

ESA Newsletter

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2023

MAURITIUS ELECTED AS NEW ESA VICE CHAIR



ROCB

East and Southern Africa

World Customs Organization

Thank You Madagascar!



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Editorial

We present the latest edition of the ESA Newsletter, highlighting recent achievements in Customs activities across East and Southern Africa. Let's delve into the exciting updates from our region!

During this elections period, we are thrilled to share that Mauritius was elected as the new ESA Region Vice Chair, succeeding Zimbabwe. We look forward to Mauritius' invaluable leadership in our efforts towards sustainable development. We also pledge our commitment to the new leadership of the region, with South Africa deputizing and Madagascar serving as the additional member to the Policy Commission.

Furthermore, we applaud the elections of Mr. Edward Kieswetter (South Africa) as the WCO Council Chairperson and Mr. Ian Saunders (United States of America) as the new Secretary General of the World Customs Organization.

In this edition, we feature Kenya and Zambia showcasing their National Customs Laboratories (NCLs), responsible for scientific examination and inspection of suspicious cargo. We also highlight the WCO's support to Ethiopia through the HS Africa Programme and Malawi's advanced training on the Harmonized System to address classification challenges. The JICA project has improved operations at three one-stop border posts in southern Africa, while Malawi's WCO A-CIP Programme experts discuss transparency and integrity waiver systems. The RTC Mauritius hosted a sub-regional workshop on financial intelligence compendium.

As you continue reading, you will learn about Namibia's efforts to enhance competency development on tariff classification and Comoros' progress on Post-Clearance Audit implementation, among many other captivating Customs stories.

The East & Southern Africa region continues to make remarkable strides in Customs activities. As we move forward, it is crucial to maintain our momentum and explore innovative solutions to address emerging issues. Together, we can create an environment that promotes trade facilitation, economic integration, revenue mobilization, security, compliance & enforcement, professionalism, and partnerships for the benefit of ESA.

Acknowledgment

Botswana Unified Revenue Service
Comoros Customs
Ethiopian Customs Commission
Kenya Revenue Authority
Malawi Revenue Authority
Mauritius Revenue Authority
Mozambique Tax Authority
Namibia Revenue Agency
Zambia Revenue Authority
Zimbabwe Revenue Authority
East African Community
Japan International Cooperation Agency
Regional Private Sector Group
South African Development Community
World Customs Organization

Editorial

Larry Liza - Editor in Chief
Faith Mosongo - Programme Officer and Editor
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Mr. Larry Liza
Director

A Season of Elections

The 29th ESA Region Governing Council during their meeting held in Antananarivo, Madagascar in May 2023 elected Mauritius as the new ESA Vice Chair taking over from Zimbabwe who chaired the region for the last two years.



Mr. Vivekanand Ramburun, Mauritius

Elsewhere, the Customs Directors General representing the 185 Members of the World Customs Organization (WCO) elected Ian Saunders as the Organization's new Secretary General for a five-year term as of 1st January 2024 and Mr. Edward Kieswetter as the WCO Council Chairperson during their meeting held in Brussels Belgium in June 2023.



Mr. Ian Saunders, WCO Secretary General



Mr. Edward Kieswetter, WCO Council Chairperson

New ESA Leadership

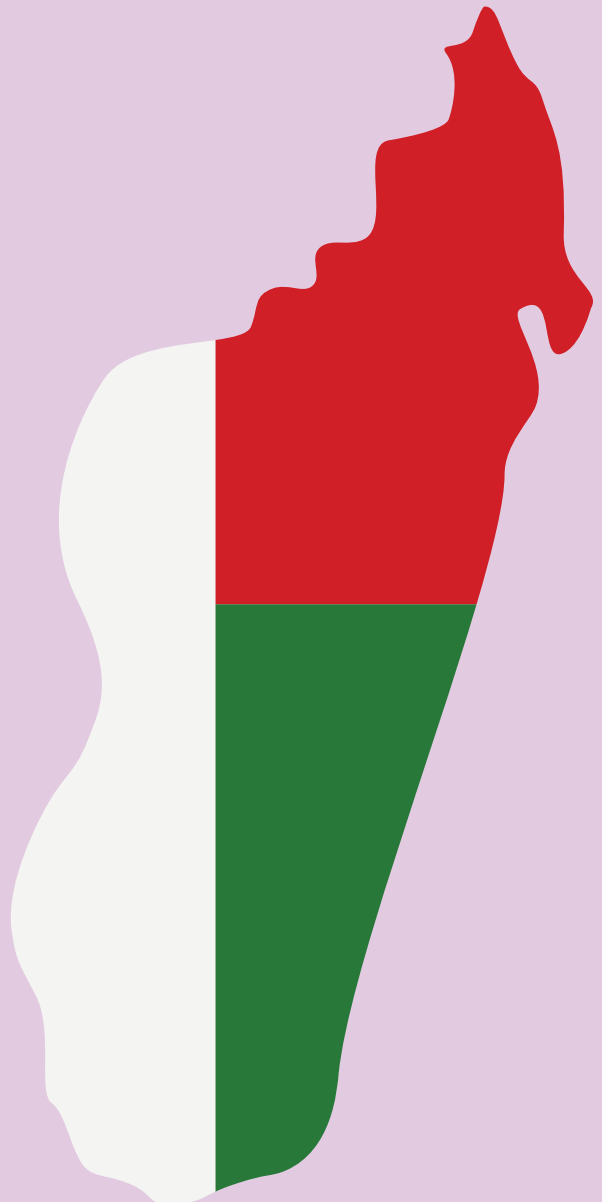
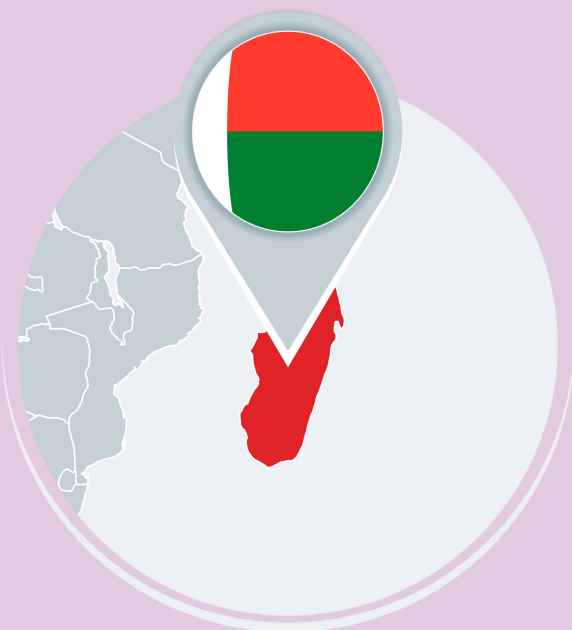
Position	Leadership
Vice Chair	Mauritius 
Deputy Vice Chair	South Africa 
Additional Member to the Policy Commission	Madagascar 
WCO Finance Committee Representative	Rwanda 
WCO Audit Committee Representative	Botswana Malawi  
Regional Finance and Governance Committee (FGC) Representatives	Burundi  Lesotho  Zambia  Zimbabwe 

29th East & Southern Africa Governing Council (GC) Meeting



The 29th GC meeting was hosted by Malagasy Customs in Antananarivo, Madagascar which take place on the 11th to 13th May 2023.

The opening remarks were made by Mr. Lainkana Ernest, the host and Director General of Madagascar Customs, welcomed all delegates and thanked the region for the hosting opportunity provided to Madagascar. Other speakers were the former WCO ESA Vice Chair, Mr. Batsirai Chadzingwa (Zimbabwe), Mr. Kunio Mikuriya, the Secretary General of the World Customs organization and the Honourable Rindra Hasimbelo Rabarinirinarison, Guest of Honour and Minister of Economy and Finance (Madagascar).



KRA Inspection and Testing Centre

The Kenya Revenue Authority Inspection and Testing Centre is a laboratory mandated to conduct scientific examination and inspection technology in support of revenue and enforcement functions. It provides testing and science based technical advisory services to facilitate informed decision concerning the nature and description of trade commodities and protection of the environment society against illicit movement of goods. I&TC collaborates with all departments of KRA and other partner government agencies such as, the Department of Criminal Investigation, Kenya Bureau of Standards, Ministry of Petroleum and Mining, Water Resource Authority, Government Chemist, Kenya Accreditation Service, and Proficiency Testing Service Providers.

