

**History for Five Years
of
World Customs Organization
Asia Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building
(ROCB Asia Pacific)**



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Takashi Matsumoto

Head of ROCB Asia Pacific

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I. Background and the establishment of the ROCB

1. Background

The World Customs Organization (WCO) is the only intergovernmental organization exclusively focused on Customs matters. The WCO is composed of 174 member governments and focuses on three main areas; 1) developing international Customs standards such as the Harmonized System Convention, Revised Kyoto Convention and SAFE Framework of Standards for secure and facilitate global trade, 2) enhancing cooperation with International Institutions including the WTO and the World Bank, and 3) providing Capacity Building for implementation of conventions and standards developed by the WCO and other international institutions.

The WCO had long been providing technical assistance to developing members since its establishment; however those efforts were not always evaluated as successfully delivered. Under such circumstance, in order to provide enhanced and improved capacity building activities to Members, the WCO discussed the new “Customs Capacity Building Strategy” at the Policy Commissions. It was subsequently approved by the 101st/102nd WCO Council Session in June 2003.

A core aspect of the Strategy involves the “Regional Approach to Capacity Building”, the objective of which is to provide better capacity building in the region by proper identification of regional needs through a comprehensive diagnosis process, to allocate limited capacity building resources effectively, to develop coordination with donors, and to promote the sharing of regional countries’ best practices. One of the important components of the Regional Approach to Capacity Building is the establishment of a “Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB)” in order to facilitate capacity building at the regional level which in turn increases the effectiveness of WCO’s capacity building activities..

2. Decision of the AP region

At the APEC Customs-Business Dialogue 2003 held in Bangkok on 11th August 2003, Mr. Kunio Mikuriya, the then Deputy Secretary General of the WCO and Mr. Chavalit Sethameteekul, then Director General of the Thai Customs Department exchanged views on various national and regional Customs matters including capacity building. The idea for the establishment of the ROCB Asia Pacific in Bangkok grew out of those discussions.

At the same time the WCO Asia Pacific Regional members discussed how to

realize the WCO concept of Regionalization of Capacity Building decided by the WCO Council in June 2003. On various occasions under the leadership of the Vice Chair Office, the New Zealand Customs Service this matter was discussed. Following these discussions and dialogues, this new initiative, the establishment of the ROCB Asia Pacific was carefully examined by interested members within the region and the WCO Secretariat. After thorough consideration, the initiative was submitted to the Heads of Customs Meeting of the Asia Pacific Region held in Auckland, New Zealand, between 30 March and 1 April 2004. The Heads duly decided to establish the ROCB Asia Pacific in Bangkok as a part of the "Regional Capacity Building Strategy". The regional decision was submitted to the 103rd/104th WCO Council Sessions held in June 2004 and endorsed by the Council, the highest decision body of the WCO.

3. Establishment of the ROCB

In accordance with the regional decision, Japan Customs decided to send an official to Thailand to support the establishment of the ROCB and Mr. Matsumoto was dispatched to Thailand on 15th June 2004. The Thai Customs Department also assigned Ms. Rashaneewan Rawirath, at the time Director for their Customs Academy as officer in charge of the ROCB matters in Thai Customs. They worked towards setting up an office in Thailand including a position of the Head of the ROCB and staffing of the ROCB. On the recommendation of the Thai Customs Department, Mr. Matsumoto agreed to serve as the first Head of the ROCB in Asia Pacific and to appoint a secretary from outside.

By the end of June 2004, the Thai Customs Department kindly provided an office (with basic equipment) for the ROCB within their headquarters'. The ROCB appointed a secretary by the end of July 2004 and opened bank accounts for organizing seminars and workshops.

A significant hurdle facing the establishment of the ROCB was gaining approval from the Government of Thailand. Under Thai law, in order to establish an office of an international or regional organization, approval is required by the Government. Approval is achieved through a change of law or through gaining Cabinet approval under the current legal framework. It was noted that several institutions including the Asian Development Bank took more than two years to get approval from the Government.

Following the endorsement of the WCO Council Session, the Thai Customs Department established a working group consisting of staff from its International Affairs Division, Legal Division and Customs Academy to overcome this hurdle to

establishing the ROCB in Bangkok. The working group, in collaboration with Mr. Matsumoto, reached the conclusion that the Convention Establishing a Customs Cooperation Council and its Annex signed by the Thai Government may cover the necessary requirement to establishing the ROCB. Accordingly, Thai Customs made every effort to gain the necessary Government approval, including meeting with officials from the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Legal Office of Cabinet.

The Thai Cabinet subsequently approved the establishment of the ROCB on 7th September 2004, having carefully considered Thai legal and regulatory frameworks. Following the approval of the Cabinet, on 28th September 2004, WCO Asia Pacific members celebrated the formal opening of the WCO Asia Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB) in Bangkok in attendance with Mr Chavalit Sethameteekul, the then Director General of the Thai Customs Department, Mr. Kunio Mikuriya, the then Deputy Secretary General of the WCO, Mr. Takashi Matsumoto, Head of the ROCB and other honorable guests and senior Customs officials from overseas administrations and the Thai Customs Department.

4. Role, Mission and Strategic Activities of the ROCB

Terms of Reference (TOR) for the ROCB Asia Pacific, which stipulates the role and activities of the ROCB, was agreed by the Asia Pacific Head of Customs Administrations Meeting held in April 2004 in New Zealand. The Heads Meeting also developed a Regional Strategic Plan which contained the responsibilities of the ROCB. The Regional Strategic Plan has been revised twice since 2004 and the current Regional Strategic Plan 2008-2010 was developed by Members.

