

ESA Newsletter

APRIL - JUNE 2022

Celebrating World Customs Day



East and Southern Africa
Region

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Once again, we are delighted to bring to you the first issue of the informative ESA Newsletter for the year 2022. Time and again we have showcased astounding stories from our beloved ESA Members and partners and these stories have been etched in our minds. Some of these stories inspired us to get through 2021 even as the continent continues to bear the brunt of global vaccine inequity, but we remain hopeful, playing our part to make the year triumphant.

This issue highlights various regional events that took place during the first quarter which include; International Customs Day 2022, International Women's Day, Support for One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) in the East African Community (EAC), Inauguration of a new Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) building, HS 2022, Border crossings research conducted by Federation of Southern African Road Transport Associations (FESARTA), COVID-19 border crossing protocols, Southern African Development Community (SADC), Regional AEO Framework workshop, Tackling NTBs in the ESA Region, Lebombo Border post among others.

As the year kicks off, we continue to aspire to be on the front line to bring to you more insightful ESA stories and continue thanking all the Members, Regional Economic Communities, stakeholders and development partners for their solid contributions through their delightful articles. Enjoy the read.

Acknowledgements

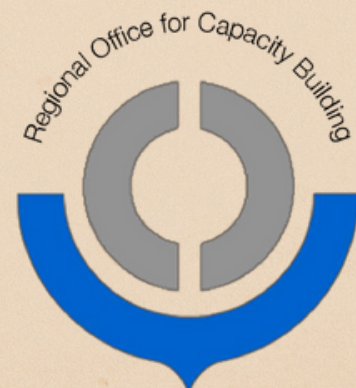
Ethiopia Customs Commission
Mauritius Revenue Authority
Mozambique Revenue Authority
South African Revenue Service
Zimbabwe Revenue Authority
Japan International Cooperation Agency
South African Customs Union
World Customs Organization
World Customs Organization, East and Southern Africa,
Regional Private Sector Group

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FAITH MOSONGO,
PROGRAMME OFFICER



**East and Southern Africa
Region**

International Customs Day – 2022

The 39th World Customs Day is celebrated at the Ethiopian Customs Commission. Customs Officials, OGA, and other Stakeholders attend the ceremony. Mr. Azezew Chane, Deputy Commissioner to Customs Operation on his remark speech said that the celebration of the World Customs Day with the theme “Scaling up Customs Digital Transformation by Embracing a Data Culture and Building a Data Ecosystem” will create an environment conducive to highlighting the work done in the construction of modern information systems and bridging the gaps. He also recalls the need to build and effectively use data infrastructures, maintain data security, and implementing of data analytics technologies including artificial intelligence in customs.

On the occasion, a document on the operation, organization, and legal framework of the World Customs Organization was presented for awareness creation. Finally, WCO Certificate of Merit for those contributing exceptional service was awarded to governmental and non-governmental organizations, ECC departments, branch Offices, and professionals who worked in coordination with the Commission.



P.I.H.S.2. Holds the Fourth Joint Coordinating Committee Meeting (JCC)

The Project for Capacity Development of South Sudan Customs for Introduction of Harmonized System Code Phase 2 (P.I.H.S.2) held the fourth Joint Coordination Committee meeting (JCC) on 25th /02/2022 in Juba and Kampala.

The meeting attended by members of National Revenue Authority (NRA), Ministry of Finance and Planning (MoFP), Ministry of East African Affairs, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and experts from the JICA project team. In the meeting, project activities i.e. trainings, HS unit activities, amendment of HS 2022, OJT, placement of staff, SAD, amendment procedures of R/D and PDM, the Monitoring Sheet Version three (July-Dec-2021) and its progress as well as challenges faced by the project.

Dr. Patrick Mugoya the Commissioner General NRA stated that despite the challenges that we are facing especially due to the Covid-19 pandemic, he is happy that this project has been going on rather smoothly and assured JCC members that NRA will continue to support management of customs revenue division and all stake holders involved in project implementation.

Accordingly, JICA believes that there is need to push further scope expansion to keep this momentum going in this regard and emphasized the importance of accountability and transparency in public financial management. JICA hopes the project outcome will contribute transparently to the National budget towards the welfare and development for the people of South Sudan and reaffirmed JICA's continued support.

In addition, Mr.Mitsunori Numaguchi the chief advisor in his closing remarks stated that with regard to ROO, an understanding of the EAC ROO by customs officers in main borders will enable them to process imports from EAC member states under EAC preferential tariff rates upon ratification from JCC members.



