

Workshop on Combating Illegal Hazardous Waste Trade Through Seaports

A Seaport Environmental Security Network Capacity Building Workshop

Accra, Ghana - 22-23 June 2009

Welcoming Remarks

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Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, dear friends!

As Co-chair of INECE – the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement – I am really delighted to see you all here in the beautiful country of Ghana and the exiting city of Accra. Being back in this place once more is a real pleasure and I feel honoured to be invited here for the occasion of this international Workshop.

Taking the liberty to speak for you all, I first would like to express my gratefulness to the distinguished previous speakers for their welcoming remarks, which were so warm and cordial and are so important for the atmosphere and success of this meeting.

The illegal transportation and trade of hazardous waste is an issue of more and more international concern. Countries of origin and countries of destination both look for effective ways to detect and counteract the shipment of such waste streams. Strategic approaches to inspection and enforcement of domestic and international legislation are critical, in this respect. Without those, the detrimental effects of such shipments to the environment, to the health of workers and the general public, and to economies will be persistent and growing.

Since the matter of waste trafficking, that we are addressing here, is clearly of *international* nature, it is also through *international* cooperation and action that we should seek effective responses towards it. It is for this reason that the International Network of Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (INECE) took the initiative to start the Seaport Environmental Security Network. This was done just over a year ago, as a direct follow-up of the 8th INECE Conference in Cape Town, South Africa.

As an international community of compliance and enforcement practitioners, the Seaport Network actually started last October with its first Workshop in Lyon. It is the network's ambition to serve as a platform for all those compliance and enforcement professionals that are facing the illicit international shipment of waste and want to act against it. The leading goals for the Seaport Network are to join forces for more issue-awareness, for building adequate capacity for compliance assurance and for concrete and practical domestic and international cooperation with respect to detection, inspection and enforcement of illegal waste shipments.

I am very happy that this INECE Seaport Workshop could be organised here in Ghana. There is all reason to express thanks to the organisational committee of the INECE Secretariat, consultants, international organisations and the participants of the Seaport Network. All worked hard to prepare this meeting. However, without the excellent help of the local authorities, very little would have been accomplished. Therefore I express my deep respect to the management and the staff of the Ghana Customs Excise and Preventive Service, the

Ghana Environmental Protection Agency and the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority. So Dinah, Jonathan, and Harry, thank you really very much for your time and efforts to contribute so much to this Workshop.

And, of course, you all, participants of this Workshop, thank you for coming here – some from a long or very long distance, others from just around the corner. Your contributions and active and productive participation will be of key importance for the success of this meeting.

To be frank with you all, it is not just this meeting that counts, but also the concrete products and activities that result from it afterwards. It must have been a wise person who stipulated that every meeting is as good as its concrete and tangible follow-up.

We started small, last year in Lyon, and have grown bigger now here in Accra. Let that also be reflected in the concrete things that we together will accomplish in the future.

Since we are dealing with this tough problem of international hazardous waste trafficking, we all know that there are no easy solutions. Nevertheless, it will be the concrete small and practical steps that can help us in jointly developing effective practical ways and means to detect and to counteract illegal waste shipments and their serious negative consequences to societies.

In this perspective, I strongly believe that we can achieve progress in a worldwide perspective and also in the context of the specific situation and circumstances of the West African Region.

I wish you all an inspiring and productive Workshop.

Thank you very much.