BIOGRAPHIES

DAY 1: 29 October 2026

MASTER OF CEREMONIES



Mr. Adrian SWARRES
Deputy Director, Enforcement, Facilitation & Technology, WCO

Adrian Peter Swarres worked in his national customs administration for 35 years before he joined the World Customs Organization in February 2026. Over the years he has amassed a vast knowledge of international trade, regional integration, Harmonized System of classification, rules of origin, customs valuation, trade facilitation, customs and border enforcement, customs procedures and legislation, and Customs modernization. He has been very instrumental in the modernization efforts of his National Customs Administration through the use of advanced technologies and automation. At regional and continental level, he contributed greatly through his attendance and active participation in regional and continental events and meetings, including those for Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Africa Union Commission (AUC), and African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). He is a past Chairperson of the Africa Union Sub-Committee of Director Generals of Customs, and a past Vice Chair for the World Customs Organization East and Southern Africa Region. He is also an accredited WCO Technical and Operational Advisor (TOA) in Single Window.

BIOGRAPHIES

OPENING CEREMONY

Opening Remarks



Mr. Ricardo TREVIÑO CHAPA

Deputy Secretary General, World Customs Organization (WCO)

Since January 2018, after being elected for the first time (he was re-elected in 2022 for a second term) by the WCO Council, Ricardo Treviño Chapa has held the post of Deputy Secretary General. During this time, he has driven an important change in the Organization through the definition and implementation of its Strategic Plan by maintaining the relevance of its mission and vision statement and achieving focus on strategic areas, core customs functions and emerging trends. In his role as Deputy Secretary General, he is part of the Management team that oversees and coordinates activities for the development of customs policies and standards as well as for the delivery of capacity building and technical assistance. Before joining WCO, in 2015 Ricardo Treviño was appointed as General Administrator of Customs by the President of Mexico, with ratification by the Senate. During his tenure, Mr. Treviño Chapa promoted digitalization of Customs procedures as well as cooperation with other border agencies and with the Customs administrations of Mexico's main trading partners. In addition, he ensured that the effectiveness of Mexico's risk alert system was enhanced through the implementation of technology and data analysis, with a positive impact on revenue collection. During this period, he also performed as the WCO Vice-Chair for the Americas and Caribbean region and, in this capacity, coordinated the first ever regional Strategic Plan to promote and implement WCO tools and instruments. With a public sector career spanning over almost 25 years, he served in several positions for Mexico's Government: as Administrator General of Evaluation and Internal Affairs of the Federal Tax Administration Service, as Director General for Revenue Collection and Director General of the Social Security Institute for the State of Mexico's Government and before this in different capacities within the national Institute for Protection of Bank Savings. Ricardo Treviño Chapa holds a bachelor's degree in finance from the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey in Mexico (Tec de Monterrey) and a Master's degree in Global Banking and International Finance from the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom.

BIOGRAPHIES

OPENING CEREMONY

Keynote Speech



Ms. Xueyan GUO

Director General, International Cooperation Department
General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC)

Xueyan Guo has extensive experience in bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the areas of standardization, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, and customs management. She previously served at the Permanent Mission of China to the World Trade Organization (WTO). She has held several senior positions within China's customs and quality supervision authorities, including: August 2012 – Deputy Director General, Department of International Cooperation, General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ). June 2023 – Director General, Bureau of Import and Export Food Safety, GACC. September 2024 – Director General, Department of International Cooperation, GACC.

OPENING CEREMONY

Keynote Speech



Mr. Eduard HAKOBYAN

Chairman, State Revenue Committee of Armenia

Eduard Hakobyan began his professional career at the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Armenia, advancing through the ranks from junior specialist to Deputy Minister. Since 2024, he has led the State Revenue Committee, driving a strategic agenda focused on systemic reforms, knowledge-based governance and results-oriented public policy. A PhD in Economics and a specialist in macroeconomic policy and forecasting, Mr. Hakobyan studied and later lectured at the Armenian State University of Economics. He has further enhanced his expertise through professional development at the Fletcher School at Tufts University and by participating in specialized programs of the International Monetary Fund, effectively integrating academic rigor with practical experience in public administration.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 1

Moderator



Ms. Gael GROOBY

Director, Policy and Standards Directorate, WCO

Gael Grooby serves as Director, Policy and Standards at the World Customs Organization (WCO). In this role she directs the development, implementation and maintenance of international conventions, standards, and tools related to the work of Customs administrations. Her work includes providing counsel to the Deputy Secretary General and Secretary General on matters relating to the Directorate. Ms Grooby joined the WCO in 2017, after 27 years in Australia's Customs administration; she has a long and varied background in Customs and brings an outlook grounded in practical Customs knowledge and a focus on real-world results. The Policy and Standards Directorate unites the development of international tools for Customs administrations under a single directorate for the first time in the WCO's history. This recognizes the interdependencies and cross-cutting aspects of work in the different customs fields. Ms Grooby is focused on ensuring work is informed by a holistic view of the customs and trade environment that Customs administrations work in and with.