Based on these two fundamental documents, the ROCB developed the ROCB Strategic Plan since 2005. The current ROCB Strategic Plan 2008-2010 contains the following Mission, Four Pillars, and three year Strategic Action Plan:

Mission:

To assist building the capacity of Member Customs Administrations to realize efficient and effective Customs

Four Pillars:

- (1) Support the implementation of the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards
- (2) Further develop partnerships with donor institutions

- (3) Enhance Technical and Management Assistance
- (4) Develop communication and coordination with Members

Strategic Activities:

- To conduct SAFE FOS diagnosis and assist members in the development of action plans under the WCO Columbus Program.
- To support members for their implementation of the SAFE FOS including the establishment of the AEO scheme.
- To organize donors meetings to support the implementation of the SAFE FOS and other capacity building activities.
- To enhance cooperation and partnership with donors and develop joint projects for Customs modernization.
- To participate in meetings and seminars organized by donors and provide Customs expertise to donor's activities
- To develop a regional capacity building work program using CCF and other funds based on the regional needs
- To organize seminars to enhance Customs management and leadership for facilitating Customs modernization.
- To provide further high quality training and technical assistance based on regional needs.
- To improve Integrity of member administrations by organizing regional and national Integrity workshop
- To identify best practice model through the diagnosis process and other studies, then disseminated to Members
- To organize heads of WCO Regional Training Center (RTC) to enhance cooperation among the ROCB and RTC for providing better capacity building

II. Activities in 2004

1. Policy and Strategy of the first year

The ROCB Asia Pacific officially opened on 28th September 2004 and commenced activities in October 2004. It was a totally new experience for the WCO with no examples, manuals or guidelines, and no correct answers with regard to what should the ROCB do. Nobody knew the right direction and correct activities of the ROCB. Even the phrase "Capacity Building" was not commonly understood by many WCO members at that time. In addition, the office was very small, consisting of only one Customs officer (head of the ROCB) and a secretary (not a Customs official) in

2004. It was realized that some concern, suspicion and anxiety about the ROCB may have existed among the Members and the WCO Secretariat.

To remove any anxiety, the ROCB decided to be “Visible” to Members, the WCO Secretariat, donor institutions and other stakeholders about its role and activities. To be a visible, the ROCB decided; 1) not to say “No” or “Cannot do” to any requests, 2) to conduct any capacity building activities including insignificant and time consuming ones, and 3) to issue an e-newsletter every quarter to provide information to Members and the Secretariat. Under this philosophy the first year’s activities commenced.

2. Regional Workshop

The first ROCB activity was to organize the WCO Regional Workshop on Diagnosis Framework Facilitators, held in Bangkok between the 8th and 12th of November 2004. The workshop was also the first WCO regional workshop on the Diagnosis Framework. The purpose of the workshop was to foster experts who could assist the WCO (and/or ROCB) diagnostic activities in the region. The workshop was attended by 16 delegates from 10 member administrations, namely Cambodia, China, Fiji, Hong Kong China, Indonesia, Japan, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Before the establishment of the ROCB, substantial, logistical work was carried out by WCO experts who joined the seminar or workshop as resource persons. The logistical work, very time consuming but important, involved activities such as arranging airline tickets, venue(s) and accommodation, preparing training materials, and calculation and payment of per-diems. The ROCB proposed to the WCO Secretariat that it would conduct all logistical activities when a regional seminar or workshop was conducted in Asia Pacific. This had merits for both the WCO and the ROCB, in particular, the ROCB was able to reduce the WCO technical official’s burden of logistical support so that they could concentrate efforts on the contents of the seminar and conduct more seminars if requested. The merit for the ROCB was seen by Members. When the ROCB arranged logistical matters, the ROCB contacted members frequently so that the members were aware of the work done by ROCB.

It should be noted that the job of seminar logistics management is time consuming and needs to be accurate. In normal circumstances it takes up to three months to prepare one seminar from the consultation with the host administration to completion of the seminar. In addition, the ROCB had no know-how about organizing a seminar. Under such circumstances, the ROCB first needed to find a reliable and

trusted travel agent, that was able to purchase airline tickets at a reduced cost and to distribute such tickets to member participants without any delay. The Head of the ROCB visited several travel agents and decided to enlist the services of JALPAK after carefully considering several conditions such as personnel, price of ticket, payment methods, size of company and location of the office. Then, in cooperation with Thai Customs, decided on accommodation and venue of the workshops, suppliers of supporting office equipment and transportation between the hotel and airport.

Understandably, there were several problems before and during the workshop including arranging airline tickets for participant's where one was not able to be issued by JALPAK in Bangkok, how to gain US dollar cash for providing per-diems to participants and so on. Through the persistence of the ROCB staff, the first event was completed successfully and the Asia Pacific region gained several accredited diagnostic experts.

3. Donor Coordination Activity

To enhance close cooperation with donor institutions such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) was one of the important missions for the ROCB. Through the attendance of a country representative of the ADB at the opening ceremony of the ROCB, the ROCB was able to develop a contact. Through this contact, the ROCB received several inquiries about the WCO and its members. Then, in consultation with an ADB officer who contacted the ROCB, the Head of the ROCB organized a small seminar on the role of the WCO at the Headquarters' of the ADB.

The seminar was held at the headquarters of the ADB in Manila, Philippines on November 18th. It was attended by about 30 ADB officials from various departments who were in charge of trade facilitation matters in the ADB. Mr. Matsumoto highlighted the role of the WCO and the WCO tools for trade facilitation such as the Revised Kyoto Convention, Harmonized System, Istanbul Convention, Diagnosis Framework, and Integrity Development Guide. It was the first time that the ADB had heard about the WCO and its activities.

After the presentation, Mr. Matsumoto had several meetings with ADB officials (project coordinators) who were in charge of projects relating to the trade facilitation or modernization of Customs within the ADB. Through the meetings the ROCB identified that the ADB had been conducting many projects related to Customs including in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, Afghanistan and neighboring countries, the Regional Trade Facilitation and Customs Cooperation Program in Central Asia, and so on. Project coordinators of the ADB and the head of ROCB agreed to keep in close

contact on Customs modernization projects. It was the first great step to enhancing cooperation with donor institutions in Asia Pacific.

4. Head of the RTC Meeting

Taking the opportunity at the ROCB opening ceremony, the ROCB hosted the 1st Heads of WCO Regional Training Centers (RTC) meeting on 29th September 2004 to seek further cooperation between the ROCB and RTC, and among RTCs in conducting efficient capacity building activities in the region. The Head of the ROCB chaired the meeting and as a result of intensive discussions, the following initiatives were agreed among the participants.

- To develop a best practice model for Customs Training Centers by the development of a compendium of each Regional Training Center as the first step.
- To study the maximum use of the WCO e-learning program, including tutor and face-to-face follow-up sessions.
- To develop a pool of experts in the region through the ROCB in collaboration with Regional Training Centers.
- To hold the Heads of Regional Training Centers' meeting on a regular basis to enhance cooperation and coordination among parties.

