South Africa and Swaziland – Implementing Exchange of Information

Objectives

Under the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) IT Connectivity Project, SACU Member states are engaged in pilot projects to exchange Customs data using the WCO framework for Globally Network Customs (GNC). One of the pilots involves the South African Revenue Service (SARS) and the Swaziland Revenue Authority (SRA). The objectives of the project include real time information sharing, risk assessment prior to arrival of a consignment, harmonization of trade procedures between the two countries and reduction in dwell time at border posts.

Outline of the project

The Customs Administrations of South Africa and Swaziland have been working on a project for data exchange based on the WCO framework for GNC to support bilateral/multilateral exchange of Customs data for export, import and transit. It is envisaged to use data provided by traders to Customs at the country of export for risk assessment and transaction reconciliation purposes in the countries of transit and import. The WCO has helped in documenting the project concept using the GNC Utility Block template. This template supports standardization and systematic capture of the various aspects of information exchange between Customs administrations.

Data Exchange has been accomplished between the integrated Customs and Border Management Solution (iCBS) operated by SARS and the automated Customs processing system "ASYCUDA++" operated by the SRA. The implementation team has developed a GNC Utility Block template. South Africa and Swaziland are using predefined data clusters mapped to the WCO Data Model. The two countries have agreed on the data communication and security protocols. A unique identifier, known as the Movement Reference Number (MRN), serves as the basis for identifying trade transactions. Data is being exchanged based on Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) established between the two countries. Security of data is achieved by using the Applicability Statement 2 (AS2) data exchange protocol for Public Key Infrastructure.

The WCO project to support IT interconnectivity among SACU Member states is supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

Outcomes

✓ Daily exchange of data in batch mode accomplished between South Africa and Swaziland. In subsequent iterations, it should be possible to exchange data in real time.

✓ The initial results of the pilot project suggest that the WCO concept of GNC Utility Blocks helps in defining the standards, protocols and guidelines which can be used for rapid prototyping and deployment of data exchange between Customs administrations.

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