

WCO Integrity Newsletter

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WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION

WCO Integrity Newsletter

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Customs administrations worldwide have now come to appreciate, more than ever before, the enormity of the fight against corruption. They have increasingly become aware of the threat that widespread corruption may pose to their ability to contribute positively towards national development, global trade and international security. Corruption is a complex phenomenon with negative consequences on economic growth, health and safety, and the prospects for global trade and security. Terrorism, proliferation of weapons and materials of mass destruction, trafficking of small arms and explosives, and illicit diversion of dual-use goods pose a serious threat not only to the security and safety of people but also to the economic development, political stability and social cohesion of countries across the globe. Customs administrations play a critical role at international border crossings in whole-of-government efforts to mitigate these threats. Customs services manage cross-border flows of goods and means of transport to ensure they comply with the law. They detect and prevent trafficking of dangerous, restricted and prohibited goods. The WCO Security Programme concentrates on strengthening Customs administrations' capacity to deal with security-related issues at national level and aims to facilitate the global Customs community's ability to deal with these threats at the international level.

As integrity is a cross-cutting issue that affects every facet of a Customs administration, including its external environment, the 17th Session of the WCO Integrity Sub-Committee will address various integrity-related issues and include wide-ranging discussions demonstrating that the global Customs community is fully aware of the current security threats which correlate with integrity breaches and also understands that the challenge of upholding integrity must be tackled in partnership with stakeholders.

Going forward, the WCO has the pleasure to introduce the 14th Edition of the Integrity Newsletter. You will read about the initiatives, challenges and experiences of Member Customs administrations such as Dubai, Thailand, Togo, as part of the current efforts to fight corruption and to enhance organizational integrity. The Newsletter will continue to provide an opportunity for all Members to share their experiences in order to inform the WCO membership and ensure that WCO integrity development efforts keep pace with global threats.

Members are encouraged to continue sharing their best practices by contributing to the WCO Integrity Newsletter, so that other Customs administrations may benefit from them and feel encouraged to implement similar measures.

The WCO Capacity Building Directorate



MESSAGE FROM THE ISC CHAIR

- Message from the ISC Chair

Dear Colleagues,

We are all aware of the crucial importance of integrity and the fight against corruption, not just in our Customs and revenue authorities but in an overall societal sense. Integrity is a very important cross-cutting issue which is integral to all our work and must always be kept in mind. As the theme of this year's Integrity Sub-Committee is "SECURITY AND INTEGRITY: CURBING THREATS, LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITIES", we will discuss integrity development measures from this angle and how integrity initiatives and promoting sound integrity are key factors in securing borders from a whole range of emerging threats.

We are also constantly reminded of the importance of predictability and transparency as key ingredients of any integrity regime. All the initiatives currently being undertaken on the basis of and related to the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement should have a large integrity component, as I am convinced that there can be no real trade facilitation without transparency and predictability and, as a corollary, integrity.

This latest issue of the WCO Integrity Newsletter is full of topical and interesting material, including articles submitted by Afghanistan, Dubai, Indonesia, Thailand, Togo, Turkey and many others.

In addition, a new WCO initiative on internal control units and their relationship with other anti-corruption government bodies (external control) is under development. I therefore, urge you to stay tuned and think of initiatives and projects in your own countries and administrations that you would like to share with Members.

Sigfríður Gunnlaugsdóttir (Directorate of Customs - Iceland)
WCO Integrity Sub-Committee Chairperson



AFGHANISTAN

Integrity Activities and News

Integrity Activities and News

Afghanistan Serious about Combatting Corruption and Enhancing Integrity in Customs

The story of corruption in Afghanistan, especially following the massive inflow of foreign funds beginning in 2001, is a well-known blight on efforts to reform and modernize governance in the country and improve service delivery to citizens. After years of difficult efforts, the current leadership of Afghanistan is taking a firm stance against corruption and, on 28 September 2017, the Afghan High Council on Rule of Law approved the 'National Anti-Corruption Strategy' during a meeting chaired by H. E. President Ashraf Ghani. Given that it is responsible for the collection of 42.6% of all domestic revenue, the Afghan Customs Department (ACD) is at the centre of Afghanistan's renewed efforts to combat corruption. A fresh leadership team within the ACD sees itself as part of a comprehensive national effort to leverage international best practices and reform institutions in a manner that reduces opportunities and incentives for corrupt behaviour. With the support of the WCO, the ACD has taken a proactive approach to supporting the national objective by drawing on the WCO Revised Arusha Declaration, the international framework that provides basic principles to promote integrity and combat corruption within Customs administrations. The Revised Arusha Declaration principles, such as the payment of living wages to Customs officers, the development of a Code of Conduct and the automation of procedures, are at various stages of implementation within the ACD.

As a result of recommendations emerging from the WCO Diagnostic Mission to Afghanistan in September 2016 and subsequent exposure to other landlocked developing country perspectives on integrity, the WCO's Secretary General, Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, and Afghanistan's Minister of Finance, H. E. Eklil Hakimi, signed the Revised Arusha Declaration in Kabul on 16 July 2017. The pledge of commitment by Minister Hakimi displays the country's serious intention to fight corruption at the highest political level and introduce high standards of integrity in Customs. The visit also afforded Mr. Mikuriya an opportunity to meet with the President of Afghanistan, H. E. Mr. Ashraf Ghani, who shared his vision of transforming Afghan Customs into a model of governance, recognizing that Customs capacity building was a crucial part of state-building. Dr. Mikuriya suggested that human resource development (HRD) was key to realizing this vision and asked the President for his political support in implementing a HRD policy that would establish career paths within Customs, supported by adequate rotations as well as protection from political interference. President Ghani was eager to move forward in this direction and expressed his strong support for the suggested way ahead.



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During the event, Minister Hakimi stated that “Afghanistan’s accession to the Revised Arusha Declaration will help us strengthen the infrastructure and human resource capacity in the Customs Department in order to develop the economy in addition to collecting national revenue. This is the only effective tool for promoting economic development, employment and trade with countries in the region.”

The WCO maintains its commitment to supporting the ACD in implementing practical measures as set out in the Revised Arusha Declaration. Accordingly, it is supporting the ACD in modernizing its Strategic Plan to reflect the Arusha principles while incorporating approaches to modernization and reform inspired by the Revised Kyoto Convention and the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, recthe WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, recognizing Afghanistan’s successful accession to the WTO in 2015.

