



TRADE BEAT

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The WCO's Integrity Programme: The Revised Arusha Declaration (RAD)



The World Customs Organization (WCO) is an independent intergovernmental body which serves as an international forum for Customs administrations, where issues of common concern can be discussed and ad-

ressed. Paramount to its agenda is the issue of Customs Integrity and this has for a number of years been a high priority item that highlights the Organization's commitment to combat corruption. So important is this subject, that a comprehensive guide was established via the WCO Compendium of Integrity Best Practices that allows Customs administrations worldwide to be aligned with these measures. This Compendium is one of the WCO's tools that guides the application of the Revised Arusha Declaration (RAD) that was tabled in 1993 and was later revised in 2003.

The RAD is contained in a single page document, and sets out the key principles for a Customs administration to establish a national comprehensive integrity development programme. The RAD also outlines the negative potential impact that corruption can have on national security, revenue and confidence in government institutions. Without integrity a Customs administration would not be able to properly manage its borders, efficiently collect revenue and effectively inspire public trust. Integrity therefore has to be practiced at the national level among Customs administrators worldwide and supported at the international level through ongoing initiatives and programmes designed to maintain a trustworthy system.





WHO ?

The Customs Co-operation Council (WCO) made a declaration concerning good governance and integrity in Customs known as the Revised Arusha Declaration.

WHAT ?

The RAD provides specific elements that are designed to improve the efficiency of Member administrations and presents key factors to prevent corruption and increase their level of integrity, as "Customs administrations throughout the world perform a number of vitally important tasks on the behalf of their Governments and contribute to national goals such as revenue collection, community protection, trade facilitation and protection of national security."

WHY ?

"Integrity is a critical issue for all nations and for all Customs administrations and that the presence of corruption can severely limit Customs capacity to effectively accomplish its mission."

HOW ?

"Corruption can be combated effectively only as part of a comprehensive national effort."

The declaration affirms that a "priority for all Governments should be to ensure that Customs is free of corruption. This requires firm political will and a sustained commitment to the fight against corruption."

Developing a National Customs Integrity Programme

Key Principles

Leadership and Commitment - An effective integrity programme must be spearheaded by the head of Customs and his executive team through the implementation of integrity measures. Managers and Supervisors should be accorded appropriate levels of responsibilities and enforce the organizations stated integrity programme by setting examples to the general staff.



Regulatory Framework - "Customs laws, regulations, administrative guidelines and procedures should be harmonized and simplified to the greatest extent possible so that Customs formalities can proceed without undue burden." Therefore systems and procedures should be in accordance to the Revised Kyoto Convention, with Customs practices being reviewed and redeveloped to eliminate red tape and reduce unnecessary duplication.

Transparency - Business interactions with Customs should be predictable, with laws, procedures and guidelines made public and applied homogeneously and consistently. The basis upon which discretionary powers can be exercised should be clearly defined. Customs Decisions should be subject to review based on appeals and administrative review mechanisms.

Automation - Customs functions should be automated to increase efficiency and effectiveness while optimizing accountability and reducing opportunities for corruption. Individuals at all levels should be subject to reviews through this mechanism as it creates an audit trail.

Reform and Modernization - Obsolete and cumbersome processes should be discontinued as they create an opportunity for bribery and an outlet for "unofficial fees" to be charged for circumventing the legitimate process.



Audit and Investigation

Monitoring and Control mechanisms will encourage an environment which fosters higher levels of corporate integrity.

Code of Conduct

An established code of conduct inclusive of appropriate penalties for noncompliance should be a part of the national integrity programme outlining practical and unambiguous terms of behaviour of all Customs personnel.



Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management and Development should be implemented via processes such as merit-based selection, adequate remuneration, staff rotation and appraisal.

Morale and Organization

A fair and rewarding work environment should be created to elevate pride in work and the organizational image.

Relationship with the Private Sector

Interactions with the private sector should be open, transparent and reinforced by severe sanctions for both officials and industry players engaging in corrupt practices.

The WCO Revised Arusha Declaration had by 2003 set the benchmark for integrity development programmes among Customs administrations worldwide. Integrity was seen as an essential component of other WCO instruments and as such, was included in the 2005 WCO SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade. The framework had been mandated to manage the security and facilitation of the international supply chain and was documented as a series of standards. These standards were framed in consultation with the private sector and further demonstrated the importance of integrity within the WCO's instruments, tools and priorities. Standard 10 requires that a "Customs administration and other competent authorities should establish programmes to prevent lapses in employee integrity and to identify and combat breaches in integrity to the extent possible."

Considering the link between Customs, revenue, and valuable cargo, the opportunity for corrupt practices and susceptibility to temptation exists throughout all Customs administrations. These risks are further heightened by the potential access to funds generated through illegal trade at the international level in narcotics, arms, endangered species, counterfeit goods and human trafficking. Therefore, adopting an effective integrity programme aimed at staff ethics and accountability, reinforced by anti-corruption initiatives is likely to ameliorate the culture and corporate image of a Customs administration. These initiatives have the potential to encourage legitimate trade and create investment opportunities for a country, and as such the Revised Arusha Declaration concludes by calling upon "Customs administrations to implement comprehensive and sustainable integrity action plans based on the key principles, and on Governments, the business sector and members of the international community to support Customs in its fight against corruption."

The Revised Arusha Declaration can be accessed via the link below:

http://www.wcoomd.org/en/about-us/legal-instruments/~/_media/C16E182FC7AD454C95416856CF232D87.ashx



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