



Permanent Technical Committee

243rd/244th Sessions
23 – 26 April 2024
24.05.2024 / Brussels
PC0757Ea

SUMMARY REPORT

THE PERMANENT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Item no.	Agenda item	Paragraph
I.	Opening <i>(To take note)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Opening remarks by Ian Saunders, Secretary General, WCO	1-2
II.	Adoption of the Agenda <i>(For decision)</i>	3-7
III.	Update and reports <i>(For information only)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Report from the 32nd Meeting of the Revised Kyoto Convention Management Committee, 6-10 November 2023b. Report from the 89th Session of the Policy Commission, 5-7 December 2023c. Oral report on the 33rd Meeting of the Revised Kyoto Convention Management Committee, 9-11 April 2024 <i>(To take note)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">d. Report from the 22nd Meeting of the ATA/Istanbul Administrative Committee, 2-3 November 2023e. Report from the 20th Meeting of the Counterfeiting and Piracy Group, 21-22 November 2023f. Report from the 10th Meeting of the Technical Experts Group on Non-Intrusive Inspection, 23-24 November 2023	8-13

	<p><i>(For decision)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> g. Report from the 67th Meeting of the Data Model Projects Team (DMPT), 25-29 September 2023 h. Report from the 17th Meeting of the API/PNR Contact Committee, 2-3 October 2023 i. Report from the 6th Meeting of the Passenger Facilitation and Control Working Group (PFCWG), 4-5 October 2023 j. Report from the 43rd Meeting of the WCO/UPU Contact Committee, 21-22 November 2023 • Update of the WCO-UPU Postal Customs Guide • Amendment of the CN 22/CN 23 postal Customs declaration forms k. Report from the 68th Meeting of the Data Model Projects Team (DMPT), 22-26 January 2024 • WCO DM Product Management • Terms of Reference of the Data Model Projects Team (DMPT) • DMRs related to WCO DM version 4.1.0 • Work Programme 2023-2025 <p><i>(For guidance)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> l. Report from the 29th Meeting of the SAFE Working Group, 15-17 November 2023 	
<p>IV.</p>	<p>WCO Theme for 2024 <i>(For discussion and guidance)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round Table on “Customs engaging traditional and new partners with purpose” - Asian Development Bank (ADB) - International Network of Customs Universities (INCU) - International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) - WCO Private Sector Consultative Group (PSCG) 	<p>14-21</p>

V.	<p>World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) <i>(To take note and for discussion)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Update from the WTO b. Mercator Programme progress report c. Panel discussion on cooperation with the WTO and other Annex D organizations: How can collaboration and synergies between the WCO and these traditional partners be strengthened? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) • Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) • UN Trade and Development (formerly UNCTAD) • World Bank (WB) d. Presentation by Colombia e. Multi-agency initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on the Global Trade Helpdesk (GTH) • Presentation on Trade4MSMEssing 	22-53
VI.	<p>E-Commerce <i>(To take note, for discussion, guidance and endorsement)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Update on intersessional progress and Members' experiences of implementing the Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation by Brazil on Safety and security • Presentation by Japan on Public awareness, outreach and capacity building, and Measurement and analysis b. E-commerce fulfilment and its implications for Customs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations by Amazon and Alibaba Group • Presentation by the United Kingdom on Fulfilment Houses c. Expanding the concept of Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) to cross-border e-commerce d. 5th edition of the Compendium of Case Studies on E-Commerce e. Update on the WTO e-commerce negotiations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation by one of the co-convenors (Australia) 	54-86

VII.	<p>Traveler facilitation and control <i>(To take note, and for discussion, guidance and endorsement)</i></p> <p>a. Update on new Terms of Reference (ToR) for the API and BRI/PNR Contact Committee</p> <p>b. Information on submission to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for an amendment to the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (FAL Convention)</p> <p>c. Report on BRI Pilot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation by Princess Cruises • Presentation by UN Countering Terrorist Travel Programme 	87-103
VIII.	<p>Smart Customs Project <i>(To take note)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on the Smart Customs Project 	104-112
IX.	<p>Digital Customs <i>(For discussion, guidance and decision)</i></p> <p>a. Foreign Trader Identification Number</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation by the United States <p>b. Concept paper on the use of blockchain by Customs</p> <p>c. DMPT's recommendation for the revision of the WCO Data Strategy Paper</p>	113-124
X.	<p>Single Window <i>(To take note, and for discussion and guidance)</i></p> <p>a. UN/CEFACT White Paper on Single Window Assessment Methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation by the UN/CEFACT <p>b. UN Trade and Development (formerly UNCTAD) Paper on Roadmap for Building a Trade Single Window</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation by the UNCTAD <p>c. Updating of the Single Window Compendium</p> <p>d. Presentation by Pakistan on the Pakistan Single Window (PSW) initiative</p>	125-139
XI.	<p>Customs-Port Cooperation <i>(For discussion and guidance)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision of the Guidelines on Cooperation between Customs and Port Authorities 	140-145

XII.	<p>Rules of Origin (To take note, and for discussion and endorsement)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Update on the Feasibility Study on the Interconnectivity Framework for Certificates of Origin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation by Korea on interconnectivity for Certificates of Origin • The draft Feasibility Study on the Interconnectivity Framework for Certificates of Origin b. WCO Origin-related Studies: Study on the Digitalization of the Certificate of Origin, Study on Accumulation/Cumulation 	146-154
XIII.	<p>Time Release Study (TRS) (To take note and for guidance)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Update on progress with the WCO and World Bank Group (WBG) joint TRS Project b. Status report on progress with the updating of the TRS CLiKC! e-learning module and the TRS Guide (Version 3, 2018) c. Update on TRS capacity building support under the SECO-WCO Global Trade Facilitation Programme (GTFP) d. Presentation by Zambia 	155-169
XIV.	<p>Transit (To take note, for discussion and guidance)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation by the Borderless Alliance 	170-179
XV.	<p>Facilitation tools (For discussion and guidance)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and updating tools in line with the WCO Strategic Plan 	180-184
XVI.	<p>Strengthening Customs-Industry Resilience (For discussion and decision)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Resolution of the Customs Co-operation Council on Strengthening Customs-Industry Resilience b. Presentation by New Zealand 	185-193
XVII.	<p>Green Customs (To take note)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the control of waste shipments 	194-215

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Improving the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure under the Basel Convention, and electronic approaches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation by the Basel Convention Secretariat c. Environmental compliance under Pillar III of the SAFE FoS 	
XVIII	Glossary of International Customs Terms <i>(To take note and for guidance)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on the Glossary of International Customs Terms 	216-219
XIX	PTC Work Programme <i>(To take note and for decision)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress report on the Revised PTC Work Programme 2022-2025 	220-223
XX	Elections <i>(For decision)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election of a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the PTC for financial year 2024/2025 	224-227
XXI	Topics for the next meeting <i>(For decision)</i>	228-232
XXII	Upcoming events <i>(To take note)</i>	233-237
XXIII	Any other business	238
XXIV	Closing	239-241

ITEM I – OPENING OF THE MEETING

- **Opening remarks by Ian Saunders, Secretary General, WCO**

1. After the Chairperson's introduction and welcome to the 243rd/244th Sessions of the Permanent Technical Committee (PTC), the Secretary General welcomed delegates and mentioned his tenure as the former Chairperson of the PTC from 2018 to 2019. He emphasized that the PTC had a long history of harnessing the expertise and experience of a diverse membership with a number of observers. He then indicated developments in present challenges and opportunities such as the emergence of disruptive technologies and big data, and emphasized the importance of good guidance and tools to adapt to them. He outlined key themes: cooperation, technology utilization, and adaptability. To ensure that the PTC provided guidance on the best way forward, he highlighted the importance of partnership represented by the WCO theme for 2024, "Customs engaging traditional and new partners with purpose", including cooperation in terms of the implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). He then moved to the topic of innovation using cutting-edge technologies, exemplified by the Digital Customs and Smart Customs Agenda items. Finally, he recognized adaptation as a key element to maintain Customs work processes to remain responsive to changing conditions. He concluded his remarks by commending the efforts of delegates and hoping that ideas from the PTC meeting would help them to move forward in critical areas. The List of Participants is set out in **Annex I** hereto.

2. **In conclusion, the PTC:**

- took note of the opening remarks by Ian Saunders, Secretary General of the WCO.

ITEM II – ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

3. Before moving to the adoption of the Agenda, the Secretariat, Brendan O'Hearn, Deputy Director in charge of the Procedures and Facilitation Sub-Directorate, provided some feedback on the results of the PTC Satisfaction Survey conducted at the October 2023 PTC meeting.
4. The Chairperson introduced the Agenda item and gave an update on the changes made in versions b and c of the draft Agenda, published on the Members' website. The PTC was invited to adopt the draft Agenda as set out in Doc. PC0738E (version c).
5. After the Chairperson's introduction of the Agenda, a few Members took the floor and made brief statements regarding the situation in Ukraine. The Chairperson asked delegates who wished to make statements to be reflected in an Annex to

the Summary Report to submit them in writing to the Secretariat. The written statements received by the Secretariat are set out in **Annex II** hereto.

6. Finally, the Chairperson encouraged delegates to use the sessions to think about what topics they would like to discuss at future meetings of the PTC and to bring those under Agenda item XXI, "Topics for the next meeting."
7. **In conclusion, the PTC:**
 - endorsed the draft Agenda (Doc. PC0738Ec).

ITEM III – UPDATE AND REPORTS

(For information only)

- a. **Report from the 32nd Meeting of the Revised Kyoto Convention Management Committee, 6-10 November 2023**
- b. **Report from the 89th Session of the Policy Commission, 5-7 December 2023**
- c. **Oral report on the 33rd Meeting of the Revised Kyoto Convention Management Committee, 9-11 April 2024**

(To take note)

- d. **Report from the 22nd Meeting of the ATA/Istanbul Administrative Committee, 2-3 November 2023**
- e. **Report from the 20th Meeting of the Counterfeiting and Piracy Group, 21-22 November 2023**
- f. **Report from the 10th Meeting of the Technical Experts Group on Non-Intrusive Inspection, 23-24 November 2023**

(For decision)

- g. **Report from the 67th Meeting of the Data Model Projects Team (DMPT), 25-29 September 2023**
- h. **Report from the 17th Meeting of the API/PNR Contact Committee, 2-3 October 2023**
- i. **Report from the 6th Meeting of the of the Passenger Facilitation and Control Working Group (PFCWG), 4-5 October 2023**
- j. **Report from the 43rd Meeting of the WCO/UPU Contact Committee, 21-22 November 2023**
 - **Update of the WCO-UPU Postal Customs Guide**
 - **Amendment of the CN 22/CN 23 postal Customs declaration forms**
- k. **Report from the 68th Meeting of the Data Model Projects Team (DMPT), 22-26 January 2024**
 - **WCO DM Product Management**
 - **Terms of Reference of the Data Model Projects Team (DMPT)**
 - **DMRs related to WCO DM version 4.1.0**
 - **Work Programme 2023-2025**

(For guidance)

I. Report from the 29th Meeting of the SAFE Working Group, 15-17 November 2023

8. The Chairperson introduced this Agenda item, explaining that the update and reports formed a standing PTC Agenda item which grouped all the “A”-items, namely reports from different WCO working bodies or by the Secretariat. Some of these reports (sub-items a to c) were being submitted to the PTC for information only. The reports under sub-items d to f were being submitted to the PTC to take note of. If required, delegates could raise any issue or launch a relevant discussion. Sub-items g to k required endorsement by the PTC. The PTC would be invited to provide guidance on the report provided under sub-item l.

c. Oral report on the 33rd Meeting of the Revised Kyoto Convention Management Committee, 9-11 April 2024

9. The Secretariat presented an oral report to the PTC regarding the 33rd Meeting of the RKC/MC, held from 9 to 11 April 2024. The report highlighted key Agenda items, including the update of references, examples, and appendices of the RKC Guidelines; the update of the Specific Annex K (SA-K) on Rules of Origin (RoO) of the RKC; the Inward and Outward Processing Handbook; a proposal to develop a Quality Implementation and Compliance Assessment Toolkit (QuIcK!); experiences shared by a new Contracting Party to the RKC; and the exchange of ideas and best practices.
10. A delegate sought clarification regarding the connection between the work conducted on RoO under the RKC/MC and a study on Origin Certification carried out by another WCO working body. They further inquired about the coordination between the two bodies.
11. The Secretariat clarified that coordination between the RKC/MC and other relevant working bodies, such as the Technical Committee on Rules of Origin (TCRO), had taken place to ensure comprehensive and inclusive progress. For instance, in the development of Guidelines for SA-K on RoO of the RKC, the draft Guidelines had been referred to the TCRO for technical input. Subsequently, based on the technical guidance provided by the TCRO, the draft Guidelines had been further referred to the RKC/MC, thus facilitating coordination between the two bodies.

j. Report from the 43rd Meeting of the WCO/UPU Contact Committee, 21-22 November 2023

12. The Delegate of Korea took the floor and provided the background to their proposal, sub-item j, amendment of the CN 22/CN 23 postal Customs declaration

forms. The delegate explained the need to distinguish B2C e-commerce items from B2B and C2C transactions in order to conduct better risk management, and stressed that this amendment, when it came into force in June 2026, would lead to more robust Customs control and facilitation of cross-border e-commerce. A delegate supported the proposed amendment of the CN 22/CN 23 forms, emphasizing that the nature of goods in the supply chain had changed with e-commerce and that Customs and postal authorities needed to adapt to this change.

13. In conclusion, the PTC:

- took note of the reports from the relevant meetings;
- endorsed the Report from the 67th Meeting of the Data Model Projects Team (DMPT), 25-29 September 2023;
- endorsed the Report from the 17th Meeting of the API/PNR Contact Committee, 2-3 October 2023;
- endorsed the Report from the 6th Meeting of the Passenger Facilitation and Control Working Group (PFCWG), 4-5 October 2023;
- endorsed the Report from the 43rd Meeting of the WCO/UPU Contact Committee, 21-22 November 2023, including the update of the WCO-UPU Postal Customs Guide and amendment of the CN 22/CN 23 postal Customs declaration forms;
- endorsed the Report from the 68th Meeting of the Data Model Projects Team (DMPT), 22-26 January 2024, including the WCO DM Product Management, Terms of Reference of the Data Model Projects Team (DMPT), DMRs related to WCO DM version 4.1.0, and Work Programme 2023-2025; and
- endorsed the Report from the 29th Meeting of the SAFE Working Group, 15-17 November 2023.

ITEM IV - WCO THEME FOR 2024

- **Round Table on “Customs engaging traditional and new partners with purpose”**
 - Asian Development Bank (ADB)
 - International Network of Customs Universities (INCU)
 - Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)
 - WCO Private Sector Consultative Group (PSCG)

14. The PTC discussed the WCO Theme for 2024, “Customs engaging traditional and new partners with purpose.” The focus was on the discussion of deepening and enriching the WCO’s established relationships to ensure their continued strengths, relevance, and mutual benefits. Representatives of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Network of Customs Universities (INCU), the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), and the WCO Private Sector Consultative Group (PSCG) participated in a round table session. Each speaker provided valuable insights into the existing

partnerships between their organizations, the WCO and Customs administrations, showcasing successful outcomes and highlighting areas for further collaboration and improvement. The discussions underscored the importance of collaborative, adaptive, and inclusive approaches to tackle emerging challenges to international trade and the supply chain.

