

WCO ESA ROCB Annual Report 2022/2023



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WCO ESA ROCB ANNUAL REPORT 2022/2023



WCO ESA ROCB Staff Establishment

Presented to

29th Governing Council

11th – 13th May 2023

Antananarivo, Madagascar.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SEASON

High-Level ESA Gender Inclusivity & Diversity (GID)
Policy Dialogue – Maseru, Lesotho



1

Regional Risk Management Workshop – Mombasa, Kenya

2



High-level Customs Digitalization Forum – Kigali, Rwanda

3



Cooperation with ULTRA Information Solutions Ltd



4

Virtual Reality Assisted Training Program

5



The Regional Seminar on Implementation of HS 2022 for East and Southern Africa - 28th - 29th June 2022 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



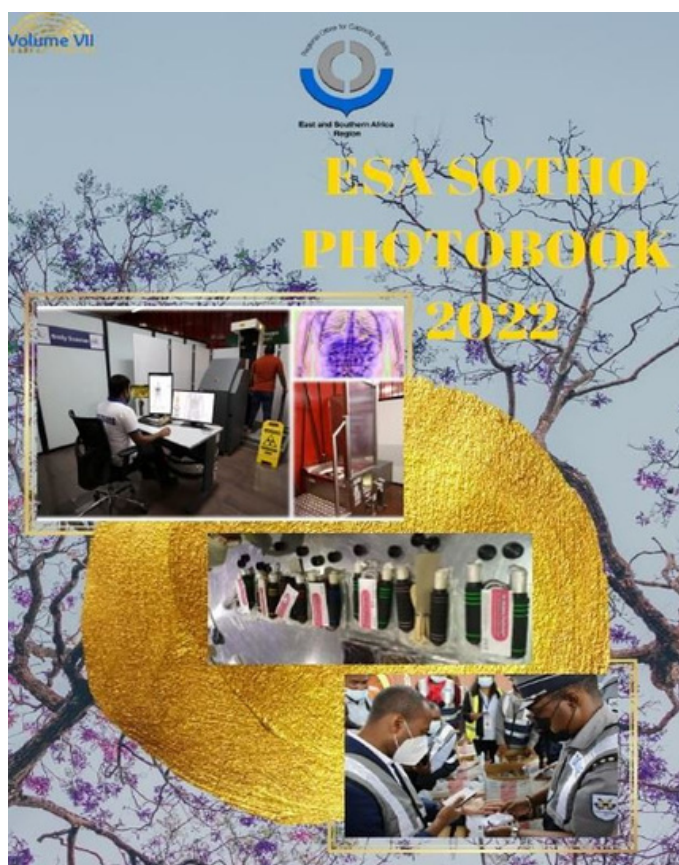
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The final Steering Committee (SC) of the WCO ESA Project II

7



Annual ESA Sotho Photobook – 2022



8

ESA Certificates of Recognition

9



Launch of the EU WCO Rules of Origin Africa Programme in Accra, Ghana

10



First ESA Regional meetings held physically following the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, May 2022, Mauritius – 28th GC & 35th RSG.



12

36th Regional Steering Group Meeting in Antananarivo, Madagascar



13

SADC Electronic Certificate of Origin Launch



14

RTC Kenya visits the ROCB



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ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS

AEO	Authorised Economic Operator
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AFEC	African Financial & Economic Crimes Forum
AUC	Africa Union Commission
CBM	Coordinated Border Management
CCF – China	Customs Cooperation Fund - China
CCF – Japan	Customs Cooperation Fund - Japan
CCF – Korea	Customs Cooperation Fund – Korea
COMESA	Common Market for East and Southern Africa
CFTA	Continental Free Trade Area (African CFTA)
CG	Governing Council
EAC	East African Community
ESA	East and Southern Africa
HS	Harmonized System
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MC	Management Committee (of the ESA region)
PICARD	Partnerships in Customs Academic Research and Development
PSCG	Private Sector Consultative Group
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RILO	Regional Intelligence Liaison Office
RJCC	Regional Joint Coordinating Committee
RKC	Revised Kyoto Convention
ROCB	Regional Office for Capacity Building
RSG	Regional Steering Group
RTC	Regional Training Centre
SACU	South African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
ToT	Training of Trainers
WCO	World Customs Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

BACKGROUND

Membership

The WCO East and Southern Africa Region comprises 24 Member Countries;

Angola,	Ethiopia,	Mozambique,	South Sudan,
Botswana,	Kenya,	Namibia,	Eswatini,
Burundi,	Lesotho,	Rwanda,	Tanzania,
Comoros,	Madagascar,	Seychelles,	Uganda,
Djibouti,	Malawi,	Somalia,	Zambia,
Eritrea,	Mauritius,	South Africa,	Zimbabwe.



Vision:

Ensuring economic growth and intra-regional trade by facilitating trade securely, efficiently and professionally.

Purpose statement:

To develop gender inclusive, professional and modernized Customs administrations that are fair, efficient and effective in revenue collection and border management service.

Goal:

To contribute to the economic growth of the Region in trade, security, societal protection and human capital development.

Values:

Transparency
Probity
Commitment
Responsibility
Respect
Cooperation

INTRODUCTION

This is the Annual Report for the year 2022/2023 of the World Customs Organization, East and Southern Africa, Regional Office for Capacity Building. From the onset, this report reveals an increased number of activities and engagements related to reform and modernization, capacity building, and other measures towards promoting trade facilitation. This is notably because of the speed with which the world (also read, Customs) continues to rebound from the difficulties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the commitment of the world to return to normalcy. The reporting format takes up the flow of the Regional Strategy in line with its objectives: Trade Facilitation & Integration; Efficient Revenue Mobilization & Customs Modernization; Security, Enforcement & Compliance; and Professionalism & Partnerships. All of these areas integrate digitization and big data analytics, while bearing in mind the important role played by all emerging technologies; Block Chain, Machine Learning, Robotics, Drones among others. This annual report goes further to integrate the reports and activities of the other regional entities and stakeholders in one, including those of RTCs, RILO, and the Private Sector Consultation group, among others.

The report also highlights capacity building activities and initiatives, programs and projects, and other statuses in regional matters and decisions over the said period. The audited Annual Financial Statements, reviewed by the Region's Finance and Governance Committee (FGC), are presented separately.

This report is presented for discussions by the 29th Governing Council Meeting.



The 28th WCO ESA Governing Council held in Mauritius, May 2022. Attendees included heads of 19 out of the 24 ESA administrations, WCO Secretary General, Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, African Union Commission, RECs (COMESA & SADC), Regional Private Sector group, among others.

Status and outcomes of the 28th Governing Council

The 28th Governing Council was held on the 12th and 13th May 2022 in Mauritius.

Status of the implementation of the decisions of the Governing Council

Items for Decision

Decision 1: Opening Remarks

The GC:

- a) Acknowledged with appreciation the opening remarks delivered by all speakers.

Decision 2: Adoption of the Agenda

The GC:

- a) Considered and approved the agenda of their meeting.
- b) Acknowledged with appreciation the presence of the Commissioner General of Malawi Revenue Authority, Mr. John Biziwick.
- c) Acknowledged with appreciation the new Commissioners present in the meeting: Angola, Malawi, Lesotho, Rwanda and Zimbabwe.
- d) Recognized the rebranding and renaming of Eswatini Revenue Service and Namibia Revenue Agency.

Decision 3: ROCB Annual Report

The GC:

- a) Offered its appreciation to Kenya for finalising the registration of the ROCB and noted the benefits that the office stands to gain in light of this gazettelement.
- b) Noted the progress made towards accessions in the region. It congratulated Comoros for acceding to the RKC bringing the total number of ESA Administrations who have acceded to the RKC to 16 out of 24. It also congratulated Tanzania for acceding to the TFA bringing the total number of ESA Administrations who have acceded to TFA to 19 out of 24. It also encouraged the other Members who are yet to accede to the RKC and TFA to do so.
- c) Noted the increasing significance of eCommerce and the critical need of developing measures on taxing eCommerce. It requested the WCO to offer support in the development of these policies nationally and regionally.

d) Noted new challenges to Cross Border Management, coming out during the COVID-19 pandemic that risked eroding gains previously made. It tasked the ROCB to consolidate best practices on taxing electronic eCommerce and on Cross Border Management.

e) Noted the importance of continuous assessment of regional needs, considering the dynamism of the Customs and international trade environment.

f) Thanked the ROCB for its commitment to offering sustainable capacity building initiatives to the region. It took note of various regional workshops/capacity building activities organized and held in collaboration with the ROCB in collaboration with the WCO, African Union Commission, the WCO ESA Project II, Private Sector, IMPACCT Working Group, among others. It further urged the ROCB to seek broader partnerships with the private sector to further Customs modernization plans in the region. – [Signed an MoU with Ultra Trade Solutions focusing on building capacities on the region in the following areas: Enhancing Research in the Region; Building Capacity in Risk Profiling; and Supporting Regional AEO Implementation. Ultra is further committed to supporting Members in advancing the use of technology among Customs administrations towards increase of revenue collection and improving their efficiency and effectiveness.](#)

g) Supported measures and proposals in enhancing in the Movement of Medicines and Medical Equipment in the region amidst crises.

h) Tasked the regional entities to promote measures against counterfeiting and illicit trade in the region and urging collaboration between national agencies. – [Ongoing collaboration with SGS France – The ROCB in collaboration with SGS France held an operational Customs Seminar on the fight against illicit trade in Champagne & Cognac for Kenya Customs, with a follow up session dedicated to the fight against fake medicines. This initiative is intended to be cascaded to the whole region.](#)

i) Acknowledged the ROCB for strengthening collaboration with the private sector in the region and encouraged greater collaboration and integration in joint delivery of capacity activities with the RECs. – The ROCB held the following capacity building activities in collaboration with the private sector and other development partners: High-level Customs Digitalization Forum in collaboration with AUC and GIZ; Bolstering Revenue and Public Safety through Digital Transformation Workshop in collaboration with Ultra; Disruptive Technologies in the ESA Region and AfCFTA: Uptake and Challenges webinars in collaboration with the WCO ESA PSG. High-Level ESA Gender Inclusivity & Diversity Policy Dialogue with AUC, GIZ, Expertise France, UNECA and GTS; and Regional Risk Management Workshop with ULTRA. The ROCB has also involved/invited the RECs for various joint activities, some listed herein, achieving moderate success in the reporting year.

Decision 4 (a): Report from the 35th Rsg meeting of May 2022

The GC:

a) Acknowledged the comprehensive and informative report of the 35th RSG.

b) Acknowledged with appreciation the work done by the GED Working Group (Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe and ROCB) on the development of the regional Module on GED. It noted that the GED Framework was renamed Gender Inclusivity and Diversity (GID) Framework and adopted the GID framework.

The ROCB is also championing the use of the WCO tools and instruments towards Advancing Gender Equity and Diversity in the region and it part of the WCO Trainer the Trainer programme on developing Recognised Experts in the topic, alongside participants from Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

d) Recommended that in addition to the already established GED forum, a regional GED network with all Member administrations be established to work closely with the global network with the aim of promoting the gender agenda. – The region continues to participate actively as members of the WCO Gender Equality & Diversity (GED) Virtual Working Group that is intended to promote Gender Equality & Diversity globally, with Mauritius, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe contributing to the second edition of the WCO Compendium for GED in Customs.

e) Took note that the ROCB is currently sourcing for funding to support the scheduled conference of Gender Inclusivity and Diversity. – In line with the directive of the Governing Council to buttress efforts towards fostering Gender Inclusivity and Diversity (GID) in the region, the WCO ESA ROCB in conjunction with the African Union Commission and their cooperating partners (GIZ and Expertise France), UNECA and GTS organized the first High-Level ESA Gender Inclusivity & Diversity Policy Dialogue, in the region, themed 'Advancing Gender Inclusivity and Diversity in the East and Southern Africa Region'. The dialogue was hosted by Revenue Services Lesotho from the 20th – 22nd March 2022, in Maseru, Lesotho. This will be followed by a conference on Gender Inclusivity and Diversity will be held in the month of June/July 2023.

f) Acknowledged the work done on enhancing Risk Management in the region and supported the working group's proposal for further WCO input before finalization and adoption of their materials. – The WCO experts have since provided their input, the RM Framework has been completed and submitted for adoption by the 29th GC. In addition, the ROCB in conjunction with the Regional Training Centre Kenya and with the support of Publican by ULTRA organized a Regional Risk Management Workshop. The workshop was held from the 19th – 21st April 2023, in Mombasa, Kenya. This sensitization workshop covered practical aspects on the implementation of the model plan by Members after its adoption.

g) Stressed the importance of the RM Framework for the region and Member administrations as repeatedly highlighted by members during the annual needs assessment. - RM Framework has been completed and submitted for adoption by the 29th GC.

Decision 4 (b) - RILO Report

The GC:

a) Proposed that the region seeks for more sources of funding to support the work of the RILO.

b) Highlighted the continued threats of illicit trade in different items and their growing effect on economic growth of members and the region. It encouraged greater collaboration and signing of MAAs in combating illicit trade and counterfeiting.

c) Appreciated the Members who are fully utilizing the nCEN system and requested the WCO to offer capacity building to Members on the use of nCEN to ensure improved uptake of the nCEN usage in the region.

