Message from the DG of the WCO A/P RCL Japan

MASUHIRA Hiromi
Director General of CCL Japan

Dear Readers,

It is my great honor to have this opportunity to greet all the readers of the RCL Japan Brief.

I’m delighted to inform you that I was appointed as Director General of the Central Customs Laboratory (CCL), Ministry of Finance, Japan, on July 1, 2022. The CCL Japan is functioning as the WCO Regional Customs Laboratory (RCL). At the beginning of my term as the head of RCL Japan, I would like to express my gratitude to all members in the region for your strong cooperation. In response to changes in the environment surrounding customs, the role of the customs laboratory is becoming more important. It is my great pleasure to work closely with you and to tackle the emerging challenges regarding the customs laboratory.

I would like to inform you that the members of the international team of the RCL Japan have been changed at the beginning of July because of an annual personnel shift, and the members continue to contribute to the important roles of the RCL Japan. I would like to ask for your continuous support and cooperation to our new international team.

In the first half of this year, the RCL Japan has conducted the following RCL activities:

As for information sharing activities in the customs analysis field, the RCL Japan issued the seventh volume of “Collection of Good Practices on Customs Chemical Analysis” this May. This volume covers analysis methods and new research in the field of “textiles and textile articles” and information on the new WCO RCL. We highly appreciate other members providing their good practices for the new volume.

The RCL Japan participated in the 1st RCL Heads meeting this May held online in light of the COVID-19 pandemic situation hosted by the Regional Office for Capacity Building in Asia/Pacific region (ROCB
The number of Regional Customs Laboratories has been increasing and there are five Regional Customs Laboratories in the AP region out of ten in the world. I am of the opinion that networking and information sharing between RCLs are especially important since customs chemical analysis requires a high level of experience and expertise. I am sure that the RCL Heads meeting contributes to enhancing regional capacity building.

This volume includes the contributed article from Malaysia, the dialogue between the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) expert and the past participant of the WCO Regional Customs Laboratory Professionals Programme at the RCL.

The RCL Japan hopes that the face-to-face workshops will resume with due consideration to the COVID-19 while taking sufficient preventive measures.

I will make continuous efforts so that the RCL Japan as WCO RCL will maintain its cooperative relationship with all the members in the region and will contribute to further enhancing the existing good networks among customs laboratory family members. Your continued support would be highly appreciated.

Sincerely,

MASUHIRA Hiromi

New international team members at the RCL Japan
(From the left: Ms. KOBAYASHI Aki (Head of Coordination of International Affairs Section), Mr. MASUHIRA Hiromi (Director-General), Ms. KAWANAKA Yukari (Deputy Director-General), Mr. UNTEN Masanori (Officer of Coordination of International Affairs Section))

<From Members>
・It is a great pleasure to work with laboratory analysts from WCO Members. I would like to make an effort to enhance the network of customs laboratories. (KAWANAKA)
・I would like to do my best with the new work at RCL. Looking forward to welcoming chemists from WCO member administrations as trainees through regional capacity building programs. (KOBAYASHI)
・I am very pleased to start my new role with international team members. Hope to work with colleagues of the WCO A/P region in the near future. (UNTEN)
The RCL Japan annually collects good practices on customs chemical analysis and disseminates them to the WCO A/P member administrations as part of the information sharing activities, which is named “Collection of Good Practices on Customs Chemical Analysis”. The collections consist of valuable articles provided by some WCO members on a voluntary basis.

The RCL Japan published the seventh volume of the “Collection of Good Practices on Customs Chemical Analysis” this May. We focused on the field of “Textiles and textile articles,” which has a large amount of interest in the A/P region this year. This volume also includes information about a laboratory that has newly become a WCO RCL.

Textile is one of the most important commodities, which has a wide range of products, is used in various industrial sectors, and has a variety of possible classifications, which could affect applied duty rate. In relation to these points, customs laboratories are required to conduct chemical analysis and assist to solve the classification matter of textiles. There is no doubt that the efforts of each customs laboratory which provided the articles help to ensure proper customs clearance.

We hope that this volume serves as a good reference for accurate and effective customs chemical analysis. Please refer to the WCO Website at http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/key-issues/customs-laboratories/resources.aspx and the WCO Asia/Pacific Website at https://www.wcoasiapacific.org/. In order for the future volume to grow into a more fruitful edition, it would be highly appreciated if you could send your good practices and/or new topics for the next volume to us (cclmaile@mof.go.jp) at any time.

Finally, we would like to introduce some information about the analysis methods of Japan Customs to which you can refer on our website at: https://www.customs.go.jp/ccl_search/e_analysis_index.htm

Collection of Good Practices on Customs Chemical Analysis Vol. 7

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1st Meeting of Heads of WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Customs Laboratory (RCL)

On 10 May 2022, the RCL Japan attended the 1st Meeting of Heads of WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Customs Laboratory (RCL), which was hosted by the ROCB A/P in a virtual manner.

The concept of RCL was firstly introduced in 2014 by Japan Customs, and since then the importance of customs analysis has been recognized, with 10 RCLs established worldwide as of May 2022.

Since there are five RCLs in the A/P region, it is expected to enhance cooperation between RCLs in the field of customs analysis.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Norikazu KURAMOTO, Head of the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB A/P). About 30 participants attended online, from RCLs, the WCO Secretariat, Vice Chair Secretariat, and RILO A/P.

One of the main purposes of this meeting is sharing of information.

