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Combating International Environmental Crime Spotlighthed at China's Customs College

UNEP and World Customs Organisation Begin Cooperation with Shanghai Centre of Customs Excellence

Shanghai/Nairobi, 16 May 2007- Efforts to assist customs officers deal with multi-billion dollar environmental crime are being stepped up in the Asia Pacific region with help from experts in China.

The initiative, involving UNEP, secretariats of the Multilateral Environment Agreements, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and Interpol, is aimed at equipping customs officials with the necessary skills and know-how to address this growing problem.

A workshop, being held this week at the Shanghai Customs College, underlines cooperation that it is hoped will become a lasting partnership between China customs officials and the other partners.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said at the meeting that: "Customs are in the frontline, expected to maximize the benefits society can derive from the globalized trading system while also expected to minimize the risks and threats that trade can pose - threats from illegal trade in banned or restricted chemicals up to managing movements of living modified organisms and the illegal trade in rare and endangered wildlife".

He said China, with some 50,000 customs officials and an increasingly important role in international trade and global political life, could make a key contribution in this field.

Environmental crime and illegal trade is, by some estimates, valued at tens of billion if not well over 100 billion dollars a year.

A wide range of chemicals, including persistent organic pollutants and ones that deplete the ozone layer, are now controlled, banned or subject to phase outs under multilateral environmental agreements.

These measures are aimed at protecting public health and the wider environment but also present opportunities for unscrupulous individuals and organized crime which the Green Customs Initiative seeks to address.

Meanwhile treaties such as the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), cover trade in wildlife as part of a range of international measures to allow legitimate trade in animals and plants and restrict or outlaw trade in species under threat.

Mr Steiner said it was impressive that a treaty like CITES had, over the decades, become as relevant to customs officials work as tackling illegal trade in arms, drugs and trafficking in humans.

The four-day Shanghai workshop, taking place at the Shanghai Customs College, aims to 'train the trainers' from regional customs agencies. It is a concrete example of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and



Further Resources

- [Green Customs](#)
- Information and training materials for customs officials to combat illegal trade in commodities of environmental concern.
- [UNEP Division of Environmental Law and Conventions \(DEL/C\)](#)
- [World Customs Organisation \(WCO\)](#)
- [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#)
- [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\)](#)
- [Interpol](#)
- [Rotterdam Convention \(PIC\)](#)
- [Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants \(POPs\)](#)
- [UNEP China Office](#)

Capacity Building.

Mr Steiner added: " For UNEP, working with organizations like WCO, Conventions, national governments and customs colleges in order to empower professionals to carry out their work to even higher standards is a critical part of our work? a critical part of building an institutional and legal framework at the global level that turns globalization into an economic opportunity with benefits not for the few but for the many".

Notes to Editors

<http://www.greencustoms.org/>

For More Information Please Contact Nick Nuttall, UNEP Spokesperson, on Tel: +254 20 7623084, Mobile: +254 733 632755, E-mail: nick.nuttall@unep.org or Satwant Kaur, Information Officer, UNEP Regional Office Asia Pacific, on Tel: + 662 288 2127, E-mail: kaur@un.org



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