

**World Customs Organization**  
**East & Southern Africa**  
**Regional Office for Capacity Building**



**VIRTUAL**

**3<sup>rd</sup> WCO ESA Regional Research Conference**

**Nairobi, Kenya**

**23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

**REPORT**

**East and Southern Africa  
Region**



WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION  
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DES DOUANES

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## **Abbreviations / Acronyms**

AU	African Union
COMESA	Common Market for East and Southern Africa
CFTA	Continental Free Trade Area
CCF	Customs Cooperation Fund
EAC	East African Community
ESA	East and Southern Africa
MRA	Mauritius Revenue Authority
ICMS	Integrated Customs Management System
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
PICARD	Partnerships in Customs Academic Research and Development
RTC	Regional Training Centre
RTAs	Regional Trade Agreements
REC's	Regional Economic Communities
ROCB	Regional Office for Capacity Building
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SCEA	Shippers Council of Eastern Africa
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
WCO	World Customs Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

**East and Southern Africa  
Region**

## 1 Background

- 1.1.1 The World Customs Organization, East and Southern Africa, Regional Office for Capacity Building (WCO ESA ROCB) launched the ESA Regional Research Programme in 2013, aiming to build institutional capacity and the body of knowledge in Customs through research. The programme also aims to enhance the region's capacity to showcase its own research globally.
- 1.1.2 The 1<sup>st</sup> WCO ESA Regional Research Conference was hosted by the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority in 2014 in Harare, Zimbabwe, themed "Customs and Trade Facilitation: Building Institutional Capacity and the body of knowledge in Customs through research". The 2<sup>nd</sup> conference took place in 2017, hosted by the Regional Training Center(RTC), Kenya. The theme of the conference was "Impacts and Implication of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and the WCO Mercator Programme to the ESA region". It was attended by more than 200 participants from 20 nations.

## 2 Introduction and Opening Remarks

- 2.1.1 The 3<sup>rd</sup> WCO ESA Regional Research Conference was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic and took place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021. It was co-organized by the ROCB and RTC Mauritius with the support of RTC Kenya and the WCO ESA Project II funded by the Government of Finland. The conference was attended by more than 150 participants from across the world. Participants included researchers and officials from various member customs administrations in the East and Southern Africa Region, WCO ESA Regional Training Centres (RTCs), the WCO, the African Union, the private sector, academia, and other cooperating partners. The conference was also graced by the presence of a high level delegation including: The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail & Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mauritius, the Honourable Alan Ganoo; the WCO ESA Vice Chair, Mr. Adrian P. Swarres, Zimbabwe; the World Customs Organization Secretary General, Dr. Kunio Mikuriya; the Director General, Mauritius Revenue Authority, Mr. Sudhamo Lal; and the WCO ESA ROCB Director, Mr. Larry Liza;
- 2.1.2 The theme of the conference was **"The effect 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.”

- 2.1.3 **WCO ESA ROCB Director, Mr. Larry Liza**, welcomed the delegates to the conference and highlighted that the conference was initially supposed to be held in Mauritius, hosted by RTC Mauritius, however this was not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He informed the delegates that in future, the region and the world at large will be having a more blended approach to missions, meetings, trainings, and all other capacity building activities.
- 2.1.4 The Director thanked the entire team that made the conference possible including the people and government of Mauritius, RTC Kenya, the supervisors, the researchers, the team at the ROCB, the WCO, and the WCO ESA Project and the Lawyer’s Hub in Kenya.

*Annex 1: Speech of the WCO ESA ROCB Director, Mr. Larry Liza at the opening of the 3rd ESA Research Conference*

- 2.1.5 **WCO ESA Vice Chair, Mr. Adrian P. Swarres, Zimbabwe**, on behalf of the ESA Management Committee and the Governing Council, congratulated the ROCB and Mauritius Revenue Authority for finally hosting the conference pointing out that conference was postponed twice due to various challenges, especially the COVID-19 pandemic. He stressed that the ESA regional research programme is a priority for the Governing Council, which directed the ROCB to run it in order to improve on the institutional capacity and the body of knowledge in Customs through research.
- 2.1.6 He further pointed out that the World Customs Organization developed novel ways and means to guide Customs in delivering its mandate during unprecedented times, and so did member administrations, the private sector and other partners. He also informed the meeting that the world is recrafting new strategies at a regional and global level.
- 2.1.7 Finally, he called for robust discussions along the theme of the conference, emerging issues on Customs and Trade and encouraged delegates to not only consider the challenges but also reflect on the opportunities presented by these emerging issues, and employ foresight towards a better future of the region.

*Annex 2: Speech of the WCO ESA Vice Chair, Mr. Adrian P. Swarres, at the opening of the 3rd ESA Research Conference*

- 2.1.8 **World Customs Organization Secretary General, Dr. Kunio Mikuriya**, congratulated the Region for holding its third conference and ensuring continuity of the ESA Research Programme. He expressed his gratitude to the Vice-Chair, ROCB and the RTC in Mauritius for organizing the conference that attracts not only Customs officers, but also Customs partners in governments, regional organizations, academia and the private sector. Dr. Mikuriya pointed out that Customs is often at the center of economic activities and provides useful information to governments and business.
- 2.1.9 He informed the conference, that while the WCO PICARD Conference for research was created with the future vision for Customs in mind, the regional chapter of research conference is more than welcome as sharing knowledge is often most effective when using a regional platform. He further emphasized that as the world is struggling to move towards the post-pandemic era, it would be important to take stock of what we have learned from this emergency situation to aim at building a sustainable and resilient supply chain, embodied in the theme of this year.
- 2.1.10 Finally, he pointed out that the WCO has been closely collaborating with the AfCFTA Secretariat and other Regional Economic Communities in supporting the creation of one market in Africa, because Customs plays a critical role in this respect and wished the delegates successful deliberations

*Annex 3: Speech of the World Customs Organization Secretary General, Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, at the opening of the 3rd ESA Research Conference*

- 2.1.11 **Guest of Honour – Director General, Mauritius Revenue Authority – Mr. Sudhamo Lal**, welcomed all delegates to the conference and thanked Honourable Alan Ganoo, Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mauritius, for gracing this conference despite his busy time schedule. He mentioned that the Conference was initially planned to be held physically in 2019 but had to be postponed on several occasions due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. However, given the resounding success of the first two conferences, it was agreed to go ahead with this conference virtually due to the prevailing sanitary conditions. He noted that this clearly demonstrates the importance that the MRA and the region gives to Customs research as well as the commitment for the advancement of the ESA region.
- 2.1.12 He pointed out that research and development is a vital element in the learning process. It unlocks the unknowns and gives the opportunity to explore different perspectives, expands the knowledge base and fuels a deeper understanding. Research also provides the latest information, new ideas and novel problem solving approaches. In some fields or certain organizations, research can be an essential part of success. He further pointed out that Customs operates in a dynamic and ever evolving environment due to changes in trade patterns, new commercial imperatives, changing aspirations of the business community, developments in technology and major events happening worldwide. There are always

new things in Customs and new ways of doing things. Customs needs to be innovative and adapt to changes in the environment.

