



## INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMS DAY 2016

Every year on 26 January we celebrate the International Customs Day. This time it is the occasion to launch the World Customs Organisation (WCO) year of “Digital Customs” under the slogan “Progressive Engagement”.

Information Technology is a topic of particular interest to me since prior to taking up my current position in the European Commission as Director-General for Taxation and Customs Union, I was in charge of the Directorate-General for Information Technology.

Digital Customs has become a vital and integral part of our rapidly changing environment, strengthening operational effectiveness, improving transparency and reducing administrative burdens.

In the European Union (EU), the coming years will see the development of many new electronic Customs Systems to support changes introduced by our new Customs legislation. All 28 EU Member States will need to use this new technology to secure the implementation of the mandatory changes. We have already created the EU Customs Data Model, which will provide a single source to publish the required data and data exchanges in a format suitable for immediate use by the EU Member States. This EU Customs Data Model is fully aligned with the WCO Data Model.

Digital Customs is relevant nationally, regionally and internationally. That is why the WCO can play an important and influential role in the development of international standards in this area. The WCO Data Model is an excellent example of such an international standard. I therefore believe that its structures and processes should be embedded in Customs Information Technology.

As Vice-Chair for the WCO Europe Region, I am happy to confirm that Digital Customs will be on the agenda of the WCO Europe Region Heads of Customs Conference in Astana, Kazakhstan in May 2016. I am convinced that our region has a lot to offer in terms of best practices and experience as well as plans for further development.

Wishing you all a joyful and successful International Customs Day,

*(e-signed)*  
Stephen Quest

Vice-Chair  
Europe Region of the WCO