



THIRD COMBATING ILLICIT TRADE SUMMIT OF CUSTOMS DIRECTORS-GENERAL

Americas Region

14-16 APRIL 2026 | RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL



Event Summary

3rd Combating Illicit Trade Summit of Customs Directors-Generals, Americas Region

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – 15–16 April 2026

The 3rd Combating Illicit Trade Summit of Customs Directors-Generals, Americas Region was co-hosted by the Special Secretariat of the Federal Revenue of Brazil (Receita Federal), represented by Fabiano Coelho, Undersecretary of Customs Administration, and the Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade (TRACIT), represented by Jeffrey Hardy, Director-General. The Summit convened in Rio de Janeiro on 15–16 April 2026.

The Summit highlighted the increasing scale, complexity and cross-border nature of illicit trade, reinforcing the need for coordinated, intelligence-led and technology-enabled responses across the Americas.

Participants

- The meeting featured **Customs Directors-Generals and senior representatives from 22 countries across the Americas region, including observers from The Netherlands and Portugal.** Delegations present and signing the Joint Declaration on 16 April 2026: Argentina, Aruba, Bolivia, Canada, Caribbean Netherlands, Brazil, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, The Netherlands and Portugal.
- The Summit benefited from the active participation and contributions from TRACIT member companies, which played key roles providing private sector expertise across the technical sessions. These included presentations from Shelley Duggan and Julie Mejia (Procter & Gamble), Regina Zamith (Johnson & Johnson), Esteban Giudici (Philip Morris International), Eduardo Cassatti (Syngenta), Thainá Marques (Lacoste), Maria Elena Lambrano (Chanel), and Mariangela Sampaio Pratas da Costa (Unilever). TRACIT member companies represented at the Summit include: AB InBev, Chanel, Beiersdorf, Diageo, Hugo Boss, Johnson & Johnson, Lacoste, Moët Hennessy, Procter & Gamble, Pernod Ricard, Philip Morris International, Syngenta and Unilever.
- Observers included 210 participants and experts from the private sector, including technology providers, legal specialists, and industry associations. Event costs were offset by contributions from expert anti-illicit trade technology providers SGS, Inexto, Webb Fontaine, SKF, Signa Inc., and ABELAC. [See here for the full list of sponsors](#)

Purpose

Building on the positive outcomes of the first Summit (Panama City, 2024) and second Summit (Cartagena, 2025), the third edition set out to bring together Customs Directors-Generals to strengthen coordination, capabilities, and common standards for the mitigation of illicit trade, ***“promoting dialogue and knowledge exchange among Customs administrations across the Americas.”*** Central and South America remain a key focus in global efforts to combat counterfeiting and other forms of illicit trade, given the increasing sophistication of criminal networks operating across borders, supply chains and digital channels.

Key Messages from delegates

- Illicit trade is evolving and remains a serious threat to economic development, public health, and security across the Americas. Sectors particularly affected include alcohol, pharmaceuticals, tobacco, pesticides, petroleum, luxury goods, and consumer products.
- Criminal networks continue to exploit institutional and operational vulnerabilities within customs systems across the region, including limited cross-border cooperation, lack of data-sharing mechanisms, and gaps in risk profiling technologies.
- The region’s customs authorities possess valuable expertise. Advancing regional collaboration is the most effective way to build on national efforts and confront the shared challenges, to which delegates expressed firm commitment.
- Joint enforcement strategies, intelligence sharing, and harmonised risk management practices were identified as essential tools to combat illicit trade effectively across the hemispheric supply chain.
- Strong partnerships – between customs authorities, the private sector, and civil society - were seen as critical facilitators of these efforts and a distinguishing feature of this Summit’s design.
- The Summit provided a platform to strengthen cross-border ties and advance the informal, action-oriented network of customs leaders committed to continued regional collaboration established at previous Summits.
- In her keynote address, **Shelley Duggan**, Senior Vice President & General Counsel of Procter & Gamble and Chairperson of TRACIT, framed three structural shifts shaping enforcement challenges globally: (i) effectively tackling illicit trade requires looking beyond border seizures towards broader supply chain disruption - criminal activity now operates across free trade zones, repackaging hubs, e-commerce platforms and informal logistics networks; (ii) the information challenge has shifted from data scarcity to data under-utilisation, as such the constraint is no longer availability, but integration and effective use; and (iii) illicit trade is evolving from primarily an intellectual property issue into a broader public safety concern, with counterfeiting increasingly linked to consumer health risks, including household goods, unsafe chemicals and counterfeit pharmaceuticals. These observations provided a strategic framework that informed the discussions and priorities throughout the Summit.

