



7 September 2016

**Joint Press Release:
EU businesses call for customs procedures to focus
on economic growth and increased trade**

EU businesses throughout the value chain could benefit significantly if customs was better integrated with economic and trade policy and implemented identically across the EU. These were the key messages arising from a high-level conference on the state of the new Union Customs Code and the future of EU Customs, held today, by 7 leading trade bodies (AmCham EU, CLECAT, EuroCommerce, the European Express Association, the Foreign Trade Association, IATA and the World Shipping Council, with support of EurTradeNet).

This event, supported by the World Customs Organisation and held at their Brussels headquarters, was the first forum of its kind to successfully bring together all stakeholders on EU customs policy after the new Union Customs Code entered into force in May 2016. Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs Commissioner Pierre Moscovici delivered the keynote speech. Participants, including business leaders and key representatives from the EU Institutions, discussed in depth a number of ways in which customs could act as a tool for business competitiveness and facilitating trade, while supporting the EU's security and safety.

The conference looked at two broad themes: a future vision for customs policy, and lessons learned from the modernisation programme so far. One important conclusion reached was that, while the UCC had only just entered into force, there was scope for further improvements to be considered in the coming years. This is especially the case with the new electronic customs systems needed to implement elements of the UCC by 2020. The business community needs a much more coordinated, efficient and harmonised interface with customs across the EU and many regard 2020 as a very challenging deadline.

Christian Verschuere, Director-General of EuroCommerce, who introduced the conference, stressed the significant impact customs procedures have on EU businesses in all sectors: *"Customs must of course ensure that our borders are secure and that the goods are properly imported. But customs procedures also impose burdens and impact directly the free flow of products for businesses and consumers. Whether you are a shipper, an importer, an exporter, an express deliverer, a carrier, a freight forwarder, a wholesaler or a retailer, customs touch businesses at every part of the value supply chain. Making sure that customs procedures work smoothly and efficiently, by taking account of their key role in the competitiveness of our economies will make a significant contribution to growth and jobs in Europe and around the world."*

This is an aspect CLECAT President, Steve Parker supported in his closing remarks, where he added: *"The question is how we turn the lessons and aspirations for customs policy, identified here today, into constructive steps for the next stage of the UCC. I hope we can work closely with our conference partners and the Commission to identify the key points into some form of road map that can be built into the business planning process and set some structure and boundaries around it."*

A statement prepared by the conference partners is attached. END

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