



MEDIA RELEASE: for immediate release

Communiqué

The Guam Customs & Quarantine Agency hosted the 7th Annual Conference of Customs Heads of the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) from 7 to 11 March 2005, chaired by Mr Ricardo Blas, the Acting Director.

This Conference was attended by delegates from twenty of the twenty three OCO Members, the OCO Secretariat and representatives of 10 invited observer organisations from the Pacific and the Asia-Pacific, including the World Customs Organization.

The Acting Governor, Mr Kaleo S. Moylan, formally opened the conference and welcomed the delegates and observers to Guam and to the Conference, noting the need for and the progress being made in regional cooperation and its importance in protecting the economies and security of the Pacific region.

Mr John Drury, Deputy Chief Executive of the Australian Customs Service, gave a keynote address covering issues facing the OCO and current trends in Australia. Mr Drury encouraged members to rise to the ongoing challenges, which will continue, and appealed to members to maintain commitment and enthusiasm for OCO work.

The main work of the 2005 Conference focused on two key issues: the Review of the OCO and its operations, and initiating the implementation of the Customs Component of the Regional Trade Facilitation Programme in the Pacific. A key decision arising from the Review was to establish the OCO Secretariat in a permanent location to enhance its effectiveness and service to its Members.

Other activities and issues discussed and progressed by OCO 2005 covered:

Trade Facilitation / Revenue Collection

Presentations from regional organisations and Members addressed the extensive requirements for and work underway on customs capacity building projects arising from regional trade agreements, particularly the Regional Trade Facilitation Programme.

United States Customs and Border Protection shared the US perspective on the development of and outlined the content of draft global standards for trade security being led by the World Customs Organization.

Law Enforcement

The continued presence of security threats posed to the OCO region from transnational criminal activities reinforced the continued need for communication and cooperation between law enforcement agencies and regional groups and for adequate funding and training for law enforcement organizations in the Pacific.

OCO members agreed to intensify their contribution to information held on regional databases and communication networks, in particular the supply of information to the Customs Regional Intelligence Network (CRIN). Members were advised about and look forward to using the newly upgraded Customs Asia Pacific Enforcement Reporting System (CAPERS).

Modernisation and Capacity Building

Members noted a South Pacific Chiefs of Police (SPCP) proposal for a Pacific project on Border Management for regional law enforcement agencies (SPCP, OCO and the Pacific Immigration Directors Conference). The Conference also noted that this was a long-term proposal that would need to recognise the different roles and priorities and international obligations of each organisation. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's Customs automation resource, ASYCUDA, was also represented at the Conference.

Communication / Representation

The Head of Secretariat addressed the OCO's work in promoting the achievements of the OCO and its members since the last Conference.

The Secretariat unveiled the new Public website and Members-only secure website. This website will enable Members to access documents and news items appropriate for members to view and comment on.

The WCO Asia Pacific Vice Chair Office and Regional Intelligence Liaison Office Asia-Pacific Office (RILO AP) presented an update on current activity for OCO members. The RILO AP proposed enhanced cooperation between the RILO AP Office and the OCO.

The Conference agreed that the OCO should sign a cooperative arrangement with the UNEP Ozone Action Program. The formal signing of the arrangement occurred at the end of the Conference.

The OCO Annual Work Plan

Members agreed to the OCO Annual Work Plan for 2005 to reflect the outcomes of the Conference.

Closing

The Conference accepted the offer of Fiji to host the 8th OCO Annual Conference from 13 to 17 March 2006.

Delegates expressed their gratitude to the people of Guam and the staff of the Guam Customs and Quarantine Agency, who had all been instrumental in making this a most successful and enjoyable Conference.

Thanks were given to the French authorities and New Caledonia for their support of the Secretariat. Thanks were also given to Marc Jannier for his diligence and hard work as Head of Secretariat.

Ricardo Blas
Chairman OCO
Guam
11 March 2005