



**World Customs  
Organization**

Operational Report

## **OP PGS East Africa**

**03<sup>rd</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021**





## Operation Global Shield East Africa (OP PGS EA)

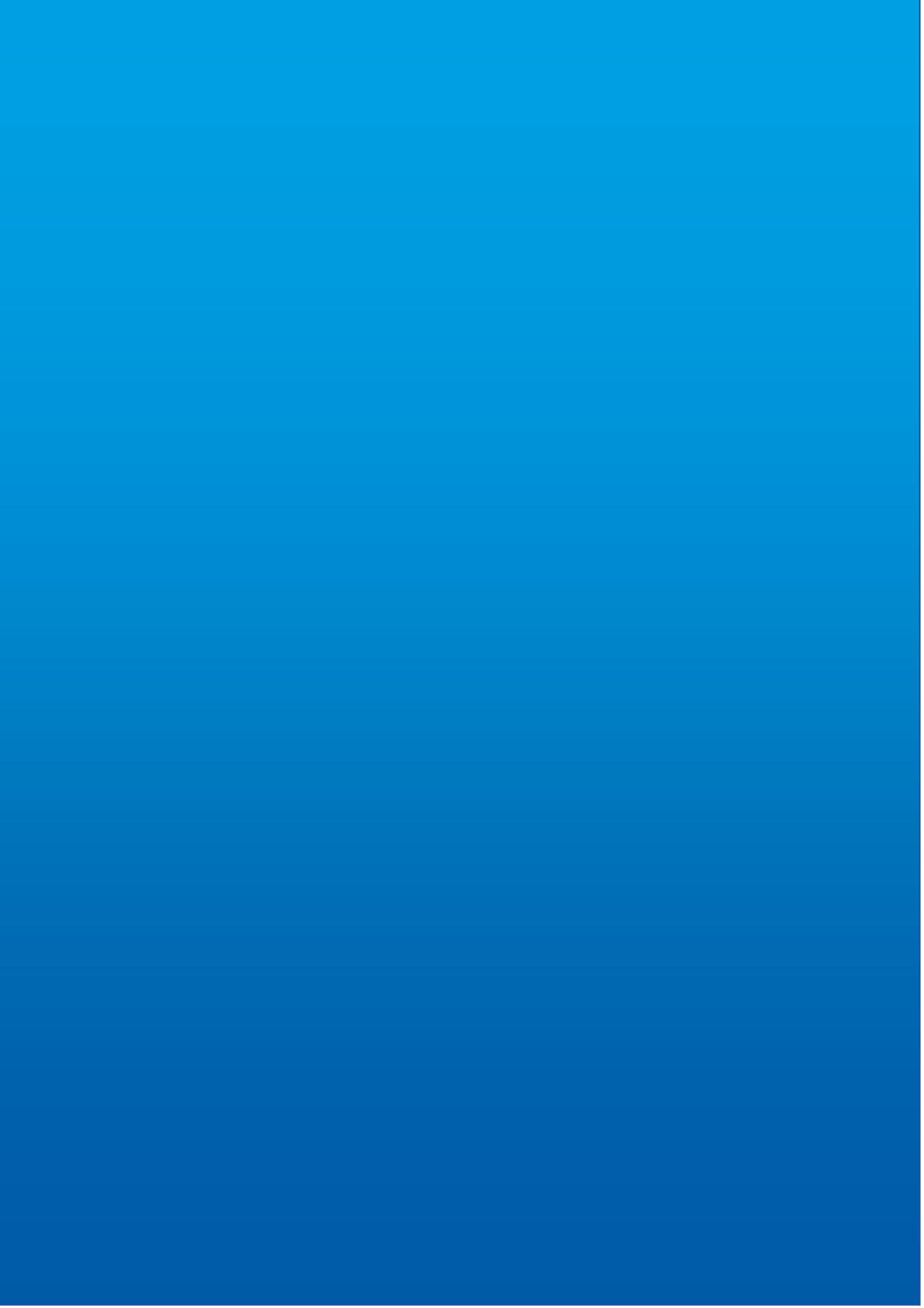


targeting illegal diversion of precursor chemicals, IEDs and  
terrorist networks trafficking in Eastern Africa