The laboratory handles approximately 120 cases per month. The cases cover a range of issues as follows; verification of goods, HS classification, control on trade of narcotics, and control of illegal imports.

I&TC has recorded significant milestones attributed to acquisition of modern testing equipment and improved staff capacity through continuous training that has facilitated rapid and accurate testing and reporting. The laboratory has developed and equipped its Satellite Laboratory in Mombasa, the main port of entry for goods in Kenya. It has also facilitated benchmarking visits from Tanzania, Uganda and South Sudan, to establish and enhance operations of Customs Laboratories in their respective administrations.

Currently, the laboratory function has a staff establishment of 17 Chemists registered with the Kenya Chemical Society. There is a need for additional staff capacity and training, funding for its projects, expanded testing, and acquisition of an automated information management system. Kenya's I&TC aspires to become a Regional Centre of excellence in scientific advisory services facilitating tax and customs compliance through implementing its strategic objectives aimed at increasing customer satisfaction and service delivery, improving quality of processes and strengthening partnership and collaborations.

Article by
Loice Akello & Lilian Ochieng,
 Kenya Revenue Authority



Moses Kibe/KRA performs an analysis of sugars using a High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) apparatus at the KRA Laboratory



Maimuma Bashir/KRA checks the density of a solvent sample using a density meter at the KRA Laboratory



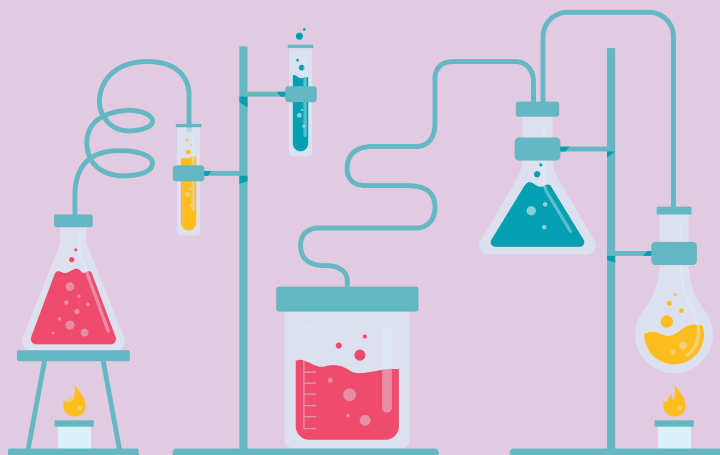
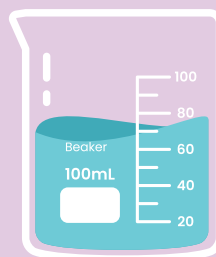
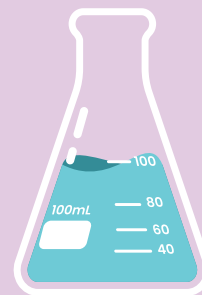
Zambia Revenue Authority Customs Laboratory

The ZRA laboratory began its operation in 2017 as part of the Mineral Value Chain Monitoring initiative to monitor the value of minerals traded in and out of the country. The Customs Services Division is its main client; others include the Investigations, Indirect Taxes, Direct Taxes as well as the Excise Divisions of ZRA. Additionally, the laboratory collaborates with partner government agencies such as the Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development, Zambia Bureau of Standards, and other private comparator laboratories for quality assurance. On average, the Lab handles between 3 and 5 cases per month, mostly being cases of misclassification and undervaluation.

The laboratory currently has three Chemists with a minimum requirement of a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry. While the laboratory has not received requests from other countries to aid them in undertaking confirmatory analysis of materials, it has provided many benefits to the ZRA in its quest to optimize revenue from trade in minerals and mineral products and contribute to trade facilitation.

While the laboratory has the technical capacity to test other materials and has previously analyzed fuels, edibles oils and chemicals, the following challenges have been experienced; limited scope restricted to mineral analysis and specific gravity tests for select materials, inadequate equipment for verifying materials other than minerals, insufficient infrastructure to accommodate more staff and equipment and inadequate staff complement to ensure separation of duties.

To adapt to the evolving business landscape, there is a need to enhance the scope of product coverage by building capacity and formalizing collaborations with other government agencies and laboratories, this would further support its efforts towards being recognized as a regional laboratory, serving countries within SADC and COMESA.



The East and Southern Africa Regional Workshop on Rules of Origin, Mombasa, Kenya.



The World Customs Organization (WCO), under the framework of the EU-WCO Rules of Origin Africa Programme, funded by the European Union, and in partnership with the WCO East and Southern Africa Regional office for capacity building (WCO ESA ROCB) held a Regional workshop on Rules of Origin for the East and Southern Africa Region. The workshop was held from 5th to 9th June 2023, in Mombasa, Kenya. The workshop was attended by all ESA members as well as representatives from the Regional Training Centre (RTC) Kenya, AfCFTA Secretariat, East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU).

The workshop was aimed at enhancing the capacity of experts from the region in the area of rules of origin and served as a platform for comprehensive and detailed discussions on a wide range of aspects and challenges related to the implementation of the Rules of Origin within the African context including the AfCFTA, the Tri-partite and other relevant trade agreements. The workshop was also an occasion to hold consultations with selected Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in the region and their member countries on rules of origin matters.



African Heads of Customs Laboratories Explore Best Practices from Regional Customs Laboratories of WCO Asia Pacific Region



The World Customs Organization, in partnership with the WCO Asia Pacific ROCB and the Japan Regional Customs Laboratory, organized a study visit for Heads of African Customs laboratories from 18th to 20th April 2023, in Kashiwa, Japan. The Study visit was conducted under the EU-WCO HS Africa Programme, funded by the European Union, at the margins of the second regional meeting of the Heads of the WCO Regional Customs Laboratories of the Asia Pacific Region.

Delegates from Ghana, Kenya and Uganda, as well as Sudan with virtual presence, had the opportunity to attend the proceedings of the meeting and engage in rich exchanges with representatives of Regional Customs Laboratories from India, Japan and South Korea in person, and with China and Indonesia virtually.

The study visit was a huge opportunity for African partners to learn more about the functioning of RCLs, their work organization methods, infrastructure and technology. The presentations of the Five Regional Customs Laboratories, RILO, WCO Regional Development Manager, ROCB and the Vice-Chair from the Asia Pacific region, gave a comprehensive picture on the ongoing work, the latest developments, the challenges, the capacity building actions and cooperation opportunities in the work and management of regional customs laboratories.

This study visit also intervened in complementarity with the WCO Regional Customs Professional Programme funded by Japan and Korea Customs which is benefiting African administrations as well. Two countries benefiting from the last edition of the programme (Sudan and Uganda) had the chance to further build up on the acquired knowledge and expertise.

The study visit was highly appreciated by the African experts, who reiterated their administration's sustained commitment to further enhance Customs laboratory work in their countries based on the information received during the visit, and engage together to move towards setting up RCLs in Africa.

For more information, please contact hs@wcoomd.org.



WCO Supported Ethiopian Customs Commission in Building Capacity on the Harmonized System



From 25th to 28th April 2023, the Ethiopian Customs Commission hosted a National Advanced Workshop on the Harmonized System in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Workshop was delivered by experts from the WCO within the framework of the EU-WCO Programme for the Harmonized System in Africa (HS-Africa Programme), funded by the European Union, as part of the comprehensive package of assistance to support ECC's work on building capacity for Harmonized System classification.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Azizew Chanie Abebe, Customs Operation Deputy Commissioner of the Ethiopian Customs Commission, expressed his appreciation for the technical assistance provided so far by the WCO and expressed the hope that this assistance would be strengthened in the future. He pointed out that the training was very important for the ECC, as it was expected to help Customs officers enhance their HS classification skills.

The Workshop was attended by 40 Customs Officers from across different Customs Offices of the country and from the headquarters of the ECC. The objective of the course was to deliver advanced training on theoretical and practical aspects of the HS in the areas of mineral products, chemicals, medicaments versus food products, plastics, textiles and high-tech products, as well as to ensure that the participants understand the principles of tariff classification of goods in the HS. Moreover, the Workshop aimed at assisting the ECC in determining technical requirements for the establishment of a Customs Laboratory.

