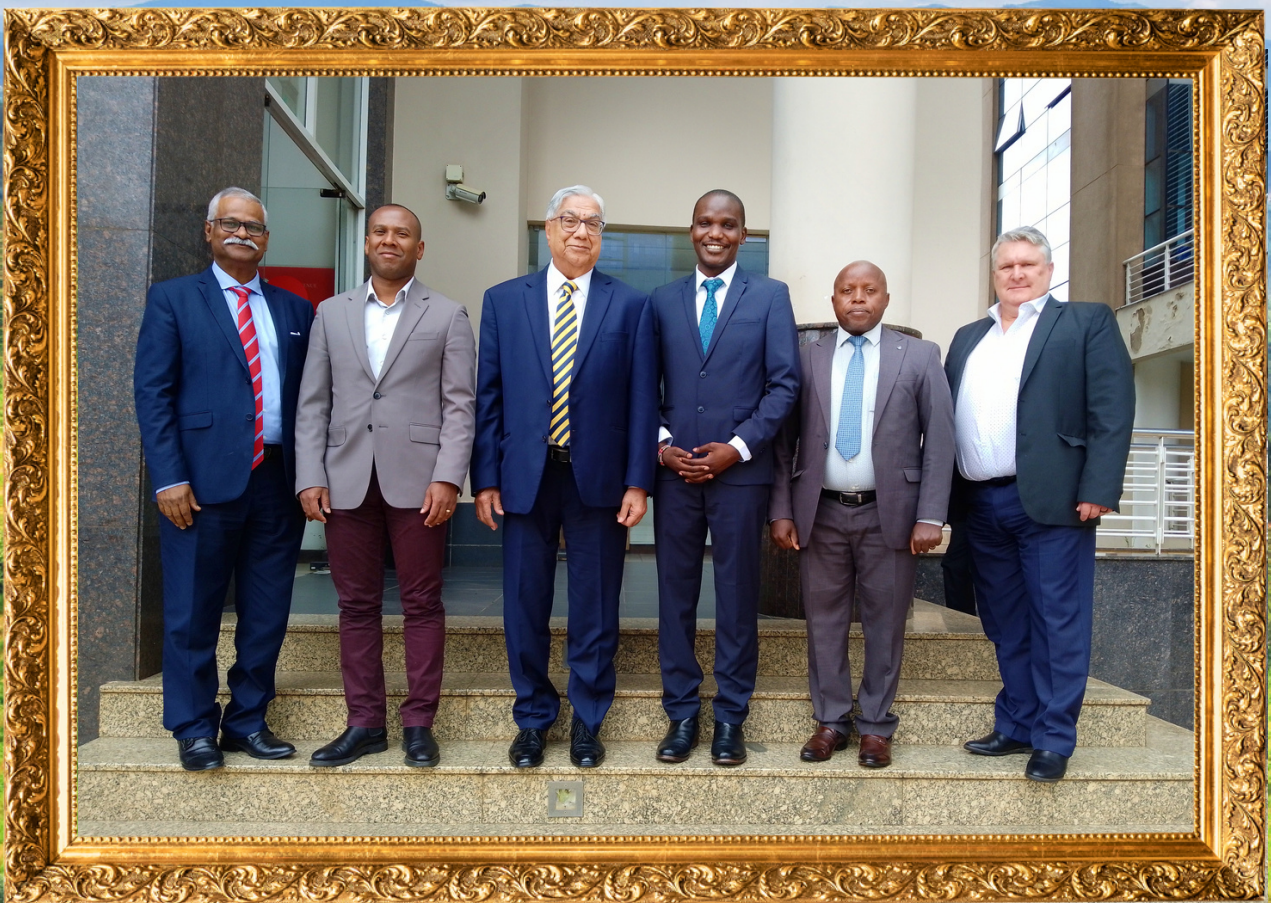


# ESA NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2023

## ESA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETS IN NAIROBI, KENYA



**ROCB**

East and Southern Africa

**World Customs Organization**





# We are coming to Rwanda!

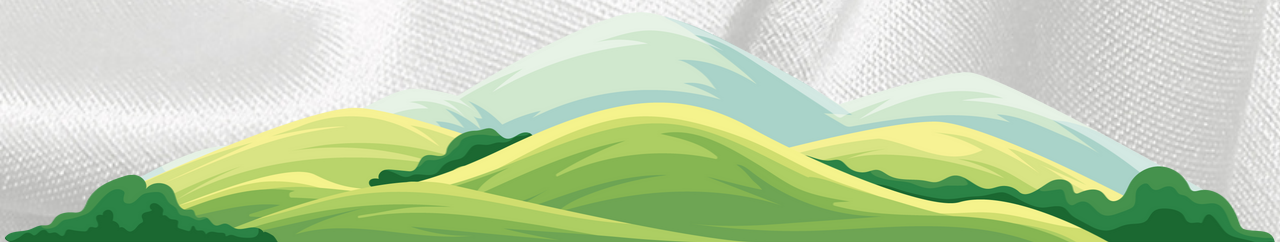
*The land of a thousand hills & fourteen million smiles*



The Regional Training Centres (RTC) Heads meeting  
6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023

25<sup>th</sup> Finance and Governance Committee meeting  
6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023

38<sup>th</sup> Regional Steering Group meeting  
8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023





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Dear Reader,

We present to you our latest edition of the ESA Newsletter where we continue to showcase fascinating Customs stories from our ESA Members, stakeholders, and friends. These stories are innovative, inspiring, and captivating and we are glad to share them with you.

In this edition, we highlight a feature on the Management Committee meeting in Nairobi, **Kenya** where we see Kenya's new Commissioner General Mr. Humphrey Wattanga host the current WCO ESA Vice Chair (Mauritius).

To the South, **Botswana** champions the use of the WCO Gender Equality Organisational Assessment Tool (GEOAT) while **South Africa** tells us more about the shared aspiration for Customs. **Eswatini's** collaboration with **GTS** leads in the use of a Digitized Advance Rulings tool as **Lesotho** welcomes its new Commissioner General, Mrs. Mathabo Mokoko. In addition, **Namibia** is utilising the Trade Facilitation Agreement Reforms tool tracker and **Zimbabwe** pursues Coordinated Border Management. On the other hand, **Mozambique** implements the Electronic Cargo Tracking Project as **Madagascar** launches a modernisation program to dematerialize certificate models for imported vehicles.

To the East, **South Sudan** highlights the importance of capacity building for Customs Staff as **Kenya** prepares for its 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Tax Summit. Meanwhile, **Burundi** launches its Regional Centre for Electronic Cargo Tracking System and **Rwanda's** Trade Portal creates a positive impact for its business community. **Seychelles** also launches new modules on ASYCUDA while **Comoros** safeguards its borders.

Lastly, **COMESA** has an insightful view on the transmuting role of Customs while the **EAC** shares with us the importance of Joint Border Management Committees and Time Release studies in the Northern and Central Trade Corridors. Furthermore, the **Regional Private Sector Group (RPSG)** makes history as Members of the International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations Region Africa Middle East (FIATA RAME) nominate two female leaders. We also get to learn of the Customs-Finance Intelligence Units (FIU) Cooperation Handbook and the use of Artificial Intelligence at **ULTRA**.

I am also delighted to share the beauty of our diversity as a multi-lingual region by publishing 3 Customs stories in the French language! In the spirit of inclusion, I take this opportunity to invite all our present and future contributors to submit their articles in either of our Region's recognised formal languages including English, French and Portuguese.

On behalf of the ROCB and the Vice Chair's office, I thank all of you for your contribution to this October-December 2023 issue. Merci Beaucoup!

Happy reading!

**Elizabeth Kamunyu,**  
Programme Officer  
WCO ESA ROCB

## Acknowledgement

Botswana - Botswana Unified Revenue Service  
Burundi - Burundi Revenue Authority/ Office Burundais des Recettes  
Comoros - Comorian Customs  
Eswatini - Eswatini Revenue Service  
Kenya - Kenya Revenue Authority  
Lesotho - Revenue Service Lesotho  
Madagascar - Douane Malagasy  
Mozambique - Mozambique Revenue Authority  
Namibia - Namibia Revenue Agency  
Rwanda - Rwanda Revenue Authority  
Seychelles - Seychelles Revenue Commission  
South Africa - South Africa Revenue Service  
South Sudan - National Revenue Authority  
Zimbabwe - Zimbabwe Revenue Authority  
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa  
East African Community  
Global Trade Solutions  
Japan International Cooperation Agency  
Ultra Information Solutions  
World Customs Organization  
World Customs Organization, East & Southern Africa,  
Regional Private Sector Group

## Editorial

Larry Liza - Editor in Chief  
Elizabeth Kamunyu - Programme Officer and Editor  
Faith Mosongo - Programme Officer  
Eric Kaburu - ICT Officer, Design and Layout



## Kenya Revenue Authority Hosts WCO ESA Vice Chair

### WCO ESA Meeting



**LEFT:** Commissioner General Mr Humphrey Wattanga presents a gift to Mr Sudhamo Lal, World Customs Organization, East & Southern Africa (WCO ESA) Vice Chairman & Director General, Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA). Mr Lal, who was accompanied by MRA's Director of Customs Mr Vivekanand Ramburun, paid the CG a courtesy call on the sidelines of a regional management committee meeting with the WCO, East & Southern Africa Regional Office for Capacity Building (WCO ESA ROCB) in Nairobi. **MIDDLE:** Mr Lal receives a gift from Ag. Commissioner for Customs & Border Control Mrs Pamela Ahago, at Times Tower. **RIGHT:** CG and Mr Lal with other delegates during a dinner. The WCO ESA ROCB is based in Nairobi and hosted by KRA. The office is a legally registered entity in Kenya with diplomatic privileges as per the laws of Kenya. The ROCB provides customized capacity-building support to the 24 members of the ESA Region. The ESA Management Committee serves as the leadership arm of the region as elected by the governing council.

Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) hosted the World Customs Organization, East & Southern Africa (WCO ESA) Vice Chair and Director General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) for a courtesy call and bilateral experience-sharing meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at the KRA Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

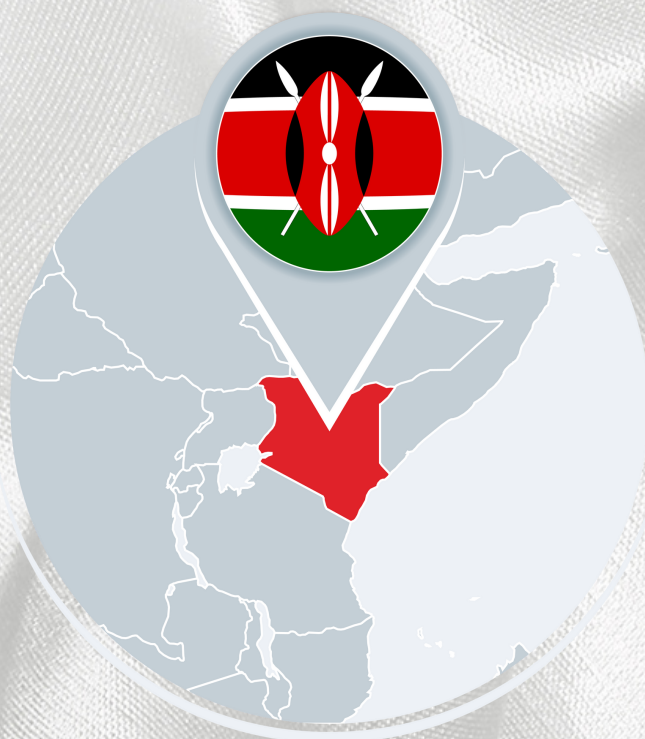
The WCO ESA Vice Chair Mr. Sudhamo Lal, accompanied by the MRA Director Customs, Mr. Vivekanand Ramburun paid a courtesy call to the Commissioner General KRA represented by the KRA Ag. Commissioner - Customs & Border Control, Mrs. Pamela Ahago.