Operational Report

# OP PGS East Africa

June 2021



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## 1 Abbreviation

API / PNR	Advanced Passenger Information / Passenger Name Records
CAS	Chemical Abstracts Service
CBRNE	Chemical Biological Radio Nuclear Explosives
CENcomm	Customs Enforcement Network communication (platform)
CUG	Closed user group
DTRA	Defense Threat Reduction Agency
EA	East Africa
ESA	Eastern and Southern Africa
FTF	Foreign Terrorist Fighters
I 24/7	INTERPOL network (communication and databases access)
I2C	WCO Information and Intelligence Center
IED	Improvised Explosive Devices
HS	Harmonized System
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
JAITF	Joint Airport Intervention Task Force
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MS	Member State
NCB	(INTERPOL) National Central Bureau
NCP	National Contact Point
OCU	Operational Coordination Unit
OSBP	One Stop Border Point
PGS	Programme Global Shield
RA	Revenue Authorities
RILO	Regional Intelligence Liaison Office

## 2 Introduction / Background:

In December 2017 the WCO, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and five revenue authorities (RA) in East Africa, namely Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, launched a Trade Facilitation and Border Control Project. The project is scheduled to be run until the end of June 2021 and is focusing on two pillars:

1. Setting up and enhancing capacity of One Stop Border Points (OSBP) such as monitoring (impact evaluation), training and sensitization of officials, use of regional OSBP procedures manual and reflection of lessons learnt.
2. Customs capacity building, especially enhancement of risk management, enhancement of post clearance audit capacity (PCA) and **enhancement of border control capacity, including Programme Global Shield (PGS).**

### 2.1 WCO Programme Global Shield (PGS)

Programme Global Shield (PGS) is an unprecedented international effort to monitor licit movement of chemicals and counter the illicit diversion of chemical precursors and detonators used by terrorists and other criminal organizations to manufacture Improvised Explosive Devices (IED).

Spearheaded by the WCO, the project is running in partnership with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in order to secure global supply chain and to enhance public safety.

This Programme aims at monitoring the licit movement of 13 of the most common chemical precursors (e.g. Ammonium Nitrate, Acetone, Urea) and other materials that could be used to manufacture IEDs in order to counter their illicit trafficking and diversion. It promotes cooperation among Customs and Police administrations in combating the illicit diversion of precursor chemicals, engages with private industry to establish best practice, trains Customs officers in detecting and handling precursor chemicals, and initiates investigations and other enforcement activities.

### 2.2 WCO/JICA Project Activities

In regards to the Programme Global Shield (PGS) component within the Trade Facilitation and Border Control Project, WCO/JICA jointly conducted the following activities:

- May 2018: Regional PGS awareness raising workshop (Kenya)
- January 2019: Regional PGS train-the-Trainer workshop (Uganda) (20 trainers, 4 of each RA have been trained)
- mid 2019: several national PGS cascade trainings have been conducted by the new PGS trainers.
- late 2019-early 2020: WCO/JICA follow-up missions to all 5 RAs.

All trainings mainly covered:

- expertise on explosive precursor chemicals and additional IED components,
- labeling, transport, handling and stockage of explosive chemical precursors,
- detection methods and hands on experience in the use of PGS test kits and Raman Spectrometers,
- promotion of national, regional and international cooperation among border agencies, member states and international organizations.

The last activity within the PGS component of the project has been the operational exercise in order to set trainings and expertise into practice and get hands on experience.

This operation, its preparation, its conduct as well as its outcome is subject to this report.

### 3 Operational Concept:

Initially, the operation was scheduled to be conducted in March/April 2020 but due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, it needed to be postponed and has finally been conducted for a period of two weeks beginning of March 2021.

The overall aim of the operation, called “OP PGS EA”, has been the reduction of terrorist movements in the region as well as of the illegal flow of substances used for the production of Improvised Explosive Devices (ED), in detail:

#### 3.1 Objectives:

The operation aimed at:

1. strengthening passenger as well as merchandise controls at airports, seaports and land borders as well as at hot spots on certain smuggling routes within the participating countries in order to detect, seize and destroy substances which are supposed to be used to manufacture IEDs.  
*To reach this aim, customs have been asked to prepare and carry out intensive and effective passenger controls, vessels, vehicle and luggage checks by using appropriate detection devices (test kits, Raman Spectrometer) to identify precursor chemicals and additional bomb making material.*
2. identifying and arresting potential Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) and linking them to organized crime as well as identifying, locating and intercepting criminal organizers behind these activities.  
*To reach this aim INTERPOL and national police forces have been supporting the efforts.*
3. promoting and strengthening cooperation and exchange of information amongst Customs administrations and between Customs administrations and other law enforcement and intelligence agencies including Police at the national level as well a regional bodies and international organizations.  
*To reach this aim the operation involved participants of several agencies such as law enforcement specialized security / counter terrorism-units of customs and police agencies and regional bodies such as the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office for Eastern and Southern Africa (RILO ESA) as well as INTERPOL.*

4. supporting subsequent investigations with the aim of identifying, disrupting and dismantling transnational illicit networks and, among other, of increasing the use of INTERPOL's databases.