It was also a good start to enhancing cooperation amongst the ROCB and RTCs. The meeting has continued since then and has become a best practice model for other WCO regions. In 2009, the WCO organized the joint Head of ROCB and RTCs meeting at the WCO Secretariat to enhance the ability of the ROCB and RTCs which are core institutions for the regionalization of the WCO Capacity Building. We now have five years of history in Asia Pacific; therefore the representatives from ROCB and RTCs in Asia Pacific have made very good contributions to the meeting and led the discussion. The Secretariat and participants of other regions appreciated the cooperation and activities of the Asia Pacific and asked us to share these practices and know-how to other WCO regions.

III. Activities in 2005

1. Policy and Strategy of the second year

As only three months had passed from the official opening of the ROCB, it was decided to keep the basic philosophy, that is, to be "Visible to stakeholders".

Through the previous three months experience, the ROCB realized it needed a concrete strategy and action plan to provide capacity building activities effectively and efficiently. Therefore the ROCB developed a ROCB Strategic Plan 2005-2006 based on the TOR of the ROCB and Regional Strategic Plan (RSP) 2005-2006, which was developed by the Heads of the Customs Administrations in Asia Pacific under the leadership of Vice Chair, China, at the end of December 2004

In order to implement the Strategy, the ROCB developed an Annual Action Plan 2005 by materializing the Strategy. The ROCB also established three pillars for activities, which were; 1) to conduct diagnosis based on the request of Members, 2) to provide necessary technical assistance based on diagnosis and results of various kinds of needs survey, 3) to develop partnership with donors to coordinate and gain synergies between the WCO and donor projects.

The ROCB Strategic Plan 2005-2006 and its Action Plan 2005 were sent to Asia Pacific Regional Steering Group (RSG) members composed of the regional representatives of Policy Commission and Financial Committee to gain their comments. After the necessary amendment reflected by the comments from the RSG members, the Strategic Plan and the Action Plan were distributed to Members.

As a part of the activity under the philosophy of “Visible”, the ROCB decided to develop an annual report to inform members about the ROCB activities precisely and comprehensively. The 2004 Annual Report was developed by March 2005 and then distributed to Members and WCO Secretariat together with the ROCB Strategic Plan 2005-2006 and Action Plan 2005.

2. Implementation of the SAFE FOS

2.1 Foster the Diagnostic Expert

Strongly supported by the WCO Secretariat and regional members, the ROCB, in cooperation with host countries, organized two regional Diagnosis Framework workshops in 2005. One was conducted in India in March and the other was conducted in China in October. The goal was to foster Customs diagnostic experts in the region. Nearly thirty Customs officers from Member Customs administrations received training on how to conduct a diagnosis and the ROCB gained more than 10 accredited regional diagnostic experts as a result of the workshops.

2.2 Conducting Diagnosis

The ROCB planned to conduct at least four diagnostic missions as required in its 2005 Action Plan; however, due to the changing of environment surrounding Members including the development of the WCO Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE FOS), which was adopted by the WCO Council held on June 2005, and the development of the Columbus Program for assisting the implementation of the SAFE FOS which was started from January 2006, no diagnosis was conducted except in the IPR area in Malaysia.

The ROCB in collaboration with the WCO carried out a diagnosis on IPR in Malaysia from 17 to 23 August 2005. The mission consisted of four experts from the WCO, ROCB, Japan Customs and the WCO IPR Strategic Group who visited Malaysian Customs to conduct the diagnosis in the area of IPR border control. Malaysian Customs had set up a steering group which comprised of senior officers from the headquarters and the major regional Customs offices and officers from the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (MDTCA), the competent authority in Malaysia under TRIPs Agreement.

The WCO mission team and the steering group analyzed the current situation of IPR border control in Malaysia and had a consultation meeting with IP rights holders to identify the needs and difficulties of IP rights holders. They also made a field trip to a frontline office to observe the operations of Customs. Many issues were identified by the team and recommendations such as a necessity of setting up a centralized IPR Unit were developed and submitted to the Director General of Customs.

3. Technical Assistance

The ROCB is expected to facilitate capacity building activities organized under the Customs Cooperation Fund (CCF), e.g. seminars and workshops. The CCF Japan fund was the only available resource for the ROCB to organize the regional and national seminars and workshops (this situation has not changed as of June 2009). The ROCB in collaboration with the WCO Secretariat and host Customs administrations has organized nine WCO Regional seminars and four national seminars during 2005. The ROCB carried out most of the administrative activities to facilitate seminars and workshops including arrangement of airline tickets for participants. The seminars and workshops are as follows:

(WCO Regional Seminar)

- WCO Instruments for Trade Facilitation (India) (Jan. 31-Feb. 4, 2005)
- Non-preferential Rules of Origin (Sri Lanka) (Feb. 21-25, 2005)

- Harmonized System (Japan) (Feb. 21-25, 2005)
- Diagnosis Framework Facilitator (India) (Mar. 14-18, 2005)
- Framework of Standards (Hong Kong) (Mar. 22-24, 2005)
- Synthetic Drugs and Chemical Precursor (Philippines) (Apr. 18-22, 2005)
- WTO Valuation Agreement (Malaysia) (May 30-Jun.3, 2005)
- Diagnosis Framework Facilitator (China) (Oct. 17-21, 2005)
- Harmonized System 2007 Amendment (India) (Dec. 12-16, 2005)

(National Seminar)

- Harmonized System (China) (Feb. 21-25, 2005)
- Harmonized System (Bhutan) (Apr. 4-8, 2005)
- WTO Valuation Agreement and PCA (Bhutan) (May 24-27, 2005)
- Rule of Origin (China) (Apr. 18-22, 2005)

Until July 2005, these events were undertaken usually by only two ROCB staff (Head of the ROCB and his secretary), therefore some of the events such as Rules of Origin in Sri Lanka, were unable to be attended by them.

The main focus was given to the implementation of the SAFE FOS such as to foster the diagnostic experts and improving understanding of the SAFE FOS. In this regard, we organized two regional Diagnosis Frameworks Facilitator Workshops in India and in China. The ROCB also organized the first SAFE FOS seminar to enhance understanding of members in Hong Kong in March 2005.

4. Heads of Regional Training Center Meeting

The ROCB organized the 2nd and 3rd Heads of Asia Pacific WCO Regional Training Centers (WCO-RTCs) meetings in 2005 to strengthen the cooperation among the WCO-RTCs and the ROCB. The second meeting was held in March 2005 in India while the third meeting was held in China in October 2005.