As part of the assistance to ECC's work, the WCO Secretariat purchased two microscopes and two balances, funded by the European Union within the framework of the EU-WCO Programme for the Harmonized System in Africa. The equipment was used for training purposes during the course to identify textile fibres and were handed over to the ECC after the Workshop.

For more details, please contact hs@wcoomd.org.



Malawi Tackles Challenges in Classification with Advanced Training on the Harmonized System



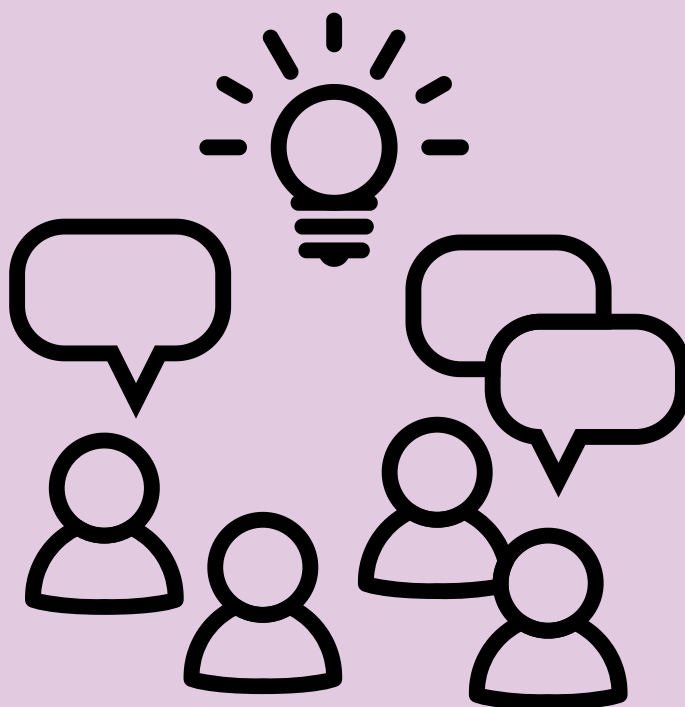
The World Customs Organization, in partnership with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), held an advanced HS training for Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA) from 17th to 21st April, 2023. The workshop, responding to a demand driven request, was organized under the Framework of the EU-WCO Programme for Harmonized System in Africa (HS-Africa Programme), funded by the European Union, and aimed to provide participants with an in-depth understanding of classification work with a focus on Chapters 27, 28, 29 and 30 of the HS as well as the principles governing the tariff classification of medicaments vs food stuffs, and parts and parts for general use, all identified as areas of specific interest by MRA.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Fredrick Mpeusa, MRA Commissioner Customs and Excise highlighted the timeliness and high relevance of the workshop as it constitutes an important contribution towards enhancing the competence of Customs officers in the area of tariff classification. He urged the participants to make the most out of the training to ensure uniform classification, collection of correct revenue and provision of correct statistics. Mr. Fredrick Mpeusa stressed that the training was particularly important as it focused on key areas in which MRA continues to face challenges in classification of commodities. He thanked the WCO and the European Union for the continued support on Capacity Building and modernization of tariff classification infrastructure.

The workshop was attended by 24 officers from different units of the MRA and border posts. Workshop participants examined a wide range of fundamental theoretical and practical aspects of the application of the HS in the identified Chapters of the HS.

The WCO experts adapted the content to provide exhaustive knowledge and skills on how best to navigate the HS to resolve MRA's everyday challenges in tariff classification.

For more information, please contact hs@wcoomd.org.



Border Community Sensitization at Two OSBPs in the JICA Project for Capacity Development on Smooth Operation of OSBPs on the North-South Transport Corridor



The Overall Project

This Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) technical cooperation project has been implemented since December 2020 to improve operations at three one-stop border posts (OSBPs) in Southern Africa including Chirundu and Kazungula. The planned Beitbridge OSBP was added to the project in the last quarter of 2022. The Project has supported several activities to improve border operations, including community sensitization workshops for border community residents.

The Community Sensitization Workshops (Chirundu and Kazungula)

The border community sensitization workshops were held separately on each side of the Chirundu and Kazungula OSBPs in mid-April 2023. A total of 1,035 community residents (475 in Zambia and 560 in Zimbabwe) attended the Chirundu workshops, on 13th April 2023 in Zambia and 14th April 2023 in Zimbabwe. A total of 790 residents (450 in Zambia and 340 in Botswana) attended the Kazungula workshops, on 19th April 2023 in Zambia and 20th April 2023 in Botswana.

The objectives of the border community sensitization workshops were to enhance understanding of OSBP operations among the community residents and border users and to provide opportunities for various border stakeholders to discuss concerns and questions related to border operations and user experiences.

These workshops were attended by border officers from each of the adjoining countries, which helped the officers share a common understanding of the concerns and interests of border community residents from both sides.

Moreover, the workshops were well supported by local governments and community leaders, who contributed by responding to questions and issues related to local politics and regulations.

In addition, the workshops provided a platform for learning and discussion relating to the benefits of the OSBPs and relevant concerns among various stakeholders. The dissemination of information through drama and poetry as well as interpretation in local languages helped community residents better understand OSBP operations and fully appreciate the benefits.

Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA) Officials and WCO A-CIP Programme Experts Discuss Transparency and Integrity in Duty Waiver Systems



From 8th to 12th May 2023, following several virtual workshops on Duty Waiver, an in-country mission was conducted by the WCO Anti-Corruption & Integrity Promotion (A-CIP) Programme in response to a specific need identified by Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA).

Following scoping activities conducted with MRA in 2020, an MRA A-CIP project plan was developed identifying priorities on which the WCO's technical assistance and capacity building (TACB) support under the Programme would focus. This in-country mission contributed to the specific priority, "strengthening of Customs procedures and practices for duty waiver", which is in line with the Revised Arusha Declaration key factor, Regulatory Framework.

The mission's main objective was to establish clear procedures to enable the implementation of the duty waiver policy in a streamlined and transparent manner.

Customs and Revenue officials holding key positions in areas like Internal Affairs, Internal Audit, Information Technology, Modernization, Investigations, Corporate Affairs, Policy Planning, and Enterprise Risk Management attended the meetings.

MRA and WCO experts reviewed the processes/procedures for waiver request application, decision-making and post-grant of waiver monitoring/follow-up. This activity also emphasized the importance of collective action to combat corruption and promote integrity.

The WCO A-CIP Programme supports more than 20 WCO Member administrations, with funding from Norad and Canada.

For more information, please contact:
capacity.building@wcoomd.org

RTC Mauritius Hosts a Financial Intelligence Compendium Sub-Regional Workshop



RTC Mauritius, as the Centre of Excellence for Compliance and Enforcement for the ESA region is fully committed to play a leading role in the fight against anti-money laundering and the financing of terrorism in the region. In this context, RTC Mauritius hosted a Financial Intelligence Compendium Sub-Regional Workshop from 30th May to 2nd June 2023 following an invitation from Mr Kunio Mikuriya, Secretary General of the World Customs Organisation, for Mauritius to join the Project OCTAGON.

Money laundering and the financing of terrorism are financial crimes with economic effects and are a big threat to global security and to the stability of the global financial system. Due to their unique positioning at all border areas; Customs has a crucial role to play in anti-money laundering activities. Illicit money enters the Customs domain after crossing international borders and very often, transnational criminal organizations disguise the origin of this illicit money from law enforcement authorities in order to move, place and use the money for their personal use and pursue their criminal operations.

Money laundering and tax evasion techniques and mechanisms evolve constantly and tax evaders are always finding new channels and new processes to launder the profits of their criminal activities.

The four-day workshop was facilitated by the WCO and aimed to share expertise and invaluable insights on the crucial matter of financial intelligence. During the workshop, technical experts from the EGMONT Group of FIUs also shared the best practices, exchanged knowledge and also identified emerging trends and challenges in the



From left to right: Mr. Dinay Reetoo, Member MRA Board and Chairperson, FIU, Mauritius; Mr. David Kane, Head AML/CFT Programme at the WCO; Mrs. Carine Charlette-Katinic, Director, FIU, Mauritius; Mr. Sudhamo Lal, Director-General, MRA; Mr. Vivekanand Ramburun, Director, Customs Department, MRA; Ms. Silvina Rivarola, ECOFEL Project Manager, Egmont Group; Mr. Sarwansingh Purmessur, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

world of Financial Intelligence and the means to fight against Money Laundering and financing of terrorism.

