

Information Note¹

Event: Conference on Strategic Trade Controls Enforcement

Organisers: World Customs Organisation (WCO)

Date and Venue: 14 – 16 November 2012

Participants:

WCO Members:

Albania; Algeria; Argentina; Australia; Austria; Bahrain; Bangladesh; Belgium; Brazil; Brunei; Bulgaria; Burkina Faso; Cambodia; Cameroon; Canada; Chile; China; Colombia; Congo; Costa Rica; Cote d'Ivoire; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Egypt; Estonia; Ethiopia; Finland; France; Georgia; Germany; Hong Kong, China; Hungary; India; Indonesia; Iran; Ireland; Italy; Japan; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Kyrgyzstan; Latvia; Lithuania; Macao, China; Maldives; Malaysia; Malta; Mexico; Moldova; Mongolia; Montenegro; Morocco; Mozambique; Namibia; Nepal; Netherlands; New Zealand; Nicaragua; Nigeria; Norway; Oman; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Peru; Philippines; Poland; Republic of Korea; Romania; Russian Federation; Saudi Arabia; Senegal; Serbia; Singapore; Slovenia; Spain; South Africa; Sri Lanka; Swaziland; Sweden; Switzerland; Tanzania; Tajikistan; Thailand; the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Tunisia; Turkey; Uganda; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates; United Kingdom; United States; Uzbekistan; Vietnam; Yemen

Others:

European Union (represented by the European Commission)

International Organisations:

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit (BWC-ISU) Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Panel of experts of Resolution 1874 (2009), current and former 1540 Committee experts

Academia:

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), University at Albany, State University of New York (SUNY Center for Policy Research), University of Georgia (Center for International Trade and Security, CITS)

Private Sector:

DHL, Thermo Fisher Scientific, L-3 Communications Security and Detection Systems, Rapiscan Systems

1. Objectives

The objectives for participation of a 1540 Committee expert in this meeting were to:

- Raise awareness for the obligations of UN Security Council resolutions 1540 (2004) and 1977 (2011) and to reiterate the important role Customs administrations play in this regard

¹ For information – not an official report. The views expressed here do not necessarily represent those of the 1540 Committee or of the organizers or participants in the event.

- Present and emphasize the role of the 1540 Committee to facilitate the delivery of assistance
- Continue the cooperation with the WCO and to assure further efforts in strengthening the effective partnership, building on previous efforts.
- Network with national Customs administrations and participating international organizations or providers of assistance
- Familiarize the 1540 experts with new strategies and/or technologies used by agencies responsible for export / strategic trade controls.

2. **Background**

It was the first time that the WCO organised a conference dedicated solely to the topic of strategic trade controls. The organiser's explicit objective was to raise awareness of this topic and to explore how customs administrations contribute to effective strategic trade control enforcement. They were also looking for input on how the WCO could better support its members in complying with strategic trade controls requirements. The conference was organised in response to discussions on the occasion of the 2012 meeting of the WCO's Enforcement Committee meeting where a number of customs administrations had outlined the various challenges they face with regard to strategic trade controls.

With its unique powers to monitor, inspect/deny or expedite the movement of shipments into, through or out of a country, customs administrations have a key role in reducing risks associated with cross-border movements of strategic items and thus in supporting to effectively implement resolution 1540(2004). The WCO itself with its membership of 178 customs administrations representing about 99% of global trade, offers a unique platform for developing standards and building capacity in this regard. This important role has been acknowledged by the 1540 Committee and its Group of Experts on a number of occasions. Due to the common understanding of the complementary nature of the objectives of the WCO and the 1540 Committee, particularly the facilitation of legitimate international trade while at the same time contributing to global security by promoting measures to deter illicit activities by non-State actors with respect to materials related to weapons of mass destruction (WMD), both sides have a long established partnership to foster this common objective.

3. **Highlights**

By means of a well-balanced mix of presentations, case studies and keynote remarks, the conference gave a broad overview on international legal obligations, key elements of national strategic trade systems, and of effective enforcement practices.

Participants acknowledged that no country is immune from the danger of non-state actors attempting to acquire WMD. Thus, there was unanimous recognition of the importance of strategic trade controls and of the pivotal role of resolution 1540 (2004). The central role for customs or other enforcement agencies was emphasized. Likewise it was recognized that strategic trade controls can complement and contribute to trade facilitation or economic development goals.

The differences and challenges in enforcing strategic trade controls became apparent but it was also demonstrated that a number of tools exist, and that administrations are theoretically well equipped, to address this area as well. Risk management, intergovernmental cooperation and coordination at national and international levels as well as timely sharing of information and outreach to industry are however of utmost importance for effective enforcement.

The need for further capacity building was raised. The WCO was invited to explore the possibility of establishing a WCO Strategic Trade Control Program. The role of the 1540 Committee as a clearinghouse for assistance offers and requests was also highlighted in this regard.

4. **Additional comments**

For further information, please contact the 1540 Committee experts by e-mail at 1540experts@un.org.