

**INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION**  
**CUSTOMS TRADE FACILITATION FORUM**

15 – 17 September 2014, Bengaluru, India

**COMMUNIQUE**

Senior Customs Officials from the following IORA member countries; Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand and Yemen attended the Customs Trade Facilitation Forum in Bengaluru, India.

The Forum was co-hosted by the Indian Central Board of Excise and Customs and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. A representative from World Customs Organisation (WCO) also attended the Forum.

Members discussed innovative trade facilitation techniques and developments. Customs administrations are committed to trade facilitation recognising the importance of supporting legitimate trade for economic prosperity. By fostering the streamlined movement of low risk consignments, customs administrations are able to concentrate their resources on high risk transactions / consignments. The representative of the WCO provided valuable insights into the trade facilitation agenda of the WCO.

Common themes from the discussion were:

- The importance of automation to facilitate trade;
- Leveraging technology to reduce transactional costs (e.g. mobile devices);
- The requirement for cultural change, both within customs administrations and the trading community;
- Use of WCO Standards, instruments and tools under the Economic Competition Package, especially the RKC and SAFE; and
- Collaboration/cooperation amongst member customs administrations.

The Forum provided an opportunity for Members who have AEO schemes to explain the benefits of their programmes for both business and customs administrations.

Members heard from those countries that have established mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs) for their AEO Programmes. Members discussed how to overcome some of the challenges in progressing mutual recognition. These included:

- Providing skills for customs officers to undertake security audits and validations;
- Differences in AEO programmes and how to reconcile those variations;

- How to take into account cultural variations that deliver the same outcomes; and
- The challenge of how to ensure that all entities involved in the physical handling of goods are part of the accredited supply chain, without which mutual recognition may be difficult to achieve.

Members proposed a number of suggestions as to how AEO Programmes could be more easily linked. Suggestions included:

- To the extent possible sharing text of concluded MRAs with Members;
- Developing a standard / template that provides Members guidance on negotiating MRAs;
- Benchmarking existing MRAs, drawing out lessons learnt from those negotiations to share with others;
- Developing stronger linkages with other organisations that have similar supply chain schemes or standard setting agencies such as the IMO or ISO to develop comprehensive training for validation processes;
- Encouraging skills exchange by Members who have negotiated MRAs with those who have not;
- Providing capacity training and assistance to less developed and developing countries who do not have mature AEO Programmes or MRAs; and
- Providing AEO accreditation courses for Members.

Members discussed various measures that complement trade facilitation, which is critical to ensuring and maintaining economic prosperity. The key themes included:

- Post clearance audit/action/investigations;
- Valuation verification;
- Risk management systems;
- International cooperation; and
- Whole of government approach and collaboration;

#### **The Forum recommended:**

Continuation of the dialogue on trade facilitation and enforcement issues including tools to complement trade facilitation.

Production of a paper for the WCO explaining the suggestions for enhancing customs to customs cooperation in linking AEO Programmes, with Members given an opportunity for input. This would be led by co-chairs Australia and India.

Survey Members to determine the key challenges/impediments to establishing an AEO Programmes and MRAs with a view to providing a consolidated report to the IORA Secretariat and WCO for consideration and recommending remedial measures. This would be led by co-chairs India and Australia.