

Green Customs Initiative: Way Forward for MEAs and Expectations on Customs

Green Customs Global Conference: "Strengthening Customs Role in Implementing Green Trade Policies for Environmental Protection," 27 and 28 June 2022

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Trade and the Environment

**Stockholm
Declaration on the
Human Environment,
1972 (Principles 8,
10, 11, 13)**

**Rio Declaration on
Environment and
Development, 1992
(Principles 4, 8)**

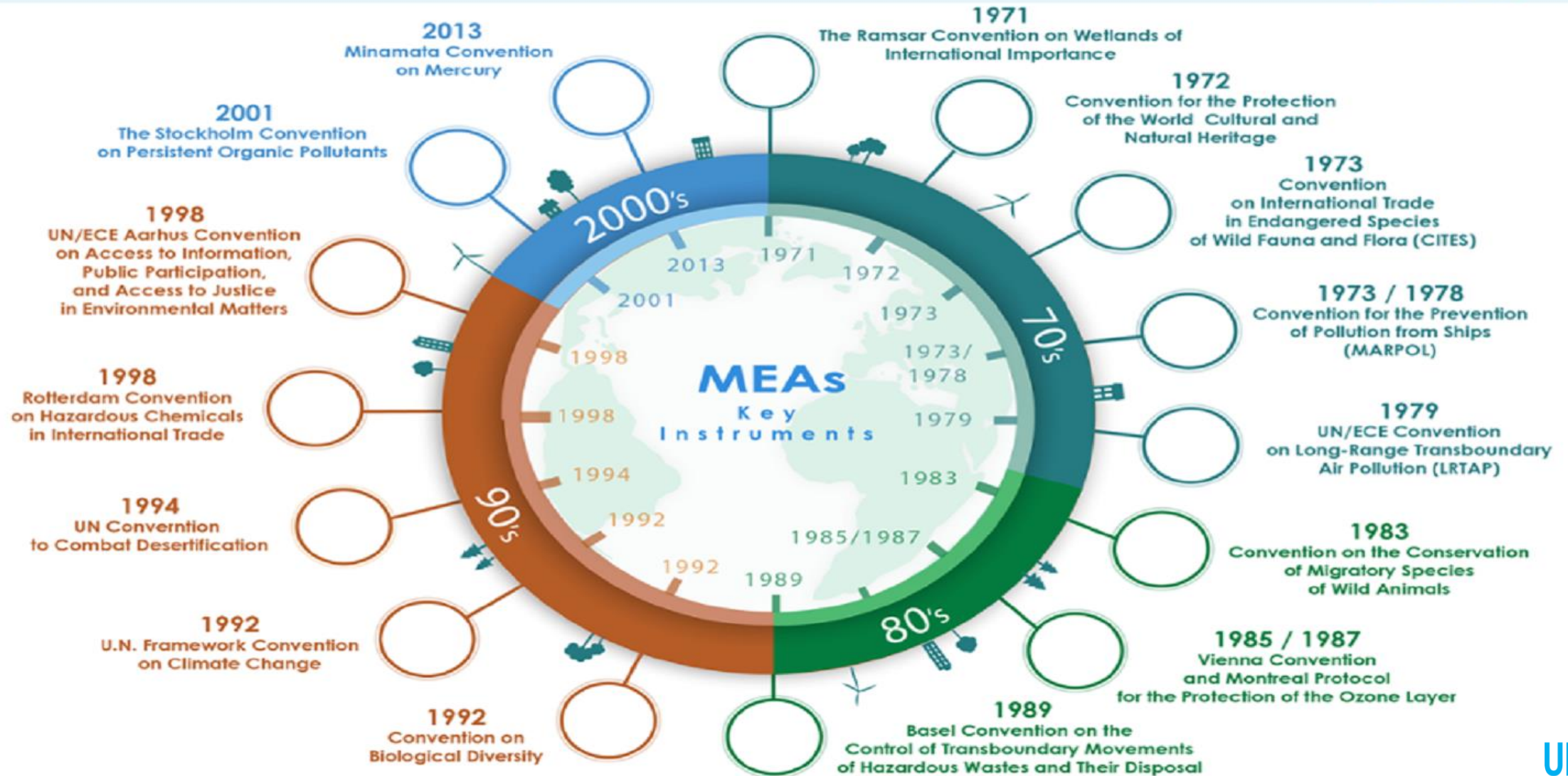
**Preamble to the
Marrakesh Agreement**

**GATT Article XX on
general exceptions (paras (b) and (g))**

**Sustainable
Development Goals**

**Multilateral, regional
and bilateral
environmental
agreements**

Multilateral Environmental Agreements



Common Features of MEAs

There are over 250 MEAs with similar features, e.g.,:

- Agreements between multiple states, and regional economic integration organizations (i.e., the EU)
- Pursue objectives aimed at protecting the environment and conserving natural resources
- Set out obligations that are binding on the Member States
- MEAs' secretariats usually administered by UNEP
- Main decision-making bodies usually are a conference of the parties, and other subsidiary bodies may be established
- Provide for reporting, implementation and compliance mechanisms

* Several MEAs include **provisions to control trade of environmentally sensitive commodities**

Customs and Implementation of MEAs

“Most illicit activities affecting the environment take place beyond national borders. By ensuring that the relevant laws are enforced at borders, customs and border control officers play a pivotal role in the enforcement chain, helping to protect citizens and the environment from the increasingly devastating effects of these activities.”