The WCO Capacity Building Directorate and its network of accredited and recognized Customs experts continue to collaborate with the ACD to support its modernization and reform agenda. Acknowledging the critical role played by other development partners in the country, the WCO is also seeking to collaborate with key players, such as the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), while also ensuring that Afghanistan’s unique needs as a WCO Member remain at the forefront of its engagement.

The WCO expresses its sincere appreciation to Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs of the United Kingdom for providing critical financial and technical assistance in this complex effort to set Afghanistan on new direction towards integrity for the benefit of all Afghan citizens.





Indonesia's Director General of Customs and Excise, Heru Pambudi,

Receives the Bung Hatta Anti-Corruption Award (BHACA)

On Thursday 14 December 2017 at the Graha CIMB Niaga Financial Hall, in Jakarta, Indonesia, the Bung Hatta Anti-Corruption Award (BHACA) Association hosted the BHACA Awards Night 2017. Since 2003, the BHACA Association has consistently been rewarding individuals who continue to grow and develop effective, corruption-free and responsible governance, as well as inspiring the establishment of corruption eradication efforts in their institutions. Previous BHACA Award recipients include Sri Mulyani (Indonesia's current Minister of Finance) in 2008 and Joko Widodo (currently the President of the Republic of Indonesia) in 2010. The 2017 BHACA Award was given to the following individuals for showing integrity and successfully bringing about innovations in the public service and government bureaucracy sector, namely Nurdin Abdullah, the Bantaeng Regent, and **Heru Pambudi, Director General of Customs and Excise of Indonesia.**

The Chairperson of BHACA's Daily Board, Natalia Soebagjo, conveyed the challenges facing the two awardees in maintain personal integrity and building a good governance system in their respective institutions. She hoped the two could continue to serve as role models and that the systems they had built would form a solid foundation for moving step by step towards a corruption-free Indonesia.

The BHACA 2017 was awarded to the Director General in recognition of his efforts to lead Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE) reforms aimed at providing faster, better and more transparent services to stakeholders in order to achieve good governance. Heru Pambudi nevertheless stressed that the award was not only an individual achievement, but also the result of hard work by all the staff of the DGCE who never stopped fighting for change towards the better. This award also offered public recognition of the changes occurring within the DGCE.

In December 2016, the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, Sri Mulyani Indrawati, launched the Customs and Excise Reform Team. Various innovative programmes were created to meet the demands of society and ensure that the DGCE

a credible and trustworthy institution. This spirit of reform was also aimed at eradicating illegal trade, developing service practices free from illegal levies and corruption, and improving stakeholder satisfaction.

The Reinforcement Programme of Customs and Excise Reforms (PRKC) contributes greatly towards enhancing integrity as the foundation for developing organizational culture and strengthening the DGCE as an institution, as well as its leadership. Other key areas of the DGCE Reform Programme gaining significant attention are optimization of revenue, reinforcement of trade facilitation and services and effectiveness of monitoring. The PRKC Programme comprises 19 strategic initiatives and 88 innovative programmes, with more than 650 action plans being applied simultaneously in 16 Customs Regional Offices and three (3) Customs Main Service Offices.

The DGCE has piloted integrity point controls and spot checks at nine (9) strategic Customs offices, namely Tanjung Priok, Tanjung Emas, Tanjung Perak, Soekarno-Hatta, Ngurah Rai, Bogor, Cikarang, Pasuruan, and Malang. In-depth monitoring is conducted based on Automated Monitoring Tools (AMT) and has led to disciplinary measures against 30 employees having committed infringements. To further improve the control programme, the DGCE has conducted training of trainers at officer level in order to pass on coaching, mentoring and counselling.

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The DGCE has also developed several systems to improve transparency and integrity among employees, including the Society Complaint System (SIPUMA), Employee's Integrity Monitoring System (SMIP) and Integrity Map. These efforts have boosted employee integrity levels according to a Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) survey, and in 2017 the DGCE obtained a score of 82.7 out of 100 for integrity.

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The DGCE is currently working together with and gaining support from other government institutions, such as the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), the Indonesian National Police (Polri), the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), the Attorney General's Office, the Presidential Staff Office, the Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (PPATK), and the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs to conduct the High-Risk Importers Compliance (PIBT) Programme. This Programme is based on the Joint Declaration of 12 July 2017 by the Minister of Finance, Sri Mulyani, and the leaders of some of the government institutions mentioned above.

Following this Joint Declaration there have been improvements in the fiscal domain with a 56 % increase in the tax base, while the macro-economic domain has seen 30% growth in small and medium-sized enterprises. In order to speed up registration services, provide proportional treatment to stakeholders based on their compliance level, and improve the ease of doing business, the DGCE and DGT have established a single identity and business profile by unifying the Customs Identity Number (NIK) and Taxpayer Identification Number (NPWP) as of 6 March 2017. This single identity is also expected to form a single business profile which can subsequently be used by other related government institutions to perform data integration.

The PRKC and PIBT Programmes as well as the synergistic cooperation and coordination between the DGCE and DGT have helped generate revenue of 189.14 trillion Indonesian Rupiah, i.e. 101.7% of the target set, in line with the upgrading of Indonesia's Ease of Doing Business (EODB) ranking. In 2015, Indonesia's EODB ranking stood at 106, rising to 91 in 2016 and then 72 in 2017 (source: World Bank). Another positive impact of the PRKC and PIBT is the increasing level of satisfaction among DGCE stakeholders, measured on a scale of 5, and having increased over recent years from 3.8 in 2013 to 3.96 in 2014, 4.06 in 2015, 4.18 in 2016 and 4.38 in 2017.

In addition to the PKRC and PIBT, the DGCE has also built constructive communication networks with various associations and business entities in order to improve DGCE performance and boost the Indonesian economy.

Along with the excellent success of the programmes, Heru Pambudi expects all elements of the DGCE, other related agencies and the business community to keep running the programmes with integrity in order to create a healthy Indonesian economy and support the growth of domestic industry, which will in turn lead to improvements in people's welfare.

"I am deeply aware that the DGCE's journey to reform is still long, with many challenges and major tasks yet to be faced and resolved. This work will not be easy, requiring consistency and endurance as well as support from various parties. However, I am convinced that the DGCE reforms will succeed in achieving their objectives. This BHACA 2017 Award is an acknowledgment of what the DGCE has done. On the other hand, this Award also provides a mandate for DGCE officers to ensure that the reforms achieve their objectives, i.e. that the DGCE is truly professional, trustworthy and loved by society," said Heru Pambudi.