SESSION 1



Ms. Vyara FILIPOVA

Head, Data & Technology Policy Unit, WCO

Vyara Filipova is the Head of the Data and Technology Policy Unit in the World Customs Organization (WCO) Secretariat, a position she holds since July 2025. In this role, she leads the WCO's work on data- and technology-related policy matters, supporting Members in leveraging innovation, digital solutions, and emerging technologies to strengthen Customs operations and international cooperation. Since April 2016, Ms. Filipova has served in different roles in the WCO Procedures and Facilitation Sub-directorate and worked on a broad range of trade facilitation topics, including e-commerce, transit, the role of Customs in natural disaster relief, the Customs Convention on Containers, and the development of a global Non-Intrusive Inspection data format. She has provided technical assistance and capacity building support to WCO Members on the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), transit, relief consignments and e-commerce. Before joining the WCO, Ms. Filipova worked for more than 15 years at the Headquarters of the Bulgarian Customs Administration, where she was responsible for multilateral cooperation and the management of Customs modernization projects. She holds a Master's degree in International Economic Relations.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 1



Mr. Dimitrios POLITOPOULOS

Smart Customs Project Manager, Data & Technology Policy Unit, WCO

Dimitrios Politopoulos is the Project Manager of the World Customs Organization (WCO) Smart Customs Project, an initiative that supports WCO Members in strengthening their understanding of and readiness for the adoption of advanced technologies.
He has served with the WCO since 2018, coordinating and contributing to a broad range of international initiatives supporting Customs modernization, digital transformation and capacity building. His work has involved close collaboration with WCO Members, international organizations, private-sector stakeholders and academia. Prior to joining the WCO, he worked as a consultant and entrepreneur, gaining practical experience in international business, trade, and project management among others. He holds two Master's degrees.

SESSION 2

Moderator



Ms. Özlem SOYSANLI

Head, Facilitation Policy Unit, WCO

Özlem Soysanli currently serves as the Head of Facilitation Policy Unit within the Policy and Standards Directorate at the World Customs Organization (WCO) in Brussels, Belgium. In this capacity, she focuses on policy matters related to facilitation and oversees the development, implementation and maintenance of the WCO's key instruments, tools. Soysanlı also manages many WCO working bodies, with a policy development function. Soysanlı joined the WCO in August 2018 as a Technical Officer in the Compliance and Facilitation Directorate. She subsequently served as Senior Technical Officer and later as Acting Deputy Director responsible for Procedures and Facilitation Sub-Directorate until July 2025. Soysanlı also served as Acting Deputy Director responsible for Enforcement, Facilitation and Technology Sub-Directorate within the Policy and Standards Directorate from July 2025 to February 2026. In this capacity, she led three units, focusing on policy matters related to enforcement, facilitation, data and technology areas. Prior to joining the WCO, Soysanlı worked in various capacities in the Turkish Customs Administration for over 22 years, mainly in the area of Customs legislation. She also served as Customs Counsellor at the Turkish Embassy in Brussels from 2014 to 2018 with the responsibility of representing the Turkish Customs at the WCO as well as at Belgium Customs.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 2



Ms. Jiayi CHAI

Officer, Reform and Development Division, Department of General Operation
General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC)

Jiayi Chai currently works in the Reform and Development Division of the Department of General Operation at the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC). She is primarily engaged in research, drafting and implementation of institutional reform plans, with a focus on customs procedural optimization, institutional and mechanism improvement, and process standardization. Ms. Chai actively contributes to the overall planning, systematic research, pilot implementation and practical advancement of Smart Customs, with a particular focus on the deep integration of customs supervision, digital governance and intelligent applications.



Mr. Naden VENCATACHELLUM

Section Head Customs, Customs Management System / IT
Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA)

Naden Vencatachellum has over 35 years of experience in Customs, complemented by extensive expertise in Information Technology and Customs digitalization. He currently serves as Section Head within the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) Customs Department, following a career that has included operational, managerial and international roles. Since joining Customs in 1991, he has worked across several areas, including port surveillance, air cargo and passenger operations, excise and customs management systems. He has led and implemented major Customs modernization initiatives, including e-Customs, the WCO National Customs Enforcement Network, the Motor Vehicle Corridor, the Tradelink Single Window, digital certificates of origin, mobile payment of duties and taxes, and data-driven risk management. From 2012 to 2014, he served as a full-time regional expert for a WCO trade facilitation project in East and Southern Africa. He is also an accredited WCO expert in electronic commerce and has provided technical assistance to Customs administrations in several countries, supporting modernization, trade facilitation, border control, and the implementation of international standards and digital technologies. Mr. Naden has represented Mauritius and the WCO at numerous international fora, including the WCO, SADC, COMESA and African Union, and has participated as a speaker, panellist and moderator on Customs modernization and digital transformation.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 2



Ms. Oluwaseun Omolara ADEDEJI

Assistant Comptroller, ICT Modernization, Nigeria Customs Service (NCS)

Adedeji Oluwaseun Omolara is an Assistant Comptroller of Customs in the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), currently serving in the ICT-Modernization Department, where she is responsible for administrative and operational coordination supporting the Service's digital transformation and modernization agenda. She has been actively involved in the implementation and coordination of the Nigeria Customs Service Modernization Project, including stakeholder engagement, operational coordination, systems rollout, risk management and the transition towards technology-driven Customs processes. Her work contributes to strengthening automation, improving operational efficiency, supporting trade facilitation and enhancing border protection. She has practical experience working across Customs administration, ICT modernization, institutional coordination and change management, with particular interest in the application of technology, data and innovative approaches to modern Customs operations. Her professional interests include Smart Customs, digital transformation, trade facilitation, border security, organizational effectiveness, leadership and Customs modernization. She is passionate about building a more efficient, transparent, technology-enabled and internationally connected Customs administration that can effectively facilitate legitimate trade while protecting national economic and security interests.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 3



