

MINUTES OF MEETING – WCO – ESA – REGIONAL PRIVATE SECTOR GROUP (RPSG) 1ST WEBINAR – 22 NOVEMBER 2018 – 10H00 TO 12H00 (CAT)

1. Welcome – Director of ROCB

Larry Liza welcomed all to the webinar. Larry advised that the ESA – RPSG (Regional Private Sector Group) was leading the way forward for other regions. He also advised that further webinars with the remaining from the 24 member states would be set up for the remainder of this year, with the aim of engaging with eight countries at a time.

Louise Wiggett (representing Swaziland and SGS) also welcomed all participants on behalf of SGS and mentioned that the initiative is a fantastic one.

2. Purpose of meeting

The WCO PSCG (Private Sector Consultative Group) has a large participation globally with 30 different participants (Corporates, General Trade & Associations) from the six WCO regions. There is a desire in the ESA regions from Private Sector to monitor, assist and help with the implementation of the WCO toolkit (various instruments, standards, guidelines & compendiums). This desire is complimentary to the work to build a fair, safe and secure trading environment. The WCO believes in the Regional Private Sector Group and will monitor the progress with tangible results as this journey is unfolding towards a seamless, compliant, safe and secure trading environment.

John Mathenge (Kenya & East Africa) advised that the AEO program is a priority to foster good collaboration working relationship between Customs Administrations and Private Sector. However, this project can be given a higher priority with a quicker uptake and demonstrate tangible benefits. There also needs to be more traction in the EAC region. Furthermore, AEO specifically benefits SMEs in the region and can be used as a tool for business to secure growth and sustainability.

He advised there must be more focus in the region. The questions are why can't the Private Sector be more involvement to make this a success?

WCO-ESA Regional Private Sector Group (ESA-RPSG) has a different skills set and if harnessed by Customs Administration it can be utilised in order to achieve the objectives set out.

Partnership and awareness is key.

3. Webinar connectivity and future communications platform

The participants welcomed the use of Webinar as an ideal mode of communication and agreed to leverage the forum to be provided on the ROCB website to further discussions

4. Sharing of documentation

- I. Draft TOR
- II. Draft Work plan

The participants largely welcomed the progress made in the development of the TORs and the Work Plan of the ESA-RPSG as well as the draft documents.

5. Comments from participants

The participants acknowledged the efforts made by the organising team in putting up the Webinar and expressed support for the various initiatives in support of the Private Sector and their collaboration with government.

6. Feedback on draft TOR

The draft TOR was tabled and it was advised that the aim for the 24 countries will be for representation in Regional Private Sector Group. We allow 30 when a specific country wants to bring in more participation from Private Sector to compliment the skill set.

Hilary Woelk (Lesotho) advised that although 30 members is a large group, it is important for each country to be represented and to participate.

Louise Wiggett (Swaziland) has requested that the WCO use instruments to measure performance from trade perspective versus a customs perspective. This is a good initiative to measure issues from both sides, as a different view might help to find quicker solutions. Louise proposed a time release study (TRS) to be done from a trade perspective, since the previous WCO studies mainly focussed on what the Customs Administrations are doing. Can the group pursue this possibility?

Lesotho and Kenya concurred with this sentiment as Private Sector has a faster barometer gauge to measure what is happening at the different borders. The questions can be asked:

Why do we want to measure performance?

What are we looking for? And how can we improve?

It is not to measure any Customs Administration, but more the 'measurement of the process' and compare factual results. We can jointly use this opportunity that is now created for us under the ESA-RPSG to see how we can capitalize on the intellect for identification of challenges. This forum with its identification capabilities and measuring tools can brainstorm and give with good practical solutions that can improve life for all. Private Sector is driven by speed and time. This can play a very important role for intra trade and give a collective guarantee on the measurement of the process.

Private Sector is aware that TRS was conducted in various countries, however results were not published, which left a lot of questions unanswered.

Patrick Gyan (WCO – Brussels) advised that there is a potential opportunity for the ESA-RPSG to influence for example, the World Bank Ease of Doing Business report for countries in the ESA region, since this report has been received with different and opposing views by some Customs Administrations based on TRS conducted. Through dialogue with Customs and reaching common understanding, the Private Sector can start playing an active role to interrogate the World Bank report and contribute to improving the measurements for trade matters.

Louise asked Patrick whether it would be possible to get the Time Release Study parameter for measurement by the Private Sector. Patrick advised this may be possible and would look into it.