Outcomes and commitments

Joint Declaration endorsed by delegates

In a demonstration of their shared commitment to mitigating illicit trade, participating delegates endorsed the ***Joint Statement on Illicit Trade Mitigation*** on 16 April 2026. Building on the outcomes of the previous Summits in Panama City (2024) and Cartagena (2025), the Declaration reaffirms the collective determination of participating administrations to enhance customs effectiveness, support legitimate trade, and address illicit trade in an increasingly complex and interconnected global environment.

- Strengthening collaboration beyond the Summit by maintaining a network of customs administrations in the Americas, facilitating continuous information exchange, joint learning, and coordinated action.
- Recognising the critical role of technology in enabling more effective customs controls, and promoting greater exchange of technological solutions, data practices, and analytical capabilities across administrations.
- Committing to the continued development of the Compendium of Best Practices as a living document, to be enriched with new practices, insights, and contributions over time.
- Reaffirming the value of this Summit as a platform for collaboration and the exchange of practical experience, particularly in relation to e-commerce growth, enhanced risk management, and data interoperability.
- Building on the success of the first and second Summits, delegates welcomed the continuation of this initiative and called for TRACIT to facilitate further regional dialogue, capacity-building activities and technical coordination between Summits.

[Read the 2026 Joint Statement on Mitigating Illicit Trade](#)

Compendium of Best Practices

A major milestone of the 3rd Summit was the formal presentation of the **Compendium of Best Practices for Customs Agencies of the Americas Region** by Stefano Betti, Deputy Director-General of TRACIT. The Compendium, available online at tracit.org, represents the first systematic effort to document and disseminate practical experience from across the region's customs administrations.

The Compendium was developed through contributions from 29 countries, including interviews, survey inputs and case studies from officials who participated in the Panama City (2024) and Cartagena (2025) Summits, complemented by written contributions from Directors-Generals participating in the 2026 Summit. It was submitted to the Summit as a practical and evolving reference tool to support customs administrations, policy officials, and other stakeholders in identifying and adapting effective enforcement practices. Contents include:

- Case studies designed for rapid comprehension, with concise summaries and results-oriented insights.
- Contact information to facilitate direct exchange and peer learning between administrations.
- An online, dynamic format that allows the document to evolve and be updated continuously with new contributions.

The Compendium is relevant to both public and private sector actors involved in trade, logistics, and e-commerce. It is available at: <https://www.tracit.org/compendium-illicit-trade-summit.html>

Agreed actions

Delegates agreed on the following priority actions to translate the Summit's outcomes into concrete impact:

- Continue development of the Compendium of Best Practices as a living document, with new country contributions submitted between Summits.
- Strengthen interoperability between customs, law enforcement and private sector data systems, with priority focus on e-commerce and small parcel flows.
- Develop a coordinated regional approach to tobacco and alcohol illicit trade enforcement, addressing Free Trade Zone vulnerabilities and cross-border smuggling routes.
- Create and expand an informal network to share information and propose activities between Summits. TRACIT will serve as the network manager and each delegation will appoint a liaison contact person.

2027 Summit - 4th Edition

Reflecting the spirit and enthusiasm to continue their work, several delegates expressed strong interest in hosting the fourth edition of the Summit in 2027. **Proposals from prospective host delegations are welcome and will be coordinated through TRACIT.**

Summary of Roundtable Discussions

Session 1: Illicit Trade in the Americas – What Keeps Customs Chiefs Awake at Night?

