

International Customs Day 2022

“Scaling up Customs Digital Transformation by Embracing a Data Culture and Building a Data Ecosystem”

Message from the Honorable Lyonpo Namgay Tshering Ministry of Finance



Since Bhutan became a member of the World Customs Organization (WCO) in 2002, we have been celebrating International Customs Day (ICD) every year on 26 January, to honour the contributions of the global Customs community and in particular, our own Customs family in DRC. Our customs officials are one of the key front-liners at the border who not only facilitate legitimate international trade and collect revenue, but also ensure the safety and security of the society and nation at large. This has ever been more imperative and evident from the on-going COVID-19 pandemic that we are enduring today and I thank you all for your dedication, hard work and sacrifices.

This indeed gives me great pleasure to celebrate this year's ICD and I am also

pleased to know that the theme; “Scaling up Customs Digital Transformation by Embracing a Data Culture and Building a Data Ecosystem”, is firstly in line with His Majesty The King's aspirations to embrace the use of advanced technologies. Secondly, it rightly fits with the various initiatives that the Department has embarked upon and finally, it sets the right scene for the development of electronic – Customs Management System (e-CMS) which may go-live sometime this year.

Reflecting on the theme and the WCO's Secretary General's message, the focus for this year seems to be on data which in this fast-growing digital era, is a very important element. It is well known that Customs globally holds an enormous amount of data in terms of cross border international trade

which is the very foundation for meaningful policy and decision-making process, efficient resource allocation, and effective public service delivery. Thus, it is very critical and timely that as we introduce new systems like Bhutan Integrated Taxation System (BITS) and electronic Customs Management System (e-CMS), we also need to focus on developing high-quality data by embracing a dynamic data culture and building a viable data ecosystem. In order to consider this, the WCO has suggested some enabling actions to be taken which I recommend you all to take into consideration. I assure you that while moving towards this path, BIG DATA will be the cornerstone and the foundation that could show us the path in the right direction.

I would also like to echo WCO's Secretary General's

message: “In order to nurture a data-driven culture, administrations need to enhance the data-literacy of their staff - in other words, their ability to interpret and analyze data accurately.” It would be interesting if we too could explore the possibility to provide capacity building programs, especially for the newly recruited officials, on technology-based subjects that largely do not require technical IT knowledge like ‘data science, analytics, etc.’. In order to support its Member Customs administrations in these areas, WCO has planned to provide a lot of technical assistance and capacity building programs which I urge you all to take advantage of. I have been told that in the near future, WCO will be offering training programs on Data Science with financial support for

developing countries and I hope that you all will try your best to avail this important opportunity.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to you all for working tirelessly with full commitment and loyalty in this challenging COVID-19 period and I hope that we continue with the same spirit. Finally, I am very happy and blessed to celebrate this year's ICD with you all, and I wish you and the global Customs community a very HAPPY INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMS DAY.

I hope and pray that the pandemic ends before this day next year so that we can all celebrate the International Customs Day together.

**THANK YOU AND
TASHI DELEK!**

