

WTO asks Customs Officers for more Nimble Footwork in New E-commerce World

“Customs has a key role in making trade seamless, safe and secure,” stated WTO Deputy Director-General Anabel González at a 20 January hearing of the European Union’s Wise Persons Group on Challenges Facing the Customs Union.

DDG González observed that customs authorities need to respond and adjust to changes in the global trade landscape brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, rapid technological developments, geopolitical tensions and climate change. She added that the role of customs was becoming increasingly complex, and that customs officials were being continuously asked to do more in areas ranging from product and food safety standards, climate, deforestation and endangered species to veterinary regulations, fake goods, drug precursors and even labour standards and human rights.

DDG González emphasized that customs practices must be more nimble, innovative and forward-looking to meet the challenges of the 21st century and stay ahead of the curve. While e-commerce provided new export opportunities for small businesses, a wider choice and lower prices for consumers, customs administrations everywhere were being stretched thin by the massive increase in the quantity of e-commerce parcels, she noted DDG González said customs reform needs to focus on better coordination with other agencies, expanded use and analysis of data and modern technologies, closer partnerships with supply chain participants and greater cooperation with third countries. She also said that the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation provided a useful framework to modernize customs.

DDG González said that the European Union Customs Union, as the most advanced customs union in the world, was well positioned to address these challenges and show the way ahead, given its long history of cooperation and sharing of common experiences among its member states.

Source: The World Trade Scanner