

January - March 2019

ESA Newsletter

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

IMPACT OF OSBP ON TRADE FACILITATION



Customs Officers at the Namanga
(Kenya - Tanzania) One Stop Border Post.

Trade liberalization and development are among the fundamental pillars for social economic development. Trade facilitation is a key factor for international trade efficiency and the economic development of countries. Realizing the importance of improving efficiency at border crossings, the East African Community (EAC) together with the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority in 2004 agreed to establish one stop border posts at each border crossing.

Previously, border operations were under different buildings in the two countries and travelers were supposed to stop at one side of the country to clear their goods, vehicles and passports before moving to the other side to undergo the same process or procedure. This was seen as wastage of time besides passengers/travelers especially tourists and traders complaining and incurring unnecessary cost.

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EDITORIAL

The WCO ESA Region is privileged to have many prolific writers determined to bring “the good” and sometimes “the not so good” news to its people. It is for this reason that the ROCB has consistently brought to you quarterly Newsletters over the past three years and hopes to continue doing so in the coming ones. Our ever so supportive partners have ensured that whenever there is a call for articles, they respond and share with us the exciting developments in their respective administrations and organizations. In this case; JICA has consistently shared with us their milestones in bringing development to the ESA Region especially in automation and classification. The WCO has shared with us its efforts in addressing the needs of its Members and in its edition you get a glimpse of the life of an ROCB staff away from the office!

Isn't it a beautiful thing that talent can give you “wings to fly” quite literally ensuring that you achieve your goals and grow both professionally as well as on a personal level? We take this opportunity to encourage ESA Members to consider including support of sports and various talents in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes. Please share with us how these programmes have transformed the lives of your staff and all other people involved.

We hope that this special edition inspires you and leaves you with the desire to keep working towards meeting your respective visions and goals. We look forward to receiving more articles from you to be featured in the subsequent WCO ESA ROCB Newsletters.

Enjoy!

Faith Mosongo

Programme Officer and Editor



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Customs focuses on 'Smart borders' at this year's ICD events



International Customs Day Celebrations

The theme of “Smart borders” was front and centre in two unique events hosted by SARS last Friday (25 January) to celebrate International Customs Day (ICD) 2019.

This year, the World Customs Organisation (WCO) chose the theme: “SMART borders for seamless trade, travel and transport”, for Customs Administrations to use to highlight their relevant activities and efforts.

SARS therefore hosted two official events to celebrate the day, each one focusing on different elements relating to the theme.

In Pretoria, the event took the form of a trade exhibition, with a number of stalls highlighting some of Customs’ strategic projects, including the Preferred Trader programme, New Customs Acts Programme (NCAP), IT capability, Partnerships, the new e-Traveller Card and the illicit economy.

In Beitbridge, the event was jointly celebrated with officials from the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA), and highlighted some of the co-operative projects that the two administrations are working together on. It was also attended by representatives from various government departments and Customs clients.

The Pretoria event was attended by the Deputy Minister of Finance, Mondli Gungubele, the SARS Commissioner, Mark Kingon, members of the SARS EXCO, Customs Manco, representatives of other government agencies and

private sector stakeholders. A number of public and private sector stakeholders as well as various SARS officials also received ICD certificates which the WCO normally sends to each Customs administration to award to those who contributed to Customs meaningfully based on the theme.

This year, a Customs Trailblazer award was also introduced, which was given to Vuso Shabalala, a former head of SARS Customs, who was described as “the Father of the modern Customs administration”, someone who instilled the principle of “lifelong learning” and in so doing, worked towards professionalising Customs.

Both the SARS Acting Commissioner,

Mark Kingon and Acting Chief Officer, Customs and Excise: Beyers Theron, paid homage to Customs officers during their speeches, with Mr Kingon asking guests to give officers a standing ovation.

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The illicit economy stand, one of several stands showcasing Customs work at the Gauteng event

IMPACT OF OSBP ON TRADE FACILITATION

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The one stop border post (OSBP) concept refers to the legal and institutional framework, facilities and associated procedures that enable goods, people and vehicles to stop in a single facility to get services under one roof with.