The first half of the meeting was consisted of updates on WCO activities and reference information for customs analysis from the WCO Regional Development Manager, Vice Chair Secretariat of A/P, Tariff and Trade Affairs Directorate of WCO, ROCB A/P and RILO A/P.

In the second half of the meeting, each RCL makes a presentation about their laboratories. Since each RCL has a function as a customs laboratory, there are some commonalities, such as conducting analysis for HS purposes or for identification of drugs. On the other hand, each country has a different system, and the size of facilities and equipment are different, many questions were asked about RCLs in other countries. It was a good opportunity to exchange views on the challenges and experiences in operating its own RCL.

In the area of customs analysis, we believe that a face-to-face meeting is preferable as sharing practical experience in operation through tour of the analysis facility is also an important element. The RCL Japan proposed that the 2nd RCL Heads meeting will be held in Japan in a face-to-face manner.
This new meeting provided a good platform for RCL to share good practices and foster deeper cooperation in the future.

From Malaysia - Mr. OSAKI Nobuaki and ex-participant of The WCO Regional Customs Laboratory Professionals programme

As the WCO Regional Customs Laboratory in the A/P region, the CCL Japan has been holding “The WCO Regional Customs Laboratory Professionals Programme" once every year since 2013, under the sponsorship of Japan (CCF Japan). This programme is to provide an opportunity for technical officers to obtain and update their knowledge and skills in the field of customs analysis, covering chemical analysis techniques, laboratory management and HS classification. 39 chemists have already attended the training course at the CCL (as of July 2022). However, over the past 2 years, the programmes have been canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Royal Malaysian Customs Academy (AKMAL) in Malacca currently establishing Customs Laboratory
In this volume, we would like to introduce the conversation between the past participant, Mr. Razali Bin Haizir (Razali) from the Royal Malaysian Customs Department (RMCD) and Mr. OSAKI Nobuaki (Nobu), the expert of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), who used to work at the CCL Japan as follows.

**Nobu:** Hi Mr. Razali! Thank you for taking time to do this interview.

If I remember right, you participated in the WCO Regional Customs Laboratory Professionals Programme, didn’t you?

**Razali:** Yes. In 2017.

**Nobu:** How was the programme?

**Razali:** It was a great and wonderful experience! I had six weeks to learn a lot of things. In the CCL Japan, I learned customs analysis methods for eleven areas/goods such as lubricating oils and polymers. Before the programme began, I consulted with the CCL to decide what kinds of analysis methods I should learn in terms of classification issues that RMCD had. So, I could get the specific knowledge about the concern of my country since it was a tailor-made programme. And, another important thing I got in the programme is I made many friends. Six trainees participated in the program in 2017. They are from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Indonesia, Malaysia, Peru, the Philippines and Tanzania. I had a good fortune to work with great colleagues from all over the world. A part of that, I also made new friends from Japan Customs especially in CCL.

**Nobu:** I think that it is important to have friends from other countries whom you can rely on. Actually, thanks to you and the other RMCD officers, I have worked in RMCD as a JICA expert. The CCL hopes the participants will be the key persons of the customs chemical analytical field in their own countries.

On the other hand, we would like participants to enjoy Japanese culture as well while they stay in Japan. How was your stay in Japan?

**Razali:** I did enjoy my stay in Japan. We went to Nagoya by Shinkansen, bullet train, and I could see Fujiyama from the Shinkansen. That was awesome. In Nagoya, we went to the Toyota Motor Museum. During that visit, I knew that Toyota came from the name of Toyoda which began in the textile industry. I had a great time, even though it was a bit colder in Japan than in Malaysia. On the other hand, we observed how regional customs officers worked for sampling cargos to send them to customs laboratories at Chubu International Airport.
Nobu: How do you want to apply what you learned in the training to your work in the future?

Razali: I’m willing to share my experience as well as the chemical expertise I have learned with my colleagues toward the establishment of the analysis center. In the future, I would like to see the RMCD have its own laboratory.

Nobu: I agree that human resource development is one of the essential elements to ensure a good customs laboratory. The CCL Japan also has domestic trainees who participate in an annual on-the-job training course. We hope the domestic trainees interact with the WCO programme trainees and the strong network of customs Laboratories all over the world gets constructed.

Nobu: I would like to move to the next topics. What is the progress of establishing the lab?

Razali: We launched the Taskforce team for establishment of the customs laboratory in the RMCD last year and now we have been considering the customs analysis targets, lab design and instruments for the first customs laboratory in the RMCD, in cooperation with Japan Customs via JICA. Thanks to Nobu, I’m sure the project is going well.

Nobu: I understand that the establishment of your own customs laboratory is one of the critical elements to ensure greater and transparent revenue collection, enhancing trade facilitation and securing a safe and secure society in accordance with global standards of customs activities. I would like to do my best with my experience to make steady progress of this issue together. Thank you for today, Razali.

Razali: Thank you.
RCL Brief welcomes readers’ contributions which describe articles on Customs analysis-related matters, such as new analytical (or inspection device) technologies, latest news or topics on your Customs laboratory work, introduction to your Customs laboratory, challenges in drug enforcement, etc. Please use the e-mail address "cclmaile@mof.go.jp" for submission.

Future Activities

- From 17 October to 1 December 2022, Attachment training at the RCL Japan and RCL Korea under the WCO Regional Customs Laboratory Professionals Programme 2022/23 is scheduled to be conducted.
- Contact point information to be updated on the website of the WCO Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair Secretariat

Please send your comments or questions to cclmaile@mof.go.jp, if any. You can find further information about CCL, Japan on our website: http://www.customs.go.jp/ccl/e_index.htm

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