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Chamber of Shipping  
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# Leadership Insights

Insights from the global leadership community

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## Harmonising trade in an uncertain world

Secretary General of the World Customs Organization, Ian Saunders, outlines how the customs landscape is modernising and becoming more resilient despite the ongoing challenges facing global trade

# Progress towards smarter borders and greener trade

As Secretary General of the World Customs Organization (WCO), Ian Saunders leads global efforts to harmonise customs procedures and modernise trade infrastructure. Speaking to *ICS Leadership Insights*, he shares the WCO's evolving priorities, the role of technology, and how customs authorities are advancing sustainable trade and resilience in today's uncertain world.

**Q How would you describe the current customs landscape in terms of trade facilitation and security?**

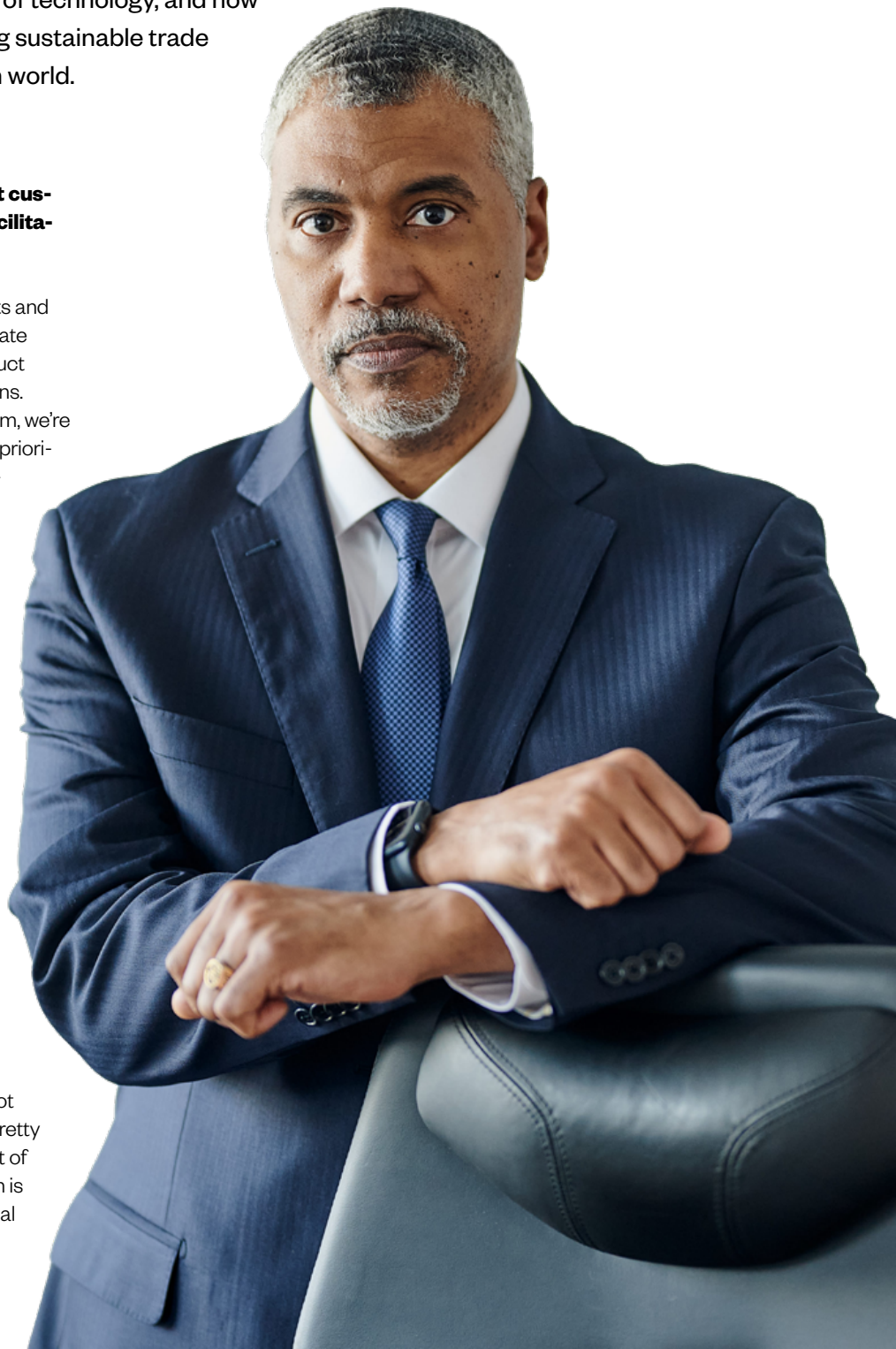
**A** It's being shaped by both evolving threats and enduring challenges. While tariffs dominate headlines, non-tariff barriers continue to obstruct trade, often surfacing during border transactions. Whether or not customs authorities create them, we're often called on to resolve them. That's why we prioritise streamlining procedures, enhancing transparency, and reducing friction.