During the meeting, the two Revenue Administrations shared experiences on topics of mutual interest including VAT on digital services, utilization of social media to track tax evasion, taxation of tobacco products, Customs Management Systems (CMS) and upcoming projects to enhance tax compliance.

This meeting took place on the sidelines of the WCO ESA High-Level Management Committee at the Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB). The Management Committee (MC) sits at the apex of the Governance model of the WCO ESA as elected by the Governing Council (GC), comprising 24 Directors/Commissioners General. It represents the interests of the GC providing oversight, strategic advice, and decision-making to ensure efficient running of the regional office as aligned with the Regional Strategic Plan. Currently, the MC is composed of 4 members: the ESA Regional Vice-Chair (Mauritius), the Deputy Vice-Chair (South Africa), the additional Member to the Policy Commission (Madagascar), and the Finance and Governance Committee Chair (Burundi). The term of service for the MC is two years ending in 2025.

This being the first meeting in Kenya since the Management Committee took office in June 2023, the KRA Commissioner General, Mr. Humphrey Wattanga, hosted a courtesy dinner in their honour. The WCO ESA ROCB Office is hosted by the Kenya Revenue Authority in Nairobi, Kenya.

By **Loice Akello**, International Relations & Diplomacy Division (Kenya Revenue Authority) & **Elizabeth Kamunyu**, Programme Officer (WCO ESA ROCB)





## BRICS Customs Experts Meeting and Heads of Customs Meeting

### A shared aspiration for Customs administrations



As the Commissioner of the South African Revenue Service (SARS), Prof. Edward Kieswetter, set the tone of the BRICS meeting for Customs Experts held in Cape Town on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023, delegates expressed their delight in his opening remarks that the highest purpose of Customs services is, ultimately, "To serve people".

BRICS countries represent 43% of the world's population, 16% of world trade and a larger share of the world's GDP than the G7. Prof. Kieswetter emphasized that by the time the conference reports on its conclusions, "We will shoot the lights out". He encouraged his counterparts to ensure that ideas agreed upon were actualized to serve the 3.3 billion BRICS citizens.

"We say that borders divide, and Customs connect. When I heard this for the first time, I was delighted because, by nature, I was brought up to be inclusive and connect to people. It is in our diversity that we are stronger," he said.

#### The shared objectives were to:

- Think bigger when facilitating trade through programmes;
- Cut red tape that leads to taxpayer non-compliance;
- Improve information exchange to reflect the joint efforts;
- Ensure continuity of the BRICS Chairship.

#### Key take away included:

- A commitment to pursue voluntary Customs compliance.
- Service to provide clarity and enhance compliance.
- Capacity building to enable service and enforcement through people, data and technology.
- Enforcement to better investigate, detect and deter.

An acknowledgment of the need for bias towards execution through:

- A multi-year consolidated BRICS Customs implementation plan.
- Periodic performance appraisals against the implementation plan.
- Standard operating procedures on handovers between Chairs.
- The possibility of a joint mechanism that supports the Chairs.

The meeting demonstrated that there was a strong commitment to cooperate and advance the BRICS Customs agenda.





## BURS Receive International Award



In recognition of the tremendous innovation, and enhanced customer-centric public service provision, Botswana Unified Revenue Service (BURS) and the Commissioner General, Mrs. Jeanette Makgolo received two prestigious awards at the 4<sup>th</sup> Africa Public Sector Conference and Awards (APSCA) 2023. The event was held on the sidelines of the just ended Africa Climate Summit/Africa Climate Week held in Nairobi, Kenya from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

BURS received the award for **“The Best Use of Technology to Revolutionize Customer Experience (CX)”**, and Mrs. Makgolo is the recipient of **“The Public Sector Woman of the Year award”**.

“The awards signify good leadership distinguished by a sustained commitment to excellence, with emphasis on modernizing service delivery and building the public service as a vibrant national institution,” said a member of APSCA.

### Background of Awards

These awards are held every year and bestowed on outstanding public sector organizations, exceptional leaders at various levels of governance, individuals and stakeholders who champion innovation, growth and policies that create a more resilient society.

When choosing awardees, members of the selecting committee take into consideration the following parameters to determine the winners;

- Years of Service in the public sector;
- Delivering ethos of public service;
- Past achievements in the public sector;
- Leadership attributes: Professionalism;
- Impact on the growth of the organization.

In an interview with a journalist, Mrs. Makgolo expressed her gratitude to the APSCA organizers for honoring her and the BURS with these awards. In her remarks the Commissioner General said “The recognition of efforts made to transform BURS is encouraging, and propelling us to do more as we contribute to the sustainable development of Botswana and Africa at large. We could never have achieved this without the team, the Ministry of Finance and the BURS Board of Directors, BURS key stakeholders and all my women empowerment networks for their support”.

Re leboga Batswana ka bophara.

By **Mable B Bolele**,  
General Manager, Communications,  
Botswana Unified Revenue Service.





## Botswana Unified Revenue Service (BURS) Gender Equality Working Group Assesses BURS Policies, Practices and Activities Using the WCO Gender Equality Organisational Assessment Tool (GEOAT)



The Botswana Unified Revenue Service (BURS) has been actively participating in Gender Equality, Inclusion and Diversity (GED) platforms at regional and international levels. BURS participated in a World Customs Organisation (WCO) workshop on Implementing Gender Equality and Inclusion in February 2023 in Kampala, Uganda and further participated in the WCO Train the Trainer Workshop on Implementing Gender Equality in March 2023 in Brussels, Belgium. The two workshops strengthened the capacity of BURS participants to embed and sustain Gender Equality and Inclusion in daily policies and practices including the utilization of the WCO Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT).

Following these workshops, BURS formed a GED Working Group (WG). The working group received training on the utilization of the GEOAT. In July 2023, the WG joined by the representatives from the National Department of Gender Affairs under the Ministry of Youth, Gender, Sports and Culture carried out an assessment of the entire Botswana Unified Revenue Service using the WCO GEOAT.

The experience was exciting, informative and eye-opening as it provided a good opportunity to determine the progress BURS has made and gauge how the organization

faired in terms of mainstreaming gender equality. The GEOAT assessment will further assist in the identification of strategies to strengthen gender equality, inclusion, and diversity, and highlight opportunities for improvement within BURS structures. The analysis further made it easier to identify existing inequalities, gaps, and shortfalls that call for action planning. This will in turn, inform action planning and mainstreaming GED in through the organizational structures.





## Lancement officiel du Centre Régional de Suivi Electronique des Cargos



Le commissaire Général de l'OBR M. Jean Claude Manirakiza et le PDG de Trade Mark Africa ont procédé mercredi le 23. 08. 2023 à l'inauguration d'un Centre Régional de Suivi Electronique des Cargos. C'est un centre qui permettra le suivi en temps réel des cargaisons sur le corridor Nord (Mombassa-Bujumbura) et le corridor Centre (Dar-Es-Salam – Bujumbura).

Remerciant le Trade Mark Africa pour ce don d'une valeur de 212 000 dollars américains, le Commissaire Général de l'OBR a précisé que le contrôle des cargaisons pourra désormais être fait sur une grande échelle et d'une manière sûre et efficace. « Le contrôle des cargaisons depuis leurs lieux d'embarquement sur les deux corridors permettra sans nul doute de juguler la fraude et par conséquent promouvoir la fiscalisation et augmenter les recettes publiques. » a renchéri le commissaire Général de l'OBR M. J.C MANIRAKIZA. Il précise que jusqu'ici que ce contrôle n'était possible que sur le territoire National.

« Ce système a été adopté sur initiative de la Communauté Est Africaine-EAC en 2017 dans le cadre de la création du Territoire Douanier Unique (TDU). Il est déjà opérationnel dans pas mal de pays notamment le Kenya, le Rwanda, l'Ouganda et la RDC, » précise M. David Beer, PDG de TMA. Il félicite l'Office Burundais des Recettes de rejoindre ce réseau régional qui vise à minimiser les processus couteux qui retardent les mouvements des marchandises par un contrôle excessif.

Il sied de signaler que les balises utilisées dans le suivi en temps réel des cargaisons notamment en cas de transport des marchandises comme le carburant ou d'autres produits inflammables comme l'huile renseignent aussi sur la qualité et la quantité des produits importés.





## The Transmuting Role of Customs and Border Officials: from Tax Collection to Health and Environmental Protection

The Transmuting Role of Customs and Border Officials: From Tax Collection to Health and Environmental Protection  
Customs plays a significant role in the realization of Africa's integration. These include the traditional roles of collecting revenue, enforcement, simplification of clearance procedures, and implementation of trade facilitation instruments e.g. Origin verification and the Regional Customs Guarantee Schemes (RCTG) for transit goods. Customs agencies have powerful tools to oversee the movement of goods across borders effectively.

However, the world has become more dynamic with rising environmental and climate change effects, fueled by technological developments that give rise to trade in illicit and dangerous products. Consequently, the tightened regulations and restrictions are required to effectively control the environmental impact of economic activities. These developments have called for increased attention towards combating unscrupulous trade and the detrimental effects of environmental pollution and climate change.

The second set of roles for Customs have gained currency in the recent past, thanks to the Green Customs Initiative (GCI). Under the GCI, Customs and Border control officers are compelled to understand the use of specific codes in the Harmonised System (HS) to identify dangerous products and environmentally sensitive items. This calls for the mutual recognition of processes, procedures and effective coordination with other agencies.

### Policy Implications

In view of the changing technical and environmental dynamics, Customs agencies need to enhance their competencies and cooperate with other competent agencies involved in the implementation of trade regulations and laws. In addition, governments must continuously invest in product specific knowledge of new developments in order to develop appropriate enforcement operations that address emerging challenges. Finally, Customs need to consider developing new tools, such as company audits and chemical analysis in laboratories to verify origin and to extend their contributions following new developments in order to strengthen the execution of their mandate.



By Dr. Christopher Onyango,  
Director Trade and Customs,  
COMESA Secretariat.



## Enhancing the Role of OSBP Joint Border Management Committees



**Meeting at the Headquarters of the Kenya Revenue Authority, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023, Nairobi**

The success of One Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) requires the collaborative operations of multiple border agencies, and cooperation with neighboring countries. Joint Border Coordination Committees (JBOCs) serve as the backbone of coordination. At a policy level, there is need to institutionalize a higher-level of coordination with the purpose to overseeing the implementation of the East African Community (EAC) OSBP Act 2016 and take decisions to support JBOCs.

Recognizing this, the EAC 5-year OSBP Sustainability Strategy 2021-2026 has underscored the importance of the EAC's endeavors to fully operationalize JBOCs regionally. It also emphasizes the formation of a policy-level coordination at national, bilateral, and regional levels.

Taking into account the current circumstances, the EAC Secretariat conducted a survey in June 2023, to assess the progress and effectiveness of JBOCs. This involved visits to multiple Partner States borders'. A team comprising of OSBP specialists from the EAC Secretariat's Customs and Infrastructure Directorates, presented the outline of the OSBP institutional framework, gathered feedback from officers stationed at the headquarters and OSBPs. This feedback highlighted the need for clear guidelines on OSBP operations. In response, the EAC plans to organize the regional EAC experts meeting which aims to refine the OSBP Procedures Manual, integrating the guidelines of the JBOCs.

