

## **Launch of the World Customs Journal, 27 March 2007**

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The management and operations of today's Customs administrations require a much higher level of knowledge, skills and behaviour than has been traditionally required. This Conference represents a joint recognition by academics and customs practitioners of the need to create a supporting framework of research and professional standards.

Admittedly, customs matters used to remain largely in the hands of practitioners and had attracted limited attention from the research world. However, the heightened awareness of the role customs can play in the rapidly changing trade environment has already generated a growing interest of a number of universities and research institutions. I hope that this trend will result in raising the academic profile of the customs profession through the development and promotion of educational programs, academic and applied research and intellectual input to strategic decision making.

The first PICARD conference last year recognized this potential for the research market in customs and border management, and the PICARD partners announced the launch of a research journal for customs matters. Since then, the International Network of Customs Universities (INCU) has been working on this new venture, and today I am delighted to welcome the inauguration of the first edition of the World Customs Journal.

I would like to commend the efforts by the INCU in providing another vehicle for customs professionals, academics, industry researchers, and research students with a medium through which to share insights and knowledge in the customs field. Being released as an e-Journal would ensure a wider access by those who are interested in trade, development and customs matters. Depending on the demand from readers, there might be a possibility of publishing it as a print journal at a later date.

The first edition of the journal contains contributions by several academics and customs practitioners on "Customs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." The articles examine the challenges posed to Customs by globalisation, trade facilitation initiatives, and security concerns. This means that the Journal will make an immediate contribution to the WCO on a topic that is to be the central theme in discussions at the Council session in June of this year.

For the next edition of the Journal, I understand that the INCU will focus on the ways in which governments are seeking to ensure the security of international supply chains, including implementation strategies for the WCO Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade. We hope that academic and practitioner will find this new medium useful to share and publish their insights with customs members and its stakeholders.

Finally, let me congratulate the Editorial Board through the Editor-in-Chief, Professor David Widdowson, on the birth of the Journal. I hope the World Customs Journal will grow as a valuable reference source for the customs community to meet the requirements of the new strategic environment and for the wider international community to deepen the understanding of the customs world.