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Signature of the mutual recognition of authorised economic operators in the EU and Japan

Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

World Customs Organisation

Brussels, 24 June 2010

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the World Customs Organisation,

I am grateful to Secretary General Kunio Mikuriya and Council Chair Martyn Dunne for the opportunity to be here today as we conclude the EU-Japan Mutual Recognition of Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Programmes.

The WCO is a unique multilateral forum to develop customs cooperation and to promote international standards. As EU Commissioner for Taxation and Customs Union, I would like to reaffirm the EU's continued commitment to this Organisation and to remaining an important contributor.

The international Customs community have challenging tasks in today's rapidly changing environment. The WCO plays an important role in helping them fulfil their tasks. Its work in strategic areas is of great importance for the EU and worldwide. Let me highlight IPR enforcement, capacity building, coordinated border management, Globally Networked Customs.

At the top of the agenda today is the international effort to secure the global supply chain. The development and adoption of world-wide security standards has been a major achievement of the WCO. The EU supports the implementation of these standards within the SAFE Framework and plays its full part in securing the global supply chain. We are implementing a security policy based on multi-layered risk management that allows for legitimate international trade to flow smoothly. We bring together a comprehensive package of domestic measures to assess and defuse risks including a solid AEO programme, which meets the highest international standards. We seek to strengthen our capacity to deter attacks by coupling domestic action with enhanced international cooperation. In a globalised world, security cannot be strengthened unilaterally, in isolation.

Businesses all over the world call for mutual recognition of Authorised Economic Operator programmes. The objective is two-fold. Firstly, to enhance end-to-end supply chain security and, secondly, to facilitate legitimate trade. By targeting our limited resources on risks, we can provide benefits in terms of greater facilitation to reliable operators. Mutual recognition can also help promote harmonisation of customs practices and procedures worldwide. This way we can prevent business and administrations end up facing incompatible standards.

Today, two major trading partners, the EU and Japan are formalising an important decision. Japanese AEOs will begin to be treated in the EU as our own AEOs and will receive equivalent benefits. The same will apply for our AEOs in Japan. I am confident that this development could open new doors to cooperation in other important areas.

Like us, several other WCO members are working on mutual recognition agreements with their trading partners. We will continue this process, and encourage all WCO members to do so. In this context, this is an important moment for the EU as a member of this organisation.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude by wishing you all very fruitful discussions in the coming days.