These pivotal initiatives are part of the EAC Calendar of activities on trade facilitation, and were supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). OSBPs play a significant role in facilitating trade. For example, a 2017 JICA survey revealed that after the initiation of OSBP operations at Rusumo (Tanzania-Rwanda border), the cargo and passenger average crossing time decreased to 73% from 55% and 81% from 79% respectively. In the EAC, 14 of the 16 border points earmarked as OSBPs, 14 have been constructed and are currently operational.



**Meeting at the Namanga (Kenya/Tanzania) OSBP, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

By **Sawada Keisuke**,  
 Technical Advisor for Customs and Trade Facilitation,  
 Customs Directorate, EAC Secretariat.



## Introducing the Customs-Finance Intelligence Units (FIU) Cooperation Handbook

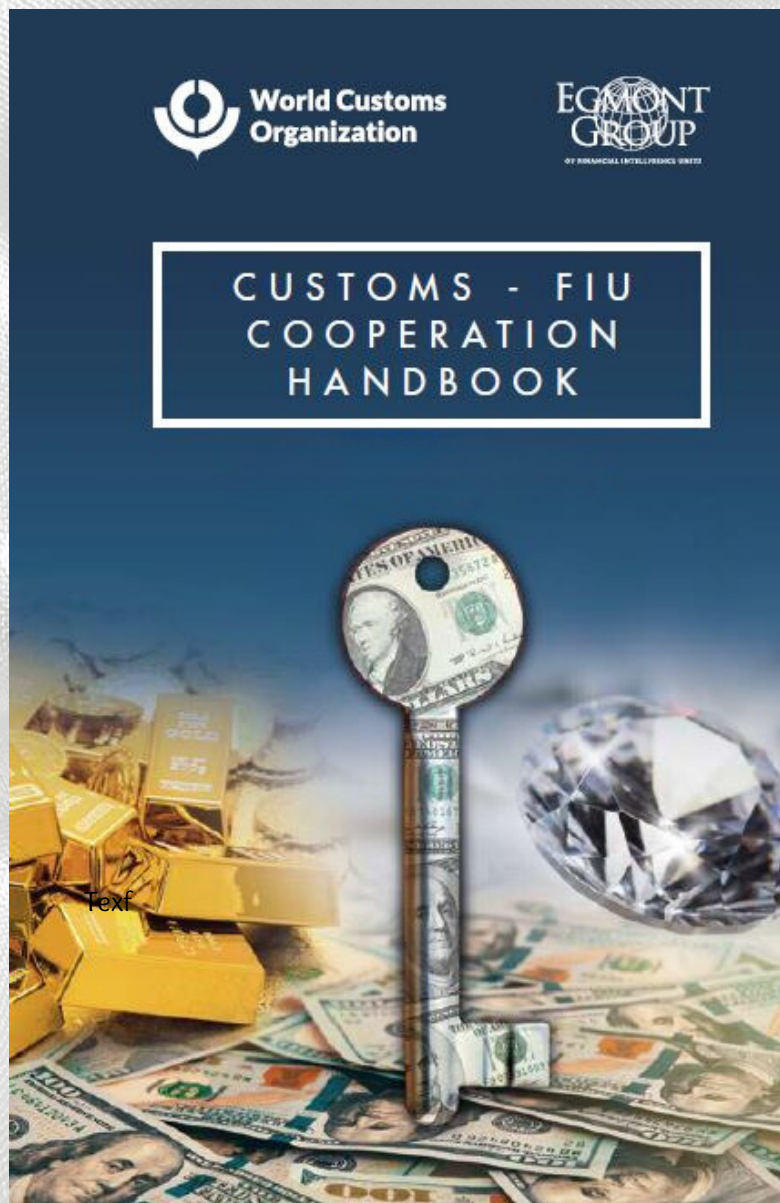
In May 2023, the Financial Intelligence Compendium (FIC) Sub-regional Workshop on Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Counter-Terrorism Financing (CTF) was held in Mauritius where the Customs-Finance Intelligence Unit (FIU) Cooperation Handbook (CFCH) was launched. The Handbook is an anti-money laundering and counter terrorism financing tool that is as a result of the co-operation between the WCO, the Egmont Group of FIUs and their supporting partners. It contains practical reference guides for use by Customs Administrations and FIUs.

The handbook is a 'living' document which strategically addresses the identification, interdiction and investigation of Customs-based money laundering including smuggling, concealment of currency, currency equivalents, gems and precious metals; trade-based money laundering (TBML) and money or value transfer systems and alternative remittance systems.

The Handbook also makes reference to the importance of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) which is the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog that sets international standards which aim to prevent illegal activities that cause harm to society. The FATF establishes the authority for countries to set up FIUs which serve as the national centres for receipt and analysis of suspicious transaction reports (STRs), information related to money laundering and other predicate offences as well as activities related to terrorism financing. In addition, FIUs are tasked to collect, analyse and disseminate information to other competent authorities and foreign FIUs. The FATF further makes 40 recommendations that provide a comprehensive framework of measures that help countries tackle illicit financial flows.

The handbook finally provides recommendations for cooperation between Customs and FIUs and contains annexed information on model cases and suggested sample questions to ask parties concerned during an interrogation.

The need for enhanced cooperation and collaboration between Customs and FIUs remains a critical partnership in curbing and eliminating AML/CTF for a safer society.



By **Elizabeth Kamunyu**,  
Programme Officer,  
WCO ESA ROCB.



## Kenya Revenue Authority 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Tax Summit

The Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) will be hosting the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Tax Summit virtually on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> October 2023 under the theme 'Turning the Reel: Building a Resilient & Progressive Tax System'.

The Summit will bring together actors from tax administrations, the private sector, policy experts, academia, media and civil society to deliberate on solutions to policy, institutional, legal, and administrative challenges facing tax administrations in Africa.

This is a public participation platform designed to improve African tax systems by sharing ideas, innovations and strategies successfully implemented in other jurisdictions. It is also aimed at enhancing the capacity of tax officials in the continent through networking, knowledge exchange and collaboration. In addition, tax policymakers and administration officials can collaborate on improving tax policy decisions that will positively enhance domestic revenue mobilization.

This year's Summit will feature keynote addresses from Kenya's Cabinet Secretary, National Treasury and Economic Planning, Professor Njuguna Ndung'u, CBS, the Cabinet Secretary, Cooperatives and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Development, Mr. Simon Chelugui, and the Deputy Secretary General Customs, Trade and Monetary Affairs, East African Community (EAC), Ms. Annette Mutaawe Ssemuwemba.

The discussions will focus on the following topics:

- Plenary 1: Tax morale the vision of Tax administrations - Building a social contract with citizens Lessons, Opportunities and Road map.
- Plenary 2: Promoting predictability and stability of the Tax System: National Tax Policy as a tool for tax base expansion.
- Plenary 3: Moving the cog: Economic Transformation through Export Promotion.
- Public Lecture: Creating an Economy on Supersonics: The Role of Digital Transformation.

KRA cordially invites you to attend the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Tax Summit as we believe that your contribution will enrich the

conference discussions and provide quality insights on the future of tax administration in low-income economies, particularly in Africa.

Please visit <https://summit.kra.go.ke/summit/> for more information on the Summit and to access previous Summit reports.



By **Loice Akello**,  
International Relations & Diplomacy Division,  
Kenya Revenue Authority.





## ERS Leading the Way in SACU with the Launch of the Digitized Advance Rulings Tool



On the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023, Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS) launched their electronic Advance Ruling Tool, taking the lead in digital transformation and trade facilitation.

The electronic Advanced Ruling Tool was officially launched by ERS Commissioner General Brightwell Nkambule. Other high level delegates included the ERS Minister of Finance, Neal Rijkenberg, representatives from the WCO, the British High Commission, represented by High Commissioner Simon Boyden, the EU represented by the EU Ambassador Dessislava Choumelova and Traders, Business Eswatini (represented by CEO Nathi Dlamini).

Capacity building and technical assistance for the implementation of the ERS electronic Advance Ruling Tool was provided under the WCO's EU HS-Africa Programme and Accelerate Trade Facilitation Programme. The Advance Ruling Tool was developed by GTS in South Africa, who worked closely with ERS, the WCO's EU HS-Africa and Accelerate Trade Facilitation Programmes to implement and deploy the tool for ERS. The tool was commissioned within a three-month period starting in January 2023 and completed in April 2023.

An Advance Ruling is an important concept in trade facilitation as it provides a simple, online interface where traders may apply for an Advance Ruling on Tariff Classification, Origin or Valuation. Often, traders face many challenges in international trade such as tariff classification of goods, determination of the country of and valuation which have an impact on the duties, taxes and levies that are applied by Customs at the time of importation or exportation. Any uncertainty around these aspects can impact on how quickly goods move through Customs, as well as on a trader's profitability.

Advance Rulings provide the trader with certainty and clarity around these aspects by providing an official, written and legally binding decision from the ERS Customs Authority.

The electronic Advance Ruling tool was well received by The Traders and Business community in Eswatini.

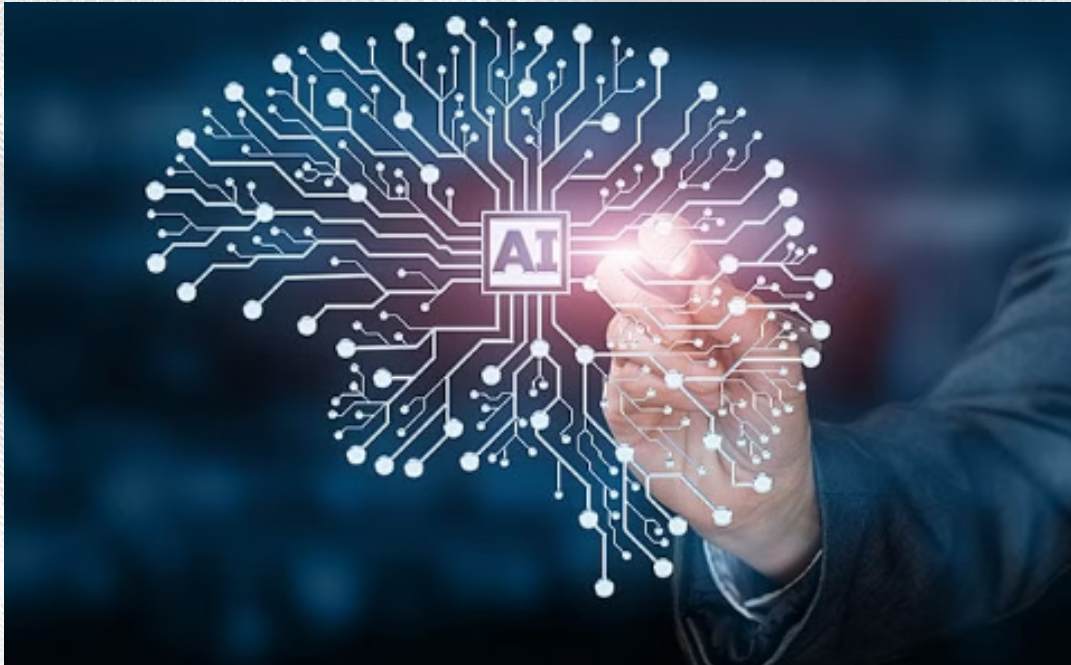
Below are some pictures of the official launch :-

1. The proud ERS team at the official launch
2. The WCO Programme Teams and the dignitaries and ERS officials at the official launch
3. Trade attending the official launch





# Modernizing Customs Operations: The Impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Customs Processes in East and Southern Africa



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing Customs procedures in both East and Southern Africa, bringing forth a wave of improvements in efficiency, precision, and security. Its impact on Customs operations within these regions is multifaceted.