- d) Encouraged Members to upgrade their nCEN to the latest Version and sought the assistance of WCO in offering quick upgrade of the nCEN systems in member states.
- e) Encouraged Members to capture and submit their seizures for data analysis and sharing timeously.
- f) Encouraged Members to utilize all the WCO Tools including the revenue and the Compliance and Enforcement package and the guiding policies.
- g) Urged Members with training or other technical needs to notify the RILO and WCO for facilitation of assistance. Members with country specific analysis done may contact the RILO ESA.
- h) Urged Members to release NCPs to attend meetings and activities.
- i) Directed RILO to finalize the survey of member needs, which will inform the next steps in ensuring members' participation in RILO activities.
- j) Emphasized the need for full reporting and information and intelligence sharing of all activities so permitted under domestic legislation related to compliance and enforcement in the region.
Noted and approved Burundi's request to the WCO that seizures input in the nCEN platform be technically validated by the head of RILO ESA as opposed to the Head RILO WCA. This will be actioned by the Head RILO ESA by August 2022.

GC to note that RILO will respond exclusively on these decisions.

Decision 4 (c) – RTC Heads Meeting Report

The GC:

- a) Emphasized the critical role played by all the regional entities in the implementation of the Strategy and called for their inclusion in activities related its implementation.
- b) Noted that while the RTCs were providing needed training and capacity building activities in the region, language barrier remains a challenge as most of the activities are offered in the English language. It recommended that interpretation be provided in all these activities to ensure all Members benefit.
- c) The GC directed that the ROCB and all regional entities continue to seek for funding from the WCO and other development partners to support interpretation during all capacity building activities in the region to ensure inclusivity of non-English speakers.
- d) Regarding CEN usage, the GC requested for a fact-finding report by the RILO, in consultation with the Vice Chair to understand why Members were not reporting their seizures on CEN, with the intent of finding a lasting solution.
- e) Acknowledged with appreciation the increased utilization of KlikC!! in the region and encouraged RTCs to support the members under their coordination to further register and utilize the platform.

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- e) Acknowledged with appreciation the increased utilization of KlikC!! in the region and encouraged RTCs to support the members under their coordination to further register and utilize the platform.
- f) Acknowledged with appreciation that the RTCs managed to adapt to the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic through utilization of online platforms to ensure continuous capacity building in the region.

The RTC Heads meeting report will provide an exhaustive update on these decisions.

Decision 4 (d) – Capacity Building Reports

- a) Thanked the People and Government of Finland for their support to the region and Member administrations.
- b) Called for enhanced and continuous collaboration among all the regional entities, RECs and all development partners to avoid duplication of capacity building activities.
- c) Proposed that the Governing Council engages the AfCFTA secretariat to ensure collaboration between the AfCFTA secretariat, the ROCB, the RECs, the AUC and all other regional to ensure the successful implementation of the AfCFTA.
- d) Recommended that the RECs provide a bi-annual report on key areas of support provided to Members to assist the implementation of the regional strategic plan, to avoid duplication of activities, and to also aid in Monitoring and Evaluation of the strategy.
- e) Noted with appreciation COMESA's efforts to formalize the small-scale cross border traders and further appreciated COMESA's efforts to introduce smart borders across the region.
- f) Noted with appreciation COMESA and other RECs' efforts to promote regional integration and continental trade.

g) Noted progress in implementation of capacity building initiatives by SADC on trade facilitation such as the electronic Certificate of Origin which is planned to be piloted in 3rd quarter of the current financial year (2022/2023) as well as the implementation of the Time Release Study along the North South Corridor and the pilot of the Regional Customs Transit Guarantee.

Decision 5: WCO Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025

The GC:

a) Acknowledged with appreciation the presentation of the WCO.

Decision 6 – New ESA Regional Strategy (2022 -2025)

The GC:

a) Welcomed the work done by the Strategy Working Group and the leadership of the Management Committee in ensuring the delivery of the document.

b) Noted that the RSG proposed the inclusion of activities related to transport and economic corridors for the ESA region under the trade facilitation and integration objectives of the Strategy and to align to the continental agenda.

c) Emphasized the need for collaboration with the RECs, the African Union, private sector and other development partners in the implementation of the Strategy. The GC called for the integration of the work plans of different stakeholders in supporting the implementation of the Strategy.

d) Requested the WCO Secretary General to assist the region in getting donor and/or development partners to assist in ensuring the effective implementation of the Strategy.

e) Tasked the ROCB and regional entities to also explore different options of funding in order to implement various aspects of the Strategy that require funding.

f) Requested the WCO to continually integrate the needs and activities of the region as outlined in the Strategy in the WCO work plans, and equally assist the region with linkages to different donors and development partners.

g) Took note of the challenges caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and note that some of the protocols put in place to combat its spread have resulted in a setback in Coordinated Border Management yet Member states had made huge strides in it. The GC called for further discussions on a post COVID Coordinated Border Management approach. It called on Members to endeavor to work with other partner states and development partners to ensure that operational activities in relation to CBM are normalized.

h) Proposed that the region integrates emerging technologies in the implementation of the Strategy and focuses on embracing interconnectivity at the regional level to ensure prompt and efficient sharing of information.

Decision 7 – Finance and Governance Committee (FGC) Report

The GC:

- a) Approved and adopted the integrated WCO ESA (ROCB & RILO) budget for 2022/2023.
 - b) Considered and approved the Financial Statements of WCO ESA ROCB as submitted by External Auditors.
 - c) Directed the FGC and the ROCB to explore more ways of safe investment of office funds in addition to the fixed deposit option as the office is now registered.
 - d) Noted the difficulties faced by the ROCB in its operations, a case in point being lack of transportation at the ROCB and approved the inclusion and purchase of an office motor vehicle in the budget. The FGC will provide an update to the Management Committee and GC with more details on the purchase of the motor vehicle including all parameters involved.
 - e) Noted that the Management letter's recommendation for the ROCB to fully comply with taxation policies in Kenya is being implemented.
- Noted with concern that Eritrea, Djibouti and South Sudan continue to be inactive in regional activities and proposed that the Vice continues to engage them. The GC further agreed that a debt management intervention may be adopted on need basis.

Decision 8: Report of the Private Sector Consultation Group

The GC:

- a) Noted with appreciation the progress report from the Regional Private Sector Consultative Group (WCO ESA RPSCG) and urged greater collaboration between the private sector and ROCB.
- b) Thanked the RPSCG for supporting the implementation of the ESA strategy as well their commitment to participate in all regional activities as invited.
- c) Requested the private sector to support the implementation of the Regional Strategy through linkages with development partners and donors.

Decision 9: WCO Reports

The GC:

- a) Acknowledged the progress report on capacity building initiatives by the WCO.
- b) Requested the continued support of the WCO and its different funds towards the implementation of the new Regional Strategy, support to WCO regional entities as well as for the infrastructural development of existing and new regional entities such as a Regional Customs Laboratory and a Regional Dog Training Centre.

Decision 10: Presentations by Candidates for the position of the WCO Deputy Secretary General's Position

The GC:

- a) Took note of the presentations by all the four candidates.

Decision 11 (a) - Vacant Positions

The GC:

- a) Filled the vacant positions in ESA region as follows:

Audit Committee Representative (1 position) – Malawi, joining Seychelles.

Regional Governance & Finance Committee Representatives (2 positions) – Lesotho and Zambia (reelected) joining Burundi and Ethiopia.

Decision 11 (b) - Term of Director of the ROCB

The GC:

- a) Deliberated on the ending term of the current Director Mr. Larry Liza and appreciated his immense contributions and determination towards the development of the region. It renewed the term of the Director for a further three years.
- b) Urged the Management Committee to put in place governance procedures to monitor similar contractual issues to ensure timely interventions before expiry of service tenures. The Management Committee should also work on aligning recruitment and service tenure processes with those of the WCO upholding transparency in the process.
- c) Thanked Kenya for seconding the Director to the region and for accepting the region's decision approving a new term for the Director. It also appreciated Kenya for their continued support to the Director and staff, as well as the region through their hosting of the ROCB.

Decision 11 (c) - Hosts of Next Regional Meetings

The GC:

- a) Accepted offers to host the next regional meetings as follows;
 - 36th Regional Steering Group meeting (RSG) – Madagascar – 23rd -25th November 2022.
 - 29th Governing Council – Madagascar – 11th & 12th May 2023
 - 37th RSG - Madagascar – 8th – 10th May 2023
 - RTC Heads meeting - Madagascar – 4th & 5th May 2023.



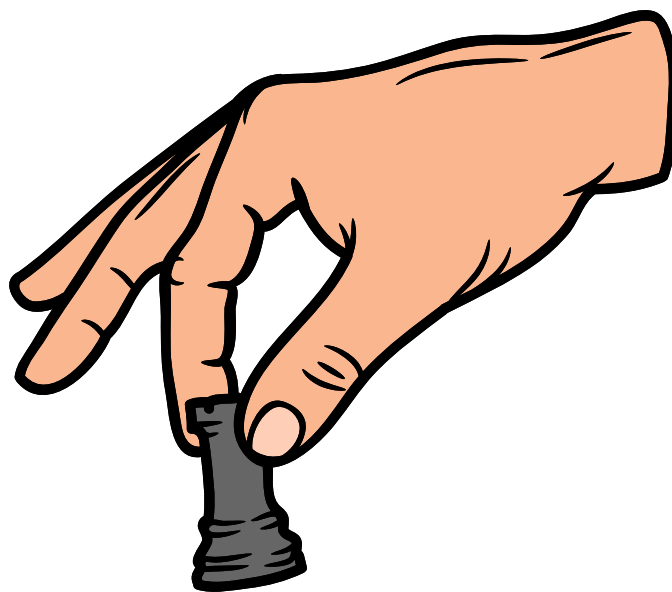
ESA STRATEGY

The ESA Regional Strategy (2022-2025) was operationalized upon approval by the 28th Governing Council meeting in Port Louis, Mauritius, May 2022.

This Strategy and Implementation Plan 2022-2025, is the result of extensive collaboration with development partners and is further based on the environmental scans and their respective trends. It has largely focused on contributions from members, based on their needs at both national and regional levels, and a collation of inputs from the WCO regional entities (Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB), Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO) and the Regional Training Centres (RTCs).

Other stakeholders key to its development and implementation include the Regional Economic Communities, African Union, and the Private Sector.

The Plan aligns the four strategic objectives with twelve operating lines; the strategic objectives present the Region's key areas of focus: Trade Facilitation & Integration; Efficient Revenue Mobilization & Customs Modernization; Security, Enforcement & Compliance; Professionalism & Partnerships. All of these areas integrate digitization and big data analytics, while bearing in mind the important role played by all emerging technologies; Block Chain, Machine Learning, Robotics, Drones among others.



1. TRADE FACILITATION & INTEGRATION

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REVISED KYOTO CONVENTION (RKC)

Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC): The Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) now has 133 Contracting Parties globally, 16 out of 24 ESA members have acceded to the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC). Burundi, Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan and Tanzania are yet to accede to the RKC.

List of Contracting Members to the RKC

No.	Country	Date of Ratification
1	Angola	23.02.2017
2	Botswana	26.06.2006
3	Bourundi	In process of accession
4	Comoros	09.03.2022
5	Djibouti	In process of accession
6	Eritrea	In process of accession
7	Ethiopia	In process of accession
8	Eswatini	31.10.2012
9	Kenya	25.06.2009
10	Lesotho	15.06.2000
11	Madagascar	27.06.2007
12	Malawi	06.09.2013
13	Mauritius	24.09.2008
14	Mozambique	11.07.2012
15	Namibia	03.02.2006
16	Rwanda	21.11.2011
17	Seychelles	In process of accession
18	Somalia	In process of accession
19	South Africa	18.05.2004
20	South Sudan	In process of accession
21	Tanzania	In process of accession
22	Uganda	27.06.2002
23	Zambia	01.07.2013
24	Zimbabwe	10.02.2003



WTO TRADE FACILITATION AGREEMENT (TFA)

Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA): As at 7th November 2022, 156/164 WTO members ratified the TFA, marking 95%. 19 out of 24 Members have ratified the TFA.