15. The Representative of the ADB emphasized the critical need to strike a balance between trade facilitation, border security, and supply chain resilience, especially in turbulent situations like the COVID-19 pandemic. Recalling the need to extend the WCO-ADB MoU in 2025, he emphasized that it was essential to strengthen partnerships and to revisit areas and modes of cooperation, considering the advent of disruptive innovation and technologies and environmental challenges, along with ongoing collaborative efforts in Customs automation, logistics, and digitalization. Additionally, he highlighted the necessity for the adoption of inclusive technology to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries.
16. The Representative of INCU centred on its role in bolstering Customs capabilities through education and research-driven initiatives. He cited successful collaborations with the WCO in publications and scientific conferences, stressing the imperative of global cooperation to tackle emerging trade challenges. Furthermore, he advocated for closer partnerships between academia and Customs administrations at both global and national levels, inviting delegates to explore potential joint research projects free of charge.
17. The Representative of the IPPC discussed areas of collaboration with the WCO to ensure the safe trade of plants and plant products while preventing the spread of pests. She emphasized the necessity of harmonized efforts between organizations to address emerging challenges, such as e-commerce and plant health risks. Notably, she highlighted the recent approval of a new recommendation on sea containers by the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures and stressed the integration of technology such as electronic certification into Customs processes, emphasizing the need for a renewed Joint Work Plan between the IPPC and the WCO, along with enhanced knowledge sharing initiatives.
18. The speaker from the PSCG highlighted successful collaborations with the WCO, including a survey regarding Customs broker regulations that had resulted in the development of Customs broker guidelines and cooperation during the pandemic. She emphasized mutual trust, fair assessment, and gender equality as fundamental elements in future collaborations between Customs administrations and the private sector. She encouraged utilizing the private sector's expertise to simplify processes while maintaining effective risk management, with a focus on upcoming priorities such as SMEs and green Customs.
19. During the Q&A sessions, delegates engaged in substantive discussions with the speakers, exploring critical aspects of Customs development and collaboration. A

delegate initiated conversations on technology's evolving role within Customs operations, proposing it as a new stakeholder bridging research and business sectors. While speakers acknowledged the significance of technology, they also highlighted challenges in its rapid advancement, particularly in combating illicit trade, stressing the importance of careful evaluation and adaptation. Another delegate emphasized the need for accessible resources and effective collaboration among stakeholders to ensure equitable benefits. One delegate stressed nurturing equal partnerships and supporting SMEs to enhance trade facilitation. Another delegate sought clarity on how the ADB's initiatives aligned with broader poverty reduction goals, prompting explanations on the interconnectedness between trade facilitation, economic development, and poverty reduction. Inquiries from a delegate spurred discussions on defining and sustaining purposeful relationships, with speakers emphasizing clear communication and tangible benefits. Concerns about illicit trade and pest contamination raised by another delegate led to discussions on collaborative measures to mitigate these risks, particularly with respect to sea containers.

20. A delegate highlighted efforts to strengthen cooperation with both traditional and new partners, particularly in areas such as capacity building and e-commerce. Another delegate shared their new approach regarding Customs brokers to ensure companies received tailored support in utilizing FTAs effectively. One delegate expressed support for the WCO's theme for 2024 and stressed the need for closer stakeholder engagement, especially in sustainable development and the resilience of global supply chains, suggesting more frequent sharing between the private sector and Customs. In response, speakers acknowledged the importance of promoting research and collaboration to address these challenges effectively. Another delegate provided insights into her country's efforts emphasizing proactive collaboration, partnerships, and addressing emerging challenges with a comprehensive strategy, including cybersecurity, supply chain resilience, trade facilitation, and gender equality initiatives.

21. In conclusion, the PTC:

- took note of the discussion with the four speakers representing the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Network of Customs Universities (INCU), the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), and the WCO Private Sector Consultative Group (PSCG);
- took note of the existing and potential collaborations with these organizations and provided guidance on the future work of the WCO, including on SMEs;
- took note of the INCU's offer to conduct research free of charge on behalf of Members;
- took note of the ADB's potential areas of revision for the next extension of the WCO-ADB MoU in 2025;
- recommended that the Administrative Committee for the Customs Convention on Containers consider the recommendations from the IPPC; and
- encouraged Members to continue to seek opportunities to forge relationships with new stakeholders, to break down siloes, and ensure new and established partnerships were equipped to adapt to modern challenges.

ITEM V – WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO) TRADE FACILITATION AGREEMENT (TFA)

a. Update from the WTO

22. The World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Committee (TFC) Chair Carlos Guevara addressed the meeting with respect to developments taking place in the WTO TFC and how they related to the WCO. He began by expressing his gratitude for the invitation, and acknowledged the PTC's key role in addressing all trade facilitation matters, including the TFA. His presentation focused on the multifaceted landscape of trade facilitation, emphasizing the intersection between the TFA and the activities of the WCO. He acknowledged the considerable progress made since the inception of the TFA, highlighting the TFC's initial challenges in navigating its role amid the unique characteristics of the Agreement. Over the past seven years, the TFC had primarily focused on monitoring transparency requirements and bridging gaps in technical assistance and capacity building, crucial for facilitating the implementation of the TFA among diverse members.
23. Digitalization emerged as a pivotal theme in his presentation, reflecting its transformative potential in optimizing trade facilitation processes. Recognizing the different digital capacities among members, the TFC had initiated a year-long series of discussions aimed at sharing experiences and best practices in utilizing digital tools to enhance TFA implementation. This initiative underscored the importance of addressing the digital gap and providing tailored technical assistance to support members in their digital transformation journey. Furthermore, he underscored the indispensable role of National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) in driving trade facilitation reforms at the local level. Highlighting the need for sustained support, the TFC was working on compiling a repository of good practices to empower NTFCs in their facilitation efforts. This emphasis on NTFCs reflected a strategic approach towards fostering interagency cooperation and coordinated border management, essential for streamlining trade processes and enhancing efficiency. In addition to digitalization and NTFCs, he addressed the pressing issue of disaster preparedness and resilience in supply chains. Drawing insights from recent informal sessions, the TFC identified key areas for improvement, including simplification of clearance procedures, border agency coordination, and leveraging digital solutions. These efforts aligned with broader global initiatives aimed at enhancing disaster preparedness and ensuring the continuity of trade flows during emergencies and natural disasters. He concluded by expressing gratitude to the PTC for the opportunity to share updates and emphasized the importance of collaboration between the WTO and WCO in advancing trade facilitation reforms.
24. A PTC observer emphasized the critical role of digitalization in enhancing TFA implementation, acknowledging the TFA's encouragement of technology use, particularly in provisions like the Single Window. He also offered his organization's support (GEA's) in advancing digitalization efforts to fully

implement the TFA, underscoring a collaborative approach between the private sector and the TFC. Various delegates also shared updates on the implementation of the TFA and highlighted the crucial role of digitalization in streamlining trade processes. Discussions revolved around the evolving role of NTFCs beyond TFA requirements and the challenges they faced, including funding constraints and limited representation at WTO headquarters. Questions and concerns raised during the session focused on the future direction of NTFCs, the support provided by the WTO for trade facilitation measures, and cooperation between the WTO and the WCO. In response, the Chair of the TFC emphasized the need for NTFCs to adapt to new challenges and encouraged collaboration between the WTO and the WCO to explore the impact of digitalization on trade facilitation. He underscored the importance of sharing best practices among countries and the role of NTFCs in fostering dialogue and learning.

25. The update from the WTO continued with a presentation on the state of play regarding TFA implementation. The Representative of the WTO Secretariat provided a comprehensive snapshot of the current state of play regarding the implementation of commitments under the WTO TFA. He emphasized the challenges and progress made by members in meeting their implementation commitments. He highlighted the categories of commitments, including those requiring technical assistance and capacity building support, and discussed the extension deadline requests made by members under Article 17 of the Agreement. He also referred to Article 19 of the TFA, on the ability to shift the commitments between Categories B and C. His presentation delved into the dynamic nature of TFA implementation, highlighting the evolving landscape of extension requests and the increasing focus on technical assistance and capacity building.
26. The presentation underscored the importance of transparency and collaboration in supporting members' efforts to implement TFA commitments. The Representative of the WTO identified the TFA Database as a valuable resource for tracking progress, sharing experiences, and identifying upcoming implementation deadlines. He emphasized the role of technical assistance arrangements and donor support in facilitating TFA implementation, pointing out the need for continued efforts to address gaps and challenges. The presentation concluded with a call for engagement and feedback from PTC delegates to further enhance the effectiveness of TFA implementation efforts and support mechanisms.
27. A delegate raised a question regarding the transition from Category C to B, and from Category B to C, and was informed that there were requirements for this transition.

b. Mercator Programme progress report

28. The Chairperson introduced the item and invited the Secretariat to introduce Doc. PC0739Ea. The Secretariat informed the PTC delegates that the

Policy Commission and Council's decision in June 2021 had concluded the WCO Working Group on the WTO TFA and incorporated its work into the PTC and the Capacity Building Committee (CBC). Since then, the TFA had remained a prominent item on the PTC Agenda. The document aimed to provide an overview of recent accomplishments under both the overall and tailor-made tracks of the Mercator Programme.

29. The Secretariat informed those present that the Mercator Programme, launched in 2014, had been instrumental in supporting WCO Members in achieving uniform TFA implementation. This programme aimed to aid governments worldwide in implementing trade facilitation measures efficiently and uniformly under the WTO TFA, utilizing WCO instruments and tools. It operated through two tracks: the overall track, which addressed broader interests such as global awareness raising, updating and development of facilitation instruments and tools, and finalizing various guidelines and compendiums. The tailor-made track provided specific support to Member administrations. Notable achievements included the finalization and approval of various instruments and tools by the WCO working bodies, and the subsequent endorsement by the Council last year. The document outlined the recent accomplishments in these areas, including the completion of several instruments and tools by WCO working bodies and their subsequent approval by the Council in June 2023.
30. Regarding the tailor-made track of the Mercator Programme, a detailed progress report was regularly presented to the Capacity Building Committee. Notably, support under this track was increasingly provided through multi-year partnerships, with additional administrations benefiting from medium to long-term engagement. Furthermore, over 200 on-site, online, or blended activities had been delivered, focusing on organizational development and technical measures associated with specific articles of the TFA.
31. The Secretariat also highlighted significant events and collaborations during the reporting period, covering a range of pertinent topics such as the Revised Kyoto Convention, e-commerce, and disruptive technologies. A key highlight of the update was the expansion of the TFA e-learning course, hosted on the WCO's CLiKC! platform, into multiple languages, including Arabic, Russian, and Spanish.
32. During the session, several delegates highlighted innovative measures and expressed gratitude to the WCO for support in implementing the WTO TFA. They emphasized collaboration among delivery partners and underscored the need for continued support to realize the full benefits of TFA implementation. Additionally, efforts in capacity building and financial support were acknowledged, reflecting a collective commitment to advancing trade facilitation globally. These interventions collectively highlighted the commitment of Member administrations to enhancing trade facilitation efforts.
33. The Secretariat expressed gratitude to delegates for their interventions and acknowledged the support provided by partners and Members for implementing the WTO TFA through WCO capacity building and technical assistance activities.

c. Panel discussion on cooperation with the WTO and other Annex D organizations: How can collaboration and synergies between the WCO and these traditional partners be strengthened?

34. The Chairperson introduced the panel discussion topic, giving the floor to the moderator, Brendan O’Hearn, the Deputy Director in charge of Procedures and Facilitation, to moderate the panel session.
35. The Deputy Director began by acknowledging the 10th anniversary of the Bali Package, highlighting its significance in trade facilitation. He noted that a decade ago, the WTO had adopted the TFA, emphasizing its commitment to simplifying and streamlining global trade procedures. As the WCO embarked on a new decade of collaboration in TFA implementation, and in line with the WCO Theme for 2024, the moderator explained that the discussion would focus on cooperation with the WTO and other Annex D organizations, particularly on how the WCO could strengthen engagement with these traditional partners. The moderator briefly introduced the panellists and invited them to share ongoing activities of their organizations to support TFA implementation; ongoing cooperation with the WCO on the implementation of the TFA; and cooperation with the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) and other Annex D organizations in the area of TFA implementation.
36. The first panellist, the Head of the TFAF, provided a brief overview of the WTO TFAF, established in 2014 to assist developing countries, especially least advanced countries, in implementing the TFA by providing technical assistance and support. She emphasized the importance of fulfilling promises made by donor countries to provide the necessary technical assistance for capacity building. She noted that the main objective of the TFAF was to contribute to the development-friendly impact of the TFA by supporting the implementation of Category C commitments, which were specific measures aimed at facilitating trade. The presenter discussed the TFAF’s vision that, by 2030, 90% of all least developed countries and developing countries would have found a development partner for Category C commitments. However, she noted that there were still many Category C notifications pending completion by the year 2050. She outlined three key instruments for implementation as follows:
- coordination or matchmaking between least developed countries, developing countries, and technical assistance partners to identify needs and provide support;
 - a donation mechanism to provide funding for preparing and implementing projects in cases where countries could not benefit from traditional mechanisms;
 - sharing knowledge and experience among members and partners to facilitate the implementation of projects and build expertise.
37. The panellist emphasized the importance of cooperation with partners, including donor members and technical partners, to achieve the TFAF’s objectives. She highlighted challenges such as competition among technical partners for limited

funding, difficulties in finding the right expertise, and ownership issues with projects.

38. The second panellist, the Representative of the OECD, discussed a recent impact analysis focusing on the trade facilitation agreement concluded a decade ago. She emphasized the importance of understanding where we stood in terms of trade cost reduction and identifying areas for further improvement. The speaker revealed that the TFA had led to an average reduction of trade costs by 5% worldwide over the last decade. However, she stressed that there was still room for improvement, particularly in areas such as digitalization and border agency cooperation. She also discussed the OECD's work in supporting TFA implementation through four pillars: mapping the trade facilitation policy environment, quantifying impacts, addressing emerging issues, and engaging with partners. She highlighted the OECD's Trade Facilitation Indicators, covering 160 economies, and their efforts to quantify the impacts of trade facilitation reforms. In terms of engagement and collaboration, she emphasized the importance of working closely with partners, including Annex D partners to the TFA and non-OECD countries at the WTO.
39. The next panellist, the Representative of UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), outlined UN Trade and Development's focus, including coordination and assistance to National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs). He highlighted that coordination challenges still exist in many countries both at NTFC and border levels. He discussed various initiatives undertaken by UN Trade and Development, including the Empowerment Programme for NTFCs and Climate Smart Trade Facilitation aimed at highlighting the contribution of trade facilitation to sustainability. Key initiatives mentioned by him included capacity building and e-learning, training programmes for stakeholders in trade facilitation, with a particular focus on NTFC chairpersons and secretariats. He highlighted tools such as the Reform Tracker, an online project management tool for implementation and reform monitoring, and Trade Information Portals for transparency and simplification of trade procedures. He underscored the importance of private sector involvement in all trade facilitation reforms, and finally stressed importance of collaborative efforts with other organizations, such as the WCO, WTO, and World Bank with a view to meeting the needs of partner countries.
40. The fourth panellist, the Representative of the World Bank, provided an overview of the Trade Facilitation Support Program (TFSP) initiated by the World Bank, aimed at providing technical assistance and investment support to countries for trade facilitation reforms. He highlighted the program's whole-of-government approach, emphasizing collaboration with various stakeholders, including public and private sectors and international partners. Key areas of assistance under the TFSP included diagnostic assessments, advocacy, technical expertise support, and support for NTFCs and public-private dialogue mechanisms. He emphasized the importance of risk management and metrics indicating the impact of the program, including increased alignment with the TFA and support for various trade facilitation measures globally. He highlighted collaborative efforts with

organizations like the WCO, the WTO, and regional associations, underscoring the importance of partnerships in advancing trade facilitation initiatives.

