



World Customs Organization
Organisation mondiale des douanes

SUMMARY REPORT

WCO Global Forum on Origin Self-Certification

12 – 13 FEBRUARY 2026
WCO Headquarters, Brussels





Building Trust and Compliance through Origin Self-Certification

I. Background and Context

The World Customs Organization (WCO) Global Forum on Origin Self-Certification was held on 12–13 February 2026 at its Headquarters in Brussels and concluded successfully. The Forum formed part of the WCO’s strategic efforts to modernize origin procedures, strengthen compliance-based trade facilitation, and enhance collaboration between Customs administrations and the private sector.

The forum was supported by the European Union through the EU–WCO Rules of Origin Africa Programme and co-funded by the Customs Cooperation Fund of Japan (CCF/Japan) and the Customs Cooperation Fund of Korea (CCF/Korea).

The event brought together 36 speakers across 7 sessions, with over 200 participants from Customs administrations, international and regional organizations, other government agencies, academia, and the business community attending in person.

Rules of origin are fundamental to the international trading system, defining the economic nationality of goods and enabling access to preferential tariff treatment under Preferential Trade Arrangements (PTAs). They also support trade policy implementation, statistical monitoring, and regulatory compliance. For Customs administrations, origin procedures are crucial for ensuring the proper application of trade preferences, conducting risk assessments, and preventing fraud or misuse of preferential arrangements.

Traditionally, origin certification relies on documents issued by designated competent authorities, such as Customs administrations, other government agencies or chambers of commerce. While providing formal validation, this approach often imposes administrative burdens and delays, particularly in complex, high-volume global supply chains. To address these challenges, many trade agreements have introduced origin self-certification, allowing exporters, producers, or importers to declare the origin of goods themselves, subject to Customs verification and post-clearance audits. This

II. Objectives of the Forum

reflects a broader transition toward risk-based Customs control, voluntary compliance, and trusted trader programmes. When effectively implemented, self-certification can reduce administrative costs, improve efficiency, and facilitate legitimate trade while maintaining strong compliance standards.

The 2026 Forum was built on previous WCO initiatives, including the 2025 Global Forum on Origin Interconnectivity, which explored the digitalization and interoperability of origin

certification systems. Under the theme “*Building Trust and Compliance through Origin Self-Certification*”, the Forum provided a platform for participants to exchange experiences, identify operational challenges, and explore practical solutions. Discussions focused on strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing public-private cooperation, and leveraging digital tools to support secure, transparent, and effective origin certification systems.

The Forum aimed to support the effective implementation of origin self-certification systems by fostering understanding, promoting cooperation, and enhancing capacity among stakeholders. Its specific objectives included:

- Providing a platform to share experiences and best practices in self-certification implementation;
- Examining legal, operational, and institutional frameworks governing self-certification;
- Identifying challenges and discussing practical solutions to enhance compliance, transparency, and trust;
- Encouraging collaboration among Customs administrations, the private sector, international and regional organizations and academia;
- Exploring the role of digitalization and technological innovation and solutions in improving origin certification processes; and
- Promoting harmonized and secure implementation of self-certification across WCO Members.

III. Opening Ceremony

Day One
Thursday 12 February

Keynote Address by the WCO Secretary General

The Global Forum Keynote address was delivered by Mr. Ian Saunders, Secretary General of the World Customs Organization, who welcomed participants to the WCO Headquarters in Brussels. In his address, the Secretary General acknowledged the broad representation of Customs administrations, government authorities, international and regional organizations, academia, and the private sector. The Secretary General underscored that such diversity of perspectives reflects that effective origin management is a collective responsibility to strengthen partnerships, trust, compliance, and efficiency in international trade. The Secretary General emphasized that credible and effective origin systems can only be sustained through partnership, dialogue, and cooperation among all stakeholders.

The Secretary General expressed gratitude to the European Union, through the EU-WCO Rules of Origin Africa Programme, as well as the Customs Cooperation Funds of Japan and Korea, for their valuable support in the organization of the Forum noting that such partnerships exemplified the collaborative approach necessary to advance sustainable trade facilitation initiatives.