Dr. Hua TONG

Technical Attaché, Smart Customs Project, Data & Technology Policy Unit, WCO

Hua Tong is a Technical Attaché in the Data and Technology Policy Unit of the World Customs Organization (WCO) Secretariat, where he works on the WCO Smart Customs Project. In this role, he contributes to the WCO's work on Customs digital transformation and the responsible adoption of disruptive and emerging technologies. His work includes contributing to the WCO Study Report on Disruptive Technologies, the AI/ML and Blockchain Packages, and the development of the Smart Customs Community Portal, as well as conducting study missions to document practical cases and experiences from WCO Members. Dr Tong has over 15 years of experience in Customs. Prior to his current assignment, he served as Programme Manager at the WCO Regional Office for Capacity Building for Asia/Pacific (ROCB A/P) from 2016 to 2021 and as Acting Head of the General Research Division at the China Customs Research Center. He is a WCO Accredited Customs Modernization Advisor in Human Resource Development and Management and has conducted capacity-building missions for WCO Members. He is also a postgraduate supervisor at Shanghai Customs University and has published extensively on Customs and related topics in WCO News, the World Customs Journal, APEC publications and Customs-related journals in China.



Mr. Chamroeun SAN

WCO Data Analytics Expert & Chief of the Data and Statistics Office, IT Department
General Department of Customs and Excise of Cambodia (GDCE)

Chamroeun San joined the General Department of Customs and Excise of Cambodia (GDCE) in 2014, initially working on customs automation systems before moving into customs data and statistics in 2019. Passionate about data, he enjoys translating complex information into practical insights that improve customs operations and decision-making. In 2022, he received a scholarship under the WCO's first BACUDA Scholarship Programme in South Korea, and in 2024, he became the first WCO-accredited expert in Data Analytics. He has contributed to WCO workshops in Mongolia, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Türkiye, Viet Nam, Peru, South Korea, Morocco, and Togo, sharing his experience and helping customs administrations strengthen their data analytics capabilities. He was recently appointed Chief of the Data and Statistics Office at GDCE.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 4 *Moderator*



Mr. Joel CHOI

Technical Officer, Lead Smart Customs Project, Data & Technology Policy Unit, WCO

Joel Choi is a Technical Officer in the Data and Technology Unit of the Policy and Standards Directorate at the World Customs Organization (WCO) Secretariat. He holds a background in Computer and Data Science with a submajor in Business Administration from RWTH Aachen University, Germany. Joel has been at the WCO for 5 years, where he oversees a broad portfolio spanning data analytics, the WCO Data Strategy, and disruptive technologies. He serves as lead officer for the Smart Customs Project and is a member of the content team for the WCO Technology Conference. In his current and previous capacities at the Secretariat, he has coordinated four sessions of the Working Group on Data and Statistics and four meetings of the WCO Data Innovation Hub, leading the drafting of three compendium documents. Prior to his current role, Joel served in the Capacity Building Directorate, where he led multiple data analytics missions across WCO Member administrations globally, covering areas including data analytics, AI, data governance, risk management, and data quality management.



Mr. Chamroeun SAN

WCO Data Analytics Expert & Chief of the Data and Statistics Office, IT Department
General Department of Customs and Excise of Cambodia (GDCE)

Chamroeun San joined the General Department of Customs and Excise of Cambodia (GDCE) in 2014, initially working on customs automation systems before moving into customs data and statistics in 2019. Passionate about data, he enjoys translating complex information into practical insights that improve customs operations and decision-making. In 2022, he received a scholarship under the WCO's first BACUDA Scholarship Programme in South Korea, and in 2024, he became the first WCO-accredited expert in Data Analytics. He has contributed to WCO workshops in Mongolia, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Türkiye, Viet Nam, Peru, South Korea, Morocco, and Togo, sharing his experience and helping customs administrations strengthen their data analytics capabilities. He was recently appointed Chief of the Data and Statistics Office at GDCE.



Mr. Arturo Jeshván ALCÁNTARA VILLANUEVA

Director General, Electronic Customs Data Processing
Agencia Nacional de Aduanas de México (ANAM)

Arturo Jeshván Alcántara Villanueva holds a Bachelor's degree in Architecture from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and has pursued Master's studies in Architecture and Urban Planning Sciences at the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN). He began his career in public administration in 2010 at Mexico City's Emergency Response and Citizen Protection Center, where he later served as Director of Infrastructure and Maintenance of the C5. In this capacity, he coordinated the operation, maintenance and preservation of the infrastructure of the C5, C2 and complementary technical sites, as well as more than 60,000 technological systems. He currently serves as Director General for Electronic Customs Data Processing at the National Customs Agency of Mexico (ANAM), where he oversees technical and administrative requirements related to the security, integrity and processing of electronic data across the country's customs offices. In this role, he contributes to strengthening revenue collection, national security and anti-corruption efforts, while ensuring full respect for human rights.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 4



Ms. Hilal ÇENGEL

Assistant Trade Expert, Department of Digital Transformation and Analysis
Customs Administration, Ministry of Trade, Republic of Türkiye

Graduated from the Faculty of Law at Istanbul University in 2020, Ms Çengel began her professional career as a lawyer, working in the legal field for approximately one and a half years. In 2023, she joined the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Trade as an Assistant Trade Expert within the Directorate General of Customs. They currently work in the Department of Digital Transformation and Analysis, focusing on digitalization and emerging technologies in customs. Ms Çengel is currently finalizing an expertise thesis on the digitalization of customs transit procedures and the use of artificial intelligence in customs, scheduled for submission in September 2026.