41. The panel discussions continued as the moderator posed a question to all panellists, asking how collaboration and synergies between the WCO and their respective organizations could be strengthened. The Representative of the World Bank responded by highlighting the potential of digitalization and blockchain technology in enhancing trade facilitation efforts. He suggested three areas for collaboration: regional integration, support for digitalization, and mainstreaming gender considerations into trade policies. The Representative of UN Trade and Development echoed similar sentiments, emphasizing the importance of coordination between international organizations and partner countries, particularly in areas such as national trade facilitation committees and cross-border data exchange. He also highlighted the role of trade facilitation in addressing supply chain disruptions. The Representative of the OECD underscored the need for collaboration in mapping the policy environment for trade facilitation, particularly in the context of digitalization and sustainability. She identified three areas for enhanced collaboration: policy mapping, impact assessment, and border agency cooperation. The WTO TFAF panellist emphasized the importance of their members' access to and knowledge of WCO tools, expressing gratitude for these valuable resources assisting Customs administrations and other agencies in trade facilitation reforms, and stressing the need for their ongoing development and updating, with particular emphasis on the RKC Guidelines and making them available free of charge. Additionally, she mentioned integrating facilitation aspects into Green Customs initiatives, relaunching the NTFC survey, and engaging with the private sector, and support for peer-to-peer learning initiatives.
42. The moderator acknowledged the importance of making RKC Guidelines available free of charge, mentioning recent discussions within the RKC Management Committee to address this issue. He also emphasized the need to reinvigorate private sector participation in capacity building efforts, with the WCO's Private Sector Consultative Group (PSCG) actively involved in such discussions.
43. During the Q&A session, an observer commented on the World Bank-funded initiatives to enhance coordinated border management, stressing the need for WCO involvement. Meanwhile, another observer emphasized the significance of agreed-upon priorities and sustained engagement in private sector initiatives. A different observer addressed a question concerning the number of funding requests received by the WTO for Single Window projects.
44. The discussion emphasized the need to prioritize automation and address governance issues for effective implementation of Single Window systems. There was a call for caution in rushing implementation, and for a focus on learning from other countries' experiences. Additionally, better adherence to international standards, and trust-building between public and private sectors, were highlighted as crucial.

d. Presentation by Colombia

45. The Representative of Colombia presented on inter-institutional coordination within the NTFC and the development of a comprehensive risk management system for Single Window entities in Colombia. She highlighted the integrated risk management system implemented in 2022, aimed at mitigating various risks associated with external trade processes. The presenter elaborated on the composition and functions of the NTFC in Colombia, emphasizing the importance of trust and communication between public and private sectors. She acknowledged the support received from various organizations and stressed the need for continuous communication and collaboration for effective trade facilitation.
46. An observer raised a question about the interpretation of Article 7.4 of the RKC concerning the mandatory submission of Customs declarations 48 hours before arrival. The response highlighted the rationale behind the policy as a government initiative aimed at enhancing control and mitigating risks associated with smuggling, money laundering, and drug trafficking.

e. Multi-agency initiatives

- **Presentation on the Global Trade Helpdesk (GTH)**

47. The Representative of the International Trade Centre (ITC) delivered a presentation highlighting its objective to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in accessing international markets by centralizing and simplifying relevant information. He emphasized the challenges faced by SMEs in navigating complex trade regulations and market dynamics due to limited resources and expertise.
48. He outlined the key features of the Global Trade Helpdesk (GTH), including its user-friendly interface, multilingual support, and coverage of various aspects of the export journey. He demonstrated how the platform enabled SMEs to conduct market research, access tariff information, understand regulatory requirements, and explore digital trade opportunities. He also discussed the collaborative nature of the GTH, which involved partnerships with multiple agencies to ensure the availability of reliable and up-to-date information.
49. In addition to providing an overview of the GTH's current capabilities, he outlined plans for future enhancements, such as expanding language support, leveraging artificial intelligence for technological upgrades, and fostering additional partnerships to promote the platform. He emphasized the GTH's role as a valuable resource for SMEs worldwide and encouraged further collaboration among stakeholders to enhance its effectiveness in supporting SMEs' international trade endeavours.

- **Presentation on Trade4MSMEs**

50. The Representative of the WTO introduced the Trade4MSMEs website, a comprehensive online platform aimed at providing support for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) engaged in international trade. She emphasized the importance of addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by MSMEs in navigating global trade dynamics. She highlighted the role of the WTO Informal Working Group on MSMEs in developing initiatives and resources to facilitate MSMEs' participation in international trade.
51. The Trade4MSMEs website offered a wide range of resources and guidance for both businesses and policymakers/researchers, covering various aspects of international trade relevant to MSMEs. She underscored the collaborative nature of the Trade4MSMEs initiative, which involved partnerships with organizations such as the WCO and other stakeholders to develop and disseminate relevant resources. She also discussed recent deliverables of the MSMEs Working Group, including handbooks, trade facilitation initiatives, and a database and research on MSME provisions in regional trade agreements, all aimed at supporting MSMEs in navigating international trade challenges
52. She emphasized the Trade4MSMEs website's role as a valuable tool for MSMEs and policymakers/researchers seeking information and support for international trade activities. She encouraged stakeholders to continue collaborating and contributing to the website's development to ensure its effectiveness in addressing the evolving needs of MSMEs in the global marketplace.

53. In conclusion, the PTC:

- took note, with thanks, of the remarks of the Chairperson of the WTO Trade Facilitation Committee (TFC);
- took note, with thanks, of the Global Express Association (GEA)'s offer to provide private sector input to the work of the WTO TFC;
- took note, with thanks, of the presentation from the WTO Secretariat about the state of play regarding the TFA implementation;
- took note of the progress made under the WCO Mercator Programme;
- took note of the ongoing cooperation with the WTO and other Annex D organizations, and discussed how the WCO could strengthen its engagement with these traditional partners;
- took note, with thanks, of the presentation by Colombia;
- took note of Members' national experiences regarding the role of National Committees on Trade Facilitation (NCTFs), in the context of Customs engaging with traditional and new partners at national level; and
- took note, with thanks, of the presentations on the Global Trade Helpdesk and Trade4MSMEs.

ITEM VI – E-Commerce

a. Update on intersessional progress and Members' experiences of implementing the Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce

54. The Secretariat introduced Doc. PC0741Ea, explaining that it had two main objectives. The first was to set the stage for discussions in the framework of the second periodic review of the E-Commerce Package, which covered the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2026. In October 2023, the PTC had been invited to engage in discussions on four out of the eight key principles on which the Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce (E-Commerce FoS) was based. The current Meeting was to focus on the remaining four principles, namely Safety and security, Public awareness, outreach and capacity building, Measurement and analysis, and Leveraging transformative technologies. In this context, the document outlined the main elements of the respective principles, as well as the tools that provided guidance on the implementation of these principles. After hearing presentations by two Members, the PTC was to be invited to identify potential areas of the E-Commerce Package that might need to be amended during the current periodic review, and to provide guidance on the way forward. The second objective of Doc. PC0741Ea was to provide an update on intersessional progress in the domain of cross-border e-commerce in areas such as capacity building support, the drafting of the new WCO tool on the implications for Customs of the e-commerce fulfilment process, and the tackling of illicit trade in the e-commerce environment.

- **Presentation by Brazil on Safety and security**

55. A Representative of the Secretariat of the Federal Revenue of Brazil delivered a presentation on security and safety aspects related to e-commerce in Brazil under the new programme “Remessa Conforme” (PRC). The speaker began by contextualizing the country’s background and the evolution of e-commerce to highlight the revenue losses incurred in the past due to the non-declaration of postal shipments. He emphasized the importance of declaration submission for all e-commerce imports, pointing out the existing legislative framework and the challenges of rapid e-commerce growth, such as under-invoicing, incorrect classification of goods, and illicit trade. The PRC had been launched in 2023 and was aimed at improving compliance by foreign vendors and marketplaces, and facilitating postal and express imports, through zero-rate import duties for shipments under USD 50.00 and by charging Customs duties and taxes at the time of purchase. The PRC offered multiple benefits, such as availability of electronic data, enhanced risk management, and a direct communication channel with e-commerce marketplaces. The strengthened partnership between Customs and the private sector helped address issues related to e-commerce. The presentation introduced the requirements set for e-commerce stakeholders willing to become part of the PRC. Investments in technology, and stringent controls, such as the use of detector dogs, enhanced security.

56. In the ensuing discussion, delegates shared information and insights on various challenges posed by the growing volumes of small and low-value shipments, such as abuse of *de minimis* thresholds through under-valuation, mis-declaration and splitting of consignments. Additionally, delegates presented potential solutions, such as the introduction of electronic declarations for e-commerce goods, increasing the responsibilities of e-commerce platforms with regard to both fiscal and non-fiscal risks, including the submission of advance electronic data, and introducing enhanced risk management, among others. Several delegates touched upon the matter of adjusting *de minimis* thresholds, including plans to harmonize the *de minimis* threshold throughout the Customs Union in the East African Community.
57. In reply to questions from the floor, the speaker clarified that the 60% flat-rate import tariff under Brazil's simplified duty regime had been calculated on the basis of federal import tax rates. Furthermore, enhancing the e-commerce-related systems was considered crucial due to concerns around significant revenue loss and lack of data and, to a certain extent, outweighed the investment in the respective systems by the government and the private sector. The presenter also explained that, under the PRC, Customs duties and taxes were collected by the e-commerce platforms and remitted to the states and to the Federal Revenue by the carriers (postal and express) operating in Brazil, based on contracts signed between the platforms and the carriers. To address the challenge of Customs valuation, the Federal Revenue of Brazil was working with the e-commerce platforms to ensure that the description of the goods in the Customs declaration was identical to the description shown on the respective platform.
- [Presentation by Japan on Public awareness, outreach and capacity building, and Measurement and analysis](#)
58. A Representative of the Customs and Tariff Bureau of the Ministry of Finance of Japan delivered a presentation on "Japan Customs Engaging E-Commerce Stakeholders with Purpose." The speaker first presented the current situation of e-commerce in Japan. With the rapid growth of imports in the domain of e-commerce a number of challenges had arisen, such as smuggling of illicit drugs and counterfeit goods in courier shipments, impersonation and undervaluation. To ensure both effective border enforcement and trade facilitation by enhancing risk management based on essential information, Japan Customs had actively engaged with e-commerce stakeholders by widening public awareness and outreach activities. For example, Japan Customs had expanded the dialogue with e-commerce platforms and had been exchanging views on counterfeit goods since 2021. In 2022, Japan had strengthened border control measures for counterfeit goods by amending its Customs legislation, which had facilitated the development of mutual understanding between Customs and platforms on further cooperation. As a result, a wide range of e-commerce platforms had cooperated with Japan Customs to publicize the legal amendments, raising extensive public awareness of compliance among e-commerce stakeholders including businesses and individual consumers. The speaker went on to elaborate on the partnerships

established with e-commerce platforms, the express industry and postal operators through the signing of Memoranda of Cooperation (MoC) to promote beneficial exchanges of information, which could be used by Japan Customs for risk management purposes. Additionally, the speaker introduced some recent legislative and operational updates, including a reform of the Customs Procedure Agent System to improve measurement and analysis.

59. Delegates expressed their interest in the collaboration between Customs and e-commerce platforms, in particular the signing of MoCs, the motivation of private platforms, and the raising of public awareness. The speaker explained that MoCs were signed on a voluntary basis rather than as a legislative requirement. Regarding the motivation, although Japan Customs put more emphasis on enforcement and compliance, private platforms could still benefit from this cooperative relationship, as being compliant alleviated the burden associated with non-compliance. Another delegate asked whether Japan Customs had considered intensifying or establishing cooperation with sourcing countries in view of the strong focus on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) infringements, and whether requiring additional information in the import declaration would increase the burden for businesses. The speaker clarified that cooperation between Japan Customs and sourcing companies was difficult as these were overseas businesses, and cooperation with the Customs administrations of the sourcing countries was more beneficial in that regard. In reply to the latter question, Japan explained that extensive consultations had been held before introducing additional information requirements by holding preliminary discussions and seminars with stakeholders. Responding to another question from the floor about the definition of e-commerce and the method for identifying private persons who were senders or recipients, the speakers from Japan and Brazil both provided their experiences. In Japan the relevant e-commerce procedures covered Business-to-Consumer (B2C), Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C) and Business-to-Business (B2B) transactions. Brazil had created a separate data field requiring the consignee's identification number (ID). In addition, an intervention from the floor reminded delegates that guidance regarding the responsibilities of platforms could be taken into consideration in the E-Commerce Package.
60. Following the two presentations by Members, the PTC held an extensive discussion on the way forward. Some delegates were of the view that there were disparate approaches to the E-Commerce FoS implementation by Members and raised the question of the extent to which Members felt bound by the FoS and had a clear commitment to implementing it. While some Members opposed the potential introduction of mandatory standards in this area, a delegate advocated for further promotion of the E-Commerce Package.
61. Furthermore, the discussion identified emerging areas and trends that could be addressed through the second periodic review of the E-Commerce Package. These included the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders such as fulfilment centres/houses and e-commerce platforms; Customs' engagement with these stakeholders; the prospect of entrusting e-commerce platforms, in their capacity as vendors and as marketplaces, with more responsibilities related to

both fiscal and non-fiscal aspects/risks, including the submission of data to Customs; and issues around the submission of advance electronic data (AED) by stakeholders that were placed in the upper stream of the supply chain. In the context of AED submission, the PTC might wish to revisit the discussions held in the past around harmonizing data requirements at the global level. Challenges around Customs valuation in the e-commerce environment were common to all Members. Drawing from recent review cycles, a delegate suggested directing the periodic review discussions towards overarching themes and focus areas concerning cross-border e-commerce, rather than delving into intricate details of the current text.

62. Several delegates suggested the establishment of a WCO Working Group on E-Commerce similar to the Working Group that had functioned between 2016 and 2020 and had been co-chaired by Customs and the private sector. Such an arrangement would provide sufficient time for discussions, ensure the presence of relevant experts, and foster engagement with postal stakeholders and the private sector, thereby facilitating thorough and comprehensive discussions aimed at addressing the challenges related to cross-border e-commerce in a holistic manner. Other delegates spoke in favour of the current approach to tackling e-commerce matters within the WCO that included annual updates of the Compendium of Case Studies on E-Commerce, discussing Members' implementation experiences in the PTC, and conducting virtual intersessional meetings reporting back to the PTC.
63. In response to the various discussion points, the Secretariat clarified that the E-Commerce FoS operated as a non-binding framework, establishing aspirational baseline standards, and was designed to evolve in line with the development of Members' good practices. To facilitate consistent and harmonized implementation, the Secretariat was delivering capacity-building workshops and awareness-raising activities, commencing with a series of regional events immediately following the approval in December 2020 of the outstanding Annexes forming part of the E-Commerce Package. Additionally, the Secretariat outlined the process that would be followed under the second periodic review, which included an invitation to submit specific proposals to be sent to Members and relevant stakeholders in May 2024, and intersessional virtual meetings that would report back to the PTC. Different focus groups might also be convened to discuss areas of interest and the draft new WCO tool on e-commerce fulfilment and its implications for Customs.
64. Some Members, who had previously voiced support for establishing a formal working group on e-commerce, now acknowledged the feasibility of the approach presented by the Secretariat. Nonetheless, the proponent of the idea sought clarification on the process for proposing the establishment of a new working body, a request promptly addressed by the Secretariat by pointing delegates' attention to the [Guidelines concerning the creation of working bodies](#) and indicating relevant deadlines.

65. In a discussion on how to improve the efficiency of the deliberations, a Member suggested reinforcing the PTC with the necessary expertise from Members so that it could pursue its mandate. One potential approach to accomplish this goal would be to allocate one or two days of the PTC meetings to a specific topic, such as e-commerce.

b. E-commerce fulfilment and its implications for Customs

- [Presentation by Amazon and Alibaba Group](#)
- [Presentation by the United Kingdom on Fulfilment Houses](#)

66. The Chairperson introduced the sub-item by informing delegates that, based on the input provided by delegates in October 2023, the PTC would start discussions on specific focus areas in the e-commerce domain, the first being the e-commerce fulfilment process and its implications for Customs.

67. The Delegate of the United Kingdom (UK) started his presentation on the Fulfilment House Due Diligence Scheme (FHDDS) by explaining the fulfilment house model. Designed with the objective of facilitating global e-commerce supply chains, fulfilment houses held vast quantities of stock stored in locations across the UK to meet consumer expectations of next day delivery. The stock held by fulfilment houses was owned by third parties, and when an order was made the fulfilment house would pick and pack individual items to fulfil the order to end customers. The FHDDS had been launched in 2018 based on Part 3 of the UK's Finance Act 2017 and Fulfilment Business Regulations 2018, SI1028/36, and had introduced a legal definition for a fulfilment house for the first time in the UK. A fulfilment house was any business that stored goods in the UK that were imported from a country outside the UK, were owned by, or stored on behalf of, someone established outside the UK, and were being offered for sale and had not been sold in the UK before. These businesses needed to be approved by His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) in order to trade, and HMRC maintained a list of approved businesses that was publicly available.

68. The FHDDS required approved businesses to maintain records of their customers, the goods held, and import entry numbers, and to ensure that all customers had a valid VAT number. They also had the obligation to notify HMRC of changes to their business details and any non-compliance of their customers. Failure to meet these requirements incurred penalties, including potential forfeiture of goods and, in extreme cases, criminal sanctions. An illustrative case study highlighted the scheme's effectiveness in enforcing compliance.

69. The discussion that followed sought to elucidate the legal standing of the fulfilment house, differentiate it from a free zone, determine the Customs status of the goods (whether in free circulation or under a Customs warehousing procedure), and shed light on who the importer of the goods and the declarant were. The speaker explained that the goods were imported as stock and, when entering the fulfilment house, were already cleared and were in free circulation. HMRC comprised both Customs authorities and tax authorities, and its Customs

powers also applied inland. It was highlighted that the FHDDS was aimed at addressing fiscal risks. *De minimis* rules were applicable to goods in fulfilment houses, but in practice these were rarely applied, as stock was normally imported in sea containers or air cargo shipments with a value above the *de minimis* threshold. This also enabled stock to be matched to an individual entry number. The importer of the goods was not necessarily the owner and seller of the goods. The declarant could be a consolidator, and this was related to some Customs risks.

