

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES  
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

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Forty-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 12-15 March 2002

Integrated Training of Customs Officials

INFORMATION NOTE PRESENTED BY THE UNEP SECRETARIAT

1. The capacity building of customs officials, who are at the forefront of every country's efforts to combat illegal trade in commodities of environmental concern, is vital but also expensive and time-consuming. Training is a key component of capacity building. The World Customs Organization (WCO) offers extensive training to customs officers with the objective of ensuring the implementation and uniform application of the customs conventions that it administers. The Secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements that have trade provisions, such as the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, have already instituted training programmes for customs officials, in cooperation with the WCO, at both the national and regional levels. Customs officer training is also anticipated to be an important element of the national implementation of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, once these enter into force.
2. In UNEP Governing Council Decision 21/27 on "Compliance with and enforcement of multilateral environmental agreements", the Council expressed concern that environmental damage caused by illegal traffic in endangered species and dangerous and harmful substances and products is growing. It also recognized that continuous efforts are required to be undertaken by all countries and relevant organizations and operational agencies concerned in ensuring compliance with and enforcement of multilateral environmental agreements, such as the International Criminal Police Organization, the World Customs Organization, the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the convention Secretariats.
3. The Council requested the Executive Director of UNEP to continue the preparation of the draft guidelines on compliance with multilateral environmental agreements, on capacity strengthening, and on effective national environmental enforcement, in support of the ongoing developments of compliance regimes within the framework of international agreements. The draft guidelines, which are to be submitted to the Governing Council for its consideration at its seventh special session in 2002, specifically suggest that States consider training of customs officers and other officials to enhance their capability to enforce their laws implementing multilateral environmental agreements.
4. A workshop on "Codes, Contraband and Cooperation: Working with Customs Authorities to Implement Environmental Treaties", convened by UNEP in Geneva in June 2001, served as a forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences among treaty Secretariats, customs authorities, non-government organizations and experts on the issue of illegal trade in commodities of environmental concern. The workshop participants recognized the benefits of a coordinated approach among treaty Secretariats, and between Secretariats, implementing agencies, and the WCO in areas such as training, enforcement, exchange of information and

awareness raising. Some activities that were suggested during the workshop included national and regional integrated training workshops when possible, preparation of integrated training materials where appropriate, and the development of links between MEA web-sites.

5. Under the Multilateral Fund of the Montreal Protocol, UNEP DTIE's OzonAction Programme has launched a world wide national customs training to monitor and control Ozone Depleting Substances. The partnership with regional customs training institutions has been established to deliver more than 40 customs training programmes in as many countries. The Secretariat of the Basel Convention is already planning to hold training workshops at its regional centres, jointly with the Secretariats of CITES and the Montreal Protocol, Interpol, the International Maritime Organization, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and UNEP. Similarly, other Secretariats are also exploring the possibilities of joint training.
6. On 1 October 2001, UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Environment (DTIE) and Division of Environmental Conventions (DEC), acting on the recommendation from the June workshop, convened a meeting in Paris with the WCO, Secretariats of the Basel, CITES, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, and the Montreal Protocol's Ozone Secretariat. The objective was to develop a plan of action to integrate the training of customs officers on several environmental treaties. The following actions were agreed.
  - UNEP/DTIE was authorized to facilitate planning of integrated training for the year 2002 with the objective of completing some training by 2003. Secretariats committed to participate in the training where it was acceptable to them, and to meet their respective proportionate costs.
  - UNEP/DTIE agreed to provide a Facilitator, supported financially by DTIE and DEC, initially working half-time for a six-month period, to further cooperation among Secretariats.
  - The Secretariats of the CITES and Basel Conventions agreed to make in kind contributions to this initiative, and consider possible financial contributions. If integrated training works well in 2002, UNEP will assist Secretariats to prepare a common implementation programme for 2003 and beyond.
  - The Facilitator will compile a list of current Secretariat and WCO training facilities, trainers, and training programmes and, in consultation with the WCO and the Convention Secretariats, develop a common training module for use in 2003. The substance and targets for the training will be decided by the Secretariats. WCO will seek in kind support from national customs authorities, such as the use of national training facilities.
  - The preparation of a "Green Customs manual" will be considered.
  - Training workshops planned by the Secretariat of the Basel Convention and the OzonAction Programme for November 2001 in Romania and India were used as opportunities to begin to introduce the integrated training concept. These initial efforts strengthened the collaborative efforts of the Secretariats and provided valuable lessons in integrated training in regard to the approach, training content, and pedagogic issues, training methodologies and training tools.
  - A pool of customs officials is to be identified to undergo specialized training to further their capacity to monitor implementation and compliance of environmental treaties in their respective countries and regions.
  - Distance (remote) training techniques are to be developed simultaneously with the common training module, and incorporated into the regular curricula of customs training academies.

