

Speech by Hon Rimsky YUEN, SC, JP
Secretary for Justice
at the 2017 International Customs Day Celebration
(20 January 2017, Friday)

Mr. Commissioner [Roy Tang], Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to be here with you this evening to celebrate the 2017 International Customs Day. On behalf of the Hong Kong SAR Government, may I extend our warmest welcome to all of you, especially those who came from the Mainland and Macao and also our friends from the various consulates in Hong Kong.

2. Hong Kong has been rated as the world's freest economy as well as one of the most business-friendly cities. These remarkable results do not come easily, but are due to (among others) our world-class infrastructure, the rule of law, open market, free flow of information, capital and goods, clean government and a level playing field for all businesses. Nevertheless, if I may stress, it is also due in no small part to our hassle-free and user-friendly Customs service.

3. Globalization and technological advances are two of the key driving forces which are changing the world landscape as well as human activities. Of the two of them, I believe advance of technologies may have the most significant impact on our daily life, as well as how we regulate many aspects of human inter-actions. Nowadays, expressions such as "Big Data" and "the Internet of Things" are trendy words that are on many people's lips.

4. As you would know, the theme for the 2017 International Customs Day ("ICD") celebration is "*Data Analysis*", and the World Customs Organization ("WCO") has dedicated 2017 to promoting data analysis under the slogan "*Data Analysis for Effective Border Management*". I am sure that the WCO chose this theme not because it wants to be seen as fashionable. Rather, as experience and research reveal, there is plainly a pressing need to explore this area in the context of customs management and control, and thus the theme of "*Data Analysis*" could not have come at a more opportune moment.

5. It is certainly no exaggeration to say that technology has turned our customary practices upside down. Customs offences are becoming more transnational and better organized. The business sector demands more efficient and facilitative services. As a major international transport hub, Hong Kong participates actively in the WCO and contributes towards international efforts to promote trade facilitation as well as supply chain security.

6. To strike the right balance between robust law enforcement on the one hand and trade facilitation on the other, our Customs has followed the international customs trend of going hi-tech by deploying modern intelligence analysis techniques and new equipment to help them target increasingly sophisticated and globalized professional crime syndicates, while minimizing inconvenience to *bona fide* business activities, passengers and the public.

7. As an open and international city, Hong Kong Customs will of course actively cooperate with other customs authorities and participate in international anti-terrorism and anti-money laundering initiatives to fight against cross-border crimes and promote safe and secure trade.

8. Looking ahead, Hong Kong will soon introduce a bill to establish a reporting system on the physical cross-boundary transportation of large quantities of currency and bearer negotiable instruments. The purpose of the bill is to detect and stop the physical movement of illicit funds across our borders. This is an important effort in fulfilling Hong Kong's international obligations established under Recommendation 32 ("R32") of the Financial Action Task Force to tackle the growing global concern of terrorist financing and money laundering, and our Customs will shoulder the responsibility to enforce this system at our 12 control points.

9. Further, as the Commissioner just mentioned, the Government is also actively working on the Single-Window Project, whereby (among others) a central IT platform will be set up to receive business-to-government electronic submissions of documents for meeting regulatory requirements for all trade documents, submissions for the trading of goods into, out of and through Hong Kong.

10. While Hong Kong Customs will spare no efforts in discharging its duties, the Department of Justice will be there to provide the requisite support. As a "joint-up" government, we work closely with all law enforcement agencies including the C&E, although we remain truly independent when it comes to issues concerning criminal prosecutions.

11. Ladies and gentlemen, in a moment, we will be presenting, on behalf of the WCO, Certificates of Merit to Customs officers who have dedicated commitment and remarkable contributions towards the theme of this year. We are very proud of these officers for their efforts and contributions in furthering the success and prosperity of Hong Kong.

12. At the same time, if I may also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the outstanding work of all our Customs officers as well as all the supporting staff, for their round-the-clock professional and high-quality services in enforcing the law and contributing to Hong Kong's success in becoming a dynamic city with vibrant activities in trade, business, finance, tourism and logistics.

13. Lastly, since Chinese New Year is just round the corner, may I wish you all a happy and prosperous year.

Thank you.