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EUROPEAN UNION
THE COUNCIL

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RESTREINT

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NOTE

from: Chairman of the Customs Co-operation Group

dated 28 December 1993

to : Steering Group II (Police and customs co-operation)

No. prev. doc.: 9909/93 ENFOCUSTOM 2 and 10565/93 ENFOCUSTOM 6

Subject: Meeting of the Customs Co-operation Group on 20 December 1993

1. On 20 December 1993 the Customs Co-operation Group met for the first time, and for its sole meeting under the Belgian Presidency.

2. Given the limited time available for the meeting, the Group was not able to deal with the whole of the agenda. Its findings on the items which were discussed are described below.

3. Air and sea traffic

The 1994 programme of joint surveillance operations on air passengers in transit was established, and a new document drawn up and adopted.

4. External Frontier Strategy

Further to the recommendations of the External Frontier Strategy Report, an action plan is to be drawn up.

The Subgroup responsible has prepared a questionnaire to that end.

With the help of this questionnaire, it will be possible to determine all the measures required to put all the Member States on the same operational footing. The questionnaire was available in only a limited number of languages and those delegations whose languages were not provided expressed their dissatisfaction. It was pointed out that such incidents could interfere with the smooth progress of discussions.

The questionnaire will be sent to all delegations in their own languages as soon as possible.

5. Convention on information technology for customs purposes

The legal problems raised by the above Convention were fully discussed. It was agreed that the Council Legal Service would be asked for a written opinion on the points outstanding.

That opinion should be available for the Group's next meeting.

6. Insufficient time to examine rest of agenda

A number of problems and shortcomings came to light during the meeting.

- Several delegations were unable to play either an active or a passive part in the discussions, which were not in their language.

- None of the documents was available in all the official languages of the Union.

  Most of the delegations concerned expressed dissatisfaction with this state of affairs and said that they regarded discussion based on such documents as informal.

- The meeting was limited to one day and it was not possible to complete the agenda. It was pointed out that the Greek Presidency of the Customs Co-operation Group had planned only four one-day meetings.

  Given the programme which, as decided by the Council, was to be completed in 1994, the time allowed was far from adequate. The Group itself thought that six monthly meetings of two days were necessary.

The Group also wanted all delegations to receive documents from the other "Third Pillar" Groups whose activities on the ground were related to customs.

These Groups are as follows:

- under Steering Group I :	External Frontiers
- under Steering Group II :	Police co-operation Drugs and Organized Crime Europol
- under Steering Group III:	Organized International Crime Judicial Co-operation (Criminal law-Community law) EIS Convention

For ease of distribution, these documents should be sent to delegations via the Customs Attachés at the Permanent Delegations. Reports on meetings would reach delegations through the same channels.