The Mauritius Revenue Authority strongly believes that a collaborative approach based on cooperation and the sharing of information between regulators, law enforcement agencies, and the private sector can be very effective in combating financial crime.



Article by:

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Namibia Revenue Agency Steps Up Efforts for Competency Development on Tariff Classification

From 8th to 12th May 2023, the Namibia Revenue Agency (NamRA) hosted a national workshop on the Harmonized System and commodity classification in Windhoek, Namibia. The workshop was delivered by two experts from the WCO within the framework of the EU-WCO Programme for the Harmonized System in Africa (HS-Africa Programme), funded by the European Union as part of the comprehensive package of assistance to support NamRA's work on competency development on Harmonized System and classification.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Willbroad S. Poniso, Head of Customs and Excise, highlighted that the aim of this course was that the participants would be adequately introduced and equipped with knowledge and skills to deal with the challenges that they might face at their respective duty stations. Some of these challenges are amongst others: misclassification of goods, non-declaration, non-stopping goods for physical examination and movement of goods either in transit or for warehousing purposes. He wished the participants all the success with the Harmonized System Intermediate Training Course and that they share the acquired knowledge with their colleagues at their respective duty stations to add value to NamRA core mandate of revenue collections.

In line with the strategic guidance on competency development, the participants have successfully undertaken the basic training through the HS Foundation e-learning course via the WCO CLiK! platform ahead of the workshop.

The objective of this course was to describe the structure of the HS Convention and to learn the basic principles of commodity classification, based on the General Rules for the Interpretation of the HS.

At the end of the workshop, Ms. Jacqueline Gawanas, Senior Manager of Windhoek Head Office, expressed her confidence in the practical benefits acquired by the participants that cover a wide range of topics on tariff classification issues, presented during the workshop.

For more details, please contact hs@wcoomd.org



EAC Secretariat to Begin Digitizing Imported Goods Tariffs



The East African Community (EAC) secretariat has commenced the process of digitizing its Common External Tariffs (CET).

The programme, being implemented with the support of the World Customs Organisation (WCO), is meant to enhance the private sector's participation in international trade.

Through the digitization of the CETs, the business community — exporters and importers — will have access to trade information from the private sector in international trade.

The platform, which is currently under development in partnership with Global Trade Solution (GTS), will enable seamless migration of the EAC CET during the transposition of the Harmonised System (HS).

It will provide information on the administration and management of the Duty Remission Scheme, the production of information and publication of other measures affecting the implementation of CET.

The platform will also include management of preferential tariff treatment on originating goods imported from Regional Economic Communities (RECs) where EAC partner states are members.

According to a statement from the EAC secretariat, the platform will be launched and made available for public use by June 30th.

Accessed electronically from both computers and mobile devices, the platform will contain searchable functionalities by tariff code or generic product description with data extraction for statistical purposes as may be required by users.

The EAC currently implements a four-band CET with a minimum rate of zero percent for raw materials and capital goods and 10 percent for intermediate goods not available in the region.

The other is 25 percent for intermediate goods available in the region and 35 percent for imported finished products available in the region.

The EAC secretariat says significant progress has been registered in the development of the platform, including the finalisation and beta-testing of some key modules.

Piloting of the system has been going on in a test environment on the EAC website since July 2020.

Authorised Economic Operator Programme Gains Momentum

The Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) on 1st June 2023, hosted a workshop to discuss the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) programme that was launched in Zimbabwe in 2013 and has been handling the certification of companies who join the programme.

Giving her welcome remarks, Acting Commissioner for Customs and Excise, Mrs Pauline Denhere said, "While international trade was an essential element for economic development, the global trading system had become vulnerable to terrorist exploitation. The role of Customs has become more important and prominent in addressing issues of terrorism in the international supply chain.

Customs has a unique role in increasing security while facilitating the legitimate cross-border movement of goods. Currently, Zimbabwe has accredited 12 companies as AEOs and through awareness workshops, it is my hope that business players will seek to join the program to enjoy the benefits of the AEO programme."

Weighing in on the same, European Union TAPEZA Project Expert, Mr. Christophe Ndayikengururukiye from Burundi said that the main reason why the project was in Zimbabwe was that Zimbabwe was a member of the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and at that level, Customs adopted the AEO framework.

"Zimbabwe is among the members who signed a letter of intent to implement this programme. This is an important programme to facilitate global trade speaking to Customs and the private sector to work hand in hand so as to secure the global supply chain," said Mr Ndayikengururukiye.

He said that the programme had three pillars namely Customs to customs, Customs to business and Customs to the private sector.

The workshop was aimed at encouraging business and ZIMRA to work together in identifying trade benefits thereby improving business competitiveness which then enhances the economic growth of the country.



Article by:

Chenayi Mack- Maponga:

Acting Manager Corporate Communications
Zimbabwe Revenue Authority



Comoros Customs Makes Progress on Post-Clearance Audit Implementation



From 2th to 5th May 2023, the Secretariat of the World Customs Organization (WCO), in cooperation with Comoros Customs, held a national workshop on post-clearance audit (PCA) in Moroni (Comoros). The workshop was funded by the China Customs Cooperation Fund (CCF China).

Twenty Customs managers working in the various central and regional control units took part in the workshop, which was delivered in French by two WCO-accredited operational and technical advisers on post-clearance audit. In his opening address, the Director General of Customs, Mr. Moustoifa Hassani Mohamed, expressed his sincere gratitude to the WCO Secretariat and CCF China for the support they had provided to Comoros Customs, and said that his Administration was set on a path of modernization, in order to ensure efficient post-clearance audit. This workshop was therefore important for building the Customs Administration's PCA capacity.

During the workshop, the participants were introduced to the various stages of the post-clearance audit cycle, as defined by the tools and instruments of the WCO and by Article 7.5 of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

The workshop included a theoretical technical component dealing with the various stages of the post-clearance audit cycle, for example control planning, targeting, data analysis techniques, pre-audit research and audit execution, and a practical technical component, during which the participants engaged in PCA-related role play, using an auditing approach based on the analysis of accounting and commercial documents, in order to bring to light any irregularities committed by the auditees.

During an exchange of views, the participants talked about the challenges of setting up a PCA mechanism, in particular the specific national economic and social circumstances, local trade practices and the human and technical capacities of Customs. On this basis, the WCO experts were able to prepare an overview of the specific needs to improve PCA implementation in Comoros.



WCO Raises Awareness of Mozambique Tax Authority on the Role of Customs in Enforcing Multilateral Environment Agreements

The WCO in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Program (Ozone Action) and the Basel Convention Secretariat, has conducted an awareness raising workshop for the Mozambique Tax Authority (AT) and officials from the Mozambique Ministry of Land and Environment (MTA), to sensitize their Customs departments on the Basel Convention and the Montreal Protocol. The workshop was held from 17th to 19th April in Maputo, Mozambique, under the auspices of the Trade Facilitation and Customs Modernization Programme for Sustainable Development in Sub-Saharan Africa (Sida-WCO TFCM Programme), with funding from the Government of Sweden.

The event emphasized the important role of Customs administrations in fighting against climate change and contributing to the sustainability of the global environment. In that regard, the WCO's role in cooperating with other global partners to ensure Customs administrations are effective in implementing Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) such as the Basel Convention on the control of the transboundary movement of hazardous waste, and the Montreal Protocol on the control of substances that deplete the ozone layer, was highlighted with a clear purpose. A team of experts from the WCO, UNEP and the Basel Convention Secretariat conducted interactive discussions and presentations on addressing the critical areas of work and cooperation for both Customs and Environment agencies to efficiently implement controls for the transboundary movement of hazardous waste, and ozone depleting substances regulated by the two agreements.

The participants benefitted from the workshop by enhancing their knowledge and understanding of the policies, trends and enforcement controls related to the Basel Convention and Montreal Protocol.

The Sida-WCO TFCM Programme is collaborating with the WCO Environment Programme and relevant international environmental organizations to provide technical assistance for selected Customs administrations in the SADC and EAC regions to address the trade related issues that adversely affect the environment while implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

For more information on the Sida-WCO TFCM Programme, kindly contact: capacity.building@wcoomd.org.