Mr. Duyen Phuong PHAM

Deputy Director, IT Customs Statistics, General Department of Vietnam Customs

Pham Duyen Phuong (Phuong Pham) is Deputy Director of Customs Information Technology and Statistics Sub-Department of the Department of Vietnam Customs, Ministry of Finance. For the last twelve years, Mr. Phuong has been contributing to and facilitating a wide range of trade performances and statistic operations of Customs Information Technology and Statistics Sub-Department. Having deep expertise in the field of information technology in general and applied mathematics and informatics in particular, Mr. Phuong uses that experience to bring up many initiatives in directing and operating the implementation of the National Single Window, the ASEAN Single Window, customs automation systems, and other important and long-term projects of the Department. Over the years, Mr. Phuong's strong leadership and management capabilities, as well as his enthusiasm for work and high sense of responsibility have enabled him to create a professional and favourable working environment for accelerating the application of information technology in the reformation and modernization of customs procedures. Under Mr. Phuong's direction, Customs Information Technology and Statistics Sub-Department has earned multiple awards and recognitions for its excellent performance in both political and professional tasks.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 5

Moderator



Dr. Hua TONG

Technical Attaché, Smart Customs Project, Data & Technology Policy Unit, WCO

Hua Tong is a Technical Attaché in the Data and Technology Policy Unit of the World Customs Organization (WCO) Secretariat, where he works on the WCO Smart Customs Project. In this role, he contributes to the WCO's work on Customs digital transformation and the responsible adoption of disruptive and emerging technologies. His work includes contributing to the WCO Study Report on Disruptive Technologies, the AI/ML and Blockchain Packages, and the development of the Smart Customs Community Portal, as well as conducting study missions to document practical cases and experiences from WCO Members. Dr Tong has over 15 years of experience in Customs. Prior to his current assignment, he served as Programme Manager at the WCO Regional Office for Capacity Building for Asia/Pacific (ROCB A/P) from 2016 to 2021 and as Acting Head of the General Research Division at the China Customs Research Center. He is a WCO Accredited Customs Modernization Advisor in Human Resource Development and Management and has conducted capacity-building missions for WCO Members. He is also a postgraduate supervisor at Shanghai Customs University and has published extensively on Customs and related topics in WCO News, the World Customs Journal, APEC publications and Customs-related journals in China.



Mr. Felipe MENDES MORAES

Coordinator-General for Customs Administration
Federal Revenue Service of Brazil (RFB)

Felipe Mendes Moraes is the Customs Administration General Coordinator at the Brazilian Federal Revenue Service. He has extensive experience in customs administration, digital transformation, risk management and information technology, having previously served as CIO of the Brazilian Federal Revenue Service. He has led major modernization initiatives in Brazilian Customs, including the implementation of the New Import Process and Single Window, the modernization of the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Programme, and the development of technology- and data-driven approaches to e-commerce and customs risk management. He has also worked internationally with organizations including the IMF and the World Customs Organization.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 5



Mr. Kin-kei LI

Assistant Commissioner, Excise and Strategic Support, Hong Kong Customs

Kin-kei LI (KK) joined Hong Kong Customs in 1999. During his service, he has worked in various areas including investigation, intelligence and enforcement, cargo and passenger processing, project management, IT infrastructure and system development and application of new technologies etc. KK spent a large part of his career in financial investigation against syndicated crimes and so he acquired a few professional qualifications. He was also the first batch to join and lead the Inter-Departmental Counter-Terrorism Unit headed by Security Bureau. He was an attaché to the World Customs Organization based in Brussels of Belgium from 2014 to 2016. Now, he is in charge of the strategic development of Hong Kong Customs and at the same time the Head of Secretariat Office of the World Customs Organization Vice-Chairperson for the Asia Pacific Region.



Mr. Abdulrahman AWADH

Head of Application Development, Abu Dhabi Customs, United Arab Emirates

Abdulrahman Awadh is an experienced digital transformation and government technology leader, specializing in customs modernization, application development, and emerging technologies. As Head of Application Development at Abu Dhabi Customs, he leads strategic digital initiatives leveraging Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, intelligent automation, and enterprise integration to enhance operational efficiency, streamline customs processes, and facilitate international trade. He has also contributed to regional and international customs cooperation, driving innovation and advancing Abu Dhabi Customs' vision of becoming an intelligent, integrated, and digitally enabled organization.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 6

Moderator



Ms. Gordana VIDANOVIĆ

Head, Facilitation Implementation Unit, ICDD, WCO

Gordana Vidanović is the Head of the Facilitation Implementation Unit in the Implementation and Capacity Development Directorate of the World Customs Organization (WCO). She has been contributing to the work of the WCO Secretariat since April 2023 and, as part of the Facilitation Modernization process, was appointed to her current position in July 2025. Before joining the WCO Secretariat, Ms. Vidanović served for several years as a Customs Counselor at the Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union. She has more than 20 years of experience in Customs, including work in the ICT Department. Prior to her posting in Brussels, she was Head of the International Department at the Serbian Customs Administration.



Mr. Hyunsang JO

BACUDA Project Manager, Facilitation Implementation Unit, ICDD, WCO

Hyunsang Jo is a Technical Attaché at the World Customs Organization (WCO) and has served as BACUDA Project Manager since July 2025. He is part of the Facilitation Implementation Unit within the Implementation Capacity Development Directorate, where he leads data analytics capacity-building programmes for WCO Members. Prior to joining the WCO, he served as Deputy Director at the Korea Customs Service from 2020 to 2025, working on import clearance and risk management, bonded areas and free zones, and customs litigation and regulatory reform. From 2017 to 2020, he worked as an Attorney-at-Law and Public Service Advocate with the Korea Legal Aid Corporation and the Seoul High Prosecutors' Office.



