

**SIXTH GLOBAL CONGRESS
ON
COMBATING COUNTERFEITING AND PIRACY**

Opening address by WCO Secretary General Kunio Mikuriya

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On 17 January, a South African police officer was assassinated for his fight against counterfeiting and piracy. His name was Johan Nortje. He was a family man, and an honourable colleague.

But he is not the only one. Unfortunately this case provides us with further proof that counterfeiting and piracy are not victimless activities. Whether directly or indirectly, they cause harm and they kill.

We have the power to curb this menace, and save lives. Because saving lives is what this is about. Medicines, vehicle parts, cosmetics, foodstuffs... nowadays these products that we use every day are potentially highly dangerous.

This menace will simply keep growing unless we act quickly, and I am convinced that nothing can be achieved in isolation.

The solution lies in concerted action on a global scale, based on the capabilities of all those involved; and here, the WCO is one of the leading protagonists.

As a result of its position at land, sea and air borders, Customs is an essential player in the fight against counterfeiting and piracy. Everyone is aware of the situation. For evidence we need only look at the ever-increasing proportion of seizures of fake goods carried out by Customs in all parts of the world.

This situation requires the WCO to do everything it can to develop close co-operation between all the stakeholders - Customs administrations, international organizations, and of course the private sector - to ensure that our action in the field is as effective as possible.

Long-standing actions

The WCO's anti-counterfeiting training programme, consisting of e-learning, diagnostic missions and operational seminars, has been in existence for a long time.

The **diagnostic missions** take account of the socio-economic realities of each country; they review the legislative arsenal, risk analysis, the exchange of information, and co-operation with the private sector and the control authorities.

National or regional operations and **operational seminars** present and implement, in close collaboration with the private sector, new risk analysis techniques in port and airport zones.

By way of example, in 2009-2010 more than 140 WCO Member countries received training in combating counterfeiting and piracy, and no less than 7 international operations have been carried out since the last Congress.

All of these interventions in the field have demonstrated the need to give Customs officers the means to fulfil their mission, particularly when it comes to identifying fakes.

The WCO: a prime mover

For in comparison with drugs or weapons, counterfeiting in general, and fake medicines and other dangerous products in particular, pose problems for Customs officers even in terms of identifying them.

In order to overcome these difficulties the WCO, acting as **a prime mover**, has decided to take advantage of all the possibilities offered by new technologies in order to put forward concrete solutions.

To support, or complement the missions in the field, a tool for in-service training in the **identification of counterfeits** has therefore been developed and launched in partnership with the manufacturers concerned. We have called it IPM, which stands for Interface Public-Members. Indeed I would like to thank the Customs and Rights Holders present here today who have contributed so much to the launch of this initiative.

This information and in-service training tool consists of an online database enabling Rights Holders from all sectors to provide Customs field officers with real-time data on their products as well as information making it possible for them to distinguish between “genuine” and “fake” goods and contact the Rights Holders concerned.

IPM has been developed to be accessible to Customs field officers anywhere in the world, at any time, in their own language, via simple and secure user interfaces. To date, nearly 70 Customs administrations representing every continent have expressed an interest in using this new tool.

IPM will, of course, be offered to all the national and international agencies involved in combating counterfeiting and piracy, bearing in mind that co-operation is the key to our success.

Conclusion

Before closing I would like to thank President Sarkozy and the organizing committee for making this Sixth Global Congress possible; it must yield results. Trade is increasing, but our staffing levels are not! This means that to optimize our results we need to develop closer co-operation between Customs administrations, and between intergovernmental organizations. Each of us has a part to play, but we must play our parts together and make sure that we have the means to achieve our ambitions.

Thank you for your attention.