Green Customs Guide to MEAs (UNEP, 2022)

Customs and Implementation of MEAs

- Customs are involved in several practicalities of implementing MEAs and related national legislation, e.g., in:
 - Identification and checking of suspicious items
 - Seizure and disposal
 - Health and safety matters
 - Legal issues
 - Cooperation with other authorities
 - Reporting of cases of illegal traffic in environmentally sensitive commodities
- Primarily, MEAs call for establishment of **legal frameworks** and for **enforcement**
- As a player in the enforcement chain, ensuring that legislation is implemented, **customs contribute to States' MEAs' compliance**

Challenges

- Inadequate knowledge of MEAs and related national laws
 - Lack of coordination between customs and relevant regulatory authorities, including MEAs' implementing authorities
 - Limited technical know-how in identifying environmentally sensitive commodities and matching them to respective harmonized codes
 - Insufficient data collection and compilation capabilities
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What can Customs do?

To enhance the effectiveness of their role, customs can:

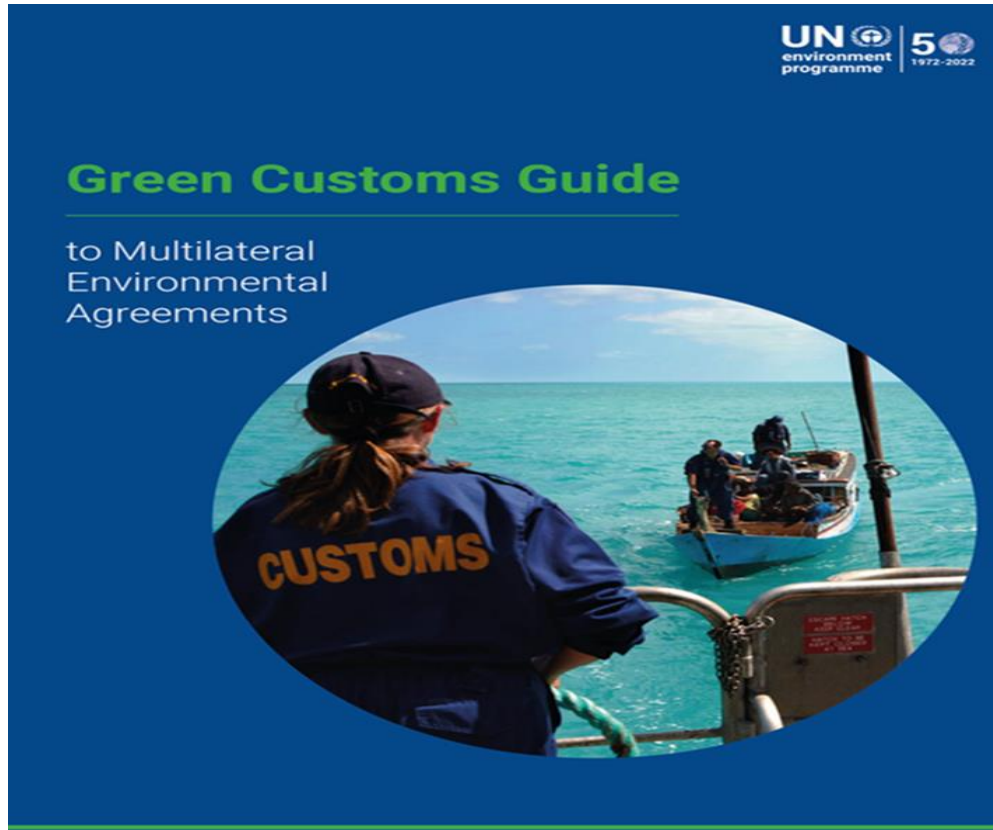
- Develop national training curriculums on green customs
 - Establish digital data collection and information sharing platforms (such data is useful in analyzing trends on illicit activities)
 - Maintain a directory of relevant MEAs and corresponding national implementing authorities
 - Enroll in available courses on MEAs
 - Create partnerships with relevant entities e.g., MEA secretariats, UNEP, UNODC, WCO etc.
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Green Customs Initiative (GCI)

A partnership of international entities aiming at enhanced capacity of customs to prevent illegal trade in environmentally sensitive commodities



Examples of Key Resources



E-learning courses hosted on WCO's training platform CLiCK!

Trends

Development of MEAs

- UNEA resolution on an internationally legally binding agreement on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment
- Existing MEAs broadening the original scope of their coverage

Implementation of MEAs

- Strengthening MEA's compliance mechanisms
- Developing data visualization tools on export and imports of environmentally sensitive commodities
- Increased participation of non-state actors
- Multi-agency collaboration at national level and international cooperation (formal or informal)

Thank you!

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