Moderated by Ana Linda Solano, Director of Americas Region at TRACIT, the opening roundtable invited remarks from each head of delegation, providing a ground-level picture of the challenges and priorities facing customs authorities across the region. Delegates from the Caribbean, Central and South America identified overlapping concerns: the surge in low-value e-commerce shipments exploiting de minimis exemptions; sophisticated modus operandi in Free Trade Zones; limited interoperability between enforcement agencies; and the growing convergence of illicit trade with organised crime and money laundering. Several delegations noted that illicit trade in consumer goods, pharmaceuticals, and agrochemicals is increasingly posing direct threats to public health, adding urgency to enforcement prioritisation.

Session 2: Illicit Trade Around the Clock – E-Commerce, Small Parcels & Social Media

This session addressed the unintended impacts of de minimis regimes, goods undervaluation, and shipment splitting as enablers of illicit trade. Delegates discussed the challenge of enforcing anti-illicit trade regulations on online marketplaces and social media platforms without hampering legitimate trade flows. The session drew on pilot projects and good practices from across the Americas, including Brazil's efforts through Correios. Private-sector perspectives from Chanel and Daniel Law highlighted the scale of counterfeit distribution via social media and the importance of platform accountability mechanisms. Delegates agreed that current regulatory frameworks were not designed for today's e-commerce volumes, and that simplified risk-based procedures for small consignments, stronger regulatory frameworks, and enhanced targeting through risk profiling are urgently needed.

Delegates revisited concerns raised during previous Summits, emphasising that the proliferation of small parcels — transported via air cargo, postal services, and express couriers — continues to overwhelm traditional customs controls. The problem is exacerbated by limited access to data from e-commerce platforms and shipping intermediaries. The session highlighted the urgent need to modernise regulatory frameworks to keep pace with the scale and speed of digital trade.

Discussions highlighted the need for:

- Enhanced risk profiling tools, with stronger access to advance electronic data (AED).
- Cross-border data sharing, particularly with express couriers and postal operators.
- Engagement with e-commerce platforms, including mechanisms for accountability and cooperation on suspected illicit shipments.
- Continued investment in screening technologies, coupled with training for customs officers to identify deceptive packaging and misdeclared goods.
- A review and assessment of de minimis rules as applied throughout the region, given widespread exploitation.

Session 3: Tackling the Global Trade in Fakes from an Americas' Perspective

An analysis of counterfeit product flows in the region — including via transit hubs, gateway ports, and key land borders — was presented alongside discussion of the various modus operandi employed by criminal

networks: misdeclaration, logistics hub repackaging, and online sales via e-commerce platforms and social media. Delegates from Argentina, El Salvador, Panama, and Paraguay, together with private-sector speakers from Syngenta, Signa Inc., and Unilever, discussed technologies and best practices to address counterfeiting. Cairo Jennings, IP Attaché for the Mercosur region at the USPTO, presented on the intellectual property enforcement landscape and regional priorities. Participants discussed the growing prevalence of counterfeit goods across various product categories — including pharmaceuticals, personal care items, household products, apparel, and alcohol — and the critical need to strengthen customs capabilities to detect and intercept such products.

Discussions highlighted the need for:

- Enhanced training for customs officers to improve product identification techniques, particularly for distinguishing high-quality counterfeits.
- Stronger partnerships with brand owners and rights holders to leverage their specialised knowledge in support of frontline enforcement.
- Shared intelligence, authentication tools, and training resources from brand owners and rights holders to aid in product verification.
- Better access to real-time product verification databases to strengthen responses to counterfeiting.

Session 4: Securing Nodes – Ports, Corridors, Free Trade Zones

Delegates examined governance in Free Trade Zones and high-risk maritime, river, and land corridors across the Americas. It was widely agreed that Free Trade Zones (FTZs) facilitate trafficking of illicit goods, and that the lack of transparency and oversight in many FTZs presents a significant challenge for customs authorities. Delegates also examined high-risk maritime, river, and land corridors and the governance challenges they present.

Delegates from Panama, Guatemala, and Jamaica, alongside the Business Alliance for Secure Commerce (BASC) Colombia, discussed how scanning technologies, non-intrusive inspection, smart seals, and tracking tools can improve coverage without impeding legitimate trade. Panama’s experience with FTZ governance reforms and Jamaica’s AEO programme were cited as regional models worth replicating.

