



Permanent Technical Committee

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243rd/244th Sessions

-
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Brussels, 23 February 2024.

FACILITATION TOOLS

Developing and updating tools in line with the WCO Strategic Plan

(Item XVII on the Agenda)

SUMMARY

Purpose of document

The purpose of this document is to set the stage for discussions on the need for new tools to be developed and existing tools to be updated by the Procedures and Facilitation Sub-Directorate, under the responsibility and competence of the Permanent Technical Committee (PTC).

For this purpose, the PTC will have the opportunity to review the existing tools and identify those that need to be updated, as well as identifying topics for which a new tool is required in order to respond to Members' needs in line with the WCO Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

Action required of the Permanent Technical Committee

The Permanent Technical Committee is invited to:

- discuss and provide guidance on the need to develop new tools or update existing ones in line with the Strategic Plan, in the areas that fall under its responsibility.

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I. Introduction

1. According to the [Strategic Plan 2022-2025](#), the WCO has set as its main Strategic Goal the provision of leadership, guidance and support to the Members. The WCO's actions respond to the main needs identified by Members, which are articulated around four strategic objectives that represent the main areas of Customs' activity; the first of these is trade facilitation. Under this strategic objective, it is specified that the Secretariat will

pay particular attention to the Revised Kyoto Convention, E-Commerce, the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, SAFE and AEO, Coordinated Border Management, the Data Model and waste-related issues.

2. The activities in each of these fields will be split between the various strategic processes representing the main functions of the WCO as an Organization, namely the development and updating of instruments, the strengthening of Customs cooperation and cooperation with key stakeholders, and capacity building activities. The supporting functions, as well as the focus areas, will also impact the development of initiatives under each of the strategic objectives.
3. The first core function of the WCO (SP1) is to provide Members with an adequate set of instruments with which to face the realities of the modern world. This function can be implemented through the development of new tools to respond to new opportunities and challenges, and also through the updating of existing tools to make them fit for purpose with regard to those opportunities and challenges.
4. SP1 includes a key performance indicator (KPI) for measuring Member satisfaction in terms of whether updated or newly-developed tools adequately respond to Members' expectations. The WCO Annual Survey conducted in 2022 provides a baseline for this KPI. The results of the 2023 Annual Survey already allow for a first comparison in this respect, as indicated in the Secretary General's Progress Report to the Policy Commission/Council in June 2023 on the Implementation of the Strategic Plan (Chart XIV in Doc. [SP0813](#)). Thus, according to the Annual Survey conducted in 2023, the overall satisfaction rating of Members regarding instruments updated or newly developed (trade facilitation and economic competitiveness) was 4.16 out of 5, based on the responses received from 124 Members on this specific question.
5. Another important aspect of the Strategic Plan is the WCO focus areas for the current strategic cycle, namely Technology and innovation, Green Customs, and Governance and accountability.

II. Purpose and scope of the PTC

6. In the PTC's Terms of Reference (ToR), its functions are defined as:
 - contributing to the strategic direction of the work done by the WCO in respect of the promotion, development and administration of trade facilitation instruments and tools, in accordance with the WCO Strategic Plan;
 - helping to enhance co-operation between Customs administrations and governmental and non-governmental (private sector) organizations in the field of trade facilitation;
 - introducing and promoting initiatives aimed at improving the effectiveness of Customs through information technology and electronic commerce, Customs co-operation and the establishment of various legal instruments;
 - developing various tools designed to enhance efficiency in trade (particularly the Guide to measuring the time required for the release of goods), and promoting their use by Members;
 - contributing to the development of means and methods to facilitate, simplify and harmonize the Customs formalities applicable to postal consignments; and
 - providing strategic support for the WCO's capacity building programmes for Members.