2.1.13 He recognized the WCO's proactiveness to managing changes in the Customs environment. Moreover, by having a dedicated unit for research- the WCO Research Unit in the office of the Secretary General, is also testimony of the high importance that the WCO attaches to research. This Unit is mandated to produce research and policy analysis on Customs and international trade matters as well as organize research conferences where academics and practitioners present their work.

2.1.14 Finally, he wished the delegates fruitful discussion and declared the conference open.

*Annex 4: Speech of the Guest of Honour, Director General, Mauritius Revenue Authority – Mr. Sudhamo Lal, at the opening of the 3rd ESA Research Conference*

### **3 Programme of the Conference**

3.1.1 The programme of the conference included two panel discussions on *Return to Normalcy & Impact of Virtual Engagements following the COVID-19 pandemic* and *the Effect of COVID-19 pandemic on Revenue Collection*, keynote speeches, and various presentations on: Cross-border e-commerce: Enhancing trade facilitation and impact of cross-border e-commerce on Customs and international trade in East and Southern Africa; Effects of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Trade Facilitation Agreement in East and Southern Africa; 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 in East and Southern Africa; and Compliance and Enforcement: Essential tools in enhancing revenue collection, safety and security.

*Annex 2: Programme of 3<sup>rd</sup> ESA Research Conference*

### **4 Keynote Address 1: The effect of emerging and ongoing issues on the role of Customs and Trade - Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail & Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mauritius, the Honourable Alan Ganoo.**

4.1.1 **Honourable Ganoo**, focused on a variety of issues aimed at emphasizing the role of research for any successful organization/institution. He highlighted the importance of research especially in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, in the development of much needed treatments, vaccines or medicines. Research can thus help find answers to things that are unknown, fill gaps in knowledge and change the way we work.



- 4.1.2 He highlighted that the MRA has incorporated research in its institutional framework through the Research, Policy and Planning Department while the WCO has a dedicated unit for research in the office of the Secretary General. The PICARD Conference and the regular Research Papers are laudable initiatives of the WCO. This perfectly illustrates the importance given to Customs research by the Customs community.
- 4.1.3 He reflected on the important mandates of Customs and revenue authorities. He highlighted the fiscal function which consists of collecting and protecting government revenue in the form of customs duty, excise duty, VAT and other taxes under Revenue/Customs Laws. He stressed that this contribution to the government budget enables the government to support our social, security and welfare systems as well as carry out important development works in the country.
- 4.1.4 He pointed out that in this digital era, it is very essential for Customs to leverage on technology for implementing effective controls, and in facilitating trade through accelerated processes. This will benefit not only traders but governments and citizens at large. One of the most recent trends in global business, especially during the period of COVID-19 pandemic, is the unprecedented growth in trade in cross border e-Commerce in physical goods, commonly known as E-Commerce. This has revolutionized the way businesses and consumers market, sell, and purchase goods, providing wider choices, advance shipping, payment and delivery options.
- 4.1.5 He encouraged Customs authorities worldwide to have the twin objective of facilitating trade while at the same time enhancing control. To strike the right balance between these two objectives, it is vital for Customs to make judicious use of the vast amount of data and information available internally and externally.
- 4.1.6 He also stressed the importance of ratifying various conventions and agreements to expedite the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit and boost trade and investment especially intra-regional trade in the ESA region.

*Annex 5: Keynote Address 1: The effect of emerging and ongoing issues on the role of Customs and Trade, Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail & Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mauritius, the Honourable Alan Ganoo at the opening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ESA Research Conference*

## **5 Keynote Address 2: Enhancing the Movement of Medicines and Medical Equipment in East and Southern African Region Amidst Covid-19 Pandemic - Ms. Virginie Bohl, Coordinator - IMPACCT**

- 5.1.1 The keynote address was delivered by Ms. Virginie Bohl, Coordinator – IMPACCT. In her address, Ms. Bohl informed the meeting that the IMPACCT working group was created in



2017, and represents a network of strategic partners, such as WCO, UNCTAD, IFRC, MSF, Save the Children, IHC in Dubai among others. The mission of IMPACCT aims for countries and humanitarian organizations to be comprehensively prepared to effectively manage customs clearance and importation processes for disaster and crisis relief goods and equipment.

- 5.1.2 To achieve its mission, partners come together to develop collective and coordinated approaches and tools to support national coordination mechanisms related to customs and importation processes for disaster relief goods and equipment.
- 5.1.3 She pointed out that members have identified the common inter-agency constraints in the importation of medicines and medical equipment during the response to natural disasters, complex emergencies or disease outbreaks. 15 primary constraints have been listed, such as the list of documentation that are required to receive an import license or the lack of national guidelines on humanitarian medical importation versus commercial importation.
- 5.1.4 Based on this list, IMPACCT looks at who, how, when, where and with whom to address the bureaucratic impediments and how to overcome the obstacles. In particular, IMPACCT considers how to get the information that humanitarian health actors need on regulations, permits and customs procedures in the countries that have a humanitarian response plan in place. This is aimed at supporting importing countries to anticipate and manage disease outbreaks through facilitating exceptional fast-tracking procedures. These fast track procedures are communicated to all humanitarian health partners.
- 5.1.5 She informed the meeting that to achieve these objectives, the Working Group (WG) is about to release the result of a survey that was sent to humanitarian partners to understand the 5 main challenges (out of the 15 primary constraints that I have mentioned earlier) in the countries where they operate. The WG will also look at the provisions of the existing agreements such as the TFA, the RKC, the AfCFTA and its annex 2 on rules of origin for example, or annex 5 on non-tariff barriers and also the customs regulations of SADC, the EAC manual etc.
- 5.1.6 She further informed the delegates the African Union, GS1, WCO ROCBESA and IMPACCT will convene a virtual meeting to explore how the regulatory objectives for trade and border controls can be aligned with the needs of the humanitarian logistics community. This meeting will be held in early December, on 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> December, Customs administrations, health regulatory agencies, humanitarian health partners have been invited to attend.
- 5.1.7 She stressed that enhancing coordination and collaboration at the national and the international level between all stakeholders is key to the success of such a project and encouraged delegates to join the discussion with their extensive experience in this area of work. She expressed her gratitude for being given the opportunity to talk about the

importation of medicines and medical equipment in the response to complex emergencies or disease outbreaks.

