



East and Southern Africa
Region

WCO ESA ROCB Newsletter

The Gender Agenda



John Pombe Magufuli

1959-2021

*WCO ESA Region sends our condolences to the
people of Tanzania*

January - March 2021

Contents

3	EDITORIAL
4	Acknowledgments
5	THE GENDER AGENDA!
7	EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AfCFTA IN ESA
9	Customs and the Success of the AfCFTA
11	Roll-out of COVID-19 Vaccines and the role of Customs Administrations
13	Workshop held under the SACU region (23 Feb 2021)
13	Summary of the prominent obstacles
14	Ideal SACU
15	Capacity Building - Training of Seychelles Scanner Screeners
17	Work under the WCO-PSCG
17	AEO Compendium and Implementation and Validation Guidance Review
18	SAFE Review Cycle
18	Customs in the future
20	AEO and linkages to the AfCFTA - WCO ESA RPSG Webinar
21	TWO OF ZAMBIA'S CRITICAL BORDERS TO BE UPGRADED TO OSBP

24	SARS Customs make a massive rhino horn bust worth R53-million
26	JICA Customs Capacity Developing Project has started in South Sudan
28	Ethiopian Customs Commission awarded best performers of the year 2020 for employees and senior officials
29	“Customs bolstering recovery, renewal and resilience for a sustainable supply chain!” ICD 2021
29	Ethiopian Customs Commission celebrates 2021 International Customs Day!
31	Africa’s women’s minister seeks voice for women in AfCFTA
33	The Malagasy Customs Canine Brigade soon operational
35	ZRA NODS FOR BORDER AGENCY COOPERATION
38	Ethiopian Customs Commission /ECC/ has implemented paperless customs operation.
40	20 Customs officials to scoop Awards
41	Save a life through First Aid and CPR.
43	SRC Contributes Towards Homes of the Elderly
45	Namibia achieves customs connectivity with South Africa
47	ROCB STAFF

EDITORIAL

COVID-19 continues to catch the headlines, and most recently, the rollout of vaccinations across the globe, and in our region. Well, this rollout is still slow, and not all our members have received the vaccines. We remain hopeful for our region while we also remain cognizant of the varied views for and/or against the vaccine. We encourage our readers to share experiences in relation to the aforementioned, that we may share it with our world in our next issue!

That said, Customs has continued to operate, and continues to rise from the ongoing effects of the pandemic as presented in our second publication of 2021. In this edition therefore, we are delighted to share the developments within and beyond our administrations. Herein are articles on the Roll out of Vaccines and the role of Customs Administrations (RPSCG), Customs and the Success of the AfCFTA (Zimbabwe), Namibia customs connectivity with South Africa, Zambia critical borders to be upgraded to OSBP, JICA Customs Capacity Developing Project in South Sudan, International Customs Day 2021 (Ethiopia), Africa's women's minister seeking voice for women in AfCFTA among other captivating stories from ESA.



As the year sets sail, 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.

Kick back and enjoy this read.

FAITH MOSONGO
PROGRAMME OFFICER.

Acknowledgments

Ethiopia Customs Commission

Madagascar Revenue Authority

Namibia Customs and Excise

Seychelles Revenue Commission

South Africa Revenue Service

Zambia Revenue Authority

Zimbabwe Revenue Authority

Japan International Cooperation Agency

Regional Private Sector Group

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THE GENDER AGENDA!

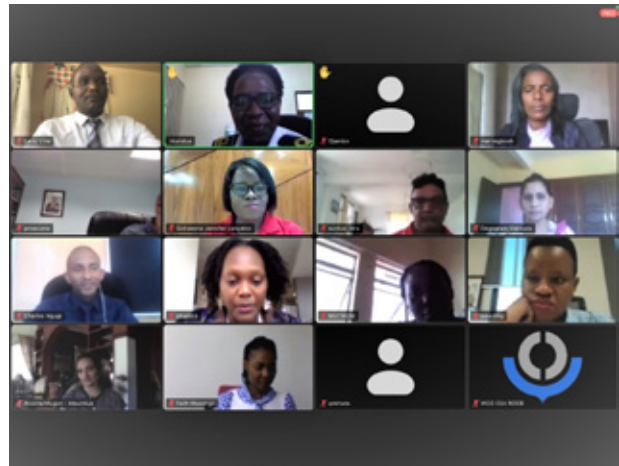
The East and Southern Africa region of the World Customs Organization has set up its Gender Equity, Equality and Diversity forum! This is in line with the directive of the Governing Council in promoting gender and diversity, as outlined in the Regional Strategy. The first forum brought together representatives from different member states in a virtual meeting in March 2021, and was chaired by Mrs. Goitseone Lenyatso of Botswana. Through this forum we are hope to develop a regional module on gender and diversity, encourage members to draft and publish gender, equality and diversity policies taking into account SDG5 and possibly organize an annual gender, equality and diversity conference.

