



# Mercator Programme

A Navigational Map for Trade Facilitation

A WCO Initiative to Support WTO TFA Implementation

## Background

In June 2014, the WCO launched the **Mercator Programme** to ensure uniform implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), using the WCO instruments and tools as most of the TFA provisions relate to Customs.

The WCO established the **Working Group on the Implementation of the TFA (TFAWG)**, inviting Member Customs administrations, trade ministry representatives, international organizations relevant to border management, the private sector, academia and other stakeholders. The TFAWG meets twice a year with more than 200 delegates in attendance at each session. It has examined each article of the TFA and developed new tools for the uniform implementation of provisions of the TFA, drawing on the existing WCO instruments, tools and best practices of Members. These tools include the TFA Implementation Guidance, Coordinated Border Management Guide, National Committees on Trade Facilitation (NCTF) Guidance, Single Window Compendium, Guidelines for Post-Clearance Audit and Technical Guidelines on Advance Rulings for Classification, Origin and Valuation.

The WCO organized **regional awareness-raising workshops** for its 6 regions that cover all of its 182 Members, inviting Customs, trade ministries, the private sector and international organizations (governmental and non-governmental) to raise awareness of the TFA and the need of its implementation through WCO tools. It has also enhanced partnership with international organizations, including sanitary, phyto-sanitary and transport sectors to provide basis for border agency cooperation, as well as with business associations for Customs-business partnership. **A second round of regional workshops**, more focused on technical implementation issues, is under way.

## Achievements under the Mercator Programme

For those countries that identified their needs on technical areas, the **WCO has delivered around 180 technical assistance missions to more than 70 countries in the following areas in the past 2 years.** The needs are often related to category B and C commitments:



Other TFA related areas in which technical assistance and capacity building (TA/CB) support was provided include Risk Management (Article 7.4), Pre-arrival Processing (Article 7.1), Enquiry Points (Article 1.3) and Advance Rulings (Article 3) which account for a further 29 missions.

## Tailored Support

The Mercator Programme provides tailor-made support that takes into account local conditions and environment for implementing trade facilitation measures. The WCO moves on to this tailor-made assistance for countries that need strategic advice in the following manner.



Provide **analysis of all previous needs assessments** by various organizations to consolidate a comprehensive plan and roadmap for implementing the TFA;



Conduct **TRS** to set baseline data for the future improvement, involving Customs, other government agencies (OGA) and the private sector;



Support the establishment of **NCTF** as a platform for coordination, including the planning, analysis and developing a reform plan for implementing TFA involving a range of stakeholders;



**Monitor and evaluate** the progress of the recipient countries in implementing TFA. Performance measurement, including TRS, is employed to ensure result-oriented assistance;



Use the WCO forum to **collect and share practices** of TFA implementation in cooperation with the WTO;



Organize **regional/national donor conferences** to match the needs of recipient countries and donor funding.

## Future TFA Implementation Support under Mercator

The Mercator Programme has been integrated into the broader WCO support for Customs reform and modernization. Therefore to support CB/TA delivery, the WCO will continue to take the following measures:

to develop **implementation tools and best practices** including e-learning platforms. So far, two e-learning courses based on the TFA Implementation Guidance and the WCO Transit handbook (Article 11) have been developed;



to expand its network of accredited experts of **Mercator Programme Advisors (MPAs)**; technical and operational advisors (TOA) and training experts. Accreditation of MPAs began in 2015 and the WCO has capacity to mobilize experts from its 182 Members covering various topics relevant the TFA agenda;



to source for **funding from the WCO reserve and donors** (China, Finland, Germany, Japan, Korea, Norway, Sweden, UK); and



to **enhance partnerships** and work with other International Organizations.



## Why connect with the WCO to implement the WTO TFA?

The Mercator Approach ensures **results-based management** and **performance measurement** forms an integral part of monitoring implementation plans and activities, including in the area of Time Release Studies (TRS).

The WCO **capacity building operational platform** is already tested and consolidated and it is at disposal of the Mercator Programme, including its regional structures (Regional Offices for Capacity Building and Regional Training Centres).

**Development partners and donor institutions that may wish to partner with the WCO  
may contact the Office of External Relations**

**[external.relations@wcoomd.org](mailto:external.relations@wcoomd.org)**

**For further information on the Mercator Programme:**

**[www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/wco-implementing-the-wto-atf/mercator-programme.aspx](http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/wco-implementing-the-wto-atf/mercator-programme.aspx)**





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