*Annex 6: Keynote Address 2: Enhancing the Movement of Medicines and Medical Equipment in East and Southern African Region Amidst Covid-19 Pandemic - Ms. Virginie Bohl, Coordinator - IMPACCT*

## **5.2 Panel Discussions**

### **5.3 Panel Discussion 1: Return to Normalcy & Impact of Virtual Engagements following the COVID-19 pandemic**

#### **Introduction**

The moderator, Mr. Gumani Mugeru, South Africa, introduced members of the panel who included WCO (**Taeil KANG - Director, WCO Capacity Building Directorate**), Madagascar (**Lainkana Zafivanona - Director General**), and Eswatini (**Gugu Zwane- Customs Modernisation, Reform and International Liaison, ERS**). He briefly introduced the topic while expressing his hope that soon there will be a return to normalcy in Customs operations.

- 5.3.1 **The ROCB Director, Mr. Larry Liza**, provided a report on the return to normalcy and effectiveness of virtual engagements. It was noted that the ROCB conducted a survey on exploring the possibilities of the return to normalcy in the delivery of our mandate as Customs, especially in capacity building and making physical meetings. From the survey the ROCB was able to assess how ESA Administrations interact with their internal and external Customers and Shareholders, a majority preferring a blended approach (Both physical and virtual) depending on the nature of the meeting ensuring that COVID-19 guidelines are adhered to. It was also observed that ESA Administrations staff have physical representation at their offices, a blended approach has been adopted and no staff is exclusively working from home.
- 5.3.2 It was further noted that Virtual meetings and online trainings are in full effect in the ESA region but experiencing various challenges such as network and connectivity among many others, that would be ruled out with the physical presence of technical experts.
- 5.3.3 In conclusion, it was noted there is progressive and steady return to normalcy and the information obtained in the September 2021 survey which to an extent may change in the first quarter of 2022.

## Discussions

- 5.3.4 **The WCO Director for Capacity Building, Mr. Taeil Kang**, informed the meeting that during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was hard to provide capacity building programs to the members because of travel restriction. To overcome this challenge, the WCO INTRODUCED online workshops as well as the virtual reality and assisted training.
- 5.3.5 Mr. Kang, highlighted two crucial projects being run by the WCO currently; BACUDA (supporting Customs with data analytics) and Virtual reality and assisted training. He informed the meeting that BACUDA (data analytics virtual reality assisted programme is a collaborative research project between Customs and data scientists whose objective is to develop data analytics methodologies, including algorithms in open-source programming languages (R1 or Python2). The WCO BACUDA project was launched in September 2019. With the participation of Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), BACUDA experts successfully developed the DATE model, and have been implementing a pilot test to verify its performance with real-time import data of the two Nigerian ports in Tin Can (in Lagos) and One (in Port-Harcourt) since March 2020. The model employed a cutting-edge Artificial Intelligence (AI) mechanism called “ATTENTION” that is used as a language translation tool and for self-driving cars. Due to this innovative technology, the model has outperformed other traditional machine learning models (such as XGBoost) in detecting potential fraudulent transactions.
- 5.3.6 The model noticeably outperforms even with relatively small-sized training data (from countries with low trade volumes) and low inspection rates (from countries with huge trade volumes).
- 5.3.7 The delegates noted that data analytics online training has been provided on the CLiKC platform and arrangements are underway to provide physical trainings to Members. It was also noted that the WCO has introduced the Virtual reality and assisted training which is a highly interactive, instructor-led training class, with defined learning objectives and participants who come together using a web-based classroom platform.
- 5.3.8 **Lainkana Zafivanona, Director General, Madagascar**, informed the meeting that indeed Madagascar is one of the countries that have kept COVID cases low compared to the rest, with 43,000 cases and under 1,000 deaths. Customs adopted various measures in order to ensure business continuity including; provided PPEs for frontline Customs staff as well as other OGAs stationed at the borders. Rotational working arrangements/ working in shifts were implemented to ensure social distancing at their respective places of work. Staff were also given remote access authorization to facilitate working from home.
- 5.3.9 He pointed out that island nations face various challenges occasioned by the ever changing Customs environment including but not limited to; high communication costs often made worse by poor maritime and air connectivity; inadequate institutional capacity, making islands less inclined to accede to international conventions; lack of connectivity to global

value chains which negatively impacts their share of international trade and investment; remoteness from large markets resulting in increased transportation costs; proneness and vulnerability to natural disasters, due in part to climate change among others.

5.3.10 Mr. Lainkana, further informed the meeting that Madagascar has put in place various measures to ensure return to normalcy and as a result was looking forward to hosting the region at the earliest possible opportunity.

5.3.11 **Gugu Zwane, Eswatini Revenue Service**, agreed that indeed there has been low provision of vaccines to Africa and ESA in general. Nevertheless, Eswatini has vaccinated over 20% of its population, which is higher than the regional average of less than 10%. This success story was attributed to the way the government approached the vaccination programme in Eswatini. At the beginning of the vaccination programme the government identified the so-called front liners as health workers, elderly persons and security forces who were in charge of enforcing the COVID regulations; this group included those working at the borders and other essential services.

5.3.12 The government further conducted engagements with individual organizations prioritizing the front-line workers which also gave officers an opportunity to ask questions and clarify some beliefs and myths and further created massive awareness (among all stakeholders including Chiefs and Community leaders and health promotion in general. Planning phase prioritized those highly at risk such as nurses as well as people with compromised health such as the elderly. The first vaccination batch received positive uptake.

5.3.13 Other measures included; Decentralization of vaccination centres – at rural community centres as well as all health facilities around the country; Vaccination on site- e.g. at the ERS; since People really wanted to return to normalcy such as entertainments and tourist attraction activities such as football stadiums, some events require the vaccination certificate as a prerequisite to participate in their activities. This has also increased the number of youth who have been resisting the vaccination drive when it was initially rolled out; Some employers forced their employees to take the vaccines e.g. KFC; and Diversity of the vaccines (Jonson and Jonson, Pfizer and AstraZeneca)- people are able to select which vaccine they want.

5.3.14 It was also noted that the ERS classifies importers, those from the formal and informal trade. It was further noted that women basically form a large percentage/majority of informal trade and hence do benefit from a number of simplified trade regimes amongst which the COMESA initiative will be included once its implementation is complete.