Philippines

Philippines Customs Chief Orders Creation of an Anti-Corruption Unit

The Chief of the Philippines Bureau of Customs (BOC), Isidro S. Lapeña, has ordered the creation of an Interim Internal Affairs and Integrity Unit (IIAIU), as President Rodrigo Duterte wants all forms of corruption to be stopped.

Corruption issues have been hounding the Bureau for a long time, which is "why we are now facing it head-on," according to Lapeña.

The Unit's key mandate is to stop illicit acts by some BOC officials and employees aimed at amassing ill-gotten wealth. It primarily strengthens disciplinary actions against errant BOC personnel and aims to encourage everyone in the Bureau to comply with existing directives and policy guidelines.

In a memorandum issued on 29 December 2017, Lapeña listed the unit's functions: investigating complaints against BOC personnel, receiving and gathering evidence in support of an open investigation; conducting *motu proprio* investigations on incidents where evidence in the prosecution of smuggling cases was compromised, tampered with, obliterated or lost while in the custody of BOC staff; conducting lifestyle checks on BOC staff; evaluating or recommending the filing of appropriate criminal cases against BOC staff before the court, if warranted by the evidence, and assisting in the prosecution of the case; and undertaking liaison work, coordinating and providing assistance to the Office of the Ombudsman, National Anti-Corruption Commission of the Office of the President, and Revenue Integrity Protection Service of the Department of Finance

Turkey

The Ministry of Customs and Trade of the Republic of Turkey is always working on strongly promoting integrity and ethics at all levels of our Administration.

The Republic of Turkey is a Contracting Party to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), each Article of which is being addressed. Accordingly, Customs is working hard towards full implementation of the TFA provisions, such as Article 5: Other Measures to Fight Corruption, Enhance Impartiality, Non-discrimination, and Transparency; Article 6: Disciplines on Fees and Charges Imposed on or in Connection with Importation and Exportation and Penalties; and Article 12: Customs Cooperation, Section 1: Measures Promoting Compliance and Cooperation.

There are several mechanisms to promote integrity of Customs officials and fight corruption at all levels of our Administration.

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To begin with, all governmental institutions in Turkey are subject to monitoring by the Central Ethics Committee, which operates within the Prime Minister's Office. In addition to this Committee, institutions have their own ethics committees.

The Ministry of Customs and Trade has an internal Ethics Committee which monitors the practices of all Customs staff. The Ethics Committee of the Ministry of Customs and Trade consists of a senior management team, the members of which represent various units of the Ministry. The team's main duty is to monitor the practices of Customs officials in terms of anti-corruption and to promote integrity. Additionally, the Department of Internal Audit and the Department of Guidance and Investigation are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the anti-corruption strategy. Thus, the Turkish Customs Administration has embarked on a process of continuous review and improvement of systems and procedures. Furthermore, new arrangements for and adjustments to IT systems are made by the legislative units.

To avoid corruption and promote transparency, the Ministry of Customs and Trade uses a central computerized risk management system called BİLGE, which performs nearly all Customs procedures electronically. Since practically all Customs clearance procedures are performed automatically through the BİLGE system, human intervention in the processes is not required.

To promote transparency, our Administration also makes exemptions, concessions, regulations, rulings, procedures and legislation publically available to all relevant stakeholders, through the Ministry's official website (www.gtb.gov.tr). In addition, all related legislation is published in the Official Journal of the Republic of Turkey.

Some activities have also been conducted recently with the aim of promoting integrity of officials:

- A circular on Ethics Principles for the Personnel of the Ministry of Customs and Trade was published on 21 August 2015. To enhance integrity and ethics at all levels of our Administration, we organize seminars, training programmes and conferences.
- The last week of May every year is "Ethics Week", during which various training courses, seminars and conferences are held with participation by our staff. Within the scope of Ethics Week, seminars on the Code of Ethics are organized annually. Additionally, some events held during recent Ethics Weeks include an Ethics Conference organized on 2 June 2016, a Seminar on Public Ethics and Value Principles organized on 6 May 2017, an Ethics Awareness Seminar organized on 17 and 18 May 2017, and a Training Programme for Ethics Trainers carried out from 22 to 26 May.



- Furthermore, our Administration has been running an EU-funded project in coordination with the Ethics Platform of Turkey on Prevention of Corruption and Promotion of Ethics. The following events have been held, with participation by our Administration's staff, as part of this project: a Seminar on the Development of Methodology for a Performance Management System (16 and 17 March 2016); Meeting on the Principles of Operation of the Turkey Ethics Platform (12 December 2016); two Seminars to Raise Awareness of Integrity (17 and 18 April 2017); a Meeting of the Ethics Platform aimed at helping with the development, coordination and investigation of ethics strategies in coordination with other governmental institutions (10 November 2017). Within the scope of the project, a survey was conducted with the participation of 1,130 members of staff. The Project on Prevention of Corruption and Promotion of Ethics was successfully completed and the closing ceremony was held on 18 and 19 October 2017. Following an evaluation of the Project outcomes by the European Union (EU) and the National Ethics Board, the "Ethics Action Plan of the Ministry of Customs and Trade" was published as a book.
- Finally, the National Ethics Panel met on 2 November 2017 with participation by our Ministry.

Snapshot of Members' Best Practices

United Arab Emirates - Dubai Customs

Measures Undertaken by Dubai Customs to Promote Integrity

Over recent years, Dubai Customs has doubled its efforts to promote a culture of integrity and ethical conduct in the work of Customs, through implementation of viable solutions that eliminate the risk of corruption and therefore ensure the smooth flow of legitimate trade while protecting revenue and society against any irregularities. The use of technology and smart intelligence has brought about effective results.

The following are some measures and practices implemented by Dubai Customs to enhance integrity, impartiality and fight corruption in all aspects of Customs business.

Organizational Governance

At Dubai Customs, the Operational Framework of Organizational Governance is a group of processes, habits, policies, laws and institutions affecting the way our Organization is directed, administered and controlled. We were one of the first government departments in Dubai to have implemented an enterprise risk management framework (ISO31000). Transparency, responsiveness and integrity are key elements of our organizational governance, which consists of a set framework, laws, policies, methodologies, processes and implementations that guide our monitoring and direction. All our corporate functions and their objectives are mapped with our vision, mission, values and strategic goals, which are very much in line the expectations of our stakeholders. The entire governance process is controlled via a Governance Manual which is regularly reviewed and updated by the Corporate Leadership of Dubai Customs, ensuring the highest standards and leading practices.

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The contents of this Manual also include the framework for our international, regional, federal and local governance levels and compliance practices such as Dubai Government Laws, Federal Customs Laws, and WTO, WCO and other regulations under the foreign and commonwealth offices.

