TFA implementation in WCO bodies like the WCO TFA Working Group. Such contribution would certainly be enhanced by regional coordination, through appropriate mechanisms.

The implementation of the TFA requirements relating to release and clearance of goods in particular regarding Risk Management and Authorised Operators needs being treated as a core component and priority in trade facilitation. 'Perishable goods' is a test case for balancing control and facilitation and would deserve guidance at field level.

The necessary development of co-operation, both between Members and between agencies at borders, requires political will and engagement from administrations, continuous support and planning for the longer term, while its implementation may follow a step by step approach, with incentives, subject to availability of the necessary resources (including information technology).

INVITE

The future Vice-Chairs of the Europe Region, in close cooperation with the WCO Secretariat and TFA WG to ensure appropriate follow-up to this declaration, with a view to securing and providing continuous support to the implementation of the TFA in the Region from the time of its entry into force.

Stockholm, 3 June 2016