Namanga OSBP is located about 160 km southeast of Nairobi and about 100 km from Arusha in the northern Tanzania. The border crossing was officially transformed into OSBP on 2nd October 2017 with the aim of reducing unnecessary checks in order to improve movements and trade efficiency between the two countries. Custom officials from Kenya and Tanzania who work in one roof simplify customs verifications, reconciliation and confirmation on the origin of Goods since they all work side by side.

At Namanga OSBP there are about 15 Government Agencies including Customs, Immigration, Health, Police, Tanzania

Bureau of Standards and Tanzania Food & Drugs Agency. Customs so far is the leading agency. Customs officers who are normally dressed in Dark Blue Suits diligently facilitate trade and movement of people throughout 24 hours.

One year after the operationalization of OSBP at Namanga, records show that Customs Revenue and Transit increased. Such increase is attributed to increased efficiency by Customs and other Agencies in attending effectively transporters, travelers, tourists, farmers and traders.

Besides improved exchange of information among agencies, OSBP has also increased reliability of the supply chain through smooth and harmonised procedures of predicting movements of cargo. Lastly, the system has increased transparency between Custom officials and customers and the later feel that they are getting full cooperation and all information required for making decision.

Customs focuses on 'Smart borders' at this year's ICD events

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In Beitbridge, Customs Executive, Cassius Sinthumule, and Customs Group Executive: Strategy and Legal Policy, Coffet Lebepe, both outlined some of the projects that SARS is working on with the various stakeholders at the border post.

"The presence of ZIMRA and Zimbabwean Immigration officials was the cherry on top of the event, as ZIMRA sang the praises of the co-ordination between the two countries in making both the trade and travellers processes seamless," said Coffet.

Port Commander, SAPS Colonel Radzilani, also mentioned how the collaboration between the various stakeholders in Beitbridge "gave her peaceful sleep" because of all the support she gets from her OGA colleagues.

*Every year, International Customs Day (ICD) is held on January 26, which is the day the Customs Cooperation Council (CCC) held its inaugural session in 1953. The CCC adopted the working name, World Customs Organisation (WCO) in 1994. The day is celebrated around a theme selected by the WCO Secretariat and communicated to all 180 WCO Members.

THE 8th AUC-RECs SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING ON CUSTOMS COOPERATION

ROCB participated in the 8th AUC-RECs Sub-Committee meeting on Customs Cooperation meeting which was held from 20th to 22nd February 2019 at Gold Crest Hotel, in Arusha Tanzania. It was chaired by Ms. Flavia Busingye, Head of Compliance and Enforcement at the EAC. Mr. Ibouura Mousa, the Head of Customs Cooperation Division of the African Union Commission opened the meeting.

Mr. Vincent Gituma, who represented the WCO ESA ROCB at the meeting, highlighted the objectives of the ESA Regional Strategy as well as the importance of the ROCB coordinating with the African Union Commission in achieving these objectives. These objectives include; promoting growth

in intra-regional trade, promoting fair and efficient revenue mobilization, strengthening intra-regional compliance and enforcement and enhancing integrity and professionalism in human capital.

He shared with the meeting some activities, initiatives and achievements of the WCO in trade facilitation mainly on: The Revised Kyoto Convention, the Mercator Programme, Needs Assessment, Baseline Studies and Regional Workshops among others. He noted that this coordination aims at generating synergies to the efforts of African Union Commission.

Mr. Gituma invited RECs to involve ROCBs in their activities and initiatives so as to benefit from the coordination through building synergies, learning

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THE 8th AUC-RECs

SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING ON CUSTOMS COOPERATION



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from each other and avoiding duplication. He concluded that, ESA ROCB views African Union as a central place where coordination with RECs could be done from, and that ESA governing council is pleased with the level of corporation between African Union Commission and WCO ESA ROCB.