The main discussion issues from the meetings were 1) to develop the WCO-RTCs compendium and the Best Practice of Customs Training Center, 2) to study maximum use of WCO e-learning modules, 3) to explore methodologies to improve and maintain qualities of WCO regional seminars, and 4) to develop a list of regional experts for maximum use of regional resources

During the third meeting, participants discussed the draft of the Best Practice of Customs Training Centers based on the compendium of five training centers and agreed to complete it by January 2006. They agreed to introduce the “Best Practice of

Customs Training Center” to regional members through the WCO regional seminar on HRD to be held in Japan in March 2006, in which anticipated the participation of senior officials on Human Resource Development/Management from members.

Heads of the WCO-RTCs meeting added value by inviting representatives from UNEP and WCO-RTC in South Africa to its third meeting. UNEP has promoted “Green Customs Initiative” - combating environment crime. Participants agreed to explore further cooperation with UNEP. A representative from South Africa attended the meeting to learn the activities of Asia Pacific Region, which became a good model for inter-regional cooperation for capacity building.

5. Partnership with Donors

Recognizing that donors institutions have been providing many Customs related capacity building initiatives, the ROCB tried to participate positively in meetings, seminars and workshops organized by donors in order to deepen mutual understanding and develop a strong partnership with them.

In relation to the role of the ADB, the head of the ROCB, along with the Deputy Secretary General of the WCO visited the ADB again in March 2005. The DSG and the head of the ROCB attended the seminar on Port Security and had a series of meetings with senior executives of the ADB including the President, Vice President, and Director Generals of each regional Directorate.

Consequently several concrete activities were organized by the both parties, including the joint seminar on “Trade Facilitation and Single Stop Inspection” for Central Asian Customs and Mongolia and China Customs, held in Bangkok from 27 to 29 July 2005.

The ROCB also developed a close cooperation with the then ADB Mekong Directorate. Six countries namely Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam along the Mekong River have committed to facilitate border trade including simplifying and modernizing Customs procedures supported by the ADB. The ROCB and ADB had several meetings to explore future cooperation. The ROCB joined the ADB study mission on GMS and provided appropriate advice.

In 2005, meaningful progress was made in the area of cooperation with donors. The ROCB received more than 15 invitations from various donors to attend meetings and seminars in its capacity as Customs expert. By attending seminars and meetings, the ROCB developed good relationships with such international or regional

organizations and gained useful information on modernization of Customs and trade facilitation. Among others, the ROCB would like to underline the Integrity seminar in the Philippines hosted by US-Aid which was the first activity for the ROCB sponsored by another institution. Following the Philippines seminar, the ROCB received financial assistance from the World Bank to attend workshops in Cambodia and Viet Nam.

6. Cooperation with other institutions

The ROCB has also tried to improve cooperation with other international and regional institutions such as ASEAN and APEC. The ROCB was invited to attend the ASEAN training centers meeting and discussed possible cooperation on capacity building activities in the ASEAN area. Vice-versa, the ROCB invited the ASEAN secretariat to the WCO Regional Seminar on Rules of Origin.

The ROCB and APEC SCCP have organized three joint seminars on Time Release Study (TRS) in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. The WCO expert explained the outline of the WCO TRS guidebook and the ROCB presented the regional best practice of the TRS.

- Malaysia (April 2005)
- Thailand (April 2005)
- Indonesia (May 2005)

7. Personnel of the ROCB

In the area of the personnel of the ROCB, Japan Customs provided a second staff member to the ROCB. Ms. Yoko Odashima started her tasks as deputy head of the ROCB in July 2005. Because of her energetic participation ROCB was able to further expand its activities to meet the expectations of stakeholders.

8. e-newsletter

To materialize a philosophy, to be a “Visible” by stakeholders, the ROCB published an e-newsletter and disseminated it to all members in Asia Pacific as well as the WCO Secretariat to provide information in a timely manner. The ROCB published the e-newsletter five times in 2005 and received several positive responses from Members.

IV. Activities in 2006

1. Policy and Strategy of the Third year

The third year of the ROCB started with a more systematic approach than previous periods. We had the Regional Strategic Plan 2005-2006 (RSP 2005-2006), the ROCB Strategic Plan 2005-2006 and Annual Action Plan 2006.

The ROCB changed the basic philosophy from “Visible” to “User-Oriented” because our activities were gradually being recognized and appreciated by Members, WCO Secretariat and donor institutions over the past year and three months of activities. The ROCB then decided to focus on the needs of stakeholders of the ROCB including recipient Members, WCO Secretariat, donor institutions and other regional and international bodies.

Consequently the implementation of SAFE FOS and Columbus Program was set as the first priority area for the ROCB’s activities in 2006.

2. Implementation of SAFE FOS

2.1 Columbus Program Phase I (Diagnosis)

The WCO Secretariat announced it would commence a Columbus Program to support Members to the implementation of the SAFE FOS in January 2006. The WCO and ROCB conducted nine (9) diagnostic missions in 2006. The ROCB sent regional experts who were accredited by the WCO Secretariat to five diagnostic missions including two ROCB experts among 9 missions conducted in the region. The ROCB had offered to provide further contribution by sending experts from the region; however, the offer was declined by the Secretariat due to a number of reasons such as the limited number of members of each mission.

- Cambodia: January 30 to February 10
- China: March 13 to 24
- Mongolia: April 3 to 14
- Viet Nam: June 5 to 16
- Philippines: July 31 to August 11
- Maldives: September 4 to 15
- India: November 6 to 17
- Malaysia: December 4 to 15
- Hong Kong: December 4 to 15

(Note: Underline shows the missions that regional experts joined)

Each diagnostic team visited a member Customs administration for two weeks and undertook meetings with Customs' executive officers, other government agencies, Minister/Vice Minister, and stakeholders such as Customs brokers, import/export, shipping lines and chambers of commerce. At the end of the each mission, the diagnostic team submitted a draft report to the Director General.

Through the above-mentioned diagnostic missions, the WCO and ROCB found several common issues in the Asia Pacific Region. The issues identified through the analysis of the 9 diagnostic reports by the end of 2006 were:

- Management skills such as Change Management, Project Management, Strategic Management and Risk Management should be enhanced.
- Most countries have in principle a scheme which offers preferential treatment to specific traders or types of goods (concept of AEO exists); however parameters for these scheme are largely revenue driven
- Many countries have a high level of computerized clearance system; however, because of the lack of IT engineers they do not maximize the benefit of the computerization of Customs
- Risk Management is applied largely but some countries applied it only at tactical level or only on the revenue side

2.2 Columbus Program Phase II (Action Planning and Implementation)

(Regional Workshop for Developing tools for Action Planning)

To support members for developing the strategic action plans based on the WCO diagnostic recommendations, the ROCB in collaboration with the WCO Secretariat organized the "Workshop on Developing Tools for Implementation Action Plans" in Shanghai, China from 10 to 12 October 2006. Several tools were tested during the workshop and participants learned how to apply these new tools.

