



Brussels, 8 October 2018.

GENDER EQUALITY

The role of women in IT – panel discussion

(Item XII. on the Agenda)

Introduction

1. Gender equality has been on the WCO agenda since 2013 when the WCO organized the conference “Women in Customs, Trade and Leadership” and launched the Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT). Gender Equality and Diversity is now promoted primarily through the Capacity Building Committee. Among the most recent achievements is the establishment of the WCO Virtual Working Group on Gender Equality and Diversity, which invites members to share good practices, challenges and experiences in this field. The WCO is also currently developing a blended learning training package to advance gender equality and diversity as part of Customs reform and modernization.
2. At the WCO IT Conference and Exhibition held in Lima in June 2018, a panel discussion on the role of women in IT raised a number of interesting points and highlighted facts and experiences on the topic, drawing attention of the Conference delegates to the topic in this specific area.
3. The PTC will now be in a position to listen to some of the findings in this area and discuss potential solutions, contributing to the gender equality agenda.

Gender equality and WCO initiatives

4. Gender Equality and Diversity is first and foremost a question of rights; it is also considered a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development and growth, and for enhancing performance in organizations. We are facing enormous challenges while discussing how to achieve the gender equality will bring great opportunities to improve the performance, competitiveness and sustainability of the organization as a whole. Thus, this is not an issue to be discussed only among women, but an issue to be discussed by the

administration as a whole, with strong leadership and strategic consideration. Therefore, the WCO finds it essential to continue promoting these values.

5. Gender Equality and Diversity is recognized by the international development community, with the United Nations in the lead, as a catalyst for achieving social, economic and environmental development. For instance, achieving 'gender equality and empower all women and girls' is one of the objectives (Goal 5) of the United Nation's Agenda for 2030 on Sustainable Development, which emphasizes that strengthening gender equality and women's rights contributes to enhancing sustainable growth and benefits societies as a whole. In addition, a report from the World Bank from 2012, 'Gender Equality and Development', affirms that by improving gender equality, countries can increase their productivity rates and improve development outcomes. This report further highlights how globalization, trade facilitation and ICT can help reducing gender inequalities by providing opportunities for women to connect to new markets, contribute to changing attitudes and norms, thereby generating incentives for countries to further promote gender equality.

Capacity Building Committee

6. At the 8th session of the Capacity Building Committee (CBC) held in March 2017, the WCO presented its ambition to further enhance the work on Gender Equality and Diversity by engaging with Members and exploring new ways to update instruments and tools and concretely include these topics in its capacity building activities.
7. The WCO Secretariat also presented the results from a Gender Equality and Diversity survey which was disseminated to all Members in October 2016 and received around 60 responses. The objectives of this survey were to gather information on the gender balance within Customs Administrations both in general and at senior management level, to get a better understanding of how advanced Members are in gender equality and diversity, and to gather material that could be used when updating WCOs current instruments and tools. The results of the survey have helped the WCO get an overview of the gender balance within Customs Administrations, in general as well as in senior management positions. The survey also helped the Secretariat to get an overview of other initiatives taken in the field of gender equality, including action plans. The results of the survey can be found in the CBC document HC0106E1a, which can be found at the following link on the WCO Members' web site: <http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/meeting-documents/capacity-building-committee/8/hc0106.pdf?lang=en>.
8. Based on an expressed interest from Members, it was agreed that the WCO would continue conducting similar surveys every other year to monitor the work of Members in this area.

The Virtual Working Group on Gender Equality and Diversity

9. The Virtual Working Group on Gender Equality and Diversity was launched in October 2017 with the objectives to exchange experience, share good practices, challenges and raise awareness of the GEOAT.
10. Since its launch, the Working Group has held nine meetings with representatives from more than 12 countries, discussing topics such as "Resistance when working with Gender Equality and how to overcome this", "Gender Equality and Trade Facilitation" and "Innovative measures to promote gender equality".

11. Several examples of good practices from Members have also been gathered, including examples of Gender Equality Action plans. Nevertheless the discussion on the associated challenges to achieve gender equality indicated the importance of continuing this discussion and raising awareness of the strategic importance of this issue at management level.

Development of a Training Package including an E-learning Module on Gender Equality

12. Under the framework of the Finland ESA Programme phase II, the WCO Secretariat is currently developing a blended training package on gender equality and its links to Customs reform and modernization.
13. The package will include two tracks; a one-week training targeting middle- and senior managers focusing on human resource management and gender mainstreaming; and a broader e-learning module focusing on raising general awareness on gender equality, targeting all Customs officers.
14. The workshop part of the training was piloted in Pretoria, South Africa in May 2018 in a regional workshop with seven countries attending and this material is now fully developed. The e-learning module is currently under development and expected to be ready by the end of 2018.

WCO Survey on Gender Equality & Diversity Survey

15. The Secretariat continues to promote and disseminate the survey on Gender Equality and Diversity to Members that have not yet replied to the first survey disseminated in 2016. The Secretariat is planning to send out a second survey sometime at the beginning of 2019 to get updated figures.

Role of women in IT - panel discussion

16. In line with raising awareness of the Gender Equality and Diversity agenda more broadly within the WCO working bodies, the topic has been placed on the agenda of the Permanent Technical Committee, the key WCO technical committee responsible for procedures and facilitation. The PTC will address a specific area relating to gender equality, by discussing the role of women in IT.
17. Bearing in mind the information shared by the speakers at a panel on this topic at the IT Conference in Lima, Peru in June 2018, the PTC meeting will be an opportunity to allow for a different audience to benefit from these important insights and to discuss the topic.
18. The panel will address the following questions:
- What is the current role of women in IT on a broad scope and more specifically in Customs IT? Are women commonly taking up managerial roles?
 - What do the statistics say regarding the percentage of women working in IT?
 - Are there initiatives in place to ensure more gender equality in IT?
 - What does the research and what do personal views of women working in IT say?
 - How can IT and other modern technologies help improve the working environment and gender equality in Customs administrations?
 - What is the role of training and capacity building?

Action required

19. The PTC is invited to:
- share related experiences from respective Member administrations and Observer organizations; and
 - provide any further suggestions or recommendations on the way forward.
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