Matters arising from the 7th AUC-RECs subcommittee meeting were shared with members. Delegates were also briefed on the outcomes of the 10th ordinary meeting of the AUSCGCS. In addition, the delegates were updated on the 2nd specialized technical committee meeting of ministers responsible for trade, industry and mineral resources

development. Finally, the meeting noted some of the reasons compelling for Customs cooperation in the AfCFTA.

The meeting was closed by a representative of African Union Commission who expressed his wish for the members to continue with dialogue on Customs Corporation. He finally, thanked EAC Secretariat as well as the Government and the people of the United Republic of Tanzania for hosting the meeting.

PREVENTION OF ILLEGAL IMPORT/EXPORT OF MINERALS USING TRA CUSTOMS BAGGAGE SCANNER

On 2nd March 2017, The President of URT Hon Dr. John P. Magufuli declared war on importation and exportation of minerals without permits. He instructed that any person who wants to import or export minerals should get legal permits from the Ministry responsible with Minerals. Following this directive, Baggage Scanner was installed at Namanga one stop border post (OSBP) in September 2017. Prior to the installation of this

Value of the identified 9.15kg is estimated to be Tsh 466 Mil (202,608 USD)

facility it was difficult for Custom officers to detect with certainty what was inside passenger's bags

With installation of Baggage scanner at Namanga OSBP, passengers walk straight to metal detector, while their handbags and luggage go through a Baggage Scanner. Since this X-ray scanner is able to show what is inside these bags, Custom officers check whatever appears to be suspicious. . Since its installation 18 Months ago, TRA Customs have managed to detect various items which are restricted,

Block Chains in Customs: *The Future is Nigh*

By Eric Kaburu, ROCB

Imagine a world of endless possibilities in Customs where a secure, decentralized, tamper proof, transparent, accurate and distributed digital record of transactions that creates trust and is said to be resilient to cyber-attacks, inalterable, transactions are authenticated also traceable and participants (in this case all countries) are able to collaborate without having to rely on a third party. All that, according to the World Trade Organization is what we call a Block Chain.

Block chain is seen as a possible game-changer to digitize and automate trade finance, customs and certification processes, transportation and logistics,



insurance, distribution, intellectual property, customs clearance and government procurement among other diverse areas related to trade.

This technology opens interesting opportunities to enhance the efficiency of a number of processes and cuts costs substantially. It also allows for automated

payments, enhanced government procurement processes, more efficient management of public contracts and fights fraud. Other opportunities brought about are the opening up of micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) and small producers from developing countries.

According to a recent World Trade Organization study, "Can Block chain revolutionize international trade?", by Emmanuelle Ganne, the challenges that face Block Chains are those related to security issues. Despite the fact that Block Chains are highly resilient compared

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PREVENTION OF ILLEGAL IMPORT/EXPORT OF MINERALS USING TRA CUSTOMS BAGGAGE SCANNER

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prohibited or due for duty. These items include; New phones, Minerals, weapons, jewelry and undeclared cash money. About 37.15 kg of different minerals have been detected by TRA customs through this Baggage Scanner. Out of these detected minerals, 9.15 kg have been identified as; Ruby Gemstone, Rhodolite, Almandite, Peridot, Black Tourmaline, Amethyst, Gemstones, Amerthist while the other 28 kg are yet to be identified. The value of the identified 9.15kg is estimated to be Tsh 466 Mil (202,608 USD).

The TRA Custom office in collaboration with other Government Agencies at Namanga and with the help of this Baggage scanner intend to curb all illegal importation and exportation of goods entering and leaving the country. Thanks to the Government for its decision to install a baggage scanner which has hastened the whole process of detecting illegal goods and materials in passenger's bags.





WCO offers its support to the Union of the Comoros

The WCO offers its support to the Union of the Comoros in its initiative to accede to the Revised Kyoto Convention

The workshop took place in Moroni (Union of the Comoros) from 18 to 22 February 2019. Its aims were essentially to confirm the preliminary gap analysis conducted by senior representatives of Comorian Customs and to provide an advisory forum for the Customs Administration on the procedure for accession to the RKC. Around 25 senior representatives of different units of Comorian Customs, from the various islands, made an active contribution to the workshop. The Customs Administration had previously held an internal session at which

a team made up of senior officials had conducted the preliminary gap analysis.