Security and facilitation are inseparable. As international criminal networks become increasingly sophisticated, customs officials must leverage technology to stay ahead. Tools like non-intrusive inspection systems help us maintain both security and speed.

Emerging technologies, particularly AI, offer smarter risk management, but partnerships are just as vital. Customs is only one part of border management; effective collaboration with other agencies and the private sector is key.

**Q What are the key lessons from the WCO's previous strategic plan, and what are your new priorities?**

**A** This [question] is well timed as we just got approval on our new strategic plan. It's pretty involved, and it's really a two-year process. Part of the reason that it takes so long to come up with is that it's grounded in an examination of the global environment from a customs perspective. It





**Our core mission remains developing and supporting global customs standards, especially for developing countries that must leapfrog into modern systems. Policies only matter if they're effectively implemented**

helps us inventory what the needs and prevailing conditions are and what our members are telling us to focus on. One clear lesson is that we can't do everything; demands will always outpace our capacity as an organisation. If we try to do everything, we won't do things well, and the support they're looking for won't be at the level that they need and expect. So, we're focusing on what matters most.

Our core mission remains developing and supporting global customs standards, especially for developing countries that must leapfrog into modern systems. Policies only matter if they're effectively implemented.

We've also streamlined our internal structure and, based on member feedback, we're focusing on three urgent areas over the next three years: technology and innovation, e-commerce, and green customs.

**Q How is the WCO promoting global harmonisation amid digitalisation and supply chain pressures? What role does the Single Window play?**

**A** Harmonisation is at the heart of our work. Our Harmonized System, used in 200 jurisdictions, ensures consistent classification of goods. We also oversee the Revised Kyoto Convention, the foundation for modern customs procedures, including digitalisation.

To make these frameworks practical, we offer tools such as the WCO Data Model, a universal language for customs data that enhances consistency and efficiency. The Single Window concept is a major enabler, allowing traders to submit all documentation through a single digital entry point, thereby stream-

lining clearance, reducing delays, and improving transparency. We actively support its development through technical assistance and partnerships with other international organisations.

**Q With rising protectionism and geopolitical instability, how is the WCO helping to keep trade flowing?**

**A** The WCO operates at the technical level, as opposed to a political one; we don't set tariffs or negotiate trade policy. Our focus is operational: making sure goods move efficiently, securely, and predictably across borders.

We live in a space where we have to be stable. We have to make sure that we are providing that simplicity, that predictability, that balance of facilitation, and security, so that the mechanics of trade don't become a barrier.

In any political climate, customs authorities must secure borders, facilitate trade, and support revenue collection, especially where customs income is vital. Our role is to offer clarity and consistency, helping members apply solutions that work in real-world conditions. That's how we ensure global trade keeps moving, even in turbulent times.

**Q How are customs authorities supporting sustainable trade and environmental goals?**

**A** Customs has long enforced multilateral environmental agreements, from controlling hazardous waste to protecting endangered species. Through technical assistance and joint operations like Operation Demeter, we've supported cross-border enforcement against illegal shipments.

Now, we're going further. We're reviewing the Harmonized System to better classify eco-friendly goods and working to green customs operations, such as reducing paper use and improving digital sustainability. Customs authorities are uniquely positioned to support green trade by intercepting harmful flows and facilitating the legal movement of sustainable goods.

**Q What message would you share with the global trade community about the future of customs?**

**A** Customs plays a vital role in facilitating trade, protecting society, and collecting revenue. We're adapting to new challenges, embracing technology, and strengthening partnerships to ensure global trade operates more smoothly.

The future lies in smarter, more agile customs operations. Through the WCO, we'll continue to set and support global standards, providing a reliable foundation for international trade, no matter what the [future holds](#).

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# Sustaining success

How an updated Lloyd's Open Form is spotlighting sustainability and introducing transparency for the salvage industry

Updates to the LOF aim to place emphasis on the importance of the salvage industry. Credit: Pexels

The Lloyd's Open Form (LOF) guides the remuneration awarded to salvors for saving property at sea. Updates to the LOF in 2024 introduce new levels of transparency, with a view to spotlighting the industry's environmental and safety contribution.

The LOF has been in use since 1908, when it was established to provide a framework for determining the remuneration to be awarded to salvors for their services in saving property at sea and minimising or preventing environmental damage.

However, in recent years, it was announced that Lloyd's was considering turning the form off altogether, prompting a rallying round from the industry with regards to its importance.