5.3.15 The ERS has experienced both benefits and challenges regarding virtual meetings and online capacity building initiatives which have been and that the best way forward will be to adopt a blended approach.

## 5.4 Panel Discussion 2: The Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic on Revenue Collection

### Introduction

The moderator, Mr Batsirai Chadzingwa, Zimbabwe, introduced members of the panel, including Zambia (**Sydney Chibbabbuka – Commissioner of Customs**), Uganda (**Abel Kagumire – Commissioner of Customs**), and the RPSCG (**Dr. Juanita Maree – CEO SAAFF (RPSCG Representative)**). He briefly introduced the topic and reflected on the challenges and opportunities that had arisen as a result of the ongoing pandemic.

### Discussions

- 5.4.1 **Sydney Chibbabbuka, Commissioner of Customs, Zambia**, informed the meeting that Zambia exceeded their revenue target by 30% in the first quarter of the year and are on course to meeting and surpassing the financial year target as well. He pointed out that given the disruptions occasioned by COVID-19 pandemic, it was expected that revenue collection would be affected severely. However, Zambia put in place various measures to mitigate these challenges including, announcing a waiver of fines/penalties on voluntary tax declarations, this was intended to caution taxpayers against the negative effects of the pandemic and support them in meeting their tax obligations. Zambia also provided PPEs for frontline Customs staff as well as other OGAs stationed at the borders. Rotational working arrangements were implemented to ensure social distancing. It was noted that while other staff worked in shifts, others were allowed to work from home/accessed the systems remotely. It was further noted that there was redistribution of workload at the regional processing centres among other measures.
- 5.4.2 He further pointed out that the private and public sector need to co-exist/have a symbiotic relationship. Without Government regulations the trading scene would be chaotic. The main role of Government is to facilitate trade facilitation, this will in turn support the private sector in maximizing profit and hence meeting their tax obligations. This will be thus a win- win situation.
- 5.4.3 **Abel Kagumire, Commissioner of Customs, Uganda**, pointed out that Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) have been defined as all cross-border financial transfers which contravene national or international laws. According to the Economic Development in Africa Report 2020 by UNCTAD, Uganda is estimated to lose shs 2trillion annually to illicit financial flows. They predict it could get worse with commercial oil production. These IFFs from trade mis-invoicing, tax abuse, cross-border corruption, illegal wildlife trade and transnational financial crime drain resources from the economy and worsen inequalities, fuel instability, undermine governance as well as damaging public trust.
- 5.4.4 It was noted that Uganda still has many porous borders which could explain the continued illicit trade. Whereas Customs has opened many border stations with state of the art equipment that leverage on technology, in a bid to evade taxes, traders still use ungazetted



routes. This illegal trade costs Uganda Billions in taxes annually. For instance, one of the most commonly smuggled items (Cigarettes) robs the government of over UGX 30bn (US\$ 8m) in revenue each year. To put it in context, an estimated 19% of all cigarettes sold around the country are contraband. As well as physical movement of goods, smuggling also gives rise to flow of illicit funds, corruption and establishment of organised crime groups.

- 5.4.5 It was noted that the African Union Agenda 2063 to which Uganda subscribes states that stemming inflow and outflow of money-laundering linked to terrorism, organized crime, corruption and other crimes would make a significant contribution to economic growth. UNCTAD also estimates that curbing IFFs would reduce the \$200 billion annual financing gap Africa faces by half. A salient lack of data as well as accepted method for monitoring IFFs limits their understanding and efforts to curb them. However, these should not stop continuous action to fight this growing problem.
- 5.4.6 The enablers of these IFFs are well known, however tackling them remains a monumental task. In the midst of this Covid-19 crisis, the Chinese character would serve well as we must consider this an opportunity to invest in and foster societies that are resilient to future threats to our economies. We thus must ensure more balanced drug control, stronger measures against organized crime, terrorism and violence. We also need to protect our economies from the embedded corruption, economic crime and illicit financial flows. Uganda has taken measures to promote financial transparency through ensuring correct registration of companies, including easy identification of true beneficial of a company which can increase financial transparency. In addition, Uganda established a competent authority - The Financial Intelligence Authority(FIA) which is our National centre for the receipt of financial data, analysis and dissemination of financial intelligence to authorities.
- 5.4.7 The Financial Intelligence Authority was established by the Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2013(AMLA) and has the mandate to combat money Laundering, countering Terrorism financing and countering Proliferation. Its objectives are not limited to; enhance the identification of the proceeds of crime and the combating of money laundering & terrorism financing; ensure compliance with this Anti-Money Laundering Act 2013 (as amended); enhance public awareness and understanding of matters related to money laundering, terrorism financing and proliferation financing; make information collected by available to competent authorities and to facilitate the administration and enforcement of the laws of Uganda; and exchange information with similar bodies whose countries have treaties, agreements or arrangements with the Government of Uganda regarding money laundering and similar offences.
- 5.4.8 It was noted that Customs uses a risk management approach which assesses risks to trade mis-invoicing, security and overall abuse of trade channels before streamlining any compliance procedures and then classifying high risk or vulnerable areas. COVID-19 has been the most disruptive phenomenon to impact the world in the last two decades and presented the most pressing health challenge which has disrupted trade supply chains



across the globe. Africa in particular has faced the brunt of it as a result of over-reliance on global value chains especially for goods from china.

- 5.4.9 Revenue collection on which our economies heavily rely has not been spared and we have had to dig deep to replenish the coffers. During the FY 2020/21, Customs revenue collection was at Ushs 7.49Tn against a target of Ushs 8Tn, reflecting a performance of 93.7% and thus posting a deficit of Ushs 512.405Bn. The drop in performance was attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic which affected international commerce and global supply chains.
- 5.4.10 It was noted that there was change in the majorly traded commodities with an increased shift towards medical and food items as well as related items. Overall, in order to manage revenue collection mandate during this time of COVID-19, Uganda Revenue Authority adopted a number of progressive measures such as; Operationalization of the Single Transactional Portal under the Electronic Single Window System. One stop centre for MDAs; where traders apply online for export certificates, permits and licenses; Extended the time for filing of corporation tax returns. A grace period of two months, i.e. from 31 March 2020 to 31 May 2020 was granted to tax payers; Deferment of tax payments due under instalment arrangement MOU's; Reinvigorated the Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System (RECTS). URA is also a stakeholder in the implementation of the Regional Electronic Cargo and Driver Tracking System (RECDTS).
- 5.4.11 Commissioner Kagumire pointed out that RECDTS is designed as a mobile phone application that enables the issuance of the EAC COVID-19 digital certificates that are mutually recognised by EAC Partner States. It was noted that waiver of penalty and interest upon voluntary disclosure has generated shs16bn so far, as a result of this measure.
- 5.4.12 Other measures put in place include; Extended warehousing duration, Uganda has only organized two public auction of goods since March 2020; Encouraged the use of online services. Most services are online and there are some staff in the office to facilitate tax payers; Help tool system was upgraded to include all customs process across the entire customs business units; NDA, KPA and KRA Single Customs Territory office were integrated on the help tool system; Increased the number of staff at the call centre; Limited receipt of physical documents to only scans/soft copies; Re-awakened usage of barcode readers at for border clearance at barrier points as a way of avoiding touching of physical documents; All staff in their respective desks had to adhere to service in a protective manner.e.g sanitising, washing hands, protective gears, social distance etc; and Physical examination, arming of RECTS and photo validation are executed in a protected manner.