In his opening speech to the workshop, Mr. Souef Kamalidini, the Director General of Comorian Customs, representing the Minister for Finance and the Budget, set out the vision of the Comorian Government on trade facilitation and stressed the importance and the benefits of being signed up to the RKC. He also described what his country hoped to gain from RKC accession and the progress achieved towards that end so far. The WCO mission team, consisting of experts from the Secretariat

Block Chains in Customs: The Future is Nigh

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to traditional databases due to their decentralized and distributed nature and the use of cryptographic techniques, they are completely immune from traditional security challenges, and advances in technologies.

There is also the issue of interoperability at a technical level, an issue on which the Block chain community is working on actively. This 'Fort Knox' will also require standardization and political will to create a regulatory framework that is conducive to paperless trade.

Finally, the technology will only be able to work to its full potential if all aspects of cross border trade transactions are digitized, from trade finance to customs, transportation and logistics, and if the actors involved are conversant. If all these factors succeed, Block chain could well become the future of international trade.

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Launch of the **EU-WCO** Programme for Harmonized System in Africa



The Continental Inaugural Conference of the EU-WCO Programme for the Harmonized System (HS) in Africa was held on 27-28 February 2019 at the headquarters of the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Conference marked the launch of an unprecedented capacity building endeavour, funded by the European Union and implemented by the World Customs Organization (WCO). This Programme, which complements other EU and WCO contributions to the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area, aims at providing African countries and other stakeholders involved in the HS implementation process with the required organizational capacities and resources to apply

future HS versions in a timely and coordinated manner throughout the entire continent.

The conference was attended by over 70 representatives from 38 African member administrations, the African Union Commission (AUC) and African Regional Economic Communities (RECs), as well as representatives of international organizations and the private sector. The conference was a unique opportunity for stakeholders contributing to the implementation and application of the HS to exchange views on ways to streamline the migration to the next version of the HS entering into force on 1 January 2022.

In their opening remarks, senior representatives of the EU, the AUC and the WCO welcomed this collaboration reiterating the

importance of this initiative and the benefits it has for regional integration as well as other socio-economic benefits resulting from increased trade flows such as job creation and poverty reduction. Mrs. Anna Burylo, Deputy Head of EU Delegation to the AU, stressed the potential that this programme has in reinforcing African integration and moving towards efficient implementation of the AfCFTA, which is one of the main axes of the EU-Africa partnership. Mrs. Treasure Maphanga, Director of Trade and Industry at the AUC, corroborated the timeliness of the conference held before the eve of the entering-into-force of the AfCFTA, the momentousness of the programme for African countries and their citizens as well as the impact it will have in increasing intra-African trade and Africa's



The WCO offers its support to the Union of the Comoros in its initiative to accede to the Revised Kyoto Convention

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and from the Gabonese Customs Administration, provided detailed advice on the principles of the RKC, the rights and obligations of the Contracting Parties to the Convention and the provisions contained in the body of the Convention, in its General Annex and in its Specific Annexes. With the help of the WCO experts, the workshop participants assessed whether the provisions of the RKC were consistent with the regional and national legislation applying to the Comoros. As part of this exercise, follow-up measures were sketched out for those areas where national legislation was found not to be fully aligned with the provisions of the RKC. A draft detailed action plan for the accession of the Comoros to the RKC and implementation was also discussed and subsequently adopted. At the workshop's closing session, chaired in person by the Minister for Finance and the Budget, Mr. Said Ali Said Chayhane, the

WCO experts said that they were very satisfied with the excellent local organization of the workshop, and they confirmed the WCO's



willingness to provide support for the Customs Administration of the Union of the Comoros in its initiative to accede to the RKC. The Minister and the Director General of Customs took the opportunity to express their gratitude to the WCO for the support which Comorian

Customs had received to date. On behalf of the Government, the Minister for Finance and the Budget undertook to assist the Customs Administration and ensure that the conditions required for accession to the RKC were met by June 2019. He described the workshop as "of high strategic importance" to a country that was determined to "open up to the rest of the world".

