



IAN SAUNDERS

JUNE 22, 2023

TRANSCRIPT SECRETARY GENERAL CANDIDATURE SPEECH TO COUNCIL

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, Mr. Secretary General, esteemed members of this Council, members of the diplomatic corps, Mesdames et Messieurs.

It is my privilege to stand again in this room with you, today as a candidate for the post of Secretary General.

A wise man in this room told a group of young people once that, what you do early in your career shapes the opportunities that become available to you later. In that context, my appearance before you today is not just the result of several months' effort; it's a result of some 30 years.

32 years ago this month, I began work with the United States Customs Service. I was brand new to public service, and one of my first tasks was to distribute Customs Co-operation Council reports to other agencies and the Court of International Trade. That was my introduction to this organization. In time, I came to understand the value of this Council's work – and to contribute to it in more substantial ways. The awe I felt on that first day is the same as what I feel today.

It is with a deep respect for the investment you make in the WCO that I offer myself as a candidate for Secretary General. Should I have the good fortune to serve as your Secretary General, you can expect leadership, vision, approachability, and a commitment to service that complements the esteemed membership of this Council. In me, you will find an able caretaker of this house that Customs has built – someone who will maintain its foundation and improve it to withstand challenges and allow us to increase our collective productivity and effectiveness.

I make this offer with clear intention and vision, with experience working with a diverse set of colleagues from every part of the world, and in response to the call to public service that each of us knows well.

My vision is of a WCO that focuses on providing timely information products and guidance of the highest quality to its members so that they, through their daily practice, can ensure the safety and security of trade while facilitating the movement of legitimate goods – goods that improve our quality of life.

I intend to drive us toward the prosperity and security to which we all aspire -- a prosperity created by favorable economic conditions, and a safety that results from the interdiction of risks hidden within trade and travel; prosperity and security made possible by effective customs practices and by a WCO whose operations are oriented to maximize service and efficiency.

I will carry forward this vision through transparency and partnership with you, informed by your interests, reliant upon your feedback, and executed based on the principles of competence, consistency, and collaboration.

It is my hope you have seen this focus on partnership through my outreach, in the efforts to communicate with as many of you as possible to understand your needs and concerns and to make them the basis of my proposed approach to leading this organization.

I have been fortunate to talk with many of you. For those with whom I have not had the privilege to speak, allow me to share what I wish to achieve for you through this organization and how I propose to help us realize these goals.

To that end, I would like to share the pillars of my vision:

Helping Customs **protect** - protect revenue, protect public safety, protect global trade;
Helping Customs **deliver** - delivering through implementation and realizing the vision of our standards and guidelines;
Helping Customs **evolve** - evolving with the times, employing the right technology and talent, and modernizing processes;
and Helping Customs **engage** - engaging with stakeholders more than ever and making them co-creators of solutions.

These capture the goals I want to support the WCO to achieve on members' behalf and speak to methods I believe can help the organization realize our shared objectives.

These pillars reflect a recognition that we must not only identify and explore the policy and procedures that are critical to Customs effectiveness; they also reflect an understanding that the real measure of success for the WCO and its members is the degree to which the standards developed and maintained here -- the expressions of our aspirations -- become the reality of our daily practice as goods and people move across borders.

The pillars are less a programmatic prescription than they are guideposts for how we can come together to decide priorities within the WCO's work, how we will measure our success, and how we communicate to others the value that we bring. The foundation of the work agenda comes from you. I hope to build on our past accomplishments and to identify the best path toward greater success.

We are at our best when we combine our efforts and skills. We are stronger when we operate with best practice. It is in this place that the principles of cooperation, thought leadership, and communication are exemplified. It is in this place that we have achieved great things because of unity of purpose, commonality of understanding, and willingness to share -- no matter the prevailing conditions.

It is the reason we have a Harmonized System that provides consistency in classification. It is why we have a SAFE Framework that guides us on how to balance trade facilitation and supply chain security. The examples are too numerous to name, and the potential to do more is similarly too expansive to describe.

You can be assured that I will use my knowledge, experience, and dedication to this entire community to ensure that we focus on meaningful issues in timely and practical ways that enrich your work at the national level to accomplish trade facilitation and security through innovation, organizational health and resilience, and collaboration with stakeholders.

I would work tirelessly to support you in implementing improvements that support legitimate trade and stop the activities of those who would do harm. I would ensure that the work done here remains focused on the shared goals that connect us, knowing that there is much to do and that our adversaries thrive when we become distracted.

I would work with you to ensure the WCO, and customs generally, are better recognized for their contributions and that our story is better told. And I would champion the organization's modernization to help it become a world-class service provider and a model among its peers.

The WCO's value continues, but the organization must adapt to guarantee this. It can help us overcome increasingly complex obstacles, but we must ensure the organization remains prepared and organized to deliver.

This will rely on leadership, an investment in the work, a drive for continual improvement, a sense of shared responsibility, and the application of good ideas.

I offer you a dedicated partner, interested in this Council's success and respectful of the spirit of cooperation in which it was established. I offer you a leader who defines success based on results, responsiveness, and integrity.

I would be honored to be your next Secretary General. If you select me, you will have the commitment of a customs professional, a diplomat, an experienced leader, a strong advocate, and a true believer in the work that you do.

The process that brings me to you is one built around one of the most solemn and important responsibilities that you have: to decide on the direction of this organization, the work it does, and the way it supports your needs.

Vous êtes sur le pont de vous acquitterez de l'une de vos responsabilités les plus importantes en tant que propriétaires de cette maison que la douane a construite.

You are about to discharge one of your most important responsibilities as the owners of this house that Customs has built.

So, I humbly ask for your vote. I am convinced that, together, we can make the WCO even stronger, more relevant, and more responsive to the challenges and opportunities of our time.

Thank you for your attention. It is a privilege to be part of the Customs family.



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