Recalling the outcomes of the 2025 Global Forum on Origin Interconnectivity, which examined digital transformation and interoperability in origin certification systems, the Secretary General described the present Forum as a natural next step since the 2026 Forum discussions were framed as an opportunity to move from concept to practice.

Addressing the theme “Building Trust and Compliance through Origin Self-Certification”, the Secretary General highlighted that self-certification represents a transformative approach. While enabling greater efficiency and predictability for legitimate trade, it also requires strengthened governance frameworks, well-structured risk management systems, effective post-clearance verification and audit mechanisms, and appropriate digital solutions. The Secretary General stressed that the benefits of self-certification are contingent upon solid legal foundations and sustained capacity development for both Customs administrations and economic operators.

The Secretary General also framed the Forum within the broader framework of the WCO Strategic Plan 2025–2028, which is anchored in the core functions of Trade Facilitation, Revenue



Collection, and Protection of Society, and reinforced by priority areas such as Technology and Innovation, E-Commerce, and Green Customs. The Secretary General underscored that modern, robust, and well-governed origin

systems are critical enablers of these strategic objectives and play a key role in supporting a transparent, efficient, and resilient global trading system.



III. Opening Ceremony

Day One
Thursday 12 February

Setting the Scene Session

Following the opening remarks by the Secretary General of the World Customs Organization, the “Setting the Scene” session, moderated by Ms. Isolde Murphy, Director of the WCO Implementation and Capacity Development Directorate, opened the substantive discussions of the Global Forum. The session aimed to map out the key policy and operational issues that would be explored over the two days, setting out the foundations, challenges, and opportunities associated with origin self-certification.

Ms. Gael Grooby, Director of the WCO Policy and Standards Directorate, noted the importance of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), particularly in an uncertain global trade environment, and emphasising the central role of rules of origin in ensuring the success of FTAs in meeting their intended results. She noted that origin self-certification has emerged as a deliberate policy response to enhance the usage of FTAs and to move the declaration point closer to those who know the goods. Ms. Grooby however highlighted that while the responsibility for the correct declaration of origin has always been with economic operators, self-certification makes this more visible. Hence high utilisation rates require sufficient education and support to be available to give operators confidence in their ability to determine correct origin. She also spoke of the need to consider the infrastructure and

Customs capacity requirements when choosing a self-declaration model. Finally, she noted the opportunities for Customs administrations to strengthen risk-based controls, postclearance verification, and digital compliance mechanisms and underscored the importance of current and future WCO work on standards, guidance tools, and capacity-building support.

Mr. Matthias Petschke, Director for Customs at the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD), presented the European Union’s extensive experience with origin self-certification, including its Registered Exporter (REX) system. Mr. Petschke noted that self-certification is widely implemented across the EU’s preferential trade agreements and contributes to reducing administrative burdens, improving efficiency, and allowing Customs authorities to allocate resources more strategically, while maintaining strong monitoring and enforcement frameworks.

Mr. Takashi Nakao, Director of the Office of Rules of Origin at Japan Customs, shared Japan’s experience with origin self-certification under its Economic Partnership Agreements. Mr. Nakao emphasized that clear legal frameworks, structured exporter authorization systems, and robust post-clearance verification are essential to ensuring compliance while facilitating trade. He stressed that self-certification strengthens partnership and trust between Customs and the private sector.

Mr. Taehoon Lee, Deputy Director at the Korea Customs Service, highlighted Korea’s long-standing implementation of self-certification across most of its FTAs. Mr. Lee explained that self-certification enables a shift from routine documentary checks to intelligence-led, risk-based verification supported by digital tools and data analytics. Korea’s experience demonstrated that well-designed systems could enhance both facilitation and compliance.