*To reach this aim, customs have been asked to follow defined seizure and evidence proof mechanisms as well as reporting chains to enable and support investigations in concert with police and other responsible border agencies, especially by sharing information with related countries and the Operational Coordination Unit (OCU) through the secure communication platform for respective follow up investigations and analysis / statistics.*

5. monitoring the licit movement of IED precursor chemicals and components in order to get a better understanding / overview of precursor chemicals and components movement and respective end use in the region and beyond.

*To reach this aim customs have been asked to check and report all precursor chemicals and other IED components importations, transits and exportations in the participating countries, including respective companies, and reporting suspicious movements or usage to enable follow up investigations.*

## 3.2 Targeted goods

The operation focused on the following high risk explosive precursor chemicals and components identified by experts as posing the greatest threat for use in IEDs. In addition to the 13 explosive precursor chemicals and one metal (Aluminum powder, flakes and paste), detonators and transmitting devices, currently monitored under PGS, have been included.

3.2.1 Precursor chemicals	CAS number	HS Code
Ammonium Nitrate	6484-52-2	3102 30
Nitro methane	75-52-5	2904 20
Sodium Nitrate	7631-99-4	3102 50
Potassium Nitrate	7757-79-1	2834 21
Sodium Chlorate	7775-09-9	2829 11
Potassium Chlorate	3811-04-9	2829 19
Potassium Perchlorate	7778-74-7	2829 90
Acetone	67-64-1,7217-25-6	2914 11
Hydrogen Peroxide	7722-84-1	2847 00

3.2.2 Other IED components	HS Code
Detonators, detonating cord, blasting caps, safety fuses, igniters	3603 00

Besides these targeted goods, this operation report will include all other seizures conducted and reported by the participating border points/check points in order to get an overall picture of licit and illicit movements of precursor chemicals and other merchandise in the focused region (Eastern Africa).

### 3.3 Phases

Three phases have been established for this operation:



#### 3.3.1 Pre-operational phase (July 2019 – end of February 2021):

During the pre-operational phase mainly all national PGS trainers have been appointed by their RAs to prepare the operation at national level, especially by:

- Setting up National Contact Points (NCP) comprising representatives of all responsible (border) agencies



- Setting up joint police/customs teams at the different border crossings



- Drafting a national operational plan based on the overall operational plan which has been shared beforehand.
- Training additional customs and police frontline officers on PGS.

INTERPOL has been liaising with their National Central Bureaus (NCB) to encourage police in the participating MS to get in touch with customs and to jointly prepare the operation.

RILO ESA agreed to conduct a regional risk assessment in regards to licit explosive chemical precursor movements in the region including main routes, main importers, end users and producers to be provided to all PGS National Contact Points (NCP) prior to the operation.

WCO/JICA jointly conducted

- 5 national consultation meetings with NCPs
- 3 virtual preparatory meetings with NCPs, INTERPOL and RILO ESA
- 2 virtual CENcomm trainings with different participants of all 5 RA
- 1 official (two days) regional pre-operational meeting including all stakeholders

to discuss preparation progress, train on communication strategy, especially in the use of CENcomm, and to finalize the National Operational Plans.

In addition, WCO secretariat set up a communication network through CENcomm operational platform as well as an Operational Coordination Unit (OCU) in order to gather and share information.



Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic the OCU could not be set up physically in Kenya as initially decided and thus had to be virtually assembled through CENcomm.

WCO/JICA, RILO ESA as well as INTERPOL representatives formed part of the OCU.

### 3.3.2 Operational phase – high intense period (3<sup>rd</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021)



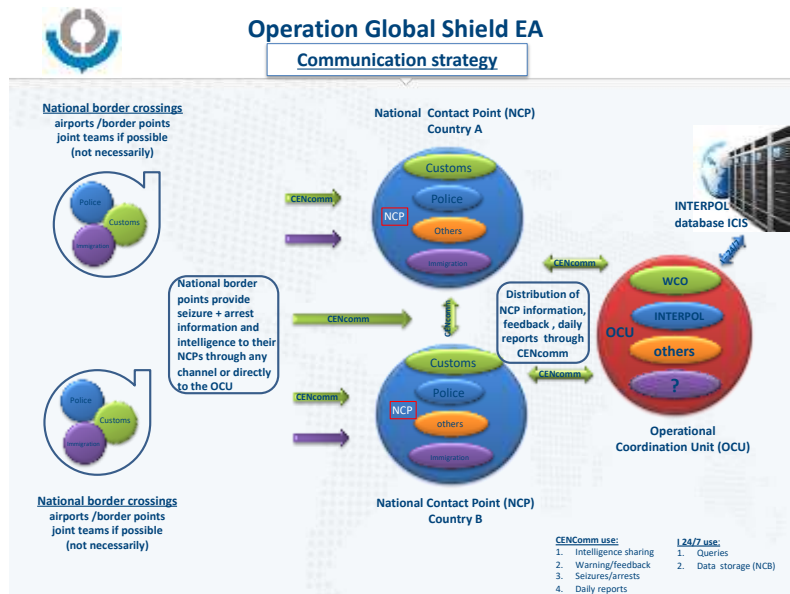
During the operational phase, intensive border and inland checks have been carried out by the participating countries with the focus on the above mentioned IED components /precursor chemicals and FTF movements.