- The possibility of securing GEF funding to support this initiative is to be explored.
  - Joint customs campaigns were suggested as a means of demonstrating that integrated training can produce results in the field. Fact-sheets on the individual training programmes of the various conventions are to be placed on the UNEP web-sites to immediately begin to link Secretariats training activities.
  - Opportunities for awareness - raising among parliamentarians, finance ministers, non-government organizations, and industrial associations will be explored by UNEP and the Secretariats.
  - UNEP will explore the use of the Internet to disseminate information to help combat illegal trade.
  - An Inter-Secretariat Task Force has been established, coordinated by UNEP, to review progress on this initiative on a regular basis.
7. UNEP is open to receiving comments and suggestions with regard to its future involvement with the integrated training of customs officials.
  8. UNEP is open to receiving comments and suggestions with regard to additional action it might take on the recommendations from the 28-29 June 2001 workshop on "Codes, Contraband and Cooperation: Working with Customs Authorities to Implement Environmental Treaties". A copy of the workshop recommendations is appended to this information note.
  9. This information note is submitted by UNEP at the request of the Inter-Secretariat Task Force with a view to seeking guidance from Meetings and Conferences of the Parties on the integrated training initiative.
  10. More information on UNEPs work to strengthen national capacity to implement multilateral environmental agreements through customs officials can be obtained from Atul Bagai, UNEP/DTIE ([atul.bagai@unep.fr](mailto:atul.bagai@unep.fr)) and John Hilborn, UNEP/DEC ([john.hilborn@unep.org](mailto:john.hilborn@unep.org)).

Extract from the Report on the UNEP "Workshop on Codes, Contraband and Co-operation:  
Working with Customs Authorities to Implement Environmental Treaties"  
held at  
International Environment House, Geneva, 28-29 June 2001

Recommendations

The participants reviewed the key points that had been raised during the previous two days presentations and discussions, and on that basis formulated the following recommendations to the Secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements.

1. The workshop acknowledged the many benefits that can be gained through strengthening the capacity of Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) Secretariats by including persons with operational enforcement and compliance experience in the staff of MEA secretariats, and recommended that this practice should become more widespread, taking into account the particular area of each agreement.
2. The Contracting Parties of the MEAs should be encouraged to set the combating of environmental crime as a priority for their national enforcement agencies.
3. The workshop acknowledged the many benefits of the World Customs Organization (WCO) Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (Harmonized System) and encouraged close working relationships between MEA secretariats and the WCO in that respect.
4. The workshop recognized the benefits of a coordinated approach among MEA secretariats, and between MEA Secretariats, implementing agencies, and the WCO Secretariat in areas such as training, enforcement, exchange of information and experiences, and awareness-raising. Some activities which were suggested during the workshop include:
  - National and regional integrated training workshops when possible
  - Preparation of integrated training materials where appropriate
  - Development of links between MEA existing websites
5. The workshop recognized the special requirements of individual States, in particular in the area of training and noted the need to ensure the most efficient use of human and financial resources through an integrated approach to training.
6. The workshop acknowledged the importance of formal and informal networking and the establishment of contact points to facilitate timely exchange of information.
7. The workshop suggested further exploration of modalities to address the problems of monitoring and control of goods covered by MEAs, in free trade zones and free ports.
8. The workshop recognized the value of profiling and risk analysis, in particular by means of automated systems, for targeting illegal trade and encouraged the exchange of experience between the MEA Secretariats and between States on this issue.