Mr. Makoto Yamane, from JICA South Sudan office



A group photo of JCC members in Juba



International Customs Day 2022 Celebration cum Inauguration of New Building of the Mauritius Revenue Authority 1/3

The celebrations of ICD 2022 at the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) have been very special. This is because the event coincided with the inauguration of a new MRA building- the Integrated Customs Clearance Centre (ICCC) at Plaine Magnien for the clearance of air cargo. The function also marked the launching of the MRA 15 Years Commemorative Magazine and new Customs projects. The building was inaugurated by Honourable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister of Mauritius, in the presence of distinguished personalities including ministers, MRA Board Members, and the Management Team. The function was restricted to a total of 50 persons due to the prevailing Covid-19 sanitary protocol.



Unveiling of the commemorative plaque of the ICCC by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius in the presence of Mr. Nayan Kumar Ballah, Chairperson, MRA Board and Mr. Sudhamo Lal, Director-General, MRA



Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister; Hon Mahen Seeruthun, Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance; Mr Nayan Kumar Ballah, Chairperson, MRA Board; Mr Sudhamo Lal, Director-General, MRA; Mr Vivekanand Ramburun, Director Customs and Mr Amick Teeluckdharry, Ag. Director, TECD posing for a group photo at the ICCC.

The theme of this year relates to the digital transformation of Customs administrations with the slogan "Scaling up Customs Digital Transformation by Embracing a Data Culture and Building a Data Ecosystem". The theme prompts us to ponder on the digital transformation of MRA Customs which, in fact, derives from MRA's overall strategy to leverage technology to improve its services.

In this digital era, MRA Customs is optimizing on technology to facilitate trade through accelerated processes, implement effective controls, and enhance integrity through transparent procedures. Some of the technologies deployed at MRA Customs include X-ray scanners introduced in 2006, drones since January 2018, CCTV systems, and Body-Worn Camera for Examining Officers from January 2021.

Technology is also enhancing MRA Customs' connectivity through "single window" platforms where many government agencies work in a collaborative and coordinated manner. Moreover, over time, MRA Customs' Electronic Data Interchange tools and systems have been enhanced with improved core functionalities aiming to increase the efficiency and effectiveness in the processing of customs declarations. MRA Customs is also harnessing on emerging technologies and techniques such as Artificial Intelligence, block chain technology, and big data analytics to enhance risk management and fraud detection capabilities. The digital transformation of MRA Customs is impressive and has been very beneficial to the trading community and the public at large.



The ICCC complex at Plaine Magnien with the conference centre on the left and administrative/operational block on the right

...International Customs Day 2022 celebration cum Inauguration of New Building of the Mauritius Revenue Authority 2/3

The ICCC Building has a total area of 6154 square meters and has a modern architectural design encompassing “green” concepts such as the use of solar energy, maximum use of natural lighting, and rain-water harvesting systems. This building is equipped with all the necessary facilities and amenities to enable MRA Customs to perform its duties diligently and also provide a value added service to the trading community such as:

- modern office space for better interaction between government authorities and stakeholders;
- auditorium and training room facilities;
- conference rooms for meetings and video-conferencing;
- detention Cell (to be used by Customs Anti-Narcotics Section);
- Sniffer dogs (K-9) compound and leisure area;
- CCTV control room; and,
- Canteen/cafeteria and other welfare amenities



Administrative block and operational area of the ICCC that houses Customs and other government agencies under a single roof

Coordinated Border Management (CBM)

One important peculiarity of the ICCC building is that it will house several border agencies under one roof, following the World Customs Organization's concept of Coordinated Border Management (CBM). Thus stakeholders will be able to conduct transactions, such as application of permits and authorizations, payment of fees, duty and taxes and clearance of goods, in this single building. Some of the government agencies that will be based at the ICCC include amongst others: Customs, Health, Agriculture, Ministry of Commerce, Food Import Unit, MSB, Pharmacy Board, etc. CBM will therefore be highly beneficial to the trading community in terms of reduced transactions costs through expedited processing and clearance times, and reduced hassles and waiting times for moving from one agency to another. All these factors will no doubt contribute to reducing the cost of doing business.

Launching of new Customs projects

It has now become a tradition for the MRA to launch new customs projects on the occasion of ICD celebrations. The E-Duty free certificate for motor vehicles and the e-Courier platform are the two new projects launched on the occasion of ICD 2022.



Mr Vivekanand Ramburun, Director, Customs Department, MRA and Deputy Vice-Chair of WCO ESA Region, delivering his speech on the occasion of ICD 2022

The e-Duty free certificate for motor vehicles concerns online application for excise duty remission on motor vehicles. This system aims to reduce dwell time at Ministries and MRA Customs for the processing and approval of Duty Free Certificate while eliminating the need for various hard copies of the application form. With inbuilt tracking functionalities, the applicant will be notified by email with respect to the different status of the application. The approved duty free certificate will be automatically sent to the applicant.

Similarly, the e-Courier platform is a completely paperless system designed to allow Courier operators and members of the public to submit simplified declarations and effect payment online to clear courier consignments. Processing and clearance by MRA Customs shall also be done online and email notifications shall be sent to the Courier operators and importers to provide updates on the clearance process, including the physical delivery authorization. The system is expected to expedite the clearance of courier consignments by targeting essentially risky consignments.