AI's automation capabilities are particularly noteworthy. It excels in automating data entry and processing tasks, swiftly and accurately extracting information from Customs declarations, invoices, and shipping documents. This reduces the likelihood of errors and significantly expedites the processing of import and export documentation. The result is not only saves time but also increases accuracy, a critical element in Customs operations.

AI is a game-changer in risk assessment and profiling. Advanced algorithms can sift through extensive datasets to pinpoint high-risk shipments and profiles, empowering Customs authorities to allocate resources more effectively for inspections and audits. This targeted approach enhances both security measures and the facilitation of trade by expediting the processing of low-risk cargo.

In Kenya, the Integrated Customs Management system (i-CMS) applies predictive analytics which is AI-driven. By analyzing trade data, the system can predict trends and identify anomalies, giving Kenyan Customs Authorities the ability to proactively address emerging risks, fraud patterns, or areas of non-compliance. This predictive capability is invaluable in enhancing border security and optimizing revenue collection in Kenya.

AI's contribution to security extends to image recognition and scanning technologies, which can rapidly and accurately detect suspicious items or contraband within cargo. These systems work in tandem with human inspectors, greatly enhancing border security which has largely been adopted in Kenya, Uganda and other countries in the ESA region.

However, with all its benefits it is essential to implement AI systems with robust safeguards to protect privacy, and data security, and ensure compliance with international trade regulations.

By **Job Toroitich Changwony**  
Customs officer,  
Kenya Revenue Authority.



## The Mozambique Revenue Authority Implements the Electronic Sealing and Tracking Project for Goods in Transit



As part of an initiative by the Mozambican Government, the Mozambique Revenue Authority, has been implementing the project of sealing and tracking goods in transit since 2021. Thanks to its coastal location, Mozambique hosts some of the major ports as well as road and rail corridors used by landlocked countries in the Southern Region of Africa, including Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, the Kingdom of Eswatini, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Botswana and Lesotho.

For many years, the control of transit goods had been through the use of traditional methods such as the use of physical escorts which posed a great challenge for the country as it resulted in significant revenue losses for both Mozambique and recipient countries through smuggling and diversion schemes.

This project involves the electronic sealing and tracking of all goods in transit, from the Customs territory entry point to exit point. The process of control involves the placement of an electronic seal device on the means of transportation and connecting this to a monitoring system under 24-hour supervision in a control room. This team is assisted by the well-equipped 'Quick Response' teams stationed along the corridors ready to intervene swiftly in case of an attempted violation of transit regulations.

The pilot project was initiated in 2020, and its effective implementation began in January 2021. This took place in 3 phases with the final phase implemented in November 2021. The sealing covers all goods transported by road and rail and its implementation has significantly reduced the smuggling, reduced the levels of corruption and cargo transit time, thereby increasing revenue collection from import duties. In addition, this measure has increased user satisfaction, port efficiency and competitiveness at the regional level.



By **Orlando Agostinho Mungoi**,  
Mozambique Revenue Authority.



## Finance Minister Appoints Mrs. Mathabo Mokoko as RSL Commissioner General



The Honourable Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Dr. Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane has appointed Mrs. Mathabo Mokoko as the new Commissioner General of the Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL).

Mrs. Mokoko is an Advocate of the High Court and Court of Appeal of Lesotho. She graduated with Bachelor of Laws from the University of Lesotho and a Masters of Taxation from the University of Pretoria. Her work experiences include: An Advocate at a private law firm; part-time Lecturer at the University of Lesotho; the Lesotho Revenue Authority (LRA) Legal Officer, Legal Officer Law Interpretation, and Senior Manager-Policy Procedures & Law Interpretation. She has also worked at the UN Headquarters as the Inter-Regional Advisor on International Tax Matters; the Head Legal & Board Secretary at Water and Sewage Company, and the Manager Legal Affairs & Company Secretary at Vodacom Lesotho.

Mrs. Mokoko rejoined the RSL as the Commissioner Operations Support and later as the Commissioner Client Services, until her recent appointment as the Commissioner General. In her remarks, the Honourable Minister Dr. Matlanyane congratulated the Commissioner General saying, "The good thing is that she is no stranger to the revenue collection environment, having served in this organization for many years, in various capacities. She is familiar with the business of the RSL. Her international and private company experiences are critical and we believe will be handy in providing the appropriate leadership and setting the relevant strategies to ensure the success of the RSL."

Commissioner General Mrs. Mokoko noted that one of her main duties will be to ensure that taxpayers have easy access to RSL services while complying with the tax laws.

Mrs. Mokoko succeeds Mr. Thabo Khasipe who joined the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) as Executive Secretary in December 2022.

*Congratulations!*





## Namibia Validates the Findings of the Time Release Study Conducted at the Walvis Bay Port



On 21<sup>st</sup> July 2023, the Namibia Revenue Agency (NamRA) invited the World Customs Organisation (WCO), His Majesty's Revenue Authority and representatives from various border agencies, Government ministries and private sector to a Workshop on Validating the Findings of the Time Release Study (TRS) conducted at the Walvis Bay Port in Windhoek, Namibia.

With the support of technical and financial assistance from WCO under the Accelerate Trade Facilitation Programme, Namibia commenced with the TRS at the Walvis Bay Port on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2023 through the TRS National Technical Working Group (NTWG).

The establishment of a TRS NTWG is the first activity from a series of four core phases under the WCO TRS Guide that are followed in a sequential manner until the Study is concluded. The TRS NTWG consisted of 34 representatives from NamRA, Namibia Ports Authority, Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reform, Ministry of Health and Social Services: Port Health Department, Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security, Ministry of Industrialization and Trade, Meat Board of Namibia, Namibia Agronomic Board, Ministry of Works and Transport, Namibia Trade Forum, Trans Kalahari Corridor Secretariat, Walvis Bay Corridor Group and the Walvis Bay Port Users Association who were

instrumental in determining the scope of the Study, including the Customs procedures to be measured.

In his keynote remarks, Commissioner Sam SHIVUTE of NamRA clarified that conducting a TRS was but a first step in facilitating trade under Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and challenged border agencies to collectively address the bottlenecks identified at the Walvis Bay Port in order to facilitate the smooth movement of goods. The Walvis Bay Port TRS final report is expected to be shared officially with the public in November 2023





# Updating the Implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement Measures on the Reform Tracker Tool



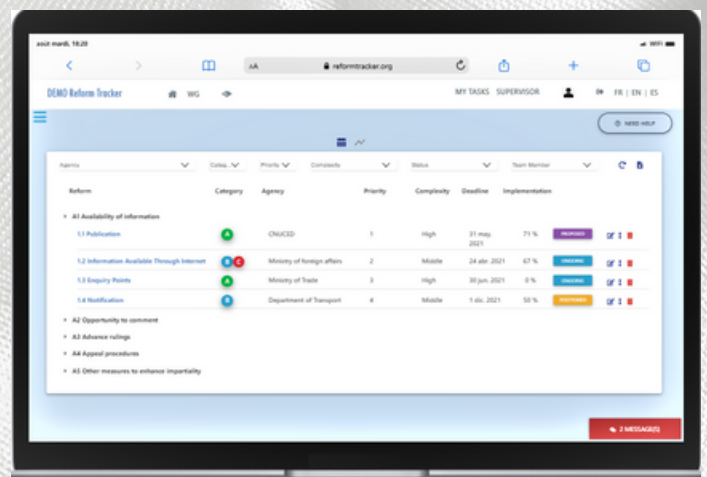
The National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) of Namibia commenced a week-long workshop from 31<sup>st</sup> July 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2023 to update the implementation of measures under the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) through the Reform Tracker Tool in order to improve the implementation score of Namibia's implementation of the TFA on the Reform Tracker Tool which stood at 7.72%.

The Reform Tracker Tool assists NTFC's to monitor and evaluate activities implemented as part of the TFA. It was launched by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Namibia on June 2021 through the Trade Facilitation Assistance Programme which aims to accelerate trade facilitation measures implementation through funding from His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HRMC). The Reform Tracker Tool is utilized by 25 countries and has been a great enabler in supporting the coordination and implementation of trade facilitation measures in Namibia.

In Namibia, the NTFC is chaired by the Namibia Revenue Agency (NamRA) with a part-time Secretariat from the Namibia Trade Forum. The NTFC functions as a forum for sharing information on pending measures under the TFA. It consists of core members including: The Ministry of Industrialization and Trade, key border agencies, Government Ministries and institutions whose mandates support trade facilitation. In addition, it has members from Namibia's private sector such as the Trans Kalahari Corridor Secretariat, Walvis Bay Corridor Group, Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Namibia Investment

Promotion and Development Board.

In his keynote remarks, Mr. Sikongo Haihambo, the Executive Director: MIT thanked the members of the NTFC for prioritizing Namibia's implementation of the TFA. At the end of the workshop, it was worth noting that the TFA implementation score of Namibia's had increased to 26.85%.





## Cross-border Road update



The latest cross-border report issued by Federation of Southern African Road Transport Association (FESARTA) for the week ending 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023 indicated that cross-border queue time averaged ~13.7 hours (down by ~0.5 hours from the previous week's ~14.2 hours), indirectly costing the transport industry an estimated \$36.8 million. Furthermore, the week's average cross-border transit times hovered around ~8.4 hours (up by ~0.1 hours from the ~8.3 hours recorded in the previous report), at an indirect cost to the transport industry of \$13.7 million. As a result, the total indirect cost for the week amounts to an estimated ~\$50.5 million, up by ↑0.5%.

The North/South corridor once more handled the greatest volumes during the week compared to the other corridors in the report, with an average of 3255 heavy goods vehicle arrivals per day, translating to 74,160 tons per day. Queue times on the Dar Es Salaam corridor were captured at 44.1 hours, while the North/South corridor queue times were 17.2 hours.

This week's costliest border crossing was the Kasumbalesa border post, with delays reaching costs of up to \$3,780,000. Delays on the Zambian side of the border post cost approximately \$1,670,760, while delays on the DRC side of the border post cost approximately \$2,109,240. The second costliest border post during this period was the Lebombo/Ressano Garcia border post between South Africa and Mozambique, where the delays translated to a \$1,926,277 cost. On the South African side of the border post, delays cost approximately \$1,897,868, while the delays on the Mozambique side of the border post cost approximately \$28,409.





# A Call for a More Regulated Logistics Environment in Africa

The importance of a well-functioning logistics environment in Africa cannot be overstated, as it is an exceptional enabler of economic growth and prosperity. Under the leadership of the Federation of Clearing and Forwarding Associations of Sovereign Africa (FCFASA), the WCO ESA RPSG created a document calling for a more regulated logistics environment in Africa. The main aim of this document calls for an in-depth investigation by the African Union to assist in establishing the rules to prevent the following devastating effects on supply chain movements, which are captured in cost, time, and sustainability for the end user:

- Effect on cross-border trade
- Substantial competition aversion giving rise to unwanted monopolistic power – The real growth in Africa lies with its abundance of Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs), as approximately 80% of African traders comprise SMMEs. One of the main stumbling blocks to competitive SMMEs is access to funding and their ability to enter international markets. Thus, SMMEs must be provided with an opportunity to be more competitive to ensure economic growth for the rest of the continent.
- Cohesive behaviour in activities under one umbrella - Allow subsidies for certain activities within the supply chain environment, which can facilitate more competitiveness.
- Operating in supply chain movement from a place of dominance, due to the structure formulated over many years in supply chain movement (create an established base to integrate horizontal regulation overall activities in the supply chain and specifically the logistics environment in a very structured way. This entails having data with substantial trade information across all activities)





## FIATA RAME Conference in Uganda



On 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023, at the Speke Resort and Conference Centre in Kampala, Uganda, the International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA) President Dr. Petrov opened the Annual 2023 field meeting of FIATA's Region Africa Middle East (FIATA RAME). Hosted by FIATA's Association Member in Uganda- Uganda Freight Forwarders Association (UFFA), the FIATA RAME meeting featured a 2-day conference welcoming over 250 logistics professionals from all over Africa to discuss the challenges of logistics professionals in the region.