Action number 1:

Look into providing World Bank Performance indicators and how it link with the WCO Time Release Study (TRS) – Patrick Gyan

John advised that engagement with Private Sector should take place before the Time Release studies, or World Bank – Ease of Doing Business processes. This will help Private Sector to participate well and give accurate data for any comparisons.

7. Feedback on draft work plan (Two different work streams)

It was agreed that from the participants in the webinar there would be two work streams:

1. Work on the AEO program: A bigger update in the ESA region from Private Sector is needed with the ultimate goal of having Mutual recognitions agreements to help intra Africa trade and allow a good collaboration amongst members, increase benefits and help legitimate trade.
2. Assessment on ease of operation in the ESA Region: Time release studies, which might include more than the measurement of efficiency across borders, as in many cases it is not Customs Administration, but the total value chain from geographical border line, cross border, terminal, transports, customs brokers, other law enforcement agencies. Here we need meaningful correct data to work with and to ask the right questions
3. Construct the ESA region in a well-structured database with all Private Sector linkage in terms of associations and bodies that work with Trade/ Customs-related issues. This will enable us to have a good collective intelligent platform in which we can view the different skill sets and organization in Private Sector for collaboration and testing of any idea.

Action number 2:

Three work streams agreed by all participants:

1. Work on the AEO program
2. Effective measurement of possesses / assessment on ease of operation:
3. ESA – Private Sector – interactive database (24 members)

Juanita asked Hilary whether any efforts are being made on SACU level, specifically on AEO (PT- Preferred Trader) for Lesotho. Hilary advised that at this stage there was only one company which participated in a pilot program which was initiated 18 months ago. A draft was prepared, but progress has stalled.

Louise advised this was similar in Swaziland (which was way behind in terms of Mutual Recognition Agreements) and we need to lean on EAC for guidance. How did they achieve such good implementation among the five membership countries in a much shorter timeframe? Private Sector needs to be more aggressive in this area as it is a commercial benefit.

Louise asked Patrick about the AEO program for SADC. Patrick advised there is an opportunity to partner with SADC region under the upcoming WCO-SADC Connect Project to be funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The focus is on ensuring a strong program with SMEs and the new program will run over three years kicking off mid-June 2019.

8. Amendments to Regional Private Sector Group

- I. Participants
- II. Suggestions

Juanita requested from the participants any companies that could be included in the list of participants and send these details through to Sjanet, Faith or Larry.

Action number 3:

List of particular companies that could be included in the list of participants - All

Creation of awareness and sharing of work under the regional group:

III. ROCB Pivotal Point

Larry advised that that ROCB pivotal point was dealing with the Customs administrations and other regional entities such as the WCO RILO – Regional Intelligence Liaison Office and the WCO Regional Training Centres. The ROCB is centrally placed

and connects with members of the Private Sector. Larry advised there is a link with EAC, SADC, COMESA and the African Union and this helps to increase greater awareness and work.

IV. Sharing of information & Website

Larry advised that a database is currently being developed for the Private Sector. Larry advised that the database is to be enhanced for more information on the website.

Hilary and Louise were informed that there are processes in place to form a business council under SADC. Draft plans are currently in progress. (Apex business organization under the NEPAD umbrella - BUSA is working with NEPAD on this).

Action number 4:

Obtain feedback on the Business Council in SADC – this is an important platform for Private Sector. Will get information from BUSA (Business Unity South Africa) with a request to share this information with this group, ESA- RPSG

Juanita advised that it was important to be part of the Business Council, or get a closer working relationship between Trade (WTO) and Compliance, Safety and Security (WCO).

V. Creation of awareness and sharing of work under the regional group

Juanita advised that the minutes of meeting would be completed by close of business Monday 26, November 2018 and shared with all the participants. Sjanet to distribute MOM to all attendees.

Action number 5:

Completion and distribution of MOM of Webinar held 22 Nov 2018 - Sjanet

9. Conclusion and wrap up

Larry thanked all participants for joining in the webinar and thanked the team for putting all the arrangements in place. Larry advised this was a very happy day and milestone for ESA - RPSG.

Larry advised that there would be other webinars being set up.

Larry further advised that an application was being investigated for development for use on all smart and android phones where information could be shared.

Action number 6:

Investigation of App for WCO: ESA-RPSG

Suggestion of formation of a WhatsApp group

Any other tools that Private Sector think that will be meaningful need to be tabled

Juanita thanked all participants for joining the webinar and for their participation and input.

ENDS