The goal here is to equip the ESA Customs Administrations with an adapted set of tools to effectively complement the WCO Toolbox on Gender Equality and Diversity and to align our objectives to the World Customs Organization (WCO) and other international agreements and treaties: World Trade Organization (WTO) Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment, World Bank charter for cross border trade, the trade facilitation agreement, the Revised Kyoto convention, Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals and the laws of all Members states.

Meanwhile, the region has further collected statistics on the status of Gender Equality & Diversity ESA Region. This survey is part of the others we have been collecting over the past years in response to the Governing Council's decision calling on the ROCB to provide data and baseline statistics aimed at providing Members with the information to help them make informed decisions in supporting.

The ROCB also participated in the virtual conference entitled **“Leveraging the AfCFTA to Boost Women's Economic Empowerment”**. The AfCFTA promotes entrepreneurship and economic empowerment opportunities for women-owned businesses through increased access to new regional export markets; and expanded opportunities across key sectors.

Notwithstanding the potential, AfCFTA gains will not be automatic. As Africa marks the first year anniversary of the New African Women's Decade of Financial and Economic Inclusion, that also coincides with the 1st January 2021 start of trading under the AfCFTA Agreement, AfCFTA State Parties will be required to effectively implement commitments that advance the welfare of women. It is against this backdrop that the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and BUSA convened the virtual conference on Leveraging the AfCFTA to Boost Women's Economic Empowerment.



*Members of the Working Group include; **Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Malawi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Uganda and Zambia.***

The first Session of the Gender Equality & Diversity Working Group which was chaired by Botswana.



EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AfCFTA IN ESA

The African Union Commission (AUC) and the WCO ESA Regional Office for Capacity Building have continued their collaboration and partnership. We held a regional webinar in March to present and discuss the needs and challenges for Customs authorities towards the effective implementation of the AfCFTA. Recall that an Extraordinary Summit of the AU Assembly on the AfCFTA in December 2020 approved the start of trading under the AfCFTA Agreement as at 1st January 2021.

The main needs highlighted during the webinar were on acquiring financial and technical support necessary in implementing all the protocols of the AfCFTA. It was pointed out that there is need for vigorous capacity building among all Customs Administrations especially in the following areas; Rules of Origin, Tariff Classification (Harmonized System), Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), Valuation, E Commerce among others. The main challenge highlighted was on acquiring sufficient funding to ensure successful implementation of the AfCFTA, given that African economies remain among the least developed countries in the world with the size of economies amongst the lowest compared to other regions.

The webinar was a follow up meeting to the virtual conference on the “**Effective Implementation of the AfCFTA: What are the Needs & Challenges for Customs Authorities?**” which was held in October 2020. The webinar focused on the various surveys and reports on the AfCFTA carried out so far, especially, the needs assessment in relation to the implementation of the AfCFTA among national customs authorities conducted in co-operation with GIZ, the AU and ESA ROCB in the East & Southern Africa region. The webinar also looked at any new AfCFTA developments and updates, feedback from Members on the Questionnaire on AfCFTA implementation as well as findings of needs analysis assessment among other issues.

The most recent webinar was attended by top/executive management representatives from Member Administrations, authorized to make decisions on behalf of their respective Administrations. This was to ensure that all the outcomes of the webinar would be easily adopted and implemented by Members.



The key speakers at the webinar included: **Mr. Larry Liza**, Director, **World Customs Organization, East & Southern Africa, Regional Office for Capacity Building**; **Mr. Dhunraj Kasee**, Senior Policy Officer, Customs Co-operation Trade & Industry Department, **AUC - African Union Commission**; **Mr. Willie Shumba**, Senior Customs Expert & Advisor, **African Union Commission**; **Mr. Mark Goodger**, GIZ Consultant & Customs Expert, **GIZ Consultant**.

