

**ACTIVITIES OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND COUNTRIES OF INTEREST
TO THE WORKING PARTY**

Comments on the US Chamber of Commerce (USCoC) document
"Balancing Security and trade facilitation in the 21 Century Global Supply Chain"

Note by the WCO secretariat

1. At the outset we should point out that the US Chamber of Commerce document has not yet been the subject of an in-depth study by the Secretariat or its Members. The document was briefly introduced by the US CoC at the last Permanent Technical Committee (PTC) meeting (12 – 14 November 2008) and on that occasion elicited no comment.
2. At the time of the PTC, the USCoC advised that their paper had not yet formally been endorsed by the International Chambers of Commerce. (ICC) The WCO Secretariat suggested to the USCoC that the most appropriate forum for discussion of the document at the WCO was in the SAFE Working Group (SWG). This Group is composed of Customs Administrations, business representatives and various internal organizations and is charged with the maintenance and development of SAFE. The next meeting is scheduled to be held from 22 -23 April 2009.. The WCO would expect the USCoC paper to be formally tabled to that meeting by the ICC, in which case a full and open discussion will be held.
3. Bearing in mind the above constraints the WCO offers the following background information and preliminary comments.
 - 155 of the WCO s 174 members have to date undertaken to implement SAFE. This undertaking is being supported by one of the largest Capacity Building programmes ever undertaken in this Organization (the Columbus Programme). Currently the WCO is also working on a step by step, practical implementation guide to further assist, in particular, the WCO developing Members. We intend also to produce a compendium of AEO programmes which are on –stream for the guidance of others.
 - Implementation of SAFE is a gradual process, in accordance with WCO Members' capabilities and supported, where requested, over the long term by appropriate Capacity Building initiatives.

- Mutual Recognition of AEO status is one of the principle long term goals of SAFE. Already Mutual Recognition Agreements(MRAs) have been signed by the US and New Zealand, US and Jordan, US and Canada and New Zealand and Japan. The EU – US have a target of 2009 for an MRA and a number of other countries and Customs Unions such as APEC Members are actively negotiating MRAs
- TIR (the ‘preferred multilateral mechanism for WCO SAFE Framework implementation’ - Mr Thomas J. Donahue, May 2, 2008) is not administered by the WCO, essentially covers road transport and has 56 Contracting Parties. This does not square with the multi-modal, global reach of SAFE. We feel also it is likely that the use of one Convention to ‘implement’ an entirely separate Instrument may lead to legal difficulties.

4. The WCO of course welcomes the comments of WP 30 and the TIR Committee in particular in order to allow for a future balanced debate of the issue where all views may be taken into account.