The FIATA President invited freight forwarding associations to join FIATA to ensure a strong and unified "global voice of freight forwarders". He presented the current work of FIATA, including digitalisation, a Global Air Cargo Programme, multimodal corridors development and promoting a level-playing field. He highlighted the FIATA Regional Strategy after the 3-year COVID-19 pandemic and the commitment of FIATA to reinforce its regional activities and support its association members in the region. The acting FIATA RAME Chair, Ms Mashiri (Zimbabwe), reminded participants of the importance of ensuring that all forwarders in the region raise their voices so that FIATA can find appropriate tailor-made industry solutions. She highlighted that: "In a time of artificial intelligence, this kind of meeting allows the possibility to meet real people, to know whom we are talking to, and to trust the expertise exchanged".

The importance of FIATA RAME for FIATA was demonstrated by the high-level FIATA leadership present with the FIATA President, Dr. Petrov (Bulgaria), FIATA Senior Vice-President, Mr. Sim (Singapore), FIATA Director General Dr. Graber (Switzerland), acting FIATA RAME Chair, Ms. Mashiri (Zimbabwe), FIATA Airfreight Chair, Mr. Woubishet (Ethiopia), FIATA IFCC delegates, Mr. Tanna (India), and FIATA Vice-President, Mr. Taylor (Chile).





## Nomination of RAME Chair and Vice-Chair: Africa Makes History!



Pictured : Dr. Juanita Maree

For the first time in FIATA history, the International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations Region Africa Middle East (FIATA RAME) members have nominated two female leaders to spearhead the work of a FIATA standing committee, showing the way to gender inclusion, diversity and modernization.

Dr. Juanita Maree (South Africa) has been nominated for the position of FIATA RAME Chair, and Ms. Sheila Mashiri (Zimbabwe) will continue as acting FIATA RAME Chair until the next election. Ms. Mashiri expressed her wishes to continue supporting RAME as FIATA RAME Vice-Chair and her full support to Dr. Maree.

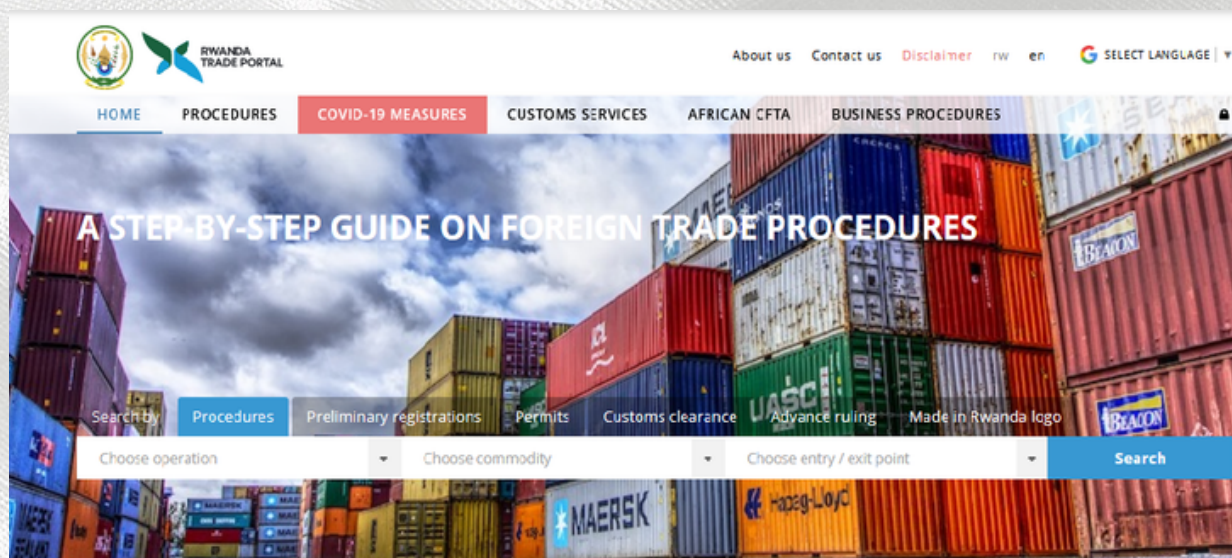
Ms. Mashiri will also run for the position of Vice-President of FIATA this autumn to represent the African freight forwarders community in the FIATA Extended Board. The FIATA President welcomed this historical election and congratulated FIATA RAME for leading the way in demonstrating gender inclusion in leadership positions.

*Congratulations!*





## Cross Border Trade Made Easy Courtesy of Rwanda Trade Portal



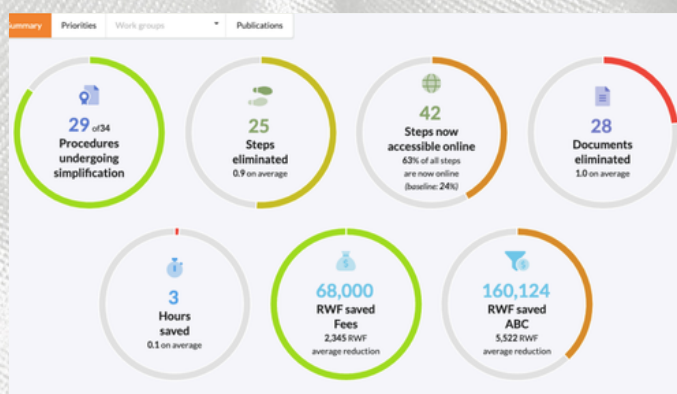
The Rwanda Trade Portal has enabled traders to engage in trade with ease, particularly during the tough times of the Covid-19 pandemic. This revelation comes after a number of traders commended the portal for its significant contribution to reducing the time taken when accessing export and import trade information.

The Rwanda Trade Portal ([rwandatrade.rw](http://rwandatrade.rw)) is an online platform that was launched in March 2018 and is implemented by the Rwanda Revenue Authority under the supervision of the National Trade Facilitation Committee. It provides a comprehensive, single source of user-centric information needed to trade in and out of Rwanda. It provides a step-by-step guide to imports, exports and transit procedures, including licenses, permits and customs clearance. Under each procedure, traders can identify the service needed, the entity/unit/officer in charge, contact information, documentation requirements, costs, duration at the counter, legal justification, recourse procedures with contact data, as well as the certifying Authority among others.

The portal was developed to fulfill Article 1 of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement(TFA), requiring member states to publish their trade procedures online, and provide contact information on inquiry points, fees and forms. This is to help traders reduce both financial and time costs incurred while trying to seek information related to different trade procedures.

Trade Portals bring more transparency to trade related information, and empowers government officials such as Members of the National Trade Facilitation Committee to evaluate the complexities of trade procedures and identify more simplification measures.

Currently, 28 trade related procedures have been simplified, making it faster and cheaper to conduct cross-border trade in Rwanda. A further 128 procedures, laws and regulations have been published with information including institutional contacts of focal staff to provide online support.





## Russia and South Africa Move to Cement AEO Mutual Recognition



Mr. Ruslan Davydov, Acting Head, Customs Service of Russia



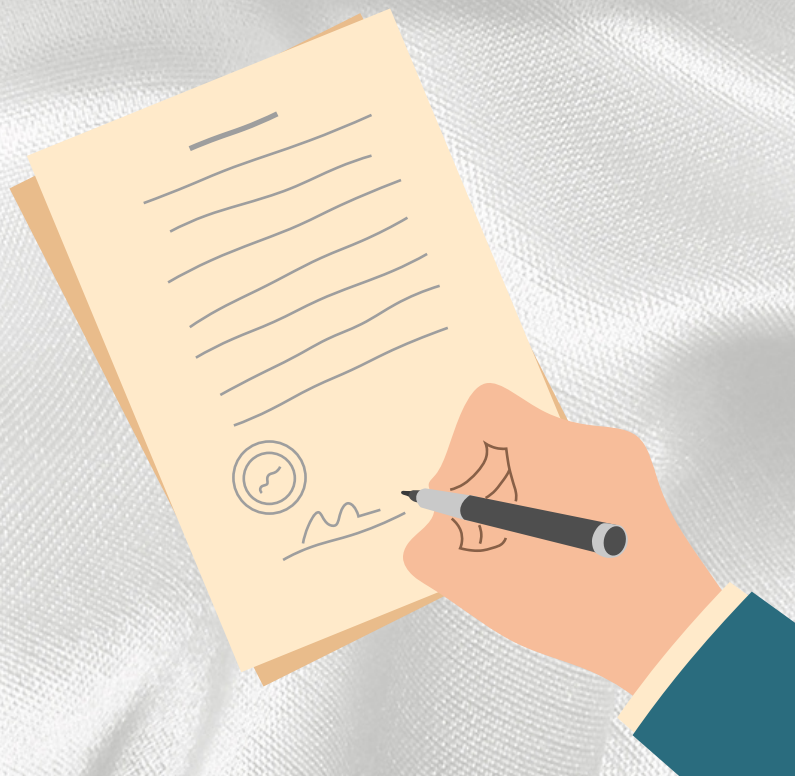
Prof. Edward Kieswetter, Commissioner of SARS

During the BRICS Heads of Customs Meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2023, the Federal Customs Service of the Russian Federation and the South African Revenue Service of South Africa decided to establish a Joint Action Plan (JAP) for mutual recognition of Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) programmes for co-operation on issues related to mutual recognition of their AEO programmes.

This agreement which occurred during the BRICS meeting for Heads of Administration in Cape Town and will establish a close co-operation framework, which includes creating a working group and exchanging information on the authorisation criteria for AEO status and Customs clearance processes. To conclude the arrangement on mutual recognition in good time – and ultimately sign and implement a Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) – the two countries will endeavour to undertake negotiations on this in several phases.

During the process, information will be shared between Russia and South Africa, including relevant legislation, authorisation criteria for AEO, the validation procedures that are held in each of the participant states, and other matters related to their respective AEO programmes.

AEO programmes are based on the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards to secure and facilitate global trade, as adopted by the World Customs Organization, and contribute significantly to end-to-end supply chain security.





## Capacity Building in Customs Revenue Division (CRD) of National Revenue Authority (NRA)



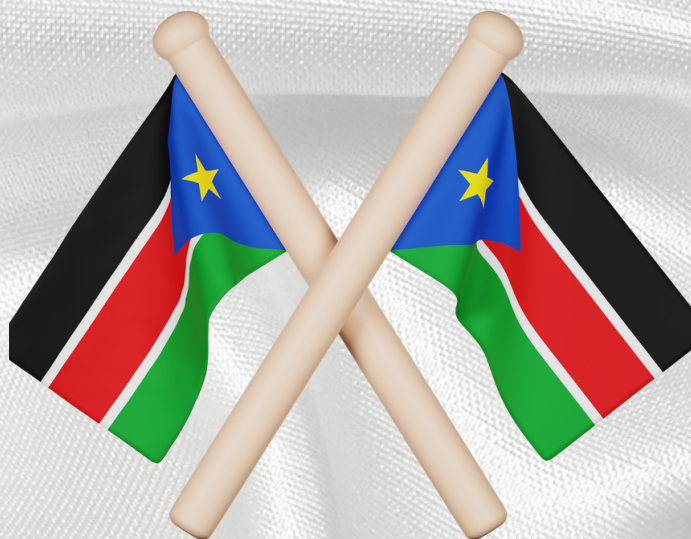
The National Revenue Authority (NRA) was established to streamline the mobilization of Non-Oil revenue as part of the Government's policy to reduce South Sudan's dependency on oil as a non-renewable resource. NRA is the only institution in the Republic of South Sudan mandated with the collection of non-oil revenue. Customs has therefore become one of its pillars in revenue collection.

