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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure

by Arlene McCarthy

on behalf of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection

on the fortieth anniversary of the Customs Union

European Parliament resolution on the fortieth anniversary of the Customs Union

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the recent adoption of Regulation (EC) No 450/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the Community Customs Code (Modernised Customs Code)¹,
 - having regard to Decision 70/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on a paperless environment for customs and trade,
 - having regard to Decision 624/2007/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an action programme for customs in the Community (Customs 2013),
 - having regard to the communication from the Commission on the Strategy for the evolution of the Customs Union (COM(2008) 0169),
 - having regard to the report of its Committee of Inquiry into the Community Transit System (January 1996-March 1997),
 - having regard to the 1997 agreement between the European Community and the United States of America on customs cooperation and mutual assistance in customs matters²,
 - having regard the proposal for a Council decision on the accession of the European Communities to the World Customs Organisation and the exercise of rights and obligations akin to membership ad interim (COM(2007) 0252),
 - having regard the conclusions of the Council meeting of 14 May 2008 on the Customs Union,
 - having regard the report on Community customs activities on counterfeit and piracy, published by the Commission on 19 May 2008,
 - having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Customs Union since 1968 has played a crucial role in preserving and developing the Single Market, creating prosperity by facilitating legitimate and competitive trade with and within the Union while protecting its citizens,
- B. whereas the existence of a customs union means the absence of customs duties at internal borders between Member States, common customs duties on imports from third countries, common rules of origin for third-country products and a common definition of customs

¹ OJ L 145, 4.6.2008, p. 1.

² OJ L 222, 12.8.1997, p. 17.

value,

- C. whereas the development of Community law has been aimed at guaranteeing that the same rules apply to all products imported into the EU,
- D. whereas the EU customs authorities have a dual role to play, namely to levy import duties and taxes and to act as guardian of the health and safety of citizens at the EU's external borders,
- E. whereas its first Committee of Inquiry focused on customs issues and already concluded as follows: 'In order to provide economic operators and the public at large with the necessary confidence that the Single Market trading environment is adequately protected, the Committee of Inquiry has concluded that the creation of a single EU framework for customs services must be a long-term objective of the EU'¹,
- F. whereas globalisation has resulted in a huge increase in international trade and in the development of new production and consumer patterns, but has also introduced new threats such as global terrorism, climate change and illicit trade,
- G. whereas reducing compliance and administrative costs has become a key issue concerning an efficient and effective administration within the EU,

Evolution of the Customs Union

1. Considers that 40 years of the Customs Union has represented a substantial achievement and provided benefits for EU business and citizens;
2. Affirms that customs authorities, who are mainly responsible for supervising the EU's international trade, thus contribute to guaranteeing open and fair trade, implementing the external dimension of the internal market, the common commercial policy and other EU common policies, and ensuring the security of the supply chain as a whole;
3. Recognises that the measures taken by the customs authorities are aimed at protecting the financial interests of the EU and its Member States, and the EU against unfair and unlawful commercial practices;
4. Recognises also that the measures are aimed at guaranteeing the safety and security of the EU and its residents while protecting the environment, and at maintaining a fair balance between the need to conduct customs controls and to facilitate legitimate trade with a view to improving European competitiveness;
5. Congratulates customs officials, in this connection, on their effective work to combat counterfeiting, which led to the seizure of 128 million counterfeit articles in 2006;
6. Welcomes, therefore, the Commission's communication entitled 'Strategy for the evolution

¹ 17.3.1, Report on the Community Transit System, Committee of Inquiry into the Community Transit System, 1997.

of the Customs Union', seeking to set out a clear orientation for customs in the timeframe 2013 to 2019;

7. Underlines that EU customs authorities need to anticipate the challenges ahead continuously and need to develop and use 'state of the art' skills, technologies and methods to facilitate and control trade in the most efficient and effective manner;
8. Emphasises the importance of candidate countries aligning with EU standards in customs and acknowledges the technical assistance to candidate countries provided by the Commission and the Member States;

Closer cooperation

9. Welcomes the announcement made at the seminar held in Saalfelden (Austria) on 8, 9 and 10 April 2008 that there would be closer cooperation between the customs administration and the surveillance authorities of the 32-country market (the 27 Member States, Croatia, Turkey, Norway, Switzerland and the United States of America) with a view to protecting EU nationals against imports of dangerous products;
10. Considers that cooperation is essential to ensure the effectiveness of EU customs services in the face of the many threats which they have to combat;
11. Calls, therefore, on the Member States to reinforce administrative cooperation between the customs authorities of the Member States and between customs and other governmental agencies, such as veterinary authorities and bodies responsible for product safety, in order to ensure that the administration of the external borders of the European Union is a joint responsibility and guarantee the security and safety of EU citizens;
12. Calls on the Commission to enhance cooperation with trading partners via existing and new customs cooperation programmes in order to facilitate trade for reliable traders and to ensure supply chain security;
13. Stresses the importance of ensuring that all economic stakeholders are represented in the Customs Committee;
14. Endorses the signing of the various agreements signed by the EU with its main trade partners around the world;
15. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to reinforce international cooperation in the framework of international organisations (WTO and WCO) and with third countries in the area of customs; points out that this is aimed at achieving more effective customs control and promoting EU standards while allowing trade to benefit the European Union and its trading partners; points out also that this will enable joint operations and pilot projects to be set up to strengthen cooperation on the ground between EU and third-country customs officials;

Security issues

16. Calls on the Member States to further strengthen the role of customs in fighting the particular dangers inherent in fake products, in particular fake medicines and toys;
17. Calls on the Commission to maintain its opposition to the recent US legislation on 100% scanning of maritime container cargo in foreign ports; points out that it has not been demonstrated that this unilateral decision by the US is needed and is effective in economic and security terms;
18. Considers that Amendment 648/2005 ('security amendment') already meets the expectations of the US authorities as regards security control in Europe;

Enhancing efficiency, effectiveness and delivery for the Internal Market

19. Welcomes the two initiatives which Community customs plan to develop over the next ten years to serve as best possible EU citizens, namely the electronic customs proposal, already approved by Parliament, and the establishment of a European customs laboratories' network with a view to uniform interpretation of new EU technical standards;
20. Recognises that this modernisation will make it possible to step up the fight against dangerous products and to strengthen consumer protection;
21. Calls on the Member States to develop new working methods and technology in a synchronised and harmonised way and to ensure a coordinated and common implementation of customs legislation; calls on the Commission to monitor closely the uniform application of customs legislation in the Member States and to report back to Parliament;
22. Calls on the Member States to provide customs with sufficient resources and (technological and human) investments to enable them to carry out their tasks, implement new paperless systems and train their staff;
23. Calls on the Member States to ensure a high level of cooperation between the customs authorities and the business community in order to enhance compliance and reduce 'red tape', in particular by using a more risk-management approach and developing 'Single Window/One Stop Shop' services;
24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Member States.