Intelligence and Internal Control

The Intelligence and Internal Control Department is responsible for ensuring compliance with Customs law, human resource (HR) rules and other relevant policies and regulations. It is committed to ensuring the highest levels of integrity and security in accordance with international standards, and to taking the necessary measures to impart organizational values to staff. Dubai Customs is committed to doing business with integrity and honesty and the same is outlined in our Code of Conduct document. All departments and sections of the organization (100%) are analysed for risks related to anti-corruption and employee conduct and action is taken in accordance with Dubai Customs HR Policy and the Dubai Government HR Law.

Automation

In 2006, Dubai Customs launched a vigorous Reform and Modernization Programme (RMP) to transform the organization from a paper-based administration into an electronic enabled, paperless, fully-automated world leading administration. The main components of the RMP included building business capacities, building technology capacities, and building human capacities.

The Programme has had a remarkable impact, including optimized trade facilitation reducing human intervention rates to 4% (i.e. increase in automatically-cleared transactions to 96%), increased protection and compliance, and improved operational performance and efficiency

Mirsal 2

Dubai Customs launched a paperless Customs clearance system, known as Mirsal 2, in March 2010. This advanced Customs system allows for the electronic clearance of simple declarations via Internet in under two minutes, without the need to submit any papers before the arrival of goods.

Mirsal 2 is a combination of IT services. The system manages all operations, including the collection of Customs duties. It also runs the risk management cycle. The main unique aspect of the product is that clients are able to sign their declarations electronically using a digital certificate. In addition, it is connected to other entities that form part of the trade supply chain within Dubai, meaning that information about the declaration is seamlessly exchanged amongst these entities, thereby allowing for faster processing of goods and cargo.

Mirsal 2 provides a large number of benefits to Customs, its clients and other related parties:

Client benefits

- Paperless online declarations available 24/7;
- Pre-clearance of goods;
- Time, effort and cost savings of up to 75%;
- Consistency in treatment, and greater predictability;



Dubai Customs benefits

- Real-time risk assessment;
- Efficiency of controls by focusing attention on risky consignments;
- Possibility of sharing intelligence information with strategic partners;
- Improved border management coordination with other government departments;
- Enhanced possibility of receiving clients' opinions, and of viewing and sharing information with them;
- Systematic and documented processes;
- Improved collection of trade statistics and data used to develop strategic planning in the region.

Risk Assessment Engine

Developed in-house by Dubai Customs, the 'risk assessment engine' is considered to be the 'beating heart' of Mirsal 2. This integrated smart system, which stands out as a reference model worldwide, assesses Customs transactions according to pre-defined risk profiles. These risk profiles are loaded into the system following the linking and analysis of intelligence gathered from various channels. All transactions flagged as risky according to the risk engine are routed for further risk mitigation and inspection.

Consignments cleared in less than 10 minutes have increased by 328%, and now represent 82% of all Customs transactions. The risk assessment engine has also helped reduce the time required for risk assessment to under two seconds, which means that 97% of non-suspect transactions are cleared automatically in less than one minute from the time the consignment data is logged.

Advanced Container Scanning System

The Advanced Container Scanning (ACS) System combines X-ray and radiation scanning inspection technologies. The device is capable of screening the contents of 150 trucks per hour, moving at 8 to 15 km per hour: that equates to one truck every 24 seconds.

What is unique about the ACS System is its integration with Customs inspection and clearance systems. An inspector using the ACS System can access data from the risk engine directly from his/her workstation, in order to check why a scanned shipment has been selected for inspection. He/she can also access the declaration, in order to compare the scanned image with the shipment details.

The implementation of this technology contributed to an increase in the compliance rate at Jebel Ali Port from 42% in 2010 to 91.7% in 2013, a reduction in the time taken for the total inspection from two hours to 20 minutes per container, and a drop in the costs involved by 54%. Last but not least, the number of Customs' clients at Jebel Ali increased by 33% during the period from 2010 to 2013.

Smart Refund System

The implementation of the new system was not an easy task; as the team had to face the traditional challenges of balancing the convenience of doing business against enforcing strict compliance.



Timely, zero-risk refund process

The deployment of the smart Claim and Refund system has drastically reduced refund times. Only a few claims requiring further documentary or physical checks do not currently receive immediate approval. It is clear that a reduction in clearance times and paperwork has been achieved; perhaps more importantly, the system has encouraged data transfer through online submission. This data can serve multiple purposes in terms of trade, risk analysis and forecasting.

With this holistic refund system, Dubai Customs will be able to focus resources on high-risk areas while increasing the productivity of the clearance process for low-risk shipments. The automated refund process can be applied consistently to all imports and exports, and is significantly faster and more accurate.

Major benefits

For importers/exporters: Faster refund times (reduced from two (2) weeks to two (2) days or within minutes for automated clearance), a more transparent process, a more predictable process and less red-tape.

For Customs: Improved staff productivity through the upgraded infrastructure, increased Customs revenue, a more structured and controlled working environment, enhanced professionalism, and improved inter-department coordination.

Commercial banks: More customers and increased funds passing through bank operations.

Government: Substantial increase in government revenue, the ability to demonstrate best practice in the region, and promote free and fair trade.

Economy: Improved transparency and governance in Customs and cross-border trade movements.

Lithuania

Initiatives and measures to promote integrity and fight corruption in Lithuanian Customs

Following the roll-out of the action plan for implementation, in 2016 and 2017, of the Anti-Corruption Programme of the Customs Administration of the Republic of Lithuania, the Immunity Service of the Customs Department, under the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania, applies the following corruption prevention measures:

- ⇒ analysis and assessment of activity areas where there is a high probability of corruption occurrences;
- ⇒ checks on individuals applying to work for Customs;
- ⇒ assessment of the personal qualities of individuals applying to work for Customs;
- ⇒ public education and information as well as publicizing of corruption cases;
- ⇒ anti-corruption training for Customs officers;
- ⇒ preventive conversations with each Customs officer, when they start work, on the subjects of prevention, threats to national security, loyalty to the state and service;

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- ⇒ preventive control of public procurement;
- ⇒ prevention of conflicts of interest, etc.

In December 2012, a system of internal reporting of attempted bribery was introduced in the Customs Administration of the Republic of Lithuania. Through this system, Customs officers are encouraged to record, on their own initiative, cases when they come across or receive cash while performing their official duties. The system of internal reporting entails a Customs officer using a special form to record cases when, during the performance of his/her official duties, he/she comes across or receives cash during Customs controls or inspections, and notifies the Chief Executive Officer accordingly. To mark International Anti-Corruption Day, the Customs officers who record the greatest number of cases of illegal money offerings or otherwise contribute to the establishment of an anti-corruption environment in the Customs of the Republic of Lithuania receive an award from the Lithuanian Customs Authorities.