NRA's 5-year strategic plan has been developed and approved to guide its activities in establishing processes while simultaneously investing in human resources as the backbone to drive reforms.

The Customs Revenue Division (CRD) has been undergoing capacity-building trainings such as on the Harmonised System (HS) from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). This has facilitated the clearance of goods using HS Codes in some Customs stations. The NRA appreciates JICA's effort towards providing capacity building that has worked so far for CRD. This initiative began with diagnostic mission which was followed by a detailed survey, and the provision of experts i.e. EAC regional experts from Uganda Revenue Authority (URA).

JICA has also trained NRA officers some of whom have been chosen to be Trainer of Trainers (ToT) in various capacities. The ToTs have conducted trainings at Juba and Nimule stations and gone a step further to train outside these two areas in the Bahr El Ghazal Region-Wau. This initiative was co-funded by NRA and JICA. This was very significant and eye-opening as most of the officers in this region had not attended such trainings. At least 30 officers were successfully trained on the HS tariff 2022 version and the Rules of Origin.

Based on our assessment, NRA needs more attention and support from the administration and partners to ensure that capacity-building for Customs Officers is a sustainable and ongoing practice.





## EU Ambassador Tours Seychelles Revenue Commission Customs Facilities



As part of its paperless journey, the Customs Division of the Seychelles Revenue Commission (SRC) has over the past months introduced two new modules within the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA). The e-manifest module and the excise tax module in were launched in March and June 2023 respectively. The two projects were implemented under the Economic Partnership Agreement of the European Union to enable Customs significantly reduce manual transactions thus enhancing services provided at both the Inland Revenue Section and at the Airport Cargo Terminal.

On June 30<sup>th</sup> 2023, SRC welcomed the European Union's Ambassador to Seychelles, H.E Vincent Degert, accompanied by his delegation, for a tour of SRC's Customs facilities to view the progress of the new modules. While meeting the Excise team at the Inland Revenue office, the ambassador was briefed on the processes and the implementation of the system. The delegation gained a broader perspective from an excise manufacturer through a visit at Almalgamated Tobacco CO. Following this, was a tour to the Airport Cargo Unit and Air Seychelles Fedex Express courier facilities to understand more about e-manifest module.

Concluding his visit, Ambassador Degert expressed his satisfaction to the staff who had worked to ensure the system's successful implementation. In his remarks, he said, "Today I wanted to see how the process is going and if everything is functioning, and if the officers are well trained and have a good knowledge on how to implement these two systems. And I am happy to say that I have observed that everything is in fact working properly and the officers themselves are well trained".

The Director of Inland Revenue, Mrs. Cindy Blakemore also expressed her gratitude to the EU ambassador, for supporting the Customs Division with its projects.





# People are Dying from Substandard Medicines Breaching the Border



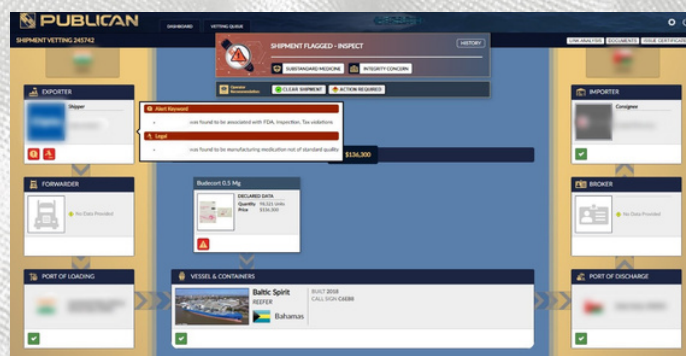
The World Health Organization estimates that one out of ten medical products in developing countries is substandard or falsified. This figure is constantly worsening due to growing demand as suppliers and opportunistic operators attempt to fill the void. Substandard goods range from faulty masks, ventilators, low-quality latex gloves, counterfeit medicines, vaccines and vitamins which are pawned off as the 'real thing.' The prevalence of substandard medical goods poses a critical challenge for Customs, as the consequence of failing to detect them is a matter of life and death. Today, Customs mainly use sporadic laboratory conformity checks which are conducted on limited number samples to assure the quality of imported medical goods. However, this approach is risky as human lives are at stake.

With only 1% of goods properly vetted, the likelihood of substandard medical goods breaching borders remains high. Digital vetting technology offers a solution that identifies a wide range of risks that go unnoticed during the traditional verification process. It comprehensively inspects 100% of shipments and identifies potential issues before the goods arrive at the laboratories, providing a crucial layer of protection.

Publican's digital shipment inspection spearheads this type of technological approach by catching substandard medical good shipments in the act. For example, Publican's data driven Artificial Intelligence (AI)

technology detected irregularities in a recent cough syrup shipment destined to Africa. These included discrepancies in the Ministry of Health reports, questionable track records of the traders, and disturbing links to previous child deaths; all identified before the shipment arrived at the port.

This scenario is one of the countless illicit shipments that occur globally every year. The benefits and impact of data driven AI technology in safeguarding nations and in ensuring the uninterrupted flow of essential goods becomes clearly evident.



By **Rudy Kirzhner**,  
 VP Trade & Customs,  
 ULTRA.



## Zimbabwe Revenue Authority(ZIMRA) Steps Up its Efforts in the Implementation of Coordinated Border Management (CBM) Principles



As required by Pillar 3 of the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards, ZIMRA has enhanced its cooperation between Customs and other Government and Inter-Government agencies involved in international trade and supply chain security, through the development and adoption of a National CBM Framework and an implementation activity plan. This was possible through assistance received from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and implementation is through the structures of the National Trade Facilitation Committee.

The WCO CBM Compendium advocates for a coordinated approach by domestic and international border control agencies, to achieve greater efficiencies over managing trade and travel flows, while maintaining a balance with compliance requirements. The use of CBM principles is critical due to the ever increasing number of Government/regulatory agencies, which has resulted in bureaucratic border clearance processes.

All cross-border regulatory agencies must find ways to effectively use their limited resources and CBM enables them to leverage on each other's strengths and resources to deal with the problem of scarcity.

Zimbabwe is a signatory to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). Article 8 of the TFA requires that each member shall ensure that its authorities responsible for border controls and procedures dealing with the importation, exportation, and transit of goods cooperate with one another and coordinate their activities to facilitate trade.

Therefore, the development of National CBM Framework and its implementation activity plan was prompted by the need for a comprehensive solution to the problems of CBM to ensure an adequate and proportionate response to the existing and potential threats, and challenges in border security and facilitation of cross border trade. The framework provides a strategy and road map for effective border management.



By **Mr. Adrian Peter Swarres**,  
Zimbabwe Revenue Authority



## Capacity Building on Combating Valuation Fraud

The 2023 World Customs Organisation (WCO) Theme 'Nurturing the next generation: Promoting a culture of knowledge-sharing and professional pride in Customs' has set the tone for WCO capacity building strategies. Nevertheless, what is strategy without implementation?

The WCO Regional Training Centre (RTC) in Zimbabwe, in executing its role to lead the East and Southern Africa Region (ESA) Region on the WCO Revenue Package matters, hosted a virtual workshop on Combating Valuation Fraud on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023. This was a follow up to a virtual workshop held in May 2023. One hundred and sixty – six (166) participants from ESA and non- ESA member states attended the workshop whose facilitator was Andrew Mtukuleni of the Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA).



ZIMRA's staff attending the virtual workshop

The workshop's objective was to share techniques used to identify and combat valuation fraud through document and mirror analysis, block chain technology and mutual data sharing schemes.

Speakers from the WCO ESA Regional Office of Capacity Building and the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority concurred on the importance of Revenue Administrations in implementing government policy and national development. They challenged the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Customs Officers to pride themselves in taking responsibility and ownership of their growth through employing intelligent methods to combat revenue fraud.

The techniques proposed for combating fraud are implementable at personal and organisational level. For example, it is possible to conduct mirror analysis, using National and open source data, to identify trade gaps. Member states are to instil the inquisitive and data analytics culture in staff.

Participants acknowledged how they felt "much more informed" after the workshop. One shared that, "... incorporating the content will greatly enhance our learning resources".

The RTC Zimbabwe applauds the ESA Region for this collaboration and looks forward to host similar workshops in the future.

By **Lillian Musarandega**,  
Training Manager Customs & Excise,  
RTC Zimbabwe.





## East African Community's Regional Time Release Study to Enhance Trade Facilitation Along Northern and Central Corridors



Source: EAC TRS Technical Working group

### What is TRS?

Article 7.6 of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) covers Time Release Study (TRS) as a tool to measure and publish the average release time of goods i.e. the actual time of the release and/or clearance of goods, from time of arrival until the physical release of cargo.

Members use TRS as a key performance measure to assess, evaluate, and enhance the implementation of the WTO TFA.

### TRS in East African Community (EAC)

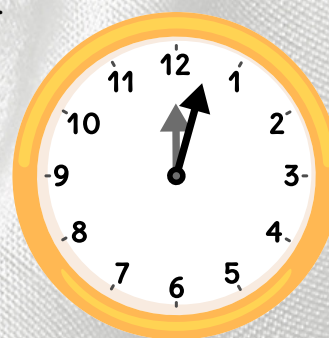
In EAC, TRS has been a tool used assist policy makers in implementing reforms along corridors and ports to eliminate bottles necks thereby promoting efficiency.

EAC in collaboration with African Development Bank (AfDB) and WCO-SIDA Programme has embarked on conducting TRS along two major trade corridors: Northern and Central Corridors. EAC Partner States have established a Regional Technical Working Group (TWG) comprising Customs Officers, Clearing Agents, Trade Experts, Ports Officers, Transit and Transport coordination authorities to assess the performance of the two corridors. The TWG has finalised the corridors mapping, questionnaires, data collection guides lines as per its timetable.

The 42<sup>nd</sup> Sectoral Council on Trade, Industry, Finance, and Investment has directed Partner States to conduct TRS National stakeholder sensitizations. The TRS will identify and document bottlenecks, success stories and assess the efficiency of Trade Facilitation initiatives e.g. Single Customs Territory; One Stop Border Posts; Ports infrastructure and Processes; Customs systems, and all the supply chain processes.

During the implementation of the action plan, the availability of accredited TRS officers was a challenge. In response to this, the WCO and the EAC will look to increasing accredited officers in the region to regularly conduct TRS.

The EAC Regional TRS report is expected to be published in May 2024.



By **Evariste Munyampundu**,  
EAC Customs Officer (Procedures and Trade Facilitation).



## Comoros: Interception des Produits Stupéfiants à l'Aéroport de Hahaya



Dans la journée du mardi 12 septembre 2023, la Brigade Touristique et de Surveillance (BTS) du Centre douanier de Hahaya Aéroport a démantelé un trafic de produits stupéfiants (chit dérive de cannabis) en provenance de Marseille.

