

Special Edition

Dear colleagues and friends,

Welcome to this special edition of our SECO-WCO Global Trade Facilitation Programme (GTFP) newsletter. While wishing you are well and healthy during these extraordinary times, we want you to know that we continue to work to deliver capacity-building assistance to our GTFP beneficiary countries and support them with the unprecedented challenges they are faced as a result of the global public health crisis.

Until March, GTFP activities had been business as usual, we were busy preparing the various technical assistance missions in our work plan, engaging with potential new beneficiaries and looking forward to the kick-off event in Uzbekistan. Then, COVID-19 hit us all and suddenly we were forced into new routines and ways of working. As we are well-equipped to be working from home, we want to make sure that disruptions in our Programme are kept to a minimum. For this reason, the GTFP team developed an Action Plan that ensures the continuity of the work plans previously agreed with our beneficiary countries.

This plan is dynamic in nature, so it can be adjusted as we go along, according to the circumstances and needs, and it optimizes the use of available technologies to the implementation of technical assistance and engagement with our counterparts and donor coordination activities.

Over the past month, we created a list of face-to-face technical assistance missions (based in the work plans with our beneficiary countries) that could be moved online, and catalogued the multiple existing online conferencing tools in order to assess the ones that could be best leveraged to maintain the participatory and interactive approach of our GTFP activities. Additionally, and thanks to the support of our GTFP National Project Managers (NPMs) in Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and Uzbekistan, we were able to collect information from the Customs Administrations (CAs) that is relevant to specific technical areas of work agreed in the work plans. This material will be the basis to design the remote assistance, that will continue to be tailor-made to the needs of the CAs, and to agree the terms of reference of this support, including the virtual tools to be used.

As part of this new way of doing things, and as a complement to the above-mentioned assistance, we will, whenever possible, create an online space for ongoing discussions and constant engagement with the officers involved in the different technical areas of work for their Administrations. With this, we create a continued forum to exchange ideas and address the questions and comments of our beneficiaries.

In the upcoming months, we will be focused on delivering these commitments, with the support of WCO experts, while monitoring the global developments relating to the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken by countries in relation to it, in order to keep this GTFP Action Plan updated and targeted to serve in the best way possible the needs of our beneficiary countries.

In our next edition, we will bring you all the updates about these actions and the other activities we have carried out since December 2019.

Stay safe and tuned!

As uncertainty has taken root and we cannot predict the future, rests the certitude that this experience will make us more agile, resilient and stronger!

Further to the updates referring to our GTFP, we want to share with you some very useful information provided by the WCO Secretariat that aims to support Customs Administrations address the various COVID-19 related challenges.

- ◇ The information includes: i) Temporary import support measures adopted by Members, ii) Temporary export control measures, iii) List of Actions that Customs can do to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and Highlights of WCO Members' best practices; and iv) WCO IPR CENcomm Group for data exchange on counterfeit medical supplies and fake medicines.
- ◇ Observations, priorities and principles by the WCO Private Consultative Group (PSCG) to be considered by the WCO and its Members during this unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ◇ WCO-WTO Joint Statement on COVID-19 related trade measures.
- ◇ COVID-19 Crisis: WCO guidance on how to communicate during a crisis.
- ◇ Joint WCO-IMO statement on the integrity of the global supply chain during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ◇ WCO and UPU take action to facilitate the sharing of information on the global postal supply chain in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ◇ COVID-19: WCO and ICC issue joint statement and call for increased action on Customs and trade facilitation.