Customs units, joint control teams, police and additional border agencies contributed to this effort.

NCPs have been reporting on seizure, arrests, suspicious shipments as well as on licit explosive precursor chemical movements to the OCU through CENcomm.

INTERPOL immediately checked all nominal shared through CENcomm in their databases and provided feedback.

The OCU coordinated NCPs, collected and compiled all information shared through CENcomm, filed daily reports which have been shared with INTERPOL and all NCPs and provided technical support to all participants.



### 3.3.3 Post-operational phase (17<sup>th</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> May 2021)

During the post-operational phase, results have been analyzed, lessons learnt evaluated and post-operational findings have been communicated to the OCU as well.

Consequently, additional seizures, licit importations and information on cases opened during the operational phase have been shared by NCPs and compiled by the OCU.

An official operational debriefing meeting has been held on May 5<sup>th</sup> 2021, gathering all NCPs, INTERPOL and RILO ESA representatives.

A respective media release has been published soon after:

<http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2021/may/85-metric-tons-of-bomb-making-materials-seized.aspx>

Finally, this operation report has been compiled.

## 3.4 Results of the operation

### 3.4.1 Seizures

As a result of PGS OP EA, commendable number of seizures on explosive chemical precursors, additional toxic chemicals and illicit goods have been realized by the five RA.

All seizures have been reported during the operational phase as well as during the post-operational phase through the OP PGS EA CENcomm platform.

On the other hand, a detailed analysis is nearly impossible as very few formatted (seizure) messages have been submitted through CENcomm. Mostly, incomplete information which have not been updated afterwards, have been shared through the CENcomm Email function.

In total

- **8.5 metric tons of chemical precursors, especially Urea and other fertilizer but Ammonium Nitrate and Nitric Acid as well,**
- **1 metric ton of other toxic chemicals and dangerous goods like Sodium Cyanide, insecticides and Formalin**

could be seized.

In addition, and beside the targeted goods

- **6 kg of heroine**
- **6,5 kg of cocaine as well as**
- **1 metric ton of Cannabis**

have been seized. Some examples:

*Kenya, 10.03.2021*

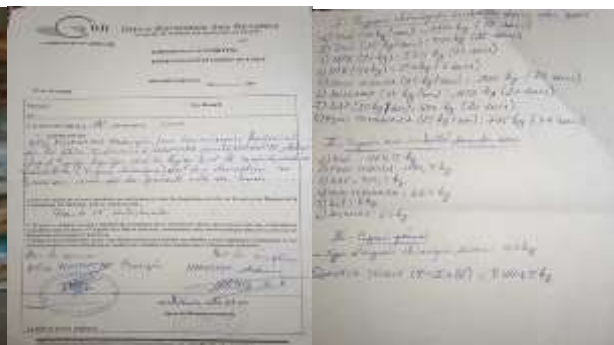
5 cylinders (13.6 Kgs) of Ozone Depleting Substance as well as 250kg of Polyethylene Polyphenyl Isocyanate were seized at Mombasa port, Kenya. The goods have been imported from China, concealed in a container containing components and spare parts for fridges and have not been declared to Customs. They have been detected through scanning.



*Burundi, 12.03.2021*

8441.5kg of fertilizers including 2624.5kg of Urea have been seized from two individuals who have been arrested by the Police on the basis of intelligence that they were selling Urea from Republic of Tanzania in a fraudulent manner. Fertilizers are controlled in Burundi. The fertilizers have been handed over to Burundi Customs (COO - Tanzania).

**This seizure is exemplarily for an excellent police/customs cooperation in Burundi.**



Burundi, 15.03.2021

At Kobero (Tanzania) border, two undeclared jerry cans (2x 35l) of chemicals, originally from India, have been seized by Burundi RA. They have been tested as **Formaldehyde and Formaline** and are considered dangerous goods.



