

Draft Agenda
2026 WCO Technology Conference & Exhibition

Customs Agility in a Complex World: Securing and Facilitating Trade through Innovation

28 – 30 January 2026, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Tuesday, 27 January 2026	
18.30 – 21.00	Registration
19.00 – 21.00	Welcome reception
Wednesday, 28 January 2026	
Devoting Day 1 to Securing Borders for Safer Trade	
08.30 – 17.00	Registration
09.00 – 09.45	Opening Ceremony
09.45 – 10.15	Official Opening Speeches - United Arab Emirates (conference host) - High-level government official of the host country (tbc) - Ian Saunders, Secretary General of the World Customs Organization
10.15 – 11.00	Refreshment & Networking Break / VIP Exhibition Tour and Press Session
11.00 – 11.15	Keynote speech by the Conference Corporate Sponsor
11.15 – 12.20 Round table	Session 1: Setting the Scene: Customs Agility in a Complex World, Securing and Facilitating Trade through Innovation <i>The World Customs Organization brings together Customs administrations from across the globe to facilitate trade, ensure effective revenue collection, and protect societies against illicit activities. Today, with the WCO community managing over 98% of world trade, Customs stands at a crossroad: the legacy of its founders now meets the unprecedented complexity of global commerce and technology, with Customs enduring commitment to security and facilitation as it remains more relevant than ever in a fast-evolving world.</i> <i>This session will explore how Customs and key Stakeholders can deliver on this commitment by embracing agility and innovation. Discussions will focus on how modern standards, data-driven cooperation, and cutting-edge solutions support not only the facilitation of trade, but also the integrity and safety of global supply chains.</i> <i>This roundtable aims to set the stage for a dynamic conference, highlighting the value and impact of Customs in advancing both economic growth and the protection of societies. The session will provide inspiration and direction for agencies seeking to strengthen their role in a world where trade and security are increasingly intertwined.</i>
12.20 – 12.30	Keynote speech by a Conference Diamond/Platinum Sponsor
12.30 – 14.00	Networking Lunch
14.00 – 14.55 Panel session	Session 2: Smart Scanners, Secure Borders: X-ray Innovation Driving Agile Customs <i>As global trade volumes surge and threats become more sophisticated, Customs administrations are under pressure to see more while slowing trade less. Advanced X-ray imaging has moved from a single checkpoint tool to a flexible, data-rich platform that can reshape border operations almost overnight.</i>

	<i>This session will examine how the newest generation of high-resolution X-ray scanners—featuring modular design and available in fixed, mobile, and drive-through configurations—can be rapidly deployed, reconfigured, or scaled up to meet shifting operational demands.</i> <i>Speakers will demonstrate how these smart scanners provide real-time operational insights—empowering frontline officers with instant, data-driven decisions at the checkpoint.</i>
14.55 – 15.05	Keynote speech by a Conference Diamond/Platinum Sponsor
15.05 – 16.00 Panel session	Session 3: Reinventing Risk Management: Breaking Silos for Unified Risk Assessment <i>Traditional risk management often operates in isolated silos, where compliance, security, and operational teams work with fragmented data, tools and objectives. This disjointed approach creates critical blind spots and inefficiencies, leaving Customs administrations vulnerable to emerging threats.</i> <i>This session will explore how integrated risk management can dismantle these barriers by unifying data, teams, and technologies into a cohesive framework. Participants will gain insights into leveraging cross-functional collaboration, AI-driven analytics, and centralized platforms to create better synergies within the administration.</i> <i>Real-world strategies will be shared during this session to transform risk assessment from a reactive checklist into a proactive and agile force, to enhance threat visibility, accelerate response, and align risk management with business resilience in the current complex global landscape.</i>
16.00 – 16.30	Refreshment & Networking Break
16.30 – 17.25 Panel session	Session 4: Above the Clouds: Enhancing Customs Security with Cloud Technology <i>Digital transformation has pushed Customs administrations to rethink their infrastructure, operations, and approach to risk. Cloud-computing technology is reshaping the way Customs processes, analyzes, and shares information, offering scalability, flexibility, and real-time capabilities.</i> <i>This session will explore how Customs administrations can leverage the cloud to drive modernization and strengthen their ability to respond to new challenges. Experts will discuss real-world journeys to cloud adoption, from migrating legacy systems to deploying AI-powered analytics and facilitating seamless cross-border data exchange.</i> <i>The aim is to inspire participants by sharing cloud-powered solutions as catalysts for security and agility. The discussion will provide actionable insights for Customs looking to better deliver on their mission to secure and facilitate trade in a complex world.</i>
19.00 – 22.00	Gala dinner hosted by the UAE