Kenya Customs Strengthens its National Pool of Rules of Origin Trainers

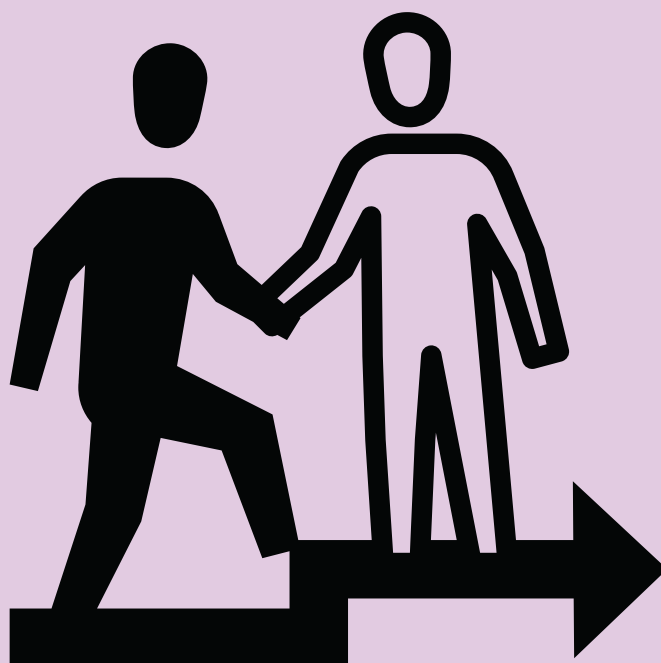
The World Customs Organization (WCO), under the framework of the EU-WCO Rules of Origin Africa Programme, funded by the European Union, and in partnership with the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) and the Kenya School of Revenue Administration (KESRA), held a national Train the Trainers workshop on rules of origin. The workshop was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 29th May to 2nd June 2023 to assist Kenya Customs in enhancing its knowledge and application of preferential rules of origin. The Train the Trainers workshop was held in parallel with a national workshop on rules of origin for KRA and other governmental and private stakeholders.

In his opening remarks during the joint opening session for the two workshops, Dr. Bernard Baimwera, Dean of Studies, Kenya School of Revenue Administration, representing the Commissioner of Customs, thanked the WCO and the EU for their support in building capacity on rules of origin and stressed that the success of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is based on rules of origin and the free movement of goods on the continent and that trade facilitation will help Africa rise. He also added that the partnership with the WCO bears benefits for the national Customs Administration, for the country as well as for the sustainable development of the African continent.

During the workshop participants worked on key concepts for proper origin determination and related operational and procedural issues mainly about the AfCFTA. They also focused on communication and training skills which will enhance the capacity of Customs trainers to further cascade their knowledge to colleagues as well as to other relevant stakeholders including economic operators.

The EU-WCO Rules of Origin Africa Programme will continue its work with Kenya Customs to equip Customs officials and relevant stakeholders with extended knowledge for efficient implementation and application of rules of origin.

For further information, please contact
EU-WCORoOAfrica.Program@wcoomd.org



Advancing Trade Facilitation and Border Security



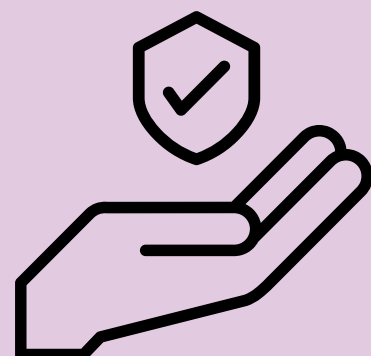
Customs administrations in the ESA region have achieved significant milestones this season and quarter, solidifying their role in facilitating international trade and safeguarding our borders. With a relentless commitment to excellence, these Customs and Border Control (C&BC) agencies have made remarkable strides.

One noteworthy highlight has been the successful implementation of modernized Customs procedures, leading to enhanced trade facilitation. By harnessing cutting-edge technologies and optimizing processes, Customs authorities have dramatically reduced clearance times, simplifying cross-border transactions. This streamlined approach has had a profound impact on businesses and traders, fostering economic growth and global competitiveness.

Collaboration has emerged as a driving force behind Customs operations. C&BC agencies have embraced partnerships with other government entities, international organizations, and the private sector. This collaborative approach has resulted in improved information sharing, intelligence-led enforcement, and more robust risk management capabilities. By working together, Customs administrations can effectively combat illicit trade, smuggling, and Customs fraud, ensuring the security and integrity of our supply chains.

Environmental sustainability has also been a key focus for Customs. Recognizing the importance of responsible practices, Customs administrations have embraced digitization and green technologies. The adoption of paperless transactions, electronic documentation, and eco-friendly procedures have significantly reduced the environmental impact of Customs operations. By prioritizing sustainable initiatives, Customs plays a crucial role in promoting a greener future.

Behind these achievements lies the unwavering dedication and professionalism of Customs officers. Their commitment to upholding integrity, professionalism, and transparency ensures the smooth functioning of Customs operations. Through their vigilance, Customs officers detect and deter illicit activities, protecting our nations from threats such as smuggling, counterfeit goods, and illegal trade practices.



Why Celebrate World Customs Day?



It was a beautiful 4th Thursday of the year. The room was filled with warmth and class as my colleagues and I ushered our stakeholders to their seats. It was my first time participating in any World Customs Day event in my entire seven years in Customs.

Taking part in organizing International Customs Day (ICD) was a privilege. I had a lot to learn in the process and I am delighted to say that the event went very well, even better than I anticipated. Our Chief guest, the Commissioner of Customs and Border Control at Kenya Revenue Authority, gave a powerful lecture on the history of Customs. She vividly explained the role that we, as Customs Officers play behind the scenes of international commerce and cross-border trade. The commissioner then congratulated all customs officers for their tireless efforts in ensuring border security as she pointed out the various working conditions and challenges that customs officers face in their day to day work. The lecture she gave captured this year's theme, **'Nurturing the next generation: promoting a culture of knowledge-sharing and professional pride in Customs.'** I came to understand the importance of knowing the background of Customs in addition to celebrating the tireless efforts of Customs Officers who strive to ensure smooth functioning of trade operations across our borders. Some of our Officers were recognized and awarded for their exemplary service in Customs.

International Customs Day

International Customs Day is held annually on January 26th, which honors the day in 1953 when the Customs Cooperation Council (CCC) was founded in Brussels, Belgium. Seventeen European countries attended this session. In 1994 the CCC was renamed World Customs Organization and today Customs organizations from 179 countries are WCO members. (National Day Calendar, 2022)

Article by **Lydia Ogotu**
Kenya Revenue Authority



Digitization for Efficient Customs Process by Kenya Revenue Authority

Embracing the wave of digital transformation throughout the international Customs organizations, Kenya, a WCO member, has made remarkable strides in adopting digital technologies to streamline Customs processes. WCO recommends strengthening coordinated border management through the integration of all the government organizations systems at entry and exit points in a single place commonly known as the single window system.

Kenya Revenue Authority, the lead agency, has been at the forefront of implementing this recommendation through the decommissioning of the Simba system and the full rolling out of the Integrated Customs Management Systems (iCMS). Through this, the cargo clearance period has been cut by half as manifests can be lodged 48hrs pre-arrival of cargo. This has also enhanced risk profiling of cargo hence minimizing risks by a high percentage at the entry and exit points.