Customs and the Success of the AfCFTA

Trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) started on 1 January 2021 with 34 countries having deposited their instruments of ratification. This is a very exciting development for the continent as it brings together the largest number of countries under a Free Trade agreement in the world. With Intra-Africa trade as low as 13% as compared to about 70% among European Union countries, the growth in Intra-Africa trade is the greatest priority currently and it requires supportive Customs processes and procedures.

Customs is the Lead Agent at Ports of Entry in most African countries. The need to facilitate trade during this time when the AfCFTA is coming into effect is critical and Customs Administrations of member countries have to adopt trade facilitation initiatives that remove all bottlenecks at Ports of Entry to ensure smooth flow of goods across borders.



Efficient Customs as a driver of the success of AfCFTA: Source - Author

The above diagram looks at the various factors that Customs Administrations should look at to ensure Trade Facilitation and success of the AfCFTA. These factors sum up the four important pillars of Trade Facilitation, which are Transparency, Simplification, Harmonisation and Standardisation.

Customs Administrations should ensure there is transparency in the provision and disclosure of information to the trading public. It also extends to laws and Regulations related to imports and exports so that traders do not have to face delays at Ports of Entry. The simplification of processes and procedures is also a major enabler in trade facilitation. Complicated procedures create rent-seeking opportunities and all the bad practices that may reduce trade flows among AfCFTA members.

Harmonization of procedures within the AfCFTA is very important and as Customs, establishing good working relations with other Customs Administrations will go a long way in ensuring the success of the trade agreement. The same also applies to standardization of processes such that traders within the AfCFTA do not face different Customs procedural requirements as they trade with different countries.

Without efficient Customs Administration, the AfCFTA will struggle to succeed as Customs processes become a major Non-Tariff Barrier (NTB). NTBs increase the cost of trading across borders thereby making goods from the trading bloc more expensive as compared to importing from outside.

Author: Innocent Muranganwa
Zimbabwe Revenue Authority

Roll-out of COVID-19 Vaccines and the role of Customs Administrations

In early December 2020, countries globally started to distribute the first batches of COVID-19 vaccines. The widespread positive news of the efficacy in combatting the virus's impact on both the population and the global economy was welcomed. The roll-out has yet to gather steam on the African continent; however, we need to be ready when this does occur.

Due to the vaccines' nature, the distribution process must occur as fast and efficiently as possible. Simply put, the cold chain's integrity needs to be maintained to avoid running the risk of spoilage. Consequently, Customs administrations must play their part in facilitating the movement of the vaccines across borders.



The restrictions brought about due to the pandemic highlighted the importance of cooperation between stakeholders. Customs administrations must coordinate with government agencies and stakeholders to ensure that border posts will be ready to handle large quantities of vaccines. Because the COVID-19 vaccines are specialized cargo (sensitive to temperature), Customs administrations should ensure that the border post's infrastructure and staff are prepared to handle the specialized load. Additional measures will need to be made regarding increased security, storage facilities and designated carriers and handlers.



In summary, the nature of the vaccine, the temperature sensitivity and the urgency of distribution means that Customs administrations need to prioritize and facilitate vaccine shipments' clearance. Finally, they should determine the need for inspection through a risk-based control and perform non-intrusive inspections as far as possible. Steps also need to be taken to address the threat of counterfeit vaccines.

BY
WCO ESA RPSCG



Workshop held under the SACU region (23 Feb 2021)

SACU is the oldest Customs Union globally, with a mandate mainly focused on simplifying goods and people's movement across borders. COVID-19 has accentuated the importance of road transport for trade within the region while shedding light on SACU's current state through results of border closures, incoherent regional policies, and a lack of a practical policy framework.

Summary of the prominent obstacles

The private sector in South Africa identified five prominent obstacles preventing traders and stakeholders from leveraging the Customs Union to the fullest. The revenue-sharing approach has long been a point of concern creating conflict between the Member States. Inadequate and outdated infrastructure and uncoordinated border management creates congestion and discourages trade. Due to underdeveloped ICT infrastructure, Member States are not sharing enough information to improve trade and border management effectively. Due to a lack of political will, the Council of Ministers is not meeting regularly, preventing the Secretariat from effectively executing its mandate. Finally, a general lack of harmonization between border posts and government agencies is aggravated by the lack of a SACU Tariff Board on a domestic and regional level.