On the fringe of this important workshop, the WCO experts were granted a meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, with whom they explored issues of mutual interest. The experts sought the Minister's support in bringing the accession process to a satisfactory conclusion as swiftly as possible, and they gave him an account of the work currently being done by the WCO on behalf of small island economies. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation assured the experts that they had his full support on both counts.

Launch of the EU-WCO Programme for Harmonized System in Africa

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trade with the rest of world. Both the EU and the AUC emphasized the role that the WCO plays in trade facilitation in Africa, restating their confidence in the unique experience and expertise of the WCO to implement this programme at the highest standards. Mr. Ping Liu, Director of Tariff and Trade Affairs Directorate at the WCO Secretariat, welcomed the engagement of more than 66% of African countries and of many RECs to the Programme and encouraged more to join. He

stressed that "the reality check is that we've got a lot of work to do. To date, 49 of the 54 African countries have ratified the HS Convention but only 29 apply the HS 2017". He is confident that the programme "would support not only individual African countries but also regional integration through the RECs and the AfCFTA towards building an African market connecting trade within the continent and beyond". The outcomes of the different discussions held at the conference confirmed the importance of timely and coordinated application

of the HS versions, outlining the relevance and the strategic timing of the Programme. Over 30 Member administrations and eight Regional Economic Communities have expressed interest in the Programme. The Programme management team will, in the next phase, conduct diagnostic missions for selected countries and RECs, and prepare country/region profiles that will feed into the development of work-plans and targeted actions.

Marine Patrol along Shores of Lake Tanganyika

Beautiful sunset at Kipili Port Station

Kipili Port Station borders Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Zambia. One of the major challenges experienced at the port station is increased illegal ports which make Marine patrol plans more cumbersome. Kipili Port is at Nkasi District, Rukwa Region and the major activity here is Export of dried fish and importation of very few items mainly from Zambia.

While Kipili Port station is the official port; there are many other illegal ports in the neighbouring villages such as Karungu, Sire, Korwe, Twui, Manansi, Nkiringa, Ninde, Kassaanga Ndogo, Msamba, Lupata and Kisenga.

Due to the nature of the Port, most businessmen on their return from the above mentioned countries do not declare their imports as they use illegal ports in neighbouring

villages. Control of importations at the port is tough regardless of the information received as the same information relayed to Customs may be shared with the smugglers hence making it almost impossible to carry out successful raids.

Another challenge experienced is inadequate means of transport to reach the smugglers as the boat used for Marine Patrol is shared with Fisheries Department. This therefore means patrols are only carried out when the boat is scheduled to be used by Customs.

SAD WITH HS CODE WAS SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED IN JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN

On the week of 4th December 2018, National Revenue Authority (NRA)-Customs Division successfully implemented a training on the Single Administrative Document (SAD) with Harmonized System (HS) code in Juba Customs headquarters (HQs) and Juba International Airport (JIA) under the JICA project for capacity development of South Sudan Customs Services for Introduction of the HS code (P.I.H.S.).

Clearing agents were guided on how to appropriately fill the SAD and correctly apply HS codes by the HS task team fostered by the project, thus an increase in the number of declarations

using SAD has been registered with 88% declarations of import and export in Juba HQs and 91% declarations in JIA on January 2019. As of January and February, HS codes have been filled in all declarations using SAD. The HS code was successfully introduced in Juba which is a great achievement for both the project and NRA-Customs Division.

Launching and implementing both HS code and SAD in Juba has brought NRA-Customs Division nearer to standing abreast with its EAC partner states in classification of goods and collection of foreign trade statistics in accordance with international trade standards. The government revenue modernization and tax policy reform program will help

SAD WITH HS CODE WAS SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED IN JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN

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to grow the national economy and generate the non-oil revenue.

