

**Speech by Ms Teresa Cheng, SC
Secretary for Justice
2019 International Customs Day Reception
25 January 2019 (Friday)**

Commissioner Tang (Mr Hermes Tang, Commissioner of Customs and Excise), Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honour to join you this afternoon in celebration of the establishment of the World Customs Organization (WCO) in 1953.

2. First of all, on behalf of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, I would like to extend our warmest welcome to all of you, especially those from the Mainland and Macao, and our friends from various consulates in Hong Kong.

3. This year, the theme for the International Customs Day (ICD) is “SMART borders for seamless Trade, Travel and Transport”. The WCO introduces the concept of “SMART borders” aiming to strengthen the whole-of-government endeavor to facilitate cross-border flow of people, goods and means of transport.

4. Just now, Commissioner Tang has shared his visions and the key to success rests with five letters “S”, “M”, “A”, “R” and “T”¹. This theme is particularly timely and relevant when the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area has become a hot topic.

5. The land, maritime and aviation networks within the Greater Bay Area are improving, in particular with the opening of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, and the

¹ The letters stand for "Secure, Measurable, Automated, Risk Management-based and Technology-driven".

Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link. The flourishing free flow of people and goods across the region poses challenges to the Customs but at the same time creates opportunity to develop a secure and innovative customs regime.

6. Hong Kong is a leading international trade centre and logistics hub. We are the seventh largest trading entity in the world with total merchandise trade reached HK\$8.2 trillion in 2017. To this end, Hong Kong Customs faithfully abide by their motto of “Commitment and Excellence” in discharging their duties with a view to upholding Hong Kong’s trading integrity and nurturing a favourable environment for business to thrive.

Gatekeeper and Facilitator

7. Hong Kong Customs has been playing an important role in protecting our borders. They are responsible for implementing a wide range of government policies spanning areas as diverse as border security, revenue collection, anti-smuggling and enforcement of intellectual property laws.

8. To function effectively, Customs needs to work smart in mastering the dual role of both a gatekeeper and a facilitator. I believe the key rests with an innovative customs regime and a close partnership with counterparts and industry stakeholders.

Innovative Customs Regime

9. In the 21st century, we live in an increasingly integrated and “borderless” world. The evolution of technology is re-defining the boundaries and changing the way how the world is doing business. Hong Kong Customs has embraced innovation and technology with a view to ensuring fast and efficient customs procedures at the borders.

10. One of the measures introduced by Hong Kong Customs is the successful implementation of the “Single e-lock Scheme” which aims to reduce repeated inspection on the same shipment by the Customs in Hong Kong and the Mainland.

11. Hong Kong Customs is now actively exploring with

the Mainland Customs the extension of the Scheme to more customs clearance points in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

12. To further facilitate trade in goods, Hong Kong Customs has implemented Phase 1 of the Trade Single Window last month to provide a one-stop electronic platform for the lodging of trade documents and expedite trade declaration and customs clearance.

Close Partnership

13. Over the years, what has made our borders work more smoothly is not just technology but collaboration. Hong Kong Customs has actively pursued strategic alliance with other counterparts around the world and with the business sector in achieving win-win solutions.

14. On customs-to-customs partnership, Hong Kong Customs has signed 25 customs cooperation arrangements with other Customs administrations which form a solid foundation for the international co-operation to tackle more effectively cross-border crimes such as drug trafficking, money laundering and customs fraud.

15. On customs-to-business partnership, the Hong Kong Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Programme helps to develop consensus on reform priorities and to improve Customs' performance by aligning their actions with the expectations and demands of the business sector. The AEO Programme is administered under a voluntary certification regime which is open to all stakeholders involved in the international supply chain. Companies accredited as AEO will enjoy priority clearance of their

shipments and reduced inspection at the boundary. I am pleased to note that the AEO prioritized clearance facility has recently been set up at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge² to enhance smoother integration of the three places.

Closing

16. The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area has great potential to become one of the world's most dynamic bay areas with tremendous opportunities. I believe Hong Kong Customs has an important role to play in the creation of smart borders for seamless trade, travel and transport in the Greater Bay Area.

17. In a moment, I will present the Certificates of Merit on behalf of the WCO to customs officers who have

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https://www.customs.gov.hk/en/trade_facilitation/aeo/update/publication/index_20181121.html

dedicated commitment and remarkable contributions towards the theme of this year. Building on the experiences and knowledge accumulated since its establishment 110 years ago, I am confident that Hong Kong Customs will continue to contribute to the prosperity and safety of our city in the many years to come.

18. As the Chinese New Year is just around the corner, may I wish you and your family a happy, healthy and prosperous Year of the Pig.

Thank you.