Last year, on International Anti-Corruption Day, the Customs Administration and other national law enforcement agencies focused their efforts on a joint activity, the purpose of which was to raise public awareness of and promote rejection of displays of corruption and dishonest behaviour. As part this activity, officers distributed leaflets to citizens along with stylized envelopes bearing the words “An envelope is not for a bribe but for festive greetings”, and urged citizens never to give bribes. During this campaign, postcards were distributed throughout Lithuania reminding the public that envelopes ought to be used to send greetings rather than for bribery.

Thailand

A Virtuous Customs Organization: Transparent and Free From Corruption

Corruption is a global problem that all countries, including Thailand, focus on because it is a major obstacle to all dimensions of economic, social and political development and has a huge negative impact on a country. Thailand has been working continuously to solve the problem of corruption at national level by implementing the National Anti-Corruption Strategy rolled out from Phase I (2008-2012) until now, and the National Anti-Corruption Strategy Phase III (2017-2021) which sets out a vision for a “Zero Tolerance & Clean Thailand”. The vision aims to transform Thailand, in the next five years, into a country with the moral and ethical high ground where corruption is no longer tolerated by society, and which applies international standards of transparency.

The Ministry of Finance has a policy to promote and develop the move towards becoming a virtuous ministry that is free from corruption, and has implemented the project "Ministry of Finance: Moral, Transparent and Free from Corruption" to that end. The Customs Department is a government agency under the Ministry of Finance with a mission to collect taxes on imports and exports, and prevent and suppress Customs offences. It is an organization that plays an important role in promoting and supporting economic development, and in enhancing Thailand’s trade competitiveness. The Ministry of Finance has designated the Customs Department as a “Virtue Customs” pilot agency to serve as a model for creating a transparent and fraud -free organization.

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The Director General of the Customs Department, Mr. Kulit Sombatsiri, and all Customs executives are showing a strong will and clear policy of honesty, integrity, transparency and accountability in the administration of the Customs Department. These executives are promoting enhanced moral and ethical standards to all Customs officers, and improving transparency in the workplace, including preventing and suppressing corruption and misconduct by Customs officials in an effective and concrete manner. They intend to build public trust in the Customs Department and, accordingly, have set out the policies, measures, plans and projects that will support and promote the reform of the Customs Department to make it a “Virtue Customs Organization: Transparent and Free From Corruption” in line with the National Anti-Corruption Strategy Phase III (2017 - 2021) and the Ministry of Finance’s policies as follows:

1. Declaration on the integrity and transparency policy

The Declaration is based on the notification by the Customs Department regarding integrity and transparency for the operation of the Customs Department, dated 16 January 2017. This policy encompasses a standard, guideline and shared organizational values to which all Customs officers shall adhere, together with rules and other regulations. It comprises five (5) aspects: transparency, accountability, freedom from corruption, integrity culture and work integrity.

2. Establishment of administrative measures to prevent misconduct by the Customs Department

The administrative measures involve preparing the supervisor's pledge in accordance with the Customs Directorate’s anti-corruption measures. Supervisors at all levels have to sign a commitments to the Director General of the Customs Department that they will control, supervise and implement preventive measures to deter their subordinates from committing any form of fraud. If they are inattentive to or unable to prevent corruption and misconduct within the unit, they shall be deemed to be ineffective managers and will face unanimous administrative measures.

3. News management to prevent and suppress corruption more effectively

The Customs Department has launched a number of news management activities. Firstly, a Customs Intelligence Centre (CIC) has been set up as a hub to develop a strategic database for the Customs Department. Secondly, a “1322 Hotline” number has been launched to receive complaints. Thirdly, the Customs Bell Project has been initiated as another channel for receiving complaints by the public. This Project enables complainants to coordinate with supervisors to solve problems. Fourthly, implementation of the Local Profile Optimization of Cargo Clearance Customs Bureaus and Customs Houses will serve as a tool for Customs risk management. Finally, the preparation of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on offence detection will serve as a measure to make Customs officers conduct strict inspections of ‘Red Line’ imported goods (high-risk shipments) and to intercept leakages of ‘Green Line’ declarations.



4. Enhancing moral and ethical standards for Customs officers

There are many projects to be implemented to enhance moral and ethical standards for Customs officers. Firstly, there is the Moral Customs Programme to standardize the duties of Customs officers at all levels. Secondly, the Good Thinking and Doing, Customs Can Do Project is an activity enabling Customs officers to conduct an integrity self-assessment. Thirdly, the Excellent Customs Officers Project promotes morale among officers who perform their duties with the intention of continuing to serve as a good role model. Fourthly, a clear framework for career advancement among Customs officers has been announced. This framework provides criteria and conditions for appointment, transfer and promotion of government officials to higher levels which are clear, transparent and fair. Fifthly, the project to instruct and disseminate information on disciplinary actions and tort liability of officers is intended to enable all Customs officers to acknowledge acts of malfeasance and tort liability and to avoid such behaviour. Sixthly, the Self-Learning on the Code of Ethics and Conduct is a project to help Customs officers gain knowledge and comply with the Code of Ethics and Discipline of Civil Servants on an ongoing basis. Finally, the Project of Ethics and Good Governance Initiative for the Prevention of Corruption and Misconduct in the Public Sector is an activity to strengthen and raise awareness among all Customs officers that they should perform their duties and behave in accordance with the principles of morality and integrity expected of government officials. The performance by officers demonstrating integrity and good governance will ensure that Customs Department operates in an efficient, transparent and fair manner.

5. Permission for outsiders or stakeholders to comment on and monitor the operation of the Customs Department

This permission has been granted through two major projects. The first project is the Customs Alliance which will help create a network of private sector participation to prevent corruption. It will also strengthen corporate governance for Customs officers in order to discourage corruption and misconduct. The other project is Cooperation between the Customs Department and the Private Sector which will provide opportunities for those involved in imports and exports to play a role or participate in the exchange of ideas and suggestions for developing imports and exports. These opportunities include coordinating and resolving import/export issues together.

6. Modifications to increase the transparency of operations

The modifications focus on establishing a balance between trade facilitation and Customs inspection, specifically by implementing a project to modify the inland, seaport, and airport cargo inspection process. The project will involve moving from a single officer to a specialized inspection team for cargo inspections, including the use of advanced technology to optimize the inspection of goods such as X-ray machines, ion scans or CCTV.