A SAD filling training manual has been prepared by the project which will further guide the agents while filling it in. The project plans to launch an HS classification unit tasked to attend to clearing agents for filling SAD with HS code properly and train customs officers under the On the Job Training in both HQs and JIA.



The Commissioner General, Dr. Attipoe Olympio addressing delegates at the meeting.



Delegates at the meeting

REDUCING COST OF TRANSIT THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMESA REGIONAL CUSTOMS TRANSIT GUARANTEE (RCTG) CARNET

In an effort to reduce cost associated with transit movement and enhance competitiveness thereof, the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) amongst other trade facilitation instruments introduced RCTG Carnet. The COMESA Regional Customs Transit Guarantee Scheme is a component of the COMESA Protocol on Transit Trade and Transit Facilitation, Annex I of COMESA Treaty.

The objective of the RCTG scheme is to provide a uniform basis for transit movement throughout the region, where only one guarantee is used for the transit of goods through all transiting member states. Two issues are of key interest to land-linked countries: the right for and conditions of the transit passage; and the efficiency of formalities that have to be undertaken for the customs transit procedures. The issue of depositing cash or

lodging insurance bond or bank guarantee at each and every country of transit is serious trade facilitation challenge which is costly and leads to delays in clearances. The implementation of RCTG carnet mitigates against these challenges.

RCTG Carnet implementation is also in line with Article V of the GATT (1994, Freedom of Transit) provision. The relevance of GATT Article V being that transit traffic, in particular by road transport, faces obstacles due to the regulatory framework for domestic and international traffic. Hence, transit traffic is subjected to multiple controls, restrictions, and a complex regulatory environment, leading to delays in clearances. Delays at borders are caused by security measures put in place to ensure that goods in transit are not diverted to the market of the transit country, without payment of the duties and taxes applicable.

Step by Step Towards a Robust AEO Programme

EAC Seeks to establish a regional AEO Association to Increase the Involvement of AEOs in the management of the EAC Regional AEO Program.

The EAC has been one of the regional economic blocs that took a bold decision to implement an AEO program on a regional basis. Since it started, albeit with some challenges, the EAC regional AEO program has made steady progress. Currently the program has 82 regional AEOs drawn from all the countries of East Africa, whose total contribution towards International

REDUCING COST OF TRANSIT THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMESA REGIONAL CUSTOMS TRANSIT GUARANTEE (RCTG) CARNET

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The COMESA RCTG Carnet is operational as follows:

- Northern Corridor. (Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda), now fully operational,
- Central Corridor (Burundi and Tanzania), now fully operational
- Horn Route, (Djibouti, Ethiopia and Sudan)
- North-South Corridor (Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

The coming together by COMESA member states to implement RCTG Carnet is a milestone on its own. The Northern and Central Corridor member states can be commended for the successful implementation of RCTG. This is a journey, as such the final destination may be reached at different times as the challenges encountered in the implementation process may differ from one country to the other. However, what is critical is to keep moving and learning from others until the objective is achieved.



Group photo of the participants

trade in the region amounts to about 9%. The growth in number has been steady and cautious as the management of such a regional program often comes with peculiar learning curves, dotted with many opportunities and challenges.

One of the opportunities that offer the low hanging fruits that the program is perhaps able to pick easily is the involvement of the AEOs in the management of the Regional AEO program. It has been decided that this involvement comes in the form of a regional AEO Association. An AEO Association offers a platform through which the AEOs can; network among themselves, support the implementation of the AEO program by playing an advisory role to customs, support themselves by offering capacity building services to members, monitor services to members and most of all play an advocacy role.

To realise this expectation therefore, the EAC Secretariat in Partnership with the Trade Mark East Africa and the AEOs

have started on a concrete plan to see the AEO association in place. In a meeting of regional AEO representatives held in Dar es Salaam from 20-22 March, the AEOs constituted an interim Committee with terms of reference and the mandate to deliver the Regional AEO Association by March 2020.