Burundi, 15.03.2021

Burundi RA took over 1,000kg of Cannabis imported from the Democratic Republic of Congo and seized by Burundian Navy. The seized cannabis was destroyed soon after as it was categorized as a prohibited product.



Based on the few information shared by all RAs most seizures have been realized at land border crossings especially at Tanzania/Burundi border (Kobero) and Kenya/Uganda border (Malaba) (see Fig. 1)



Figure 1 seizure locations in East Africa, land border crossings

All goods have been seized from truck loads and have been packed in small quantities (25-250kg) within jerrycans, bags or drums.

The seizures have been realized due to non-declaration, misdeclaration or due to national import restrictions on dangerous goods.

Due to the information provided, all seized goods were supposed to be delivered to small companies in the respective MS.

For the time being, INTERPOL and police could not link neither companies nor individuals involved to any kind of organized crime or terrorist networks yet. Some investigations are still ongoing.

### 3.4.2 Arrests:

In total 10 individuals have been arrested in the course of the different seizures.

Due to INTERPOL's queries, none of them could be linked to a criminal organization nor identified as Foreign Terrorist Fighter (FTF).

### 3.4.3 Licit explosive precursor chemicals movements

In addition to the above-mentioned checks and seizures, more than 30 containers with more than 1 000 metric tons of explosive chemical precursors which have been imported licitly in to the 5 participating MS have been checked and recorded by the RAs.

All goods have been scanned and tested by Raman Spectrometers and it has been verified if customs declaration complied with the goods transported.

As a result, Mombasa port remains one of the major hubs for importations of dual use explosive precursor chemicals in East Africa. More than 75% of all goods checked during the operation have been imported through the port of Mombasa.

Within this time frame, explosive precursor chemicals have been mainly imported from India, Belgium, China and Norway but also from Portugal, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Thailand, Saudi Arabi, and South Africa (see Fig. 2).

Regarding the quantities imported, **Calcium Nitrate** forms the major part. More than 600 metric tons have been imported in the course of the operation from Norway. Due to the customs declarations their final destination and use will be in Kenya.

In addition, more than 182 metric tons of **Nitric Acid** have been imported from Belgium and the Netherlands with their final destinations being Kenya and Uganda.

More than 91 metric tons of **Ammonium Nitrate** have been imported from Saudi Arabia with their final destination being Rwanda.

Remarkable quantities of **Potassium Chlorate** (50 mega tons) have been imported from India to be used in Kenya, **emulsion explosives** from China (50 mega tons) to be used in Rwanda.

Smaller quantities of **Sodium Cyanide** (20,7 mega tons) have been imported from Czech Republic, **Hydrogen Peroxide** (19,2 mega tons) from Thailand, and **detonators** (9,1 mega tons) from South Africa (see Fig. 3).

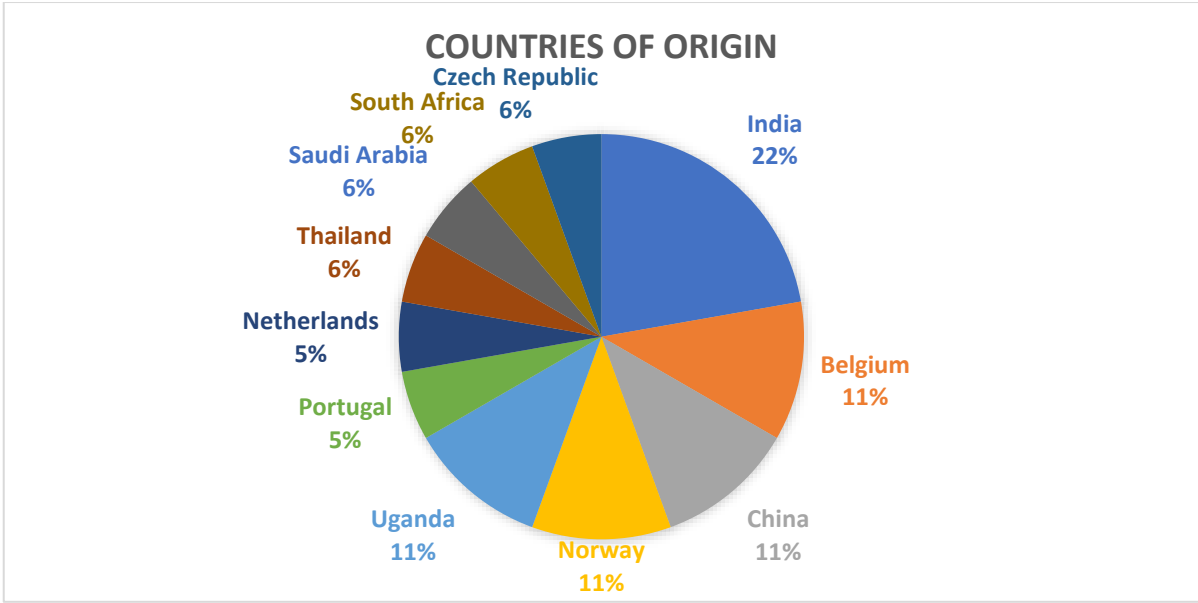


Figure 2 : main countries of origin and proportion of precursor chemical importations