Ms. Raghad Al-Talli, Trade Facilitation Advisor at the International Trade Centre (ITC), presented the private sector perspective. She emphasized that while self-certification reduces costs and administrative burdens, its effectiveness depends on legal certainty, digital readiness,

consistent border practices, and strong capacity development. Ms. Al-Talli noted that technical complexity remains a significant challenge, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises, underscoring the need for training, practical guidance, and structured public-private dialogue.

Overall, the session underscored that origin self-certification represents a structural evolution in origin administration, requiring clear policy frameworks, effective implementation mechanisms, digitalization, and sustained cooperation between Customs and the private sector. It provided a comprehensive foundation for the detailed discussions that followed during the Global Forum.





IV. Summary of the Panel Discussions

Day One
Thursday 12 February

Session 1: Foundation and Frameworks of Self-Certification

This panel examined the concept of origin self-certification, providing participants with an understanding of its purpose and benefits, including enhanced trade facilitation, streamlined compliance, and reduced administrative burdens. The session reviewed the legal infrastructure underpinning self-certification, highlighting harmonized policies and regulatory frameworks that support consistent implementation across jurisdictions.

The session was moderated by Ms. Gordana Vidanović, Head of Facilitation Implementation Unit, Implementation and Capacity Development Directorate at the WCO Secretariat. Through presentation of research papers and practical case studies, the panel discussion explored the conceptual framework, gained insights from lessons learned, and identified strategies to foster innovation and strengthen compliance in the future.

Mr. Darlan F. Marti, Trade Policy Specialist in the WTO Market Access Division and Secretary of the Committee on Rules of Origin (CRO) presented the concept of self-certification and the purpose and benefit of self-certification. He further shared insights on self-certification from the work of the WTO Committee on Rules

of Origin regarding Members' experiences and discussions on self-certification.

Mr. Atsushi Tanaka, Chair of the TCRO and Deputy Director, Office of Rules of Origin from Japan Customs, presented the overview of types of proof of origin used in Japan and outlined the legal and institutional foundations for effective origin self-certification systems. He introduced that to implement the self-certification system, Japan enacted the Act on Provision of Information on Goods Declared as Originating Goods under Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) in January 2015. He also described the organizational structure in Japan and highlighted the central role-played capacity-building activities for stakeholders.

Dr. Teddy Yagambaram Soobramanien, CEO of COMESA Business Council, highlighted private sector challenges, noting that the rules of origin compliance become red tape at the implementation stage rather than at the rule-setting stage. Dr. Soobramanien emphasized that self-certification is strong where legal frameworks are harmonized, compliance responsibilities are clearly defined, and business understand their obligations.

Ms. Faith Mathenge, Origin Expert of the EU-WCO RoO Africa Programme, WCO Implementation and Capacity Development Directorate, provided an overview of the Programme's efforts to enhance African trade through effective implementation of rules of origin and supporting the implementation of African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

She shared the comparative studies on self-certification provisions in African FTAs and the capacity development activities related to mainstreaming self-certification in Africa, e.g., supporting African RECs to conduct benchmarking study visit to the EU and enhance their capacity to implement self-certification.



Session 2: Sharing Practices and Experiences: Opportunities and Challenges

This panel highlighted the current state of origin self-certification, sharing experiences from countries and regions. Speakers presented best practices, lessons learned, opportunities, and challenges, emphasizing collaboration between Customs administrations, the private sector, and other stakeholders. The session provided participants with a clear picture of the practical landscape, setting the stage for solutions and innovations in subsequent panels.

Moderated by Mr. Jiabin Luo, Head of Revenue Policy Unit, WCO Nomenclature and Revenue Sub-Directorate, the panel discussion highlighted key practices and experiences on origin self-certification from different regions.

Mr. Jamie Thompson, Manager, Trade Policy, New Zealand Customs, presented the practices for compliance and operational efficiency. Mr. Thompson shared the New Zealand experience of things that work and suggestions from industry about what can be done differently in self-certification.