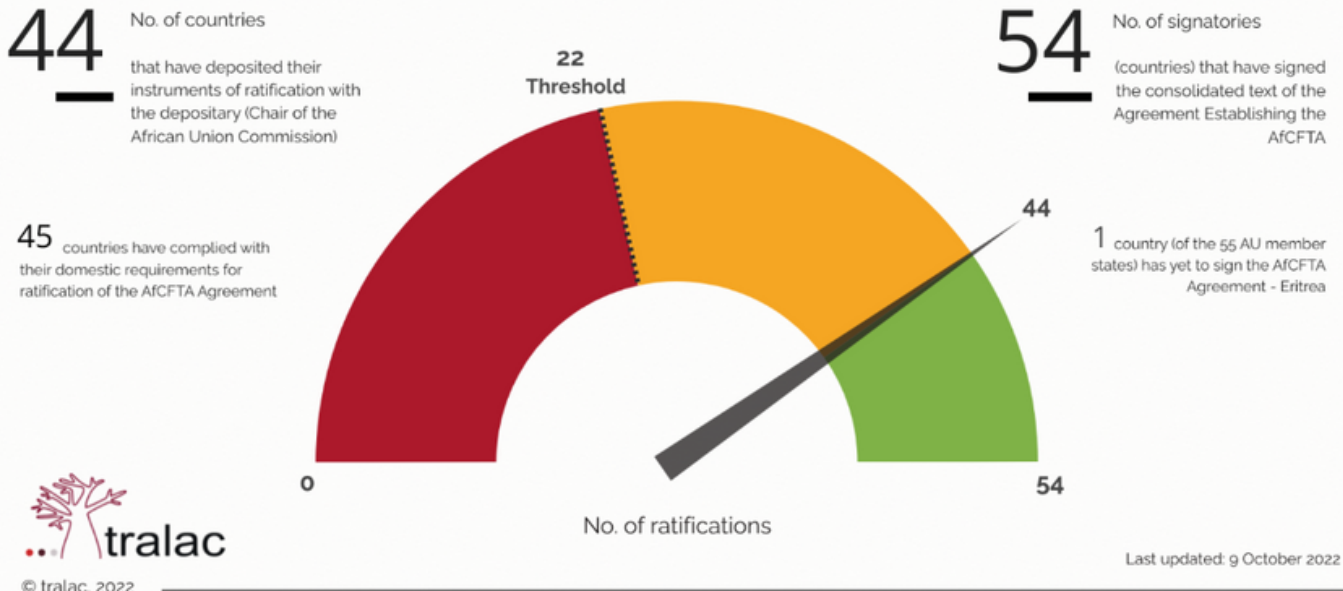
Ratifiers: Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Eswatini, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Missing: Comoros, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan

No.	Country	Date of Ratification
1	Angola	09.04.2019
2	Botswana	18.06.2015
3	Bourundi	12.12.2019
4	Comoros	In process of accession
5	Djibouti	05.03.2018
6	Eritrea	In process of accession
7	Ethiopia	In process of accession
8	Eswatini	21.11.2016
9	Kenya	10.12.2015
10	Lesotho	04.01.2016
11	Madagascar	20.06.2016
12	Malawi	12.07.2017
13	Mauritius	05.03.2015
14	Mozambique	06.01.2017
15	Namibia	09.02.2018
16	Rwanda	22.02.2017
17	Seychelles	11.01.2016
18	Somalia	In process of accession
19	South Africa	30.11.2017
20	South Sudan	In process of accession
21	Tanzania	08.04.2020
22	Uganda	27.06.2018
23	Zambia	16.12.2015

The operational phase of the AfCFTA Agreement was officially launched on 7 July 2019. On 7 October 2022, the AfCFTA Secretariat launched the AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative in Accra, marking the commencement of trade under the Agreement.

AfCFTA Ratification Barometer



Number of ratifications deposited



As at October 2022, 44 of the 54 signatories (81.5%) have deposited their instruments of AfCFTA ratification with the AUC Chairperson.

The operational phase of the AfCFTA was launched during the 12th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union on the AfCFTA in Niamey, Niger on 7th July 2019. On 7th October 2022, the AfCFTA Secretariat launched the AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative in Accra, Ghana, marking the commencement of trade under the agreement.

44 (17 from ESA) countries have deposited their instruments of ratification. Instrument depositors: Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Niger, Chad, Eswatini, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Namibia, South Africa, Congo, Rep., Djibouti, Mauritania, Uganda, Senegal, Togo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Rep., Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso, São Tomé & Príncipe, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Mauritius, Central African Rep., Angola, Lesotho, Tunisia, Cameroon, Nigeria, Malawi, Zambia, Algeria, Burundi, Seychelles, Tanzania, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Morocco and Guinea-Bissau.

Countries that are yet to ratify both agreements indicate that their processes are at different stages of national approval, especially parliamentary processes and cabinet approval states.

THE 10TH STEERING COMMITTEE (SC) OF THE WCO ESA PROJECT II



The 10th and final Steering Committee (SC) of the WCO ESA Project II was hosted by the Kenya Revenue Authority through its Commissioner for Customs Ms. Lilian Nyawanda on 18th & 19th May 2022 in Mombasa, Kenya. The meeting was chaired by WCO ESA Vice Chair Mr. Batsirai Chadzingwa, and attended by all members of the SC including Commissioners from Mauritius (Mr. Vivekanand Ramburun) and South Africa (Mr. Beyers Theron). Other participants were the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finnish Customs, WCO and the ROCB, as well as the Project Manager Ms. Riitta Passi. The Project has been supporting trade facilitation (TF) agenda, within the framework of the WCO Mercator Programme in the East and Southern Africa region, and was expended to wind up its operations end of May 2022.

REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON FREE ZONES FOR THE EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (ESA) AND WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA (WCA) REGIONS

The World Customs Organization (WCO) organized an online Regional Workshop on Free Zones for the East and Southern Africa (ESA) and West and Central Africa (WCA) regions from 15th to 17th June 2022, in close cooperation with the WCO ESA and WCA Regional Offices for Capacity Building (ROCB/ESA and ROCB/WCA). 82 participants from 23 Member administrations joined the dialogue to explore the ways for the sustainable development of free zones with enhanced Customs involvement. This was the fourth regional workshop in a series of regional events aimed at discussing the harmonized and efficient implementation of the WCO Practical Guidance on Free Zones (FZ Guidance) that was endorsed by 2020 December Council.

“Free Zones should not be “free” from necessary Customs procedures and controls. Customs should be one of the main authorities and should coordinate with all public and private authorities.” said the Director of Compliance and Facilitation, Mr. Pranab Kumar Das, in his opening remarks. The Head of ROCB/ESA, Mr. Larry Liza, stressed in his opening remarks that this is an excellent time for them to walk through the elements of the Guide to enhance the functions of Customs since these elements, over the last one year, have even found greater significance for Customs. Experts from Customs administrations, Free Zone authorities, the private sector and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) delivered perceptive presentations during the three-day workshop. Three pre-accredit WCO Experts also joined the workshop to moderate and provide presentations.

The workshop covered the key elements identified by the WCO Free Zone Guidance for adequate Customs procedures in Free Zones (FZs). These include enhancing cooperation, utilizing the concept of Authorized Economic Operator in FZs, Customs involvement in FZs, use of data and technologies, effective Customs control through Risk Management in FZs, IPR protection, and origin determination of goods produced in FZs.

The participants exchanged and discussed the challenges of FZs and special economic zones and the need for strengthening Customs involvement. The issue of capacity building and implementation of WCO instruments and tools have been widely discussed. Good practices of administrations and initiatives developed by the private sector were presented. Some Members shared the fraud cases that were identified and their impact on activities in FZs and related international and national legal frameworks. Determination of origin in FZs in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA) context was also discussed. “Now is the time when Customs needs to take ownership for Customs involvement in Free Zones”, stated Mr. Brendan O’Hearn, Deputy Director in charge of Procedures and Facilitation, in his closing remarks delivered by the Secretariat. His message closed by expressing his desire that this workshop would trigger further discussions within all administrations on what Customs can do to obtain a safe, secure and competitive business environment in FZs. Mr. Abdel Kader SANGHO, Head of ROCB WCA, stressed it is essential that Customs and stakeholders continue to work together to develop practical, fair and innovative solutions that contribute to economic competitiveness while ensuring safety and security.

ATAF'S 6TH HIGH-LEVEL TAX POLICY DIALOGUE

ATAF's 6th High-Level Tax Policy Dialogue was held virtually on 3rd August 2022. It focused on Boosting Trade and Tax Revenues and also looked at the impact of the AfCFTA on Domestic Resource Mobilization in the next five years. This meeting was a high-level meeting and is part of the Nexus series.

The WCO ESA ROCB Director, Mr. Larry Liza chaired a panel on Trade Facilitation and Non-Tariff Barriers in the AfCFTA: Easing the cost of doing business for increased revenue mobilization.

Other panel discussions included: Tariff revenue loss from AfCFTA: Real or Perceived? What measures can help bridge the gap; Reform priorities by Customs, Tax administrations and the Governments to maximize revenue mobilization from the AfCFTA; Curbing Illicit Financial Flows through trade misinvoicing in the AfCFTA; Trade, Customs and Tax coordination in the Regional Economic Communities and AfCFTA; and the Tax policy implications of the AfCFTA.



2. EFFICIENT REVENUE MOBILIZATION & CUSTOMS MODERNIZATION

Revenue mobilization is a key priority for ESA Members which is strongly linked to national developmental goals, poverty alleviation and economic growth. Customs administrations of the ESA region continue to play a critical role in mobilizing revenue to the national budget of their respective countries. It is imperative to enhance revenue compliance and combat commercial fraud and corrupt practices to eliminate risks of revenue leakage. It is also important to enhance the efficiency of revenue collection by implementing WCO recommended best practices, methods, procedures and instruments towards the journey to provide world-class and modern Customs services.

Regional Seminar on Implementation of HS 2022 for East and Southern Africa - 28th & 29th June 2022 - Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

On 28th and 29th June 2022, the WCO East and Southern Africa (ESA) Region gathered for a seminar to discuss progress achieved in the implementation of the seventh edition of the Harmonized System (HS), which entered into force on 1st January 2022. The seminar was hosted by the Ethiopian Customs Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and was organized within the framework of the EU-WCO Programme for Harmonized System in Africa (HS-Africa Programme), funded by the European Union.

The seminar brought together representatives of all main stakeholders of the HS implementation process: Customs administrations, Regional Economic Communities (COMESA, EAC, SACU and SADC), the AfCFTA Secretariat, the Africa Union Commission as well as the EU Delegation to the

African Union. Officers of the ESA Regional Office for Capacity Building and the Regional Training Centres from Kenya, Mauritius and Zimbabwe also attended the seminar.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Debele Kabeta Hursa, Ethiopian Customs Commissioner, highlighted the significance of the HS in ensuring the smooth flow of legitimate trade, a higher degree of market integration, and an environment conducive to modernization and investment. He expressed his appreciation to the WCO, the EU and the HS-Africa Programme for the assistance provided to Ethiopia, which had been vital in delivering timely implementation of the HS 2022 amendments in the country, based on the strategic approach developed with the support of the Programme.

Apart from discussions of the content of the HS 2022, participants shared experience of their organizations and countries on the implementation of HS amendments.

Representatives of Botswana, Ethiopia, Mauritius, the EAC and the SACU offered presentations on transposition of Common External Tariffs and national tariff and statistical nomenclatures to new versions of the HS, highlighting the challenges faced in the process, solutions provided and lessons learned. The AfCFTA Secretariat presented an update on the state of implementation of the Continental Free Trade Area and the results achieved and stressed the paramount importance and relevance of the implementation of HS amendments for a successful AfCFTA implementation.

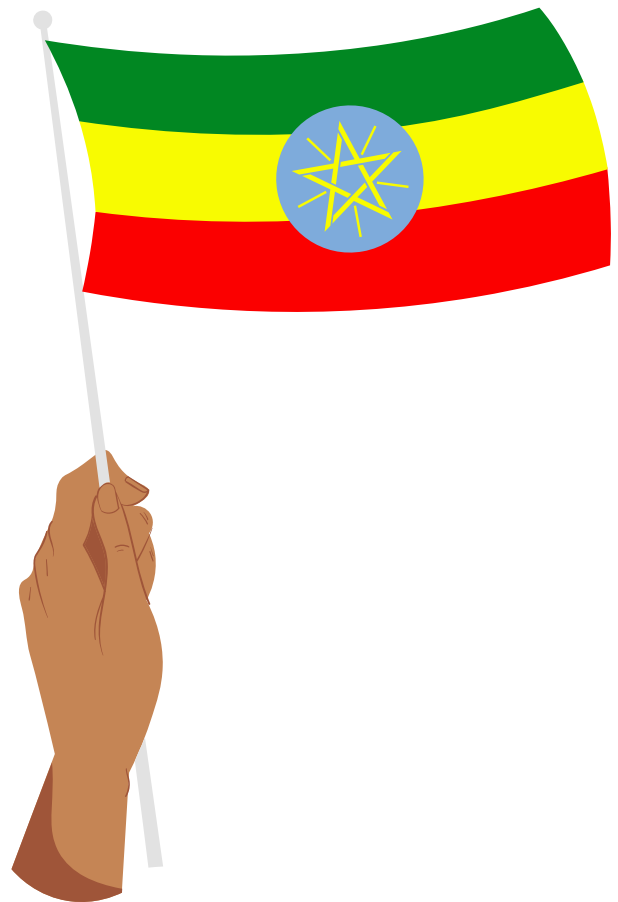
The seminar was an occasion to discuss digital transformation in Customs' work related to tariffs and commodity classification by presenting some of the projects recently implemented in the region, namely the electronic tariff platforms in Eswatini and Lesotho.



It was felt that such initiatives would make a tangible difference for all stakeholders involved in international trade by making accurate information on applicable duty rates easily available. In conclusion of the seminar, a panel discussion on capacity building aspects of HS-related work was held, chaired by Mr. Larry Liza, ESA ROCB Director, with representatives of RTCs as panellists. During the discussion, emphasis was placed on the importance of reaching out to relevant stakeholders to deliver capacity building support, challenges brought by Covid-19, as well as ways of measuring training efficiency.

Participants took note of the strategic guidance on competency development in the area of the HS, as well as new e-learning tools and the training package developed with the support of the HS-Africa Programme.

The seminar took stock of the progress achieved by the ESA Region on the implementation of the HS 2022, with three quarters of ESA Members having already migrated to the new version of the HS. The HS-Africa Programme pledged continued support for the countries and the RECs of the region and will keep delivering assistance to African partners and stakeholders, in accordance with its mandate.



Successful Launch of the EU WCO Rules of Origin Africa Programme in Accra Ghana



The World Customs Organization (WCO) and the European Union (EU) held a continental inaugural conference on 19th & 20th July 2022 in Accra, Ghana, to launch the Programme on the implementation and application of rules of origin for enhanced Intra-African trade. Commonly dubbed the EU-WCO Rules of Origin Africa Programme, this initiative is aimed at supporting the African continent to improve its capacity to deal with rules of origin and ultimately to support the harmonized and well-coordinated implementation and application of the rules of origin under Annex 2 of the AfCFTA and other regional and international commitments.