Thursday, 29 January 2026

Devoting Day 2 to
Trade Facilitation through Digital Pathways

07.45 – 17.00	Registration	
08.10 – 08.20 Exhibition area	Tech Talk 1	Tech Talk 5
08.20 – 08.30 Exhibition area	Tech Talk 2	Tech Talk 6
08.30 – 08.40 Exhibition area	Tech Talk 3	Tech Talk 7
08.40 – 08.50 Exhibition area	Tech Talk 4	Tech Talk 8
09.00 – 09.10	Keynote speech by a Conference Diamond/Platinum Sponsor	
09.10 – 10.05 Panel session	Session 5: Facilitation at the Border: Digital Solutions for Seamless Trade <i>Trade facilitation stands as a core mission for Customs, demanding innovative solutions to keep pace with the complexity and speed of modern supply chains. As digitalization reshapes the global trade landscape, Customs administrations are turning to a new generation of tools to streamline procedures, strengthen compliance, and deliver greater value to both government and business.</i> <i>This session will explore the range of digital platforms and technologies such as Single Window systems, that are redefining border operations. Speakers will share practical experiences on integrating these solutions, building partnerships across agencies, and driving user-centric innovation at the border.</i> <i>The panel will offer fresh perspectives and actionable ideas for Customs to simplify and facilitate trade, enhance transparency, and adapt rapidly to changing demands. Attendees will gain a clearer view of the path towards agile, technology-driven facilitation in a connected world.</i>	
10.05 – 11.00 Panel session	Session 6: Facilitation at One Click: Linked Data and Verifiable Credentials Speeding up Trade with Trust <i>Cross-border trade remains burdened by manual paperwork, redundant data entry, and siloed systems, causing costly delays, as well as risks related to fraud and non-compliance. Linked data and verifiable credentials offer valuable opportunities to eliminate redundant paperwork, automate validation, and accelerate trade through globally interoperable digital trust.</i> <i>This session will demonstrate how verifiable credentials – digitally signed, tamper-proof documents – and linked data – machine-readable connections between datasets – can revolutionize trade facilitation. While verifiable credentials can replace physical certificates with instantly verifiable digital proofs, linked data can automate cross-validation of shipments. Together, they enable “one-click” facilitation and compliance.</i>	

Participants will be equipped with the knowledge on how Customs administrations and traders can use this unified approach to slash clearance time, reduce administrative costs, and minimize errors, achieving maximum benefits in cross-border trade.