In recognition of this, the Lloyd's Salvage Arbitration Branch (LSAB) instead launched the LOF 2024, the 13th edition, building on the LOF's longstanding success, which can be partially attributed to its ability to evolve and adapt.

The updated LOF introduces a number of new clauses, with the most notable a requirement to share previously confidential settlement data with Lloyds, alongside the introduction of a new Fast Track Documents Only (FTDO) procedure, which aims to speed up the number of claims that can be heard and applies to "all arbitrations where the security demand is US\$10m or less".

## Placing social value in the spotlight

The new data-sharing rules require data to be provided within 60 days of services being completed and includes ESG data, such as details of oil, chemicals and hazardous substances salvaged and the potential impact averted. Additionally, the value of salvaged property and the settlement paid, as well as how this was apportioned between interested parties, must be shared.

This disclosure will be kept confidential by Lloyds with the intention of publishing an aggregated and anonymised version of the information annually.

By offering greater transparency, ensuring there is a bank of awards or settlements available, this data sharing update aims to encourage even more users of the contract, while enabling underwriters to understand risk levels.

It will also enhance the reputation of the salvage industry and the LOF, according to Nicky Cariglia, founder of Marittima, which offers bespoke sustainability consultancy and emergency response for maritime. Speaking to *ICS Leadership Insights*, she says: "One of the important considerations for the 2024 update is how to demonstrate the importance of the



## The 2024 LOF update ... will bring appropriate focus to the social importance of the industry, including both the financial and societal costs

salvage industry and the role of the LOF without drowning businesses in red tape. These recent updates will demonstrate the pollution saved and hazardous materials prevented from entering the environment, while speeding up the process by which costs are claimed."

This view is echoed by David Lawrence, Head of Global Marine Services & Broker Oversight at Lloyd's, who explains that collecting sustainability data will prove an important aspect of demonstrating the social value of the salvage industry and LOF. Speaking to *ICS Leadership Insights*, he says: "LOF allows for the immediate response that is crucial when it comes to saving lives, mitigating environmental impact, and saving property, in that order of importance."

"The 2024 LOF update, which requires the sharing of data relevant to this, will bring appropriate focus to the social importance of the industry, including both the financial and societal costs, if prompt intervention from salvors had not been possible and (further) waste had been allowed to spill. Gathering this data should allow the financial level of LOF awards to be viewed in their proper context."

Such a move could be viewed as necessary given that there has historically been a view among some in the industry that the LOF is too expensive for insurers, even prompting an [article exploring who killed LOF](#) back in 2017. Speaking to *ICS Leadership Insights*, Stephen Wood, Director at marine salvage consultancy Archimedeo, notes that the "LOF has had a bad

reputation in the ship owning community for being expensive" but also notes this might not be entirely fair, pointing out that no one would "question the cost...of the fire brigade".

Henk Smith, Director at salvage consultancy Marine Masters, echoes the view that the LOF is viewed as expensive. Speaking to *ICS Leadership Insights*, he notes: "The LOF is sometimes viewed by the insurance industry as a blank cheque." Despite this, he also points out that it is a "contract that allows salvors to quickly begin working on the preservation of property and the environment, which can take longer under a commercial contract".

### Efficiency and transparency with FTDO

The FTDO procedure aims to ensure a greater volume of cases can be heard, with all cases under \$10m going through the fast-track system by default unless an interested party convinces an arbitrator that a document only approach is unsuitable.

As with data sharing, the introduction of FTDO could also improve transparency in a way that benefits the industry, according to Lawrence. "The introduction of FTDO means there is a record of decisions that is available so that people can understand what's been agreed and the rationale. That's also important for underwriters who gain a better understanding of risk levels and their reserves given the likely results of future cases."

### The LOF future

Given the recent updates to LOF, there are no immediate plans to introduce fur-

ther changes before gaining clarity on how the 2024 updates are working in practice, explains Lawrence.

"We need to embed the 2024 updates and review how effectively they are supporting the industry. These were introduced after a period of significant consultation so we're confident they will deliver positive results, but we're also adaptable on an ongoing basis, which is why LOF has stood the test of time. We're committed to continuing to work with the industry to ensure LOF is the most suitable and beneficial salvage contract when a vessel is in distress."

One of the aspects of the LOF that has seen change though is the new Default Clause, which was launched by ICS and the Lloyd's Market Association (LMA), following over a year's consultation with underwriters, owners, Lloyd's and other interested parties.

This new clause for incorporation in marine hull policies ensures that in the event of an emergency, it is clear that the master and or owners can proceed to use the LOF to obtain salvage services without delay, and also sets out a process for owners to notify hull underwriters and take their views as to the appropriate contract to be used in such circumstances (whether LOF or some other contract).