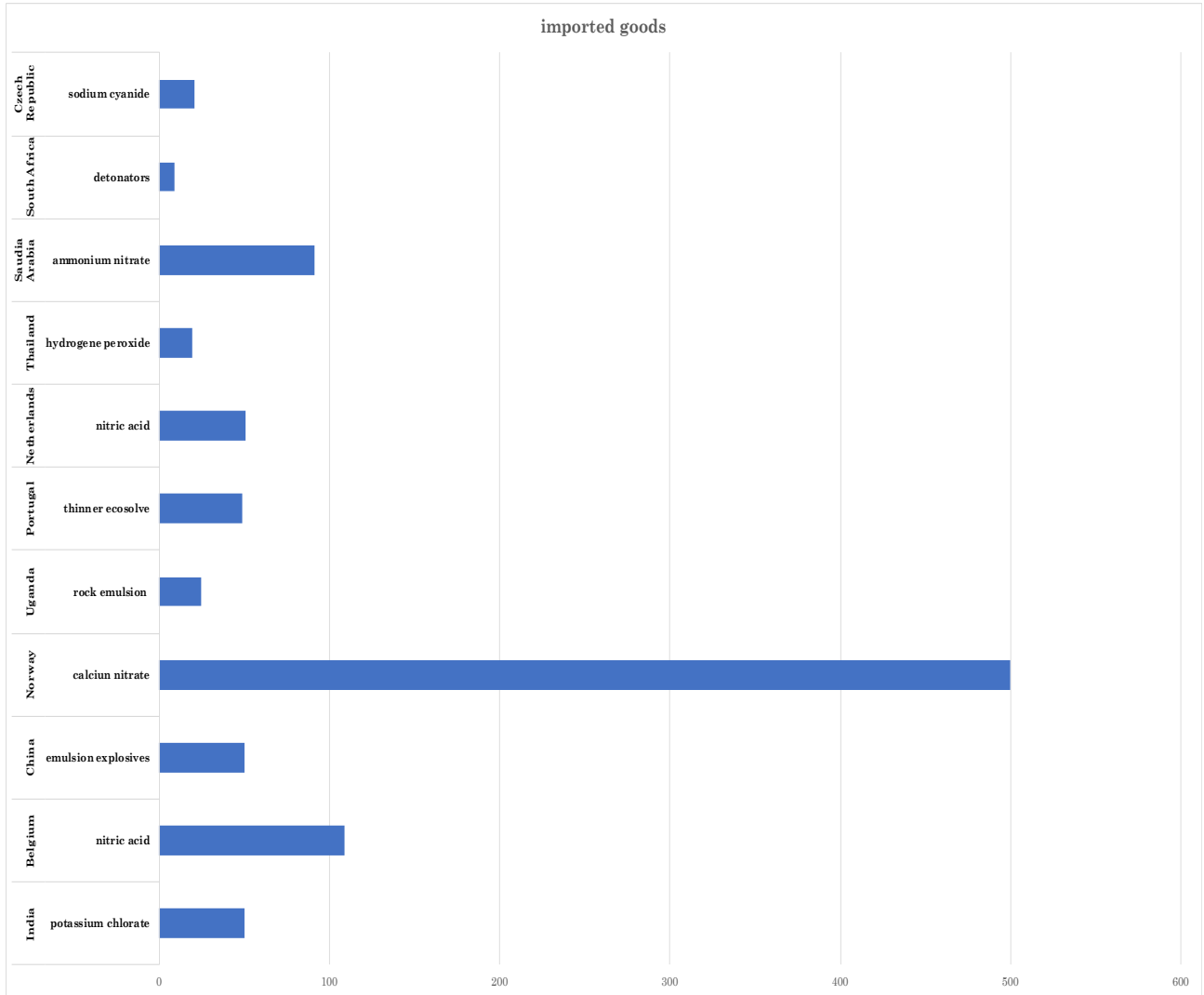


Figure 3: main substances imported in the course of the operation

## 4 Achievements (to the objectives mentioned under 4.1.)

- *Strengthening passenger as well as merchandise controls at airports, seaports and land borders as well as at hot spots on certain smuggling routes within the participating countries in order to detect seize and destroy substances which are supposed to be used to manufacture IEDs.*

fully achieved



Various checks have been carried out by all RA at the different border crossings. Excellent efforts have been achieved by Burundi RA due to their preparation and conduct of the operation. Most of all seizures realized within the operation have been achieved by Burundi RA. In addition, Burundi has been very actively and professionally exchanging information through the operational communication platform CENcomm.