11.00 – 11.30	Refreshment & Networking Break	
11.30 – 11.40	Keynote Speech by a Conference Diamond/Platinum Sponsor	
11.40 – 12.30	Session 7: Data-Driven Decisions for Sustainable Supply Chains	
Panel session	<i>Climate targets, circular-economy pledges, consumer expectations and evolving environmental regulations are rapidly reshaping global supply chains and pushing Customs beyond traditional enforcement. Today's "Green Customs" agenda spans HS-code updates for green and circular-economy goods, risk-based targeting of polluting or illegal shipments, facilitation measures for low-carbon products, and partnership with environmental authorities to uphold sustainability commitments.</i> <i>This session will show how Customs can turn trade and logistics data into actionable environmental insights—pinpointing high-risk, high-impact shipments and enabling sustainable trade policies. Speakers will present hands-on examples—from HS-code mapping tools that flag environmental goods, to joint Customs–environment agency risk frameworks, to "green corridors" that streamline clearance for certified green products—demonstrating how border operations can be simultaneously more sustainable, compliant and efficient.</i> <i>Participants will leave with a clear roadmap for implementing Green Customs reforms in line with WCO guidance and global climate and biodiversity goals, including governance steps, technology enablers and multi-stakeholder collaboration models.</i>	
12.30 – 14.00	Networking Lunch / Tech Talks	
12.40 – 12.50 Exhibition area	Tech Talk 9	Tech Talk 13
12.50 – 13.00 Exhibition area	Tech Talk 10	Tech Talk 14
13.00 – 13.10 Exhibition area	Tech Talk 11	Tech Talk 15
13.10 – 13.20 Exhibition area	Tech Talk 12	Tech Talk 16

Stream A		Stream B (English only)
14.00 – 14.55 Breakout sessions in two streams	Session A1: Data Without Silos: Accelerating Interoperability with the WCO Data Model Over the past two decades, the WCO Data Model has become the lingua franca for cross-border regulatory data exchange, yet many administrations still struggle to break free from legacy systems. This breakout session assembles implementation leads from Customs and solution providers to demonstrate how the WCO Data Model can be implemented to enhance interoperability. The session's second focus looks ahead: preparing the WCO Data Model for verifiable credentials by expressing its elements as Linked Data. Speakers will show how simple JSON-LD contexts and decentralized identifiers let declarations, licences and certificates become tamper-evident digital credentials that machines can instantly verify.	Session B1: Common Format, Shared Vision: Advancing NII Interoperability with UFF 3.0 The Unified File Format (UFF) is a WCO-sponsored, nonproprietary standard for nonintrusive inspection (NII) data—recently elevated to version 3.0.0—designed to ensure interoperability across scanner systems by different vendors, support centralized image analysis, and streamline data exchange between Customs administrations. This session will gather perspectives from Customs and industry on how UFF implementation can improve operational efficiency and cross-border collaboration. Looking ahead, the discussion will explore how UFF 3.0.0 supports greater automation, detection technologies integration, and standardized technical requirements.
	15.05 – 16.00 Breakout sessions in two streams	Session B2: DIY Digital Customs: Empowering Officers to Build Solutions Customs officers no longer have to wait for long, cost-heavy IT projects to fix everyday bottlenecks like duplicate data entry, missing alerts or manual spreadsheets. Modern low-/no-code environments—often already included in an administration's productivity suite—let non-developers drag-and-drop interfaces, plug directly into existing risk or declaration databases, and spin up secure mobile apps in a single afternoon. In this session participants will hear case studies to automate workflows and solving real-life issues—all without writing a line of code.
16.00 – 16.30 Refreshment & Networking Break		
16.30 – 17.25	Session A3: IoT at the Border: Transforming Cargo Control with Smart Seals	Session B3: Cyber-Secure Trade Corridors: Fortifying Global Supply Chains Against Digital Threats

Breakout sessions in two streams	The increasing complexity of global trade requires smarter solutions for securing cargo and ensuring supply chain integrity. IoT-enabled smart seals provide real-time tracking, tamper alerts, and digital records, allowing Customs to move from manual inspections to data-driven risk management. This session will highlight real-world experiences and lessons learned from implementing smart seals in Customs operations. Panellists will discuss practical challenges, opportunities for international collaboration, and the impact of IoT smart seals on border security and trade facilitation.	As trade digitalizes, cyberattacks escalate – ransomware cripples ports, data breaches leak shipment records, and spoofed credentials bypass Customs controls. Cybersecurity has increasingly come to the centre of trade protection. This session will address urgent vulnerabilities at the intersection of trade infrastructure and cybersecurity and share with participants some practical experience in defending critical supply chain infrastructure through proactive cyber-physical security strategies.
19.00 – 22.00 Dinner sponsored by the Corporate Sponsor		