(Development action plans in Maldives)

In response to the request from the Minister of State, Maldives Customs, the ROCB organized the "Action Plan Development Workshop" in the Maldives from 18 to 23 December 2006. The workshop consisted of three steps; 1) problem analysis, 2) development of a logical frame (Logframe), and 3) development of an action plan. The workshop was attended by 16 executive officers from their headquarters. They analyzed the WCO recommendations and tried to identify what the core issues were behind the diagnostic recommendations. Then they developed a Program Logframe, and finally, they developed a draft action plans based on one core issue identified

through the problem analysis as example of the action plan. These were the first Phase II activities in Asia Pacific.

2.3 Foster the Diagnostic Expert

Furthermore, in response to the request from the Japan Customs, the ROCB and the WCO sent experts to a Diagnosis Framework Workshop held in Japan from 11 to 15 December 2006, which was held by voluntarily sponsorship by Japan Customs. Customs officers from Australia, New Zealand and Oceanic Customs Organization also attended the workshop. We added another 10 experts to the list of experts to the pool in the region.

3. Technical Assistance

Providing necessary technical assistance to members is one of the core activities for the ROCB; therefore the ROCB in collaboration with the WCO Secretariat and host Customs administrations organized six WCO regional seminars, and five national seminars using the CCF Japan funds in 2006.

To enhance the quality of regional seminars and the effective application of the WCO tools, the ROCB organized a new type of regional seminar; that is, a blended seminar of the WCO e-learning and class room lessons. The ROCB requested participants to complete WCO e-learning modules on HS and HS 2007 before arrival at the seminar so that participants had a standard knowledge. However, nearly 50% of the participants accessed less than 5% of the module because of poor IT infrastructure in developing members. This trial workshop revealed the weakness of the WCO e-learning. Names of seminars and workshops are as follows:

(WCO Regional Seminar under CCF Japan)

- WCO Framework of Standards (Malaysia) (February 21-24, 2006)
- Human Resource Development (Japan) (March 7-10, 2006)
- WCO Data Model (India) (April 3-8, 2006)
- CEN Application (Malaysia) (June 12-16, 2006)
- Combating on Synthetic Drugs and Chemical Precursor (China) (August 22-24, 2006)
- HS 2007 Amendment and e-learning (Malaysia) (November 13-18, 2006)

(National Seminar under CCF Japan)

- WTO Valuation Agreement and PCA (Pakistan) (January 27-February 3, 2006)
- WTO Valuation Agreement and PCA (Bangladesh) (March 20-24, 2006)
- CEN Application (Viet Nam) (April 17-21, 2006)

- HS 2007 Amendment (Fiji) (May 1-5, 2006)
- Revised Kyoto Convention (Mongolia) (September 18-22, 2006)

4. Heads of the RTC Meeting

The ROCB organized the 4th Heads of Asia Pacific WCO Regional Training Centers (WCO-RTCs) meetings in Japan in March 2006 to strengthen the cooperation among the WCO-RTCs and the ROCB. The meeting agreed the compendiums of the five training centers and developed the best practice of the Customs training center. The Best Practice and Compendiums were submitted to the WCO High Level Capacity Building Meeting held in May 2006 and they were highly appreciated by participants. The Best practice and five compendiums are uploaded on the ROCB web-site.

5. Partnership with donors

Recognizing that international or regional donor institutions have been providing many Customs related capacity building initiatives, the ROCB positively participated in seminars and meetings organized by them in order to deepen mutual understanding and to develop a strong partnership with them.

The highlight of the partnership with donors in 2006 was the organizing of the ADB and ROCB joint Heads of the GMS (Greater Mekong Sub-region) Customs Meeting in September 2006. Delegates from Cambodia, China, Laos, Thailand and Viet Nam attended the meeting and discussed the facilitation measures at land borders including the adoption of the Revised Kyoto Convention, Framework of Standards, and the ADB Cross Border Transport Agreement. Participants decided to organize the meeting annually to improve trade facilitation at borders among them.

The ROCB and ADB also organized another joint meeting in Tokyo, “Forum on Trade Facilitation and Customs Reform and Modernization” for Central Asian Customs, and Afghanistan, Mongolia and China Customs, to provide WCO tools and experience of advanced Customs administrations.

In addition, the ROCB attended many regional seminars and meetings organized by UN organizations, the World Bank and other donor institutions. Through the activities, the ROCB has developed good relationships with such institutions and gained useful information on modernization of Customs and trade facilitation. The ROCB received some financial assistance from donors to attend their activities. The seminars and meetings are as follows:

(ADB)

- ADB Port Security Meeting (Philippines) (March 24, 2006)
- ADB GMS Seminar on Risk Management (Cambodia and Viet Nam)(July 10-14, 2006)
- ADB BIMP-EAGA Customs, Immigration, Quarantine and Security Meeting (Philippines) (August 21-22, 2006)

(United Nations)

- UNEP/SIDA Ozone Officer and Customs Cooperation Workshop (Thailand) (May 17-20, 2006)
- ILO hosted Workshop on Securing the Integrity of CTU Movements in the Supply Chain (Singapore) (June 21-22, 2006)
- UNEP Partner's Forum of International Enforcement Organizations on Combating Environment Crimes (Thailand) (July 28, 2006)
- UNDP/UNESCAP ARTNeT Consultative Meeting on Trade Facilitation and Regional Integration (Thailand) (August 17-18, 2006)
- UNEP hosted National Seminar on Interaction program on Facilitating Effective Implementation of MEAs (Multilateral Environment Agreements) (Nepal) (September 19-22, 2006)
- UNESCAP Expert Group Meeting on Evaluation of Study on Legal Regimes for Transport Facilitation (Thailand) (October 26-27, 2006)
- UNESCAP Second Regional Meeting for Landlocked and Transit Countries (Thailand) (October 30 – November 1, 2006)
- International Conference on Closing the Gap in Planning and Implementation of e-Government in the Asia Pacific hosted by UNESCAP (Philippines) (November 27-29, 2006)

(World Bank)

- World Bank Mission on Trade Facilitation (Laos) (October 16-20, 2006)

(JICA)

- Customs Risk Management Meeting (Cambodia) (March 5-6, 2006)
- JICA-ASEAN Regional Cooperation Meeting (Myanmar) (April 20, 2006)
- Sub-regional Workshop on Customs Risk management (Thailand) (July 13-14, 2006)

(Red-Cross)

- International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principle (Malaysia) (December 12-13, 2006)

(ITC)

- Workshop on optimizing Viet Nam's position with respect to key multilateral treaties affecting trade (Viet Nam) (October 9-10, 2006)

6. Personnel of the ROCB

In the area of the personnel of the ROCB, 2006 was the epoch-making year for the ROCB. ROCB accepted two Thai officials in July and a Customs official from Korea in December while the secretary left the office in March 2006. By the end of 2006, the ROCB expanded from three to five staff.