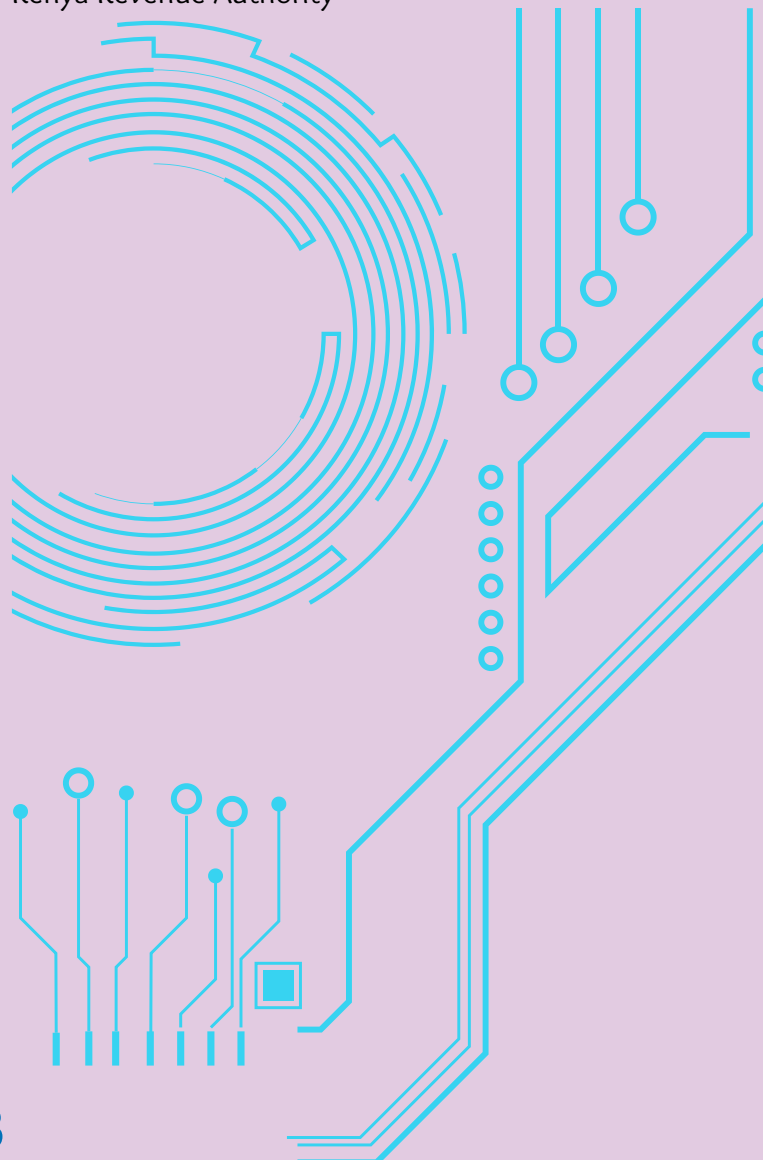
This season has also seen an increase in the installation of cargo scanners at most of the border stations while sourcing for other scanners for the remaining stations is underway. Cargo scanners have hugely reduced tax evasion through the concealment of cargo and also the importation of high-risk cargo without following due process. Scanners have also reduced cargo clearance time by half as most of the cargo does not undergo 100% verification.

Personally, as a Customs officer at Loitoktok Border station, appreciate the huge strides taken by the Authority to enhance trade facilitation while taking into consideration revenue collection. This has always been a challenge but as time goes by, we hope, through the support of the government and WCO, to do even better in the coming season.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish every Customs member both nationally and internationally a great season ahead as we close this.



Article by
Caleb Mayeku Wanjala
Customs Officer
Loitoktok Border
Kenya Revenue Authority



Retreat for the Botswana Unified Revenue Service Customs Services Division



The Botswana Unified Revenue Service (BURS) Customs Services Division is charged with among others, policy making, data analysis, fostering and maintaining strategic partnerships with all relevant stakeholders such as national and international organizations and donor agencies.

Taking into consideration that it is relatively the start of the 2023/24 performance year, it was found fit that staff working in the division commence the year with enthusiasm and a clear mental well-being to enable them carry out the division's mandate. The Customs Services staff therefore embarked on a three-day retreat from 24th to 26th May 2023 with the aim of ensuring that staff from the various units of the Division are motivated to work together, their strengths are developed, and to address any weaknesses and challenges the division is experiencing in general that affect performance.

As a means of building team work among staff, a number of team building activities and excursions took place. The staff left the retreat with a different mindset due to the mindset coaching and emotional Intelligence sessions that they went through. This programme was completed by a bonding session by staff in a more relaxed atmosphere over dinner, drinks and bonfire. Staff mingled freely during the session and generally expressed the benefits of the retreat and their anticipation towards the next retreat session.



JICA Enhances Partnership with EAC Secretariat



In February 2023, JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) deployed a Technical Advisor, Sawada Keisuke, to the Directorate of Customs of the EAC Secretariat. This deployment aims to strengthen Customs and trade facilitation in the region.

JICA has a longstanding commitment to One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs), focusing on infrastructure development, legal frameworks, procedural facilitation, and capacity development. These efforts have contributed to trade facilitation in the EAC region. JICA, in partnership with the WCO, has also initiated capacity development programs for Customs officers through the Master Trainer Program.

While previous JICA projects focused on specific EAC Partner States and borders, the current initiative from the EAC regional perspective aims to expand these efforts to benefit the entire region and all EAC Partner States.

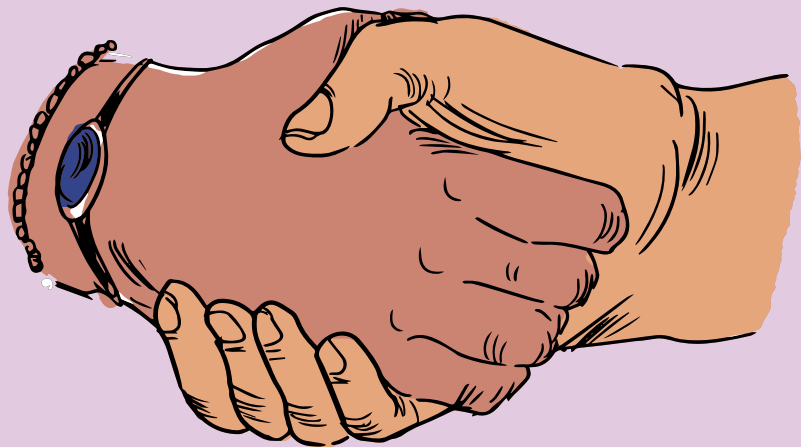
The primary activities of this collaboration include the operationalization of the OSBP Management Committees, enhancing the utilization and monitoring mechanism of EAC Customs Trainers including the Accreditation of the EAC Customs Trainers Program.

These activities are designed to enhance the Customs and trade facilitation programs within the EAC region, promoting EAC-intra trade, and advancing regional integration.

Article by:

Sawada Keisuke

Technical Advisor for Customs and Trade Facilitation,
Customs Directorate, EAC Secretariat



RPSG Webinar on Connectivity and Digitalization Linking Customs with Business

On 20th April 2023, the World Customs Organization East and Southern African Regional Private Sector Group (WCO ESA RPSG) hosted its first webinar for the year. The webinar addressed the topic of digitalization and connectivity as well as the importance of linking Customs to business in the East- and Southern African trade landscape.

A common theme in the 21st Century has been converting information from a physical format into a digital one. The same is true for Customs and trade-related matters, in that cross-border trade can now occur with fewer documents and procedures than ever. Indeed, information sharing can now occur at the touch of a button – connecting many different role players from all levels throughout the supply chain.

The 90-minute webinar brought together expert speakers who shared their valuable knowledge and expertise with the attendees. The first speaker was Ms. Patricia Mwela from the Ministry of Commerce & Industry in Zambia, who discussed respective Zambian trade facilitation measures. Shortly after, a panel of three gentlemen identified as – (1) Rajnish Hawabhay (MNS), (2) Charansingh Dabeesing (MACCS), and (3) Afzal Delbar (CHBA) – discussed the importance of establishing a linkage between Customs and business.

Finally, the webinar was concluded by the World Customs Organization's Technical Attaché, Mr. Christian Lembke, who discussed and highlighted global standards for a connected world by enhancing digitalization and inter-connectivity in Customs and trade. Unfortunately, the level of digitalization and connectivity is not yet uniform across the region.

Therefore, the main aim of this webinar was to shed some light on some lessons learned and share some success stories on digitalization and connectivity in the ESA region.



