



HARMONIZED SYSTEM
COMMITTEE

-
31st Session
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NC0660E1

O. Eng.

Brussels, 18 March 2003

REPORT ON THE MEETING OF THE POLICY COMMISSION (48TH SESSION)

(Item II.2 on Agenda)

Reference documents :

SP0110E1 (PC/48)
SP0117E1 (PC/48)

SP0119E1 (PC/48 – Report)

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Policy Commission held its 48th Session in Istanbul (Turkey) from 11 to 13 December 2002.
2. The Report of the Policy Commission can be found in Doc. SP0119E1. The discussions on issues relating to the Harmonized System are summarised in the following paragraphs.

II. REPORT OF THE POLICY COMMISSION

Strategic Planning

3. In introducing Doc. SP0110E1, the Deputy Secretary General explained the new strategic planning methodology proposed by the Secretariat, which was intended to provide the new scope for prioritisation, the facility to adapt more quickly to changing circumstances, and the decision to link the Plan more closely to the Organizations budgetary process.
4. The Strategic Plan itself would include a summary of the environmental scan, entitled “Customs Environment”, a revised Vision Statement, a revised and simplified Mission Statement, a few key Organizational Objectives and a few key Organizational Priorities. The detailed lists of operational tasks which had previously been the central part of the Strategic

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Plan would henceforth be consigned to a separate document ("Divisional Plans") for use by the Secretariat and the various Committees.

5. In conclusion, the Chairperson expressed the Policy Commission's support for the initiatives taken by the Secretariat to streamline and improve the WCO planning process, welcoming in particular the fact that in future :
 - the environmental scan would be prepared directly by the Secretariat and subsequently circulated to Members for their feedback;
 - the Strategic Plan would be separate from the detailed Divisional Plans; and
 - the planning documents would provide for prioritization of activities, and would be linked to the budget process.
6. It was recognised that the environmental scan was now even more important than before, with many new challenges emerging for the WCO. In addition, the scan could prove very valuable to administrations in terms of positioning themselves nationally and persuading their political leaders of the importance of the Customs arena and of the WCO.
7. It was important that scanning be a participatory process, in which Members continued to be involved. In this connection the Vice-Chairpersons should play a more active role in the process, by feeding in their regional perspectives.

Terms of reference and work plans of WCO working bodies

8. Introducing this item, the Secretary General explained that the Ad Hoc Group on Committee Structures and Working Methods had held a lengthy discussion on the Organization's strategic planning and the need for a direct link between the Strategic Plan and the work of the various WCO working bodies. Subsequently, the Council had instructed the Secretariat to submit the work plans and terms of reference of the working bodies to the Policy Commission, for endorsement.
9. Doc. SP0117E1 set out the terms of reference and work plans for almost all the WCO working bodies. The Secretary General emphasised that the terms of reference and, more particularly, the work plans of WCO bodies would continue to evolve and be modified in line with the Organization's work. In this respect, some working bodies might disappear with time and others be constituted in the light of new tasks and priorities.
10. In conclusion, the Policy Commission :
 - Endorsed the working document setting out the terms of reference and work plans of the WCO working bodies;
 - Agreed to recommend to the Council that the Integrity Sub-Committee remain a Sub-Committee but that it should, in future, report to the Policy Commission rather than to the Permanent Technical Committee, thus enhancing its status.

III. CONCLUSION

11. The Harmonized System Committee is invited to take note of the above developments at the Policy Commission (48th Session). In particular, the Committee is invited to note that : (1) the new strategic planning methodology has been adopted; and (2) the terms of reference and work plan for working bodies in the area of nomenclature/Harmonized System (namely, the Harmonized System Committee, the Harmonized System Review Sub-Committee, the Scientific Sub-Committee and the Harmonized System Working Party), as set out in Annex I to Doc. SP0117E1, have been endorsed by the Policy Commission.
 12. The Secretariat would urge delegates to stress the continuing importance of the Harmonized System in their home administrations, particularly with regard to input into the WCO's environmental scanning and strategic planning process.
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