Capacity Building Progress Report

June 2020

 PART I
TABLE OF CONTENT

PROGRESS REPORT OVERVIEW ........................................................................................................... 1
WCO CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES .......................................................................................... 1
CAPACITY BUILDING DELIVERY ........................................................................................................ 3
GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING ........................................................................... 3
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES ................................................... 4
  CUSTOMS PROFESSIONALISM AND PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT ................................................. 4
  LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME ........................................ 5
  THE WCO E-LEARNING PLATFORM CLIKC! .................................................................................. 5
  THE VIRTUAL CUSTOMS ORIENTATION ACADEMY (VCOA) .................................................... 5
  WCO FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME ................................................................................................. 6
  WCO CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME ............................................................................... 6
  SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME (GRIPS - AGU) .............................................................................. 6
  EXECUTIVE PROGRAMME IN CUSTOMS AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (EPCBA) ............ 7
  PICARD PROGRAMME .................................................................................................................... 7
  INTEGRITY DEVELOPMENT ......................................................................................................... 7
  GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ............................................................................................ 8
NEW CB TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS .................................................................................................. 9
  EXECUTIVE AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCY-BASED HRM PROGRAMME (EPCB – HRMP) .......................................................................................................................... 9
  REVIEW OF THE WCO INTEGRITY DEVELOPMENT GUIDE .................................................... 9
PART I .................................................................................................................................................. 11
  EUROPE REGION ............................................................................................................................ 11
    ALBANIA ........................................................................................................................................ 12
    ARMENIA ....................................................................................................................................... 13
    AZERBAIJAN .................................................................................................................................. 15
    BELARUS ....................................................................................................................................... 16
    BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA ...................................................................................................... 18
    GEORGIA ....................................................................................................................................... 21
    KAZAKHSTAN ............................................................................................................................... 25
    KYRGYZSTAN .............................................................................................................................. 26
    MOLDOVA ...................................................................................................................................... 28
    MONTENEGRO .............................................................................................................................. 31
    NORTH MACEDONIA .................................................................................................................... 34
    SERBIA .......................................................................................................................................... 36
    TAJIKISTAN .................................................................................................................................... 37
    UKRAINE ....................................................................................................................................... 39
    UZBEKISTAN ................................................................................................................................... 40
  FAR EAST, SOUTH AND SOUTH EAST ASIA, AUSTRALASIA AND THE PACIFIC ISLANDS (ASIA/PACIFIC) ............................................................................................................................. 43
    AFGHANISTAN ............................................................................................................................... 45
    BANGLADESH .............................................................................................................................. 47
    BHUTAN ......................................................................................................................................... 48
    CAMBODIA .................................................................................................................................... 49
    CHINA .......................................................................................................................................... 50
    FIJI .................................................................................................................................................. 51
    INDIA ............................................................................................................................................ 51
    INDONESIA .................................................................................................................................... 53
    IRAN ................................................................................................................................................ 53
    LAO PEOPLE’S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC ..................................................................................... 54
    MALAYSIA ...................................................................................................................................... 55
    MALDIVES ..................................................................................................................................... 56
    MONGOLIA ..................................................................................................................................... 57
    NEPAL .......................................................................................................................................... 58
    PAKISTAN ...................................................................................................................................... 59
    PAPUA NEW GUINEA ..................................................................................................................... 60
    PHILIPPINES ............................................................................................................................... 61
    SAMOA ......................................................................................................................................... 62
SRI LANKA ................................................................................................................................. 62
THAILAND ............................................................................................................................... 63
TIMOR LESTE .......................................................................................................................... 64
TONGA ...................................................................................................................................... 65
UNION OF MYANMAR ............................................................................................................... 66
VANUATU .................................................................................................................................... 68
VIETNAM ..................................................................................................................................... 69

AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN (AMS) .................................................................................. 71
ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA .......................................................................................................... 73
ARGENTINA ................................................................................................................................. 75
BARBADOS ................................................................................................................................. 79
BELIZE ......................................................................................................................................... 80
BOLIVIA ....................................................................................................................................... 81
CHILE .......................................................................................................................................... 84
COLOMBIA .................................................................................................................................. 85
COSTA RICA ............................................................................................................................... 86
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC .............................................................................................................. 88
ECUADOR ..................................................................................................................................... 89
EL SALVADOR ............................................................................................................................. 91
GUYANA ....................................................................................................................................... 92
JAMAICA ...................................................................................................................................... 95
MEXICO ......................................................................................................................................... 97
PANAMA ..................................................................................................................................... 100
PARAGUAY ................................................................................................................................ 102
PERU ........................................................................................................................................... 104
SAINT LUCIA .............................................................................................................................. 106
SURINAME .................................................................................................................................. 107
URUGUAY .................................................................................................................................... 108

EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA .................................................................................................. 111
ANGOLA ....................................................................................................................................... 118
BOTSWANA ............................................................................................................................... 119
BURUNDI ..................................................................................................................................... 120
KENYA ......................................................................................................................................... 121
LESOTHO .................................................................................................................................... 123
MALAWI ....................................................................................................................................... 124
MAURITIUS ................................................................................................................................... 126
RWANDA ..................................................................................................................................... 128
SEYCHELLES .............................................................................................................................. 129
SOUTH AFRICA .......................................................................................................................... 131
UGANDA ...................................................................................................................................... 136
ZAMBIA ....................................................................................................................................... 138
ZIMBABWE .................................................................................................................................. 140

WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA ................................................................................................... 143
BENIN ......................................................................................................................................... 160
BURKINA FASO .......................................................................................................................... 162
CAMEROON ................................................................................................................................. 163
CAPE VERDE .............................................................................................................................. 164
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC .................................................................................................... 165
CHAD .......................................................................................................................................... 166
CONGO (REPUBLIC OF) ............................................................................................................ 167
CONGO (DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF) .................................................................................... 168
CÔTE D’IVOIRE .......................................................................................................................... 169
GAMBIA ........................................................................................................................................ 171
GHANA ......................................................................................................................................... 172
GUINEA ......................................................................................................................................... 173
GUINEA-BISSAU .......................................................................................................................... 173
LIBERIA .......................................................................................................................................... 175
MALI ............................................................................................................................................... 176
MAURITANIA ................................................................................................................................. 177
NIGER ........................................................................................................................................... 177
NIGERIA ......................................................................................................................................... 178
SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE ......................................................................................................... 179
SENEGAL ...................................................................................................................................... 180
SIERRA LEONE ............................................................................................................................. 182
TOGO ............................................................................................................................................ 183
## NORTH OF AFRICA, NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST (MENA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>195</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>196</td>
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<td>Palestine</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Progress Report Overview

1. This report provides information on the progress achieved by the World Customs Organization (WCO) Member administrations in their respective Reform and Modernization processes and outlines their priorities for reform, as well as their major achievements in terms of modernization and capacity building. The report also provides an overview of the current WCO programmes, projects and initiatives that are assisting administrations realize their development goals.

2. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on Customs administrations around the world. The WCO and its Membership have marshalled all efforts through responsive measures and policies to maintain Customs business and to share useful lessons from experiences with global partners. The WCO has also been working closely with other international organizations in addressing the challenges faced in facilitating the movement of goods across borders and this has included a number of joint actions and initiatives. In order to ensure that technical assistance and capacity building support to Members has continued during these difficult times, the WCO Secretariat has remained agile and has focused on exploring alternative delivery arrangements that has included using various online tools and communication platform to provide remote delivery activities.

3. What initially started as a temporary online solution to replace essential face-to-face WCO planned committee meetings and forums, has since been expanded significantly to provide a complete and important new element to the overall WCO Capacity Building Strategy for the delivery of effective technical assistance and capacity building to Members. National and regional remote online activities now regularly include the holding of formal sessions and meetings, the delivery of workshops and webinars, virtual training events, discussion groups, conducting holistic diagnostic studies, and piloting remote accreditation events, etc. This new and innovative virtual WCO capacity building delivery mode can now be considered as the “new norm”, particularly whilst the global pandemic persists.

4. The information outlined in the Annex is compiled from reports and data provided by the Member administrations, in collaboration with the respective WCO Regional Development Manager (RDM). In addition to this Capacity Building Progress Report, the Capacity Building Delivery Report is prepared once a year for the annual session of the Capacity Building Committee (CBC). The Capacity Building Delivery Report enables results-based management reporting and showcases progress made by Members with Reform and Modernization.

5. The revised WCO Capacity Building Strategy (2020-2022) was presented and approved by the CBC in March 2020. The strategy, which is fully aligned to the WCO Strategic Plan 2019-2022, includes an implementation plan and a monitoring and evaluation mechanism with key performance indicators based on the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) methodology.

WCO Capacity Building Programmes

6. The WCO capacity building and technical assistance programmes consist of strategic, organizational, procedural, and technical assistance programmes, projects and initiatives. The activities are coordinated within the Secretariat and updated annually with the input from Members. There is also increasing coordination and cooperation between the WCO and other development institutional partners.

7. Since its launch in June 2014, the Mercator Programme has been the WCO’s flagship capacity building programme and strategic initiative aimed at assisting governments worldwide, and Customs administrations, in implementing the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) in a uniform manner. The key objectives of the Mercator Programme are to achieve harmonized implementation of the TFA, to provide “tailor-made” technical assistance and capacity building, and to coordinate effective cooperation amongst stakeholders.

8. During the reporting period the “overall track” of the Mercator Programme, that deals with broader interests including awareness-raising at all levels as well as updating and developing trade facilitation standards and tools, has witnessed some excellent progress. This has included the development of new tools associated to Cross-Border E-Commerce, the Exchange of Electronic Advance Data between Post and Customs, Disruptive Technologies, Data Analytics, Data Models, Transit, Unified File Format (UFF) for Non-intrusive Inspection (NII), Free Trade Zones, Coordinated Border Management (CBM), Information Security, and guidance for the Customs administrations of Small Island Economies (SIEs).

9. Work has also continued in the comprehensive review of the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), enhancements to the WCO SW Compendium and the development of the WCO RAMMAP-SWIM (Reform and Modernization-Monitoring Activities and Projects/SW Interactive Map).
10. Several activities have also been conducted to promote further the cooperation with other border agencies and other international organizations to enhance overall border efficiency and effectiveness. The WCO also continues to engage regularly and effectively with the WTO and has provided expert speakers for a number of WTO events.

11. The “tailor-made” track of the Mercator Programme focuses on meeting Members’ needs, which includes needs assessments, strategic planning and implementation, followed by effective monitoring and evaluation. Tailor-made assistance may come in the form of multi-year (MY) Mercator Programme implementation plans or “stand-alone” engagements supporting specific TFA articles.

12. A growing proportion of TFA related support under the tailor-made track is now being delivered under MY Mercator partnerships. During the reporting period five additional Members requested support under the MY Mercator model bringing the total of Customs administrations benefiting from this engagement approach to over 50.

13. MY Mercator engagements are based on medium to long-term partnerships with Members and employ a project-based approach, including a significant role for the WCO accredited experts, in particular Mercator Programme Advisors (MPAs), who are regularly providing effective TFA implementation support through sustained engagement with beneficiary Members.

14. During the reporting period the WCO conducted a further 12 TFA diagnostic or implementation support missions in response to requests from Members to contribute to their national TFA implementation activities. Since the commencement of the Mercator Programme operating model over 40 diagnostic missions have now been conducted. Further TFA diagnostic missions are planned later in 2020 or early in 2021.

15. From the 12 diagnostic missions delivered in the reporting period over 200 strategic recommendations were developed in close collaboration with Members, of which 85% were related to technical trade facilitation procedures strongly associated to specific articles of the TFA. Further analysis of this reveals a continuing high requirement for support in the broad areas of publication and transparency, Customs procedures, compliance and RM (RM), along with cooperation, collaboration, and connectivity.

16. The remaining 15% of diagnostic recommendations relate to important crosscutting matters associated to organizational development. Experience has shown that to achieve sustainability, support under the Mercator Programme needs to extend to those crucial areas considered to be the TFA enablers. These areas commonly include project management, donor coordination, human resource development, leadership, information and communication technology, integrity, and gender and diversity. This cross-cutting, “whole-of-Customs” perspective is a core strength of the WCO’s approach to the TFA scoping and diagnostics, whilst appreciating that the TFA is part of a wider modernization and reform dynamic.

17. In addition to the multi-year implementation support, many WCO Members continue to benefit from ad-hoc technical assistance missions focused on the individual TFA technical measures such as Advance Rulings (AR), Risk Management (RM), Post-Clearance Audit (PCA), Time Release Study (TRS), Authorized Economic Operator (AEO), and Single Window (SW) along with support in areas associated to data harmonization, stakeholder engagement, CBM, etc.

18. Further achievements in trade facilitation and overall performance have been realized by Customs administrations during the past year, and both the public and private sectors in many Mercator Programme benefitting countries, in terms of reduced costs, reduced delays at the border, improved transparency, stronger cooperation and coordination, enhanced leadership and management competence, human resource development along with enhancements in many specific technical areas where WCO tools, instruments and standards have provided added value. This includes sustained progress in many of the technical areas outlined above.

19. The WCO will continue to refine both the “overall” and “tailor-made” tracks of the Mercator Programme to ensure that they are fully responsive to Members’ needs and implementation challenges, particularly those associated to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the Programme continues to leverage the WCO’s unique value-added, including its network of accredited experts and the WCO instruments and tools supporting effective TFA implementation.

20. Other support programmes managed by the WCO Secretariat that compliment TFA related support include the WCO-UNODC Container Control Programme, the WCO Security Programme, the WCO Environmental Programme, the Customs Enforcement Network Implementation Programme, the Integrity Development Programme, the Gender Equality and Diversity Programme, the Leadership and Management Development Programme and the expert training support associated with the WCO’s Revenue Package, the Compliance and Enforcement Package, the Economic Competitiveness Package and the Organizational Development Package.
Capacity Building Delivery

21. The capacity building delivery activities focus on providing support related to all areas of the WCO strategic plan that include the economic competitiveness package, revenue package, compliance and enforcement package and organizational development package. The provided support also extended to areas relating to the building blocks of WCO strategic plan which include digital Customs, information exchange and expert accreditation events aimed at raising the performance and profile of Customs.

22. The WCO capacity building delivery is based on the multi-year project planning as well as on the annual capacity building needs assessment carried out by the Secretariat together with the Member administrations and supported by the Regional Offices for Capacity Building (ROCBs). The needs assessment process for the current financial year was finalized at the end of the previous one. Since then, securing financial support from donors and support by experts from Member administrations as well as capacity building delivery has been ongoing. The Delivery Plan is regularly updated as new needs and priorities emerge.

23. In addition to the need’s assessment process, the WCO now presents to its Members the alternative to express their intent to engage on a medium to long-term basis with the Secretariat under the tailor-made track of the Mercator Programme. Additionally, in view of the recurrent global security threats which impact negatively on the supply chain, Customs role in securing the borders and protecting society is even more into focus. In this connection, a new Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy has been developed which emphasizes Customs’ crucial role in the issue of border security and cooperation among border agencies. This development responds to the intent of the Punta Cana Resolution adopted by the Policy Commission in December 2015 and will continue to have a bearing on the WCO’s capacity building activities.

24. It is worth reiterating that the responsibility for the implementation of reforms lies with the Members. It is important for the Members to continue developing the technical and strategic knowledge and skills required to manage and maintain their own reform programmes that will lead to sustainable organizational development.

25. All WCO assistance/involvement is only carried out at the request of a Member. The Secretariat does not issue reminders indicating that missions are required.

26. From July 2019 to June 2020 over 500 capacity building missions were delivered, including regional, sub-regional and national events. More detailed information can be found under each Regional section in this report and in the CBC Capacity Building Delivery Report.

Guiding Principles for Capacity Building

27. From the outset, the WCO Members recognized that the WCO capacity building programmes and projects should follow a number of core guiding principles:

**Political will** – Customs administrations must secure as much support from policy-makers as possible. Sustainable Reform and Modernization can only survive in time with continued support from all political echelons;

**Ownership and commitment** – Customs administrations should own and take charge of their Reform and Modernization process. They should be able to engage partners with a clear vision of where they wish to take their organization, how to get there, and how partners can assist;

**Holistic development** – Capacity building should address technical, operational and strategic elements of the organization. The Reform and Modernization process should begin with a strategic diagnostic and subsequently take a holistic approach to ensure all interdependencies are addressed, particularly with regard to human resource development and management;

**Demand driven and responsive** – The capacity building support offered to Customs administrations should respond to the real needs and assist in overcoming obstacles on the Reform and Modernization roadmap;

**Partnerships** – The relationship between providers of capacity building support and beneficiaries is based on dialogue, exchange and mutual understanding. Members should also engage all key private and public sector stakeholders, as well as the donor community, in their reform.
Human Resource Development and Training Programmes

Customs Professionalism and People Development

28. Given the importance of Customs human capital in ensuring the organizational performance, the WCO has intensively supported Members and Regional Training Centers (RTC) in the field of Human Resource Management (HRM) and Development and has established and piloted a state of the art new Programme in HRM to support this approach.

29. During the reported period the WCO has conducted 7 tailored People Development Diagnostic Tool missions to assess HRM policies, strategies, processes, practices and capacities in Eswatini Revenue Authority, Kyrgyz Customs Service, Guyana Revenue Authority, Malawi Revenue Authority, the Federal Customs Authority of UAE, Lesotho Revenue Authority, and Mauritius Revenue Authority. A comprehensive diagnostic report supplemented by a realistic and concrete work plan has been provided to the beneficiary.

30. In addition, to support Members to develop and implement a Merit and Competency-Based HRM system, the WCO conducted three tailor-made HRM missions to support the Customs administrations of Algeria, Comoros and Mali. Furthermore, to reinforce the roles and responsibilities of the regional entities, the WCO conducted a follow up mission to the ROCB in the Western and Central Africa (WCA) region to develop and implement a Competency-Based HRM system. It is important to point out that the documents and the approach developed is used as a best practice for the other regional entities.

31. In January 2020, the WCO piloted the first phase of the Executive and Professional Competency-Based Human Resources Programme (EPCB–HRMP) in East and Southern Africa (ESA) region bringing together 24 HRM Directors and professionals and targeting eight Revenue Authorities from Eswatini, Lesotho, South Africa, Malawi, Mauritius, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. With the COVID-19 situation, WCO continued its support to those authorities virtually to finalize the expected deliverables.

32. During the pandemic situation caused by the COVID-19, the WCO continued its HRM support to Members virtually. WCO has successfully delivered three HRM remote support to South African Revenue Services (SARS), the State Customs Service of Ukraine (SCSU) and Lesotho Revenue Authority (LRA). As a result, the HRM Working Groups were able to finalize all the Competency-Based HRM Tools.

33. To promote the WCO regionalization approach and equip the WCO RTCs, the WCO conducted missions to design a new strategy for the Interstate Customs School of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa and delivered three “train the trainers” workshops to over 60 participants, based on the WCO competency-based approach, were delivered at the RTCs in Jordan, Ukraine and Bishkek.

34. As part of the Master Training Programme (MTP) in Southern Africa on Customs valuation has been delivered to Customs officials of Botswana, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, while in West Africa region on “RM and intelligence analysis” has been delivered to Customs officials of Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo. Both the MTPs in Southern and West Africa have so far completed three out of five planned progressive activities respectively with the support jointly offered by the WCO and JICA experts and the strong ownership demonstrated by the nominated participants from participating countries.
35. Given to the global outbreak of COVID-19, the WCO/JICA Joint Project has organized since May 2020 eight virtual workshops/meetings to support the development of training materials. More virtual workshops/meetings are scheduled to follow in 2020/2021.

**Leadership and Management Development Programme**

36. From July 2019 to June 2020 the Leadership and Management Development Programme (LMDP) has delivered five Top Executive Retreats (TERs) to Directors General and the executive managers of the Customs administrations of Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Peru and Zambia. Together, these workshops have assisted over 80 top executive managers. The main outcomes are that concrete approaches for the most urgent strategic challenges are defined, stronger cooperation based on enhanced trust and openness within the executive team is established, and individual leadership attitudes, skills and behaviors are improved.

37. Two LMD workshops were also delivered to around 35 WCO Fellows and Professional Associates taking part in the WCO Fellowship Programmes in English and French. In addition, the Programme delivered LMD workshops for the Customs administration of Lesotho and a mini-LMD workshop for senior managers of China Customs as part of their study visit to the Netherlands.

38. As part of the follow-up support, the LMDP has assisted the Customs administration of Uganda in developing their change management capacities so that they become more effective, inclusive, and agile in response to the rapidly changing environment.

39. From January 2020 the LMD workshops are based on newly developed material available in English, French, Spanish and Russian. Some LMD facilitators have been updated on the new material and have improved their qualification during a refresher event.

40. In addition, as part of its monitoring and evaluation approach, the LMDP has conducted four evaluation surveys from beneficiary administrations using a questionnaire to assess mid-term results (change in behaviors) of LMD activities. Also, the development of the new Middle Management Development Training (MMT) has recently commenced.

41. As a result of the LMD Facilitators accreditation workshop for Spanish speakers in March 2020 four participants has been identified as MMD tutors allowing the LMDP to extend its support to more Spanish-speaking Members.

**The WCO E-Learning Platform CLIKC!**

42. The CLIKC! Website has more than 32,000 registered users. Over 200 new users are registered every month, and around 350 are connected daily. Approximately 1,370 Customs officers have completed courses on the platform during the reporting period.

43. New courses on small arms & light weapons, airport passenger controls and the Compendium of Customs Operational Practices for Enforcement and Seizures (COPES) have recently been released.

**WCO Academy Initiative**

44. The WCO Academy e-learning portal for the private sector and academia currently offers a wide range of courses and webinars covering key Customs topics. The feedback from the ever-growing user base, which now consists of almost 2800 users has so far been positive. Learners from 47 countries have been benefited from WCO Academy's e-learning courses.

45. The WCO has so far concluded 16 Distributor Agreements with various organizations and companies. The distributors contribute to the WCO Academy's efforts to promote the online courses and disseminate Customs knowledge among the private sector stakeholders. The 1st Global Distributors Meeting was organized and held online in March 2020 because of the restrictions related to the outbreak of COVID-19.

**The Virtual Customs Orientation Academy (VCOA)**

46. The VCOA comprises six highly interactive modules accompanied via online tutoring on the WCO CLIKC!!! Platform. The VCOA’s main objective is to provide newly recruited Customs officials with a 14-week unique development opportunity. The learning journey addresses core Customs competencies, the concepts of clearance procedures and practices, international standards and conventions, and how to apply them in the workplace.
47. The 10th session of the Academy began in September 2019 and involves 33 participants from 24 countries. 16 tutors from Cambodia, Canada, Denmark, Eswatini, India, Korea, Norway, Peru, South Africa, Turkey and Zambia are providing effective support.

48. The 11th VCOA session took place from March to June 2020. It involved 31 participants from 28 countries and 16 experts from Turkey, Peru, Cambodia, Ecuador, Korea, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Botswana, Canada and South Africa provided support as tutors.

**WCO Fellowship Programme**

49. A number of Fellowship Programmes were initially planned during 2019-2020: the 79th, 80th and 81st sessions of the Fellowship Programme (English-speaking, French-speaking and Spanish-speaking sessions respectively), which usually combine four weeks in Brussels and two weeks in a hosting administration for a study trip. The 79th Fellowship Programme has been delivered in its entirety and in view of the COVID-19 situation, the 80th Fellowship Programme was only partially delivered, whereas the 81st session was postponed to 2021.

50. 26 Fellows developed their leadership and management competencies in order to sustain the Reform and Modernization activities of their home administrations.

51. The Fellows have followed a four-week Programme in Brussels, which was structured around a LMD workshop and also tutored research work on a specific modernization issue (ranging from core Customs topics such as enforcement, RM or revenue package-related topics, to newer research areas such as E-Commerce). The classroom periods were followed by a study trip to a donor administration (the People’s Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, Japan and France).

52. The Fellows’ alumni are now systematically requested to report back on the Programme’s outcomes on their work performance and career one-year after completion. The follow-up of the Programme also includes a tighter integration within the organizational development process undergone by their administration. In addition to the LMD workshop, the Fellows have to successfully finalize their study report on the implementation of reform in one specific WCO technical area and have to obtain their tutor’s validation before the report is sent to their Director General for consideration.

**WCO Career Development Programme**

53. Under the current WCO Career Development Programme, funded by the Japanese government, 94 Customs officials, including 10 Customs officials in 2019/2020, from 60 Member administrations has so far been given the opportunity to gain work experience at the WCO Secretariat for 10 months. Each official is assigned to an area of work which is commensurate with his/her skills, aiming at obtaining knowledge, skills and international work experience. Participants also benefit from a study trip to Japan for widening their view through the site visit to Japan Customs. However, the participants in the 2019/2020 group could not visit Japan due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

54. Positive feedback shows that previous participants of this Programme have greatly contributed to the modernization processes of their Customs administrations and also their region, and are acting as a liaison point between their organization and the WCO Secretariat.

**Scholarship Programme (GRIPS - AGU)**

55. Under the Japan-WCO Human Resource Development Programme (Scholarship Programme), 10 Customs officials from developing country Members are selected to study for a one-year Master’s degree at Japanese universities every year. The subjects focus on (i) Public Finance at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) and (ii) Strategic Management and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) at the Aoyama Gakuin University (AGU).

56. Both courses comprise an academic segment and a practical segment. The GRIPS is an economics-oriented study aimed at developing a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical, empirical and institutional aspects of Customs policy. The AGU teaches fundamental skills in strategic management and IPR as well as a sound understanding of design, implementation and evaluation of IPR-related Customs policy.

57. Currently 20 Customs officials are studying at the GRIPS and the AGU, due to COVID-19 face-to-face lectures have been replaced with online lectures. Since the start of the Programme, funded by the Japanese Government, 294 Customs officials from 65 Member administrations in all WCO regions have been awarded the scholarship and taken part in the Master’s degree Programme at the GRIPS and the AGU.
Executive Programme in Customs and Business Administration (EPCBA)

58. The 7th EPCBA event funded by CCF Korea was scheduled to be held in the first half of 2020 and postponed in the aftermath of the COVID-19. The Programme is looking for ways to invite 10 participants for online class in the second half. Physical Programme will be explored depending on the assessment of the situation.

The Experts and Management of WCO Experts

59. The WCO continues to develop its pool of Customs experts in response to the increased demand for capacity building support from Members. The WCO Secretariat regularly publishes information on experts and their deployments. The overall process of coordination is enhanced through the annual WCO Delivery Plan that continues to support the appropriate allocation of experts.

60. The Virtual Working Group (VWG) on Experts Deployment, established to provide greater transparency and visibility with regard to the management of experts, continues to address a number of issues raised by Members.

61. At the 11th session of the WCO CBC in March 2020, the CBC asked for an additional discussion via the VWG on the development of an Experts Management and Deployment Guide (EMDG).

62. In collaboration with nominated WCO lead officials, WCO RDMs and other WCO Directorates, the WCO Capacity Building Directorate (CBD) continues to manage the pool of Customs experts through the Accredited Customs Expert (ACE) database.

63. During the reporting period, the WCO conducted three formal accreditation workshops for English and French speaking officials. In August 2019, an accreditation event for Technical and Operational Advisors (TOAs) in the field of Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) was held in Zambia. In September 2019, an event for COPES expert trainers was held in Belgium. In March 2020, a pre-accreditation event for Spanish speaking officials took place for LMD Advisors in Spain. In addition, a refresher event for LMD Advisors was held in Belgium in December 2019.

64. Over many years, the WCO has continued to receive excellent support from Member administrations when releasing officials to participate in the WCO accreditation events and then releasing them to participate in subsequent in-field missions. The WCO fully acknowledges the important role played by Member experts in the successful delivery of effective capacity building activities.

PICARD Programme

65. The demands of globalization and modernization require a greater understanding of the political, economic and trading environment which Customs is expected to operate in. PICARD Professional Standards include a distinct set of knowledge, skills and behaviors which can only be delivered through a more professional approach to development and career management.

66. In the reporting period the Secretariat, in close cooperation with representatives of the Academic World has updated the Strategic Document (Roadmap for PICARD 2030). The ultimate goal is to have a Programme which is responsive in shaping the future of Customs, with major innovations including a commitment to explore the possibilities of mutual recognition of academic and training Programmes; the development of joint/dual degree Programmes; and exchanges of students and lecturers between academic institutions.

67. In the financial year 2019/2020, two Customs Curricula have been recognized by the WCO as being compliant with PICARD Professional Standards: “Customs Affairs” (Institute of Law and National Security, RANEPA, Russian Federation) and “Customs Affairs” (Samara State Technical University, Russian Federation). To date, 25 Academic Customs Curricula from 15 Universities/Institutions have achieved WCO PICARD recognition.

Integrity Development

68. In June 2019, the WCO Council endorsed integrity as one of the nine priority areas of work for the WCO.

69. In October 2019, Customs officers of the State Revenue Committee of Armenia benefitted from a WCO self-assessment facilitation workshop and were updated with international practices in the area of anti-corruption. In November 2019, the WCO, with the support of the United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP), delivered a mission to Serbia Customs on integrity testing mechanisms. In December 2019, the WCO delivered an integrity diagnostic mission to the Guyana Revenue Authority and provided recommendations for further improvement of its anti-corruption work. In February 2020, the Customs administration of Paraguay benefitted from an integrity development mission as a follow-up to an integrity diagnostic conducted in December 2015.
70. In June 2020, the WCO collaborated with CBP to conduct a webinar series focused on integrity. The series was designed to raise the awareness of CBP officials regarding the WCO’s holistic approach to integrity and the organization’s available resources. The WCO Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Ricardo Treviño, participated in the webinar to highlight the importance of integrity as a strategic priority for the organization and provided some insights into current WCO activities. Despite travel restrictions, this virtual series provided effective means for engagement, allowing the US CBP and the WCO to build on their strong partnership on integrity.

71. In October 2019, the WCO engaged further with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and discussed ways of enhancing cooperation on the integrity agenda. Potential areas of cooperation were also discussed in Vienna, Austria, between the WCO and the International Anti-Corruption Academy, in November 2019.

72. The WCO participated in several meetings of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) focused on the implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCC), including the 8th Conference of the State Parties to the UNCC, held in December 2019 in Abu Dhabi. During these meetings, the WCO presented recent initiatives of the global Customs community on combating corruption and promoting integrity. In May 2020, the WCO participated in the annual 25th Steering Group Virtual Meeting of the OECD Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ACN). The WCO updated the ACN Secretariat and its Members on the latest integrity development activities and shared future plans and prospects that might be beneficial for the ACN countries. In addition, the WCO contributed to the discussion on the OECD Anti-Corruption Performance Indicators to be endorsed and launched in the ACN pilot countries.

73. The WCO organized the 2nd Global Meeting of Integrity experts held at the RTC in Xiamen (China) in December 2019, where experts enhanced their knowledge on the WCO Integrity Programme. The experts were also updated on the latest integrity tools and activities in relation to the WCO Revised Arusha Declaration on Integrity and Governance in Customs.

74. The 19th session of the ISC was held in February 2020 under the theme “Building Trust in the Digital Era” at the WCO HQ bringing more than 100 delegates from the Member administrations, the international anti-corruption community, the private sector and academia.

75. In light of emerging issues and new best practices on the anti-corruption agenda, the WCO initiated work on updating the WCO Integrity Development Guide (IDG), its key capacity building tool on integrity. During the 19th session of the ISC, the Members endorsed the establishment of a WCO Virtual Working Group (VWG) on the IDG review. Over the course of 12 weeks (from 6 April to 28 June 2020), the WCO Member integrity experts conducted a highly productive work on the IDG enhancement, while maintaining a very high response rate. 78 integrity experts from 44 Members and two ROCBs, covering all six WCO regions, participated in the VWG. Collaborative work was done virtually using the WCO CLIKC! Platform. The WCO's online platform has served well as a useful tool for engagement with Members during the COVID-19 lockdown period. The VWG also served as a refreshing training for the Member experts and as an additional motivation to implement good integrity practices that were shared throughout the entire course. From the VWG participants, more than 350 submissions with valuable proposals for the IDG improvement have been received via CLIKC! Platform.

76. The 16th issue of the WCO Integrity Newsletters was published in December 2019 and included 11 integrity-related articles provided by the Members. The 17th issue of Integrity Newsletter was issued in June 2020 highlighting 13 Member articles and the WCO updates and reports on integrity development.

**Gender Equality and Diversity**

77. Given the interest demonstrated by the WCO Members and following the WCO’s ambition to work closer with the Members experienced in, the WCO Secretariat has engaged in a number of activities. The WCO has continued its work with the Virtual Working Group on the Gender Equality and Diversity holding meetings approximately every second month. Its membership has recently increased to over 40 countries. In parallel, the Secretariat organizes bilateral calls with the Members to further discuss their work in this area. Case studies on gender equality and diversity are also being collected, with the aim of developing a compendium to be used as a complement to the Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOT). To date, approximately 15 draft case studies have been collected. The newly developed e-learning module “Advancing Gender Equality in Customs” is also being promoted through the VWG.

78. At the occasion of the July 2019 WTO Global Review of Aid for Trade held in Geneva, the WCO jointly organized a session on “Gender Integration in Aid for Trade Facilitation” with the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the World Bank Group (WBG) and the European Commission (EC).
79. The WCO Secretariat also participated in a number of events organized by other international development partners including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on the topic of gender equality and trade, to present the WCO’s work and explore avenues for enhanced collaboration. A video presentation of the WCO work on gender equality and diversity was also made for the workshop on Change Management and Gender organized by the Oceania Customs Organization (OCO) in Fiji (December 2019). In addition, a presentation on gender sensitive and inclusive communication was made on the occasion of the 1st WCO Global Communication Strategies Conference held in Brussels in October 2019.

80. The December 2019 Policy Commission welcomed and endorsed the Secretariats’ proposals on how to enhance the WCO work on gender equality and diversity. In addition, the PC recommended the potential establishment of a “Women in Customs network” and drafting of a high level WCO Gender Equality and Diversity Declaration as a way to build momentum beyond the work of the Virtual Working Group. Further discussion on the topic is on-going.

81. The draft declaration was presented for the feedback to the Members of the Virtual Working Group and to the CBC in March 2020, who endorsed the draft with a few minor amendments. The draft Declaration was meant to be presented for final approval to the PC and the Council in June 2020, however it will now be postponed until the PC and the Council meetings in December 2020. The Secretariat also prepared and presented suggestions of a mandate for the proposed “Women in Customs network”, which was presented to the Members of the Virtual Working Group at the meeting in May 2020. Due to the postponement of the PC and Council, the launch of this network is now postponed to the PC December 2020 meeting.

82. In addition, the support on the assessment of gender equality and diversity was provided to Brazil (April 2020) and India (in June 2020) under the framework of the Trade Facilitation in Middle Income Countries (TFMIC) Partnership funded by the United Kingdom’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, these assessments were conducted on remote basis through virtual meetings.

**New CB Tools and Instruments**

**Executive and Professional Competency-Based HRM Programme (EPCB – HRMP)**

83. This Programme aims to provide HR managers working in Customs Departments and Revenue Authorities with the tools and competencies to manage their human resources strategically. This is conducted through the application of international standards and approaches that are proven to be positive contributors to the Reform and Modernization agendas.

84. The Programme covers all aspects of competency-based HRM tools and processes, strategic HR management in the Customs context, gender and diversity management, HR project management but also change management, leadership and strategic communication. It is delivered using the following tiered approach:

- One month prior to the first week of the Programme, the participants are invited to familiarize themselves with the relevant HRM WCO tools and instruments, carry out a self-assessment of their Customs administration using Part A of the People Development Diagnostic Tools, and prepare a brief presentation on the state of play of HRM in their organization (current situation, challenges, way forward, etc.). Moreover, they are requested to successfully complete the following E-Learning courses: TFA Principles, gender and diversity management and integrity.

- Week 1 is dedicated to strategic HRM, the principles of competency-based HRM, leadership and the management of HRM projects;
- At least 3 months are given to participants, between week 1 and 2, to experience and put into practice what they learnt during week 1; and
- Week 2 is dedicated to implementing competency-based HRM processes, change management in a HR project, and to carry out a consolidation and assessment activity.

- After a minimum of 6 month after the end of week 2, the beneficiaries are invited to participate in a post evaluation field activity to assess their development and initiatives in the field of competency-based HR management.

**Review of the WCO Integrity Development Guide**

85. In light of emerging issues and new best practices in the anti-corruption agenda, the WCO initiated work on updating the WCO Integrity Development Guide (IDG), its key capacity building tool on integrity.
86. During the 19th session of the ISC, the Members endorsed the establishment of the WCO Virtual Working Group (VWG) on the IDG review. Over the course of 12 weeks (from 6 April to 28 June 2020), the WCO Member integrity experts conducted a highly productive work on the IDG enhancement, while maintaining a very high response rate. 78 integrity experts from 44 Members and 2 ROCBs, covering all six WCO regions, participated in the VWG.

87. Collaborative work was done virtually using the WCO CLIKC!!! Platform. The WCO’s online platform has served well as a useful tool for engagement with Members during the COVID-19 lockdown period. The VWG also served as a refreshing training for the Member experts and as an additional motivation to implement good integrity practices that were shared throughout the entire course. From the VWG participants, more than 350 submissions with valuable proposals for the IDG improvement have been received via CLIKC!!! Platform.

88. New version of the IDG is expected for release in 2020/2021 FY.

   Development of a new WCO Integrity E-Learning Module

89. The WCO, under the WCO-Norad Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion Programme (A-CIP) for Customs, has initiated the development of a new WCO Integrity E-Learning Module to support Members with distanced learning, especially during the COVID-19 times, of the main WCO integrity development tools and instruments and to sensitize learners to the importance of integrity in Customs environment. The release of the new e-learning module is planned during the 2020/2021 FY.
**Regional Developments**

The Europe region is the largest of the WCO’s regions and has 52 Members (plus the European Union (EU) that has been granted status akin to Membership).

Out of these, 19 Members have been engaged with the WCO as recipients of capacity building support in the past years. These are Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of North Macedonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, the Russian Federation (support on regional basis), Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

There are eight regional Members (the EU, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK) that have provided support to the WCO Customs Cooperation Fund (CCF) for the delivery of capacity building activities to the benefit of other, less developed administrations. The new Global Trade Facilitation Support Programme with the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) was launched with Uzbekistan as the only European region beneficiary country of the Programme in the beginning, and at the Central Programme Steering Committee (CPSC) in November 2019, Serbia and Ukraine were confirmed as the new fully-fledged beneficiary countries.

**Recent regional developments in terms of integration and cooperation in the area of Customs**

The WCO Europe Region is diverse. It includes well-developed, developing and less developed countries, and hosts several economic and political entities. Considerable development activity is underway in most countries and this is reflected in the improved economic growth rates. Customs Reform and Modernization has played and will continue to play a key role in this development.

The EU and individual developed European countries implement programmes for capacity building assistance for the benefit of a number of other countries. The Customs administrations of the EU candidate countries, neighboring countries and other States in the Region benefit from a number of the EU assistance initiatives.

The South East and Central Europe countries have a strong focus on the accession to the EU and most of them are the Members of the Central European Free Trade Area (CEFTA). These countries have established broad modernization programmes focused on trade facilitation, effective revenue collection, introduction of international supply chain security measures, and the alignment with the EU Customs legislation.

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries have common trading partners, similar trade procedures and a common language. Most of them are at a similar stage of development and are undergoing Customs reforms and capacity building initiatives. They strive to achieve further processing and operational advantages in sharing data, intelligence and common procedures.

In 2009, a new Customs Union (CU) was established among Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia. The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU or EEU) was established by a treaty signed on 29 May 2014 by the leaders of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, and came into force on 1 January 2015. The agreements for Armenia’s and Kyrgyzstan’s accession to the Eurasian Economic Union were signed on 9 October 2014 and 23 December, respectively. Armenia’s accession treaty came into force on 2 January 2015. Kyrgyzstan’s accession treaty came into force in May 2015. The EEU provides the free movement of goods, capital, services and people along with common transport, agriculture and energy policies. There are also provisions for a single currency and greater integration in the future. The EEU Common Customs Code was established on 1 July 2010 and is based on the principles of the WCO RKC.

**Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB) in Europe**

On 11 November 2009 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the WCO and the Government of Azerbaijan on the establishment of the ROCB in Baku.

The official opening ceremony for the ROCB took place on 17 October 2011 in Baku. The opening was attended by delegates of 44 Member Customs administrations, other ROCBs, RILOs and WCO RTC as well as some International organizations.

The ROCB in Baku is functioning well, given the lack of expert staff. In April 2019 during their annual Regional Conference, the Heads of Customs of the WCO Europe Region approved the appointment of Mr. Eser Çengel from Turkey as the next Head of the ROCB, effective from June 2019. The regional website contains useful information on the WCO capacity
building tools, policies and strategies, as well as translations into Russian of a number of the key WCO instruments. It has been recently modified to become even more interactive and user-friendly.

Coordination of capacity building activities in the region through regular ROCB/RTC meetings

The Europe Region hosts seven WCO RTCs – in Budapest (Hungary), Baku (Azerbaijan), Moscow (Russian Federation), Skopje (Republic of North Macedonia), Astana (Kazakhstan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) and in Khmelnitsky (Ukraine).

The regional entities have held annual coordination meetings since 2009. They have initiated a series of capacity development activities aiming at achieving quality training and efficient capacity building in the Region. The 10th Regional structure’s meeting is planned to be held in October 2020 in an online manner to discuss issues related to the delivery of capacity building support activities to regional Members, ways to optimize the cooperation between the different regional structures in Europe, and enhancement of the RTC functions.

Regional development priorities

On 24-26 January 2011, at the premises of the Russian Federal Customs Service in Moscow, a dedicated Europe Region Think Tank met to deliberate on important issues related to streamlining the regional capacity building activities and getting the new ROCB in Baku up and running in 2011. The meeting resulted in the elaboration of the first ever Capacity Building Strategy for the Europe Region defining the Region’s strategic and operational priorities for 2011-2014. The priorities enlisted below were given the official endorsement of the Europe Region’s Directors General during their annual conference held in Luxembourg in March 2011:

- To support the implementation of sustainable standards that provide safe, secure and fluid trade lanes at a global level;
- To improve the coordination and the communication mechanism within the region to make the best use of available human and financial resources;
- To foster a consistent approach to RM;
- To strengthen cooperation between administrations to improve their capability in Customs enforcement and in the fight against fraud;
- To enhance the system for collecting taxes and duties;
- To follow and keep up to date with global trends and developments affecting Customs;
- To support Members in the development of their integrity Programmes; and
- To help Customs administrations to secure Government funding for their capacity building projects.

National Developments

ALBANIA

Current planning

In order to modernize, harmonize with international standards and implement best practices, a new Business Strategy of the Albanian Customs administration (ACA) for 2018-2021 was adopted in January 2018, drafted in collaboration with the Austrian and Slovenian Customs experts. Customs as the main contributor to the country’s budget focuses on preparation for new developments and business facilitations in Albania.

Customs Reform and Modernization Progress

The ACA has made progress in approximating Customs legislation with the EU acquis. The new Customs Code approved in 2014 is fully in force since 2017. It is partially aligned with EU Customs Code and with some other acts of the EU. Implementing provisions have also been adopted. The new Customs Code brings: modernization of Customs legislation and procedures, increased clarification and unification of procedures by sanctioning the right to be heard, simplified or facilitated Customs rules and procedures with the aim of increasing the efficiency of Customs transactions, further steps towards a paperless environment and support for faster Customs procedures for trustworthy economic operators that respect the law.

In the framework of the modernization and digitalization of the Customs administration a number of projects for the implementation of mandatory systems for the EU accession have been completed or are ongoing.
The ACA updated the goods nomenclature in line with the 2016 version of the EU Combined Nomenclature. The preferential tariffs are included in the ASYCUDA System. There are approved acts concerning marking and monitoring of fuels, prohibition of waste’s importation, domestic security policies in the Customs IT System.

The ACA has increased the security of the electronic procedures by implementing in all Customs houses the ASYCUDA World automatic system of handling Customs data. The Risk Assessment is made automatically and covers 100% of entries. Selection for control is based on the risk profiles operating in the ASYCUDA World system. The profiles are constantly evaluated/reviewed in order to improve the selection for control. The operation of scanners has improved the quality of controls and has reduced the number of physical controls. Related to the development of advanced information on the movement of goods, the ACA has a module functional since 1 December 2010. The exchange of information with neighboring countries through the Systematic Electronic Exchange of Data System (SEED) is operational. With Kosovo, the Common Transit System is fully functional through the automatic interconnection of electronic systems, which now enables businesses to initiate a transit procedure in the territory of Albania or Kosovo and to end it in the other country, thus avoiding unnecessary border controls and significantly reducing time and cost for business.

Since 1 October 2012 a new Excise module in the ASYCUDA World System has been implemented that is an integral part of the system. The new module and the VPN technology provide an opportunity for the economic operators to declare online from their premises the excise goods they produce. This module enables the accurate and real time report on collecting excise duties.

In 2015 legislative amendments were made to allow for the introduction of Customs clearance on the premises of the economic operator (local clearance). Provisions for the AEO’s and simplified procedures are in force from 1 January 2015.

Two new Departments were established, the IT Department and the Excise Department. The IT Department is in place since August 2012 with 4 Directorates. The number of its staff has increased from 11 to 27. The Excise Department is in place since October 2012. The new Tirana Customs terminal was inaugurated in 2013 and the infrastructure at border crossing points is being improved. The capacity and efficiency of the Customs laboratory were enhanced. In the framework of the modernization of the Customs laboratory, the Information Management System LIMS in the Customs laboratory is functional. In 2018 a new sector was established in the Directorate of Procedures, which will deal with AEO, simplifications and other business facilitations.

In February 2018, an Inter-Institutional Group for Trade Policy Coordination and Trade Facilitation was established, which among other responsibilities is in charge of proposing concrete measures for facilitating trade through the implementation of the 5th CEFTA FTA Protocol.

The ACA has an important role in implementing the Inter-Sector Strategy of Prevention, Fight against Corruption and Transparent Governance, in the framework of the National Strategy for Development and Integrity (NSDI). With support of the WCO the ACA has developed and approved an Integrity Action Plan and its staff received training on its ethics. The Internal and Anti-corruption Investigation Directorate increased its activities and reported breaches of the ethical code by the Customs officials to the disciplinary committee. Further efforts are being put in the field of human resources management to increase transparency and implement a system of formal appraisal. The use of a 24-hour camera monitoring system has been extended to all Customs border points.

Very good cooperation links have been established with a number of other Customs administrations. In cooperation with the Customs administrations of Montenegro and the Republic of North Macedonia, the actions have been undertaken to set up joint working groups on border currency control.

A Training Academy for the Tax and Customs Administration started working in May 2013 with the Customs training strategy as part of its Programme.

WCO support

The WCO support was particularly important in the area of improving integrity and transparency and strengthening the administration capacities to prevent and fight corruption, as well as in the area of the fight against drug and precursor trafficking. Further support has been delivered in the areas of IPR protection, improvement of the Customs laboratory functions and its modernization, SW and the Data Model, as well as Risk assessment and selectivity and Rules of Origin. In 2019/20 the WCO support was provided mainly within the UNODC-WCO CCP.

ARMENIA

Background

In 2008, the State Customs Committee and the State Tax Service were merged into the State Revenue Committee (SRC) and were directly subordinated to the Government of Armenia.
The overall objectives of the ongoing Customs reform/modernization process are:

- To improve the Customs Code based on international best practices;
- To develop and introduce Customs procedures in border crossing points in line with the Integrated Border Management system principles taking into consideration the "One Stop Shop/SW" principle;
- To develop and introduce a system of regular training and instruction for Customs officers, as well as relevant courses for the public;
- To expand cooperation with other state institutions, economic entities and society, thus enhancing the level of confidence/mutual trust and information exchange;
- To expand cooperation with foreign Customs authorities, the EU and Customs Union institutions and other International organizations;
- To enhance and improve efforts to combat Customs related crimes and rules violations;
- To develop and introduce a system of simplified Customs procedures for conscientious economic entities, establishing relevant legal and institutional base for the introduction and implementation of an AEO system;
- To expand technical and professional capacities of Customs;
- To introduce and improve control methods;
- To develop and introduce a country of origin certificate issuing system in the Customs service; and
- To inform about technology capacity development in Customs.

Current planning

A Strategic Plan is adopted and approved by Parliament to guide the administration’s reforms every two years. Armenia has recently engaged with the WCO under the tailor-made track of the Mercator Programme and in May 2019 a scoping mission was conducted followed by a Mercator Implementation Planning Mission in February 2020 to provide assistance in drafting a multi-year Implementation Plan to steer the reforms in the next several years and indicate potential areas where the WCO support would be most needed.

Customs Reform and Modernization Progress

A Twinning project within the country’s agreement with the EU is focused on strengthening the Customs control procedures and enforcement in line with the best practice in the EU Member states.

In 2008 the National Assembly adopted a package of legislative amendments, including the Customs Code, and further revisions are underway to achieve alignment with the international standards (e.g. RKC accession in process). In July 2013 the country acceded to the RKC.

Since 2008 a new IT system (TWM) has been in place for all types of declarations and for internal transit in all Border Crossing points (BCPs) and Customs houses and an Electronic payments module was launched in 2011. Since 2008 Customs brokers and DTI (Direct Trade Input) offices have been opened and the RM system has been improved. An electronic document management system was launched in 2009. The list of goods required to be certified at the moment of importation has been reduced from 65 to 16. The number of required documents was reduced to three. Post-clearance control and audit are implemented. An Advisory Group to the Head of Customs is in place including representatives from the public and private sector. A new Customs website (www.customs.am) and a call center were launched. The international cooperation has been improved with 17 bilateral and multilateral agreements on mutual administrative assistance and exchange of information signed and agreements on joint use of border crossing points with Georgia and Iran negotiated.

In the framework of implementing the integrated border management concept several working groups meet periodically, consisting of Armenian and Georgian Customs and one with Iranian Customs representatives.

The State Revenue Committee has developed a Code of Ethics for Customs Servants of the Republic of Armenia. A Tax and Customs officials’ promotion order has been recently approved.

A new Training Centre of the State Revenue Committee of Armenia was launched in July 2012. More than 300 Customs officers have already been trained there on different topics.
The system of issuing Import Certificates of medicines and drugs by the SW principle is currently in a pilot phase. The ACS has introduced an electronic control system based on RM, which enables the electronic implementation of Customs declaration process. This system makes it possible to identify the risky transactions and operators.

The ACS has also introduced the simplified procedure of declaring under several Customs regimes of personal cars, as well as means of passenger transport by physical persons on the RA Customs border.

At the end of 2012, an extensive process of introducing a network of Taxpayer Service Centers was launched jointly with ‘HAYPOST’ CJSC. It is expected to operate about 140 similar Service Centers in Postal departments spread throughout the territory of the Republic of Armenia. Simplified procedures are thus used for the delivery of goods received by citizens by mail or courier deliveries.

**WCO support**

The WCO support was particularly important in the areas of strategic planning, RM, SW, border management, valuation, PCA and the implementation of the Harmonized System 2012. In October 2014, a WCO Columbus Programme Phase III mission was conducted in Armenia to evaluate the overall progress of the administration in the modernization process. The WCO has supported Armenia in a new function assigned to Customs, namely the development of procedures for issuing Certificates of Origin, establishing and managing a PCU under the UNODC/WCO Container Control Programme, designing and establishing an AEO Programme, and further developing the capacities of the national training center. In November 2015, WCO Istanbul Convention on Temporary Admission was conducted in Yerevan. Integrity, Risk assessment and RKC implementation national seminars were conducted in 2016 and a CBM workshop took place in February 2017. Further support was received in 2017-18 in the areas of HS, AP/PNR, RM and PCA and in enhancing the digital solutions for information exchange between Customs and postal services. In 2019/20, the ACS also benefitted from support in the areas of integrity development and Mercator planning.

**AZERBAIJAN**

**Background**

The main objectives and tasks of further development of the Customs authorities can be summarized as follows:

- To improve the legislative base and Customs regulation;
- To assure conformity of Custom control methods to international standards;
- To automate the Customs procedures and organization of e-Customs services;
- To strengthen of the fight against smuggling and other violations of law in the field of Customs;
- To develop the Customs infrastructures; and
- To train and widen personnel on international cooperation.

**Current planning**

The new Action Plan on Development of the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2017-2021 was approved by the Board of the State Customs Committee in January 2017. It takes into considerations the measures in the Presidential decrees for strengthening the Customs administration and for introducing Strategic Road Maps on the national economy and on the main sectors of the economy.

**Customs Reform and Modernization progress**

One of the significant achievements of the recent years in the Customs area is the introduction of the SW principle (since 2009) for the inspection of goods and transport means moving across the check points at the state borders. The operational Electronic Customs services, Single Automated Management System of Customs service, “Business-Customs” virtual cooperation, Electronic Customs declaration system, Electronic payment, automated registration system of goods and transport means at the Customs border checkpoints are the evidence of the effectiveness of the Customs automation. It has also been successful in developing and implementing Risk Analysis and RM.

The Customs Code was reviewed and revised with support of the EU and the UN Development Programme and the new Customs Code entered into force on 1 January 2012. It introduces, inter alia, the institute of AEO and provides better structured and targeted PCA services. A number of rules regulating the respective provisions of the new Customs Code have been adopted and some are still under development. Furthermore, the new Law of the Azerbaijan Republic on Customs tariffs entered into force on 3 October 2013. In the area of integrity and fight against corruption, there have been approved Regulations of Servicing, internal discipline rules and the Honor Code determining the attitude rules and the ethics policy of the Customs employees.
Within the enhanced Customs-business partnership and in order to provide transparency and to simplify the declaration process in the Customs clearance, the State Customs Committee launched a pilot project for electronic declarations that allows declaring on the internet since 4 April 2016 and on 4 May 2016 completely switched to electronic declaration of goods and vehicles, as well as improved Customs legislation to ensure transparency and simplify Customs procedures.

As a continuation of the ongoing reforms, "Rules of use of “Green channel” and other gating systems for transportation of goods and vehicles across the Customs borders" were approved by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Taking into account the international experience in ensuring the release of goods and vehicles through the Green Corridor and other gating systems, as well as in increasing the effectiveness of Customs control, “Automated RM” subsystem of Unified Automated Management System of Customs was established, and this software was put into operation on 1 August 2016.

One of the most important projects implemented by Azerbaijan Customs service is the TRS project. This was worked out using the methodology of the WCO Guidelines TRS and its integration into the Unified Automated Management System was ensured. The project allows determining gaps in the Customs procedures and movement of goods and transport vehicles along the border.

The CA of Azerbaijan is very active on both International and regional levels, providing its strong support to the WCO initiatives. On 30 January 2002 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the WCO regarding the establishment of RTC in Baku. On 11 November 2009 the MOU of the establishment of the ROCB in Baku was signed with the Government of Azerbaijan. A new building of the ROCB in Baku was constructed and the official ceremony of the ROCB opening was held in October 2011. The Memorandum of Understanding between the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the WCO on the use of the Dog Training Centre of the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan as the WCO Regional Dog Training Centre was signed in September 2015.

The 10th Annual WCO PICARD (Partnerships in Customs Academic Research and Development) Conference was held from 8 to 10 September 2015 in Baku. The International Network of Customs Universities (INCU) regional office in Baku and the SC regularly organize a number of events, among which the International Student Conferences.

A number of bilateral agreements on cooperation in the field of professional re-training and improvement of professional skills of staff have been concluded with other Customs administrations (Bulgaria, Republic of North Macedonia, Mongolia, Republic of Moldova, Republic of Togo, Turkey and Ukraine).

During the Conference of DGs of Customs in the Europe Region, held in Saint Petersburg in April 2019, the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan was elected as the WCO Council Vice-Chair for the Europe region until July 2021.

WCO support

The WCO provides support to the modernization projects in Azerbaijan by sharing expertise on developing regional training structures, providing access to the WCO training tools, developing the ICT systems, assisting in strengthening the administration’s capacities on strategic planning, countering the illicit diversion and trafficking of precursor chemicals (through trainings under the Global Shield Programme) and training of the Port Control Units under the WCO-UNODC Container Control Programme. More recently, the WCO provided support to the SCC for developing their AEO Programme, capabilities to manage risks related to road transport, IPR and improving the transit procedures. The Customs Administration of Azerbaijan hosted a number of regional events, international forums and workshops. In November 2015, RM and RK and in 2016 API-PNR Systems workshops were conducted in Baku. A Customs Laboratory modernization support mission took place in June 2017. In 2019/20 further support was rendered in areas such as RM, CTS deployment, and also within UNODC-WCO CCP.

BELARUS

Background

The strategic development objectives of the Customs Service can be summarized as follows:

- Improved revenue collection to increase the republican budget input under the increasing external goods turnover, enhancement of the cross-border transportation of goods and vehicles;
- Barrier-free environment for business: facilitation, reduction of existing and rejection of the establishment of new administrative procedures, reduction of costs related to Customs clearance of goods, and, as a consequence, increasing the Belarusian enterprises competitiveness, improvement of investment climate;
- Effective fight against smuggling, money laundering, and assisting in the creation of a clear competitive environment for foreign economic activity participants; protection of health, morality, citizens safety;
Better compliance with the international standards in organizational and legal aspects in the sphere of Customs matters, providing effective work in the Customs Union within Euro-Asian Economic Community, of the continuing integration of the Republic of Belarus to the international system of world economic relations;

Higher effectiveness of the Customs service functioning with optimization of costs for its operating; and

Modernization of the Customs service aimed at reducing the integrity risks when applying Customs legislation and Customs clearance and control technologies.

Current planning

The Strategy and main directions of the Customs Service of the Republic of Belarus development are approved by an Order of the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Belarus.

Customs Reform and Modernization Progress

In May 2012 a WCO Columbus Programme Phase III mission was conducted in Belarus to evaluate the overall modernization progress of the administration in the past years. The expert mission noted important achievements since the 2007 diagnostic report in areas such as: management of trade information, legislative controls, increased IT efficiency, use of technical and NII equipment, establishment of the Institute for Advanced Customs Training, intensified stakeholder consultation and interaction. There were four main recommendations for further development and for increasing the efficiency of the administration’s performance, namely wider implementation of the RM framework (strategy and plans); development of the leadership and management potential through dedicated trainings; continued engagement with other border management agencies to consolidate border functions with the Customs as a lead agency; and further steps to create benefits for the AEOs.

Belarus acceded to RKC in 2011 and is also an active Member of the Customs Union (CU) formed in 2007 together with Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation.

A SW system has been implemented which is supplemented by the use of the “One stop” principle for physical persons. At present the Customs authorities jointly with the State Border Committee are developing an Integrated Border Management Concept.

The SCC RB was the first state body to introduce new information and communications technologies. Modernization in the area of ICT started in 1997. The current ICT development plan in the SCC RB is linked to the sub Programme “Electronic Customs” within the National Programme for development of services in the area of ICT. The electronic declaration system applied to 97% of the export and 79% of the import has delivered positive results – currently over 75 000 Customs documents are processed electronically per month. As of June 2012, the CU countries have to introduce mandatory preliminary information about goods imported by road, which will also be used for the transit declarations.

The SCC is implementing RM system and nearly 1.5% of consignments transported across the Customs border undergo Customs inspection, herewith the effectiveness of the Customs inspections (detection of offences) has risen to 5% (in 2005: 7.6% were inspected with effectiveness of 0.6%; in 2009: 1.6% were inspected with effectiveness of 4.7. NII technology (scanners) is widely used.

Starting in 2003, the SCC RB has been working continuously on setting up and developing an institute of Fair Participant of foreign economic activity as a basis for the AEO. The legal basis for the introduction of an AEO Programme both on the CU and national level is in place as of July 2011 and there are already 307 AEOs operating. In order to coordinate the efforts of the Customs authorities and the representatives of the business community more effectively, in 2002 a Social council was established, and joint sessions took place on a regular basis. At present there are more than 60 Memoranda of Understanding concluded with the largest private sector entities in the country. In 2012 the Social council was reformed to Social and Advisory Council; its regional units were established as well as two expert advisory groups on IT and transit issues respectively.

In the area of integrity and fight against corruption, the SCC has adopted in 2011 a comprehensive complex of measures on preventive care and strengthening the fight against official violations.

In November 2012 a scientific and technical council was established within the SCC RB in order to ensure scientific support to Customs.

WCO support

The WCO has assisted Belarus Customs in strengthening the administration’s capacities in such areas as NII, ICT, and preliminary exchange of electronic data, HS classification and PCA, as well as CBM and SW. In May 2012 a WCO Columbus Programme Phase III mission was conducted in Belarus to evaluate the overall progress of the administration in the
modernization process. More recently, a WCO RM workshop was conducted in Minsk. In April 2016, Mercator Programme - WTO TFA implementation - expert Mission/ workshop was conducted in Minsk. In 2017 the support was rendered in the important area of PCA. In 2019/20 further support was provided in improving the Customs processing of expedited shipments (express consignments).

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

**Background**

On 4 July 2008 Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) became an active WCO Member.

The overall objectives of the ongoing Customs reform/modernization process in the country include:

- Harmonization of Customs regulations and alignment with the EU acquis;
- Improvement of organization and human resource management;
- Enhancement of trade facilitation and relations with business;
- More efficient collection of revenues;
- RM;
- Improvement of audits;
- Implementation of regulations on intellectual property rights; and
- Improvement of the Customs IT systems.

**Current planning**

The Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH (MOFTER) and especially its sector for Customs policy and tariff has competencies in formulating the country’s foreign trade policy, Customs policy and specifically its Customs tariff policy. MOFTER is also responsible for the normative and legal powers in these areas. The Indirect Taxation Authority of BiH (ITA) was created in 2004 and became operational in 2005. ITA is responsible for the enforcement of legal provisions and policy on indirect taxation, as well as for the collection and allocation of indirect tax, i.e. value added tax, Customs duties, excise duties and road taxes based on the Law on Indirect Taxation System of BiH. It has a dedicated Customs Sector consisting of five departments in HQ, as well as Department for Customs Business in four Regional Centers.

**Customs Reform and Modernization progress**

From a strategic perspective the current developments of the Customs administration are driven by the need to harmonize the legislation of BiH with the EU acquis and to implement the relevant operational reform. Another key driver for modernization and reform is the core governmental function as a revenue collection service.

The Parliamentary Assembly of BiH adopted a new Law on Customs Policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2015. The new Law has been aligned with the acquis of the EU (acquis), i.e. with the Customs Law of the EU, and also the provisions of the new implementing regulations are harmonized with the EU Customs regulations that were in effect until May 2016. This new law includes, inter alia, provisions for RM, AEO and for introducing an entry summary declaration and exit summary declaration. The new law will fully apply upon the entry into force of the Decision on its implementing provisions. The Draft Decision has been completed and is currently in the course of taking the opinion of the competent authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, after which it will be sent for adoption to the Council of Ministers by the ITA Governing Board as a proponent of the decision. The start of the implementation of the Decision which envisages the use of electronic transit procedure (NCTS), is conditioned on the launch of using electronic signatures in BiH and earlier changes of the Law on Electronic Document from 2014.

The WCO Diagnostic Report in 2013 recommended that the ITA uses the possibility of establishing new units for RM to restore its RM strategy and adopts a holistic approach to compliance based on risk.

The ITA introduced local clearance at import and the status of authorized consignor and authorized consignee in the Customs transit procedure, accelerating Customs clearance procedures and reducing expenses linked to the import and export of goods. ITA is developing guidance on the implementation of safety standards and procedures for granting authorization for an AEO, in accordance with the new Customs regulations, and guidelines for AEO, as well as other supporting documents, which will apply from the beginning of the implementation of the new the Law on Customs policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The BiH Customs Tariff is updated on an annual basis. BiH is a Contracting Party to the WCO HS Convention as of 2014 and its current tariff is based on the WCO Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System version 2012. BiH is signatory to the Istanbul Convention on the temporary admission of goods. Valuation regulations are in line with the WTO Valuation agreement.
BIH is not yet a signatory to the RKC; however, in the past years there has been significant progress in introducing simplified Customs procedures - acceptance of invoices as declarations for clearance of certain commodities; Customs clearance based on an incomplete declaration and local Customs clearance at the premises of the importer and the exporter for certain Customs regimes. The BIH Council of Ministers already adopted the proposal for launching the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the RKC. It was concluded that the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations (MOFTER) would submit a proposal to the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the suggestion that the signatories of the instrument of accession to the RKC would be the Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations. The Presidency adopted a Decision on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s accession in May 2016.

In November 2005, the Indirect Taxation Authority began the process of implementation of the ASYCUDA World. The current Customs declaration procedure is known as the ‘Customs Declaration Processing System (CDPS). The process is 100% electronic via Electronic Data Input (EDI). Freight forwarders approved to use the system apply to the Ministry of Trade & Tourism to obtain a registration number and then apply to ITA to be allocated a Customs Identification Number (CIN). There is pre-arrival electronic exchange of information through the EU Systematic Electronic Exchange of Data project (SEED) with the Republic of Serbia and with Montenegro. This information exchange is the WCO Data model compliant and includes TIR carnets and ATA carnet details. ITA is working towards introducing the New Computerized Transit System (NCTS) which is a condition for accession to the EU.

In July 2005, the BIH Council of Ministers adopted a Strategy for Integrated Border Management, and established an inter-agency Working Group for its implementation. With the coordination of the Ministry of Security and involvement of other competent ministries, the inter-agency working group prepared a new Strategy for IBM in BIH, as well as supporting documentation (situation and needs analysis, Action Plan). The new strategy of the Council of Ministers was adopted in 2008 establishing a State Commission for IBM which, among others, had the task of monitoring the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan on IBM in BIH. The Commission is composed of representatives of the Ministry of Security, Border Police, ITA, BIH Veterinary Office, BIH Board for Protection of Plants Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Transport and Communications and Ministry of Civil Affairs. In late 2009, by order of the State Commission for IBM, a review process of the existing and development of a new Strategy and Action Plan was initiated. In addition, an Agreement on cooperation between the institutions involved in the BIH IBM was signed and Article 6 of the Agreement provides that the contracting parties will, at least once a year, prepare a joint risk analysis, which will be the basis of an IBM and planning and implementation of joint activities. It is also prescribed that the relevant risk analysis will be created in the framework of a Joint Centre for Risk Analysis (JCRA). The State Commission for IBM has adopted the rules of procedure and established professional Sub-Commissions for the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan.

The Headquarters of JCRA is on the premises of the Border Police of BIH, and in accordance with the above agreement, ITA has delegated two representatives and set up a Local Centre for Risk Analysis (LCRA), in the Law Enforcement Department. The main task of the LCRA is to provide expert assistance to JCRA and prepare risk analyzes. Since November 2011, an ITA BIH instruction specifies working methods for the LCRA providing for a way of cooperation between JCRA and LCRA, a methodology of risk analysis as well as other issues. The exchange of information is performed via an established secure line.

On the proposal of the State Commission for IBM, the Council of Ministers has, on two occasions, revised the Strategy and validated it. With a view to full reconciliation of the IBM Strategy with the EU Border Policy, a new IBM strategy for the period 2015-2018 has been created, which is based on the concept of IV Pillars, as follows:

- Border controls and Customs surveillance;
- Detection and investigation of cross-border crime;
- Measures in third countries; and
- Inter-agency cooperation in the field of IBM.

During 2018, the Coordination Body for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan for IBM will develop an IBM Draft Strategy for the period 2019-2021, after the EU activities are finalized and a new National Strategy for the EU is adopted, in accordance with the guidelines of the EC regarding the protection of borders and cross-border movement of goods and passengers. The draft of the new BIH IBM Strategy will fully follow the guidelines and recommendations of the EC.

In accordance with the new Book of Rules on organization and job classification in the ITA BiH a special organizational unit, the Department for analysis and RM within the Office of the Director, was established. The main task of the Department is to perform analysis of all resources, organization and coordination of the activities of the identification of appropriate targets in the area of the most anticipated risks, collaborate with all organizational units of the Administration, especially the organizational units that perform control and the Intelligence Department in order to obtain current data, risk analysis and the tendency of new violations of regulations governing indirect taxes. The Department also collaborates with the organizational units for the purpose of gathering information from all available sources and databases to draft risk assessments, exchanges of data and information with the Joint Centre for Risk Analysis in accordance with the applicable
regulations. It establishes the criteria for methodical analysis and evaluation of data, performs selection and risk assessment as a basis for implementing control functions including entry criteria in the selection module in a system for automated processing of Customs declarations, as well as the selection criteria of risk analysis in the field of VAT and excise duties. The Department also performs complex analytical tasks related to Customs and tax fraud and establishes guidelines for their control, analyzes reports on the results achieved in the implementation of these activities and the results used to favor those criteria, while collaborating with other organizational units of other institutions.

The ITA Customs Control Unit is focused on the operation of PCA. The ITA PCA system represents a modern compliance function; it is applied as a control mechanism in fiscal and non-fiscal areas and equally used to verify and re-assess the authorization criteria for special Customs regimes and for facilitated procedures. Mobile Teams from the Anti-Smuggling Unit operate periodically to supplement Customs controls. The Annual Plan of the PCA Department was made using a new methodology with the participation of the Department for Analysis and RM. It includes fixed and flexible parts. The fixed part is related to certain legal entities by default risk indicators, and the flexible part is related to subsequent controls based on the demands presented by other organizational units in the ITA/other institutions, etc. A draft new ordinance on limited control and the control of indirect taxes has been elaborated, which will provide a new and improved approach to organizing and carrying out Customs controls.

IPR is an important issue for the country and new legislation is being introduced. A new Organizational Unit – Department for protection of IPR, Prohibitions and Restrictions, has been established in the ITA. The Department is engaged in processing copyright owners’ requests for undertaking Customs measures to protect intellectual property including review and approval, as well as ex officio. It actively cooperates with international, State and entity bodies and institutions involved in the protection of intellectual property, and it participates in training in the field of intellectual property. It provides technical assistance in the implementation of information systems in the field of intellectual property protection. The ITA utilizes the application INES+ which allows for better data exchange, electronic recordation of IPR violations, electronic recordation of requests for Customs measures to protect IPR and statistical reports.

The ITA has a dedicated Anti-Corruption Strategy aiming at eliminating the conditions that lead to opportunities for corruption, enhancing the harmonization of national legislation with international standards and increasing the efficiency and accountability in the work on corruption prevention. With the EU IPA funding a new book of rules on internal organization and job classification of the ITA was developed. Further work/amendments are needed aiming at delivering an improved personnel management system, alignment of job classifications with responsibilities and working goals, definition of necessary education and training, and reduction of staff turnover. An annual Training Plan is produced following identification of training needs by all outstations and in response to a request from the Training Unit. A Code of Conduct for staff Members of the ITA is in place since 2006, and it published on the ITA website. The website is regularly updated with any changes to working practices and procedures. It contains contact details of the various sections of the ITA as well as a free telephone number which the public can use to seek information on any aspect of the ITA activity. In addition, there is a link to an ‘Information Request Form’. This can be completed online and sent electronically to the ITA to seek specific information or clarification on any ITA-related issue. The ITA has an intranet that is available to all employees of the Administration.

The Customs laboratory carries out activities related to laboratory testing of samples primarily with the aim of classifying goods under the Customs tariff and billing-related duties. From its creation in 2004, the Customs Laboratory seeks to harmonize its technical proficiency and personnel capabilities with those of the Customs laboratories of the EU countries. The Customs laboratory implements all currently applicable requirements of the international standard ISO/IEC 17025, regarding the management system, in order to be ready for the Customs laboratory accreditation.

Through the project Customs 2020 the Customs laboratory is planning a series of trainings to increase the number of methods implemented and shorten the period of sampling to issuing the report. The ITA is in the process of procuring equipment for 400,000 € for the Customs laboratory, through a grant of the European Commission. With this equipment the laboratory plans to be able to further analyze about 30 additional parameters, as well as some samples that are now using the services of an external laboratory.

The Indirect Taxation Authority applies many international agreements / free trade agreements signed by Bosnia and Herzegovina, as follows: the Free Trade Agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Turkey, the Agreement on Amendments and Accession to the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA 2006), the Free Trade Agreement between the countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Agreement on Stabilization and Association between European Communities and their Member states, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other hand. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a signatory to the Regional Convention on Pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential Rules of Origin. This Convention has been in force with the EFTA countries as of 01.02.2015 and with the countries of CEFTA since 01.04.2016 and with the countries of the EU since 12.09.2016. The application of identical Rules of Origin significantly increased the possibilities of cumulating of origin of goods.
The relationships between the Trade and the ITA are very good. Regular meetings take place involving the Chambers of Commerce, Freight Forwarders Association, International Transport of Goods association and other key stakeholders. The ITA also attends and regularly contributes by updating the meeting concerning any changes to Customs procedures.

A variety of signed protocols are in place with countries such as Montenegro, Croatia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Slovenia facilitating the bilateral exchange of information and intelligence. In addition, there exist numerous reciprocal Free Trade Agreements with Turkey, the EU and CEFTA countries.

On a local level there are protocols providing exchanges and co-operation with Border Police, Veterinary Departments and Plant Health.

BiH appreciated strong donor attention over the past years through national, bilateral or regional development Programmes of the EU, agencies of the World Bank group, IMF, USAID, OSCE and other agencies. Several Border Crossing Points (BCP), particularly at the border with Croatia, have been upgraded with the EU funding and control equipment acquisition or installment of x-ray scanning devices have been possible with investments based mainly on external funding.

**WCO support**

The WCO supports the Reform and Modernization efforts of the ITA by providing workshops and missions in areas such as IPR, Valuation along with participation in the WCO-UNODC Container Control Programme. In 2016 Customs laboratory modernization and RKC workshops were conducted in BiH and in 2017 a Mercator Programme Awareness Raising, a TRS and risk assessment and selectivity workshops took place. Further support in the area of PCA, Risk assessment and selectivity and detection and investigation of firearms trafficking was provided in 2017-2018. In January 2020 ITA benefited from the support in enhancement of training strategy and integration of WCO e-learning modules, and also within the UNODC-WCO CCP.

**GEORGIA**

**Background**

Georgia embarked on a comprehensive Customs reform Programme in 2006 and the priorities of the ongoing Customs modernization process in the Revenue Service of Georgia are:

- Support to the EU integration process of the country;
- Institutional development and sustainability of the service while implementing modern approaches in human resources management field, promoting the identification of staff training needs and continuous process of relevant professional development, ensuring competitiveness and transparency of the recruitment of new staff and career development system and further developing the information communication technology systems;
- Improvement of RM system;
- Improvement of supply chain security;
- Enhancing the profile of a Customer-oriented Customs;
- Supporting and enhancing the digitalization of Customs procedures;
- Supporting the efficient and effective implementation of the provisions envisaged under the WTO TFA (e.g. CBM, SW, Freedom of Transit, AEO, etc.);
- Enhancing the cooperation on bilateral and multilateral level; and
- Supporting the regional economic integration.

**Current planning**

The strategic approach of the Georgian Customs underlines the importance of the permanent updates in the Customs filed while taking into consideration the recent challenges and new economic trends. The Georgian Customs, together with the international Customs community, acknowledges the importance of the reasonable balance between the simplified Customs procedures and proper Customs control activities, streamlined Customs procedures based on RM which are highly automated and completely paperless, and improved human resource management to ensure proper balance between facilitation and control and improve the level of safety and security.
Customs Reform and Modernization Progress

Years ago, at the core of the reforms in both the tax and Customs administration in Georgia was the government’s decision to eradicate the corruption that was eroding the state. However, the reforms have done more than simply removing corruption; they have also increased efficiency and transparency for citizens and businesses while reducing costs. In recent years Georgia has undertaken important efforts to improve the integrity in the Customs service. The process has started with replacement of high and mid-level management. At the same time the government announced corruption as a crime and a zero-tolerance policy against offenders. New rules regulated in detail all Customs related procedures and relevant integrity and anti-corruption policy was developed and implemented, including provision for strict fines and jail time for state employees found guilty of corruption or bribery. A modern working environment and decent salary ensure high motivation and the integrity of Customs officers. Integrity is considered to be the most important milestone for the transparency of the service.

Georgia established a unified Customs and Tax Administration under the Revenue Service (RS). Currently the border crossing related control is under the supervision of the Georgia Revenue Service and the Patrol Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs while GRS conducts all Customs procedures, as well as phytosanitary control on the border and passport control of truck drivers. There is the possibility to obtain certificates (origin, SPS etc.) and permits (dual use goods, CITES, SPS etc.) directly at Border Crossing Points or in Customs Clearance Zones, specified in the electronically submitted documents, which allows to accomplish all the procedures at one place.

As part of the legislative reform, the country has joined over the past years a number of WCO conventions: the HS Convention, the Istanbul Convention and the Nairobi Convention.

On its way to the European Economic Integration process within the scope of the obligations envisaged under the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and its technical part on Deep and Comprehensive Free Area, important steps have been undertaken:

- Draft version of the Customs Code has been elaborated to be prospectively in compliance with the Union Customs Code. The project will be finalized by 2018;
- Georgia has adopted legislative changes introducing the principles of AEO institute. Work continues on further elaboration and revision of the legislation;
- Georgia became a party to the Regional Convention on the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Preferential Rules of Origin on 1 July 2018. A relevant new decision from March 2018 enables the diagonal cumulation between Georgia, the EU, EFTA and Turkey;
- In 2017 the Georgian Law on Border Measures Related to Intellectual Property Rights was adopted in compliance with the EU regulation (No 608/2013) envisaging the following new provisions in the Georgian regulatory framework: addition of Customs procedures to the law of Georgia on border measures related to intellectual property rights, under which intellectual property will be protected at the Georgian border; implementation of the Ex-officio principle in the Georgian law which gives the possibility to the Customs authority to detain goods suspected in infringing IP rights which are not registered in the national registry of IP objects for Customs protection reasons; definition of Customs responsibilities, application timeframes and etc.;
- Aiming at the approximation, with the possible accession, to the Common Transit Convention and New Computerized Transit System, the working group, established within the Georgia Revenue Service, has been working on the prospective changes from the legal and procedural perspectives. The EU technical assistance project “Supporting the Accession of Georgia to the Conventions on Transit Area and Launching of the New Computerized Transit System (NCTS)” was approved in December 2017. The project started in March 2018 under the consortium of Finland-Poland-Latvia; and
- Georgian Customs administration has been benefiting from a number of training Programmes for the practical understating and implementation of the provisions envisaged under the EU regulations.

A number of Reform and Modernization projects for the GRS are currently being implemented with support by the EU, but also World Bank and USAID.

A Risk-based Management system has been implemented since 2008 which is fully integrated in the GRS, “E-Customs” system. 100% risk-based control is in progress while the system provides for PCA and control. For the purposes of PCA, the Customs and tax data bases can be shared. IT system allows for preliminary information exchange and the use of digital signatures. The importers can monitor their cargo status through a new ASYCUDA World application. Special modules and functionalities have been introduced, e.g. electronic administration system, parcels, integrated tariff, personal identification and registry system (PIRS). By using the PIRS (data base of the Ministry of Internal Affairs), a Custom officer accomplishes the passport control of truck drivers at the BCPs, thus, the One Stop Shop principle is in place in all BCPs.
In the beginning of 2012, the GRS IT Centre developed software which receives information from the PIRS system automatically in the GRS “E-Customs” system that gives Customs better RM possibilities. The new software system was fully deployed and functional by end 2012. Implementation of the recent reforms in that particular area (RM) started in autumn 2015 with the assistance of International Finance Corporation. A new Customs RM strategy was implemented in 2015. The Customs control as part of the RM Policy is based on identified risks, new policy defines roles and responsibilities within the organization. While RM is identified as «efficient methods for information gathering and sharing», further emphasizing the connection between operations and RM, Risk Owner concept was introduced. Risk Owners are those managers within the procedure, control and audit units that are close to, and in charge of, operational resources. Implementation of Key Performance Indicators – KPI was another significant step towards identification of strategic risks and monitoring the actual progress of the operational implementation. While moving the decision making from top to mid-level management, the approval process of risk profiles has become more flexible and responsive to newly emerged risks, having the direct positive impact on effectiveness of Customs RM.

Having taken into consideration the API/PNR perspectives objectives and benefits, Georgian Customs has been interested in developing, on the first stage, API system. In this regard, the WCO together with the WCO accredited Customs expert conducted the relevant seminar on the development of API/PNR system. This seminar has been the basis for further development of cooperation. Preliminary legal changes have been prepared.