Fostering Customs Cooperation with the Regional Economic Communities and Building Capacity on Harmonized System

The institutional architecture as enshrined in the Abuja Treaty recognizes the eight (8) Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as 'building blocks' necessary for the establishment of the African Economic Community. However, it is an undeniable fact that these RECs are actually governed by specific mandates, objectives, plans and programmes in addition to different institutional and legal framework hence the pressing need for proper coordination and cooperation. It is in that regard that a forum, very well known as the '**AUC-RECs Customs Coordination Committee**' was established around 2008/2009.

Synergies

The principal objective of the Coordination Committee is to provide for the proper coordination of projects, programmes and activities necessary for an efficient, effective and orderly implementation of the customs cooperation and trade facilitation measures under the Abuja Treaty. It is expected that this will also limit, if not eliminate the duplication of efforts and resources into competing projects and activities and will provide a platform for generating synergies, sharing of experiences and best practices and mutual assistance etc.

RECs

Since then, the Committee have met for eight times and the last meeting of its kind was held in February 2019 in Arusha, Tanzania. The major objective of the 8th meeting was, inter alia, to update and exchange ideas on the various customs modernization modernization and trade facilitation initiatives being implemented by the RECs, as well as to ensure the proper coordination of projects, programmes and activities between the Customs Departments of the RECs and the Customs Cooperation Division of the Commission more specifically within the context of new developments such as the development of the AU Trade Facilitation Strategy and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). It is expected that the deliberations would also permit an effective implementation of the recommendations and decisions of the AU Sub Committee of Directors General of Customs (AUSCDGC) -a statutory body created by the Assembly to deal with Customs and Trade Facilitation matters at the African Union level.

EU

Interestingly, the meeting that was in fact hosted by the EAC Secretariat, also

benefitted from the presentation of the new **EU-WCO Programme for the Harmonized System in Africa**. The Harmonized System is actually an international terminology for the classification of products and allows participating countries to classify traded goods on a common basis for customs and trade related purposes. This programme is funded by the European Union (EU) as part of the EU's External Investment Plan and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy and implemented by the WCO. It is designed to complement other efforts aiming at the implementation

of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO-TFA). The longer-term objective is to provide African countries with the required organizational capacities and resources to apply future HS versions (especially HS 2022) in a timely and coordinated manner throughout the respective regions and the entire continent. The official launch of the Project was in fact done in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at the seat of the African Union Commission on the 27th February 2019.



Participants attending the AUC-RECs Customs Coordination Committee meeting in Arusha, Tanzania.



Participants at the African Union Commission for the launch of the EU-WCO Programme for the Harmonized System in Africa.

WCO – Finland ESA Project II

January – March 2019 activities

1. Top Executive Retreat (TER) was conducted in Comoros from 14 - 18 January, 2019. The objective was to bring together senior executives in order to focus on strengthening the leadership capacity of the management team.
2. Advance Ruling System for Classification workshop was held in Harare, Zimbabwe from 28 January to 1 February 2019 attended by mid-to-high-level technical officers and managers.
3. TRS work session mission took place in Bujumbura, from 28 January to 1 February 2019. The session aimed at assisting Burundi to finalize the national TRS report.
4. The 3rd WCO Economic Competitiveness Package (ECP) ToT workshop was held at the RTC, Kenya from 5 to 13 February 2019. Participants had previously attended the 1st and 2nd ToT workshops. Three potential Mercator Programme Advisors were identified from the group, who can assist members in implementing the provisions of the WTO TFA. The rest of the participants are suitable to become ESA National and /or Regional Trainers.
5. The WCO organized a national workshop, for the Comorian Customs Administration on Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) from 18 to 22 February 2019.
6. A People Development Diagnostic mission for Malawi Revenue Authority was held from 11 – 15 March 2019. The analysis helped to identify the critical competency gaps within the context of the MRA's modernization and reform programme.
7. Mercator scoping mission in Seychelles was held from 10-15 March, 2019 with particular attention to Intelligence Unit matters, in order to combat documentary Commercial Fraud, Valuation Risk assessment among others.
8. Risk Management and Selectivity Workshop in Zimbabwe is ongoing (25 - 29 March, 2019). The objective is to assist the Customs Administration in strengthening the existing Risk Management practices by focusing on risk assessment, profiling, targeting and intelligence driven RM.
9. Mercator scoping mission is ongoing in Burundi from 26 - 31 March 2019 specifically focusing on assessing the activity of the NCTF OBR's organizational capacity to implement the TFA assessing among others.
10. Blended training package on Gender Equality was finalized and will be officially launched at the WCO Capacity Building Committee in April 2019.