Discussions highlighted the need for:

- Improved clarity in regulations governing customs authority within FTZs, including requirements for advance electronic data and advance declarations.
- Risk profiling of suspect shipments, conducting ex-officio checks in FTZs, and extending customs supervision to the FTZ perimeter.
- Additional resources to address the growing number of FTZs and the high volumes of shipments processed within them.
- Broader adoption of trusted network programmes, such as Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) schemes, to enable risk-based targeting.
- Regional sharing of models such as the OECD Clean Zone Certification and the associated Code of Conduct for Clean Free Trade Zones.

Session 5: From Checkpoints to Systems – Strategic Border Governance

This session emphasised the necessity of effective interagency coordination between customs authorities, law enforcement agencies, and prosecutors to ensure that serious border violations are successfully referred for criminal investigation. The session highlighted the need to move from reactive, checkpoint-based enforcement to systemic, intelligence-led approaches, where customs operates as one node in a broader enforcement network rather than a standalone barrier. Delegates from Bolivia, Cuba, and Guatemala

discussed structural barriers to inter-agency information sharing, including legal constraints, institutional silos, and gaps in investigative capacity. Delegates also emphasised that customs operations cannot function in isolation and that diverse stakeholders, including the private sector and governments, must collaborate to succeed. Discussions highlighted the need for:

- Expanding collaboration among customs authorities across borders as well as with enforcement agencies, postal services, international organisations, and the private sector.
- Aligning penalties, improving intelligence gathering and sharing, streamlining communication methods and working with IP rights holders more effectively.
- Increasing effective operational data-sharing to enable real-time responses to illicit trade flows.

Session 6: Private-Public Partnerships – Making Brazil’s Alcohol Market Safe for Consumers

This session discussed the impact of illicit trade in alcohol on consumer health and safety, fiscal revenue, market integrity, and intellectual property protection. Cultural introductions from the Instituto Brasileiro da Cachaça and the Association of Artisan Brewers of Brazil framed the economic and cultural stakes for Brazil’s distinctive beverage sector. International perspectives from the Alliance Against Counterfeit Spirits and the Latin American and Caribbean Spirits Alliance highlighted the scale of illicit alcohol flows across the region. Brazilian industry representatives and customs officials from Trinidad & Tobago, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic discussed collaborative solutions. The session underscored that illicit alcohol — including counterfeit and unregistered products — represents a direct risk to public health and that enforcement must be supported by robust public-private data-sharing arrangements.

Session 7: Turning Data into Seizures – Risk Management and Artificial Intelligence

This session explored the use of AI and advanced analytics for profiling cargo, passengers, and parcels, enabling more efficient and data-driven resource allocation. Introduced by Marek Retelski, Head of Global Sales at Webb Fontaine, the session drew on examples from Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Saint Lucia. Delegates discussed the practical challenges of building and updating risk engines, including data sourcing, algorithm governance, and the need for human oversight. Delegates agreed that while AI presents strong potential, its effectiveness depends on data quality, institutional capacity, and cross-border data-sharing agreements and interoperability that remain underdeveloped across the region. Delegates underscored the critical role that risk management and intelligence play in modern customs enforcement strategies. As illicit trade operations grow in scale and complexity, delegates emphasised that enhancing capabilities to anticipate, detect, and disrupt illicit flows before they reach borders is crucially important.

Discussions highlighted the need for:

- Upgraded risk assessment tools and analytical systems capable of processing large volumes of data, especially from express shipments and e-commerce platforms, to better identify high-risk consignments.
- Establishing interoperable data systems and information-sharing protocols across the region to significantly strengthen enforcement capacity.
- Regional training initiatives to build technical skills in risk profiling, behavioural analysis, and intelligence gathering.
- Enhanced partnerships with the private sector to strengthen cooperation and deepen intelligence networks.

Session 8: View from Europe

A valuable exchange of lessons learned and best practices was presented by Mechteld Fletcher, Deputy Director-General of Customs of The Netherlands, and Helena Borges, Director-General of the Authority for

Tax and Customs of Portugal. Both administrations offered insights from the European context, including experience with advanced risk profiling systems, container pre-screening, and public-private partnerships for IP enforcement. The European perspective was well-received by delegates and highlighted both the potential for technology-enabled enforcement and the importance of long-term institutional investment in data infrastructure and interagency cooperation frameworks.

