Knowledge, a Catalyst for Customs Excellence

The 2011 World Customs and Trade Forum held in Guangzhou, China, highlighted the importance of harnessing knowledge as a means to improve public-private collaboration in modernisation of the international supply chain.

Hosted by the General Administration of China Customs (GACC), about 300 participants from Customs administrations, public agencies, international organisations and multinational corporations gathered on 24 and 25 November 2011 to exchange views on public-private best practices, challenges facing the international trading environment and the latest policy-related trends under the overall forum theme "Knowledge, a Catalyst for Customs Excellence".

The World Customs and Trade Forum, a platform for dialogue and exchange between the customs and trade sectors, is an annual event that was launched by the World Customs Organisation (WCO) in 2007.

Mr Fong Yong Kian, Director-General of Singapore Customs, was one of three panellists for a roundtable discussion on the topic 'A Professional Knowledge Based Service Culture' which was moderated by Mr Tom Doyle, Lead Customs and Border Management Specialist from Accenture. The other two panellists were Mr Jérôme Fournel, Director General of French Customs and Dato' Sri Mohamed Khalid bin Haji Yusuf, Director-General of Royal Malaysian Customs.

During the panel discussion, Mr Fong highlighted the changing role of Customs, from an enforcement agency to one that plays a vital role in facilitating international trade, and the importance of knowledge in effective decision-making. He stressed that a strong Customs-business partnership is key to ensuring a secure supply chain and enabling legitimate trade. Mr Fournel and Dato’ Sri Mohamed Khalid reiterated the importance of sharing and managing knowledge, and the forming of strategic business alliances to better understand industry needs in order to develop customised solutions for businesses.

At the close of the two-day forum, Mr Sun Yibiao, Vice Minister of GACC and Mr Kunio Mikuriya, Secretary General of the WCO emphasised that Customs administrations need to continue to enhance trade facilitation, beef up capacity-building and form effective government-business partnerships by sharing knowledge to mitigate risks and facilitate the global economic recovery.