The renovation of BCPs has been conducted on a permanent basis. Currently Georgia benefits from the EU Eastern Partnership IBM Pilot Project “Support to the development of Red Bridge Crossing Point between Azerbaijan and Georgia”. The project envisages the provision of the Georgian side with the relevant SPS infrastructure and equipment. Construction work is in progress. The construction of Customs Clearance Zones (CCZ) as large clearance centers is also an important facilitation for the trade sector. The post-clearance control and audit were introduced in 2010 but still need development as the concepts are applied in a rather general manner lacking the practical analysis of effectiveness.

Clearance of goods is carried out in accordance with with 5 options:

1. Physical submission of B/L and invoice;
2. Electronic submission of Customs declaration and supporting documents;
3. Advanced electronic submission of B/L and invoice;
4. Using electronic signature (economic operator can submit B/L and invoice at the "A" CCZ, when goods are located in the "B" CCZ (“distant declaration”); and
5. Local clearance (economic operator can request clearance of goods at its warehouse/office):
   - Electronic submission of Customs declaration and supporting documents by economic operator accessing the ASYCUDA system;
   - Economic operator submits B/L and invoice via www.rs.ge; and
   - CCZ officer visits economic operator’s premises.

Payment of import duties and taxes can be deferred for a period of 5 days. In case of submitting of advance declaration, the payment of import duties can be deferred for a period of 15 days. In case of being a member of the “Golden List” (“Gold List” Programme as a type of Customs-business partnership was initiated in 2009 in Georgia which is the profound basis for the implementation of the AEO model) the payment of import duties can be deferred for a period of 30 days.

The number of documents for import and export procedures has been reduced, 54 documents were required for import and export procedures in 2005; however, currently there are only 2 documents (invoice and waybill) required.

The strategy and the action plan of Integrated Border Management (IBM) were implemented in 2006 in Georgia. The control system being implemented within the border management has overcome the so called "Blind Control" method with no risk analysis and assessment. The control system has concentrated on the RM system elements for creating, testing, implementing, amending risk profiles and random selection percentage. Georgia focuses on clear activities within the IBM Strategy and Action Plan around three Pillars: 1. Intra-Service cooperation; 2. Inter-Agency cooperation; and 3. International Cooperation. In 2014, the IBM strategy was updated, and the relevant action plan was approved. The plan reflects the transitional activities to be conducted in accordance with the implementation of the Action Plan on Visa Liberalization between Georgia and the EU. The interagency group of border agencies will start soon the internal working process aiming at the update of IBM Strategy and its Action Plan.

The philosophy of the IBM strategy underlines the importance of mutually beneficial cooperation with its neighbor countries, relevant access and feed-back on the processes at the BCPs. In this respect, particular attention is paid to the Joint Use of BCPs. The joint use principle has been successfully conducted with the Republic of Turkey, streamlining the Customs procedures and avoiding duplicative procedures on the borders thanks to the advance exchange of Customs information.
In 2015 Georgian and Azerbaijani Customs administration established the relevant legislative and operational bases for the advance exchange of the Customs summary declaration. Georgia has been actively working on issues regarding the joint use of the BCPs with the Republic of Armenia.

One of the reforms for strengthening the inter-agency cooperation was the establishment of an e-platform for permits needed to finalize the border control procedures. The e-platform for exits automatically registers the permits issued by the following agencies: Ministry of Internal Affairs; Ministry of Defense; Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development; Ministry of Agriculture; Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection; Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Affairs. Permits that are issued are automatically registered and validated on all the BCPs. Feed-back is provided to the permit issuing agencies at the end of the process.

Georgia established an Approved Exporter institution enabling the exporters to decrease the time for the Customs formalities required for obtaining of Originating documents.

GRS actively participates in the WCO-UNODC Container Control Programme and a Port Control Unit has been established in the Poti Customs Clearance Zone comprising inter-agency staff from Customs Department, Investigation Service, Patrol Police Department and Central Criminal Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. Recently a new Unit was established in the Tbilisi Customs Clearance Zone and mainly concentrates on the transit cargo. In 2017 a “Tbilisi Airport” unit was established for the purpose of detection of illegal movement of drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors. The units benefit from a number of training Programmes.

The WCO Cargo Targeting System is a system developed by the WCO to assist Customs administrations to collect, store and exchange cargo manifest information. The provided software consists of an application for the collection and storage of cargo manifest data at a national level and an interface for the exchange of data amongst Customs Administrations on the international level. By adopting WCO CTS Customs administration will have the ability to perform risk assessment of cargo manifests within a structured database. This will enable identification of high risk consignments and facilitation of cargo not deemed to be high risk. On May 2015 WCO conducted needs assessment visit to Tbilisi and Poti. RS together with Data Exchange Agency Ministry of Justice held negotiation process with all shipping line companies in Georgia with a purpose of providing relevant cargo manifest information for the system. After successful negotiations from October 2015 shipping lines are providing the information to the CTS in test regime which became fully operational in 2017.

In support of the digitalization of the Customs procedures and to facilitate legitimate border crossing, regional co-operation and integration, considering Georgia’s strategic position in the South Caucasus region and leading role in the effective use of IT technologies in the field of Customs management the Georgian Customs is determined to move towards the paperless solutions as regards TIR procedures. Georgia expressed the willingness to participate in the project aiming at digitalizing the TIR procedures along the corridors composed of TIR countries that also intend to participate in this particular project. Considering all the mentioned above, in March 2018 the Memorandum of Understanding between LEPL Georgia Revenue Service of the Ministry of Finance of Georgia, Georgian International Road Carriers Association and International Road Transport Union concerning the implementation and maintenance of further TIR RM IT tools in GRS IT systems was signed.

In June 2017 Georgia hosted the 16th annual WCO IT Conference and Exhibition having more than 500 participants from all over the world while having the possibilities to discuss the advantages and challenges of power of data in advancing of border management.

Intensive cooperation has been in progress on the bilateral level:

- In 2016 memorandum of cooperation was signed with the German Customs administration. The cooperation envisages the technical assistance programmes in fight against smuggling, effective protection of the society and the implementation of border control;

- In 2016 the project for the development of dog handling service was developed and submitted to Czech Agency for International Development being successfully approved. It is a two-year project for 2017-2018 period;

- In July 2017, an agreement on mutual assistance in Customs matters between the Governments of the United States and Georgia was signed. The purpose of this agreement is to develop long-term and sustainable cooperation between Georgia and the US Customs administrations;

- In February 2017 the following documents were signed: Protocol between the LEPL Revenue Service within the Ministry of Finance of Georgia and the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Belarus, on cooperation in the field of combating Customs offenses in relation of goods transported by air; and Memorandum between the LEPL Revenue Service within the Ministry of Finance of Georgia and the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Belarus on cooperation in the sphere of staff training; and

- In June 2017, the Ministry of Finance of Georgia and the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Kazakhstan signed an Agreement on arranging preliminary data exchange on movement of vehicles and goods transported within the territory
of the Republic of Georgia and the Republic of Kazakhstan. The purpose of the agreement is to accelerate Customs clearance procedures in the places of import of the goods and vehicles transported across the Customs border, as well as in the destination Customs authorities on the territory of the countries that are parties to the agreement, which in turn have a positive impact both on more effective implementation of the bilateral level of Customs control and on raising transit potential of the region.

WCO support

The WCO has offered support to the overall modernization programme of the country by supporting the strategic planning and management development of the administration, a TRS implementation and training of officials on the HS 2012 and IPR issues, as well its participation in the WCO-UNODC Container Control and Global Shield Programmes. More recently Tbilisi hosted a WCO sub-regional Post-Clearance seminar, as well as a WCO national workshop on AEO. Two missions aimed at the development and improvement of the recently established Georgian Customs canine center have also been held with the support of experts from the WCO Regional Dog Training Centre in Germany. nCEN, IPR and API/PNR, Origin national seminars were conducted in 2016 as well as a review of the implementation of CTS (Cargo Targeting System). Further support was rendered in areas such as IPR protection at the border CTS deployment, HS train-the-trainers and Project Management and Donor Coordination. In 2019/20 Member received further support in the scope of UNODC-WCO CCP.

KAZAKHSTAN

Background

The main objectives of the comprehensive Customs Development Project have been to review the organizational structure, to develop service standards, to establish a management information system, to review, redesign and implement a national integrity development plan, to develop and implement an HRM strategy, to align the Customs Code and secondary legislation with international instruments and best practices, to implement a new cargo control and declaration processing regime, to strengthen the post-clearance and audit, the law enforcement functions, the interaction and collaboration within Customs, with other border agencies, and with relevant regional and international institutions, to develop and enhance an integrated ICT.

Current planning

Kazakh Customs (CAK) has recently engaged with the WCO under the tailor-made track of the Mercator Programme and in October 2018 a scoping mission was held. It was followed in March 2019 by a dedicated workshop on drafting a multi-year implementation plan to steer the reforms in the next several years and establish potential areas where WCO support would be most needed.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

The Customs Development Project (CDP) of Kazakhstan for the period 2008-2014 was based on the provisions of a tripartite agreement among the WCO-World Bank-CA of Kazakhstan (signed in March 2007) and its implementation is financed by the Government of Kazakhstan (70%) and the WB (30%).

The CDP was formally launched in January 2009. The project covers all spheres of activities of the Customs Service of the Republic of Kazakhstan and includes analysis of the consistency of the activities of the Customs Service to international standards, the development and introduction of the new methods and technologies in accordance with international best practices, modernization and development of information and communication technology, technical equipment as well as training Customs officials. The project was developed on the basis of the WCO methodology and structure for Customs capacity building. Its subcomponents are grouped into three technical components in the following areas:

I. Institutional development and Human resources management;
II. Customs operations; and
III. Information – Communication Technologies.

Its priorities are the introduction of the SW, Risk Analysis and RM principles in the Customs area that allow for significantly reducing the time of for Customs clearance and facilitating trade development. Integrated Customs tariff and electronic declaration are key systems supporting the SW Concept. The establishment of the Customs Union also required from the Kazakhstan authorities to strengthen borders in the South, East and West of the country and to implement closer monitoring of trans-border flows and transit. As a first step, all functions at the border have been transferred to Customs after amendments in the Customs Code. The pilot project on Integrated Border Management started on 1 January 2008. Now Customs is a leading authority at the border as it ensures online exchange of relevant data with other border agencies and coordinates the “One-stop Shop” control at the borders. Pilot projects on CBM are under way with neighboring Customs administrations. Enforcement activities including intelligence and special operations have increased significantly too.
CAK is now working on the development of a comprehensive RA/RM system, the architecture of which was presented to the Government in the first quarter of 2011. The risk profiles are being regularly updated and materialized into audit tasks and new criteria of selectivity.

One hundred eleven legal entities have been granted AEO status in Kazakhstan, 63 of them are active companies; 35 have been suspended; and 13 have been withdrawn. AEO, unlike other foreign economic activity participants, have special provisions for the storage of goods, release of goods before submission of the Customs declaration, advanced information in electronic form, and implementation with payment guarantee for transit shipments. With the assistance of an interdepartmental group further implementation of the “Green Corridor”, for AEOs is being introduced to permit expedited passage of vehicles across the Customs border and reduce clearance time. At present, work is being done to improve the legislation of the Customs Union and the Republic of Kazakhstan on AEO, based on international best practices.

A new integrated IT system was developed in 2010, piloted by the end of 2011, and became fully operational by the end of 2012. CAK started the process of development of the relevant legislative basis for the implementation and control of AEOs. Kazakhstan acceded to the Harmonized System Convention in 1999. In 2010 CAK became a contracting party to the Revised Kyoto and the Istanbul conventions. A WCO RTC was opened in 2009, in Astana and since then hosts a number of the WCO regional and sub-regional activities for the Europe region Members.

A pilot project on the Joint Customs Control with Chinese Customs was launched in December 2007, and a pilot project to secure Customs and shipping documentation “Safe-Package” with the Customs services of Kyrgyzstan, China and the Russian Federation started in 2008. Kazakhstan is a Member of the Customs Union (the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC)) as of January 2012 and in line with its Customs Code there are plans to introduce an advanced exchange of information within the EAEC.

In the year 2007, a CAK Integrity concept was adopted. The existing Code of Conduct was reviewed and revised in line with the WCO Model Code of Ethics and Conduct and that it includes practical guidance to officials on how to handle integrity issues.

In 2016 the CAK introduced the Astana-1 (ASYCUDA system). Now it is on the stage of realization.

**WCO support**

The WCO has provided support to the CAK in such areas as the WCO Data model, RM, AEO establishment, developing of the regional training structures, and access to the WCO training tools. The Customs administration recently devised a new plan for the five-year period (2013-2018) and the WCO supported this process by facilitating a Strategic Action Planning workshop in January 2012. The CAK also received support from the WCO in the areas of implementing Istanbul Convention on temporary admission, developing a national harmonized data set based on the WCO Data Model, improving the Customs performance measurement system, further development of the AEO concept, improving integrity, RM and TRS. The administration also participates in the WCO/UNODC project “Global Shield” and the UNODC-WCO Container Control Programmes. In May 2013, CAK hosted a WCO AEO Forum for the Europe Region in Astana and in May 2014, it held a Regional RM workshop. The Customs Service of Kazakhstan organized the Customs-Business Partnership Forum for the WCO Europe Region in Astana in May 2015. During 2015, IPR, HS 2012 and Origin workshops were conducted in Astana and in 2016 a Valuation WS on royalties, license fees and transferring pricing took place. The Member received also support in further developing of their RM framework, the CCP Programme, STCE, integrity and trade facilitation. In 2019/20 WCO provided capacity building support in Mercator Implementation and delivered an AEO workshop.

**KYRGYZSTAN**

**Background**

The Customs Reform and Modernization Programme of the Kyrgyzstan State Customs Service dates back to 2002, when a concept for the development of the Customs service in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2002-2010 was developed. In the following years the Customs service focused mainly on preparation for accession of the Kyrgyz Republic to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). In 2016-2017 according to Presidential Decree law enforcement agencies of the Kyrgyz Republic, including SCS, have been reformed and reorganized. Currently the Customs’ modernization strategy for 2018-2022 is being implemented.
Current planning

The further integration in the EAEU and the new Customs code of EAEU, which entered into force on 1 January 2018, envisaging introduction of complete non-paper, electronic procedures, as well as current governmental priorities called forth the necessity of further improvement of Customs regulation. In this connection a new Customs Development Strategy and its Action plan for 2018-2022 have been developed, which include the following priorities:

- Complete automation of Customs procedures;
- Developing Customs administration (control) system’s efficiency;
- Improvement of the Customs legislation;
- Introduction of modern methods of Customs control and simplification of Customs procedures;
- Infrastructure development;
- Improving social and living conditions of officials, increasing remuneration; and
- Implementation of effective anticorruption measures.

Kyrgyzstan has recently engaged with the WCO under the tailor-made track of the Mercator Programme and received a scoping mission in early July 2019. Back-to-back with the fact-finding mission, a dedicated workshop on drafting a multi-year Implementation Plan to steer the reforms in the next several years and indicate potential areas where WCO support would be most needed was conducted.

Customs Reform and Modernization Progress

The Customs administration of the Kyrgyz Republic with the Asian Development Bank (ADB’s) support implemented a project on modernization of the Customs service and development of infrastructure, resulting in the development of a Single Automated Information System (SAIS) and Infrastructure at the entry points. A number of donor organizations such as the ADB, BOMCA (EU), U.S. Department of State, OSCE, WB/IFC, UNODC and the GIZ also gave support to the Programme on reforming and modernization allocating funds on training, technical assistance and purchase of equipment.

On 1 January 2005, a new version of the Customs Code entered into force, where main international standards and the principles of the RKC have been taken into account. It was in force till the accession to the EAEU.

The Customs development strategy for 2011-2013 allowed taking important Reform and Modernization measures, which led to positive results: reducing administrative barriers, facilitation of procedures, development of infrastructure, and introduction of automated information system as well as increase in revenue collection up to 80% during 2011-2014.

Despite these achievements it was necessary to continue the work on improvement of Customs administration (control), automation and infrastructure.

A Treaty on Accession of the Kyrgyz Republic to the Agreement on Eurasian Economic Union (Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus and Armenia) signed on 23 December 2014 by the Heads of States of High Eurasian Economic Council (Moscow, Russian Federation) entered into force on 12 August 2015 when Customs control on Kazakh-Kyrgyz border was cancelled. To launch the work on aligning the Kyrgyz Republic Customs legislation with the legislation of the Customs Union, a new Law on Customs Regulation in the Kyrgyz Republic was adopted in December 2014 which entered into effect together with the Treaty on Accession of the Kyrgyz Republic to the Agreement on Eurasian Economic Union. Since accession of the Kyrgyz Republic to the EAEU, experts of the SCS formed a working group on preparation of the EAEU Customs Code’s new edition, which was finalized and signed by Heads of EAEU states on 26 December 2016. The Customs Code was prepared taking into account the provisions of the RKC and the WTO TFA.

The process of accession required alignment of the Customs legislation and improvement of infrastructure in line with the EAEU standards. A Roadmap, which includes measures to bring Kyrgyz Republic’s regulations and infrastructure in line with the EAEU requirements, was adopted in an accession package. A new Law on the Customs Regulation in the Kyrgyz Republic was adopted in December 2014, which entered into effect from the day of entry into force of the Treaty on Accession of the Kyrgyz Republic to the Agreement on EAEU. Also, a number of Customs national legislation acts have been adopted based on EAEU legislation.

As part of the Kyrgyz Republic’s accession to EAEU process, in 2017 reconstruction of 6 border check-points have been launched, where modern inspection and examination equipment will be installed, which will be completed in 2018.

Further integration of the EAEU and introduction of the new EAEU Customs code require transition to non-paper electronic technologies and processes.

The Customs’ modernization strategy for 2018-2022, developed by a working group of dedicated Customs managers, highlights particularly the task of improving the quality of services rendered by the Customs, complete automation of
Customs procedures – electronic declaration. The Strategy also aims at achieving facilitation and increased application of Customs procedures with economic effect such as processing, free bonded warehouse, bonded warehouse, as well as introduction of differential taxation system at the importation of goods. One of the priorities of the Strategy is to create Customs development fund, which will support Customs infrastructure development, improvement of social and living conditions of officials, increase of remuneration based on the assessment of results of work and efficiency.

In 2015-2017 the SCS implemented National Anticorruption Policy Action Plan. Currently in accordance with Presidential decree, with the assistance of the EU BOMCA, the SCS drafted an Action plan on introduction of anticorruption model of management in Customs for 2018-2020, which has to be approved by the Security Council of the Kyrgyz Republic. A Commission of Ethics ensures compliance of officials with ethical norms. In order to establish a sustainable partnership between the Customs and the business community, a Consultative Council in HQ and regional Customs regularly discusses problems and difficulties of economic operators.

**WCO support**

In 2008 the Customs service of Kyrgyzstan confirmed its commitment to move into Phase II. A group of Kyrgyz Customs officials made a study visit to the WCO and increased their knowledge of the WCO tools and work in the areas of interest: PCA, RM, HRM and training. However, in the next years due to the political instability in the country the WCO had to temporary suspend its support activities in Bishkek. In June 2012 a support mission on the Revenue Package (Valuation) took place. Currently the WCO and Kyrgyz Customs are entering a new stage of cooperation, and support is being delivered in areas such as HS, RM, accession to the RKC, implementation of a TRS and further participation in the Global Shield Programme with the financial support of the OSCE Office in Bishkek, WCO (accredited) experts provided guidance and advice to Kyrgyz Customs for developing training courses on IPR, RM and Integrity. National training in the STC, an RKC Gap analysis WS for compliance with EEU Customs Code, as well as support on the nCEN implementation, SW and the Data Model and IPR were the landmarks of the cooperation with the WCO in the recent years. In 2019/20 the Member benefited from the WCO support in the areas such as Mercator Diagnostic support, advance ruling (Customs valuation). Training of Trainers based on the WCO Competency approach.

**MOLDOVA**

**Background**

The overall priority directions of the ongoing Moldovan Customs Service (MCS) reforms and the modernization process are international trade facilitation, ensuring the economic and fiscal security of the state and building the administrative capacity.

**Current planning**

The MCS is undergoing a comprehensive reform and modernization process in the context of the Association Agreement with the EU, signed on 27 June 2014, and its part in the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), which sets up a free-trade area between the EU and Moldova, in line with the principles of the WTO.

The strategic priorities of the MCS, defined in the Strategic Programme VAMA 2020 (CUSTOMS 2020), were approved at the beginning of 2017. Mid-term Customs activity priorities derive from national policy documents and international commitments in relation to the European institutions.

The National action plan on the implementation of the Moldova – EU Association Agreement in 2017-2019, which in Chapter 5 "Customs and trade facilitation“ specifies the priorities for the cooperation in the Customs area, such as increasing the administrative capacity of control, security, fraud prevention and legitimate trade facilitation.

**Customs Reform and Modernization progress**

In June 2016, the Republic of Moldova ratified the TFA (Protocol Amending the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization), which contains commitments made to simplify the cross-border procedures and modernization of techniques and instruments for Customs clearance and Customs control. The Customs Service has taken the role of coordinating the implementation of the TFA on the national level and will promote implementation of best Customs' management practices in collaboration with other public authorities and business environment within the National Trade Facilitation Committee, set up at the end of 2016 by the Governmental Decision.
The MCS continued the comprehensive streamlining of Customs processes, procedures, formalities and documents, as well as improving the legal and regulatory framework, using the WCO tools and instruments.

Since 2017, the Customs Service operates under a new organizational chart which is the result of the institutional reform promoted and implemented during 2016. Thus, the reorganization process has optimized the number of the Customs houses from seven to three and the staff limit, which has been optimized by 12% and constitutes 1520 people.

The MCS simplified the Customs procedures and made them more efficient, introducing and implementing the electronic declaration procedure for export declarations, launched in November 2013, and for import, launched on 1 March 2015. At the end of 2016, the share of the electronic export declarations submitted electronically exceeded 98% and of the import declarations 19%.

In November 2016 the Memorandum of Understanding between MCS and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for the development of Integrated Customs Information System based on ASYCUDA World was approved by the Government decision.

Based on IT modernizations, in 2017, the MCS expects to launch an EU TWINNING Programme for the New Computerized Transit System (NCTS) and SW introduction.

In August 2014, the MCS introduced the AEO programme. Importers, exporters, manufacturers, warehouse operators, Customs brokers, and logistics operators are eligible to become AEOs. Some 10 AEOs have been registered. A simplified declaration is in place for AEOs, for which a separate fast lane is in place at border crossings. In this regard, the legislation has been aligned to the EU standards.

Starting 1 July 2015, the MCS recognizes the EU AEOs at the pilot Moldova-Romania border crossing point Leuseni-Albîta. That is the EU AEO holders of the Certificate AEOS and AEOF that are exporters and/or transport operators in the supply chain of a consignment cross the respective border via the AEO-dedicated and accordingly marked lane and benefit from fewer controls, consultation and faster crossing.

At the beginning of 2017, the MCS and the EU agreed on initiating a project on AEO Mutual Recognition and drafted the respective road map.

These reforms, together with the improved risk assessment processes, aim to decrease clearance times and the number of physical checks. Thus, in 2016, the share of Customs declarations for import directed to the red clearance channel for physical control decreased to about 10%, down from 14% in 2015. The export declarations referred for control were about 8% comparing to 3% in 2015.

The blue lane Customs channel, as a form of simplified procedure that is to speed the release of goods from the Customs control and to facilitate external trade, was launched in August 2015. The Blue Lane is a Customs channel that enables the immediate validation of Customs declaration and the deferment of Customs control for credible economic operators – whose transactions neither pose a high risk of fraud, nor require physical control of goods. That is, if a declaration is routed based on risk analysis (by the integrated Customs information system ASYCUDA World) to the blue lane, the goods are released immediately into free circulation without any physical or documentary control. At a later date, the Customs declaration would be verified by Customs from the authority's offices (Customs desk audit) with no interference into the economic operator's activity, unless violations of Customs regulations are discovered.

In order to align Moldova's classification system with the EU legislation, in July 2014, a law was passed on approving the Combined Nomenclature of goods, introducing the latest version of the Harmonized System for classification of goods (HS 2012). Currently the MCS drafts amendments to align to HS 2017 the Customs Integrated Tariff of the Republic of Moldova (TARIM).

The MCS continued to align the legislation in the field of valuation in accordance with international standards and implement a Customs valuation module (a Customs valuation database as a risk assessment tool), which is in the piloting process. The valuation module has been designed using the WCO Guidelines on the development and the use of a national database as a risk assessment tool.

Another important step forward has been made towards facilitating international trade by reducing to three the number of documents that must be presented at Customs clearance.

According to new provisions, the Customs declaration filed with the Customs Service has to be accompanied only by three mandatory documents, namely: 1) an invoice, 2) transport documentation and 3) permissive act, where the legislation provides for the presentation of licenses or authorization.
The new procedures will drive down the costs for business and boost trade. It will also help to bump up Moldova’s ranking in the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business Report. 2016 year’s report saw Moldova at 33 (out of 189 countries ranked) in the “trading across borders” category. The Regulations on the procedure for the issuance and revocation of the approved exporter to be applied to the provisions of the Customs Code of Moldova and to facilitate foreign trade and procedures for certification of goods origin was approved in 2015. The document was developed in accordance with the commitments undertaken by Moldova Association Agreement and is aimed at facilitating the proof of domestic goods’ origin that are exported to the EU under preferential regime with the exemption of Customs duties. According to this regulation, economic agents who have the status of approved exporter will have the right to confirm the preferential origin of goods under their own responsibility. This means that the approved exporters will no longer be asked by the Customs authorities to show a certificate of origin and will confirm it by filling in the declaration. This provision will facilitate the export of domestic goods in the EU and will significantly reduce the cost and time necessary to confirm the origin of the goods.

In 2015, with the support of the EU funds, the construction of the Customs laboratory premises finished and the equipment for the Customs laboratory and 2 mobile laboratories has been purchased.

In June 2016 the Customs laboratory was accredited/certified in accordance with Quality Standard ISO.

Some amendments have been made to the Customs Code, in order to align the national legal framework with the EU regulation, concerning Customs enforcement of IPR. The MCS is drafting a new Customs Code in correlation with the UCC of the EU. The draft is expected to be approved in September 2017.

In order to fight trans-national illicit trade and ensure the security of the state border, the MCS participates in international operations for counteracting illicit trafficking of goods. The structure of the MCS Mobile teams has been adjusted by the creation of new units for coordination of the mobile teams’ activity.

In order to streamline mobile collaboration between mobile teams of the Customs Service and the Border Police Department, in 2015 were created joint mobile teams consisting of representatives of the Customs Service, Border Police Department and EUBAM. This is in the framework of the Cooperation Agreement with the Department of Border Police, Cooperation Plan between the Department of Border Police and Customs and the Standard operating procedure of joint mobile teams. Following the obtained results of the mobile teams, there were 177 detentions and seized goods.

On 16 December 2014, the MCS and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the implementation of the UNODC-WCO Container Control Program. This Programme is of particular importance in the development of Giurgiulesti International Free Port, as well as to prevent cross-border crime and facilitation of the international transportation of goods in containers.

For the purpose of increasing public awareness, the MCS launched a Call Centre, which includes traditional means of communication (telephone calls) and contacts through online media (Skype, email, etc.).

Customs-Business partnership consolidation remains on the agenda of priorities, and in 2016 the list of Members of the Consultative Committee under the MCS was completed and now includes 15 organizations. Also, the Advisory Committees are additionally established within the Customs houses business associations.

An important MCS achievement is the certification of its quality management system in accordance with ISO 9001:2008. The MCS is the first public authority in the Republic of Moldova, who managed to implement a quality management system in accordance with this standard. This will ensure an effective promotion of the optimization of Customs procedures and management capacities of the entire system.

**WCO support**

WCO provided support and technical assistance to the MCS in several areas, such as

- Capacity building,
- Nomenclature and Classification of Goods,
- Enforcement and Compliance,
- IPR,
- Integrity,
- Resource Mobilization and
- Implementation of the WTO TFA.

The WCO supports the MCS in the context of the Eastern Partnership Integrated Border Management Capacity Building Project (IBM) in partnership with the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External...
Borders of the Member States of the EU (Frontex), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

The WCO delivered a national workshop on various aspects of the Harmonized System and the essentials of commodity classification, Integrity and IPR areas. The MCS received training for its officers as part of their participation in the UNODC –WCO Container Control Program.

In May 2016, TRS workshop was conducted in Moldova and further support was provided in 2017 on Resource mobilization, Customs valuation and the Revenue Package. In recent years Moldova Customs benefitted also from the support in the areas of E-Commerce, trade facilitation, RM and simplified Customs procedures. In 2019/20 the WCO rendered support to improve anti-smuggling and anti-fraud methods, fraud detection, investigation techniques.

MONTENEGRO

Background and current planning

The current Customs administration’s Business Strategy 2016-2018 sets the following goals for development:

- Harmonization of Customs Legislation with the EU acquis;
- Modern and efficient revenue collection;
- Strengthening Customs enforcement and protection of society;
- Improvement of trade facilitation and enhancing partnership with the business community;
- Human Resource Management and Development;
- Development of information systems; and
- Strengthening international cooperation.

A new strategy for the period 2019-2021 is to be drafted soon.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

The MCA has been advancing with its modernization efforts based on the WCO diagnostic recommendations and the support of the EU. In 2008-2009 the country ratified the Convention on Temporary Admission (Istanbul Convention) and acceded to the RKC.

Considering the accession process of Montenegro to the EU, during previous years, the MCA has been undertaking numerous activities in order to harmonize Customs legislation with the acquis, as well as in order to strengthen the administrative capacities and achieve interconnectivity and interoperability with the EU IT systems. Moreover, MCA is undertaking activities on upgrading Customs information system. Montenegro is putting a lot of effort on harmonizing its legislation with the EU acquis communautaire. The Stabilization and Association Agreement between Montenegro and the EU entered into force on 1 May 2010. Montenegro received Candidate status in December 2010 and in June 2012 the accession negotiations between Montenegro and the EU were launched. In 2013 negotiation chapters were opened where the Customs administration is actively involved. In October 2014 an agreement was signed between the EU and Montenegro on the participation of Montenegro in the Programme of the Union "Customs 2020".

During the last year, the Customs administration accomplished record high revenue collection. 703 million Euros were collected resulting in increase in revenue collection of 17.77 percent compared to 2016.

In October 2017 the Government of Montenegro adopted new Rulebook on internal organization and systematization of the Ministry of Finance. New organizational units have been established in the MCA in accordance with the Customs Service Law.

During 2017 The Customs administration has updated the Action plan of the Business Strategy 2016-2018, on which the Ministry of Finance has agreed in September 2017. In October 2017 the Customs Administration adopted the updated IT Strategy and the Strategy for Improvement and Modernization of Infrastructure and Technical Equipment. In December 2016 the Public Relation Strategy of MCA was also adopted.

The Law on Amendments to the Customs Law entered into force on 8 November 2017. The Law amended the provisions related to the criteria for issuing an authorization for an AEO, Customs status of goods and transit procedure, thus harmonizing it with the new Union Customs Code. Further harmonization was made in the part of the provisions on non-preferential origin of goods (deletion of the so-called “negative list” prescribed actions considered to be the last significant economically justified processing that leads to new products) and Customs valuation (more closely defined persons considered to be Members of the same family). Also, a new Article 67a concerning the protection of IPR (the legal basis for the adoption of secondary legislation, the costs of the procedure, treatment of the Customs authority) has been added.
The new Customs Service Law entered into force in January 2016. The Law determined larger power to Customs officers. In its focus is also the responsibility of officers and the integrity. Further amendments in 2017 created conditions for the adoption of by-laws in the field of issuing warnings and orders, as well as regulations defining more precisely the stopping, control and search of means of transport, passengers and baggage, which regulates in more detail the behavior of Customs officers when enforcing referred Customs powers. Accordingly, there were adopted following by-laws: Rulebook on the official ID and badge of Customs officers, Rulebook on the method of use of means of restraint by Customs officers, Rulebook on the conditions, method of carrying and use of firearms by Customs officers.

Considering that the EU is in the process of developing new software solutions and applications in order to implement UCC, the Customs Administration of Montenegro follows the development at the EU level and in accordance to that conducts preparations for the future implementation of the IT projects that are mandatory in the process of the EU integration of Montenegro. In this process the MCA has continuous communication with the EC.

Within the 2014-2016 the EU IPA programming, the Customs administration started working on planned projects related to the accession to the Common Transit Convention (NCTS). In the beginning of 2018, the tender procedure for project related to the accession of Montenegro to the Common Transit Convention (IT implementation and business support to the New Computerized transit System NCTS Project) was launched. The beginning of the implementation of mentioned project is expected at the end of the year.

Moreover, during 2017 MCA acquired equipment for Customs control function like mobile scanner, vehicles for performance of its security function, equipment for video surveillance as well as for operational center, through the IPA 2015 Project “Support to the implementation of the Integrated Border management strategy”. The tender procedure for acquisition of laboratory equipment is ongoing. The project will continue in 2018 and in 2019. Also, MCA has continuously conduct activities during 2017 with other law enforcement agencies in order to implement the activities from the Schengen Action plan.

The MCA is preparing the Terms of reference for the implementation of the Project “Support to the Customs administration in the area of excise in order to implement in Customs information System new national excise application” from the IPA EIF funds. The beginning of the implementation of mentioned Project is also expected at the end of the year.

Additional Protocol 5 CEFTA 2006 (concluded at the CEFTA Ministerial Meeting on 26 May 2017 in Belgrade) was ratified by the Parliament of Montenegro in December 2017. In order to prepare and create preconditions for its implementation, the Customs Administration prepared and forwarded to the Food Safety Administration, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Affairs and the Agency for Drugs and Medical Devices an initiative for the conclusion of the Memorandum of Cooperation for the purposes of the Additional Protocol 5 of CEFTA 2006. The activities on harmonization of the text of the memorandum, as well as data exchange are currently underway.

Following the successfully completed pilot project, implemented with the technical assistance of the World Bank Group (IFC), within the project "Implementation of Simplified Procedures and AEO", four companies obtained by the end of 2017 approvals for simplified procedures based on bookkeeping records.

In accordance with the methodology of the WCO TRS, the Study on the Average time-release was drafted and adopted at the session of the National Committee for Trade Facilitation. The Study includes import, export and transit of commercial goods in road, air and sea transport.

The MCA in continuity holds meeting with economy operators and the Chamber of Commerce in order to inform the on possibilities with regards to the applying simplified procedures.

The implementation of the project "Pre-treatment of express consignments in accordance with the WTO TFA continued, with the support of GIZ. Project was expected to be completed by middle of 2018.

The information system used by the Customs administration is a centralized system (CIS), divided into segments, i.e. modules, depending on the purpose or Customs procedures. In June 2011 simplified procedures for declaring goods based on invoice were integrated in CIS, and in 2013 an application for simplified procedure of declaring goods on the basis of bookkeeping entry was introduced allowing for the implementation of a pilot project for export simplified procedures on the basis of bookkeeping entry to begin in May 2013. During 2014 the Administration started the implementation of a pilot project for import simplified procedures on the basis of bookkeeping entry.

A new electronic system for risk analysis was put into operation in 2013 and following the EU and the WCO standards, the MCA started reducing the rates of detailed examination of goods at border crossing points and in Customs offices in mainland. The successful development of the RM system has continued, introducing new risk profiles in the field of tariff, origin of goods and value of the goods. Work is being undertaken to assure the interconnectivity and interoperability with the EU RM System, which provides a rapid direct and secure exchange of risk information to support the targeting of shipments. In 2017, the MCA has significantly improved the System for risk Analysis, especially in the part of informatics system has continued, introducing new risk profiles in the field of tariff, origin of goods and value of the goods. Work is being undertaken to assure the interconnectivity and interoperability with the EU RM System, which provides a rapid direct and secure exchange of risk information to support the targeting of shipments. In 2017, the MCA has significantly improved the System for risk Analysis, especially in the part of informatics
support. It implemented the project “The New Inspection Report” providing applications in the Customs Information System which enable complete bookkeeping and procedures of central and local risk analysis, as well as appropriate reporting system for the needs of control and evaluation.

The improvement was conducted with technical support of TAIEX, and procedures in RMS in the Customs Administration were harmonized with legal obligations and the best practice in this area in the EU countries. In addition, the MCA improved its work in the area of courier service risk analysis. The first year (2017) of functioning of RUR system (bookkeeping of RM) was successful. During 2017 in data base ERI (the bookkeeping of information exchange), containing the data on the results of Customs controls (offense orders, narcotic seizures, infringing of the intellectual property rights, verifications of invoices etc.) 471 information logs were entered.

There was an evident progress in strengthening the functionality of the Systematic electronic exchange of data (SEED System) by introducing modules for registering the transfer of cash across the border, return of VAT as well as ATA Carnet.

Two agreements on the donation of equipment were signed in 2017 between the US Department of State and the MCA within the EXBS Programme (Export Control and Related Border Security). A Protocol with Albania on conducting border rail transport between these countries was signed in June 2016.


In the area of Customs security, the Customs administration had intensive cooperation with international institutions and partner services.

The Customs Administration has continuous cooperation with EUROPOL, INTERPOL, OLAF and SELEC. Based on the agreement between the Customs administration and the Anti-Fraud Office of the EU - OLAF, we have established a communication channel for direct mutual exchange of data. In this way, the Customs administration has gained access to the part of the AFIS system of the EU.

The Customs administration has continuous cooperation with Customs Service of the UK based on the Memorandum on Cooperation and mutual assistance related to the tax and Customs matters between the Government of the UK and Montenegro. In 2017 this cooperation between the two Customs services has been additionally improved by daily exchange of information which resulted in the number of significant seizures of cigarettes done by the HMRC. Moreover, the support of the British Embassy in Podgorica continued in 2017 with the donation of computer equipment for Customs House of Bar.

Furthermore, the MCA continued efficient cooperation and exchange of information with a number of law enforcement agencies on the national level such as: the Agency for environmental protection, the Trade Inspection, the Police Administration, the Tax Administration, the Administration for Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism, the Agency for medicines and medical devices. In October 2017 was signed the Agreement of the improvement of cooperation in the area of crime suppression between the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance (the Tax Administration, the Customs Administration, the Administration of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing), the Supreme Court and the Supreme State Prosecutor’s Office of Montenegro.

The Customs administration is undertaking actions aimed at better protection of the intellectual property rights. In 2012 the Regulation on actions of Customs service with respect to goods suspected of IPR infringements entered into force, which is harmonized with the EU regulations and the TRIPS Agreement. In July 2012 MCA received access to the WCO IPM Portal too. The administration also participates actively in a number of trainings and study visits under a dedicated twinning project on improving the protection of intellectual property rights.

At the beginning of 2012 the MCA established a new Intranet portal where information necessary for the work of the Customs officers is regularly uploaded and updated. The MCA is also updating the web site of the Customs Service.

The Customs laboratory premises in the MCA headquarters in Podgorica have been reconstructed. The procurement of equipment for the laboratory was envisaged in 2016 as part of a larger IPA Programme supporting a project on Integrated Border Management. This project will also result in the acquisition by the Customs administration of a mobile van scanner, equipment for combating smuggling for border and mainland offices and mobile teams, for video surveillance at the mainland border Customs offices, as well as equipment for operational center and vehicles for Customs investigations and mobile teams.

The administration has its Training strategy and in cooperation with other state services and international organizations a great number of specific trainings have been carried out.

As of 1 January 2013, a new Code of Ethics of Customs officers and administration employees has been in force. A risk map of all work posts in the MCA has been drafted in July 2013 as well as a risk map of all organizational units. In July
2013 the MCA launched the public campaign "Corruption is not an option" and the Administration’s anti-corruptive measures have been widely promoted. The new Integrity Plan of the Customs Administration was adopted in March 2014 and the Customs administration implemented testing of its Customs officials with the aim of assessing personality, ability and integrity.

In April 2014 a Joint Plan of actions for the prevention and repression of corruption at border crossing points has been adopted by the Customs administration, Police administration and the Administration for Inspection Affairs.

The Customs administration continues to promote integrity and contributes to diminishing of corruption risk through number of harmonized activities of strengthening of institutional and administrative capacities. The activities are conducted in accordance with the Integrity Plan which is internal anti-corruption plan and contains a set of measures of legal and practical nature used for preventing and removing possibilities for emergence and development of different ways of corruptive behavior. Within drafting of Integrity Plan, it was made systematic analysis within the institution through estimation of risk of emergence of corruption within certain working position and organizational units and with this regard it was made the Risk Map. Further, after drafting the Risk Map and Integrity Plan, the promotion of the concept of integrity development was continued through Integrity tests the respondents were selected in accordance with Risk Map of certain working posts which was made within Integrity Plan.

The Customs administration of Montenegro continued successfully to conduct trainings in cooperation with the Human Resources Management Authority of Montenegro and international organizations and institutions and during 2016-2018 officers attended great number of trainings on various topics needed for upgrading professional competence and skills.

WCO support

In 2010, a WCO strategic planning support mission was delivered to the administration. In December 2012, the WCO supported the improvement of the RM function in Montenegro Customs and in 2013, the administration received training under the UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme. Further support has been provided on Tariff Classification of specific and new goods and Human Resources management, development of the Customs laboratory, strategic planning, fight against Customs fraud and RM. In 2015, the WCO Customs Modernization Advisors assisted the MCA senior management group with a review of their Strategic Plan and design of associated performance indicators. Further support has been delivered by the WCO in the areas of PCA, TRS, and Customs laboratory modernization, cross-border movements of illicit cash, use of NII, valuation and valuation control and integrity development. In 2019/20 WCO supported Member mainly within the scope of UNODC-WCO CCP.

NORTH MACEDONIA

Background

The main objectives of the ongoing Customs reform/modernization process include:
- Trade facilitation;
- Protection of the society;
- Revenue collection and protection of the financial interests; and
- Modernization.

Current planning

The Customs administration adopted a new Strategic Plan (2018 - 2020) where Customs Mission, Vision, Values and objectives were revised and approved by the Ministry of Finance. The strategy aims at preparing the service to operate in accordance with the EU acquis. Based on the Strategic Plan, an annual Action Plan is drafted each year to specify tasks, indicators and deadlines.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

As accession to the EU is of central importance to the administration, the alignment of Customs legislation with the EU has received much attention. A number of legal acts relevant to Customs administrative procedures, Transit procedure, Tariff and Excise have been amended due to changes at regional and national level.

The Customs service modernizes its procedures by the use of a new ICT system (incorporating Customs Declaration processing, SW/One stop shop, e-applications for inward processing, document management system, automated number plates recognition). New IT modules, including an electronic document management system, a human resource management system and an electronic resource planning system have been introduced in 2009 and their development is continuous according to the changes of legal acts. The new Customs declaration processing system, replacing existing ASYCUDA, is operational. The new computerized transit system is fully functional for FYROM since 1 July 2015. The
implementation of SW and One-stop-shop projects was launched several years ago with the U.S. assistance. A Customs laboratory has been established with the EC support. The SW system for issuing authorizations has been further upgraded, a new functionality for transport authorizations was introduced and the number of economic operators using it has increased. The RMS at border crossings was further developed and new applications for risk analysis were introduced in 2013.

In December 2013, the Customs Administration introduced the use of new electronic systems: eLohn platform and a system for electronic monitoring of trade with mineral oils containing material marking. The electronic system for procedures with economic impact “eLohn” allows electronic submissions of all requirements for procedures with economic impact, as well as submission of documents for monitoring of the inward processing procedure in an electronic workable format through XML messages, based on the WCO Economic Competitiveness Package. The project for implementation of a system for electronic monitoring of trade with mineral oils containing marking is an obligation under the law amending the law on excise. This project is prepared in order to provide a system which will enable free flow of electronic information among all participants in the process of trade with mineral oils containing marking material, through registration of traders and connection of the terminals owned by the economic operators with the electronic system of the Customs administration.

New updated strategies have been adopted for the period 2017-2019, including on training and professional development of Customs officers, and human resources management.

New Law on Excise and Amendments to the Law on Excise Implementing Rulebook were prepared, and expected to be adopted in 2018.

The new Law on Customs Measures for the Protection of IPR was amended in May 2015. The structure of this law is based on the new EU regulation No. 608/2013. The new Rulebook was amended in June 2015. The structure of this rulebook is based on the new Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1352/2013 of 4 December 2013. This Rulebook provides new form of Application for actions and Request for extension. A user manual for the platform of the WCO for IPR infringements (IPM) was adopted, allowing recognition of originality of products. The WCO IPM database is regularly used by many Customs officers in the everyday activities of the protection of IPR.

The cooperation with other Customs administrations, in particular with those of the neighboring countries, is extending. An agreement on Customs cooperation has been signed with Kosovo and a joint police and Customs cooperation center has been established with Bulgaria. A system for exchanging electronic pre-arrival information, automatic matching and targeting with several other neighboring Customs administrations (SEED2) is successfully functioning. The administration took part in a number of international operations and projects to detect illicit trade in counterfeit goods, drugs, explosives, high-risk chemicals and pharmaceuticals. Cooperation and exchange of intelligence with the Customs authorities of neighboring countries intensified, as did cooperation with the relevant UN agencies and the WCO.

The Republic of North Macedonia Customs has been the first administration to use the WCO TRS internet software and to have integrated the data generated in its work. In 2008, the WCO e-learning platform was successfully rolled-out on the intranet pages of the administration. On 28 September 2009, an MOU establishing a WCO RTC in Skopje was signed. The RTCs is a unique collaborative undertaking of Customs, the Faculty of Economics of Skopje University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius and the WCO. RTC Skopje hosted the Annual meeting of the regional CB entities in February 2017.

The Customs Administration has further strengthened its integrity system with measures relating to transparency, human resources and financial management. The system includes legislative measures strengthening sanctions for committing corruption, raised wages for Customs officers and special IT tools to prevent and detect corruption. By applying the Registry of risk points in Customs matters susceptible to corruption and guidelines for the most common errors and omissions in the overall functioning of the administration, Customs prevents situations of abuse of office and performs internal controls in the organizational units. The sector for control and investigations was restructured and strengthened. Professional and integrity standards and internal control measures have been implemented systematically. Cooperation with other national Law enforcement agencies and the private sector has been well developed. The partnership between the Customs administration and the business community is realized through the activities of the Advisory Body created in January 2009 as a forum for exchange of opinion and collaboration with chambers of commerce and economic operators.

**WCO support**

The WCO support was particularly important in the areas of strategic action planning, RM, integrated border management, TRS, IPR, HS 2012 implementation and integrity, as well as on strengthening the capacities of the RTC in Skopje and the leadership and management development area. In 2015, the WCO Customs Modernization Advisors facilitated a workshop for senior managers that updated their Strategic Plan. In 2016 - 2019 further support was provided in the areas of risk assessment and selectivity. Customs fees and charges STCE, Human Resources Development AEO and Leadership and management Development. In 2019/20 Member received WCO support in Customs valuation (transfer pricing).
SERBIA

Background

The overall objective of the ongoing Customs reform process is to develop the service into a professional, modern and well-equipped administration that protects the society and ensures facilitated flow of goods and passengers providing for cost reductions to trade.

Current planning

As per the adopted Development Plan of the Customs Service 2017-2020 and the Action Plan for Implementation of the Development Plan of the Customs Service, The main direction of the Strategy is to bring policies and procedures in line with the WCO, the EU and the WTO principles, aiming for efficient protection of the Serbian economy and its citizens from illegal and illicit movement of goods and all forms of cross-border crime in international trade, while at the same time striving for maximum facilitation of the legitimate flow of goods and passengers.

The guidelines for introducing measures in the Development Plan came from the Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Communities and its Member states on one side and the Republic of Serbia on the other side, from the National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA), Annual progress reports for Serbia by the European Commission, Screening Reports for the Negotiating Chapter 29 – Customs Union and other negotiating chapters in which CAS is taking part, reports from IT monitoring missions of the European Commission, positive practice of the EU in implementation of Customs regulations, various strategic documents, international and regional conventions, as well as bilateral agreements. In the process of European integration, in 2017 Serbia opened the Negotiation Chapter 29 – Customs Union.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

The Serbian Customs legislation is largely harmonized with the EU Customs legislation. The collection of Customs duties in 2017 increased by 19.69% with respect to 2016 owing to the higher revenue collection and improved control of the Customs clearance of goods, especially of high risk goods. Bearing in mind that the Government of the Republic of Serbia declared the fight against the grey economy its priority the Customs administration has achieved significant results regarding the seizure of excise goods, cut tobacco (998.69 kg) and cigarettes (16,270,260 pieces). The administrative capacity of the Serbian Customs administration has been considerably strengthened, notably by improved post-clearance controls and by the roll-out of an upgraded risk analysis system. Customs has also improved the exchange of information with other state bodies.

Serbia is currently implementing 26 bilateral agreements on mutual administrative assistance in Customs matters, including agreements with neighboring countries. Project “SEED” is being implemented in accordance with planned activities.

Since 2005, the Customs administration has been conducting a long-term project “Control of foreign trade in arms, military equipment and dual-use goods” in cooperation with the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications and with support of the EU and the US Government. Also, since 2013, a system of continuous training of Customs officers was established, with the aim to introduce a strong regional Customs service personnel infrastructure which will deal with the issues of identifying dual-use goods and which would support the implementation of Customs control of strategic goods on the field.

By using equipment (machines for the destruction of counterfeit and pirated goods) from IPA 2011 -Enforcement of intellectual property rights - with special emphasis on the destruction of pirated and counterfeit products in 2017 a total of 1,424,091 pieces of various goods were seized and 392,504 pieces were destroyed, which makes up 27.56% of the total of seized goods. CAS currently has six national trainers for implementation of control of strategic goods, certified by the U.S. Department of Energy, one of whom is also WCO-accredited. Each year they conduct specialized training “Implementation of control of trade in strategic goods – Identification of dual-use goods” for operational Customs officers.

The Serbian government has formed a coordinating body for the effective protection of intellectual property rights, which monitors and directs the individual tasks within the scope of several state administration bodies, in which work, through its representatives, the Customs Administration participates too. The Customs Administration took part in drafting the Development Strategy of Intellectual Property Rights and Action Plan for the period from 2017 to 2021.

As one of the recommendations of the EC recent progress report has been the modernization of the Customs laboratory, a new project has been developed, to be funded through IPA 2013 and co-financing from the RS budget for 2017.

The support project for the Customs system of Serbia within the IPA 2013 is structured around two main components: the first focuses on building institutional capacity for the introduction of automated system of import and export and procurement of IT equipment, while the second component is related to investments in the infrastructure of border crossings. Intensive
work with other IBM services, helmed by Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia, for preparing the Project for IPA 2016 Integrated Border Management was carried out. The Strategy of Integrated Border Management and the Action Plan for its implementation were adopted in 2017. Furthermore, the Customs administration realizes, primarily, trainings and workshops through the cooperation with GIZ under the project „Reform of Public Finances“. Under this project the Act of Security of the ICT systems of the Serbian Customs Administration was developed and entered into force in May 2018.

The NCTS with additional subsystems, Guarantees Management System (GMS) and Approvals Management System (AMS) has been introduced at national level since 25 January 2015. With the accession to the Convention on a common transit procedure and the Convention on simplified formalities in trade in goods In February 2016, the NCTS has been in use for the common transit procedure as well. Between January 1 and 31 December 2017, the NCTS system processed over 1,400,000 transit declarations, which is an increase in the volume of transit of over 8% compared to the previous year.

The submission of applications to the Customs administration of Serbia for granting the status of AEO started on 1 September 2014 and until now 13 companies have received this status. Simplification of Customs procedures continues and the number of companies that use such procedures is on the rise. By the introduction of the NCTS, the Customs administration got a new system for the treatment of risk, ERIAN, which currently works only in transit and provides advanced capabilities for targeting in transit, contributing to a safer environment, both for Serbia and for the EU Member States. Over 99% of Customs declarations are being submitted electronically. The percentage of inspections per total number of SAD is 13.56%.

Post-clearance controls and risk analysis systems are implemented following the two respective strategies.

With the use of software developed by the WCO, the Customs administration, in cooperation with other state bodies and with the support of the World Bank, conducted successfully a TRS of Customs clearance procedures at the busiest Customs posts in land and air traffic.

CAS is a user of the Programme “Customs 2020” and in 2017 a total of 77 Customs officers took part in 25 different activities (of which, CAS has initiated 13 work visits for 59 Customs officers), while within TAIEX technical assistance three expert missions were organized, with 41 Customs officers participating. Based on the Programme of specialized training and professional development of CAS for 2017, a total of 37 specialized trainings were held with 759 Customs officers taking part.

WCO support

The WCO technical assistance is deemed of extreme importance by the Serbian Customs Administration. Recently, the following workshops have been held: Modernization of the CAS Customs Laboratory, Simplified Procedures and AEO, Train the Trainer and Development of the CAS Business Strategy 2016-2020, development of management skills and leadership, workshops on classification of goods and TRS.

In accordance with the commitments of the Pilot Project of the WCO, “Strengthening the integrity and fight against corruption,” the Serbian Customs Administration produces Atlas of risks annually.

Two Customs officers participated in the scholarship Programme of the WCO scholarships for Customs laboratories.

Several WCO Fellowships have been awarded to CAS officers. In previous years support has also been provided in areas such as IPR, valuation, investigation techniques, Customs laboratory development, training techniques and modern methods, simplified Customs procedures and AEO, as well as in LMD, TRS and HS, RM, integrity testing strategic planning and performance measurement, n-CEN implementation. In 2019/20 Serbian Customs received further support in development of integrity testing system, and building SW environment.

TAJIKISTAN

Background

The overall objectives of the ongoing Customs reform/modernization process include:

- Simplification of Customs procedures and trade facilitation;
- Improvement of forms and methods of fighting against smuggling and other violations of Customs legislation;
- Modern IT and communication systems; and
- Improved cooperation with the business community.
Current planning

The Tajik Government incorporated the Customs Reform and Modernization into the country’s overall structural reform agenda.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

RM has been implemented since 2008, as changes in the Customs Code introduced this principle in the work of Customs. Risk profiles are implemented in electronic form to the Unified Automated Information System (UAIS).

The UAIS consists of three interrelated subcomponents: (i) developing the core UAIS application systems and associated operation-support systems; (ii) developing communications infrastructure to support UAIS operation; and (iii) providing training and a public awareness campaign to ensure sustainability and broad-based support for Customs services. The System was installed in December 2010, and fully implemented at Customs service in 2012.

In October 2015 the Republic of Tajikistan acceded to the General Annex, special annexes A, B, C, D, E (with the exception of Chapter 3 "Coastal transportation of goods"), F (With the exception of Chapter 3 "Return"), G, H, J, K of the RKC.

In order to simplify Customs and trade procedures, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan established as of 2017 a Coordination Committee for simplification of trade procedures. The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and the Customs Service jointly in cooperation with other relevant ministries and departments take the necessary measures to ensure the implementation.

At the same time, in order to strengthen cooperation in the Customs sphere, on April 30, 2015, a «Technical Protocol" was signed between the Customs Service under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Customs Department under the Ministry of Finance of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on the electronic exchange of Customs data.

The programme for the implementation of the SW System for export and import procedures and transit procedures in the Republic of Tajikistan is designed to ensure further improvement of foreign trade regulation instruments and their most effective use in solving the following tasks:

- Development of foreign economic activity;
- Expansion of foreign trade relations and integration of the economy of the Republic of Tajikistan into the world economy;
- Formation of a favorable business and investment climate in the country; and
- Ensuring the economic security of the republic.

The Programme defines the main directions of the activities of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan for the next five years to simplify and improve the efficiency of administrative procedures in foreign trade through the introduction and use of electronic systems for processing and transmitting information between interested state bodies and subjects of foreign economic activity.

The proposed project will support the development of the transport corridor and trade facilitation in the CAREC region by reducing physical and institutional barriers to cross-border movement of goods. The project will include three separate but closely related components: 1) improvement of border crossing points; 2) creation of a National SW; and 3) capacity building in project management and oversight. The project was scheduled to be completed in 2018.

The HR and management policy is being reformed by developing new staff appraisal criteria and adopting related regulations, establishing a detailed human resource database, and developing training programmes in line with international best practices. To address the corruption issue, a Code of Conduct was produced on the basis of the Arusha Declaration and with support from the EU; a transparent appeals system for decisions made by Customs has been established.

There is a consultative body in the Central Customs administration as well as in the regions to assure the dialogue with the private sector and a systematic approach to compliant vs. non-compliant businesses.

WCO support

The WCO Secretariat has provided support to the Reform and Modernization project in Tajik Customs by sharing its expertise, supporting the strategic planning process and providing access to the WCO training tools. The WCO supported Tajikistan in the validation of the architecture and the technical parameters of the new Customs IT system according to the modern international standards. Training within the Global Shield Programme has also been provided to Tajik Customs officers, as well as a valuation workshop and a RM workshop, co-organized by ADB. Further support has been provided in 2016-2017 on the HS 2017 implementation, TRS and accession to the RKC. In 2017-2019 support was rendered in areas such as IPR, STCE and CCP. In 2019-2020 Tajikistan Customs was further supported in the scope of UNODC-WCO CCP.
UKRAINE

Background

The overall objectives of the ongoing Customs reform/modernization process include:

- Introduction of clear and transparent regulations of external economic activities;
- Simplification of procedures;
- Implementation of international and EU standards;
- Improvement of technical equipment at border crossing points;
- Modernization of automated risk analysis system;
- Enhancement of PCA and control; and
- Boosting investment and economic growth.

Current planning

At the end of 2012 the Ukrainian Customs Service became part of the Ministry of Revenue and Duties (MRD) as a result of the merger between tax and Customs authorities and in 2014 the MRD was replaced by the State Fiscal Service (SFS) of Ukraine.

In December 2019 the State Customs Service of Ukraine was re-established, as the central executive authority which implements the state Customs policy and the state policy in the field of combating offenses when applying legislation on state Customs affairs. The activities of the service are directed and coordinated by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine through the Ministry of Finance of Ukraine. The SFS consists of Customs and tax administrations as well as the tax police. The SFS has the following main directions and goals in the Customs development area:

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

Ukraine has made significant progress in aligning its Customs legislation with the EU norms and standards. Extensive CB support is provided to Ukraine through the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM). In April 2009, the WCO signed a Joint Statement with EUBAM to coordinate activities in the areas of support.

In May 2010, as part of the reform process, Ukraine drafted a new Customs Code, a number of governmental acts and orders, implemented series of simplifications for Time Release and deregulated Customs procedures.

In September 2011, Ukraine acceded to the WCO RKC.

Since December 2011, all veterinary and epidemiological, sanitary and phytosanitary control procedures at the border are carried out by Customs in the form of preliminary paper control.

The new Customs Code created a favorable new Customs environment for foreign economic activity, simplified Customs clearance and taxation rules for trade, namely by introducing:

- Consolidated legal framework on Customs duty;
- Favorable investment climate;
- Adjusted taxation procedures and Customs regimes in accordance with the WCO RKC;
- Use of re-import and re-export regimes;
- Improved taxation procedures for temporary admission with partial Customs duty exemption;
- Detailed Customs payments refund;
- Improved sanctions procedure; and
- Simplified inward and outward processing procedures, etc.

Work continues to establish a legal framework and practical rules that enable full functioning of the AEO Programme.

Ukraine Customs has its fully functioning automated clearance system “Inspector-2006”. Since April 2011, an E-Customs pilot project is unfolding. At the end of 2012, the electronic declarations represented 20% of all clearance. The electronic declaration procedure can be used by all agents without any restrictions in any regime. Ukraine Customs has also implemented preliminary e-declaring by using E-TIR Carnet.

Automated national RM system “ASAUR” is fully functional. Ukraine works on improvement of RM and PCA in ASAUR. There are three priority areas of law enforcement defined: fight against drug trafficking, high taxable goods and international cooperation.
Ukraine has established a national PCA system based on the new Customs Code. Electronic PCA developments are influenced by further development of the E-Declaring. The E-Customs Audit pilot project enabled Customs to access trade accounting and reporting services.

Since 2008, the Ukraine Customs Academy in Dnipropetrovs’k has played an active role in the WCO PICARD Programme and in the development of professional standards for Customs. In 2009 Ukraine signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the WCO for participation in the PICARD Programme. In 2010 the WCO and Ukraine signed also an MOU on establishment of a WCO RTC, originally on the basis of the Academy in Dnipropetrovs’k. In May 2016 the SFS advised WCO that after the Academy had been removed from the Customs system to the Ministry of Education and Science, the RTC would now be on the premises of their Department for Specialized Training and Canine Service in Khmelnyts’kyi. In July 2016 a MOU was signed between WCO and SFS for also giving the Khmelnyts’kyi center the status of a WCO Regional Dog Training Centre (as a follow up to the annual regional Heads of Customs Conference decision).

Since May 2015, a comprehensive reform plan has been approved; execution of the plan has commenced; many regional and local leaders were replaced; a change director was appointed; integrity Programmes were expanded; and a set of indicators that provide for a substantial lift in organization performance are being pursued. There are preparations for ambitious changes to organization structure which will merge the field networks across tax and Customs.

In August 2016 an ambitious project for an Open Customs Area was launched in Odessa by the local government, involving a significant change of personnel at the country’s largest port. 132 newly recruited Customs officers, hired specifically to provide a high-quality service, should create conditions in the port of Odessa to facilitate trade and safeguard the border enabling Customs clearance procedures to be completed around the clock using ASYCUDA. It was hoped that the Odessa’s Open Customs Area will serve as a model for similar initiatives in other regions of Ukraine.

At the same time, the new SFS launched nationally on 1 August 2016 an e-Customs and SW project to allow Customs posts and regulatory authorities to automatically exchange data on cargo crossing the border of Ukraine. The planned modernization of management processes (Customs, veterinary, sanitary, phytosanitary, radiological and environmental), will be carried out with an automatic electronic data exchange.

The initiative aims at facilitating the Customs interaction with businesses and eliminating the opportunities for corruption related to Customs clearance. Part of the new measures introduced is the implementation of surveillance systems and systems that provide automatic distribution of Customs declarations for clearance.

**WCO support**

The WCO support was particularly important in the areas of strategic planning, information and communication technologies, trade facilitation, IPR, human resources and modern training methods, LMD, valuation, AEO, RM (profiling and assessment) and fight against Customs offences and strengthening the capacities of the RTC. Further support was provided in 2016-2017 on modernization of the Customs laboratory, deployment of CTS, problematic issues of strategic goods trade control, HS classification of several commodities, SW and data harmonization, Rules of Origin, as well as support to the RTC. In past years joint work continued on the UNODC-WCO CCP further implementation, TRS, STCE, special Customs zones and on improving the strategic planning process in SFS. In 2019/20 WCO provided further support to RTC Khmelnyts’kyi on Train of Trainers according to the WCO competency approach and national support to Ukraine State Customs Services Executive and Professional Competency-Based HRM Programme (online training). Support continued also within the UNODC-WCO CCP.

**UZBEKISTAN**

**Background**

The Customs administration of Uzbekistan (CAUz) has a Customs Development Concept and Strategy that identify the priority areas and strategic goals for the ongoing reform process:

- Improvement of the Customs legislation (adoption of a new Customs Code in line with international norms (e.g. Kyoto Convention, WTO requirements);  
- Improvement of the management system and HR policy (optimization of organizational structure; improvement of the internal communication and information exchange system; training and professional development of HR, using the international experience; fight against corruption (introduction of international standards);  
- Improvement of systems for Customs payments collection (development of system for assessment of Customs payments; improvement of financial system to guarantee Customs payments; improvement of reporting system, usage of IT instruments and user-friendly registration system; strengthening relations between the Customs service and banking system aimed at fraud prevention;
- Simplification of Customs procedures and trade facilitation (incl. development of a system for identification of reliable participants to foreign economic activity, which would be entitled to apply simplified procedures; development of mutual consultation system with participants to foreign economic activity; introduction of electronic data exchange systems and electronic declaration; development of information exchange with other state institutions;
- Improvement of forms and methods in the fight against smuggling and other violations of Customs legislation (including, development of a centralized data base for RM and analysis; improvement of control methods; cooperation with other law enforcement authorities, including information exchange and joint operations; Internal audit and investigation, development of PCA; and
- Modern IT and communication systems.

Current planning

By a Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan from August 2011, a complex of measures was adopted including the Customs administration procedures for improvement (on the basis of the international experience, implementation of the newest information technologies, the fight against smuggling), as well as measures for Customs revenues increases (inventory of preferences, unification of rates, increase of the list of goods subject to preferences). The Decree also provided for optimization of the Customs organizational structure, by hiring highly skilled specialists and further improvement of the training and professional development of staff (system of a complex estimation, fight against corruption).

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

The Government of Uzbekistan set as a priority task (February 2011) the development of a new edition of the Customs Code as a normative act of direct impact and corresponding to international standards and international agreements. Currently, the draft law is under consideration by the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan (Parliament). The draft law is based on standards and norms as contained in the International Convention on simplification and harmonization of Customs procedures (Kyoto Convention, 1999), the International Convention on temporary admission (Istanbul Convention, 1990), the Customs Codes of the EU and the CIS states, as well as existing Customs legislation.

The new Code compiles two current laws – the Customs Code and the Customs Tariffs Law, to unify and simplify the use of Customs legislation. The draft code envisages wide use of information technologies for the submission of necessary information to the Customs bodies.

These initiatives have stimulated and accelerated the legal and regulatory reforms necessary to allow for electronic processing of Customs clearance procedures. Customs is on the way of establishing a national SW and upgrading their RM system.

The WCO TRS software tool is widely used by the administration to regularly assess the situation at the Uzbekistan border crossing points.

The Customs Service of Uzbekistan is the responsible government body for the introduction of a mechanism for the implementation of procedures related to export in “SW” and at the same time providing a number of certificates, such us certificate of Origin, Veterinary, Phytosanitary and Hygienic certificates.

The Customs service of Uzbekistan has piloted and uses currently an automatic information system called “Authorization Documents” which allows different bodies to insert certification of authorization documents on-line.

According to the Order of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan related to the improvement of business environment and the Order of the Government related to the procedures of Customs clearance of goods in e-declaration, Uzbek Customs is working on the implementation of e-declaration and developed the Automatic Information system called “e-declaration”. Currently 90 % of Customs declarations are completed electronically.

WCO support

The WCO support was particularly important in the areas of assessing needs and getting donor support for NII procurement and using the TRS tool for the administration’s performance improvement and TF purposes. In June 2008 the Customs National Dogs Training Centre in Tashkent was accredited as a WCO Regional Dogs Training Centre. Further support has been rendered in the areas of IPR, RKC, HS 2012 and electronic Customs and SW. A workshop on the modernization of the Customs laboratory took place in April 2017. In 2018/19 support was provided in the areas of integrity development, the CCP Programme implementation, automated RM system and API/PNR. In 2019/20 WCO conducted Mercator diagnostics mission in Uzbekistan, under the scope of GTFP, and also continued support with the UNODC-WCO CCP.
Regional Development

The Asia Pacific region has 33 Members in total. Out of these, 25 Members have been engaged with the WCO as recipients of capacity building support in the past years. These are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar (Union of), Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, Tonga, Vanuatu, Vietnam. There are 4 regional Members (China, India, Japan, Korea (Republic of) that provide support to the WCO Customs Cooperation Fund (CCF) for the delivery of capacity building activities to the benefit of other, less developed administrations. From March 2019, India started providing support to the WCO CCF.

Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB)

The ROCB A/P, which was established in Bangkok, Thailand in 2004, has currently 9 full time staff. There are five Technical Attachés dispatched by China, Hong Kong China, Japan (2), and Korea, and four Thai Customs officers. In addition, two Customs Attachés from Australia and New Zealand based in Bangkok provide ad hoc assistance to improve the quality of the communication with stakeholders.

The ROCB A/P Strategic Action Plan is reviewed every two years taking into account the latest Regional Strategic Plan to ensure consistency of their activities to the region’s policy and strategy. ROCB A/P also develops Annual Work Plan for proper implementation of the Strategic Action Plan.

Regional Training Centres (RTCs)

The A/P Region hosts seven WCO RTCs – in China (Shanghai and Xiamen), Fiji (Suva), Hong Kong, China, India (Bengaluru and Faridabad), Japan (Kashiwa), Korea (Cheonan) and Malaysia (Melaka).

A/P Heads of the RTCs Meeting convenes annually. The 17th Heads of the Asia/Pacific WCO RTCs meeting was convened at Cheonan, Korea in September 2019 and heads and delegates of six RTCs, representatives from the WCO and the A/P Vice-Chair’s Office attended and charted the way forwards for strengthening the cooperation between RTCs, the ROCB A/P and the RILO A/P and better contributing to the A/P regional capacity building activities. Among other things, heads and delegates of the RTCs intensively discussed topics such as the development and the use of e-learning programs, application of the WCO Training Strategy, the way forward to optimize the benefits of hosting WCO workshops, and the enhancement of the RTCs’ functions.

The Asia/Pacific (A/P) region produces the Regional Strategic Plan (RSP) every two years. Current RSP 2018-2020 was adopted in May 2018, and has the following three focus areas:

1. Trade security and facilitation;
2. Compliance and enforcement; and
3. Capacity building

Based on this RSP 2018-2020, the ROCB A/P has also set its Strategic Action Plan 2018-2020 for the implementation of capacity building activities under the following four pillars in order to achieve the objectives specified in the RSP:

1. Support the implementation of WCO convention, instruments and tools;
2. Further enhance collaboration with the development partners (DPs);
3. Improve needs analysis, planning, delivery and management of regional capacity building activities; and
4. Enhance communication and information sharing among Members.

The RSP 2020-2022 was scheduled to be discussed and endorsed at the 21st RHCA Conference planned in April 2020, but the conference was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be discussed and endorsed in due course.

1. Support the implementation of WCO Conventions, Instruments and Tool

The annual capacity building needs survey is conducted by the regional coordinators (currently Japan and ROCB A/P) for the pertinent Focus Area of the RSP, and all Members in the A/P region were strongly requested to provide their latest needs and priorities on capacity building together with the link to their respective national strategies. Based on the needs and priorities expressed from the Members, the WCO, in cooperation with the ROCB A/P, plans its annual capacity building
activities in the A/P region. In order to tailor the support for the Members’ specific needs, a number of national workshops are organized in addition to a series of regional and sub-regional workshops on various Customs issues.

During the period from July 2019 to June 2020, 22 regional and sub-regional workshops on various issues including E-Commerce, Organizational Crime, CBM, Illicit Cross-border Trafficking in Cultural Property, SIE, Canine Training, Transit, Security, Electronic Crime, AEO, Integrity, Revenue Package, RM, IPR, Anti-money Laundering, Passenger Control, and Valuation were organized. The WCO Security Project for Asia Pacific provides huge support to regional initiatives on counter terrorism as well as Container Control Programme assist a number of Members to enhance their drug enforcement capacity. Further to these activities, a number of national workshops were conducted (for details, please see the Annex).

It should be noted that A/P region has been combining a regional approach and national approach on the same topic to achieve concrete outcomes from its activity. For instance, considering the importance of ‘leadership and ownership’ of the recipient Members, specific need and ownership identified through a regional event has been taken care of by a follow-up national workshop in cooperation with the participant to the regional event. This approach has been identified as valuable and the A/P region is going to continue this effort.

In 2015, ROCB A/P initiated its Regional Survey on the Follow-Up Actions taken after the regional workshops conducted in 2014/15 with a view to taking snapshots of the institutional ramifications accrued from these regional and sub-regional workshops. The outcomes of the survey were analyzed and compiled comprehensively in the ROCB A/P’s Good Practice Report on Exemplifying follow-up Actions of regional workshops organized in the FY 2018/19 (July 2018–June 2019), which was published in April 2020, as well as the Good Practice Report on some specific areas such as AEO and Integrity.

(2) Further enhance collaboration with the Development Partners

Enhancing collaboration with DPs is one of the important action items for the A/P region and the region continued this effort in 2019/20 as well as to develop more concrete project-based collaboration to provide coordinated and result-oriented supports in both quality and quantity to regional Members. Followings are few examples of the development in the A/P region.

- SECUREX pilot project: Joint WCO-UPU National Technical Assistance Mission to India(July 2019);
- Joint WCO-INTERPOL pre-operative meeting for AP region (Operation Athena II)(July 2019);
- Regional workshop on Combating Illicit Cross-border Trafficking in Cultural Property for OSCE Asian Partners for Cooperation Region (PIC) (August 2019);
- AEO validation training workshop to Lao People’s Democratic Republic supported by WB (August 2019);
- Seminar for Pacific Parliamentarians on the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1540 plus side meetings with OCO and PSI(September 2019);
- National workshop on TRS in Cambodia jointly with ADB, JICA and the WCO (September 2019); and
- National workshop on AEO in the Philippines with ADB and the WCO (November 2019).

(3) Improve needs analysis, planning, delivery and management of regional capacity building activities

a. Capacity building needs analysis and planning

A/P region places great importance on this action item. In January, the regional capacity building coordinator (currently Japan) and ROCB A/P circulated the annual capacity building needs survey to all regional Members. A good number of constructive feedbacks on the latest needs and priorities of their capacity building were provided. ROCB A/P worked together with the Regional Capacity Building Coordinator to analyze these feedbacks in conjunction with the regional/national strategies and prepared the regional capacity building proposals for 2020/21.

b. Contribution of regional experts

Recognizing that a successful capacity building Programme relies heavily on access to highly skilled and qualified Customs expertise inside the region, A/P region has placed great emphasis on the utilization of regional resources based on the ‘Framework to Pool, Utilize, Support and Increase Accredited Customs experts in the Region’ since 2013 where the region regarded the year as the ‘mobilization of regional resources’. Current RSP 2018-2020 sets forth a range of strategic objectives, including ‘Enhance the effective deployment of resources in capacity building through cooperation among Members and regional bodies. Based on the Framework and the growing needs in the A/P Region, the WCO and ROCB A/P worked together to identify the gap between the regional needs and available expertise in the A/P region to effectively establish and fully utilize the ‘pool of regional experts’. In addition, A/P region initiated the work on ‘candidate list’ for the
purpose of providing systematic support for regional experts as well as, where necessary, supplementing the capacity building needs of our Members, in particular on the areas where there are no WCO accredited experts. Through these efforts, those regional experts are now making remarkable contributions to the regional capacity building activities.

(4) Enhance communication and information sharing among Members

**a. Use of communication tools**

To enhance communication with Members in the A/P region, ROCB A/P publishes E-Newsletter on a quarterly basis and distributes it to the regional Members, the WCO Secretariat and the ROCBs in other regions. Commencing from 2015/16, the E-Newsletters are distributed to the participants to the regional and sub-regional workshops conducted in the featured quarter. The latest edition is 69th published in July 2020.

To complement the E-Newsletter, ROCB A/P has been managing the ROCB A/P website (http://www.rocb-ap.org) since September 2014 to provide information on its activities and summaries of the regional/national capacity building programmes. The ROCB A/P website also uploads contributions from the region’s accredited experts so that their experiences are shared and may motivate other officials to take part in cooperating Customs Reform and Modernization efforts.

**b. Customs Good Practice Report**

A/P has published a series of the Good Practice Report with the support of RTCs in the region. For example, the Good Practice Reports on ‘Training Evaluation’ in June 2013, ‘Coaching and Mentoring’ in March 2015, ‘Cyber Investigation and Digital Forensics’ in February 2018 and ‘Training Management in the A/P regional Members’ in March 2019. These reports contributed to share valuable experiences among regional Customs administrations. In 2019/20, ROCB A/P published ‘Exemplifying Follow-Up Action taken after the A/P regional workshops in 2018/19’ (April 2020) and ‘AEO/Customs Compliance Programme and Mutual Recognition Arrangement’ (April 2020).

**c. Designation of ‘Programme Manager’ for the respective sub-regions**

To meet the expectation from both development partners and regional Members to further strengthen capacity building programmes in the region, it is important for A/P region to improve its own capacity to take care of these increasing interests. For this purpose, ROCB A/P designates respective staff as ‘Programme Manager’ for the respective sub-region and is moving forward to provide more focused quality assistance through enhanced communication with Members and DPs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-region</th>
<th>ROCB staff</th>
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**National Developments**

**AFGHANISTAN**

**Background**

Afghanistan became a Member of the WTO in 2015 and is the beneficiary of extensive development partner support in the modernization and reform of Customs. The WCO’s renewed engagement in Afghanistan was the result of an innovative collaboration with the United States, and carefully calibrated interventions that leverage the WCO’s unique value-added, while complementing the extensive technical and financial engagements of other development partners.

In addition, the Afghan Customs Department (ACD) is considering the fielding of its senior officials to the Afghan Embassy to Brussels to act as Customs Attaché/Permanent Representative to the WCO so that she/he is able to attend most of the WCO meetings and programmes and to provide regular feedback to Kabul.

**Current planning**

The WCO has engaged closely with the ACD in the development of its 5-year Strategic Plan 2018–2023. The core components of the plan include:
- Enhancing institutional efficiency by modernizing the administration, processes and infrastructure;
- Enhancing revenue collection;
- Increasing, enhancing and strengthening automation;
- Strengthening compliance;
- Implementing the TFA; and
- Implementation of AEO system.

2016 saw the official opening of the Afghanistan Customs and Revenue Academy providing a new institutional framework for the training, certification and ongoing professional development of Customs officers. The state of the art facility provides substantial classroom and faculty resources to support induction and ongoing professional development.

The ACD has also been working with neighboring countries and trading partners towards signing mutual assistance agreements and acceding to some of the important international conventions. A framework agreement was signed with the Organization for Security and co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in Dushanbe, Tajikistan for capacity building of the ACD employees.

Afghanistan acceded to the Arusha Declaration on Customs Integrity in July 2017 on the occasion of the Secretary General’s visit to Kabul.

Customs Reforms and Modernization progress

The ACD has made significant improvements to the automation and infrastructure of their Customs operations in comparison to the manual procedures that were in place previously. Under the various reform programmes, notable progress has been achieved, for example, simplification of legal procedures for trade, usage of ASYCUDA. ASYCUDA world system, implementation of RM Module and implementation of ASYCUDA’s Valuation Module etc. in the current scenario more than 90% of the trade is covered by ASYCUDA. In addition, progress has also been made in improving the warehouses, transit and RM system. WCO HS Classification Code has also been implemented to harmonize product codes so that trade with partners is regulated and managed in an efficient manner.

WCO support

The ACD actively took part in the WCO Global Shield Programme and sent its officer to attend regional trainings in various areas of Customs such as border management control, chemical precursors, RM, chemical laboratory, classification, valuation, trade facilitation and IPR and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability. A WCO sub-regional workshop was held in September 2015, which enhanced the organizational capacity for Customs valuation in addressing requirements of the WTO Valuation Agreement.

Following a request from the ACD, the WCO successfully delivered a diagnostic assessment of the ACD in keeping with the WCO’s Diagnostic Framework in September 2016. The diagnostic was delivered within the context of Afghanistan’s recent accession to the WTO and the resultant commitments that Afghanistan will need to fulfill in relation to the WTO TFA. The mission resulted in a comprehensive diagnostic assessment of the ACD, including perspectives on the extent to which the country meets the provisions of the WTO TFA, along with a series of priority recommendations such as the sharing of perspectives from other landlocked developing Members. Subsequently, a team of WCO experts visited Kabul, where they engaged with key stakeholders in the ACD and with leading development partners, including USAID, DFID and the World Bank.

Following the diagnostic, the WCO exposed the newly appointed Director General of Customs of Afghanistan to Reform and Modernization best practices in similarity landlocked Uganda. Following this initial diagnostic and exposure work, the WCO invested heavily in supporting an iterative and consultative strategic planning process, which was mediated by a team of Mercator Programme Advisors from the United Kingdom, South Africa and Uganda. The WCO also supported the development of a donor coordination strategy, taking into account the large volumes of incoming international assistance.

The WCO officials have twice briefed H. E. Ahmad Hakimi, Minister of Finance, on the results of the above activities and reached an agreement on a series of forward initiatives, leveraging the WCO instruments and tools, which will support the challenging Reform and Modernization journey in Afghanistan.

Working in collaboration with the United States Commercial Law Development Programme (CLDP), the WCO supported the development of an integrity action plan in March 2018, with strategic alignment to the wider 2018-2023 National ACD strategic plan and the provisions of the Arusha Declaration on Customs Integrity.

