

Union Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurates the first Global Conference on Cooperation in Enforcement Matters (GCCEM) in New Delhi

GCCEM will benefit world economy through networking and collaborative effort by the law enforcement agencies: Finance Minister

Union Finance Minister also launches phase IV of 'Operation Sesha' to curb the illegal trade of Timber, including Red Sanders

Intelligence sharing and increased collaboration amongst international agencies is more relevant in the era of artificial intelligence: MoS Shri Pankaj Chaudhary

WCO Secretary General calls for knowledge sharing amongst Customs agencies of all Countries

Maintain balance between enforcement and trade facilitation for ease of trade while increasing competitiveness and reducing cost to customer: Revenue Secretary

GCCEM will create a platform that serves as a catalyst for enhancing collaboration with existing partners and for forging new partnerships: CBIC Chairman

More than 75 delegates representing over 40 Custom Administrations / Organisations are participating in the inaugural GCCEM

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Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman presided over as Chief Guest at the inaugural session of the first ever three-day-long Global Conference on Cooperation in Enforcement Matters (GCCEM) in New Delhi, today.

Union Minister of State for Finance Shri Pankaj Chaudhary was the Guest of Honour and Secretary General, World Customs Organisation, Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, was the Special Guest at the Inaugural Session. Shri Sanjay Kumar Agarwal, Chairman, CBIC, along with Members of the Board and other senior officers of the Department and various Law Enforcement Agencies / Organisations of India also graced the occasion.



The genesis of the GCCEM lay in the suggestion made by the Union Finance Minister at her last year's address at

the Inaugural function of DRI Foundation Day in 2022, emphasising on the importance of greater cooperation and collaboration among international enforcement agencies for timely intelligence sharing and directed that in the year of India's G20 Presidency, CBIC and DRI must hold an international conference towards this end.

Against this backdrop, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) under Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), in consultation with World Customs Organisation (WCO), Brussels, is hosting the global conference from 30th October to 1st November 2023 with the theme '*It takes a Network to fight a Network*'. The aim of the international conference is to facilitate sharing of insights, best practices and to serve as a catalyst for enhancing collaboration with Indian Customs' partner Administrations and for building new partnerships. The WCO has collaborated with Indian Customs to ensure wide participation by Member Administrations and international organisations, including WCO's Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices (RILOs) and senior representations from the WCO Secretariat.

Congratulating CBIC and DRI for ensuring the global conference sees the light of the day, Smt. Sitharaman stated that the global conference on cooperation in enforcement matters is a major step forward in networking and collaborative efforts by the law enforcement agencies across the world, eventually benefitting not just India's economy but also the world economy.



The Union Finance Minister observed that Customs has two important facets i.e. facilitation and enforcement. These should be at the core of functions of Customs and enforcement agencies. She suggested that officers must remain dedicated, make use of technology, share information and actionable intelligence with domestic and international agencies to create deterrence to illicit trade and Transnational Syndicates. The experience of agencies would show the direction and path to curb the evils in international trade.



The Union Finance Minister also launched phase IV of 'Operation Sesha' by Indian Customs in collaboration with RILO Asia-Pacific and RILO Middle-East to curb the illegal trade of Timber including Red Sanders. Smt. Sitharaman stressed on curbing of illicit trade of red sanders with emphasis on preserving other precious flora and fauna. Apart from above, the Union Finance Minister concluded by stating that international agencies should also cooperate in bringing back the antiques to their respective countries.



Smt. Sitharaman also acknowledged the role of World Customs Organisation in anchoring the sharing of knowledge between Customs enforcement agencies across the world and emphasised brainstorming into the requirement of further legislative and procedural improvements in various countries for fighting the menace of illicit trade.

In his address on the occasion, Union Minister of State for Finance Shri Pankaj Chaudhary mentioned the challenges of the faster and newer developments in technology, including use of Artificial Intelligence. Shri Chaudhary emphasised that in the era of Artificial intelligence, the importance of intelligence sharing and increased collaboration amongst international agencies is more relevant.



While addressing the gathering, Mr. Kunio Mikuriya, Secretary General, WCO, underlined the importance of sharing the knowledge amongst Customs agencies of all Countries besides the importance of transferring the knowledge to the next generations through mentoring.



In his address on the occasion, Shri Sanjay Malhotra, Secretary, Department of Revenue, Government of India, stated the economic effects of smuggling as also its social and national security ramifications. Shri Malhotra mentioned that the fast-evolving modern digital world has blurred the boundaries of nation states and has created a daunting challenge for enforcement agencies across the world. Shri Malhotra laid stress on the requirement of

maintaining a balance between enforcement and trade facilitation which are important for ease of trade, increasing competitiveness and reducing cost to customer.



In his address during the international conference, Shri Sanjay Kumar Agarwal, Chairman, CBIC, laid stress on the inter-linkages between the menace of smuggling and transnational crimes in the ever-changing dynamic international landscape. Shri Agarwal stated that through this international conference, it is earnestly sought to create a platform that serves as a catalyst for enhancing collaboration with existing partners and for forging new partnerships.



Shri M.K. Singh, Principal Director General, DRI, gave vote of thanks to all the guests and delegates along with the team of officials and staff of CBIC for making the event possible.



More than 75 delegates representing over 40 Custom Administrations / Organisations, including the Secretary General-WCO, Secretary General-CITES and other international agencies are participating in the inaugural GCCCEM. In addition, representatives of various Law Enforcement Agencies of India are also participating in the three-day conference on various sessions in the field of anti- smuggling and commercial frauds.



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