Ideal SACU

An ideal SACU allows for the simplified movement of goods across borders with digitalization and new technologies, assisting government agencies and the private sector in all countries in taking full advantage of all the region's trade opportunities. A Regional Single Window system would simplify border procedures. Digitalization should be on the agenda for all discussions and negotiations, with a particular focus on e-commerce and facilitating trade for MSMEs. A commitment from the various Member State's governments to drive projects in cooperation with the private sector can create an ideal operating environment within SACU.

What can be done?

- Short-term: Have regular meetings of the Council of Ministers and Technical Liaison Committees, including a private sector representation. Establish a SACU Tribunal. Source funding for Crickmay CPMS, which will assist in providing real data metrics management. Conclude negotiations and incomplete elements and protocols of the AfCFTA. Ensure that the e-commerce agenda is given priority.
- Medium-term: Encourage Revenue Authorities to implement Authorized Economic Operator systems for green lane passage. Risk management systems and pre-arrival processing and minimize physical inspections. Upgrade border post infrastructure and encourage the use of technology under the guiding principles of SMART Borders.
- Long-term: Implement a Single Window System across the entire SACU region.

Capacity Building - Training of Seychelles Scanner Screeners

A country's effective & efficient border security is becoming increasingly important in today's global world of economy & trade. To ensure that these are maintained, it is the responsibility of Customs organizations to ensure that there is prevention in trading of illicit goods across borders, particularly upon entry. It is therefore, with the utmost necessity that proper & gradual training is provided to staff working at various entry points to properly know how to detect such activities especially through the use of x-ray scanners in their line work.

Having undergone a five-day training, starting November 16th to the 20th, seventeen Customs officers from the Seychelles Revenue Commission (SRC) had the opportunity to broaden their knowledge in the use of x-ray machines & analyzing of x-ray images which would in turn be expected of them to be able to better perform such early detection duties, where they can help to prevent such atrocious activities that are affecting the world of trade.

The training of screeners was facilitated by Mr. Dobin Samson- a highly skilled Seychellois in the field of Aviation & Airport Security. The training programme itself consisted of both in-class and on-site practical sessions whereby the participants were introduced to the different screening terms and the notion behind the need to conduct routine screening activities and learning about the different characteristics of an x-ray machine. The group of Customs officers was also acquainted with the necessary safety education so that necessary precautions are observed when dealing with such machines. Aside from these, the participants of the training were also equipped with the necessary skills that would allow them to: (i) successfully operate scanners using a Hi-Tray keyboard, (ii) develop the ability to carefully read and evaluate x-ray images, and (iii) understand how operators of an x-ray machine should conduct routine testing using the CTP.

Following the very packed yet fruitful sessions, the participants' theoretical and practical abilities were put to the test where the successful participants later received their certificate. Mr. Samson on his part was very proud to have been able to share his time and knowledge with the SRC participants, and looks forward to many more such collaborations, that surely make available capacity development opportunities for more Seychellois workers.



Photo above (Top): Mr. Dobin Samson delivering one of the theory classes. (Bottom): The proud certificate recipients in a souvenir photo with Mr. Samson, the Commissioner of Customs—Mr. Paul Barrack and the Manager for Airport Terminal Operations—Ms. Genila Valentin.

Work under the WCO-PSCG

Since its establishment in 2006, the WCO Private Sector Consultative Group (PSCG) has been closely tied to the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards. The recent focus included the AEO compendium and Validation Review, the SAFE review cycle and a document on “Customs in the future”.

AEO Compendium and Implementation and Validation Guidance Review

The WCO published the 2020 edition of the AEO Compendium, which offers a concise overview of existing AEOs and MRAs signed between Customs administrations. According to the Compendium, the ESA region now has 15 programmes with a total of 668 operators.

During the past several months, some PSCG members have participated in the work of the sub-group of the SAFE Working Group on the AEO Implementation and Validation Guidance. The PSCG remains committed to the continuous improvement of the SAFE Framework of Standards and AEO Implementation and Validation Guidance. The group supports efforts to make AEO programmes accessible to SMEs. Its priorities include simplifying and harmonizing requirements with consistent enforcement as we continue to strive to facilitate trade.