Friday, 30 January 2026		
Devoting Day 3 to Innovating for the Future of Customs		
08.10 – 08.20 Exhibition area	Tech Talk 17	Tech Talk 21
08.20 – 08.30 Exhibition area	Tech Talk 18	Tech Talk 22
08.30 – 08.40 Exhibition area	Tech Talk 19	Tech Talk 23
08.40 – 08.50 Exhibition area	Tech Talk 20	Tech Talk 24
09.00 – 09.40 Panel session	Session 8: Bridging the Data Gap: Strengthening Public–Private Dialogue on Cross-Border E-Commerce With the exponential growth of e-commerce transaction volumes, the need for reliable, standardized data and effective data exchange has become increasingly critical to ensure a smooth and secure flow of e-commerce shipments. In this process, it requires Customs administrations to fully involve relevant stakeholders in the e-commerce supply chains. This session will identify the challenges met in the current e-commerce landscape and share experience on how to bridge the data gap between Customs administrations and e-commerce stakeholders, more specifically, how to obtain the right data at the right time from the right source through strengthening open public-private dialogue. Speakers will explore various potential solutions to get as many e-commerce stakeholders as possible onboard to create a more trusted and standardized data-sharing environment, facilitating e-commerce trade while guaranteeing security.	
09.40 – 09.50	Individual Spotlight (interview with a moderator)	

09.50 – 10.00	Individual Spotlight (interview with a moderator)
10.00 – 10.40	Session 9: Ideas in Action: Hackathon Showcase & Honors
Panel session	The conference hackathon is our live innovation laboratory—a high-energy arena where coders, designers and domain experts race to solve real Customs challenges in just 48 hours. From sunrise brainstorming to midnight debugging, teams have leveraged open APIs, sandbox datasets and expert mentors to transform bold concepts into tangible solutions. Over an intense two-day sprint, hackathon teams turned fresh ideas—AI-powered risk engines, green-logistics dashboards and more—into working prototypes. Now the hackatheers will deliver rapid five-minute demos on stage, and every attendee becomes a judge: cast your vote in the conference app to decide the champions in real time. By the session's end, participants will have witnessed proof of concepts that could soon be piloted at borders worldwide, met the creators behind them, and helped select the winners who will receive mentoring and seed support to take their solutions to the next level. Expect to leave inspired—and armed with new contacts and ideas you can bring back to your own administration or organization.
10.40 – 10.50	Individual Spotlight (interview with a moderator)
10.50 – 11.00	Individual Spotlight (interview with a moderator)
11.00 – 11.30	Refreshment & Networking Break
11.30 – 12.30	Session 10: The Next Horizon: Building Resilient and Agile Customs in a Complex World
Round table	The world of Customs is at a turning point: digital transformation, evolving trade dynamics, and the demands for security and facilitation require agencies to lead with vision, agility, and a commitment to public value. This high-level roundtable will explore the strategies, partnerships, and mindsets needed to navigate the next era of Customs. The speakers will share perspectives on leveraging technology for sustainable innovation, building resilient organizations, and reimagining collaboration both within Customs and with public and private partners. Bringing together voices from the global Customs community and beyond, this closing session aims to provide clarity and momentum for the road ahead, drawing on the key lessons and fresh perspectives shared throughout the conference. Participants will leave with a renewed sense of purpose and practical ideas to lead with confidence and creativity into the future of international trade.
12.30 – 13.00	Closing of the Conference <i>Representative of the Customs administration of the host country</i> <i>Ian Saunders, Secretary General of the World Customs Organization</i>
13.00 – 13.30	Grab-and-Go Lunch
14.00 – 17.00	Conference social programme