70. The second presentation under sub-item b) was delivered by a Representative of Alibaba Group who presented the electronic World Trade Platform (eWTP) initiative, emphasizing its role in facilitating digital Customs clearance and enhancing global trade. The eWTP aimed to address challenges in e-commerce by offering digital solutions such as global trade services, smart logistics, digital finance, and digital trade standards. Through partnerships with various countries and regions, eWTP fostered collaboration on public service platforms (PSPs), providing comprehensive visibility and promoting compliance across B2B, B2C and C2C relationships. The eWTP hub in Liege, Belgium exemplified this cooperation, enabling direct connections with government authorities for efficient Customs processes, as demonstrated by the successful distribution of medical supplies to 54 Members in Africa and 15 Members in Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the eWTP fostered secure data exchange for Customs declaration purposes.
71. Through a pre-recorded presentation, a Representative of Amazon then provided insights into the complexities of e-commerce fulfilment models and their implications for Customs. Amazon itself employed various fulfilment models, including the traditional retail model or direct import, the Manufacturer Fulfilled Network (MFN) utilized by third party sellers, and the hybrid Fulfilment by Amazon (FBA) model, each with its own challenges and implications for Customs processes. Amazon's fulfilment models provided a warehousing mechanism for third-party sellers to store goods near customers, with additional services including domestic logistics and delivery services once goods were sold after importation. Fees associated with these services were incurred after importation and were not related to the import value of the goods. The third-party seller, who retained ownership of the goods at the time of importation, was responsible for packing the goods, shipping them to an Amazon warehouse and ensuring that Customs requirements were appropriately addressed.
72. The speaker highlighted the importance of nuanced approaches based on the business model variations, and of tailored solutions to address these challenges, stressing the need for collaboration between the private sector and governments. Furthermore, he identified key challenges in the fulfilment process, notably unclear documentation requirements, burdensome record management and valuation challenges, as there was no transaction value at the time of importation. Among the suggested solutions were allowing the use of the various accepted Customs valuation methods for e-commerce shipments, promoting global harmonization and simplification of documentation requirements for

Customs valuation validation, and digitizing Customs procedures. Another possible solution was the testing of new valuation procedures through pilots similar to the U.S. Section 321 Data Pilot. Moreover, the speaker underscored the importance of data sharing between governments and the private sector to enhance regulatory compliance and address gaps in supply chain visibility. Collaboration with regulators, exemplified by programmes such as the Notice of Seizure programme, which the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (U.S. CBP) used to notify Amazon of seizures of fulfilment centre shipments, were essential to identify and address issues in the fulfilment space, ensuring enhanced information sharing and mitigation of potential risks for safer supply chains. The speaker concluded by advocating for mutual understanding, flexibility in valuation processes, and enhanced collaboration as essential pillars for navigating the complexities of e-commerce fulfilment and Customs requirements.

73. The ensuing discussion highlighted challenges that Customs were facing with regard to the submission of advance electronic data for low-value shipments, where inadequate data hampered their ability to identify and interdict high-risk shipments, prompting a priority focus on developing solutions to receive additional data for improved risk assessment and trade enforcement. A delegate spoke in favour of solutions in which the e-commerce platforms were responsible for the data related to third-party seller transactions and logistics, as there were cases where these transactions did not comply with the requirements of compliance programmes established by Customs. The importance of Customs providing feedback to legitimate economic operators on seizures was also stressed during the discussion.

c. Expanding the concept of Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) to cross-border e-commerce

74. The Secretariat introduced document PC0742Ea and explained that at its 29th Meeting in November 2023, the SAFE Working Group (SWG) had discussed the possibility of developing new guidelines/tools on expanding the concept of AEO to cross-border e-commerce, noting that it was one of the activities within the SWG Work Programme 2022-2025, with a deadline for completion set at March 2024.
75. The SWG agreed to commence this work by collecting Members' practices in expanding the concept of AEO to cross-border e-commerce, and decided to extend the deadline for this activity from March 2024 to March 2025. In this connection, the Secretariat had prepared a draft template (Doc. PC0742EAE1a) to start collecting Members' practices, as part of the work on expanding the concept of AEO to cross-border e-commerce for consideration by the 243rd/244th PTC Sessions.
76. A number of delegates supported the proposed template prepared by the Secretariat and agreed to begin collection of Members' practices prior to the convening of the 30th SWG Meeting.

77. A delegate suggested additional input to the draft template, which was subsequently incorporated into the final version of the template. The template incorporating those amendments is appended at **Annex III** to this Summary Report.

d. 5th edition of the Compendium of Case Studies on E-Commerce

78. The Secretariat introduced document PC0743Eb, explaining that since 2020 the Secretariat had compiled annual editions of the Compendium of Case Studies on E-commerce. The Secretariat had prepared the draft 5th edition of the Compendium of Case Studies on E-Commerce by updating the 4th edition with the information submitted by Members and by adding to it the nine new case studies submitted by six Members, namely Armenia, China, Ecuador, Poland, Qatar and Uzbekistan. Thus, the draft 5th edition of the Compendium contained 46 case studies – 30 on E-Commerce FoS implementation and 16 on revenue collection approaches.
79. Delegates expressed appreciation for the WCO Secretariat's work and highlighted the importance of updating the Compendium of Case Studies on E-Commerce on a regular basis. Furthermore, they supported the endorsement of the draft 5th edition of the Compendium for submission to the PC and Council for their endorsement, as a living document, in view of its subsequent inclusion in the WCO E-Commerce Package. Delegates also encouraged the submission of further case studies, best practices, and initiatives.
80. Two Members requested further updates to their respective case studies. After the PTC Meeting, another Member requested further updates to its case study on E-Commerce FoS implementation. The revised version of the Compendium incorporating those updates is appended at **Annex IV** to this Summary Report. The Delegate of the European Union (EU) clarified that the EU's case study reflected the current e-commerce approach rather than future plans under negotiation within the EU; nevertheless, a link in the case study provided information on the proposed future scheme. The Brazilian delegate announced plans to submit a case study on the "Remessa Conforme" Programme (PRC) for the next edition of the compendium, as the programme was less than one year old. The procedures described in the existing case study by Brazil remained valid for shipments that were not part of the PRC.
81. An Observer found the Compendium of Case Studies valuable for understanding the e-commerce practices of various WCO Members, providing insights into diverse approaches worldwide. However, the Observer expressed concerns that simply collecting and presenting case studies might suggest that all practices were automatically endorsed as good practices, and suggested that the PTC review the case studies and recommend certain good practices.

e. Update on the WTO e-commerce negotiations

- Presentation by one of the co-convenors (Australia)

82. Through a prerecorded video, Australia, one of the co-convenors of the WTO e-commerce negotiations, provided a comprehensive update on the progress of negotiations under the e-commerce joint statement initiative (JSI on e-commerce). The speaker explained that the JSI was aimed at developing an agreement establishing baseline rules for predictable, transparent and inclusive digital trade rules with global reach to harness the benefits of electronic commerce for businesses, consumers, workers and the economy at large, and ensure inclusive access to such benefits. The negotiations that had been underway since 2019, with 90 WTO Members participating, were now in the final round of technical negotiations.

83. The future agreement would include rules in three main areas. Firstly, it would establish rules to facilitate trade by digital means to ensure the compatibility of systems across borders and make cross-border trade easier for traders. Secondly, it would include rules covering consumer protection, including data protection and unsolicited e-mails, also known as spam. Thirdly, it would establish rules to facilitate cooperation across a wide range of digital economy topics with trading partners and to support developing countries through capacity building.

84. The first area included commitments on the recognition of electronic contracts and electronic signatures and the interoperability of e-invoicing and e-payment systems. Furthermore, the agreement would contain commitments on paperless trading and Single Window data exchange. The paperless trading rule was expected to include commitments to make forms and documents publicly available in electronic format and ensure electronic forms were treated as legally equivalent to paper versions, an important step in streamlining import and export processes. The Single Window commitment was expected to encourage the advance submission of electronic documents and the harmonization of data elements for Customs processes, and would contain a reference to the WCO Data Model and other international standards.

85. Furthermore, there had been strong support among WTO Members for the inclusion in the agreement of an enduring commitment not to impose Customs duties on electronic transmissions.

86. In conclusion, the PTC:

- took note, with thanks, of the presentations by Brazil and Japan on various aspects of implementation of the E-Commerce FoS;
- based on the presentations by Members, identified potential areas of the E-Commerce Package that might need to be reviewed and potentially amended during the second periodic review of the E-Commerce Package. These included the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders such as fulfilment centres,

and e-commerce platforms, Customs' engagement with these stakeholders, issues around the submission of advance electronic data, including regulated datasets and the submission of data upstream in the supply chain;

- discussed possible options for taking the work forward, and re-iterated its agreement to continue discussing Members' experiences in implementing the E-Commerce FoS in the future PTC sessions and in intersessional meetings;
- encouraged further promotion of the E-Commerce Package;
- took note of the progress made in the area of cross-border e-commerce;
- took note, with thanks, of the presentations by Alibaba Group, Amazon and the United Kingdom on e-commerce fulfilment and its implications for Customs;
- discussed and endorsed a draft template for the submission of Members' practices, as part of the work on expanding the concept of AEO to cross-border e-commerce, taking into consideration comments provided by delegates;
- examined the draft 5th edition of the Compendium of Case Studies on E-Commerce;
- endorsed the 5th edition of the Compendium of Case Studies on E-Commerce, subject to minor updates proposed by Members to their respective case studies, for submission to the next Policy Commission and Council for their endorsement and approval as a living document, in view of its subsequent inclusion in the WCO E-Commerce Package;
- encouraged Members to update their case studies and to share further case studies, best practices and initiatives for inclusion in the future editions of the Compendium of Case Studies on E-Commerce;
- took note, with thanks, of the presentation by Australia providing an update on the WTO e-commerce negotiations; and
- provided guidance on the way forward.

ITEM VII – TRAVELER FACILITATION AND CONTROL

87. The Passenger Facilitation and Control Working Group (PFCWG) had agreed in October 2023 that it would submit a request to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for an amendment to the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (FAL Convention) to include mandatory reporting on Advance Passenger Information (API) and Booking and Reservation Information (BRI)/Passenger Name Record (PNR). This would provide an international legal framework for cruise ships, similar to the one that currently existed under Annex 9 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention) for aviation. The WCO had submitted the requested amendments to the IMO, for discussion at the IMO FAL 48 Sessions on 8-10 April 2024. The WCO Secretariat would be providing the PTC with an update on this initiative. The PTC would be invited to take note and seek Members to nominate as part of a mini-group to develop and propose suitable language for the amendment to the FAL Convention.

88. The WCO, Cruise Line International Association (CLIA), IMO and five WCO Members were participating in a pilot on the use of BRI data in international

cruise ship travel. The Secretariat would brief the PTC and ask participating Members to present the current status of the pilot. The PTC would be invited to take note and provide guidance, as required.

a. Update on new Terms of Reference (ToR) for the API and BRI/PNR Contact Committee

89. The Chairperson introduced this Agenda item by informing delegates that, at the last meeting of the PTC, it had been agreed that the Secretariat would work with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to amend the API/PNR Contact Committee Terms of Reference (ToR) to include other modes of transport and industry partners.
90. Since the 241st/242nd Session of the PTC, the Secretariat had been working with the IATA and ICAO Secretariats to develop a ToR acceptable to each organization and then would seek endorsement through a virtual meeting of the API/PNR Contact Committee.
91. The Secretariat reported that the 18th Meeting of the API/PNR Contact Committee had been held virtually, via email, in February 2024, to endorse the updated ToR, following the closure of the WCO Passenger Facilitation and Control Working Group (PFCWG) and the subsequent expansion of the API/PNR Contact Committee to cover all modes of transport.
92. The Secretariat had received support for the revised ToR from 21 members of the API PNR Contact Committee and no members had expressed any objections or concerns regarding the endorsement of the revised ToR.
93. The new ToR was presented to the PTC for endorsement, noting that it would be reviewed again at the first meeting of the reconstituted Contact Committee.
94. Members spoke in support of the intersessional work, and the PTC endorsed the updated ToR.

b. Information on submission to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for an amendment to the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (FAL Convention)

95. The PTC was updated on the recent International Maritime Organization (IMO) meeting, with the 48th session of the Facilitation Committee (FAL) held from 8-12 April 2024. At the FAL meeting the WCO, sponsored by Australia, had submitted a proposal to amend the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (FAL Convention) to include Advance Passenger Information (API) and Booking and Reservation Information (BRI)/Passenger Name Record (PNR) declarations in the FAL Convention.

96. The Proposal had been well received by IMO members and the Secretariat thanked Australia and New Zealand in particular for their lobbying and engagement with IMO representatives. The IMO FAL Chair summed up by saying the proposal had ‘overwhelming support.’
97. The PTC was informed of the importance of this amendment as it would change the way border agencies processed cruises, and how maritime transport arrivals were risk assessed. The global data standards would help to facilitate legitimate travellers and control high-risk travellers, and would mirror the data available for air travellers under the ICAO standards.
98. The WCO and Customs administrations now needed to develop and propose suitable language to be approved by FAL 49 in 2025 as the amendment to the FAL Convention. The Chairperson asked for nominations to form a mini-group to complete this work. New Zealand volunteered during the PTC and others were encouraged to contact the Secretariat after this session to express their desire to join the mini-group.

c. Report on BRI Pilot

- Presentation by Princess Cruises

99. The PTC was updated on the progress of a mini-group of interested Members that had been meeting every 3-4 weeks since the last PTC to progress a global pilot for Booking and Reservation Information (BRI).
100. The WCO had been working with the IMO, Cruise Line International Association (CLIA), United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT) and Princess Cruises, as well as a number of Customs administrations, to progress this work. The mini-group had also met with the Data Model Project Team (DMPT) to refine the BRI aspect of the WCO Data Model (DM) and confirm the useability of message implementation guides.
101. CLIA member Princess Cruises presented the work they had done to create packages to send departure/arrival information in the WCO-agreed formats, which they had tested with fictional passenger and crew data. Princess Cruises would work with Customs administrations to complete the testing.
102. Princess Cruises also informed the PTC that they supported the WCO submission to the IMO. Princess Cruises also stated that the change would allow Cruise Operators to reduce administrative burdens, and potentially reduce the costs of having to maintain multiple systems for reporting to different Governments. A global standard would reduce port call times and allow best practices to be shared through WCO forums. Global standards and technology guidelines would make any changes to the WCO Data Model easier to implement by industry.

103. In conclusion, the PTC:

- endorsed the updated Terms of Reference (ToR) for the API and BRI/PNR Contact Committee;
- took note of the submission to and approval of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) on the proposed inclusion of an amendment to the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (FAL Convention) in the IMO FAL Work Programme presented in April 2024;
- took note, with thanks, of New Zealand's offer to be part of the mini-group to prepare the text for the amendment of the FAL Convention, and invited other Members to express their interest to the Secretariat;
- encouraged PTC delegates to work with their maritime counterparts towards approval of the amendment of the FAL Convention;
- took note of the work of the Booking and Reservation Information (BRI) Cruise Ship Pilot; and
- took note, with thanks, of the presentation by Princess Cruises.

ITEM VIII – SMART CUSTOMS PROJECT

- **Update on the Smart Customs Project**

104. The Secretariat introduced Agenda Item VIII, delineating the goals and scope of the WCO Smart Customs project, which had been launched in December 2023 with funding from China Customs. The project aimed to address the increasing need for technological advancement in Customs operations. Aligned with the WCO Strategic Plan 2022-2025, particularly in the focus area of "Technology and Innovation," its objectives encompassed updating the WCO/WTO Study Report on Disruptive Technologies, evaluating Members' technology use status and needs through Members consultations, launching a Community Portal for dialogue, and organizing regional and global events.
105. The Secretariat informed delegates that during the first regional event in the WCO Americas and Caribbean Region, AI, big data, data analytics, and blockchain had emerged as top areas of interest. The key technologies in focus were to be further defined through a global survey, which had been launched on 17 April 2024, with a deadline of 6 May 2024. The survey aimed to assess the adoption of disruptive technologies among Members, identify capacity-building needs, and nominate National Contact Points (NCPs). The Secretariat called for active participation from Members to ensure an inclusive approach in addressing digital gaps and targeting technologies for a transformative impact.
106. Members expressed support for the project, emphasizing their expectations to learn from existing experiences in applying disruptive technologies to enhance Customs efficiency, security, and transparency.
107. Observers commended the initiative and expressed willingness to cooperate, seeking opportunities to embed innovative thinking into their initiatives and partner in pilot projects. They also emphasized that Customs digitalization and the adoption of disruptive technologies should be seen as tools to enhance Customs effectiveness and efficiency, while highlighting the necessity of

addressing the digital divide among Customs administrations to ensure inclusivity. Several Members called for the participation of other stakeholders to reap the shared benefits.