Also the WCO Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion (A-CIP) Programme for Customs has started to conduct its integrity activity with ACD as a WCO A-CIP Partner Administration since January 2019. The first activity took the form of a workshop,
Capacity Building Progress Report
June 2020
Part I

held in Tbilisi, hosted by the Georgia Revenue Service (GRS) in collaboration with the US Department of Commerce’s Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP) from 16 to 20 June 2019. As one of the 10 key factors in the WCO’s Revised Arusha Declaration concerning good governance and integrity in Customs, this “Regulatory Framework” refers to the simplification and harmonization of Customs laws, regulations, administrative guidelines and procedures so that Customs formalities can proceed without undue burden.

BANGLADESH

Current planning

The Customs modernization Programme incorporates the latest ICT technology for better compliance in all its land, sea and airports. Pre-Shipment Inspection (PSI) system has been scrapped from Bangladesh Customs since July 2013 and now a voluntary system of PSI is in practice. Presently, the Customs Act (1969) of Bangladesh is being reviewed in line with the General Annex of the RKC and several provisions of the TFA to make it on par with international standards. The National Board of Revenue (NBR) is leading a National Trade Facilitation Committee (NCTF) to implement the TF Agreement in Bangladesh. Besides a dedicated unit for carrying out reform activities has been formed to expedite the implementation of Strategic Action Plan 2013-2016, which has been revised and drafted as Strategic Action plan 2014-2017.

The Customs Modernization Programme has several components:

- Develop policy units at the National Board of Revenue (NBR) with strong and reliable Management Information System (MIS) support and statistical capability;
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) on RM, Post Clearance Audit, Assessment, Physical Inspection, and Non-Intrusive Inspection have been finalized and will soon be implemented in Bangladesh Customs;
- Develop an audit manual for regular audit of activities and performance by internal and external agencies; this process has not been started at Bangladesh Customs yet but remains a high priority;
- Strengthen and modernize intelligence and RM, improve valuation and audit capacity; Bangladesh has already joined the Container Control Programme (CCP) under UNODC to strengthen the capacity of Customs Intelligence;
- Directives for AEO have been issued and TRS surveys are being conducted in the largest sea port and land port in Bangladesh;
- Dedicated units have been established at the Headquarters towards implementation of AEO, RM and PCA and the analysts/team Members are being trained in-country and at some successful implementation locations abroad with support from development partners;
- Redefine scope of work at Customs stations through reduction in discretionary powers redesigning working process; Scope of work in different Customs stations are being reviewed in the ongoing amendment of the Customs Act;
- Strengthen and modernize the Customs Training Academy and review HR policy for retention of core competences (RM, PCA, valuation, classification, etc.) at respective offices;
- PSI system has been discontinued in Bangladesh Customs. Instead Customs mutual cooperation agreements with different countries are being stressed for enhance Customs cooperation to address the issues of overseas investigation, information exchange, gathering trade data, etc.;
- Establish connectivity with important partners for simplification of Customs Business Processes; and ASYCUDA World (AW) has been implemented in all Customs Houses and five (5) Land Customs Stations. AW has now been connected to the port CTM system and that of Central Bank of Bangladesh;
- Recently, it has been decided that trade centric NSW will be established with support from the World Bank and a high-power working group on NSW has been formed; and
- Recruit new officers and impart training. About two hundred senior officers have been recruited through the Public Service Commission and they are already working in the field. Besides about 800 Customs inspectors has been recruited to strengthen the capacity of Bangladesh Customs who will receive training in phases.

Currently it has been taken a number of Reform and Modernization initiatives based on 4-year Customs modernization Strategic Action Plan for the period of 2019-2022.
Customs Reform and Modernization progress

A dedicated team has been formed to steer the Reform and Modernization activities of Bangladesh Customs. The team is working on various elements of its Strategic Action Plan. At the very first step the Customs Act of 1969 of Bangladesh is being reviewed to incorporate the best practices under RKC and TFA. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) on RM, Post Clearance Audit, Assessment, Physical Inspection, and Non-Intrusive Inspection are being finalized to use these tools for better Customs management. AEO systems will be introduced to facilitate the trade. TRS survey is under process in major ports. Capacity of Customs Intelligence will be strengthened with the ongoing cooperation with the UNODC.

WCO support

A WCO IPR workshop was held in August 2015, which enhanced the organizational capacity for proper control and management of IPR matters.

Two WCO-ADB joint national expert missions were held in November 2015 and March 2016, which resulted in finalization of development of Action Plan to upgrade the current Customs Valuation Database which support to better address requirements of the WTO Valuation Agreement.

An Advance Ruling workshop was held in February 2016, which supported to establish an advance ruling system in line with the international standard.

In FY 2016/2017, Bangladesh benefitted from the WCO support in the area of TFA, LMD, CBM and e-learning under the funding of the HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD Trade Facilitation Agreement Capacity Building Programme. The WCO has also ensured that Bangladesh benefits from international best practices and Member experiences in SW implementation as the country embarks on a complex process reengineering to support the roll-out of the World Bank-supported national SW.

In February 2019, re-evaluation of Mercator Plan and joint TFA assessment with Asian Development Bank was conducted. Through the activity some 63 technical and 14 cross-cutting recommendations for reform emerged from the discussion. WCO proposals in organizational development, including sensitive human resources management were well-received.

Specific proposals to engage with the USAID-funded Bangladesh Trade Facilitation Activity (BTFA) Programme, addressing questions of AEO, PCA and experience sharing. Additional proposals for possible engagement with UNCTAD on questions of ASCYUDA World application in the Bangladeshi context and experience sharing from other WCO Members.

STCE national training was conducted in March 2020 for NBR officers to be more aware of STC issues and adopting measures in this regard, and also some of the participants could be selected to attend a Train the Trainer workshop and become STCE expert trainers.

BHUTAN

Background

Bhutan’s development planning framework continues to be guided by their development philosophy of “Gross National Happiness” and is realized through the implementation of Five Year Plans (FYP). Currently Bhutan is in their 11th FYP and it is the second FYP to be implemented since the introduction of Democratic Constitutional Monarchy in 2008. The Department of Revenue and Customs (DRC) is one of the four departments under the Ministry of Finance responsible for formulating sound fiscal policy that will ensure private sector development and economic growth. The Customs and Excise Division is responsible for overall management of taxes on traded good, trade facilitation and protection society.

Current planning

Presently, the DRC with the assistance of ADB is undertaking two main initiatives: SASEC Trade Facilitation Programme and National priority:

Effective initiation of this Programme began from December 2012 focusing mainly on Customs Reform and Modernization as per the RKC. Bhutan acceded to the RKC on 15 September 2014. In order to comply with the RKC, Bhutan Customs is in the process of initiating the following activities:

- Customs Bill 2015 submitted in November 2015 to the National Assembly of the Parliament for ratification;
- Drafting Customs Rule and Regulation and stakeholder consultations;
- Developing a Customs Management Module which is a part of Revenue Administration and Management Information System (RAMIS);
- Compliance Traders Programme;
- Established a National Transport and Trade Facilitation Committee;
- Carry out the Business Process Analysis and TRS;
- Drafted Strategy Framework for 2014-2018; and
- Capacity building in terms of institution and human resources, RM, PCA, valuation and forms optimization (as per UN Layout Key).

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

The DRC has launched a robust Customs Reform and Modernization Programme beginning in 2014 with objectives to simplify and harmonize the Customs procedures, facilitate international trade, adopt international best practices and standards, improve the service delivery to the taxpayers and ultimately enhance the revenue collection.

The key to Bhutan Reform and Modernization revolves around the implementation of RKC standards and some of the major priorities set for the period 2014 to 2016 are, review and align the Customs legislation to be RKC compliant, implementation of RM, introduction of PCA, AR, special procedure for the authorized traders and the development and roll out of new computer systems.

Bhutan is not a Member of the WTO and therefore has no obligation to implement the WTO Valuation Agreement. However the new Customs Act and the supporting Rules and Regulations that came into force in 2017 has WTO valuation principles incorporated in a modified manner.

WCO support

In collaboration with the ADB, the DRC received capacity building and technical assistance from the WCO to facilitate effective and successful Customs Reform and Modernization Programme initiated in lieu of SASEC-TPP.

A WCO SW workshop was held in November 2015, which supported the on-going roll-out project of new computer system.

A WCO-ADB joint national expert mission on Customs valuation under the WCO-ADB Multi-year Project was held in May 2016, which resulted in finalization of development of Standard operational procedures on Customs valuation control which is in line with the international standard and the upcoming new Customs bill and will support to better address requirements of the WTO Valuation Agreement.

A WCO national workshop on RM, PCA and Revenue Package Diagnostic on valuation was conducted in November 2017, June 2018, and April 2019 respectively to support Customs Reform and Modernization. The DRC has also been actively participating in WCO regional and sub-regional workshops in various areas and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability.

CAMBODIA

Current planning

The General Department of Customs and Excise of Cambodia (GDCE) developed the Strategy for Customs Modernization for 2019-2023 with the support of the WCO, which aimed at addressing new challenges and to continue to implement the requirements under RKC, WTO TFA and ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). The GDCE has set five strategic objectives under the Programme including revenue collection, compliance and enforcement, modernization of IT and trade facilitation, Customs cooperation and human resource and organizational development, supported by detailed action plans, timeframes and performance indicators.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

Under the Reform Programme for 2003 -2008, notable progress had been achieved. For example, a new Law on Customs was introduced in 2007, and Customs clearance procedures were reviewed and simplified. Institutional/organizational change was made such as the establishment of the Customs reform Steering Committee and team, the RM and Audit Office, and Customs Training Centre.

The 2009-2013 Programme was developed to deepen the Reform and Modernization of the organization. The successful results included the adoption of regulations for the implementation of the Customs law (2007) and the automation of Customs declarations through the introduction of ASYCUDA. The GDCE paved the way for the accession of the RKC though reviewing and changing legal instruments. Subsequently, in June 2014, Cambodia became the 94th Contracting Party to the RKC.
Under the 2014-2018 Program, the GDCE has successfully introduced Best Traders Programme (AEOs) to eight companies, AR on HS and Rules of Origin and engages actively in the negotiation of FTAs.

The automation of Customs procedures has been developed by introducing ASYCUDA World in 2006. Now the ASYCUDA World has been deployed to 32 Customs offices covering about 97% of Customs declarations (import and export), and the GDCE is working to improve system functionalities such as warehousing, transit, manifest control as well as the activation of Direct Trader input (DTI) facility. The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has strongly committed to achieve full electronic Cambodia National SW (CNSW) implementation through the reform and modernization Programmes being implemented by the relevant government agencies and institutions, including the GDCE. The GDCE has successfully automated the import/export clearance processing procedures using the ASYCUDA system, which will become an important component of the future CNSW system. As part of the RGC’s commitment towards the AEC 2015 and pursuant to the Agreement and Protocol to establish and implement the ASEAN SW (ASW), the CNSW system will enable Cambodia to connect to the other ASEAM Member States SW systems. The planning and development will pave the way for Cambodia Customs in implementing the WTO TFA.

The GDCE in cooperation with ROCB A/P and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has organized 4 dialogue meetings with development partners to mobilize and coordinate technical assistance and support to implement the GDCE’s Strategy on Reform and Modernization.

WCO support

Based on the requests from the GDCE, the WCO has dedicated its support on Mercator Programme planning and implementation. In August 2018, initial scoping mission on the WTO TFA was conducted together with strategic planning support, followed by implementation planning mission in January 2019 combined with RM diagnostic. In addition to that, the WCO/ROCB supported establishing regulatory framework on IPR enforcement.

In February 2020, national workshop on Customs valuation was conducted to aim for enhancing knowledge of complex areas of Customs valuation and for good understanding of key Revenue Package materials including how to apply the Guidelines on Advanced Ruling and key messages of the Practical Guidelines for Valuation Control. GDCE also has been taking a series of frequent support from CGP, APSP and INAMA project for several years.

Under the close collaboration among ADB, JICA and the WCO, a TRS workshop was held in September 2019 to aim to strengthen the capacity of the GDCE TRS Working Group to conduct their second TRS and increase the support of the stakeholders during the conduct of TRS. TRS report and its National Action Plan has been finalized.

CHINA

Current planning

In 2011, China Customs worked closely with the local governments and relevant departments to promote the implementation and execution of the 12th Five-year Plan, national-level development strategies and priority projects. The core strategies in the Strategic Plan include good governance, capacity building, efficient and effective revenue collection, enhanced trade facilitation and enhanced enforcement and compliance

Customs Reforms and Modernization Progress

China-EC implemented the first phase pilot on Smart and Secure Trade Lanes on 19 November 2007.

China Customs launched its AEO Program, named the ‘Classified management of Enterprises’ in April 2008 and currently 40,162 businesses are classified AA (i.e. AEO). China Customs is now launching a pilot project on SW, aiming at coordinating among different border agencies the framework of mutual exchange of information, mutual recognition of controls and mutual assistance of enforcement.

WCO support

China Customs has hosted a RTC (Shanghai Customs College) since 2004 and Regional Detector Dog Training Centre since 2012. The RTC have organized various workshops and trainings, through introducing the technical instrument and tools developed by WCO, to improve the capacity building of A/P Member administrations.

China Customs established the China Capacity Building Cooperation Fund in the WCO in 2014 to support the WCO in its efforts to provide assistance.
FIJI

Current planning

Fiji Customs and Revenue Service has developed Strategic Plan for 2017-2020, which focuses on 4 key areas such as partnership, legislation and processes, people and technology, with a set of organizational goals, objectives and performance.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

Fiji Customs has achieved 90% of the requirements towards implementing a uniform Compliance Strategy by reviewing the current compliance operational procedures and legislations, strengthening data collection and analysis, targeted approach and determining the compliance level of traders. ROCB conducted training on PCA to further strengthen the unit. In addressing this uniformity in application, new requirements arose from the national levels which posed new challenges to the organization. A number of MOUs such as Customs-Brokers, Customs-Biosecurity, Customs-Land Transport Authority, Customs-Department of Environment were drawn up to address these issues with continuous networking with other agencies.

Fiji has completed implementing the systematic RM all levels of Customs business processes and is under continuous review for new Customs risks. The concepts have been incorporated into individual business processes for monitoring and treating the risks.

Fiji Customs realized the need to enhance and ensure improved Customer services. As a result, the Authority is in the process of employing a Customer Service Champion to ensure an improved Customer service delivery. The Authority is seriously involved and participating in the Service Excellence Award spearheaded by the government to address Customs service delivery at all levels both internally and externally.

The Public Relations unit has been actively involved in advising the public on the roles and responsibilities of Customs. This has been achieved by placing TV advertisements, conducting Radio Talk Back and updating of the FRCA website.

Customs clearance system was upgraded from ASYCUDA++ to ASYCUDA-World, which has huge impact on automation of Customs processing. This is the platform for the SW concept as well as assisting the establishment of the AEO Programme.

Fiji initiated reform of human resource management and development structure and, in August 2017, Fiji conducted People Development diagnostic with the support from the WCO and succeed to update the human resource policy and strategy.

The automation of all Customs procedures has been addressed. In December 2018, a WCO national workshop on TRS was conducted and TRS has been implemented and under continuous review in order to better the service delivery.

WCO support

WCO has been conducting ad hoc national workshops such as TRS workshop to build national capacity in order for the country to conduct a TRS in December 2018 or ncEN workshop by focusing on the 3 databases and Icomm communication module, the search module and analytical part in December 2019. Also Fiji Customs has been taking a series of support by CCP to assist Fiji Customs in establishing effective container selections and controls to prevent drug trafficking and other illicit cross-border activities.

Fiji Customs has been actively participating in WCO regional and sub-regional workshops on various topics and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability. RTC Fiji, as one of the RTCs in Asia/Pacific region has conducted several WCO workshops including sub-regional workshops for the Pacific Islands Members with the support of the WCO, ROCB A/P and donors.

INDIA

Current planning

The CBEC prepares a Results Framework Document (RFD) every year. The RFD for 2014-2015 sets various actions according to 4 objectives, i.e. collection of indirect tax, improve taxpayer services, improve compliance for fair trade and enforcement of border control, and develop human resources for efficiency and transparency.

The CBEC’s Mission is to facilitate trade and industry by streamlining and simplifying Customs, Central Excise and Service Tax processes and helping Indian business to enhance its competitiveness.
In order to improve the delivery of its services, the CBEC has also prepared a Citizen’s Charter in 2008.

**Customs Reform and Modernization progress**

- **Launch of Customs SWIFT clearances (SW Interface for Facilitating Trade):** the Customs SWIFT enables importers/exporters to file a common electronic ‘Integrated Declaration’ on the ICEGATE portal. The Integrated Declaration takes care of the requirements of Customs, FSSAI, Plant Quarantine, Animal Quarantine, Drug Controller, Wild Life Control Bureau and Textile Committee and it replaces nine separate forms required by the said 6 different agencies including Customs. With the roll-out of the SW, CBEC also introduced an Integrated RM facility for Partner Government Agencies (PGAs), which will greatly expedite clearances from all concerned, channelize scarce resources and will further improve ease of doing business. The Integrated RM System will ensure that consignments are not selected by agencies routinely for examination and testing but based on the principle of RM. It will also help participating agencies handle their respective risk areas (related to human and animal health, biosafety and environmental safety) more effectively. With this development today, Indian Customs is amongst a few select countries that have functional SW clearances, inclusive of multiple PGAs and integrated risk based selection;

- **Filing of declarations by importers, exporters, Customs brokers and manifests by shipping and airlines through digital signatures with effect from January 2016:** wherever the Customs documents are digitally signed, the Customs does not require the user to physically sign the said documents. Around 97% of import and export declarations and manifests are being filed electronically with digital signatures. The balance 3% is being filed through Service Centre;

- **Deferred duty payment for select categories of importers and exporters** has been introduced in the recent Budget. This provision will enable release of cargo without payment of duty, which shall enable speedier clearance and improved liquidity in hands of the businesses;

- **Documents required for Import/Export:** the number of documents required for export/import have been reduced to three, namely, electronic declaration, Invoice cum packing list & Bill of Lading;

- **Electronic Delivery Orders:** introduction of an electronic messaging system between shipping lines and custodians for electronic delivery order, instead of a paper based delivery order, has been introduced;

- **24X 7 Customs clearance facilities extended** to 19 sea ports and 17 air cargo complexes;

- **WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) approved** by Cabinet and ratification underway. Categorization of Articles under the Agreement has been notified to the WTO;

- **Customs Clearance Facilitation Committee (CCFC) set up at every major Customs seaport and airport.** At Central level, a ‘Central Customs Clearance Facilitation Committee’ under the chairmanship of Revenue Secretary has been set up to address the issue relating to Customs Clearance and infrastructure impacting clearance of goods;

- **Warehousing:** major changes have been introduced with regard to the provisions related to Warehousing in the recent Budget. The system of physical control and locking of public and private warehouses by Customs is being dispensed and replaced with record based controls. The period of warehousing to be extended till de-bonding or consumption of goods in respect of EoUs/EHTPs/STPIs/Manufacturing Units under Customs Bond, such as ship building yards which shall reduce transaction costs and burden of documentation. Power for extending warehousing periods in respect of other classes of importers to be delegated to Principal Commissioner/Commissioner;

- **Special Valuation Branches:** the procedure for handling related party transactions and those involving special relationships completely revamped. Extra duty deposits waived and the provisions for renewal of SVB orders have also been dispensed; and

- **On Site PCA or OS PCA** at premises of importers and exporters has been extended to a limited category of importers presently and in future the scope will be enhanced.

**WCO support**

Two WCO-ADB joint national expert missions were held in September 2015 and June 2016, which resulted in establishment of core trainers’ team and in finalization of development of training materials which support in-country training activities to better address requirements of the WTO Valuation Agreement.

A WCO IPR national workshop was held in February 2016, which enhanced the organizational capacity for proper control and management of IPR matters.

The CBEC has also been actively participating in the WCO regional workshops on various areas and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability.
Indian Customs established the Indian Customs Cooperation Fund in the WCO in 2019 to support the WCO in its efforts to provide assistance.

**INDONESIA**

Current planning

After the accession of the Istanbul Convention on Temporary Admission (The ATA) and the RKC in 2014, the DGCE has basically met the TFA provisions. Since AEO Programme was launched in 2015, the DGCE has certified 110 companies consist of exporter, importer, Customs broker, warehouse, and temporary storage. In addition, DGCE is planning to integrate the RM measures in different government agencies into one single portal, Indonesia Single RM (ISRM). This action is in line with the border management initiative in the WTO TFA on article 7.4 on RM.

The roles of IT and RM are very important in order to mitigate risks in the international trade. Therefore, the DGCE is now trying to digitalize its Customs services as well as optimize the use of RM to focus on high risk consignments.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

The transformation started in 1995 with the formulation of the Customs Law and the Excise Law and followed with a reform in 2002. The reform took initiatives on trade facilitation improvement, stakeholder coordination, anti-smuggling, under valuation, and strategy to improve integrity.

As of 2012, the DGCE had managed to modernize 113 Service Offices as well as revitalize its business process. Following the reform, in 2013, an institutional transformation commenced with the assistance of an international independent consultant. The transformation was divided into three terms: short term (2013-2014), medium term (2015-2019), and long term (2020-2025). In the short term, the institution will focus on initiatives with highest visible impact to key stakeholders and invest in enablers for ‘long and hard” initiatives. In the medium term, scale up reforms to encompass whole of Ministry of Finance (MoF), whole of Indonesia, whole service points, and whole employees, as well as embed behavior changes, harnessing investment in enablers from earlier stage. In the long term, the institution will sustain impact and pursue continuous improvements, aim for further substantial structural reforms if deemed necessary.

During its Diagnostic Phase, including consultation with more than 150 stakeholders including ministries and agencies resulted in a comprehensive blueprint to transform the DGCE as an institution. The transformation themes of the DGCE is to be world’s leading Customs and excise administration by accelerating cross-border trade facilitation and future-proofing facilities, capturing compliance gap and strengthening protection from dangerous goods. There are six themes of change:

1. Improved clarity of role, aligned to MoF’s and DGCE’s strategic aspiration;
2. Streamlined and frontloaded Customer declarations;
3. Strengthened risk profiling to incentivize right behavior;
4. Segmented non-intrusive interventions conducted professionally;
5. Efficient post-clearance and audit as primary enforcement tool; and
6. Strong foundations streamlining organization and putting leadership and budget where most needed.

The themes of change are translated into strategic initiatives and action plan that are classified into a set of priorities.

**WCO support**

The DGCE has been actively participating in the WCO activities on various areas and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability. In order to support the modernization, the WCO, in cooperation with the DGCE, delivered support on security agenda through WCO Security Project for Asia Pacific and conducted national workshop on Rules of Origin (November 2018).

**IRAN**

Current planning

Vision of Iran Customs consist of five pillars, which are:

1. Improvement of the business environment and streamline Customs processes;
2. To stimulate international trade and provide a way to increase domestic and foreign investment;
3. Protection of the health and safety of the community;
4. The targeted development of human and institutional capital; and
5. Reduction the time, cost, and documents in the Customs formalities for clearance in Customs procedures (import, export, transit).

To achieve the vision, action plan for 2019-2020 has been implemented to make progress on Customs Modernization.

Customs Reforms and Modernization progress

The Customs legislation has been updated to conform to international standards, which includes more than 80% of RKC standards. The Istanbul Convention on Temporary Admission has been adopted and ratified in the Parliament to pave the way to accede to the RKC. Establishment of joint border controls with neighboring countries is under consideration and several MOUs will be signed. A physical form of SW was established in many Customs offices and is being developed. Container and pallet X-Ray equipment and CCTV systems were installed in Customs stations. Specialized Customs offices for processing of specific goods were defined for the purpose of expediting services. A TRS was conducted, and a TQM

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... programmes on various areas and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability. The IRICA also benefitted from a support mission on RKC and TFA in December 2016, and on PCA in April 2018, on ICT and AEO in August 2018 and on RM in April 2019.

LAO PEOPLE’S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Current planning

Lao Customs Development Plan has been formulated for 2018-2020.

Lao Customs has established a new Customs training center. At the same time, Lao Customs has completed a 45-day training programme for junior staff and newly recruited officers. The trainers are senior officers from relevant divisions and regional Customs offices. The objective of this training programme is to provide the basic knowledge on Customs-related matters, for instance, Customs valuation, HS and classification, rule of origin determination, Customs clearance procedures, RM and other related topics.

Lao Customs established a group of trainers that consists of 10 officers from relevant divisions. These trainers will be assigned to give lectures on particular the previously cited topics above. They will also be sent to attend training Programmes overseas for enhancing their capacity. Currently, Lao Customs has received support from the World Bank and JICA to strengthen the personnel capacity.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

Lao Customs has revised some certain articles of Customs Law which were approved by the National Assembly in December 2014. The objective of the revised Customs Law is to ensure the consistency and transparency in line with best practices and international standards. Lao Customs has also simplified and harmonized its Customs clearance procedures at the borders for facilitating trade.

The implementation of automation for Customs clearance at the border is necessary and Lao Customs plans to roll out the ASYCUDA to another 12 international Customs border checkpoints throughout the country in order to facilitate the movement of goods and people at the border.

Integrity is also an important area to Lao Customs. The Code of Ethics based on the Revised Arusha Declaration is developed with a view to emphasizing and establishing good discipline in the Lao Customs.

In 2019 April this year, a Ministerial Instruction No. 1159 has been issued, detailing AEO criteria, requirements, benefits, and associated procedure on the management of the programme.
**WCO support**

In August 2013, experts from the WCO, Japan Customs and ASEAN in conjunction with Lao Customs organized a national workshop on gap analysis for RKC accession. The workshop provided some useful recommendations and guidance on RKC accession. In November 2014, the WCO Secretary General (SG) officially visited Lao Customs. The SG had met Lao PDR’s higher government officials including the Vice Prime Ministers and Ministers of line ministries. He emphasized the importance of acceding to the RKC underlying the benefits which Lao PDR would obtain. A national workshop on RKC was held in March 2015 with the support of the WCO, Japan Customs and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The objective of the workshop was to outline the background, benefits of RKC to relevant officials from government agencies and private sectors. As a result, the government of Lao PDR deposited the instrument of accession to the RKC in July 2016.

Based on requests for assistance from Lao Customs, the WCO has provided a workshop on Transit in September 2016, Passenger Control in September 2017, HS in November 2017, IPR in November 2018, Rules of Origin in December 2018, Top Executive Retreat in March 2019, National support mission by INAMA Project in July 2019, Training-of-Trainers Course for representatives of Customs Training Institutions on technical aspects of the Transfers Regime of the Chemical Weapons Convention in July 2019, AEO validation training workshop jointly supported by the WCO and WB in August 2019. Lao PDR, Lao Customs has also actively participated in WCO regional and sub-regional workshops on various areas and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability.

**MALAYSIA**

**Current planning**

The Royal Malaysian Customs Department (RMCD) has developed a comprehensive five-year Strategic Plan (2015-2019) which outlines Programmes and activities towards achieving the department’s core objectives. The new Strategic Plan is a continuation of the previous Strategic Plan. Under the Five Year Strategic Plan 2015-2019, the department’s vision and mission have been revised with the vision to be “A World Class Customs Service” which refers to the role of Customs in providing a delivery service that is recognized at an international level, followed by the New Five Year Strategic Plan 2020-2024 was developed. Strategic Plan 2020-2024 is a top management plan that contains vision, mission, objectives, strategic core, slogan and common values as one of the department’s service culture to meet the expectations of stakeholders and the people for the next five years. This plan will be a guide and reference to RMCD staff at all levels in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programs and activities based on the strategic core and targets that have been set. Strategic planning and initiatives under the Strategic Plan 2020-2024 will be the best direction to improve RMCD services through revenue collection efficiency, provide trade facilitation and enforce the law towards the prosperity of the country.

**Customs Reform and Modernization progress**

The RMCD has put high priority on the development of knowledge management within the organization. A special task force was established for this purpose. The policy of lifelong-learning for its employees is established and institutional trainings and other capacity building Programmes that are provided to the staff.

The RMCD, with the assistance of the Prime Minister’s Department, is currently working on a new Customs information system which will be known as Ubiquitous Customs (u-Customs). The new system is scheduled to be launched in 2017 and will include a comprehensive and enhanced RMS. In regard to RM, the RMCD also planned to establish a Customs National Targeting Centre that will be incorporated in the u-Customs.

An AEO Programme was launched in January 2010 and RMCD has revised its Administrative Regulations emphasizing security and transparency in the supply chain security The RMCD signed its first MRA on AEO with Japan Customs at the Council Session in June 2014. The RMCD has also signed MRA with Hong Kong Customs on 17th March 2016 at the 17th Regional Heads of Customs Administrations Conference held in Kuala Lumpur. The department is currently negotiating with Korea Customs Service and Thai Customs Department with a view towards signing the MRA on AEO.

The RMCD has also established a Technical Co-operation Committee with major manufacturers/producers of specific products, with the objective of developing a better understanding on the manufacturing of products, current trends in business processes and business transactions relating to the product.

The RMCD also plays a pivotal role in the National Committee on Trade Facilitation. Under the National Logistics and Trade Facilitation Master Plan, RMCD and Ministry of International Trade and Industry have been designated to co-chair the Cluster on Trade Facilitation. This Cluster on Trade Facilitation functions as the National Committee required under the WTO TFA.
The RMCD has emphasized the importance of integrity with the establishment of the Integrity Action Plan 2015-2019. One of the measures taken to prevent corrupt practices is the implementation of the Integrity Pact in Government Procurement for procurement contracts involving Customs Administration where a pact is signed by both bidders and government officials and the pact underlines measures to be taken in the event of a breach.

Malaysia has implemented the Megaport Initiative which was operationalized in 2009 as a part of the government’s efforts to deter, detect and interdict illicit trafficking in nuclear and other radioactive materials.

Malaysia has also participated in the WCO UNODC Container Control Programme (CCP) pending the approval of the Government of Malaysia. The CCP unit has been established at Port Klang, Malaysia’s major port on 4 September 2015.

**WCO support**

The RMCD has been actively participating in WCO regional and sub-regional workshops on various areas and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability. AKMAL, as one of the RTCs in Asia/Pacific region has conducted several WCO workshops including national workshops with the support of the WCO, ROCB A/P and donors. Based on the request from the RMCD, the WCO conducted a national workshop on CBM in February 2017, PCA in March 2018, STCE in October 2018 and RM in September 2019. Also RMCD has been receiving support by APSP to ensure sustainability of the activities, training and equipment provided under the Programme Global Shield (PGS) and Passenger Controls initiatives.

**MALDIVES**

**Current planning**

Maldives Customs Service has developed a strategic plan 2014-2018, which focused on key areas such as human resource development, facilitation, RM and partnership with stakeholders. Each focus area is further detailed with a list of strategies and work plan which includes milestone, responsible division, KPI and a time frame for each strategy. The Strategic Plan 2020-2024, developed with the support of a UN consultant from the Maldives and in collaboration within MCS, is aligned to ensure the access to and compliance with the TFA. It has five major focus areas, namely: human capital management, organizational strengthening, trade facilitation & RM, border security & enforcement, and partnership & coordination, for which an Action Matrix containing 28 strategic initiatives with 117 milestones along with associated key performance indicators, outcomes and timelines. The Action Plan Matrix was developed to prioritize the results of the WTO categorization and notification of category A, B and C commitments.

**Customs Reform and Modernization progress**

The Maldives Customs Act which governs and provides legal support for Customs functions was newly instituted in 2011. The organizational structure was reviewed and changed following the enactment of the new Act.

The review of Customs procedures has been carried out for the reduction of barriers to a competitive market environment and the new Customs regulation such as Express channel is under the consideration.

A number of IT systems and projects are either running or under development, and these have assisted Customs procedures to be streamlined. The introduction of new IT systems includes (1) reducing paper-based procedures which allow the importer to download a form, create a declaration, update business information and receive automotive notification, and (2) creating a Customs Portal which allows importers and brokers to upload documents and check the status of declarations. The Development of the National SW system is ongoing through the cooperation with Asian Development Bank.

The MCS has been working on the enhancement of the RM system and the implementation of PCA principles. The RM section and intelligence section were established to play a leading role in these areas. After WCO-ADB joint multi-year support on Valuation and PCA, a detailed procedure and a comprehensive PCA system has been introduced since 2016, and field audits are being conducted since mid-2016.

The partnership with other border agencies such as the police and defense force and other Customs administrations has been enhanced through the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). In 2013, the MCS signed an MOU with the Environment Ministry to implement the ‘Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer’. The MCS also signed two MOUs with the Maldives Inland Revenue Authority (MIRA) and Transparency Maldives. The MOU with MIRA is to exchange Information between Customs and MIRA on cases related to tax collection and investigations while the MOU with Transparency Maldives focused on mutual cooperation between the two agencies on eliminating corruption in society.
The MCS is working toward the accession of the RKC. The ROCB A/P delivered the national workshop on RKC in September 2013 to support and expedite this process. In order to align with the RKC, a gap analysis of the General Annex and Specific annexes, and designing the legislative provisions are currently underway.

In 2018, a series of WCO missions to install GTAS system into Maldives Customs were conducted to have enhanced structure to obtain API/PNR and strengthen RM implementation for passenger control. In June 2019 GTAS was officially launched, and the Maldives is now requiring all air carriers with flights in and out of Maldives to submit API and PNR data in the agreed upon format.

WCO support

The MCS has installed the WCO E-learning Programme into its system in 2011.

From November 2014 to August 2015, the WCO sent a series of missions to support the MCS in the areas of Customs Valuation, PCA and RM, which resulted in identifying issues and in facilitating MCS’s development of action plans.

A WCO-ADB joint National expert mission was held in January 2016, which resulted in establishment of core trainers’ team and in finalization of development of training materials which support in-country training activities to better address requirements of the WTO Valuation Agreement.

A WCO national workshop on TRS was held in November 2017 to conduct a TRS in Maldives to identify bottlenecks and enhance trade facilitation by taking into consideration the average time to release the cargo. TFA diagnostic/implementation planning mission was conducted to support MCS in establishing a holistic strategy for implementing the Articles of the WTO TFA in November 2019.

Also MCS has been receiving support by APSP to ensure sustainability of the activities, training and equipment provided under the Programme Global Shield (PGS) and Passenger Controls initiatives and CCP as well.

The MCS has been also actively participating in WCO regional workshops in various areas and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability.

MONGOLIA

Current planning

Mongolia Customs has developed Strategic Plan for 2016-2020 which contains 9 key objectives such as:

- Customs control based on RM;
- Enhancement of capacity to protect national security and to combat illicit trade;
- Implementation of proper tariff policy and securing national state budget revenue;
- Enhancing the capacity of the Customs organization, developing human resource capabilities, supplying highly skilled workforce with specialized expertise;
- Adopting change management, good governance and internal control within the Customs organization;
- Implementing CBM, eliminating hindrances to the free flow of goods and vehicles;
- Enhancing legal reform, creating enabling business environment, and facilitating trade;
- Ensuring operational transparency and adopting international service standard; and
- Developing information technology, creating enabling environment for paperless clearance.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

IT infrastructure and equipment has been improved significantly. A new IT platform, the Customs Administration Information System was introduced in 2009. The ADB supports the IT System of Mongolia Customs. Currently GACT is working on the implementation of “Regional Improvement of Border Services (RIBS) project” which includes preparatory work for SW.

The PCA function was reinforced, for instance, by the introduction of Customs’ competence on PCA in legislation in 2008. Still, Mongolia Customs considers that the expertise of officers should be improved through learning from international best practices.

Mongolian Customs has been working on the preparation for legal environment for AEO.
The RM unit was created in 2010, and the function of the RM has been enhanced through an IT system. In January 2012, the unit expanded its role and turned into the RM department including Customs control functions. Four units have been established to analyze and profile risks and a risk targeting and operational analysis center was created. With the assistance of USAID, a RM module of Mongolia Customs Automated Information System has been improved.

Following the ratification of the WTO TFA, a National Committees on Trade Facilitation was established, recognizing the importance of SW, subcommittee on SW was also created. But unfortunately, the annual plan of this subcommittee entailed of creating a trade portal, which refers more to transparency and predictability.

WCO support

Based on the requests from Mongolia Customs, the WCO has provided various workshops. For instance, the WCO has delivered workshops on CBM in May 2016, on RM in September 2016, on LMD in October 2018 and on IT Diagnostic in December 2018. Mongolia Customs has also been actively participating in WCO regional workshops in various areas and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability. Mongolia Customs is positively utilizing the WCO E-learning Programme by translating it into its own language.

NEPAL

Current planning

The Customs Reform and Modernization Strategies and Action Plan (CRMSAP) have been prepared for a period of four years covering 2017 to 2021. The CRMSAP sets major objectives as expedited legitimate trade facilitation, promoted integrity and good governance, enhanced Customs automation and data management, strengthened HR management capacity, developed infrastructure and physical facilities, enhanced passenger clearance services, fair and accurate revenue collection, strengthened compliance management/voluntary compliance, advanced RM, protected society/safety & security and streamlined CBM. Customs also formulates an annual action plan in line with CRMSAP. This includes the legal amendment of Customs Act in line with Accession to RKC, study of documents requirements for Customs processing, enhancing the compliance level, risk based Customs management, time release study, infrastructure development, capacity development, extension of ASYCUDA World and e-Customs.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

The DoC has a dedicated Customs Reform and Modernization section which has the responsibility for driving and managing the reforms throughout the organization. At present, a number of new reform initiatives are underway or in the planning phase.

The DoC has been working toward the accession of the RKC and it is now in the final stage for accession. The WCO delivered the workshop on RKC to support and expedite this process. Recently, the Cabinet has approved the proposal and was submitted to the Legislative Parliament in March 2015 for its accession.

For the enhancement of the RM function, an Intelligence section has been established. The section is responsible for collecting and analyzing the information on infractions related cargo clearance and preparing national risk profiles. The computerized risk-based clearance system was also implemented in 6 major border Customs points on entry to facilitate the clearance of goods of low risk and compliant traders.

The Headquarters of Customs has the facility for electronic live monitoring of the entry clearance process at 10 major Customs offices and also has visual IP camera surveillance at nine major Customs offices.

Customs has started acceptance of the bank receipts for goods clearance and it is planned that this system will be extended to all major Customs Offices.

The DoC has developed an e-Customs Master Plan for full automation of the Customs Administration. At this stage, Customs is upgrading to ASYCUDA World which aims to interface with the Nepal National SW System to be developed. The piloting of system is being carried out in Mechi Customs Office. Customs Valuation Module has been implemented in 16 Customs offices as of March 2020 and plan to expand in all the Customs offices using ASYCUDA.

An AR service has been introduced for tariff classification.

Lastly, Nepal has acceded the RKC as 107th Member of the Convention and handed the instrument of accession to the WCO on 3 February 2017. In all the steps of RKC accession, the WCO, ADB, Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR) and International Finance Cooperation (IFC) provided technical assistance to the Department of Customs, Nepal.
WCO support

Based on the requests from the DoC, the WCO delivered a workshop on RKC in March 2011.

The WCO and the ADB conducted a national workshop on the TRS tool in March 2015 in Nepal which supported the workshop participants to draft an action plan to conduct a TRS in December 2015 to identify bottlenecks in Customs clearance. Moreover, with technical support from the WCO, the DoC has successfully conducted TRS in Mechi Customs Office in March 2016. In November 2016, a support mission to assist in validation of Customs Reform and Modernization Strategies and Action Plan of the DoC was delivered.

Two WCO-ADB joint national expert missions on Customs valuation under the WCO-ADB Multi-year Project were held in August 2015 and March 2016, which resulted in establishment of core trainers’ team and in finalization of development of training materials which support in-country training activities to better address requirements of the WTO Valuation Agreement.

The DoC has also been actively participating in the WCO regional workshops in various areas and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability. Based on the requests from Nepal Customs, the WCO has recently conducted national workshops on RM in November 2017 and Revenue Package focusing on HS and AR in July 2018.

PAKISTAN

Current Planning

Pakistan Customs has embarked upon an ambitious reform and automation imitative with the goals of transforming Pakistan Customs into an effective, transparent and efficient revenue collecting and enforcement organization.

Pakistan Customs’ reforms and modernization efforts are continuing since the last decade. Pakistan Customs has been moving towards automated clearance procedures as part of an indigenous reform agenda and launched the Web Based One Customs system (WeBOC) in 2011.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

Currently, over 90% of the import and export cargo is processed and cleared through an indigenously developed paperless cargo clearance system called Web Based Customs (WeBOC). The WeBOC operates with a robust RM System (RMS) with more than 65% of the import and 90% of export cargo being cleared without intrusive inspections. The WeBOC is connected through Electronic Data interface with the Ports/Terminal operators/tracker companies/air lines etc. and with some regulatory ministries. The WeBOC system is also connected electronically with the State Bank of Pakistan for verification of foreign exchange remittance documents namely, Export-form (E-Form). In order to record and track the mode of payments for the import consignment, an electronic Import Form (I-Form) is also being developed which verifies and records the trail of payments sent abroad for imported cargo.

Automated clearance through any self-assessment-based system cannot exist without a robust PCA organization that would effectively monitor clearances through post clearance audits and encourage compliance without adversely impacting speedy clearance at the ports. The Directorate General of PCA was consequently established in October 2008. It is an important organ of Pakistan Customs with an important role to play in the scenario of automated clearances through WeBOC since it enables Customs controls while allowing for immediate expedited release of goods or at least reduction of release times. In fact, implementation of post clearance Customs controls is very much part of the Pakistan Customs RM strategy.

Pakistan Customs has put in place a 24/7 cargo clearance system for exports at all the major airports and sea ports to facilitate the round the clock clearance of cargo. For import of perishable goods, immediate clearance groups (ICG) are working at the major airports, round the clock as well.

Pakistan has recently TFA and has accordingly, chalked out a comprehensive plan for its implementation. Consistent with the ‘SAFE Framework’ developed by the WCO, the Pakistan Customs is working on developing a plan for implementation of an AEO Programme connecting all the stakeholders in international cargo supply chain ranging from importers, exporters, clearing agents, port operators to transporters and freight forwarders across borders.

Pakistan has acceded to the TIR Convention 1975 and is in the process of making the TIR system operational. Besides, legal changes and introduction of new procedures, Pakistan Customs is conducting awareness seminars for all stakeholders to promote TIR. Border Customs stations have been notified as eligible to handle TIR cargo and software to dovetail with International Road Transport Union (IRU) software is also being developed. Introduction of TIR will open three major trade corridors for movement of goods through Pakistan i.e. China, Caspian and Iran-Turkey corridors. It will also lead to
up gradation of Pakistan’s transport sector and introduction of internationally used best practices with regards to movement of cargo.

Pakistan Customs with assistance from international development partners mainly Asian Development Bank has also embarked upon a project to establish state of the art border complexes at its land borders with Afghanistan and India under the Integrated Transit Trade Management System (ITTMS). This single project has the potential to turn Pakistan into a regional trading hub. In connection with its efforts for implement a SW, Pakistan Customs is in final stage of negotiations with the Chinese Customs for establishing EDI with China for online verification of Certificates of Origin and export/import declarations. In addition to China, negotiations are also under way to establish similar electronic connectively, with Afghanistan and Turkey.

Pakistan Customs has fully implemented WCO GTAS since November 2019 after implementation efforts began in June 2018. Targeting officers at the newly forming National Targeting Center in Islamabad, along with targeting officers and IT staff from six other airports including, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Multan, Sialkot and Faisalabad all have the capability to conduct risk assessment of both in and outbound commercial air passengers. Training on API and PNR and development of risk assessment methodology is also conducted for 35 targeting officers and IT administrators with the support of the USCBP.

Pakistan Customs has started to use the nCEN in their fight against international trans-border crime since September 2019, aiming at providing Customs administrations with the necessary hardware and software as well as related knowledge and skills to implement simplified and enhanced Customs law enforcement procedures, using modern operational techniques.

WCO support

A WCO sub-regional workshop was held in September 2015, which enhanced the organizational capacity for Customs Valuation in addressing requirements of the WTO Valuation Agreement.

Following the TFA Needs assessment mission in January 2017 and Joint WCO-HMRC Scoping Mission for Pakistan in August 2018, series of PCA and nCEN Rollout support has been provided, namely in November 2018, July 2019 and August 2019. To further support Pakistan’s effort to balance trade facilitation and security, the WCO provided assistance on RM including setting up National Targeting Center, and ICT&AEO in December 2018 and January 2019 respectively.

Pakistan Customs has been taking a series of support by CCP to assist in establishing effective container selections and controls to prevent drug trafficking and other illicit cross-border activities.

Pakistan Customs is actively participating in WCO regional workshops and training events on various Customs related topics and gained sound understanding of respective topics to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Current planning

The PNG Customs Service Corporate Plan has been developed for 2013–2017. Also, in 2017 the PNG Customs Service developed its Strategic RM Plan.

With the PNG Customs Service becoming a statutory authority in 2014, the main focus is currently on capacity building for its staff both new and existing to implement the PNG government objectives in line with international best practices.

Customs Reforms and Modernization

The PNG Customs’ modernization and reform Programme is still on going with various projects which includes two container examination facilities, communications, review and updating of SOPs. The ASYCUDA WORLD has been applied since 2017.

The PNG Customs Service is also looking at building capacity in Post Clearance Audit, in compliance assessment and review, to strengthen its RM program.

WCO support

Based on PNG’s request to the WCO, a workshop on SAFE and AEO was conducted in PNG with the participants from Samoa and Tonga in May 2018, which enhanced understanding and implementation of SAFE and promoted the development of AEO scheme based on RM approach. In addition, to enhance capacity on performance measurement and on identifying bottle necks, the WCO delivered support on TRS to build capacity to conduct by their own through the national workshop on TRS in April 2019. The WCO national workshop on Revenue Package, on Development of AR System for
Classification and the HS 2017 was also held in July 2018, while focusing on improving the current infrastructure and the advance ruling system for classification in PNG, as set out in the WTO TFA.

The PNG Customs Service has also participated in a number of the WCO regional workshops and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability.

PHILIPPINES

Current planning

The Philippines Bureau of Customs (BOC), as the second largest revenue collection agency of the government contributing about 22% of the total national government revenue, is mandated with the triple mission of collecting revenue, facilitating trade and protecting borders.

The present Customs reform Programme of the BOC has added these three-fold objectives: streamline and revitalize bureaucracy, uproot the culture of corruption, and jump-start a virtuous cycle of integrity and true public service.

The BOC Strategic Transformation Plan 2017-2022 includes five Strategic Objectives associated to BOC Mission Statement 2: “To facilitate trade in a secured manner through an informed compliance Programme”. The Plan includes a number of activities focused on establishing trade facilitation Programmes, improving business processes, institutionalizing knowledge management, optimizing the use of data, and enhancing the compliance of stakeholders. The Plan has been complimented by the development of a new BOC Strategic Road Map

Customs Reforms and Modernization Progress

The Customs Modernization and Tariff Act (CMTA) has already been approved by the Congress and is due to be signed by the President of the Philippines. It will replace the Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines (TCCP) which was last amended in 1978. The CMTA aims to modernize the BOC by speeding up the current Customs procedures, limiting human interface during Customs transactions, and fostering transparency and accountability.

Today, the BOC is more transparent. All importations into the Philippines as well as weighted dutiable values for all imports are published in the BOC website (www.Customs.gov.ph). All issuances, polices and regulations are also available in the website. This allows stakeholders wide access to information about the BOC anytime, anywhere. Dialogue is also being conducted on a regular basis with the private sector and stakeholders.

New recruitment policies were also introduced. Polices against nepotism were promulgated, reiterating existing anti-nepotism laws. All opened job vacancies were disclosed, and a rigorous examination was conducted for all applicants, in partnership with the Civil Service Commission.

To revitalize its anti-smuggling efforts, the BOC filed cases against erring importers/brokers. Administrative cases were also filed against BOC officials and employees for conniving with these unscrupulous importers/brokers.

IT infrastructure was also improved. New computers and laptops were purchased. X-ray machines were installed in various airports and sea ports. The BOC also continues to develop the National SW which it hopes to be integrated with the ASEAN SW until necessary review on the technical requirements is finalized by 2017.

In 2010, the Philippines had deposited its instrument of accession to the RKC.

To improve the competency and efficiency of BOC officials and employees, continuous training and workshops are conducted.

WCO support

Based on the requests from the Philippines, the WCO has delivered an advisory mission for new port development of Manila in July 2017. In addition, the WCO, jointly with the World Bank, conducted diagnostic mission on Human Resource Development to enhance and update the BOC's policy and strategy. At the request of the BOC, the WCO conducted a diagnostic support mission to make a comprehensive assessment of the situation with regard to the WTO TFA implementation, highlighting some areas where further capacity building and technical assistance support is required in August 2019.

Also the BOC has been taking a series of support by CCP to assist in establishing effective container selections and controls to prevent drug trafficking and other illicit cross-border activities. The BOC also actively participates in WCO-sponsored workshops and trainings on various topics like IPR, AEO, and RM and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability.
SAMOA

Current planning

Samoa Customs has Corporate Plan developed by the Ministry of Revenue for 2017-2022 which includes effective client service with active compliance management, modernization of the revenue mobilization services, effective trade facilitation and border management enforcement through as the key strategic areas.

Samoa Customs is dedicated to ensuring that monitoring of its RM framework is enhanced through strengthening its PCA team and also its operational divisions.

Customs Reforms and Modernization Progress

Samoa Customs went through the review process of the Customs Act which was completed in 2014 and the new Customs Act came into effect. In January 2015, the Cabinet also approved the new Customs Regulations 2015. The Customs Modernization Project features a component on the review of the Human Resource structure for Customs which commenced with a scoping mission in March 2014. The restructuring has now been approved by the Samoa Public Service Commission, and Samoa Customs is now in the implementation phase of the new structure for Customs and is also awaiting approval of the new structure for support services divisions. The new Customs restructure resulted in the additions of new posts and renaming the three Customs technical divisions to clearly identify and segregate the roles played by each division in the clearance process allowing for faster clearance and effective management of selectivity profiles. It also gave greater focus to border security and post compliance auditing. The restructure included re-grading of salary levels of Customs Officers with the basic starting salary now approved from Level 3 to Level 6 and other higher level positions being re-graded to higher remuneration in accordance with job evaluation and complexity of tasks.

The ASYCUDA World system has been in operation for several years. Samoa Customs is now in the process of discussions with other administrations involved in the clearance process to achieve SW.

The Performance Management Framework introduced within the Samoa Public Service and piloted by the Ministry also consists of capacity building activities that the staff went through in each appraisal period. In addition to the internal capacity building and training activities, Samoa Customs participates in various workshops and training, both national and international, to ensure that Customs officers are trained to keep up with the international standards and best practices.

Samoa Customs is now in the process of monitoring the compliance levels of importers, agents and transport companies through our Ministry Compliance Improvement Plan to establish a Compliant Traders Programme.

WCO support

A WCO workshop on RKC was held in December 2015, which supported Samoa Customs to accede to make steady steps towards RKC accession. In June 2017, a workshop on Revenue Package and HS 2017 was also delivered upon the request of Samoa Customs. In addition, a workshop on SAFE and AEO was conducted for Samoa, together with PNG and Tonga, in May 2018 to enhanced understanding and implementation of SAFE and to promote the development of Compliant Traders Program based on RM approach. A WCO national TRS workshop was held in November 2019 to establish competence and confidence in the implementation of the WCO TRS tool, in collecting, recording and analyzing the data as well as reporting and conclusion of a TRS.

Samoa Customs has been actively participating in WCO regional workshops on a number of topics, including the ones designed in partnership with Oceania Customs Organization, and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability.

SRI LANKA

Current planning

The current Strategic Plan of Sri Lanka Customs covers years 2015-2018 and the process to develop a Strategic Plan for the next 3 years is on the way. In addition to this, Sri Lanka Customs has an annual work plan which includes key activities and performance indicators.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

Sri Lanka Customs has been intensively working on the development of an IT system. They are utilizing ASYCUDA World for the automation of Customs procedures. Other procedures such as the acceptance of electronic payment are included and currently 11 banks are in operation for e-payment. SW is ongoing process which is currently supported by the World Bank.
An AR system for HS classification and Customs valuation has recently been introduced.

The WCO support on AEO Programme in January 2018 assisted Sri Lanka Customs to initiate the Compliance Trader Programme which is now in implementation phase as Fast Track Documentation Programme and Green Channel Facilitation Programme. The plan is to upgrade the Programme to be AEO Programme during 2019.

After conducting a WCO workshop on TRS in September 2018 jointly with International Trade Center, Sri Lanka Customs successfully conducted the second TRS in December 2018 and published the report compiling relevant information.

WCO support

Two WCO-ADB joint national expert missions were held in October 2015 and February 2016, which resulted in establishment of core trainers’ team and in finalization of development of training materials which support in-country training activities to better address the requirements of the WTO Valuation Agreement.

Based on the request of Sri Lanka Customs, the WCO has delivered workshops on TRS support in September 2018, national workshop on Rules of Origin Joint action with the WTO in October 2018, and PCA in December 2018

GTAS Initial Engagement and Technical Visit in March 2020 was implemented to support airport managers in enhancing passenger controls and in responding to the identified need to emerging risk and threats including the implementation of API and PNR. Furthermore, national workshop on Rules of Origin and AR was held in March 2020 in enhancing its knowledge on Rules of Origin and increasing institutional capacity to carry out origin work including the development of an AR system for origin.

Also Sri Lanka Customs has been taking a series of support by CCP to assist in establishing effective container selections and controls to prevent drug trafficking and other illicit cross-border activities.

Sri Lanka Customs has also been actively participating in WCO regional workshops in various areas and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability.

THAILAND

Current planning

The five-year Strategic Plan (2016-2020) of the Thai Customs Department (TCD), which is called “Customs Strategic Plan 2020”, has five major strategies under which several projects and plans have been developed. The five strategies are to develop work process and ICT system for trade facilitation; to develop Customs measures and international trade information promoting border trade and global trade connectivity; to develop efficient and integrated Customs control system; to enhance revenue collection efficiency and effectiveness based on good governance principle; and to develop human resources capacity and organizational management.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

The TCD has put high priority on the development and enhancement of a National SW (NSW). The Thailand NSW was launched in October 2011, and there is a total of 33 government agencies which are officially connected to this NSW. The NSW accepts electronic transactions including import and export declaration, import and export licenses and duty payment.

The development of an Electronic Advance Customs Valuation Ruling system is one of the priority areas of Customs reform. In Thailand, the system has been implemented. The TCD has issued the Customs Notification No.38/2558 dated 3 March 2015, which is effective from 4 March 2015.

Preparation for CBM (CBM) is one of the priority areas of Customs reform. To emphasize the concept of CBM, the TCD has carried out a study to consider and prepare for the facilitation of cross-border movement of goods at port of entry, with a focus on simplification of Customs procedures, minimizing transaction cost including coordination with other border agencies both within and between countries. The study report has already been made available on the Department's website.
The AEO Programme was launched in 2011 originally for importers/exporters. To date, there are a total of 147 certified AEO importers/exporters, and 145 Customs brokers. The TCD has been working on the improvement of the Programme, including the conduct of research for establishing MRAs with other Customs administrations in the future. The TCD signed AEO MRAs with Hong Kong Customs in June 2015. Also, the TCD signed Action Plans with Korea Customs Service and Royal Malaysian Customs Department in September 2014 and April 2016 respectively. In addition, the TCD will sign an Action Plan with Singapore Customs in May 2016.

**WCO support**

The TCD has been actively participating in the WCO regional and sub-regional workshops on various areas and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability. In addition, to respond to needs expressed by the Thai Customs, the WCO conducted national workshops on Transfer Pricing & Advance Valuation Training and Risk & Compliance Management in November 2018 and January 2019 respectively.

The WCO organized expert mission focusing on several aspects linked to IWT, such as training, RM, and operational planning and implementation in July 2019. Also national workshop on the HS and AR on classification was held in December 2019, mainly focusing on securing uniformity in the interpretation and application of the HS Nomenclature and introducing the amendments to the HS that will enter into force in 2022, and offering an opportunity to discuss the tools and instruments developed by the WCO under the Revenue Package to assist the improvement of the current classification work and related infrastructure, including an Advance Ruling system.

**TIMOR LESTE**

**Background**

On 28 January 2000, the organization commenced as a joint Border Service under the United Nations Transitional Administration East Timor (UNTAET), before later coming under the control of the Revenue Service. Many current Customs law and practices are derived from the law and regulations developed during UNTAET and subsequent UN missions.

The Customs role in Timor-Leste has undergone continual redevelopment since Timor-Leste independence in May 2002. The Directorate General of Customs Timor-Leste was established in 2012, when it was separated from the Directorate General Revenue. It reports directly to the Minister of Finance.

In 2013, the WCO conducted a Diagnostic assessment of Timor-Leste Customs and made specific recommendations related to the import clearance business model, as well as the modernization of the organization in general.

Timor-Leste Customs currently receives assistance from many international donors and agencies, most notably the WCO, World Bank, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), ADB and United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Many WCO Members from within the region also provide valuable ongoing assistance for specific reform programs.

**Current planning**

The current business model for cargo clearance has impediments that make it difficult for Customs to effectively achieve its mission. Customs intends to modernize the Customs role as a key stakeholder within the Timor-Leste supply chain.

Multiple diagnostic studies, most notably the WCO Review and the recently drafted UNCTAD Scoping paper prepared for the ASYCUDA World Project have identified work practices that can be improved. They are principally related to tariff, classification and valuation work areas, cargo profiling and targeting, and the role of Port examination and inspection teams.

Timor-Leste Customs is developing business model structures to enhance its ability to effectively target cargo. It aims to improve detection of revenue smuggling and cross border criminality. A key to this process is the desire to develop effective information collection, information analysis and intelligence targeting. The new work structures being developed are to be supported by three key law and technology reforms.

Timor-Leste Customs has developed a new Strategic Plan (SP) for the period 2020-2025. The planning process started in July 2019 and involved an “away day planning event” hosted by the DG, with the four Directors and the five Regional Heads along with consultants from USAID. The SP was finalized in December 2019, approved by the Minister, and is now waiting for promulgation of the new version of the Organic Customs Code before it can be formally launched. It is anticipated this will be soon. The Plan sets out a clear vision for the reform of the Customs administration and is guided by the four core values of the administration, namely:
• Integrity;
• Professionalism; and
• Transparency and respect.

Each of the pillars includes a sequence of activities with timeframes and strategic deliverables. It is envisaged that the Plan, once implemented, will be supported by a number of institutional documents including a Customs Authority Action Plan and quarterly reports.

The related activities contained within the Strategic Plan and that of the CRP Annual Work Plan fall within four distinct pillars that are dependent on each other but cover four different perspectives:

• Cultural reform - (strategic) enhance change management, improve leadership, display commitment, provide transparency, adhere to values, maintain professional standards and service quality etc.;
• Resource development - develop policies/strategies, adopt competency-based approach, assess training needs, assess skill sets, introduce performance agreements, conduct effective monitoring/evaluation etc.;
• Technical assistance – deliver sustainable technical training, publish SOPS/User Manuals, conduct management assurance, enhance system connectivity, improve inspection equipment/utilization etc.; and
• Stakeholder engagement – understanding roles/responsibilities/perspectives, build mutual trust/respect, establish effective fora, provide trade information, develop technical platforms, work in collaboration etc.

Customs Modernization and Reform Progress

Significant progress has been made in 2014/15 on the three technical Programmes to support the intended work structures. They are:

• Commencement of the ASYCUDA WORLD implementation Programme;
• Initial background preparation for a new Harmonized Tariff 2012; and
• Drafting of a new Consolidated Customs Code (Customs legislation) that modernizes Customs legislation and enable new electronic practices and improved enforcement.

Significant financial resources are provided for these tasks by the World Bank, WCO and UNCTAD. Currently, the NSW project is scheduled to be launched in February 2020 and will last until 2024. The project will be conducted under the auspices of the MoF and will be led by the DG.

WCO support

The WCO has participated with the World Bank and the contracted Customs Advisers to consider a range of new structural models and cargo clearance flows to favorably enhance the Customs impact on the supply chain. The WCO, under the NORAD project, has supplied training for Compliance and Operations staff to improve their skill-set for valuation (basic and intermediate), classification, and intelligence and profiling. WCO missions have also supported basic policy development for mid-level officers and are currently focused on the provision of ‘Train the Trainer’ Programmes to support the training requirements that will be required as the three-key technical Programmes come online.

Diagnostic support mission, including TFA assessment, was implemented in January 2020 to carry out a comprehensive diagnostic of the Customs functions to support Timor-Leste Customs Authority establishing a holistic development strategy in line with the WCO Diagnostic Framework, international standards and the WTO TFA.

TONGA

Background

A Customs Strategic Action Plan (based on the SAFE) has been completed after a WCO diagnostic in 2010 and a sustainable corporate planning process was undertaken for the first time in 2014, led by a technical advisor.

Having been focused on incorporating improved risk-management approaches, Tonga now has a functional integrated intelligence-driven automated risk-management process which operates through their Customs Management System (CMS). They are continually looking to improve trade facilitation in this regard and are now able to turn towards building their intelligence capacity to contribute to a more effective risk-management approach and strengthen its role in international and regional networks.
Current planning

The corporate planning will be undertaken for the second year in 2015, with a focus on building capacity for enforcement in Tonga Customs through an improved intelligence function and valuation capability.

Tonga Customs has re-structured and now includes a dedicated Intelligence Unit, which is currently building a foundational understanding of modern intelligence issues and approaches. In line with improving enforcement capacity, a dedicated Valuation Unit was also established to increase its ability to identify undervalued goods and fraudulent activity.

Tonga is also focusing on strengthening its networks and improving collaboration with local related administrations as well as international bodies and supporting the AEO model. To help with this, Tonga Customs has been exploring the possibility of adopting a new computer system to match a number of other Pacific administrations. After an initial comparative analysis, it plans to explore in more detail during 2015, the suitability of the AYSCUDA World System for the Tongan context.

Through these and current legislative review activities, Tonga is planning to be positioned to accede to the RKC in the near future.

Customs Reforms and Modernization Progress

Tonga’s long-term socio-economic growth efforts are framed by the Tonga Strategic Development Framework (TSDF) 2015-2025, which establishes seven national outcomes. Deriving from the TSDF, a number of strategic sector plans are providing guidance, for instance on agriculture, fisheries, education, energy, health and infrastructure.

WCO provided support in March 2015, for Tonga Customs to successfully undertake a legislative gap-analysis of changes needed for RKC compliance. Drafting of amendments and additional legislation have commenced and was expected be completed in 2015/16.

As part of the modernization process, Tonga Custom now has a fully operational RM Framework. Criteria for assessing and rating risk were incorporated into its automatic Customs Management System (CMS) in July 2014 and are functioning well.

Tonga Customs staff had the opportunity to improve their knowledge and leadership in the SW concept as it relates to trade facilitation at several WCO workshops throughout the past year. Staff also attended events to better understand and work towards AEO initiatives, which all planning activities and developments in RM have supported.

As mentioned, from engaging in other WCO workshops and meetings, Tonga Customs was prompted to re-structure, to strengthen enforcement capability. The first step has been establishing an Intelligence Unit to better identify possible illegal activity in Tonga and contribute to and benefit from international intelligence networks. Tonga Customs has also established a Valuation Unit to better identify possible fraudulent activity related to the stated value of goods.

Within the Ministry of Revenue and Customs, strategic planning remains an annual exercise, currently represented by the 2019 / 20 Corporate Plan and Budget. While the Corporate Plan demonstrates alignment to the TSDF 2015-2025, there is an absence of a medium-term strategy that would provide a visionary linkage between the Ministry of Revenue and Customs and Tonga’s overall national development strategy.

WCO support

A workshop on SAFE and AEO was conducted for Tonga, together with PNG and Samoa, in May 2018 to enhanced understanding and implementation of SAFE and to promote the development of AEO scheme based on RM approach.

The WCO Scoping Mission for the Tailor-made Track of the Mercator Programme was implemented in September 2018 to establish a two year plan to support Tonga’s implementation of the WTO TFA under the HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD partnership, followed by multiple workshops were conducted, namely TRS workshops in December 2018, March 2019 and February 2020, workshop on PCA in May 2019 and workshop on RM in August 2019, based on the partnership

Tonga Customs has been actively participating in WCO regional and international workshops on a number of topics, particularly focused on RM and compliance management as a means to secure and facilitate trade for Tonga.

UNION OF MYANMAR

Current Planning

Myanmar Customs has developed Strategic Plan which includes four strategic goals and they are to implement modern international Customs practices, to establish a modern IT environment, to reform the organization and develop its human resources and to create and nurture effective partnerships.
Action plan 2017-2021 includes:

- To achieve compliance with the standards of the RKC;
- To introduce an AEO Scheme;
- To introduce a PCA System;
- To develop and apply a comprehensive and coherent system of RM in all areas of Customs control;
- To introduce an effective system of prevention, deterrence, investigation and enforcement;
- To implement controls over the value of imported goods which are fully and consistently compliant with the WTO's Valuation Agreement;
- To meet the Customs standards in the WTO TFA;
- To develop a modern system of bonded warehousing;
- To establish, staff and equip a new IT division within the department;
- To continue the rollout of MACCS and MCIS;
- To contribute to the development of a National SW;
- To upgrade the Myanmar Customs Department Website;
- To develop and introduce a range of new IT systems and applications;
- To develop a Myanmar Customs Intranet;
- To introduce and progressively allocate staff to a new organization structure;
- To develop and introduce human resource management (HRM) systems and procedures;
- To develop effective relationships with the private sector; and
- To develop effective cooperation arrangements with other government departments and Customs administrations.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

Myanmar Customs recognized that reform is the critical role as for a modern Customs administration to keep abreast of international standards and increased trade volume.

Myanmar Customs amended the Sea Customs Act and Land Customs Act in order to conform to international Customs best practice in 2015. Reorganization of the current organizational structure has been conducted and a division has been formed for the purpose of implementation automated cargo clearance system. Furthermore, regional offices have been opened in seven states and eight regions. Recruitment of new officers and internal promotion have also been carried out.

Myanmar Customs has implemented its automated system called Myanmar Automated Cargo Clearance System (MACCS). In this system, all Customs formalities such as import, export and transit are included. In addition, the partnership among other government agencies, cargo handlers, warehouse operators, brokers, freight forwarders, and other stakeholders etc. has been established to achieve the successful implementation of MACCS. Developing of blueprint for achieving National SW has been supported by the World Bank and now it is in the stage of discussion among other border-related agencies.

Following the support provided on TRS in April 2018 jointly by the WCO and ADB, Myanmar Customs conducted their second TRS in February 2019.

Regarding the preparation to accede RKC, Myanmar Customs has organized the steering committee and working group to perform gap analysis between RKC guidelines and current procedures of its department.

WCO support

In 2014, the WCO collaborated with ROCB AP and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to conduct the national workshop on RKC for Myanmar Customs officials and private sector in order to prepare Myanmar Customs for the accession to RKC. The RKC accession process and analyzing the gaps between current Myanmar Customs procedure and recommendations of RKC were inputted and that workshop also supported the development of an Action Plan.

The WCO recently delivered national workshops on regulatory framework of IPR in November 2018 and on Security and SAFE FoS in January 2019. Also Myanmar Customs has been taking a series of support by CCP to assist in establishing effective container selections and controls to prevent drug trafficking and other illicit cross-border activities.
Moreover, Myanmar Customs benefited from opportunities to participate in many trainings, seminars and workshops organized and funded by the WCO and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance their capability.

**VANUATU**

**Current planning**

Vanuatu Customs is implementing its strategy through the Corporate Plan of Ministry of Finance and the Action Plan in the Customs Modernization Program 2016-2020. Key strategic priorities are set as 1. Workforce has the Knowledge, Skills and Integrity needed to achieve its desired outcomes, 2. High Levels of Voluntary Compliance will be achieved through Effectively Managing Risk, 3. Systems, Processes and Structure will Effectively Contribute to Business Outcomes, 4. Improve through development and change, 5. Work in Partnership with Key Stakeholders.

**Customs Reforms and Modernization Progress**

In 2013, New Customs Legislation and regulation was approved by the National Parliament. This law set new measures in Customs processes.

Customs Regulations were introduced to take into account the functions of Customs brokers.

In 2014, two senior Customs officials of Vanuatu Customs, under the NZ Government support, undertook an Advance Ruling training with the New Zealand Customs Service in Auckland, New Zealand.

In 2012, the WCO ROCB conducted a national workshop on PCA in Vanuatu. In this workshop, the opportunity was also given to external stakeholders to participate and share their views and comments concerning technical issues regard classification of goods and valuation methodology.

Vanuatu introduced ASYCUDA++ in 1998 and upgraded to ASYCUDA World in July 2014 with a view to incorporate the provision of the SW concept.

In March 2018, Vanuatu acceded to the International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System and it will enter into force on January 2020.

Following the WCO workshops on RKC in June 2017 and Vanuatu successfully acceded to RKC in June 2018.

With the on-going support from the Australian Aid funding through the auspices of the Governance for Growth (GfG), a Customs Technical Advisor was hired to assist in the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Customs Operations.

**WCO support**

Through the WCO/ROCB, Vanuatu Customs continues to benefit from the WCO workshops on Valuation, HS, and Rules of Origin.

Recently, the WCO delivered workshops on RKC in June 2017 and Vanuatu is now towards the way on the ratification to RKC. In addition, a national workshop on TRS was held in April 2018 to enhance the expertise to conduct TRS by their own.

In response to a request with a view to building its capacities in the field of PCA, the WCO organized a national workshop for Vanuatu Customs in June 2019 to introduce to the WCO's concept on PCA in order to increase the efficiency of PCA implementation and promote trade facilitation and to thoroughly cover auditing practical knowledge and technics of targeting, Customs valuation, pre-audit research and conducting of on-site audit, as well as a case study from the expert’s home country.

Vanuatu Customs is actively participating in the WCO regional and international workshops on a number of topics and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability.
VIETNAM

Current planning

The Vietnam Customs Development Strategy by 2020 was decided by the Prime Minister in 2011. The Customs Reform, Development and Modernization Plan from 2016 to 2020 was approved by the Ministry of Finance in 1st quarter 2016, with the purpose of international trade facilitation, revenue assurance, and social security and public health protection. In particular, the e-Customs procedures continue to be improved.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

Automated Customs procedures have been introduced and are the main method to conduct Customs clearance in Vietnam. The Vietnam Automated Cargo and Port Consolidated System/Vietnam Customs Information System (VNACCS/VCIS system) was officially implemented in April 2014 and has been successfully functioning since July 2014. At present, there are over 100% of Customs Departments and Customs Branches in Vietnam which are using this system.

As of January 2018, the National SW in Vietnam was connected with 11 and applied for 68 administrative procedures. Regarding the ASEAN SW, together with ASEAN Members, Vietnam completed the project on the ASEAN SW, and has announced the official implementation of NSW and ready technical connection with ASW.

The organizational structure of RM was consolidated. A legal system was established for RM application in Customs in order to have consistent awareness of RM in Customs activities and to support effectively the implementation of e-Customs procedure.

WCO support

The WCO had been supporting Vietnam Customs through the NORAD project on the area of stakeholder engagement. A number of activities on client service and compliance management had been conducted within the framework of the project for the period 2012-2017.

Vietnam is currently working with the WCO and a Mercator Programme Advisor under Mercator Tailor-made Track. A Mercator Scoping mission has been conducted in July 2017 in the margin of evaluation mission of NORAD project. In addition, a workshop on Project Management was held in November 2017.

Several workshops were held supported by INAMA Project to enhance the enforcement capacity of Customs Administrations to combat illegal wildlife trade with RM technical assistance in November 2018, April 2019, August 2019 and October 2019.

Vietnam Customs has been actively participating in the WCO regional and sub-regional workshops on various areas and gained sound understanding of respective areas to formulate recommendations to enhance its capability. Based on the requests from Vietnam Customs, the WCO also provided support on Intellectual Property Rights in January 2018, Advance Ruling and AEO in November 2018. Furthermore a national workshop was delivered in March 2020 to help Vietnam Customs and partner ministries identify how new business processes, detection equipment, training and an API PNR systems can be used to implement ongoing improvements in their passenger risk assessment capability.

Also Vietnam Customs has been taking a series of support by CCP to assist in establishing effective container selections and controls to prevent drug trafficking and other illicit cross-border activities.
Regional Developments

The Americas and Caribbean region has 33 Members. Out of these, 24 Members have been engaged with the WCO as recipients of national capacity building support in the past year. These are: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, the United States, and Uruguay. There are two regional Members (Canada and the United States) that provide support through the WCO Secretariat for the delivery of capacity building activities to the benefit of other, less developed administrations. Other regional Members provide support to less developed administrations in a bilateral manner. Currently, one member (Venezuela) has an inactive status.

The Americas and the Caribbean Region has taken a unique approach to assist its Members, based on its current situation that includes no financial support for the ROCB. The Vice Chair, ROCB and RTCs, and recently RILO SA and RILO JIO, work as a team to provide a high level of assistance and service to the regional members.

17 regional Members have committed to work with the WCO under a longer-term national Customs modernization project. The following Members benefit from support under the tailor-made track of the WCO MY Mercator Programme: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Peru and Suriname.

Despite the current pandemic, COVID-19, which heavily impacted the delivery of capacity building support in the Americas and the Caribbean were 29 activities had to be postponed for the WCO next financial year 2020 – 2021, the WCO provided virtual support to CARICOM members, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru and the United States.

Members also benefitted of webinars on a wide range of topics, including Integrity, ‘Introduction to Wildlife Crime and Illegal Wildlife Trade’, ‘Introduction to the CITES Convention’ and ‘CITES documents and document fraud’ and were delivered in cooperation with the CITES Secretariat (under International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime partnership), and Strategic Trade, Control and Enforcement (STCE),

In addition, for the delivery of capacity building activities the WCO joined efforts with partner organizations such as the Organization of American States Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (OAS/CICTE), the Universal Postal Union (UPU), and the IMF through their regional center for Central America CAPTAC-DR, and CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS).

Recent regional developments in terms of integration and cooperation in the area of Customs

As with other regions, the Americas and Caribbean region is diverse but uniformly focused on its modernization programs. The region has developed several integration initiatives, NAFTA countries comprised by Canada, USA, and Mexico; Central America, that is attempting an economic integration plan under SIECA comprising: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama; then, Mercosur that is on the Atlantic side of South America including Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Venezuela; the Andean Community that faces more the Pacific, including Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia; and the Pacific Alliance composed by Mexico, Peru, Colombia and Chile.

Separately, mostly due to language and cultural ties is the English speaking Caribbean, they are generally members of the Customs Law Enforcement Council (CCLEC). The WCO’s approach of working with CCLEC to ensure the WCO understands and addresses the Caribbean’s needs has led to joint efforts to move in the direction of implementation of many of the WCO’s tools and instruments. On May 2019, CCLEC Members concluded the treaty that create the Caribbean Customs Organization (CCO) in Havana, Cuba. CCO serves as a successor body to the informal association of Customs administrations, known as CCLEC. The agreement was open for signature until 20 January 2020 and has been signed by 14 members and ratified by 4.

The WCO Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The aim of this MoU is to harmonize Customs’ procedures among CARICOM fifteen Members (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago), to facilitate trade and to protect its citizens from illicit trade.

The Americas and Caribbean region is also comprised by SIEs. These comprise a broad group of states/jurisdictions that have similarities in terms of a variety of criteria, ranging from population to land area, national income, or the share of world trade. According to the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLSS), three geographical regions have been identified for the location of SIDS, namely the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Atlantic, and Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS). In an effort to better understand the peculiarities and challenges of the SIEs in the region, the WCO has been working closely with CCLEC and CARICOM. In addition, several activities have taken place in order to enhance the support provided by the WCO to SIEs.
Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB) in Americas and Caribbean

The ROCB in Montevideo, Uruguay, offers support to the Members in the region organizing several regional workshops (including virtual workshops), creating and maintaining a network of national contact points for capacity building, translation of documents, including some WCO instruments and tools, amongst others. The ROCB also provides support to the implementation of the third regional strategic goal of the Regional Strategic Plan.

The ROCB as responsible for the implementation of the third regional strategic goal (see details below), created a regional National Contact Point Network. This network has met in three occasions, February 2017, November 2017 and March 2019. Since the first meeting, major improvements have been solidified, including strengthening the network, and the creation of several groups that will focus on regional efforts to support the role of the ROCB-AMS.

Regional development priorities

The Americas and the Caribbean region has a Regional Strategic Plan comprised with the following three regional strategic goals:

1. Strengthen the efficient and coordinated border management that considers a balance between facilitation and security measures;
2. Promote the compliance of Customs regulations through the implementation of programmes aligned with International Standards; and
3. Develop the capacities of Customs officers to ensure an efficient and quality service assuring compliance with the institutional mission of Customs.

Additionally, the Regional Strategic Plan includes sub-goals that are translated into an action plan. The Regional Vice-Chair is in charge of tracking and monitoring the implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan with the support of one or two Members that have volunteered to be responsible for the implementation of the action plan. The results of the indicators are informed and updated annually in the RCCDG.

At the XXII RCCDG, held in Asuncion, Paraguay in April 2019, the Regional Vice-Chair presented the updates related to the implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan. 40% of the activities have been achieved, 34% are in process of implementation and 26% are still pending. These number show the commitment of the region to achieve common goals.

Due to COVID-19, the XXIII RCDG meeting that was going to be held in Antigua, Guatemala, has to be cancelled. During this meeting the Directors General of Customs were going to discuss the progress made and the updates to the Regional Strategic Plan.

The Americas and Caribbean has eighteen operational AEO programmes and one under development, which represents 54% of the membership. Under these programmes several mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) have been signed within the region and with the Members from other regions as well. Three plurilateral mutual recognition agreements for AEO programmes are being negotiated under regional integration initiatives, i.e., Pacific Alliance, ANDEAN Community, and Central America.

In November 2018, 8 Members of the region (Bolivia, Chile, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay) signed the Declaration of Sao Paolo, where they committed to support each other in the development of activities that strengthen the supply chain. During the WCO Council Session celebrated in June 2019, the regional Members assigned the action plan for a Regional Mutual Recognition Agreement, and included two more Members (Brazil and Colombia).

Several SW programmes have been implemented and others are under development, including regional initiatives as the Central America Trade Platform. 6 members of the region are signatories to the RKC: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and the United States.

In the Americas and the Caribbean region, the Directors’ General of Customs endorsed the establishment of a Regional Private Sector Group of the WCO Americas and Caribbean (RPSG - Americas). The purpose of the group is to provide non-binding assistance and dialogue on matters related to Customs, international trade, and capacity building for Customs human resources, from the perspective of the private sector.
Regional Development Projects

The HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD TFA Capacity Building Programme

The HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD Trade Facilitation Agreement Capacity Building Programme under the United Kingdom’s Commonwealth Heads of Government fund, benefit Members from the Caribbean (Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Guyana and Jamaica).

TFA needs assessments in keeping with the established methodology were finalized and represent the Programme’s forward planning approach for delivery to March 2020. Planned TFA-related activities will focus on those areas where WCO instruments, tools and standards offer a particular value-added, including RM, PCA, TRS, AEO, CBM and data harmonization. In addition, organizational development questions, including leadership, management, training and human resources management will be addressed as both complements and enablers for TFA implementation.

Under the framework of the renewed Programme, technical diagnostics on RM, PCA, AR, have been delivered as part of the renewed Programme’s engagement with new beneficiaries, with Belize and Guyana benefiting from this in-depth analysis. These analytical reports provide a basis for forward engagement on some of the most complex and time-consuming articles of the TFA. In most cases, the diagnostics point to an ongoing need for more focused training and professional development in these areas.

While not at the core of the Programme’s member-centric (national) approach, the Programme has supported several workshops in the Caribbean that aim at the harmonized implementation of the WCO tools and instruments.

The WCO-SECO Global Trade Facilitation Programme (GTFP)

The WCO-SECO Global Trade Facilitation Programme (GTFP) aims at strengthening the organizational and technical capacities of the Customs administrations of Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and Uzbekistan, to successfully lead, plan and implement sustainable and transparent Customs reforms, with involvement of relevant stakeholders, and apply international standards and best practices, in particular those of the WCO and the WTO related to trade facilitation. The Programme consists of three components: Organizational development, Trade facilitation and Performance measurement.

The GTFP Inception Phase (Phase 1) ended on 30 August 2019, in which comprehensive scoping missions under the auspices of the Mercator Programme were conducted and specific country work plans were developed for Bolivia, Colombia and Peru. The national Steering Committees of the beneficiary Members approved the country work plans with a number of missions already in the pipeline, mostly on AEO, RM, PCA and TRS, alongside a LMD workshop and workshops on human resources, strategic planning and project management.

