EU/New Zealand Agreement on cooperation and mutual administrative assistance in customs matters

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PURPOSE: to conclude the Agreement between the European Union and New Zealand on cooperation and mutual administrative assistance in customs matters.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: in 2009, New Zealand signalled its interest to enter into a legally binding relationship with the European Union and approached the European Commission with a request of its government to **develop customs cooperation with the EU** focusing on supply chain security and trade facilitation.

On 22 July 2013, the Council authorised the Commission to negotiate an Agreement on cooperation and mutual administrative assistance in customs matters with New Zealand. The negotiations were launched in September 2013. Both sides initialled the Agreement in Brussels on 23 September 2015.

It is now necessary to conclude the Agreement on behalf of the European Union.

CONTENT: under this proposed Decision, the Council is called upon to approve, the Agreement between the European Union and New Zealand on cooperation and mutual administrative assistance in customs matters.

Objective: the general objective of the Agreement is to develop and intensify cooperation and mutual administrative assistance in customs matters with New Zealand; in particular, to establish the **legal basis for a cooperation framework which aims at securing the supply chain and facilitating legitimate trade**, as well as enabling information exchange to ensure the proper application of customs legislation and the prevention, investigation and combating of breaches of customs legislation.

The Agreement provides a basis to further develop customs cooperation in future if warranted, for example through the establishment of Mutual Recognition of respective trade partnership programmes (Authorised Economic Operators in the EU).

Trade cooperation framework: the Agreement also intends to:

- maximise the contribution made by them to the work of the WCO, the WTO and other relevant international organisations in improving customs techniques and in resolving problems of customs procedures, customs enforcement and the facilitation of trade;
- implement international instruments and standards applicable in the area of customs and trade;
- implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement upon its entry into force;
- cooperate in the research, development, testing and evaluation of new customs procedures, and in the training and exchange of personnel and provision of assistance.

Mutual administrative cooperation: the Agreement aims to enable information exchange to ensure the proper application of customs legislation and the prevention, investigation and combating of breaches of customs legislation.

Joint Customs Cooperation Committee: the Agreement seeks to establish a Joint Customs Cooperation Committee, consisting of representatives of the customs and other competent authorities of the Contracting Parties. It shall see to the proper functioning and implementation of this Agreement and shall examine all issues and disputes arising from its application.