SAFE Review Cycle

The PSCG continued to provide its input in the 2021 SAFE Review Cycle. Delegates had an opportunity to review all 28 SAFE Review proposals, including five new proposals submitted during Phase 1 of the Meetings. A significant number of recommendations were identified as requiring further work, including developing the AEO Implementation and Validation Guidance, which the PSCG collectively drafted.

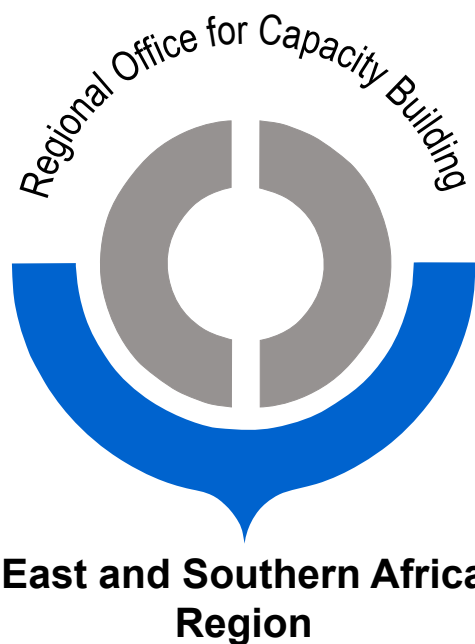
Customs in the future

The COVID-pandemic has highlighted deficiencies in the present system, particularly in dealing with emergencies and essential goods and facilitating the flow of all goods across borders. To best manage the evolution of Customs, border authorities and trade from now on, we collectively need to:

- Identify and remedy the fragmented border management approaches that have historically been applied nationally and regionally.
- Utilize technology and give AEOs the status they deserve.
- Streamline procedures since risk management in some border agencies has led to significant breakdowns and delays at borders (with added pressure created by COVID-19).
- Strengthen current proposals with concrete action plans and fixed deadlines.

Now is the time for expediting and harmonizing processes across borders through innovative and aligned use of technology (paperless, risk-based selectivity, etc.). There is a need for resilience and efficiency in supply chains and consistency in paperless procedures, automated systems, electronic data, e-payment, risk management processes and movement of revenue collection processes away from the border.

The PSCG argues that despite the critical role Customs plays, there is no doubt that Customs agencies have limited political influence, and this is where a solid partnership with the private sector makes sense in terms of communicating Customs' agenda to other government authorities.



AEO and linkages to the AfCFTA – WCO ESA RPSG Webinar

The African Union-led agreement is designed to establish the world's biggest free-trade zone by area, encompassing a combined economy of US\$3.4 trillion. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) will bring together all 55 member states of the African Union, covering a market of more than 1.2 billion people, including a growing middle class. As an essential instrument for trade on the continent, member states hope that the agreement will be boosting intra-African trade, integration, and development in the long-term.

The aim is to create an integrated market for goods, services, promoting the cross-border movement of capital and persons. However, whether this agreement is feasible or not will largely depend on how to incorporate the plethora of differences between countries, goods, border procedures, and law.

The same goes for approximately 19 different AEO programmes on the African continent, and it is unclear how AfCFTA will accommodate AEO operators. Incorporating the provisions is essential considering the specific details included in the Annexes to the AfCFTA Protocols, which is captured in Article 13 - Trade Facilitation Measures for Authorized Operators.

To discuss the AEO and its linkage to the AfCFTA, the WCO ESA RPSG held a webinar titled “Unpacking AEO in the East and Southern African Region”. The speakers included the ROCB's Director, Larry Liza. The topics covered included:

- Overview of AEO in the context of the AfCFTA
- Update from the WCO AEO
- AEOs and the SACU region
- Progress: South Africa Single Government AEO program
- AEO – Training and Capacity Building

A more committed effort should be made to accelerate the uptake of AEO and merge the provisions of respective AEO in the AfCFTA agreement since it can unlock significant benefits for traders.

In line with Article 7.7 of the WTO-TFA, the signing of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) based on accreditation program in place with various Customs Administrations worldwide should also be a priority and similarly aid C-2-C communication.

TWO OF ZAMBIA'S CRITICAL BORDERS TO BE UPGRADED TO OSBP

By Robert Zawe

The importance of a well-developed border infrastructure for trade facilitation and the economic well-being of a country cannot be over-emphasized. Realizing this fact, the Zambian government has been modernizing the infrastructure of various border posts in preparation for upgrade into One-Stop Border Posts (OSBP). This is to facilitate the quick movement of people and goods for economic benefit.