Session 9: From National to Hemispheric Action - Cooperation in the Americas

Delegates discussed regional illicit trade threat patterns and the value of information sharing and collaboration across borders, including multilateral and bilateral frameworks such as Mercosur cross-border initiatives and international AEO cooperation agreements. Introduced by Eduardo Leite of UN CEFAC, the session drew on contributions from Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador, and Trinidad & Tobago. Discussions underscored the need to move from fragmented bilateral efforts towards more structured and sustained regional cooperation frameworks. Delegates agreed that the Summit network itself represents an important step in this direction, and called for concrete mechanisms to sustain engagement between editions.

Session 10: Illicit Trade in Tobacco

Cigarette smuggling accounts for a significant portion of the Latin American market. Delegates examined inconsistencies in customs processes, re-export of cigarettes between Free Trade Zones, and deficiencies in due diligence regarding the production and final destination of merchandise that facilitate large-scale illicit cigarette trade, undermining tax revenues and facilitating organised crime. Daniel M. Rico of C-Análisis presented findings on trafficking typologies across the region, and investigative journalist Lucía Salinas (Clarín/A24) offered a special presentation on cross-border criminal networks. Philip Morris International's perspective on illicit trade prevention and track-and-trace technology was presented by Esteban Giudici. Discussants from Brazil, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Uruguay highlighted the fiscal and organised crime dimensions of tobacco smuggling and the need for harmonised enforcement standards across the region.

Session 11: Illicit Trade Threats to Consumer Health

Delegates examined how illicit trade threatens consumer health through counterfeit, substandard, and unregulated goods, and discussed the enforcement, regulatory, and awareness measures needed to reduce these risks. Introduced by Julie Mejia, Regional Director for Brand Protection Latin America at Procter & Gamble, the session included perspectives from Caribbean Netherlands, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Paraguay. Private-sector contributions from Johnson & Johnson and Lacoste highlighted the scale of health-risk counterfeiting across household products, personal care, and apparel. The session reinforced the emerging consensus that reframing illicit trade as a consumer health and safety issue — rather than solely an intellectual property concern, can drive stronger political prioritisation and more effective enforcement tools.

Session 12: Follow the Money – Trade-Based Money Laundering & Financial Flows

This session analysed how illicit financial flows infiltrate the international trading system through trade-based money laundering (TBML), and discussed the tools available to detect and prevent them, including financial intelligence, data analytics, and public-private cooperation. Introduced by Ana Linda Solano, Director for the Americas Region at TRACIT, the session drew on examples from Panama and Paraguay. Discussions focused on the tools available to detect and prevent them, including financial intelligence, data analytics, and public-private cooperation.

Discussions highlighted the need for:

- Closer integration between customs and financial intelligence units to identify TBML patterns through under- and over-invoicing, shell companies, and complex financial structures.

- Data analytics tools capable of detecting anomalies in trade data that may indicate illicit financial flows.
- Enhanced public-private cooperation to share intelligence between financial institutions, customs, and law enforcement agencies.

Session 13: Case Studies from the Oil and Gas Sector

Using Brazil’s Operação Cadeia de Carbono and Operação Carbono Oculto as case studies, this session highlighted typologies such as shell companies, trade mis-invoicing, and complex financial structures used to move and launder illicit proceeds across the oil and gas supply chain. Introduced by Juan Ricardo Ortega, President of Bogota Energy Group, the case studies were presented by senior officials from the Receita Federal’s customs offices in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Discussants from the Brazilian Petroleum, Gas and Biofuels Institute and Ecuador’s customs directorate offered comparative perspectives on similar patterns across other sectors, including textiles. The session was highlighted by participants as a model for the Summit’s case-study format and the value of interagency coordination for cross-border learning.

