

Brussels, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2003

## Customs: agreement initialled with United States on transport security co-operation

***An agreement with the United States to include transport security co-operation within the scope of the EU/US customs agreement was initialled by the European Commission's Director General for Taxation and Customs Union, Robert Verrue and US Ambassador to the EU Rockwell Schnabel on 18 November 2003. The agreement shall improve security on a reciprocal basis for both the EU and the US. It will furthermore guarantee the right balance between trade facilitation and security by ensuring that general customs control of legitimate trade takes due account of security concerns and by creating equal levels and standards of controls for US and EC operators.***

European Commissioner for Taxation and Customs Frits Bolkestein welcomed the result of the negotiations: "This is an important step forward. The EU and the US will be working hand in hand to secure trade and to ensure equal conditions for the US and the EU."

The Commission has negotiated the agreement with the US on behalf of the European Community (EC) on the basis of the mandate it received on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2003 (see [IP/03/399](#)). The agreement complements US initiatives launched after the attacks of 11th September 2001 to establish international co-operation so as to integrate security checks in normal customs controls before goods leave a country. The reciprocal agreement ensures also the security of containers from all locations that are imported into, transhipped through, or transit the EU and the US. The Commission fully shares the concerns of the United States about improving security and considers that the most effective means to meet these concerns is by co-operation at EC level with the US. The Community agreement thus prevents differential treatment of Member States and trade diversion within the EU. The agreement will also ensure that legitimate transatlantic trade is not hindered by the increased security arrangements and that control standards are equalised for US and EU operators. An important element of co-operation will be the availability of advance information to perform sophisticated targeting as implemented by the so-called 24 hours rule of the US and as proposed by the Commission in July ([IP/03/1100](#)).

Once formally adopted (on the EU side by the Council of Ministers), this agreement will expand the existing Agreement between the European Community and the United States of America on customs co-operation and mutual assistance in customs matters, which was signed on 28 May 1997. The current agreement focuses on classical customs co-operation while the expanded agreement covers also co-operation in ensuring the security of the logistical chain in international transport.

The Agreement establishes a working group that will elaborate the necessary technical elements of expanded co-operation (see Annex). This working group is due to begin its work very shortly.

For further information see the Europa website at:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/taxation\\_customs/customs/information\\_notes/containers\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/taxation_customs/customs/information_notes/containers_en.htm)

**ANNEX to the Agreement between the European Community and the United States of America on intensifying and broadening the CMAA to include co-operation on Container Security and Related Matters**

The Working Group created under Paragraph 5 of the Agreement between the European Community and the United States of America on intensifying and broadening the CMAA to include co-operation on Container Security and Related Matters will examine and make recommendations on issues including, but not limited to, the following areas of co-operation between U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Customs authorities in the European Community with a view to ensuring that general customs controls of international trade take due account of security concerns:

- a) defining minimum standards, in particular in view of participating in CSI, and recommending methods by which those standards may be met
- b) identifying and broadening the application of best practices concerning security controls of international trade, especially those developed under CSI
- c) defining and establishing standards to the greatest extent practicable for the information required to identify high-risk shipments imported into, transhipped through, or transiting the United States and the European Community
- d) improving and establishing standards to the greatest extent practicable for targeting and screening such high-risk shipments, to include information exchange, the use of automated targeting systems, and the development of minimum standards for inspection technologies and screening methodologies
- e) improving and establishing standards to the greatest extent practicable for industry partnership-programs designed to improve supply chain security and facilitate the movement of legitimate trade
- f) identifying any regulatory or legislative changes that would be necessary to implement the recommendations of the Working Group and
- g) considering the type of documents and measures further implementing the intensified and broadened customs co-operation on the issues set out in this Annex.