



The Green Customs Initiative: Capacity Building for Environmental Security

Introduction

The Green Customs Initiative is a partnership of international organisations and secretariats that cooperate to enhance the capacity of customs and other relevant border enforcement personnel to deal with trade in 'environmentally-sensitive items'. It offers an integrated approach for providing information, training and awareness-raising to facilitate legal trade in such commodities and prevent their illegal trade.

The Need for Action

Environmental crime is a significant and increasingly lucrative business. National and international crime syndicates worldwide earn an estimated US\$ 20-30 billion dollars annually from hazardous waste dumping, smuggling proscribed hazardous materials, and exploiting and trafficking protected natural resources. Illegal international trade in environmentally-sensitive commodities such as ozone depleting substances, toxic chemicals, hazardous wastes, endangered species and living modified organisms is an international problem with serious consequences. It can directly threaten human health and the environment; contribute to species loss; result in revenue loss for governments; and undermine the success of international environmental agreements by circumventing agreed rules and procedures.

Customs and border protection officers constitute the front line of every country's defence against trans-boundary illegal trade. Building the capacity of these officers is therefore vital. Training and awareness-raising are key components of such capacity building, but can be time-consuming and expensive when delivered separately for the wide range of issues customs officers must cover. An effective solution is coordinated training; and this is what the Green Customs Initiative aims to provide.

The Green Customs Partners

The Green Customs Partners are:

- The Secretariats of the following multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs):
 - Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal,
 - Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (Convention on Biological Diversity)
 - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
 - Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer
 - Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and pesticides in International Trade
 - Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)
- Interpol
- Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) – Chemical Weapons Convention
- UNEP Division of Environmental Law and Conventions
- UNEP Division of Regional Coordination (DRC) and UNEP regional offices
- UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- World Customs Organization

The initiative also works closely with a number of other regional and international organisations.

Benefits of Green Customs

The Green Customs Initiative provides coordinated and cost-effective delivery of training and awareness-raising of customs officers and enforcement personnel that is delivered through an umbrella partnership involving multiple organisations with diverse mandates. Customs administrations need and regularly request coordinated training such as that delivered under the Green Customs Initiative as such training is not being provided by other means. For some of the MEAs involved, Green Customs is the only structured interaction with the customs community, as funding is often not available for such outreach activities. Without the intervention of the Green Customs Initiative, customs officers in developing countries and countries with economies in transition (CEITs) would have a significantly more piecemeal and inefficient approach to understanding the implications of trade-related MEAs and related organisations.

Green Customs tools:

- **Green Customs Guide to Multilateral Environmental Agreements** - A guidebook for trainees and trainers to be used as a core element during workshops and training and as a post-course or stand alone reference document. This is available at: <http://www.greencustoms.org/reports/guide.htm>
- **Workshops to train customs officers** - Many Green Customs training workshops have been held all around the world. These have ranged from regional workshops to sub-regional and national workshops. Details of planned future workshops can be found on the Green Customs Website (see below). An objective of the initiative is for developing countries and CEITS. to incorporate “Green Customs” into their national customs training curricula.
- **Green Customs website and materials** - A number of additional training and information materials have been developed by the Partners and the Green Customs Initiative Secretariat. These are added to and updated as appropriate. E-learning training modules are also being developed in coordination World Customs Organization.

More Information and more details on the Initiative can be found on the Green Customs website:

www.greencustoms.org

UNEP DTIE hosts the Green Customs Secretariat in Paris, France.

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