...International Customs Day 2022 Celebration cum Inauguration of New Building of the Mauritius Revenue Authority 3/3



WCO Certificate of Merit awardees for ICD 2022 in the presence of Mr Vivekanand Ramburun (middle in the front row), Director, Customs Department and other Directors of MRA

Award of WCO Certificate of Merit

To mark ICD 2022 celebrations and like every year, MRA awarded a total of 18 WCO Certificates of Merit to MRA officials (14) and representatives of the public (2) and private sectors (2) for their contribution to Customs. The ceremony was held in the auditorium of the ICCC with a limited number of participants in order to respect sanitary protocols. The awardees include customs officers who participated in the rummage of an aircraft arriving from the Malagasy Republic and found a new born baby dumped in a toilet bin. Lady cabin crew member of Air Mauritius (on the right side in the front row) gracefully attended to the new born baby and helped in saving his life.



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ROCB Staff Team Building Exercise

During the 24th Governing Council, the Directors General of the East and Southern African Region directed the ROCB to develop a work plan that includes a team building exercise for staff. The team building exercise is aimed at strengthening the ROCB Staff and equipping them to successfully implement the new ESA strategy. Team building is also important in any successful organization for the following reasons;

- Aligning around goals
- Building effective working relationships
- Reducing team members' role ambiguity
- Finding solutions to team problems
- Various types of activities used to enhance social relations

The team building exercise took place on the 2nd and 3rd of March 2022 at the Ol Donyo Sapuk Resort which is located in Machakos County and is only one and a half hour's drive from Nairobi off the Thika Super Highway along Garissa road. Ol Donyo Sapuk Resort proudly sitting at the foot of Kilima Mbogo Mountain and overlooking Ol Donyo Sabuk National Park, is soaked in the local history of pre-colonial Kenya. With magnificent views of Kilima Mbogo mountain, and set on 50 acres of beautiful and lush green gardens. The well-manicured and maintained grounds provide great outdoor experiences for team building. For the Young and Active a hike up Kilima Mbogo within the Ol Donyo Sabuk National Park is a rewarding experience.

We were able to focus on promoting staff cohesion and teamwork, motivating staff, boosting team performance, communication, collaboration, and fostering innovation and creativity among other objectives. The training also involved brain stimulating activities and fitness exercises.

We are thankful to Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) for facilitating our travel; to Babu Fitness Consultants for their excellent instructions and guidance. We are also grateful for the excellent hosting by the Ol Donyo Sapuk Resort.



SACU Strengthens Regional Co-Operation to Implement HS 2022

In pursuit of strengthening regional co-operation, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) continued its work towards greater coordination of policies and activities in the area of the Harmonized System (HS) and tariffs. On 24 January 2022, the SACU Technical Working Group on HS, Tariff, Origin and Valuation held a virtual meeting to discuss the progress in the implementation of the new edition of the HS. The meeting brought together 30 experts representing the five Member States of the SACU and the SACU Secretariat.

In its presentation, the SACU Secretariat focused on the Roadmap for Migration from HS 2017 to HS 2022. The Roadmap lays out all the main steps, phases and action required to ensure timely and well-coordinated implementation of HS amendments by the Customs Union and its Member States. It had been developed in cooperation with the WCO, in the framework of the EU-WCO Programme for HS in Africa (HS-Africa Programme), funded by the European Union, and validated at previous meetings of the Working Group.

The Working Group expressed satisfaction at having achieved most of the milestones set by the Roadmap. It was stressed that the Roadmap rendered simultaneous implementation of HS amendments by all SACU Member States achievable, ensured meaningful participation in the process of business representatives, and made the collaboration between all the stakeholders involved in the migration process more transparent and efficient. As a result, all the Member States successfully migrated to the HS 2022 version of the SACU Common External Tariff.

Based on Members' feedback provided during the meeting, some issues would still need to be addressed, such as procurement of sufficient numbers of HS 2022 publications, development of skills related to the implementation of HS amendments, and resolving some internal technical issues.

Meeting participants felt that further streamlining of the HS migration process would be desirable and should be considered for the implementation of future versions of the HS. The HS-Africa Programme pledged its continued support to the SACU in that regard.

For more details, please, contact capacity.building@wcoomd.org.



SACU Member States have Successfully Migrated from Harmonised System (HS) 2017 to HS 2022 (1/2)

1. On the 1st January 2022, all SACU Member States simultaneously implemented the 2022 version of the Harmonised System (HS) Nomenclature in the context of the SACU Common External Tariff (CET), which has replaced the HS 2017 version. This is the first time that SACU Member States migrated the CET to a new version of the HS in a well-coordinated manner across the Customs Union, with the support of the SACU Secretariat. The migration was also made possible by the technical support from the World Customs Organisation (WCO) under a Programme known as the HS-Africa Programme, funded by the European Union (EU).