Additionally, light-touch interventions have also been planned at the regional and national level in the Americas. These interventions consist of short-term technical activities focused on specific thematic areas in trade facilitation, based on countries’ priorities and needs identified.

The Trade Facilitation Programme in Middle Income Countries (TF-MICs)

The Trade Facilitation Programme in Middle Income Countries (TFP-MICs), under the United Kingdom’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s (FCO) Prosperity Funds Global Trade Programme is a new three year partnership between the WCO, the FCO and the World Bank Group (WBG) that started its inception phase in October 2019. This new partnership is designed to provide technical assistance and capacity building to support TFA implementation in five middle income countries. One of these countries is in the Americas and Caribbean region: Brazil.

National Developments

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Background

Antigua and Barbuda’s Customs and Excise Division (CED) is a semi-autonomous agency and administers the Customs (Control and Management) Act 2013 as well as a number of other Acts. The Customs and Excise Division is responsible for:

- Processing of documents for the importation and exportation of goods;
- Collection of import and export duties (Customs revenue);
- Accounting for Customs revenue;
Enforcing import and export prohibitions and restrictions in accordance with laws;

- Encouraging compliance by facilitating the clearance of legitimate imports and exports at ports, airports, warehouses, parcel post, courier services and sufferance wharves;
- Facilitating the entry and departure of ships and aircrafts to and from ports, airports and marinas;
- Facilitating bonds and deposits relative to import and exports, including private warehouses and in-bond facilities;
- Facilitating concessions; and
- Assist in seizure of drugs and contraband items.

Antigua and Barbuda became a WCO Member in 2017.

Current planning

Two published missions were found, the most recent being: “to encourage compliance, to collect revenue and protect our borders while facilitating trade and the movement of persons through a professional, skilled workforce in accordance with international best practices and the law.”

While not expressly stated as strategic objectives, the CED role includes:

- Trade facilitation by encouraging voluntary compliance with Customs laws, achieve through importer education and dialogue aimed at revenue maximization;
- Timely processing of passengers, baggage and cargo with an effective monitoring of goods in order to stem illicit trade;
- Cooperation with regional and international agencies in exchanging information to ensure regional security and to promote safer trade; and
- Delivery of professional service to clients while enhancing public confidence in the integrity, equity and fairness of Customs operations.

The CED goals are to:

1. Maximize revenue collection;
2. Establish a comprehensive border security framework;
3. Improve the organization and management framework;
4. Improve governance and human resource management and to train professional and committed staff; and
5. Leverage information technology and communication systems to accomplish all the above.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

ASYCUDA World increased the use of information technology within the Antigua and Barbuda Customs (CED) by simplifying Customs procedures, reducing thereliance on paper-driven processes and allowing traders to transact with Customs through an electronic environment. The CED now is capable of providing automated services 24/7 to the trading community, the public and all of our other key stakeholders.

CED are performing at optimum level at the moment and equipment is needed for the department to go to the next level. The Manifest, declaration and the accounting modules are working on an operational level. The RM, duty free & Ware housing and the post audit modules are being developed on a daily basis but are not fully functional.

With regards to CED reform programme:

- A PCA section and RM section have become operational. Both the sections received some training and capacities were built with the technical assistance from WCO;
- Diagnostic studies for SW System and AEO Programme have been completed;
- Advance Cargo Information system managed by CARICOM IMPACS has been implemented. This system uses the real time import data to identify various kinds of risk (commercial fraud, security, counterfeiting, illegal trade in endangered fauna and flora etc);
- The draft Harmonized Customs Regulations have been completed and are at the final stages of vetting by the Ministry of Legal Affairs; and
A reorganization of the Customs Division was approved by the Cabinet to suit the requirements of Reform and Expansion process and implementation of the ASYCUDA World project. In the process some additional positions were created. Efforts are on the way to promote and appoint persons into suitable positions.

Capacity building and training. The year 2019 was very focused on capacity building and training:

- Over 16 overseas training programs, local training workshop and 30 WCO online courses were attended by the officers of CED during 2019. The topics related to modern Customs technical subjects, international best practices, WTO and WCO standards and protocols; and
- Antigua and Barbuda also received support from the WCO Secretariat. This support is mentioned in the section below.

WCO support

In 2019, the WCO lead two missions to Antigua & Barbuda on PCA and AEO. The WCO also conducted two workshops in Antigua - Strategic Planning and RM & Selectivity

ARGENTINA

Background

The Customs administration is one of the three Directorates General making up the Federal Administration of Public Revenues (AFIP), in the form of a single agency. The process of modernizing Argentina Customs began in 2004 with the implementation of the SAFE Framework of Standards and was subsequently strengthened by the arrival of a WCO delegation on a Columbus Programme diagnostic mission to put a Customs reform strategy into place.

At the end of 2017 a readjustment of the Customs organizational structure was promoted in order to contemplate the strategic project of the new management that adapts the functions in order to the aspects included in the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the WTO, ratified in February of 2017 for our country.

Among the main readjustments is the creation of the Customs Process Reengineering Directorate, with structural reflection for the re-launch of the AEO Program, SW for Foreign Trade, Simplification and Facilitation of Trade, and New Technologies and Special Customs Projects.

The effective date of the structural modification was May 2018.

Current planning

The current 2017 Strategic Plan provides for awareness-raising on the implementation of the WTO TFA to ensure that commitments made are respected, and for the programme for re-engineering Customs processes in all Customs areas with a view to continuing to apply good international trade practice.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

- In June 2014, the María Computer System was improved and is now known as the Malvina System. The improvement was designed to allow real-time Customs operations management, RM and information exchanges between international trade stakeholders;
- In December 2014, Argentina became the first country in the world to formulate a Cargo-XML standard for air transport;
- Argentina acceded to the Body and General Annex of the Kyoto Convention revised by Law No. 27138, the respective instrument being lodged with the WCO in June 2015;
- AEO was modified to include the SAFE Framework of Standards, the certification of all the participants of the supply chain and to be able to sign Mutual Recognition Agreements. In October 2017, through General Resolution 4150, the new AEO (former SAOC) was launched and it was complemented through the General Resolution 4197 that creates an “AEO Pilot Project” for the users of the In-Company Customs;
- Mandatory use of seals. An online course in Spanish was introduced for officials from other government services and other Customs administrations, with 200 participants from the region. MERCOSUR Customs administrations approved the Customs Transit Security Initiative (ISTA), providing for the use of an electronic seal to ensure mutual recognition in relation to regional transit matters;
- The strengthening of Customs cooperation is essential for AFIP/Customs. At the moment, the network of Customs Cooperation and Mutual Administrative Assistance Agreements consists of 28 completed bilateral agreements. This network has been enlarged by the inclusion of the COMALEP and MERCOSUR multilateral agreements;
Bilateral agreements were entered into with Georgia, Finland and Algeria between 2015 and April 2017. The WTO TFA follows the parliamentary procedure for accession to it;

- Strengthening of Customs cooperation by applying other international initiatives such as the AIRCOP Agreement and the Container Control Programme (UNODC);

- Argentina takes part in the Container Security Programme (CSI) and has signed the Megaports Agreement and the Trade Transparency Unit (TTU) Programme with the United States;

- With respect to face-to-face courses under the AIRCOP Agreement entered into by AFIP last year, experts from Argentina’s RILO network provided training on the use of CENComm for Argentinian Customs officers and officials from other government services covered by the Agreement;

- On 5-7 December 2017 Buenos Aires hosted the WCO national workshop and Seminar on CBM, SW and Data Model, jointly organized by the WCO, the Customs General Directorate (DGA/AFIP) and the SW Work Group of the Production Ministry. The format of the technical assistance, two days for the workshop and one day for the seminar, permitted the participation of the officers of organizations that participate in the foreign trade (SENASA, INV, ANMAT, ANMAC, INAL) as well as of the high level officers in charge of the decision making, including representatives of AFIP, among others;

- During the 11th Ministerial Conference of the WTO, held in Buenos Aires on 10-13 December 2017, there was a side event at the AFIP Headquarters: “E-Commerce: A Game Changer for Customs, Trade and Consumers”. The WCO Secretary General, Kunio Mikuriya, participated of said event;


- AFIP has developed online capacity building courses for its virtual Campus, several of which focus on subjects included on the WCO agenda, e.g.:
  - WTO TFA;
  - Trade facilitation capabilities;
  - International exchanges of Customs information;
  - INDIRA 2.0 (information on import/export destinations);
  - SAFE Framework of Standards (implemented in 2015, with examples of national Customs legislation);
  - Air cargo security and facilitation (WCO-ICAO Brochure);
  - Introduction to Rules of Origin;
  - Sample traceability system;
  - Container registration;
  - Satellite monitoring of freight;
  - Mobile scanner operator;
  - WCO-OECD transfer pricing; and
  - Firearms: identification and legislation.

- Posting of all WCO documents relating to tools, compendiums, guidelines and resolutions on the Customs Intranet page;

- Cooperation between Argentina and the ROCB in translating regionally strategic documents into Spanish;

- Reorganization of the AFIP Advisory Committee to optimize institutional dialogue and create “Spaces for Dialogue” on tax, Customs and social security matters under (AFIP) Provision No. 316/16. The aim is to create an environment for communication and a communication channel between the administration and other trade stakeholders to exchange proposals and recommendations, highlight external opinions, analyze standards, procedures and systems and contribute to the decision-making process and to the definition of guidelines on the subjects addressed;

- In MERCOSUR Technical Committee No. 2, “Customs Matters”, the project to harmonize the Customs declarations Data Model in MERCOSUR (MODDA) began in 2015. The work was driven by the WCO Data Model, which seeks to ensure that data on global trade operations are standardized at international level. From 5 to 9 June 2017, during Argentina’s rotating presidency of MERCOSUR, the Working Group on the project to harmonize the Customs declarations Data Model held a meeting with the support of WCO experts;

- In October 2016, Argentina’s International Trade SW (VUCEA), covering declaration formalities, permits, certificates, licenses and other authorizations for import, export and transit operations, was created by Presidential Decree No. 1079. AFIP sits on the Committee overseeing the introduction of VUCEA;

- The digital signature is a strategic policy decision of Argentina’s Administration which is designed to work gradually towards the dematerialization of Customs procedures;
Overseen by ALADI (Latin American Integration Association), on 10 May 2017, Argentina and Brazil jointly launched the digital certificate of origin (COD) with Brazil. Regarding to Uruguay, it began on 9 April 2018 and finally the terms of reference will be signed for the start of the pilot with Chile on 29 May 2018; and

Since February 2017, the electronic document management system has been under implementation in the National Public Administration and in the Customs administration. This platform is used to manage government administration measures.

WCO support

The WCO has provided support in areas such as the RKC, RM, the Data Model, and facilitation and compliance. Both strategic and operational training has had a strong impact, not only on the development of strategic management but also on the use of new inspection tools by Customs officers, thereby improving management capabilities on the basis of clear and precise objectives.

On 19 June 2015, the Federal Administrator of Public Revenue deposited to the Secretary General the instrument of accession of Argentina to the International Convention on the simplification and harmonization of Customs procedures.

- A national COPES workshop delivered by WCO experts was held in Buenos Aires from 2 to 7 December 2016;
- On 17 February 2017, trainers from the Administration and WCO experts ran a practical training course under the UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme;
- In March 2017, the WCO provided a Regional Assistance according to the specifications of the Technical Committee No. 2 of Customs Matters of MERCOSUR and of the Harmonization of the Customs Declaration Information Group as regards the WCO Data Model. The results for the year 2017 have been the specification of common data of Customs declarations for export and import;
- In April 2017, a national capacity building workshop was held for Argentinian Customs officers under the Strategic Trade Control Enforcement (STCE) Project;
- The Argentina Customs has participated in different WCO expert accreditation workshops. It has obtained the pre-accreditation on the following:
  - “Accreditation workshop for TOAs on COPES (Compendium of Customs Operational Practices for Enforcement and Seizures)”;
  - “Accreditation workshop for TOAs on the Mercator Programme (Implementation of the TFA measures)”;
  - “Accreditation workshop for TOAs on Customs laboratory Matters”; and
  - “Accreditation workshop for TOAs on SW”;
- Participation in May-June 2017 of the 72nd edition of the “Fellowship Programme in Spanish”. The Argentina Customs representative based his work on the “Organizational Development”. The title of his paper was “Implementation of the People Management Strategy in the Argentina Customs”; and
- During the Cooperation between the Customs and the Private Sector (Pilar II – SAFE Framework of Standards), there were activities jointly organized by the ROCB, the Argentina Customs and the Importers Chamber of the Argentine Republic (CIRA) representing the private sector. The Academic sector was represented by different universities that offer degrees related to foreign trade (21st Century University and UADE Foundation). The topics were selected taking into account the suggestions made by the Private Sector:

With the joint efforts of the WCO and CICTE, two activities took place to provide support for the validation, preparation and execution of the AEO Programme.

In addition, since December 2018 Argentina is now part of the WCO MY Mercator Programme, the multi-year programme for the implementation of TFA,

BAHAMAS

Background

The Bahamas Customs and Excise Department (BCED) joined the WCO on August 16, 1974. From 2006 to 2016, the WCO conducted approximately a dozen missions.
The key function of the Customs Department is the Collection and Protection of the Revenue of The Bahamas. Its key objectives are to facilitate legitimate trade, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations and to provide a professional quality service to its clients. BCED achieves its objectives through development and management of appropriate Human Resource Programme and policies.

Its areas of responsibility encompass 32 Points of Entry throughout the Bahamas. This includes all Airports and Port Docks; and control of all imports and exports from and to The Bahamas.

Customs Reform and Modernization Progress

BCED is currently engaged in a major Customs modernization programme funded through a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). This loan covers the implementation of an Electronic SW (ESW), business process re-engineering, and establishment of marine and K-9 units, organizational review, and the development of a comprehensive training programme for the department.

The overall objectives of these initiatives are to:

- Improve the facilitation of trade;
- Strengthen the ability of Customs to collect revenue; and
- Improve border protection.

The specific trade support programme objectives are:

- Modernize the organization and operational structure of Customs;
- Modernize Customs operations with emphasis on border control, enforcement, Electronic SW, and system automation; and
- Enhancement of the International Trade Institutional Platform

WCO support

In March 2016, the Bahamas Customs and Excise Department (BCED) Comptroller made a formal request to the WCO to conduct a mission to review and assess BCED’s human resources and training development strategies.

To conduct the assessment, the WCO team reviewed Bahamas existing training plans, website information, previous external reports and the 2006 WCO Diagnostic report. The “WCO People Diagnostic Tool” and “WCO Framework of Principles and Practices for Customs Professionalism” were also key reference tools for the HR component and the identification of HR functions, key HR processes and the competency-based HR approach.

The mission concluded with a close-out session with the Comptroller and key management during which the WCO advisors presented their draft findings and summary report of the scoping mission. The draft report conveyed the key findings including competencies/training for BCED consideration, a BCED draft Competency Layout, and a 2-year national training plan with proposed courses and timelines. In April 2017, the BCED requested the WCO Capacity Building Directorate follow-up support on the finalization and mobilization of the training programme that the WCO developed with Bahamas Customs the previous year.

Following an Agreement signed in March 2018 between the WCO and the Bahamas Customs and Excise Department (BCED), the WCO has been providing technical assistance and capacity building support in a comprehensive organizational development and training programme, the WCO-Bahamas Training Programme. This Programme aims to strengthen the institutional capacity at BCED as well as increase the level of competence of officers in delivery of services by providing specialized training. 27 planned activities have already been conducted in the last year including: Mercator Scoping and Planning missions with support to the development of performance measurement indicators; Data Model, TRS, AEO program, IPR framework, valuation, classification, Rules of Origin, AR and RM Diagnostic/development. The Programme came to an end in October 2019. Nevertheless, Bahamas and the Donor, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), requested an extension allowing the use of the fund residual and BCED to benefit from post-programme workshops and trainings during 2020. Post-programme activities were defined between the WCO and BCED for an optimal use and to ensure post-programme sustainability.

Positive reports have been received of increased knowledge among over 150 BCED officers who have received training so far in technical areas including valuation, classification, RM, Rules of Origin, LMD among others.

The Capacity Building Directorate’s technical activity works in favor of medium- and long-term assistance to its Members in the execution of specific development strategies.
BARBADOS

Background

The Barbados Customs Modernization Programme commenced April 2006 and was completed October 31, 2011.

The overall objective of the Programme was to assist the Government of Barbados (GOB) in its efforts to improve the efficiency of the Customs and Excise Department (CED) in order to contribute to steadily improved tax revenues; facilitate and expedite legitimate commerce and travel; and improve Barbados’ competitiveness in the global economy.

The specific objectives were to:

- Strengthen the Customs administration by simplifying current procedures, improving the audit capacity and the institutional abilities to prevent and fight against fraud;
- Strengthen the VAT and Excise tax obligations and compliance through the modernization of the main administration processes, especially those corresponding to tax collection and audit; and
- Strengthen the institutional management capacity, through the improvement of administrative processes and the implementation of mechanisms for the integration and strengthening of the support systems (e.g., planning, internal control, financing, human resource development).

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

The Barbados Customs and Excise Department is continuing its pursuit to enhance the trade facilitation process. In this regard, the following projects have been planned for implementation:

- Migration from ASYCUDA++ to ASYCUDA World. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) provided technical assistance for the implementation of this project. The Project Unit, comprised of information technology experts from the Department and personnel from UNCTAD, was selected to implement the project and the work commenced in 2013. This project is a continuation of the Department's desire to adhere the requirements of the Kyoto Convention General Annex, Chapter 7, Application of Information Technology;
- Implementation of an Electronic SW. The Readiness Assessment for the Implementation of an Electronic SW (ESW) consultancy which was convened under the Reform and Modernization Programme was a precursor for this project. This project adheres to the principles of the General Annex, Chapter 6, Customs Control, Chapter 7, Application of Information Technology; and
- Central Container Facility. This is a trade facilitation project designed to achieve four main purposes:
  - Increase the number of containers unstuffed at the ports of entry;
  - House all the trade agencies that impacts on the release of goods from the ports of entry;
  - Reduce the time of release of imported goods; and
  - Reduce importation cost to importers.

WCO instruments/standards achieved:

- Advance electronic manifest information received (WCO Framework of Standards: Core Element);
- RM methodology adopted (WCO Framework of Standards: Core Element);
- Enhanced trade facilitation for legitimate trade (WCO Framework of Standards: Core Element); and
- The Modernization Programme sought to adopt the following principles of the RKC;
  - The simplification and harmonization of Customs procedures;
  - The Customs Control Standards;
  - The application of Information Technology standards;
  - Information decisions and rulings;
  - Rights of appeal; and
  - Assessment, collection, and payment of duties and taxes.

WCO support

In May 2017, the WCO participated in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) workshop to establish a Caribbean Wildlife Enforcement Network (CaribWEN). The workshop was conducted under the auspices of the International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime (ICCCWC). The activity builds on the outcomes of the Caribbean Regional Wildlife
Enforcement workshop held in Nassau, Bahamas in July 2016. The creation of CaribWEN aims to strengthen enforcement and cooperation in the Caribbean region to address wildlife crime (including timber, terrestrial and marine species). Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs) are recognized as a successful mechanism to combat wildlife trafficking, through training and capacity building, encouragement of better communication between key stakeholders, strengthening of enforcement cooperation and coordination, identification of trafficking hotspots, analysis of trafficking routes, identification of priority species and supporting the strengthening and harmonization of legislation.

BELIZE

Background

The Belize Customs and Excise Department (CED) is under review, as recommended by the IMF in its October 2014 Mission Report, and an IMF Mission is planned for May 2015 to support the development of the new organization.

The Department’s major legislative responsibilities are outlined in the Customs Act and GST Act. A revised Customs Act is scheduled to be passed and implemented later in 2015.

The CED is a department within the MOF and is charged with responsibility for:

- Establishing a balance between facilitation and control through proper RM;
- Facilitating legitimate trade and movement of people and their goods and conveyances across borders;
- Providing a level playing field for all importing and exporting community members (i.e. consistent and predictable interpretation and administration of Customs procedures and recommendations);
- Preventing the illegal importation and exportation of contraband and other dangerous goods;
- Assessing and collecting Customs and excise revenues and GST;
- Administering a wide range of legislation, specific schemes and trade measures, including the legislation and requirements of Other Government Departments;
- Implement public relations strategies to both promote voluntary compliance and support tourism; and
- Consistently managing the department in an efficient and effective manner.

The requirements and recommendations between regional and international trade and Customs organizations have a significant influence on CED. The most significant of these organizations include the WTO, the Caribbean Common Market and Community (CARICOM), and the Caribbean Customs Law Enforcement Council (CCLEC). While participating in these organizations can be an advantage, meeting the imposed deadlines for implementation of new legislation, policies and standardized procedures are a significant challenge.

In addition, CED supports the Ministry of Trade in the negotiation of trade agreements, and the implementation and maintenance of existing trade agreements (e.g. CARIFORUM – EU Economic Partnership Agreement - EPA) by providing statistics, analysis and advice on proposed Customs procedures.

ASYCUDA World has been successfully implemented which has resulted in significant improvements in release processing, release times and a reduction in the number of examinations conducted (e.g. no examinations for green lane shipments). There are, however, a number of enhancements that are still required including warehousing and accounting modules, etc.

WCO support

In August and November 2015, the Belize Customs & Excise Department (CED) requested assistance in preparing a National Training Strategy, along with RM, Valuation and PCA training.

On November 18, the WCO officials and Belize C&E Senior Management conducted a video conference call and determined that an overall strategic planning with a focus on human resources and a training strategy should be the first step in addressing their human resources policy needs, training requirements and building a modern Customs administration.

The WCO facilitated a workshop from 8 to 12 February 2016, to review the CED Strategic and Business Plan 2014-2017, develop a human resources strategy, national training plan and calendar. Twelve CED senior managers participated in the workshop.

Priority HR development areas identified were:
The workshop also resulted in overall:

- Increased capacity in the area of strategic planning and development of a national training strategy;
- Alignment of existing programmes and projects and improved delivery of operational requirements; and
- Increased awareness of WCO tools, initiatives and standards as well as of international best practices.

The workshop also included a site visit to the Santa Elena Northern Border Customs Station in Corozal on the third day of the workshop. This is on the northern border with Mexico and adjacent to the Corozal Free Trade Zone. The purpose of the visit was to observe the current operations at the Customs station, the planned reconfiguration of the station to allow for a dedicated entry lane for passenger vehicles and provide feedback on both. The current configuration requires all vehicles to enter in the same lane and all passengers must exit for immigration and Customs inspection at the station. The reconfiguration appears to be an effective improvement but would be even further enhanced by non-intrusive inspection equipment and a systematic approach to examining vehicles. The WCO COPES tool could be a beneficial future training mission to address the latter observation. The Santa Elena Customs Station uses the ASYCUDA World automated Customs system but continues to input information manually from the “In bond Cargo Manifest Details”. This step/manual process should be automated and sent electronically into ASYCUDA World and was discussed with CED senior management.

In November 2017, the WCO held a workshop on Stakeholder Engagement at the Customs and Excise Conference Centre in Belize City, Belize. The purpose of the workshop was to enhance the skills of Members and stakeholders of Belize’s NCTF in the area of effective stakeholder engagement before, during and after consultations to coordinate implementation of the WTO TFA. This Stakeholder Engagement workshop was an interactive event comprising several activities, exercises and role plays on how to manage an effective consultation process while ensuring a structured approach to engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The participants exchanged good practices during the workshop and expressed their appreciation to the WCO facilitators for leading this event. It is important to note that the NCTFs are a critical forum to engage in constructive strategic objective development for the implementation of the TFA.

Additionally, Belize CED hosted a Sub-Regional workshop on IPR Border Enforcement for Central America. 15 officers from 4 countries within the region successfully participated in the workshop. WCO tools such as the RM Compendium, Customs Enforcement Network (CEN) and case studies from the Region were the main topics covered by the workshop. The participants presented IPR case studies and challenges faced in the fight against counterfeiting, giving rise to discussions on the region’s needs. During the field exercise, a consignment containing IPR infringing goods was intercepted at Belize port.

Belize is a beneficiary Member of the HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD Trade Facilitation Agreement Capacity Building Programme. Under this Programme, several diagnostics were conducted in key areas for their Customs modernization processes, such as, PCA and RM. In addition, an implementation strategy for the National SW was developed.

BOLIVIA

Background

“National Customs” is the Customs tax administration of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. In 2006, National Customs undertook the task of modernizing Border Management.

In 2005, technical assistance was received from a mission composed of representatives of the Canada Border Services Agency, under the framework of the Capacity Building Project in the Americas of the WCO. As a result of this mission, a pre-diagnostic of the Customs Administration of Bolivia was obtained and the Institutional Strategic Plan 2007–2011 was developed.

In the last few years, the National Customs of Bolivia has increased efforts towards Reform and Modernization of the Customs Administration.
Current planning

The Institutional Strategic Plan 2016-2020 has been formulated with an active participation of all and each of the functional areas of the national Customs considering suggestions from public servants who have made valuable contributions on the basis of their experience.

The new strategic orientation for the Customs of the 21st century focuses on: Customs connected around the world (e-Customs), better coordination of border management, RM based on the information, collaboration Customs’ companies to enter into strategic agreements with economic operators, implementation of procedures and techniques to examine the existing international conventions according to procedures. The use of technology and instruments of high performance, adopting a model based on that knowledge. Also, to be Customer-oriented to continue with the fight against corruption.

The strategic priorities part of this plan are as following:

1. Improve the efficiency of the Customs operation and the provision of Customs services for its execution and voluntary compliance;
2. Modernize and improve the efficiency of Customs controls through RM and enforcement of sanctions, to encourage compliance with Customs obligations and to crack down on smuggling;
3. Strengthen communication and institutional transparency to promote Customs modernization and ethical values in the public service; and
4. To develop the internal capacities necessary to conduct and execute the process of Customs modernization.

Additionally, the Institutional Strategic Plan 2016-2020 introduced the map of processes existing at the national Office for the definition of the operational framework on which performs its functions, as well as including those working processes that require to be developed to achieve the goals set for the next five years.

In this map, processes have been classified the following levels:

(a) Strategic processes: includes transverse processes to the organization that generated the strategic orientation on which the decisions that affect both business processes and support;

   The national Customs considered the following strategic processes: policy management, RM, information management and management planning;

(b) Critics’ processes: includes those processes that generate results and/or services related to the existing raison of the organization;

   The national Customs considered as critical processes: management of the register of operators, Customs operations, Customs management, beginning and disposal of goods, control and audit procedures; penalties and tax enforcement; and

(c) Support processes: comprises the transverse processes whose functions support the execution and generation of the results of the critical processes, which are: human resources, legal support, fundraising, technology, infrastructure, internal control, material resources and statistics.

Customs Reform and Modernization Progress

Border Management New System Project

In 2013, the Unit of Border Management New System Project was created, which aims to "develop and implement a new Integrated System of Border Management including improvement and automation of Customs processes implemented in the National Customs".

In 2013, the management team was formed and the Development Platform was acquired. It provides technical assistance in modernization processes performed in other Customs administrations worldwide under the framework of the implementation of the standards and instruments of trade facilitation and improvement of Customs controls established by the WCO and other agencies.

In 2014, development procedures were completed and the implementation of a New System of Registration of Importers, which establishes a reliable and updated statistical accounting system. Registration of Exporters, Agents Brokers and Carriers is being implemented this year (2015).
In 2016, the new Export Procedure was approved and the implementation of the New System of Export was implemented progressively, starting in the 2 International Airport Customs and then in other 12 Border Customs including Desaguadero (border with Peru), that is an important Custom for Bolivian exportations.

In 2017, the implementation of New Export System was concluded; the startup of the system was to begin in another 3 Customs, including Tambo Quemado (border with Chile) that is an important Customs for Bolivian exportations. Furthermore, in that year the implementation of the New Import System started by the approval of the Regulation for Registration of Goods Acquisition (Declaration (Declaración de Adquisición de Mercancías – DAM) that is a Previous Declaration that must be presented electronically for all transaction purchases for imported good before their arrival. Also, the implementation of the DAM Register System started.

In 2018, the implementation of DAM’s Registration system was continued and was completed in April’s 2018. This year the transition, deposit and import clearance system will be implemented progressively.

❖ AEO Programme

The AEO Unit was created by National Customs of Bolivia in 2013 to implement and manage the AEO Programme. This Customs Administration has had technical assistance from WCO experts to develop the "Action Plan 2013-2015 for the implementation of the AEO Program" which was initially oriented to the export sector.

It included the following criteria:

- Awareness raising activities of the private sector, government agencies and staff of National Customs;
- Design of the theoretical model, which provides preconditions, requirements and AEO benefits, procedures, regulatory framework, forms, etc. The review of international best practices (BASC, ISO, etc.) was performed;
- Design validation of the theoretical model;
- Selection of companies that are part of the pilot plan;
- Visit in situ and initial assessment; and
- Creation of the Consultative Group with the private sector, developing the procedural framework for its operation.

The Bolivian AEO Programme was formally launched on 24 March 2015 for exporters and in 2016 it included Customs Brokers, Importers and Highway Carriers.

Currently, the Bolivian AEO Programme has certificated 28 companies which include 5 Exporters, 11 Customs Brokers, 10 Importers and 2 Highway Carriers.

As well as, this Programme has been working to sign the Mutual Recognition Agreement such as:

- On 17 April 2018 in Los Cabos, Mexico the Customs of Uruguay and Bolivia subscribed the Mutual Recognition Agreement; and
- The Members of the Andean Community (Ecuador, Peru and Colombia) are in the 3rd phase of the Action Plan regarding to join validation visits.

On December 2017 in Brazil, the Customs of Brazil and Bolivia subscribed the MOU which includes the MRA.

The Bolivian AEO Programme has signed agreements with other Bolivian border agencies to grant benefits and exchange information to carry out the evaluation of operators applying to certification.

As a result of the last assistance within the framework of the Mercator Program held in July 2018 the following issues were identified that should be accorded the highest priority:

- Creation of the necessary regulations for the issuance of advance ruling within the framework of Art. 115 of the Bolivian Tax Code;
- Implementation of the WCO TRS methodology; and
- Evaluate the viability of SUMA becoming SW of foreign trade of Bolivia.

Likewise, 2nd level recommendations were established in order to increase the level of compliance that the ANB already has with respect to the provisions of the TFA, such as the AEO and RM.
One point of attention for Bolivia is that the NCTF has not been formally constituted. Up to this moment, only one Draft Supreme Decree was developed that foresees the creation of the committee. It is also very important that the ANB has a leadership role in reviewing and application of the measures for the implementation of the provisions of the TFA and the reading of the Draft Supreme Decree (DS) that provides for the creation of the NCTF.

**WCO support**

- The Columbus Programme of the WCO continues to support to the national Customs in its process of modernization in order to increase the efficiency of the Administration, facilitation and trade security;
- The National Customs of Bolivia has received support from the WCO for the development of the Human Resources Management in May 2017. This cooperation will allow the NCB to collaborated and apply a Plan 2017-2019 which includes new strategies for human resources also modification to Institutional Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and other institutional procedures;
- Likewise, in February 2018, the WCO was delivered a mission about Performance Measurement which was aimed to support the institution for the design of indicators according to the four pillars of the Institutional Strategic Plan 2016-2020: Facilitation, Control, Transparency and Communication, Internal Capacities;
- Mercator Programme Scoping Mission from 23-27 July 2018 with the main objective to carry out an analysis of the processes and procedures of the National Customs of Bolivia (ANB), in order to identify possible gaps that the Customs administration has in compliance of the WTO TFA; and
- SECO-WCO Global Trade Facilitation Programme (Bolivia) is one of the beneficiary countries of this comprehensive 4-year Programme with expected outcomes on the areas of trade facilitation and organizational development. A mission within the framework of this Programme took place in June 2019 to assess the follow up given to the recommendations made as result of the Mercator scoping mission in 2018.

**CHILE**

**Background**

Since 2011, the National Customs Service has focused its efforts on achieving an efficient administration and a new management model in line with the guidelines of the 21st Century Customs Administrations, generating and updating the process of corporate strategic goals for the period 2012–2015. Such process has been ratified and updated in May 2014, with the inclusion of the new authorities of the National Customs Service.

**Current planning**

In May 2014, the Strategic Plan 2014-2018 was adopted, which established guidelines aimed at developing the required actions to respond to new changes in international trade. For this, 5 Strategic Goals were developed, regarding enforcement, rules and sanctions, collaboration with partners, management and development of human resources, and internal management.

During these four years, some of the achievements of this plan were the following:

- Making RM the cornerstone of the audit to comply with the law and facilitate foreign trade;
- Improve efficiency and productivity of controls, non-invasive technology incorporated in the main primary zones (ports and land borders);
- Contribute to the development of SW/SICEX;
- Implement IT software applications to streamline and facilitate the control of Customs clearance;
- Implement the AEO pilot programme; and
- Implementing a Balanced Scorecard institutional.

The new Strategic Plan for 2019-2022, has the following mission statement: “Control and facilitate foreign trade to contribute to tax revenue, economic development, competitiveness and the protection of the country and its people, promoting voluntary compliance of regulations, delivering an innovative and quality service, with honest and competent officers”.

Some areas of work for this plan include:

- Solidify the AEO Programme, allowing companies to become certified;
• Simplify the process of exportation of services, modifying current regulations and integrating it to the SW Program;
• Develop an E-Commerce control Programme, in order to collect revenue and detect tax evasion;
• Implement Electronic Certification of Origin, implementing with some countries, such as members of the Pacific Alliance;
• New IT developments between Customs and some of the most important port and airport, providing for better connectivity and faster procedures;
• Strengthen PCA;
• Strengthen and improve Customs-free zone procedures;
• Strengthen voluntary compliance, regarding Customs brokers and other trade operators, in order to improve traceability; and
• Improve information exchange between public, private and partner institutions.

**WCO support**

In February 2017, the WCO supported the PCA Programme of the Chilean Customs, which was launched in 2015. This activity helped to improve knowledge on the basic concept of the PCA; to improve understanding on the advantages of the PCA in controlling the WTO Valuation Agreement, origin, classification; to enhance practical knowledge on modus operandi; and to improve audit techniques through the knowledge and skills demonstrated during the workshop. Likewise, the Regional workshop on PCA, jointly organized by Chile and the Dominican Republic, was to be held in the RTC of the latter country in May 2018.

The WCO provided support to Chilean Customs on a national Strategic Trade Control Enforcement (STCE) training workshop. This activity support Customs administrations to comply with non-proliferation obligations set forth by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004).

During a 4-day mission, the WCO expert assisted with carrying out an assessment of the current Chilean AEO Programme and shared knowledge and best practices with respect to improving validation process for enhancing the effectiveness of the AEO Programme. The expert further helped Customs with the development of training activities regarding AEO implementation, involving the private sector and other government agencies representatives.

**COLOMBIA**

**Background**

The Customs Administrations of Colombia, Dirección de Impuestos y Aduanas Nacionales (DIAN) is responsible for managing quality compliance with tax, Customs and exchange obligations, through service, inspection and control; facilitate foreign trade operations and provide reliable and timely information, in order to guarantee the fiscal sustainability of the Colombian State.

In 2020, DIAN expects to generate a high level of voluntary compliance with tax, Customs and exchange obligations, support the country's financial sustainability and fosters the competitiveness of the national economy, managing quality and applying the International best practices in its institutional actions.

**Current planning**

DIAN's strategic priorities for 2014-2018 are the following:

1. Contribute to the sustainability of the public finances of the Colombian State;
2. Contribute to the improvement of the country's competitiveness;
3. Encourage voluntary compliance with Tax, Customs and Exchange obligation; and
4. Develop best practices of Good Governance management to increase levels of trust and credibility.

**Customs Reform and Modernization progress**

DIAN has been implementing, over the last four years, innovative actions that have required to be fully strengthened from the human, technical and, of course, normative point of view; all in order to achieve a more efficient and modern service of the country facing the needs of the Customs users and the demands of the growing commercial and industrial competitiveness of the country in an increasingly integrated regional and global environment that requires fewer borders so that trade flows and brings the expected benefits to citizens.
Particular focus has been given to matters of Integrity and in 2017, a joint plan was elaborated between DIAN and the Special Agency for Tax Inspection in order to increase citizens and employees' attention on corruption complaints, improve and raise awareness about the Special Agency for Tax Inspection and the relationship it has with DIAN and promote capacity building and sensitization on anti-corruption, transparency and complaints.

It is within this framework of modernization that the following progress was registered.


On 25 June 2018, the Anticorruption Policy of the DIAN was approved in the extended session of the Committees: Strategic Coordination, Institutional Coordination of Internal Control and Management and Performance.

Regarding Mutual Recognition Agreements, it should be mentioned that on 21 July 2018, Colombian Customs signed the first multilateral mutual recognition agreement of the OAS programme with the Customs of the countries of the Pacific Alliance: Mexico, Peru and Chile. With this agreement, the AEOs of Colombia will receive benefits in the matter of reduction of Customs inspections in those countries.

In this context DIAN expects to continue to develop the work made to date, especially the one related to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes that follow from the approved policies mentioned above, as well as the development of workshops at national level to make use of the existing technical tools and update them when needed. DIAN is also committed to continue to foster RM in relation to corruption, amongst other issues.

Another milestone in the Customs Modernization Progress is the inauguration of the Integrated Center to Combat Smuggling, a high-tech technical instrument to attack the scourge of technical smuggling, tax evasion and unfair competition. This center has two fundamental components: the Customs laboratory and the Customs Control Center. The laboratory, which is the most modern in the Colombian State, was designed with the standards of the WCO and with high-tech equipment to meet the requirements of physical-chemical analysis of goods for Customs control. The Customs laboratory will be a fundamental technical instrument to guarantee the security of the country. It will allow the efficient prevention and control of technical merchandise smuggling, evasion and entry into the country of dangerous substances that threaten the environment and public health. Likewise, it will allow the signing of agreements with other entities in the country and with other Customs laboratories in the world. For its part, the Customs Control Center of DIAN will allow real-time control and traceability of cargoes that are transported within the national Customs territory under the Customs transit modality, through the installation in the units of loading of electronic security devices -DES- whose use is established in Decree 1165 of 2019 (Customs Regime) and Resolution 0044 of July 23, 2019.

WCO support

Colombia is one of the beneficiary countries of this comprehensive 4-year Programme with expected outcomes on the areas of trade facilitation and organizational development. A diagnostic mission within the framework of this programme and following the Mercator Programme approach, as well as a diagnostic on organizational development, took place in July 2019. They have also benefitted from other WCO Programmes such as Container Control Program, Colibri Project and Cargo Targeting System.

COSTA RICA

Background

In 2014, the Directorate General of Customs (DGA) directed its efforts towards achieving the goals embodied in the plans of the Ministry of Finance, focusing on the implementation of more efficient control mechanisms of Customs operations, optimizing the use of resources allocated to identify the elements that directly affect the control of goods entering the country and to ensure an effective revenue collection. Also, advances in procedures and trade facilitation continue: strengthening of the Customs Facilitation Programme for Reliable Trade in Costa Rica, improvements of Information Technology Systems for Customs Control (TICA) and other Customs procedures.

Current planning

In 2007, a Strategic Plan workshop was held with the support of the Office of the Treasury of the United States. As results of the diagnostic made by the WCO, in 2008, 2 workshops were organized to review the Mission of the Customs Administration. In March 2011, 2 WCO experts visited the Costa Rica Customs Administration to conduct a workshop on methodological support for the development of the Strategic Plan 2012-2016. This event was delivered at the management level, with around 45 participants.
In March 2012, the Administration received support on its Strategic Plan by the World Bank and an Internal Commission. In May 2012, a new Strategic Plan 2012-2017 was generated, which was concluded and formalized in June. Between August and December 2011, with the support of the IDB, technical assistance was delivered to create a management indicator system, including a national and International version, called COMALEP. This system of indicators monitored progress in 2011 and the first half of 2012. Also, another mechanism that furthered progress in this area were the indicators obtained, monitored and sent to the Economic Integration of Central American Secretariat (SIECA).

There are still great institutional challenges, including linking the process of strategic planning and procedures with the budget execution process. The absence of a system of activity-based costs, forces the implementation of Cost Accounting and the introduction of spending controls for each administrative unit and the creation of a cost center, which was suggested by WCO in 2010.

In 2014, progress was made on the update of the Strategic Plan for the period 2015-2018 in order to adjust it to the new requirements of the Costa Rica National Development Plan. 2 assessments per year were carried out using performance indicators, which impacted on decision and strategy making. The Costa Rica National Customs Service will continue its efforts to ensure effective revenue collection and RM as well as combating commercial fraud.

Customs Reform and Modernization Progress

In 2019, Costa Rica continued moving forward with its modernization efforts. In this sense, the National Customs Administration reached several milestones:

- Implementation of the Single Central American Customs Declaration (DUCA);
- Advances in the implementation of Process Management;
- Implementation of the Free Trade Agreement between Central America and the Republic of Korea and the corresponding modifications to the structure of the tariff;
- Reactivation and start-up of the Scanner Project;
- Progress in the implementation of the Single Taxpayer Registry;
- Progress in the elaboration of a historical database of technical criteria on tariff classification;
- Regarding the Registry of Auxiliaries of the Customs Public Function, it has been implemented that the updating of information is carried out by email;
- Within the framework of the SW for Investment (VUI), the regulations related to the registration procedures of companies under the Free Zone Regime were approved;
- With regards to Green Customs, specifically the Montreal Protocol by the United Nations Environment program, the recognition granted for the work carried out by this Customs Administration in protecting the ozone layer was achieved;
- Projection of progress in the execution of specific projects, through the dissemination of the "Customs Hour" program by video conference to all officials;
- Improvements in the TICA transactional system for the application of risk criteria to supervise the discharge of the UT at the end of the mobilization and for the scanning of export containers; and
- Implementation of improvements in the AEO Program.

WCO support

The WCO, provided a support on IPR in August 2017. 30 Customs officers from all parts of the Country and with different specialties participated in the workshop. Since the diagnostic mission in 2014, a lot of changes were made in the legislation and procedures. The workshop focused on the enhancement of IPR RM.

The WCO provided support to the National Customs Service of Costa Rica under the WCO Mercator Program, on 19-23 March 2018. The WCO team successfully conducted a scoping mission and recommended actions to effectively implement trade facilitation measures, taking into consideration local conditions and environment, as well as the WCO instruments and tools.

As part of the Mercator Programme, in May 2018 the WCO provided support on the development of an AR system for classification and origin.

In 2019, the WCO continued to provide support to Costa Rica under the Container Control Program, Cargo Targeting System and Strategic Trade Control Enforcement Program.
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Background

At the end of 2016, the DGA started the development of the Institutional Strategic Plan 2017-2021 and published in June 2017.

During this period, workshops were held with different officials of the institution, benchmarking to other Customs offices, and support was received from IMF and CAPTAC-RD consultants, with the purpose of evaluating the strategic framework and the situation of the Dominican Customs at the moment, for determine the new strategy of the institution.

Current planning

In the General Directorate of Customs (DGA) we are working on achieving the objectives of the Institutional Strategic Plan 2017-2021, through the development of the strategic projects and the initiatives proposed in the Operational Plan 2018.

Customs Reform and Modernization Progress

The Dominican Customs has been working on the strengthening of its technological infrastructure through the development of a Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP), in order to protect the integrity of the data and avoid stopping operations in the face of the occurrence of natural events or own of the infrastructure. We have also proceeded to the migration of many of the copper data circuits to optical fiber, which allows to reach high speeds in communications.

Regarding relevant controls and assurance measures that can serve as a good practice if we talk about Customs Reform and Modernization, we can mention:

- The implementation of the digital signature, which has made it possible to replace the model based on the use of "token" with a more robust, economic and wide-ranging digital certificate;
- The debugging of user profiles, the filtering of web content, the rehabilitation of video surveillance equipment, the protection of documents, the revision of national and international agreements and the protection of databases; and
- The use of additional NII equipment, through the deployment of state-of-the-art X-ray equipment.

In the area of the Reform and Modernization of the Customs, projects are being developed aimed at:

- Improve RM;
- Reduce release times;
- Increase revenue collection;
- Greater control of the load, to expand the variables used in the identification of high-risk loads;
- Reduce the number of physical inspections of merchandise;
- Efficiency of the capacity work, by enhancing the possibility of having findings in the loads that are selected to be inspected;
- Interconnect Customs with key institutions for the detection of high risk cargo; and
- Improve the quality of the information offered by users in the statements made.

In addition to the above, work is being done to perfect the Logistics Centres model based on Presidential Decree No. 262,15, which aims to convert the country into the "Hub" of the Caribbean; in the Dominican Republic, in this area there are already 13 companies that are logistics operators and 6 in the process of certification.

The Dominican Customs office elaborated an action protocol for the authorization of entry and control of ships in Dominican ports, which will allow the provision of information for the control and security of the logistics chain of trade that is carried out through the arriving ships and sail from the Dominican ports.

With regard to the AEO Programme, the country has a total of 186 certified companies and mutual recognition agreements with the United States and South Korea.

Activities of the SW (VUCE):

With the implementation of the SW for International Trade (VUCE), it has been possible to simplify and standardize the procedures required by the para-Customs institutions, thus promoting the facilitation and transparency of import and export processes. Among the advances of the first quarter of 2018, we can mention: the national implementation of the DGA-
VUCE Project with the following institutions - Plant Health (Import and Export), National Renewable Energy Commission, DIGEMAPS, (Alcoholic Beverages and Dairy Products), Dominican Council for Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Other facilitation measures:

The creation of the Trade Facilitation Committee through decree 431-17, at the end of 2017 with the participation of the public and private sectors. During the first four months of 2018, 2 intersectoral meetings were held and on 14 February the notification of the commitments assumed by the country in the different categories under the TFA was received from the WTO.

WCO support

The WCO has provided support on the following topics:

- 1st mission under the Mercator Programme of the WCO took place from 27 to 31 March 2017, which consisted of a diagnostic assessment of the country within the framework of the WTO TFA;
- The 2nd mission under the Mercator Programme, scheduled for August or September of 2018, consisted of the implementation and support plan for the processes of Reform and Modernization of Customs so that the country complies with the provisions of the TFA;
- Training in the international arena, where officials and officials of the institution have been selected to participate in various training activities, such as:
  - International Customs Day;
  - 75th edition of the WCO Scholarship Programme for Spanish-speaking Customs officers;
  - Eighth session of the Virtual Academy of Customs Guidance (VCOA) of the WCO;
  - WCO TRS accreditation workshop for TOAs for the Region of the Americas and the Caribbean (AMS) of the WCO;
  - Fifth Executive Programme in Customs and Business Administration (EPCBA); and
  - OMA-Japan Regional Customs Laboratory Programme.

ECUADOR

Background

Discussion on the current legislation governing Customs matters began in early 2009. In early 2010, it expanded to all foreign trade operators and related public institutions. Once this proposal was approved by the Government, the Presidency of the Republic decided to incorporate it in the Code of Production, Trade and Investment approved by the National Assembly and published officially on 29 December 2010.

The main objective of the reform is an “adequate Customs control without interfering with the process of foreign trade” which is based on two pillars: efficiency and equity.

Current planning

The current mission, vision and corporate philosophy are applied from 2011 until 2016. The modernization plan began with a discussion of the proposed reform that emerged from the current Customs legislation. Other major projects are scheduled for modernization of Customs as is the project of “New System for Customs International Trade Operations” or “ECUAPASS” which was implemented in March 2013. The ratification of the RKC is still an ongoing process but is expected to be implemented in the near future. Ecuador Customs is also on track to carry out AEO programmes.

Customs Reform and Modernization Progress

The improvement in efficiency achieved through the modernization of Ecuadorian Customs has had a huge impact not only in reducing time release clearance but also reducing trade costs.

This reduction in clearance times has resulted from the implementation of processes that have allowed greater flexibility using the Automatic Valuation (appraisal) (green channel) which was implemented in late 2008, reducing requirements for importers to access to this channel after the publication of COPCI (Ecuadorian Code of Legislation). The proportion of declarations that are cleared through the automatic channel was around 55% in March 2015, while the proportion of declarations assigned to physical inspection was reduced from 64.42% in January 2007, to 11.45% in March 2015.
In November 2012, the SW, which is the 1st module of the new Customs system "ECUAPASS" was implemented. This system has reduced the time associated with Customs formalities, through an integrated system with the rest of the government institutions involved in foreign trade. As of December 2014, 86,644 approved procedures were performed through the SW representing an estimated saving of about $15 million U.S. dollars, including savings in logistics costs, warehousing costs, paper use, notarial costs due to use of digital signature and document scanning.

The new Customs IT system ECUAPASS allows foreign trade operators to facilitate operations, reducing time associated with the compliance of Customs formalities. To implement it, a team on 150 Analysts and developers worked together (60 from Ecuadorean Customs and 90 from Korea). Since its implementation, the time of nationalization of goods (from the entry of the cargo to the release of goods) has been reduced from nine days to approximately five days.

The ECUAPASS is a friendly system for internal and external users. It ensures transaction security through technology, including electronic signatures; in addition, it allows for the managing of Customs formalities at any time and from anywhere. Moreover, ECUAPASS is a dynamic system, designed to efficiently address the challenges of trade, applying the best tools and methodologies for the effective control of goods, people and means of transport. Additionally, ECUAPASS has positioned Ecuadorean Customs as a strategic partner within the supply chain, integrating it with the other operators and control institutions involved in the foreign trade cycle. Within this project, we have developed the SW, to provide even more services through the web and make the import and export clearance process more efficient.

So far, the results of the implementation of ECUAPASS are:
- Reduction in the use of 68 million sheets of paper;
- Simplification of logistics in the clearance process; and
- Increase in the use of electronic payments for Customs duties and taxes from 3% to 48%.

Ecuadorian Customs Legislation was developed based on the RKC which is near being ratified. Moreover, the Data Model of the WCO has been incorporated in the development of ECUAPASS as well.

The impact and functionality of the new computerized system for Ecuadorian Customs achieved international recognition at the WCO IV Forum for Technology and Innovation, where it was won the award for Customs Innovation (November 2013) and . The ECUAPASS system was the global winner.

Another important achievement is the recognition of Ecuadorian Valuation System and the Customs Value Database. This has been a successful tool related to the set of measures and pricing and the challenge faced by many countries in the implementation of the WTO Valuation Agreement, mainly concerning undervaluation/under-invoicing. As of result of the successful performance of this tool, the Administration was invited by the WTO to present at a workshop on the use of Customs valuation databases, highlighting the excellent work done by Ecuador in this area.

Ecuadorian Customs strengthened non-intrusive controls using of X-ray technology at the major the ports; the X-ray equipment is state-of-art with higher quality image scanning, ensuring better inspection of containers.

Besides technical matters, training programmes have focused on managerial techniques and leadership in order to increase the profile of personnel and prepare them for future challenges in their professional life.

The Ecuadorian Customs Administration has issued its Code of Ethics in order to sustain its culture of professionalism, loyalty, transparency and efficiency.

Last but not least, Ecuador Customs launched the AEO Programme in Guayaquil on 18 August 2015. This newly established programme, include the successful completion of the pilot phase with three exporting companies.

WCO support

The WCO delivered a Columbus Programme Diagnostic Mission in 2006. The results were provided in 2007, and the reforms were applied.

Ecuadorian Customs has received constant support on issues related to valuation aiding in the development of best practices in Customs valuation control and to be recognized as a success.

Additionally, Ecuadorian Customs has received advice in the strategic planning and implementation of programmes such as the AEO.

During a WCO mission on RKC provisions compliance, WCO experts observed that Ecuadorian Customs recognizes the importance of adhering to the RKC, and that it is essential to ensure that national Customs legislation is in conformity with
international standards (Certification of international Customs standards implementation), and the benefits related to improving the investment environment resulting from accession.

In addition, the WCO experts recognized that Ecuadorian Customs is firmly committed to acceding to the Convention and the importance of strong political will.

After a week of productive sessions, the working group identified, in relation to each provision of the General Annex, the references to national provisions and alignment with practices implemented by the Administration, allowing the compliance to the General Annex.

In August 2013 and December 2014, WCO missions to assist Ecuador Customs' laboratory modernization were carried out. In January 2014, a National Seminar on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy was held in Ecuador. In June 2015, a mission to support RM will take place.

With sponsorship of CCF Japan, a WCO national workshop on Customs laboratories and sampling procedures was held in the headquarters of Ecuador Customs in Guayaquil, from 26 to 28 October 2015. During the workshop the participants discussed relevant areas of sampling such as sample management, custody, safety and legal framework as well as the necessary equipment required for sampling in Ecuador Customs. The participants also discussed the possibilities for revision and improvement of the National Sampling Manual in order to reflect the best practices on the matter.

EL SALVADOR

Current planning

The Ministry of Finance has established the Institutional Strategic Plan 2015 - 2019. The plan is conceived, within the new strategic vision of the Government, as the key management tool that promotes the creation, adaptation or strengthening of institutional capacities, according to the priorities and objectives set out in the Five-Year Development Plan (PQD) 2014-2019, which was presented through the Technical and Planning Secretariat of the Presidency (STPP) officially in January 2015 before citizens, structured around three national priorities: a) productive employment; b) education with inclusion and social equity, and; c) effective citizen security.

The strategic plan 2015-2019 offers important improvements in its design and conception, fundamentally, by the alignment of the strategic objectives, the performance objectives and the projects associated to each one of them, framed within the parameters of the process management, for which, the six macro processes are already defined, these being the management base of the Ministry of Finance and which contribute to the mission of directing public finances with greater efficiency and effectiveness to protect fiscal sustainability, in the short, medium and long term.

The Plan sets the 4 strategic objectives, which are:

1. Move gradually to correct the imbalance of Public Finance and achieve a trend towards fiscal sustainability;
2. Improve the allocation of resources and the quality of public spending, protecting investment and social spending;
3. Implement a progressive tax policy that generates sufficient income in a sustained manner to finance public spending and public investment, with efficiency, effectiveness and equity in the administration of the tax and Customs system; and
4. Strengthen, modernize and innovate processes and services oriented to the satisfaction of users and taxpayers.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

The Ministry of Finance, under the Government Plan and the Institutional Strategic Plan 2010-2014, is running several projects to modernize public finances management, in order to increase the effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of revenue collection and public expenditure.

Customs modernization is part of the global modernization process of the Ministry of Finance, which is based on 5 strategic objectives. In some of these objectives it is possible to find some activities related to Customs modernization and the WCO SAFE Framework.

The major projects which are being implemented by the Customs Administration are:
1. New technologies:
   - The use of non-intrusive equipment (X-rays), scales and flow meters in La Hachadura, El Amatillo, El Poy, Anguiatú border Customs and Acajutla and La Union maritime Customs;
   - The implementation of a new video surveillance system for the control of Customs area;
   - Substitution of ASYCUDA ++ by ASYCUDA World to improve goods clearance and general border management;
   - New international transit controls through the TIM system which integrates Customs, migration and quarantine regional controls;
   - The adoption of the RM Automated System to focus physical examinations and clearance efficiently.
2. The mass use of the Internet as a central interaction tool to communicate with contributors and users (Electronic Services Portal);
3. New internal infrastructure and IT equipment;
4. New infrastructure in public areas;
5. The Implementation of the Customs, Tax and Revenue Integrated Model to improve the control and revenue collection;
6. The Implementation of AEO. The Customs Administration launched the AEO Programme on September 2017;
7. The adoption of the Single Customs Operations Manual;
8. The adoption of a new Post Audit Model based on a systematic RM;
9. The proactive participation of DGA in the process to promote and strengthen regional integration of the Central America Customs Union;
10. The process reengineering, restructuring and management control based on the implementation of Institutional Management Indicators;
12. The Implementation of an Excellence Model updated from the ISO 9001 to ISO 9004 quality standards; and
13. Implementation of the WCO DM. El Salvador Customs Administration has been implementing international standards, including the WCO Data Model, to help enhance its efficiency in managing border clearance procedures. The Customs Administration is currently using the ASYCUDA++ system and was planning to upgrade to ASYCUDA World. The use of the WCO DM would enable ASYCUDA to interoperate with external systems in a standardized manner around the world. At the end of the workshop, the WCO invited El Salvador Customs to develop a National Information Package that would reflect its level of adoption of the WCO DM.

WCO support
During last year, the WCO provided support on the development of the AEO Programme and the implementation of the WCO DM.

In January 2019, the WCO facilitated a diagnostic mission of Customs and other border agencies of El Salvador, including a detailed assessment of its implementation of the WTO TFA, under the framework of WCO Mercator Programme.

GUYANA

Background
The Revenue Authority was established on January 27, 2000, with merger of the Inland Revenue Department and Customs and Excise Department. This change became effective upon the passing of the Revenue Authority Act, No. 13 of 1996. After the merger Inland Revenue Department and Customs & Excise Tax Departments were renamed Internal Revenue and Customs and Trade Administration. On 1 January 2007, The Value Added and Excise Tax Department was established within the Authority.

1.1 Vision
The Vision of the Revenue Authority is to gain recognition and respect from its clients and other stakeholders, through its integrity and fairness in administering high quality, yet affordable programmes. The Authority's good standing will be earned though:
• Quality service and client education that meet the needs of the diverse client base;
• Responsible enforcement of the laws based on the application of sound RM, principles, and practices;
• Fair, impartial and timely redress processes;
• Sensitivity to the effects of administrative and legal requirements we must impose on clients and own efforts to ease the burden and cost of compliance;
• Skilled, knowledgeable and professional people, working in an environment that encourages and supports their personal and professional development; and
• Commitment to open, transparent and accountable administration.

1.2 Mission

The mission of the Revenue Authority is to promote compliance with Guyana's Tax, Trade and Border Laws and regulations, through education, quality service, and responsible enforcement programmes, thereby contributing to the economic wellbeing of the people of Guyana.

1.3 Goals

The Revenue Authority's goal is to provide the best possible service at an affordable cost. The Revenue Authority will achieve this goal by the following core principles:

• Providing accessible, dependable and Timely Service;
• Being fair and respectful;
• Providing effective communication;
• Managing own resources effectively and economically; and
• Being responsive and committed to improvement.

Customs Reform and Modernization Progress

In keeping with its Vision and Mission, for 2018, the Authority has in view, a modernized of Customs department in keeping with the key principles of the RKC:

2.1 Integrity.

In 2017 there was the creation of a (Special Investigation Unit) SIU tailored to tackling the perceived corruption and corrupt practices within the various department;

2.2 Human Resources.

Also, in 2018 there is a rotation of Customs officers from the various departments at several levels Junior, Supervisors, and directors. The development and creation of a transfer guideline for the department. Further, the GRA is seeking to have the core Customs functions reintegrated rather than spread out across the organization;

2.3 Transparency.

This is supported by publications of the department Laws, Regulations and Standard Operational Procedures (SOP) on the department's website. Notices are regularly placed in the media to inform stakeholders of developments and requirements. Engagements are also held with representative bodies including the Customs Brokers Association, Private Sector, Manufacturing Association, and the Shipping Association;

2.4 Accountability.

In 2017 the GRA established a Valuation and Classification Committee as an independent review of cases to bring about a structured approach within the Authority on classification and valuation decisions;

2.5 Facilitation & Control.

The GRA as a key stakeholder in the Trade Facilitation Agreement National Committee which has been instrumental in reviewing most of Customs procedures during 2017 and is still ongoing in areas:

• RM. In 2017 saw the creation of “GEM” an automated feature to the Total Revenue Integrated Processing System (TRIPS) this has greatly reduced processing time of Customs declarations;
• PCA Unit. In 2017 the Unit developed SOPs and is currently operational;
• Classification Review Committee;
• Valuation Review Committee.

2.6 Client Service

In addition, to ensure that Customs Services are improved and maintained there is the development of simple Customer service surveys

2.7 Standardization

The development of Customs officer training modules (I, II, III) have been implemented in 2016-2018 to ensure that officers are knowledgeable in the laws and regulations of the country along with international conventions etc.

2.8 Minimum Intervention

With the further development in RM, PAC and the Trusted Traded Programmed unit in 2017 there is a great reduction of the level of Customs intervention.

2.9 Information & Communication Technology

In November 2017, The Revenue Authority embarked on the journey in the ASYCUDA implementation project that is expected to meet the requirements of the Customs operations over a period of time (estimated 2-3 years) in segments. This will be in keeping with the TFA Category B commitments.

2.10 Co-operation & Partnership

• There is currently in development the appointment of the National Contact Point for the WCO CLIKC!!!!!!! E-Learning to aid in the further development of the officer knowledge and awareness of the international best practices for the benefit of the GRA.
• Inter- American Development Bank (IDB) Online courses in RM, Customs Planning, SW, Rules of Origin and other Customs related courses.
• WTO - This is accomplished through IT E Campus. In addition, there is currently webinars in TFA implementation in the Caribbean.
• CARICOM - Inter regional training and information exchange through workshops and seminar.
• United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) - E-learning programme.

In 2018 the GRA was a part of the WCO Mercator Programme (Feb. 2018) and is in the process of finalizing the Mercator Programme Diagnostic (MPD) with the WCO, the first WCO event is scheduled to be hosted by Guyana in May 2018.

WCO support

The WCO conducted CITES and wood identification training for the Port Control Unit (PCU) in Georgetown Guyana from 5 to 9 December 2016. The training was co-delivered by a CITES and wood expert from Dutch Customs at the Port of Rotterdam. Guest speakers included experts from the Wildlife Division, Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (CITES Management Authority) and the Guyana Forestry Commission contributed to the event as well.

On February 2018, the WCO provided strategic support to the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) Customs and Excise Department under the Mercator Programme. A team of WCO experts met with senior officials, front-line officials, and made site visits to operational and commercial areas to evaluate reforms for modernizing Customs and implementing the WTO TFA.

The GRA operates in a complex, high-profile environment. It engages in high-volume business-process activities such as processing import, export, transit, and transshipment consignments, while preparing or responding to urgent and high-profile events. Recommendations were made to enhance reforms underway as well as support preparations for drafting a strategic plan with supporting organizational functional alignment, implementation plans for core business areas (e.g. human resource management, RM, enforcement and compliance, trade facilitation, etc.) and on-going projects.

Since 2018, Guyana is a beneficiary Member of the HMRC – UCTAD – WCO Trade Facilitation Programme. Under the scope of this Programme, Guyana has received support on several key areas for the Reform and Modernization of the Customs, such as, SW and PCA.
JAMAICA

Background

On March 28, 2013, the Jamaica Customs Department was designated the status of Executive Agency to fully perform as such effective April 2, 2013. The Agency is currently going through a number of organizational changes in accordance with its proposed long term Modernization Plan.

The Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA) has 4 specific mandates: the equitable collection of revenue, protection of Jamaica’s borders against illicit imports, the facilitation of legitimate trade and the delivery of high quality Customer service, while developing and maintaining a team of motivated professional and competent staff. JCA carries out these functions by:

- Assessing and collecting Customs duties, fees, and penalties due on imports;
- Interdicting and seizing contraband, including narcotics and illegal drugs;
- Processing passengers, baggage, cargo and mail;
- Detecting and apprehending persons engaged in fraudulent practices designed to circumvent Customs related laws;
- Protecting Jamaica’s industries, labor and intellectual property rights by enforcing Jamaica’s laws intended to prevent illegal trade practices, including provisions related to quotas; the Anti-Dumping Act; and by providing Customs Records for copyrights, patents, trademarks; and
- Protecting the general welfare and security of Jamaica by enforcing import and export restrictions and prohibitions, including money laundering.

All Customs activities are governed by the Customs Act. In addition to its own laws, Customs enforces over 125 other provisions of law for other ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs).

Customs Reform and Modernization

Jamaica was selected to pilot the WCO RM Diagnostic in the Americas based on a specific request from senior management and strong political support for RM Reform and Modernization. Top management identified RM as a priority with a specific focus on the categorization and ranking of risk, mitigation of risk and assessment of a RM tool.

The Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA) corporate RM Policy provides a sound foundation for influencing the necessary risk-aware culture and methodologies.

An example of RM being a priority for the JCA Reform and Modernization strategy was the replacement of its existing cargo management system with ASYCUDA World and the simultaneous expansion of its RM capability. The expansion includes an increase in dedicated resources, process flows, systems support and line area support. ASYCUDA World was implemented in December 2017.

Jamaica also is a reference at the crossroad of world maritime trade flows, a leader for transshipment in the Caribbean, notably thanks to the Port of Kingston which ranks 8th in the top 20 of Latin American and Caribbean ports with 1.567 million TEU handled in 2016. The expansion of the Panama Canal in April 2016 is key for Jamaica’s logistics hub, and will be a benefit to Jamaican operators who are preparing to transition to this paradigm shift in the global trade.

Following an international request for proposal issued by PAJ, SOGET has been selected for the quality of its global track record, its implementation methodology as well as its next gen PCS solution. Thus, Kingston will enter the league of world class leading ports, by implementing S-ONE PCS in the context of fierce port and maritime competition.

WCO support

The WCO developed RM Diagnostic Tool in response to many requests from Member for a review of their RM practices. There are questions in several of the chapters of the WCO Diagnostic Framework and this RM Diagnostic complements that tool by providing more detailed scrutiny of RM policies and procedures. The RM Diagnostic ensures that a set of standards and practices are available for use in future diagnostic missions that either include or focus on the RM policies and practices of administrations. The RM Diagnostic Tool also supports the development of recommendations in this area and Members can also use the tool for self-assessment.

The WCO conducted the RM Diagnostic Pilot the week of 1-5 February 2016. The diagnostic followed a methodology of document evaluation, interviews and observations of Customs planning and processes. The work of the WCO team covered strategic and operational areas and considered: infrastructure, processes, legislation, internal and external cooperation, information technology, human and financial resources and specific projects/programmes/initiatives related to RM.
The JCA has a Corporate Strategic Plan 2018-2021, an Operational Plan 2018-2019 and RM Policy, among other plans guiding their Reform and Modernization agenda. The JCA corporate RM Policy also provides a sound foundation for influencing the necessary risk-aware culture and methodologies. This RM diagnostic began with a meeting of key Jamaican Customs senior managers. The pre-mission information around the organization structure, policies and priorities was confirmed, as well as more detailed information surrounding current initiatives. The purpose, conduct and anticipated result of the diagnostic exercise were also discussed.

The diagnostic findings were:

- Top Management has made RM as priority with a specific focus on the categorization and ranking of risk, mitigation of risk and assessment of a RM tool;
- Customs resources and activities appeared to be directed towards a good balance between meeting government and Strategic Plan objectives for both revenue collection and community protection;
- There was a good balance between Customs resources and activities in regard to meeting the goals of the Strategic Plan; and
- Corporate handling of risk was clearly stated in its planning documents and a strength.

The priority recommendations to Jamaica Customs senior management were:

- Complete a risk register;
- Ensure RM and Intelligence Unit roles and functions are clearly understood;
- Synchronization of CTS with ASYCUDA WORLD;
- Identify specific training for operation staff; and
- Refine and complete compliance policy

In addition, with the advent of the WTO TFA and pace of initiatives introduced by various Members, consideration for attending relevant WCO technical committees should be considered, for example, the Permanent Technical Committee, Enforcement Committee, Capacity Building Development Committee, Harmonized System Review Committee and Technical Committee on Customs Valuation.

In April 2017, the WCO and the JCA participated in the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) of the Organization of American States (OAS) AEO workshop in Kingston, Jamaica from 4 to 6 April 2017. The purpose of the workshop was to provide assistance to the JCA in the enhancement of their AEO requirements, identify further benefits to the programme, and brief the AEO Committee on the importance of the programme and its requirements. In addition, a session on MRAs was held to assist the JCA prepare for potential MRAs.

In December 2017, a WCO national workshop was conducted to build the capacity of the Agency in conducting TRS. The workshop was held in Kingston, Jamaica, from 4-8 December 2017. As a result, import and export processes where mapped, an action plan was created, and an execution schedule was developed.

In February 2018, the WCO assisted the Agency by conducting a Strategic Planning workshop. The workshop was held in Kingston, Jamaica, from 5 to 9 February 2018. The culmination of the workshop resulted in the development of a three year draft Strategic Management Action Plan 2018-2021.

Other WCO-related capacity building initiatives undertaken by the JCA for the year 2017 were:

- Participation in the WCO – Japan Scholarship Programme;
- Participation in the WCO’s 73rd Fellowship Programme;
- Participation in the WCO’s accreditation workshop for SW; and
- Increased usage of WCO CLIKC!!!!!! Platform.

The JCA also engaged in capacity building initiatives in the area of general Customs processing with the assistance of the People’s Republic of China.

Since 2018, Jamaica is a beneficiary Member of the HMRC – UCTAD – WCO Trade Facilitation Programme. Under the scope of this programme, Jamaica has received support on several key areas for the Reform and Modernization of the Customs, such as, SW, Strategic Planning, Integrity, LMD, among others.
The WCO Security Programme conducted a national Strategic Trade Control Enforcement (STCE) training workshop in Kingston, Jamaica from 1-4 April 2019. This activity enhanced Customs capacities to enforce non-proliferation measures set forth by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004). At the event in Kingston, approximately 20 frontline Customs staff from JCA were introduced to the concept of STCE. In addition, there was active participation from the Jamaican Ministry of National Security and the Jamaican Hazardous Substances and Regulation Authority. The course assisted Customs officials to identify weapons of mass destruction, their constituent parts, means of delivery and dual-use materials and items needed to manufacture these products.

MEXICO

Background

The Tax Administration Service of Mexico (SAT) has engaged in promoting trade facilitation through the development of the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, assigning its Administration General of Customs (AGA) the strategic goal of supporting growth, prosperity and competitiveness, through efficient, transparent and predictable Customs procedures, along with modern infrastructure and equipment, that facilitate trade and hinder the illicit behavior of enterprises, people and officers, whilst strengthening national security.

SAT has carried out crucial reforms to face major challenges of today’s foreign trade, allowing Mexico to comply with international trade facilitation instruments; particularly with the RKC and the WTO TFA, which entered into force on 22 February 2017.

Customs Reform and Modernization

Over last years, the Mexican Customs Administration has introduced deep changes in the Customs processes, which have been based on automation and regulatory enhancements, reducing red tape and allowing improvement in processes and greater efficiency.

In April 2018 a new reform to the Customs Law was approved which introduced modifications that will provide a strong platform to the Mexican State to face the challenges derived from the conclusion of free trade agreements and the globalization of markets; maintaining the ability to control, supervise and properly oversee foreign trade operations.

It also contributes to international trade facilitation and economic growth of the country, allows to adapt the regulatory framework to the use of new and better technologies, provides flexibility of processes, clarification and precision of obligations of the various foreign trade actors, as well as strengths the existing Customs regimes and the benefits to certified and reliable companies for Customs authorities, among others.

In addition, this new reform meets current foreign trade demand and recognizes the new ways of doing things in a coordinated manner with other authorities and countries. It recognizes by law the Customs authority to carry out the clearance process of goods jointly with authorities of other countries, sharing Customs facilities and processes, a practice that has been operational with the United States since 2016. Under the commitment made by the presidents of the Republic of Colombia, the Republic of Chile, the United Mexican States and the Republic of Peru, on 6 June 2012, in the Framework Agreement of the Pacific Alliance, through which they constitute the Pacific Alliance (PA) as an area of regional integration, which seeks to progressively move towards the free movement of goods, services, capital and people. The staff of the SW for Mexican Foreign Trade (VUCEM) joined the multidisciplinary team in charge of complying with the agreed commitments, specifically those related to "Trade facilitation and Customs cooperation" between PA member countries, in which Colombia is already exchanging information on Phytosanitary Certificates, Certificates of Origin and we are in definition to exchange information on the Customs declaration and data on transport documents.

Implementation of the Single Maritime Manifesto (MUM) scheme, which contemplates the exchange of messages through international standards and is in tests with the different shipping companies, international cargo agents and associations.

With the VUCEM, improvements have been made in the procedures or formalities, automation of the processes, simplification of the procedures, reducing the documents required for each of these, compliance with the rules, and sending information in advance of the arrival of merchandise, adhering to the WCO data model. As of 2019, 307 procedures have been implemented from 10 agencies with almost 600 modalities, about 35 Gb of information on digital documents are received daily and more than 1.87 million procedures were carried out within the VUCEM, not counting the sending of information from manifests, acknowledgments of value (COVE) and digitized documents.

After the support received by the WCO Secretariat in 2016 for the implementation of TRS, Mexico conducted it first TRS in the Customs administrations of Nuevo Laredo, Manzanillo and the International Airport of Mexico City (AICM). Mexico has published the results of the study on the following website: omawww.sat.gob.mx/gobmxtransparencia/Paginas/planes_informes.html.
Customs cooperation

SAT has been working with the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) to develop the maritime, rail, and air eManifest. Regarding the latter, AGA is developing a harmonized data set that will form the Integrated Trade Data System (ITDS). Currently, the rail manifest is being tested in four out of six rail crossings. During 2017, 184,260 transport documents were transmitted though the SW, equivalent to 172,975 foreign trade operations (3401 import trains and 3071 export trains).

As part of the Federal Government’s Strategy to increase the flow of goods, improve control and security at the Southern border, as well as to enhance controls at roads network between the territory of Mexico and unofficial crossing points in Guatemala several actions have been carried out such as:

- Infrastructure and equipment projects to address operations on 4 Integral Inspection Points (IIPs), and 3 more to be developed in the near future;
- 3 joint operations;
- 1 business resumption exercise; and
- 4 visits to border’s checkpoints with both Guatemala and Belize.

The placement of the above-mentioned IIPs was strategically defined by the Mexican Government in cooperation with all relevant agencies for its development and entry into operations for the construction of Customs facilities and personnel security support.

SAT also has a focused on developing its network of cooperation agreements (CMAA). To April 2018, 28 CMAA’s have been signed, 6 of these are yet to enter into force. In addition, AGA is engaged in 23 on-going negotiations, 2 of them have concluded and are pending for formalization procedures.

These agreements constitute the legal framework through which the Parties have the possibility to provide mutual assistance and exchange of information to prevent, investigate and fight Customs offences, as well as to secure the international logistic chain.

Since 2014, Mexico has signed four MRAs on AEO with the United States, Korea, Canada and Costa Rica, and is currently under negotiation with Hong Kong, China, Israel, Guatemala, Brazil and the country members of the Pacific Alliance (Chile, Colombia, Peru and Mexico).

The Mexican programme currently has 778 AEOs that include 599 AEO Certified Companies that represent 55% of foreign trade operations of the country, 121 Customs Brokers, 102 Highway Carriers, three Bonded Warehouses, and one Courier.

Customs actions and activities

AGA improved its controls by installing new high-tech non-intrusive inspection equipment such as X-ray devices to screen luggage, fixed X-ray high penetration portals (cargo and passenger vehicles) and mobile X-ray devices, enabling greater speed and a more secure flow of goods. The non-intrusive inspection equipment for cargo are distributed in 36 Customs offices as follows: 17 Customs on the northern border, 2 Customs on the southern border, 14 maritime Customs and 3 interior Customs. With regard to non-intrusive inspection equipment for passengers, there are 44 Customs offices equipped with them.

Another step forward to facilitate trade was the implementation of Points of Sale Terminals to allow for electronic payment of duties corresponding to baggage exceeding the allowed passenger limit from August 2013 to April 2018, SAT installed 165 electronic payment terminals at 47 Customs offices, which processed 934,332 transactions totaling around US$72.8 million.

The Mexican Administration General of Customs is continuously working on innovation of its capacity building programme. A clear example is the 2018 1Q trainings and updating activities that have been delivered to 1,800 Customs officials working at the most strategic positions, such as: verifiers, lawyers, inspectors and foreign trade officers.

As part of the Training Programme at SAT’s Foreign Trade Training Centre, from 2014 to date, 2,218 foreign trade officers have completed the 11-month training programme and assigned to the 49 Mexican ports of entry.

SAT is expanding the scope of valuation analysis of goods through the enhancement of its risk models to facilitate case integration to continue post clearance investigations.

Regarding air passenger security, the Tax Administration Service expanded its data collection. Currently, Mexico receives electronically API-PNR from over 90% of flights and around 90% of passenger data volume.
Data transmission has allowed the “Electronic Data Processing Centre” or National Targeting Centre (CPED by its acronym in Spanish) to consolidate passenger risk analysis, achieving higher accuracy on serious transnational crime alerts, while expediting passenger clearance.

Mexico has provided technical assistance to Latin American countries in several areas such as Quality Management for Customs Laboratories, Cargo Control, RM, NII and AEO. Mexico has also led and coordinated projects within the region to assure trade facilitation and Customs control such as the RM Strategy and the Regional Strategic Plan.

During the period 2016-2018, more than 10 countries received technical assistance in laboratory, RM, AEO SW, Pre-Inspection and Polygraph test.

In April 2018, Mexico hosted the regional meetings: XXI RCCDG Meeting, the WCO-COMALEP-Private Sector Joint Meeting and the XXXIX COMALEP, where more than 25 Customs Administrations (including observers) participated. These meetings provided the perfect forum for Customs Administrations to discuss topics such as information exchange, NII, unified file format, gaps to WTO TFA compliance, SW, RM and PNR.

**WCO support**

The WCO has provided SAT with essential tools, support and guidance to develop strategies for the enhancement of trade facilitation and control.

In July 2017, the Central Customs Laboratory became the third laboratory to obtain the distinction of the WCO Regional Laboratory, this within the framework of the 21st Century Customs strategic plan.

Mexico has been actively involved with the WCO CBD by nominating experts in IPR, Maritime IPR, HS, AEO, CMA, MPA, Strategic Goods and RM matters, for them to be accredited as experts by the Organization.

Therefore, to date, Mexico has 13 WCO accredited experts, which have trained more than 330 Customs officials from different countries so far. Those countries include: Angola, Argentina, Benin, Burundi, Bolivia, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Gabon, Ecuador; Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Paraguay, Panama, Peru, Republic of the Congo, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda, United States, Uruguay, Tanzania and Togo.

Between 2016 and 2017, Mexico has been part of 40 WCO activities related to the capacity building, in which more than 60 officials got actively involved on matters such as Laboratory, Modernization, Strategic Management of Goods and standardization of processes, Customs valuation, SW, PCA and RM.

Since September 2016, Mexico has had a presence in the Professional Development Programme of the WCO / Japan (Career Development Programme 2016/2017), which lasts approximately 10 months; however, and due to the great work and professionalism displayed by the selected Mexican officer the extension of the programme was accepted, ending until September 2018.

In 2016, Mexico started working along with the WCO on its TRS, receiving special training and with the participation of diverse representatives of the public and private sector involved in the Customs clearance in Mexico. Derived from this technical mission received, during 2017 Mexico designed a questionnaire, which was applied to the most representative ports of entry per mode of transportation: Nuevo Laredo (Land) and International Airport of Mexico City (Air) to determine the time for the clearance of goods. Finally, based on this work, we are placing efforts to apply the same strategy at the most important maritime port of entry: Manzanillo. Once the data has been collected, a report will be drafted.

Additionally, the WCO has provided expertise on Small arms and light weapons, PCA, Strategic Trade Control Enforcement, as well LMD, for senior managers.

In May 2019, the WCO provided support to Mexican Customs on Synthetic Drugs, Chemical Precursors and Identification of New Psychoactive Substances.
PANAMA

Background:

Panama began a major effort in the Reform and Modernization of Customs in 1999 which evolved into Cabinet Decree 29 of 18 August 2004. The Administration, with the support of the Government of Canadian Customs, worked on the Arusha Agreement, to create a code of ethics and conduct. Decree Law No. 1 of 13 February 2008, created the National Customs Authority of Panama. Prior to and now, Customs has performed assessments, consultancies, training in various issues, and placed greater emphasis in the last five years in the Integration SIECA.

It currently has Cabinet Decree N.° 12 of 29 March 2016, which dictates complementary provisions to the Central American Uniform Customs Code and its regulations.

Current planning

Panama is in the first phase of capacity building and developed a strategic plan for 2011-2015. Many processes and procedures suggested and mentioned in the RKC are being adopted by Panama Customs. The National Customs Authority of Panama adheres to the Strategic Plan 2011-2015 but after the new administration was installed on 1 July 2014, Panama Customs began making changes to it and developing a new plan called: Vision 20/20.

The Administration actively participates in the Container Control Programme of the United Nations programmes for the prevention of drug trafficking and crime (UNODC). In 2012, a cooperation agreement was signed in order to extend this control programme, which began in 2009. The programme has been very successful as reflected in the statistics. Panama continues to participate in this programme, updating it and it is projected to expand to other modes (air). Customs officials have participated as trainers in other countries.

