

FOREWORD



Launch of the *World Customs Journal*

by

Kunio Mikuriya, Deputy Secretary General, WCO
at the PICARD Conference, Brussels, Belgium, 27 March 2007

The management and operations of today's Customs administrations require a much higher level of knowledge, skills and behaviour than has been traditionally required. This Conference represents a joint recognition by academics and customs practitioners of the need to create a supporting framework of research and professional standards.

Admittedly, customs matters used to remain largely in the hands of practitioners and had attracted limited attention from the research world. However, the heightened awareness of the role customs can play in the rapidly changing trade environment has already generated a growing interest in a number of universities and research institutions. I hope that this trend will result in raising the academic profile of the customs profession through the development and promotion of educational programs, academic and applied research and intellectual input to strategic decision making.

The first PICARD Conference held in 2006 recognised this potential for the research market in customs and border management, and the PICARD partners announced the launch of a research journal for customs matters. Since then, the International Network of Customs Universities (INCU) has been working on this new venture, and today I am delighted to launch the first edition of the *World Customs Journal*.

I would like to commend the efforts of the INCU in providing customs professionals, academics, industry researchers, and research students with a medium through which to share insights and knowledge in the customs field. Being released as an e-Journal ensures wider access by those who are interested in trade, development and customs matters.

The first edition of the Journal contains contributions by several academics and customs practitioners on 'Customs in the 21st Century'. The articles examine the challenges posed to Customs by globalisation, trade facilitation initiatives, and security concerns. This means that the Journal will make an immediate contribution to the WCO on a topic that is to be the central theme in discussions at the Council session in June 2007.

For the next edition of the Journal, I understand that the INCU will focus on the ways in which governments are seeking to ensure the security of international supply chains, including implementation strategies for the WCO Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE Framework of Standards). We hope that academics and practitioners will find this new medium useful to share and publish their insights with WCO members and other stakeholders.

Finally, let me congratulate the Editorial Board through the Editor-in-Chief, Professor David Widdowson, on the birth of the Journal. I hope the *World Customs Journal* will grow as a valuable reference source for the customs community to meet the requirements of the new strategic environment and for the wider international community to deepen their understanding of the customs world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Kunio Mikuriya', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kunio Mikuriya
Deputy Secretary General
World Customs Organization