



CONFERENCE ON DEVELOPMENT OF TAX ADMINISTRATION AND CUSTOMS, RIGA, LATVIA



From left side:

1. Chair of conference Prof., Dr. oec. Aivars Krastiņš, Advisor to Director General of State Revenue Service of Latvia
2. Kunio Mikuriya, Sekretary General of the World Customs Organizations
3. Atis Slakteris, Minister of Finance of the Republic of Latvia
4. Valdis Zalters, State President of the Republic of Latvia
5. Dzintars Jakāns, Director General of the State Revenue Service of Latvia

The international scientific and practical conference „Further Development of Tax Administration and Customs in the Environment of Single Market of European Communities” dedicated to the 15th anniversary of the State Revenue Service of Latvia was held on November 26, 2008. Besides Latvian specialists, guests from Japan, Australia, Estonia, Netherlands, Finland, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden and Lithuania took part in the conference. Kunio Mikuriya, Secretary General of the World Customs Organizations, and Mats Sjorstrand, President of Intra-European Organization of Tax Administration made speeches of welcome. Atis Slakteris, Minister of

Finance of the Republic of Latvia, described the economic situation of Latvia, steps of the Government in order to stabilize the economic situation.

Kunio Mikuriya discussed peculiarities of the global financial crisis, its influence upon international trade and customs activities in the report “Further Development of Customs”. Access to trade finance and drop in trade volume as a result of the crisis. Customs will be affected these ways: pressure on revenue collection, diminishing investment on border infrastructure and rise of protectionist trend. The speaker discussed visionary statement by global Customs leaders “Customs in the 21st Century” approved by WCO Council, June 2008. He stressed, that there is a need for closer real-time collaboration among Customs administrations and between Customs and business in facilitating legitimate trade and undertaking customs controls. The new requirement is to create in partnership between the various stakeholders of the public and the private sectors, a global Customs network in support of the international trading system. Speaking about professional, knowledge-based service culture, the speaker stressed, that future orientation of Customs requires moving towards a knowledge-based and customer-orientated model. Staff competencies need to support timely customer-focused processes and services that minimize the administrative burden on legitimate trade. Training and organizational culture should support high levels

of integrity, demonstrating consistency, transparency, honesty and fairness. Effective change management and leadership skills also need to be developed.

David Widdowson, Professor of University of Canberra made the report “International Customs Compliance Management: The need for consistency”. The speaker stated, that while considerable progress has been made by the international community in relation to the establishment and agreement of standards, there is a long way to go in ensuring that individual economics have the necessary capacity to translate the theory into practice. The exercise conducted by WCO suggests that consistent global application of existing and future conventions, agreements and guidelines relating to border management is unlikely in the absence of significant capacity building support.

Hans – Michael Wolffgang, Professor of Law University of Munster, Institute of Tax Law, delivered the report “Customs Union in Europe: Quo Vadis?”. The author revealed the current multi-functionality of Customs within the Community, which for instance, involves securing in Community and national revenues, facilitating legitimate trade, protecting consumers and environment. Speaking about the future structure of customs administrations in Europe, the speaker stated, that the need to create an integrated European Customs Administration.

Sakari Alasalmi, Director, Head of customs unit of Ministry of Finance of Finland made the report “Customs – Potential Synergies in Taxation and/ or Border Controls”. The speaker stated that with the decrease in customs duties and the increase in control tasks, customs have gradually transformed from fiscal authorities in general organs controlling and supervising foreign trade. Customs, earlier seen as

mainly serving the objectives of the internal market, are nowadays more and more a tool for implementing Community commercial policy, the emphasis shifting on the external dimension. This development means further harmonization of Customs procedures. The speaker had a look into the development and future prospects of Customs and tax administration *vis-à-vis* each other.

Victor van Kommer, PhD, Director of the Knowledge Centre, International Bureau of Fiscal Documentation, Amsterdam, made the report “Some principles for professional Tax Administration”. The speaker stated, that revolution in information technology is one of the main drivers for organisations to adopt another management style and transform themselves from the traditional controlling and hierarchical organization towards a role as facilitator and motivator. The key issue for management will be connecting people, systems and organisation. The challenging task now for the executive managers is to protect the privilege of collected data on the one hand and to facilitate a professional culture where sharing values and knowledge is the daily driver on the other hand.

On the occasion of the conference, collected articles „Further Development of Tax Administration and Customs in the Environment of Single Market of European Communities” (ISBN 978-9984-32-927-70) were issued.

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