- 5.4.13 **Dr. Juanita Maree – CEO SAAFF (RPSCG Representative)** highlighted various challenges faced by the private sector and arising from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic including: flexible consumption and companies whose primary business is in service-related sectors such as leisure and hospitality, travel, and logistics have experienced a sharp fall in demand and consequent profit; Disruptions to the global and local supply chains (due to Covid-19 restrictions and changed consumer behaviour) have adverse effects on companies' inventory levels due to delays and increased freight costs, affecting profits; Landlocked countries especially took the brunt of the pandemic, as trade lanes were disrupted and the flow of goods dried up. Therefore, the global impact of higher freight rates, longer delays in obtaining goods, and overall congestion were elevated during the pandemic; The overall economy has intensely felt the impact of massive layoffs, absences, and reduced compensation; and the old infrastructure of African borders, ports, and airports was emphasized during the pandemic. Unfortunately, these critical nodes are not compatible with technological developments to ease the flow of goods and reduce "touchpoints".
- 5.4.14 It was noted there were some gains arising from the pandemic including; E-commerce companies and shipping lines recorded extremely high profits during and after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic due to an increase in demand (or a sudden lack of supply due to changing shipping patterns) and subsequent profit; There was a significant uptake in a dialogue between critical role players in the private and public sectors. This uptake has enabled the sharing of essential information and ever-changing procedures, which has (and still is), in turn, helped prevent hiccups and delays and helped lessen the overall gaps between public and private sectors; Stronger, risk-based, and futuristic contingency plans were created as necessities, as customs and businesses had no choice but to fast track the adoption of technology and digital connectivity; There has been an improved level of trust and transparency in doing business during and post the pandemic. Indeed, there has been a fast-tracking of improved cross-border activities revolving around operating procedures. Collectively, there has been a drive to simplify cross-border activities – which are especially important in the ESA region, as more than 80% of the trade takes place via the road modality; Heightened consultation across the different stakeholders, including customs administrations, other governmental agencies, and the private sector; and a general business gain has been adopting a hybrid working strategy by implementing a virtual and on-site approach to doing business.
- 5.4.15 Dr. Juanita further pointed out the various measures put in place by the private sector to ensure business continuity including; Technological advances that allow business continuity without human intervention where possible. Furthermore, this approach will enable us to shift the risk profiling of traders and goods away from the frontline and future up and down the supply chain; Joint operations were created in some sectors to cooperate and target the challenges created by the pandemic. These included linking the medical industry and their supply of essential goods with the extended supply chain operators to expedite clearance and speed up the necessary flow of goods; Remote-working conditions

have formed part of long-term plans and are used to attract the talent needed to operate in the unpredictable business environment. In addition, this measure creates the potential to re-engineer workflows and innovate existing surroundings for the better; Further measures were put in place revolving around ongoing public-private dialogue in most sectors. This measure was predominantly in the logistics and supply chain environment and increased dialogue between companies' operations and management teams; Notably, the collective private sector has unlocked pain points in the logistics and supply chain movements by adopting a centralized best-practice approach; while Africa has for too long relied on manual process flows and paper submissions. The potential pitfall is that paper processes create the potential for fraud to flourish. Instead, by adopting electronic documentation practices, the supply chain is further secured.

- 5.4.16 She further highlighted the importance of Customs-Business partnership during the pandemic and in general and pointed out the following: Such partnerships encourage a climate of shared responsibility and ownership towards developing sustainable outcomes, policies, and procedures; It allows Customs to better align its plans and policies with the changing needs and demands of business, especially during and after the pandemic. Ultimately, it will lead to a more flourishing and compliant trading/business environment, mutually beneficial for Customs and Business. It was noted that such a partnership brings life to an appreciation for each other and the overall service culture amongst all. It is vital to emphasize the critical role that Small and Medium Enterprises play within the East and Southern African trading environment. Such a partnership can help build the pillars needed to help these enterprises grow and it allows for a shared insight into the pain points within the trading environment and helps to establish mutual beneficial solutions.

## **6 Presentations of Research Papers**

### **6.1 Potential effects of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on trade and Customs in East and Southern Africa.**

**Researchers: Ntuli Ferdinand & Dube Fungai**  
**Zimbabwe Revenue Authority**

- 6.1.1 The researchers highlighted rationale/objectives of AfCFTA including: to enhance sustainable economic development through a continental free trade area; to support Agenda 2063; Boosting Intra Africa Trade; promote trade facilitation and security; and achieving greater economies of scale and wider markets. They highlighted the benefits of overcoming Non-Tariff Trade Barriers through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) within the AfCFTA and emphasized the need to embracing ICT at strategic level within customs Administrations to enhance automation and modernization.
- 6.1.2 It was noted that ICT enhanced Integrated Border Management (IBM); Coordinated Border Management (CBM) and data processing. It was pointed out that the aim of trade

facilitation is to reduce the time it takes to move goods from point A to B. Trade Security involves regulating global trade in conformity with national legislation which aims to safeguard the wellbeing of citizens. The role of customs in this regard includes but not limited to: addressing complex customs and regulations; inefficient and costly transit systems; Enhancing automated risk profiling; Embracing guidelines of the WCO Safe Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade; and Establishment of National, Regional Risk Committees.

- 6.1.3 The recommendations from the research include: AfCFTA Member states should be guided the AfCTA Treaty, BIAT, WTO TFA, GATT 1994 Article XXIV; To pursue Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP) or Build Operate and Transfer (BOT) for infrastructural development programmes ; To capacitate and extend initiatives such as COMESA Infrastructure Fund and Aid for Trade; To craft legislation and manuals to operate in an e-commerce environment; Borrowing from experiences in other regions (e.g. South East Asia); Electronic data processing as opposed to paper based controls ; and to capacitate customs administrations in controlling digital value chains.