NEW FACES at the ROCB!!



By Judy Mwaura

There is change at the ROCB!

We have a new Finance Officer, Mr. Vincent Gituma, who was deployed from the host administration, Kenya Revenue Authority, to replace Mr. Andrew Odhiambo who left the ROCB to further his career in mainstream Customs. Vincent is a professional accountant with wide knowledge in finance matters and is already adopting to the ROCB working environment which aims to sustain the standards and guidelines as set by the WCO ESA Region.

The second new face at the ROCB is Mr. Francis Ochiel who replaced

Ms. Primrose Maina as the Administrative Assistant. He is a young vibrant gentleman involved in sports. He is a professional rugby player attached to the Nondescript Rugby Football Club based in Nairobi, Kenya.

The ROCB wishes them all the best as they perform their duties to the region as well as nurturing his talent.

The staff gender ratio among the core ROCB staff has now shifted from the 50:50 ratio to 5:2, five men and only two ladies. I look forward to more ladies adding to our numbers in the near future.

Vincent and Francis, welcome to the ESA family.



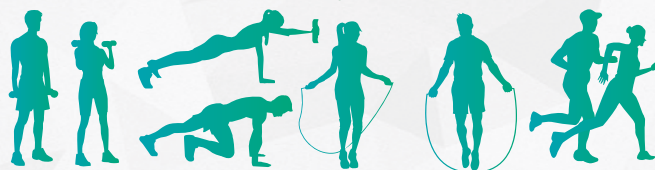
Mr. Vincent Gituma
Finance Officer



Mr. Francis Ochiel
Administrative Assistant

Fitness, Health and Sports:

My perspective!



By Francis Ochiel

Physical activity is vital to the holistic development of young people, fostering their physical, social and emotional health. The advantages gained from sport reach beyond the impact on physical well-being and the value of the educational benefits of sport should not be under-estimated. Health has been the most valued gift in humankind since time in memorial with most credit attributed to the advanced modern medicine for its part in increasing life expectancy. However, it is important not to forget the value of physical fitness mostly achieved through regular exercises or engaging in sports activities.

Sport is platform used for Social Corporate Responsibility as well as advertisement for both government and private sector organizations globally. This has given sports men and women a chance to earn a living through use of their talents; scholarship programs awarded to bright and needy students who have excelled in sports have gone a long way in ensuring that these students achieve their dreams. I am a proud beneficiary of such a program. Through this marketing platform (sports) many global organisations such as DHL, Europcar, etc have been able to extend

their market globally hence making their products and services known to the market. This has resulted in the promotion of cross border trade which has in turn contributed to the generation of revenue by different customs administration globally.

My home administration, Kenya Revenue Authority, runs such a program. It is the main sponsor of Ushuru Football Club

based in Nairobi, Kenya. Until 11 October 2014, the club was known as Kenya Revenue Authority Football Club. On a personal level, I remain grateful to the beautiful and majestic game that is rugby, through it, I have earned my wings to fly. My university education is currently partly sponsored by my home club Nondescript Rugby football Club. With the support of my Director and colleagues at the ROCB, I am able to balance my work and responsibilities at my sports club seamlessly.

Sports is not without challenges as the sporting fraternity encounter hiccups in soliciting for sponsorship and maintaining them. It is my prayer that corporates as well the respective government administrations continue to support the sporting fraternity through having many corporate social responsibility programs and introducing tax reliefs for companies sponsoring a particular sport.



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