The conference was attended by African Customs Administration Experts on rules of origin, Ghana Revenue Authority as the host Customs Administration, the AfCFTA Secretariat, the Tripartite Free Trade Area

Task Force, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), WCO Regional Offices for Capacity Building (ROCB), the Private Sector, UNCTAD, WTO, ITC, TRALAC, the European Delegation, and the World Customs Organization. In his opening remarks, Mr. Konstantinos Kaiopoulos, Director of Tariff and Trade Affairs stressed the central role of rules of origin for the implementation of any free trade agreement. He expressed his expectation that this programme will greatly contribute in building the capacity of customs and relevant stakeholders for enhanced understanding, implementation, and application of rules of origin in Africa.

The Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Ghana, Mr. Massimo Mina, in his remarks, stated that the European Union strongly supports Africa's economic integration. Therefore, the EU-WCO RoO Africa Programme is an important new... 4

...step by the EU and the WCO to support and promote Africa's economic integration. The AfCFTA Director of Trade in Goods and Competition, Dr. Mohamed Ali, in his opening remarks, highlighted the commitment of the AfCFTA Secretariat to ensuring the success of the EU-WCO RoO Africa Programme. He stated, that given the fruitful experience of the first six months of partnership with the WCO and the EU, the AfCFTA can only be optimistic about the successful completion of the pending AfCFTA rules of origin matters including stakeholders' capacity building.

In his welcoming remarks, the Ghana Revenue Authority Commissioner Customs, Col. Kwadwo Damoah, stated that WCO's collaboration with the EU to heighten the importance of Origin has come at a good time to leverage the responsibilities bestowed on Customs Administrations by AfCFTA and other FTAs to which African States have signed up. He called on the customs experts to contribute more during the discussions and to highlight all the challenges they face in administering the rules of origin.

The conference sessions presented the scope, components and timeline of the implementation of the Programme and how the different activities shall be conducted to better meet the needs of all stakeholders and attain the sought objectives. Different presentations and panel discussions shed the light on the national and regional perspectives, challenges and lessons learned and the AfCFTA secretariat shared the state of play on the implementation of RoO under the agreement and role of Customs in that process. International organizations and private sector stakeholders exchanged with the audience their experiences and expectations and proposed avenues for cooperation under this Programme and beyond for effective and successful implementation of the RoO.

The conference concluded by consensus on the need for capacity building and harmonized instruments to enable all stakeholders to manage and administer RoO effectively and that the EU-WCO RoO Programme is of utmost relevance and importance in that process.

The commitment and engagement of all partners during the conference is a positive first step towards excellent collaboration on the successful implementation of this Programme. The outcomes of the conference and discussions will feed into the establishment of the Programme's work plan and the activities.

Workshop on HS 2022 Amendments for the ESA Region

The workshop on HS 2022 amendments for the ESA Region was held virtually on 16th August 2022. The Workshop was organized by the World Customs Organization, East and Southern Africa, Regional Office for Capacity Building (WCO ESA ROCB), in cooperation with the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA). The aim of the training was to improve tariff classification competency in the Region as we implement the changes brought forth by the Seventh Edition of the Harmonized System.

The Director ROCB, Mr. Larry Liza gave opening remarks and congratulated Zimbabwe for hosting the virtual workshop. He acknowledged the support of the EU-WCO Programme for Harmonized System in Africa in the implementation of HS in the region and the different capacity building missions/workshops held for the region, one which inspired the organising of the workshop.

Mr. Batsirai Chadzingwa, the Commissioner - Customs and Excise who is also the WCO ESA Region Vice Chairperson officially opened the workshop. He reiterated the importance of collaboration in order to promote a regional approach to tackling customs issues.



Launch of the SADC Electronic Certificate of Origin

SADC has taken an important step towards enhancing seamless flow of intra-regional trade following the launch of the electronic Certificate of Origin (e-CoO) in Blantyre, Malawi, on 7th September 2022 under the theme 'Enhancing trade facilitation through the SADC Electronic Certificate of Origin'.

The recently launched e-CoO is to intended address the challenges encountered with the use of manual Certificate of Origin by simplifying customs procedures, enhancing e-Commerce, eliminating fraud, improving record management and statistical data, reducing cross-border certificate verification time as well as reducing the cost of doing business.

The meeting was opened by Mrs. Agnes Katsonga, the Executive Director of MRA who saluted SADC for the launch of the pilot programme. She decried the challenges associated with manual processing of Certificates of Origin, leading to delays, higher costs, forgery, among others. She highlighted the inherent gains from digitalization (in response to eCOO) – efficiency, boost in revenue collection, regional integration, among other benefits to all stakeholders. Speaking at the launch of the SADC e-Certificate of Origin, Commissioner General of the Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA), Mr. John Biziwick, said thee-Certificate of Origin will improve the way business is conducted in the Region because the challenges that were associated with the manual processing of the certificate will be eliminated.

Mr. Sandwich Mtonakutha, the Director of Finance, Investments and Customs in SADC, called for enhancement of systems to ensure efficiency in trade facilitation, lowering cost of business which enhancing revenue collection.

The meeting (held in a blended format) was attended by Commissioners from various SADC members from Customs and Trade, alongside other stakeholders including the WCO ESA ROCB Director Larry Liza, the WCO, GIZ, among others.



Bolstering Revenue and Public Safety through Digital Transformation Workshop

The workshop was held virtually on 22nd September 2022. It was co-organized by the WCO ESA Regional Office for Capacity Building, in conjunction with Publican by Ultra. The Workshop was attended by more than 70 participants from across the world. Participants included Senior Technical and Administrative officials from various member Customs administrations, WCO Regional Training Centres (RTCs), the private sector, and other cooperating partners. It was also graced by the presence of a high level delegation including: the WCO ESA Vice Chair, Mr. Batsirai Chadzingwa, Zimbabwe; Mr. Rudy Kirzhner, Vice President, Trade and Customs, Publican by Ultra; Customs Commissioners and Directors General; and the WCO ESA ROCB Director, Mr. Larry Liza.

The workshop focused on various topical issues including: Innovative digitalization driving increased revenue and public safety - Rudy Kirzhner (Vice President, of Trade and Customs (Publican) for Ultra Information Solutions); The effects of Under Valuation in relation to Bolstering Revenue and Public Safety through Digital Transformation - James Ndege (Chief Manager-Business Intelligence & Analysis, Kenya Revenue Authority); The effects of Illicit Trade in relation to Bolstering Revenue and Public Safety through Digital Transformation - Cornelius Kakwesa (Deputy Commissioner for Customs Business Support, Malawi Revenue Authority); and Public Safety - Bolstering Revenue and Public Safety through Digital Transformation - Nundiswar Bhugwant (Section Head at the Mauritius Revenue Authority).

3. SECURITY, ENFORCEMENT & COMPLIANCE

The intention of this objective is to reinforce the efficiency and effectiveness in upholding compliance to Customs law, regulations and procedures in the region, and creating the enforcement mechanisms to strengthen regional security, protection of society to enable economic growth and development. This shall incorporate strategies to enhance regional trader compliance programmes and development of frameworks for customs-to-customs networking on information exchange, intelligence sharing and treatment of common and emerging risks.

10th Pan African Conference on Illicit Financial Flows and Taxation

The 10th Pan African Conference on Illicit Financial Flows and Taxation was held on the 28th & 29th September 2022, Lusaka, Zambia. The conference, themed 'Tax Justice Amid Multiple Crises', brought together different organizations within the tax and customs systems from Africa and other countries outside the continent.

The conference explored the current global environment and the impact it has had on the African countries' ability to raise resources for recovery fairly and equitably. It also discussed recommendations on IFFs and the International Financial Architecture as well as Innovative Progressive Domestic Resource Mobilization Strategies, and within the context of climate change. The WCO ESA Director, Larry Liza, spoke on maximizing Customs efficiencies to minimizing IFFs and shared the progress made in implementing the IFF Action Plan in the region and how the existing WCO tools, guidelines and instruments are useful in helping Customs fight against the IFFs. The meeting was co-organized by the Tax Justice Network Africa (TJNA), the African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF) and the Centre for Trade Policy Development (CTPD).



The Operational Customs Seminar on the Fight against Illicit Trade in Champagne & Cognac for Kenya Customs

The Operational Customs Seminar on the fight against illicit trade in Champagne & Cognac for Kenya Customs was held on 12th September 2022 at the Hotel Villa Rosa Kempinski, Nairobi Kenya. The seminar was intended to raise awareness regarding potential health risks for the consumers of counterfeit alcohol and to provide Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA's) effective tools to combat counterfeit illegal alcohol, and for the purposes of this seminar, specifically, Champagne and Cognac.

Its specific purpose was to support Customs in the implementation of concrete actions such as new profiling and targeting techniques in order to be able to qualify and to quantify the level of counterfeit and illegal alcoholic beverages, through specialized capacity building training. The seminar was organized by the WCO ESA ROCB in partnership with SGS and Moët Hennessy.



4. PROFESSIONALISM & PARTNERSHIPS

The ability of Customs to contribute to regional growth and development rests on the organizational efficiencies and effectiveness of Customs administrations in implementing modernized systems and procedures enabled by a strong professional workforce. This objective seeks to enhance integrity, professionalism and human capital development in Member customs administrations through the development of subject matter experts, promotion of gender equality and diversity and enhancing research initiatives.

The High-Level ESA Gender, Inclusivity & Diversity (GID) Policy Dialogue – Maseru, Lesotho

The dialogue was aptly aligned with the WCO 2023 Theme of ‘Nurturing the Next Generation: Promoting a Culture of knowledge-sharing and professional pride in Customs’ and was geared towards encouraging and promoting dialogue on GID amongst thought leaders in various industries including Governments, Customs, Development Partners, Regional Economic Communities and the Private Sector.

The dialogue was graced by the presence of a high-level delegation including: Dr. Adelaide Retselisitsoe Matlanyane, the Minister of Finance, Lesotho; the WCO ESA Vice Chair, Mr. Batsirai Chadzingwa, Zimbabwe; Acting Commissioner General, Lesotho, Mrs. Mathabo Mokoko; UNECA Principal Regional Advisor, RITD - Ms. Brendah Mundia, Head of component, Programme Support to the AfCFTA, GIZ AU - Ms. Aude Lanois; AUC Senior Policy Officer, Mr. Dhunraj Kasse; and the WCO ESA ROCB Director, Mr. Larry Liza.

The forum is envisioned as the first of a series of engagements on the topic and has a focus on the Eastern and Southern African region (ESA) and provided a great platform for Customs Authorities

and the supply chain stakeholders to learn about how they can exploit the opportunities that the AfCFTA has to offer in the context of GEDI (Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion). Customs Authorities and Partner Government Agencies from the region shared experiences on matters concerning GID and Trade as they pursue reforms and modernization whilst delivering their mandate effectively and efficiently. In addition, Regional Economic Communities, Development Partners and the Private Sector also had an opportunity to demonstrate how they have leveraged on GID to remain competitive in the trade environment in order to ensure sustainability.

Outcomes of the Dialogue and Policy Recommendations.

i. Development of sustainable policies on GID and the Gender Action Plan.

ii. **Commitment in Leadership and Management** – Top Management of all gender to take up the role of Gender Champions across all networks.

iii. **Gender Mainstreaming in Recruitment and Hiring.**

iv. **Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL).**

v. **Digitalization, Research & Data Management:** Utilize digitalization and secure management of disaggregated data to develop policies, tools and instruments to facilitating trade, especially for vulnerable and informal cross border traders as well as eCommerce. to collect and analyse gender disaggregated data for trade policy.

vi. **Promoting communication and awareness.**



vii. **Set up of visible/prominent Gender units** - Generally, gender units do not exist in organizations and where they do, they are not given prominence. GID should be given prominence in the relevant divisions/departments.

viii. **Use of gender focused engagements and governance structures to address fragmentation challenges.**

ix. Use of change management programs to advance of gender, inclusion and diversity initiatives in the long term. Use of change management in organisations will ensure successful transformation
 x. Use of capacity building activities to advance the GID agenda with both customs and other border agencies and well as private sector

xi. Information accessibility – Ensuring that there is availability of information to women, youth and MSMEs through use of free multimedia and government platforms. Information accessibility empowers marginalised groups, and MSMES to make informed strategic decisions.

xii. Use of inclusive stakeholder engagements between governments (competition authorities, IPR authorities, customs), private sector and development partners including trade facilitation structures such as NTFCs and Customs Business Forums.

xiii. Partnerships with learning institutions and governments.

xiv. Continental Approach for Simplified Trade Regimes- The AUC is invited to adopt a continental approach in the development and implementation of the Simplified Trade Regimes in collaboration with RECs and Partners such as UNECA, UNCTAD and GIZ, and to conclude existing discussions and fully implement STRs where they exist.

xv. Taking advantage of AfCFTA instruments - Member States (Women) need to take advantage of the trade facilitation instruments related to the

AfCFTA such as the Rules of Origins Annexes and Guidelines; NTB Online Elimination Mechanism; African Trade Observatory; competition policy; dispute settlement mechanisms etc. to address gender-based barriers systemically. NTB reporting can also include a gender and diversity dimension.

xvi. **AU SME Strategy** - Member States need to domesticate the AU SME Strategy and Implementation plan taking into consideration the situation women and youth in the region.

xvii. **Regional Meetings on GID** - GID meetings to be held periodically to provide a platform for engagement of key stakeholders as well as sharing of best practices. This could be done annually or every 2 years.