- *Identifying and arresting potential Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) and linking them to organized crime as well as identifying, locating and intercepting criminal organizers behind these activities.*

partly achieved



Police conducted only few traveler checks on their own. They mainly relayed on customs and took over respective seizure cases provided. Consequently, INTERPOL could not identify any FTF in relation to the information provided and the seizures realized during and after the operational phase.

- *Promoting and strengthening cooperation and exchange of information amongst Customs administrations and between Customs administrations and other law enforcement and intelligence agencies including Police at the national level as well a regional body and international organizations.*

mostly achieved



The operation has been a very useful exercise to underline importance of border agency cooperation. Efforts have been made in establishing and strengthening multi-border agency networks.

Kenya RA as well as Tanzanian RA made big efforts in establishing a solid multi-agency cooperation framework prior and during the operation.

INTERPOL participation and WCO/INTERPOL cooperation have been excellent especially during the operational phase. Despite few communications through CENcomm, INTERPOL OCU members have been immediately following up on every nominal shared through the system and provided swift feedback.

- *Supporting subsequent investigations with the aim of identifying, disrupting and dismantling transnational illicit networks and, among other, of increasing the use of INTERPOL's databases*

partly achieved



Only few nominals have been collected and shared by RAs in the framework of the seizures realized. Consequently, police and INTERPOL could not follow up on quiring their databases.

- *Monitoring the licit movement of IED precursor chemicals and components in order to get a better understanding / overview of precursor chemicals and components movement and respective end use in the region and beyond.*

fully achieved



RAs have carried out intensive and comprehensive border checks on licit chemical precursors and other IED components at main hubs and reported their findings through CENcomm (item 4.4.3.).

## 5 Observations

### 5.1 Highlights

Despite the massive challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, PGS OP EA was a great success with good achievements made through the efforts done by East African countries and the significant support offered by the WCO, JICA, INTERPOL, RILO ESA and other relevant parties concerned. The activities conducted under the WCO/JICA framework contributed to this achievement. The WCO highly valued the contribution made by the JICA Trade Facilitation and Border Control Project office in Nairobi to organize those activities and to ensure close communication with RAs.

Rwanda RA's capacity building efforts need to be highlighted, as they developed their own PGS e-learning tool which they have incorporated in their national PGS trainings for frontline border officers.

Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda RAs participated and contributed successfully to INTERPOL's OP SIMBA III, aimed at countering terrorist movements as well as the illicit diversion of bomb making material in East African countries. OP SIMBA III has been conducted soon after, during the post operational phase of OP PGS EA on 19-29 March 2021.

### 5.2 Challenges/lessons learnt

#### 5.2.1 COVID-19 pandemic:

The global COVID-19 pandemic posed the most significant challenge for both preparation and conduct of the operation.

As the joint WCO/JICA project is due be ending in June 2021, the operation could not be postponed any longer.

Consequently, all trainings, especially on communication (use of the CENcomm platform), the preparation of the national operational plans as well as the pre-operational meeting had to be held virtually.

Due to national sanitary restrictions, some PGS cascade trainings for participating front line officers within the member states as well as physical meetings with additional stakeholders could not be conducted as scheduled.

In addition, some border crossings have been closed and less customs staff have been available as initially planned and promised by RAs.

Physical deployments for the OCU to be set up in Kenya have not been possible. Thus, OCU has been set up and operated virtually.

During the operational phase, reduced cargo and passenger movements have been monitored.

### 5.2.2 Communication:

Despite several virtual operation preparatory meetings and two virtual CENcomm trainings, communication and exchange of information should be improved.

During and after the operational phase, very limited communication through the CENcomm platform has been monitored. Respective and important formatted messages (warning/seizure/feedback message) have not been submitted. This included the lack of sharing nominal by customs which is essential for Police/INTERPOL follow-ups.

### 5.2.3 RA management:

Despite motivation and good mood among NCPs, frequent staff rotations, the lack of staff capacity along with the lack of support and clear instructions by the RA management have been monitored during and after the operational phase. For instance, Rwanda RA joined the operation one week later.

In addition, PGS test kits have not been available at Tanzanian borders, although WCO/JICA project had procured and delivered sufficient number to all participating MS. Apparently, they are stocked in the main customs office in Dar es Salaam and could not be delivered to border stations.