III. Current status

7. The WCO has been developing and updating tools based on its three-year Strategic Plans and yearly Implementation Plans. The PTC supports this procedure in the areas that fall under its responsibility and competence.
8. The tools developed by the Procedures and Facilitation Sub-Directorate and endorsed by the PTC in past years can be found via the following link:
<https://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/tools.aspx>
9. During financial year 2022/2023, a number of tools were developed/updated, endorsed by the PTC and published following Council approval in June 2023; these include, among others, Version 4.0.0 of the WCO Data Model, the updated WCO Implementation Guidance to Section I of the WTO TFA, Guidelines on Cooperation Between Customs and Port Authorities, and the Cruise Ship Compendium of Best Practices for Customs.
10. Furthermore, the E-commerce Package, the SAFE Package and the WCO Data Model have their own updating and maintenance mechanisms, and the tools under these packages have been reviewed and updated regularly, based on those mechanisms.
11. A number of new tools are also being developed, for presentation at this or future PTC sessions. They include, in particular: the Guidelines on the Customs treatment of return-refill containers and packings; the Guidelines on E-commerce fulfilment: implications for Customs; the Concept Paper on the use of blockchain by Customs; the WCO–UPU Postal Customs Guide, the Study Report on Smart Security Devices; and a repository of Members’ practices of collaborating with other regulatory agencies to ensure environmental compliance under Pillar III of the SAFE FoS.
12. Moreover, a number of tools are in the process of being reviewed/updated, or are the subject of ongoing discussions about the procedures for updating them. These include the Single Window Compendium, the GNC Handbook, the TRS Guide, AEO and SMEs (expansion of the AEO programme to include SMEs and MSMEs), the CBM Compendium, the Railway Guidance, and the Guidelines on Cooperation between Customs and Port Authorities.
13. Nevertheless, there are a number of tools have not been reviewed or updated recently. A few examples are listed below:
 - Customs International Benchmarking Manual (2003)
https://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/tools/customs_international_benchmarking_manual.aspx
 - WCO Unique Consignment Reference (UCR) (2004)
https://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/ucr/ucr_new_e.pdf?la=en
 - Model Business Lens Checklist for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (December 2014)
<https://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/key-issues/ecp/2015/model-checklist.pdf?la=en>
 - Guidelines on Chapter 7 of the General Annex of the Revised Kyoto Convention on the Application of Information and Communication Technology (RKC ICT Guidelines) (2014)
<https://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/tools/ict-guidelines.aspx>

- Voluntary Compliance Framework (2015)
<https://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/tools/voluntary-compliance-framework.aspx>
- Study Report on Customs Brokers (June 2016)
<https://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/tools/study-report-on-customs-brokers.aspx>
- WCO Customs Brokers Guidelines (June 2018)
<https://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/tools/wco-customs-brokers-guidelines.aspx>
- Transparency and Predictability Guidelines (July 2016)
<https://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/tools/transparency-and-predictability-guidelines.aspx>
- Guidelines for Strengthening Cooperation and the Exchanging of Information between Customs and Tax Authorities at the National Level (October 2016)
https://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/customs-tax-cooperation/customs_tax_guidelines_en_final2.pdf?db=web
- National Committees on Trade Facilitation (2016 & Annex in 2021)
<https://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/nctf/nctf.PDF?db=web>
- WCO Handbook on Inward and Outward Processing Procedures (2017)
https://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/wco-handbook-on-inward-and-outward-processing-procedures/pc_handbook.pdf?la=en

14. Finally, it is important to note that there may also be other areas in which WCO Members agree on the need to develop a new tool.

IV. Suggested way forward

15. Given the Organization's limited resources, the technical teams in the Secretariat need to focus their efforts on instruments and tools that respond to Members' interests and are expected to have a significant impact on their daily operations. The main objective of the Secretariat's work is to provide tools that will be implemented by Members to the greatest possible extent. To arrive at a better understanding of the needs of the membership in terms of the development of new tools or the updating of existing ones, PTC delegates are invited to base their comments and requests – albeit not exclusively – on the following aspects:
- operational impact of a given tool, and/or a problem encountered operationally with the implementation of the current version of the tool, based on their national experience,
 - correlation with the WCO Strategic Plan and the priorities defined by the Plan, and
 - priority level of this activity.

V. Action required of the PTC

16. The PTC is invited to:

- discuss and provide guidance on the need to develop new tools or update existing ones in line with the Strategic Plan, in the areas that fall under its responsibility.
