

WCO-ESA Project II “To Progress the trade facilitation (TF) agenda, within the framework of the WCO Mercator Programme in the East and Southern Africa Region 2016 – 2019” funded by the Finnish Government – The first meeting of the Steering Committee and Project Launch held in Mombasa, Kenya 6 – 8 February 2017

The 1st Steering Committee (SC) meeting of the WCO ESA Project II took place from 6 – 8 February, 2017, in Mombasa, Kenya, and was hosted by the Kenya Revenue Authority. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Tom Moyane (ESA Vice Chair and Commissioner, SARS) and attended by SC members from South Africa, Uganda, Angola, Finnish Customs, and Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the WCO Secretariat. The Kenya Revenue Authority and ESA ROCB attended as observers.

The new WCO-ESA Project II focuses on support in 5 Components: Trade Facilitation and WCO Mercator Programme, Organizational/Institutional Capacity, Human Resource Management and Development, Sustainable Regional Expertise and Autonomy and Project Governance.

During the opening remarks the participants informed the meeting on their latest developments, present modernization initiatives and challenges faced. The participants expressed their appreciation on the impact and results of the first WCO-ESA Project and welcomed the new WCO-ESA II as a very timely Project to assist Members to respond to the challenges in implementing the WTO TFA.

The meeting was briefed on the recruitment process of the Project Staff which will be finalized before the end of February. A total of 95 applications were submitted for the posts of Regional Expert and Project Assistant. The WCO had already earlier selected a Project Manager who started her work in October.

By the deadline, 25 January 2017, the WCO had received 49 requests for Assistance from 9 ESA Customs Administrations. Most of the requests were submitted on Risk Management, Implementation of the RKC and ATF, AEO, SW, HR Management and support to the RTCs. The SC recommended that all the requests be validated and verified to avoid overlapping and a detailed implementation plan including baseline data to be presented at the next SC meeting to be held in the margins of the July WCO Council sessions. The Progress of the implementation of the requested assistance and the financial situation will be monitored at the SC meeting to be held February-March 2018 and a decision will then be made whether further requests for assistance can be submitted by the ESA Members.

The SC members had also the opportunity to visit Mombasa Port and gain personal impressions on the spot of the envisaged port enlargement as well as familiarize themselves with its operations.

Project launch was held on the 2nd day of the meeting. In his opening speech, Secretary General Mikuriya stressed the key role played by Customs in economic competitiveness; revenue collection and protection of society from illicit trade, and appreciated the positive outcomes of the WCO-ESA Project I in improving the efficiency of Customs, particularly with respect to enhanced border management.

WCO Secretary General thanked the Finnish Government for its continued support in the region by funding this second phase of the Project through the Mercator Programme to support governments in implementing, in a consistent manner using WCO tools and instruments, trade facilitation measures including the ones prescribed under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

Representing the Finnish Government, H.E. Ambassador Tarja Fernandez, and Customs Director General Antti Hartikainen spoke about their intentions to support the ESA region while, from the ESA region, Commissioner Tom Moyane of the South African Revenue Service (SARS) in his capacity as WCO Vice-Chair, and Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection Julius Musyoki of the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) talked about their willingness to maximize the benefits that they receive from the Project.

The next meeting of the SC will take place in the margins of the WCO Council Sessions in Brussels in July 2017.