Ms. Bernardita Palacios Scheggia, Head of Technical Department, Trade, Economic and Financial Policy, Chile Customs, presented on origin self-certification in practice: Compliance lessons and next steps, highlighting that Chile has diverse certification system, but has 30 years' experience in administering of self-certification. Ms. Scheggia indicated that institutional and private sector development in origin matters is core in the shift towards more liberal certification models.

Mr. Anthony Minja, Customs Officer, Tariff and Valuation, East African Community (EAC) Secretariat, presented the East African Community experience and why self-certification matters. He mentioned the transformation that Customs had gone through from the traditional border control to intelligent supply chain management, balancing trade facilitation with effective oversight wrapping up his presentations with the benefits and challenges of self-certification systems.



Session 3: Streamlining Origin Self-Certification Systems through Innovation

This panel explored digital practices and technological solutions associated with Origin Self-Certification. By adopting these innovations, countries and organizations can enhance transparency, traceability, and data security. Integrating digital tools into origin self-certification systems enables faster verification, reduces administrative burdens, and streamlines the exchange of trade-related information, ultimately supporting smoother and more efficient cross-border trade operations.

The session was moderated by Ms. Sun Hwa Cho, former Chairperson of the TCRO and Professor of Rules of Origin at the Customs Border Human Resources Development Institute of the Korea Customs Service. The discussion showed a range of digital practices implemented by Customs administrations and regional entities to support self-certification.

Mr. Sebastian Agustino Macias, Trade and Rules of Origin Expert at DG TAXUD, European Commission, presented the EU's Registered Exporter (REX) System, outlining its registration, monitoring and validation processes. Mr. Macias highlighted the system's strengths in enhancing traceability, transparency, and efficiency. He stated that 123,916 exporters within the

European Union have registered under REX, along with approximately 88,000 exporters from 88 partner countries outside the EU.

Mr. Wu Chao, Customs Officer at the Customs National Supervision Bureau for Duty Collection (Shanghai), General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC), presented China Customs' practices regarding the data exchange of declarations of origin under self-certification schemes. Mr. Wu explained that China Customs has established a unified management platform for self-certification, which includes the qualification of authorized exporters and a smart service for generating declarations of origin. Mr. Wu further introduced the import practice for claiming preference via declaration of origin, particularly the EODES Mode, meaning the electronic origin data exchanges (structured data), and the PDF document exchange Mode with specific FTA partners.

Mrs. Aissata Koffi Yameogo, Ag Principal Program Officer Tariff and Customs Procedure, Customs Union and Taxation Directorate, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission, focused on regional implementation of self-certification, highlighting

the Authorized Exporter scheme, the use of invoice declarations, and the conditions governing their application within ECOWAS,

while also touching upon ongoing digital developments, particularly the centralized e-hub system used for electronic certificates of origin.



Session 4: Standpoints on Implementation of Self-Certification

This panel presented insights on the implementation of origin self-certification from the private sector, legal advisors, and Customs administrations' point of view. The session highlighted the challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned, fostering a holistic understanding of practical realities and strategies to enhance compliance, efficiency, and trust in self-certification mechanisms.

Moderated by Ms. Raghad Al-Talli, Trade Facilitation Advisor at the International Trade Center (ITC), the panel examined the implementation of self-certification by Customs administrations across different regions. It also provided perspectives from a legal advisor and introduced the ICC platform designed to assist trade in implementing self-certification.

Ms. Béatrice Dion, Acting Director of the Trade and Anti-dumping Programs Directorate at the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), stated that Canada views trader self-certification as a modern and effective certification regime. Ms. Dion introduced Canada's exporter self-certification process, outlining its benefit, implementation framework and compliance mechanism. Ms. Dion also addressed approaches to building accountability among

traders, including the use of advance rulings on origin, departmental memoranda (D-Memos), a dedicated Origin of Goods webpage on the Canada Border Service website, and the establishment of administrative programmes, such as post-clearance audits, to ensure compliance.