In January 2013, the new module of risk analysis was integrated into Customs management system (SIGA). In addition, Panamanian Customs officers participated in seminars and practical training related to the analysis of intelligence, use of computer tools in the management of risk, and the interdiction of cargo at international airports. Panama is currently working with the WCO on the implementation of the CTS platform. Its staffing in the area of Risk Analysis is dedicated to the review of international trade and risk profiles in these areas.

Panama Customs worked together with CAPTAC-DR consultants in order to continue developing technical assistance to "Strengthening of control under a comprehensive vision and based on RM". The relevant technical department has implemented Advance Rulings. We are still on the stage of official implementation of the new functionalities in the Customs computer system of the Republic of Panama, on the Internal Transfer and Transshipment of merchandise.

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) allocated funding for the development of an AEO Programme in 2009. After various meetings, Panama started to work on the first agreement of mutual recognition with South Korea. The National Customs Authority of Panama signed a MOU with Uruguay to strengthen institutional cooperation and technical assistance at the CRDGA and COMALEP, in Puerto Natales, Chile in April 2015.

In 2012, the AEO Programme began 2 phases. The first phase included a pilot plan, sensitization and dissemination of the programme supported by Colombia, and by November 5 companies had been selected for the review of the safety requirements. Only 2 companies were awarded the security certificates after the examination. To date, 9 certified AEO companies remain. Goal proposed by this Authority at the end of 2018, 30 certified companies. We keep in coordination for a Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) with Guatemala, Costa Rica and El Salvador.

In regard to the SW, Panama developed an export platform without automated controls, so validation is still a manual activity for Customs officers. In November 2012, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry (MICI) and Customs initiated communications and started to populate the SW export platform. The IDB supported the initiative and will provide the economic support. On 28 May 2014, the implementation of the SW system, which is incorporated with SIGA/VUCE, consisted of one portal and sped up the process of exports via the SW. It also facilitates permits and licenses held by other entities. It implemented the process and completed within the platform, certificates of origin, determination of origin, auto certification, monitoring of textiles and approve / reject pre-claims.

In terms of human resources, the Administration has focused on new training for its Customs staff in a variety of areas such as Customs management information system, Rules of Origin, IPR elements and factors related with HS and value. In 2010, the total staff consisted of a total of: 1,382 officers allocated and assigned to all regional Customs administrations. The vast majority of these public servants have received an intensive training programme on the different levels of competence and functions of the authority. Currently, the Administration has a total of 1,655 employees. The airport area of Tocumen International Airport and the North zone in the province of Colon has experienced an increase in staffing and understand that this new quantity of officers will prevent and help monitor potential Customs infractions. Additionally, the
training plan of each province was intensified. The WCO experts delivered most of these trainings. During the year 2017, 68 officials benefited through scholarships in the following areas:

- Graduated in hub logistic platform and multimodal and intermodal transportation (33); and
- Graduated in forensic financial investigative audit (35).

With the acquisition of the new electronic platform, which integrates the Customs management system (SIGA), this could allow for an interface between the Colon Free Trade Zone and other areas systems to obtain information on the commercial movements through the Declaration form (input, output and transfer) of national and international trade. To date, Panama does not have an interface with the Colon Free Trade Zone but is addressing that issue. The National Customs Authority of Panama will have the route for the first half of 2018.

The Panamanian Customs management system (SIGA) was officially launched on 19 July 2012 based on the projection of more effective controls, higher capacity transactions, and interfaces with other entities of the State involving imports and exports, and new requirements and modifications are projected to be implemented soon.

Process management

Within the framework of Panama’s accession to the Central American Economic Integration Subsystem (SICA), the Customs Authority (ANA) has begun a progressive process of adapting its main Customs processes to the legal provisions of the Central American Uniform Customs Code (CAUCA) and its Regulation (RECAUCA). The adoption of CAUCA and RECAUCA will allow Panama greater predictability in foreign trade operations, allowing economic operators to know in advance the rules that will be applied at the time of making arrangements with Customs. These legal instruments contain the basic Customs norms applicable throughout the Central American region, in force in Panama since 2013 through the Law 26, under certain conditions of progression and reservations of law.

In the implementation of the Management by process for the correct application of the Customs regulations of Panama, the following processes have been identified, which are the following macro processes.

Advantages for management by the processes

1. Make changes from documentary presentation to presentation via electronic format;
2. Reduction of costs for documentary presentation and displacement to the Customs Authority;
3. Reduction of time between the authorization request and the registration or its denial;
4. A communication system with the operator is established through consultation and email;
5. Better control for the National Customs Authority equals decrease of risks;
6. Greater traceability of the load;
7. Greater quantity and better quality of information of the manifest;
8. Establishment of data of the Trade Operators for the application of the risk analysis;
9. Increase in security in the control of destination of all downloaded merchandise;
10. Increase in the reliability of the inventory of Customs warehouses;
11. Greater control of the processes of entry, transshipment, exit and internal transit of cargo in Customs areas;
12. Creation of the electronic file that could be extended to other processes.

Implementations of the new functionality for Internal Transfer (IT) and Transfer of Land Transfer (TT)

It is the new functionality developed in the Integrated Customs Management System (SIGA) for cargo movements by land of non-nationalized merchandise under the destination of transshipment or internal transit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUNCTIONALITY</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOVEMENT OF STAMP INVENTORY</td>
<td>It will allow you to keep track of all the stamps from the moment they enter the warehouse until they are used in the transfer document.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGISTER OF TRANSPORTATION PORTS</td>
<td>It allows the control of the ports enabled to carry out land transshipment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGISTER OF CHARGES BY ROUTE</td>
<td>It allows the registration of the different routes, times of travel, charges that will be used in the transfer of merchandise from an initial point to a final one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGISTER OF TRANSFER OF MERCHANDISE</td>
<td>It allows the registration of the document of transfer of terrestrial merchandise, either Internal Transit (TI) or Terrestrial Transborder (TT).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### FUNCTIONALITY | DESCRIPTION
--- | ---
**REGISTRATION OF DRIVERS / TRANSPORTERS** | It will allow the control of all drivers and transporters that carry out Internal Transit (IT) or Land Transfer (TT).  

**ONLINE PAYMENTS** | Operators can make their payments by online banking.

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**WCO support**

Panama participated in the Regional management workshop, in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), organized by the WCO, where the main objective was the development of a regional strategic plan in RM. The National Customs authority has continued to participate in seminars/workshops, regional risk strategy and Operation Westerlies 3 (Argentina - November 2014). This Authority is actively maintained in international participations.

Thanks to the significant support given to Panamanian Customs, it has positioned itself at the forefront of controls in the region, receiving awards by the Secretariat of the WCO (year 2012). On the subject of Management by Processes through the financial support of the International Monetary Fund and the accompaniment and advice of the Technical Assistance Centre for Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic (CAPTAC-DR), Advances of Customs have been recognized for the second time.

In 2007, with the support of the UN Environment programme, the Office for the implementation of the environmental conventions was established in Panamanian Customs. Panamanian Customs Officers were trained on the Montreal Protocol (ozone). In 2012, the "Customs Green Initiative" was initiated which is another programme that has provided positive results and seizures of species and substances covered in the environmental conventions. The training plan in each province was doubled by the putting into force of new agreements and trade negotiations which require Customs technical knowledge. WCO experts delivered most this training.

The WCO has been continuously providing support to Panama Customs related to AEO, IPR and most recently on E-Commerce.

### PARAGUAY

**Background**

The National Customs Administration of Paraguay has approved their 2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan which aims to strengthen both Administrative and Operational Customs management procedures. The Plan is composed of Strategic Axes, Objectives, Strategies and Actions to be executed within the established period, so that the Institution fulfills its mission, vision and institutional objectives, framed in the Customs Legislation, in accordance with the guidelines established in the Plan National Development Bank Paraguay 2030 approved by Decree No. 2794/2014 and the Strategic Orientations established by the WCO.

The new mission and vision of the Customs are periodically reviewed and appropriate to the context, they align with national Customs legislation and ensure that Customs procedures are safe and effective along with efficient revenue collection. In addition, they promote cooperation among other interested parties and best practices of the procedures.

**Customs Reform and Modernization progress**

Following their modernization process, results have been achieved in both management of Human Resources and Customs procedures, creating new tools for trade facilitation. For example:

a) Actions for the simplification of Customs procedures:

- Launch of the AEO Programme based on the WCO Framework of the WCO for export and import;
- SW for the Importer (VUI): Portal where the user interacts with the Customs and the other Institutions of the state, for management of authorizations and licenses prior to the importation of merchandise;
- The Customs of Paraguay has implemented in 2016 the Advanced Air Manifest under the IATA XML CARGO IMP standard, as well as procedures for the advance transmission of information of merchandise subject to the Remesa Expresa regime (electronic commerce). Both processes are entirely electronic, with the use of a digital signature (token), zero papers, and significant improvements in the lifting times of air cargo. We are currently close to implementing the advance passenger information, with technical assistance from the WCO and the US CBP. In this first stage it includes the API;
- In January 2018, digital dispatch for import regimes has been implemented, also with the use of digital certificates and tokens, the whole process being entirely electronic;
- In the MERCOSUR area, we are moving forward with the total computerization of the SINTIA (International Customs Transit System) with the member countries, at a fairly broad level. The same is being done for the waterway;
- Regarding postal services, we are working on the interconnection to the CDU of the UPU / WCO to computerize the postal delivery process; and
- The Customs of Paraguay creates interdisciplinary working groups with the private sector for the development and implementation of trade simplification projects. Share experiences and compile the suggestions made in them. In each project implemented by the DNA, there is an important period of testing in order to ensure the implementation without generating negative effects to the actors involved. In some cases, Customs even provides technical assistance in information technology or procedures for the progress of developments.

b) Human Resources

From 20 to 23 March 2018, the DNA has received support from the WCO for the Strengthening of the Human Talent Area. The facilitators, Mr. Antonio Carroccia and Mr. Alvaro García, evaluated the functioning of the different Sub Systems of Human Resources, and provided recommendations and opportunities for improvement to the highest Institutional Authority:

- Better management practices are implemented, which allow optimizing the performance of human talents and consequently of the institutional management forming part of the organizational culture; among which we can mention the development and migration of the Computer System of Human Resources Management, from the Desktop environment to the Web environment, allowing the application of new technologies adjusted to current requirements;
- The Human Resources Department has certified the reviews of the 9 processes under the ISO 9001: 2015 Standard; which are contemplated within the scope of the Quality Management System; among them we can mention: Selection, Admission Induction, Promotion/Recategorization Reinforcement, Evaluation of On Line Performance, Measurement of Organizational Climate, Staff Welfare Plan, Recognition and Motivation Program; as well as Computer Systems applied to administrative processes, which allow the optimization of time, resources and the provision of reliable management information for decision making by Senior Management;
- It is in development within the Web Assistance System; the Module of Registration and Processing of Online Justifications, thus contributing to the elimination of papers; and
- Internal Opposition Contests for the promotion of officials are in process; and Unloading for the Contracted personnel of the Institution.

c) Training

The Paraguayan Customs carries out its annual training plan through the Superior Technical Customs Institute, which is prepared according to the needs expressed by those responsible for the areas. Also, the Technical Customs career is ongoing in a permanent basis.

d) Integrity and transparency

As a result of the Integrity Mission, carried out by WCO experts in December 2015, progress has been made in eight of the eleven suggestions resulting from the aforementioned mission, and the other three have a reasoned justification for non-viability.

Work is being done, at an advanced stage, on the elaboration of a normative digest via the WEB to consult the Customs regulations. This measure allows to consult by topics, download in electronic format, search by keywords, etc.

WCO support

The WCO has continuously supported the modernization efforts of Paraguay, through workshops, seminars and forums. Some of the assistance that Paraguay has received in the last year are:

- Integrity support;
- Support on the effective implementation of the AEO;
- Human Resources Development; and
- Development of Performance Indicators.
PERU

Background

In 1991, Customs reform started by issuing a special regulation that allowed Customs to have legal administrative, economic and financial autonomy. In July 2002, the Central Government ordered the merger of the National Tax Administration Service (SUNAT) with the National Customs in order to avoid duplication of functions and achieve integration of services.

The Strategic Plan 2012-2016 contemplated the following strategic objectives regarding Customs modernization:

- Improve the effectiveness of tax control and Customs compliance;
- Reduce tax and Customs non-compliance by strengthening control processes, comprehensive risk system implementation, integration of tax and Customs control procedures, and improvement of the detection mechanisms of tax and Customs violations;
- Provide quality services to facilitate and encourage voluntary compliance;
- Improve the country’s competitiveness by facilitating and modernizing foreign trade to ensure an expedited and secure supply chain in Customs clearance, while reducing tax and Customs duties compliance costs, and providing quality service to individuals.

On 22 December 2011, Law 29816 was enacted – to strengthen SUNAT. The law seeks to establish the rules and requirements to strengthen SUNAT, in order to improve its work in relation to the fight against tax evasion, smuggling and illicit trafficking of goods, facilitating foreign trade, expanding the tax base and steady growth of tax revenues.

SUNAT’s mission is to serve the country by providing the necessary resources for fiscal sustainability and macroeconomic stability, contributing to the common good, competitiveness and protection of society through the administration and promotion of fair taxation and legitimate foreign trade. Its aim is to become the most successful, modern and respected tax and Customs administration in the region.

Current planning

The SUNAT Institutional Strategic Plan (ISP) for the period of 2017-2019 establishes the Institutional Strategic Objectives (SO) as well as the corresponding Institutional Strategic Actions (SA). For the aforementioned period, the strategic objectives are:

1. Improve tax and customer compliance.
   SUNAT will develop the necessary mechanisms and strategies to significantly improve compliance with tax and Customs obligations by taxpayers and users of foreign trade, which should be materialized in concrete and internationally comparable indicators, such as those related to reduced tax evasion and/or non-compliance. This objective is also related to those other obligations whose control of compliance has been entrusted to SUNAT by law states.

2. Reduce the costs of compliance with tax and Customs obligations.
   SUNAT, as part of the State, will avoid transferring overcharges to those managed and commits itself to the simplification, optimization and automation of processes aimed at minimizing the costs of compliance with tax and Customs obligations, or others whose control is in charge of the SUNAT. For these purposes, the broadest meaning of costs is considered.

3. Strengthen internal management capacity.
   Develop a management-culture-oriented process optimization and productivity improvement, in order to ensure the efficient use of resources for the implementation and promotion of institutional strategic and operational actions.
Customs Reform and Modernization progress

In the framework of the modernization process, the Customs General Law (Legislative Decree N° 1053) and its amendments were approved, adding standard improvements oriented to Advance Clearance facilitation and simplification with reduction of surcharges on warehousing, time release and release of goods such as the AEO, Advance Clearance, Goods Release in 48 hours after unloading termination, release at point of arrival, release of goods with guarantee submission prior to numeration, AR on tariff classification, Customs valuation criteria of goods, returns application, suspension and exemptions of Customs duties, quota application, re-import of repaired or altered goods. Furthermore, among the standard improvements there are those related to cargo manifest outreach and NII of goods in containers entering the country through port terminals in Callao.

It is worth mentioning that improvements in advance clearance process have enabled its increase as follows: 13.48% in 2010, 18.76% in 2011 and 30.7% in 2012. In 2014, it reached 36.9%.

By virtue of the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE Framework), which was signed by Peru in 2009, the General Customs Law incorporates criteria to grant the AEO Certification, as well as the regulation of facilities to be granted regarding Customs control and simplification. In this sense, the Supreme Decree N° 186-2012-EF approving the Regulations of Certifications for the AEO was issued. Since 9 March 2013, when a General Procedure for Certification was issued, the AEO programme has finished its implementation, comprising exporters, Customs brokers and warehouses which may qualify as an AEO in a first stage, enabling them to benefit from cargo control facilitation, and expedited and simplified Customs procedures. Later this system shall be extended to other operators related to the supply chain.

The new Integrated System of Customs Management (SIGAD) was implemented, which includes declarations 48 hours in advance; regulation of guarantees and introduction of new safeguards; restructuring of procedures and formalities for the entry of goods into the country, the unloading and delivery of goods after arrival, which has had a significant impact on foreign trade facilitation.

A procedure for expedited shipments was regulated through a special Customs procedure of express delivery consignments by air, which has impacted positively control and collection with a release time within 6 hours.

It is worth mentioning that Peru is working on a final project for an export optimization model, RM project, NII, profiles for the risk indicators project and Customs procedure RM.

Regarding the control and facilitation of border crossings, Peru has completely implemented the Bi-national Centre of Border Attention (CEBAF) Traffic Axis N° 1 Peru – Ecuador, the final study on CEBAF Peru – Bolivia has also been finished as well as the feasibility study on the Iñapari – Assist border pass project called the Peru – Brazil Integrated Control Centre, and it is pending the addition to domestic legislation of the Peru – Chile Framework Agreement for the implementation of the Santa Rosa – Chacalluta Integrated Control Centre.

SUNAT, to contribute to the country's competitiveness, through agile and safe foreign trade, has been implementing its Customs digital transformation program "FAST - Customs Facilitation, Security and Transparency". This program is changing the operation of trade, with a substantial decrease in Customs clearance times and the costs associated with them. Likewise, work is being done to strengthen comprehensive RM to combat illicit merchandise trafficking and to promote legitimate trade. During 2019, as a result of this process, we can present, by way of example, some results in facilitation and control, the same that have been possible thanks to alliances and cooperation agreements with the main Customs offices in the world, as well as with various organizations international and national. All this work is the product of the effort of the national Customs teams, who with their work contribute to the institutional and national objectives associated with a more agile and secure trade.

WCO support

Peru is one of the beneficiary countries of the SECO-WCO Global Trade Facilitation comprehensive 4-year Programme with expected outcomes on the areas of trade facilitation and organizational development. A diagnostic mission within the framework of this programme and following the Mercator programme approach, as well as a diagnostic on organizational development, was expected to take place in July 2019. Peru has also received support in under the Colibri Project and the Container Control Programme.
SAINT LUCIA

Background

Ever since Saint Lucia became a member of the WCO in 2005, the Customs department has made significant strides to adopt recommendations and best practices developed by the WCO. In 2006, the department implemented ASYCUDA++ which significantly improved the efficiency of the operations and revenue collections. This greatly assisted in trade facilitation as economic operators were now able to use an online system for submitting declarations to Customs. ASYCUDA++ also had a RM module which assisted in the targeting and selection of high risk shipments.

In 2010 the ASYCUDA++ was upgraded to ASYCUDA World. The upgraded software brought additional functionality and improved coordinated border agency functions. The new system supported uploading of supporting documents for declarations and the development of a SW environment for the sharing of information with other border agencies. Additional modules were created to allow other agencies like Ministry of Commerce, Fisheries Division, Veterinary Division and Plant Quarantine Division to make approval online. Currently information is submitted electronically to Port Authority and the Bureau of Standard through ASYCUDA World.

The advent of the global economic recession and financial crisis in 2008 brought about new challenges to the country. In 2012, the government implemented VAT which saw the collection of revenue from a larger tax base. In that same year, the department upgraded its harmonized system from HS 1996 to HS 2007. In November 2014, the department further upgraded to HS 2012.

Current planning

In April 2013, the Comptroller of Customs directed that a strategic plan be developed to guide the operations of the department for the next five years. The development of the plan took into consideration international best practice and the changing demands of the business community. The mandate for a new direction was partly due to the effect of the financial crisis and the drive to further push the WCO recommendations like trade facilitation and RM. The WCO Safe Framework of Standards became key pillars during the development of the strategic plan as it spoke to the Customs to Customs relationship and the Customs to business relationship of which the trusted trader or voluntary compliance programmes are essential components.

The strategic plan centered on the development of trade facilitation, border security, quality service, RM, organization and management. For trade facilitation, the department is in the process of developing the voluntary compliance programme for trusted traders. Significant strides have been made in developing the PCA unit to support the trade facilitation and RM initiatives. Currently, Saint Lucia is working with other OECS countries to implement a regional economic union which includes a mechanism for the free circulation of goods and free movement of persons within the OECS countries.

The initiatives for enforcement and border security involved the ongoing development of an integrated case management system and the installing of a cargo scanner for more reliable inspections. The enforcement division is also involved in many operations like Lion Fish which targeted smuggling and illegal drug detection. The department works closely with other regional administration through Caribbean Customs Law Enforcement Council (CCCLEC) and IMPACS for sharing of information.

On the quality service side, development is ongoing for the establishment of an internal and external feedback mechanism for internal and external stakeholders respectively. Plans are also in place to make additional information related to Customs procedures, requirements and standards available through the public website.

The organization is in the processing of analyzing and approving a new organizational structure which would ensure more effective use of resources. Some changes recommended include a research and policy unit, enhancing training, developing a change management strategy and updating Customs laws and regulations. Updating of the legislation is being done with other CARICOM countries to ensure that there is harmonized legislation for Customs operations. Presently there is an exercise to review the standard operation procedures of the entire department.

Efforts are afoot to integrate RM practices throughout the department. We have recently established a RM unit with trained staff in the area of risk analysis.
Customs Reform and Modernization Progress

To date we have received significant assistance from CARTAC in modifying the organizational structure, RM and pre-clearance processes. The department is currently using risk parameter to configure IT systems for targeting and selection. Significant work has been done in simplifying the procedures related to Customs clearance including the rescinding of obsolete forms, the sharing of information with other border agencies through the development of SW architecture and engaging stakeholders to determine the problems affecting trade.

A committee has been constituted to analyze recommendations made for a change in the organizational structure, to ensure that it meets the needs of staff and the trading community. Training was organized in the area of strategic management, leadership, tariff classification, valuation and enforcement to ensure that the department has a cadre of skilled staff to perform their functions. These training programmes were conducted by IADB, WCO, IFC and CARTAC at various intervals.

WCO support

WCO has provided much support in providing training through the CLIKC! online training database. Various units have been identified for specific training available through the CLIKC! system. The WCO capacity building team has also organized dialogues on leadership and strategic thinking with top managers from regional countries in the Caribbean. These avenues allow managers to not only share ideas on strategic thinking but also establish regional relationship for the sharing of information, thereby fostering a Customs to Customs relationship. The funding of other forums and workshops like the WCO IT conference has allowed senior managers to understand the issues associated with modernization of Customs processes through technology.

Access to the WCO enforcement databases like CEN and IPM has enhanced capabilities in performing Customs’ functions. The WCO consultants, through the Ministry of External Affairs, provided onsite training in the area of valuations. This training benefited the department tremendously as officers were able to engage the facilitators directly during the training sessions.

In August of 2015, the Comptroller of Saint Lucia Customs requested a TRS. The request was not part of the current corporate plan and no funding was available at the time. Efforts continued throughout the year to secure funding and the required experts to conduct it. In April of 2016, CCF Korea agreed to fund the mission and delivery is expected in the near future.

In September 2016, two WCO experts co-facilitated a TRS in Saint Lucia. The workshop participants attained a comprehensive understanding about the WCO Standards, Tools and Instruments, including CBM, AEO, SAFE Framework of Standard and others. Regional and national experiences were presented to the participants as way to further enhance their knowledge on the TRS within the regional context.

A study visit to a local clearance unit allowed the experts to have a better understanding about the clearance process in Saint Lucia, particularly some of the stages that Customs declaration goes through. Saint Lucia uses the UNCTAD ASYCUDA System to process declarations.

The WCO explained to the participants how process mapping for clearance of goods can be drafted.

The WCO finalized the deployment of the National Customs Enforcement Network (nCEN) application in Saint Lucia with an nCEN workshop. Selected officers from the headquarters as well as airport and seaport units were trained on the functionality of the system. During the eight-day training workshop the participants acquired practical knowledge on the functionality of the system, a theoretical background on data gathering and the analytical possibilities provided by the nCEN application. The workshop also touched upon the other WCO applications in the CEN suite, giving a valuable insight into the additional data mining capabilities provided by the global CEN database, or the information exchange potential of the CENcomm application.

SURINAME

Background

Suriname joined the WCO in November 2018. Suriname is a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Union of South American Nations (USAN), the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR for its Spanish initials), the Caribbean Customs Organization and the WTO. Suriname also participates in the European Partnership Agreement with the CARIFORUM countries.

The Ministry of Trade is working to draft a new tax and a new Customs law. The intent is to consolidate the different Customs laws and instruments into a General Customs Act. The Ministry of Trade is working with a consultant (BDO International) and hopes to have a draft Customs law by the end of 2019. Once a draft is completed, it would go to Parliament for approval. This new legislation is in line with, and similar to the EU and the Netherlands’ Customs Legislation.
Current Planning

Suriname has a strategic plan for the country and budget. As part of the Customs Reform and Modernization process Suriname Customs and Excise Department (SCED) is looking into developing a long-term and comprehensive strategic plan.

SCED mission and vision statements include:

- **Mission:**
  To protect the country’s borders and state revenue and to facilitate trade in order to strengthen and enhance the security and economic prosperity of Suriname.

- **Vision:**
  1. To be a result orientated organization, recognizable by its high values on integrity and professionalism;
  2. To apply the laws in a correct and fair manner;
  3. To gain the confidence of its clientele; and
  4. To achieve the highest standards in regard to providing service and promoting compliance.

Customs Reform and Modernization Process

As part of the Reform and Modernization efforts, the SCED requested support to the WCO Secretariat to overcome challenges related to ASYCUDA World System, SCED administrative organization and internal controls, and the Customs valuation of goods. UNCTAD is currently providing support to SCED to overcome the challenges related to ASYCUDA.

Customs generally deals with four key issues: revenue collection, community protection, trade facilitation and national security. To effectively address these issues, a high level of integrity is critical. The Parliament of Suriname is in the process of finalizing the anti-corruption law.

Suriname uses the CARICOM version of the HS. Suriname currently applies the 2007 version (CARICOM External Tariff (CET) 2007). Suriname is planning to transition to the 2017 version of the CARICOM HS.

Suriname has not yet ratified the WTO TFA. However, Suriname has notified the WTO of its Category A, B, and C commitments.

WCO support

The WCO performed a diagnostic mission in Suriname from 13 to 18 October 2019. The focus of the mission was to assist SCED in implementing their strategic planning cycle, Customs regulations deriving from the WTO TFA, and address the priority areas for SCED.

URUGUAY

Customs Reform and Modernization Progress

The reform carried out at the Uruguay National Customs Directorate (DNA) has been part of the strategy for international positioning and enhancement of the conditions for a better competitiveness of the country’s production of goods. Given the international trade strategies defined, it was necessary to implement an enabler Customs management system, based on the adaptation to the current trends in international trade, in matters of commercial agreements, security, cargo risks, sanitary and environmental conditions, and the logistics that support the trade of goods.

Framed within a participative process of strategic planning that involved the National Direction, directors, staff, and the main interest groups, the DNA defined its belief system, mission and vision of its modernization process. Based on management best practices, and advised by international organizations such as IDB, IMF and the WCO, the strategic objectives were established. These objectives are the drivers towards the achievement of a specific vision, and they are accompanied by a set of indicators, goals and strategic initiatives. Subsequently, in a gradual and coherent manner, the strategy of the DNA was then disseminated within each of the units of the organization and adopted by them.

In 2010, the strategic guidelines for Customs modernization were formulated for the first time. These guidelines were:

- Improvement of processes and procedures;
- Updating institutional and organizational regulations;
- Improvement of human and material resources; and
- Improvement of infrastructure and equipment.
Aimed at delivering these changes within the Organization, the DNA started a Strategic Planning process and established its 2010-2015 Strategic Plan, while defining its belief system (mission and vision), its strategic objectives and the performance indicators to measure the implementation of the plan.

In this first planning process, the DNA has implemented a comprehensive Management by Objectives System, designed from the most widely accepted conceptual developments and very well adapted to the reality of the country and the Customs Administration.

The strategic initiatives that arose from this strategic plan, have been defined in order to achieve the goals established, which aim at more intelligent controls and actions that facilitate the entry and exit of goods to and from Uruguay. Some of these initiatives are:

- Digital Single Customs Document (Digital DUA);
- SW for Foreign Trade (VUCE);
- Qualified Economic Operator Programme (OEC);
- Integrated Customs Intelligence System (SIIA);
- Electronic Seal for secure transit shipments; and
- Automation of Customs controls at the port.

These projects are fully implemented, and their implementation has caused great impact on control and facilitation. Among the results, we can find:

- Paperless Customs, 99% of procedures are digital;
- According to World Bank estimates, the use of the Digital DUA represents a saving of USD 10: per year for international trade in Uruguay;
- Interconnectivity of 15 government agencies that participate in international trade, managed through the VUCE platform, which represents 60 digital processes;
- 48 OEC certified operators, which have been granted reductions in inspection times, priority at Customs clearance, preferential lanes and personalized attention;
- The Integrated Customs Intelligence System is an analysis system of international trade information, which uses econometric models that enable us to carry out fewer but better controls. This system defines the risk rules, which are then applied to the international trade operations, and the outcome provides feedback for the system;
- The electronic seal has contributed to make Uruguay the only country in the Americas that controls 100% of the transit shipments. This represents a saving of 7 hours in average in transporting goods 500km within the national territory; and
- Through an inter-institutional project, the automation of the entry and exit of goods through “acceso Maciel” (one of the gates at Montevideo port) was possible, which represents a reduction in time of 60% for international trade operations, which—in average—also represents a reduction of 4 days of work per month.

As a way to bridge the gap between institutional and organizational regulations, the New Customs Code of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay (CAROU) was approved. This code brings Uruguayan Customs regulations into line with the Customs Code of Mercosur (CAM), thus introducing provisions aimed at aligning the current regulations with the current scenario. The Code has established 4 aspects that enhance the enabling spirit that the DNA is aiming at:

- Binding Consultations: the possibility of submitting consultations to the DNA regarding the implementation of Customs regulations in a specific case. The DNA is obliged to apply the criteria established in the resolution to the individual who submitted the consultation;
- OEC: the Certified Economic Operator has been created and institutionalized. CAROU, provision N° 40;
- Logistic Warehouses: the DNA has powers to carry out controls on the goods that are stored at these warehouses. They have become Customs areas; and
- Free Zones: they are part of the Customs territory; therefore, the DNA can carry out selective controls on them.

Furthermore, a new methodology has been developed for process management, and as a result, the ISO 9001 – 2008 Quality Management Certificate has been obtained by the Customs Inspections Division, for the Customs Audit process. This Division has been a pioneer in using this methodology. All the Areas in Uruguay Customs are currently aimed at using process-based management systems.
Aimed at bridging the gaps in physical infrastructure, equipment and advanced technology, which the DNA considers crucial, we have invested in the physical infrastructure of the Customs branches in the provinces and at the Headquarters in Montevideo:

- Investment in technology 2009 – 2015: U$ 5,419,739

The Performance Based Incentive System is another tool through which all Customs officials are evaluated by a group of factors (responsibility level, individual performance and participation in finding infringements). One of the key factors is the Performance Factor, which considers, among others, the team goals compliance level. This tool allows the strategy to impact at all levels within the organization and to gather the necessary information in order to check that the behaviors generated by the system are aligned with the Strategic Plan.

For the 2015-2020 period, Uruguay Customs is going through a second strategic planning process, in which officials of all levels are involved. The DNA has obtained a set of achievements (organizational restructuring, and the performance based incentive system) that allow us to strengthen the management tools, to achieve behavioral changes within the organization and to improve the efficiency of Customs process. During this process, we have been seeking changes in the relationship with international trade operators, especially a way towards a compliance culture.

Going through the Customs modernization process has developed within the DNA a team of experts in best practices for intelligent controls, simplification of Customs procedures and management methodologies bases on achieving goals and objectives. This has permitted to position the Uruguay National Customs Directorate as a model in modernization of Customs management, for other Customs Administrations from the region and worldwide.

**WCO support**

In August 2018, the WCO conducted a national workshop on CBM aimed to facilitate and enhance cooperation between Customs and cross-border regulatory agencies on one hand, and between other regulatory agencies for information sharing and coordinated inspection and control of cargo on the other. Uruguay Customs is a dynamic administration which was the first agency to be interfaced with VUCE. It shared information with participants on a new CBM initiative and provided details about the scope of the initiative, highlighting it as the starting point for conducting a on several categories of goods and, more importantly, stating that a group of relevant agencies would be formed to determine the goods selected for the TRS. In August 2019, the WCO provided support to Uruguay under the Customs Operational Practices for Enforcement and Seizures (COPES) program.
EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

Regional Developments

The WCO East and Southern Africa (ESA) region comprises 24 Member countries including: Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Out of these, 2 countries still remain as inactive WCO Members.

In the past year, 20 ESA Member administrations were active recipients of the WCO technical assistance and capacity building support. This include sixteen (16) countries that have expressed commitment to receive support to implement the WTO TFA measures at national level, through a medium-term to longer-term arrangement under the WCO Mercator Programme Tailor-made Track approach. Thus far, all the 16 Member countries received WCO capacity building and technical assistance in 2019/2020, albeit, few Member administrations are at the very early stage of Mercator Programme support.

The Secretariat continues to engage with both inactive Members and notable ‘dormant’ Member administrations to take active participation in WCO Programmes at global and regional levels.

Accessions by ESA Members to main WCO Conventions:

- Harmonized System (HS): Twenty-one (21) out of 24 countries in the ESA region are contracting parties to the HS Convention. Burundi was the last to ratify this Convention in January 2017.
- RKC: At present 15 ESA countries are contracting parties to the RKC (all, except Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan and Tanzania). Latest accession was by Angola in February 2017.

WTO-TFA:

So far, 19 ESA countries have ratified the Agreement. The latest accession was by Tanzania in April 2020.

For the remaining 5 ESA countries, Eritrea is not a Member of the WTO, while Comoros, Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan, have observer status in the WTO and are currently at different levels of negotiations and progress towards the Membership accessions.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA):

The Agreement entered into force on 30 May 2019. Trading under the AfCFTA Agreement was due to commence on 1 July 2020, however, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, this date is postponed 1 January 2021.

- To date, all ESA countries have signed the Agreement except Eritrea, which is the only AU Member State yet to sign.
- 10 ESA countries have ratified the Agreement (Kenya, Rwanda, Eswatini, Uganda, South Africa, Namibia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and Mauritius.

Other Regional integration and Cooperation Initiatives

Most countries in the ESA region have Membership with one or more of the several regional economic blocs in the region that are pursuing regional economic integration as common agendas to foster economic development. This is demonstrated by the ESA countries Membership to following African Union (AU) recognized Regional Economic Communities (RECs): Common Market for East and Southern Africa – COMESA (15); Southern Africa Development Community - SADC (13); East African Communities – EAC (6); and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development – IGAD (7). Other regional groups are; Southern African Customs Union –SACU (5), and the Indian Ocean Commission – IOC (4). Regional integration is one of the core pillars of Africa’s strategy for economic development and continental industrialization, and the common vision is to achieve an integrated African Economic Community (AEC) as envisioned by the African Union using RECs as key building blocks. In that regard, most ESA Customs administrations are implementing national Customs modernization Programmes that are aligned with regional strategies and contributing to the regional development goals.

The Regional Private Sector Group (ESA-RPSG) formed in the ESA region continued to play a collaborative role with the ROCB through Webinars and business/supply-chain survey reports that raised regional awareness about the business sector’s priorities, challenges, and expectations. The initiative is in support of the collective desire of both the ESA business sector, through RPSG, and the Customs leadership of WCO ESA region to promote and enhance Customs-to-Business cooperation. The ESA-RPSG seeks to support Customs administrations in the region with advice and cooperative initiatives to enhance efficient cross-border trading and regional integration. In a complementary manner to the role played by the PSCG in the WCO at global level, the ESA-RPSG is in collaboration at the regional level to monitor Customs policies, and
the efficiency of their operations on cross-border trade, and provide useful advice to the Customs leadership through the regional Vice-Chair. The RPSG is also providing stronger regional representation in the PSCG.

Current situation in the ESA region:

- The global economic shock from the COVID-19 pandemic and the negative downturn on cross-border trade for travelers, traders, transporters, has had its proportionate impact on both national and regional economies in ESA region. All Member Customs administrations were affected by the swift response and strict restrictions imposed on cross-border movement based by national governments that were also in adherence to guidelines imposed at regional levels by all the RECs: EAC, SADC, COMESA and to an extent SACU. As these measures functionally addressed the health crisis of the pandemic, they have simultaneously disrupted the progress of most Customs modernization Programmes both at national and regional levels. Incidentally they have also raised serious questions about the preparedness and the capacity of ESA Customs administrations to respond to disaster and to maintain Customs business continuity to ensure supply chain security during such challenging times;

- In response to the emerging challenges, the ESA-RPSG worked in collaboration with the ROCB ESA to conduct series of regional Webinars to share the experiences and measures undertaken by Customs and various regional stakeholders to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The WCO used all occasions to participate in these Webinars to share its initial response measures to the pandemic and to outline the ongoing WCO initiatives and efforts to assist Member Customs administrations and the business sector to support the recovery phase of the pandemic; and

- While several planned regional activities and events as well as WCO missions to Members were suspended, the use of online technology by regional Members to conduct virtual meetings and to absorb WCO capacity building missions has emerged significantly as the accepted approach and is progressively advancing in maturity. At least 21 virtual missions were conducted by the WCO to support various ESA Member countries at both national and regional levels, as immediate COVID-19 response measures to ensure continuation of the planned capacity building to the Members.

Regional Structures

The ESA Region is the host to a ROCB, four RTCs and a Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO).

The ROCB ESA: is hosted by Kenya in Nairobi and staffed by 5 permanent officials, including the Director. The ROCB ESA plays an active role in annual coordination of the WCO ESA Members capacity building needs assessment process, and is also responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the ESA Regional Strategy 2018 – 2021.

4 RTCs are hosted in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Mauritius, and South Africa respectively. The 4 RTCs continue to undertake initiatives to enhance their recognized roles as Centres of Excellence for the respective WCO strategic packages (ECP, RP, CEP and ODP). The RTCs have developed a performance measurement framework as of measures to monitor their role and performance in implementation of the regional strategy.

The RILO ESA is currently hosted by Zimbabwe with staff capacity of 6 officials, and operational since January 2018. A MoU formalizing Zimbabwe as the host country was signed by the WCO Secretary General and the Commissioner General of the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority during the 80th Session of the WCO Policy Commission, in December 2018, held in Mumbai, India. To ensure effective delivery of its planned work Programme, the RILO is aligning its activities to the ESA Regional Strategy and utilizing baseline data collected by the ROCB and other RECs to identify and develop a regional risk register.

Regional Strategic Priorities

The ESA Region Strategy 2018-2021, is underpinned by the following vision, goal, mission statement and values:

Vision
A region that facilitates trade efficiently and professionally while ensuring economic growth and intra-regional trade.

Goal
To contribute to the economic growth of the region through trade, security, social protection and human capital development.

Mission
To develop gender equitable, professional and modernized Customs administrations that are fair, efficient and effective in revenue collection and border management service.
Values

Transparency, Probity, Commitment, Responsibility, Respect, and Cooperation.

The strategy is focused on the following priority areas:

1. Simplify, standardize and harmonize policies, legislation and procedures based on international standards;
2. Strengthen stakeholder relationships to improve trade facilitation;
3. Modernize revenue collection;
4. Adopt Customer service initiatives;
5. Enhance RM policy, strategy and procedures;
6. Implement CBM principles;
7. Encourage information sharing;
8. Conduct intelligence-led intra-regional operations and support global;
9. Develop a pool of subject matter expert and expert trainers;
10. Promote integrity through utilization/implementation of the WCO Tools;
11. Promote gender equality and diversity; and
12. Enhance research in the Region.

Through execution of the 3-year regional strategy implementation plan 2018 – 2021, which is in the final cycle, the targeted priorities have been pursued. The implementation matrix had been boosted with baseline data collected by the ROCB from the onset of strategy execution to support accurate monitoring and reporting of its progress. The link below provides the 2019-2020 Annual Report of the ROCB ESA that highlights the progress of the ESA region strategy implementation: https://www.wcoesarocb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ROCB-Annual-Report-2019-2020_v5_lo.pdf

Regional Development Projects

The WCO capacity building delivery is anchored on cooperation Programmes with development organizations or Member countries that have agreed to finance a variety of capacity building projects to support Member countries Customs administrations. The link below provides a general overview of WCO capacity building projects: http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/capacity-building/activities-and-Programmes/cooperation-Programmes.aspx.

Member administrations of the ESA region continued to receive various WCO capacity building support through the following cooperation Programmes and projects:

- WCO-Finland ESA Project II “To Progress the Trade Facilitation Agenda, within the Framework of the WCO Mercator Programme 2016–2019”;
- WCO–Sida projects in Sub-Saharan Africa;
- WCO/JICA Joint Project on Trade Facilitation in Africa;
- WCO-Norad Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion (A-CIP) Programme;
- HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD TFA Capacity Building Programme; and
- WCO-EU Programme to support Africa on the Harmonized System.

ESA Regional Project funded by Finland

The WCO-Finland ESA Project II “To Progress the Trade Facilitation Agenda, within the Framework of the WCO Mercator Programme 2016–2019”, funded by the Finnish Government was launched in February 2017, and was designed to support developing countries in the East and Southern Africa (ESA) region to effectively implement the WTO TFA provisions using the WCO’s international standards and tools under the auspices of the tailor-made track of the WCO Mercator Programme.

For some activities, the project has had joint funding arrangements with other projects including the HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD TFA Capacity Building Programme, Trademark East Africa (TMEA) and the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (GATF).

In July 2019, Mauritius benefitted from a diagnostic workshop on Customs laboratories where participants gained insight into effective ways of establishing a Customs laboratory and the implementation of “test procedures”, as required by the TFA. Kenya received support for the establishment of an advance ruling framework, and the conduct of a pre-arrival processing diagnostic mission. Uganda was supported to conduct a TRS in August 2019, while the delivery of a TFA...
diagnostic and implementation planning mission to Botswana, in October 2019, resulted in the full accreditation of 2 WCO MPA experts from the region.

Zimbabwe and Eswatini received support in advanced PCA in respectively in November and December 2019, while Malawi and Seychelles benefitted from AEO support to improve the professional knowledge in developing policy regulations. One of the highlights for the reporting period, was a conference held in Burundi, for the formal publication of the results of a recently conducted TRS. Malawi also released their TRS results in December 2019 following the capacity building support received from the project in 2017. The study covered Import, Transit and Export processes and was conducted through the use of WCO TRS Guidelines and tools.

The period also saw considerable funding support provided in the area of HR with a competency-based management workshop in Eswatini, in April 2019, which was further enhanced through peer matching SRA officials with HR officials from Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA). A people development diagnostic mission was conducted in Mauritius in August 2019, while a follow-up mission to Comoros, in December 2019, resulted in improved knowledge and skills in the implementation of a competency-based HR framework.

In September 2019, LMD TER’s were conducted in Kenya and Malawi and in South Africa in October 2019. An LMD workshop, focused on change management, was also supported in Uganda in November 2019. A sub-regional pilot workshop of the WCO’s Executive and Professional Competency-based Human Resources Management (EPCB-HRM) Programme was held in South Africa, in January 2020, which formed part of a phased one-year professional development Programme that aims to build the foundations of a modern HR management system.

In January 2020, a training workshop in Customs valuation (basic course) was held in Seychelles in a bid to enhance fair and efficient revenue collection. In February 2020, Zimbabwe also received assistance from the WCO to practically identify and classify different types of fabric, through the use of proper infrastructure for recognition and classification of textiles and textile articles. To facilitate this workshop, the WCO presented ZIMRA with two microscopes and a weighing scale.

A mid-term evaluation of the project was conducted in October-November 2019 and the findings presented by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland at the Project Steering Committee meeting in February 2020. The objective of the assessment was to prepare an external, independent analysis and assessment of the Project performance and technical arrangements in Customs administrations and beneficiary countries. The evaluation was based on the OECD template, with 7 issues considered in relation to relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, coordination, and crosscutting objectives. The conclusions of the Report confirmed that the Project had generally met all 7 criteria applied to the Evaluation

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, delivery of a number of project activities were suspended. In line with the WCO’s approach to delivering online support over the period, the project issued questionnaires to Uganda and Zimbabwe in April 2020 to initiate preliminary virtual evaluation missions to determine to an extent, the outcomes of Programme support in the two countries.

Meanwhile, the Ministry for Foreign of Finland has granted project a non-cost extension up to July 2020 to ensure completion of postponed project activities as well as preparation of final reports, project review and closure.

The WCO – Sida projects in Sub-Saharan Africa

The Phase II (2014-2018) of the WCO- Sida projects in Sub-Saharan Africa funded by the Government of Sweden came to a scheduled end in December 2018. The projects focused on the following three Capacity Building Projects involving 21 Member countries; the WCO-EAC CREATE Project, the WCO-SACU Connect Project and the WACAM Project. The regional projects benefitted from a positive mid-term evaluation, which highlighted progress as well as challenges. Overall, they were found to have been on track, effective and efficient, and well-managed. A potential phase III of the projects is currently under negotiation.

The WCO-EAC CREATE Project

The WCO-EAC CREATE Project focused mainly on supporting the EAC countries with the development and roll-out of a regional AEO Programme. This Programme reached 82 operators that represent over USD 1.5 billion in terms of regional trade volume, 7% of regional trade and 9% of revenue collected in the region in 2018. A further 17 companies have been put forward for regional AEO accreditation since July 2018. Some of the achievements of the project in the last 12 months are outlined below.

The EAC region carried out a client satisfaction survey on the regional AEO Programme, to assess the level of satisfaction regarding the effective application of its related benefits. On average, 74% of the benefits are being applied across the region. Moreover, peer validation review visits were carried out to assess the level of compliance with agreed regional AEO Programme and AEO validation practices. The peer validation visits have concluded that all countries are applying the
agreed regional AEO Programme and AEO validation procedures and that, on average, 92% of the regional AEO Programme prerequisites are established at the national level.

Five monitoring and evaluation visits were held, in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, to review the implementation of national AEO Programme upgrade plans since the AEO Programme diagnostic took place in 2016. These monitoring visits concluded that all countries are making endeavors to implement the national upgrade plans. The average implementation rate of activities and identified outputs within national upgrade plans is 77%, while the level of achievements of results is currently at 70%. Areas related to HRM, IT and communication related to the AEO Programme have proved to be the most challenging ones. It is important to note that the AEO Validation Module has now been included in the EAC Customs Curriculum training with the Project’s support.

A consultative session on the project between the WCO, the EAC, the Customs administrations of the region and the private sector was held in July 2018 during which a roadmap for the future of the regional AEO Programme and a regional concept note were developed and approved by all concerned parties.

The project held its “Phase Out and Closing Event,” during which final project outputs were adopted and recommendations to consolidate the Programme were made in view of a potential Phase III of the project. The WCO-EAC CREATe Project achieved all the targets over the duration of the project.

The WCO-SACU project

The WCO-SACU Connect Project focused on supporting the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) Members to be better prepared to contribute to enhanced regional integration and trade facilitation through targeted and tailored capacity building at both the regional and national levels. The project consisted of four components; IT connectivity, trade partnership, RM and enforcement and legislative reform.

The project supported Eswatini and South Africa to develop the legal framework to successfully establish connectivity and automated data exchange, while Lesotho and South Africa established IT connectivity in the same period. IT connectivity based on the WCO’s Globally Networked Customs (GNC) and Data Model (DM) is now a reality in the SACU region. Discussions to expand IT connectivity efforts to the wider SADC region were held in October 2018 and the SADC Members have adopted a regional project concept note to facilitate SADC IT connectivity efforts.

Under the Trade Partnership component, the project also supported the region in developing training modules on the preferred trader audit. The South Africa Revenue Services (SARS) has since rolled out the Regional Preferred Trader Programme at the national level, and to date, counts more than 70 companies.

The project sponsored the RM and enforcement champion of the WCO-SACU Connect Project to participate in the WCO-led Enforcement Operation “Mirage”, resulting in the drafting of a final report drawing on the operational good practices/lessons learned and analyzing how to replicate these in the SACU region. The SACU region also adopted its Regional Compliance Management Strategy in the second half of 2018.

Finally, the project held its Phase Out and Closing Event, during which final project outputs were adopted, and main achievements, challenges and lessons learned were identified for the course of Phase II (2014-2018). The project achieved over 84% of its set targets over the duration of the Project and the SACU region is seen as the benchmark for IT connectivity and regional enforcement cooperation by the African Union.

The WCO/JICA Joint Project on Trade Facilitation in Africa

WCO/JICA Joint Project was launched in July 2016 to further enhance WCO support for Customs administrations in Africa and is currently supporting three sub-regions, namely East Africa, Southern Africa and West Africa.

In East Africa, the Joint Project is supporting the collaborative efforts of 5 countries, namely Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda in the areas of RM, PCA and Program Global Shield under their “Trade Facilitation and Border Control Project”. 3 sub-regional and 6 national activities have been organized in 2019/2020. Amongst others, the value of the Joint Project is particularly well-demonstrated in one of the key components, the Master Trainer Programme (MTP). The MTP aimed at increasing the pool of experts in some key Customs areas, such as in HS classification and in Customs valuation to establish more sustainable training delivery capacity. Under the ongoing Project in East Africa, MTP on PCA is in progress. As a result of the joint support extended by the WCO and JICA, some 90 Master Trainers (MTs) have already been developed in East Africa. They are very active and delivered training for nearly 12,000 Customs officers and agents in the last two years (2018-2019). A number of those MTs are also accredited as WCO Accredited experts (ACE) and are supporting other countries particularly in Africa with their accumulated expertise and knowledge.
Responding to the latest regional strategies developed by the WCO East and Southern African (ESA) region and the WCO West and Central African (WCA) region to develop regional “pool of experts”, the WCO and JICA agreed to offer similar MTPs to support countries along the respective JICA-supported trade corridors in Southern Africa and West Africa.

In Southern Africa, the MTP on “Customs valuation” was launched in October 2018 with the participation of Customs officials of Botswana, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The MTP in Southern Africa had so far completed 3 out of 5 planned progressive activities with the support jointly offered by the WCO and JICA experts and the strong ownership demonstrated by the nominated participants from participating countries. It should be noted that Master Trainers of East Africa were invited to participate in those activities and shared their valuable knowledge and experience for contributing to the success of MTPs in Southern.

While the global outbreak of COVID-19 affected the smooth implementation of planned activities under the WCO/JICA Joint Project since March 2020, 8 virtual workshops/meetings comprising PCA under MTP for East Africa and PGS for Burundi, Rwanda and Kenya respectively were delivered from May 2020. In addition, the development of training materials was conducted virtually, using email exchanges and communication from April to June 2020 to ensure the progress of the WCO/JICA Joint Project. More virtual workshops/meetings are scheduled to follow in 2020/2021.

**WCO-Norad Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion (A-CIP) Programme**

The WCO Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion (A-CIP) Programme for Customs, financed by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), aims at improving the business environment for cross-border trade in selected WCO Member countries. Activities are guided by and in line with the ten key factors of the Revised Arusha Declaration Concerning Good Governance and Integrity in Customs.

Since June 2019, under the Programme bilateral component, the WCO conducted 4 more scoping missions, to conclude qualitative assessments in 11 A-CIP Partner Administrations, including 3 ESA countries; Ethiopia, Mozambique and Tanzania. Other countries were Afghanistan, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Lebanon, Nepal, and Tunisia. Each country’s integrity-related needs and priorities were identified and A-CIP country-level Project Plans were developed to clarify objectives and guide A-CIP activities for the next four years.

Under the Programme multilateral component, a Regional workshop was held in July 2019 on the East African Community (EAC) Customs and Tax Code of Ethics to provide more clarity on how EAC Members can implement integrity-related activities. Over this period, the Programme has also arranged translation of several WCO integrity related materials into partner languages including Portuguese and Arabic, widening their reach and accessibility.

In December 2019, Norad signed an addendum to the initial Grant Agreement to expand funds for A-CIP Programme from EUR 5 million to EUR 8 million. The additional funding allows 6 more Members to benefit from A-CIP TACB. There are also on-going discussions with Global Affairs Canada (GAC) to expand the A-CIP Programme to the Americas region.

In January and February, the A-CIP Programme also supported a pilot Customs Integrity Perception Survey (CIPS) in 10 of the initial A-CIP Partner countries, delivered at priority locations in January 2020 using mobile survey stations. CIPS offer a way of assessing perception and behaviors around integrity and provides a baseline for measuring the impact of integrity-related initiatives.

A meeting of A-CIP Project Coordinators from each administration was held in Brussels in February 2020 where lessons learned were shared and project management skills were reinforced to ensure successful realization of intended results for each participating country.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, an alternative work plan was developed and agreed with the donor and Programme beneficiaries. This plan pulled some remote activities forward that had been anticipated for later in the Programme, such as the development of an e-learning module, and also focused on converting plans for in-country scoping work to a remote assessment package that would be piloted with the 6 new A-CIP Partner Administrations as well as remote technical assistance and capacity building activities.

**The HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD TFA Capacity Building Programme**

The HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD Trade Facilitation Agreement Capacity Building Programme (April 2018 to March 2020), under the United Kingdom’s Commonwealth Heads of Government fund, benefitted Members from various WCO regions including, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, and Zambia from the ESA region. The Programme brings the WCOs and UNCTADs complementary nature together and coordinates closely with the UNCTAD Empowerment Programme for NTFCs, as part of a maturing partnership between the two organizations.

The period saw a continued delivery of tailor-made TA/CB in trade facilitation to the beneficiary countries the WCO Mercator Programme approach. Activities have focused on areas where WCO instruments, tools and standards offer added value.
In addition to delivering in-country capacity building, the Programme supported the roll-out of several new WCO capacity building products, including advanced PCA training which became available to Rwanda and Zambia in August and November 2019 respectively. The Programme also addressed organizational development issues, including LMD and HRM as complements and enablers for effective TFA implementation in Lesotho and Zambia.

In addition to UNCTAD, the Programme enjoyed successful collaboration with the World Bank focusing on TRS in several countries, especially, Rwanda and Zambia in the ESA region, and further cooperation with the USAID activity associated to the Southern Africa Trade Hub in Zambia. Following, the same collaborative approach, the Programme also delivered several joint missions on core TFA topics including AEO and PCA in collaboration with the WCO-Finland East and Southern Africa (ESA) Programme II in Eswatini, Malawi and Zambia.

A new partnership with HMRC was concluded for the period April 2020-March 2022 under the HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD Programme. The third phase Programme will geographically shift its focus from Commonwealth countries to primarily supporting Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Over the course of April-June 2020 initial conversations were conducted with possible partner countries and preparations made for the WCO’s first ever remote Mercator Programme stocktaking missions to be scheduled for July 2020. Selected countries from the ESA region will be confirmed.

The Trade Facilitation Programme in Middle Income Countries (TF-MICs)

Under the United Kingdom’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s (FCO) Prosperity Funds Global Trade Programme, the Trade Facilitation Programme in Middle Income Countries (TFP-MICs), is a new three year partnership between the WCO, the FCO and the World Bank Group (WBG) that is designed to provide technical assistance and capacity building to support TFA implementation in five middle income countries including South Africa.

The reporting period saw a transition of the Programme from the establishment of key Programme and strategic documents, including the development of specific country results frameworks and planning sessions with partnership countries, to a start of the delivery of activities.

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the Programme changed its delivery approach to focus on delivering remote missions and support. Activities have focused primarily on virtual forward planning meetings with development partners and partnership countries. For South Africa, the Programme is committed and providing remote support to review the Customs Control Act (2014).

The WCO-EU Programme to support Africa on the Harmonized System

In 2018, the WCO and the EU launched a joint multi-year Programme to support African Customs administrations, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the African Union Commission (AUC), relevant government administrations and the private sector in the coordinated implementation and uniform application of the WCO Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, generally referred to as "the Harmonized System" or simply "the HS".

The Programme contributes to the implementation of the WTO TFA and to the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), formally launched by the Assembly of the AU on 21 March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda. Furthermore, the Programme is implemented as part of the EU’s External Investment Plan and to the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, adopted at the Lisbon Summit in 2007 and refined at subsequent summits in 2010, 2014 and 2017.

The Programme is aimed at harmonizing the classification of goods based on WCO standards to enhance African trade. The anticipated outcome of the Programme is that in 2022 the beneficiary African countries will implement and apply the 2022 version of the Harmonized System (HS) in line with the HS Convention, the WTO-TFA and the WCO’s RKC, together with continental and regional commitments. The longer-term objective is to provide African countries with the required organizational capacities and resources to implement future HS versions in a timely manner that is coordinated throughout the entire continent and the respective regions.

The Programme is funded by the EU (EURO 5,000,000) and implemented by the WCO, on the basis of the financing agreement signed between the EU and the WCO. A full-time Programme Management Team has been established within the Capacity Building Directorate of the WCO Secretariat to ensure proper implementation of this initiative.

Following the continental launch of the Programme in February 2019 and the inception phase, the Programme has moved into the implementation phase providing support to its many partners and beneficiaries on a wide range of topics focusing on the implementation of the HS, including advance ruling systems, tariff classification work infrastructure, electronic tariff platforms as well as strengthening capacity in the area of tariff classification, based on tailor-made work Programmes.”

In the ESA region, the Programme has progressively engaged directly with the 7 Member Customs administrations in Angola, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, Seychelles, and Somalia to migrate to implementation of the current HS version and also develop the required organizational capacities and resources to implement future HS versions. The
Programme is working as well, in partnership with the EAC and SACU Secretariats to reinforce regional coordination mechanisms for building the capacities in tariff related areas of operation for their respective Partners States that constitute 11 WCO Member countries in ESA region.

**National Developments**

**ANGOLA**

**Background**

The Presidential Decree 324/14 in December 2014 established the merger of the Customs Service and internal Tax services into the Angola Revenue Administration (Administração Geral Tributária), with new organizational structure, mission, values and vision.

**Current planning**

In July 2016 the RKC was approved by the National Parliament and formal ratification has taken place on 20th July 2016 through the resolution number 26/16.

The Angolan Revenue Administration signed, in 2014, a contract with UNCTAD in order to implement the World version of ASYCUDA. The system has now been implemented in the main entry ports namely Luanda Port and Lobito Port. Implementation in other Customs stations will continue progressively according to the rollout plan.

Efforts are being made in close collaboration with the Ministry of Trade to get approval for the establishment of National Committee in Trade Facilitation as recommended by the WTO and WCO. So far, the legislative proposal (draft legal diploma) have been submitted to the Cabinet and is now awaiting formal approval.

**Customs Reform and Modernization progress**

The process of Reform and Modernization of Customs in Angola began in 2001. The Programme which has been implemented in partnership with the UK private company Crown Agents has been successful. The positive results achieved is due to the internal organization of Customs administration, the introduction of new rules and procedures in their work, hiring and training of qualified personnel, installation of modern equipment and the substantial increase in revenue for the state budget. Angola has a particular focus on HR development to ensure sustainability of the reform process.

**On cooperation with other Customs Administrations:**

- In 2009 Angola signed an MOU of Best Practices, in 2014 a Mutual Administrative Assistance and Cooperation Memorandum, and in 2015 the Mutual Administrative Assistance and Cooperation Agreement was finally signed;
- In 2014 a Mutual Administrative Assistance and Cooperation Memorandum was signed with the Democratic Republic of Congo;
- Recent MOU signed:
  - Namibia: signed 2016;
  - Netherlands: signed 2017;
  - South Africa: signed 2017; and

Angola participates actively in the regional events such as the WCO ESA Steering Committee and ESA Governing Council, the SADC Subcommittee for Customs Cooperation (SCCC) and different meetings of the Customs of the Portuguese speaking Countries Community.

In 2011, Angola became the 139th Member of the Harmonized System Convention.

In 2012 a Canine Brigade was implemented in Luanda.

**WCO support**

Current WCO support to the AGT include:

- A National support mission on combatting Illegal Trade in Wildlife held in August 2019;
- National IPR workshop on Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy held in February 2020;
The Botswana Unified Revenue Service (BURS) was established through an Act of Parliament (No. 17 of 2004) as a semi-autonomous legal entity that would provide service for the Botswana Government in the effective and efficient collection of Income Tax revenue, collection of Value Added Tax, Customs and Excise Duty and the Capital Transfer Tax, and the administration and enforcement of all revenue laws which pertain to the above, as promulgated in the Customs Act, Excise Duty Act, The Income Tax Act, The Value Added Tax Act and the Capital Transfer Act.

Modernization Initiatives

- Customs and Excise Legislation
  The new Customs Act and new Excise Duty Act were considered and passed by Parliament on 12 July 2018. In this regard, the Customs and Excise Duty Act has been repealed and, in its place, a new Customs and Excise Duty legislative framework comprising of two separate pieces of legislation came into effect on 27 August 2018.

- Introduction of Centralized Processing Centre
  As part of the Revenue Service’s efforts to improve the operational efficiency and the ease of doing business in Botswana, BURS has commissioned a Centralized Processing Centre with effect from March 2018. This initiative is a pre-clearance system for commercial cargo and envisages a situation where all declarations processed and cleared centrally. Among other things, the Processing Centre is expected to standardize and enhance the integrity of declaration process to avoid any forms of impropriety from the Revenue Service’s personnel. Furthermore, it also allows for rationalization, optimal use and deployment of human resources as well as setting of performance targets for processing of returns and declarations.

- Non-Intrusive Inspection System (NIIS)
  Five years ago, BURS launched the use of scanners at major border posts, which over the years have proven to be quite essential in that a number of concealed contrabands were discovered and ill-intentions nipped in the bud. In light of this, BURS has acquired a range of non-intrusive cargo and baggage inspection equipment to further enhance border security measures at other ports of entry. This addition of further NIIS systems and a strong focus on training and mentoring will indeed enhance BURS’ ability to protect the Botswana society against illicit and harmful goods such as drugs and other contrabands that are a threat to national security, as envisaged under the new BURS 2019 – 2024 Strategic Plan. Further, the non-intrusive inspection capabilities of this technology will save the economy millions of Pula that are lost through illicit cross-border trade

- Customs Cooperation
  Botswana Unified Revenue Service and South African Revenue Service on 21 November 2018 signed an Arrangement for the Automatic Exchange of Customs Information on the basis of Annex E to the 2002 SACU Agreement. Annex E on Mutual Administrative Assistance provides for Members to enter into mutual arrangements for implementing the automatic exchange of Customs information between them including for the protection of the information exchange.

Current planning
The BURS developed and adopted the new Strategic Plan 2019-2024 taking into consideration the recommendations from the WCO Customs Environmental Scan Report on Customs Initiatives. In the main BURS would like to leverage the 2019-2024 strategic plan to gravitate to the optimized Tax Revenue Collection quadrant, hence fulfil its long-term vision of collecting P54.7 billion revenues by 2024. The key focus areas of the Strategic Plan are Human Capital, Business Excellence, Service Excellence and Revenue Optimization.
WCO support

The BURS received the following WCO mission support in 2019-2020:

- Under the WCO-ESA Project II, Botswana received support on an in-depth analysis of the Customs Environment in November 2018. The main objective of the diagnostic was to assist the Customs Services Division (CSD) develop Customs initiatives proposals towards the development of the BURS five-year Strategic Plan for 2019-2024;

- In August 2019, the WCO INAMA Project supported BURS with recommendations to enhance their institutional and organizational frameworks in combating Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT)-related matters;

- In October 2019, the WCO followed up to support BURS in a TFA diagnostic mission that would form the basis for BUR-CSD to implement the trade facilitation Articles in the WTO-TFA. A number of recommendations and a draft implementation plan were submitted to the senior management as input to lay foundation for future WCO capacity building, and also provide a good opportunity for BURS and CSD to engage with key trade facilitation stakeholders in the country to determine future WCO-led Mercator Programme activities to take place; and

- Botswana is among five WCO Member countries from Southern Africa that currently, are beneficiaries of the WCO/JICA Joint Project’s Master Trainer Program (MTP) in Customs Valuation. Under this program, selected staff from BURS are undergoing a progressively structured trainer Programme that will enable them to become qualified Master Trainers in the field of the WTO Agreement on Customs Valuation and be recognized and deployed as expert trainers at both national and regional level.

BURUNDI

Background

The “Office Burundais des Recettes”, (OBR) was established by the law N°1/11 of 14 July 2009 as a central body for the administration and enforcement of all the laws relating to revenue under the general supervision of the Minister for Finance. It has a Board of Directors and the day-to-day administration is managed by the Commissioner General assisted by a Deputy Commissioner General. Specifically, OBR was established to maximize revenue collection, provide better services to taxpayers, develop a competent and effective organization and develop efficient and effective systems and procedures of control.

Current Planning

In January 2018, Burundi adopted a new Strategic Plan (2018-2022) that relies on four strategic axes: Resource mobilization, Organizational Development and Professionalism, Trade Facilitation and Enhancement of Taxpayers Compliance, and Strengthening Regional and International Cooperation. A second strategy (2019-2023) to fight against corruption within Office Burundais des Recettes’ staff has also been developed.

Reform and Modernization

The, Customs and Excise Department being one of the four departments of OBR (other departments are: Domestic Taxes Department, the Enforcement Department and the Corporate Services Department) has undertaken a number of reforms aimed at improving and securing Customs revenue collection, trade facilitation and simplification of Customs procedures.

As a relatively young administration, the OBR Customs Department has envisioned a lot to do in terms of modernization and is relying on external support in the form of technical assistance and capacity building to implement WCO instruments and tools and to progress with national implementation of WTO TFA measures.

Since 2009, various initiatives have been undertaken and derived various results in the alignment of Customs procedures with international best practices.

During the 2018-2019 year, the following reform activities were undertaken:

- Conduction of a national TRS on cargoes entering or exiting Burundi on both main corridors: Central and Northern corridors;

- Launch of the electronic payment facility of Customs duties and taxes;

- Capacity Building activity on the assessment of the capacity of Burundi to implement the WTO TFA through the Mercator Programme approach; and

- Acquisition of NIK system to detect drugs entering, transiting or exiting Burundi.
Finally, during the 2019-2020 year, Office Burundais des Recettes' key milestones to be achieved are the ratification of the WCO RKC and the WTO TFA.

**WCO support**

The OBR received the following WCO mission support in 2019-2020:

- WCO/JICA Joint PGS national workshop Mercator Scoping held in November 2019; and

**KENYA**

**Current planning**

Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) is implementing the 7th Corporate Plan which highlights the strategic focus for the three-year period 2018/19 - 2020/21. The vision and mission for this current strategic plan are:

- **Vision:** A Globally Trusted Revenue Agency Facilitating Tax and Customs Compliance;
- **Mission:** Building Trust through Facilitation so as to foster Compliance with Tax and Customs Legislation.

The focus is revenue mobilization through transformation, data-driven decision-making and tax base expansion coinciding with the implementation of the Government’s Big Four Agenda and the Third Medium Term Plan of Vision 2030. KRA’s main contribution to both initiatives rests primarily on the mobilization of resources to fund the activities envisaged.

The Corporate Plan is underpinned by 4 key thrusts:

- Mobilization of revenue;
- Achieving the SDGs;
- Implementation of the Big Four Agenda; and
- Fostering job creation.

In the Plan period, the Authority’s focus will be on key priorities of the country’s implementation of the Government’s Big Four Agenda and the Third Medium Term Plan of Vision 2030.

The priority areas include:

- To enhance revenue through improved compliance;
- To improve business climate by facilitating compliance with Tax and Customs laws and trading nationally and across borders;
- To become a data and intelligence driven organization;
- To build public confidence by entrenching integrity, professional competence and Customer focus amongst our staff.

**Customs Reform and Modernization**

Over the years, KRA has made considerable progress in its journey of delivering a digital Customs administration regime. The concept of a digital Customs is anchored on the belief that technology holds the key to the successful management of all tax administration processes.

**Integrated Customs Management System (iCMS)**

At the heart of global trade is Customs which has been significantly defined by the complex balancing act of ensuring safety of national borders and facilitating trade. As a result, Customs departments world over are under pressure to deliver Customer-centric service, capture accurate revenues and stop illicit trade within the constraints of stretched resources.

To enable Customs to manage multiple operations and benefit from best practice and innovative approaches, KRA has rolled out the new Integrated Customs Management System (iCMS). This system replaces the 12-year-old SIMBA system and brings on board key innovations including: automated valuation benchmarking, automated release of green channel cargo and importer validation of declaration. Further, iCMS comes with two-way iTax integration which enables data sharing on those who import to enable follow up on domestic tax declarations.
The automated valuation-benchmarking feature enables Customs to use system in-built values to interrogate declarations that fall outside tolerable limits. This will substantially address the perennial problem of cargo undervaluation, which is a major source of revenue leakage. In the future, cargo for taxpayers who hold AEO status shall be system-released once pre-determined in-built controls are validated. This feature will add great value to the AEO designation, besides drastically cutting down on clearance time.

There are other key features including the auto population of Customs declarations from shipping data, the creation of an online virtual auction which enables any Kenyan to bid at Customs auctions and the provision of an automated tariff facility which effectively empowers any person to make a Customs declaration.

On 10 May 2019 - The iCMS Solution was rolled out at the major international airports in Kenya. The iCMS solution is fully operational at the following airports:

- Jomo Kenyatta International Airport;
- Moi International Airport; and
- Eldoret International Airport.

The rolled out air cargo operations covers 22 modules, with a view of increasing the modules over the period of June 2019:

- iCMS will be ready to receive all IDFs as from 21 June 2019. All IDF submissions to be discontinued in SW System from 21 June 2019;
- Deployment of iCMS Pilot candidate to live on 23 June 2019;
- Commence pilot of Bulk cargo consignments on 24 June 2019; and
- iCMS go live for all the consignments on 5 July 2019.

Integrated Cargo Scanning Solution (ICSS)

The scanner integration project enables Customs to take electronic control of cargo scanning operations. Previously scanning operations were localized at the point of scanning, meaning that Customs leadership did not have ongoing visibility about scanning operations. Customs headquarters in Nairobi is now enabled to supervise, interrogate and take decisions about scanning operations.

This new development will address the long running concern of avoiding physical contact between image analysts and cargo owners, a practice that bred major corruption risks. In addition, we will develop centralized expertise in image analysis and decision-making. Further, we shall establish effective control over scanning operations through centralization and knowledge sharing.

KRA has acquired and deployed new scanners distributed in the following areas: 4 drive through scanners in ICDN, 1 mobile scanner in Namanga, 1 rail scanner under installation in Kipevu and 10 CT baggage scanners in OSBP’s.

New developments in scanning:

- Integration
  KRA operationalized the Integrated Scanner Command Centre (ISCC) from August 2018. The ISCC enables scanned images to be analyzed from a centralized location and scanner operations scanner operations to be monitored from a central location. Currently, 6 scanners have been integrated to Scanner Command Centres. Plans are underway to integrate all the other scanners to the ISCC.

- C&BC has acquired, trained and deployed 180 new staff to manage scanner operations on 24/7 basis for all the 33 scanners currently in deployment or undergoing installation, these includes ten (10) KAA airside baggage scanners which KRA has been mandated to operate.

Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System (RECTS)

Globally, transit trade is an important element in the economic movement. The transit trucks are considered as one of the most common means of smuggling inside any country. So, truck transport monitoring has become inevitable for government organizations in many countries.
The Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System (RECTS) has given Customs complete visibility over transit cargo operations not just within Kenya but across the entire Northern Corridor into other partner states. This non-intrusive capability to monitor cargo movement has not only drastically cut down opportunities for diversion but has in addition markedly improved cargo transit times through elimination of driver-initiated delays.

The RECTS has been extended to the tracking of sensitive exports, especially tobacco and spirits which have been the target of dumping. Presently, the key preoccupation is to increase the quantum of seals available in order to ensure 100% coverage for all transit cargo.

Within the FY 18/19 there tendering of 10,000 seals that has been done these include 4,000 fuel seals.

Transit times have reduced significantly for instance from Port of Mombasa to Katuna the figure has reduced from 4.69 days to 4.19 days. Security and safety of cargo has been ensured.

This financial year FY18/19 a total of BIF of Ksh 1,683Million has been saved either as a result of diversions saved, theft as a result of accidents or through smuggling.

Strategically, RECTs will be integrating with iCMS.

WCO support

Recent WCO support to KRA include:

- WCO/JICA PGS national follow-up mission in July 2019;
- Virtual WCO/JICA Joint PGS national workshop in June 2020;
- Hosting of TRS Route Survey in support of Uganda Revenue Authority in August 2019;
- National workshop on WCO Revenue Package: Development of AR System for classification and origin in August 2019;
- LMD TER in September 2019; and
- WCO/JICA RM national follow-up mission in October 2019.

KRA continues to receive mentorship missions from the WCO-UNODC Global Container Programme. The following missions were conducted by the WCO:

- CCP Air - Refresher training at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi in November 2019;
- CCP - Kenya, Online mentoring training in Mombasa in April 2020; and
- CCP-Air, Kenya, Online mentoring training for the officers of the Air Cargo Control Unit in Nairobi in May 2020.

LESOThO

Background

The Lesotho Revenue Authority (LRA) was established in October 2001 and became operational in January 2003. The Authority is a statutory body that incorporated the functions of the Income Tax, Customs and Excise and Sales Tax Departments and is responsible to the Government for collecting specified duties and taxes. The authority operates outside the framework of the civil service and has a considerable degree of functional autonomy.

In the financial year 2018/19 the LRA has obtained financial assistance from the World Bank to fund the ASYCUDA Upgrade project which the trade facilitation agenda is being funded by SADC under the SADC Trade Related Facility.

Current planning

The LRA has just rolled out a new strategy for 2018 - 2023 aimed at improving clients experience in all the LRA services through modernizing and automating Customs and tax processes. The strategy has identified the need for improvement in various Customs initiatives which will be done as part of Customs Modernization Programme Phase II.

Under this strategy, the priority for this financial year is for Customs to continue to modernize through implementation of the following projects:
Part I

• ASYCUDA World Upgrade and Redundancy:
  o The ASYCUDA redundancy has resulted in completing Disaster Recovery Site (DRS) which will not only serve as redundancy for Customs but also for all other LRA critical automated systems;
  o Completed integration of ASYCUDA with ETPM;
  o Testing new payment module; and
  o Work has begun on developing ASYCUDA Performance measurement module;

• Preferred trader (pilots) project:
  o Completed terms of reference for consultancy services towards AEO;

• IT Interconnectivity:
  o Interconnectivity with SARS is at software development stage and the launch is expected before September;

• CBM:
  o Piloted single face at the largest border post in preparation for the CBM.

• The LRA will also lead the implementation of a Lesotho National Regulatory SW:
  o Recently began work procurement of a SW facility to be led by the LRA.

WCO support
Lesotho had received diverse WCO support under the WCO-SACU project to implement the sub-regional interconnectivity with other SACU Member States and a Preferred Trader Programme. That provided a good foundation for the LRA to develop operation capacities mature levels.

As a beneficiary of the HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD Programme, the LRA continued to receive technical assistance and capacity building support under the Mercator Programme. Recent WCO support include:

  • LMD TER in August 2019;
  • E-learning support for Lesotho Revenue Authority;
  • Organizational Diagnostic in Tariff Classification (supported by WCO EU-HS Africa Programme); and
  • LMD workshop in January 2020.

MALAWI

Background
The Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA) was established by an Act of Parliament in 1998 and was launched in February 2000. It was formed to improve on the functions previously carried out by Divisions of Customs and Excise, and Income Tax in the Ministry of Finance. The Customs and Excise Division is one of the core divisions of MRA. The division’s mandate is derived from the Customs and Excise Act. Key objectives of the divisions include:

  • Collection of Revenue;
  • Legitimate Trade Facilitation;
  • Collection of International Trade Statistics;
  • Protection of the society from importation/exportation of hazardous goods; and
  • Enforcement of export proceeds.

Current Planning
The MRA is currently implementing its Corporate Strategic Plan (CSP) July 2017 to June 2020. Strategic Goals for the CSP are as follows:

  • Optimize revenue collection in line with GDP;
  • Reduce cost of collection to 3%;
  • Enhance service delivery to match with ISO 9001:2008 benchmarks;
  • Improve strategic human resource to anticipate and meet present and future human capital needs; and
  • Improve systems and processes to provide periodic data for effective decision making.
Customs Reform and Modernization Progress

Since its inception the MRA has continuously instituted reforms aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness so as to increase revenue collection. Modernization initiatives are hinged on four strategic focus areas namely revenue growth, Customer service, people, systems and procedures. The following are Customs reforms that have been implemented:

- **Automation of Customs Management System**
  Migration from ASYCUDA++ to ASYCUDA World (web-based) in 2015.
  Upgrade from ASYCUDA++ to ASYCUDA World has been beneficial to both Customs and Traders as it has more controls and reduced the cost of doing business through the reduction of clearance time. It has also improved effectiveness and efficiency in border management through the automation of Customs clearance procedures such as Passenger clearance, Simplified Trade Regime, minor imports and exports. Further, ASYCUDA World has enabled interface with other external systems relevant to Customs clearance such as Malawi Traffic Information System (MaTIS) for Department of Road Traffic and Safety Services and Malawi Police.
  The e-query module has been successfully incorporated into the ASYCUDA World. In addition, an SMS alert system has been introduced to give notifications to both clearing agents and importers at different stages of declaration processing.

- **NII Technology (Cargo Scanner)**
  Usage of non-intrusive inspection technology commenced in 2013. To date this technology has been deployed at Mwanza Border Post between Malawi and Mozambique and at the Inland Examination Centre in Lilongwe. Usage of cargo scanners has enabled MRA to detect contraband and to control technical smuggling. Scanners have also been deployed at Dedza and Songwe Border Posts.
  Plans to install baggage scanners at Chileka and Kamuzu International Airports are at an advanced stage. The Malawi Government is in the process of procuring 2 baggage scanners and the Japanese government has pledged to provide two more scanners.

- **Introduction of Electronic Payments (E-payments)**
  E-payment transactions commenced in October 2017. The objective is to ensure real time settlement of tax payments at the convenience of both taxpayer and the MRA. Usage of the E-Payment system has minimized risk of fraud, eliminated tax payer queues and penalties that arise due to refer to drawer cheques.

- **COMESA Virtual Trade Facilitation System (CVTFS)**
  CVTFS is a cargo tracking system that uses electronic seals (e-Seals) to track the movement of goods in the COMESA Region. Malawi started implementing CVTFS on 1 October 2016. The system is enabling Customs to get real time updates on the actual location of goods thus providing an effective solution to cargo monitoring thus achieving more transparency and control in the movement of national cargo. Currently, Electronic cargo seals are being armed in 5 Customs stations namely Mwanza, Dedza, Songwe, Chiponde, Mchinji and Muloza. The cargo tracking system is currently operational at national level.

- **RM and PCA**
  As part of its reforms, MRA established RM and PCA units in 2008. The increase in international trade volumes necessitated the need to institutionalize RM and PCA concepts. The application of the two concepts has facilitated legitimate trade as low risk consignments are not subjected to controls during importation.

- **Piloting AEO Programme**
  The Pilot AEO Programme completed on 31 March 2019. The Programme is fully operational now with 6 operators; 5 importers and one exporter. The authority has plans to incorporate Customs brokers and Transporters into the Programme.

- **One-Stop Border Post**
  Construction work for OSBP at Mchinji – Mwami border with Zambia has begun and is expected to be completed by June 2019. At 4 other border stations tendering for contractors is in process and is expected to be finalized by December 2019.

- **National SW**
  With support from World Bank, a consultant was identified and is working to come up with the appropriate model of SW for the country. The plan is to have the project running by June 2020.
Cooperation with other Customs Administrations

In order to enhance cooperation with other Customs Administrations, MRA signed Memorandum of Understanding with the following:

- Tanzania Revenue Authority – the revised Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2008;
- South Africa Revenue Service – Memorandum of Cooperation was signed in 2010. Negotiations are ongoing to review the Memorandum. Agreement on Mutual Administrative Assistance between the two Customs Administrations has been finalized and is awaiting signing by the two governments;
- Zambia Revenue Authority – Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2014;
- Zimbabwe Revenue Authority – the revised Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2015; and
- Mozambique Revenue Authority – the revised Memorandum of Understanding regarding Mutual Administrative Assistance was signed in 2017.