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Cooperation with ULTRA Information Solutions Ltd



The World Customs Organization, East and Southern Africa region and Ultra Information Solutions Ltd. signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 5th July 2022. The Agreement was signed by Mr. Larry Liza, Director of the Regional Office for Capacity Building and Mr. Elad Kotzer, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Ultra Information Solutions Ltd. The company will support a series of initiatives, in line with the WCO ESA Regional Strategy, over the next three years. It is aimed at accelerating Customs Modernization and Digitalization in the ESA region.

While the scope of the agreement may be broadened, its key focus is on:

Enhancing Research in the Region: through support of and professional contribution to working groups, conferences, publications, events and missions, in collaboration with the region's private sector grouping.

Supporting Regional AEO Implementation: here we have developed unique technology and methodology which will allow the inclusion of SMME's, while supporting MRA's + the development of innovative data strategies, as detailed in the Strategy.

Ultra is further committed to supporting Members in advancing the use of technology among Customs administrations towards increase of revenue collection and improving their efficiency and effectiveness.

High Level Customs Digitalization Forum – Kigali, Rwanda

The ESA Governing Council directed the ROCB to conduct an IT conference / digitalization forum.

This High-Level Forum on Customs Digitalization was organized by the WCO ESA ROCB in conjunction with the African Union Commission (AUC), and with the support of GIZ under the Technical Assistance Facility (TAF-EU).

The ESA Regional Strategy (2022-2025) recognizes the critical role played by Information Communication and Technology (ICT) for reform and modernization of the region, and in particular, Customs administrations. Key components towards its successful implementation are digitization and data management. As Africa continues recovering considering the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the place of information technology cannot be better underscored at this time. More administrations have increased their investment in

ICT over the last two years, through progressive change management, integrating new and latest technologies and plans in delivering their mandate. The digitalization of border procedures across the continent, with customs clearance processes at the forefront, will be a key enabler of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The AUC, the WCO ESA ROCB and GIZ therefore organized the Forum “Accelerating Digitalization in Customs to boost intra-African trade” to discuss trends in digitalization at national, regional and global levels and share best practices among key stakeholders, including the private sector, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Partner Government Agencies and the African Union Commission as well as the African Continental Free Trade Area.

The High-Level Forum on Customs Digitalization was hosted by Rwanda Revenue Authority in Kigali, Rwanda on the 3rd and 4th November 2022.

The forum was attended by more than 100 participants from across the world.



Summary Outcomes of Conference and Policy Recommendations

- i) Governing Council (GC) is invited to consider the organization of a High-Level Customs Digitalization Forum for the ESA region on an annual basis in collaboration with Technical Partners with the objective to share experiences and best practices and also identify possible challenges and potential solutions.
- ii) Governing Council (GC) is invited to consider the development of an ESA Customs Digitalization Strategy and mobilize resources to implement same with the collaboration of RECs and Technical Partners.
- iii) Governing Council (GC) to request the AfCFTA Secretariat to build the capacity of the region (customs administrations and relevant private sector) on the e-tariff book.
- iv) Governing Council (GC) is invited to urge Customs administrations to make timely and reliable information easily available to the private sector.
- v) Governing Council (GC) is invited to urge Customs administrations to develop/roll out specific customs-related and gender friendly business technologies (Customs single window; simplified self-service declaration form; NII technology; etc) for MSMEs.
- vi) Governing Council to urge Customs administrations to endeavor to implement modern emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence; drone technology; cargo tracking solutions with more cost friendly disposable seals; cloud computing; advanced wireless technologies; smart border systems; e certificates of origin; advance passenger information and NII equipment leveraging on efforts by RECs and in collaboration Technical Partners.
- vii) Governing Council is invited to urge RECs to expedite interconnectivity of the various customs administrations as this will also help data exchange

and sharing of information at a continental level in the context of the AfCFTA.

viii) Governing Council is invited to urge all Customs Administrations, Partner Government Agencies, the private sector and all development partners to build capacity and training on data analytics, AI and all emerging technologies.

ix) There is need to utilize and customize the WCO eCommerce package and tools while leveraging on technology and joint initiatives to stop revenue leakages and illicit flow of goods.

Virtual Reality Assisted Training Program in the Region

The Virtual Reality Training Program (VRT) was developed through a partnership with WCO Headquarters in Brussels, RTC Korea, Korea Customs Service, CCF-Korea and HO Entertainment to support customs officials in learning and understanding the basic procedures of physical inspection on containerized cargo at a maritime port. The inspection scenarios take into account risk indicators from the WCO Risk Management compendium.

The WCO ESA with the support of CCF-Korea installed the VRT kiosk equipment at the ROCB office in Nairobi on 10th March 2023. This exercise was conducted by the experts from CCF-Korea being HO Entertainment CEO Mr. Sung Cil Baek and the Chief Technical Officer Mr. Dong-Ho Ryu and was graced by the WCO ESA Director Mr. Larry Liza who thanked the WCO Capacity Building Director Dr. Taeil Kang, RTC Korea, Korea Customs Service, CCF-Korea and HO Entertainment for making the vision of VR technology a reality. He expressed that the ROCB was pleased to host the VRT system and promised to assist the ESA members and learners from all over the world in capacity building through the VR technology training.

A training exercise was conducted for two days with the ROCB staff by the HO Entertainment team. The devices for the VR training are the headset, controller, high-end computer, TV screen and kiosk. The program also developed a screen version that Customs officials can play on their desktop computer and notebook and have the 3D experience. The length of one training session is approximately 10-15 minutes depending on the trainee's progress.

As a trainee interacts with the VR program s/he selects one of three individual scenarios to detect contraband items such as drugs, counterfeit goods and explosives smuggled in imported cargo. After selecting one case, the trainee verifies the importation documents in order to identify any discrepancies e.g. weight, consignor details, goods description etc. The program shows necessary steps required to ensure safety of the officer. Other interesting aspects include the inspection of the container's exterior, use of non-intrusive inspection equipment such as K-9 dogs, mobile vehicle scanners and X-ray black/white and coloured imagery. In the following step, the trainee opens the container and inspects it using different tools such as chisel, magnifying glass, scanner and placing the cargo in a bonded area of a dedicated warehouse where they conduct cargo examination and identify contraband cargo.

As part of the interactive learning, there is a virtual robot who guides the trainee throughout and finally the program provides a detailed summary of findings and the trainee receives a virtual badge as a token of encouragement.

The official opening and launch of the VRT program was held at WCO Regional Training Centre Kenya on 13th March 2023 where Virtual Reality Training Station System had been set up. The ceremony was attended by dignitaries including RTC Kenya Head Commissioner Dr. Mugambi Mwirigi; the WCO H.Q team led by the Director of Capacity Building Dr. Taeil Kang, the CCF- Korea Fund Manager Mr. Sungsig Kim and WCO Regional Manager Mr.

Oluimo DaSilva; the Kenya Revenue Authority Ag Commissioner- Customs & Border Control, Ms. Pamela Ahago and Trade Facilitation Deputy Commissioner of Customs, Ms. Susan Wanjohi.

The VRT system will enhance the capacity of Customs officers by providing the relevant knowledge and skills in improving customs operations and drive compliance in revenue mobilisation. The KESRA trainers performed a practical demonstration of some port operations such as cargo inspection.

Dr. Taeil Kang expressed his plans to distribute more VR Kiosks in other regions globally. He also informed the attendees that more training content was being created including; VR e-commerce transactions at airports, data analysis programs on the WCO CLiKC e-learning platform as well as the use of the VR Metaverse to train customs officials in the future.



Engagements with TradeMark Africa

On 17th March 2023, the ROCB held a meeting with TradeMark Africa with an aim of discussing various areas of potential partnerships and collaborations. TradeMark Africa is a Non-Governmental Organisation that works on a not-for-profit basis and is funded by Belgium, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. It aims to grow prosperity through increased trade through large-scale job creation, poverty reduction and enhanced economic growth in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

The ROCB hopes to foster a partnership with TradeMark Africa on key areas of focus including Technology and Digitalisation in supply chains; and Gender, Inclusivity and Diversity in Trade.

Publication of the ESA Region Research Book

The ROCB published the ESA Region Research Book. This research book presents the papers, report and outcomes of the 3rd WCO ESA Regional Research Conference which was held on the 23rd and 24th November 2021. It was co-organized by the ROCB and WCO Regional Training Centre (RTC) Mauritius with the support of WCO Regional Training Centre (RTC) Kenya and the WCO ESA Project II funded by the Government of Finland.

The theme of the conference was “The effects of emerging issues on the role of Customs and Trade” in East and Southern Africa, covering: Potential effects of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on trade and Customs; Security and development: Challenges and opportunities presented by technologies and emergence of new trade practices and their potential effects on security; Gender Equity, Equality and Diversity: Highlighting opportunities presented in the integration of gender practices and promotion of diversity in Customs and Trade;

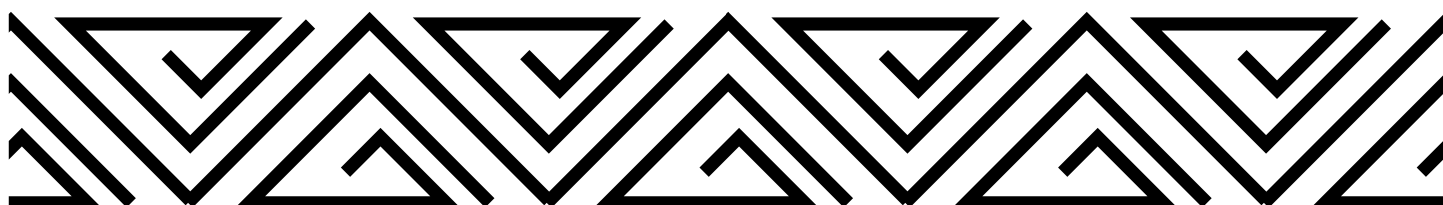
Enhancing trade facilitation and impact of cross border e-commerce on Customs and International trade; and an overview of digitization and its effect on AfCFTA, Gender and cross- border Trade as well as Trade Facilitation in General. Panel discussions focused on Return to Normalcy & Impact of Virtual Engagements following the COVID-19 pandemic and on the Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic on Revenue Collection. Two key note addresses were delivered on: “The effect of emerging and ongoing issues on the role of Customs and Trade” and “Enhancing the Movement of Medicines and Medical Equipment in East and Southern African Region Amidst Covid-19 Pandemic.”



Newsletter Publication

The ROCB aims to publish eNewsletters quarterly and urges Members and stakeholders to submit their articles to the ROCB on a rolling basis. During the reporting period four newsletters were published and shared with the region and the global Customs family. There issues herein are: July – September 2022 issue; October - December 2022 issue; January – March 2023; and the April – June 2023 issue.

Publication



UPDATES FROM THE REGIONAL PRIVATE SECTOR GROUP (RPSG) 1/6

After establishing a governance structure to lead customs and trade-related matters from the perspective of the private sector in the ESA region, the WCO-ESA-RPSG experienced quite a fruitful year as several “victories” were achieved during the course of 2022. One of the most notable victories was achieved on Thursday, 25 August, as the WCO ESA RPSG hosted their 14th webinar, “AfCFTA: Uptake and Challenges”. The event was headlined by two distinguished speakers, Mohamed Ali, Director of Trade in Goods and Competition of the AfCFTA Secretariat, and Trudi Hartzenberg, Executive Director of the Trade Law Centre. The webinar was attended by 235 unique viewers, representing the largest audience attending a WCO-ESA-RPSG webinar thus far.

When considering the ambitions for 2023, it is fundamental to revisit the core values and focus areas of the WCO ESA RPSG. The group was formed to verify the implementation, monitoring, and assistance of various WCO Instruments and Tools instruments, making trade easier without comprising or imposing a higher risk profile. The group is governed by a Terms of Reference (TOR) and works under the guidance of the WCO Private Sector Consultative Group (PSCG). This approach will also allow the private sector to articulate its regional integration challenges and possible solutions to the well-known obstacles. We must manage them effectively to create a safe, fair, and compliant environment for all regional private sector participants.

As found on the WCO ESA RPSG website (<https://www.wcoesarpsg.org/>), the six key focus areas of the RPSG remain:

- (1) SMART Borders
- (2) AEO
- (3) Education and Awareness
- (4) Research in the region
- (5) Measurements; and
- (6) Non-tariff barriers.

The region can stay abreast of the latest news by using the website, which contains newsletters, webinars, and several global resources. Furthermore, the RPSG has partnered with FESARTA – the Federation of East and Southern African Road Transport Associations – to publish weekly reports on the cross-border trade flows in our region. We look forward to continuously adding value to the region’s supply chains and celebrating more victories in the coming year. Ultimately, the RPSG will continue its efforts to become the apex private sector organization in the ESA region.

1. Border crossings and corridor management:

Over the last 12 months, an exciting collaboration with the Federation of East and Southern African Road Transport Associations (FERSATA) delivered some insightful geofencing data investigating the cross-border delays and associated costs experienced at several regional border posts. The analysis includes several border posts on the North-South corridor, Walvis Bay Corridor Group (WBCG), Maputo corridor, and the Dar Es Salaam corridor. The data is further presented in bi-directional Heavy-Goods-Vehicle (HGV) flows and illustrate the (1) arrivals per day, (2) queue times, (3) border crossing times, (4) HGV tonnage, (5) delays, and (6) cost of delays. The latest report was circulated to the region containing up-to-date stats to 28 March 2023. Transporters, traders, and cargo owners are encouraged to use the non-tariff barrier (NTBs) online tool UNCTAD and the AfCFTA Secretariat developed. However, for a more regional approach, transporters are encouraged to contact FESARTA and join their TRANSIST Bureau, which has successfully facilitated regional trade.