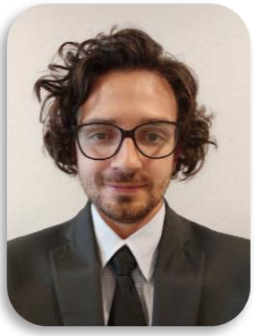
Ms. Maria ORTIZ BOLIVAR

Programme Manager, SECO-WCO Global Trade Facilitation Programme (GTFP)
Facilitation Implementation Unit, ICDD, WCO

Maria Ortiz Bolivar has over twenty years of professional experience in trade and international development. She works for the World Customs Organization (WCO) as Program Manager of the SECO-WCO Global Trade Facilitation Program, supporting Customs Administrations in the implementation of international standards and trade facilitation best practices. Prior to joining the WCO, she worked for the Colombian government as Director of Regulatory Affairs at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, Ernst & Young, and the Colombian National Customs and Tax Bureau. Ms. Ortiz has also worked for the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank on a range of trade facilitation and competitiveness operations in Latin America and the Caribbean, the African region, as well as integration initiatives in Europe and Asia. Her academic background includes a Law degree and Master's degree in Commercial Law from Universidad Libre and Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Colombia, respectively, as well as a Master's degree in International Commerce and Policy from George Mason University (USA).

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 6



Mr. Juan Diego CHAVARRÍA VALVERDE

Technical Officer, DTPU, Enforcement, Facilitation & Technology Sub-Directorate, WCO

Juan Diego Chavarría is a Technical Officer in the Enforcement, Facilitation & Technology Sub-Directorate of the World Customs Organization (WCO), where he specializes in leveraging data and technology to enhance global trade processes. His work focuses on initiatives such as the Single Window Environment, the WCO Data Model, Passenger Information Data, e-Commerce and the WCO Technology Conference. Prior to joining the WCO, Mr. Chavarría worked for seven years in Single Window projects, with a particular emphasis on process optimization and digital transformation. Designing and reengineering procedures for Licenses, Permits, Certificates, and other documents (LPCOs), overseeing interoperability and regulatory processes in areas such as health, agriculture, sanitary and phytosanitary controls, and wildlife management in both national and international levels.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 7

Moderator



Ms. Gael GROOBY

Director, Policy and Standards Directorate, WCO

Gael Grooby serves as Director, Policy and Standards at the World Customs Organization (WCO). In this role she directs the development, implementation and maintenance of international conventions, standards, and tools related to the work of Customs administrations. Her work includes providing counsel to the Deputy Secretary General and Secretary General on matters relating to the Directorate. Ms Grooby joined the WCO in 2017, after 27 years in Australia's Customs administration; she has a long and varied background in Customs and brings an outlook grounded in practical Customs knowledge and a focus on real-world results. The Policy and Standards Directorate unites the development of international tools for Customs administrations under a single directorate for the first time in the WCO's history. This recognizes the interdependencies and cross-cutting aspects of work in the different customs fields. Ms Grooby is focused on ensuring work is informed by a holistic view of the customs and trade environment that Customs administrations work in and with.



Mr. Philippe DUPONTEIL

Director for Customs Tariffs and Digital Delivery of Customs and Taxation Policies
Directorate General for Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD), European Commission

Philippe Duponteil serves as Director for Customs Tariffs & Digital Delivery of Customs and Taxation Policies at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union (TAXUD). Previously, he was Director in the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), supporting EU policy development, and held several management roles at DG TRADE, including Head of Division leading EU trade negotiations with China, Japan, and Korea. He also served as Minister-Counsellor at the EU Delegation to Japan. Before joining the European Commission in 1995, Philippe worked for the French Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



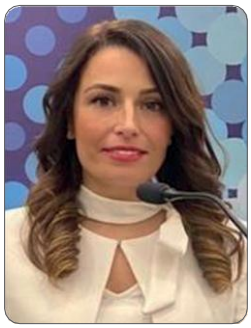
Mr. Antonio LO PARCO

Director, Regional Office for Capacity Building for the WCO Europe Region (ROCB Europe)

Antonio Lo Parco has been Director of the WCO Regional Office for Capacity Building for Europe (ROCB Europe) since July 2023. He has more than three decades of experience in customs, taxation, trade facilitation and public administration. He served as Resident Twinning Adviser in three EU Twinning projects on customs modernization in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Türkiye, and coordinated the Italian contribution to a further customs modernization project in Moldova. From 2013 to 2017, he was appointed by DG TRADE as Trade Affairs Manager and Diplomatic Attaché at the EU Delegation to Georgia. His work has focused on customs modernization, digital systems, transit, border management and international cooperation.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 7



Ms. Raghad AL-TALLI

Head of Trade and Investment Facilitation, MENA & LAC, International Trade Center (ITC)

Raghad Al-Talli leads trade facilitation programs and strategic initiatives at the International Trade Centre (ITC). Since joining ITC in 2014, she has supported over 35 countries in designing innovative digital solutions and implementing high-impact trade facilitation reforms such as Single Window, Risk Management, Port Community Systems, Authorized Economic Operator, and automated Time Release Studies. Her work helped countries modernize their customs and trade ecosystems, streamline operations, and enhance transparency, ultimately strengthening trade performance and global competitiveness. Raghad provides strategic guidance to policy makers and businesses, fostering international collaboration and driving solutions that reduce trade barriers and enhance efficiency. She brings experience from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, where she worked in the Finance Department, along with four years in the private sector. She holds a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Economics and Finance from the University of Geneva.