7. ROCB in other region

2006 was also epoch-making year for the ROCB. ROCB Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) Region was established in Nairobi, Kenya, and ROCB Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) Region was established in Dubai, UAE respectively

V. Activities in 2007

1. Policy and Strategy for Fourth year

In line with the decision of the Regional Contact Point Meeting, the one year expansion of the Regional Strategic Plan, the ROCB expanded our two year strategic plan to a three year strategic plan (2005-2007). At the same time, we added a 4th Pillar into our strategic plan, that is, "Develop communication and coordination with Members". Under this pillar, we decided to add "Study and Research" function and develop and distribute "Regional Best Practice Report".

We decided to keep the basic philosophy "User-Oriented" to meet needs of our stakeholders. We also decided to make the implementation of SAFE FOS and Columbus Program as a center of the ROCB's activities in 2007.

2. Implementation of SAFE FOS

2.1 Diagnosis

Another six (6) diagnostic missions were dispatched in 2007. ROCB joined three missions including attending a leader of the mission to Bhutan. Experts from Japan, New Zealand and Australia also joined three missions. As a result regional experts joined five mission of six missions undertaken in 2007. This showed that the regional experts, including ROCB experts, were fully utilized for WCO diagnosis activity.

➤ Thailand: January 15 to 26, 2007

- Sri Lanka: March 19 to 30, 2007
- Bhutan: May 14 to 25, 2007
- Papua New Guinea: May 7 to 21, 2007
- Nepal: June 4 to 15, 2007
- Iran: September 1 to 13, 2007

(Note: Underlining represents the missions that included regional experts)

2.2 Action Plan Development

In 2007, the ROCB focused on supporting Action Plan Development, Phase II of the Columbus Program, as well as conducting diagnosis. The ROCB organized five (5) national workshops in Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Viet Nam and Papua New Guinea, to assist in the development of a strategic action plan based on the WCO diagnostic recommendations. The workshop consisted of clarification of the WCO's recommendations, identification of core issues, and development of an action plan. The ROCB sent experts to all five workshops and supported members in the development of an action plan.

- Malaysia: April 9 to 13, 2007
- Thailand: May 9 to 11, 2007
- Cambodia: May 28 to June 1, 2007
- Viet Nam: August 7 to 10, 2007
- Papua New Guinea: December 13 to 14, 2007

(Note: Underlining represents the missions conducted by the ROCB expert)

2.3 Other Activities for support SAFE FOS

- ◆ Organized regional seminars related to the implementation of SAFE FOS

To support the implementation of the SAFE FOS, the ROCB organized the following four regional workshops related to the SAFE FOS implementation. Through the regional trend and pattern report by the WCO it was revealed that management areas, including change management and project management, is weak and needed improvement in Asia Pacific. As a consequence, the ROCB, in cooperation with the WCO and the Thai Customs Department, organized the WCO Regional Seminar on Development in Customs Management in Bangkok, Thailand.

- Implementation of FOS Follow-up (HK) (February 13 to 16, 2007)
- Customs Management Development (Thailand) (March 6 to 9, 2007)
- Integrity (Malaysia) (May 21 to 25, 2007)

- FOS and Revised Kyoto Convention (Fiji) (August 20 to 24, 2007)

- ◆ Support WCO World Cap project

The WCO started a new initiative called “World Cap” to develop a capacity building database to provide better and more targeted capacity building activities in the future. In response to the WCO’s request, the ROCB encouraged members to submit the questionnaire to the WCO.

3. Technical and Management Assistance

The ROCB in collaboration with the WCO and the host Customs administration organized eight WCO Regional seminars using the CCF Japan Fund during 2007. Highlight of this area was receiving financial support from donors to organize two regional seminars. ADB and Commonwealth Secretariat provided financial support to Regional Seminar on Trade Facilitation and Integrity respectively. Titles of seminars and workshops are as follows:

- Implementation of FOS Follow-up (HK) (February 13-16, 2007)
- Trade Facilitation (Japan) (February 13-15, 2007)
- Customs Management Development (Thailand) (March 6-9, 2007)
- IPR Border Enforcement (Japan) (March 12-16, 2007)
- Integrity (Malaysia) (May 21-25, 2007)
- Customs Valuation (China) (June 4-8, 2007)
- FOS and Revised Kyoto Convention (Fiji) (August 20-24, 2007)
- Fight against Commercial Fraud (India) (August 20-24, 2007)

To provide better regional training the ROCB organized the Heads of WCO RTC Asia Pacific meeting in Malaysia on 13-14 November 2007. The meeting agreed to update the compendiums and compile best practice. The meeting also agreed to accumulate their expertise by developing Center of Excellence in Asia Pacific Region.

4. Partnership with donors

As the profile of the ROCB increases among donors in the Asia Pacific, we have received more than 20 invitations and requests to send experts to seminars and workshops organized by donor institutions such as UNESCAP and UNEP.

The ROCB positively participated in those seminars, workshops and meetings to develop better partnerships with the institutions and to gain useful

information on Customs modernization and trade facilitation. Additionally, these institutions now have a good understanding of the Customs, WCO and ROCB activities in the Asia-Pacific. This mutual understanding is necessary for the development of strong partnerships. The ROCB received some financial assistance from donors to attend their activities.

5. Study and Research

The ROCB started a new initiative “Identify regional best practices” to provide better information to members to support their modernization activities. As the first report, in October 2007, the ROCB developed “the Study on Best Practice on Time Release Study” in cooperation with China, Japan and Korea Customs. The report contained the methodology and utilization of the TRS of three countries. The report was introduced during the Regional Contact Point Meeting held in Goa, India, in October and was also distributed to members by e-mail. The new initiative was highly appreciated by members.