WCO support

Recent WCO support to the MRA include:

- LMD TER in August 2019;
- AEO Diagnostic in November 2019; and

MAURITIUS

Current planning

Since its inception in 2006, the Mauritius Revenue Authority, regrouping all the tax collecting departments of the country, took up the challenge to reform and modernize revenue collection and administration in Mauritius. The progress made during the past years has been attested in media reports, public views from opinion surveys and even comments from visiting foreign delegations. The MRA Corporate Plan (2018-2020) – “Sharing Prosperity Nationwide”, introduces new approaches to enhance compliance based on trust and cooperation with all stakeholders and empowering its people to offer improved services by leveraging on new technology.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

The Mauritius Customs has, since joining the Mauritius Revenue Authority in July 2006, made considerable progress and has successfully harnessed the ICT in its modernization process. The department is proud to have systems such as the following:

- Customs Management System (CMS): CMS/EDI System for Customs declarations – continuous upgrading and enhancement;
- The National SW (Mauritius Trade Link): Work in progress for other agencies. The agencies already integrated are: Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection (MICCP) - Import & Export, Film Classification Board (FCB), Mauritius Standard Bureau Approval (MSB), Radiation Protection Authority (RPA), Ministry of Fisheries (MFish). Agencies in the process of being integrated: Agricultural Marketing Board (AMB), National Plant Protection Office (NPPO), National Agricultural Product Regulatory Office (NAPRO), Food Import Unit (FIU), Division of Veterinary Services (DVS), Dangerous Chemicals Control Board (DCCB), Pharmacy Board (PB);
- Cargo Community System Development of the following CCS modules in progress: Air Export Module, Air Transshipment Module, Air Import Module, Sea Export Module and submission of electronic Courier/Postal Manifest;
- Web-based Certificate of Origin;
- NII Technology;
- E-Payment;
- Advance Cargo Manifest;
- Online Tracking System for containers in the Freeport zones;
- nCEN upgraded with iCOMM Module;
- Paperless Customs (Online submission of Customs declarations together with scanned copies of specified documents);
Deferred Payment Scheme to SMEs, VAT registered persons at import and local manufacturers of excisable goods;
- Passenger Assessment & Clearance System (PACS) for settlement of duty and taxes by air;
- Launching of a Mobile Application to have online real-time visibility of the status of validated Bill of Entry on mobile devices;
- Creation of a one-stop shop for motor vehicles to deal with every trade aspect related to motor vehicles and to expedite clearance of motor vehicles;
- Automatic Removal of lien on motor vehicles;
- Online Currency declaration platform. This platform enables submission of online electronic Currency declaration by travelers who intend to transit, enter or leave Mauritius with more than 500,000 rupees in cash or Bearer Negotiable Instruments or its equivalent in local or foreign currency;
- AEO scheme;
- Implementing the HS 2017;
- Blended training Programme with E-Learning Modules;
- e-Auction Sales System: Phase III - electronic bidding system launched;
- TRS conducted to identify bottlenecks in the supply chain for delivery of goods;
- E-Registration of economic operators;
- Enhancement of CCTV surveillance system is in progress;
- Warehouse Management System already implemented in Bonded warehouses and is being extended to Excise Operators;
- Online Portal for use by the National Transport Authority and Registrar General; and
- The Enquiry Point already implemented with assistance of WCO.

Combat against import of illicit drugs

- A dedicated Customs Anti-Narcotics Section (CANS) was set up to combat illicit drug trafficking and other contraband;
- The MRA Customs has acquired a Fast Interceptor Boat;
- A platform “Stop drugs” on the MRA’s Website was created for reporting on illicit drug trafficking;
- There is ongoing training on Surveillance, Intervention and Controlled Delivery to enhance skills and knowledge;
- Acquisition of new state-of-art scanners and replacement of previous out of date scanners; and
- The MRA Customs have acquired two drones for aerial surveillance of the port and the surroundings. These drones will reinforce the existing control within the port area and its surroundings for prevention of drug trafficking and for gathering of intelligence in remote areas, too rugged for ground access, or otherwise considered too high-risk for officers.

WCO support

Mauritius has during recent years received diverse support from the WCO under the WCO ESA project in the areas of Leadership and Management Development, Customs enforcement, Rules of Origin and SW.

Recent WCO support includes the following:

- Diagnostic mission to support Customs laboratory in July 2019;
- HRM Diagnostic Mission in September 2019; and
- Training workshop on Customs valuation in December 2019

The multilingual RTC which was opened in November 2013 continues to provide training support to the region. It is recognized by the ESA region as a Centre of Excellence for the WCO Compliance and Enforcement Package.
RWANDA

Background

The Rwanda Revenue Authority was established under law N° 15/97 of 8\textsuperscript{th} November 1997 as a quasi-autonomous body charged with the task of assessing, collecting, and accounting for tax, Customs and other specified revenues. This is achieved through effective administration and enforcement of the laws relating to those revenues. In addition, it is mandated to collect non-tax revenues.

Current Planning

Customs Services Administration currently implements the RRA Strategic Plan 2018/2019 to and contributes to the achievement of RRA objectives of optimize revenue collection by ensuring:

- Revenue Targets are achieved;
- Enhanced Tax Compliance;
- Improved VAT Administration;
- Improved provision of Tax payers Services;
- Improve widened tax base; and
- Strengthened internal capacity and coordination.

Reform and modernization process

In RRA’s strategic agenda for fiscal year 2018/2019, RRA undertook a framework for mainstreaming all the various projects undertaken in the modernization Programme by adopting an integrated approach to strategy management and ensuring the implementation of Information Technology in management of trade across borders.

With the support of the WCO and other donor agencies, the following have been achieved

(a) Rwanda Electronic SW-supported by TradeMark East Africa

The adoption of the electronic SW system provides the key to:

- Simplifying cross-border trade;
- The enhancement of real-time information sharing;
- Exchange between Customs and other border agencies and private sector stakeholders; and
- It has also enhanced Rwanda's competitive. RESW is a platform that enables different government agencies, Ministries, traders, Non-governmental organizations, clearing agents, banks and Transporters exchange information electronically with RRA without physically traveling to Customs offices process transactions.

(b) Electronic Cargo Tracking (eCTS);-supported by TradeMark East Africa

The eCTs is a web-based system used to monitor transit cargo from the point of entry to the exit in order to improve its safety and promote fair terms of trade by eliminating offloading of undeclared goods on the Rwandan market. eCTS helps in reducing transit time, enhance cargo safety and help traders to better predict arrival of goods.

(c) Cargo Scanning; supported by World Bank

Cargo scanning or NII refers to non-destructive methods of inspecting and identifying goods in transportation systems. It is often used for scanning of intermodal freight shipping containers. This method of inspection is used by RRA at selected border posts to facilitate faster clearance of cargo while at the same time complying with WCO SAFE FRAMEWORK of standards.

(d) Adoption of Risk based Approach in Inspection of goods

This is the systematic application of management procedures and practices which provide Customs with the necessary information to address movements or consignments that present a risk. The application of RM and the use of risk-based selectivity (red/yellow or green channel) allow Customs to allocate its scarce resources to the high-risk areas while increasing the efficiency of the clearance process for low-risk shipments.
(e) **Operationalizing the One Stop Border Posts (OSBPs); supported by Trade Mark East Africa, JICA and African Development Bank**

In a bid to improve trading across border Rwanda has also embarked on improving infrastructure that supports trading across border. Construction and Operationalization of 6 OSBPs has been completed (Rusumo, Nemba, Kagitumba, Ruhwa, Rubavu and Gatuna).

(f) **AEO supported by the WCO EAC CREATe Project**

The AEO Programme is designed to facilitate and enhance the experience of the complaint trader when undergoing Customs clearance processes. The simplified procedure for AEOs has had tremendous effect with regard to reducing the cost associated with the movement and clearance of goods.

**WCO support**

Recent WCO support to the RRA include:

- Mission to develop specialist capacity in PCA in July 2019;
- WCO/JICA Joint PGS National follow up mission in November 2019;
- Support to conduct TRS in November 2019; and

**SEYCHELLES**

**Background**

The Seychelles Revenue Commission (SRC) is an authority that was established through the enactment of the Seychelles Revenue Commission Act 2009 as the body responsible for the administration of revenue laws. The SRC Act also mandates the SRC to operate as an independent Authority with responsibility to conduct its affairs in a transparent and efficient manner. However, the Ministry of Finance remains the parent Ministry with the responsibility to oversee major policy issues affecting revenue. The SRC is headed by a Commissioner General (CG) who is responsible to the Minister of Finance for the management of the SRC and the administration of all revenue laws.

Based on the SRC strategic plan 2017 – 2019, the strategic objectives are:

- Improve voluntary compliance and facilitate trade;
- Improve detection and sanction of all forms of tax evasion and smuggling;
- Enhance our business capacity;
- Develop a dynamic and professional workforce; and
- Promote good corporate governance.

**Customs Reform and Modernization Progress**

- The SRC has acquired a pallet size scanner for use by Customs to help in detection of any illicit goods or contrabands that have been concealed in consignments being brought into the country;
- The RKC Seychelles has already submitted the ratification instrument to the National Assembly for ratification;
- WTO TFA. Seychelles is collaborating with donor organizations for technical assistance and capacity building for its category B and C provisions. We are currently providing AR for classification and Rules of Origin;
- Timeframe to assess declaration, as a means to improve service delivery and in line with the TFA, Customs has revised and adjusted the timeframe to process declaration from 48 hours to 12 hours;
- HS tariff migration 2017, on 1 April 2018, Customs migrated from version 2007 of the Harmonized System to that of 2017;
- TRS, Customs will be conducting a TRS as an effort to Reform and modernize Customs operations. The SRC has drafted a project proposal for the exercise and managed to secure funding under the SADC TRF. It is expected to start in 2019;
- Enhancing capacity in Excise Tax Management – Seychelles is considering the automation of Excise Tax calculation, which is currently being done manually. This will require reviewing and amending the Excise Tax Act and supporting regulations;
• AEO - A concept note has been prepared to introduce the same, businesses will be provided with an international recognized quality mark, which will indicate that their role in the international supply chain is secure and their Customs controls and procedures are efficient and compliant;

• Registered Exporter System (REX) – A concept note has been prepared to introduce the REX system. This system will simplify export formalities by allowing the registered exporter to certify the preferential origin himself by including a specific declaration (so-called statements on origin);

• SW– Its implementation will benefit Seychelles in terms of turnaround time in document processing, better utilization and deployment of resources such as transport and manpower, elimination of queues, provision of timely statistics and eliminating the high risk involved in moving cash if an electronic payment mode is introduced as well. Therefore, an increase in government revenue, faster clearance times for traders, and improved staff productivity for Customs; and

• WCO CTS – SRC has acquired the software from WCO to facilitate the targeting of containerized maritime cargo. The software, which will be using the ASYCUDA platform, to facilitate its operation, is yet to be operational.

Areas of Cooperation with Member Customs Administrations and other Development Partners

• Memorandum of Understanding with MRA;
• Memorandum of Understanding with SARS;
• Memorandum of Understanding with Inland Revenue Board of Malaysia;
• Interim Economic Partnership Agreement (iEPA) with 3 ESA and 28 EU Countries;
• The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) UK;
• WTO TFA;
• Ratification of the Nairobi Convention; and
• Membership to the COMESA, SADC and AfCTFA.

WCO Capacity Building support

2020

• Installation of WCO CTS server in January 2020; and
• Customs Valuation workshop conducted in February 2020.

2019

• EU-WCO Programme for the Harmonized System (HS) in Africa 27-31 May 2019

In the framework of the EU-WCO Programme for the Harmonized System (HS) in Africa, the Republic of Seychelles hosted diagnostic workshop on the implementation of the HS from 27–31 May 2019, and was facilitated by experts from the WCO. During the workshop a thorough examination of the national tariff classification work model was carried out, with its main objective to assist Seychelles to become a Contracting Party to the HS Convention.

• National Customs Enforcement Network (nCEN)- 3 - 7 June 2019

2 experts from the WCO conducted a 5-day refresher training from 3 - 7 June 2019 on the national Customs Enforcement Network (nCEN) - a system developed by the WCO to assist Customs administrations with the collection and storage of law-enforcement information at the national level. Customs officers have now acquired additional skills to help them manage information on all aspect of their law-enforcement functions. These include details of offences, suspect persons or business entities, now held securely within a modern national system, which is accessible through the Government network.

• Customs Diagnostic Mission TFA – 4-15 April 2019

2 experts from WCO conducted a diagnostic study from 4 - 15th April 2019 to assess the function of the Seychelles Customs to establish its current position and what needs to be done to improve on the general standards, in line with the international best practices. The study was done through meeting with various units in Customs including HR/HRD and Deputy Commissioner's office and legal unit to collect information on the current operational practices in place. Meetings were conducted with other Government Border Management Securities as well as Private sectors to better understand the involvement of stakeholders.
2018

- **Developing Customs Capacity in Airport Passenger Control and Analysis – 21-25 May 2018**
  Seychelles received support in developing Custom’s capacity in Airport Passenger control and analysis. The training had in general developed the officer’s skills in passenger profiling, baggage search, questioning techniques, RM, Manifest data identification etc.

- **Developing Capacity in Project Management – 11-15 June 2018**
  Seychelles received support with WCO to enhance Project Management (PM) skills within the whole of SRC. The workshop was targeted for senior level staff of all ranks, who are regularly tasked with organizational based Project Management tasks in their everyday responsibilities. A total of fifteen officers benefited from the workshop.

- **ASYCUDA Valuation workshop in Seychelles – 17-28 September 2018**
  A number of representatives from SRC attended an ASYCUDA Valuation Training from 17 – 28 September 2018. It was initiated to facilitate the configuration of the valuation database and revision of the Valuation Module in the ASYCUDA World system. The exercise resulted in the review of the standard version of the Valuation Module, which involve the addition of new functionalities to improve data collection and reporting. However, the ASYCUDA Valuation module and database is yet to be operational.

**SOUTH AFRICA**

**Background**

Since the launch of the Customs Modernization Programme in July 2010, South African Revenue Service (SARS) has made significant progress in improving and enhancing the current business system platforms. Examples are the implementation of a whole new integrated Customs business solution, the Interfront Customs Border Solution (iCBS) which takes care of all Customs declaration processing and forms the basis for the declaration processing requirements of the New Customs Control and Duty Acts 2014 as well as Manifest Processing System (MPR) which laid the foundation for the Reporting of Conveyances and Goods requirements in the new Act.

In 2015 the New Customs Act Programme (NCAP) was initiated to oversee the implementation of the new Acts, with specific focus on the following work Programmes:

- **Reporting of Conveyances and Goods (RCG)**
  The Customs Control Act, 2014 requires an automated cargo management capability beyond the foundation already laid by Manifest Processing System (MPR) system implemented in 2016. This work Programme will include the majority of cargo reports prescribed under the new Act including pre-load reporting for containerized cargo, safety and security goods control, fiscal goods accounting, holistic risk assessment and compliance monitoring and reporting.

- **Registration, licensing and accreditation (RLA)**
  The registration function is currently fragmented, predominantly manual and paper based, with system support only in relation to the current licensing and registration requirements. Submissions of applications require the applicants to visit the SARS branches and finalization of applications is often delayed. This work Programme will include the capabilities for Client Sufficient Knowledge testing, new client types and validations, electronic registration, automated workflow and messaging, and relationship management.

- **Declaration Processing (DPS)**
  Customs Declarations Processing on iCBS has been continually maintained and modified, since the initial implementation in August 2013, to keep pace with all required national fiscal and economic policies. Elements of the Customs Control Act have already been introduced under the current declaration process namely, Customs Procedure Codes (CPC). The declaration processing system is also enhanced to accommodate Customs surety, penalties and forfeiture.

  The Custom Control Act, 2014 requires enhanced processes and systems functionality to align to new legislative requirements on Declaration and Release processing.

The reason for focusing on the work Programmes above or rather the implementation approach was based on the analysis of the SARS Value Chain in relation to the Customs Supply Chain. When analyzed, it was clear that the 3 critical areas identified are the key touch points between the SARS Value Chain and the Customs Supply Chain.
Current planning

South Africa Revenue Service currently implementing its 2019-2020 Annual Performance Plan

In keeping with the principle of continuous improvement, SARS, as a learning organization, is presently embarking on a process to develop a professional and disciplined Customs and Excise workforce. The plan is to conclude the alignment of the functions on the Customs and Excise structure in order to map and enhance the following:

- The end-to-end divisional value chain and its requisite processes;
- A curriculum inventory and skills framework to enhance these processes;
- The ideal capacity norms and standards for a branch and a hub; and
- In collaboration with the WCO, a diagnostics exercise to derive a proposed menu of Customs and Excise business performance indicators for a branch and a hub.

SARS has finalized the process of developing all the rules necessary for the implementation of the Customs Control and Customs Duty Act. The commentary on the current published drafts by external stakeholders has been halted in order to allow SARS Business Systems to conclude their system development and the Policy Division to finalize the development of policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

SARS continues its journey to implement the new Customs Legislation – the Customs Control and Customs Duty Acts. Due to its magnitude, implementation will take on a multi-year strategy to ensure business continuity and smooth transition. The legislation is highly prescriptive and reliant on technology and will thus have a major impact on all stakeholders in the business community.

NCAP:

In order to add context to the magnitude of the change required from the old '64 Act to the new Customs Control Act 2014, the table below highlights some of the major shifts between the 2 Acts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customs &amp; Excise Act 91 of 64</th>
<th>Customs Control Act 2014</th>
<th>Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>76 x Registrants and Licensees.</td>
<td>130 x Registrants and Licensees.</td>
<td>+54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 x Cargo Reports.</td>
<td>60 x Cargo Reports.</td>
<td>+54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 x Declaration type.</td>
<td>6 x Declarations types.</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 x existing policies impacted.</td>
<td>79 x new policies to be developed.</td>
<td>+79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible 382 additional documents (Standard operating procedures, guides, manuals, annexures templates such as letters and forms and terms of reference.</td>
<td>+382</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>350 + Customs electronic messages to support transactional and post clearance compliance.</td>
<td>+350</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reporting of Conveyances and Goods (RCG):

The aim of RCG is to provide for Customs control of all vessels, aircraft, trains, vehicles, goods and persons entering or leaving the Republic; to facilitate the implementation of certain laws levying taxes on goods and of other legislation applicable to such goods and persons; and for matters incidental thereto.

On 20 April 2018, SARS implemented Release 1 of the Reporting of Conveyances and Goods Project by launching its new Cargo Processing System (CPS). In recent years SARS has introduced several e-initiatives to reinforce cargo reporting in support of its electronic Customs Clearance Processing System (iCBS), introduced in August 2013. In order to expedite the implementation of the new Acts, SARS deemed it necessary to introduce the legal rules underpinning the new reporting regime under the current Customs and Excise (1964) Act. Some of the benefits realized with Release 1 are:

- The processing of cargo, outturn and conveyance reports required by the Customs Control Act,2014 for sea, air, rail and road modalities, import and export, on a priority basis;
- Manifest notifications to Depots to enable the unpacking of cargo against manifest information received by SARS in order to perform fiscal goods accounting;
• Fiscal assurance by establishing whether the duty on all imported goods has been paid to the fiscus and to highlight discrepancies by means of reports, as well as a feed to the Customs Risk Engine (CRE), and the display of manifest data for all modalities to documentary inspectors on a user front-end;

• Safety and security assurance by reports designed to view and track cargo movements throughout the supply chain; and

• The implementation of a reporting compliance campaign from 1 November 2018 to enforce the submission of all prescribed reports.

Release 2A (Part1) followed on 14 September 2018 consisting of the remainder of the rail reports not addressed in the first release, as well as the goods accounting aspects thereof.

Release 2A (Part-Shipment) was implemented on 25 January 2019 in respect of the automated management of part-shipment movements across land border posts aimed at further improving the efficiency of cross-border commercial truck movements.

Coupled to the rollout of RCG Release1, was the successful implementation of the Manual Case Creation (MCC) workflow.

Enforcement teams perform the necessary enforcement activities / interventions on cargo, cargo documents and cargo conveyances entering/ exiting the Republic of South Africa (RSA) through various ports of entry / exit to establish any factors which might have an indication of risk and which may contravene the rules and regulations for importation and exportation of cargo as stipulated by the law.

Manual Case Creation is a capability that has been developed to enable these teams to manage and control manual risk cases identified by Customs personnel. This process is powered by the Enforcement Workflow System (EWS) hosted by the SARS Service Manager (SSM) front-end system.

RCG Phase 2B is planned for implementation during December 2019 and comprises the following:

• RCG Manual Case Creation on Mobile:
  This release aims to extend the current functionality of the Manual Case Creation (MCC) desktop solution also to a mobile platform in order to further support Customs enforcement units in the field with a more simplified case creation and tracking solution.

• RCG eCase:
  This release uses specific reports generated by the goods accounting functionality of CPS to bring to the attention of the user, via automated workflow, instances where cargo has not been accounted for by an appropriate Customs declaration, or where discrepancies exists between cargo reports and Customs declarations that casts doubt over the correctness of the Customs clearance declaration.

• RCG ePenalties:
  This release aims to enforce full compliance with reporting requirements relating to manifests by identifying instances where manifests have not been submitted as reflected on Customs clearance declarations and then automatically generating and transmitting a penalty letter to the relevant cargo reporter.

Registration, licensing and accreditation:

The Customs Control Act No 31 of 2014 requires for certain Customs clients to undertake the “Customs Sufficient Knowledge test”. The CCA requires for Traders to provide proof of Customs sufficient knowledge.

In May 2018, the CSK testing was open to selected client types. Clients were able to log-in online and register and book an exam slot. 50 out of 130 client types require Customs Sufficient Knowledge (CSK) assessment as a condition of Registration and Licensing under the CCA.

Based on operational imperatives, a decision was taken in 2018, were in the electronic capabilities being built for RLA will be delivered in relation to the current Customs & Excise Act, of 1964 and not the new Customs Control Act, which the effective date is still to be determined.

Therefore, the CSK Programme was suspended, until they go live date of the CCA is achieved.

The RLA Programme, despite the move from the CCA to the C&E Act of 1964, aims to still deliver the following:
- A single, centralized electronic and manual application processing capability for a person required to apply for registration, licensing, approval or accreditation in terms of the Customs and Excise Act of 1964; the Customs Control Act No 31 of 2014, Customs Duty Act No 30 of 2014 and the Excise Duty Act No 91 of 1964;

- A system that is able to identify an entity based on any existing information maintained internally by SARS. This prevents the need for an entity to re-submit all known entity information per application made;

- Client profile management to ensure single, centralized client information with clean, validated and vetted data;

- An electronic and manual Case Management and Workflow processing system to support the single, centralized electronic and manual application processing system;

- Online applications submission and management;

- Client profile and relationship management; and

- Automated documentation/notification management.

RLA Release 1 is due for implementation during the 2nd quarter of 2019 (September).

**Declaration Processing (DPS):**

The Declaration Processing and Release (DPS) is the nucleus around which import, export and transit goods are accounted for by Customs in terms of their liability, goods description and purpose for being in South Africa. The Control Act focusses on legal obligations and administration of goods under a Customs Procedure and Home Use, including simplified clearance requirements and formalities.

Some of the impact and benefits of DPS are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customs compliance more than just a clearance declaration</th>
<th>Clearance to be discharged within all conditions of a specific procedure – e.g. removal of goods under a clearance for national transit must commence and complete within specific time frames failing which the ‘release status’ may be effected.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A supply chain focus</td>
<td>Act brings more supply chain players into the net – parties who in the past have had little or no previous electronic interaction with Customs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant change management</td>
<td>Interpretation and application of the new Acts on practical day to day application to operations – in particular the first 2 years under transitional provisions – e.g. application of goods cleared under old Act and subsequent requirements under the new Act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New concept for release</td>
<td>A distinct split in the clearance/release activity - release is subject to arrival of goods. Customs to give ‘final release’ subsequent to OGA intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Management</td>
<td>Parties participating in the clearance transaction to be ‘related’ to the declarant of the goods - in the Relationship Management Module (RMM).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisional, Incomplete &amp; Supp.</td>
<td>To facilitate clearance where information is not available, or it is provisional – must be followed by a supplementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased E-Commerce bandwidth</td>
<td>To accommodate increased transactional and post clearance messaging and reporting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proposed implementation approach is to deliver the solution in various tactical releases. Tactical Release 1, which is the implementation of the Incomplete, Provisional and Supplementary declaration, was planned for release in 2018, but a revised date has been set for early 2020.

Benefits of tactical release one includes:

- Quick win for trade facilitation and alignment to International standards through automation of specialized clearance types;

- Provides an earlier start to change management leading up to Declarations processing implementation under new legislation (CCA of 2014); and

- Enhanced collation of Trade Statistics.
SACU C-2-C Data exchange:

On 14 June 2018, Mr. Mark Kingon, Acting Commissioner of the South African Revenue Service (SARS) and Mr. Dumisani Masilela, Commissioner General of the Eswatini Revenue Authority (SRA) signed the Arrangement for the Automatic Exchange of Customs Information between the South African Revenue Service and the Eswatini Revenue Authority on the basis of the Annex E to the SACU 2002 Agreement allowing exchange of live data for refining and matching purposes. Once both parties are happy with data quality and matching accuracy, the exchange will be signed off become live and data can then be used for risk and other purposes as set out in the arrangement.

Matching of Export & Transit declarations from Eswatini to South African with Import declarations from Eswatini is being done (and vice-versa in Eswatini).

3 additional fields have been added to the data set being exchanged as deemed required to correctly match. A revised agreement including additional fields has been signed by Eswatini Revenue Authority (SRA) and Botswana Unified Revenue Service (BURS). Technical setup up with BURS is in progress. Lesotho Revenue Authority has in principle agreed to the same arrangement and is being finalized for signature.

The SACU agreed Unique Consignment Reference (UCR) was agreed and implemented to allow a common reference to match on.

The implementation of the SACU Unique Consignment Reference (UCR) structure and requirement for all Exports and Imports and Transits from Eswatini was in June 2018 by SARS. Amendment of rules to include Botswana is in progress.

The organization has been committed to the WCO SACU Connect Programme and will continue its participation towards the implementation of Customs to Customs (C2C) data exchange, AEO and SACU Unique Consignment Reference (SACU UCR) initiatives.

To date the SARS Preferred Trader Team ensured that 55 traders were conferred the Preferred Trader accreditation status. One of the benefits of accreditation is the Customs and Excise Relationship Manager and these Managers were assigned regionally to the accredited clients. The primary role of the Relationship Managers is to build and maintain a professional relationship with the clients.

The Accreditation Review Customs Committee (ARCC) has been meeting regularly to ensure that all applications for Preferred Trader accreditation meet the required criteria by making recommendations for approval, rejection, suspension and cancellation of client accreditation in line with the relevant policies and providing expert advice and guidance.

Internal and external stakeholder engagements were conducted. Internal engagements encompassed various SARS sections in all nine provinces. External stakeholder engagements were conducted with various partners including the South African Police Service and the Cross Border Road Transport Agency. There is a commitment for further engagements.

The Frequently Asked Questions were updated for the SARS Call Centre to ensure that clients are assisted.

The SARS website was updated with relevant information for external clients.

SARS have since established a PT Forum. The PT Forum will include PT Accredited clients, Members of the SARS Management Team and Members from relevant sections within SARS, including PT/AEO Relationship Managers.

SARS will also establish an AEO working group that will consist of other Government Agencies (OGA’s), Customs and the private sector.

The organization continues to be committed to the WCO SACU Connect Programme. The current Customs and Excise Act of 1964, Rule 64E is in the process of being amended and will be published to include benefits to the SACU Member states. SARS Preferred Trader Programme (PTP) is actively involved in the development of a SACU accreditation Programme and Mutual Recognition Agreement with SACU Member states. SARS played a vital role in the development of the SACU PTP Internal and External Procedure Manual as well as the SACU PTP Audit Training Modules. SARS has started providing the PTP introductory course as per the SACU work plan to intended internal stakeholders.

The TFA was approved by the National Assembly (NA) and National Council of Provinces (NCOP) in May 2016. The National Assembly and Cabinet approved the establishment of the National Committee on Trade Facilitation (NCTF) and that it be co-chaired by the DTI and South Africa Revenue Services (SARS). Since its inception, the NCTF has had 6 meetings. The inaugural meeting took place on the 6th May 2016 and the last one on the 5th December 2018. These 6 meetings have primarily focused on the required interdepartmental consultations to finalize South Africa’s schedule of commitments. South Africa deposited its instrument of acceptance of the Protocol incorporating the TFA into WTO.
Agreements together with its Category A & B measures at the WTO, and on the 30 November 2017, the WTO officially notified all Members and posted it on the website.

In addition to the above, SARS is enhancing its Customs RM electronic platform. The current risk system is being revamped to include a feedback loop, automated case workflow for PCA, national seizure database, as well as suspicious activity reporting. The environment will be improved to be data rich incorporating third party and taxpayer data including data mining tools.

**WCO support**

South Africa has received diverse WCO support on capacity building. The recent support include:

- AEO Validation Training and Validation of SACU PTP Compatibility Assessment Tool in January 2020; and

**UGANDA**

**Current Planning**

Over the last 5 years, the Uganda Revenue Authority continued to strengthen procedures, processes and controls through various initiatives to improve trade facilitation as a Country. The Customs Modernization initiatives are still hinged mainly on improvement of people, processes and systems. Under the current URA Corporate Strategy 2016/2017-2019/2020, the key axes are: process efficiency, productive partnership and quality people.

As a Member State of the EAC, Uganda is included in the Regional WCO EAC Trade Facilitation Programme funded by SIDA.

**Customs Modernization Progress**

In its strategic agenda for 2011-2015, URA undertook a framework for mainstreaming all the various projects undertaken in the modernization Programme by adopting an integrated approach to strategy management. To realize this, the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) was used as a basis for developing this corporate plan. The BSC is premised on the need to balance both financial and non-financial value drivers under a defined value generation chain to balance today's institutional aspirations with the long-term goals and objectives.

This phase of modernization focused on the following areas:

- Service support enhancement;
- Customs business systems enhancement;
- Integrated tax systems; and
- Infrastructure development.

The Customs modernization specifically focused on the following areas:

- Review, enhancement and implementation of all Customs business processes;
- Implementation of ASCYUDA WORLD system;
- Procurement and installation of an electronic Cargo Tracking system (ECTS);
- Interface of Airline's system with ASCYUDA world to facilitate pre-arrival declaration; and
- Implementation of the National AEO Program.

With the support of the WCO and building on the achievements of the previous strategic direction of URA, the following have been achieved:

**AEO companies**

The number of AEOs increased from 51 to 64. The regional AEOs currently stand at 29. Monthly AEO declarations (AEO declarants and consignees) rose to an average of 14,371 out of 61,044 monthly average declarations. This represented 23.5% of declarations. The declarations made by AEO declarants were at 22.3% which was, 13,642 out of the total monthly average of 61,044.

**Operationalizing the One Stop Border Posts (OSBPs)**

Operationalization of One Stop Border posts was completed at 4 border points of Malaba, Mutukula, Busia, and Mirama Hills during the financial year 2015/2016. The Mutukula and Busia OSBPs were launched.
Construction of additional OSBPs at Elegu is completed and now operational, while the border point of Katuna on-going.

**Operationalization of the Centralized Document Processing Centre (DPC)**

Uganda Revenue Authority, Customs Department reengineered the Customs Clearance procedures by implementing a Centralized Document Processing Centre (DPC). The DPC was launched in February 2017 and has been operational since.

**Uganda Electronic SW**

The Electronic SW launched on 4 November 2016 provides a platform on which all parties involved in trade and transport can lodge standardized information and documents at a single point to fulfill all import, export, and transit-related regulatory requirements. Since the launch, a total of 13 Agencies added and implemented.

**Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System (RECTS)**

From the electronic Cargo Tracking System which was pioneered by the URA, it has now been transformed into a Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System with Kenya and Rwanda adopting the same system for monitoring transit cargo under Customs control from Mombasa to Kigali.

**Transit reforms**

Validation of transit cargo is based on images sent to a central validation unit by the exit officers. Exit officers use tablets provided by the URA to take images of the trucks at designed points at the border stations. 46% of Transit Validation is done centrally and on a photographic evidenced based.

At least 99% of the Transits exit the country as opposed to outright Transit diversion of Duty Not Paid goods onto national markets.

**NII**

Following the successes registered in NII, more equipment was acquired to cover the border posts of Malaba, Busia, Mutukula, Katuna, Elegu and CT baggage scanners are currently being installed at Malaba, Busia, Entebbe and the Central Bus Terminal.

**Part lot management**

A system designed and adopted in April 2017 to address uncoordinated loading, validation and bond in force risks of part lot consignments.

- Progress made - Requirement scoping, Systems design, Systems development, Systems testing through pilots in Multiple and Maina bonded warehouses.

**Piloted the first phase of Global Travel Assessment System (GTAS)**

Global Travel Assessment System was piloted, and we are able to register a few successful hits as a result, however the phase has met a few challenges, such as the inability to access the Electronic Advanced Passenger Information. There is need for the WCO to engage International Air Transport Association (IATA) to request its Members to provide this information to Member administrations.

**WCO support**

WCO support has been instrumental through the following:

- Benefactor Study Tour for Gambia Revenue Authority in September 2019;
- LMD Follow-Up in November 2019;
- CCP Air - Uganda, Refresher Training at Entebbe Airport;
- GTAS Implementation & Training Visit in January 2020;
- WCO/JICA Joint PGS National Follow up Mission in February 2020; and
ZAMBIA

Background

The Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) was established on 1 April 1994 as a statutory corporate body and enacted under the Zambia Revenue Act, Cap 321 of the Laws of Zambia. The establishment of the ZRA resulted in a merger of the Department of Taxes and the Department of Customs and Excise. It is mandated to collect revenue on behalf of the Republic of Zambia under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance.

Current Planning

The Corporate Strategic Plan (CSP) for the Zambia Revenue Authority for the period 2019 through 2021 is premised on the Government's Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) spanning the same period.

The plan acknowledges the importance of securing the support and willing participation of all Zambians in the effective tax administration. ZRA's aim, in this regard, is to enhance revenue collection and grow compliance across the entire eligible tax base.

The ZRA's vision is to be “A model of excellence in revenue administration and trade facilitation in the world” while its mission is “To optimize and sustain revenue collection and administration for a prosperous Zambia”.

The Vision Statement seeks to capture ZRA's critical role in Zambia's development as outlined in the Vision 2030. The Vision 2030 is the first long-term written plan for Zambia which sets out the goals and targets for Zambia to become “A prosperous middle-income Nation by 2030”.

The Mission reflects the organization's new approach to taxpayer engagement and compliance enhancement. To achieve the Corporate Plan, the Organization is guided by four Strategic Pillars, namely:

- Increasing Tax Compliance - focus is on enhancing tax compliance and expansion of the tax base through building a tax paying culture;
- Customer focus and Collaborations - shifting the Customer service perception by improving service accessibility through service centers and technology platforms. Focus is also on cultivating productive, reliable, consistent, accurate & reciprocal partnerships;
- Process Efficiency - leveraging technology to enhance service delivery and promote compliance by simplifying all business processes, IT reliability and improve management; and
- Right Human Capital - revolutionizing staff attitude and competences in order to improve institutional capacity optimize talent management and improve staff integrity.

Customs Reform and Modernization Initiatives

In line with the ZRA Corporate Strategic Plan, the Customs Services Division is implementing several modernization projects to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in its procedures and operations. These Programmes are premised on the WCO framework for modernizing Customs administrations to respond to needs of Customs in the 21st Century. The main initiatives include:

- Automation of the clearance process
  The Customs clearance process is automated and riding on the web based ASYCUDA World version in 2013.

- Centralized Processing Centres
  The number of regional Centralized Processing Centres (CPC) s has increased from 6 in 2018 to 7 in 2019. This comes with the inclusion of Chanida CPC covering the Eastern region. The creation of CPCs has led to Customs clearance procedures aimed at providing uniformity and consistency in the application of the law and procedures regardless of the border used.

- E-Payments and Centralized Payment
  There are 16 banks in the country that are connected to ASYCUDA World for electronic payments. Other than the e-payments, there are mobile payment services as well and currently one mobile service provider is offering e-payment services.

  In addition to e-payment platforms, the Authority developed a mechanism for centralized payment systems where taxpayers can make payment for all tax types in one place.
• **Customs Accredited Client Programme**
  The Customs Accredited Client Programme (CACP) is based on the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards and is similar to the AEO concept as provided in the framework of standards. The scheme allows for expedited release of goods at border crossings leaving the checks at post clearance stage. Currently, Zambia has grown its CACP Membership from 39 in 2018, to 59 in 2019.

• **PCA and RM**
  The Customs Services Division also has a dedicated PCA and RM unit. PCA is critical for the implementation of the WTO TFA through expedited clearance of goods. Capacity has been enhanced by upgrading the minimum rank of officers in the PCA unit from Examining Officer to Collector.

• **Use of Non-intrusive Scanners**
  The adoption of scanners is intended to support expedited clearance of goods and also inform enforcement activities. There are 8 fixed and 2 mobile scanners installed at the main border crossings.

• **Customs Self-Assessment**
  The Administration is piloting the Customs Self-Assessment (CSA) system, a project intended to allow for speedy clearance of goods for compliant traders while ensuring that the non-compliant ones are penalized accordingly. The CSA Programme has an embedded penalty regime that is applied automatically on declarants that default or abrogate the Customs legal provisions. Roll out to 3 more Centralized Processing Centres earmarked for Quarter 3.

• **The Zambia Electronic SW**
  Zambia has implemented an electronic SW system called the Zambia Electronic Single Widow (ZESW), and the ZRA has been designated as the lead agency in the implementation of the project. At the moment, there are 31 processes that are earmarked to operate on the SW in the second phase of the project which is expected to run from 2018 to 2022. The first phase was implemented from 2013 to 2017. The ZESW has four pillars namely, The Import and Export Permit; the Multi-Agency RM; the Single Payment Point; and the Electronic Voucher of Exemption.

  Under the import and export permit the Ministry of Agriculture is yet to begin the pilot. There are 11 Government ministries that are implementing the electronic voucher of exemption; 13 Government agencies are implementing the multi-agency risk module; and 4 Government agencies are implementing the Single Payment Point.

  Under the Single Payment Point, the Customs Integrated Border Declaration Form is set to be implementation in July 2019.

To facilitate trade, a number of initiatives have been implemented for the long run and these include the following:

• **One-Stop Border Posts**
  Zambia has an operating One Stop Border Post (OSBP) with Zimbabwe. There are also other OSBP projects in progress between Zambia and Botswana, between Zambia and Malawi and between Zambia and Tanzania.

  The details are as follows:
  
  - Zambia – Malawi at Mwami /Mchinji - the contractor has moved on site for the construction of the infrastructure;
  - Botswana – Zambia at Kazungula - construction of infrastructure in progress. To be tentatively completed in 1st Quarter of 2020;
  - Zambia – Tanzania at Nakonde/Tunduma - on pilot due to infrastructure challenges on Zambian side.

• **Automation of the Certificate of Origin**
  The ZRA is working with Common Market for the Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern Africa Community Development (SADC) regional communities on projects to automate the certificate of origin. The SADC Trade Related Facility is supporting the development of the E-Certificate of Origin. The project is still on-going.

• **Cooperation with Member Customs Administrations and other Development Partners**
  Zambia has been cooperating with the following neighbors in the area of data exchange:
  
  - Malawi;
  - Tanzania;
Zambia has been involved in the following trade facilitation projects:

- Lobito Corridor Trade Facilitation Project within the auspices of the African Development Bank (AfDB). The project aims at supporting infrastructure improvement and for Government agencies working along the corridor with focus at Jimbe and Kipushi;
- Great Lakes Project. The project is funded by the World Bank to enhance infrastructure development and coordinating support as follows:
  - Kasumbalesa – Construction of Trade Centre;
  - Chembe; and
  - Mokambo.
- GIZ Kasumbalesa Trade Facilitation project. The project aims to enhance trade facilitation in the areas of cross border trade, capacity building data exchange support of trade information desk.
- IMF AFRITAC South (AFS) Customs Technical Assistance Mission to ZRA: 13-24 May 2019- workshops on Stakeholder Engagement; Data Matching; and Business Process Mapping

**WCO support**

Zambia continues to get support from the WCO. In the recent past, ZRA has received support in the following areas:

- AEO support in July 2019;
- Piloting of Advanced WCO PCA workshop Package in September 2019;
- Phase 2 support for SW Implementation in November 2019;
- WCO nCEN project - training on the newly installed nCEN application in November 2019;
- nCEN implementation support in November 2019;
- LMD TER in December 2019; and
- TRS Planning and Implementation Follow up Mission.

**Zimbabwe**

**Background**

The Zimbabwe Revenue Authority's (ZIMRA's) modernization Programmes have been an integral part of the organization since its inception on 1 September 2001.

The WCO Columbus Programme diagnostic mission was conducted between 4 December and 15 December 2006 and the report was released on 18th September 2007.

The Zimbabwe Revenue Authority’s modernization efforts aspires to enhance its technology, processes and manpower skills to achieve the following:

- **Clear and simple laws**, better information and taxpayer services to minimize taxpayer effort and compliance costs;
- **Efficient collection systems and procedures** by simple forms and straightforward assessment, filing, and payment arrangements to ease administration and compliance;
- **Adequate enforcement power** of the administration to ensure compliance with basic obligations by taxpayers on record keeping, return filing, and voluntary payment;
- **Risk analysis** to cut unnecessary, unproductive audits, while the non-compliers are targeted. This ensures efficiency in enforcement;
- **Function-based operational structure**: customs and cross cutting business systems organized according to key specialized areas (e.g. valuation, Rules of Origin tariff classification, excise, assessment, audit, investigations, debt management) in order to operate more efficiently;
- **Automation** promotes risk-based management, fast and simple file returns, declarations and E-payments. Web-based information and inquiry services are also highly appreciated by taxpayers;
Focus on taxpayers by their revenue potential and transactional volume, paying particular attention to the large and medium taxpayers who are the largest sources of revenue and moving the largest volumes of trade; and

Human resource management for competency, integrity and professionalism: e.g. a competitive and transparent process of recruitment, effective incentive mechanisms and training in ethics, supported by a zero-tolerance approach to cases of dishonesty.

Current planning

The modernization plans are engraved in the current strategic plans of the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority which runs for the years 2015 - 2018. The Organization has already begun working on development of its strategic plan for the next period 2019 - 2022.

Concurrence is normally obtained from Ministry of Finance in terms of funding and promulgation of new legislation.

Other stakeholders are also consulted in the implementation of the aspects of the border efficiency management.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

- **Upgrade of ASYCUDA++ to ASYCUDA World.** The Customs system was upgraded to ASYCUDA World – (internet based) resulting in improved performance, turnaround times and more convenience to the importers and agents. The upgrade includes the E-filing, e-warehouse, e-transit and e-payment. This created a platform for implementing the SW concept for all stakeholders involved in the processing of commercial cargo;

- **ASYCUDA World roll out and activation of key modules.** With the roll out of ASYCUDA World, automation of Customs processes has been on-going and to date the Bill of Entry process, Transit Management and HS 2017 is now functional. To date the following additional ASYCUDA World modules have been implemented: e- temporary importation permit for foreign registered motor vehicles imported temporarily; e- cargo manifest for airfreight; e-miscellaneous assessments for direct payments; automated RM module; suspensive clearances module; electronic query notification and management system, electronic payments/e-banking platform. The Authority is also currently implementing the e-State Warehouse Management module at the major port of entry with Botswana which is Plumtree Border Post. The Authority developed and implemented an e-Temporary Import permit application which allows for the pre-capturing and lodgment of an application for the temporary importation of motor vehicles by tourists or visitors to Zimbabwe. This application can be downloaded and utilized on smart cellphones or computers and allows the tourist or visitor to complete the necessary temporary importation documents for the clearance of their vehicles prior to arrival at the port of entry;

- **The AEO initiative is being fully implemented from January 2016.** Stakeholder awareness Programmes were launched and many clients expressed interest in the Programme. It embraced the private sector partnership dialogue forum culminating in the establishment of a Customs to Business engagement operating under the name ZIMRA to Business Forum. Memorandum of Understanding was signed between ZIMRA and various sectors of business and some government agencies and all Customs Clearing Agents Associations. The AEO Programme has expanded to incorporate clients, who are receiving expedited clearances at ports of entry, with minimal formalities being undertaken at ports of entry;

- **Use of NII equipment:** Installed baggage, relocated and mobile scanners at the major ports of entry like Beitbridge, Plumtree, Harare Airport, Chirundu, Forbes, Victoria Falls Airport and Nyamapanda. Additional mobile scanners were installed and commissioned at a container depot/transit shed in Harare;

- **In 2016 ZIMRA piloted the Electronic Cargo Tracking System (ECTS) at 3 major border posts namely at Forbes border post between Zimbabwe and Mozambique, Chirundu border post between Zimbabwe and Zambia, and Beit Bridge Border Post between Zimbabwe and South Africa.** The initiative improved controls on the movement of transit cargo, particularly fuel products. The electronic cargo tracking system has been rolled out to all major ports of entry and has also been extended to breakbulk cargo;

- **PCA - structure and teams to support the initiative now in place.** Technical Assistance was obtained through AusAID to assist in reviewing the governance issues, review of training materials and procedures and effect practical on-the-job training and transfer of expertise. ZIMRA has continued to develop the PCA Unit through assistance received from AFRITAC South;

- **RM - the authority restructured to enhance functionality of the RM and this has culminated in enhanced facilitation of trade.** The RM Unit has carried out numerous awareness campaigns at ports of entry and developed the RM function within the Revenue Authority, additionally the ZIMRA has established an Enterprise RM function which receives input from the Customs RM Unit on a regular basis;
Canine Unit was introduced which will focus on curbing drug, CITES trafficking and smuggling. The unit became operational in December 2012. It expanded to cover all major ports of entry in the country, and has numerous successful interceptions over the years of drugs, minerals, currency, wildlife products, and other products. ZIMRA is also exploring the establishment of a fully-fledged canine breeding and training facility;

Direct banking and e-banking concepts were introduced where clients can settle their tax and duty obligations in the comfort of their banks. The e-banking facility has been fully implemented at all ports of entry, and the development of a SW facility has been finalized, and all payments of other border agencies at ports of entry is now being facilitated through the ZIMRA e-payment/e-banking platform; and

The nCEN platform has been implemented in Zimbabwe through the assistance of the WCO.

Cooperation with Customs administrations and other organizations

In January 2018 ZIMRA signed an MOU with Mozambique Revenue Authority in a bid to formalize the already existing cooperation between the sister organizations.

ZIMRA and SARS are also at an advanced stage of amending the existing Customs Mutual Administrative Assistance Agreement in order to include Automatic Exchange of Information which is not included in the current CMAAA.

ZIMRA and Zambia Revenue Authority are also working on System Connectivity. Both Administrations are using ASYCUDA for declaration processing and have found it more beneficial to have the two systems interfacing.

WCO support

ZIMRA is committed to long-term support under the WCO Mercator Programme to implement the provisions of the WTO TFA.

Recent WCO support to ZIMRA include:

- Develop specialist capacity in PCA conducted in November 2019; and
Regional developments

West and Central Africa (WCA) is one of the WCO’s three African regions, and consists of 23 Members: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. In July 2020, and as a result of support provided by the WCO and the WCA region, Equatorial Guinea signed the Convention establishing the Customs Cooperation Council and is about to become an active Member of the WCO.

In 2015, the region developed its first Regional Guide. This document was updated in 2018 and briefly outlines the WCA Region together with its specific structures, conferences, meetings and tools to support Customs Reform and Modernization. It is aimed at any individuals or structures involved in the Customs Reform and Modernization process. The region has also a regional website (omdaoc.org) which makes relevant information available in English and French.

Accessions by WCA Members to main WCO Conventions:

- Harmonized System (HS): All of the 23 WCA countries are now contracting parties to the HS Convention. The Gambia was the last to ratify this Convention in 2019; and
- RKC: At present 17 WCA countries are contracting parties to the RKC (all except The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania and Chad). Latest accession: 2019 Ghana.

WTO TFA:

Many the 23 WCA countries have ratified the Agreement but significant efforts still need to be undertaken to implement the relevant measures. The missions conducted noted the progress made but also underscore the need for many countries to improve relations between Customs and the Ministry of Trade to ensure better collaboration in this field and to better involve other stakeholders in the work.

- So far, the TFA has been ratified by 18 WCA countries (all except Guinea-Bissau, DR Congo, Liberia, Mauritania and Sao Tome & Principe): latest accessions: 2019 Republic of Guinea; 2020 Cabo Verde; and
- Following WCA Members benefit from long-term assistance and support under the Mercator Programme: Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone and the Central African Republic.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA):

The Agreement entered into force on 30 May 2019. This reinforces the need for African Customs to develop coherent and holistic strategies and concrete actions to facilitate trade.

- By now, all WCA countries have signed the Agreement; and
- 16 among them (all except Guinea-Bissau, DR Congo, Liberia, Mauritania and Sao Tome & Principe) have already ratified it. Latest accession: Cameroon, Gabon, Sao Tome & Principe.

Current situation in the WCA region:

- Since June 2019, following the WCA Members have new Directors general/Commissioners of Customs: Burkina Faso, Chad, DR Congo, Ghana, Niger and Senegal;
- Security and Customs revenue collection remain the priority missions of the WCA Customs, even though trade facilitation boosted by the TFA and the AfCFTA remains a topical issue;
- The COVID-19 pandemic heavily affects WCA countries, even though the numbers of infections remain low compared to other regions. Economic downturn and a standstill of investments and tourist activity lower state revenues and makes it more difficult for Customs to achieve their revenue objectives. Temporarily closed borders and travel restrictions constitute real challenges for the development of the region, trade facilitation, regional integration but also assistance and projects;
- For many countries in this Region, border security constitutes an increasing challenge. Armed groups settle and operate in border areas and exploit the border economy and fiscal resource for their purpose. Their strategies of harassment or attacks of security and defense forces aim to weaken the ability of States to govern their borders. Customs are particularly concerned. The WCO support aims at strengthening the Customs’ capacity to use intelligence and modern technology to contribute to the fight against such groups. Recent seizures of arms and IED demonstrate the Customs’ capacity to translate received training into action and seizures, in particular in Cameroun, Nigeria, Liberia and Mali;
• The illicit trade and consumption of drugs and fake medicines have become a major concern of the WCA region. However, it can be observed that WCA Customs increasingly participate in the numerous capacity building activities and enforcement operations of the WCO and of the RILOs. This has led to numerous spectacular seizures, in particular in Cameroun, Benin and Mali;

• Many WCA countries are suffering from the looting of heritage, natural and cultural resources and the extinction of their flora and fauna. The WCO has developed a number of initiatives (notably the INAMA and PITCH Programmes) to enable the WCA Customs to better protect the country’s heritage, resources and species, and through this, protect their society, economy and environment. Some WCA Customs have started developing frameworks that allow them to fight more effectively against its scourges, but for others this is still not a priority that is reflected in their Reform and Modernization plans;

• Electronic commerce is also developing in WCA and Customs must take measures to face this new reality. They are called upon to develop or improve their Customs clearance procedures and their systems, especially for goods ordered on the Internet and transported by post or express courier;

• The study on the major challenges of the WCA Customs carried out in 2016 by a regional virtual working group led by Senegal has provided guidance for the WCO assistance delivered in this financial period. The document identifies following challenges and suggests strategies and actions to face them: interference of politics in Customs matters, leadership, HR management, interventions of private sector inspection companies, dependency on ASYCUDA and its future evolutions, update and harmonization of community Customs codes, economic partnership agreements, regional transit, trans border organized crime, CBM and WTO-TFA implementation;

• After many years of studies and developments, computerized solutions to manage transit at the bilateral and sub-regional levels have become operational. Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger and Togo are the first countries being interconnected. They use SIGMAT (“Système Interconnecté pour la Gestion des Marchandises en Transit”) and for their road transits. SIGMAT provides standard transit processes and enables Customs Administrations to exchange standard XML messages to manage common transit operations. At present, work is undertaken to connect other ECOWAS countries and to extend the use of SIGMAT to rail transit. It is also planned to extend SIGMAT to CEMAC Members;

• Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo remain the only WCA Members having Revenue Agencies. The others keep on having traditional Customs Administrations;

• Various WCO initiatives have enabled a number of WCA Customs administrations to enhance their HR management. This is why some of the WCA Customs administrations attach greater importance to the human factor as the key for change. They show increased interest in the implementation of WCO tools and concepts such as LMD, competency-based HR management strategy, training strategy, etc.). Support has also made it possible to establish a pool of recognized HR experts. These experts are now able to assist other administrations and have already been mobilized to lead WCO missions. However, frequent changes of Heads of Customs administrations and shortfalls in terms of recruitment, training and rotation of staff remain for many Customs administrations major obstacles to sustainable reform. At present, and despite the support provided by the WCO, only a very few WCA Customs administrations actually apply competency-based HR management. It is expected that the Ouagadougou Declaration recently adopted will boost the implementation of competency-based HRM in this region;

• Several countries in the WCA region are still not applying the HS 2017 and are consequently not delivering on their international commitments. This is a major obstacle for some bilateral, interregional or global negotiations on trade facilitation and Rules of Origin. However, the ongoing WCO-EU Programme to assist Africa on HS matters is providing substantial support to these countries and has enabled a number of them to accede to the HS Convention, migrate to HS2017 and also implement relevant measures such as AR;

• The TFA and the WCO support provided has helped a number or WCA Customs administrations to take ownership of missions outsourced by their governments to private sector inspection companies and to terminate the contracts that bind them to such companies. Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, DR Congo, Gabon, Ghana Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Guinea and Guinea Bissau have been successful in reclaiming outsourced tasks and this motivates other countries to follow. At present, the WCO is further supporting Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo on this topic;

• The Regional workshop on CBM, organized by the WCO in February 2018 in Abuja, revealed that there is no operational SW in WCA corresponding to the definition of a SW in UN/CEFACT Recommendation 33 and to the WCO’s understanding of this concept. Many WCA countries have ongoing SW initiatives. However, they are all limited in terms of their scope and the services provided (restricted functions and/or limited number of stakeholders connected) or in terms of their geographical focus (most often restricted to port operations). Some countries have more than one SW initiative. The participants also concluded that many OSBP projects are being carried out at with financial support from several donors including the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Government of Japan, the IMF, the EU, USAID and others. However, despite of massive investments and available new infrastructures, only two OSBP are currently operational;
The region currently has developed a certain number of useful tools (e.g. regional website, regional e-mail addresses, Regional Guide, Vice-Chair’s Newsletter) that enables it to communicate more easily and inform and involve regional structures and persons acting within the framework of the WCO and for the development of WCA Customs; and

Many development partners have pledged to support Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to revitalize their reform process after the Ebola crisis. Thanks to this support and cooperation with these institutions, the WCO has been able to carry out a range of activities in these countries and multi-year support Programmes are being implemented.

Recent regional developments in Customs integration and cooperation

Customs modernization of Members is characterized by a national approach, but also by an increasingly significant regional or sub-regional integration process.

Indeed, all the Member countries belong to one or more of the following economic sub-regional organizations:

- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS);
- West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU);
- Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC);
- Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS);
- Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD);
- Mano River Union (MRU); and
- Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP).

ECOWAS introduced its Common External Tariff (CET) in 2015. At its 52nd ordinary session held in December 2017, the Authority of Heads of State and Government adopted the new ECOWAS Customs Code. The WCO supported its alignment with the RKC and the WTO TFA.

Since 2013 the WCO and ECOWAS, together with other development partners, support the ECOWAS Members in the development of transit interconnectivity. The developed solution called SIGMAT (“Système Interconnecté pour la Gestion des Marchandises en Transit”) has become operational in 2019 and is currently extended to all ECOWAS countries. At present significant work is undertaken to create the legal framework for SIGMAT and for regional guarantees (bonds).

Since 2019, WCO and ECOWAS have collaborated closely to support the ECOWAS Members in the development of an Integrity framework and related ECOWAS legal instruments. Other ongoing WCO-ECOWAS collaborations focus on the development of a regional framework for AEO framework and a regional approach to Customs training.

CEMAC adopted its new Community Customs Code in 2018. The WCO supported in the alignment with the RKC and with WTO-TFA.

ECCAS set up Steering Committee to define a long term action plan and to explore options for the Community to move towards a Customs Union. An ECCAS Regional Trade Facilitation Committee held its first meeting in May 2018.

Regional structures

WCA Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB) in Abidjan

In January 2009, the ROCB for the WCA region was inaugurated in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire. It is made up of Director Mr. Ebenezer Tafili (Cameroon), 8 Technical Attachés from Côte d’Ivoire, Congo Republic and Gabon and administrative staff from Côte d’Ivoire. In 2014, new and larger office facilities were made available to the ROCB by the Government of Côte d’Ivoire. This enables the ROCB staff to work in a modern environment and this undoubtedly has a positive impact on their motivation and on the Office’s performance.

The Regional Fund for WCA

The Directors General adopted the principle of an annual contribution of EUR 10,000 per Member administration to finance the activities of the regional structures (ROCB, RTCs, and RILO). This Fund enables these structures to take part in the WCO meetings falling within their competences and in statutory regional activities. Moreover, it has enabled staff of regional structures to undertake their own missions to support Members upon request.

WCA region’s Regional Training Centres (RTCs)

The WCA region is currently home to 3 WCO RTCs - Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Brazzaville (Republic of the Congo) and Abuja (Nigeria).
WCA Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices (RILOs)

The WCA region has 2 RILOs which are located in Dakar (Senegal) and Douala (Cameroon). In April 2009, these RILOs decided to enhance their cooperation by establishing a common network of National Contact Points (NCPs). Both RILOs also subsequently organized a number of training and development initiatives focusing on strengthening the capacity of NCPs to contribute towards exchanging information. Also, the RILOs take part in numerous WCO enforcement activities and operations and organize more and more enforcement operations themselves. They participate in the annual WCA Conference of Directors General, the WCA Committee of experts and in the annual meeting of the WCA Contact Points.

At present the WCA region does not have Regional Customs Laboratories and Regional Dog Training Centers.

Regional multiyear strategic plan

The 3rd Regional Strategic Plan for 2018-2022 was adopted in the margin of the 23rd WCA Conference of DG, held in Guinea in April 2018. The 5 axes remain the same:

1. Leadership;
2. Strategic Management;
3. Human Resource Management (HRM);
4. Partnerships; and
5. Customs procedures (security and facilitation)

Every year, the WCA Customs administrations receive an annual Roadmap. It takes account of the administration’s level of development and sets out the actions to be conducted and the objectives to be met by all WCA Customs administrations. The Roadmaps also contain the assessment parameters that will enable the ROCB-WCA to conduct periodic monitoring and evaluation of the progress. The annual evaluation enables the ROCB to more accurately determine the strengths and weaknesses of each administration as well as its capacity building requirements. Finally, the evaluation exercise makes it possible to determine the region’s trends and priorities. The strategic plan and the results of the evaluations are made available on the regional website (omdaoc.org).

In order to monitor closely the development of Customs reforms within the region's countries, the ROCB took the initiative to designate, within its structure, the National Development Coordinators (NDCs) who are each responsible for a given number of countries (2 to 3).

Regular WCA meetings

These statutory and periodic activities of the WCA region enable Customs leaders and managers to share their experiences, familiarize themselves with new standards, tools and trends, but also to coordinate their reform initiatives at both national and regional level.

The following periodic meetings of the WCA region were held since June 2019:

WCA Conference of Directors General of Customs

- 2019: Central African Republic
- 2020: Conference to be held in Benin cancelled due to COVID. A virtual conference is to be held on 24 September and will deal with priority topics such as election of WCA Vice-chair and regional fund.

Biannual Meeting of the WCA Committee of experts

- 2019: The 23rd Meeting of the Committee of experts of the Conference of Directors General of Customs of the WCA Region was held on 19-21 November 2019 in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo. It made the following recommendations:
  - The Vice-Chair to set up a tool for evaluating the performance of Regional Structures in collaboration with the WCO Secretariat;
  - The WCO Secretariat to support the WCA RILOs for the holding of a regional training session on information exchange tools for the benefit of National Correspondents;
  - The ROCB to develop a Programme to strengthen the capacities of the Customs administrations in terms of project management;
  - The Customs Administrations to strengthen their project management capacities; develop and implement a data analysis strategy in accordance with the WCO Manual and produce an annual report about capacity building Programmes and results of their administration and about of the theme of the International Customs Day.
• 2020: Meetings cancelled due to COVID.

WCA Contact Point Meeting

• 2019: From 24 to 26 September 2019, the 10th Meeting of the WCA Contact Points for Capacity Building was held in Kinshasa, DR Congo. It focused in particular on the following themes:
  - The role of National Capacity Building Contact Points (NCPs) and the need to improve their contributions to the planning, monitoring and evaluation of Customs reform;
  - Monitoring the implementation of the 2018-2022 Regional Strategic Plan;
  - The situation of the region in relation to the measurement of the performance of Customs activity and the selection of indicators, in particular for monitoring the implementation of the WTO TFA;
  - Data analysis and project management as modern and efficient tools for the implementation of Customs reforms;
  - Progress made at level of "The mirror", a tool developed by the ROCB and used by WCA Customs to monitor and evaluate the implementation of their national and regional strategic plan;
  - Progress of the "regional coaching Programme".
• 2020: Meetings cancelled due to COVID-19.

Meeting of Human Resource and Training Managers

• 2019: The 9th Meeting of HR and Training Managers of the WCA Region took place in Ouagadougou from 28 to 30 October 2019. Theme: Investment in human capital, an essential lever for the performance of WCA Customs. The meeting adopted the ‘Ouagadougou declaration’. These administrations, convinced that the implementation of a modern competency-based Human Resources Management system will allow the WCA Customs to improve their performance and successfully complete their Reform and Modernization processes, agree that:
  - Training and human resources managers should:
    - Participate in their personal development to fully assume their responsibility for the modernization of Human Resources management within their administrations;
    - Fully play their role as strategic partner and change agent within their administrations for better organizational performance;
    - Implement modern HRM competency-based tools, particularly in terms of recruitment and training.
  - Customs in the WCA region should:
    - Develop and defend arguments with governments to adequately provide the structures in charge of human resources management and training, with the necessary resources (human, material and financial);
    - Set up a modern, transparent and competency-based Human Resources Management system including all management practices: recruitment, mobility, rotation, promotion and training.

The line ministries are called upon to commit themselves through concrete actions to energize and operationalize the HR modernization initiated within the Customs administrations. The WCO and other technical and financial partners are asked to:
  - Support Customs in dialogue and advocacy with governments;
  - Coordinate capacity building activities between the different partners;
  - Continue to support the Customs Administrations in their human resources modernization Programmes.
• 2020: Meetings cancelled due to COVID-19.

WCA Regional Wording Group (RWG)

In April 2019, the RWG on Information and Communication Technology (ICT9) held its 5th annual meeting in Senegal. The meeting enabled the participating IT Managers to exchange on the theme “Which computer environment for anticipated inspections to secure revenue and accelerate Customs clearance” identified best practices and came up with recommendations.

The 2020 meeting has not been held yet (due to COVID-19 restrictions).
WCA Donor Conference – Conference of WCA Customs and Development partners

In October 2019, the latest WCA Conference of Customs and their development Partners was held in Niger. It was attended by 17 WCA Customs administrations, Vice-Chair, ROCB, RTCs, RILOs, and many development partner and institutions, including the African Union, ECOWAS, African Development Bank, Commission of the EU, UNESCO, World Bank, FMI-AFRITTAC, JICA, GIZ, UN-OCHA, UNCTAD, EIED of CEMAC, French Customs, Embassy of France and of the United States and the WCO Secretariat.

The conference allowed the participants to present the concept of SMART Borders and to discuss its relevance and its application in the WCA, more particularly to facilitate legal trade, fight against fraud and to secure cross-border trade. Following the thematic discussions, the development partners presented their initiatives and priorities and the WCA Customs presented the following projects:

- The WCA Customs' Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit (SIGMAT);
- The regional project for the modernization of the WCA Customs’ human resources;
- The regional WCA Customs capacity building project in internal control and audit;
- The regional project for the implementation of an AEO Program in the ECOWAS region;
- The project for the establishment in WCA of a Training Programme for Trainers in PCA and compliance management;
- The regional project for WCA countries on TRS;
- The WCA Customs Capacity Building project in data analysis; and
- The RILO project for the strengthening of Intelligence in WCA and for the implementation of the nCEN application (national Customs Enforcement Network).

The Conference made following recommendations:

- Technical and financial partners to support the projects presented at this conference and to coordinate their interventions in support of Customs administrations;
- The Vice-Chair to maintain the dynamic of dialogue between the partners and the Customs administrations of the region;
- The WCO Secretariat to prepare an advocacy for the political decision-makers of the Member States to include security as one of the priorities of the Customs;
- Current situation: the tools of the WCO security Programme already contain this advocacy and a good number of activities of this Programme address or involve directly or indirectly decision-makers and stakeholders. The role and contribution of Customs to security is also integrated into the new WCO strategic plan.
- The Regional Economic Communities to speed up the adoption of the implementing provisions for their Community Customs code and to popularize them; and
- Customs administrations to strengthen collaboration with the Private Sector and other Development Partners; to continue modernization efforts through the use of new technologies and tools; to develop synergies with other border control services.

Recent regional operations

Operation ACIM (2016-2017)

Operation ACIM (Action against Counterfeit and Illicit Medicines) was organized jointly by the WCO and the International Institute for Research against Counterfeit Medicines (IRACM).

The first of the kind mobilized 16 African Customs administrations, including 10 from the WCA region (Benin, Cameroon, Congo (Republic of), Côte d’Ivoire, DRC, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo). This Operation was launched in September 2016 and lasted 10 days in order to inspect, simultaneously, in the main ports on the continent, cargoes identified as likely to contain illicit or counterfeit pharmaceutical products posing a dangerous threat to local populations. Some 113 million illicit and potentially dangerous medicines, with a total value of around EUR 52 million, were seized as a result. The biggest interceptions were in Benin, Kenya, Nigeria and Togo.

The 2nd Operation (ACIM 2) was implemented from 12 to 21 June 2017. Some 18 African countries participated in the Operation, 9 of which were from the WCA region (Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo).
The Operation was organized and coordinated by the WCO in partnership with IRACM. The operational phase was preceded by a 3-day training session in early June 2017, followed by analyses. Operation ACIM 2 led to the interception of 258,933,104 units of different types of products recorded in 840 cases. Since 1 July 2017, 187,262,514 units of different types of products have been seized or stopped (561 cases). During the Operation, 130 containers were intercepted, in addition to consignments by air, post or accompanied luggage.

**Operation MIRAGE**

Following the suspension of the partnership with IRACM, the WCO organized and coordinated Operation MIRAGE in September 2018, preceded by a train-the-trainer workshop in Benin. It involved 15 African ports, including nine from WCA countries (Benin, Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo) that had already taken part in the ACIM Operations.

**Operation CRIPHARM (2016-2020)**

The 1st regional operation to combat pharmaceutical crime in the WCA, called CRIPHARM, took place from 27 January to 16 February 2016. It was organized by the RILO Western Africa and the RILO Central Africa under the supervision of the Vice-Chair for the WCA region and with technical support from the WCO Secretariat. This Operation recorded 78 seizures of pharmaceuticals and other products (drugs, pharmacopoeia products, CITES goods, etc.).

Operation CRIPHARM II ran from 29 January to 21 February 2017 and covered all the countries in the WCA region. The Operational Coordination Unit (OCU) was set up in Kinshasa (DRC) and, in addition to the two RILOS for the WCA region, brought together eight WCA countries. 81 seizures of prohibited and restricted goods, in particular drugs, medicines and pharmaceutical products, cigarettes, CITES goods, arms and ammunition, etc. were recorded.

Operation CRIPHARM III took place from 26 March to 16 April 2018. This 3rd operation to combat pharmaceutical crime involved the 23 WCA countries and the OCU was set up in Abidjan. 1,598 messages were exchanged via CENcomm. These resulted in 60 seizures, 67% involving pharmaceutical products totaling 93,400 kg. 94% of these seizures were made at land and airport borders, and on Customs territories.

Operation CRIPHARM IV was held from 25 January to 23 February 2019 with an OCU hosted in Togo. 7,464 messages were exchanged during this period, including 219 seizure messages concerning 14 WCA countries. Pharmaceutical products accounted for 69.41% of the seizures.

Operation CRIPHARM V was held from 24 January to 22 February, 2020 with an OCU hosted in Banjul (The Gambia). Over 13,994 CENcomm traffic flows were recorded between the 96 users of the Operation. The seizure messages totaled 314, coming from 16 WCA countries. Of these seizures, pharmaceuticals accounted for 54% of the total number.

**Operation TRIGGER (2017-2018)**

Operation TRIGGER against illicit firearms trafficking and terrorism, organized jointly by the WCO, INTERPOL and the UNODC was launched in September 2017. It involved, more particularly, the Customs services and national Police services in 10 WCA region countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria). Operation TRIGGER was carried out in 3 stages. The first was the leadership training workshop held in Algiers from 4 to 8 September 2017. The operational briefing was given in Abidjan in October 2017 and the operational phase ran from 20 November to 2 December 2017, followed by a debriefing in Abidjan in late January 2018.

An Operation TRIGGER IV took place in September 2018 but was limited to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

**Operations COCAIR (2017-2018)**

The operational phase of COCAIR VI was held from 9 to 17 December 2017, with participation of 37 airports from 33 countries in Africa, Latin America/Caribbean and Europe, including 16 countries in the WCA region. An OCU, set up at the WCO Headquarters and comprising experts from some of the participating countries, managed the exchange of information through CENcomm. The WCA was represented within the OCU by Mali and the two RILOS (CA and WA).

The objective was to establish operational cooperation and information sharing between airports in order to intercept shipments of cocaine and other illicit products bound for Europe. This Operation, in keeping with previous instalments, was conducted by the WCO under the auspices of Project AIRCOP, with financing by the European Commission and in collaboration with UNODC and INTERPOL. The Project AIRCOP Joint Airport Interdiction Task Forces (JAITFs) were also directly involved in the Operation.
Outstanding results were achieved during this Operation, both in terms of the volume of information shared between airport units and the quantities of drugs seized. The quantities of cocaine seized have more than doubled. Accordingly, some 98 seizures were recorded into the CENcomm, covering a total of 1,469 kg of drugs including over one ton of cocaine and 150 kg of khat. The following seizures were recorded for the WCA: 144 kg of drugs, 95 kg of medication, and 8030 pieces of cigarettes and CITES goods, and USD 98,000 of currency.

Given the success of COCAIR VI, an operation COCAIR VII was carried out in December 2018 on the same principle. The operation was preceded by two train-the-trainer sessions that took place in Lima and in Abidjan in November and focused on the recognition of illicit drugs, an introduction to risk analysis, control of IFFs and the use of CENcomm. COCAIR VII showed good overall results for WCA, including 26 seizures with 184 kg of narcotics, 160112 cigarettes and $31,445 in foreign currency.

**Operation AFRICAN WINGS (2016-2020)**

Operation AFRICAN WINGS VI organized by French Customs was carried out in 2019 and focused on the control of light aviation involved 16 countries in the region: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, CAR, Senegal, Chad and Togo. The WCO has once again supported this operation by allowing CENCCom access and by hosting the UCO in RILO premises in Dakar. In addition to significant litigation results, the volume of exchanges by CENCCom has improved significantly (379 messages in 2019).

**Operation COSMO**

Operation COSMO II saw the participation of the following WCA countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, DR Congo, Guinea Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. It largely consisted of a communication exercise focused on strategic trade controls. As a result, the actions were as follows: inspection of goods, detention and identification, communication with foreign Customs counterparts, communication with the WCO (use of STRATComm), and contacts with industry, obtaining licenses, verification of products and licenses, and parties involved in the transactions. The WCO also facilitated this operation by running the OCU in-house at the WCO Headquarters, and monitoring and promoting active communication and interaction among participating countries.

**Contracts with private sector inspection companies**

A study conducted by the WCO Secretariat in 2013 showed that 20 of the 23 countries making up the WCA region have concluded one or more contracts for the provision of services with private sector inspection companies which are directly involved in the Customs clearance process. It can be seen that these contracts are no longer limited to pre-shipment inspections (PSI), instead extending in some countries to controls at the destination (such as scanner, classification, valuation and determination of the origin of goods) and even to RM, to geo-localization of means of transport and to physical inspection of goods.

The following worrying trends have been noted with respect to inspection companies in the WCA:

- Most of the other WCO regions have already terminated these contracts, however, these contracts are tending to persist and even develop within the WCA region;
- In many cases, Customs was not involved in drafting these contracts;
- In certain cases, Customs is not prepared for the changes related to such cooperation and has consequently not developed strategies to reclaim its powers at the end of the contract;
- Some governments have decided to outsource RM, which is based on the following: intelligence; availability and assessment of electronic information contained in declarations and manifests, seizures, penal procedures and fines, operational knowledge of frontline Customs officers, exchange of information (based on international Conventions such as the Nairobi and Johannesburg Conventions) between Customs administrations, other authorities and intelligence liaison offices, shared tools (e.g. CEN). However, most of these information sources are not available to the inspection companies and this raises the question of how they can implement a RM system on behalf of Customs;
- Generally speaking, this study has clearly shown that these contracts have not contributed to building Customs’ capacities in the outsourced areas. The transfer of knowledge and technologies, as stipulated in the contract, has not taken place to the required extent. On the contrary, in some cases Customs has lost its capacity and motivation to manage and apply the outsourced issues; and
- It also needs to be recognized that the concept of PSI is outdated and should be replaced by advance submission of data to Customs and by modern RM. Article 10.5 of the WTO TFA, signed on 7 December 2013 in Bali and definitively adopted on 27 November 2014, supports this approach and stipulates that WTO Members shall not require the use of
pre-shipment inspections in relation to tariff classification and Customs valuation and encourages Members not to introduce or apply new requirements regarding the use of other types of pre-shipment inspection.

In this context, following actions were supported by the WCO since 2013:

- In 2013, Niger announced that it did not intend to renew its existing pre-shipment inspection (PSI) contract;
- In March 2014 the WCO organized a seminar with development partners (i.e. World Bank, IMF, African Union, African Development Bank, World Trade Organization) to assess the issue of inspection services, to harmonize as far as possible related policies and strategies and coordinate advice to governments and Customs. The result of the seminar is the common press release published on the public website of the WCO;
- In June 2014, the WCO Council empowered the Secretariat to continue with the initiatives already taken, develop guidelines and best practices on this topic and prepare guidance for rendering Customs procurement more transparent. Some WCO Members which have been able to successfully take over from inspection companies have pledged to assist the WCO Secretariat in this respect;
- Boosted by the successful termination of inspection contracts and the takeover of the main outsourced functions by Customs in Kenya, Mauritania and Nigeria, other WCA countries have committed to developing similar initiatives. This trend has been further accelerated by Article 10.5 of the WTO TFA which stipulates that Members shall not require the use of pre-shipment inspections in relation to tariff classification and Customs valuation and encourages Members not to introduce or apply new requirements regarding their use;
- In 2015, the WCO actively supported Ghana and DRC. The Governments of these two countries expressed their wish not to renew the existing contracts and asked for WCO support to build Customs’ capacities in order to regain their powers gradually, with no loss of revenue. The support offered to Customs enabled these two Governments not to renew their contracts and for Customs to regain its powers. Nevertheless, the Government of Ghana signed a fresh 5-year contract with a private-sector company to support the organization of the new process recently developed in the area of valuation and advance tariff classification, with the development of a SW and with other relevant initiatives;
- In 2015, Niger’s Government adopted new organizational structures for valuation and tariff classification and the staff was appointed. In December 2018, the WCO conducted a Revenue Package a diagnostic mission (Value / HS) to initiate the next phase of support;
- In 2016 and 2017, the WCO assisted Guinea Customs in this respect. In 2017, the Government chose not to renew its contract with the inspection company that had been in place for several years. Since then, Guinean Customs is currently assuming responsibility for the valuation and tariff classification of goods entering the country;
- In 2016 and 2017 Gabon and Guinea Bissau completed their comparable initiatives successfully;
- In September 2018 the inspection contract in Burkina Faso ended and a support mission took place in October/November;
- In March 2019, Côte d’Ivoire’s inspection contract expired; a Revenue Package Diagnostic mission was conducted by the WCO in December 2018 (Valuation/ HS);
- Other WCO support is still underway to further assist Customs in Benin, Cameroon, the Republic of the Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo, in their initiatives to take ownership of their missions related to the valuation and the tariff classification of goods;
- For Sierra Leone, 4 support missions were carried out and should enable the Customs to definitively take ownership of valuation and classification;
- Chad still has a pre-shipment inspection contract. This contract which requires the inspection company to be paid ad-valorem (service costs expressed in% on the value of the goods) was expected to end in November 2019. So far the WCO has not received a request to assist them in this matter; and
- The trend of inspection companies to move from pre-shipment inspection to destination inspection, and to offer other services (including SW and tracking of cargo by geolocation) can be observed.

WCO Donor Programmes supporting the WCA region

The Secretariat has set up a new link on the WCO website providing access to ongoing development and financing Programmes administered by the Organization. The link is as follows:

The WACAM Project, funded by the Government of Sweden, entered Phase 2 in January 2015 and ended in December 2018. It covered the following 3 topics: Strategic Management, HR Management and Stakeholder Engagement.

Since beginning of 2016 the Project has, among others, contributed to implementing the following measures in these 3 areas:

- **Strategic Management:**
  - Intensified its cooperation with ECOWAS in the areas of Human Resources (HR) (draft Regional Training Strategy) and transit-interconnectivity (financing of training on the WCO Data Model and the GEFEG tools);
  - Funded the Columbus Phase 3 mission conducted in Togo; and
  - Finalized the preparation of new training material on project management which was adopted by the CBC in March 2017.

- **HR Management:**
  - Continued to support the region with the development of a pool of HR experts;
  - Fostered regional cooperation in the field of HRM by using experts from the region for national support missions to Ghana, Liberia, Mali and Togo, in particular;
  - Provided national support to Benin, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Senegal and Togo;
  - Begun preparations to support Nigeria;
  - Supported 5 countries with the development and finalization of HR tools for implementation of the competency-based approach (HR strategy, general training policy, benchmarks for jobs, competency framework, and competency dictionary and job descriptions);
  - Continued preparations for the development of a Guide to implementation of the competency-based approach in the Customs context; and
  - Evaluated Burkina Faso's progress with the HR reform launched in 2014.

- **Stakeholder Engagement:**
  - Provided support to Cape Verde for the conduct and completion of a TRS;
  - Developed an 18-month work plan for supporting Guinea on Stakeholder Engagement in the areas of enforcement (installation of the nCEN, Compendium of Customs Operational Practices for Enforcement and Seizures (COPES) training and multi-agency operation) and trade facilitation; and
  - Evaluated Ghana's progress with the Stakeholder Engagement reform launched in 2014.

In the period 2017-2018, the Project has carried out numerous support missions in the field of HRM using regional experts, in order to create a viable pool of regional HRM experts in WCA. This support notably enabled Mali to finalize its competency-based HRM tools and Liberia to conduct its competency assessment in key pilot sites. Also, the HRM support to Gabon and Gambia concluded with a train-the-trainers session based on the new WCO material developed under the Project. The Project also supported the ECOWAS region with the development of the ECOWAS Regional Customs Training Strategy and provided critical inputs to the upcoming WCO WCA Regional Strategic Plan.

The support provided contributed also to achieve following:

- **Strategic Management:**
  - Gambia Revenue Authority (GRA) strengthened its project management capacity through training in this area. The organization adopted an Organizational Project Management methodology and initiated design and implementation of an advanced strategic dashboard to facilitate monitoring and management of its performance;
  - Burkina Faso Customs Administration has strengthened its project management capacity through training in this area and has adopted an organizational Project Management Methodology;
  - Burkina Faso notified the ratification of the WTO-TFA, successfully implemented an advance ruling mechanism (Article 3 of the WTO Act) and completed a partner's study (Article 7.6 of the TFA of the WTO);
  - Customs administrations of the Economic Community of West African States have developed the joint Programme of the regional basic Customs training Programme for the ECOWAS region, in line with the ECOWAS regional training strategy;
  - A regional pool of trainers has been created. These trainers will be expected to deliver modules of the regional basic Customs training Programme at the regional and national levels;
  - AOC region has adopted its regional strategic plan;
• WCO project management (PM) material has been successfully disseminated in three languages in Burkina Faso, Cape Verde and The Gambia, allowing 60 Customs officers to build their capacity in the area of PM; and
• A new standard for Business Process Mapping (BPM) was developed to assist Cape Verde. It was then made available to other Portuguese-speaking countries.

HR Management:
• Liberian Revenue Authority conducted its training needs analysis based on the competency-based approach and registered users on the WCO CLIKC!!!!!!!!! e-learning platform;
• Gambia Revenue Authority has applied the competency-based approach to a new human resources management process, namely the assessment of staff performance, and has also registered users on the WCO CLIKC!!!!!!!!! e-learning platform;
• Mali has successfully adopted its human resources management strategy for the period 2018-2021 and has begun implementation; and
• Niger has developed basics for a competency based human resources management system by implementing modern human resource management tools (skills baseline, job catalogue and job descriptions). It has successfully conducted change management and communications related activities to support modernization of its human resources management system.