2. The HS 2022 version reflects the amendments to the HS Nomenclature as adopted by the WCO Council (on the 28th June 2019 and 25th June 2020) and accepted by HS Contracting Parties in accordance with Article 16 of the International Convention on the Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System (HS Convention) of the WCO. SACU Member States, being Contracting Parties to this Convention, are required to align their Customs and Statistical Nomenclatures with this latest version of the HS.

3. The Preparation for the migration of the SACU CET from HS 2017 to HS 2022 started in 2019, with the support of the HS-Africa Programme. Under this Programme, Member States developed a Migration Framework to facilitate the transition to new versions of the HS; and established a SACU Working Group to spearhead the HS migration among other things. The Roadmap for the HS 2017 - HS 2022 Migration, which was based on the Framework included:

(i) preparation of draft amendments to the CET and correlation tables; (ii) consultations among the Member States at national and regional levels; (iii) legislative processes in the Member States where required; (iv) awareness-raising and publicity activities regarding the new HS version; and (v) actual implementation of the final approved amendments in the Member States' automated Customs Systems.

4. HS 2022 is the 7th edition of the HS and a result of a major revision of the HS since its adoption by the WCO Council in 1983, implemented in 1988. The HS 2022 includes 351 sets of amendments affecting various sectors such as agriculture, food and tobacco; chemicals; wood; textiles; base metals; machinery; and transport. The changes were necessitated by, amongst others, public health and safety requirements, inclusion of goods specifically controlled under various conventions, food security and environment protection, new products introduced as a result of progress in technology, deletion of certain products due to low volumes of trade, and clarification of the classification of certain products.

5. Typical examples of changes made in the HS 2022 version include those aimed to provide specificity for:

(a) Products related to Public Health and Safety e.g.

i. Diagnostic Test Kits

ii. Clinical Test Kits for Medical Research and Cell Cultures (including Cell Therapy Products)

(b) Products related to Protection of Society and Fight Against Terrorism e.g.

i. Dual Use Goods (Radioactive materials, Toxins, Biological Safe Cabinets, High-Speed Cameras, etc.)

ii. Electric Detonators, Ignitors, etc.

6. Positive feedback has so far been received from various Stakeholders including Private Sector operators in the region, as well as the WCO who pledged its continued support. The SACU Secretariat remains grateful to the European Union and the WCO for the assistance provided to SACU Member States in this regard. More about the HS and the SACU CET

7. The HS is a multipurpose international product nomenclature developed by the WCO. It comprises more than 5,000 commodity groups; each identified by a six-digit code, arranged in a legal and logical structure and is supported by well-defined rules to achieve uniform classification. More information on the HS 2022, can be obtained from the WCO website on:

http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/nomenclature/instrument-and-tools/hs_nomenclature-2022-edition.aspx

8. The SACU CET is a legal instrument which provides for various schedules of customs duties on imported goods, excise duties on certain goods produced in the Customs Union and similar imported goods, as well as rebates and refunds of such duties, and trade remedies. The Nomenclature used in the CET for classification and application of the duties, rebates, refunds and trade remedies, is based on the HS. However, as some of the HS six digit codes have been extended up to eight digits to cater for regional requirements, the CET comprises more than 8000 specific commodity groups referred to as "tariff lines".

...SACU Member States have Successfully Migrated from Harmonised System (HS) 2017 to HS 2022 (2/2)

In addition, the Nomenclature in the CET is used for the collection of international trade statistics. The link to new SACU CET based on the HS 2022 can be obtained on the SACU Website:

www.sacu.int (Click on "Common External Tariff Book" under "Quick Links")

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Ethiopian Customs Commission was Awarded a Gold Cup for Being Best Performer of the Year 2021(2013E.C)

The Ministry of Revenue recognizes and awarded a gold cup for the leadership and staff of the Customs Commission for the outstanding performance and being the best performer of the year 2021(2013E.C). The event was attended by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Demeke Mekonnen, and other senior officials.

The Ministry of Revenue also awarded laptops and smart screen televisions to the most outstanding executives and staff from its ministry, Customs Commission, and National Lottery Administration, and granted money to the relatives of staff who lost their lives fighting against contrabandists.

The Commission also thanked the staff and leadership for their success on the following day and in his remarks, Customs Commissioner Debele Kabeta said the commission has achieved significant achievements since its reform and has received numerous awards from various governmental and non-governmental organizations which indicate that the commission is on the right track with entrusting the government and the people to fulfill their responsibilities.