Mr. Joppy Teja SENTANA

Associate Expert Lecturer, Financial Education and Training Agency (FETA) Indonesia
Regional Training Center (RTC) for the Asia Pacific region

Joppy Teja Sentana is an Associate Expert Lecturer at the Customs and Excise Training Center, FETA Indonesia, with an academic background in customs, excise, accounting, and economics from STAN, Universitas of Indonesia, and the International University of Japan. He has extensive professional experience within the Directorate General of Customs and Excise, including roles as Associate Customs and Excise Examiner/PFPD at KPPBC TMP Tanjung Perak, Head of Customs and Excise Services and Technical Support Section at KPPBC TMP C Maumere, and Goods Inspection Officer at KPUBC Type A Tanjung Priok. He has also actively contributed as a speaker in various customs, export-import, and trade regulation forums, and participated in an international workshop on customs valuation organized with the World Customs Organization and Japan Customs.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 8

Moderator



Ms. Sigfríður GUNNLAUGSDOTTIR

Deputy Director, Capacity Delivery Sub-Directorate
Implementation and Capacity Development Directorate (ICDD), WCO

Sigfríður Gunnlaugsdóttir joined the World Customs Organization in 2025 as Deputy Director of Capacity Delivery in the Implementation and Capacity Development Directorate (ICDD). In this role Sigfríður serves as a member of the WCO´s Management Committee, responsible for the implementation of the WCO´s capacity building projects and activities. Working under the leadership of the Director of Implementation and Capacity Development Sigfríður works closely with the ICDD´s Implementation Support Sub-Directorate as well as the Policy and Standards Directorate, the Project Management Office and other internal services and regional structures to ensure quality, sustainable and Member centric capacity building interventions that are in line with the WCO´s Capacity Building Paradigm. Before joining the WCO Secretariat Sigfríður has served as Head of International Affairs at Iceland Revenue and Customs, as Programme Manager at the Icelandic International Development Agency´s (ICEIDA) Lilongwe, Malawi Office, at the University of Iceland and as Country Director of AFS Intercultural Programs in Iceland. Sigfríður holds a BA degree from the University of Iceland, an MA from the University of East-Anglia and an ML degree from Reykajvík University.



Mr. Abas JAFAROV

.NET Developer, State Customs Committee of Azerbaijan

Abas Jafarov is a .NET Developer at the State Customs Committee of Azerbaijan, where he has worked since 2015. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science from Baku State University. His professional experience focuses on the development and management of web and desktop applications for customs, including the enhancement of existing systems and implementation of new functionalities. He works extensively with C#, .NET Core, ASP.NET, Oracle, PostgreSQL and SQL Server, as well as API and web service technologies. In his current role, he contributes to the development, maintenance and continuous improvement of customs-related digital solutions and prepares technical reports within his areas of responsibility.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 8



M. Adékoulé Josué BABALOLA

Chef du Service des Études Stratégiques, Économiques et Statistiques
Direction Générale des Douanes du Bénin

Adékoulé Josué BABALOLA est Chef du Service des Études Stratégiques, Économiques et Statistiques à la Direction Générale des Douanes du Bénin. Il est également Correspondant National du Projet Smart Customs de l'Organisation mondiale des douanes (OMD) au sein de son administration. Ingénieur statisticien diplômé de l'École Nationale d'Économie Appliquée de Dakar (Sénégal), titulaire d'un DEA en Finance et Économétrie de l'Université Paris II Panthéon-Assas (France) et d'un DESS en Gestion des Projets et Développement Local de l'Université d'Abomey-Calavi (Bénin), il compte près de vingt ans d'expérience dans l'analyse des données douanières, la gestion des risques, la sélectivité des contrôles et l'aide à la décision. Dans ses fonctions actuelles, il coordonne entre autres le Système de Gestion des Risques de la Douane béninoise et contribue à l'exploitation des données et des technologies analytiques pour renforcer l'efficacité des contrôles. Il développe notamment des modèles prédictifs fondés sur le Machine Learning, pour la détection automatique de la fraude et l'orientation des déclarations vers les circuits de contrôle. Dans le prolongement de cette expérience, il a récemment suivi le programme « La science des données au service des administrations fiscales et douanières », dispensé par l'IHEDD/FERDI et l'ENSEA d'Abidjan. Son travail de fin de formation a porté sur « l'utilisation du Machine Learning pour la détection automatique de la fraude en vue de l'orientation des déclarations vers un circuit de dédouanement », établissant ainsi un lien direct entre Data Science, intelligence artificielle et gestion du risque douanier. Il a également renforcé ses compétences dans le cadre du projet DATAFID, à travers plusieurs formations spécialisées portant notamment sur l'analyse des données douanières sous R, l'analyse exploratoire des données, la Data Science et ses enjeux organisationnels, ainsi que l'analyse géospatiale appliquée aux administrations fiscales et douanières.