7. Supervision and examination by external experts

The Customs Department intends to instil public confidence in the fact that Customs officials will be effective, transparent and fair when performing their duties. Accordingly, it has invited qualified and honest external experts to control, supervise and inspect the performance of the Customs Department. One of the experts is Mr. Wicha Mahakun, who in 2016 was awarded a Renaissance Needle medallion in the field of Law by His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun. He is the Chairman of the Customs Department's Ethics Committee.

8. Corporate governance

This project is a Customs measure against Customs brokers or agents who commit corruption or act fraudulently. The measures will help to elevate the Customs broker profession to acceptable standards. It will also create transparency in the operations of the Customs Department and enhance the effectiveness of measures to combat corruption and misconduct in the public sector.

These policies, measures, plans, and projects defined as a framework for action are not the only factors affect the success of the Customs Department in achieving its goal of being a "Virtuous Customs Organization: Transparent and Free From Corruption". In addition, the commitment and intent by both Customs and the private sector, along with all stakeholders, is another important factor in helping us reach this goal. There must be coordination to create transparency and fairness in Customs operations, as well as to jointly monitor and prevent corruption and misconduct in the Customs Department.

Togo

PROMOTING INTEGRITY AND THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IN THE TOGOLESE REVENUE OFFICE (TOR)

A lack of integrity and the absence of a Code of Professional Ethics in an administration are detrimental to the proper functioning of public services and create the distrust that citizens develop for the administration. The "Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé" (*Computerized Treasury of the French Language*) defines ethics as the "science that deals with the regulating principles of action and moral conduct". This concept refers to the principles and rules set out in terms of freedoms and constraints. It is aimed at regulating an action and aims to make it as efficient and orderly as possible. Ethics can therefore be understood as "a set of attitudes favouring honest behaviour and working practices". Considering ethics to be one of the main challenges to the efficiency of the tax administration, the Togolese Revenue Office (TOR) is framed by fundamental values such as integrity, transparency, courtesy, collegiality, professionalism, etc. in order to achieve the objectives assigned to it.

A whole series of strategies aimed at promoting ethical conduct, improving the image of the TOR and combating corruption has been developed, formalized and implemented. These strategies are based on the following elements:

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- Staff regulations;
- Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures;
- Two Control Directorates: Anti-Corruption/Internal Audit and Quality Assurance;
- Other control and prevention mechanisms.

1. Staff Regulations

Fair and transparent human resource management policies have created a supportive environment for ethical values. On 29 October 2015, the Office established Staff Regulations that communicate policies such as:

- merit-based recruitment and promotions;
- sound performance management.

In addition, with a view to promoting the professionalism of the staff, special emphasis is placed on training. To promote good conduct, disciplinary procedures are implemented to encourage staff to:

- comply with the provisions of the law establishing the TOR;
- show respect for the values of the Office.

2. Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure

Honesty and integrity are essential values for a successful business. They represent fundamental values that should guide our professional and personal lives. The Office's ethical vision is one of continuous respect for high levels of morality, regardless of the consequences.

For example, in October 2015 the TOR adopted a Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures to promote ethical principles and values guiding public servants in the performance of their duties. This Code outlines the minimum standards of behaviour expected of each employee to enable the Office to achieve its institutional objectives. It includes a growing list of sanctions for employees at fault for deliberately infringing any provision of this Code. It helps employees understand the minimum standards of individual and professional behaviour expected of them in order to maintain public confidence in the Togolese Tax and Customs Administration. From a disciplinary point of view, the TOR's philosophy seeks, as far as possible, to rehabilitate any employees at fault and disciplinary measures are therefore taken swiftly and irrevocably, yet impartially. This Code devotes an entire chapter (Chapter II) to the professional ethics of officers.

This Code is the main tool on which the Anti-Corruption Directorate relies to carry out its mandate

3. Two Control Directorates

3.1. Anti-Corruption Directorate (ACD)

Article 34 of the TOR's Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures defines the responsibilities of the Anti-Corruption Directorate. To this end, it sets out that:

- ⇒ - The Anti-Corruption Directorate is responsible for conducting independent investigations into suspected cases of corruption, fraud



- ⇒ The Anti-Corruption Director is responsible, at the end of each investigation, for producing and submitting an investigation report on cases of corruption and misappropriation of public funds, cases of misconduct and other cases falling within in the category of serious misconduct to the Commissioner General of the TOR. After reviewing this report, the Commissioner General forwards it to the Management Committee.
- ⇒ - In cases of suspected corruption, fraud, embezzlement or gross misconduct, the Anti-Corruption Directorate may ask the Commissioner General, the Commissioner of General Services, the Commissioner of Customs and Indirect Taxes, the Commissioner of Taxation or any other director to suspend any suspected official for a maximum period of two months while conducting an investigation

The anti-corruption strategy is therefore based on the three pillars of Prevention - Information - Investigations.

3.2. Internal Audit and Quality Assurance Department

Thanks to its independence stemming from the fact that its functional reporting line is the General Commissioner and its administrative reporting line is the Chair of the Executive Board, the Internal Audit and Quality Assurance Department helps the TOR achieve its objectives by ensuring that:

- Laws, regulations, rules and procedures are respected, followed and enforced;
- The TOR's operational and strategic objectives are achieved;
- Financial information is accurate, reliable, and issued and made available in a timely manner;
- Resources are acquired economically, used efficiently and adequately protected;
- A quality management system in accordance with ISO standard 9001:2008 is in place.

The organization's activities are scrutinized according to standards of ethics, integrity, corruption prevention, quality assurance and audit, thus ensuring transparent management. Procedures have also been redefined, simplified, standardized and improved. This approach has fostered positive cultural change, with management focused on continuous improvement of services and increased user satisfaction.

4. Other control and prevention mechanisms

4.1. Use of the banking system for payment of taxes and Customs duties and taxes

Tax revenue settlement operations are outsourced, at least in the computerized tax and Customs units. Accordingly, all payments must be made via local banking computer systems, including five (5) partners: ECOBANK, BTCL, ORABANK, La Poste and UTB. This minimizes embezzlement and attempted corruption as TOR agents no longer handle cash.



4.2. Computerization of the tax and Customs systems

With a view to modernizing taxpayer services, the TOR has opted to facilitate them by setting up an online reporting platform (electronic filing of declarations) to simplify procedures for taxpayers and to increase their productivity through time savings.

