

World Custom Organization's SAFE Framework of Standards: *the Multilateral Approach*
Eric Stewart, US Chamber of Commerce

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is committed to America's global engagement. Therefore, ensuring that the movement of legitimate goods around the globe is performed in a way that both facilitates trade and balances our need for security is a critical issue for the business community. In 2006, the Chamber created the Eurasia Business Platform as a policy initiative encouraging Government decision-makers to support regional cooperation and global integration with the goal of creating a transparent and profitable commercial and investment climate in Eurasia. A major focus for the EBP has been to encourage a multi-lateral approach to ensure the Black and Caspian Sea Regions governments are at the forefront of global negotiations.

The U.S. Chamber fully supports the objectives of the World Customs Organization (WCO) SAFE Framework to secure the movement of global trade in a way that does not impede, but in fact, facilitates trade. However, we are concerned about the ability of all 150 governments being able to implement the SAFE Framework quickly and with the appropriate levels of accountability and mutual recognition.

There are several mechanisms that help ensure the safe, secure and expeditious movement of goods around the globe. However, we are only aware of one, the TIR Convention, which is a truly functioning multilateral customs transit system already applicable to multimodal transport. Furthermore, we believe the TIR Convention could be used as a global multilateral legal instrument to provide mutual recognition of the security requirements, including the accreditation for Authorized Economic Operators.

In the interest of enhancing security and facilitating trade, we are of the opinion that it would be advantageous for the business community and the governments involved to consider enhancing the TIR Convention, by building on its existing security provisions, to facilitate the implementation of the WCO SAFE Framework. This idea does not suggest that the TIR would replace existing mechanisms (CSI or CTPAT) or bilateral agreements between countries, but rather it could serve as a preferred multilateral mechanism to be used by countries wishing to implement the WCO SAFE Framework in a consistent and timely manner.

By utilizing the TIR Convention as the implementing mechanism for SAFE we can:

- Legally bind WCO members together for purposes of ensuring that secure and safe trade transpires from country to country.
- Create greater certainty among trading partners that shipments are processed and facilitated with the same guidelines & procedures included in the TIR Convention
- Allow for greater efficiency for the 57 countries, whom are party to the TIR.
- Ensure greater security and scrutiny of the goods being shipped.
- Recognize harmonized implementation of identical stringent security criteria in each of the 57 countries for each candidate, resulting in mutual recognition.

These actions will allow participants to: speed up implementation, strengthen the process for AEO accreditation, create greater certainty and responsibility throughout the entire process, enhance trade facilitation, strengthen communications between Customs authorities and bolster global security & the integrity of the supply chain.