Mr. Virgilio Martin CACHAY MONTALVAN

Project Specialist, Office of Institutional Programs and Projects Integration
Superintendencia Nacional de Aduanas y de Administración Tributaria (SUNAT), Peru

Virgilio Cachay is a statistician with more than 26 years of experience in Tax and Customs matters at the National Superintendency of Customs and Tax Administration of Peru. He is a professional specialized in the development of statistical, econometric, machine learning, deep learning, and artificial intelligence models applied to high-complexity and high-impact institutional projects. Among the most recent achievements in which he has participated, it is the implementation of a new customs control selection system architecture incorporating advanced analytics models, MLOps practices, and AI agents.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 8



Mr. Hassan ALSHEHRI

IT Applications Expert, Customs Applications
Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority (ZATCA), Saudi Arabia

Hassan Alshehri is an Application Expert at the Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority (ZATCA), specializing in customs process automation and the digitization of operational workflows. His expertise includes applying Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and License Plate Recognition (LPR) technologies to streamline customs procedures and enhance operational efficiency. He has contributed to integrating customs applications with internal and external systems, as well as operational technologies such as X-ray inspection equipment and tracking systems. His work focuses on improving data exchange, reducing manual intervention, and supporting integrated customs operations.



Mr. Mathews KALIKITI

Assistant Commissioner, Business Processes and Projects, Customs Services
Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA)

Mathews Kalikiti is Assistant Commissioner for Business Processes and Projects in the Customs Services Division of the Zambia Revenue Authority, where he leads the unit responsible for project portfolio and programme management, business process reform and change management. He oversees delivery governance across the Authority's portfolio, including technology initiatives such as an AI-enabled HS classification recommender, the Smart Borders programme beginning with Smart Gates, and Customs-to-Customs electronic data exchange. With over 23 years in customs administration, he previously served as enterprise risk lead on major modernization programmes, including the Zambia Electronic Single Window and TaxOnline II, an in-house developed tax administration system, and was part of the team that established the Authority's enterprise risk management framework and business continuity policy. He holds an MSc in International Trade Policy and Trade Law from Lund University, certified in Risk and Information Systems Control (CRISC), and is completing a PhD at the University of Zambia Graduate School of Business with a dissertation on artificial intelligence-integrated risk management in customs administration.

BIOGRAPHIES

DAY 2: 30 October 2026

SESSION 9

Moderator



Mr. Hans PIETERS

Chief Operating Officer (COO), WCO

Hans Pieters joined the World Customs Organization (WCO) in October 2018 as the Head of Administration and Personnel. In this capacity he oversees the Organization's Accounting Service, the Information and Telecommunications Service, the Employee Service Unit, the Communications and Events Service, the Interpretation Service, the Publications Service and Central Service. He oversees all Human Resource matters and advises the Secretary General on a wide range of policy and technical matters being discussed in the Organization. He is also responsible for the WCO Finance Committee, and contributes to the organization and execution of the Organization's Audit Committee, Policy Commission and Council. He previously served as personal advisor to the Belgian Minister of Finance, Mr. Johan Van Overtveldt, on all matters related to Customs and excise. In this role, he was leading the technical negotiations on new legislative initiatives on these topics within the Belgian Government. He was also in charge of preparing the Minister's interventions in Parliament, as well as addressing queries coming from the media. Furthermore, he was the Minister's representative in the Belgian Customs' Management Team, which meets on a weekly basis to discuss the day-to-day management of the Administration. Prior to his work at the Cabinet of the Minister of Finance, Mr. Pieters worked for the Belgian Customs and Excise Administration. In 2013 he was the youngest ever officer to be appointed as Belgium's Permanent Representative at the WCO. During that time he was also responsible for all bilateral non-EU relations and was in charge of coordinating a number of trade facilitation projects (e.g. Smart and Secure Trade Lanes, Green Lanes, Benelux-India project on paperless Customs, among others). Moreover, in 2016, he chaired one of three working groups dedicated to the strategic reform of the Organization and the development of the new Strategic Plan. From 2011 to 2013 he worked as a Customs officer at Brussels airport, starting as a field officer conducting inspections of import and export cargo, as well as postal parcels. Later he had the opportunity to lead a small team dealing with all regularization claims concerning Customs declarations. He holds a Master of Arts Degree in English and Spanish from Ghent University, a Master of Arts Degree in Multilingual Business Communication from Antwerp University and a Master of Science Degree in Customs and Supply Chain Compliance from the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. During his Bachelor of Arts Degree in English and Spanish, he also studied at the Universidad de Valladolid in Spain. In addition to Dutch (mother tongue), English and Spanish, he is also fluent in French and has notions of German and Portuguese.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 9



Mr. Erik WILLEMS

ASYCUDA Programme Management Officer, UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

Erik Willems has more than three decades of experience in the field of customs. He currently serves as a Programme Management Officer with the ASYCUDA Programme at UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The Programme developed ASYCUDAWorld, a customs data-management system used in more than 100 countries and territories worldwide. Erik is currently contributing to the development and implementation of ASY5, the next generation of ASYCUDA software, which is now being introduced in its first participating countries. Previously, he managed ASYCUDA projects, primarily in Arabic-speaking countries, as well as in several other countries. Erik holds a master's degree in economics and spent more than 15 years with Belgian Customs, serving in various operational and headquarters roles, including Collector and Inspector. He subsequently pursued an international career in the customs field, first as a Project Manager at Eurocustoms, where he led customs-reform projects in Eastern Europe, and later as a Customs Expert at the TIR Convention Secretariat.