108. Recognizing the strategic importance of technology, the Secretariat noted that the ongoing survey included questions specifically aimed at assessing how the adoption of disruptive technologies had improved or could potentially improve Customs performance in Member practices, providing linkages to the WCO Performance Measurement Mechanism (PMM).
109. As the donor of the project, China Customs underscored the project's genesis in narrowing the digital gap and harnessing insights from peers to enhance Customs performance and global supply chains.
110. Discussions included suggestions to explore the use of disruptive technologies for security, among others in fragile borders. The Secretariat informed the PTC that the Project had been launched for a three-year period. It highlighted the future Community Portal as a platform for such discussions, and emphasized the WCO's moderating role in the future Portal. The Secretariat also indicated that various options were being considered for the platform's development, with careful attention to data security and sustainability considerations.
111. Acknowledging the project's cross-cutting nature, Members emphasized its interconnections with the WCO Data strategy and the BACUDA project. The Secretariat assured the PTC of the Project's internal synergies with various WCO initiatives related to technology, and informed delegates that it was to be presented to the 4th Meeting of the Working Group on Data and Statistics (WGDS) in May 2024. Additionally, the Secretariat underscored that the Project aimed to engage stakeholders to share experiences and knowledge on technology application in Customs administration.

112. In conclusion, the PTC:

- took note of the progress achieved on the Smart Customs Project.

ITEM IX – DIGITAL CUSTOMS

a. Foreign Trader Identification Number

- **Presentation by the United States**

113. The Delegate of the United States (US) presented its Global Business Identifier (GBI) test overview. The initiative was driven by a supply chain traceability focus and informed by the global rise of labour and environmental protection and import safety laws. Considering that many companies today were already using identifiers to map their supply chains, U.S. Customs and Border

Protection (U.S. CBP) envisioned a future state in which identifiers were voluntarily shared with U.S. CBP and Partner Government Agencies (PGAs) to demonstrate compliance with emerging mandates and indicate low risk. The GBI had been designed to operate within U.S. CBP's Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) platform, and included three global entity identifiers (Legal Entity Identifier, LEI; Global Location Number, GLN; Data Universal Numbering System, DUNS) for consideration for several type of economic operators, such as the manufacturer, shipper, seller, distributor, packager and exporter.

114. Delegates agreed that the identification of foreign trade entities could significantly enhance the risk management capabilities of Customs administrations. A delegate shared their initiative with similar objectives, involving the creation of a data analytics model to assign a unique code based on the name and address details declared at the time of submission of Customs declarations. Another delegate asked about the relation between GBI and the Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (CTPAT) programme. The presenter noted that reconciliation between the GBI and CTPAT number might be considered as the test was progressing. Another delegate asked questions about the relationship between the GBI and the WCO Recommendation and Guidelines on Trader Identification Number (TIN). The delegate also shared its practice in sharing TIN and Authorized Economic Operator master data with its neighbouring countries utilizing a blockchain-based solution. The Secretariat clarified that the TIN Recommendation focused on the identification of entities managed and assigned by government agencies at the national level, such as AEO number, and to be used in conjunction with AEO Mutual Recognition Agreement/Arrangement. In contrast the GBI focused on identifying economic operators at the exporting country level by leveraging third parties' identification services. A delegate asked how the entities' information would be kept up to date. The presenter answered that it was the responsibility of the entity to keep their data up to date. The CBP ran validation mechanisms in its risk management systems to analyse the accuracy of the information.

115. An observer asked whether the US would upgrade the GBI programme from voluntary to mandatory in the future. The presenter clarified that the GBI test was voluntary in scope. Another observer pointed out the challenge in establishing a unified identification number at the national level. Another observer asked if the identification number was only for entities or also for products. The presenter clarified that the GBI test focused on entity identification.

b. Concept paper on the use of blockchain by Customs

116. The Secretariat briefed the participants that the concept paper considered the use of blockchain technology, taking into account that it offered a number of unique features that could benefit Customs in modernizing their border processes. Such features included immutability, which was critical to ensuring the authenticity of trade data/documents; providing a single version of the truth; increasing trust in the use of electronic information; and improving data quality. In addition, blockchain adopted a distributed architecture that helped supply chain

actors or economic operators to become more connected. The Secretariat further explained that the draft concept paper that was submitted for PTC consideration had been developed based on the outline discussed by the PTC in the previous Meeting, considering the guidance and inputs provided by delegates during that Meeting. The concept paper emphasized blockchain implementation from the perspective of “blockchain ecosystems” that described the processes, services, policies and regulatory frameworks on top of the blockchain technology.

117. Some delegates welcomed and supported the endorsement of the concept paper and thanked the Secretariat for taking into account the input provided during the development of the paper, including input on data protection and other legal issues. Proper integration of blockchain in Customs processes could revolutionize both cross-border trade processes and the digitalization of Customs, resulting in more efficient and secure digital systems. The concept paper could be enriched with best practices and used as a basis for further discussion. A delegate asked about the experience of using blockchain technology in a Single Window environment. The Secretariat responded that there was a case study on Egypt’s blockchain-enabled Single Window in the WCO Magazine, published in October 2022. Additionally, the Secretariat clarified that case studies should be submitted through the global survey under the Smart Customs project, launched on 17 April 2024.
118. One delegate raised the issue of energy consumption/the resources needed to implement blockchain, which was relatively higher compared to other technologies. Another delegate pointed out that blockchain had a number of limitations and suggested the use of other technologies, such as verifiable credentials and decentralized identifiers. The Secretariat agreed with the delegates’ views and explained that the draft concept paper was not intended to advocate for a particular technology, i.e. blockchain, but to focus on the characteristics of the technology and how it could bring benefits to Customs and the supply chain, so that alternative technologies that were more affordable could also be considered. Regarding the verifiable credential, the DMPT planned to initiate a discussion in this area from a technical perspective in the context of the linked data concept. Another delegate asked a question about the scalability of blockchain technology, particularly as the data grew in size. The Secretariat replied that a number of technical solutions could be considered, such as the creation of a partition that would allow the archiving of old data, or the use of an off-chain method where only the signature (hash) of the data was stored on the blockchain.
119. A delegate noted the need to observe blockchain practices by economic operators in improving their supply chain management for their traceability, transparency, and visibility, as well as the need to use their practices as leverage to boost Customs efficiency. The delegate appreciated the inclusion of the Commercial Supply Chain Ecosystem which highlighted Business-to-Business digitalization in addition to the typical Government-to-Government exchange of information.

c. DMPT's recommendation for the revision of the WCO Data Strategy Paper

120. The Secretariat briefed the PTC that at its meeting in June 2022, the Policy Commission had discussed and endorsed the WCO Data Strategy, which was aimed at ensuring the clarity and consistency of WCO data initiatives, encompassing the full range of data matters and data use in the Customs domain. The Policy Commission discussion and the title of the WCO Data Strategy paper implied a broad data coverage without indicating a specific limitation. The DMPT's intersessional review of the WCO Data Strategy paper led to a preliminary finding that the Strategy outlined in the paper was heavily focused on data analytics and statistics, despite the broad scope of the title. It was felt that the WCO Data Strategy could benefit from the inclusion of other WCO data initiatives, such as the data standardization promoted by the WCO Data Model (DM).
121. The inclusion of other data initiatives into the WCO Data Strategy required it to act as an umbrella covering various data initiatives of the WCO, including the WCO DM. The WCO DM could fit into the Strategy and its inclusion could potentially complement the data analytics/statistics initiative, given its role in enabling digitalization to ensure the availability of data generated from cross-border trade processes through interoperability for analytics/statistics purposes.
122. Several delegates noted that the current focus of the WCO Data Strategy was on statistics and analysis, as identified by the DMPT, which represented how the data was used. However, the aspect of how the data was collected was missing. They supported the core recommendation of the DMPT and supported broadening the scope of the WCO Data Strategy to include the role of the WCO DM, subject to Council approval. There was also support for the idea that the WCO Data Strategy should act as an umbrella for various data initiatives. The delegate also highlighted the aspect of standard base interoperability and interconnectivity between the pillars of the WCO Data Strategy to ensure that each pillar was not disconnected from the others.
123. It was proposed that the extension of the remit should cover not only the WCO DM, but also other data-related areas such as Globally Networked Customs (GNC), the Single Window (SW), disruptive technologies and enforcement-related data exchange. The extension of the scope should not imply a transfer of responsibilities related to the new area to the Working Group on Data and Statistics (WGDS). Given the diversity of the new areas, the review of the WCO Data Strategy should not be entrusted to the DMPT alone, but also to other relevant working bodies in coordination.
124. **In conclusion, the PTC:**
- took note, with thanks, of the presentations by United States, and requested that any lessons learned be shared with the relevant working bodies;
 - discussed and endorsed the concept note on the use of blockchain by Customs;

- discussed the Data Model Projects Team (DMPT)'s recommendation to provide input to the WCO Data Strategy;
- discussed and provided guidance on the DMPT's preliminary findings on their review of the WCO Data Strategy; and
- agreed on tasking the DMPT to continue reviewing the WCO Data Strategy in coordination with the Working Group on Data and Statistics (WGDS), considering also the relationship of other data sharing and digitalization work led by the PTC to the WCO Data Strategy.

ITEM X – SINGLE WINDOW

a. UN/CEFACT White Paper on Single Window Assessment Methodology

- Presentation by the UN/CEFACT

125. The Representatives of UN/CEFACT provided a pre-recorded video presentation based on the UN/CEFACT White Paper on Single Window Assessment Methodology (SWAM) outlining a structured framework to enable countries to assess and improve their Single Window systems, which were crucial for streamlining Customs and trade processes. The presenter showcased how the methodology focused on three main pillars: institutional and legal framework, IT framework, and Single Window performance. It additionally indicated that it provided a comprehensive self-assessment tool that enabled countries to evaluate the current state of their Single Window implementation, and that this tool was designed to address the varying needs and structures of different countries and included recommendations for conducting workshops, automating survey forms, and ensuring political support to safeguard the methodology's success.

126. In addition, the presenter indicated that the SWAM offered three different assessment approaches: Express Analysis, key factor-based assessment, and Objectives-Based Assessment, catering to varying levels of detail and focus. It was explained that the Express Analysis approach provided a quick evaluation of Single Window systems based on UN/CEFACT's Recommendation 33 criteria. The presenter further indicated that in order to aid countries in their assessment journey, the White Paper offered a structured guide for conducting assessments, compiling results, and creating action plans. The presentation culminated by indicating that by adopting this methodology, countries could identify gaps, streamline processes, and improve collaboration among stakeholders, ultimately enhancing trade facilitation and compliance with international standards.

b. UN Trade and Development (formerly UNCTAD) Paper on Roadmap for Building a Trade Single Window

- Presentation by the UN Trade and Development (formerly UNCTAD)

127. The UN Trade and Development (formerly UNCTAD) presentation on the "Roadmap for Building a Trade Single Window" highlighted key aspects of the

ASYCUDA (Automated System for Customs Data) Programme, emphasizing the progression from Customs automation to comprehensive trade digitalization and facilitation. The presenter underscored the importance of a systematic approach to trade facilitation, incorporating the knowledge sharing, training, and capacity building required to streamline international trade. The presentation outlined significant guidelines and technical approaches, emphasizing the necessity of a single entry point, interoperability, and data standardization using models like the WCO Data Model. The presenter detailed challenges such as resistance to change, legislative delays, and IT constraints, while also stressing the critical success factors of political commitment, stakeholder collaboration, and effective communication strategies.

128. The outcomes from the Single Window projects in various countries showcased substantial benefits. Rwanda's Single Window, launched in 2012, had demonstrated a reduction in Customs clearance times, dropping from 11 days to under a day, and cutting clearance costs significantly. Timor-Leste, after launching its system in 2021, had experienced reduced physical trips by investors and minimized delays and costs, enhancing overall efficiency. Jamaica's 2020 implementation had led to reductions in processing times for permits and certificates, enhancing trade efficiency. The presenter concluded by emphasizing the value of the UN Trade and Development (formerly UNCTAD) Roadmap as a comprehensive blueprint for establishing effective Single Window systems, leveraging ASYCUDA's extensive experience in different countries.
129. The presentation was well received, with Members and observers offering several comments and questions. The Representative of the World Bank emphasized that their Single Window efforts aligned with the SWAM methodology and followed the World Bank's blueprint for implementation. He indicated that this blueprint focused on the development of a National Single Window, especially concerning legal, data, technology, and risk aspects. He concluded by highlighting the World Bank's support for National Single Window initiatives.
130. Questions about the Single Window were directed towards the goals of measuring efficiency in Single Window environments, the use of AI in ASYCUDA, and the potential implementation of UN Trade and Development's ASYCUDA system in a comprehensive SW environment. In response, the UN Trade and Development delegate noted that they employed AI through machine learning in their risk management module, and clarified that UN Trade and Development could not participate in internal bidding within countries.
131. Additional comments from Members highlighted their current progress with Single Window implementations, emphasizing the change management measures required for successful integration. They compared the significant advancements in growth and efficiency achieved in the post-Single Window phase against the pre-Single Window stage, citing notable improvements in their rankings in the World Bank's Trading Across Borders and Doing Business reports.

c. Updating of the Single Window Compendium

132. The Secretariat briefed the PTC on the importance of fostering discussions to enhance Single Window initiatives and ensure continuous improvement. The Secretariat provided a brief overview of the current Single Window Compendium (SW Compendium), a resource endorsed in 2017 by the WCO Council, which was divided into two volumes. Volume 1 served as an executive guide, offering strategic insights for implementing Single Window systems from a business perspective, while Volume 2 was intended for practitioners, diving deep into the technical standards and practices necessary for building and maintaining these systems. The Secretariat emphasized the need to update and improve the SW Compendium to keep it aligned with evolving trade facilitation needs globally.
133. To support this update, the Secretariat proposed the creation of a dedicated mini-group composed of interested Members and Observers. This group would collect and synthesize proposals, best practices, and case studies for a comprehensive SW Compendium update, ensuring it remained globally relevant and inclusive. The mini-group would consist of a balanced representation from regions with advanced and developing Single Window systems, as well as experts and private sector stakeholders. They would analyse submissions to identify areas needing updates and consult with contributors to enhance the SW Compendium's utility. Members were encouraged to lead this group, which would play a critical role in shaping the future of Single Window environments globally.
134. Following the discussions, several Members supported the creation of the mini-group and provided guidance on areas needing updates within the SW Compendium. They emphasized the importance of updates regarding the consistency and interconnectivity between the cross-border regulatory agencies of neighbouring Customs administrations, and suggested reviewing the optimal data sets used for information exchange. The establishment of the mini-group was agreed upon, with Members including the European Union, Russian Federation, India, Brazil, and Pakistan offering to participate and contribute. They encouraged other Members to express their interest in joining the group to the Secretariat.

d. Presentation by Pakistan on the Pakistan Single Window (PSW) initiative

135. The Pakistan Single Window (PSW) presentation outlined Pakistan's progress and strategy for implementing a National Single Window. This initiative, part of Pakistan's WTO obligations under Article 10.4, aimed to digitize cross-border trade processes and improve efficiency. Leading the initiative, Pakistan Customs had established the PSW Company to operate the NSW platform in collaboration with government and private entities. The rollout, planned in three phases from 2017 to 2024, demonstrated significant progress, with coverage reaching 95% in key trade areas and international integrations underway with several countries. The presentation highlighted the importance of political

support, phased implementation, and stakeholder collaboration in achieving successful reforms.