Support for One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) in the East African Community (EAC)

With support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), a total of 50 public-sector officers and private-sector stakeholders at the Malaba OSBP between Kenya and Uganda from 25 to 27 January 2022, and 35 public-sector officers and private-sector stakeholders at the Namanga OSBP between Kenya and Tanzania from 1 to 3 February 2022, received training in the EAC OSBP Procedures. The training was provided by a team of national and regional trainers and a JICA OSBP expert team (from PADECO Co., Ltd. of Japan), as part of the Component for Effective OSBP Operation of the Project on Capacity Development for Trade Facilitation and Border Control in East Africa (2018-2022).

The training modules – which were based on the EAC OSBP Training Curriculum – covered the OSBP legal framework and procedures; border security and disaster risk management; coordinated border management; environmental and social safeguards; and OSBP “support programs”, including change management, customer care, ethics and integrity, gender mainstreaming, and international relations. In addition, the JICA OSBP Team supplemented these modules with a module on the EAC Administrative Guidelines to Facilitate Movement of Goods and Services during the COVID-19 Pandemic, April 2020.

A total of 928 officers and stakeholders received training or sensitization in the EAC OSBP Procedures under the project from 2019 to 2022, plus another 657 were trained or sensitized during a predecessor project from 2014 to 2017, for a total of 1,585 between 2015 and 2022. Scores on a test (quiz) administered to public sector officials at the conclusion of the training were consistently high, well above 70%, the score level considered minimally acceptable for understanding and use of the procedures. Also, the project developed self-study question-and-answer materials and simulations/case studies for officers to provide a potentially cost-effective approach for training in the procedures and complement the training materials.

In addition, on 31 January 2022, the project supported a joint border committee meeting at Malaba. The meeting updated the performance monitoring report for the OSBP, considered measures to better apply the EAC OSBP Procedures at Namanga, and discussed the results of and lessons learned from a time measurement survey conducted by the project at Namanga in November 2021. OSBPs provide for more efficient border crossing by persons and goods, with resulting economic and social benefits.



OSBP Training at Malaba, January 2022



OSBP Training at Namanga, February 2022

The International Women's Day, March 8 was Celebrated at Ethiopian Customs Commission

The International Women's Day, March 8, was celebrated for the 46th time in Ethiopia and at the Ethiopian Customs Commission's Headquarters under the motto "I am my sister's guardian".

On the occasion, Mrs. Misrak Mamo, Deputy Commissioner of Institutional Capacity and Support, said that the role of women is crucial in building Ethiopia that is a globally prosperous, free from poverty and backwardness." Mrs. Misrak, also mentioned that the commission's women workers are being provided with skills and capacity building training to bring them to the forefront of leadership and to ensure the benefits of women depending on research so far done.

Mrs. Mantegbosh Kebede, Director of the Women, Children and Youth Directorate, on her part, remarked that "If women get the chance, they are competent and hard work to achieve their responsibilities at any time".

The day was adorned with an aerobics gym and a variety of entertainments.



Commissioning of Customs Officials

By: Feniasimba

Last 26th January 2022 Mozambique Revenue Authority has officially launched the Commissioning of its Customs Officials that covered 2148 paramilitary officers out of a total of 3836 within the organization throughout the country. This is the end of a process that started in 2018 essentially aiming at professional career development that will, at the end of the day, boost the motivational status of all staff.

During the ceremony, the then Minister of Economy and Finances highlighted the fact that commissioning of officers is part of a legal procedure that will translate into a sense of discipline and hierarchy leading to more efficiency and efficacy in revenue collection to the state coffers and in fighting contraband and other customs offenses that negatively contribute to tax evasion.

The Minister challenged the now commissioned officers to act with more responsibility and professionalism, thus becoming an example in the society. "the higher ranking an officer is, the more individual responsibility is demanded from him and he should refrain from illegal acts." – the Minister said.

The Official Launching of the Commissioning of the officer took place alongside the commemoration of World Customs Day.



Border Crossings Research Conducted by FESARTA

After more than four months of fieldwork in gathering cross-border trade data via the road modality in Kenya and Malawi, the Federation of Southern African Road Transport Associations (FESARTA) provides some essential feedback concerning the region's state. Many corridors have seen significant increases in trade flows, most notably volume moving through the Port of Mombasa. Indeed, the port now handles some 34 million tons of cargo, surpassing Durban. Furthermore, the Malaba border crossing takes some 2 000 trucks a day. Volume increases are also experienced in other corridors:

- Beira Corridor is up by 56%
- Dar Corridor is up by 63%
- Walvis Bay Corridor through Katima Mulilo is also up by 63%

Unfortunately, despite these increases in the East, significant challenges remain, especially in the South. Recently, the issues still hampering cross-border road trade included:

- Kasumbalesa experienced very long queues because of the border renovations. For example, around 300 to 500 trucks were in the queue last week, which can take up to 8 days to get through. Consequently, some drivers whose entry card and insurance expired had to pay \$175 for re-entry and \$150 for insurance. In addition, transporters had to traverse horrible roads and police checkpoints to bypass the renovations.