Additionally, in the light of border- and corridor management, Zambia – particularly at Kasumbalesa – had made significant strides by addressing issues

UPDATES FROM THE REGIONAL PRIVATE SECTOR GROUP (RPSG) 2/6

mounting through its trade facilitation desk. Some of these issues include having a plethora of Other Government Agencies (OGAs) regulating trade at the border, according to John Mumba, chairman of the Zambia Customs & Forwarding Agent Association, who is also a member of the RPSG. For example, at one-point last year, the Kasumbalesa border post had approximately 15 OGAs which exacerbated significant bottlenecks at the border post.

According to statistics gathered by FESARTA (and published on the RPSG website), Kasumbalesa processes approximately 800 trucks (north and southbound) per day. And in recent times, border crossings have averaged around a day and a half, which is too long for cross-border trade at one of the busiest border posts in the SADC region. Through private-sector collaboration, these OGAs have recently been downscaled to six, which enhanced trade facilitation through the border. Government is now also asking the private sector to step in with suggestions which will improve the border post as a whole. These collaborations are essential to realizing the dream of a united Africa – trading under the AfCFTA.

2. Cross-Border Road Transport Symposium – Kasane, Botswana

The Ministry of Transport and Public Works of the Republic of Botswana, together with the Tripartite Transport and Transit Facilitation Programme (TTTFP) Project Management Unit and the Cross Border Road Transport Regulators Forum (CBRT-RF), held a “Cross-Border Road Symposium”. The event was held at Kasane, Botswana, from 3 to 5 October. The event brought together an impressive programme of regional and international road transport industry experts, business leaders, researchers, and intellectuals from more than 27 countries in Southern and Eastern Africa. Some of

the key takeaways from the event included (1) trade facilitation under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), (2) harmonization of trade and transportation through TIR operators, (3) SMART transport solutions such as the Performance-Based Standards Approach, and (4) the Kazungula Bridge project. As we move beyond COVID-19, it has become apparent that we need to rebuild and strengthen our systems. Therefore, we call on the sector to demonstrate leadership and make it their business to strengthen and commit to implementing regional programmes and reforms.

3. Webinars during the year

Over the last 12 months, the RPSG hosted two webinars and the 12th webinar titled “Practically tackling NTBs in the ESA Region”, held in March 2022. The webinars ensured the participation of excellent international speakers – stimulating meaningful discussions on customs and trade-related matters within the region. All RPSG webinars are recorded and are available on the RPSG’s website and the RPSG’s YouTube channel.

The RPSG hosted their 13th webinar on 23 June 2022, titled “Disruptive technologies in the ESA Region”, highlighting the potential benefits of new technologies and their application in the region’s customs and trade. Technology is ever-increasing in our daily lives, as it is in business. To that end, in 2019, the World Customs Organization 2019 published a study on Disruptive Technologies. This Study aims to share insights into what’s regarded as “disruptive technologies” and to allow Customs administrations to reap the benefits of their present opportunities. This webinar topic was chosen as these benefits are also valid for trade in the ESA region. The webinar was chaired by Juanita Maree (WCO ESA-RPSG Chair), with technical support by Jacob van Rensburg (WCO ESA-RPSG Executive Coordinator) and headlined by the technology expert Werner van Niekerk.

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Additionally, the 14th webinar was hosted on 25 August 2022, titled “AfCFTA: Uptake and Challenges”, and provided essential updates on the progress of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement. The event was headlined by two distinguished speakers, Mohamed Ali, Director of Trade in Goods and Competition of the AfCFTA Secretariat, and Trudi Hartzenberg, Executive Director of the Trade Law Centre (tralac). The webinar was chaired by Juanita Maree (WCO ESA-RPSG Chair), with expert commentary and guidance by Larry Liza (WCO ESA-ROCB) and technical support by Jacob van Rensburg (WCO ESA-RPSG Executive Coordinator). The webinar was attended by 235 unique viewers, representing the largest audience attending a WCO-ESA-RPSG webinar thus far.

4. Work plan and progress made on the deliverables for 2023

The region has an exciting road ahead in 2023 as the hunt for a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for the next three-year period is underway. The poll for these respective nominations has been shared with the rest of the group, and the election process will take place during one of the next Governance meetings. Although the possibility of a new leadership team exists, the WCO-ESA-RPSG will still strive to make inroads on the most relevant customs and trade-related issues to aid trade facilitation in the ESA region. As a result, an in-depth workplan was enacted, which should be approved and signed off soon by the Governance Structure, the ROCB, and, importantly, the ESA Vice-Chair.

For alignment purposes, the workplan was articulated back to the ROCB, and they provided insights on the agenda, research, and other priority settings that need to be changed slightly.

The RPSG also contacted the SADC Business Council, who advised that they currently prioritize capacity building on the rules of origin. As a result, SADC contacted the WCOs rules of origin team in this regard. The RPSG supports this major priority, so we have committed to following up and reporting on the region’s most recent developments. However, no meeting has occurred with the AU yet; however, once the plan is finalized, it will be sent to the AU for alignment and agreement.

The workplan identified five priority areas in 2023, which will help the RPSG build a resilient, intact regional private sector, which can add valuable insights as stipulated in our Terms of Reference and guide us with Regional Customs in the ever-changing trade landscape. These include the election of a new Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson and revised workflows, focusing on AfCFTA and

Category commitments under the WTO-TFA. Our five main projects include:

i. Governance meetings – The RPSG will continue with the four governance meetings held throughout the year; for the moment, these meetings will remain virtually on Microsoft Teams. The preliminary dates of the three remaining government meetings are 1 June 2023, 7 September 2023, and 7 December 2023, respectively.

ii. Election of a new Chair – The hunt for a new Chair- and Vice-Chair should be concluded in June, as the election will occur at one of the next Governance meetings.

iii. Projects and Objectives – This year’s projects and objectives are mainly captured in the four webinars planned for the year. The first webinar topic should speak to digitalization and connectivity. Digitalization without connectivity could create more significant problems in trade facilitation and

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leave regional- and national entities each operating as “islands”. The date for this webinar is yet to be confirmed; however, the webinar is anticipated to take place in April. The second webinar will most likely look at the WCOs theme for 2023 and should be hosted somewhere in June. The third webinar will pertain to a vital topic on the African continent in the form of the AfCFTA and should take place in September. Finally, the topic for the fourth webinar has yet to be confirmed but will be made available as soon as discussions progress. The webinar should ultimately take place in November.

iv. Publication and Deliverables – The RPSG aims to deliver the following publications and deliverables throughout the year:

- Surveys from our members to capture their insights on trade-related matters in the ESA Region.
- The four quarterly status reports are mainly based on customs, trade, OGAs and other good narratives that speak to the ESA Region’s progress. This year’s reports will aim to move away from the COVID-19 narrative to address the AfCFTA and non-tariff barriers instead.
- Newsletters will include best practice- and customs stories to be published in the ROCB Newsletters.
- Corridor Management is focused on ensuring the strategic direction is well shared as we must align with the Corridor Management Plan, the World Bank, and the African Union. The ESA RPSG is active in planning, insights, and lessons learned best practices.
- Research and awareness will be linked to Picard to share critical case studies as we gain more insights into the regional workings. In 2022, the RPSG authored several key research papers, including:

(1) Disruptive Technologies – During the past year, the WCO ESA RPSG drafted a research paper on disruptive technologies which aims to share insights into what is commonly referred to as “disruptive technologies” and allow Customs administrations to reap the benefits of the opportunities they present. Although the word disruptive might be assigned a negative connotation, the report addresses these topics as a matter of the natural evolution of technology.

This research paper forms a joint report on how these disruptive technologies have impacted East and Southern African customs and trade. The account includes those technologies already impacting the current landscape and the expected impact. Thus, the aim is not to provide a snapshot in time but rather to create the foundation of a topic set to evolve the customs and trade landscape as we advance.

The paper delves into the potential benefits of new technologies, which can be tremendous for the region. A 2019 WCO report discussed several disruptive technologies in and around trade and customs. These technologies included:

1. Blockchain technology
2. Internet of Things
3. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML)
4. Biometrics
5. Drones
6. Virtual, augmented, and mixed reality
7. 3D printing

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(2) Rules of Origin - Within a preferential or free trade area such as the AfCFTA, the Rules of Origin (RoO) specify the conditions and criteria under which a party can claim origin status and subsequently benefit from the preferences offered by the trade agreement. For the World Customs Organization East and South African Regional Private Group (WCO ESA RPSG), these conditions have been highlighted at a continental kick-off conference on 19-20 July 2022 in Accra, Ghana, to lay the groundwork for collaboration between the private- and the public sector. Collaboration between the public- and private sectors is essential in ensuring that the gains to be made using an effective set of RoO are not undermined if such rules are not appropriately designed and enforced to support preferential trade liberalization.

As successfully represented at the WCO conference in Accra, Ghana, the RPSG encourages dialogue and engagement under the RoO framework, including the increased uptake of technology as an enabler of trade and streamlining the most effective RoO approach. Consequently, there is a need for effective integration of technologies and systems, such as E-CoO, aligning with the ASYCUDA and Interfront systems to ease the processes associated with the customs administrative compliance requirements related to the RoO and enhance trade under preferential or free trade agreements.

Lastly, for the efficient and effective functioning of RoO under the AfCFTA, the RPSG proposes the following: (1) Establish a small functional working group on the RoO. (2) Utilize the WCO Harmonized System Toolkit and link the tool to the Interfront/ASYCUDA system. (3) Establish a small research team from the ESA region to complement the WCO work. (4) Establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism in terms of E-CoO and other proposed measures and the implementation thereof by member states.

(3) Single Window Systems - The World Customs Organization, East, and Regional Private Sector Group (RPSG) recently drafted a concept note to outline the assessment of Single Window Systems (SWS) in various African countries. It has been determined that SWS positively impacts trade in these African countries; however, several areas are highlighted where SWS can improve.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, electronic submission of Customs documentation has become critical due to the significant digital shift experienced in the international trade environment. As a result, systems such as the Electronic Single Window have become an essential trade facilitation tool. A Single Window System (SWS) is an online platform where traders and other supply chain role-players can upload their customs-related documents without physically entering the relevant offices, where all government agencies can easily access the relevant documentation.

The assessment of SWS in various African countries determined that SWS positively impacts trade in these African countries; however, several areas are highlighted where SWS can improve. Data sharing, key risk indicators, SMART borders, and authorized economic operators are identified by the RPSG as critical aspects that need to be considered when implementing SWS, as well as how these aspects can complement SWS if implemented correctly.

Furthermore, several lessons were learnt from the implementation of SWS, such as (1) anticipating resistance as the benefits are not always clear, (2) securing a commitment from top-level government, and (3) considering institutional arrangements. (4) Be flexible, and (5) not all the African countries assessed implement the same SWS. (6) The private sector needs assistance, and (7) clarify the different risks in the supply chain movement. (8) There are no developed SWS in the SADC region, and (9) the

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capacity-building program needs to focus on the required skill sets.

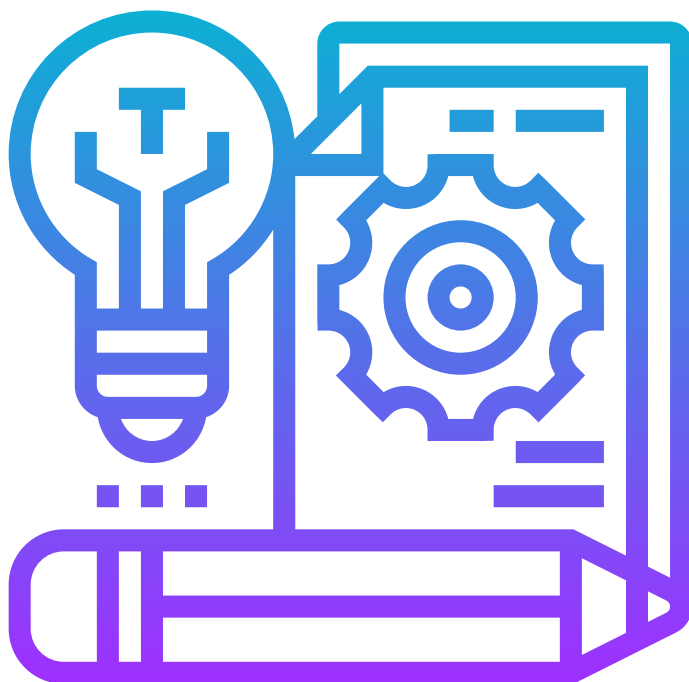
(4) Regional Customs Transit Guarantees – During the last 12 months, the WCO ESA RPSG drafted a concept note on the Regional Customs Transit Guarantees (RCTG) highlighting the group's view on the topic. The RCTG Scheme is a customs transit regime developed to facilitate the movement of goods under customs seals in the COMESA region which provides the required customs security and guarantee to the transit countries. The main objective of the RCTG scheme is to provide a consistent basis for transit movement throughout the region, where only one guarantee is used for the transit of goods through all transiting Member States. (I.e., protecting fiscus controls.)