Stakeholder engagement:
• Ghana Revenue Authority has successfully set up its advisory committee in the port of Tema, the country's main port, thus laying the groundwork for the implementation of Measure 2.2 of the WTO TFA;
• Guinea successfully initiated the establishment of the Consultative Committee in the Port of Conakry with relevant stakeholders and indeed completed its second operation, WACAM 2. This demonstrates the capacity building of stakeholder participation;
• Operation WACAM 2 held from 17 to 28 December with a UCO in Conakry with the participation of DCPAF, the Central Anti-Drug Office and the CITES Service. 637 kg of counterfeited pharmaceuticals were seized; and
• Nigeria Customs Service and their stakeholders were trained in the TRS which has been successfully declined in Lagos (Report expected in the first half of 2019).

The WCO Security Programme (2018-2020)

On the side-lines of the 23rd WCA Conference of DG of Customs, organized in April 2018 in Guinea, a new security project for the WCA region was presented and launched. This Japanese-funded project revolved around 5 priority areas:

• Control of substances and products that can be used in the manufacture of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), as part of the Programme Global Shield;
• The fight against illicit trafficking and use of small arms and light weapons, within the framework of the SALW Project;
• The control of travelers / the fight against the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, by using API and passenger records (PNR);
• Control of exchanges of goods a strategic nature, through a Programme that includes a component ‘capacity building and a component ‘operational activities; and
• The fight against the financing of terrorism, which targets illicit trade and money laundering activities, including the systems of money couriers and money laundering under the guise of commercial operations; as part of this Project, the WCO organized, on 11 and 12 December 2019, a security conference in Brussels entitled: "Security challenges from an African perspective". It brought together more than 150 delegates who came to represent more than fifty countries (including many WCA countries) and organizations to debate security challenges affecting Customs work in Africa.

14 WCA Member have benefited from the project activities and equipment related to the Programme. Training of trainers for the program took place in Ouidah in Benin from 7 to 22 June and from 19 to 30 August 2019.

The control of precursor substances and other product components used in the manufacture of improvised explosive devices (IED), as part of the Global Shield Program was the subject of 2 pre-operational seminars in Dakar in January and in March 2020. They were attended by the National Contact Points (NCPs) and the 2 WCA RILOs and dealt with security issues in WCA, training at CENComm3 training and preparation for Operation Alamba 2020.

Alamba 2020 took place from 7 to 22 March 2020 with an UCO based in Dakar until 17 March and then in Brussels until 22 March 2020: it was delivered virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic and enabled participating countries (Benin; Burkina Faso; Cameroon; Chad; Central African Republic; Côte d'Ivoire; Democratic Republic of Congo; Guinea; Liberia; Mali;
Niger; Nigeria; Senegal and Togo) to carry out 119 seizures of which 52% of concerned targeted products (i.e. 39 tons of cyanide; 7.8 tons of explosive components; 5,200 pieces and 24 rolls of detonating cord; 1052 liters of nitric acid, 660 parts of igniters; and 220 liters of hydrogen peroxide).

**SPC ++ project - Security by Collaboration in the WCA Region - since 2016**

At the regional level, Nigerian Customs, in cooperation with the WCO, organized in Abuja, in December 2016, the first meeting of the Technical Committee on the security project (SPC ++), with a view to proposing a new framework to tackle security issues in the WCA from a commercial and Customs point of view. 5 countries from the region participated in the meeting, namely Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, the Central African Republic and Chad. They adopted concrete recommendations to strengthen regional coordination and jointly implement activities.

In March and September 2017, 2 missions were led by the WCO in northern Nigeria to explore the fiscal and trade governance implemented by the insurgents and the current impact of the crisis on trade and Customs. Identical missions were carried out in the Central African Republic, Niger and Burkina Faso. One of the findings of these missions is that the development of the cartographic dimension is essential for Customs to better control their land borders, strengthen their intelligence function and cooperate with the security and defense forces. Tools implementing intelligence and training modules are being tested. As first results, a spatial risk analysis approach was developed and tested, allowing a participating Member to strengthen its links with its national intelligence agency.

**PITCH - protection of the cultural heritage - since 2018**

Since April 2018, a series of activities has been organized on the role of Customs in the protection of cultural heritage (PITCH Programme). These activities provide opportunities for the WCA Customs to tackle the problem of contraband cultural heritage and to harmonize their national practices and policies which also relate to security and terrorism. In this context, a regional workshop was held in Burkina Faso in May 2018 and a train the trainer workshop was organized in Senegal in December 2018. Following these training, a major seizure took place in July 2019 in Burkina Faso on 2 statues from Cameroon accompanied by false documents. A training planned in February 2020 in Niger for several WCA countries and for Morocco had to be postponed and will be organized at a later stage.

**SIGMAT - regional transit Interconnectivity - since 2013**

This project, jointly supported by the WCO, the ECOWAS Commission and a pool of development partners (in particular: World Bank, African Development Bank, UNCTAD, GIZ, EU, JICA, USAID, etc.) is in the implementation phase. Its objective is to simplify, speed up and make transits between countries in the WCA region safer and less costly. It is planned to interconnect the transit systems of ECOWAS countries in 2020 and to extend interconnectivity to Central African Customs.

- The launch of the Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit (SIGMAT) and the start of transit operations managed by SIGMAT between Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire were celebrated on 22 March 2019 in Abidjan, in the presence of WCA Customs, the African Union, ECOWAS, UNCTAD, various other development partners and international organizations and the private sector;
- SIGMAT is currently operational for road transit in the following countries: Burkina Faso, Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Niger and Togo. Others are in the testing phase;
- From 28 to 30 October 2019 and from 13 to 17 January 2020, two meetings were held in Ouagadougou and Abidjan with Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire, in the presence of the WCO Secretariat, the World Bank and SITARAIL. These meetings made it possible to develop the framework and a timetable to extend SIGMAT by autumn 2020 to rail transits, primarily on the Abidjan-Ouagadougou corridor;
- From 13 to 15 November 2019, the ECOWAS Commission organized a meeting with WCA Customs and development partners to assess the implementation of SIGMAT, further consolidate the additional act of the Community which will provide the legal framework for the IT solution and for regional guarantees for transits operated by SIGMAT;
- In February 2020, Senegal and Mali entered the test phase, which made it possible to test the interface between the GAINDE system and ASYCUDA World;
- Also in February 2020, the WCO went to The Gambia to present SIGMAT to executives of the Gambia Revenue Authority and to initiate interconnectivity. In the same period, UNCTAD was on site to support the Customs in their migration to ASYCUDA World;
- In March 2020, the SIGMAT developers of the WCA region and the Customs who have already operationalized its use were to meet in Lomé to develop a mobile version of this application and to let it approve by Customs transit experts;
• Since March 2020, several virtual workshops were organized by the World Bank and with support of the WCO to develop functional and technical specifications for a SIGMAT website. Both, have been adopted in June 2020 and next steps to mobilize resources for the development have been initiated; and

• Work to consolidate and adopt the new ECOWAS regulatory framework for SIGMAT and to connect other countries to this system continues and the concepts and tools to monitor its implementation are in the development phase.

INAMA - combat wildlife crime – (2018 -2020)

The WCO-INAMA project in which several WCA Members participate is a follow-up to 2 previous initiatives funded by the Swedish government (GAPIN I and II projects). It started in 2018. Its objective is to strengthen the capacity of Customs administrations to combat wildlife crime through targeted capacity-building actions and support provided during enforcement operations.

From January to June 2018, the INAMA Project was given over to the definition of Customized programming and detailed organization of activities. Implementation commenced in April with a regional TTT and accreditation session in Zambia in May 2018 followed by another session in Burkina Faso in June 2018 for French speakers. A regional workshop was also held in Tanzania for English speakers (Ghana, Nigeria). Other national sessions were also organized, covering in particular mentoring and CITES risk mapping:

- Burkina Faso (April and June 2018) covering border control support and the development of a CITES database;
- Cameroon (2 missions in June 2018) on the definition of CITES-related occupations; and
- Togo (2 missions in August 2018)

In December 2018, 2 workshops were held in Cameroon in Yaoundé and Douala to support Customs in the finalization of risk mapping and provide a COPES training to aware Customs agents to search and questioning processes. These workshops were part of the INAMA development plan in Cameroon, developed in 2017. This action plan was especially the result of the institutional self-assessment on CITES implementation and the diagnostic mission which took place in 2017 as well.

In 2019, 2 global operations to combat trafficking in CITES products took place, one within the framework of INAMA (Operation PRAESIDIO) and one within the framework of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC).

- 8 countries in the region participated in the Praesidio operation (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo) as well as the RILO WA. It took place from 4 February to 3 March 2019. This operation, carried out jointly with INTERPOL, did not only aim to seize prohibited wildlife and wood products, but above all to make arrests and prosecutions to dismantle criminal networks. Police officers from Interpol central offices in Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana participated in the operation; and
- The Thunderball operation carried out within the framework of ICCWC took place from 4 June to 3 July 2019. 109 Members participated in this joint operation including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, DR Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria and Togo. With the support of INAMA, an accredited expert from Burkina Faso and an expert from the ROCB in Abidjan participated in the Operation Coordination Center in Singapore.

In July-August 2019, support missions were conducted in Cameroon, Togo and Nigeria. The objective of these missions was to take stock of the implementation of project activities, to formulate recommendations for the implementation of CITES, and to continue the process of accreditation of 5 officers as operational technical advisers. The process ended at an accreditation workshop in Zambia from 26 to 30 August 2019 with the success of 4 out of 5 officers. Additional support provided to Nigeria in November and December 2019 enables the Customs and their stakeholders to better manage the risks associated with the illegal wildlife trade.

Under the aegis of the International Consortium to Combat Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), and in collaboration with INTERPOL, it was planned to hold a regional CITES workshop in Cameroon from 25 March to 3 April 2020. Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Guinea and Madagascar were invited to take part in this event, intended for law enforcement officers, but also for police and environmental authorities. The workshop has been postponed due to the Coronavirus. A second workshop should take place in July 2020 in Windhoek, Namibia, with the participation of Nigeria.

Thanks to the activities carried out since 2014, the WCA Customs have significantly strengthened their capacities to fight crime linked to wildlife. Many officers have received CITES technical training, and have more widely benefited from training in RM, intelligence and operational planning. Officers from 9 WCA administrations have also received COPES training. 4 officers succeeded, thus strengthening the expertise of the region. CITES has now been included in anti-fraud training in
certain WCA countries. Customs Police cooperation was also strengthened thanks to regional workshops and joint operations.


The HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD Programme was designed to provide targeted capacity building support to selected developing countries (including Sierra Leone, Ghana and Liberia). It supports the beneficiaries in the implementation of the WTO-TFA, in particular by using the available WCO instruments and tools, as well as the expertise of UNCTAD on the establishment and development of National Trade Facilitation Committees (NCTF).

In 2016, following a needs assessment mission carried out in collaboration with the World Bank, the Programme developed a tailor-made Mercator Implementation Plan for Sierra Leone and participated in the organization of an International Forum to support the NCTFs. The Forum was jointly organized by the WCO, UNCTAD, the World Bank and others in Geneva with more than 250 delegates from 44 countries.

In 2017, implementation of this plan continued, and many activities were carried out. In the field of audit and PCA a needs assessment was conducted (March 2017) followed by training to improve the knowledge of the National Revenue Authority (NRA) in that area (September 2017). In order to provide the NRA with greater support in developing the new Strategic Plan for 2018-2022 and continue the work initiated in 2016, a supplementary workshop was organized (August 2017). As part of overall support for RM, a workshop was organized to help implement and use the nCEN system (February 2017), which was installed in June 2017. Finally, in order to upgrade skills and enable the NRA to take over the activities relating to valuation, classification and controls on origin – Revenue Package, two sets of training were provided (during the February mission and then in October 2017).

In 2018, 2 countries in the WCA region benefited from following support through this project:

- Sierra Leone in January and February for a follow-up/evaluation mission of the Mercator Programme as well as on the TRS and post clearance audit. From 20 to 24 August, a Revenue Package workshop to strengthen the valuation skills of 15 officials from the Sierra Leone Revenue Agency took place. This helped support Customs in its initiative to reclaim Customs valuation, now still entrusted to an inspection company; and
- Liberia, where UNCTAD provided support to establish and operationalize the National Trade Facilitation Committee.

In 2019, additional assistance to Sierra Leone took place from 25 February to 1 March and focused on the improvement of the organization's Human Resource Management (by integrating the competency-based approach) and in the mapping of operational business processes for Customs clearance at the port of Freetown.

**JICA-MTP Master Training Programme – (2016-2021)**

After the notable success of the MTP in East Africa where it enabled to develop a pool of approximately 90 trainers specialized in HS classification, Customs valuation, and intelligence analysis, the WCO and JICA decided to extend the Programme to support the WCA regional policy on the development of “expert pool”.

While the MTP in West Africa started with the 6 countries along the JICA-supported trade corridor in West Africa, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, and Togo, the MTP is expected to bring a significant benefit for the entire WCA region through the training to be delivered by the regionally available quality trainers.

The MTP for WCA focuses on RM and intelligence analysis and is composed of 5 progressive sub-regional activities. The 1st sub-regional workshop (Working Group activity 1) was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from 11 to 15 February 2019 with the 18 Working Group Members nominated by the countries and the invited experts from the WCO and Japan Customs. The 2nd sub-regional workshop (Working Group activity 2) was held in Accra, Ghana from 5 to 9 August 2019 and the 3rd sub-regional workshop (Working Group activity 3) was held in Cotonou, Benin from 3 to 7 February 2020 respectively where the Working Group Members demonstrated their strong ownership to the Program and made excellent progresses to achieve the objective of the MTP. At the 3rd workshop, the Working Group Members started their work on the development of the locally featured training material with the support extended by the experts from the WCO and Japan Customs, and are currently continuing their intercessional efforts to complete the materials at the fourth workshop (Working Group 4) expected to take place in Lomé, Togo in late 2020 (TBD based on COVID-19 situation).

It is worth mentioning that once this training material is finalized it will be the first official training material on RM and Intelligence for the majority of the participating countries available in English and French.

From October 2018 to June 2020, the German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the WCO have implemented a joint Programme to support the Gambia Revenue Authority and its stakeholders in the implementation of trade facilitation measures. The Programme has enabled the Gambia Revenue Authority to conduct a TRS at the seaport of Banjul, to develop Enterprise RM Strategy, a Customs RM Strategy, a Compliance Management Strategy, Risk Registers, RM training material and also to train a pool of RM Trainers.

Norad – ACIP - Promotion of integrity and fight against corruption - (2019-2024)

Following the success of the previous cooperation Programme between the WCO and the Norwegian government (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Norad), a new Programme focused on the promotion of integrity and the fight against corruption (A-CIP) for the attention of Customs authorities was launched in early 2019. This new Programme responds to the high costs of Customs corruption, both for the public and private sectors, and aims to improve Customs governance and integrity in certain WCO Member countries.

These objectives will be achieved by carrying out activities within the framework of 2 components:

- A bilateral component intended to help the WCO countries to implement the 10 building blocks of the revised Arusha Declaration. The first countries identified in the region are: Ghana, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone, followed by Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger.

- A multilateral component in order to create an environment conducive to the implementation of A-CIP measures for WCO Members, while drawing on other regional and international initiatives in parallel, and drawing on the WCO instruments and tools.

Initial assessments and support have already been provided to Mali, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone.

European Union – Harmonized System for Africa – since 2018

On 4 October 2018, the WCO signed a financing agreement with the EU of EUR 5 million for the Programme "Harmonize the classification of goods based on WCO standards to strengthen trade in Africa".

In the WCA region, the Programme has 18 committed countries as well as ECOWAS, UEMOA, CEMAC and ECCAS. These regional economic communities as well as Cameroon and Burkina Faso are Members of the Programme steering committee. To date, the following activities have been carried out in WCA:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Missions</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Agreed Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Niger (December 2018)</td>
<td>HS diagnostic</td>
<td>Work plan established +notification of the migration to HS version 2017</td>
<td>Follow-up mission, including workshop on AR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambia (April 2019)</td>
<td>Accession to the HS Convention</td>
<td>Deposit of instruments of accession to the HS Convention + work plan established</td>
<td>Technical assistance for the migration to HS2017 and implementation of an advance ruling system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOWAS/UEMOA + Liberia and Nigeria (July 2019)</td>
<td>Consultation on the ECOWAS TEC and situation with regard to the application by the Member States</td>
<td>Definition of the RECs and the Member States roles in the migration and application of the CET work plan and list of technical support activities established</td>
<td>2 meetings of the Tariff ad-hoc Committee to finalize CET2022 Establishment of a migration scheme including responsibilities and timelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria (July 2019)</td>
<td>HS Diagnostic (version 2012)</td>
<td>Finalization of the migration to HS2017 by end of 2019</td>
<td>Technical assistance for the implementation of an advance ruling system Study visit to Ghana to exchange experiences for the implementation of a Customs laboratory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missions</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Agreed Actions</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| CEMAC/ECCAS + Member countries (July 2019)  | Consultation on the CEMAC CET and situation with regard to the application by Member States  
Situation of the Member States with regard to AR.  
Relation CEMAC/ECCAS | Definition of the roles of RECs and Member States in the migration and application of the CET /  
Definition of the difficulties and needs of the countries  
Work plan and list of technical support activities established | 2 meetings of the Tariff ad-hoc Committee to finalize CET2022  
Establish a migration scheme including responsibilities and timelines  
Technical assistance for the implementation of an advance ruling system |
| Central African Republic                      | National workshop on the establishment of an AR system                     | Project national regulations are drafted for adoption.  
Notification of acceptance of the WCO Recommendation on Advance Ruling Programs (1996) received by the WCO. | Promotion of AR by the Central African Customs administration. Migration to HS 2017 |
| Sao Tome and Principe.                       | HS Diagnostic, HS migration2017/2022. AR system.                           | Action plan developed,  
Plan for migration to version SH 2022 written | Technical assistance for implementation of an advance ruling system.  
Technical assistance for the migration to the 2017 SH version and then the 2022 version. |
| Nigeria (January 2020)                       | National workshop on the establishment of an AR system                    | Draft national regulations are drafted to be finalized soon | Promotion of AR by the NCS |
| Niger                                         | AR system.  
Coordination of support.                                                   | Joint support Programme supported by WCO and ICT | SH Training and E-learning support |
| Liberia                                       | AR system.  
Analysis of WCO SH related recommendations                              | Ratification of several SH recommendations notified to WCO. |                                                                                     |

Ongoing and upcoming activities include:

- Technical support so that all WCA countries can align their tariffs with the latest version of the HS (by the end of 2020) and migrate to the next versions in time;
- Technical assistance missions for the WCA countries to establish advance ruling system;
- Training workshops for trainers;
• A training manual on the HS and a new e-learning platform; and
• Support to regional RECs for the preparation and provision of their HS2022 / compliant TECs on time.

Following key successes can be reported for WCA:

• Ratification of the HS Convention by The Gambia;
• Ratification of several HS related Recommendations by Liberia and Niger;
• Implementation of AR for classification in Cameroun and Central African Republic; and
• Successful Migration to HS2017 by Nigeria and the Gambia.

COPES Programme (2015-2020):
The Compendium of Customs Operational Practices for Enforcement and Seizures (COPES) was developed to support the Customs in the improvement of their evidence collection standards, and to better integrate their action in the criminal justice system and in border security issues.

A COPES training course, organized in partnership with the Benin Customs Administration took place from 24 to 28 September 2018 in Cotonou, Benin. It was attended by 24 Customs officials and provided an opportunity to train a number of managers and officials on the latest techniques for gathering evidence, making seizures and carrying out investigations. The training course also enabled the WCO to accredit the first COPES trainer from the WCA region.

A COPES / INAMA workshop was held in Madagascar from 26 to 30 November 2018 with a number of the WCA participants, followed by a restitution from 18 to 20 December in Cameroon.

The activities carried out since 2019 for the WCA region comprise:

• Brussels: 25 to 29 March 2019, training of trainers in cooperation with the drug Programme;
• Côte d'Ivoire: 15 to 17 April 2019, regional awareness seminar;
• Benin: 17 to 21 June 2019, training of trainers in cooperation with the security program;
• Benin: 26 to 31 August 2019, training of trainers in cooperation with the security program;
• Brussels: 16 to 20 September 2019, training of trainers with the participation of a Benin Customs officer; and
• Niger: 2 to 6 June 2019, national training workshop in cooperation with the AIRCOP project.

EU – COLIBRI - since 2019

The EU-funded COLIBRI project aims to improve surveillance and control of general aviation along the cocaine route. More specifically, it has 3 objectives:

• Strengthen the capacities of national administrations; training of trainers and tutoring;
• Creation of a global general aviation database and a geo-portal integrating technical and dynamic information; and
• Organization of coordinated international operations targeting private business and leisure aviation.

This project also targets several WCA countries and the first exploratory missions have already taken place in Cabo Verde, The Gambia, Mali and Niger.

C-RED Project (2016-2018)

In May 2016, the WCO and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed a grant agreement to implement the C-RED Project (Customs for Relief of Epidemic Diseases), which supported Customs administrations in West Africa affected by the Ebola virus epidemic (in particular Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone). This Project was based on the WCO 2011 Resolution on the role of Customs in natural disaster relief.

The project ended on 5 October 2018 and was divided into 2 components:

• Providing the front-line officers of 3 beneficiary administrations with self-protection equipment (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone); and
• Providing capacity building to react effectively to regional epidemics and natural disasters: Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

As regards the 1st component, the self-protection equipment was provided by the WCO’s partner, the UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD). This equipment was delivered to, and stored at, the UNHRD hub in Accra. The 3 beneficiary countries have been in possession of their equipment since early 2018.
As regards the second component, on the basis of the underlying data and an initial regional consultation, the WCO offered national support leading to:

- Development of capacity building material to support and guide Customs administrations so that they respond effectively to disasters;
- Support for Member administrations selected in drawing up/examining standard operating procedures (SOPs) in emergencies and their respective capacity to implement them;
- Support for implementing SOPs, including in-situ support and remote support;
- Simulation exercises for the Member administrations selected to test the SOPs; and
- Organization of regional workshops to share experience and develop areas of improvement.

In Nigeria, 2 missions were carried out which made it possible to identify faults in the Customs clearance of relief supplies and draw up SOPs and recommendations on Customs clearance procedures for relief supplies.

In Guinea, 2 similar missions took place in July and October 2017. They were given over to drafting national SOPs, which now provide guidance for the humanitarian community and the various government agencies involved.

In Mali, an exploratory mission took place in September 2017. The Mali Customs authorities are leading the work of all the stakeholders as regards the draft SOPs for the Customs clearance of relief supplies.

In Sierra Leone, a similar initial mission took place in late October 2017. Draft SOPs have been drawn up, as well as recommendations to improve national procedures in place for the Customs clearance of relief supplies.

The WCO is monitoring the completion of the SOPs, their adoption and the implementation of the recommendations drawn up.

In Liberia, an exploratory mission on the SOPs took place in May 2018, then in Senegal.

In July and August 2018, missions to train trainers and for the development/review of SOPs took place in Mali, Nigeria and Liberia; a feedback mission was then held in September in Guinea preceded by 2 days of training.

**UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme (since 2016)**

In 2016, the "UNODC-WCO Global Container Control Programme", developed and implemented in partnership between the WCO and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), organized the following activities in WCA: training or follow-up workshops in Senegal (6 workshops), Liberia (1 workshop), Benin (1 workshop) and Togo (3 workshops).

In 2017, training and follow-up workshops were organized for the following countries: Senegal (2 workshops), Mali (3 workshops), Benin (1 workshop), Ghana (1 workshop), and Togo (1 workshop).

In the first quarter of 2018, a workshop was held in Benin in February, followed by a feedback mission in September.

**National developments**

**BENIN**

**Background**

Benin expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS and the WCO diagnostic mission was conducted in June 2007. In January 2008, the WCO began its support on strategic management of Customs reform.

On 10 March 2009, a committee was set up and tasked with the development of a 2009-2011 Action Plan and several missions funded by the US-Millennium Challenge Account and the Customs Co-operation Fund (CCF) of Japan were conducted by the WCO in 2010 and 2011.

The Benin Government outsourced a number of key Customs functions (such as Valuation, Classification, SW and PSI) to inspection companies. This outsourcing of basic competencies made Customs more dependent on external assistance. Accordingly, the government has been advised by its development partners to devise a strategy enabling Customs to take ownership of outsourced functions. In May 2012 the government suspended the contracts but two new contracts were signed in 2014 relating to Customs valuation and scanning.

In January 2017, Benin signed the RKC.
Current plans

As part of the modernization of the Benin Customs Administration, a Strategic Plan for the period 2013-2016 has been devised and implemented, in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund, aimed at strengthening the key functions of Benin Customs. More specifically, the Customs administration’s reform strategy for 2013-2016 covers 3 objectives: (1) strengthen Customs capacity to perform its essential functions; (2) boost the efficiency of Customs by supplying modern and effective tools; and (3) increase the mobilization of Customs revenue.

The current Strategic Plan for the period 2018-2020 covers the following areas:

1. Leadership development;
2. Strategic Management;
3. HR Management;
4. Partnerships/stakeholder relations;
5. Implementation of an inspection Programme for imports;
6. Institutional and ITC reform;
7. Built the Customs capacities to enable it to take ownership of essential functions; and

During the initial phase of its process, the Administration initiated a 2009-2011 Action Plan and enjoyed a number of support missions from various organizations and donors. This process continued with the establishment of a team focused on reform, comprising 10 Customs officials. The team became operational in December 2013.

With the support of AFRITAC West, a new Roadmap to monitor the 2013-2016 reform was developed and implemented for more effective follow-up of the actions.

The Belgium Development Agency (ENABEL) supports the port development through its PASSport project. Work is currently undertaken to evaluate the possibility to develop a joint ENABEL-WCO Programme to support Benin Customs.

WCO support

In the margins of the annual Conference of WCA Directors General that took place in March 2012 in Cotonou, the WCO Secretary General met with the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance to promote Customs reform and strategic planning.

In September 2013, when attending the 5th Session of the African Union (AU) Sub-Committee of Directors General of Customs, held in Cotonou during that period, the WCO Secretary General met the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Vice-Chair of the National Assembly to promote, inter alia, the RKC. Thanks to these initiatives and to Customs’ awareness-raising efforts targeted at the country’s highest authorities, Benin acceded to the RKC on 5 January 2017.

A WCO mission was carried out from 10 to 14 February 2014 in Cotonou (Benin) and resulted in the drafting, with Customs, of ToR for the acquisition, installation and operation of new scanners.

Other missions were conducted by the WCO Secretariat in 2016, relating in particular to HRM (June and November 2016). However, competency based HRM has still not been implemented.

In March 2017, Benin’s Container Port Unit benefitted from training provided by the UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme. This improved this Unit’s capacity to target risky Container.

In September 2018, the COPES project trained 24 selected enforcement senior managers, managers, frontline officers, investigators, prosecutors to enhance their awareness about the importance of knowing about evidence collection, seizures in order to be able to lead effective investigations and prosecutions.

In December 2018 the West Africa Security Project assisted the Customs in the development of project related security work plan.

Assistance provided jointly by the WCO and the Belgium Customs supported Benin in the further development and implementation of their AEO Programme. Latest support was provided in June 2018.

The WCO support provided in November 2019 enabled Benin Customs to benefit from an NCEN training. This has led to a more frequent and better use of this tool and has improved exchange of intelligence within the WCA Region.

In January 2020, the WCO supported Benin in the preparation and conduct of a TRSat Cotonou seaport. This support is to be continued.
COPES training for Benin Customs in May 2020 enabled the Customs to successfully contribute to operation ‘STOP’ (IPR) and to improve its procedures for seizures and sampling.

**BURKINA FASO**

**Background**

Burkina Faso expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS and the WCO diagnostic mission was conducted in June 2007. Missions to support the Administration with the development of its multiannual Strategic Plan were conducted by the WCO in 2014 and 2016. The country hosts the longest standing RTC in the WCA region.

**Current plans**

Burkina Faso’s Strategic Plan for the period 2017-2021 has been adopted and covers the following areas:

1. Administration management;
2. Mobilization of Customs revenue and trade facilitation; and
3. Communication and development of partnership.

**Process of Reform and Modernization**

The most important recent developments are as follows:

- Establishing the Reform and Modernization Unit through a circular of February 2015 aimed primarily at offering a Strategic Plan accompanied by annual plans and ensuring the monitoring and evaluation of the various modernization projects;
- Migration to ASYCUDA World: all the automated offices have migrated;
- Commissioning of scanners. Two new scanners have been commissioned to check luggage on arrival at the airport;
- Implementation of satellite tracking of goods in transit. The first phase was launched on 16 February 2015 and covers the Dakola – Transit Monitoring Unit and Intervention Unit corridor;
- Signature of the RKC in July 2017;
- Devising and adoption of the 2017–2021 Strategic Plan;
- Termination of the contract with the Private Sector Inspection Company and taking over of outsourced functions in 2018;
- Carry out of a TRS in 2018;
- Adoption and implementation of a Standard Project Management Methodology for all of the administration’s projects in 2019;
- Implementation of AR in 2019;
- Establishment of transit Interconnectivity for road transportation through SIGMAT, in particular with Côte d’Ivoire in 2019; and
- Commence transit interconnectivity for rail transportation with Côte d’Ivoire in 2020.

**WCO support**

Since 2016, Burkina Faso has benefitted from a multi-year and multi-component support provided by the WCO Mercator Programme. In April 2016, the support focused on the implementation of the RKC and the TFA and in October 2016, a WCO LMD Executive retreat for the management team was organized for this Administration. A WCO Revenue Package Diagnostic mission conducted in November 2016 provided the Customs with recommendations for the improvement of valuation and classification, and a work plan for the termination of the contract with an inspection company.

In 2017 and 2018, assistance provided by WACAM and INAMA continued according to plan. Through that, Customs improved their capacities to manage projects, lead their organization strategically, apply RM to cargo manifests and Customs declaration lodged prior to arrival of the goods, develop an enforcement plan, carry out periodic TRS, implement advance ruling and use CENcomm more efficiently.
In 2018 the support provided by the WCO enabled the Customs and its stakeholders to improve their awareness and cooperation in the field of protection of cultural heritage and to develop a security action plan to be implemented in the framework of the West Africa Security Project.

In autumn 2018 the Government of Burkina Faso decided not to renew the existing contract with their inspection company. Since then, Customs assume full responsibility for classifying and evaluating of commercial goods.

Support provided in 2019 enabled the Customs to professionalize their enforcement teams at the airport of Ouagadougo and to improve their capacity to target passengers and air cargo, in particular with regard to narcotics.

Support provided in 2020 enabled the Customs to improve their understanding and use of NCEN and to kick-off their participation in the WCO-Norad A-CIP Programme. The latter will support Burkina Faso in the development of their integrity Programme.

**CAMEROON**

**Background**

Cameroon expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS and the WCO diagnostic mission was conducted from 27 March to 9 April 2006.

**Current plans**

The last multi-year Customs’ Strategic Plan covered the period 2012-2016 and following areas:

1. Implementing strategic management tools;
2. Instituting effective HRM practices;
3. Equipping the Customs Administration with a modern regulatory framework and procedures;
4. Developing Programmes contributing to efficient and effective revenue mobilization and voluntary compliance;
5. Optimizing operational performance through the acquisition of appropriate infrastructure and logistical resources; and
6. Developing cooperation, partnership and communication.

At present, the ROCB assists the Customs in the development of a new Reform and Modernization plan for 2020-2025. This plan will also include indicators for performance measurement.

**Process of Reform and Modernization**

In 2014, Cameroon acceded to the RKC.

In 2015, Cameroon Customs pursued its objective of modernization and reform. Among the significant progress recorded, strategic management has been strengthened through an LMD Programme organized in Yaoundé from 20 to 31 July 2015.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the country’s Navy for monitoring of seas and rivers was signed. Another MOU was signed with the town of Kyé-ossi for the establishment of a Customs Training Centre.

At regional level, tripartite consultation between the Customs Administrations of Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Chad took and resulted in the establishment of a formal framework for dialogue between the 3 administrations. More specifically the framework deals with transit between the 3 countries and the extension of the NEXUS+ system to the Customs Administrations of Chad and the Central African Republic.

Remaining on the international stage, a cooperation agreement was signed with Korean Customs for technical IT support, while another with Azerbaijan Customs on dog and handler units has been negotiated.

A SW in Douala for the external commerce has been implemented.

**WCO support**

The WCO organized 2 missions in February and June 2008 to help the Administration develop an Action Plan for the period 2008-2011. This Plan was completed in June 2008 and, up until 2011, served as the main tool for managing reform projects.

In December 2011, the WCO conducted a strategic planning mission to assist the Administration develop a Strategic Plan for the period 2012–2015. This plan has been extended to cover 2016. A WCO evaluation mission (Columbus phase 3) carried out in May 2017 provided the Customs with useful inputs for the next strategic plan.
Assistance provided by the WACAM project enabled the Customs to familiarize with the concept on competency based Human resource management but at present this concept in not actually used by this administration.

In 2017, WACAM and INAMA also enabled enforcement officers from Cameroun Customs to benefit from a Customs enforcement scoping mission and from a training that enables them to better apply the concept of controlled deliveries.

In 2017, the Customs benefitted from assistance that has enabled them to further improve their periodically carried out TRS and to align their current PCA practices to those promoted by the WCO.

In 2018 the WCO provided further support on TRS, assisted enforcement officers in the development of a work plan for the West Africa Security Project and in their capacity to enforce the CITES-Convention.

In 2019 the WCO assisted the Customs and relevant stakeholders in the evaluation of their AEO Programme. CENcom training provided to Customs officers at the airport of Douala and Yaoundé enabled to better use this tool and improve the exchange of intelligence.

In 2019 and 2020, the support focused on IPR, the use of CENcom and intelligence for enforcement operations, in particular related to narcotics, arms, IED, IPR, and more specifically fake medicines. The increased professionalism and motivation of Customs, the better coordination with other relevant Government Agencies and the support provided to the Customs and to the RILO have been decisive drivers for the many spectacular seizures that have been recorded since.

**CAPE VERDE**

**Background**

Cape Verde expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS and a WCO diagnostic mission was conducted in 2009 (Columbus Programme Phase I).

In 2012, the WCO conducted a multiannual strategic planning mission to devise the 2012-2014 Strategic Plan in conjunction with Customs.

**Current plans**

The Strategic Plan for Cape Verde for the period 2016-2019 covered the following areas:

1. Improving the image of the organization;
2. Secure the collection of the State’s revenue;
3. Contribute to the security and speed in the international flow of goods and people;
4. Encourage voluntary tax and Customs compliance;
5. Improve the Tax Debt Management;
6. Raise the perception of risk to taxpayers and economic operators;
7. Strengthen cooperation and the exchange of information with other institutions;
8. Simplify procedures to taxpayers and economic operators;
9. Know the profile of taxpayers and economic operators;
10. Simplify work processes;
11. Implement result-based management;
12. Strengthen transparency, internally and externally;
13. Develop skills, integrate and value people;
14. Adjust infrastructure and IT governance to the institutional needs; and
15. Mobilize resources for strategy execution.

The development of the new Strategic Plan for the coming years has been supported by the IMF.

**Process of Reform and Modernization**

At institutional and organizational level, the Customs Directorate, with the new 2013 organizational structure of the Ministry of Finance and Planning, has been included once again in the National Directorate of State Revenue (DNRE), on the same basis as the Directorate General of Contributions and Taxation.

In this connection, the Directorate of Customs has retained two central services with an operational focus: the Customs Regimes and Procedures Department and the Enforcement Department. Following services were centralized: The Directorate of Studies and International Relations, the Inspection, Organization and Accounting Directorate and the IT and Customs Statistics Directorates are now central services.
The establishment of the DNRE has resulted in the implementation of services shared between the two Directorates: Internal Audit Service, Tributary and Customs Justice Service, Planning and Coordination Service for Tributary and Customs Inspections, Logistics and Personnel Management Service, Information Technology (IT) Service, Planning and Cooperation Service, in which the guidance and skills are intended to be shared.

**WCO support**

WCO support provided since 2016, has enabled the Administration to identify the major areas of reform and to develop a multiannual Strategic Plan. The Customs were able to:

- Significantly improve their capacity to plan strategically and relations with relevant stakeholders and its image;
- Successfully conduct a TRS and publish its results;
- Establish management reporting system (MRS) for the organization; and
- Identify Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), group these thematically, and identify their data source, in view of designing a Strategic Dashboard for the administration.

In 2020, a diagnostic mission carried out by the COLIBRI project enabled the Customs and the WCO to develop a strategy and a project plan for better control and targeting of private and light aircrafts, in particular with regard to narcotics.

**CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**

**Background**

The Central African Republic expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS and the WCO diagnostic mission was conducted in April 2008.

**Strategic plans**

The Columbus Programme Phase 2 mission enabled the Administration to draw up a Strategic Reform Plan for the 2014-2016. That Plan was adopted and approved by the Ministry of Finance and Budget during a workshop held in Bangui from 3 to 6 December 2013.

The Custom’s current Strategic Plan for 2017-2019 was developed with the support of the WCO, the IMF and the EU and contains following axis:

1. Improvement of Strategic Management;
2. Optimization of Information and Communication Technologies;
3. Optimization of Human Resources Management and general resources;
4. Modernization of procedures and trade facilitation;
5. Strengthening the fight against fraud and cross-border crime; and
6. Strengthening ethics and good governance.

**Process of Reform and Modernization**

The Customs Administration has been going through a challenging period of change since 2006. After initially being disbanded in September 2006, a new Customs organization was created in February 2007.

In 2008, the WCO conducted a diagnostic mission to this Administration.

In November 2011, the Administration received a WCO strategic planning mission and the new senior management undertook to consolidate the draft 2013-2016 Strategic Plan produced during that mission. A team was designated to chart and implement reform projects.

At the request of the Central African Republic Authorities, a mission by the IMF’s Fiscal Affairs Department was carried out in Bangui from 14 to 27 June 2012. This mission consisted of providing an overview of recommendations in the following areas: I. Assessment of the Customs Administration’s reforms; II. Guidance for pursuing Customs reform; III. Project concerning the establishment of a Customs office at Béloko. The mission took this opportunity to examine the Customs situation in depth and noted that progress, although limited, had been made in various sectors since the WCO diagnostic. The actions taken were nevertheless individual and isolated.
In September 2012, Central African Republic Customs also received technical assistance sponsored by the EU. This technical assistance pushed forward the finalization, adoption and approval of the Strategic Plan for 2014-2016 by the Ministry of Finance and Budget in December 2013.

A technical assistance visit organized from 24 October to 7 November 2012 by the IMF Fiscal Affairs Department gave rise to a mission by the Department in June 2012. This was the 1st of 3 assistance visits to take place up to April 2013. The overall aim is to help the Customs Administration develop tools and modern practices in the areas of Customs valuation, intelligence, RM, PCA and internal audits.

Unfortunately, another 'coup d’état' took place in March 2013 and essential parts of the Customs Administration, especially its headquarters, were destroyed and looted.

**WCO support**

In May 2012, the WCO conducted a mission to Bangui to support the institution in setting up a unit in charge of managing the HS.

At the invitation of the Director General of Customs, the WCO Secretary General visited Bangui on 8 and 9 November 2012 to gain broader political support for Customs modernization in the country. Representatives of the ROCB and the RTCs of Burkina Faso and the Congo were also present and had the opportunity to meet with the management and visit the infrastructure of CEMAC’s Inter-State Customs School to weigh up options for closer and more formal cooperation with the WCO. Discussions with the IMF mission were also held on this occasion in order to coordinate the ongoing work on the Customs Strategic Plan.

Due to the 'coup d’état' that took place in March 2013, no assistance has been provided until 2017. Various attempts to consolidate the Administration’s Strategic Reform Plan have failed and the current situation makes it almost impossible to plan and implement reform successfully.

However, in 2016, the WCO agreed to assist this Administration through the Mercator Programme. The 1st mission provided senior managers with leadership and management skills.

Support provided in 2017, enabled the Customs to review their strategic reform plan and to develop a Mercator support plan.

In 2018, the West and Central Africa Security Programme conducted a project related diagnostic mission. This enabled to Customs to be fully involved in this project and to participate in numerous regional activities that ran from 2018 to 2019.

In 2019, assistance provided by the HS-Africa project enabled the Customs to implement AR. Other support assisted them in the updating of their Mercator plan and to further improve the managers capacities to plan and monitor reform strategically.

**CHAD**

**Background**

In 2006, the Director General of Customs informed the WCO of Chad’s willingness to implement the WCO SAFE Framework of Customs and in 2010 he accepted the WCO's proposal to receive a diagnostic mission to initiate the Columbus Programme.

**Current plans**

Chad’s Customs Administration developed a 2009-2011 Action Plan that was renewed in late 2011 and in 2012. A 2013-2015 Strategic Plan was completed with the support of the AFRITAC-CENTRE mission and a multiannual Action Plan developed within the framework of the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Finance and Budget.

After several years as an inactive Member of the WCO, Chad became active again in June 2019.

**Process of Reform and Modernization**

In January-February 2011, the WCO conducted a diagnostic mission which established a report for the Government of Chad. This report was approved by senior officials from the Chad Customs Administration during a workshop held in November 2011.

In May 2012, at the invitation of the Government, the Columbus Phase 2 mission visited the Customs Administration to develop a 2013-2015 multiannual Strategic Plan. However, the plan has never been consolidated and implemented.
In 2012 Chad Customs received 2 AFRITAC missions. The 1st mission was to assess the assistance needs of Customs under its modernization Programme and to define with the Customs management the amendments needed for successful reform.

The 2nd AFRITAC mission visited Chad in May 2013. The objective of this mission was to support Customs in the implementation of its strategy for controlling Customs operations based on RM. To this end, the mission organized a training workshop on RM.

In 2013, the Ministry of Finance and Budget adopted a multiannual Strategic Plan 2013-2016 with 9 goals for the development and modernization of Public Finance management.

The Government of Chad received 4 mobile scanners from the Government of the People's Republic of China but they remain unused.

**WCO support**

In 2011, the WCO supported the Customs Administration in conducting a comprehensive diagnostic of its management and operation which led, still with WCO support, to a draft Strategic Plan.

In 2015, the WCO conducted a study visit to Chad to analyze aspects related to CBM.

Chad having regained active Member status, the Customs accepted in June 2019 to receive a WCO support mission to revitalize the collaboration and to take stock of reform. The support enabled the Customs to identify reform needs and priorities and to evaluate potentials for the WCO to support modernization. However, very frequent changes of the Customs Top Management have made it impossible for the Customs to actually implement recommended reform initiatives and for the WCO to support effectively.

**CONGO (REPUBLIC OF)**

**Background**

The Republic of the Congo expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS and the WCO diagnostic mission was conducted in January 2007. Congo houses an RTC.

**Current plans**

Congo Customs have Annual Operational Action Plans but are also about to develop a multi-year strategic plan. However, this new plan has still to be adopted.

**Process of Reform and Modernization**

At its request, the WCO conducted a strategic planning mission in June 2012 to finalize the annual operational Action Plan. The creation of an organizational structure for the planning and implementation of reform projects was one of the most important results of this initiative.

In 2013, the Government of Congo, with the support and participation of Customs, other government authorities, stakeholders from the private sector and with development partners organized a seminar on the future of Congo Customs. This has enabled the Customs to redefine their vision and role and to initiate new reform cycles.

In 2015, Congo’s largest Customs office, Pointe Noire, was connected to ASYCUDA and the Government initiated the development of a SW.

In December 2017, Congo signed the RKC.

In 2018 and 2019, the Customs further developed their e-Customs platform and launched their new transit tracking system called ‘Ekengué’.

**WCO support**

The WCO’s support in 2012 enabled the Republic of the Congo Customs to develop an integrated Strategic Plan for 2012-2014, to enlist a donor and to develop an IT strategy.

The Administration wants to make computerization a spearhead of its modernization process, but at present their ITC is still managed by the Ministry. The WCO’s recommendation to create a dedicated organizational structure for ITC (possibly a Directorate) at the level of the Customs has not been adopted yet.
In 2013 and 2014, the WCO provided the Republic of the Congo with support to develop Leadership and Management, sensitize Customs and stakeholders on TRS and on the establishment of an organizational structure responsible for the HS/classification. The HS unit is now fully operational.

Support provided in 2017 contributed to the ratification of the RKC by Congo in December 2017.

Also in 2017, support enabled Customs to install nCEN and enforcement officers to use this tool professionally. RM experts could acquire additional skills to improve their targeting and selectivity tools and procedures.

**CONGO (DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF)**

**Background**

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS and the diagnostic mission was conducted in May 2007.

**Current plans**

The DRC Customs Administration developed a 3-year Strategic Plan for 2013-2015. The Plan was based on the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Finance for the comprehensive reform of the Public Finance sector, as well as on recommendations made by the WCO and donors.

In October 2018, the Customs published their Vision 2023 and their Strategic Plan for the period 2019-2023. It has following objectives:

- Leadership;
- Strategic management;
- HR Management;
- Partnerships/stakeholder relations;
- Procedures and mobilization of revenue; and
- Fight against fraud.

**Process of Reform and Modernization**

The process of Reform and Modernization of the DRC Customs Administration began in 2003 with the adoption of the initial Programme developed with the support of donors.

Complying with the important recommendations made by the WCO at the end of Phase 1 of the WCO diagnostic, the Government, by Decree of the Prime Minister, dated 25 January 2011, restructured the organizational framework of the Administration and created a Directorate for Reform and Modernization.

Thereafter, Customs developed a Reform and Modernization Programme providing a strategic framework for the period 2012-2014, supported by the WCO and the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) granted by the IMF.

In 2017, the Government organized a National Forum to explore options for Congolese Tax Reform and to exchange on the need to create a National Revenue Authority.

**WCO support**

In 2011, the WCO facilitated a workshop that brought together Customs and stakeholders and trained them on the ‘Kimberley Process’. This enabled the participants to identify options and concrete measures to improve cooperation with the objective to better fight against trade of illegally traded diamonds.

In August 2012, at the request of Customs, the WCO led a Columbus Phase 2 mission to review the existing reform Programme. This enabled the Customs to consolidate their 3-year Strategic Plan.

Support provided by the GAPIN project trained the participants on the CITES Convention.

Support provided in from 2013 - 2016 focused on rules or origin, classification/ HS-matters and on Customs valuation. This helped to convince the Government not to renew its contract with the private inspection company and enabled the Customs to take ownership of these tasks.
In 2017, the WCO participated in the National forum for Congolese Tax Reform. The support focused on the presentation of the WCO Guidelines for Customs – Tax Cooperation. As a result of this Forum, the Congolese Government decided to postpone the creation of a National Revenue Authority.

Further support provided in 2017 and organized by the RILO enabled NCEN training to enforcement officers.

The Customs’ strategic plan 2019-2023 has been developed without WCO assistance.

CÔTE D’IVOIRE

Background

Côte d’Ivoire expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS and the WCO diagnostic mission was conducted in October 2007.

Current plans

The multi-year strategic reform plan of Côte d’Ivoire Customs’ for 2015-2017. It covered the following lines of action:

- Upgrading the Customs clearance procedure in connection with the SW;
- Valuation, tariff classification and cooperation with Webb Fontaine for the transfer of capacities to Customs;
- Risk analysis and selectivity of controls;
- Command of suspensive procedures and exemptions;
- Ongoing bolstering of enforcement; and
- Strengthening of the organization’s management and resources.

Their multi-year strategic reform plan for 2018-2020 covers the following lines of action:

- Pursue the modernization of Customs procedures;
- Pursue RM and the intelligence function;
- Enhance the controls of revenue relevant sectors;
- Enhance Customs surveillance and fight against contraband; and
- Ensure the management of resources, the supervision of services and communication.

Process of Reform and Modernization

In its instructions of September 2010, the Ministry of Economy and Finance adopted the Customs’ proposal to create an organizational structure at the Customs Headquarter for planning and implementing Customs reform projects in Côte d’Ivoire.

With the joint assistance of the ROCB and the WCO Secretariat, the Customs Administration was able to secure financing of one million euro from the EU (PACIR Project) in June 2012, in support of its reform project. The many activities to be implemented in 2013 and 2014 covered, inter alia, the following topics:

- Measuring the time required for the release of goods;
- Facilitation training for Members of the observatory monitoring the swiftness of Customs clearance operations (OCOD), with broader participation by other stakeholders;
- Pre- and PCA (including the valuation, classification and origin aspects);
- Selectivity of Customs controls;
- Implementation of the AEO concept;
- SW; and
- IT interfaces between SYDAM (Côte d’Ivoire Customs IT system) and the Malian and Burkinabe IT systems.

In February 2013, the government adopted a decree approving the concession agreement for the design, financing, installation, operation and maintenance of a computerized SW for Foreign Trade (GUCE). The objective of the GUCE is to enable Côte d’Ivoire to facilitate the procedures for imports of goods, to comply with international standards and to improve the ‘Doing Business’ ranking by the World Bank. It is a platform that integrates and centralizes all contracting parties to foreign trade, relying on powerful tools for monitoring flows of goods and risk assessment.
At the same time, the government adopted a Decree approving the concession for the design, financing, installation, operation and maintenance of a system of analysis and determination of the value of imports to Côte d'Ivoire. This agreement was supposed to create a decision-making center, consisting of destination risk analysis, assessment of the value and tariff classification of imported goods.

In June 2013 Côte d'Ivoire ratified the RKC.

In 2017, the government decided to provide the Customs with more than 2000 additional army soldiers. One of the current top priorities of the Customs' Management is to successfully integrate these soldiers in the Customs, motivate them and equip them with the necessary skills, competencies and integrity.

In April 2019, the Government decided not to renew the contract with the private sector inspection company that provided valuation and classification support. At present, both functions are entirely performed by the Customs.

In March 2019, the Customs successfully interconnected their transit system with the one of Burkina Faso's Customs.

In spring 2020, the Customs adopted guides of procedures for its managers and staff.

**WCO support**

In the period 2013-2017, Côte d'Ivoire Customs managed its Customs reform with the support of the ROCB-WCA. The assistance missions carried out by the WCO, in particular under the PACIR Programme, enabled the Customs to develop transit-interconnectivity, carry out time release studies, and improve its organization and procedures for PCA/ audit of enterprises and finally its contribution to the control of cross border trade of diamonds (Kimberly Process).

In 2017, the WCO support enabled the Customs to train the new CAAT team at the airport of Abidjan on the use of the CENcomm and improve their ability to exchange intelligence.

In 2018, IT and Customs officers were assisted to install the WCO e-learning platform locally and trained to technically maintain and use the platform over time. It is the intention of the Customs to use the platform primarily at their Training Centre in Abidjan.

The WCO support provided under the Revenue Package, since 2013, but more specifically in 2018 and 2019, contributed to convincing the Government of the will, need and capacity of the Customs to take ownership of valuation and tariff classification. In April 2019 the Government took the decision not to renew the related contract with the inspection company and Customs took over these responsibilities.

The support provided since 2013, in particular under the PACIR and the SIGMAT project, contributed to the development and implementation of ECOWAS transit interconnectivity for road transport. The solution is operational for road transit since 2019 and will become operational for rail transit with Burkina Faso later in 2020.

The support provided since 2019 enabled the Customs to participate successfully in the West and Central Africa Security Project, in operation Shield Africa 2019 and further improve its RM, intelligence and use of NCEN.

Support provided since 2020 focused on the involvement of the Customs in the A-CIP Integrity project.

**GABON**

**Background**

Gabon expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS and the WCO diagnostic mission was conducted in November 2006.

**Current plans**

The last available Strategic Plan covers the period 2013-2017 and focuses on 4 projects:

- Redesign of Customs procedures;
- Capacity building in the area of IT;
- Strengthening surveillances structures; and
- Strengthening organizational capacities.
Process of Reform and Modernization

Gabon Customs’ Reform and Modernization process has been monitored by both the WCO and the IMF. An IMF evaluation mission conducted in late 2013 delivered project management training sessions to those involved in the reform. The support enabled the managers and staff in charge of Customs reform to more strategically and efficiently plan, monitor and evaluate modernization initiatives.

The Government has decided to partner with a private sector company to develop a SW. According to current plans the SW should become operational soon.

2 new scanners were purchased and are now operational in the ports of Owendo and Port-Gentil.

In January 2019, Gabon successfully implemented HS2017.

Since January 2020, ASYCUDA World is operational at the Port of Owendo. Further deployment to other Customs offices has been initiated.

Plans of the Government to merge Gabon’s Tax and Customs Administrations and to create a Revenue Agency had been developed. However, at present, both Administrations keep on working independently.

WCO support

The WCO support in 2011 enabled the Administration to assess the reform progress since 2009 and to develop a Strategic Plan and a methodology for the implementation of an Action Plan consistent with the objectives of the Ministerial Working Plan.

In 2014 the Administration benefitted from an LMD workshop.

The support provided to the Gabon Customs through the WACAM Project, since 2014, enabled this administration to develop competency-based HR management and test its application at Libreville Airport. At present, Gabon Customs have the HRM experts and tools to implement these standards. However, by now, competency-based HR management is still not applied.

In 2016 the WCO supported the Customs to evaluate its reform progress and provided inputs for the next phases of the administrations reform.

GAMBIA

Background

Gambia received a diagnostic mission in 2007 and a strategic planning mission in 2009.

Current plans

The 2015-2019 Strategic Plan of the Gambia Revenue Agency (GRA) contains 5 strategic objectives:

- Objective 1: Provide effective and tailored business governance;
- Objective 2: Optimize compliance with legal measures relating to revenue;
- Objective 3: Increase the availability of competent HR and modern infrastructures;
- Objective 4: Implement modern and simplified business procedures and processes and ICT systems; and
- Objective 5: Create and nurture effective international, regional and national partnerships

WCO support

Under the WACAM Project, the GRA benefitted from several WCO assistance missions between 2013 and 2017, especially in the areas of strategic management, project management, and development of stakeholder relations and implementation of modern HR management. Based on this assistance the GRA was able to very successfully implement competency based Human Resource Management and standards for project management.

In 2017 and 2018, the organization benefitted from further LMD support. This has fostered the organizations leadership and contributed to more strategic and efficient reform.

Since 2018, the GRA has been supported by the WCO-GIZ Programme. This has enabled the GRA to conduct a TRS at Banjul seaport; to develop an Enterprise and a Customs RM Strategy (including risk registers) and a Compliance Management Strategy; furthermore, it has enabled the GRA to improve its offense database and support their RM trainers in the development of training material and delivery of training for their officers.
Support provided in 2019 by the WCO-EU project on the Harmonized System for Africa enabled The Gambia to ratify the WCO’s HS-Convention in the margin of the WCO Council session 2019.

**GHANA**

**Background**

Ghana expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS in 2005 and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) began the implementation process in 2006 by conducting a diagnostic study followed by training and capacity building assistance.

Although the Administration did not request a WCO diagnostic, support with the Phase I Mission was provided in March 2008 to assist with implementation of the AEO Programme. In July 2015, the WCO carried out a mission to reinvigorate the Columbus Programme in Ghana.

**Current plans**

The last available Strategic Plan of The Ghana Revenue Authority’s (GRA) covers the period 2015-2017 and the following 5 strategic areas:

- Effective optimization of revenue collection;
- Responsive Customer service;
- Meeting other non-revenue statutory obligations;
- A transparent environment to improve voluntary tax compliance; and
- A professional and credible organization.

**Process of Reform and Modernization**

The GRA has received a lot of support from external Development Partners such as the GIZ, SECO, CBP and the WCO.

The new Customs Code was adopted in 2015 and a mobile analysis laboratory entered into service.

Large-scale recruitment and training was organized to strengthen the Customs. This enabled the GRA to successfully resume the functions outsourced for the past 15 years to 5 inspection companies. Well trained senior officers now provide a 24/7 service for evaluating and classifying goods.

**WCO support**

In 2012, the WCO has supported the GRA in the migration to HS 2012, in the establishment of a professional Tariff and Classification Unit and in the alignment of IT systems and processes to the WCO Data Model.

In 2013 the WCO provided the GRA with an LMD workshop, e-learning support and with assistance to develop and implement a stakeholder engagement strategy.

In 2014, an initial evaluation and coordination mission under the Columbus Programme.

In 2016, working in collaboration with UNCTAD, the WCO supported the institutionalization and development of Ghana’s National Trade Facilitation Committee.

The primary objective of the support provided by the WCO in recent years was to guide the GRA regaining the ownership of tasks outsourced to a number of inspection companies. The 5 respective contracts all ended, and Customs is now carrying out its own Customs valuation, tariff classification and origin work.

Other support provided under the WACAM Project from 2014 to 2018 helped the GRA to establish consultative committees and implement effective procedures and tools to enhance stakeholder relations.

Support in 2017 to 2019 assisted the GRA in following initiatives: promotion and ratification of the RKC (ratification of the RKC is envisaged in 2019); development of rules and procedures related to IPR, health and safety; strategic Trade control enforcement.

Since 2020 the GRA has been supported by the NORAD funded A-CIP project. It has performed an integrity diagnostic and developed an integrity action plan.
GUINEA

Background
Guinea received a WCO diagnostic mission in 2007 and a strategic planning mission in 2010.

Current plans
Guinea's Strategic Plan for 2013-2017 contains 5 strategic focus areas:

1. Improving Leadership and Strategic Management;
2. Optimizing the Management of Human, Material and Financial Resources;
3. Adapting the Legal Framework (Legislation) and Enhancing Enforcement;
4. Facilitating Customs Procedures and Optimizing ICT; and
5. Reinvigorating External Communication, Cooperation and Partnership.

Process of Reform and Modernization
In 2015 Guinea adopted its current Customs Code. In September 2019 Guinea launched its SW for External Trade and the Customs signed a Performance Measurement Contract with the Ministry of Budget.

WCO support
In 2011, the WCO supported the Customs in the development and consolidation of its first reform action plan.

In 2012, the WCO provided assistance to professionalize the Customs in the management of classification issues (HS) and in the migration to HS2012. Other missions were conducted to strengthen the Customs’ capacity to apply the CITES Convention. After that, WCO missions to this country were suspended until summer 2016 due to the Ebola epidemic.

In 2017 and 2018, the WCO engaged in a multi-component assistance Programme to support the Customs in the recovery after the Ebola crisis. This Programme helped the Customs to achieve following:

- Develop and improve stakeholder relations, also in the area of enforcement (through WACAM and COPES support);
- Develop and implement standard operational procedures for relief consignments (through C-RED support); and
- Take over valuation and classification after the termination in 2017 of the contract with a private sector inspection company.

GUINEA-BISSAU

Background
On 19 August 2010, Guinea-Bissau became a Member of the WCO and expressed its intention to implement the SAFE FoS. A WCO diagnostic mission was conducted in February 2012.

To effectively rise to the challenges involved in performing its tasks, the Customs Administration has, over the past few years, embarked on a series of structural reforms and modernization of its procedures to meet the government’s objectives. Focus has been placed on revenue collection, trade facilitation, trade statistics and protection of society on the one hand, and alignment with international standards on the other. As a result, it became the 177th Member of the WCO on 19 August 2010.

Current plans
The last available Strategic Plan for Guinea-Bissau Customs comprises 9 Strategic Priority Areas:

1. Legal management;
2. Institutional and organizational framework;
3. Organization of HRM;
4. Modernization of Customs procedures (creation of a department responsible for Customs procedures);
5. Improving the organization of internal control (integrity and good governance);
6. Improving surveillance and enforcement (creation of a Customs Intelligence Service);
7. Efficient logistics management;
8. ICT (stabilization of the Internet, setting up an Intranet, and other information and communication tools); and
9. Internal and external communication (partnership).
At present, work is undertaken to suggest to the Government the adoption of a new decree on the organization and attributions of the General Directorate of Customs and to develop a new multi-year strategic reform plan aligned with the Strategic plan of the CPLP.

**Process of Reform and Modernization**

The mission led by the WCO in February 2012 enabled the Administration to develop a 5-year Strategic Plan (2013-2017). A WAEMU mission conducted in December 2012 was also used to make a brief analysis of developments since the diagnostic mission in 2008 funded by the World Bank and to make some preliminary recommendations on the matter. In March 2012, the Administration hosted another mission by AFRITAC/IMF West Africa, commissioned by the Minister of Finance to assess the clearance procedures.

In 2013, a mission took place to assess the recommendations stemming from the 2012 diagnostic by AFRITAC/IMF West Africa.

As part of the triannual multilateral Programme for the period from 2013 to 2015, financed by Portugal (GPEARI-MFAP), the Integrated Public Finance Cooperation and Technical Assistance Programme relating to Customs matters supported the country in the implementation of the specific RKC measures and migration to HS2012.

In 2015, Guinea-Bissau ratified the HS Convention.

A support Programme funded by the World Bank and covering the period 2017-2021 enabled the Customs to undertake following:

- Establish a telecommunication network, interconnect the services of the Customs headquarters and a number of Customs offices; provide them all with solid Internet connection;
- Equip the Customs headquarter and most of the Customs offices with IT equipment and furniture;
- Build 2 new Customs offices at the border with Senegal;
- In 2017, with the support of Burkina Faso Customs train a number of Customs officers in Burkina Faso;
- In 2019, with the support of the ROCB, Senegal Customs and Cameroon Customs, train 30 Customs officers in Senegal and Cameroon; and
- In 2020, a 3-weeks Customs training Programme conducted under their Mutual Assistance initiative with Senegal.

Plans to migrate to ASYDUCA World are currently developed in cooperation with the African Development Bank and UNCTAD.

**WCO support**

The support provided by the WCO between 2011 and 2013 enabled the Administration to benefit from a range of training which produced positive results and improved the performance of Customs and its ability to carry out its reform projects.

In July and August 2013, Customs received the Columbus Phase 2 mission which provided an opportunity to consolidate the Strategic Plan for 2014-2018. After that, the Plan was adopted by the Ministry of Finance.

In 2013, and as part of the WACAM Project, selected Customs officials benefited from training on mobilization of resources and development of project proposals.
LIBERIA

Background

Liberia expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS and the WCO diagnostic mission was conducted in June 2009. In November 2009, the WCO conducted a Columbus Phase 2 mission to assist the Administration in drafting its 2009-2013 Strategic Reform Plan.

Current plans

Liberia expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS and a WCO diagnostic mission was conducted in June 2009. In November 2009, the WCO conducted a Columbus Phase 2 mission to assist the Administration in drafting its first WCO-supported Strategic Reform Plan for 2009-2013.

The Liberia Revenue Agency (LRA) was established through an Act of the National Legislature in 2013 and began operations on 1 July 2014 as a semi-autonomous agency of the Government.

Liberia benefits from assistance of a set of development partners, donors and private sector consultants (i.e. IMF/AFRICTAC, World Bank, EU, USAID, Ecorys and the WCO).

The LRA Corporate Strategic Plan 2016-2021 comprises following main goals:

- Administer Revenue Legislation in an effective, fair and transparent manner;
- Maximize voluntary compliance;
- Build an effective institution at all levels through excellence in leadership, accountability, technical and real infrastructural capacities; and
- Transform Revenue Administration by utilizing effective Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

WCO support

In May 2013, the WCO and Liberia Customs decided to evaluate the results of the 2009-2013 Reform Plan and to develop a new plan for newly established LRA. However, from 2013 to 2015, due to the Ebola crisis, the WCO support was difficult and therefore limited integrity development and Performance measurement.

In 2016, the WCO supported the LRA in the conduct of an organizational diagnostic and in the development of new strategic priorities for the Customs.

In 2016-2018 Liberia benefited from following support:

- Competency based human resource management provided under the WCAM program. At present these standards are still to be implemented;
- Performance measurement. The WCO-UNCTAD ASYPM tool has been installed, adapted and is at present used;
- Development of standard operational procedures (SOP) for relief consignments, in cooperation with UN-OCHA and relevant stakeholders. These SOP are now implemented; and
- Support provided under the Revenue Package to assist the Customs to take ownership of valuation and classification, outsourced by the Government to a private sector inspection company. This support is still ongoing.

In 2019 and 2020, the LRA benefitted from following support:

- Development and implementation of an Integrity Programme (A-CIP/Norad);
- Planning and conduct of a TRS at the port of Monrovia;
- Awareness raising to involve Liberia in the Global Shield Programme; and
- Organizational development and training on HS matters. This enabled Liberia to ratify a set of the WCO recommendations related to HS.
MALI

Background

Mali signed the letter of intent to implement the SAFE FoS in 2005 and received a WCO diagnostic mission in October 2006 (Phase 1 of the Columbus Programme). A first Action Plan was drawn up in response to the WCO’s recommendations in November 2006.

For Mali, security has been and remains a major concern. The northern borders of the country are no longer in the hands of the Customs.

Strategic plans

The last strategic plan covered the period 2016 – 2019 and was made up of 6 strategic focus areas:

1. Improving strategic management and leadership;
2. Optimizing the management of human, financial and material resources;
3. IT development and modernizing procedures to maximize revenue;
4. Strengthening the institutional framework, partnership, cooperation and communication;
5. Bolstering the fight against fraud, cross-border organized crime and terrorism; and
6. Enhancing integrity and ethics


Process of Reform and Modernization

On 29 January 2010, Mali acceded to the RKC through Decree No. 10057/RM

Since 2013, following could be achieved, among others:

- Development of a 1,400,000 euro data center, with support from French Cooperation;
- Entry into operation of the mobile transit control unit;
- Construction of a Customs Training Centre in Samanko;
- Further implementation of the RK;
- Design of job descriptions;
- Completion of the river unit complex housing the nautical training center;
- Establishment of the Directorate for Facilitation and Partnership with Business, that provides businesses with Customs assistance and advisory support and strengthen Customs - Business Partnership;
- Establishment of a PCA Directorate and introduction of PCA and investigations of Customs offences using the accounting records of taxpayers;
- Establishment of Training-partnerships with Morocco, France, Tunisia and AFRITAC West (IMF);
- Better use of the ASYCUDA features and its satellite applications. This has contributed to increasing revenue and improving services for users;
- Decree No. 2013/122/P-RM of 2013 on the Code of Conduct and Ethics for Customs was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Mali. The new Code provides best practices for developing a culture of integrity and good governance; and
- Implementation of Standard Operational Procedures (SOP) for relief consignments.

WCO support

In 2011, following Mali’s move to Phase 2 of the Columbus Programme, two high-level workshops were organized by the WCO in the country:

- A workshop to assist the Customs Administrations of Mali and Niger to develop funding proposals for donors; and
- A workshop on IPR protection.

In 2013, Mali received WCO training on the RKC. This enabled the Customs to implement some measures of the Convention.

In 2014 and 2015, Mali received support to develop a training strategy, to implement e-learning and to strengthen its border management. Leadership and Management training was provided to senior Customs officials.
In 2016-2018, Mali received WACAM support to sensitize relevant managers on the concept of competency-based HR Management. C-RED supports in drafting SOPs for Relief consignments.

Since 2014, Mali was supported in the development of transit-interconnectivity with other WCA Customs administrations. It is expected that Mali transit interconnectivity, in particular with Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Togo will become operational in 2019.

Since 2019, the NORAD funded A-CIP project has supported the Customs in the development of an integrity development Programme

In 2020, Mali Customs have developed and tested their transit interconnectivity interface with SIGMAT. Operationalization of SIGMAT transit operations with neighboring Customs administrations is expected to start in late 2020.

**MAURITANIA**

**Background**

Mauritania expressed its intention to implement the WCO FoS and the WCO diagnostic mission was conducted in June 2007.

Mauritania neither belongs to ECOWAS nor to the WAEMU. It is therefore not directly supported by these organizations. However, ad-hoc assistance to Customs is provided by the IMF, the World Bank and also on a bilateral level, in particular by France.

**Process of Reform and Modernization**

In 2011, the WCO conducted a Columbus Phase 2 mission in Mauritania to assist the Customs Administration in formulating an Action Plan for 2011-2012. Since then, the institution has been faced with new challenges, in particular related to the rationalization and management of HR and new threats, including security. Due to the development of containerized commercial traffic with Asia, it is also faced with changes in the structure of the country’s foreign trade.

A Columbus Phase 2 mission conducted in early 2012 helped the Administration to update its Action Plan. Reform projects building the Administration’s capacity to manage change and implement reform were added to the existing Action Plan and measures to adapt the role and mission of Customs to new economic and security related challenges were carried out.

**WCO support**

The support given by the WCO in 2011 and 2012 has enabled the Administration to evaluate progress since 2007 and draw up a Strategic Plan and a methodology for carrying through its reform projects.

In 2013, Mauritania received support for the design of training and e-learning.

In late 2014, Mauritania received a WCO mission to kick-start the Customs reform and modernization process.

In 2017 and 2018 the WACAM project sensitized relevant senior managers on the competency-based HR management approach promoted by the WCO. By now, this concept is not used in this Administration. Also in 2018, the WCO supported the Customs in the conduct of a reform diagnostic and evaluation mission. This mission visited the new airport in Nouakchott and undertook visits to land border Customs office to check realities at the frontline and draft recommendations for the next steps of the reform. Also, the mission enabled the Customs and the Ministry of Commerce to further improve its cooperation, in particular for the implementation of the WTO-TFA.

**NIGER**

**Background**

Niger expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS and the WCO diagnostic mission was conducted in January 2007.

As for a number of other WCA countries, security has been and remains a major concern and makes it difficult for Customs to implement straight forward Reform and Modernization.

**Current plans**

With the WCO’s assistance, the Administration drew up its multiannual Strategic Plan for the period 2010-2012 and published it on the Internet.
The most recent Strategic Plan available to the WCO is for 2013-2015 and contains following axes:

- Improvement of resource mobilization;
- Promotion of the national economy; and
- Protection of Niger’s society.

**Process of Reform and Modernization**

In 2009, the WCO strategic planning support enabled the Customs to finalize its first multi-year Strategic Plan.

In 2012, the following actions were carried out thanks to the support of the Ministry of Finance’s Capacity Building Project, funded by the World Bank:

- Study on the assessment of officers’ skills and development of a complementary training plan;
- Study on tax expenditure to ensure better controls over exemptions from duties and taxes granted at Customs;
- Development of a new Strategic Plan for 2013-2015, taking account of national texts on results-based management;
- Financing of study trips to share experiences relating to the management of petroleum products in Côte d’Ivoire, IT development in Cameroon, and risk assessment and selectivity in Mali; and
- Financing to conduct an organizational audit of the Directorate General of Customs.

In 2015, Niger acceded to the RKC and the Government adopted a ministerial decree on the organization and attributions of the General Directorate of Customs. The new organization comprises organizational structures in charge of Customs Reform and Modernization, tariff classification (HS), origin and Customs valuation. Managers and staff were appointed.

**WCO support**

In 2009, the WCO evaluated the Customs IT system and infrastructure and contributed to provide advice for the migration to a newer version of the ASYCUDA system and to make better use of it.

From 2011 to 2013, the WCO support enabled the Customs to develop its IT strategy and get it approved by the Government. Based on that, and to further training on business case development and donor attraction, a central server was purchased and installed in 2013. This has led to significant improvements.

In 2012, the WCO provided support in the development of a concept for a Customs Training Centre in Niger. The support was complemented in May 2014 by the French Cooperation Programme that assisted the Administration in the development of a training plan. However, at this stage there is still no operational training center for the Customs.

In the period 2014 - 2019, Niger was provided with LMD training, e-learning support, support to implement competency-based HR management and to conduct a TRS. Unfortunately, e-learning and competency-based HR management are still not used by this administration, but concrete plans exist to implement these tools and concepts.

Also in May 2014, the WCO participated in a meeting with Niger Customs and Cotecna to supervise their contract and to develop a strategic approach and concrete actions to enable the Customs to take ownership of functions outsourced to the inspection company.

In 2018, the Government decided not to renew its contract with the inspection company. At present Customs performs valuation and classification without support of the inspection company.

In 2019 and 2020, the WCO helped the Customs to further built capacities in the area of classification and valuation and thereby sustain support provided beforehand. The support also enabled the Customs to further develop AR.

Other support provided in 2020, focused on security and intelligence, enabled the beneficiaries to get fully involved in the West Africa Security Programme (WASP) and develop through the COLIBRI its capacity to fight against illicit traffic of narcotics transported by means of light and private aviation.

**NIGERIA**

**Background**

Nigeria expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS and the WCO diagnostic mission was conducted in June 2006.
WCO support

WCO support provided in 2013, 2016 and 2018 supported the NCS in the development of their LMD capacities.

Other Support provided since 2012 contributed to achieve following:

- Take ownership of Customs valuation and classification and the Government to terminate its contract with a private sector inspection company;
- Benefit from advise for the development of a SW; and
- Develop and improve Nigeria’s AEO Programme.

Support provided since 2016 contributed to SPC++ project. This project led by Nigeria contributed to enhancing the collaboration of WCA Customs and stakeholders and enabled them to fight more efficiently against terrorism and criminal organizations operating in border zones.

In 2017 and 2018 C-RED support enabled the NCS and its relevant stakeholders to develop SOP for the clearance of relief consignments.

Support in 2019 and 2020 provided following:

- The INAMA project assisted the NCS in the improvement of their fight against contraband and illegal trade of wildlife covered by the CITES Convention;
- Norad’s A-CIP project enabled the NCS to undertake an integrity diagnostic and to initiate an integrity support Programme;
- Advice for the establishment and management of Free zones; and
- Support for the implementation of AR.

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

Background

Sao Tome & Principe became a Member of the WCO in September 2009. To date, it has not yet expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS, although it received a diagnostic mission funded by the United States Government and conducted by the WCO in September 2008.

Sao Tome & Principe undertakes efforts to become an active Member of the WCO and will have to implement the WTO TFA after accession.

Strategic plans

Sao Tome & Principe’s last available Strategic Plan is for 2012-2015 and comprises the following areas:

1. Strategic management;
2. HR Development;
3. Legislation;
4. Procedures;
5. ICT;
6. Communication and partnerships; and
7. Governance, integrity.

In 2016, the administration developed an annual action plan with following focus areas:

1. Modernization - trade facilitation through simplification, automation and transparency;
2. Building capacities to collect and secure revenue;
3. HR Development; and
4. Modernization - Customs legislation
Process of Reform and Modernization

Sao Tome and Principe is a Member of ECCAS and of CEN-SAD, which act as the framework for development and regional integration.

Until 2011, this small Administration of 52 Customs officers had no Strategic Plan. Instead, it carried out reforms on the basis of an Action Plan, with support provided under cooperation programmes with Portugal and Angola and support from the United States Government (Office of Technical Assistance (OTA) of the US Treasury/Millennium Challenge Corporation). Thanks to that support, the Customs Service moved forward, set up ASYCUDA World and modernized the infrastructure and equipment of the Directorate General of Customs.

In November 2011, the WCO conducted another mission funded by the United States Government to update the 2008 diagnostic and to help the Customs Service draw up a Strategic Plan for the period 2012-2015. The Plan has not yet been adopted, however the Directorate General of Customs has begun implementing the activities scheduled for 2012.

In 2013, the Directorate General of Customs achieved 3 priority objectives:

- ASYCUDA World connection at the airport, automation of the manifest, implementation of statistical modules and IT databases for integrated management of exemptions and tax benefits. These initiatives should be operational in the first quarter of 2014, in addition to the improved management and control of warehouses and suspensive procedures and the mobilization of resources for the implementation of ASYCUDA World in Principe;

- Money laundering: a Financial Intelligence Unit has been established, comprising a Customs focal point. Report templates for communication between border services and Ministerial authorities as well as information for travelers were produced; Sao Tome and Principe has become a Member of GIABA. An assessment/diagnostic of the country in this respect was carried out by experts from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and GIABA, and the IMF stepped in to modernize the Anti-Money Laundering Act; and

- SW: A funding proposal was signed with the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the Investment Climate Facility for Africa (ICF) and UNCTAD and the preparatory activities have already begun.

In September 2013, an IMF diagnostic mission requested by the Ministry of Finance and Cooperation was carried out, resulting in a 2014 Action Plan.

In 2015, Sao Tome and Principe acceded to the HS Convention.

WCO support

The support given by the WCO and financed by the United States in 2011 and 2012 enabled the Administration to evaluate progress since 2008 and to draw up a multiannual Strategic Plan and a methodology for the planning and conduct of its reform.

SENEGAL

Background

In its declaration of intent dated 2005, the Director General of Senegal Customs informed the Secretary General of the WCO of his resolve to implement the SAFE FoS and the WCO carried out a diagnostic mission in June 2006.

2 strategic planning missions were held in Dakar in October 2009 and June 2012 (Columbus Programme Phase 2). In April 2014, the Administration received a Columbus Phase 3 mission to evaluate progress and drive the new modernization cycle.

Current plans

Senegal's Strategic Plan for the period 2014-2017 is based on five lines of action:

1. Consolidating modernization efforts to boost business competitiveness;
2. Enhancing Customs revenue mobilization to contribute more fully to budget resources;
3. Combating fraud and counterfeiting and playing a role in the implementation of national security policy;
4. Optimizing the management of human, material and financial resources; and
5. Customs outreach at national and international level.
Process of Reform and Modernization

Decree No. 07282 MEF/DGD of 30 July 2009 introduced major reforms relating to trade facilitation, especially:

- The setting up of a Directorate for Facilitation and Partnership with Business;
- The establishment of structures dedicated entirely to planning and strategic management; and
- The implementation of structures responsible for following up, assessing and refocusing the reform.

The largest area of Reform and Modernization over recent years remains the implementation of paperless foreign trade procedures and Customs clearance formalities.

The establishment of the Directorate for Facilitation and Partnership with Business is aimed at finding the right balance between the performance of Customs controls (Customs revenue) and the smooth flow of trade (facilitation). The balance between trade facilitation and security of Customs revenue is built on a strategy of appropriate RM and on “facilitation and privileges” offered to partner economic operators in return for strict and voluntary compliance with Customs regulations. This commitment to partnership is reflected in a Programme drawing inspiration from the WCO’s AEO status and entitled the “Preferred Partner Programme (PPP).

Special units and specific structures have been set up to manage this status. A Joint Customs-Business Committee inspired by Pillar II of the WCO SAFE FoS was set up and serves as a framework for ongoing dialogue between the Administration and its partners.

Performance contracts are periodically signed between the Ministry of Finance and Customs.

WCO support

In 2011 and 2012 the WCO support for the Senegal Customs Administration consisted basically of following:

- A Columbus Phase 2 strategic planning mission;
- The launch of the WCO Interface Public-Members (IPM) tool accessible to Customs officers through the Senegalese Customs IT system;
- A national LMD workshop; and
- A regional workshop on the WACAM HRM Project, held in December 2012.

In 2013, the WCO responded favorably to the request for assistance to set up modern training systems, including e-learning and incorporating new training materials on the RKC, CBM, PCA and RM.

In 2014, the WCO conducted a Columbus Phase 3 mission to evaluate the Customs reform initiative. This mission was the first of the kind in the WCA region.

In 2015 and 2016, the WCO support related primarily to HRM through the WACAM Project and implementation assistance with the RKC and the WTO TFA.

In 2017, IT managers were familiarized with the WCO IT guide for executives and enforcement officers took part in the African Wings IV operation.

In 2018, Senegalese valuation experts were trained on transfer pricing and enforcement officers at the airport of Dakar were trained on the use of CEN. Furthermore, the administration was assisted to develop an action plan to be implemented under the West Africa Security Programme (WASP).

In 2019, further assistance enabled the Customs to further improve their AEO Programme, professionalize their CAAT enforcement team at Dakar Airport, install and make better use of CENcomm and improve the Customs capacity to apply IPR.

Since 2014, Senegal was supported in the development of transit-interconnectivity with other WCA Customs administrations. It is expected that Senegal’s transit interconnectivity, through SIGMAT will become operational in 2020.
SIERRA LEONE

Background

In 2007 Sierra Leone expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS and the WCO diagnostic mission was conducted in September 2007. In December 2011 and November 2012, the WCO organized 2 missions to assist the Administration in updating its 2007-2011 Strategic Reform Plan for the period 2012-2015.

Although the Administration had adopted a modernization plan with other external support, the WCO commenced a Columbus Phase 2 mission in September 2009 to help the Administration modernize its corporate mission and strategy.