Quatre-vingt-dix-neuf (99) sachets contenant ce produit dangereux ont été dissimulés dans cinq (5) boîtes différentes du lait de NIDO pour tromper la vigilance des douaniers. Avec une quantité de 9 kilo et 800 gramme (9,8 KG), la valeur de ces produits stupéfiants est au voisinage de vingt-quatre millions sept cent cinquante mille (24 750 000) francs comoriens.





## La Douane Malagasy Lance le Programme de Dématérialisation des Modèles de Certificats pour les Véhicules Importés



Dans le cadre de la concrétisation de sa stratégie de modernisation et de la dématérialisation des processus de dédouanement, la Douane malagasy a mis en place le programme de dématérialisation des Modèles de certificat d'immatriculation des véhicules importés. Le lancement officiel de ce programme a été réalisé le jeudi 07 septembre 2023 au Radisson Blu Waterfront Ambodivona, Antananarivo.

Auparavant, lors du dédouanement à l'import d'un véhicule, en fonction du régime douanier attribué, un certificat est établi et visé manuellement par le Bureau des Douanes pour servir à l'immatriculation dudit véhicule auprès des Centres Immatriculateurs de Madagascar (CIM). Il s'agit d'un imprimé généralement rempli à la machine à écrire et visé manuellement par le responsable du Bureau des Douanes après liquidation et paiement de la déclaration d'importation.

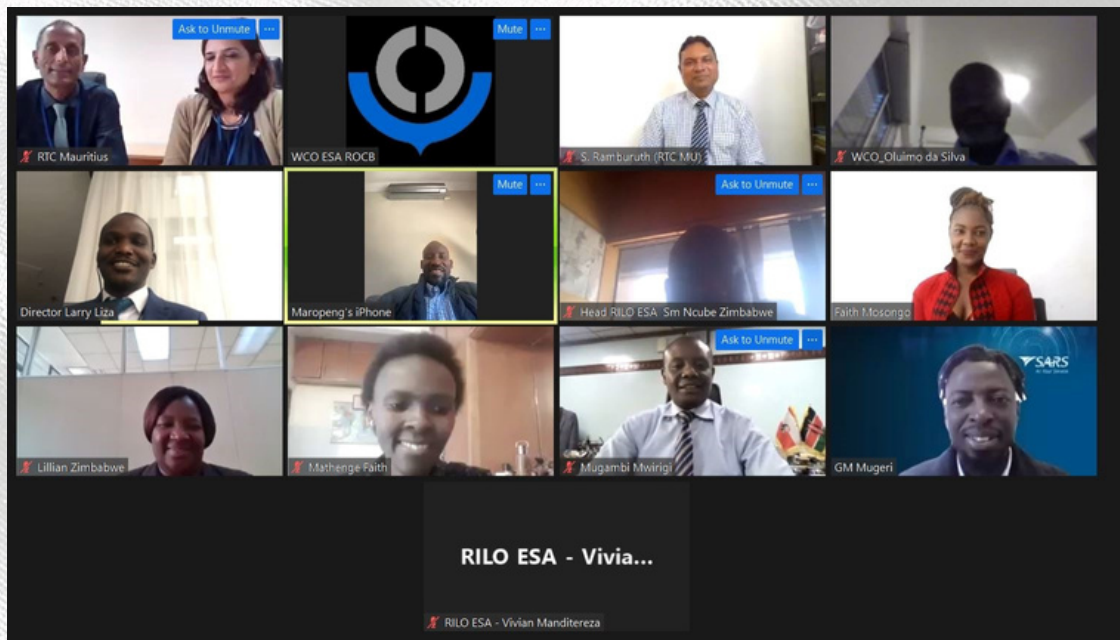
Désormais, avec la mise en place de ce programme de dématérialisation, les certificats sont générés automatiquement par le système dès que la déclaration en douane est liquidée et payée. Les spécificités des véhicules sont collectées à travers le processus « Contrôle d'identification des véhicules importés d'occasion » ou CIVIO et via le processus « Dossier d'Importation de Véhicule » ou DIV pour les cas ne devant pas faire l'objet d'un CIVIO. Les numéros de CIVIO et DIV doivent être référencés dans les déclarations en douane pour que le système génère un certificat modèle.

Ce programme est réalisé avec la collaboration de la société GasyNet et a pour objectif d'accélérer et de sécuriser les procédures de délivrance des modèles de certificats pour les véhicules. Il permettra la vérification en ligne et hors ligne de l'authenticité des certificats. A terme, il s'agit de créer une base de données fiable en matière d'importation de véhicules tout en assurant une plus grande fluidité dans le processus d'immatriculation des véhicules importés.





## The Regional Training Centres (RTC) Heads Meeting



The meeting of the WCO ESA RTC Heads, ROCB, RILO and the WCO took place virtually on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023. Participants included the Heads or representatives of the RTC Kenya, RTC Mauritius, RTC South Africa, RTC Zimbabwe as well as the ROCB, the RILO and the WCO. The Chairperson of the RTC Heads for the year 2023-2024, Mr. Maropeng Phineas Sebothoma, South Africa, thanked all the participants for attending the meeting and pointed out that the main agenda of the meeting was to kick start the implementation of the decisions made during the RTC Heads meeting held in May 2023 in Madagascar. He emphasized the principal role played by the collaboration of all regional entities in the delivery of capacity building initiatives in the region.

While the meeting examined the ongoing initiatives by the Regional Training Centres in their respective areas of excellence, it was noted that the capacity building initiatives have been largely concentrated around the support of Members in their efforts towards achieving more efficient and effective Customs Administrations. It was thus agreed that going forward the RTCs will further explore the holding of all-inclusive regional initiatives that will cut across all our stakeholders, including and not limited to: Member Administrations; Partner Government Agencies; Regional Economic Communities (RECs); Development Partners; Universities and related Research Centres; the Private Sector and all other partners with aligned goals.

The meeting further agreed to support the socializing of integrity policies in the region as well as developing a regional Code of Conduct on Integrity. This support is not limited to the area of integrity but will be extended to all areas covered by the ESA Regional Strategy and other emerging topics of interest to the region and the global Customs family.



By **Faith Mosongo**,  
Programme Officer,  
WCO ESA ROCB.



## High Level Engagement on Promotion of Safe and Inclusive Working Environment



The "High-Level Engagement on the Promotion of a Safe and Inclusive Working Environment" was organized by the WCO ESA Regional Office for Capacity Building 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2023. Over 120 participants from the region and globally attended the virtual meeting, officials from Customs administrations, WCO Regional Training Centres, Regional Economic Communities, the private sector, and other partners. Notable attendees were the WCO ESA Vice Chair, Mr. Sudhamo Lal; Secretary General of the World Customs Organization, Dr. Kunio Mikuriya; Commissioner General (Zimbabwe), Ms. Regina Chinamasa; Director of Customs from Mauritius, Mr. Vivekanand Ramburun and a host of Directors General/Commissioners. Others were Inclusive Trade Director from Trade Mark Africa, Ms. Gloria Atuheirwe; and CEO of Global Trade Solutions, Ms. Louise Wiggett, Human Resources & Training Director from Mauritius, Mr. Dhoojanaden Maunikum; and the WCO ESA ROCB Director, Mr. Larry Liza.

Mr. Sudhamo Lal emphasized the importance of a "Safe and Inclusive Working Environment" in his opening remarks. He spotlighted the role of gender equality and diversity in sustainable development, linking it to workplace happiness and performance. Dr. Kunio Mikuriya's keynote addressed the essence of a positive

workplace. He highlighted its importance for employee satisfaction and productivity, pointing to clear missions, teamwork, performance rewards, training, effective communication, and work-life balance as crucial components. He further noted that this focus is pivotal for Customs modernization in the ESA region, recognizing the value of its workforce.

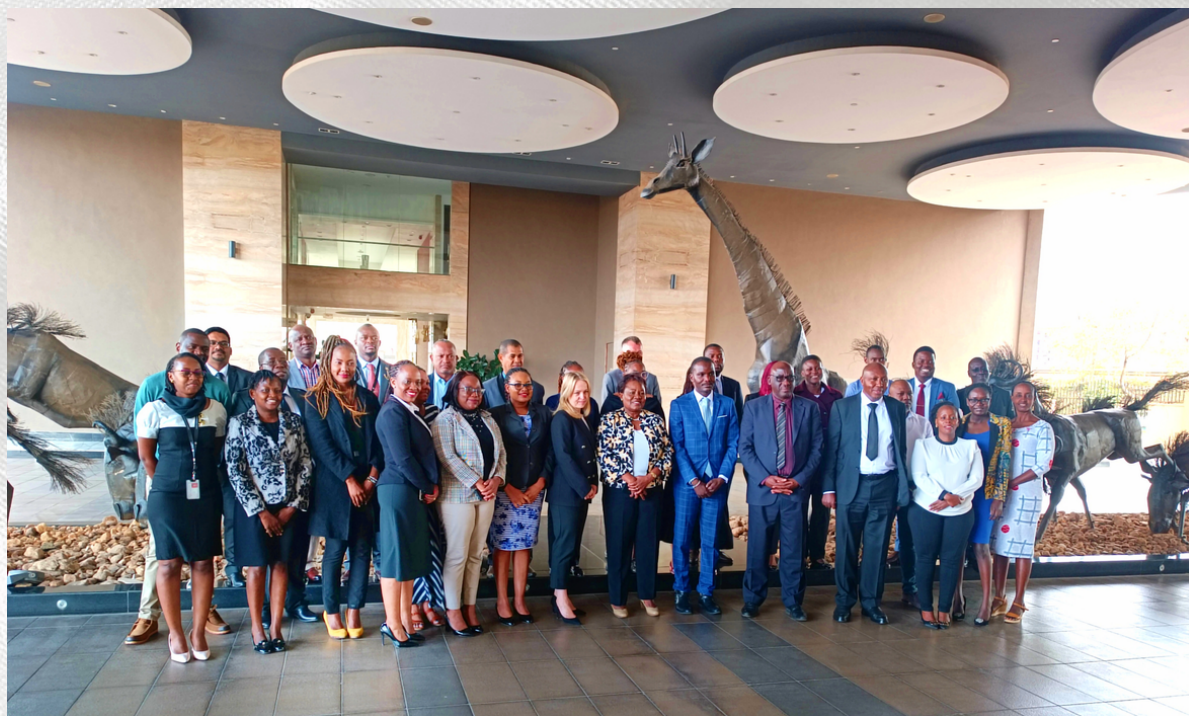
The meeting concluded with remarks from Mr. Vivekanand Ramburun of Mauritius.



By **Faith Mosongo**,  
Programme Officer,  
WCO ESA ROCB



## The 20<sup>th</sup> Administrative Meeting for National Contact Points for Regional Intelligence Liaison Office for The East and Southern Africa (RILO-ESA), 2023



The 20<sup>th</sup> Administrative Meeting for National Contact Points for Regional Intelligence Liaison Office for the East and Southern Africa (RILO-ESA), took place in Nairobi, Kenya, from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> August 2023. It was hosted by the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA).

The meeting was officially opened by the Commissioner Customs and Border Control, Kenya, Ms. Pamela Ahago. She welcomed the delegates to Kenya and emphasized Kenya's commitment to sustainable development of the ESA Region. Additional opening remarks were delivered by Mr. Larry Liza, the WCO ESA ROCB Director, and Mr. Sitheni Ncube, the Head of the RILO, East and Southern Africa Region. The meeting was attended by NCPs from 12 Member countries, representatives from the WCO ESA ROCB, TRAFFIC East Africa as well as the RILO Western Europe, led by the Head, Ms. Olga Salmenko.

