



Message from the World Customs Organization International Customs Day 2024

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On 26 January each year, the Customs community comes together to celebrate International Customs Day. As we gather to commemorate this important occasion, I am filled with a profound sense of honour and anticipation in my first year as Secretary General. While this year's celebration is especially significant for me, its wider importance in part comes from it marking the launch of our new theme: "Customs Engaging Traditional and New Partners with Purpose".

This year, we are embarking on a path that challenges us to both reaffirm our longstanding partnerships and to boldly forge new alliances. Our world has changed dramatically over the last decade and continues to do so, presenting us with unprecedented challenges, including rapid technological advances, environmental and health crises, and complex geopolitical and economic dynamics. These conditions require that the global Customs community take a forward-thinking approach to its work and seek solutions that are not just based on its own knowledge and resources, but are supplemented by the support of stakeholders.

The theme for 2024 is a strategic call to action, urging us to broaden our perspectives, think creatively, and embrace innovative approaches. This is essential for Customs administrations to maintain their role in facilitating global trade and ensuring security in a rapidly evolving environment.

In 2024, we focus on deepening and enriching our established relationships to ensure they continue to be strong, relevant, and mutually beneficial. At the same time, we aim to actively seek and establish new connections with a wider range of stakeholders, including financial institutions, environmental organizations, NGOs, and academic institutions.

These new partnerships will infuse our efforts with fresh perspectives and innovative solutions. Our collaboration this year is about aligning all our partnerships with the overarching mission and values of our Customs administrations. We aim to ensure they contribute meaningfully to our objectives of trade facilitation, border security, and the resilience of global supply chains.

Incorporating a broad spectrum of voices and perspectives into our strategies is also paramount. Doing so will ensure that our strategies are comprehensive and more resonant with the global community we serve.

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We are also committed to continuously evaluating and refining our partnerships to maintain their effectiveness and relevance. Such a dynamic approach is vital in an ever-changing global landscape, and increases our ability to achieve meaningful results in line with our critical mission.

Lastly, as we think about the enablers of our engagement, we must look to the value of cutting-edge technologies and data analytics. These will enhance our understanding and engagement with partners, thereby increasing our responsiveness and effectiveness.

As we begin this year and take this day to reflect on our mission, our accomplishments, and our way forward, I hope that our efforts – as Customs and with partners – will advance us toward a safe, prosperous, and inclusive future.

I am deeply appreciative of your support and dedication to making International Customs Day a noteworthy occasion, and for promoting and acting upon our 2024 theme throughout the year.

I wish you a productive and engaging International Customs Day.

Ian Saunders
Secretary General
26 January 2024