The trend is towards the automation of Customs and tax procedures. This also helps to combat corruption as declarations are archived automatically, thus allowing for traceability in the system.

4.3. Awareness campaign

An information and awareness campaign focusing on integrity was launched when the TOR was established. The campaign started with top management and now extends to all staff. Dissemination of the Staff Regulations and the Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures has been carried out and is ongoing. There is a "documentation" link on the website (www.otr.tg), directing users to other documents that promote the principles and values of integrity within the institution. Intranet connectivity also makes it possible to promote integrity by e-mail.

4.4. Promotion of Customs ethics through best practices

In terms of promotion of Customs ethics, the TOR bases itself on best practices. It refers to national and international instruments such as the:

- Integrity Development Guide, produced in June 2014 by the World Customs Organization and published on its website;
- Revised Arusha Declaration;
- Customs Code of Togo;
- Code of Ethics and Good Conduct for Customs Officers.

All of these instruments contain provisions that lead to responsible behaviour.

In the light of the above, two elements are essential to the development of integrity:

- Total commitment by the authorities, and
- Commitment by all staff to ethical values.

The TOR is working towards this noble goal. That is why the TOR's anti-corruption slogan is: **"ZERO TOLERANCE OF CORRUPTION"**.

OVERVIEW OF THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IN THE TOR

Prevention component

The Office has put in place several tools/instruments to prevent corruption:

o Legal provisions: The laws, regulations of the Office, decisions, procedures manuals, etc. frame all the anti-corruption activities. These mechanisms were strengthened by the new Penal Code deliberated on and then adopted on 2 November 2015.



o Information and control processes:

- * declaration of property made by TOR officials;
- * awareness and education of officials and taxpayers against corruption and other misconduct;
- * receipt of complaints and disclosures via the 8280 Freephone number; the anticorruption@otr.tg e-mail address; the 20823 Lomé-TOGO P.O. Box; or directly to an officer in the Anti-Corruption Department;
- * use of the banking system for revenue collection;
- * use of secure receipts for offices that are not yet computerized,
- * unannounced inspections.

o Physical devices

- * obligatory wearing of badges permitting the identification of TOR officials and Customs declarants;
- * installation of surveillance cameras;
- * construction of "open space" offices.

Intelligence section

In the area of intelligence on corruption, complaints are compiled and handled through well-defined channels, namely:

- 8280 Freephone number;
- anticorruption@otr.tg e-mail address;
- Information collected following field operations;
- Voluntary disclosure, etc.

The Office has established a network of informants/whistle-blowers on corruption and other misconduct cases ensuring that information is available in almost real-time. All complaints are dealt with quickly and efficiently, while respecting the privacy of the person filing them. Complaints can be filed by telephone (8280) and by e-mail at anticorruption@otr.tg.

The table below gives a summary of statistics on complaints received on the 8280 number from the commissioning of the hotline (in September 2014) up to November 2017.



Type of call	Number	Percentage
Against Customs office	446	8.24%
Against Taxation office	353	6.52%
Against General Services Office	32	0.59%
Against Office of the Commissioner General	10	0.18%
Whistleblowing against companies	237	4.38%
Questions and suggestions	1,147	21.19%
Call not related to the TOR	2,281	42.15%
Other general enquiries	906	16.74%
Total	5,412	100%

Investigations component

Some 79 cases were investigated at the beginning of 2017. The officers in question faced measures ranging from disciplinary action to dismissals. Some cases have even been entrusted to the courts.

The table below tracks the number of investigations by type of case from 2014 to the beginning of 2017.

No.	Case type	Number	Percentage
1	Corruption	30	37.97%
2	Misconduct	16	20.25%
3	Corruption - Fraud - Misconduct	33	41.77%
	Total	79	100%

To bolster prevention within the TOR, an internal control system for activities has been set up and is implemented by the Internal Audit and Quality Assurance Department.

Zambia

INTEGRITY IS MY CHARACTER

ZRA LEADS THE WAY IN FIGHTING CORRUPTION

"Integrity is my character" is the discourse that has become synonymous with employees of the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA). It has not been an easy journey, nor has the journey been completed. There is more work to be undertaken in order to attain desirable levels of integrity among staff of Zambia Revenue and Customs, in particular.

Integrity is one of the ten core values of the ZRA, where employees are expected to exhibit the highest standards of personal probity and behaviour. Although, historically, low levels of integrity have often been associated with Customs officers, management at the ZRA has extended the coverage of integrity-promotion activities to all employees in the organization as tax administration, in general, exposes officers to temptation. The success achieved in fighting corruption and promoting integrity in the ZRA has been due to the formation of the Zambia Revenue Authority Integrity Committee (ZRAIC). The Committee's vision is to make the ZRA a professional and corrupt-free organization renowned for efficient service delivery.



SNAPSHOT OF MEMBERS'
BEST PRACTICES

The ZRAIC's activities, which are fully funded by the ZRA, are outlined in an annual Integrity Plan that covers all departments.

In order to meet the strategic objective of enhancing the productivity and professionalism of human resources and setting the tone for zero tolerance of corruption, different activities are conducted across the country targeting all officers and tax agents. During the period from January to March 2017, the ZRAIC conducted sensitization activities at the Nakonde border crossing between Zambia and Tanzania, and at Mpulungu Harbour linking Zambia with Burundi, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo through Lake Tanganyika. Sensitization activities were also conducted at Kitwe Port Office, an inland office, at the Mwami border crossing between Zambia and Malawi, as well as at the Chanida border crossing linking Zambia and Mozambique.

To enhance awareness of the initiatives being undertaken by the ZRA, management designated the month of September 2017 as Integrity Month for both employees and taxpayers. The ZRA Commissioner General reminded taxpayers to play an integral role in fighting all vices that promote corruption by paying taxes and not bribes. The Commissioner General also urged taxpayers to report corrupt officers to the Integrity Committee or to any relevant law enforcement agency, such as the Anti-Corruption Commission.

During his visit to Chirundu One Stop Border Post between Zambia and Zimbabwe, the Commissioner for Customs Services in the ZRA, Mr. Sydney Chibbabbuka, reminded officers to always wear their identification badges and uniforms whenever on duty as a way of promoting transparency and visibility. He added that it was important for Customs officers to remain professional at all times, as they were usually the first to have contact with taxpayers at border crossings, and that it was important for them to receive the necessary training on customer care and service programmes.

During the graduation of nine (9) ZRA officers who underwent training in customer care and service in 2017, the Commissioner for Modernization and Corporate Strategy, Mr. Dingani Banda, urged these officers to implement their newly gained knowledge immediately. He also hoped that the training would help achieve the intended outcomes, such as improving the perception of customers and enhancing the ZRA's image as well as achieving personal effectiveness and ensuring positive relationships with external and internal customers.