Current plans

With the WCO’s support, Sierra Leone renewed its strategic plan for 2018-2022, based on the following strategic focus areas:

- Effective and efficient revenue mobilization to support government fiscal space;
- Develop human capital and institutional capacity;
- Enhanced trade facilitation;
- Automated and integrated modernized business processes and procedures; and
- Improved public trust and credibility

Process of Reform and Modernization

The Administration, with the joint assistance of the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID), the World Bank and WCO, has made considerable progress in automating the Customs clearance system by implementing the ASYCUDA World system complemented by RM and PCA.

In 2011, the Customs legislation has been consolidated and updated with a new 2011 Customs Act. This reform enabled Customs to increase revenue collection by over 400% since 2007, made it easier for other stakeholders and operators to automate their processes, and also shorten the average clearance time.

The Ebola crisis has seriously hampered the development of the country and Customs, in particular between 2013 and 2015.

In 2015, Sierra Leone acceded to the RKC and the HS Convention.

In 2017, Sierra Leone ratified the WTO-TFA and submitted its category “A”, “B” and “C” notifications in February 2018.

WCO support

In 2011, the WCO conducted a follow-up mission to further review the corporate strategy and organizational structure.

In 2013, the Administration benefitted from WCO support in the area of Classification (HS) and RM.

In 2016, the World Bank and the WCO conducted a joint mission to identify the needs of the Sierra Leone Revenue Authority with respect to TFA implementation. Additional 2 missions were conducted, and they focused, respectively, on strategic planning and the TRS. In the same year, Sierra Leone became a WCO country benefitting from the Mercator Programme and funding for that was provided by the WCO-HRMC-UNCATAD Programme.

As an early adopter of the tailor-made track of the Mercator Programme, Sierra Leone benefitted from a comprehensive Programme of TFA-related supports between 2016 and 2018, under the guidance of a dedicated MPA. Iterative technical supports in PCA, intelligence-based RM, TRS and strategic planning have laid the foundations for Sierra Leone’s successful implementation of TFA measures. This comprehensive Programme helped to strengthen relationships with the private sector, increase revenue and improve strategic oversight of the organization.

In 2017 and 2018, additional support was provided to assist the organization in the preparation for takeover of valuation and classification from a private sector inspection company and to train enforcement officers on the use of CEN/nCEN. C-RED assisted the organization in the development of standard operational procedures for relief consignments.

In 2019, the WCO started assisting Sierra Leone in the development of competency-based HR Management, in the preparation of a TRS at Freetown seaport and, through the Norad A-CIP project, in the development and implementation of an integrity work Programme.
TOGO

Background
Togo expressed its intention to implement the WCO SAFE FoS and the WCO diagnostic mission was conducted in December 2006.

In 2012, the Togolese Revenue Authority (OTR) was established it unites the Customs and the Tax administration under one single roof and management.

In 2011 and 2012, the WCO organized 2 missions to assist the OTR with the development of a new Strategic Reform Plan for the 2012-2015.

Current plans
Togo’s 1st Strategic Plan covered the period 2015-2017 and following priority areas:

1. Optimization of Customs revenue collection;
2. Effectively communicating with and educating taxpayers about fiscal civic-mindedness; and
3. Modernization and building of institutional capacities.

Their 2nd Strategic Plan covers the period 2018-2022 and following priority areas:

1. Mobilization of fiscal and Customs revenue;
2. Promotion of the private sector and investments; and
3. Institutional Capacity building of the Office.

Process of Reform and Modernization
A cooperation project with the Belgian Customs enabled Togo to receive substantial support, especially to develop partnerships with the private sector, to pursue the development of AEOs and to more effectively control petroleum products.

WCO support
In May 2012, the WCO Secretary General invited Togo’s government to support Customs reform and to take part in a conference organized jointly by Togo, Belgian Customs and the private sector to promote and formalize partnerships. Also in 2012, the WCO assisted the Customs in the planning of its next Reform and Modernization cycle.

In 2013, the Administration was assisted to develop performance measurement, e-learning and the OTR participated in activities organized by the Container Control Programme. This has enabled them to better target risky containers.

In 2014, Togo acceded to the RKC and further support related to the Container Control Programme was provided. The OTR also participated in the WCO’s Operation Biyela.

In 2015 and 2016, the Administration requested the WCO’s support to regain ownership of missions outsourced to an inspection company. In response to this request, the WCO conducted 2 missions to support Customs with respect to Customs valuation and to draft specifications for the purchase of a new scanner.

More support was provided in 2016 to assist the OTR in the establishment of a National Trade Facilitation Committee and a Customs reform evaluation mission (Columbus Phase 3) was conducted in to evaluate reform progress achieved and to provide inputs for the next reform cycle.

In 2017, the WACAM project sensitized relevant senior managers on the competency-based HR management approach promoted by the WCO. This initiative enabled the Administration to develop the tools for a competency-based approach and test its application. In 2017, CENComm training was provided to enforcement teams at the airport and INAMA provided support also in 2018 to enforce the CITES Convention.

Drug law enforcement training was delivered to the selected OTR officers by COCAIR VI operation. TRS training enabled the selected OTR officers to learn more about this standard and to develop it internally for periodic measuring of release times. Finally, approx. 150 OTR officers from Customs, Tax and General Services attended an information session that enabled them to learn about the WCO expert mobilization and management process, including accreditation Programmes.
In 2018 and 2019, further valuation support was provided to assist the OTR in their initiative to regain ownership of missions outsourced to an inspection company. The West Africa Security Program (WASP) assisted the OTR in the development of a security action plan and in the understanding and implementation of measures related to the UN Resolution 1540. Assistance to support the OTR in the conduct of a TRS at Lomé seaport was initiated.

Further support provided in 2019 and 2020 enabled the OTR to take stock of its HR Management and initiate the development of related reform initiatives. The Norad A-CIP supported the organization in the conduct of an Integrity diagnostic and in the initiation of an integrity Programme.
NORTH OF AFRICA, NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST (MENA)

Regional developments

The North of Africa, Near and Middle East (MENA) Region has 18 Members, Palestine has joined the WCO in 2015.

Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Morocco, Egypt and Tunisia are, to date, the only countries in the region to have ratified the WTO TFA. On the other hand, all countries from the region are contracting Parties to the RKC except Libya, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Palestine.

Recent regional developments in terms of integration and co-operation

Since 2008, 6 RTC have sprung up across the MENA region. After RTC Beirut, RTC Alexandria, RTC Riyadh, RTC Amman, RTC Tunisia, RTC Kuwait, the Heads of Customs have decided during their last annual meeting in Cairo in March 2020 to open a new RTC in Doha. The establishment of RTC Doha will strengthen the support provided by all the RTCs to the regional training initiative. All RTCs have played a key role in delivering capacity building support for the wider region. The RTC Amman was particularly used to host the delegations from Palestine and Sudan under the WCO Mercator Programme between 2016 and 2018.

The 1st meeting of the MENA National Capacity Building Coordinators was held from 22 to 24 May 2013 in Abu Dhabi, UAE. The meeting agreed on the roles and responsibilities of the CB coordinators in working with the WCO and the ROCB to support regional and national capacity building activities in response to the needs and priorities of the Region’s Customs administrations.

The 2nd meeting of the national CB coordinators took place in Qatar in March 2017 to discuss the new capacity building delivery approach and the role of the ROCB MENA in planning the CB support to the Members.

In December 2017, the national capacity building coordinators proposed, during their meeting in Casablanca, Morocco, a new regional capacity building approach. The December Meeting also discussed the current needs collection process that leads to the regional training plan and proposed a new approach that better meets the needs of the Members in the Region. The new initiative which was endorsed by the Heads of Customs during their last annual meeting in Cairo in January 2018 will improve the coordination between the WCO and the regional structures in terms of CB support delivery. It eliminates the duplication of efforts and capacity building activities through the adoption of a single regional plan that includes all national and regional CB activities to be delivered during the financial year. The new approach was implemented for the first time during the meeting of the National Capacity Building Coordinators that was held in Alexandria in April 2018 with the objective of enhancing the awareness of the capacity building coordinators from the region on their role, and ways of contributing to the work of the WCO Secretariat and the ROCB.

During the 5th Capacity Building Coordinators’ meeting that took place in Muscat, Oman from 24 to 28 March 2019, the Customs officials from 18 Middle East and North of Africa (MENA) Region countries discussed the capacity building needs and share knowledge and experience with regard to the modernization initiatives of Customs administrations.

That was the first forum where all 18 Members of the MENA region were all in attendance.

To meet the Region’s train-the-trainer needs with respect to the HS, the WCO and Saudi Arabia Customs jointly organized a regional HS expert workshop for the Customs administrations of the MENA Region. The workshop was held at the Riyadh RTC from 20 to 24 April 2013, and brought together Customs officers from Bahrain, Egypt, Yemen, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia and the UAE.

The workshop was aimed at strengthening the HS classification capacities of Arab-speaking countries. It was an opportunity to put the WCO CLIKC!!!!!!! E-training platform into practice through the WCO's standardized training tools, such as the HS training kit and e-learning modules, so as to provide appropriate HS training.

In accordance with the MENA Region’s objectives, a regional workshop on the SAFE FoS and the AEO Programme was organized by the WCO in collaboration with the Moroccan Customs Administration, from 10 to 14 June 2013 in Casablanca.

Some 14 AEO experts from 8 of the Region’s countries took part in this regional event. The workshop highlighted the challenges related to the AEO Programmes in application in the MENA Region, and also served as an excellent platform for exchange between participating countries on the basis of presentations on good national practices, a discussion forum on subjects of mutual interest and a means of strengthening co-operation between Customs administrations.

To train the Region’s senior Customs officers in international data standards, a regional workshop on the WCO Data Model was held in the UAE from 12 to 15 May 2013 with the involvement of the Region’s countries and the private sector.
The WCO, in co-operation with the Federal Customs Authority (FCA) of the UAE, organized a Regional Forum on the Economic Competitiveness Package for the MENA Region on 19 and 20 November 2013 in Abu Dhabi. Participants talked about the critical role of Customs in improving the efficiency of the trade supply chain and economic competitiveness. They also recognized the importance of the key WCO tools and Programmes, such as the RKC, Customs-Business Partnerships, the SW and the TRS to ensure a culture of compliance, better co-ordination and better service for stakeholders at borders.

The high-level officers from the Region’s Customs administrations, experts from international organizations, such as the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the IDB, as well as participants from the private sector exchanged their experiences and views on economic competitiveness. They held very active discussions on possible actions to enhance economic competitiveness at the regional level. As a result, they adopted recommendations on sharing innovative practices and experiences related to CBM, TRS, and AEO Programmes, performance indicators, Customs-Business Partnerships and effective transit systems for the Region. The outcomes of this Regional Forum were adopted by the Directors General of Customs of the Region at the Regional Meeting held in Marrakech, Morocco on 29 January 2014.

Basing itself on the needs and priorities expressed by Members, the WCO, in co-operation with Qatar Customs, organized 2 regional workshops to offer tailored assistance capable of meeting the Region’s specific needs. The first regional workshop, financed by Qatar Customs, on accreditation of RM experts and risk assessment and selectivity advisers took place from 25 to 28 November 2013 in Doha. The second workshop, also financed by Qatar, was held in Doha and brought together Directors and human resource managers from the Region’s 13 countries. Throughout the course of the workshop, participants were given an opportunity to enhance their skills and develop new knowledge and aptitudes in the area of human resource management and development. The focus was placed on the importance of producing appropriate job descriptions facilitating the recruitment and training of Customs officers according to Customs administrations’ priorities, as well as allowing an objective assessment of these officers’ performance.

A sub-regional workshop on combating counterfeiting and piracy was held in Tunisia from 9 to 13 December 2013 in order to apply new RM methods to suspicious cargo and consolidate the joint efforts by the MENA Region’s Customs officers. This event was attended by inspectors from Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Libya and Egypt.

A regional Customs valuation workshop funded by Qatar Customs for the benefit of the MENA region was held from 13 to 17 April 2014 in Doha. The purpose of this workshop attended by senior and mid-level Customs officers from 10 countries in the MENA region, was to strengthen the knowledge of Customs valuation and provide further assistance with the challenges posed in effective implementation of the WTO Valuation Agreement. The workshop was also intended to provide support for the WCO’s Revenue Package initiative.

In 2014, the WCO conducted an accreditation workshop for expert trainers on the HS, from 12 to 16 May, in Casablanca, Morocco, under the sponsorship of the CCF Japan. 10 participants from 9 countries of the MENA Region attended the event, and 2 officers have been accredited. This means that a new capacity has been created in the Region – that of providing training on the HS entirely in Arabic. There is no doubt that this will facilitate the understanding of technical matters related to the use of the HS and HS-related instruments by the Members using the Arabic language, also allowing to take account of the specificity of the problems faced by these administrations.

The regional cooperation also benefited from the support from the ROCB for the MENA region through the organization and the funding of a regional workshop on Rules of Origin, held from 1 to 5 June 2014 in Abu Dhabi, UAE. The main objective of the workshop was the promotion of the new Guidelines on Preferential Origin Verification, developed under the WCO Revenue Package Action Plan, as well as the related tools and instruments listed in the Revenue Package Schedule.

The workshop covered a wide range of topics related to Rules of Origin, including the role of Customs in the implementation of FTAs, Rules of Origin of FTAs/EPAs, verification of preferential origin, AR on Origin, and stakeholder training.

Between July 2014 and June 2015, 8 regional workshops have been conducted in the MENA region for Members. These regional events were possible as a result of support from the Qatar Customs Authority (4 workshops), Saudi Customs (2 workshops), CCF Japan (1 workshop) and CCF Korea (1 workshop).

Due to the growing threat posed by money laundering, a regional workshop on the role of Customs in combating money laundering was conducted in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in January 2015 with the participation of most of the countries from the MENA region. The objective of the workshop was to train senior Customs officers on methods to eliminate this threat at the operational level.

The second regional workshop on Rules of Origin was jointly conducted by the WCO and the General Authority of Customs of Qatar in Doha from 22 to 26 February 2015. The workshop was attended by Customs officers from the MENA Region. The objective of the workshop was to enhance the capacity of the Customs trainers to effectively and efficiently manage all issues related to Rules of Origin and to prepare them for the accreditation workshop to be conducted in the MENA Region.
Upon request of the region to set up a regional pool of high-level experts in Customs valuation and Rules of Origin, qualified in capacity building and the training domain and capable of conducting training activities at regional level following the WCO standards, the WCO organized, under the sponsorship of the Qatar Customs Authority, a regional accreditation workshop for expert trainers in Customs valuation in Doha, Qatar from 22 to 26 March 2015. The second accreditation workshop on Rules of Origin was conducted in Abu Dhabi during the period 4-8 April 2015 with the financial support of CCF Korea.

The CBM concept, including implementation methods and advantages together with international best practices have been explained during a regional workshop that was held in Qatar from 5 to 9 April 2015. The workshop offered an opportunity to discuss the WCO's role and efforts in this endeavor, aimed at facilitating the implementation of joint cooperation strategies by MENA region Members for improved control and facilitation at borders.

Between 19 and 22 April 2015, Saudi Customs hosted a regional workshop on the practical implementation of the Harmonized System 2017 Edition. The workshop was organized with the sponsorship of Saudi Customs and attended by senior managers from the MENA region who discussed, inter alia, possible improvements in the national tariff classification work and related infrastructure.

During the financial year 2015/2016, the WCO support provided to the MENA region Members has reached an unprecedented level. This was achieved thanks to the financial support from Customs cooperation Funds as well as the generous contribution from the region.

With the aim of enhancing the level of the regional cooperation, boosting the regional integration, and helping eligible countries for funding from the MENA region implement their Reform and Modernization agenda, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have increased, during this year, the level of their financial support to the region. The two funding Countries are convinced that the achievement of the regional goals cannot be effected without helping countries from the region build their capacities to tackle the new common challenges and exploit the common new opportunities.

The financial support has enabled the conduct of 9 regional and 2 sub-regional workshops. The regional events covered topics such as CBM and SW, the WCO data model, WCO Mercator Programme, HS 2017, Customs intelligence, the impact of E-Commerce on Customs, the development of pre-arrival processing systems, Train of Trainers on SAFE framework, investigation techniques, RM related to the movement of passengers and how to combat smuggling.

Most of the topics were very timely initiatives which have enabled the success of the regional events together with the high level of participation from the region and the excellent level of organization and engagement. Most of the regional workshops reflected on several current and emerging challenges and explored potential solutions in the various areas. Moreover, all regional events provided the participants with a good opportunity to share their national experiences, initiatives and future thoughts.

The regional workshops enabled the participants in developing draft action plans along with a set of recommendations as potential way forward. Some of the countries have already started the implementation of their action plan and the recommendations of the regional workshops.

Additionally, most of the regional workshops provided participants with a good opportunity to establish networks with other Customs administrations of the region, and to engage with other relevant stakeholders to achieve an effective coordination in the different areas covered by the regional initiative.

The cooperation has also involved the conduct of the first Regional Container Control Programme (CCP) Meeting for MENA region that was held from 28 November to 4 December 2015 in Amman, Jordan and the workshop on SW Modality and E-Trade which was held by the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) in Casablanca, Morocco from 9 to 10 November 2015.

At the sub regional level, a RM and PCA workshop organized by Agadir Technical Unit (ATU) for the benefit of Agadir Agreement Member States: Egypt-Tunisia-Morocco-Jordan was held in Casablanca Morocco from 2 to 5 November 2015.

2016/2017 was a year of extensive support at all levels, In March 2017 the WCO organized an accreditation workshop for AEO trainer-experts in Riyadh with the financial support of Saudi Arabia.

The financial support from Saudi Arabia and Qatar enabled for the 4th consecutive year the conduct of 7 Regional workshops that covered major areas such as the role of Customs in border security, human resources management, E-Commerce, risk assessment, the Mercator Programme and the Global Shield Programme. From 9 to 11 January 2017, a Regional Security workshop for the MENA Region was held in Amman, Jordan, as a follow-up event on the WCO Security Programme Strategic Seminar held at the WCO Headquarters in Brussels in June 2016. The event provided a platform to discuss challenges Member administrations in the region face regarding flows of migrants, dual use goods, arms and explosives linked to ongoing conflicts and terrorist activity.
In April 2017, the first workshop on the role of Customs to protect the cultural heritage was conducted in Tunisia to discuss the challenges involved in dealing with cultural heritage under threat. The event discussed the role Customs authorities play in the prevention of illicit trafficking of cultural objects and their subsequent restitution. The workshop reflected the excellent partnership between the WCO, UNESCO, INTERPOL, UNODC and ICOM (International Council of Museums) in the area of prevention of illicit trafficking of cultural heritage.

To tackle security issues from Customs perspective, a regional initiative was launched during a regional workshop that was held in Saudi Arabia in May 2017 to establish a joint approach to meeting the security challenges along the shared borders of the MENA region Members.

The last regional workshop organized in the MENA region for the year 2016/2017 focused on the role of Customs to implement the TFA provisions through the WCO Mercator Programme. This workshop is intended to facilitate the exchange of strategic views, experiences and expectations of Members in the MENA region on ways forward towards consistent, effective and efficient implementation of the WTO TFA.

During the year 2017/2018, the MENA region benefited from the WCO support at the regional as well as national level. This support could only be achieved thanks to the financial support from the Customs cooperation Funds and the financial contribution from Qatar Customs.

At the regional level, the support missions focused on the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural objects with the view to prepare the Region for a Global operation. The support also concerned the role of Customs in fighting against valuation fraud (false invoicing and undervaluation with a focus on the application of Decision 6.1 of the WTO Committee on Customs Valuation in cases where Customs have doubts about the truth or accuracy of the value declared.

As the MENA Region is the most affected by terrorism, a regional event was planned in order to enhance the role of Customs in combatting illicit financial flows and terrorism financing. Other very timely topics were also covered including data analysis and organizational performance measurement.

Performance measurement

The demand from MENA Region Members for capacity building in the area of PCA has increased, especially as many Members are currently implementing WTO TFA. For this, an accreditation workshop for PCA experts took place in the Region in April 2018. Once pre-accredited experts have completed the full accreditation process, they are expected to play a key role in assisting administrations having embarked on Customs Reform and Modernization Programmes, especially in relation to PCA.

Most of national and regional activities planned for 2019/2020 were postponed due to the COVID Pandemic.

The Last MENA Conference of Directors General of Customs took place in Cairo, Egypt on 1 March 2020.

ALGERIA

Background

Algeria became a Member of the WCO in December 1966.

Algeria’s Directorate General of Customs launched, in 2007, a 4-year modernization Programme following diagnostic missions by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the WCO. The WCO capacity building diagnostic mission was carried out in March 2007.

The 2007-2010 modernization Programme was introduced with a view to optimizing the resources and missions of the Customs administration and amending management methods and all mechanisms of action and Customs control relating to the changing environment, taking into account the complexity and speed which increasingly characterize international trade operations.

The aim of the Programme is to improve the performance of Customs as a public service institution by making Customs legislation and regulations more flexible and transparent, and by an effective and flexible change process.

Starting from this, strategic objectives have been laid down essentially relating to:

- Development of the economic and partnership role of Customs;
- Development of human resources and training;
- Safeguarding Customs revenues and the effectiveness of enforcement; and
- Modernization of working practices and management methods of the Administration.
The above objectives have identified 5 main areas of modernization: **Customs legislation, organization, Customs technology and control**, the **information system** and **resources**. For each of these areas, a precise diagnostic is carried out, accompanied by an action plan and Standard Operating Procedures.

**Evaluation of the Programme**

From an operational perspective, a number of notable actions have been achieved. At the regulatory level, for instance, the Customs administration has finalized the draft recast of the Customs Code, particularly in the fields of disputes, Customs facilitation, tax collection, anti-smuggling and the fight against counterfeit goods, and the maritime police. There are also projects redeveloping the structural and organizational plan with a view to responding to the new missions entrusted to it as a modern Customs administration. In this specific framework, a number of actions have already been carried out such as the reorganization of the Central Administration, including the office of General Inspector of Customs and territorial field offices.

Satisfactory results have been recorded in the fields of Customs technology, enforcement, smuggling and counterfeit goods, in the management of human and other resources, in IT, etc.

The introduction of the system to evaluate services’ performances through performance indicators has cultivated the duty to achieve results rather than focusing on the means used, an approach widely adopted in conventional management. This process is reflected in performance contracts signed jointly with regional Directors of Customs.

In terms of the relationship with stakeholders, especially for users of Customs services, a number of advances may be noted. In particular, a Directorate General of Public Relations and Information has been set up, and a more dynamic policy of internal and external communication has been established in order to involve Customs staff and users in the necessary changes and explain the issues to them. The establishment of reception and information units at regional level ensures better handling of user requests and grievances. These reception structures are supported by a range of information and outreach materials (leaflets) and by an IT application which will be dedicated to the rapid and transparent management of grievances.

Currently, the modernization initiative is conducted under the 2016-2019 strategic plan which is based on participative management and provides for the establishment of an integrated information system including an automated clearing system (SIGAD).

The new Customs Code was developed to support the economic and security roles of Customs and improve the socio-professional conditions of the Customs officers. The integration of new information and communication technologies into all Customs missions are among the “flagship” missions to “absolutely succeed” to enable the emergence of a strong economy based on sustainable development.

**Support for modernization 2011-2015**

The evaluation of the 2007-2010 Programme led to the launch of a diagnostic framework to commence consolidation, i.e. validate the achievements of this Programme and define the areas of support over the period 2011-2015.

This modernization support Programme will essentially be focused on strategic management and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the institution at all levels.

The Programme is based on modern management tools such as project management, performance indicators, continuous improvement, etc.

In this context, an AEO Conference was organized by the WCO in Algeria in support of a reform of this procedure undertaken by Algerian Customs.

**WCO support**

At the request of Algerian Customs, an expert mission was conducted from 27 to 30 January 2014 to assist the Customs Administration to identify the proper means to measure and assess its performance, develop additional indicators and help the IT team manage the technical aspects of the performance measurement policy.

With the objective to strengthen senior management capacity to lead and drive reforms, the WCO organized a LMD workshop from 29 April to 10 May 2018 for 18 senior managers of Algerian Customs. After the adoption of the new strategy, it has become clear that building management capabilities and modern leadership skills will help to install a more effective management culture.
A national support mission in the field of HRM was carried out by the WCO in Algiers from 26 to 30 May 2019. The main objective of this mission was to consolidate the efforts by the HRM working group, including strengthening their capacities in competency-based HRM and raising the Steering Committee’s awareness of the importance of the HRM modernization process.

A WCO mission on the implementation of AR was conducted for the benefit of Algerian Customs on 1 January 2020.

A WCO mission on Customs laboratories for the Algeria Customs Administration took place on 8 March 2000.

**BAHRAIN**

**Background**

Bahrain became a Member of the WCO in June 2001.

The key objectives of the Customs development project carried out since 2007 are to review the organizational structure, develop service standards, devise and implement a human resource strategy, build and develop staff skills and knowledge, implement best international practices and instruments, strengthen PCA enhance Customs co-ordination and co-operation with other agencies at the border and with the appropriate regional and international organizations, and implement a RM system.

**Evaluation of the Programme**

The Customs Administration has developed a clear vision, mission and Strategic Plan covering a 2-year period. A number of projects have been carried out over recent years, based on the WCO mission recommendations:

- An automated Customs clearance system has been set up and is now operational in all the Customs offices;
- X-ray equipment has been installed;
- An annual training and development plan has been implemented; and
- An operational selectivity system is in place steering declarations to different channels based on risk indicators.

**Developments**

At the request of the Bahrain Customs Administration, the WCO organized a national workshop in Manama, from 10 to 13 March 2014. The goal of the workshop was to provide advice and technical support in order to develop a RM framework and related policies and procedures. The workshop also aimed to enhance the competencies and skills of the RM units as regards the risk assessment and selectivity mechanism.

An AEO scheme provides opportunities not only to facilitate Customs procedures but also procedures enforced by other regulatory authorities being a part of the international supply chain. A national workshop on AEO was organized in Manama from 26 to 28 May 2014 with a view to discuss the main steps for the implementation of an AEO scheme in Bahrain. During the workshop, the participants discussed the benefits of the Programme as well as the ways to build capacity to undertake verification, monitoring and audit operations. The present processes have also been mapped in order to design the Programme and move it into a pilot implementation.

As Bahrain Customs has just created a PCA section in December 2015, the WCO conducted a national workshop on PCA in Manama, Bahrain, from 17 to 21 April 2016 to explain the international standard of PCA concepts and its working process, in line with the WCO PCA Guidelines.

The workshop focused on how to conduct a pre-audit research based on risk profiles and provided an overview of the progress of an audit from targeting to on-site audit with a view to implement PCA in Bahrain in a more effective way.

With a view to implement an effective PCA function in accordance with the WCO PCA Guidelines and meeting in full the requirements of the WTO TFA, Bahrain sought the WCO’s support in conducting a PCA diagnostic. The objective of a PCA diagnostic is to review, analyze and report on the Administration’s institutional arrangements, as well as, the methodologies and techniques used to conduct its post clearance audits.

A WCO mission on advance ruling took place in Bahrain on 21 February 2020 to enhance and facilitate Customs procedures in providing transparent information as a requirement of the TFA.
EGYPT

Background

Egyptian Customs joined the WCO in 1956.

WCO support

A workshop was conducted in February 2015 on IPR. In April 2015, the WCO organized a national seminar on the RKC in Alexandria with the main purpose to work with Customs on a gap analysis and support them in drafting an action plan to fully implement the provisions of the RKC.

In 2016-2017 Egyptian Customs received the support of the WCO in the following areas: Strategic planning, CBM, SW and data model.

The main objective of the strategic planning workshop was to review and redraft the new ECA’s Strategic Plan to fully integrate Customs reform, modernization and trade facilitation, including the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA).

A specific support was provided in the area of SW with an emphasis on the importance of CBM as the foundation for the establishment of a SW approach. Necessary steps towards the implementation of the SW such as initial functional assessment, business process analysis, data harmonization, and the WCO Data Model were also explained.

In June and July 2019, ECA benefitted from the WCO support in Customs valuation.

A national workshop on RM took place in Alexandria from 19 to 23 January 2020 to assist Egyptian Customs in making the existing RM Unit work more effectively.

JORDAN

Background

Jordan became a Member of the WCO in January 1964.

Current planning

A strategic plan has been developed for the period 2014-2016 with the following objectives:

1. Promoting investment and enabling industry to be competitive to enhance the competitiveness of the national economy;
2. Facilitating trade exchange between Jordan and other countries;
3. Collecting revenues for the treasury;
4. Controlling passengers and goods movements and transportation crossing the Kingdom’s borders in conformity with the department’s authorities under the current regulations in force;
5. Combating smuggling;
6. Protecting the local society and the environment from hazardous materials; and
7. Contributing in controlling commercial activities to prohibit illegal businesses under the current regulations in force.

A new strategic plan for the period 2017-2019 has been formulated to carry through with what has been achieved in the previous Strategic Plan for 2014-2016, as well as articulating the future vision of "Jordan ranks globally among the best twenty countries for security and facilitation of cross-border trade". The current 2017-2019 Strategic Plan incorporates a range of initiatives and projects destined to renovate and strengthen Customs Controls, simplify and facilitate Customs clearance procedures; elevate staff proficiencies, preserve the environment and enhance the Department's relationship with the local community.

WCO support

As IPR is an important issue for the country, Jordan Customs conducted in cooperation with the WCO a National Seminar on Intellectual Property Rights in Amman in February 2015.

In March 2015, a WCO strategic planning support mission was conducted in Amman to discuss the use of the balanced scorecard (BSC) approach as a strategic planning as well as a performance management tool. The main objective of the mission was to explain how to translate strategic objectives into concrete actions and tangible modernization projects.
Participants also discussed the ways of cascading and implementing the BSC with particular emphasis on results-based management to deliver modernization projects more effectively.

More recently, the WCO conducted a Train-the-Trainer workshop on Customs valuation in May 2015 to support Jordan Customs’ efforts to strengthen efficient management of Customs valuation control and enhance trainers’ skills.

In order to enhance understanding of the requirements for effective implementation of PCA, in line with the WCO Guidelines for PCA, a WCO national workshop on PCA was held from 28 September to 2 October 2015 in Amman, Jordan.

The workshop highlighted the importance of PCA, focusing on its technical details as well as on the specific approach to be followed by auditors during a PCA.

In a view to strengthen the strategic positioning of human resources management and development in Jordan Customs, a national workshop was conducted in Amman, Jordan from 03 to 07 January to equip the HRM team with the right capacities to sustain efficient competency-based staff planning, workforce development and performance management.

The event focused on the importance of competency framework and competency-based job descriptions as critical recruitment, training and performance management tools in accordance with the WCO Framework of principles and practices on Customs Professionalism.

During this year, another workshop on SAFE FoS and TFA has been conducted in Amman, Jordan from 4 to 7 April 2016. The workshop explained the new Pillar of the SAFE FoS and discussed its significance for an efficient implementation of the WTO TFA.

Since submitting their letter of intent to implement the SAFE FoS, Jordan has already been implementing several SAFE Standards in a phased manner.

In 2016-2017, Jordan Customs benefited from the support of the WCO to implement its SW to simplify cross-border trade regulatory procedures which will reduce inefficiency and redundancy of border management processes. The support provided concerned also the TRS for determining the average release time which is a priority for Jordan as the country is keen to not only improve its ability to attract further foreign direct investments but also to comply with the requirements of the WTO TFA.

Jordan Customs also received WCO support in the field of Mercator Programme to provide more clarity on the requirements under the TFA against the current situation (primarily from a Customs perspective), especially the barriers and the actions required for full compliance, as well as the categories for each of the technical measures.

In February 2017, a national workshop on performance measurement was conducted in Jordan to discuss the current performance measurement system, to familiarize Customs officials with international good practices and to assist with formalizing Jordan Custom’s performance measurement framework. More recently, support was provided to Jordan Customs to prepare for the implementation of an AR system for tariff classification, origin and Customs valuation, in accordance with the provisions of the WTO TFA.

During the financial year 2017/2018, Jordan Customs benefitted from the WCO support to develop the risk register and RM framework.

A Train-of-Trainers workshop was organized in 2018 with the aim to develop a network of highly trained and highly confident professional key trainers who will be equipped to establish and deliver core Customs business Programmes. Jordan Customs has adopted a Training strategy for Customs officers which includes the development of trainers from different technical areas such as: Customs regulations, Customs procedures and regimes, processing of Customs declarations, Customs tariff and classification of goods, Customs value and origin of goods, Customs investigations, risk analysis, and PCA.

With a view to implement an effective PCA function in accordance with the WCO PCA Guidelines, Jordan Customs requested the WCO’s support in conducting a PCA diagnostic. The objective of the PCA diagnostic that was conducted in May 2018 is to review, analyze and report on the Administration’s institutional arrangements, as well as, the methodologies and techniques used to conduct its PCAs.

Jordan Customs made an important contribution to the Customs community through its review of the new Arabic language e-learning modules on PCA, RM, CBM and the RKC.

Jordan Customs received the WCO support to develop trainer’s capacity based on the WCO ToT approach. The mission took place on Amman on 7 July 2019.
Jordan received in December 2019 a support to build the capacity of Customs in intelligence area.

**KUWAIT**

**Background**

Kuwait became a Member of the WCO in October 1993.

Customs modernization in Kuwait began in 2006 by seeking political will for the implementation of the SAFE FoS.

**Current planning**

In February 2013, a team from the WCO and the World Bank carried out a diagnostic mission for Kuwait Customs.

The conclusions and recommendations of the mission report focused on the need to develop a Reform and Modernization plan for Kuwait Customs in accordance with the principles of the RKC and with the best practices identified by the WCO and the World Bank.

The report also highlighted the need to establish CBM by coordinating the activities of all border control agencies. The idea is to boost Customs efficiency in the management of trade flows and movements of people and to strike a balance with security requirements. Kuwait Customs is currently implementing solutions to:

- Increase the rate of usage of IT systems;
- Enhance the degree of co-ordination, co-operation and exchange with other agencies in order to reduce the level of intervention and increase overall efficiency and effectiveness; and
- Promote the use of RM.

A Strategic Plan is currently being developed by a team trained for that purpose.

**WCO support**

Upon a request by the Kuwait General Administration of Customs (KGAC), a WCO support mission to Kuwait was conducted from 28 September to 3 October 2013 to help the Administration formulate its Strategic Plan and a related action plan.

A team of the KGAC managers in charge of driving and coordinating the Customs reform process was trained.

The modernization projects will focus on the following areas:

- Overhaul of the current organizational structure and operational processes within Customs;
- Implementation of tools and instruments to enhance trade facilitation;
- Establishment of RM;
- Improved human resource management;
- Infrastructure development;
- National roll-out of an AEO Programme; and
- Revision of the training policy and development of a training strategy and plan.

The WCO support was provided at the political level through the visit of the WCO Secretary General to Kuwait on 29 March 2018 to observe and support the country’s Customs modernization process.

Kuwait Customs is currently implementing a SW, which would provide enhanced transparency and predictability to facilitate the cross-border movement of goods in collaboration with other government agencies and the private sector.

Kuwait Customs is considering the Golden Sector Companies as a trusted trader system and this could be the first step towards the implementation of an AEO programme.

Kuwait Customs envisages the introduction of the Cargo Targeting System and the development of the RM system to protect society from security threats, as well as the realization of the TRS to strengthen coordinated efforts towards trade facilitation.

Kuwait Customs received in February 2020 a WCO mission to discuss and develop the RTC strategic plan.

A RM workshop took place in February 2020 in Kuwait city.
LEBANON

Background

Lebanon became a Member of the WCO in May 1960.

WCO support

As part of its effort to develop the core competencies of Lebanese Customs officials, a national seminar on HS was held in Beirut in March 2011. The workshop was devoted largely to the presentation of the HS 2012 amendments and addressed the following topics:

– International Convention on the HS and its instruments;
– The amendments made to the Convention as part of the 4th HS review cycle; and
– An exchange of views on the management of the HS in Lebanon, particularly as regards the improvement of classification work and the associated infrastructure.

In the same vein, the WCO conducted a workshop for Lebanese Customs on Customs valuation in Beirut in May 2011. The workshop covered valuation methodology and practical aspects in addition to issues relating to multinationals such as transfer pricing and royalties as well as specific cases raised by Lebanese Customs.

In the context of its ongoing endeavor to modernize the work of Customs, the Administration of Lebanon hosted a national workshop on HS. The workshop was held in Beirut from 1 to 4 April 2014 and proved to be an appropriate platform to discuss possible improvements in the national model of tariff classification work and related infrastructure. Participants deliberated on a number of issues related to the HS Convention, reviewed the 2012 amendments to the Nomenclature and looked in greater detail at the issues surrounding the classification of wood and articles of wood through a study of Chapter 44 and an examination of practical examples.

During 2015, the WCO in cooperation with Lebanese Customs organized a RM workshop in Beirut from 19 to 22 January 2015 with the participation of 20 Customs officers from Headquarters and field-level offices. The workshop focused on the adoption of an integrated holistic approach to implementing RM taking into consideration both organizational and operational levels.

The development of a pre-arrival processing system has become a priority for Lebanese Customs. To this end, a national workshop was held in Beirut from 24 to 26 June 2015 to assist them develop such a system. The aim was, inter alia, to enable Customs assess the risk in advance which will lead to significant reduction in transaction cost for the trade.

In order to be responsive to the new challenges through the development and implementation of an integrated set of policies and procedures that ensure increased safety and security, as well as effective trade facilitation and revenue collection, Lebanese Customs was convinced that this can be only materialized through the adoption of a structured way in the form of a strategic plan taking due account of the WCO most essential instruments, as well as modern strategic planning methods.

To launch its Reform and Modernization initiative, Lebanese Customs requested the WCO to conduct a support mission from 14 to 18 December 2015 in Beirut to help the administration draft its Strategic Plan and related action plan.

The workshop provided an opportunity to explain the methodologies and benefits of effective strategic planning and the development of appropriate Mission / Vision / Values and Strategic Goals / Objectives / Activities / Indicators. It offered also the occasion to provide advice and guidance on the development of a new long-term Strategic Plan that is aligned to core strategic priorities of the Government and the Customs administration.

Following the recommendations from the strategic planning workshop, the WCO conducted a national support mission for competency – based HRM to Lebanese Customs. The mission, taking place in in Beirut from 9 to 13 May, supported the Customs modernization committee to implement a competency-based HRM system including: a competency framework, a job catalogue, service mandates and job descriptions.

Aiming at developing the leadership and management skills of senior and middle managers and providing them with the tools needed to use their knowledge to effectuate change in practice, the WCO conducted a national LMD workshop in Lebanon in January 2017.

In May 2017, Lebanese Customs benefited from the support of the WCO to implement its SW to simplify cross-border trade regulatory procedures which will reduce inefficiency and redundancy of border management processes.
In July 2017, Lebanese Customs organized a Project Management workshop in Beirut to build the institutional project management capacity and help better implement the Reform and Modernization projects.

In December 2017, the WCO conducted a diagnostic mission of the training system to revamp and improve learning and development Programmes. Aware of the value learning and development programmes bring to its business, Lebanese Customs wants to have a clear understanding of the trends emerging in learning and development programmes in order to better position Customs to select the right targeted solutions to drive results, increase employee engagement, and increase innovation and productivity.

In August 2020, the massive explosion that occurred in Beirut, Lebanon’s capital and main port city, has complicated the situation that was already difficult in many ways. The explosion damaged most of the port facilities and destroyed Customs building and Customs Training facility and numerous Customs port officers have been relocated to Beirut airport and work from there. The destruction of the Customs IT infrastructure and servers in the port provoked the transfer of the automated processing of Customs clearance that was operational before the explosion to a manual paper-based processing system.

Lebanese Customs joined the A-CIP Programme in 2019 and an integrity Scoping Mission was conducted in October 2019.

**MOROCCO**

**Background**

Morocco became a Member of the WCO in July 1968.

Within the framework of its regional and global opening up, the Kingdom of Morocco has invested heavily in the signing of a number of international association and free trade agreements both with developed countries and with countries of comparable levels of development as Morocco, with the aim of promoting the dismantling of tariff and non-tariff barriers.

These are essentially bilateral agreements with the EU, the US, Turkey and the UAE.

Morocco’s Customs and Indirect Tax Administration (ADII) is an active Member of the WCO and the WTO.

To achieve these objectives, a major ADII capacity building project was carried out over the period from 2005 to 2009, largely focusing on:

- Human resources through, in particular, training for Customs staff, recruiting new staff, and adapting the organization to the evolution of the ADII missions and the increase in numbers of its interventions;
- International co-operation to improve the conditions for preparation, implementation and follow-up of agreements between Morocco and its trade partners; and
- Governance by strengthening strategic and operational management, management control, adopting the contractualisation of objectives, and aligning audit and internal control with strategic objectives. And, quite recently, the launch of a major project to define ADII’s strategy in 2015 and support its implementation in the field.

**Evaluation of the Programme**

In order to attain the objectives of the free-trade agreements concluded and structural projects launched, a number of accompanying projects were carried out during the 2005-2009 period, in particular the adaptation of laws and regulations, the modernization of the Administration, the promotion of investment, the introduction of logistics infrastructures, the improvement of the services sector and human resources.

That being said, Moroccan Customs continues to play its role as a supplier of revenue for the State’s general budget and the volume of Moroccan external trade significantly increased in value over the past few years.

In January 2009 the ADII launched the full and integrated version of its new computer clearance system, BADR. As a result, 90% of the clearance process has now been computerized; the goal is 100%.

A new provision was incorporated in the Customs Code to establish AEO status on a legal basis; the associated Decree and Order are currently being approved.

Within the framework of simplification of administrative procedures and the use of electronic administration, the ADII has introduced a SW in the port of Casablanca through the PortNet system.

In terms of Customs-Business Partnership, the ADII has concluded a number of MOUs with the General Confederation of Moroccan Companies (CGEM), the Moroccan Association of Textile and Clothing (AMITH), the Moroccan Federation of...
Leather Industries (FEDIC) and the French Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services. Among the main actions undertaken within the framework of this project is the plan to reduce the time which goods spend in ports.

The modernization of human resource management constitutes a key focus of the ADII's capacity building strategy in recent years, through the drafting of a reference system of jobs and skills, making training more dynamic (in organizational and logistic terms), and finally accelerating the implementation of the integrated resource management system (RIAD).

As regards integrity, an observatory has been set up to increase participation by the private sector and users of the service in general in the fight against corruption.

**Support for the modernization**

The ADII is particularly focused on the improvement of governance and the quality of service. It has progressively undertaken a project to strengthen strategic management, launched within the framework of the ADII strategy for 2011-2015.

This strategy has been outlined as the best way of meeting 4 key objectives:

- Respond more effectively to client expectations;
- Better anticipate the development of their role, promoting targeted and more effective controls;
- Offer a new professional space to Customs staff; and
- Improve performance and effectiveness through management by project.

The “Customs 2015” Project is launching innovative projects likely to strengthen the capacities of the ADII in terms of revenue collection, enforcement and greater integrity.

The concept of PCA has been introduced, but requires further development taking into consideration the WCO's best practices. The methodological standards applicable to PCA and to the review of Customs declarations will be improved following recommendations by the WCO experts who recently carried out a mission for Moroccan Customs in June 2015.

Moroccan Customs participated this year in the regional effort to help Customs from the MENA region to improve their knowledge and skills related to the fight against fraud (seizures, penalties, detentions, etc.). This was translated by the conduct of a COPES workshop in Casablanca, Morocco, from 23 to 27 May 2016 with a focus on the importance of collecting evidence for investigation and prosecution purposes.

**OMAN**

**Background**

Oman became a Member of the WCO in September 2000.

**WCO support**

In April 2013, the WCO Secretary General travelled to Oman to discuss Customs modernization with the country's political leaders.

During the SG’s visit, the WCO was asked to support Oman in the implementation of the WCO SAFE FoS and, as a future step, to help the Administration in formulating its strategic Reform Plan.

The Directorate General of Customs of the Royal Oman Police in the Sultanate of Oman is in the process of developing a new Customs system and SW based on international best practices, and using WCO Data Model version 3.3 as the basis for the messaging and data components. A WCO mission was conducted in January 2014 in order to assess the progress made in the implementation of this project in line with the best practices in the SW field.

2014-2015 has been a particularly active year for Oman Customs with the conduct of four national workshops. The first workshop which took place in Muscat, Oman from 19 to 23 October 2014 was devoted to RM with the aim of assisting Oman Customs in effectively and efficiently embedding RM practices in Customs operations. The workshop particularly focused on how to establish and maintain national targeting centers and administer a robust Customs selectively system.

Oman Customs also requested the support of the WCO in conducting a TRS in order to review the clearance procedures by measuring the average time taken between the arrival of goods and their release. The workshop was held in Muscat, in April 2015 and has enabled participants to develop their knowledge on how to identify problem areas and potential corrective actions to increase the efficiency of border controls.
In order to ensure consistency in the implementation of Reform and Modernization projects, Oman Customs organized a strategic planning mission in Muscat during the period from 10 to 14 May 2015 to set priorities, establish agreement around intended objectives and outcomes, and adjust the organization's direction in response to a changing environment. The workshop focused not only on where the organization is going and the actions needed to make progress, but also how it will measure progress.

Priority has also been given this year to the identification of genuine and counterfeit goods. To this end, Oman Customs organized an IPR workshop in Muscat in June 2015 to train Customs officers on the identification of the locations where genuine goods are produced, the normal transportation routes and descriptions of the goods, and the identification of suspicious cargo based on risk assessment.

Being part of the Royal Oman Police, Oman Customs recognizes its important role in border security. Oman Customs has already implemented its ‘Bayan system’ - an Integrated Customs Management System and Single Electronic Window. They have also implemented a RM system in July 2015.

To consolidate these efforts, the WCO conducted in December 2015, a workshop on the preparation of the implementation of the SAFE Framework of Standards (FOS) and an AEO Programme in Oman to continue implementing the WTO TFA projects.

In order to assess, at frequent intervals, the progress towards its stated goals and enhance Customs efficiency, a national workshop was conducted in Muscat from 22 to 25 February 2016, to support Oman Customs implement a performance measurement system.

The workshop discussed the steps Oman Customs will need to take to launch its performance measurement system including the appointment of a Performance Measurement team.

In order to help create a PCA structure within Oman Customs, the WCO conducted a National workshop in Muscat in January 2017 to explain the international standard of PCA and its working process, in line with the WCO PCA Guidelines.

In December 2017, Oman Customs organized in collaboration with the WCO a national workshop on project management to build the institutional Project Management capacity and help Customs better implement the reform and modernization projects.

The WCO also organized a national workshop to strengthen Oman Customs activities and improve its understanding and management of projects in the area of the SW environment and CBM, not only to foster the movement of goods across borders but also to enhance the security of cross-border transactions.

A WCO support mission on the implementation of AR system took place in December 2019.

**PALESTINE**

**Background**

On 24 March 2015 Palestine became the 180th Member of the WCO.

**WCO support**

The first support ever provided to Palestine Customs after Palestine became a WCO Member focused on the improvement of the training skills of Customs officers. To this end a ToT workshop has been conducted in the premises of the RTC Amman in February 2016. The objective of the workshop was to deepen the knowledge and enhance the capacity of Customs trainers in order to more effectively and efficiently undertake all issues related to Customs core business, and to train prospective trainers, capable of conducting training activities at national level following the WCO standards.

Palestine Customs also participated to the workshop on SAFE FoS and TFA that has been conducted in Amman, Jordan from 4 to 7 April 2016. The workshop was a response to a request from Palestine Customs to address both security and facilitation issues.

As one of the priority countries under the HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD TFA Programme, Palestine Customs benefited from multi-mission support under the tailor-made track of the Mercator Programme, which enabled the administration to define its strategic plan, reform its human resources procedures and respond to the emergent challenges facing the administration’s complex operating model.
WCO support in RM provided the foundations for the deployment of RM liaison officers at the administration’s 13 Customs stations. This network has been supplemented with the installation and roll-out of nCEN. The WCO enabled experiencing sharing between Palestine and Morocco, given the latter’s experience in the management of bonded warehouses, which is central to Palestine’s emergent Customs operating model.

Two support missions on Customs valuation and transfer pricing and Customs intelligence were conducted in RTC Jordan for the benefit of the Palestine Customs.

Palestine Customs joined the A-CIP Programme in 2019 and an integrity Scoping Mission is planned to be conducted in the 3rd quarter 2020.

QATAR

Background

Qatar became a Member of the WCO in May 1992. On 13 July 2009, the State of Qatar deposited its instrument of accession to the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures (RKC) with the WCO.

Evaluation of the Programme

During recent years, Qatar Customs has been progressing in terms of both technologies and people. With the objective of a paperless Customs, it implemented a SW in 2011, linking 17 government agencies and an electronic payment system.

The focus of Customs leadership has shifted from technology to human resources. The training Programme has been significantly expanded to include a partnership with the Community College of Qatar to provide a 2-year Programme in English and college study for high school graduate Customs officers. Qatar Customs established its "Duties and Ethics of Customs Officers" in 2011 and upgraded it in 2012, including the development of an English version.

Current planning

Qatar is currently undergoing a comprehensive Reform and Modernization Programme; basic actions have been defined by the Strategic Plan for 2013-2016 which is about to be updated. The current Strategic Plan is aligned with the Qatar National Vision 2030 that sets a goal to create a sustainable economy and advance the living standards of Qatar citizens. It was formulated to allow greater co-operation with regional and international organizations and comprises the following main pillars: enhancing co-operation and information exchange, simplification of Customs clearance procedures, improvement of economic competitiveness, fair and efficient revenue collection, capacity building, protection of society and security, and integrity and good governance.

WCO support

To achieve an appropriate balance between trade facilitation and regulatory control, a national workshop on RM was held from 31 March to 2 April 2013. The purpose of the workshop was to assist the Directorate General of Customs in making the existing RM Unit work more effectively.

The WCO held a LMD workshop in Doha from 16 to 27 February 2014 for a group of senior Customs officers.

Management development is a priority for Qatar Customs, which Reform and Modernization efforts have resulted in the implementation of a series of organizational measures over recent years. This was consequently a timely workshop offering a clear response to the needs expressed by the Administration.

The LMD workshop provided an opportunity to examine various management-related topics in greater depth, such as strategic management, visioning, communication, change management, negotiations, people management and the promotion of integrity in the workplace.

In the context of implementation of an AEO Programme, Qatar Customs sought the WCO’s assistance regarding the development of AEOs and regarding the RKC and the Istanbul Convention. 2 missions were carried out in Doha. The first took place from 2 to 4 March 2014 through a workshop involving a working group made up of officials selected for and tasked with devising the Administration’s AEO Programme.

To ensure that trade reaps the benefits of much greater simplification of Customs formalities offered by the ATA Carnet, a second training workshop was organized by the WCO from 19 to 22 May 2014. Participants deepened their knowledge of the ATA System which forms an integral part of the WCO Convention on Temporary Admission and the Istanbul Convention.
The WCO organized a national seminar on the RKC, held in Doha from 24 to 27 March 2014. The national seminar was attended by a number of senior officers and managers from Qatar Customs. The primary objective of the seminar was to inform and raise awareness among all the players about the importance and benefits of the RKC and to fully familiarize participants with this instrument so as to expedite Qatar’s accession process and make appropriate preparations for the implementation of this Convention at the earliest opportunity.

At the end of the regional workshop on HRM held early this year in Qatar, a discussion on the design of an action plan related to the implementation of the different tools and instruments that have been discussed during the workshop took place. As a follow up to a regional workshop, a WCO mission on HRM was conducted from 12 to 15 May in Doha with a view to assist Qatar Customs on the improvement of the HRM strategy and practices.

With the aim of providing advance and predictable information to stakeholders in order to facilitate compliance with Customs requirements, Qatar Customs organized a national workshop in Doha from 12 to 15 May. In addition to the different steps towards the design and the establishment of a national advance tariff ruling Programme, the workshop discussed a variety of aspects related to the HS Convention relevant to the national dimension of the classification work, including its theoretical foundation as well as some of the practical aspects.

A Customs WCO support mission was conducted from 17 to 19 March 2015 in Doha to discuss the current performance measurement system and to assist with formalizing the Qatar Customs performance measurement framework.

The organizational effort in developing the leadership and management skills of QCA managers has been sustained through the organization by the second Leadership and Management Development workshop. The workshop was held in Doha during the period 19-30 April 2015.

A Columbus phase 3 mission was carried out in Doha from 17 to 21 May 2015. The mission looked at holistic organizational issues using as references the WCO Diagnostic Framework and building blocks identified in the “Customs in the 21st Century” strategic document. The aim of the mission was to assess the results of the Reform and Modernization efforts undertaken since the WCO diagnostic mission in the 1st Phase. The Phase 3 offered also an opportunity to recommend adjustments to the ongoing modernization activities.

In addition to 4 regional workshops that have been organized this year in Doha for the benefit of MENA region Members with a financial support from Qatar Customs Authority, the support of the WCO to Qatar Customs has continued through 2015-2016 and has led to the conduct of 3 workshops at the national level to strengthening the RM function and help implement the provisions of the TFA and the RKC.

As part of continued WCO Mercator Programme support regarding the implementation of the WTO TFA, the WCO held a national workshop in Qatar from 26 to 29 October 2015 to further enhance the Trade Facilitation-related part of the already existing Qatar Customs Strategic Plan.

Qatar Customs has made significant progress overall in the area of trade facilitation as a very active WCO Member having been the recipient of a series of Customs modernization related events so far this year - in addition to playing a pivotal regional role focusing on both bi-lateral and multi-lateral Customs agreements.

From 23 to 26 November 2015, the WCO organized a Risk-based Selectivity workshop in Doha, Qatar to help Customs implement a robust organizational RM framework and improve operational risk assessment practices.

In the same vein, Qatar Customs hosted a national workshop in Doha, from 18 to 21 January 2016 as part of its efforts to enhance the implementation of the RKC through the identification of aspects that need to be addressed and the formulation of an action plan.

During 2016-2017, the support of the WCO to Qatar Customs has continued and has led to the conduct of 3 workshops at the national level to implement TRS, to improve intelligence management practices and to discuss the implications of E-commerce on Customs. In addition to the national events, 4 regional workshops have been organized this year in Doha for the benefit of the MENA region Members with financial support from the Qatar Customs Authority.

In December January 2018, Qatar Customs organized in collaboration with the WCO a national workshop on project management to build the institutional project management capacity and equip the project managers with the needed capabilities to better implement the Reform and Modernization projects.

Qatar Customs also benefited from detailed and practical information on the concepts, conditions and requirements for the establishment of an AEO Programme as described in the SAFE Framework of Standards during a diagnostic mission on AEO that was held in April 2018 in Doha. An action plan was drafted to improve the current AEO scheme.
With a view to implement an effective PCA function in accordance with the WCO PCA Guidelines and meeting in full the requirements of the WTO TFA, the General Authority for Customs for Qatar sought the WCO’s support in conducting a PCA diagnostic. The objective of a PCA diagnostic is to review, analyze and report on the Administration’s institutional arrangements, as well as, the methodologies and techniques used to conduct its post clearance audits.

The PCA diagnostic was conducted in Doha, Qatar from 25 to 29 March 2018. The Diagnostic involved discussions with senior representatives from various departments and sections within the General Authority for Customs of Qatar, including, Internal Audit Department; Anti-Smuggling & Customs Security Department; Planning and Quality Management Department; Operations & Risk Analysis Department; Department of Revenue and the Subsequent Audit; Origin Section and visits to the Hamad Sea Port and the Air Freight Customs and Private Airports Own Management Department at Doha International Airport.

A national PGS Assessment and diagnostic was conducted in Doha in February 2020.

A regional workshop to improve the selectivity systems by utilizing Data Analytics for RM purposes took place in Doha, Qatar in November 2019.

SAUDI ARABIA

Background

Saudi Arabia became a Member of the WCO in May 1973.

Current planning

Saudi Customs seeks to provide integrated Customs services to meet development requirements in Saudi Arabia, and keep pace with the latest developments at local and international level. This will be achieved through a form of a balance between facilitation of the flow of trade and enforcement of the law.

The objectives of Saudi Customs are as follows:

- Prevent entry of IPR-infringing goods or substandard goods to ensure consumer protection;
- Collect Customs duties on imported goods;
- Facilitate export procedures and open markets;
- Protect the national economy from dumping threats;
- Protect the domestic industry; and
- Protect the health and security of the community

WCO support

The WCO, in cooperation with Saudi Customs, organized a RM / Assessment workshop in Riyadh from 27 to 30 October 2014. The workshop, which is part of the trade facilitation strategy of Saudi Customs, provided an opportunity to discuss RM at the operational level including risk assessment, profiling and targeting, and information and intelligence. In addition, several elements of RM at the organizational level were covered to assist Saudi Customs better achieve the overall strategic objectives.

A second workshop was devoted to the SAFE Framework of Standards (FoS) and AEO. This workshop was held in Riyadh from 23 to 25 March 2015 and focused on the preparation for launching the Saudi Customs AEO Programme. The possibility of a harmonized AEO Programme for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Member States in the future is being explored.

During this financial year, Saudi Arabia hosted and funded 3 regional events for the benefit of Customs from the MENA region. Saudi Customs has benefited from these events to enhance the knowledge and skills of its officers.

The first event on “Implications of E-Commerce on Customs” was conducted from 16 to 19 November in Riyadh, and highlighted the significance of growing cross-border E-Commerce and the need for Customs administrations to adequately prepare to address issues stemming therefrom.

Being the first of its kind in the region, the workshop enabled the participants in developing a broad draft action plan along with a set of recommendations as potential way forward, which inter alia included adoption of a risk-based approach based on advance electronic data (including from post); developing IT and data analytics capabilities, enhanced coordination with partner government agencies and active engagement with other stakeholders involved in the E-Commerce supply chain to explore opportunities for the exchange of data.
The second workshop for this year was held in Riyadh from 1 to 4 February 2016 to prepare a pool of experts from the MENA region able to provide technical assistance in the field of SAFE FoS and AEO.

The last workshop, which was held in Riyadh from 27 to 31 March 2016, focused on CBM, SW and the WCO Data Model. The objective of the workshop is to help countries from the region develop SW solutions to simplify cross-border trade regulatory procedures which will reduce inefficiency and redundancy of border management processes.

In December 2016, the WCO conducted a national workshop for the benefit of Saudi Customs to enhance its risk-based controls at borders by setting up a PCA section in January 2017.

Saudi Customs also benefited from detailed and practical information on the concepts, conditions and requirements for the establishment of an AEO Programme as described in the SAFE Framework of Standards during a workshop that was held in May 2017 in Riyadh.

The current Customs Modernization Strategy was approved by the competent authority in September 2017 and is being implemented by the Customs Administration. The WCO conducted in December 2017 a mission to assist Saudi Arabia Customs in ensuring that Customs modernization Programmes and projects are shaped towards this strategy for the benefit of a sustained and coherent economic reform process.

Based on a request from Saudi Customs, a diagnostic mission was conducted in December 2019 to evaluate Saudi Arabia Reform and Modernization progress.


SUDAN

Background

Sudan became a Member of the WCO in June 1960.

Current planning

Sudan is currently undergoing a comprehensive Reform and Modernization Programme; basic actions have been defined by the current Strategic Plan for 2012-2016. The Strategic Plan was produced taking into consideration:

- Feedback on the implementation of the recommendations stemming from the Columbus Programme Phase I diagnostic mission;
- SWOT matrix, developed by the senior management team; and
- Validated Mission and Vision.

The 2012-2016 Strategic Plan is aligned with the 25-year National Comprehensive Strategic Plan and the 5-year national Strategic Plan and was formulated to allow greater technical co-operation with regional and international organizations. It comprises the following main pillars: simplification of Customs clearance procedures, enhancing relationships with private sector, improving internal and external communication, and human resource development.

Customs Reform and Modernization progress

Sudan Customs has made good progress with the automation of services and is planning to introduce ASYCUDA World this year. Sudan Customs also plans to increase the use of the X-ray inspection system to speed up inspections of passengers and goods at Soba container inspection post, as well as using electronic gates, e-mail and conducting Customs controls with the aid of closed-circuit television (CCTV).

The Customs modernization activities identified by Sudan Customs will focus on the following areas:

- Improving the legislative base and Customs regulations;
- Reviewing the organizational structure;
- Rolling-out the ASYCUDA World system;
- Increasing the use of non-intrusive inspection;
- Developing human resources;
- Enhancing the relationship between Customs and private sector;
- Developing Customs infrastructure;
- Broadening international co-operation;
• Improving internal and external communication; and
• Using RM systems.

A Columbus Phase 2 mission conducted in early 2013 supported the Administration to review its Strategic Plan. Reform projects building the Administration’s capacity to manage change and implement reform were discussed with senior management and measures to adapt the role and mission of Customs to new economic and security related challenges were proposed. Several planned reform activities have already been carried out within the context of these projects, while others are under way.

Modernization efforts are also needed in key areas such as the use of simplified procedures, including the introduction of the AEO concept, the introduction of the SW principle and the systematic development of PCA.

As part of a continuous effort by Sudan Customs to enhance RM capabilities to a "best practice" level as well as to effectively and efficiently embed RM practices in Customs operations, a RM workshop was conducted from 10 to 13 March 2014 in Khartoum, Sudan.

Senior and mid managers learned how to develop and implement a Customs risk assessment system based on profiling and targeting. They discussed the identification of key risk areas and related risk indicators applicable to land, maritime and air cargo movements. They were also given an opportunity to explore issues related to the identification and categorization of importers and exporters and to the implementation of intelligence tasking, intelligence briefing and operational reporting communication cycle.

Within the framework of the WCO’s Capacity Building Programme and in partnership with Sudan Customs Authority, a technical workshop to refine the training strategy and discuss the different steps related to the establishment of the new Customs academy was held in Khartoum, Sudan from 1 to 5 June 2014.

This workshop provided an opportunity to further refine the training strategy and training plan, using key WCO tools such as the National Training Centre Guidelines, the PICARD Professional Standards and best practices from similar support in other administrations.

By establishing the underlying policies and principles supporting the delivery of training, alongside the professional, operational and managerial competencies needed to deliver on the administration’s mandate, Sudan Customs Authority is well-positioned to move forward with the implementation of modernized training tools, including e-learning, in keeping with its current Strategic Plan.

In 2014 and 2015, the Sudan Customs Authority has continued the implementation of its strategic plan with a focus on the trade facilitation tools and instruments.

The first project concerned the implementation of an AEO Programme and was supported by a national workshop organized by the WCO, in cooperation with the UNDP. The workshop took place in Khartoum from 11 to 13 November 2014 with a high level of participation reflecting the importance and commitment that the Sudanese Customs Administration attaches to this initiative.

A national workshop to assist Sudan Customs in better understanding the WTO TFA and considering its future implementation by using necessary WCO instruments and tools was held in Khartoum from 23 to 27 November 2014. The workshop discussed in detail the terms of the TFA and represented an opportunity to explain the WCO Mercator Programme which was developed to assist WCO Members in implementing trade facilitation measures including the TFA.

Another trade facilitation measure is related to the implementation of an advance ruling system for tariff classification. The aim of the workshop conducted in February 2015 in Khartoum was to assist Sudan Customs in designing a system that provides certainty to the importer, or his or her representative, as to how goods are to be classified and thereby facilitates the documentation requirements for clearing goods at the border.

Also in February 2015, a workshop on TRS was organized by the WCO in Khartoum Customs. The workshop discussed the best way to conduct a TRS and resulted in the drafting of an action plan to ensure an effective implementation of the future TRS which will be carried out in the course of the coming months.

During this year, 2 TRS have been conducted in Sudan in order to identify and address the bottlenecks that hinder the smooth movement of goods. The study reports containing a detailed analysis of the situation along with possible solutions were sent to the WCO.
From 1 to 3 December 2015, a scoping mission was conducted in Khartoum to update the country’s national trade facilitation plan that was completed in 2013 as well as to adopt a comprehensive trade-related technical assistance Programme to help Sudan implement trade facilitation reforms. With this plan in place, Sudan became one of the earliest adopters of the Mercator tailor-made track.

The event concluded with a forward plan to support the NCTF and Sudan Customs in the effective and sustainable implementation of trade facilitation measure. Joint efforts between the WCO and UNCTAD continued to support the NCTF and its finalization of a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap.

The implementation of the plan started with the conduct of a national workshop on CBM, SW and the WCO Data Model in Khartoum from 10 to 14 January 2016.

The event focused on the importance of CBM principles as the basis for the development of a SW environment to enable coordination and cooperation between all relevant agencies involved in border management. The workshop also discussed the importance of strategic planning and formal governance structures in establishing a SW environment. Other important topics included Business Process Re-engineering as well as Data Harmonization, using the WCO Data Model as the interoperability framework to lay the foundation for CBM and SW.

The implementation process of TFA related projects has continued with the conduct of 2 national workshops on risk assessment and passenger’s selectivity in February and March 2016. The selectivity system of ASYCUDA is now operational across five Customs stations with green channel chances reaching 30% at Khartoum International Airport, and 10 – 20% at Port Sudan and Soba Dry Port.

The implementation of passenger risk assessment in Khartoum airport will increase the level of certainty about the relative risk that passengers represent as early as possible in the traveler pathway and enable Customs to make timely, well placed, risk-based intervention and resource deployment decisions.

During 2016-2017, Sudan Customs hosted a national workshop to develop the leadership and management skills of senior and middle managers and to provide them with the tools needed to use their knowledge to effectuate change in practice, while support in human resources management has helped the administration move to a more competency-based approach.

In March 2017, a WCO support was provided to Sudan Customs to discuss the current IPR situation, to review the legal framework of IPR border enforcement, the IPR-related information exchange and the need of building a cooperative relationship with the private sector.

In 2017-2018, Sudan established a PCA team within the RM unit, which benefited from the WCO’s capacity building support. Sudan Customs benefitted from the WCO support on Customs intelligence during a sub-regional workshop that was conducted in Amman, Jordan in December 2019.

SYRIA

Background

At Syria’s request, an expert mission to Damascus took place from 7 to 10 November 2010, in the framework of Phase 2 of the Columbus Programme. The purpose of this mission was to examine Syrian Customs’ existing capacity and to draw up the strategy documents for a Reform and Modernization process based on the SAFE principles and the WCO Columbus Programme Phase 1 recommendations.

Evaluation of the Programme

Syrian Customs is committed to the facilitation and simplification of Customs procedures, based on international best practices. For this purpose, the management of most Customs warehouses has been automated in accordance with the ASYCUDA system and electronic processing of transit data has been initiated, as has work on a project to develop and modernize a number of areas, including human resources, the RM work plan, and the work plan for the electronic tracking of trucks transporting goods.

Moreover, the system for the electronic payment of duties and taxes, in particular, should be operational in the near future, in accordance with the provisions of Article V of the Syrian Customs Code which deals with the simplification and facilitation of methods for the payment of Customs duties, using credit accounts and bank guarantees, and any other means of payment which facilitates and stimulates trade flows.
Under Phase 2 of the Columbus Programme, the experts have proposed and recommended the establishment of a Directorate for Development and Modernization within Syria’s Directorate General of Customs, for the effective monitoring and successful management of the various development Programmes. In this respect, once the national situation has stabilized, Syrian Customs may require WCO support as regards monitoring Phase 2 of the Columbus Programme.

TUNISIA

Background

Tunisia became a Member of the WCO in July 1966.

Evaluation of the Programme

Following the events which led to a change of political regime, Customs has continued to function despite the damages sustained and the serious disruption to services.

In January 2010, a WCO expert mission assisted Tunisian Customs with the launch of an AEO Programme.

At the end of 2011, in the framework of the WCO’s participation in the G8 Deauville Partnership, Tunisian Customs carried out a diagnostic of its needs in two important areas: RM and Customs IT.

Subsequently, a project for the modernization of the border with Libya was launched with the support of the WCO. The project is supported by the IDB, which is drawing up the funding dossier with the Tunisian and Libyan Governments. Expert missions will be conducted by the WCO in order to implement a modern, tailored blueprint for trade facilitation and security at this border, which is of vital importance to the economies of the region.

The WCO initiated talks with the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the IDB when participating in a Conference on trade facilitation in the Maghreb, held in Rabat in June 2012.

As a result, projects on Customs IT-related procedures, as well as the modernization of second-level controls and support for a regional training Programme, are under consideration.

WCO support

As part of Phase 2 of the Columbus Programme, and at the request of the Tunisian Customs Administration, a mission to assist with evaluating the implementation of the recommendations stemming from the diagnostic report and with planning the modernization was conducted from 30 May to 4 June 2013. Meetings with the Reform and Modernization Committee made it possible to analyze the goals and expectations of Tunisian Customs and to identify the Customs Administration’s development priorities. Discussions during the workshop led to the development of a five-year Strategic Plan for 2013-2017.

At the request of the Director General of Tunisian Customs, a WCO mission went to Tunisia from 11 to 14 June 2013 to conduct a national integrity development workshop with approximately 30 participating Customs officers. The objective of this workshop was to raise participants’ awareness of integrity and anti-corruption, to enter into dialogue on these issues on the basis of a case study and to help the Tunisian Customs Administration conduct an integrity self-assessment. At the end of this workshop, a national integrity action plan produced as a result of the ideas shared between all the workshop participants was submitted to the Director General.

Acting on a request by the Director General of Tunisian Customs, in the framework of the five-year Strategic Plan devised during Phase 2 of the Columbus Programme, the WCO organized a national seminar on the RKC which was held in Tunis from 3 to 6 December 2013. The national seminar was attended by more than 70 officials from the core departments of the Directorate General and regional Directorates, and by senior Tunisian Customs officers. Participants also included representatives of the Ministries involved in Customs clearance procedures (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Trade and Handicrafts, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Transport), the Tunisian Post Office, the National Institute for Standardization and Industrial Property, and the private sector. The main purpose of the seminar was to inform all these players and increase their awareness of the importance and the benefits of the RKC, and to fully familiarize participants with that instrument in order to expedite the process of Tunisian accession and prepare effectively for the Convention to be implemented at the earliest opportunity. The seminar concluded with the development of an Action Plan for accession to and implementation of the RKC.

WCO support will continue to be provided over the coming year through the organization of a national workshop on PCA. The aim is to enable Customs to target its resources more effectively and to work in partnership with the trading community to ensure greater compliance and to facilitate trade.
Given that a dynamic RM Programme is essential for PCA, a RM workshop was conducted in Tunis from 09 to 12 June 2014. The workshop aimed to provide advice and technical support in order to develop a RM framework and related policies and procedures.

Participants from Tunisian Customs learned during the workshop how to develop and implement a Customs risk assessment system based on profiling and targeting. They also discussed the identification of key risk areas and related risk indicators applicable to land, maritime and air cargo movements. Besides, they were given the opportunity to explore issues related to the identification and categorization of importers and exporters and to the implementation of intelligence tasking, intelligence briefing and operational reporting communication cycle.

The senior management of Tunisian Customs has given the development of leadership and management skills of middle and senior managers a high priority. For this a LMD workshop was held in Tunis, Tunisia from 19 to 30 January 2015.

The workshop was attended by 20 participants and facilitated by a WCO accredited expert from the French Customs. The focus of the workshop was on exploring issues related to strategic management, visioning, change management, negotiations, people management, integrity development and gender equity. A special attention was given to the personal development of the participants, as a way to encourage them to develop their individual leadership qualities.

With the adoption of the new strategic plan 2016-2020, the development of Human resources has been identified as one of the most important capacity-building activities to be undertaken for the modernization of Tunisian Customs.

The WCO support to Tunisian Customs has taken shape through the conduct of an HRM mission in Tunis from 2 to 8 February 2016. The mission aims to support the Tunisian Customs in an ambitious reform process and more specifically to consolidate the Reform and Modernization projects including the development of tools and processes to implement strategic HR management.

Another workshop was held from 19 to 22 January 2016 in Tunis to familiarize Customs staff and other stakeholders with the TRS and prepare them for the conduct of such a study. The WCO support has been provided to assist Tunisian Customs in the implementation of the WTO TFA through the Mercator Programme.

Since the delivery of business outcomes is realized through the success of projects, Tunisian Customs hosted a national workshop in Tunis from 25 to 29 April 2016 to adhere to project management methods and strategies when implementing the new strategic plan with the aim to deliver value at each step along the way.

In order to strengthen the strategic positioning of human resources management and development in Tunisian Customs, the WCO conducted a national workshop in December 2016 to equip the HR modernization working group with the right capacities to implement efficient competency-based approach.

Opportunities and challenges in the area of cross-border E-Commerce related to facilitation and control were discussed during a national workshop that was held in Tunis in March 2017. The workshop reflected on several current and emerging challenges emanating from E-Commerce and explored potential solutions.

In April 2018, Tunisian Customs organized in collaboration with the WCO a national mission to review and update the current strategic plan. The mission aims to ensure that:

- Customs Modernization Strategy is approved by the competent authority and implemented by the Customs Administration;
- Customs modernization process is driven and owned by the Customs; and
- Future Customs modernization Programmes and projects are shaped towards this strategy for the benefit of a sustained and coherent economic reform process.

Tunisia Customs joined the A-CIP Programme Activity in 2019 and an integrity Scoping Mission took place in September 2019.

A Strategic Planning follow-up mission was conducted in September 2019 to help Tunisian Customs develop its first Strategic plan and related action plan.

An advanced regional workshop on the Electronic Certificate of Origin was conducted in October 2019 for the benefit of ATU countries including Tunisia.
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Background

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) Customs Administrations have benefited a WCO diagnostic mission conducted in October 2007. The mission studied the current situation of the 7 local Customs Administrations of the UAE, as well as an overview of the role of the Federal Customs Authority (FCA) and its connection to local Customs. The main objectives of the mission consisted of identifying potential development activities for UAE Customs and the strategic path for the future.

Evaluation of the Programme

The recommendations made to local Customs were taken into consideration by each individual administration in its own internal reforms, whereas the overview recommendations for UAE Customs were taken into consideration by the FCA in co-operation with local Customs and may be summarized as follows:

Developments

1. In the light of the recommendations pertaining to security and RM controls, local Customs which did not have a RM department set up these offices, enabling the establishment of a UAE Customs Intelligence Committee. UAE Customs worked in co-operation with all the relevant authorities at different levels as follows:
   - The FCA, in co-operation with local Customs, established an intelligence data sharing system among local Customs to exchange seizure information locally both within Customs and other relevant agencies to build a national intelligence database to be used for RM;
   - The Unified Trader Code (UTC) project has been developed to register all relevant entities that are related to import/export in a unified database. This database will help to facilitate the review of the activities of such entities and to share information between local Customs administrations helping to ensure that these entities are authorized to conduct trade activities;
   - The UAE joined the WCO Interface Public-Members (IPM) project in 2011. It is being used as a learning tool and as a reference for Customs inspectors to assist them in combating IPR infringements;
   - In co-operation with the UAE “Executive Office of Goods and Material Subject to Export Control Committee”, Customs are in the process of working to have a shared IT database to help control sensitive goods at national level;
   - An IT System, enabling all importers/exports to lodge their cash declarations, was developed in 2011 in conjunction with the Central Bank. This is one of the steps for which the FCA is linked up to other government agencies as part of the SW; and
   - Customs are part of the National Emergency Authority and have worked on creating a Customs response team to deal with issues requiring Customs action in the event of an emergency.

2. As for the recommendation to develop IT systems adopted between Customs Administrations in the UAE, the following developments have taken place:
   - UAE Customs Administrations have initiated a database for Customs statistics and information sharing at local and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) level as a step in exchanging information and enhancing IT; and
   - The UAE has joined the WCO CEN project, ensuring active participation in exchanging information related to seizures made internationally by local Customs as well as following up seizure statistics for the UAE. The co-operation between the UAE CEN team and the MENA RILO regarding statistics and information sharing is continuous. Based on the CEN shared data, the UAE has used such information for risk analysis and based on the trends and patterns derived from the information collected from the CEN, a corrective action plan and risk parameters have been established.

3. As for the recommendations on continuous development of Customs in the UAE and drawing up the plans required to secure such a goal, the UAE has taken the following steps:
   - Based on the UAE Federal Government Strategy, the FCA is working on a three-year Strategic Plan starting from 2008. Customs Strategic Plans are based on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and linked to the overall strategy of the government;
   - The UAE is in the initial phase of a study on how a TRS may be implemented in the UAE and how local UAE Customs would benefit by developing Customs procedures as per international best standards (2011);
- The UAE is planning to conduct an AEO study, looking at how it could be implemented in the UAE; and
- The SW project is being revised and studied by UAE Customs and other related government authorities, by discussing the feasibility of the implementation of the IT integration system needed for the project.

4. The UAE is participating in global activities and projects through which Customs work in the UAE will be updated with best practices adopted in the field of integrity and quality as follows:

- The UAE ratified the ATA Convention with effect from 1 April 2011 and accepted both Annexes A and B.1. The UAE ATA Committee meets on a regular basis to update the current situation and study the rest of the Annexes to the Convention;
- With reference to the SAFE FOS, the UAE has established a National Inspection Committee, with Customs officers as Members to assure the quality and integrity of Customs procedures followed in the UAE, and with the main aim of unifying these procedures at a national level; and
- The establishment of the Committee for the National Customs Procedure Policy is derived from UAE Customs’ study of the Kyoto Convention and its applications at Customs level.

5. As part of Programme Global Shield to combat illicit movements of precursor chemicals that could be used to manufacture explosives, the FCA, in collaboration with the WCO, held a training workshop in Abu Dhabi from 7 to 11 October 2012 to sensitize Customs officers to the risks associated with the trade in these products and to enable them to meet the challenges raised by technological developments and the political instability prevailing in several parts of the world.

6. A workshop to evaluate the implementation of the recommendations stemming from Phase 1 of the Columbus Programme was held on 29 and 30 August 2012 in the UAE, with all the Customs administrations present. During the workshop proceedings, special support was given to the preparation of a 2014-2017 Strategic Plan for the FCA.

7. A Phase 3 mission of the Columbus Programme was carried out in the UAE in November 2012. The WCO experts visited FCA headquarters in Abu Dhabi, the headquarters of the Abu Dhabi Customs Administration, Ajman Customs and port, Umm Al Quwain Customs, Sharjah Customs, Fujairah Customs and port, Raps Al Kamiah Customs and port and Dubai Customs. At the end of the mission, a report was presented to the FCA containing recommendations for the formulation and implementation of the Strategic Plan.

8. To assist the FCA in formulating a Strategic Plan and in implementing the recommendations emanating from Phase 3 of the Columbus Programme, a meeting between the relevant structures and WCO experts was held in Abu Dhabi on 9 and 10 December 2012. During that meeting, the FCA was assisted in the formulation of a Strategic Plan for 2014-2017. Likewise, each Customs Administration of the seven Emirates received assistance from the experts with the implementation of the priority recommendations listed in the report on Phase 3 of the Columbus Programme.

9. In 2016, the WCO conducted a workshop on the preparation of the implementation of the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards (FOS) and an AEO Programme in Dubai, from 13 to 15 December 2015. The workshop focused on the need for a harmonized implementation of the SAFE FOS and AEO Programme among all Emirates.

10. In March 2017, support was provided to UAE Customs to prepare for the implementation of an advance ruling system for tariff classification, origin and Customs valuation, in accordance with the provisions of the WTO TFA.

YEMEN

Background

Yemen became a Member of the WCO in July 1993.

Evaluation of the Programme

The reforms undertaken by Yemen Customs may be summarized as follows:

- In the field of legislation: a number of amendments have been made to the provisions of the Yemen Customs Code in order to comply with the spirit and principles of the SAFE FoS to secure and facilitate global trade;
- A move has been made towards the adoption of computerized systems, scanning systems and AEO status through a RM approach;
- As regards Customs value, Yemen Customs applies the transaction value in accordance with Article VII of the GATT;
As regards IT, preparations are currently underway for a transition towards the use of the new version of ASYCUDA World; and

Yemen Customs uses the latest version of the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System as published by the WCO.

Support for a modernization strategy

Yemen Customs has undertaken a major reform project focusing on procedural and organizational restructuring, and to do this there are plans to organize, in co-ordination with the WCO, a conference on the development and modernization of Yemen Customs.

Yemen Customs is striving to bolster Customs controls while ensuring the smooth flow of trade with its partners. With this in mind, a national workshop on RM was held from 3 to 7 February 2013. The purpose of the workshop, considered part of the Customs Capacity Building Programme, was to enhance the Administration’s risk analysis and RM capacities.

Once the national situation has stabilized, a WCO support mission will be conducted in Yemen to assist the Administration develop its Strategic Plan and devise a related action plan.