Welcome to the first issue of our SECO-WCO Global Trade Facilitation Programme (GTFP) newsletter. In this edition you will find what we have been up to during the past six months, the Inception Phase of our Programme. The GTFP is the first joint initiative between the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the WCO. It aims at fostering and facilitating international trade in beneficiary countries, in particular Customs Administrations (CA), through the implementation and application of international standards and best practices for the importation, exportation and transit of commercial goods. Tailor-made working plans in the areas of Organizational Development and Trade Facilitation have been developed for Bolivia, Colombia and Peru. As we are already looking into expanding the GTFP and move onto its Implementation Phase, stay tuned for more updates.

Highlights

Regional Informative Event in Lima, Peru
Kickoff Events in Bolivia, Colombia and Peru
Presentation Mission to Uzbekistan

Regional Informative Event in Lima, Peru

On 24 May 2019, the GTFP held a regional informative event in Lima, hosted by the CA of Peru, National Superintendent of Customs and Tax Administration (SUNAT). The event was attended by the Deputy National Superintendent of Customs of Peru, Mr. Rafael Garcia Melgar, the Director of Customs Management of Colombia, Mrs. Ingrid Diaz and the Executive President of the CA of Bolivia, Mrs. Marlene Ardaya Vasquez. This occasion provided the opportunity to present to the CAs in the Latin American beneficiary countries the scope, objectives and planned activities of the Programme. There was a strong interest from all parties becoming part of the GTFP, which has been underlined by a joint commitment towards the overall objective and outcomes of the Programme.
WCO Mercator Diagnostic Missions in Bolivia, Colombia and Peru

The GTFP is a direct response to the growing demand for holistic trade facilitation support, responding to the main areas in trade facilitation with specific needs, and aiming at complementarity, comprehensiveness and harmonization. Beneficiary countries benefit from tailor-made assistance following the 3-steps approach of the WCO MERCATOR Programme. In June and July diagnostic support missions, the first MERCATOR step, were carried out in Bolivia (10-14 June), Colombia (15-16 July) and Peru (15-23 July) to make comprehensive assessments on the current state of play regarding the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), and also to evaluate matters pertaining to the CAs Organizational Development. In addition to effective engagement with CAs officials, the WCO experts met with key stakeholders from the public and private sectors involved in the trade facilitation and customs modernization in these countries. By following this methodology the WCO experts identified areas of interest in each country, taking into account their specific needs, and the Project Team developed bespoke 3-year Mercator Implementation Plans for Bolivia, Colombia and Peru to be delivered under the framework of the GTFP.

The GTFP Kicks off in Bolivia

The GTFP launching event took place on 27th September in La Paz, Bolivia. This event coincided with the establishment and first meeting of the National Programme Steering Committee, comprising representatives from the Customs Administration (CA) of Bolivia, Aduana Nacional de Bolivia (ANB), SECO and the WCO, as well as from the public and private sectors who validated the country work plan that has been previously agreed between the WCO and the ANB. During the upcoming three years, the WCO and the ANB will be working together on the priority areas identified, risk management and advanced rulings, and topics pertaining to organizational development, such as strategic planning, project management and leadership and management development. The overarching framework for cooperation has been set in a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed on the same day by the ANB, SECO and the WCO.
The WCO and DIAN Agree Capacity Building Support

The kickoff event in Colombia took place on 30th September in Bogota. In order to mark this occasion, the WCO, the Customs Administration (CA) of Colombia, Dirección de Impuestos y Aduanas Nacionales de Colombia (DIAN) and SECO signed a MoU that frames the tripartite cooperation. Over the next years, it is expected that DIAN can strengthen its capacities on risk driven customs procedures and post clearance audit along the best customs practices and international standards with support of the GTFP. Similarly to what happened in Bolivia, the Steering Committee for the project in Colombia also took place on the same day. Both DIAN and the members of this committee showed a strong commitment to pursuing the planned activities and the objectives of the GTFP, which will support DIAN’s strategic objectives and priorities.

The GTFP Launches in Peru

The inaugural event of the GTFP in Peru was held on 30th October in Lima. The ceremony was attended by over 40 representatives from government and the private sector who joined the celebration of the tripartite MoU between SECO, the WCO and SUNAT. SECO was represented at the highest level by the Swiss Ambassador in Peru, Mr. Markus-Alexander Antonietti, and SUNAT by the National Superintendent of Customs and Tax, Mrs. Claudia Suarez. In their opening remarks, both parties welcomed this collaboration highlighting the important benefits it will achieve for a more efficient and competitive business environment, and to integrate Peru even more into global value chains. This event was proceeded by the establishment and first meeting of the Steering Committee that gave green light to the capacity building support in priority areas identified during the scoping mission, such as risk management and coordinated border management.

You can see the video of our kickoff events here.

Uzbekistan Welcomes the GTFP

The Customs Administration of Uzbekistan, State Customs Committee, welcomed the GTFP Programme Management Team on 13th November in Tashkent to endorse the programme and discuss its participation moving forward. With the activities to be conducted within the scope of the GTFP, Uzbekistan will advance the capabilities of customs authorities and simplify Customs procedures in line with international standards and best practices. This will add to the significant steps given by Uzbekistan to transform and modernize its trade infrastructure, and support the implementation of the strategic goals and priorities of the CA of Uzbekistan. A MERCATOR Diagnostic mission will follow in the beginning of 2020.

You can find more information about the GTFP by checking our webpage here.