Main Programme achievements  
*December 2016 to February 2017*

- Further progress in the delivery of Mercator Implementation plans in Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe
- Deepened programme engagements with Afghanistan and Palestine
- Establishment of an innovative capacity building partnership between Customs in Afghanistan and Uganda, addressing themes of organizational development, integrity and automation
- Enhanced Customs Laboratory capacities in Zimbabwe and Sudan with a particular focus on analytical methodologies
- Strengthened knowledge of the Palestinian Customs in the development of a new long term Strategic Plan including TFA related customs reform and modernization imperatives
- Raised awareness among NCTFs through the organization of the First ever International Forum for NCTFs together with UNCTAD, ITC, WTO and the World Bank, providing international best practices to more than 350 stakeholders

The Mercator Programme, launched by WCO in 2014 aims at supporting expeditious and harmonized implementation of the WTO Agreement for Trade Facilitation (TFA) using core WCO instruments and tools, such as the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC).

It offers tailor-made technical assistance and capacity building over longer periods and is designed to allow for effective coordination between the WCO, the WTO and other key international trade facilitation stakeholders.

The HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD programme, financially supported by the Government of the United Kingdom via Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC), operates under the auspices of the Mercator Programme and assists developing countries in the implementation of the TFA.

‘The UK welcomes the entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and recognises that this is a huge milestone in harmonising global customs procedures. The HMRC-programme is continuing its work in priority countries providing tailored in country customs and NCTF capacity building activities via WCO’S Mercator Programme and UNCTAD’s Empowerment Programme.’ (Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs)
December 2016: Study tour for the Afghan Customs to visit Uganda Revenue Authority

As a follow-up to the diagnostic completed in September 2016, the WCO organized a one week study tour for the Afghan Customs Department (ACD) to visit the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) to learn from the 12 year modernization and reform journey undertaken by the URA in Kampala on the 5-9th of December 2016.

The delegation from ACD had the opportunity to observe and interrogate many of the URA’s specific achievements, including electronic cargo tracking, compliance management, automation of procedures, Customs-business partnerships, authorized economic operators and regional information sharing arrangements. They were also exposed to the URA’s unique management culture, which offered insights into questions of integrity, leadership, professional development and stakeholder relationships.

Uganda and Afghanistan share a number of key features, including similar populations, a similar landlocked geography and similar statuses as least-developed countries, which enabled the sharing of relevant experiences.

“While modernization and automation strategically place Customs administrations in much better positions in respect to efficiency, transparency, and achieving higher revenue or trade facilitation goals, it is essential that planning for such initiatives is well thought. Meeting with counterparts in URA, a pool of competent professionals with phenomenal leadership, provided us with invaluable insight on automation tactics and best practices.”

Sayed Hassan Naqawi
Senior Advisor, Afghan Customs Department (ACD)

January 2017: First International Forum on NCTFs in Geneva

The WCO co-organized, together with UNCTAD, the International Trade Centre (ITC), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank Group, the first ever International Forum for National Trade Facilitation Committees (NCTFs) at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva on the 23-27th of January 2017.

The objective of the Forum was to strengthen the capacities of NCTF representatives and to provide opportunities to access funding. The Forum covered various aspects related to the establishment and sustaining of NCTFs, including international best practices and coaching techniques.

More than 350 delegates from Ministries of Trade, Customs Administrations, the Private Sector, Customs Administrations, Regional Organizations and International Organizations participated in the Forum of which 13 national delegations were sponsored by the HMRC-Programme.

“A highly interactive forum that achieved its objective of boosting capacities and partnerships for implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement. Presentations delivered by experts from various Trade Facilitation Bodies, followed by panel discussions provided useful insights resulting in enhanced understanding of formal requirements under the Agreement by the participants.”

Edina Mudzingwa,
Manager International Affairs
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