6. ROCB Personnel

In the area of the personnel of the ROCB, one official from China Customs was seconded to the ROCB in March 2007. The ROCB was composed of 6 officials including Head of ROCB. They are seconded from China, Japan (2), Korea and Thai (2) customs. This structure has been maintained since then.

VI. Activities in 2008

1. Policy and Strategy for the Fifth year

Since a New Regional Strategic Plan 2008-2011 was established the ROCB developed a new ROCB strategic plan 2008-2011 with four pillars mentioned (earlier (page 4)). The ROCB introduced a new basic philosophy “Result-Oriented” to conduct activities in 2008. Since October 2004, the ROCB has undertaken many activities to meet the needs of stakeholders including member Customs administrations; however at the same time we, the ROCB staff, have a dilemma, that is “The ROCB has conducted many seminars and workshops but what were the results? What kinds of achievement was derived through the ROCB activities?” To answer this question, we set the new basic philosophy “Result-Oriented” as our activities. We tried to gain the visible and concrete results through the ROCB’s activities.

2. Implementation of the SAFE FOS

2.1 Diagnosis

The ROCB planned to conduct three diagnostic missions to Pakistan, Myanmar and Laos in cooperation with the WCO as required in its 2008 Action Plan. However, because of security issues in recipient countries and a comprehensive review of the Columbus Program by the WCO Secretariat, the ROCB was not able to conduct these missions. At the same time the WCO Secretariat conducted two diagnostic missions to Fiji and Macao, China in 2008.

- Fiji: February 18 to 29, 2008
- Macao China: March 17 to 28, 2008

(Note: Underlining represents the mission participated by the regional expert)

2.2 Action Plan Development

In 2008, the ROCB organized two national workshops in Bhutan and Nepal to assist in the development of an action plan based on the WCO diagnostic recommendations. The ROCB expects Bhutan and Nepal will develop their action plan based on the national workshop.

- Bhutan June 2 to 6, 2008
- Nepal August 21 to 25, 2008

2.3 Regional Workshops

To support the implementation of the SAFE FOS, the ROCB, in cooperation with host Customs administrations and the WCO Secretariat, organized regional seminars/workshops on:

- “Container X-ray Scanner Image Analysis Workshop” in Australia: 31 March to 4 April 2008,
- “AEO Seminar” in Thailand: 7 to 9 May 2008
- “Corporate Risk Management Seminar” in Hong Kong: 29 July to 1 August 2008

Three of them were designed by the ROCB based on the needs of Members and carried out as the first workshop in the world under the WCO scheme. This is the one of activities based on User-oriented and Result-oriented.

(Container X-ray)

The objectives of the Container X-ray Scanner Image Analysis workshop were 1) to share operational experience on the use of container x-ray scanners, 2) to share know-how on the analysis of scanner images, and 3) to learn operational risk management methods to select containers to be scanned. Since the implementation

of the SAFE FOS many Customs administrations have introduced or plan to introduce container x-ray scanners however many administrations have faced difficulties with effective and efficient usage of the scanner. Under such circumstance, the ROCB designed the program and asked the Australian Customs Service to host it because Australia Customs has lengthy experience and effective outcomes from using container x-ray scanners.

(AEO)

The AEO Seminar was designed to share information among Members for the implementation of the AEO scheme. Australia, China, Japan, Korea, New Zealand and Malaysia made presentations about their AEO scheme and/or pilot projects based on the AEO guidelines. Participants shared their experiences as well as discussed how to introduce national AEO programs by analyzing the compliance and other risks of companies. Participants also attended the consultation session with the private sector to hear the voices of representatives of the private sector for the implementation of the AEO.

(Corporate Risk Management)

The objective of the “Corporate Risk Management” seminar held in Hong Kong was to provide strategic management skills and knowledge to Members for the implementation of the SAFE FOS. The seminar covered many management areas such as strategic management, corporate governance, change management, project management and Customs integrity.

2.4 Implementation of the recommendation

In response to a request from Maldives, the ROCB organized a Risk Management Workshop. As Risk Management was the first priority area in the Action Plan developed by Maldives Customs based on the WCO diagnostic recommendations, Maldives Customs requested the ROCB to support the establishment of Risk Management in the cargo selectivity area. Following the workshop conducted in March 2008 by experts from the ROCB and Japan Customs, Maldives Customs effectively introduced a cargo selectivity system in July 2008. This is a very good example of the implementation of WCO diagnostic recommendations by Members and Result-oriented activity of the ROCB.

3. Partnership with donors

3.1 Donor Meeting in Cambodia

One of the difficulties for Customs modernization is how to gain the budget from the government. Often the position of the Customs is not strong enough within governments so that many Customs administrations particularly the Customs administrations in developing countries have faced difficulties in securing enough budget for its modernization. To improve this situation and to support the implementation of Action Plan developed by Members, the ROCB decided to organize a donor meeting in requesting countries.

A national donor meeting was the new initiative for the ROCB. No experience existed in the ROCB and WCO (except for global donor conference hosted by the WCO). First, we decided on a candidate country, Cambodia, because Cambodia Customs has been actively undertaking several measures for Customs modernization and ROCB sent two missions to support developing action plan on SAFE FOS. After consultation with Cambodian Customs we decided to organize it on 20 February 2008. Next, we built a list of donors that are working in Cambodia, and developed a program for a one day meeting in consultation with Cambodia Customs. The ROCB and Cambodia Customs decided to show donor institutions about political will, ownership of Customs and a concrete plan to gain the support from them.

The meeting was attended by more than 30 representatives from 9 donor institutions including the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, JICA, AusAID and executive officials from Customs. The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Economy and Finance made an opening speech. He emphasized the importance of Customs modernization toward economic development in Cambodia. We were able to give participants a clear message from the political level.

Following the opening ceremony, the Director General explained the past progress of the Cambodia Customs, the Deputy Director General explained the future five year Customs Action Plan based on the WCO diagnostic recommendations and ROCB explained the progress of the SAFE FOS. Representatives from donor institutions clearly understood the ownership of Customs toward the modernization of the Customs. They also made presentations about their activities in Cambodia. Of course it was almost impossible to gain the firm commitment from donors from a one day meeting but the ROCB expected donors would include Customs activities when they develop next year's action agenda.

3.2 Joint Activities with Donors

Recognizing that many of the challenges faced by Customs administrations cannot be met without a substantial amount of funding and that the WCO is not a

donor institution, the ROCB has made every effort to enhance cooperation with donors to assist Members in the Asia Pacific find funding. This was in recognition of the fact that donor countries and institutions have conducted and funded many Customs related capacity building initiatives in the region for some time. ROCB conducted the following joint activities with donors in 2008.