The meeting was themed "Stimulating timely intelligence sharing and increased participation against illicit trade among member states." The Customs environment is dynamic, bringing with it challenges that require ongoing compliance and enforcement initiatives. The pivotal role the RILO plays in tackling these challenges cannot be understated. Their mission is to protect society while boosting the efficiency and effectiveness of Customs.

This involves offering operational support to administrations, crafting intelligence analysis projects, spearheading regional intelligence operations, ensuring mutual administrative assistance, and fostering regional cooperation with other enforcement agencies.

The NCPs' meeting was crucial as they reviewed reports, measured Member administrations' progress against illicit trade, and evaluated their support role for the RILO and the broader region.

Article by **Faith Mosongo**,  
Programme Office,  
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## Building Effective and Efficient Teams in the Modern Day Organization

All modern-day organizations require high-functioning teams to boost their performance and achieve their envisioned goals and missions. It is therefore paramount to put in place effective and efficient teams through regular capacity building and team building activities. These activities should put more focus on strengthening collaboration and avoiding internal competition among employees, it should be clear that the team is working towards a common goal and hence there are no losers nor winners, we succeed together or fail together.

It is common for competition to exist among employees or team members, in fact, oftentimes healthy competition in the team may produce good results especially when geared towards peer skill improvement and innovation. However, this, if not properly managed, may end up having detrimental effects on the team, especially, if the team members feel short-changed or if some get overly competitive to the point of wilfully sabotaging their colleagues' efforts in order to win. Organizations must therefore cultivate a productive and healthy working culture by supporting the development of rapport among team members and urging employees to embrace each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Having regular team building activities is therefore encouraged, and especially held away from the office. This will bring the team to a neutral ground allowing them to get to know each other from a different perspective other than that which is already in the office environment. It is interesting to note that people often display very different characteristics in varying environments and may help us understand each other more, neutral environs will also remove the manager-employee relationship and instead foster a personal relationship among employees.



By **Faith Mosongo**,  
Programme Officer,  
WCO ESA ROCB.



# GO TEAM!



# Importance of Leadership in Building Organisational Culture



There is a popular expression that says ‘Fish rots from the head’ and this has been proven true when we talk about the importance of leadership in building a reputable organisational culture. I am certain that you have also heard the expression ‘Culture eats strategy for breakfast’ by Professor Peter Drucker, a management consultant and guru. Other management peers have further expanded the expression to say that ‘Culture eats strategy for breakfast, innovation for lunch, and transformation for dinner’.

The famous American author John C. Maxwell is also quoted as saying “A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way”. This statement underlines the responsibility of leaders in building successful organisations through work culture. A great leader is a visionary who leads by example with integrity and empathy, collectively inspiring others towards a greater cause. They understand that leadership is dichotomous; meaning that there are times when they are supposed to lead and times when they need to exercise servant leadership, allowing others to lead the way. Great leaders create a nurturing environment for their team(s) to thrive which provides psychological safety.

Psychological safety is important as it motivates and enhances team accountability by pulling it up and away from the undesirable zones of apathy, anxiety and comfort. As a result, teams are elevated to a high-performance learning zone where they feel empowered and develop a growth mindset as they learn from their mistakes, taking valuable lessons that will also make them the great leaders of the future.

It is critical for a positive work culture to be front and centre of the leadership’s vision. Leaders have to lead from the front in order to build a transformative and impactful organisational culture that inspires greatness and success.



By **Elizabeth Kamunyu**,  
Programme Officer,  
WCO ESA ROCB.



## Retirement Realities: Insights and Strategies for a Secure Future

Ten years ago, I jumped into the working world thinking I had all the time and energy in the universe. But guess what? Retirement, the big "R," is no longer a distant speck but a close neighbor. This got me thinking and I have been asking myself, "How do I want to retire, and what awaits me?" Though I wish I'd thought of this earlier, it's better late than never. After some reflection, I've gathered crucial retirement insights that I'd like to share.

Financial planning is the bedrock of a secure retirement. It should begin with your very first pay cheque and continue throughout your career. Starting early and investing more leads to greater compounding benefits. Diversifying your investments is crucial for a secure and balanced financial future. Entering retirement without debt is a prudent approach, preventing monthly obligations from depleting your savings. To boost your retirement income, you can consider starting a business. However, it's important to remember that while many businesses succeed, some may fail, so exploring business ideas while still employed can provide valuable learning experiences.

Retirement necessitates an adjustment in one's lifestyle. Retirement is more than just a financial transition; it's a significant life change comparable to starting a new chapter, relocating to a different place, or embarking on marriage. Retirement grants the valuable gift of additional free time, allowing for self-discovery and the pursuit of happiness. Approach retirement like an artist with a blank canvas, crafting a masterpiece filled with vibrant experiences, joy, and purpose. Stay connected with loved ones, maintain physical and emotional well-being, and embrace the flexibility that retirement offers for a fulfilling journey.

Planning for healthcare is essential. Healthcare requirements and prices typically increase as we age. It's critical to budget for future medical bills in advance. You can start saving for health insurance early on. A healthy lifestyle, including a balanced diet, regular exercise, and checkups, not only promotes wellness but also lowers medical expenses.

Emotional preparedness is key because retirement is an emotional rollercoaster. It brings the thrill of newfound free time, the anxiety of "What do I do now?" and nostalgia for the daily work routine. So, in preparing for retirement, don't just pack your suitcase; bring your emotional toolkit too. Be ready for excitement, butterflies, and moments when you unexpectedly miss the office tea. Remember, it's okay to experience these emotions. Engaging in hobbies, spending time with family and friends can assist in gracefully navigating this emotional journey.

Remaining flexible in retirement is essential, much like sailing through unpredictable seas. Plans may shift unexpectedly, but that's alright. A flexible mindset, enables adjustments to retirement plans and lifestyles to tackle unforeseen challenges. In summary, life is an adventure, and retirement marks the next thrilling chapter.



By **Clemence Wawuda**,  
Finance Officer,  
WCO ESA ROCB.



## Importance Of Punctuality In Meetings

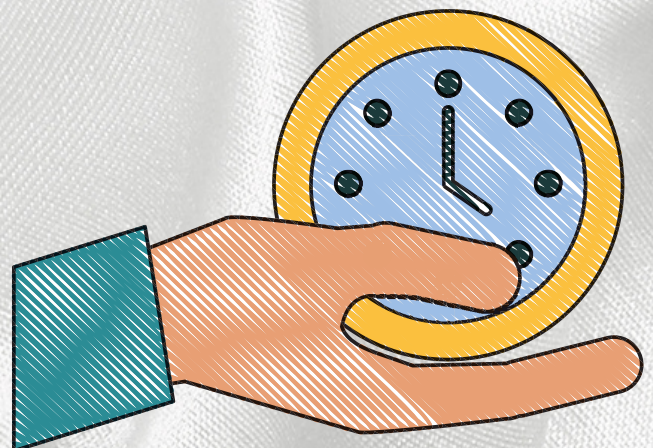
A meeting is a gathering of people in a particular place at a specified time. Meetings can be held physically or virtually. Meetings can be local or international. In all meetings, punctuality is very important. You may have attended a meeting where a participant arrives five minutes late and justifies themselves by saying "I am only late for five minutes". To the latecomer, five minutes does not seem to be a big deal. To the other participants who arrived early, it becomes irritating and very annoying, especially if the late person has to walk in front to sit down, or when the facilitator has to repeat all over again what had been discussed earlier. Participants who arrive in physical meetings late causes distractions. Generally, people who do not keep time are also known to be very disorganized. The latecomers miss out on important issues that were discussed prior to their arrival which could have an impact on their day to day lives.

Punctuality in meetings is paramount if the Agenda is to be discussed at the scheduled time. When participants arrive early before the scheduled timings, they interact with each other, thus becoming familiar with each other and can discuss social issues before the meeting begins hence creating a rapport amongst themselves. Meetings that are started on time implies that the participants are dedicated and above all committed to the cause of the Agenda. When the moderator of the meeting transacts the business of the meeting on time, the participants may be willing to attend another meeting when invited. By being punctual time is saved which translates to a saving of resources.

Therefore, punctuality becomes the cornerstone in all spheres of life; boarding time in cases of flights and trains, medication dispensation in cases of patients, time tables in schools, meal times, sport activities as well as reporting for work.



By Judy Mwaura,  
Administrator,  
WCO ESA ROCB.



# PUNCTUALITY



## Finding Your Balance

We always say, in life, 'work smart, not hard' but do we really work smart in life? But do we truly embody this mantra in our daily endeavors? Work-life balance is the equilibrium achieved when you prioritize your personal and professional obligations equally. There may be days when you work longer hours, ensuring you have got time afterward to enjoy other activities.

This incorporation is vital if you are looking to build up your emotional, physical and mental health but most importantly your career.

Here are a few tips to creating your balance:

Always prioritize your well-being. Health is paramount in anyone's life. If you're feeling burnt out, consider seeking therapy to address and manage those feelings.

Cherish moments with your loved ones. When did you last assist your child with their homework or treat your spouse to a date? Family is paramount. Dedicate quality time to bonding with your children to understand them better, and don't neglect your partner. Nurture the bond, keeping the spark alive. After all, there's a saying that there's nothing more valuable than family.

Embrace vacations. Whether it's with friends, family, or a solo adventure, taking time to recharge is essential. Remember, life is meant to be lived to the fullest.

Make time to unplug and reflect. Dedicate moments daily or weekly to introspection. This could be through reading motivational books or tuning into uplifting podcasts.

Never neglect self-care, especially where your mental health is concerned.

A song titled "Balance" by Savara of Sauti Sol partially inspired this commentary. Its lyrics resonate: "Usijinyonge na stress, acha vibe ikubless. Always hope for the best. Hiyo ni mental balance." Translated, it means, "Don't weigh yourself down with stress; let the positive vibes bless you. Always hope for the best. That's mental balance."

Remember, finding the right balance is a continuous journey but well worth the effort.



By **Jamilah N. Mutah**,  
Finance & Administrative Assistant,  
WCO ESA ROCB.



## Crafting the East and Southern Region Global Newsletter

In the dynamic world of international trade and Customs, effective communication is paramount. The World Customs Organization, East and Southern region, Regional Office for Capacity Building (WCO ESA ROCB) achieves this through its quarterly Global Newsletter, an informative and engaging publication that helps fill gaps, share stories and inspire collaboration in East and South Africa (ESA) region and the world. This article explores the process behind creating this powerful newsletter.

The WCO ESA ROCB newsletter serves as a channel for the dissemination of regular updates and information in the ESA region. More than just an archive of news, the newsletter offers a compelling call-to-action for members, encouraging them to make an active contribution to the Customs ecosystem. Furthermore, it serves as a platform to share innovative ideas and best practices, creating a culture of continuous improvement in Customs.

At the heart of our newsletter are our stakeholders. Drawing from a rich pool of 24 ESA members, the regional economic community and development partners, the newsletter highlights compelling Customs stories that resonate with the diversity of the region. These stories that they share with us summarize the ideas, achievements and challenges encountered in Customs, fostering a spirit of solidarity and sharing of experiences.

Behind the scenes, we have a dedicated editorial team which crafts each newsletter edition. It is headed by Mr. Larry Liza, Director of WCO ESA ROCB serving as the Editor-in-Chief. Alongside him, are our Programme Officers Ms. Faith Mosongo and Ms. Elizabeth Kamunyu serving as Editors and yours truly taking charge of the Design and Layout.

In conclusion, the crafting of the WCO ESA ROCB newsletter demonstrates the organization's commitment to consistent communication, collaboration and growth.

More of our informative newsletters are available on our website via the link below;

<https://www.wcoesarocb.org/newsletters/>



By Erick Kaburu,  
ICT Officer,  
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