### 5.2.4 RILO ESA support:

In terms of RILO support there is room for improvement. RILO ESA provided a brief overview on the results of the operation during the debriefing meeting.

On the other hand, offered and agreed support prior and during the operation has been lacking.

### 5.2.5 INTERPOL/police support:

INTERPOL participation has been perfect in terms of OCU support. As mentioned above, swift action has been taken on the information shared through CENcomm and immediate feedback has been provided.

On the other hand, police mainly relayed on customs and took over respective seizure cases provided and realized only few passenger checks on their own. Consequently, INTERPOL databases could not be checked intensively.

## 6 Conclusion / Way forward

### 6.1 Conclusions

For future PGS operations, if ever possible, it is highly recommended to wait until global sanitary situation has improved in order to ensure that all staff required will be available and physical trainings and meetings will be allowed to be conducted.

In general, operational preparation and its conduct is unsuitable to be conducted virtually.

To enhance coordination and communication onsite as well as for the Operational Coordination Unit (OCU), physical deployments of WCO and regional representatives should be considered. The OCU should be kept a physical unit in order to be able to quickly exchange and follow up on information shared.

If CENcomm is considered the best communication tool for WCO operations, respective physical trainings should be regularly included in every type of operational preparation and should even be maintained after the operation at a national level and at the WCO level as a regular (e.g. quarterly) training, especially for all PGS National Contact Points (NCP).

For most of the participating East African RAs improvement of leadership and ownership is crucial. The role and responsibility of National Contact Point (NCP) should be clearly defined. RAs are encouraged to continue and enhance for PGS to be properly included in their strategy as introduced by the WCO/JICA project.

Regular and continuous PGS training of border stations is required considering the frequent staff rotation. If ever possible, those national PGS trainings should be included in the RA's annual training plans. An exchange or assistance of additional PGS trainers from neighboring countries should be considered.

In addition, better police integration in future operations should be discussed with INTERPOL to ensure more passenger checks to be realized.

RILO integration should be enhanced as regional Customs support, especially on regional analysis, risk assessment and regional experts' network substantially supports operational preparation and conduct.

Depending on future funds availability, a similar operation could be considered to be conducted after the sanitary crises.

## 6.2 Way forward:

Due to the challenges and lessons learnt during the operation, RAs already identified concrete actions to be taken to strengthen border controls on precursor chemicals and other IED component as follows:

Country	National Actions to be taken
Burundi	<p>Continuation of PGS awareness raising and risk education campaigns,</p> <p>Continuation of monitoring the trade of precursor chemicals to be shared with other EARAs through CENcomm platform,</p> <p>Involvement of other stakeholders on efforts of IED threat prevention.</p>
Kenya	<p>Strengthening the Multi-agency framework at all entry points by anchoring these IEDs &amp; Precursor Chemical Operations and programs in the Border Control &amp; Operations Coordination Committee (BCCOC) mandate,</p> <p>Quarterly awareness raising trainings of border officers on detection and handling of IED components &amp; detection training (PGS test kits),</p> <p>Enhancement of Regional co-operation between the East Africa revenue authorities to strengthen border control through joint activities.</p>
Rwanda	<p>Inclusion and establishment of PGS courses in national training program,</p> <p>Conduction of PGS e-learning courses (training) for customs border staff, (Sensitization through virtual class)</p> <p>Trainings for other stakeholders (i.e. Police) at different border points, namely Kagitumba &amp; Rubavu</p>
Tanzania	<p>Strengthening relationship with partner agencies (Police &amp; GCLA) by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conducting joint PGS awareness raising trainings for law enforcement officers.</li> <li>• conducting quarterly management meetings where Manager of enforcement will share national state of play on IED and precursor chemical controls with Heads of partner agencies.</li> </ul> <p>Uplifting enforcement operation on porous border to neighboring countries by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sharing intelligence with all national enforcement teams on IED components which are expected to be imported illegally.</li> <li>• distributing precursor chemical Test-Kits to all enforcement teams.</li> <li>• deploying Raman Spectrometers to border points mainly used for trafficking of precursor chemicals.</li> </ul> <p>Information sharing on precursor chemicals and IED components intelligence and seizures through CENcomm with member states and WCO.</p>
Uganda	<p>Frequent/regular training of Customs border officers to counter deployments,</p> <p>Use of and reliance on intelligence information and trend analysis in future operations for better results,</p> <p>Establishment of a regional committee comprising of PGS National Contact Points (NCPs) to coordinate PGS activities and any matters arising through more regular</p>

	meetings and to communicate any outcomes to the bigger PGS family of border and bond customs officers.
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