(Time Release Study in Laos)

In response to a request from the World Bank, the ROCB organized a Time Release Study (TRS) workshop in Laos from 10 to 12 March 2008. The objectives of the workshop were: 1) to familiarize the concepts and principles of the WCO TRS Guideline, 2) to introduce regional best practice on TRS, 3) to clarify the process and procedures of TRS in Laos, 4) to develop a TRS survey format. It was attended by about 30 government officials from Customs, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and Ministry of Health. Participants agreed to conduct a TRS in Laos in October, which would cover from arrival of mode of transport to release of goods from Customs control. However, the TRS was not conducted in Laos because Customs were not able to gain the support from Ministry of Finance and other trade related Ministries by September 2008.

(RKC in Laos)

During the RTC workshop in Laos, it was requested by Laos Customs to organize a Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) seminar in Lao PDR to deepen the understanding of the RKC, the blueprint of modernization of Customs. In response to the request, the ROCB asked the World Bank to provide financial support and asked Thai Customs to provide the RKC experts considering that the Thai and Laos have similar language and Thai Customs has much experience in the implementation of the RKC including revision of the Customs Law. In cooperation with the World Bank and Thai Customs, the ROCB organized the national seminar on RKC at Vientiane, Laos PDR, from 25 to 27 June 2008. It was attended by about 60 middle and senior level Customs officers and officials from Cross Border Regulatory Agencies.

3.3 Cooperation with UNEP and 2008 Ozone Layer Protection Award

On 19th May, at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., the ROCB was presented with the **2008 Ozone Layer Protection Award** by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) among 24 individuals, companies, organizations and teams who demonstrated originality and public purpose, persuasive moral and organizational leadership, and elimination of emission of ozone-depleting substances.

Since July 2005, the ROCB has maintained a close relationship with the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) to assist with their Montreal Protocol obligations by enhancing awareness-raising and capacity building on environmental protection among customs administrations in the Asia Pacific region. The ROCB has sent experts to various environment workshops hosted by UNEP and organized two Green Customs Train-the-Trainer Workshops in Shanghai (May 2007) and Bangkok, Thailand (September, 2007) in cooperation with UNEP. The ROCB also invited the UNEP to the RTC Head Meeting. These activities were recognized as supporting UNEP objectives and as a result the ROCB was selected as a winner of the award.

3.4 Other activities with donors

The ROCB attended another 19 meetings and workshops hosted by various international and regional institutions to promote the importance of Customs modernization activities. The ROCB's contribution was highly appreciated by the organizer of these events. The ROCB also has been developing effective networks and gaining the latest information on Customs capacity building activities and the needs of members through these events.

4. Technical and Management Assistance

The ROCB has been expected to facilitate capacity building activities organized under the Customs Cooperation Fund (CCF), including seminars and workshops. The ROCB in collaboration with the WCO and the host Customs administration has organized eight WCO Regional seminars using the CCF Japan Fund during 2008. Titles of seminars and workshops are as follows:

(WCO Regional Seminar/Workshop)

- Integrity Workshop for OCO (Fiji) (25-29 February 2008)
- X-ray Scanner Image Analysis Workshop (Australia) (Mar. 31-April 4 2008)
- SAFE FOS Follow-up and AEO Seminar (Thailand) (7-9 May 2008)
- Corporate Risk Management Seminar (Hong Kong) (29 July-1 August 2008)
- Postal Management Seminar (Thailand) (22-25 September 2008)
- Fight against Counterfeit and Piracy (Japan) (6-10 October 2008)
- Accreditation Workshop on HS (Malaysia) (3-7 November 2008)

(WCO National Seminar/Workshop)

- Integrity Workshop in Mongolia (21-26 January 2008)
- Risk Management Workshop in Maldives (10-13 March 2008)
- Valuation and PCA Workshop in Bhutan (26-30 May 2008)

5. Activities in the IPR Area

In response to the RSP, the ROCB in cooperation with the WCO Secretariat and/or IPR Business Partner (formerly WCO IPR Strategic Group) conducted two IPR diagnoses in India (21 to 25 January 2008) and Viet Nam (22 to 30 May 2008). The main findings related to the two missions are as follows:

Indian Customs developed a new legal framework for IPR border enforcement in 2007. Indian Customs also established an Intellectual Property Right Cell in all regional offices for the acceptance of the application for suspension lodged by IP Rights holders. In addition, Indian Customs introduced an excellent e-Application system to support the submission of applications by IP Rights Holders. To complement these initiatives, further close cooperation between Customs and IP Right holders was requested by the mission team.

Viet Nam Customs amended the Customs Law and developed a Decree for proper IP border enforcement. However, Customs does not have ex-officio power for the suspension of IP infringing goods. Viet Nam Customs established a designated unit for IPR control including for the acceptance of applications. It is also expected that Viet Nam Customs should develop a regular consultative meeting with IP Rights holders.

6. Study and Research

The ROCB started a new initiative “Identify regional best practices” to provide better information to members to support their modernization activities since 2007. The ROCB issued the following three reports in 2008 about Authorized Economic Operator (AEO):

- AEO in Korea and New Zealand (April 2008)
- AEO in Australia and China (April 2008)
- AEO in Japan (August 2008)

7. WCO activities

As five ROCB including ROCB Asia Pacific are operating, the WCO organized the Heads of the ROCB meeting in November 2008 and Mr. Matsumoto, Head of the ROCB was elected as a chair of the meeting. Participants shared the experience about office management and discuss issues about the WCO capacity building activities.

VII. Conclusion

Five years ago, the ROCB Asia Pacific was established and started its activities with huge expectation and some anxiety by members and the WCO Secretariat. It was an experiment for the AP Members and WCO secretariat on how to deliver regionalization on capacity building and how to provide capacity building effectively and properly in region. Nobody had experience and know-how nor a clear path to the future activities at that time.

After the five years' activities in Asia Pacific, it is difficult for us to judge or evaluate our activities; however, currently we have received positive support and many requests from WCO members, Secretariat, donor institutions and other trade related organizations. These are positive signs for the ROCB Asia Pacific.

The ROCB Asia Pacific moves forward to take a leading role in the regionalization of Capacity Building to meet the expectation of stakeholders particularly member Customs administrations in Asia Pacific. We seek our role as a path finder and are very pleased to share our experience with other regions.