*Annex 7: Presentation on potential effects of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on trade and Customs in East and Southern Africa.*

## **Discussions**

- 6.1.4 It was noted that with the right policies and infrastructure in place, Customs administrations have implemented various measures to curb corruption among the customs officers since this is one of the hiccups in experienced in trade facilitation.

## **6.2 Regional electronic cargo tracking system: implications on trade facilitation and smuggling by youth in Uganda along the Northern Corridor**

**Researcher: Geoffrey Okoboi (Electricity Regulatory Authority) & Michael Kyanzi (Uganda National Oil Company)**

- 6.2.1 The researcher highlighted that currently, there is a high rate of youth unemployment, approximately 83% of total unemployed people. This has resulted in increased levels of poverty among youths and hence leading to increased youth unrest and involvement in criminal activities including smuggling.
- 6.2.2 It was noted that smugglers deny Uganda \$700m in unpaid taxes. In 2016, Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda introduced the RECTS to monitor transit, re-export and export cargo to minimize diversion and loss. As a result, people previously involved in cargo smuggling have been affected.
- 6.2.3 The following conclusions were drawn from the research; Most transit cargo go through Uganda to DRC; Transit time of cargo trucks monitored under RECTS has reduced; Male youth dominant smugglers in Uganda; RECTS implementation has heightened risk of and

smuggling of goods RECTS monitored; the youth have not abandoned smuggling; and that the youth have gone into boda-boda (motor bikes) for ferrying smuggled goods, diversifying income, and camouflage.

- 6.2.4 The recommendations from the research include: government should revise the law on smuggling to make it a “high-risk, low-reward” activity; RECTS initiative be extended to Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania and South Sudan; and target Government initiatives to help youth smugglers prepare for a career change.

*Annex 8: Presentation on the Regional electronic cargo tracking system: implications on trade facilitation and smuggling by youth in Uganda along the Northern Corridor*

### **6.3 A Meta-analysis of the opportunities likely to be presented in the integration of gender practices and promotion of diversity in customs and trade in ESA.**

**Researcher: Sendra Chihaka**  
**Zimbabwe Revenue Authority**

- 6.3.1 The researcher introduced his topic of study and pointed out that gender equity, equality and diversity dimensions are poor in ESA despite being topical in contemporary trade discourse as an engine of sustainable development and growth. Gender inequality in SSA averages 0.569 compared to highly developed regions like Europe and Central Asia (0.270) and East Asia and the Pacific (0.312). (UNDP Gender Inequality Index, 2017) and may point to the fact that economic growth and development go hand in hand with high gender equality.
- 6.3.2 It was noted that her research work was aimed at identifying likely benefits of integrating gender practices and promotion of gender diversity in Customs and trade activities within ESA region.
- 6.3.3 She pointed out that majority of customs administrations in ESA are male-dominated; partly a mirror of patterns of authority in the African society and the fact that tariffs have generally been collected in a context of confrontation between Customs and the trader, with the risk of coercion or violence. Modern Customs reforms have resulted in more of trade facilitation and less of gate-keeping-more skills required in compliance rather than enforcement, thus the need to improve in areas of gender equity, equality and diversity. Some superiors prefer working with men because they are most unlikely to take time off to take care of the family and even work at odd hours unlike their female counterparts.
- 6.3.4 It was also noted that: national, SADC, COMESA and EAC gender policies blueprints have been created but lacking implementation; guidelines have been developed at regional and national levels but more enforcement needs to take place; gender equality results in economic growth through expanding human capital as women with better education are



able to undertake high-value economic activity; and gender inequality is a barrier to trade and development in ESA.

- 6.3.5 The recommendations from the research include: Customs' direct interaction with traders means that Customs processes should consider the impact they have on small-scale traders who are mostly women ; modernization of customs processes can result in more participation of female employees in customs activities, trade and economic growth must be responsive to influence by gender equality policies; creation of national and regional gender policies with enforcement mechanisms and AfCFTA a good opportunity to look at gender equality enforcement mechanisms from the onset.
- 6.3.6 The conclusions drawn from the research include: initiatives to address gender inequality in ESA have not yielded the desired results of improving gender equality; Customs administrations can play an influential role in promoting gender equality and diversity in trade through modernization activities and engaging more with the private sector; gender equality is a necessary condition for economic development and not an afterthought and without gender equality, sustainable development is not sustainable and is not development.

*Annex 9: Presentation on A Meta-analysis of the opportunities likely to be presented in the integration of gender practices and promotion of diversity in customs and trade in ESA.*

#### **6.4 Enhancing trade facilitation and impact of cross border e-commerce on Customs and International trade in East and Southern Africa**

**Researcher: Yolanda Mampana**  
**South Africa Revenue Services**

- 6.4.1 The Researcher introduced her topic of study and pointed out the world is increasingly becoming interconnected with improvements in communication and technology. One of the areas which have been greatly impacted by this is the buying and selling of products and services as this is now being done on electronic and usually internet based platforms. This has been termed as e-commerce. E-commerce is the fastest growing area in the global economy and has helped in the shortening of distance and other barriers between buyers and sellers.
- 6.4.2 She informed the meeting that when e-commerce transactions are conducted in different areas or countries by using information and communication technology (ICT), it is called cross-border e-commerce (CBE) with goods and services flowing from across international borders passing through customs. According to CBEC (2014) in 2012 cross border e-commerce sales reached \$300 billion with China and US leading the way.
- 6.4.3 It was noted that traditionally, the customs played a narrow role, which was focusing primarily on the collection of duties and taxes on imported goods, and later on to include



ensuring legitimacy, safety, and security of these goods. This role has changed with customs administrators now expected to take the role of trade facilitator by international customs and trade organizations such as World Customs Organization and World Trade Organization (WTO). This has resulted in countries undertaking several types of customs reform such as the use of online single window systems to streamline customs paperwork and improve transparency; the adoption of 'trusted trader' programs and risk assessment tools which helps to speed customs clearance at border checkpoints.

- 6.4.4 It was further noted that the establishment of the electronic exchange of data in the transportation and border clearance processes of international consignments, thus diminishing the amount of paper documentation and reducing administrative costs. In addition to this, countries are now seeking to harmonize customs processing among regional trading partners using guiding principles from international organizations such as the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement.
- 6.4.5 Challenges being faced by Customs within Southern and Eastern Africa due to CBE include; the lack of standardized procedures within the region; lack of adequate information with regard to the rules and regulations in place, to be able to comply with them and pay any applicable duties/taxes; and Postal services often do not have the necessary mechanisms to exchange information electronically.