Following the launch of integrity month on 19 September 2017 in Lusaka, many Customs offices have answered the call by arranging integrity talks and awareness-creation activities for members of staff during which key stakeholders, such as the Anti-Corruption Commission, have been asked to give presentations. The theme for the 2017 integrity month was "*Integrity is my character*".

Staff awareness talks have been conducted for Customs officers at ten (10) stations, namely Chanida, Lusuntha, Mwami, Nakonde, Mpulungu, Nchelenge, Kashiba, Chembe, Kitwe and Zombe.

In order to maximize the opportunities arising from employees embracing integrity as a core value in their day-to-day work, the ZRAIC Chairperson, announced that focal point persons have been appointed across the country to assist with localized integrity awareness programmes.

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SNAPSHOT OF MEMBERS'
BEST PRACTICES

The ZRA does not operate in isolation but also collaborates with other strategic institutions given responsibility for promoting integrity in government institutions. Some of the strategic partnership institutions that participate in sensitization programmes are the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Drug Enforcement Commission (DEC) and the Zambia Police Service. The Integrity Committee has also included a module on ethics and integrity in all induction and refresher courses for all officers attending the Customs Basic Course.



Commissioner of the Customs Services Division, Sydney Chibbabbuka, addressing Customs Basic Course graduates at the ZRA Training Centre in Lusaka





WCO integrity-related projects

LINKING COMPETENCY AND VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE TO INTEGRITY IN CUSTOMS – THE CASE OF THE EAC REGIONAL AEO PROGRAMME

INTEGRITY CHALLENGES IN CUSTOMS – THE PRIVATE SECTOR HAS A ROLE TO PLAY

“Integrity: an age-old problem for Customs”

This is a commonly accepted statement which represents the problems facing Customs administrations. The recognition of fact this led to the adoption of the Arusha Declaration by the World Customs Organization (WCO). Since its adoption in 1993, the Arusha Declaration has been shaping programmes implemented by Customs administrations and all WCO capacity building support programmes, both overtly and covertly, with good results being reported. Even though the Declaration includes a paragraph on fostering relations with Customs Brokers and relevant sectors of society, one thing to come out of studies conducted in this area is that better results might perhaps be achieved if the efforts geared towards Customs and governance in Customs took a holistic approach and included a little more emphasis on the role of other stakeholders, especially the private sector. The role of the private sector in the fight against corruption cannot and should not be overlooked. Hence, in Article 10 of the Revised Arusha Declaration the WCO further elucidated the relationship with the private sector as one of the key issues to consider when developing Customs integrity programmes. Other WCO instruments also address this, including the Revised Kyoto Convention and SAFE Framework of Standards.

VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE AS AN ENABLER IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

Corruption is a two sided coin: there is the side of the giver and that of the taker. Customs and, perhaps, other cross-border regulatory agencies normally appear on the taker’s side, while the private sector appears on the giver’s side. As already mentioned above, studies have shown that involving the private sector is an important enabler in the fight against corruption. Through various instruments, the WCO encourages a holistic approach to addressing integrity problems in Customs. The SAFE Framework of Standards, the central instrument in this article, approaches it through the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) concept.

A LOOK AT THE EAC REGIONAL AEO APPROACH

The East African Community (EAC) is a Regional Economic Community (REC) comprising the six (6) countries of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and, very recently, South Sudan. The region is implementing a number of Customs modernization initiatives as it works towards achieving a fully-fledged Customs Union. One of these initiatives is the implementation of the EAC Regional Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Programme, which is being implemented with the WCO’s support. The region has approached implementation of the Programme by linking voluntary compliance and competency to integrity, as discussed below.



WEAVING INTEGRITY THROUGH THE COMPETENCY OF AEO VALIDATION OFFICERS

As alluded to above, the AEO concept offers a new approach, and proper management is paramount for it to have that desired effect in terms of transforming the way Customs relates to and transacts with its clients. This calls for high levels of competency among the Customs officers mandated to administer the programme. As conveniently summed up above, the AEO Programme is built on the principles of voluntarism, ability and trust. Joining the Programme is voluntary, implying that the decision to join rests entirely with the economic operator. Ability and trust, which can also be translated to mean “low risk”, are determined by Customs using the SAFE Framework’s 13 criteria. This means that Customs has a duty to ensure that operators admitted to the Programme adhere strictly to the criteria. The competency and integrity of Customs AEO validation officers therefore becomes pivotal in guaranteeing that there is strict professional adherence to the criteria and that all players who come on board are qualified and deserve to be there. It also ascertains that the Programme is administered as foreseen and promised. This guarantees integrity throughout the AEO Programme process, from recruitment of companies to post-authorization administration. Competency creates professionalism, which in turn facilitates efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, confidence and trust, all highly potent active ingredients for integrity to grow.

COMPETENCY, MEASUREMENT, MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT FOSTERS INTEGRITY

There is a longstanding and contentious saying that “if it can’t be measured then it doesn’t exist”. While many theories have been put forward to the contrary, especially for things whose existence we know not of, one outcome of this statement is that we must be able to measure everything we create. By measuring, we can monitor performance and hence work towards the target through enforcement actions in cases where the results are divergent. The absence of measurement and adherence to standards provide fertile soil for corruption to thrive. Effective measurement and adherence to standards require good levels of competency among those who have been tasked with this responsibility.

Integrity is one of the pertinent issues that poses numerous challenges to Customs administrations and has to be dealt with if the world, and especially the developing world, is to have modern and efficient Customs Services. One effective approach is through the establishment of partnership with other stakeholders. The WCO SAFE Framework provides good guidance on such partnership through the AEO concept. The AEO approach encourages voluntary compliance and partnership between Customs and the private sector. This arrangement creates a conducive environment for integrity to grow, and provides Customs administrations with one of the most effective opportunities to curb corruption, but only if administrations invest in the competency of Customs officers.



This approach is being employed in the EAC through the Regional EAC AEO Programme, with emphasis being placed on developing the competencies of the officers administering the Programme. A special training course has been developed in consultation with the WCO to train officers in order to boost competency and guarantee integrity in the Programme's management. To end on a positive note, the preliminary results already indicated that this approach will yield the desired benefits and will provide fertile ground for integrity and trust to blossom.

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**WCO PROJECTS
E-CREATE PROJECT**

Please feel free to contact the WCO Secretariat for any information related to these integrity projects