- Also, system downtime has been experienced in Zambia.

- Lastly, the manual processing of TIPs (Temporary Trade Permits) for all trucks entering Mozambique. These TIPs are causing unnecessary delays and costs to the South African cargo owner. Of more concern is the fact that the implementation of the single-entry TIP is in contravention of the SADC Protocol on Trade, specifically Article 3.

Fortunately, talks are ongoing between the two countries, with the decision to open the border for 24/7 operations continuing, with viability studies to be conducted. The Easter Period, where the border will be open 24/7, will be another test. Regional cross border road trade has made significant strides since the pandemic's hard lockdowns. However, considerable work still lies ahead for the region to realize its dreams proposed by the AfCFTA.

Logistics Sector Players want Governments to Ease COVID-19 Border Crossing Protocols in the Wake of Low Positivity

The key players in the regional logistics sector have asked the governments to flex Covid-19 testing protocols to ease border crossing in the wake of a decline in positivity rate and vaccination rollout across the region.

In an earlier phone interview, Mr Fred Seka, the Federation of East African Freight Forwarders Associations (EAFFA) president, urged EAC partner states to slacken the existing Covid-19 protocols in tandem with the prevailing situations at the border points.

"We need to urgently revise the Covid-19 protocols, especially at the borders before they mutate into a non-tariff barrier of trade," Seka said.

The Kenya Transporters Association (KTA) Chairman Mr Newton Wang'oo, on the other hand, issued a statement asking the government to divert its resources from testing for Covid-19 and focus on the vaccination of drivers. In addition, facilities for free testing should be placed at all border points.

KTA has also asked regional governments to allow fully vaccinated drivers not to be required to present negative PCR test results every 14 days.

"Many countries in the world have adopted this system, and we view it as the best way forward under the prevailing circumstances," Wang'oo said.

Currently, the positivity rate in Kenya is 0.1 per cent in a sample size of 3,956. Moreover, the cumulative tests by yesterday stood at 3,403,120 confirmed cases at 323,075, with total recoveries reaching 303,352.

Over 7.6 million adults in Kenya were fully vaccinated against the Covid-19 as of March 1, 2022. In addition, around 1.4 million individuals have completed the immunization in Nairobi, the highest number among Kenyan counties. Overall, roughly 16.7 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, including first and second doses, were already distributed in Kenya.

All the other countries in the region have reported a significant reduction in the positivity hence the need to revise the border crossing protocols and facilitate trade among the partner states.



RTC Mauritius Pioneers Training in HS for ESA Member States



RTC Mauritius has developed a Curriculum on the Harmonized System (HS) for the benefit of WCO ESA Member States. This capacity building initiative aims to dispense customized training on this very important pillar and trilogy of customs. This initiative is the outcome of the Technical Working Group (TWG) set up by the ROCB in the context of an enhanced collaboration strategy among WCO ESA Regional Training Centres (RTCs) whereby RTC Mauritius was assigned the responsibility to develop a Curriculum on HS for the 24 ESA countries.

The HS Curriculum aims at developing the skills of current and future customs professionals of the region as well as further enhancing their work performance through specialized knowledge on the HS. The training sessions outlined in the Curriculum have been graded as Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced depending on the target audience. The topics included therein explain the origin of the System, provide a detailed structure and description of the Harmonized System and its applications for the classification of commodities, General Rules for the Interpretation (GIRs) of the Harmonized System as well as the complementary publications of the Harmonized System. Emphasis is also being made on the text of the International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System and the list of Contracting Parties who have so far adhered to the said convention.

The Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (popularly known as the Harmonized System or the HS) is one of the most successful instruments ever developed by the World Customs Organization (WCO) and it entered into force on 1 January 1988. There are more than 200 countries and Customs or Economic Unions (most of which are Contracting Party to the HS Convention) actually using the System as a basis for their national Customs tariffs. It is a multipurpose goods nomenclature used by more than 200 countries and Customs or Economic Unions as the basis for purposes such as Customs tariffs, trade policy, rules of origin, monitoring of controlled goods, internal taxes, quota controls, and for the compilation of international trade statistics. The HS is a common language for trade, the more so being a unique way of identifying and coding merchandise and its knowledge important for Trade Facilitation and proper application of Customs regulations.

The HS Curriculum has already been circulated to the ESA Member States who may wish to mount in-house training courses, based thereon. Moreover, RTC Mauritius, in consultation with the ESA ROCB, intends to conduct the Training at Basic and Intermediate Level with the assistance of MRA experts in HS at the request of ESA Member States during the calendar period January to June 2022. It is also envisaged with the collaboration of ROCB to arrange for WCO Experts together with resource persons from MRA to conduct training at Advanced Level as from July 2022. This curriculum will surely pave the way for greater synergy and collaboration amongst ESA Member States as regards capacity building in one of the core areas of customs administration.