*Annex 10: Enhancing trade facilitation and impact of cross border e-commerce on Customs and International trade in East and Southern Africa*

## **7 Special Presentations**

### **7.1 Bird's eye view from the Private Sector - an overview of digitization and its effect on AfCFTA, Gender and cross- border Trade as well as Trade Facilitation in General.**

**Presenter: Louise Wigget**

#### **Global Trade Solutions**

- 7.1.1 **Ms. Louise Wigget, GTS**, informed the delegates that Customs is working with OGA 's to strengthen mutual trust and transparency to secure and facilitate legitimate trade. The SAFE Framework and AEO ensure all parties in supply chain are safe and secure. It was also noted that rapid and safe movement of people and goods across borders encourages trade, travel and transport and that physical security enables digital visibility.
- 7.1.2 Ms Wigget pointed out that being SMART invariably refers to the implementation of solutions that are automated hence resulting in; a less cumbersome border environment where data is mined, shared and effectively analyzed, an advanced cargo and customs declaration, reduced friction and dwell times in supply chain reduces opportunities for crime and corruption as automated payment processes reduce "Cash" incentives.

- 7.1.3 It was noted that easy flow of goods and people, strengthening supply chain integrity, and mitigating potential security threats are achievable through a “Risk Management-based” approach. Identifying potential risks and reducing reliance on physical inspection of consignments by using predictive analytics, profiling techniques and biometrics is highly encouraged in facilitating legitimate trade, strengthening supply chain integrity, and mitigating potential security threats.
- 7.1.4 She further pointed out that technology is the main driver to open the opportunities of the digital age, Blockchain, 3D printing and cloud computing are currently being used in addition to new technologies such as geo-spatial data, artificial intelligence, robotics, and drones. Thanks to technological advancements and public/private partnerships we will be able to trade smarter, compliant and safely.

*Annex 11: Presentation on the Bird's eye view from the Private Sector - an overview of digitization and its effect on AfCFTA, Gender and cross- border Trade as well as Trade Facilitation in General.*

## **7.2 Enhancing Trade Facilitation & Border Management under COVID-19 in Africa**

**Presenter: Dhunraj Kasseer (AUC) & Mark Goodger (GMLS)**

- 7.2.1 **Mr.Dhunraj Kasseer (AUC)**, informed the meeting that in the wake of the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 in Africa , in 2020 the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of the East and Southern region , namely COMESA, EAC and SADC developed several guidelines and compendiums to sensitize and assist Member/Partner states to deal with the pandemic. In the same vein, the AU Sub Committee of Directors General of customs (AUSCDGC) had also issued a Communique to all Customs Administrations requesting them to implement bold measures that can mitigate the negative impact while also ensure the smooth supply chain of essential goods (including masks, medicines, sanitizers, etc at the first instance and then general goods.
- 7.2.2 Taking cognizance of the adverse effects that the Pandemic can have in other regions and more importantly in other sectors such as maritime , air and services , the AUC Department of Economic Development Trade Industry and Mining (ETIM ) started collaborating with the UNECA and AUDA NEPAD to develop a more comprehensive guideline now called the AU Continental guidelines on trade and transport facilitation for the movement of persons, goods and services across Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic. The document is a humble attempt building on currently existing REC and the Tripartite guidelines and expanding their scope to offer a harmonized approach to trade facilitation on the continent, while adopting “best practices” from within and outside the continent to optimize trade flow across borders, all while limiting the spread of COVID-19.

- 7.2.3 The guidelines facilitate and support the efforts of Member States to implement the policies and measures to combat COVID-19 that have been recommended by Africa CDC, the African high-level task force on recovery of air transport, IATA, ICAO, IMO, IOM, UNCTAD, OCHA, WCO, WHO and WTO.
- 7.2.4 It's worth noting that, the Guidelines were considered by the AU Sub Committee of Directors General of Customs in November 2020 and also endorsed by the Specialized Technical Committee of Trade Industry and Mining (STC-TIM) comprising of AU Ministers responsible for trade matters in September 2021. The Ministers sensitized Member States on the urgency of implementing the Guidelines in conjunction with other regional and international instruments and best practices. They also underlined the necessity for the African Union Commission to support Member States efforts towards the implementation of the relevant measures of the Continental Guidelines as a means of mitigating the negative effects of the Pandemic on the African economies and people.
- 7.2.5 In conclusion, it is indispensable that AU Member States invest in long term supply chain resilience and thereby adopt these guidelines as minimum uniform regulations, procedures and standards in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19, minimize disruptions in the supply chain, and facilitate the movement of goods and services across the continent during the COVID-19 pandemic period. The Guidelines have been shared to all African Customs Administrations for consideration and implementation.
- 7.2.6 Finally, it will also be worth sharing that the Department of Economic Development Trade Industry and Mining collaborated with the African Capacity Building Centre (ACBC) of the International Organization of Migration (IOM) and the WCO ESA ROCB to organize a joint training workshop for Customs Administrations of the ESA region with the theme ***“Enhancing border management in East and Southern Africa Amidst COVID 19 Pandemic”*** held on 20<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>st</sup> October 2021. He further informed the delegates the African Union, GS1, WCO ROCB ESA and IMPACCT will convene a virtual meeting to explore how the regulatory objectives for trade and border controls can be aligned with the needs of the humanitarian logistics community. This meeting will be held in early December, on 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> December, Customs administrations, health regulatory agencies, humanitarian health partners have been invited to attend.
- 7.2.7 **Mr. Mark Goodger (GMLS)**, informed the meeting that Customs Authorities, being aware of the challenges of COVID-19 and supplies allied to ensure ramp up in vaccinations and boosters should put in more measures to facilitate trade in such critical supplies. It was noted that vaccinations come from well-known global suppliers that can be easily identified and the importers from such suppliers are by majority, the same that import the allied supplies of PCR equipment's, garments, and other products required to administer and deliver such crucial supplies and hence should be facilitated faster especially given the urgency of the situation at hand.

- 7.2.8 Customs authorities have provision for expedited clearance and advance information in risk management, however, the private sector reports that they are still major delays at the release point. Added to the burden, is the time consuming clearance procedures and uncoordinated inspections by different authorities at the border.
- 7.2.9 It was proposed that advance declaration be implemented with Post Clearance Audits to serve any additional risk management checks. Justification of and evidence of order on such global suppliers can be managed within a system that will alleviate the burdens and in fact, be to the benefit of our respective nations.