Mr. Pablo Muñoz, Head of the Customs Practice of Van Bael and Bellis in Belgium, specializing in EU Customs Law, presented the legal implications of self-certification for approved exporters, registered exporters, and importers. Mr. Muñoz emphasized the need to strike an appropriate balance between trader responsibility and administrative oversight.

Mr. Peter Campbell, Policy Advisor at HM Revenue & Customs (UK) explained how self-certification operates in the United Kingdom (UK), including the precedent in UK free trade agreements and the benefits for traders and Customs authorities, noting that self-certification is a central pillar of modern, facilitative origin procedures, helping to minimize unnecessary administrative burdens without weakening the integrity of compliance controls. He also introduced the UK's integrated compliance strategy including verification of



origin, deterrent measures and trader education to build trust in self-certification.

Mr. Martin Van Der Weide, Policy Advisor on Origin at the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce and Chair of the ICC/World Chambers Federation International Certificate of Origin Council

provided an overview of ICC origin activities and further introduced ICC Genesis, a digital platform developed to simplify and secure trade under FTAs by enabling preferential origin self-certification and third-party validation, thereby helping businesses to navigate rules of origin and facilitate trade under FTAs.



Session 5: Compliance Mechanisms, Trust and Capacity Development

This panel explored insights on technical assistance, compliance mechanisms, and capacity development for origin self-certification. Panelists from the private sector, member Customs administrations, and the WCO Secretariat shared challenges, best practices, and strategies that strengthen implementation, foster trust, and enhance operational efficiency.

The session was moderated by Ms. Sigfríður Gunnlaugsdóttir, Deputy Director, WCO Capacity Delivery Sub-Directorate, and featured diverse perspectives from Customs administrations, private sector representatives, regional organizations, and development agencies.

Ms. Mette Werdelin Azzam, Lead Origin Expert, EU-WCO RoO Africa Programme, WCO Implementation and Capacity Development Directorate, emphasized that to implement self-certification on capacity-building on rules of origin is crucial to make sure that all stakeholders have adequate knowledge on origin determination and origin procedures. She mentioned the technical assistance provided by the RoO Africa Programme both regionally to Regional Economic Communities and nationally to Customs administrations and the private sector to implement self-certification.

Mr. Washington Dube, CEO, Shipping & Forwarding Agents' Association of Zimbabwe, shared the approaches to compliance in the private sector. This presentation explained that origin self-certification represents a major change in the administration of rules of origin, transferring responsibility from issuing authorities to economic operators. As mentioned by Ms. Azzam, Mr. Dube reiterated that training and technical support for both economic operators and Customs administrations were necessary to ensure correct application of complex rules of origin.

Mr. Zakaria Asmama, WCO Accredited Origin Expert, Head of the Origin Division, Customs and Indirect Taxes Administration of the Kingdom of Morocco, provided insights on compliance management through capacity development in Morocco. Mr. Asmama provided an overview of the three types of self-certification used in Morocco, which are approved exporter, importer based, and exporter-based certification. Mr. Asmama indicated that trust shown in self-certification goes hand in hand with compliance, stressing that when administrations trust traders, traders in turn feel responsible and are more obliged to become compliant.



Ms. Macarena Torres Rossel, Deputy Director of the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, World Economic Forum, discussed the building of trust through stakeholder engagement. She emphasized that origin self-certification was not primarily a technical challenge but a question of trust between stakeholders. Ms. Torres Rossel stated that it required Customs administrations

to trust that economic operators make accurate declarations, and businesses to trust that systems are predictable, fair, and proportionate. There is a need for an environment that supports traders in understanding the requirements and building internal compliance capability which is foundational to build trust and effectively implement self-certification.



Session 6: Way Forward – Shaping the Future of Origin Self-Certification Worldwide

Session 6 explored the future of origin self-certification from the perspectives of Customs administrations, the private sector, regional organizations, developing and least developed countries, and the WCO Secretariat. The session highlighted strategic priorities, emerging trends, and practical recommendations to strengthen implementation, foster collaboration, and advance trade facilitation worldwide.