136. The speaker from the PSW indicated that the implementation had brought about significant business process reforms, such as a score increase in the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation and the re-engineering of numerous processes to enhance efficiency. He further explained that the PSW Act of 2021 served as the legal foundation, mandating the alignment of laws and regulations across all participating agencies to integrate with the NSW platform. He highlighted that the initiative emphasized customer focus, private sector collaboration, and a sustainable governance model, and that the key success factors identified included strong change management, monitoring, and oversight, along with adherence to best practices in public sector administration.
137. In the ensuing discussion, delegates posed a variety of questions and shared their insights. Some Members highlighted their recent adoption of advanced technologies, while others discussed regional initiatives in the Single Window (SW) sphere, such as the ASEAN SW and Mercosur connectivity. Questions focused on topics including private sector involvement in the AEO field with the PSW, challenges with data exchange connectivity, potential time savings with the PSW, and implementing new technologies.
138. The speaker addressed these questions, emphasizing collaboration between the PSW and the Pakistan AEO programme. He also discussed challenges related to trade data confidentiality, highlighting their careful approach to data exchange using the WCO Data Model. He emphasized the time savings that could be achieved by making information available in real time. The speaker acknowledged the potential of implementing disruptive technologies but stressed that such decisions ultimately depended on budget considerations and the balance of benefits against investment costs.

139. In conclusion, the PTC:

- took note, with thanks, of the presentations by the UN/CEFACT and UN Trade and Development (formerly UNCTAD);
- took note of the recent work done by other international organizations in the Single Window (SW) area;
- took note, with thanks, of the presentation by Pakistan;
- shared and discussed Members' national and/or regional practices in their recent SW implementation experiences;
- discussed and provided guidance on the areas that required potential updates within the SW Compendium specifically, considering the need for consistency and interconnectivity between cross-border regulatory agencies of neighbouring Customs administrations; and reviewing the optimal set of data used for information exchange;
- agreed on establishing a mini-group focused on the update of the SW Compendium; and

- took note, with thanks, of the European Union, Russian Federation, India, Brazil and Pakistan's offers to participate and contribute to the mini-group and invited other Members to express their interest to the Secretariat.

ITEM XI – CUSTOMS-PORT COOPERATION

- **Revision of the Guidelines on Cooperation between Customs and Port Authorities**

140. The Secretariat informed the PTC that in April 2023 the Permanent Technical Committee (PTC) had endorsed the draft Guidelines on Cooperation between Customs and Port Authorities. The PTC had asked the Secretariat to engage in dialogue and work with the World Shipping Council (WSC) and other interested stakeholders to incorporate their perspective and input into the Guidelines for the PTC's consideration at its next meeting. Subsequently, at its meeting in October 2023, an outline of the proposed revisions to the Guidelines had been presented to the PTC, whereupon the PTC had discussed and taken note of the proposals submitted during the intersession for potential incorporation into the Guidelines on Cooperation between Customs and Port Authorities. The purpose of the Agenda item was to update the PTC on the progress of the work and highlight some of the key discussion points with a view to presenting the final outcome at the next PTC meetings. The WSC submitted a draft amended text to the mini-group for review. Subsequently the mini-group provided their comments on the amended text.
141. The Secretariat conveyed a message from the WSC whereby the WSC regretted that it had been unable to participate in the PTC meeting. The WSC remained committed to making a constructive contribution to enrich the Guidelines on Cooperation between Customs and Port Authorities, reflecting the input and perspective of the liner shipping sector. The WSC trusted that the presentations made previously by the WSC to the PTC, the SAFE Working Group and the Port Customs Guidance Working Group would attest to its positive motivation and highlight practical items that it hoped would be reflected in the Guidelines.
142. The Representative of the International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH) had launched the Guidelines with the participation of Deputy Secretary General, Ricardo Treviño Chapa, at the IAPH World Port Conference in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on 31 October 2023. It had also been the opportunity to organize several meetings with the directors general of a number of port authorities, along with the participation of the World Bank in ad hoc meetings, paving the way to the implementation of the Guidelines in particular in the global south and in small island developing states. The WCO and IAPH were in the process of developing a comprehensive dissemination and implementation strategy for 2024/2025. It was deemed by too early to be conducting a comprehensive review, considering that the Guidelines had only been launched

in October 2023 and that a return of experiences of implementation was a requirement to revise the Guidelines.

143. It should be noted that the target audience of the Guidelines was in fact Customs and port authorities, and the Guidelines had also derived knowledge and a set of principles from existing instruments and tools from the WCO and the IAPH against this background. Therefore, in order to maintain the current scope of the Guidelines without losing the WSC's perspective, it was suggested that the WSC input be concentrated on a specific section of the Guidelines in the format of a specific "box"/annex highlighting a case study on cooperation between container shipping lines, Customs and port authorities.

144. A delegate stated that the Guidelines were relevant to its flagship initiatives on a port alliance to fight drugs trafficking which had been presented at the 44th Session of the Enforcement Committee. The delegate considered that the input provided by the WSC was acceptable and supported the refinement of the proposal. Another delegate shared the relevance of cooperation between Customs and ports in light of the recent bridge collapse incident at the Port of Baltimore.

145. In conclusion, the PTC:

- discussed and provided guidance on the revised text of the Guidelines on Cooperation between Customs and Port Authorities; and
- asked the mini-group to consider how to incorporate the World Shipping Council's comments into the final document.

ITEM XII – RULES OF ORIGIN

a. Update on the Feasibility Study on the Interconnectivity Framework for Certificates of Origin

- Presentation by Korea on interconnectivity for Certificates of Origin

146. The Representative of the Korea Customs Service delivered a presentation on the interconnectivity framework for Certificates of Origin (CO) by sharing the experiences, insights and lessons learned by the Korea Customs Service in implementing data exchange on CO. The speaker introduced the Push Model of CO interconnectivity, which had been implemented in Korea since 2016, and the semi-automated Pull Model implemented since 2023. In addition, the speaker shared the journey of the Korea-China Electronic Origin Data Exchange System (EODES) as well as other Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). The business process model, legal aspects of CO interconnectivity and the dataset for e-CO were also introduced.

147. Several delegates appreciated the experience shared by the Korea Customs Service, and one delegate requested more information on the experience with self-declaration of origin. Another delegate requested more clarification on the

data set used for CO exchange between different FTAs. One delegate also shared the view that the feasibility study was timely, particularly for the African Community, noting the ongoing work by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat and its Contracting Parties to establish digital solutions and interconnectivity for proof of origin on the continent.

148. The speaker explained the self-declaration system implemented in Korea. In response to the questions on the CO data set, the speaker clarified that the WCO Data Model was indeed used in CO interconnectivity in Korea. However, there was no standardized business process model or technological specification. The Technical Committee on Rules of Origin (TCRO) Informal Working Group (IWG) was currently working on this; it was hoped that the outcome of the feasibility study would assist Members to implement CO interconnectivity.

- **The draft Feasibility Study on the Interconnectivity Framework for Certificates of Origin**

149. The Secretariat introduced Doc. PC0749Eb and informed the PTC of the work done by the TCRO IWG in carrying out the Feasibility Study on the Interconnectivity Framework for the Certificate of Origin (CO). The WCO's Globally Networked Customs (GNC) methodology, with its key components, had been used as the basis for the study's development and had been conducted in two phases. The document included a number of discussion points, including the scope of interconnectivity, the types of proof of origin assessed, Business Process Models (BPM), and the data set for the e-CO. Concerning the BPM, the push model had been included as the primary process model in the Study, considering that most data exchanges for the CO were implemented using the push model. Additionally, a semi-automated pull model of the CO and self-declaration of origin models would be appended as Annexes to the Study, providing supplementary information. In addition, the IWG reviewed and discussed the e-CO data set that had originally been published as part of the WCO Data Model (WCO DM) Derived Information Package (DIP). The result of the survey completed by the IWG members indicated that all data elements in the WCO DM's data set were used by one or more members. The IWG compiled 37 new data elements for the e-CO proposed by the participating Members. Some of the proposed new data elements included exhibition details, country of third-party invoice issuer, retroactive indicator, back-to-back indicator, operation model, reference to FTA, etc. Preliminary data modelling of the new data elements had been initiated for further discussion by the Data Model Projects Team (DMPT).

150. Several delegates expressed their appreciation for the work done by the Secretariat and the TCRO IWG on the Feasibility Study. One delegate pointed out that CO connectivity would help the Members to build CO interconnectivity while the declaration of origin as the other main type of proof of origin could also set another direction for certification. It was recommended that the Secretariat conduct a broader study on different types of proof of origin. One delegate

pointed out that the e-CO data set should distinguish between non-preferential and preferential CO, as there was no international standard for non-preferential CO. The delegate also mentioned that the EU was more in favour of the system of self-declaration by registered exporters, while in certain areas, such as the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean area, the system of accepting and verifying the issuance of e-CO was being considered and would be further developed. One delegate reported that its national practice on certification was more in favour of self-declaration and would move to a full self-declaration system in the future. One delegate asked for further clarification on the procedural process for the e-CO data set. An observer noted that the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) was also working on the digitization of CO and was willing to share its experience.

151. The Secretariat clarified that the study had been developed on the basis of Members' experience in implementing preferential CO, which was highlighted in the introduction to the study. In addition, during the development of the study, two types of proof of origin, i.e. the CO and the self-declaration, were examined and discussed. As most of the practices focused on the exchange of data on CO, only a few of the practices were related to self-declaration. The push model on the CO was recommended as the optimal model, while the practices on the declaration of origin were annexed to the study as supplementary information. The Secretariat also thanked a delegate for his intervention on the update of the AfCFTA meeting with respect to the e-CO, and expressed the WCO's readiness and willingness to assist the African Community and the AfCFTA Secretariat on the e-CO whenever needed.

b. WCO Origin-related Studies: Study on the Digitalization of the Certificate of Origin, Study on Accumulation/Cumulation

152. The Secretariat introduced Doc. PC0750Ea and informed the PTC of the background to the two studies, noting that, in accordance with the guidance provided by the 239th/240th Session of the PTC, Section 6 of the Study had been prepared as a commentary document to be presented to the 42nd Session of the Technical Committee on Rules of Origin (TCRO). The TCRO had discussed and supported the "Summary Finding of the Study on the Digitization of the Certificate of Origin." With regard to the Study on Accumulation/Cumulation, the Secretariat explained that the aim of the Study was to provide an overview of the cumulation provisions in existing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and the related procedural requirements. The Secretariat further explained that the Study consisted of three main sections. Section 1 provided an explanation of cumulation in accordance with the terminology of the WCO Origin Compendium, categorized by "whose elements could be cumulated" and "which elements could be cumulated." Section 2, entitled Document Review, provided an overview of cumulation in the 398 FTAs in force, including categorization, legal texts and certification requirements. Section 3, entitled Case Studies, provided the implementation practices of 29 WCO Members in relation to certification and verification of cumulation, categorized by WCO region.

153. Several delegates expressed their appreciation for the study and supported the adoption of the studies. One delegate noted that some amendments were needed to the case studies on cumulation provided by EU Members. Written inputs would be submitted later. One delegate congratulated the Secretariat on the progress made on the study, which would help Members to deepen their understanding of the relevant rules and to better apply them in administrative practice. The revised version of the Study on Accumulation/Cumulation incorporating those updates is appended at **Annex V** to this Summary Report.

154. In conclusion, the PTC:

- took note, with thanks, of the presentation by Korea;
- examined and endorsed the Business Process Models (BPM) and the revised dataset for the e-CO of the Interconnectivity Framework for the Certificate of Origin as the Annex V to this document: Chapter III (Business Process Model); and Annexes I, II, III and IV;
- took note of and endorsed the “Summary Findings of the Study on the Digitalization of the Certificate of Origin”; and
- took note of and endorsed the “Study on Accumulation/Cumulation.”

ITEM XIII – TIME RELEASE STUDY (TRS)

a. Update on progress with the WCO and World Bank Group (WBG) joint TRS Project

155. The Secretariat provided a brief update on the joint project with the World Bank Group (WBG) to develop a new TRS database system. The project had been approved in 2022 considering a two-phase approach: a feasibility study and a development phase. By the end of 2022, user requirements and terms of reference had been established, and in June 2023, the WCO and the WBG had signed a joint letter to commemorate the joint project.

156. The PTC was informed that due to changes in the WBG’s procurement policy relating to information technology projects and its cybersecurity issues, the WBG’s procurement unit was unable to approve the project proposal. The WCO and the WBG were now exploring alternative approaches, such as grant agreements, to continue the project. The Secretariat conveyed to the PTC the WCO’s commitment to moving forward, given the importance of TRS for many developing countries. The WCO was actively seeking financial support from internal donors to keep the project on track.

157. The Representative of the WBG reiterated their commitment to working with the WCO, emphasizing the importance of their partnership in implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, especially in facilitating TRS. The recent setback in developing a new TRS software database was due to changes in procurement rules, driven by increased concerns over cybersecurity. Despite this

challenge, the WBG was exploring alternative solutions, aiming to fund the project through a grant. The grant would cover the development of new TRS technology, enhancements to the database, and pilot projects in Pacific countries. However, the Representative conveyed that this process could take some time, with the earliest expected completion being at the end of 2025. The WBG planned to provide an update at the next PTC meeting, with more clarity on timelines and the scope of the project. The WBG apologized for the changes and expressed hope for a successful resolution in the near future.

158. Several delegates informed the PTC about TRS progress in their respective administrations. They emphasized the importance of updating the TRS software and suggested that future projects should incorporate real-time release times. Additionally, they expressed concern about the impact of a funding shortfall on the TRS software development project if no other donors were found.
159. The Secretariat acknowledged the comments and explained that alternative funding options for the TRS software project were being explored due to changes in the WBG's procurement policies. One potential approach being considered was to focus on critical areas of the TRS implementation phases, such as the data analysis phase, to mitigate funding issues. Despite the setbacks, the Secretariat further emphasized the WCO's commitment to finding solutions and keeping communication open with potential donors and the WBG.

b. Status report on progress with the updating of the TRS CLiKC! e-learning module and the TRS Guide (Version 3, 2018)

160. The Secretariat provided an update on the ongoing work to update the current TRS Guide (Version 3, 2018). Since the last PTC, the Secretariat had shared the current TRS Guide with registered participants of the last PTC meeting for their input. To date, the Secretariat had received inputs from seven WCO Members: Guatemala, Japan, South Africa, Armenia, New Zealand, Sweden, and Trinidad and Tobago. It was further conveyed that inputs had also been received from WCO TRS accredited experts representing Malaysia, Guatemala, and Mauritius. The PTC was informed that, as of today, the Secretariat was in the process of reviewing the inputs received, aiming to enrich the Guide with insights from national and regional TRS implementation, and focusing on data analysis and practical aspects. The updated Guide was intended to offer valuable information to help WCO Members implement TRS more effectively. The Secretariat added that further collaboration work with Members had been planned during the intersession, including possible virtual discussions, to gather additional feedback and refine the Guide, ensuring it aligned with current Customs practices and fostered effective TRS methodologies.
161. The Secretariat reported a significant upgrade to the WCO TRS CLiKC! e-learning module, made possible through financial support from the Global Trade Facilitation Programme (GTFP) joint initiative between the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of Switzerland (SECO) and the WCO (SECO-WCO GTFP). It

was noted that the module's new content would be accessible to all WCO Members by mid-May 2024. Additionally, contributions on the updated content and module had been received from WCO TRS accredited experts representing Malaysia, Maldives, India, Kenya, Brazil, and Jamaica, ensuring a range of perspectives for diverse Customs contexts. The improved TRS CLiKC! module reflected the WCO's commitment to bridging the gap between theory and practice, empowering Customs professionals with the necessary tools for effective TRS implementation. The Secretariat encouraged all Members to take advantage of this resource and thanked the SECO-WCO for their support in facilitating this update.

162. The Delegate of India praised the Secretariat for its work on updating the TRS Guide and noted that they also intended to provide feedback after the PTC meeting. The Delegate mentioned that India had been conducting national TRS annually since 2021 to reduce dwell time and improve collaboration among stakeholders through digitalization and digitization. The Secretariat thanked India for their support and look forward to receiving their input. The Secretariat noted that part of the TRS Guide's update involved showcasing IT systems and technologies used by Member countries, which could help others enhance their TRS practices.

c. Update on TRS capacity building support under the SECO-WCO Global Trade Facilitation Programme (GTFP)

163. Insights had been provided on the TRS support under the joint initiative between the SECO and the WCO. The first phase of the programme, which had begun in December 2018 and concluded in December 2023, benefited 15 countries across four regions, including Bangladesh, Bolivia, Colombia, and Uzbekistan. The second phase, scheduled to begin in February 2024 and continue until 2027, aimed to strengthen compliance with international standards and best practices focusing on the import, export, and transit of goods.