*Annex 12: Presentation on Enhancing Trade Facilitation & Border Management under COVID-19 in Africa*

## **8 Outcomes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ESA Regional Research Conference**

- 8.1.1 **Dr Dennis Ndonga, Murdoch University Australia**, informed the meeting that over the course of the conference, delegates heard briefings and panel discussions focused on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on revenue collection, business operation and the need to facilitate disaster relief goods. Delegates also heard research presentations themed around the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA); digitization of cross-border operations and logistics chains; gender equality and equity; and enhancing trade facilitation. Some of the discussions have noted ongoing challenges and the presenters have provided recommendations on how to address them. This is a good outcome for the conference. A research conference partly seeks to inform and create an open forum for the dissemination of ideas.
- 8.1.2 Dr Ndonga pointed out that based on what was covered by the conference, participants are better informed about the key themes and topics that have been covered. However, a research conference further aims to stimulate new ideas. The information gathered from the conference should help Customs and Trade anticipate new related challenges. All details covered in this conference can be summarised to two new challenges that Customs administration and key stakeholders need to reflect on as they move forward.

### **1. The impact of COVID-19 on Customs Operations**

The presentations covered in the conference focused on the immediate impact of COVID-19 and the measures undertaken by different administrations and stakeholders as part of trying to adapt to the new operational environment. Africa is still lagging in terms of vaccination rate and, with the exception of a few, most countries are yet to fully vaccinate at least 40% of their population. Therefore, we are still in a situation of adapting to the virus and our discussions in this conference have pointed towards the initial challenges. However, we need to be able to reflect beyond the current situation and anticipate the operational challenges that will arise when we get to a COVID-normal environment. The world is moving towards COVID travel passports and proof of

vaccination as part of the cross-border requirements. We need to reflect on how this will impact Customs operations in our region. We have our unique situation where informal traders are a significant part of cross-border movement in many parts of Africa. How will Customs work to facilitate the movement of such traders as well as prevent the spread of the virus?

## **2. Implementation of the AfCFTA**

The conference presentations have noted that Customs plays a big part in securing the success of the AfCFTA. This is only the beginning of the conversation. We have learnt that Customs needs enhanced capability for integrated border management as well as adopt several trade facilitation tools to support the cross-border movement of goods and services being promoted under the AfCFTA. The questions to reflect on are, what measures does your national Customs administration need to implement? How can they go about addressing these measures?

There are still some unresolved issues under the AfCFTA, which will have a direct impact on Customs operation. For instance, the member countries will soon agree on the AfCFTA Rules of Origin. Therefore, an area to reflect on is how will Customs adapt to the new RoO once they are in force?

For Customs administration and key stakeholders, we need to get ahead of these challenges and place ourselves in a position where we can be proactive rather than reactive. If there's one key lesson that we can draw from the pandemic is that being unprepared does have serious consequences. The entire world was caught off guard by this pandemic and for that we can take some credit in the efforts and measures taken to mitigate the situation. However, it will not be prudent to continue being reactive to the foreseeable challenges. One of the main ways of in being proactive in preparing for the new challenges is through supporting regional research.

With regional/ home-grown research we can have a regional lense to our problem. By supporting researchers from within our regional Customs administrations and participating private sector, we will be able to draw on the knowledge of researchers who have a better appreciation of our unique set of circumstances. Researcher who would also be invested in the work. Such researchers would be able to customise regional solutions to our problems.

From this conference we have been able to see the quality of work that can be produced by researchers who work within our member countries Customs administrations. Some of the researchers who presented over the course of the conference were drawn from the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA), South African Revenue Service (SARS), Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) and other regional stakeholders. What this demonstrates is that the human resource is there. Moreover, this being a capacity building forum we provide the support in helping such researchers improve on the quality of their work. As an academic supervisor, Dr. Ndonga together with the help of Dr Nellie Mpanduki, worked with the researchers to help them improve on the quality of their research and writing. It is important to note that part of the research work has been presented for publication in reputable international journals including the Journal of Southern African Studies and the World Customs Journal.

In conclusion:

- To the Customs officials who are interested in research and want to contribute to finding solutions to the problems faced by their Customs administration, there is a forum for you to develop your research work. The WCO ESA regional Customs research conference will.
- To the regional Customs administrations, there is a need to find a regional lense and regional solutions to the challenges across the region. This can be achieved by investing in research within your relevant administrations as well as supporting the work of the WCO ESA regional Customs research conference.





## **9 Listing of Annexes**

- Annex 1: Speech of the WCO ESA ROCB Director, Mr. Larry Liza at the opening of the 3rd ESA Research Conference.
- Annex 2: Programme of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ESA Research Conference.
- Annex 3: Speech of the WCO ESA Vice Chair, Mr. Adrian P. Swarres, at the opening of the 3rd ESA Research Conference.
- Annex 4: Speech of the World Customs Organization Secretary General, Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, at the opening of the 3rd ESA Research Conference.
- Annex 5: Speech of the Guest of Honour, Director General, Mauritius Revenue Authority – Mr. Sudhamo Lal, at the opening of the 3rd ESA Research Conference.
- Annex 6: Keynote Address 1: The effect of emerging and ongoing issues on the role of Customs and Trade, Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail & Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mauritius, the Honourable Alan Ganoo at the opening of the 3rd ESA Research Conference.
- Annex 7: Keynote Address 2: Enhancing the Movement of Medicines and Medical Equipment in East and Southern African Region Amidst Covid-19 Pandemic - Ms. Virginie Bohl, Coordinator – IMPACCT.
- Annex 8: Presentation on potential effects of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on trade and Customs in East and Southern Africa.
- Annex 9: Presentation on the Regional electronic cargo tracking system: implications on trade facilitation and smuggling by youth in Uganda along the Northern Corridor.
- Annex 10: Presentation on A Meta-analysis of the opportunities likely to be presented in the integration of gender practices and promotion of diversity in customs and trade in ESA.
- Annex 11: Enhancing trade facilitation and impact of cross border e-commerce on Customs and International trade in East and Southern Africa.
- Annex 12: Presentation on the Bird's eye view from the Private Sector - an overview of digitization and its effect on AfCFTA, Gender and cross- border Trade as well as Trade Facilitation in General.
- Annex 13: Presentation on Enhancing Trade Facilitation & Border Management under COVID-19 in Africa.

## 10 Conference Organizing Team and Report Secretariat

### CONFERENCE ORGANIZING TEAM

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1.	Aroona Mugon – Director’s Office	2.	Ms. Faith Mosongo - Programme Officer
2.	Nemraj Dayal – RTC Mauritius	3.	Mr. Eric Kaburu, ICT Officer
RTC Kenya			
1.	Ms. Eunice Njenga - Chief Manager		
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