WCO ESA RPSG

Official platform from the perspective of the private sector in the East and Southern African Region

www.wcoesarpsg.org



Content on our website:

- ❖ Cross-border road reports
- ❖ Newsletters
- ❖ Projects (including Digitalization)
- ❖ Previous webinars
- ❖ International resources



WEBINAR on:

“Digitalization & Connectivity – Linking Customs with Business”

20 April 2023, 14h00 – 15h30
(CAT, UCT +02h00)

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If you have further questions, please email:
jacob@wcoesarpsg.org | lisa@wcoesarpsg.org | jbezuidenhout@saaff.org.za



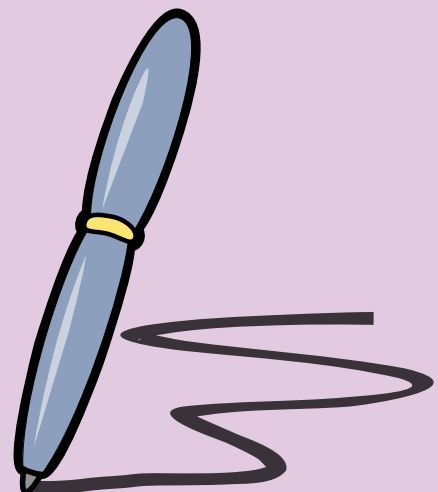
Private Sector Consultative Group
Regional Private Sector Group – East and Southern Africa

The SACU AEO Awareness Conference and Signing of the SACU MRA



The South African Revenue Service (SARS), in partnership with the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), was pleased to host the SACU Regional AEO Awareness Session from 29th to 31st May 2023 at Emperors Palace Hotel Convention Centre in South Africa. The South African Association of Freight Forwarders (SAAFF) CEO, Chairperson of the WCO ESA RPSG, and co-Chair for the SARS Private Sector Consultative Group, Dr. Juanita Maree, also took part in the event by availing herself to be a guest panelist. Her panel comprised Authorised Economic Operator experts who shared their practical experience on the AEO Compliance Programme, which included the benefits experienced by their businesses and suggested improvement areas.

However, the most crucial aspect of the AEO awareness session was signing the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) between the SACU Member States on 31st May 2023. The MRA will see accredited traders in Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa benefit from lower trade costs and quicker turn-around times for imports and exports. The Heads of Revenue Administrations in Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa, have agreed to recognize each other's importers and exporters who have been granted an Authorized Economic Operator (AEO). Traders who are AEOs across the SACU region will benefit from fast-tracked controls and reduced administration costs for Customs clearance.



SAPICS/SAAFF Conference

The Professional Body for Supply Chain Management – SAPICS – hosted its 45th annual conference in collaboration with the South African Association of Freight Forwarders (SAAFF) from 11th to 14th June at the prestigious Century City Conference Centre in the Mother City, South Africa.

The SAPICS conference is the leading event in Africa for Supply Chain Management. For half a century, supply chain professionals worldwide have gathered in South Africa at the SAPICS Annual Conference to exchange ideas, experiences and expertise in all things supply chain. The central theme of this year's conference will be "Forward Thinking Supply Chains", where discussions centered around future supply chains and what skills and technologies would be needed to manage them. Traditional and historical supply chain processes are seemingly insufficient in over two and a half years of disruption. Organizations worldwide are learning that what they have been doing in the past is not enough to deal with the constantly changing environment of challenges. A Forward-thinking supply chain calls for the need to future-proof the supply chain, anticipate disruption and have the solutions to counter the disruption.

This year's conference commenced on 11th June with several exciting workshops ranging from "The Peak Performance Quotient" to "Unlocking Supply Chain Innovation through Design Thinking". The conference concluded on 14th June with exciting site visits ranging from a Pepsico South Africa's Cereals Plant (Weetbix) tour to the Cape Town Port.





**Forward thinking
supply chains** >>>

11 - 14 June 2023

45th Annual SAPICS Conference
Century City Conference Centre, Cape Town, South Africa

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Chirundu Up for Border Upgrade



Border stakeholders pose for a group photo during the Chirundu, Kariba Border Posts scoping visit.

“The Government of Zimbabwe has plans to upgrade Chirundu One Stop Border Post (OSBP) to become like the magnificent Beitbridge Border Post, in order to ease congestion and facilitate smooth flow of trade and travel”.

This was said by the Acting Chairperson of Border Efficiency Management System (BEMS), Mr Thulani Chitopo, who is also Deputy Director in the Ministry of Industry and Commerce during a scoping visit to Chirundu One Stop Border Post (OSBP) by the BEMS Committee on 21st June 2023.

The main objective of BEMS is to improve efficiency and enhance trade facilitation at the country’s border posts. The scoping visit was aimed at assessing border procedures and understanding the challenges faced in executing different operations.

BEMS committee is made up of stakeholders drawn from the Immigration, Environmental Management Agency, Zimbabwe Republic Police, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, President’s Office, Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) among others.

Speaking to committee members, Mr Chitopo said that seven border posts are earmarked for border upgrades and the Government has begun to work on making them One-Stop.

These include Nyamapanda, Plumtree, Forbes, Beitbridge, Kariba, Victoria Falls and Kazungula border posts.

The visiting team noted that the proposed OSBP upgrade project would make Zimbabwe a preferred transit route by easing congestion and improving turnaround time thereby making it more competitive.

Chirundu OSBP borders Zimbabwe and Zambia and the boundary between the two countries is defined by the mighty Zambezi River.

The border plays a vital role in Africa’s North-South Trade Corridor, which links eight countries, namely Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.



Article by
Inzwirashwe Muwonwa & Mildred Hove
Zimbabwe Revenue Authority

13th African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF) Country Correspondents Conference

The African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF) designated Country Correspondents play a crucial role as they are the principle representatives of ATAF in their respective countries. Through the Country Correspondents, it is possible to maintain effective liaison with member countries in carrying out appointed activities by ensuring timely provision of information or assistance which the ATAF Secretariat may require.

The 13th African Tax Administration Forum Country Correspondents Conference was hosted by the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) Training Academy from 11th to 12th May 2023 at the Custom House in Port Louis, Mauritius.

The aim of the conference was to bring together focal points from the forty-two (42) ATAF member countries and the Secretariat to reflect on the impact of ATAF's programmes of the lapsed year and draw lessons for the year to come.

This gathering is an ideal platform for Country Correspondents to strengthen their ties and jointly devise avenues to improve their mutual collaboration to successfully deliver ATAF's services to members.

Hon R. Padayachy, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development officially launched the conference and in his keynote address, the Minister acknowledged that much work has been done in the field of Illicit Financial Flows and Base Erosions and Profit Shifting (BEPS), but there still remains a big challenge to tackle all the issues. He added that ATAF is playing a leading role in putting forward the key priorities of African countries on the tax challenges arising from digitalization to ensure that the outcomes consider the interests of African countries and small jurisdictions.



The conference was attended by thirty-three (33) Country Correspondents from Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Eswatini, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.





A Happy Customs Officer: Can We Sustain Happiness within the Customs and Tax Environment?

Working in a dynamic environment where new challenges arise every day, and where what you learned today may not be necessarily helpful once you receive a redeployment letter tomorrow, can it be possible to have happy Customs officers? Is it possible to be at ease wherein after building your beautiful mansion and looking forward to coming home to enjoy the fruits of your labor, the axe of a sudden transfer to a far flung border station falls on you? In Customs, being married does not necessarily mean coming home to your spouse every single day. How happy can one be?

Motivational speakers have offered valuable insights on how to stay happy. However, as much as you may be committed and enthusiastic about implementing these guidelines, the intricacies of life may not allow you from experiencing perpetual bliss. We all agree that most governments rely on revenue generated to sustain national economies, rising inflation and crippling debts which have left some of our countries nearly on our knees. Customs and Tax officials are the individuals mandated to collect taxes and are faced with ever-increasing targets, and are also expected to maintain harmony, peace and happiness in their homes. Experience shows that their work environments place them under intense pressure. So, how then can we address the wellness and mental health of our officers?

In the East and Southern Africa (ESA) region, we have not overlooked the well-being of our officers. We focus on promoting trade facilitation and integration, efficient revenue mobilization, Customs modernization, and strengthening security, enforcement, and compliance. Yet we have also placed particular emphasis on fostering professionalism and partnerships. During the recent regional meetings—the RTC Heads Meeting, the 37th Regional Steering Group, and the 29th Governing Council—held on the beautiful island of Madagascar, the importance of promoting wellness and mental health among all staff was extensively discussed. As a result, the 29th Governing Council directed the ROCB, with the support of collaborating partners, to organize a high-level conference on the Wellness and Mental Health of officials in Customs and Trade. This will be our Happiness Conference!

We appeal to all our esteemed readers who are passionate about this topic to reach out to the ROCB with your invaluable ideas and support. Together, let us work towards making this dream a reality for all of us.



