Customs capacity to fight counterfeits strengthened by WCO/GS1 cooperation agreement

Brussels, 6 September 2012

Press Release

Kunio Mikuriya, Secretary General of the World Customs Organization (WCO), and Miguel Lopera, President and Chief Executive Officer of GS1, signed a cooperation agreement on 4 September 2012 aimed at exploring ways to optimize the fight against counterfeiting and piracy.

The WCO and GS1 have agreed to maintain a continuous working relationship on all Customs related matters, particularly by leveraging the use of WCO tools and GS1 identification standards, as part of international efforts to tackle the illicit trade in counterfeit and pirated goods.

The Interface Public-Members (IPM) tool was launched by the WCO in 2010 to enhance communication between Customs and rights holders, facilitate the sharing of information, and strengthen the capacity of Customs officials to better combat counterfeiting and piracy.

GS1 standards enable the unique and unambiguous identification of items which leads to reduced costs and increased security, both vital benefits for Customs and business in the 21st century international trading environment.

"Faced by the growing trade in counterfeit goods, the WCO and its Members are determined to work with GS1 and other concerned organizations to fight this menace in order to protect the health and safety of consumers across the globe," said WCO Secretary General, Kunio Mikuriya.

Secretary General Mikuriya added, "This cooperation agreement with GS1 not only enables the WCO to enhance IPM, as well as continue strengthening Customs’ capacity, it is also proof of the usefulness of this WCO anti-counterfeiting and piracy tool to our private sector partners."

"With the GS1 System of Standards and our overall expertise in supply chain management, GS1 can help Customs agencies improve their capacity to detect counterfeit products," said GS1 President and CEO, Miguel Lopera.

President Lopera added, "By leveraging the GS1 Barcode, all brand owners, not only for luxury goods but also for consumer and healthcare products, will have the opportunity to work with Customs to protect their brand, consumers and patients alike."

Through the cooperation agreement, the WCO and GS1 aim to achieve the following common objectives:

- Identify potential joint projects and concrete measures to promote and facilitate the use of GS1 global identification and traceability standards in the fight against counterfeiting and piracy by Customs and other law enforcement agencies;
- Design, implement and deploy a new IPM functionality based on GS1 Identification Numbers that will enable counterfeit products to be identified, including identification using mobile devices;
- Conduct a two-year pilot, with the cooperation of interested WCO Members, on the use of GS1 identification standards by Customs and other law enforcement agencies to capture coded data, including via mobile devices, in order to help identify potential counterfeits.

GS1 and the WCO have a long-standing relationship and have cooperated on a number of mutually beneficial Customs related issues, underpinned by the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed between the two organizations in November 2007.
More information

About GS1
GS1 is a neutral, not-for-profit, international organisation that develops global standards and solutions to improve the efficiency and visibility of supply chains across industries. It engages a global community of trading partners, industry organizations and technology providers to understand their business needs and develops global standards in response to those needs. GS1 is driven by close to two million user companies, which execute more than six billion transactions daily in 150 countries using GS1 standards. GS1 has local Member Organizations in over 110 countries. Its head office is in Brussels. For more information: www.gs1.org or email TL@gs1.org.

About WCO
The World Customs Organization (WCO), with its 178 Members across the globe responsible for processing approximately 98% of global trade, is the only intergovernmental organization uniquely focused on Customs matters. Recognized as the voice of the Customs community, the WCO is particularly noted for its work in areas covering the development of global standards, the simplification and harmonization of Customs procedures, supply chain security, enforcement and compliance and Customs capacity building, as well as the Harmonized System, Customs valuation and rules of origin. For more information: www.wcoomd.org or email communication@wcoomd.org.