Our view on the RCTG is captured within the strengthening of the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards (WCO SAFE), with particular emphasis on Customs-to-Customs operations captured in Pillar 1 and Customs-to-other government agencies operations present in Pillar 3 of the WCO SAFE. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing Ukrainian war, it is essential for additional costs, which possibly present enormous unintended consequences in our extended supply chains, to be avoided as far as possible as it could be devastating for the whole African continent. Moreover, the current economic climate we find ourselves in is far from ideal, as excessive inflation rates are paving the way for an economic recession which would add insult to injury for an already-wounded continent.

5. Focus Areas and Portfolios – The focus areas of the RPSG for 2023 will remain, among others, the AEO, digitalization, and coordinated border management which could be linked to Single Windows and OSBPs. However, the ROCB requested that gender is also brought in as an additional portfolio. Although the private sector may have a different view on this, the RPSG agreed to bring

gender in as an additional portfolio which can be debated on the platform to see whether an alignment exists with SADC, the ESA Business Council, and the AU.

The portfolios of 2023 are identified as the following (a) AEO Programme, (b) implementation and monitoring of projects as per ESA-WCO-RPSG, (c) communication, awareness, and training, (d) digitalization, (e) coordinated border movement, and (f) the harmonization and simplification of policies.



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1.0 CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT NETWORK (CEN) MANAGEMENT

1.1 CEN Usage

- Thirteen (13) out of 19-member states recorded seizures in CEN during the Year representing a yearly of 68.42%. This figure shows a significant increase from the 42.11% that was recorded in the past two years.
- The number of entries uploaded onto the CEN system declined from 1, 397 entries last year to 1, 139 entries this year (an 18.47% percentage decline).
- Only three (3) Member States however, recorded more than 50 Entries during the period under review.
- The highest user remains South Africa with 725 entries for the year followed by Zimbabwe with 114 entries.

1.2 Seizures by country

Validated cases

Country	Number of Cases	%Age of Total
South Africa	725	63.65%
Zimbabwe	114	10.01%
Mauritius	56	4.92%
Namibia	52	4.57%
Malawi	44	3.86%
Kenya	43	3.78%
Uganda	35	3.07%
Angola	33	2.90%
Burundi	17	1.49%
Tanzania	14	1.23%
Botswana	4	0.35%
Zambia	1	0.09%
Mozambique	1	0.09%
Total	1139	100.00%

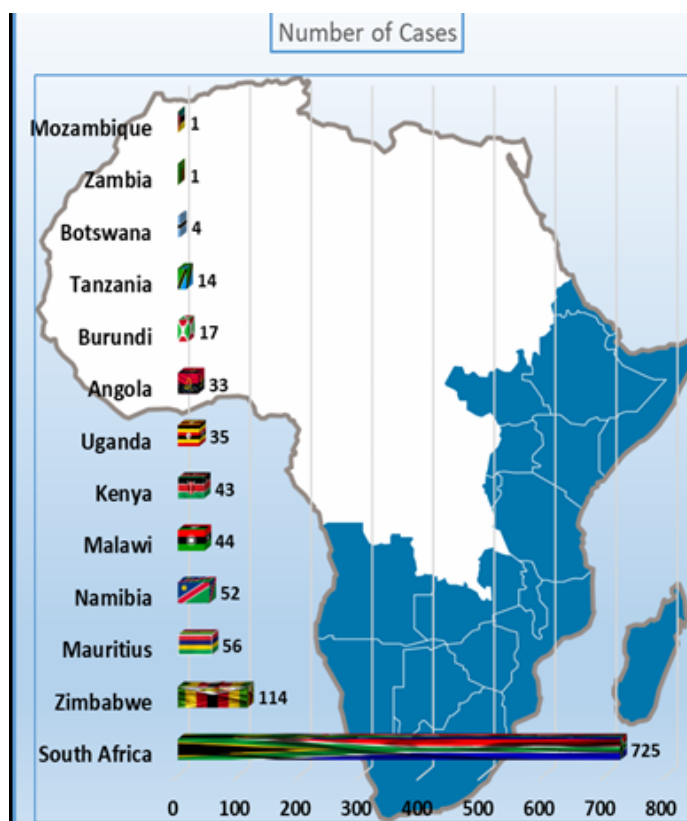
Comments

- South Africa recorded the highest number of Seizures with 725 cases uploaded onto the CEN platform. The figure represents 74% of the total entries made for the year.
- Zimbabwe was the second highest contributor to the system with 114 cases followed by Mauritius with 56 cases.
- Entries for South Africa however, declined from 1, 027 entries last year to 725 entries this year (a 29.41% decline), while Zimbabwe entries increased from 69 entries last year to 114 entries this current year (a 65.22% increase).



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- Six (6) countries did not upload any entries for the whole year (01/04/2022 up to 31/03/2023).



- Only four (4) countries recorded over 50 seizure cases. These countries are RSA, Zimbabwe, Mauritius and Namibia.
- The low usage of the system was mainly due to the nCEN systems that are down in some member states. The nCEN upgrades are taking long and thus members are unable to upload seizures onto the platforms.

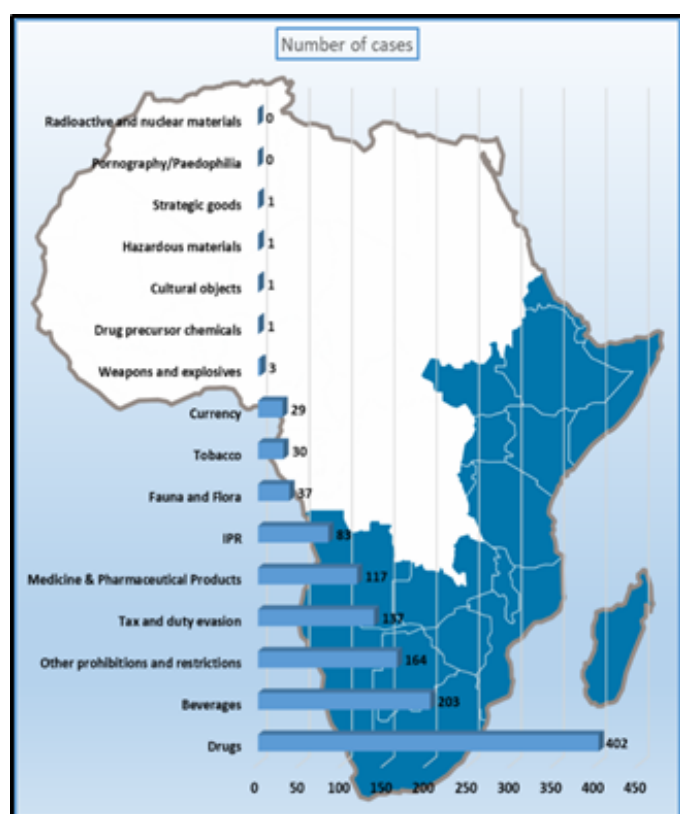
1.3 Seizures by Commodity

The total number of entries per commodity was 1,209 for the year.

Commodity	Number of cases	%Age Contr
Drugs	402	33.25%
Beverages	203	16.79%
Other prohibitions and restrictions	164	13.56%
Tax and duty evasion	137	11.33%
Medicine & Pharmaceutical Products	117	9.68%
IPR	83	6.87%
Fauna and Flora	37	3.06%
Tobacco	30	2.48%
Currency	29	2.40%
Weapons and explosives	3	0.25%
Drug precursor chemicals	1	0.08%
Cultural objects	1	0.08%
Hazardous materials	1	0.08%
Strategic goods	1	0.08%
Pornography/Paedophilia	0	0.00%
Radioactive and nuclear materials	0	0.00%
Total	1209	100.00%

- Drugs topped the list with 402 seizures (33.25% of total commodities seized). The figure represented a decrease in drug cases from last year where 634 cases were recorded (36.59% decrease).
- Beverages and Other Prohibitions & Restrictions ranked second and third on the list with 203 and 164 cases respectively.
- Again, no cases were uploaded for radioactive & nuclear materials and Pornography/Paedophilia.

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1.4 Year on year comparison (2021/22 – 2022/23)

Commodity	Number of cases 2023	Number of cases 2022	Variance	%age Change
Drugs	402	634	-232	-36.59%
Beverages	203	221	-18	-8.14%
Other prohibitions and restrictions	164	207	-43	-20.77%
Tax and duty evasion	137	81	56	69.14%
Medicine & Pharmaceutical Products	117	87	30	34.48%
IPR	83	25	58	232.00%
Fauna and Flora	37	0	37	
Tobacco	30	43	-13	-30.23%
Currency	29	36	-7	-19.44%
Weapons and explosives	3	17	-14	-82.35%
Drug precursor chemicals	1	10	-9	-90.00%
Cultural objects	1	0	1	
Hazardous materials	1	4	-3	-75.00%
Strategic goods	1	0	1	
Pornography/Paedophilia	0	0	0	
Radioactive and nuclear materials	0	0	0	
Total	1209	1365	-156	-11.43%

Comments

- Total cases per commodity fell by 12.90% from the previous year (from 1 365 cases last year to 1 209 cases in the year under review).

- Drug cases dropped from 634 the previous year to 402 cases in the year under review (a decline of 36.59%).
- The top three (3) commodities remained the same for the two years with drugs, beverages and other prohibitions and restrictions, respectively.

1.5 Value of the Contraband

Commodity	Value	%age of Total
Drugs	US\$1,857,438.00	77.47%
Medicine & Pharmaceutical Products	US\$10,008,662.00	14.95%
Other prohibitions and restrictions	US\$2,731,805.00	4.08%
Fauna and Flora	US\$775,048.00	1.16%
Currency	US\$560,636.00	0.84%
Tobacco	US\$476,401.00	0.71%
IPR	US\$325,529.00	0.49%
Tax and duty evasion	US\$178,497.00	0.27%
Beverages	US\$19,741.00	0.03%
Drug precursor chemicals	US\$6,125.00	0.01%
Cultural objects	US\$0.00	0.00%
Hazardous materials	US\$0.00	0.00%
Pornography/Paedophilia	US\$0.00	0.00%
Radioactive and nuclear materials	US\$0.00	0.00%
Strategic goods	US\$0.00	0.00%
Weapons and explosives	US\$0.00	0.00%
	US\$66,939,882.00	100.00%

Comments

- The total value of contraband seized during the year was 66 939 882.00 down from USD131 392 035.00 the previous year.
- Top of the list was Drugs with USD51 857 438.00 worth of drugs being seized in the region during the year under review. This figure represented 77.47% of the total value of seized commodities reported onto the CEN platform.

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- Medicine & Pharmaceutical products ranked second with USD10 008 662.00 worth of contraband seized. Third on the list was Other Prohibitions and Restrictions with USD2 731 805.00 worth of goods seized.
- Only three (3) commodities had more than USD1million worth of goods seized.
- The top three (3) commodities remained the same for the two years with drugs, beverages and other prohibitions and restrictions, respectively.

1.6 Year on year comparison (2021/22 – 2022/23)

Commodity	2023	2022	%age change
Drugs	US\$51,857,438.00	US\$24,023,547.00	115.86%
Medicine & Pharmaceutical Products	US\$10,008,662.00	US\$6,270,874.00	59.61%
Other prohibitions and restrictions	US\$2,731,805.00	US\$88,396,303.00	-96.91%
Fauna and Flora	US\$775,048.00	US\$347,661.00	110.81%
Currency	US\$560,636.00	US\$97,462.00	475.24%
Tobacco	US\$476,401.00	US\$63,159.00	654.29%
IPR	US\$325,529.00	US\$924,754.00	-64.80%
Tax and duty evasion	US\$178,497.00	US\$423,583.00	-57.86%
Beverages	US\$19,741.00	US\$63,131.00	-68.73%
Drug precursor chemicals	US\$6,125.00	US\$10,761,561.00	-99.94%
Cultural objects	US\$0.00	US\$0.00	
Hazardous materials	US\$0.00	US\$0.00	
Pornography/Paedophilia	US\$0.00	US\$0.00	
Radioactive and nuclear materials	US\$0.00	US\$0.00	
Strategic goods	US\$0.00	US\$0.00	
Weapons and explosives	US\$0.00	US\$0.00	
Total	US\$66,939,882.00	US\$131,392,035.00	-49.05%

- The greatest increase in the total value of commodities seized was recorded for Tobacco with a 654.29% increase from USd63 159.00 in the previous year to USD476 401.00 in the year under review.

- The value of goods seized due to Other Prohibitions & Restrictions fell from USD88 396 303.00 in 2022 to USD2 731 805.00 in the current year (a 96.91% decline). This commodity fell from being the highest to the third highest in the current year.
- The value of Drug precursor chemicals fell by 99.94% (from USD10 761 561.00 to USD6 125.00). This represented the highest decline for all commodities.

1.7 Significant Seizures (Per commodity)

1.7.1 Drugs

Drugs worth a total of USD51 857 438.00 were seized in the region during the period under review. The tree biggest entries on the CEN system were:

- 785kgs Crystal Meth worth USD13 839 587.00 that was seized at an airport in Johannesburg, RSA on 26/08/2022.



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b) 567kgs Crystal Meth valued at USD10,132,626.00, seized at Johannesburg Airport, RSA on 27/01/2023.



c) 264Kgs of Cocaine valued at USD6 832 339.00, seized at a Seaport in Durban on 18/06/2022.



1.7.2 Medicine and Pharmaceutical Products

USD10,008,662.00 worth of medicine and pharmaceutical products were seized during the year 2022/2023. The biggest seizures were reported by RSA:

a) 1,365,000 sexual enhancement tablets valued at ZAR136,500,000.00 seized at Johannesburg Airport on 25/01/2023.