This clause aims to address the concerns that have led to the decline in the LOF's use and restore confidence in this vital contract, ensuring that it remains a cornerstone of maritime safety for [years to come](#).

# ICS Academy

The International Chamber of Shipping Academy provides seafarers on-the-go access to e-learning that works seamlessly with on board procedures and helps shipping companies ensure best practice and regulatory compliance on board.



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# ICS in Action

A round-up of ICS news and activities over the past month.

## Launch of Seafarer Workforce Report Survey

ICS and BIMCO are preparing the next edition of *Seafarer Workforce Report*, which aims to provide estimates of the global supply and demand for seafarers. Traditionally prepared every five years since 1990, the *Seafarer Workforce Report* is the trusted source of information on the global situation related to seafarer training and ship's crewing.

Maritime administrations, shipping companies and maritime education and training institutions have all received invitation to take part via online questionnaires and we encourage you to participate.

For more information and if you wish to participate please click [here](#) to find your questionnaire to complete.

For any queries, please email [marinesurveys@bimco.org](mailto:marinesurveys@bimco.org)

## New Ship-to-Ship Transfer Guide, Second Edition

The *Ship to Ship Transfer Guide for Petroleum, Chemicals and Liquefied Gases, Second Edition* is the definitive industry reference for safe and effective Ship-to-Ship (STS) operations. The cross-industry guide, developed jointly by CDI, ICS, OCIMF and SIGTTO, provides comprehensive guidance on the planning and execution of STS transfer operations for petroleum, chemical and liquefied gas cargoes.

Reflecting the latest operational best practices and regulatory developments, it is applicable to all ships involved in STS activities, whether conducted at sea or in port. The Guide serves as a crucial reference for masters, marine superintendents, STS service providers, and transfer organisers, ensuring safety, environmental protection, and regulatory compliance.

Each product format has a unique cover to illustrate two ships moored in an STS configuration.

Full details on the Guide can be found [here](#).

## ICS takes part at Clean Energy Ministerial meeting in Busan, Korea

At CEM16, held in Busan, South Korea, a delegation from the International Chamber of Shipping took part in a number of high-level events and discussions with Energy Ministers and key stakeholders across the shipping, energy, and governmental sectors.

The Clean Energy Marine Hubs (CEM-HUBS) were at the heart of global discussions, emphasising the need for connection between the energy plans for clean fuels and the maritime sector, and the role innovators, policymakers, and industry leaders can play in establishing the new infrastructure architecture for maritime to support the clean energy transition.

Thomas Kazakos, ICS Secretary General, and Patrick Verhoeven, Managing Director of CEM-HUBS founding partner, International Association of Ports and Harbors, participated in the High-Level Dialogue discussing future fuel outlook. The CEM-HUBS delegation also hosted a session that addressed shipping's dual role in moving clean commodities and its own demand of fuels, and participated in the 'High-level Roundtable of Future Fuels Demand Creation' session.

## Help shape the future of the ICS Academy

ICS is conducting market research on potential future courses, and your support is needed. Please take the brief survey [here](#) and let us know what e-learning training you'd like the ICS Academy to develop.

**ICS is the principal international trade association for merchant shipowners and operators, representing all sectors and trades and over 80% of the world merchant fleet.**

For more ICS contacts:  
[www.ics-shipping.org/contact-us/](http://www.ics-shipping.org/contact-us/)

### Contact us International Chamber of Shipping

7th Floor, Walsingham House,  
35 Seething Lane, London  
EC3N 4AH

+44 (0) 20 7090 1460  
[info@ics-shipping.org](mailto:info@ics-shipping.org)  
[www.ics-shipping.org](http://www.ics-shipping.org)

### Editorial Intent Communications

**Namrata Nadkarni**  
+44 (0) 7598 025 513  
[namrata@intentcommunications.co.uk](mailto:namrata@intentcommunications.co.uk)

**Robert Platt**  
[robert@intentcommunications.co.uk](mailto:robert@intentcommunications.co.uk)

**James Falkner**  
[james@intentcommunications.co.uk](mailto:james@intentcommunications.co.uk)

**Ed Parshotam**  
[ed@intentcommunications.co.uk](mailto:ed@intentcommunications.co.uk)

**Design and layout**  
**Phil McAllister**  
[phil@philmcallisterdesign.com](mailto:phil@philmcallisterdesign.com)  
+44 (0) 1273 737481

**Press and Communications**  
**Katerina Dimitropoulos**  
+44 (0) 7497 363434

**Sales**  
**Richard Emsley**  
[richard.emsley@ics-shipping.org](mailto:richard.emsley@ics-shipping.org)  
+44 (0) 7730 289459

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