

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS  
CUSTOMS PROCEDURES GROUP 12 - 13 MAY 1994 REPORT  
TO  
THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND INVESTMENT

APEC Customs Fellowships

It is recommended that the Committee on Trade and Investment note developments with the Fellowship Program, in particular that a Business Case will be brought to the November Customs Group meeting, addressing program delivery, potential topics and a possible proposal for APEC funding.

The Role of the Business/Private Sector

The Committee on Trade and Investment is asked to note:

- That the Customs Group recognised the importance of the business/private sector to its work program.
- That, in keeping with APEC Guidelines for participation by non-members, in-principle agreement was given for appropriate involvement of business/private sector organisations in the Customs Procedures Group. It was noted, however, that extensive participation of business/private sector representatives as delegation members could run the risk of dissipating the work of Customs Administrations at Sub-Committee meetings.
- That discussions will be held out of session to obtain a clearer understanding of planning for the 2nd APEC Symposium in November, with a progress report to be delivered to the Committee.

It was agreed that the APEC Secretariat would circulate a letter from Australia asking for views on the desired nature of business/private sector involvement at the Customs Group meeting in November 1994, with the aim of reaching consensus on this issue.

Future Role of the Customs Group

The Group agreed to recommend to the Committee on Trade and Investment that an APEC Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures be formed with a Statement of Intent and Terms of Reference. These reflect the duality of the role of Customs Administrations - being engaged in the facilitation of trade while simultaneously maintaining their responsibility to provide for the protection of the community.

In making this recommendation the Group noted that Thailand would bring forward for consideration and adoption by the inaugural meeting of the Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures detailed procedural guidelines for the conduct of its business, including, for instance, arrangements for secretariat support, the need to achieve

consensus on agenda items, frequency of meetings, reporting structure and review of its activities and terms of reference after a period of three years.

#### Future Election Of Chair And Vice Chair For A Sub-Committee On Customs Procedures .

The Committee on Trade and Investment was asked to note that it was agreed that, unless circumstances dictated otherwise, the Chair of the Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures would be drawn from the Customs Administration of the APEC Chair and that the Vice-Chair be drawn from the Customs Administration of the next APEC Chair.

For the remainder of this year, Australia will continue as Chair of the Customs Procedures Group, with Japan as the Vice Chair - to take over as Chair in 1995, with the Philippines as Vice Chair.

#### Work Plan Structure - Short And Long Term Projects

The Group agreed that, as Work Plan agenda papers had only been distributed at the meeting, there had been insufficient time to consider the issues in any depth. Consequently the Group agreed to postpone discussion of specific proposals until its next meeting.

In view of the constraints on both financial and personnel resources the Group agreed that priority listing of the longer term items was needed. It was agreed that those who had proposed topics before the Committee should draft short policy papers for discussion at the Group's next meeting, which would follow the APEC model for standard format and would demonstrate a clear link with trade facilitation objectives..

#### APEC Customs Work Plan

- i. Survey of APEC members' priorities for annexes to the Kyoto Convention (*Canada*).

CTI is asked to note progress and that members will provide comments to Canada as the shepherd of this project with a view to determining the positive contribution the APEC Customs Group could make to the review of the Kyoto Convention by the Customs Cooperation Council.

- ii. Feasibility Study of proposal that APEC Customs administrations exchange tariff classification opinions, decisions and rulings, and case studies of the application of the Harmonised System (*New Zealand*);

The Committee on Trade and Investment is therefore asked to note that action on this matter will depend very much on the way APEC advances the Tariff Database proposal. Should the database go ahead then the Committee may care to note that New Zealand will pursue implementation of this project through that database.

- iii. APEC Seminar/Workshop on the nature and significance of 1996 amendments of HS (*Thailand*);

The Committee on Trade and Investment is invited to note progress on this matter and that Thailand will write again to the Customs Cooperation Council seeking a firm commitment to funding so that firm arrangement to proceed with the seminar can be made.

- iv. APEC Customs Guide (*United States*).

The Committee on Trade and Investment is asked to note that printing of the APEC Customs Guide is expected within approximately six weeks. Further, the Committee is asked to note the preference of the Customs Group that profits from the sale of the Guide be made available for the future work of the Group.

- v. APEC Customs Symposium (*Indonesia*).

The Committee on Trade and Investment is asked to note progress with this matter and that delegates expressed a commitment to support Indonesia to ensure the success of the 2nd APEC Customs Symposium in November 1994.

- vi. Air Express Courier EDI Project (*Australia*).

The Committee on Trade and Investment is asked to note that the first phase of the project will involve UPS Singapore and Chinese Taipei. Australia will consolidate development of a business case and advise the Committee in September of progress. The involvement of other economies and air express companies - with their subsequent incorporation into the business case - will similarly be progressively notified to the Committee.

The Committee on Trade and Investment is asked to note progress on this project and that Australia will carefully monitor development and provide appropriate up-dates to the Customs Group and the Committee in a timely manner. The Committee is asked to also note that the project partners have undertaken a firm commitment to prepare a Business Case for consideration by the Customs Group at its November meeting. If approved by the Committee and SOM, a pilot project could begin in early 1995.

#### Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Customs Group will take place as part of the November Round of APEC activities in Indonesia in November 1994, prior to the meeting of the Committee on Trade and Investment and in conjunction with the 2nd APEC Customs Symposium.

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