164. The SECO-WCO Global Trade Facilitation Programme (GTFP) support had three main objectives, which included setting a baseline to measure the programme's impact, reducing clearance times, and enhancing stakeholder engagement. Specific activities were highlighted, such as translating WCO TRS materials, supporting TRS implementation in multiple countries, and accrediting new TRS technical and operational advisors. Key aspects of successful TRS implementation were identified, such as obtaining political will through written commitments, utilizing a blended approach of face-to-face and remote capacity building, forming a multidisciplinary working group, and creating a clear roadmap with activities and deadlines to ensure sustainability. The importance of change management in fostering adaptability and communication among stakeholders was also emphasized.

165. Several Members expressed their gratitude for the GTFP's support. Bangladesh had appreciated a workshop held in March 2022, which had spurred more capacity-building activities. Colombia had noted improvements in Customs

processes due to the programme now moving into its second phase. Guatemala highlighted the GTFP's assistance in promoting trade facilitation, while Rwanda shared their experiences with TRS, which allowed them to generate reports to evaluate Customs performance and identify areas for improvement. SECO responded by acknowledging their kind words and emphasizing that their achievements were the result of their hard work, with GTFP facilitating the process. Other Members interested in TRS were encouraged to seek their support and guidance.

d. Presentation by Zambia

166. The presentation by the Representative of Zambia at the PTC meeting discussed Zambia Revenue Authority's experience with TRS, focusing on the unique perspective of a landlocked country surrounded by eight neighbours. Since 2019, Zambia had conducted TRS at key border points to identify bottlenecks and enhance Customs clearance efficiency. With support from the World Customs Organization (WCO), the World Bank, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), these studies had led to significant reductions in clearance times. For instance, at the Kazungula border, the clearance time had dropped from eight days in 2020 to two days in 2022 thanks to the construction of Kazungula Bridge and the implementation of non-intrusive inspections. The TRS outcomes had resulted in recommendations such as enhanced training for border personnel, improved data exchange platforms, and increased staffing levels, contributing to a smoother Customs process.
167. Zambia's TRS experience underscored the importance of collaboration among regional stakeholders. The TRS studies promoted data exchange and interconnectivity among border agencies, enabling a more coordinated approach to border management. Additionally, Zambia's involvement in regional TRS initiatives such as the North-South Transport Corridor from Durban, South Africa, to Kasumbalesa, Zambia, fostered cooperation among neighbouring countries, leading to smoother trade routes. This collaborative effort had reduced clearance delay times by 2 hours and 42 minutes, demonstrating the benefits of regional integration and shared resources.
168. In the discussion, a private sector delegate emphasized the importance of early private sector involvement to ensure successful TRS. The Delegate of Brazil shared their experience with TRS for exportation and plans for a similar study focused on imports. Meanwhile, the Delegate of Japan highlighted their support for TRS in Africa and collaboration with the WCO on TRS implementation in Central Asia and the Caucasus regions. This feedback stressed the value of collaboration and knowledge-sharing among Customs authorities, the private sector, and international partners. The presenter acknowledged these insights and announced a new TRS scheduled for June 2024, supported by the JICA. This ongoing effort illustrated the commitment to improving Customs efficiency and fostering international cooperation.

169. In conclusion, the PTC:

- took note of the status, including the change in funding position of the World Bank Group on the project to develop a new TRS Database System;
- took note of the progress made and provided guidance on updating the TRS CLiKC! e-learning module and the TRS Guide (Version 3, 2018);
- took note of the capacity building assistance extended on TRS, particularly by the SECO-WCO Global Trade Facilitation Programme (GTFP); and
- took note, with thanks, of the TRS implementation experience shared by Zambia.

ITEM XIV – TRANSIT

170. The Secretariat explained that, following up on the information presented to the PTC in October 2023, document PC0740Ea provided a report on the preparatory process for the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC3) and on capacity-building events in the area of transit. Through a communication circulated on 19 April 2024, the WCO had been notified of the postponement of LLDC3, with the new dates to be determined by the UN General Assembly. Nevertheless, the Secretariat reported that in the intersession the WCO had participated in three events aimed at progressing the preparations for LLDC3 and the development of the next Programme of Action for LLDCs. One of those events had been a Ministerial Conference at which the Secretary General had emphasized the critical importance of efficient, harmonized, automated, and paperless Customs procedures for facilitating trade in LLDCs and transit developing countries, thereby enhancing their economic competitiveness.

171. In terms of capacity-building support, the Secretariat highlighted a regional workshop on transit interconnectivity and the use of regional transit guarantees for the West and Central Africa (WCA) region. The workshop had gathered a total of 35 participants from Member Customs administrations, as well as from eight partner international organizations, regional economic communities (RECs) and development partners. The discussions on transit interconnectivity had been centred on the implementation of the Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit known as SIGMAT. The workshop had been organized as a WCO pre-conference event to LLDC3.

- **Presentation by the Borderless Alliance**

172. Following the Secretariat introduction, a Representative of Borderless Alliance, a multilateral partnership of private and public sector stakeholders, delivered a presentation on their efforts to promote trade facilitation and transport in West Africa, with a focus on addressing bottlenecks and reducing crossing times and costs along transit corridors. The speaker emphasized that the costs of doing business across Africa were inflated by long delays at ports and borders, poor infrastructure at border crossings, inadequate linkages across the continent, lack of recognition of documents beyond national borders, harassment along transit corridors, cumbersome procedures, and corruption. The challenges of doing business across the continent included

insurgencies, diversion of transit shipments, smuggling, including in IPR-infringing goods, mis-declaration, under-invoicing and tax evasion. As a consequence, local businesses were unable to tap into regional markets, and governments were losing revenue.

173. The speaker then touched upon the various initiatives launched by Borderless Alliance and formulated recommendations for addressing trade facilitation challenges at the borders in West Africa, including formalizing trade via enhanced trade data collection. Furthermore, the presentation highlighted the role of the SIGMAT project in interconnecting Customs administrations throughout the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The speaker stressed that enhancing the success of development projects along transit corridors involved combining hard infrastructure initiatives with soft infrastructure approaches, prioritizing trade facilitation interventions at border crossings, and fostering cooperation among border agencies, private operators, and advocacy groups to advance the free movement of goods and people across the ECOWAS region.
174. In conclusion, the speaker emphasized the need for improved attention to land border crossing challenges, the necessity for policymakers to have accurate information to support policy formulation, the importance of trust for successful public-private partnerships, and the need for enhanced public-private collaboration to align policy priorities and drive intra-African trade.
175. The ensuing discussion highlighted the key importance of efficient exchange of information among the Customs administrations involved in a transit operation, based on relevant legal frameworks. This aspect was exemplified by initiatives such as the SIGMAT project, the Single Customs Territory of the East African Community, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Customs Transit System, all of which had been described in the WCO Compendium of best practices in the area of transit. These initiatives had been instrumental in enhancing trade facilitation along with compliance and enforcement, and in reducing transit times and costs.
176. The discussion further highlighted the benefits of regional and international transit guarantee schemes. The role of regional economic integration and of RECs was also emphasized in that regard. Delegates also expressed support for the Borderless Alliance recommendations on the need for enhanced cooperation between governments and the private sector. In terms of security measures for transit movements, the Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System (RECTS) implemented in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda was pinpointed as a good practice, along with the establishment of numerous One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) across East and Southern Africa. The support of development partners and donors was also acknowledged in a number of interventions, along with the importance of sharing good practices among Members.

177. These aspects were important for all 32 LLDCs and transit developing countries, including the Members situated along the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, also known as the Middle Corridor that had been gaining importance in linking Asia and Europe.

178. In reply to some of the interventions from the floor, the Secretariat explained that one of the main objectives of the WCA regional workshop on transit interconnectivity and the use of regional transit guarantees had been to showcase the implementation of good practices, such as the SIGMAT project, with a view to enabling other Members, especially those in Central Africa, to benefit from the lessons learnt and to replicate those good practices throughout the region.

179. In conclusion, the PTC:

- took note of the progress achieved in the area of transit and in particular the support to LLDCs;
- provided guidance, noting and acknowledging the success of the implementation of the SIGMAT system, which had delivered a positive impact for the West African countries involved in it, and could be used as a blueprint for connecting all Customs administrations in the region and beyond; and
- took note, with thanks, of the presentation by Borderless Alliance.

ITEM XV – FACILITATION TOOLS

• Developing and updating tools in line with the WCO Strategic Plan

180. The Chairperson introduced Agenda item XV, highlighting the WCO's core role in equipping Members with essential tools to address modern challenges. Emphasizing the importance of both developing new tools and updating existing ones for their effectiveness, the Chairperson invited the Secretariat to provide further clarification on this item.

181. The Secretariat commenced by addressing the purpose of document PC0754Ea, which aimed to initiate discussions on the development of new tools and the updating of existing ones by the Procedures and Facilitation Sub-Directorate, overseen by the PTC. It highlighted the WCO's practice of developing and updating tools based on the three-year Strategic Plans and yearly Implementation Plans, with support from the PTC in relevant areas. The presentation emphasized that tools developed by the Sub-Directorate and endorsed by the PTC in previous years were available on the WCO website. It was noted that various tools, including those in the E-Commerce Package and the SAFE Package, had their own updating mechanisms and had been regularly reviewed and updated. Additionally, it mentioned ongoing efforts to develop new tools and update existing ones, highlighting tools currently under review or discussion. The Secretariat emphasized the need for the PTC to identify tools requiring updates and to propose new tools to develop in line with the WCO

Strategic Plan. Furthermore, the PTC delegates were invited to base their recommendations on aspects such as the operational impact, correlation with the Strategic Plan, and priority level.

182. The delegates underscored the significance of prioritizing the update of existing tools over developing new ones, citing resource constraints. They emphasized the imperative for these tools to remain current and address the evolving needs of Customs administrations worldwide. One delegate drew from national experiences to highlight the advantages of consolidating guidelines into a unified format, aiming to simplify information and enhance efficiency for Customs officers. Furthermore, there was agreement on the importance of categorizing and interconnecting the diverse tools provided by the WCO into broader classifications. This approach sought to create more user-friendly formats, improve the visibility and accessibility of tools, and align updates with the WCO Strategic Plan.

183. To the delegates' comments the Secretariat responded by emphasizing the significance of proactive planning and coordination within the PTC to ensure the timely updating of tools and alignment with strategic objectives. They also highlighted ongoing efforts to enhance the visibility and accessibility of WCO tools and instruments, underscoring the importance of collaboration and shared decision-making within the PTC.

184. In conclusion, the PTC:

- discussed and provided guidance on the need to update existing tools or develop new ones, noting that this needed be done in line with the upcoming Strategic Plan, in the areas that fell under the PTC's responsibility, and taking into account the Secretariat's available resources; and
- discussed the need to streamline and increase the visibility of existing tools.

ITEM XVI – STRENGTHENING CUSTOMS-INDUSTRY RESILIENCE

a. Draft Resolution of the Customs Co-operation Council on Strengthening Customs-Industry Resilience

185. The Secretariat introduced document PC0753Eb and recalled that at the 241st/242nd Sessions of the PTC, held from 24 to 26 October 2023, the WCO Vice-Chair for the A/P region - Australia – had presented the draft Concept Note for discussion within the PTC. The PTC expressed its general support for the draft Concept Note and endorsed a standard definition of “resilience” for inclusion in the WCO Glossary of Customs Terms. The draft Concept Note was then discussed further, and welcomed, during the 29th Meeting of the SWG, held from 15 to 17 November 2023. At the 89th Session of the PC, held from 5 to 7 December 2023, the draft Concept Note was presented again and received robust support from the delegates.

186. Based on guidance provided by the PC, under the leadership of Australia, a draft Resolution of the Customs Co-operation Council on Strengthening Customs-Industry Resilience (Doc. PC0753EAE1a) had been prepared for consideration by the 243rd/244th PTC sessions.

b. Presentation by New Zealand

187. A delegate of New Zealand presented their administration's efforts to enhance Customs-Industry resilience, particularly through the Secure Exports Scheme initiated in 2004. The presentation showcased the strategic goals of New Zealand Customs, emphasizing the importance of partnerships with AEO companies, such as Fonterra. The delegate highlighted the successful secondment of a senior Customs manager to Fonterra, which had improved mutual understanding of operational challenges and led to better risk management and incident response strategies. This collaboration was portrayed as a model for balancing business needs with regulatory compliance, enhancing communication and efficiency through trust-based partnerships, and building resilience against global disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic.

188. The PTC delegates expressed their gratitude to New Zealand for sharing their experience and showed interest in exploring such collaboration.

189. A number of delegates thanked Australia for their leadership and expressed their support and endorsement of the draft Resolution, additionally sharing insights from their respective national experiences concerning Customs-Industry resilience.

190. A delegate, while expressing overall support, recommended that a bilateral and more specific resolution between the WCO and a private sector association or company could potentially yield greater benefits compared to a unilateral resolution.

191. Another delegate, in endorsing the draft Resolution, proposed an alteration to the previously endorsed definition of "resilience," recommending the replacement of the term "crisis" with "threats." They noted that this adjustment would align the definition with the text of the draft Resolution.

192. The Secretariat clarified that, at this stage, pursuing bilateral resolutions might limit the intended scope outlined in the current draft Resolution. Additionally, they confirmed that the endorsed definition of "resilience" could still be amended by replacing the term "crisis" with "threats," as the WCO Glossary of Customs terms had not yet been updated, allowing for such a change.

193. In conclusion, the PTC:

- took note, with thanks, of the presentation by New Zealand on their experience of seconding a Customs officer to one of their biggest AEO companies; and

- discussed and endorsed a draft Resolution of the Customs Co-operation Council on Strengthening Customs-Industry Resilience ([Annex VI](#)).

ITEM XVII – GREEN CUSTOMS

- a. **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the control of waste shipments**
- c. **Environmental compliance under Pillar III of the SAFE FoS**

194. The Chairperson introduced this Agenda item, outlining its three sub-items. Regarding the first sub-item (a), the Chairperson noted that the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for controls of waste shipments was anticipated by the WCO Implementation Plan 2023-2024 and the Green Customs Action Plan (GCAP). The PTC was apprised of the draft guidelines prepared to assist Customs administrations in developing SOPs to support enforcement efforts and ensure compliance with waste-related legislative requirements. The Chairperson mentioned that these draft guidelines, restricted to Members, had been presented at the 44th Meeting of the Enforcement Committee held in March 2024.
195. Moving to the third sub-item (c), the Chairperson said that the PTC would be briefed on the newly launched online repository containing Members' practices in collaboration with regulatory agencies, with a specific focus on ensuring public safety and security, particularly in the context of environmental compliance under Pillar III of the SAFE FoS. The Chairperson noted that the published repository had been endorsed by the 29th Meeting of the SAFE Working Group and the 89th Session of the Policy Commission, including the template for submitting new Members' practices.
196. Supplementing the Chairperson's introduction, the Secretariat elaborated that the guidelines offered a comprehensive set of templates, together with relevant procedures, to support the development of domestic SOPs that were fit-for-purpose and that could be adapted and used at the national level. It was further explained that the guidelines drew upon practical insights from several activities under the Environmental Programme, as well as the lessons learned from the WCO Asia-Pacific Plastic Waste Project, and related activities of the Sida-WCO TFCM Programme, which had been reported to the 235th/236th Sessions of the PTC (Docs. [PC0729Ea](#) and [PC0728Ea](#)).
197. The Secretariat also informed the PTC that the 44th Meeting of the Enforcement Committee had approved the draft guidelines for developing SOPs as a living document.
198. In addition to the update provided on the SOPs, the Secretariat also briefly highlighted recent progress made on some of the GCAP action items since the last PTC meeting in October 2023 and after the conclusion of the 89th Session of the Policy Commission in December 2023. The Secretariat reported the main

progress made on the GCAP: (1) a document for COP28 had been prepared and transmitted to the COP28 Secretariat, along with the WCO Position Paper on Green Customs, resulting in the status change of GCAP action item 39 to green, indicating that it had been delivered; (2) a research workshop had been conducted on Customs and the environment to prepare for COP28, resulting in the status change of GCAP action item 36 to green; (3) the wording of GCAP action items 3 and 18 had been changed to reflect the PTC's decision to build upon the APEC SCCP's Compendium of Green Customs Practices in order to accomplish the stocktaking activities; and (4) the 89th Session of the Policy Commission had endorsed the outcomes of the PTC on the updated Coordinated Border Management Compendium, pertaining to the GCAP action item 5, and the development of a repository of Members' practices on collaboration with other regulatory agencies to ensure environmental compliance under Pillar III of the SAFE FoS, pertaining to GCAP action item 8. For further information regarding the WCO's GCAP, please refer to the [Annex to Doc. SP0822Ea](#), which contained the version endorsed at the 88th Session of the Policy Commission.