Mr. Christian PIAGET

Head Cargo Border Management & Claims, Operations, Safety and Security – Cargo
International Air Transport Association (IATA)

Christian Piaget joined IATA in May 2013 to work on the development and ongoing maintenance of cargo customs, security and claims procedures and standards. After a Master of Law in Switzerland and an MA in European Studies in Belgium, Christian spent 10 years leading legal and advocacy activities in the road transport sector. During this period, he headed the Legal Department and External Affairs at the International Road Transport Union. Christian then served in Brussels as the EU Representative for the World Shipping Council, the association representing liner shipping companies, advocating maritime industry interests before the European Commission, the World Customs Organization and other international institutions. Today, Christian represents IATA member airlines in the development of customs laws, standards and practices affecting the movement of air cargo, with a particular focus on advance risk assessment and trade facilitation. He also oversees air cargo security and serves as Secretary of the IATA Cargo Border Management Board, which is responsible for the association's customs and security activities. IATA has an observer status at the WCO and is actively involved in particular in the SAFE Working Group's activities.

BIOGRAPHIES

SESSION 9



Dr. Talkmore CHIDEDE

Senior Digital Trade Expert, Digital Trade Division, African Continental Free Trade Area AfCFTA Secretariat

Talkmore Chidede is a Senior Digital Trade Expert at the AfCFTA Secretariat. His expertise spans topics related to digital trade, international trade and investment, regional economic integration, and international law and arbitration. Since joining the AfCFTA Secretariat in 2021, he has led the development and negotiation of the AfCFTA Protocol on Digital Trade and its eight (8) annexes. Dr. Chidede also played a key role in the development and negotiation of the AfCFTA Protocol on Investment. He is currently leading the AfCFTA Secretariat's work on the implementation of the Protocol on Digital Trade. Prior to joining the AfCFTA Secretariat, Dr. Chidede worked as a Researcher at the Trade Law Centre (tralac) based in Cape Town, South Africa, where he was responsible for building trade-related capacity in Africa, assisting countries to enhance trade governance and inclusive policy processes to ensure that trade contributes to sustainable development outcomes. He holds a Doctor of Laws (LLD) degree in International Trade and Investment from the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. He also holds a Master of Laws (LLM) degree (CUM LAUDE) in International Trade and Investment, and a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree from the University of Fort Hare, South Africa. He further holds several professional certificates in digital trade related areas.

BIOGRAPHIES

DIALOGUE PART 1

Moderator



Ms. Gugu DLAMINI-ZWANE

Head, Needs Assessment & Strategic Support, ICCD, WCO

Gugu Treasure N DLAMINI-ZWANE is a customs and international trade professional with over 20 years of experience in customs modernization, trade facilitation, capacity development, and institutional reform. She holds an Executive MBA from ESAMI/Maastricht and a Master's in Customs Law and Policy from the University of Münster. She has worked extensively with the WCO, including through the Columbus and Mercator Programmes, and has served as Customs Attaché in Brussels and as a Project and Change Partner in Eswatini. Since April 2026, she has been Head of the Needs Assessment and Strategic Support Unit at the WCO, where she leads efforts to advance evidence-based capacity development and support Members in implementing innovative and sustainable Customs solutions.

DIALOGUE PART 2

Moderator



Ms. Vyara FILIPOVA

Head, Data & Technology Policy Unit, WCO

Vyara Filipova is the Head of the Data and Technology Policy Unit in the World Customs Organization (WCO) Secretariat, a position she holds since July 2025. In this role, she leads the WCO's work on data- and technology-related policy matters, supporting Members in leveraging innovation, digital solutions, and emerging technologies to strengthen Customs operations and international cooperation. Since April 2016, Ms. Filipova has served in different roles in the WCO Procedures and Facilitation Sub-directorate and worked on a broad range of trade facilitation topics, including e-commerce, transit, the role of Customs in natural disaster relief, the Customs Convention on Containers, and the development of a global Non-Intrusive Inspection data format. She has provided technical assistance and capacity building support to WCO Members on the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), transit, relief consignments and e-commerce. Before joining the WCO, Ms. Filipova worked for more than 15 years at the Headquarters of the Bulgarian Customs Administration, where she was responsible for multilateral cooperation and the management of Customs modernization projects. She holds a Master's degree in International Economic Relations.

BIOGRAPHIES

CLOSING REMARKS



Mr. Ian SAUNDERS

Secretary General, World Customs Organization (WCO)

On 24 June 2023, Mr. Ian Saunders was elected Secretary General of the World Customs Organization (WCO). He took office on 1 January 2024. As WCO Secretary General, he provides leadership and executive management for the global Customs community's priorities, including developing global Customs instruments, standards and tools; securing and facilitating global trade; protecting revenue collection; building Customs-business partnerships; and delivering capacity building in support of Customs reform and modernization. Prior to joining the WCO, Mr. Saunders worked as Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Western Hemisphere at the U.S. Department of Commerce. In this role, he was responsible for developing programmes, policies and strategies designed to strengthen the United States' commercial position in this region of the globe. Mr. Saunders spent most of his career with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), where he held several senior positions including Assistant Commissioner for International Affairs, Deputy Assistant Commissioner for International Affairs, and Acting Deputy Executive Assistant Commissioner for Operations Support. Earlier in his tenure at CBP, he was Director of International Policy and Programs, Director of International Training and Assistance, and held several staff positions working on bilateral, regional and multilateral portfolios. Mr. Saunders entered the U.S. Government Senior Executive Service in 2008. He has undergraduate and graduate degrees in International Affairs from Georgetown University in Washington DC, and has attended executive courses at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and the American University.

