

Editorial



In past editions of the Journal I have criticised governments for failing to provide the international trading community with the regulatory clarity and certainty required for prudent commercial decision-making. In stark contrast, it is pleasing to see the World Customs Organization (WCO) publishing the next iteration of the Harmonized System (HS) nomenclature two years prior to its implementation on 1 January 2022, giving traders and regulators alike ample opportunity to prepare for its introduction.

The regular updating of the HS to maintain its relevance in a continually changing world is no mean feat, and its importance to global trade should not be underestimated—it has arguably been one of the most significant contributors to international trade facilitation since its introduction over 30 years ago. We are therefore pleased to present the WCO’s announcement of HS 2022 as this edition’s Special Report, in which it highlights amendments to the nomenclature that address environmental and social issues of increasing global concern.

The role played by Customs in addressing such issues was reinforced on International Customs Day, which is celebrated on 26 January each year, at which time the WCO announces a specific theme for its member administrations. This year the Secretary General, Dr Kunio Mikuriya, chose a particularly apposite theme, ‘Customs fostering Sustainability for People, Prosperity and the Planet’.

The chosen theme acknowledges the significant but generally unrecognised contribution to a sustainable future that Customs makes through its diverse range of social, economic, health and environmental responsibilities that underpin its critical role in policing international trade that may be harmful to the planet. This includes the enforcement of laws relating to endangered species of wild flora and fauna, ozone depleting substances, hazardous waste, hazardous chemicals and pesticides, persistent organic pollutants and biotechnology that may adversely affect biological diversity, to name a few.

Customs administrations around the world should be encouraged to use this year’s theme as a catalyst to raise the profile of the important role they play in protecting our planet for future generations. The Editorial Board would certainly welcome the publication of papers that address these important issues in future editions of the Journal.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Widdowson'. The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large initial 'D' and 'W'.

Professor David Widdowson AM
Editor-in-Chief