Media release and event materials

Summit information and documentation can be found on the TRACIT website at:

<https://www.tracit.org/third-illicit-trade-summit-americas.html>

- Summit Agenda
- Official Media Releases
- Joint Statement on Illicit Trade Mitigation
- Compendium of Best Practices
- Photographs and videos
- List of delegates and invited speakers

Participants

Hosts

- Fabiano Coelho, Undersecretary of Customs Administration, Special Secretariat of the Federal Revenue of Brazil
- Jeffrey Hardy, Director-General, Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade (TRACIT)

Attending Customs Agencies

- Argentina – Diego Carlos Figueroa, Subdirector General de Control Aduanero
- Aruba – Roderick Croes, Director of Customs
- Bolivia – Alberto Samuel Soto De La Vía, Presidente de la Aduana Nacional
- Canada – Glen Pereira, Canada Border Services Agency
- Caribbean Netherlands – Claudia Toet, Director of Customs and Tax Administration

- Brazil – Fabiano Coelho, Undersecretary of Customs Administration, Special Secretariat of the Federal Revenue of Brazil
- Cuba – William Pérez González, Vice Jefe Primero de la Aduana General de la República
- Dominican Republic – Raquel Elia Soriano Abreu, Subdirectora General
- Ecuador – Luis Landivar Olvera, Subdirector General de Operaciones
- El Salvador – Jose Benjamin Mayorga Osorio, Director General de Aduanas
- Guatemala – Edwin Orlando Curtidor Juárez, Intendente de Aduanas
- Jamaica – Velma Ricketts Walker, CEO & Commissioner of Customs
- Nicaragua – Danys Antonio Ortiz Pérez, Subdirector de Asuntos Jurídicos
- Panamá – Soraya Valdivieso, Directora General de la Autoridad Nacional de Aduanas
- Paraguay – Juan Olmedo, Gerente General de Aduanas (DNIT)
- Peru – Jorge Gallo Alvarado, Superintendente Nacional Adjunto de Aduanas (SUNAT)
- Saint Lucia – Sherman Emmanuel, Comptroller of Customs
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines – Selwyn Da Silva, Comptroller of Customs and Excise Department
- Trinidad & Tobago – Darren Bholá, Customs and Excise Supervisor
- Uruguay – Miguel Palumbo, Gerente del Área de Control y Riesgo, Dirección Nacional de Aduanas
- The Netherlands – Mechteld Fletcher, Deputy Director-General of Customs
- Portugal – Helena Borges, Director-General of the Authority for Tax and Customs

Invited Guest Speakers and Experts

- Shelley Duggan, Senior Vice President & General Counsel, Procter & Gamble; Chairperson of TRACIT
- Adriana Gomes Rêgo, Deputy Special Secretary, Special Secretariat of the Federal Revenue of Brazil
- Congressman Julio Lopes, Brazilian Congress
- Jorge Gallo Alvarado, Regional Vice-President for Americas and the Caribbean, World Customs Organization (WCO)
- Andrés Quiroga, Head of Development Trade Facilitation Services for LATAM, SGS
- Stefano Betti, Deputy Director-General, TRACIT
- Ana Linda Solano, Director of Americas Region, TRACIT
- Saim Manto, Global Head of Brand Protection, SKF
- Luis Bernardo Benjumea Martinez, Executive Director, Business Alliance for Secure Commerce (BASC), Colombia
- Cairo Jennings, IP Attaché for the Mercosur region, USPTO
- Marek Retelski, Head of Global Sales, Webb Fontaine
- Jeremy Stillman, Global Vice President, Inexto
- Eduardo Leite, Regional Rapporteur for Latin America and the Caribbean, UN CEFACIT
- Juan Ricardo Ortega, President of Bogota Energy Group
- Daniel M. Rico, Director, C-Análisis
- Lucía Salinas, Investigative Journalist, Clarín / A24
- Julie Mejia, Regional Director for Brand Protection Latin America, Procter & Gamble
- Regina Zamith, Director, Global Brand Protection – LATAM, Johnson & Johnson

- Esteban Giudici, Head of Illicit Trade Prevention and Track & Trace Policy, PMI
- Eduardo Cassatti, Head of Corporate Security, Syngenta
- Thaina Marques, IP Counsel - Brand Enforcement Americas, Lacoste
- Maria Elena Lambrano, Director of Brand Protection, Chanel
- Mariangela Sampaio Pratas da Costa, General Counsel Home Care Americas, Unilever Tatiane Lopes, Corporate Counsel for the Downstream sector - Brazilian Petroleum, Gas and Biofuels Institute