

ANA and TRACIT unite Customs Directors-General from 24 countries to tackle illicit trade in the Americas region

Panama City, 27 March 2024 – The first edition of the Combatting Illicit Trade Summit of Customs Directors-General in the Americas Region concluded today, marking a significant milestone in the collective fight against illicit trade in the region. Organized by the Autoridad Nacional de Aduanas de Panamá (ANA) and the Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade (TRACIT), the Summit drew participation from 24 Directors-General in the region, from Canada to Argentina.

In addition to TRACIT Director General Jeffrey Hardy and ANA Director General Tayra Barsalla, the meeting featured Customs Directors-General and government officials from 24 countries: Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Bonaire, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and the United States.

The Summit benefited by contributions and participation from key Intergovernmental Organizations including, the World Customs Organization (WCO), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The audience featured more than 200 experts from the private sector, including TRACIT member companies and technology suppliers like Countercheck and S2 Global.

The first day opened with a high-level Roundtable Summit with Customs Directors-General. In this welcoming remarks, Javier Enrique Caraballo Salazar, Procurador General de la Nación, Panama noted, **“It is an honor to host in Panama such a distinguished assembly of colleagues from across the Americas. Your presence underscores the significance of our mission and the solidarity that is crucial to drive our efforts against illicit trade.”**

In his opening remarks, TRACIT Director-General Jeffrey Hardy noted, **“This Summit embodies TRACIT’s mission to mobilize efforts across borders and industries and to facilitate public and private sector collaborations in fighting illicit trade. The significant breadth and depth of illicit trade in the Americas region, ranging from counterfeit goods to tobacco and wildlife trafficking, from pesticides to pharmaceuticals and alcohol, underscores the multifaceted challenges that must be tackled collectively. Illicit trade inflicts significant harm on our economies, societies, and natural resources, demanding urgent and concerted action to combat this pervasive threat.”**

In inaugurating the Roundtable, Director-General of ANA, Tayra Barsallo, highlighted Panama's leadership in convening this vital forum. **“We stand at a critical juncture in our fight against illicit trade. We need to protect the economic and social fabric of our nations collectively. This Summit signifies our shared commitment to fostering a collaborative approach towards securing clean, fair trade across our borders. In the last year, Panama has made significant efforts to increase the effectiveness of Customs. We are eager to exchange our insights and best practices, equally anticipating the opportunity to learn from yours. Together, our shared knowledge becomes our collective strength,”** Ms. Barsallo stated.

In the Roundtable, Directors-General addressed critical vulnerabilities to illicit trade, focusing on the surge in small package trafficking, the necessity for enhanced data sharing and strategies to manage

illicit activities within Free Trade Zones. Emphasizing the significance of strengthening cross-border collaborations, they explored ways to amplify joint efforts, ensuring more robust and effective actions to combat illicit trade.

Day two of the Summit featured panel discussions exploring innovative strategies to combat illicit trade and enhance global security. Discussions continued with a focus on advancing strategies and partnerships to combat illicit trade across the Americas in key impacted sectors including pharmaceuticals, fast moving consumer goods, alcohol and crop protection products.

In his keynote address on Day two of the Summit, Mr Hardy noted, “Customs agencies play a pivotal role in the battle against illicit trade, and this Summit has been specifically designed to tackle the unique challenges these agencies face. Through our discussions, we aim to harvest valuable insights and best practices that will strengthen our collective efforts. Today is a launch point for collaborative efforts that can extend beyond the Summit and throughout the year to share knowledge, enhance our capabilities, and build our resilience against illicit trade. We deeply value the dedication and participation of everyone involved, as we join hands across the Americas to mitigate this pervasive threat.”

The Summit also featured the collective endorsement of a Joint Statement on Illicit Trade Mitigation, a testament to the collective resolve of the Customs agencies to protect their economies and societies from the harms of illicit trade. It symbolizes their shared commitment to promoting dialogue and knowledge exchange among their Customs administrations.



Looking ahead, the Summit set a precedent for platform to share best practices, strengthen enforcement mechanisms, and foster an environment where trade can flourish without the shadow of illegitimacy. **"This Declaration is just the beginning of a concerted effort to protect and promote fair trade in the Americas. Together, we will continue to work towards a future where our economies are shielded from the detrimental impacts of illicit trade,"** concluded Ms. Barsallo.

As a reflection of the spirit and enthusiasm to continue their work, several delegates requested that TRACIT coordinate a second edition of the Summit next year and invited opportunities for

coordination and capacity building sessions along the way. These views were also expressed by private sector experts suggesting, for example, partnering in a regional operation focused on pharma crime and establishing a standard that Customs agencies can use for measuring trends and exchanging information on illicit trade in alcohol.

In his closing remarks TRACIT's Director of Programs Esteban Giudici stated, **"Our discussions will not only help us dive deeper into the common challenges we face today but will also pave the way for innovative and unified solutions against illicit trade."** Thanking ANA for all their support in hosting this regional forum, he noted, ***"We are committed to work in partnership with ANA and all the other Customs agencies in the region. Together we will stop illicit trafficking, to the benefit of the region and the many destination countries for illicit trade."***

About TRACIT

The Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade ([TRACIT](https://www.tracit.org)) is an independent, private sector initiative to mitigate the economic and social damages of illicit trade by strengthening government enforcement mechanisms and mobilizing businesses across sectors most impacted by illicit trade.

About the National Customs Authority of Panama

ANA's mission is to facilitate world trade, collect taxes efficiently, participate in national security and promote the sustainable development of the country. ANA controls, monitors and supervises the entry, exit and movement of goods, persons and means of transport through all borders, ports and airports of the country.

For further information

<https://www.tracit.org/panama.html>

<https://www.ana.gob.pa>

[Inicia en Aduanas taller sobre mitigación del comercio ilícito](#)

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