Moderated by Ms. Gael GROOBY, Director, WCO Policy and Standards Directorate, the panel featured experts' presentations on innovative approaches to shaping the future of origin self-certification worldwide.

Mr. Stefano Inama, Chief, Technical Assistance, Division on African and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), showcased the opportunities, experiences and lessons learned from implementation of self-certification by LDCs and Developing Countries. Mr. Inama stated that trade facilitative certification systems like self-certification and the REX system are considered by LDCs as the best practices in this field. Mr. Inama encouraged

investment in human capital to increase the capacity to determine the actual origin of goods rather than on verifying the authenticity of certificates even where such are digitalized.

Ms. Cecilia Burnalli, Expert, Valuation and Origin Department, National Customs Administration, Uruguay, presented the Uruguay Customs administration's outlook on certification as well as the use of back-to-back certificates of origin.

Dr. Jacob Kotcho, Director, Common Market, Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), introduced aspirations from Africa. Dr. Kotcho stated that self-certification is included in the new ECCAS rules of origin and is linked to the status of approved exporter which would improve on the current practice in ECCAS where exporters are approved after verifying that their products are indeed originating, but without giving them the right to self-certify the origin of their goods.

Mr. Nelson Brens, former chairperson, Association of Professional Customs Brokers of the Americas (ASAPRA), discussed the way forward for self-certification from the private sector's perspective. Mr. Brens reiterated that



trust is the foundation for trade facilitation, predictable and transparent trade relationships, streamlining legitimate trade flows, and responsible trade practices. Mr. Brens also stated

that adequate capacity development, public-private partnership and shared responsibility are fundamental pillars that form the foundation of a successful self-certification system.





V. Closing remarks



Mr. Ricardo Treviño Chapa, WCO Deputy Secretary General, thanked all participants, moderators and speakers, for their active contributions to the Global Forum on Origin Self-Certification. The Deputy Secretary General highlighted the diversity of attendees, including Customs, international and regional organizations, the business community and academia. Additionally, Mr. Chapa emphasized that exchanging knowledge, sharing best practices and building relationships over the two days had strengthened trust across the trade ecosystem.

The Deputy Secretary General stressed that effective self-certification requires not only harmonized policies but also practical implementation through clear procedures, digital tools, capacity-building and risk-based compliance mechanisms.

Trust and efficiency are achieved through collaboration and dialogue among all stakeholders, as demonstrated by case studies, best practices and tailored solutions presented during the two-day Global Forum. The Deputy Secretary General concluded by encouraging continued cooperation to advance trade facilitation, strengthen compliance and confidence in the global trading system, and noting the value of the networks formed over the two days, Mr. Treviño Chapa reaffirmed the WCO's commitment to provide dialogue platforms.



VI. Conclusions

The 2026 Global Forum on Origin Self-Certification reaffirmed the growing importance of origin self-certification as a key instrument to facilitate legitimate trade while safeguarding compliance and the integrity of preferential trade arrangements. Participants emphasized that continued efforts are needed to strengthen legal and operational frameworks, enhance institutional and technical capacity, and promote effective cooperation between Customs administrations and the private sector.

The WCO will continue to support its Members through the development of guidance tools, targeted capacity-building initiatives, and enhanced international cooperation. In this context, the WCO will also organize upcoming events and technical engagements dedicated to origin matters, providing further opportunities for Members and stakeholders to exchange experiences, discuss emerging challenges, and advance uniform and effective implementation of origin procedures.

These collective efforts will contribute to ensuring that rules of origin are implemented in a reliable, secure, and sustainable manner, thereby supporting legitimate, transparent, predictable, and resilient global trade.





VII. Annexes

Final Agenda:

https://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/events/2026/wco_global-forum-on-origin-self-certification_agenda-en.pdf?la=en



Panelists Bio

https://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/events/2026/wco_global-forum-on-origin-self-certification_agenda-with-speakers-bio-en.pdf?la=en



Links to Presentations

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