



IP(88) 666

**PRESSE-MEDDELELSE • MITTEILUNG AN DIE PRESSE • PRESS-RELEASE • INFORMATION A LA PRESSE
ΑΝΑΚΟΙΝΩΣΗ ΓΙΑ ΤΟΝ ΤΥΠΟ • INFORMAZIONE ALLA STAMPA • MEDEDELING AAN DE PERS**

Brussels, 3 November 1988

Eighth EC/US Bilateral Customs Meeting

441.2(103)
+ 443.11

On 24 and 25 October 1988 in Brussels, Mr. Emilio Rui Vilar, Director-General of Customs Union and Indirect Taxation at the Commission of the European Communities and Mr. William von Raab, U.S. Commissioner of Customs, met to discuss questions of common interest to their two services. At this meeting, which was the eighth to be held since 1980, Mr. Vilar and Mr. von Raab were accompanied by senior members of their respective staffs, and for the first time Canada was also represented, by Mrs. Barbara Hébert, Director of Departmental and International Affairs, Customs & Excise.

In an increasingly complex world economic system, in which growing volumes of trade produce an ever greater interdependence between trading partners, there are many subjects on which information can be exchanged, new ideas examined and experience shared to the mutual benefit of the customs administrations, whose organization and procedures must keep pace with the changing environment in which they operate.

The Commission's representatives provided information about the Community's plans for the completion of the internal market and their implications for trade between the Community and third countries, stressing that Europe 1992 will not be a fortress but a world partner.

The Commission was also able to offer information about its experience in implementing the International Convention on the Harmonized System in the Community since 1 January 1988. The USA will implement the Convention from 1 January 1989.

The American delegation explained the new arrangements for the exchange of trade statistics between the USA and Canada as a means of ensuring greater reliability of previously inaccurate export data. It was agreed that the USA and the EC should explore the possibility of using each other's statistics for imports from the other partner as the basis for compiling more accurate export statistics.

In an exchange of views on customs automation the US delegation was able to provide considerable detail of its computerized operations, which have produced significant progress towards a paperless environment, in which direct input of information into a computer system replaces written declarations. The EC team explained the Community's own ambitious objectives in this area and the measures already taken or planned. Both sides agreed on the need to continue

their close cooperation on electronic data exchange, within the framework of the UN EDIFACT project. They also exchanged opinions on legal problems associated with the replacement of traditional declarations by electronic means.

The current situations in the European Community and in the USA were also examined with respect to control of counterfeit goods and measures to combat the "laundering" of cash obtained from various kinds of illicit operation of interest to customs (such as drug smuggling). These are fields in which both partners can benefit from more frequent and informative exchanges of information. It was also agreed that mutual assistance could be strengthened.

The Community and American delegations agreed that meetings of this kind should continue to be held on annual basis.