Faith Mosongo
Programme Officer
WCO ESA ROCB





Embracing Diversity at the Workplace

The beauty about humanity is that we are inherently unique from conception. Each individual embodies their distinctiveness in character, talents, abilities and shortcomings.

The Harvard University defines diversity as the condition of being different or having differences. Differences among people are diverse with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, health, physical and mental ability, race, religion, physical size, education level, job and function, personality traits among others.

In the context of the work place, these differences are manifested in our daily interactions. The work environment allows each of us to fulfil the roles and responsibilities we were hired for. This presents an opportunity for us to showcase our uniqueness through competencies, skills, gifts and quirks. We differ in how we think, communicate, strategize, perceive things, comprehend concepts, execute projects, deal with changes, challenges, failures, wins and so on.

There are as many unique human attributes as there are people in the world. Therefore, as we continue to progress in our personal life and career, we are bound to interact with more people and experience the beauty of diversity in ways that we may not have encountered before. It is my view that whenever a group of people converge, whether in a family set up or as a team at the workplace, there you will have opportunities to learn about others, practice patience, tolerance, empathy and kindness.

I am persuaded that most of us agree that life would be so boring if we were all alike. It is my sincere hope that you are in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment where you feel that you are treated fairly, valued, celebrated and respected. Therefore, I urge you to embrace diversity within and outside work because that is where the joys of human experience lie!



Elizabeth Kamunyu
Programme Officer
WCO ESA ROCB



Financial Literacy: Your Key to Unlocking the Path to Financial Independence

Financial Independence is more than just an idea; it's possible through proper financial literacy skills. It is essential for everyone to be equipped with basic understanding of personal finance management as it cuts across all areas of life regardless of income level hence necessitating attention.

To embark on this path, whether you are a recent graduate stepping into the world or a seasoned professional looking to escape the chains of financial limitations, financial literacy is the first step. I define financial literacy as the compass that guides an individual navigate the murky waters of personal finance, guiding them toward making informed decisions, comprehend key financial concepts, and acquiring the skills necessary to manage their finances effectively. This can be accomplished through exploring a multitude of educational resources like books, podcasts, online courses, and workshops.

It is important to have a destination in mind and as such setting SMART financial goals. By establishing specific and realistic financial goals, you give yourself a clear purpose. It also helps shape actions you should take toward achieving your goals. Regardless of our income level, there is a need for every individual to develop their unique vision toward attaining financial independence.

Once your goals are determined, you need to chart your course with a well thought-out budget. Create a budget that takes into consideration your objectives, expenses, and income. Analyze your spending habits carefully to find areas where you can save costs, and then utilize those savings to establish a strong financial foundation. By making saving and investing part of your lifestyle rather than merely a habit, you can improve your financial health and establish an emergency fund to cushion yourself from unanticipated expenditures.

Another essential competency to develop on your financial journey is prudent debt management. Recognize the different categories of debt and the effects they may have, prioritizing paying off high-interest loans your top priority to free yourself from their weight.

To reduce interest rates and restore control over your financial destiny, you may consider different strategies like debt consolidation and refinancing.

In a rapidly changing financial landscape, continuous learning is the key to staying ahead. Stay curious and hungry for knowledge. Stay updated on the latest financial trends, regulations, and investment opportunities. Embrace change, adapt your strategies, and seize the potential that comes with being well-informed about the financial world.

In conclusion, keep in mind that achieving financial literacy is a lifelong endeavor rather than a one-time accomplishment. Decide to start, immerse yourself in the world of financial literacy, set objectives, make a budget, carefully save and invest, manage debt, and never stop learning. Your future self will be grateful to you as you unlock the door to financial independence. Top of Form
Bottom of Form



Clemence Wawuda
Finance Officer
WCO ESA ROCB



Transformational Changes of the Telephone

Since the 19th century, the telephone has undergone hundreds of changes. No matter what form the telephone took, it revolutionized the way society communicated and interacted with one another.

In the early 80s the telephone in use, did not have any digits, it was a box that was fixed in a room with a handle at the side. One had to lift the hand set and turn the hook at the side to alert the operator that you are calling. Once the operator answered, you then asked her to connect to the other number you wanted to speak to.

In the 90s the landline with digits for dialing was invented. Making calls became friendlier since one could dial on his own without going through the operator. The disadvantage was that since it was a land line one had to hang around the room to receive calls.

As technology advanced, in the 2000s a wireless land line was invented which made life better. Even though one could only be connected for a radius of 2kms, at least there was the luxury of walking around as you talk. Call booths also came into place, whereby one had to insert coins, dial the number and talk according to the set limit, once the money was exhausted the calls disconnected automatically.

The evolution of mobile phones started with the Motorola handset. It was a big heavy handset with an antennae. The earliest models of cell phones were Nokia 3310, Samsung, Erickson and Sony. Today we have smart phones which communicate more efficiently through usage of social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, E-mails and Video calls. How life changes, today anyone without a smart phone is regarded analogue especially the young generation since by a touch of a button, one can do different things.



Judy Mwaura
Administrator
WCO ESA ROCB





Men's Mental Wellbeing Matters

Let's talk about Men's mental health.

Many think that men are three times more likely to commit suicide than ladies, the preceding is true.

It is true that men are three times more likely to commit suicide compared to women. In Kenya, it claims an average of four lives every day, with a ratio of three men to every woman.

A person's mental well-being significantly affects their work life, including their productivity and motivation. The prevailing environment significantly undermines the mental health for both genders.

Given the prevalence of mental well-being issues among men and the perils of overlooking them, it is crucial to distinguish the challenges men confront when seeking for offer assistance.

Here are some of the misconceptions;

1. **"A real man doesn't ask for help"**: Social beliefs that men should always appear strong and never show emotions are harmful and restrictive. Mental illnesses can induce feelings of vulnerability, anxiety, and fear. Men who isolate themselves to avoid confronting these emotions may struggle internally and experience difficulties in their relationships, both at work and at home.
2. **"An individual of faith should not need therapy or medication"**: Assuming that men with personal issues lack faith or moral strength diminishes the complexity of the mental health battle. Mental well-being can be influenced by various factors, including spiritual well-being, past trauma or abuse, distorted thinking patterns, relationship problems, and even chemical imbalances in the brain.

Creating safe spaces where men can freely express their thoughts and feelings has proven to be effective in reducing mental health problems. There is hope that men can lead healthy and productive lives with the right support.

Seeking therapy is an excellent starting point. By addressing mental health concerns through professional help, men can embark on a journey of healing and personal growth.

Let's work together to promote men's mental wellbeing and build a society where everyone can thrive.



Jamilah Mutah

Administrative & Finance Assistant
WCO ESA ROCB





Managing Virtual Meetings Post COVID-19

It's been approximately three and a half years since the first case of COVID-19 was reported. Sometimes, it still feels like a nightmare, but the reality is that the pandemic happened. As we journey and move on with our lives post COVID-19, managing virtual meetings continues to become a critical skill for organizations that we now know as the new normal at the workplace.

In my own experience and line of work, virtual meetings were less commonly used and when I used them it was to support staff remotely to help resolve a technical or IT related issue, and in most cases, they were located in different countries and cities. I cannot recall a time when key team decision making took place virtually, prior to the pandemic, but we cannot ignore how this new normal has revolutionized our workplaces.

We have been able to bridge gaps that were once considered impossible. We have had to be mindful of different time zones, technological disparities, including everyone and making sure everyone is heard and valued. At the ROCB, these efforts have strengthened our partnerships, created new ones, saved us money and time, and accomplished a lot in implementing our Regional Strategic Plan (2022 – 2025).

One of the developments that I have been keen on and I haven't been disappointed with, is the continual advancement of technology. I always look forward to the latest tools that make our meetings more engaging and interactive. Where would we be without enhanced screen sharing, customized virtual backgrounds, webinars, high quality videos, breakout rooms, enhanced security, analytics, augmented and virtual reality among many other great innovations?

A further positive consequence of COVID-19: I can confidently say that I have gained valuable knowledge that is useful for everyday work. I have learned the importance of setting clear objectives and agendas, being more effective as a facilitator, communicating with clarity and articulately, and managing my time more efficiently.



Erick Kaburu
ICT Officer
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