Dear colleagues,

Security concerns and responses to them continue to have a strong impact on international trade. The United Nations, the World Customs Organization, other intergovernmental agencies, Governments, and business organizations have recently launched several initiatives to address these issues. Trade security was one of the major themes at UNECE’s International Forum on Trade Facilitation in May this year and has been addressed in a Task Force of the WCO over the past 15 months.

Ensuring the efficient and secure flow of trade is of primary concern to both UNECE and WCO. In order to contribute to this dual goal of trade facilitation and security UNECE and WCO invite you to participate in an international conference on Trade Facilitation and Security on November 13-14, 2003, in Geneva.

The theme of this conference is facilitating trade within a secure environment. The main objectives are to:

- Review, from both a trade and governmental perspective, the overall extent and coverage of current intergovernmental, national and business initiatives in trade facilitation and security;
- Examine the potential for co-ordinating these initiatives to ensure that all concerned organisations have a joined up collaborative approach to covering the entire trade transaction process from both a trade facilitation and security perspective;
- Consider the potential impact of these initiatives on trade and trade facilitation;
- Provide an opportunity for governments and trade to raise any specific concerns regarding the overall direction of this work and to identify any possible gaps that need to be addressed.

The expected outcomes are as follows:

- Opportunities for co-ordinating of initiatives identified and concrete follow-up actions agreed to realize these opportunities;
- Identification of possible problem areas and concrete follow-up actions agreed to address these areas;
- Concerns of trade, and governments, especially governments from transition and developing countries, noted and strategies to address these concerns identified;
- Security gaps in the supply chain identified and possible approaches to the development of remedial standards/tools/initiatives agreed.
We are inviting all leading intergovernmental agencies, business organizations and UNECE member states to participate in this conference, which we believe will complement the existing work being undertaken by WCO, UNECE and other related organizations. We think you will agree that this promises to be a most important and useful conference and hope that you or your representative will be able to attend.

A draft agenda for the conference is attached. Further details can be obtained from Mr. Mario Apostolov, the event coordinator. Mr. Apostolov can be contacted at mario.apostolov@unece.org; phone: +41 22 9171134; fax +41 22 9170037

We look forward to your support for and participation in this important initiative.

Yours sincerely,

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