It is also to be noted that the WCO invited MRA to provide training to customs officials of the Malagasy Customs in HS for the WCO-HS Africa programme. In this context, one trainer in HS from MRA participated in a mission in the Malagasy Republic in March 2022.

SECTION II	VEGETABLE PRODUCTS
Chapter 10	Cereals
Heading 10.06	Rice
Subheading 1006.30	Semi-milled or wholly milled rice, whether or not polished or glazed.

P.I.H.S.2 Visits EAC Secretariat and Holili/Taveta OSBP

A delegation of 5 project members from the JICA Project for Capacity Development of South Sudan Customs for Introduction of Harmonized System Code Phase 2 (P.I.H.S.2) visited the EAC Secretariat in Arusha and Holili OSBP, Tanzania.

The delegation led by Mr. Mitsunori Numaguchi the chief advisor of the project had gone to 1) confirm the status of the EAC member states' work on the 2022 revision of the EAC-CET (Common External Tariff), 2) observe the operation status of the juxtaposed OSBP which is a reference for the Nimule OSBP, and 3) coordinate the South Sudanese response on the application of the EAC Rules of Origin (ROO) in South Sudan.

The EAC-CET 2022 will be formally approved at the EAC Finance Ministers' Meeting (SCTIFI) scheduled for June 2022, and most importantly member states must accept all CETs. With the likelihood that the Secretariats draft will be discussed, South Sudan is encouraged to proceed with the amendment procedure based on the EAC Secretariats' draft and finalize it as per the results from the meeting. The EAC-CET is revised every five years in line with the WCO HS revisions and annually for EAC convenience.

Regarding the EAC-ROO, a competent Authority in South Sudan should be determined as soon as possible to carry out the necessary work (human resource development and updates of laws and regulations) to issue certificates of origin. Additionally, the project recommends aligning all Financial Act tax rates with EAC-CET, reviewing the South Sudan Tariff, and supporting the coordination of a competent ROO Authority in South Sudan.



A group photo of project members with a team from the EAC Secretariat

Mpumalanga & Lebobo Border Post – Significant Busts

South African Revenue Service – Customs – Lebombo Border Post: Detecting and preventing the entry of illicit goods that are harmful to society and the economy is a key function of any Customs Administration. Smugglers are attempting to smuggle goods through ports of entry and illicit crossing along the borderline and as Customs we are focussed on port enforcement as well as ensuring the as part of the SARS Strategic Objective Number 3 – “DETECT TAXPAYERS AND TRADERS WHO DO NOT COMPLY, MAKING NON-COMPLIANCE HARD AND COSTLY” we facilitate legitimate trade and enforce on non-compliance.

On 7 March and 9 March 2022 respectively, the Lebombo Customs team intervened on 2 vehicles that were originally declared as empty when entering the country from Mozambique and upon further inspection, the following items were found as not declared and attempted to be smuggled into the country illegally.

Skin Lightening Creams – 24 944 units of Caro Light soaps and creams with an estimated value of R3 424 240.00

Possible Counterfeit Goods – 1 248 units of various branded sneakers, soccer boots, and flip flops with an estimated value of R892 250.00

The vigilance of officers and their experience in risk detection, smuggling trends, and concealment methods made it possible for these items to be detected which otherwise have entered the local economy which would have resulted in a loss in revenue collected and potential flooding of the market.

Members are continuously focussed on the detection and seizure of illicit goods through our ports of entry and are commended for their efforts.



Webinar: Practically Tackling NTBs in the ESA Region

The WCO-ESA-RPSG hosted their 12th Webinar titled "Practically tackling NTBs in the ESA Region" as part of its current focus area for the first quarter of the year 2022. The Webinar brought together esteemed panelists, including a Senior Expert of NTB/TPT/SPS, AfCFTA Secretariat, Ms. Kuenia Molapo, and Executive Director of TRALAC, Ms. Trudi Hartzenberg. The panelists' discussions were very insightful and helpful. Ms. Molapo guided us through the AfCFTA online NTB reporting, monitoring, and elimination tool. Both panelists stressed the importance of using the correct online NTB-reporting portal when reporting an NTB, following the established trade regime.

Ms. Hartzenberg gave an in-depth view on the current level of intra-African trade, the various non-tariff trade costs, and the tools available to assess these. Non-tariff trade costs include all additional expenses other than tariffs involved in trading goods bilaterally between trade partners rather than domestically. These trade costs include transport costs, costs associated with completing trade procedures, and the time to obtain necessary information. Interestingly, in terms of the average inter-REC and intra-REC non-tariff trade costs for goods between 2015 -2019, non-tariff trade costs are lowest within RECs, i.e., intra-REC trade.