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b) 299,800 tablets of Erectile Dysfunction Medication (sexual enhancements) valued at ZAR 29,980 000.00 seized at a Mail Centre in Johannesburg on 25/11/2022.



1.7.3 Other Prohibitions and Restrictions

A total of USD2,731,805.00 worth of goods were seized due to other prohibitions and restrictions. The following were the outstanding entries uploaded onto the CEN:

a) 40 000 blank Turkish visas seized at a Mail Centre in **Johannesburg** on 14/08/2022. The blank visas were valued at USD2,318,461.00.



a) 29kgs of Planta (Conophytum Succulents and Geophyte Plants) valued at USD353,667.00. The plants were seized at **OR Tambo International Airport** on 05/01/2023.

1.7.4 Fauna & Flora

The total value of Fauna and Flora entries uploaded onto the CEN system for the year was USD775 048.00. The two outstanding entries were:



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a) 30.7kgs Rhino horns valued at USD242 088.00 seized at an Airport in Johannesburg on 28/04/2022.

b) 24.975kgs Rhino horns worth USD192 015.00 seized at an Airport in Johannesburg, RSA on 02/06/2022.



1.7.4 Tobacco

The two outstanding seizures reported onto the CEN system for the ESA region were:

a) 7 000 000 pieces of cigarettes seized in Lilongwe, Malawi on 26/08/2022. The cigarettes were valued at USD151 513.00.

b) 168 pieces of Molasses weighing 1 240kgs seized at Johannesburg Airport on 22/07/2022. The consignment was valued at USD23,975.00

2.0 INTELLIGENCE PRODUCTS

Alert Messages

		
WCO RILO-ESA ALERT 02-2022		
6.55KGS CRYSTAL METH FROM RSA TO AUSTRALIA CONCEALED IN GIFT BOXES.		
Date: 25 February 2022	Contact: RILO-ESA Regional Intelligence Liaison Office for East & Southern Africa Zimbabwe Revenue Authority 10th Floor ZB Centre, Cnr First Street / Nkomo Nkhumuh Ave Harare, Zimbabwe Direct line: +263 242773143 E-Mail: riilo-esa@zimra.co.zw	
Origin: Republic of South Africa		
Commodity: Crystal Meth		

Drafted and distributed the 13 Alert messages during the year.

- **WCO RILO-ESA Alert 05 - 2022:** Seizure of 208kgs Cannabis at Forbes Border Post - Zimbabwe.
- **RILO-ESA Alert 06 - 2022:** Seizure of 3.5kgs Crystal Meth and 8kgs Heroin concealed in Woven Baskets (False Compartments).
- **WCO RILO-ESA Alert 06 - 2022:** Cannabis parcels seizures at Mail Centres in RSA destined for the UK.
- **WCO RILO-ESA Alert 08 - 2022:** 136kgs heroin and 19kgs crystal meth concealed in charcoal from Mozambique to RSA.
- **WCO RILO-ESA Alert 09 - 2022:** Method used to identify Illicit Cigarettes -Cigarette Pallet Markings.
- **WCO RILO-ESA Alert 10 - 2022:** Seizures of 3 consignments containing 23.27kgs Crystal Meth concealed in tennis balls and Chargers from RSA to Australia.
- **WCO RILO-ESA Alert 11 - 2022:** 40, 000 Blank Turkish Visas seized at a Mail
- **WCO RILO-ESA Alert 12 - 2022:** Seizure of Heroin at Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport in Zimbabwe.

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- WCO RILO-ESA Alert 13 - 2022: 264kg Cocaine and 785kg Crystal Meth seized at a Seaport and Airport in South Africa.
- WCO RILO-ESA Alert 14 - 2022: Seizure of Heroin at Johannesburg South Africa Mail Centre from USA.
- WCO RILO-ESA Alert 15 - 2022: Seizure of Crystal Meth moulded in wheel alignment parts at Johannesburg Express Courier South Africa.
- WCO RILO-ESA Alert 16 - 2022: 195kg Cocaine from Mozambique to South Africa seized at Komatipoort.
- WCO RILO-ESA Alert 17 - 2022: Possible illicit goods and narcotics from RSA to Qatar.
- WCO RILO-ESA Alert 18 - 2022: Seizure of exotic turtles at Lusaka International Airport.
- WCO RILO-ESA Alert 01 - 2023: EK764-FEDEX-Target (RSA to Dubai).
- WCO RILO-ESA Alert 02 - 2023: Firearm Silencers from RSA to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- WCO RILO-ESA Alert 03 - 2023: Crystal Meth seizures for January 2023 – express courier and airport.
- WCO RILO-ESA Alert 04 - 2023: High-risk parcel from Cape Town, South Africa to Amsterdam, Netherlands.

RILO ESA Newsletter

Produced and circulated two half-year RILO ESA Newsletters covering periods:



January to June 2022, and
July to December 2022.

Analysis

Drafted and circulated an analysis report entitled:

- WCO RILO ESA Conveyance Analysis for the First Quarter 2022: A Closer Look at the Preferred Methods of Conveyances – Trends and New Routes

This analysis was based on seizures that were reported for the period 01 January 2022 to 31 March 2023.

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3.0 INFORMATION & INTELLIGENCE EXCHANGE



There were other alert messages that we received from RILOs AP, ECE, and WE that were directed to specific countries for high-risk consignments. These were shared and feedback given.

Received and circulated Infor Magazines from RILO WE and RILO ECE.

Received and shared information and alerts from member states to other RILOs and fellow ESA member states. Most of the alerts and requests for information were from RSA, Namibia and Mozambique.

4.0 JOINT OPERATION / PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Invitations to participate in various joint operations were received and cascaded accordingly. There was an increase in the uptake and participation in the Operation Stop II by Member States in the Region. The RILO ESA office continuous to encourage all Member States to keep up the good work and continue participating in such operations to enhance effectiveness in curbing smuggling in the region and beyond.

- **Operation STOP II**

Two additional members from the ESA region, (Ethiopia and Uganda) participated in Operation STOP II, Phase 3. These added to the initial 15 that had participated in the previous edition of the operation. Operation STOP II, Phase 3 was held between 20 April 2022 and 04 May 2022.



A two-day workshop was held for the two new participants:

- Ethiopia: 23 – 24 February 2022
- Uganda: 14 – 15 March 2022.
- RILO ESA members attended virtual Operation STOP II Regional Workshop for Phase 3 on 13/4/2022.
- Attended a virtual Operation Stop II workshop held on 9/06/2022.

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• Operation Thunder

Operation Thunder 2022 was held from 03 to 30 October 2022.

A pre-operational workshop was held in Pretoria RSA from 3-5 October 2022. Participants from administrations in Africa and the RILOs attended this workshop.

• Operation DEMETER VIII

Operation Demeter VIII was held on the following dates:

- Pre-operational phase from 18 July to 30 September 2022.
- Operational Phase from 1 October to 31 October 2022.
- Post-operational phase from November to 15 December 2022.

Two (2) Pre-operational workshops were held:

- From 23 to 26 August in Kampala, Uganda and
- From 29 August to 1 September in Lusaka, Zambia.

• Operation against illicit trade in tobacco: ESA Region

A committee was set up for operation SITT (Operation Stop Illicit Trade in Tobacco).

The committee is comprised of the RILO ESA member staff and NCPs from Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, RSA, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Terms of reference for the committee were drafted and circulated to all members.

The committee is however, still to meet and deliberate on the operation terms, guidelines and dates.

5.0 RILO ESA WEBSITE

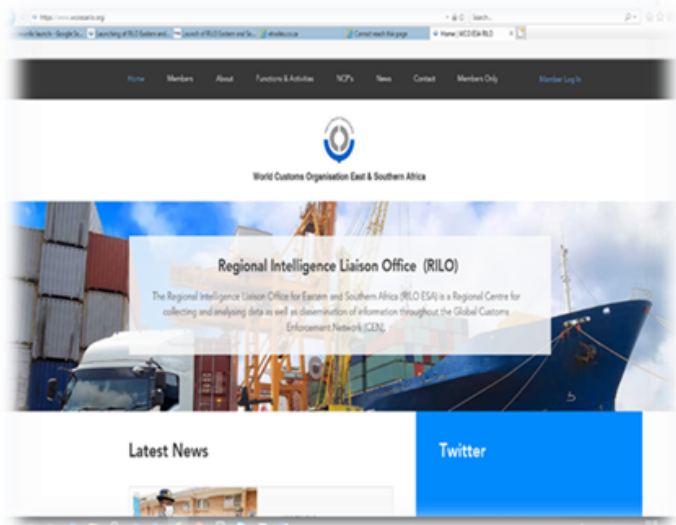
- [The RILOESA Website \(www.wcoesarilo.org\)](http://www.wcoesarilo.org)

The RILO ESA website is up and running.

- New stories were added to the site although a lot needs to be done by all member states to improve the website.
- A RILO ESA website committee was formed as was recommended during the 19th Administrative NCP meeting held in Namibia. The team comprises the RILO ESA staff and NCPs from Burundi, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia and RSA.
- Terms of reference for the committee were drafted and circulated to all members.
- A training session was held for the committee by the website developers on 29 November 2022.
- RILO ESA staff requested and were afforded a refresher training session by the developers again on 30 March 2023.



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6.0 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

- **19th NCP Annual Administrative Meeting**

The 18th Annual Administrative Meeting of the National Contact Point (NCP) for the World Customs Organisation (WCO) Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO) Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) was held in a blended fashion this year. The physical meeting was held in Namibia from 23 – 25 August 2022.

The Theme for the meeting was **“Data driven technologies: Rethinking our collaborations, making intelligence sharing simple”**. The Theme was motivated by the need to revive the RILO ESA network as well as to increase the usage of customs enforcement tools by member states. It was also in line with the theme of World Customs International day commemorated in January 2022 under the theme **“Scaling up customs digital transformation by embracing a Data culture and building a Data Ecosystem”**.

The Namibian Revenue Agency Commissioner MR. Sam Shivute officially opened the 19th NCP meeting.

11 out of 19 countries presented their country reports. The eight (8) who did not present did not give any excuse or communicate which is sad as the theme was about **rethinking collaboration, increasing communication skills**.

If the member states were facing any challenges communication is key.

Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Seychelles, Angola, Botswana Namibia, Burundi, Kenya, Mauritius, Madagascar presented their country reports which detailed some of their achievements, analysis as well as the challenges being faced.

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Commitments made:

- RILO ESA to assist with information requests to and from other RILOs
- Continuous exchange of intelligence with RILO ESA members and other RILOs
- Have the website timeously updated with additional people given administration roles. The additional people to include RILO officers, NCPs from the French speaking and Portuguese speaking countries. A fair representation of the East and Southern parts of the region was also considered.
- A committee to be formed for operation SITT (Operation Stop Illicit Trade in Tobacco).
- To use the desktop app, CENcomm to capture seizure cases to CEN.
- To utilise RILO ESA office when needing training or any assistance in uploading files to CEN
- Member states agreed to collaborate, share information and improve in submitting cases in CEN
- RILO ESA to look into best practices for drug seizure process

Other Meetings

Attended the following meetings:

- The Head RILO ESA attended the RTC/RSG/GC meetings in Mauritius.
- Attended virtual WCO-RILOs/INCB-RTOs Regional Technical officers TEAMS meeting held on 9/05/2022.
- Attended a virtual SADC-TWIX Regional General meeting that was held on 17/05/2022.



- Attended a SADC-TWIX webinar meeting on Illegal shark fin trade in Southern Africa – a demonstration of innovative identification tools on 19 August 2022
- Attended 4 webinars for Operation DEMETER held on 1, 2, 12 and 16 September 2022
- Attended the WCO RILO Eastern and Central Europe and Western Europe webinar on Information Exchange Services and Tools for Customs Officer on 29 September 2022.
- Attended IWT workshop in South Africa held from 26- 30 September 2022
- Attended Operation DEMETER pre-operational phase workshop held on 27 July 2022.
- The Head RILO ESA attended the WCO ESA Regional Training Centres (RTC) Heads meeting held in Antananarivo, Madagascar between 21 & 22 November 2022.
- The Head RILO ESA also attended the 36th Regional Steering Group (RSG) meeting held in Antananarivo, Madagascar between 23 & 25 November 2022.

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7.0 LEARNING AND GROWTH

- Received further training on the Website Management
- ITrained in CENComm and other CEN Uploadsb

8.0 RECOMMENDATIIONS

- Member States encouraged to upgrade their nCEN to the latest Version. Assistance to be sought from the WCO to assist with the quick upgrade of the nCEN systems in member states.
- Member states to capture and submit their seizures for data analysis and sharing, timeously.
- Member States encouraged to utilise the WCO Tools
- Member states with training or other technical needs encouraged to notify the RILO and WCO for facilitation of assistance.
- Members who need country specific analysis done may contact the RILO ESA office.

Sitheni M Ncube
Head RILO ESA

ROCB STAFF ESTABLISHMENT

The current ROCB staff comprises the Director, two Programme Officers, Finance Officer, ICT Officer, Administrator and Finance & Administrative Assistant . All staff are from Kenya. The office received virtual support from the following Members: Botswana, Mauritius, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe.



LARRY LIZA
DIRECTOR



FAITH MOSONGO
PROGRAMME OFFICER



ELIZABETH KAMUNYU
PROGRAMME OFFICER



SAMUEL WACHIURI
FINANCE OFFICER



JAMILAH MUTAH
**FINANCE & ADMINISTRATIVE
ASSISTANT**



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