199. Regarding the repository of Members' practices on collaboration with other regulatory agencies to ensure environmental compliance under Pillar III of the SAFE FoS, the Secretariat added that this was also part of the PTC Work Programme 2022-2025 (action 26), and the SWG Work Programme 2022-2025 (action 10). The PTC was informed that the repository of Members' practices, including the template, had been [published](#) and made accessible to Members on the [WCO's SAFE Package web page under the section on Pillar III](#). The Secretariat further mentioned that Members wishing to share their practices could do so by using the template available on that web page.
200. The Delegate of Indonesia expressed appreciation for the Secretariat's efforts in developing guidelines for Customs administrations regarding waste shipment controls under the Basel Convention. The Delegate noted that considering it as a living document ensured its relevance and continuous improvement. It was also emphasized that the guidelines played a crucial role in strengthening compliance and enforcement activities. Furthermore, the Delegate conveyed that during the WCO Asia-Pacific Plastic Waste Project, Indonesia and other Asia Pacific countries had actively collaborated, enriching the draft guidelines with valuable insights. The Delegate of Indonesia finally highlighted that the inclusion of chapters on re-exportation significantly contributed to preventing prolonged procedures and economic losses for stakeholders.
201. The Delegate of Canada expressed gratitude to the Secretariat for the efforts in promoting Green Customs, particularly in developing the repository of best practices. The Delegate acknowledged the significant contribution of the Secretariat to advancing sustainability initiatives. The Delegate of Canada further extended Canada's commitment to identifying and implementing sustainability measures within their Customs operations and pledged to continue advocating for environmental considerations.

202. The Delegate of the EU, on behalf of its Member States, reiterated their strong support for actions taken in the Green Customs area and in line with the focus area of the WCO's Strategic Plan. The Delegate emphasized Customs' fundamental role and obligations in achieving common climate objectives. The Delegate of the EU expressed support for the draft guidelines for developing SOPs for controlling waste shipments, considering them as valuable tools. The Delegate acknowledged that the EU was well aware of its historical association as one of the origins of undue waste shipments. Given this context, the Delegate of the EU emphasized that the EU had been taking measures in response.
203. The Delegate of China expressed gratitude to the Secretariat for their significant efforts in developing the SOPs guidance for controlling waste shipments. China recommended that Members play an active role in Customs enforcement operations to ensure security and promote development. The Delegate also emphasized the importance of jointly implementing the WCO GCAP to fulfil responsibilities and address international environmental concerns, particularly in combating solid waste. China supported the global joint enforcement operation, known as Operation Demeter, which strengthened Customs enforcement across various stages of smuggling, including source, transit, and destination points. The Delegate noted that this initiative aimed to enhance global ecological and environmental governance.

b. Improving the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure under the Basel Convention, and electronic approaches

● Presentation by the Basel Convention Secretariat

204. Regarding the second sub-item (b), the Chairperson informed the PTC that the Small Intersessional Working Group (SIWG) established by the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Basel Convention had been entrusted by the 16th Meeting of the COP, held from 1 to 12 May 2023, to improve the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure by identifying challenges with its implementation, along with best practices and possible approaches and initiatives. The Chairperson indicated that a Representative of the Secretariat of the Basel Convention would brief the PTC on the progress made by the SIWGs.
205. The Representative of the Basel Convention Secretariat appreciated the opportunity to provide updates on the developments under the Basel Convention and acknowledged the close partnership between the WCO and the Basel Convention Secretariat.
206. With a brief explanation on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure, the Representative noted that the main focus of the presentation would be on two specific developments that recently been made under the Basel Convention.
207. The Representative explained that at the COP-15 in 2022, a proposal to amend the convention had been submitted by a Party to add a response timeline for the importing country, triggering a crucial discussion on enhancing the PIC procedure.. This discussion had arisen due to concerns about delays, especially with multiple transit countries, sometimes exceeding a year. Consequently, a Small Intersessional Working Group (SIWG) had been established to work on

improving the functioning of the PIC procedure by identifying implementation challenges, along with best practices and possible approaches and initiatives to be considered. The SIWG had collected experiences and best practices to structure reports with potential solutions. However, the Representative reminded the PTC that this effort was still in its preliminary stage.

208. The Representative presented the different areas identified by the SIWG so far on which parties could take action to improve the PIC procedure with a combination of policy actions. In addition, the Representative shared some possible recommendations or options for a potential way forward. One example cited was on the need to update the Contact information of the competent authorities. Another example pertained to the requirement to provide notification in paper format or hard copies of the original documents. Considering these issues, the Representative pointed out that one of the recommended ways forward was to first understand or collect information on how many parties only accepted paper notifications. Additionally, it could be beneficial to encourage parties to use emails and electronic approaches where possible. Another area of recommendation could be to enhance the technical, financial, and administrative capacity of competent authorities.
209. The Representative also emphasized that a key observation made by the SIWG was the inconsistent implementation of the PIC procedure among parties. An example was cited concerning rules on shipment changing at the last minute, causing delays in document movement, with time-bound documents expiring as a consequence. Another issue observed was the refusal by shipping lines to accept hazardous and other waste, presenting significant challenges for countries lacking facilities, necessitating the export of their hazardous and other waste. Other types of issues highlighted included charges being applied by some parties on the services provided to recover costs incurred. Transit seemed to be another challenge mainly for maritime transit and in terms of understanding or interpreting the application of the Transit terminology.
210. On the potential options to address these issues and challenges, the Representative highlighted a number of options being considered by the SIWG such as providing training for the competent authorities, sharing experiences, and establishing a new partnership or informal network, giving an example of Asia Network, which was a network between competent authorities sharing information at various levels on a range of topics. Additionally, the Representative noted that some other areas that the SIWG was exploring involved establishing potential timelines for the importing country to respond, and possibly standardizing the time periods. The Representative further advocated setting up these timelines at the national level if this was not feasible at the international level.
211. The Representative of the Basel Convention Secretariat also updated the meeting on the status of the another work stream pertaining to the electronic approach to notification and movement documents or in other words digitalization of the PIC Procedure. This process mandated undertaking pilot projects and formulating recommendations. Thus far, the efforts had primarily focused on gaining an understanding of existing practices and experiences across various

countries. For instance, the EU intended to digitalize PIC procedures at the EU level. Similarly, both Canada and the US seemed to have established electronic systems, including arrangements with Mexico for trade purposes. The Representative highlighted that the current focus was on identifying the key requirements for a feasible digitalization system suitable for the 191 parties of the Basel Convention.

212. In conclusion, the Representative of the Basel Convention Secretariat informed the PTC that the report that had just been presented would be made public in the upcoming days, particularly for the forthcoming Open-Ended Working Group from 25 to 28 June 2024. Following that, the next round of negotiations would take place in Geneva, with hopes for progress by the next Conference of the Parties in 2025. The Representative highlighted the possibility that discussions might arise regarding the need to amend the Convention to make some recommendations legally binding or to consider other voluntary measures or tools to promote improvements in the PIC procedure.
213. The Delegate of Senegal expressed gratitude to the Representative of the Basel Convention Secretariat for the insightful presentation. The Delegate remarked that implementing the Basel Convention was challenging due to its complexity. Hence, it was suggested that explanatory notes be developed to facilitate implementation and contribute to better compliance with the Convention, recognizing that simplifying the procedure might not be feasible. Additionally, the Delegate provided an update on the significant steps taken by Senegal to address plastic waste issues in line with the Basel Convention. The Delegate highlighted the enactment of a law to reduce plastic waste and prohibit its importation. The Delegate further noted that Senegal had recently seized a significant quantity of plastic waste valued at six billion CFA Francs, underscoring the effectiveness of these measures.
214. In response to Senegal's inquiry, the Representative of the Basel Convention informed participants that an online enforcement course on the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, hosted on the WCO online platform CLiKC!, was available in English, French, and Russian, and might provide valuable information. Additionally, it was noted that discussions had been underway with WCO colleagues to organize a workshop in mid-July 2024 in Senegal for French-speaking countries in Africa, mainly involving environmental authorities, and that Customs would also be invited. The Representative further assured the meeting that the workshop presented an excellent opportunity to address Senegal's question and delve deeper into the challenges relating to the implementation of the Basel Convention.
- 215. In conclusion, the PTC:**
- took note of the draft guidelines for developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the control of waste shipments;
 - took note, with thanks, of the presentation by the Basel Convention Secretariat in terms of the progress made by the Small Intersessional Working Group (SIWG) on electronic approaches and the SIWG on Prior Informed Consent (PIC) under the Basel Convention; and

- took note of the online repository of Members' practices on collaboration with other regulatory agencies to ensure environmental compliance under Pillar III of the SAFE FoS.

ITEM XVIII – GLOSSARY OF INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMS TERMS

• Update on the Glossary of International Customs Terms

216. The Chairperson introduced this Agenda item citing the need to continue work on regular updates of the Glossary. The Chairperson then reminded delegates about the definition of the term “resilience” that had been endorsed at the October 2023 Session of the PTC for inclusion in the Glossary, and the recent development relating to a potential minor adjustment to the term.
217. The Secretariat provided an update on the work previously done by the PTC on the Glossary; and then proposed three approaches to conducting a comprehensive review of the Glossary. In addition, the Secretariat stated that the three approaches suggested in the working document were to be viewed as a holistic part of the comprehensive review plan rather than as independent alternatives.
218. A delegate informed the PTC about the term “data dummy” or “fictitious data” that had been used during discussions in the Enforcement Committee.
- 219. In conclusion, the PTC:**
- took note of the update provided on the status of the Glossary; and
 - endorsed the proposed way forward.

ITEM XIX - PTC WORK PROGRAMME

• Progress report on the Revised PTC Work Programme 2022-2025

220. The Secretariat informed participants that the purpose of document PC0756Ea and its Annex was to provide a progress report on the implementation of the revised PTC Work Programme 2022-2025 and to propose further amendments. These adjustments included adopting outcome-oriented terminology for certain activities in the Work Programme, updating the wording of key performance indicators, and aligning team resources and timelines with current activity statuses. Additionally, the Secretariat proposed new activities, and suggested removing some activities to align with the Implementation Plan and ongoing Secretariat activities.
221. The draft Revised PTC Work Programme was divided into two parts: Part I covered activities within specific time frames, while Part II addressed activities undertaken continuously. In total, there were 94 activities, with 42 in Part I and 52

in Part II. The progress column reflected achievements since the last progress report in April 2023, while the completion status column used colour codes to denote activity status: green for completed, blue for in progress, and red for postponed or not started. Notably, 26 activities were in progress, 11 were completed, and five had not yet started in Part I. The Secretariat concluded with an invitation for the PTC to review and endorse the proposed adjustments as well as take note of the progress in terms of the implementation of the PTC Work Programme 2022-2025.

222. A delegate expressed gratitude to the Secretariat for their hard work on the PTC Work Programme. Another delegate expressed their appreciation towards the Secretariat for implementing the requests from prior PTC meetings and highlighted the inclusion of new activities aimed at updating guidance, such as the guideline for returning refill containers and packings, suggesting a holistic approach towards updating existing guidance and instruments. Both delegates expressed support for the endorsement of the PTC Work Programme.

223. In conclusion, the PTC:

- took note of progress with the implementation of the Revised PTC Work Programme 2022-2025, and
- reviewed and endorsed the proposed adjustments.

ITEM XX – ELECTIONS

- **Election of a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the PTC for financial year 2024/2025**

224. The Chair explained that the PTC was required to elect a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson each year; after being elected for a period of one year, the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson were eligible for re-election. The PTC was then invited to elect a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson from amongst its delegates for financial year 2024/2025.

225. The Delegate of New Zealand nominated Hoai Nguyen (Vietnam) to serve as the PTC Chairperson for 2024-2025. The nomination was supported by a large number of delegates.

226. The Delegate of Australia nominated Abraham F. Siafa (Liberia) as Vice-Chairperson of the PTC for financial year 2024/2025. A number of delegates supported the nomination.

227. In conclusion, the PTC:

- elected Hoai Nguyen (Vietnam) as Chairperson of the PTC and Abraham F. Siafa (Liberia) as Vice-Chairperson of the PTC for financial year 2024/2025.

ITEM XXI – TOPICS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

228. The Chairperson introduced the item by explaining that delegates would be invited to suggest Agenda items for the next PTC meeting(s).
229. A number of topics were suggested by Members. One delegate sought a progress report on the Smart Customs Project, emphasizing the importance of staying updated on its developments and aligning project progress with the Work Programme. Additionally, another delegate underscored the significance of regional time release studies for sharing best practices within the WCO, anticipating that insights from the Central Asian region could offer valuable perspectives distinct from those of Central America. Another delegate raised concerns regarding Customs' role in fragile and conflict-affected situations, stressing the need for further research and practical recommendations. Lastly, a delegate suggested discussing partnerships to address emerging threats, highlighting the importance of collaboration to enhance Customs industry resilience.
230. The Secretariat provided a comprehensive update on the Fragile Borders Action Plan, detailing ongoing research efforts since June 2023. They highlighted initiatives such as field missions and engagement with national authorities aimed at addressing violence and conflict in affected regions. Moreover, the Secretariat outlined plans to explore funding opportunities to further engage in this area and enhance security measures.
231. The Secretariat stated that all proposed topics would be carefully considered for inclusion on the Agenda for the next meeting, scheduled for October 2024. The Secretariat emphasized that the suggested topics aligned with the ongoing Work Programme and reiterated their commitment to comprehensive coverage of emerging issues. Additionally, they stressed the need to prioritize topics based on their relevance and potential impact on Customs operations.
- 232. In conclusion, the PTC:**
- took note of the topics suggested to be addressed in the next meeting(s).

ITEM XXII – UPCOMING EVENTS

233. The Chairperson introduced the Agenda item, aimed at providing an update on the WCO's upcoming events and meetings which were of relevance to the PTC, and invited the Secretariat to provide an update.
234. Delegates were encouraged to share any information they had on upcoming workshops, seminars, conferences, or other relevant meetings of interest.
235. The Deputy Director in charge of Procedures and Facilitation, Brendan O'Hearn, provided an update on WCO events and meetings through a

PowerPoint presentation. He informed the PTC of the relevant upcoming meetings and events and, in particular, invited delegates to take part in the 6th WCO AEO Global Conference in China (8-10 May 2024).

236. With regard to the upcoming events, the Delegates of China and Brazil took the floor and stated that they were looking forward to welcoming the delegates to the 6th WCO AEO Global Conference and the Technology Conference. Another delegate raised a question regarding the absence of the WCO Knowledge Academy on the upcoming events and was informed that the Academy had been cancelled.

237. In conclusion, the PTC:

- took note of the update on the WCO events and meetings.

ITEM XXIII – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

238. The Chairperson introduced the Agenda item and delegates were asked if there was anything to be discussed under this item. There were no requests from delegates.

ITEM XXIV – CLOSING

239. The Director of Compliance and Facilitation, Pranab Kumar Das, expressed his deepest appreciation to delegates for their participation. He recalled that the participants had explored various topics by reviewing documents, sharing experiences, presenting practices, and discussing ways forward. He then communicated his belief that the PTC would continue to be a valuable and versatile platform where Members and partners would be able to work together. He also summarized the outcomes of the Agenda items, including the round table on the WCO theme for 2024, e-commerce, digitization and resilience, delivering his appreciation to the participants for their contribution. He expressed his appreciation to the outgoing Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for their leadership and dedication shown over the last couple of years. He also congratulated the new Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson on their election for the next financial year and assured them of the Secretariat's support. He appreciated the work of the Secretariat staff in preparing the meeting documents and managing the execution of the PTC sessions.

240. In his closing remarks, the Chairperson thanked all delegates for their participation over the past four days. He mentioned that it had been an honour and privilege to serve as the Chairperson of the PTC which was one of the original working groups stipulated in the Convention establishing a Customs Co-operation Council. He thanked the Secretariat for their work and professionalism, and then expressed his appreciation to the outgoing Vice-Chairperson for her support and cooperation. He congratulated the new Chairperson and Vice-

Chairperson and expressed his conviction that the PTC would be in capable hands. He noted that the next PTC meeting was planned to take place from 23 to 25 October 2024.

241. The Chairperson then closed the meeting.