Through these discussions and information-sharing, the RPSG notes the growth and contribution of the AfCFTA in terms of trade liberalization within the continent. Indeed, the Tripartite and AfCFTA -online NTB reporting, monitoring, and elimination tool is instrumental to improving intra-regional trade in Africa. The WCO-ESA-RPSG is optimistic about what is yet to come for the rest of the year. The Webinar has been recorded and is available on the RPSG's website and the RPSG's YouTube channel.



 A screenshot of a web browser showing the AfCFTA Reporting, Monitoring and Eliminating Mechanism website. The browser tabs include Microsoft Office Home, Mail - Kuenia Molapo, Post Attende - Zoom, Non-Tariff Barriers : Complai, and how to let zoom access share. The website URL is tradebarriers.africa/register_complaint. The page features the AfCFTA logo and the title "Reporting, Monitoring and Eliminating Mechanism". Below the title is a navigation bar with links: Home, About, Complaints, Documents, Events, Links, and Contacts. There is also a language selector (A) and a Login/Register button. The main content area has two sections: "Login as a registered user" and "Register an account". The login section has fields for "Email address*" (with the value kueniamotsoapitso@gmail.com) and "Password", along with a "Reset your password" button and a "Login" button. The registration section has a "Register" button. Below the registration section, there is a note about receiving an activation email and a link to "Resend your activation link". At the bottom, there is a link to "Download the user manual for this site here:" and four buttons for different language manuals: EN English manual, FR French manual, AR Arabic manual, and PO Portuguese manual. A small video inset in the top right corner shows a person, identified as Kuenia Molapo, speaking.

SADC Regional AEO Framework workshop

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) recently held a four-day (3,4,7, and March 8, 2022) Validation Workshop of the draft SADC Regional Authorized Economic Operators (AEO) Framework. The workshop brought together stakeholders from all the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Customs Administrations, and private sector stakeholders, including members of the WCO ESA RPSG.

The development and implementation of a Regional AEO Framework in SADC is a key priority of the SADC Trade Facilitation Programme, as approved by the 16th meeting (March 2016) of the Ministerial Task Force on Regional Integration held in Gaborone Botswana. The AEO falls under the SADC Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP), which sets out to deliver several results, activities, and sub-activities. Consequently, the situation analysis of the existing AEO Schemes in the SADC Member States was commissioned under TFP Result 2.

Incidentally, in South Africa, a SARS-Private Sector AEO Working Group has been established for early engagement of various role-players in the Private Sector. The Working Group aims to significantly help develop and implement the AEO Programme, whose input will be incorporated in the solutions table.

An independent consultant, Brendah Mundia - Deputy Director Capacity Building at World Customs Organization - led discussions around the findings of existing AEO Schemes in the SADC Member States. The main objective of the situation analysis was to establish their development status and identify areas of improvement, capture lessons and identify best practices to inform the establishment of a Regional AEO Framework in SADC. Crucially, for private sector involvement, there was a plea made for organized groups - such as the SADC Business Council and the WCO ESA RPSG - to work in collaboration and streamline proceedings to arrive at a single voice for business.



World Customs Organization
East and Southern Africa
Regional Private Sector Group

ZIMRA Launches Women in Taxation Platform



ZIMRA ladies follow proceedings during WiT launch

The Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) launched Women in Taxation (WiT) Forum at a colourful event on 18 March 2022 in Mutare City. The launch was intentionally held during the Women's Month as part of the global initiatives and activities to celebrate women.

WiT, whose membership is from women in the domestic taxes field, customs field and a representation of support staff, was launched upon realising that across the globe, women still face marginalisation and exclusion from making critical decisions in society. The few women who are serving as experts in both customs and taxes face challenges in balancing work and life demands as well other gender related prejudices. Tax and customs issues are generally regarded as a technical subject hence few women take them up given the perceived demands of the field. The effects of working at the border posts usually away from family, staff transfers, maternity issues and other societal gender related roles – were discussed during the launch and policy reviews that favour women are expected as a result.

The platform also helps women in the tax and customs administration to actively participate meaningfully in policy making and shaping as well as the administration processes. This is achieved through sharing ideas, creating networks and linkages whilst addressing matters that affect women in the tax and customs field. It will also serve as space for women to cross pollinate ideas, unleash robust discussions, interrogation of existing processes, exploring future and ideal systems and sharing ideas on how best should

women contribute towards efficient resource mobilisation and administration while creating an environment for women to unleash their full potential.

WiT is expected to organise outreach programmes that empower other business women and SMEs with tax and customs knowledge and processes. It advocates and challenges women to rise and take up these top positions and shapes women to have a "can-do" mind and step up to lead.

Speaking during the launch, the ZIMRA Acting Commissioner General, Ms Regina Chinamasa said that she expect the platform to conduct research on special concerns for women in different levels and advocate solutions whilst offering new policy adjustments, to tackle issues of mental health and other social issues that affect women as they handle different responsibilities in society in general, provide training and mentorship programmes for women and ultimately, to help to improve the welfare of women in Zimbabwe at different levels.



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