As a landlocked country, Zambia has a total of eight neighboring countries with over 30 gazetted operational borders. So far four of these borders are fully-fledged OSBPs. These include Chirundu, Katima Mulilo, Nakonde, and Kasumbalesa, while Chanida border on the eastern part of the country bordering Mozambique has the facility for OSBP but is yet to be turned into an OSBP.

The latest to join the list of OSBPs in the country will be Kazungula and Mwami Border Posts. The two borders are set to be officially opened this year. The improvement in the infrastructure of these two critical borders will also see the two borders increase their operating hours much to the delight of importers and exporters.

Kazungula Border infrastructure which comes with a masterpiece world-class 923-meter road and rail bridge has already been completed awaiting the official commissioning possibly by the two Heads of State of Zambia and Botswana since the project is a joint venture. The infrastructure at Kazungula Border will enable Customs' Southern region headquarters to migrate from the inland Livingstone Port to Kazungula immediately after the commissioning of the border.

Standing at almost 95% complete as of February 2021 is the Mwami Border, a critical border on the east side of the country. The new infrastructure at the border is also expected to be officially opened and turned into an OSBP later in the year.

Due to warm relations and increased trade volume between Zambia and Malawi since independence, the Mwami border has been operating 24/7 despite its limited old infrastructure. With the new infrastructure, the border will now operate as a fully-fledged OSBP.

The addition of these two borders to the list of OSBPs will leave the country with only one border with Angola to be upgraded to complete the list.

The improvement in the border infrastructure has greatly contributed to the boosting of morale for customs officers who are now enjoying improved working conditions. The coming in of these two OSBPs will bring the total number of OSBPs in Zambia to six.



Mwami OSBP infrastructure under construction



Part of Kazungula OSBP infrastructure



Part of Kazungula OSBP infrastructure

SARS Customs make a massive rhino horn bust worth R53-million

The Customs unit of the South African Revenue Service (SARS) made a bust of rhino horn with an estimated value of R53 172 000, in a shipment destined for Malaysia.

While conducting manifest profiling at the courier facilities, the Customs Detector Dog Unit at O.R.Tambo International Airport selected a suspicious shipment declared as 'HP Cartridges Developers'.

The three-piece shipment was taken to the X-ray scanner for non-intrusive inspection, where the image analysis reflected objects resembling the shape of rhino horns. The shipment was taken for physical inspection and upon inspection of the boxes, 18 pieces of rhino horn were found concealed in traditional clothing. The goods weighed 63kg.

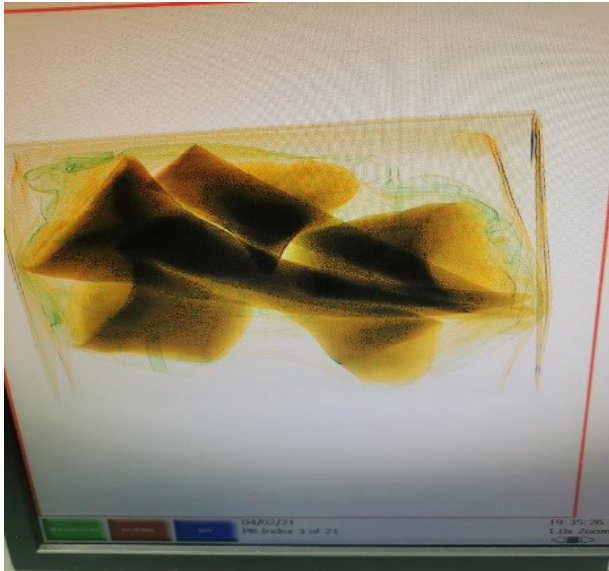
This is the fourth rhino horn bust by SARS Customs at the O.R.Tambo International Airport between July 2020 and February 2021. The overall weight of the rhino horn seized in these four cases is 277.30 kg with an estimated value of R 234 114 206.

The Customs officers immediately called the Directorate of Priority Crimes Investigation (Hawks) to the scene who confiscated the shipment for further investigation.

In his reaction to this massive seizure of the rhino horn, Commissioner Edward Kieswetter congratulated the Customs officers for their excellent work.

He warned the perpetrators of the crime that SARS, working with other law enforcement agencies, would spare no efforts in confronting and dealing decisively with any criminal malfeasance. Those that are involved in such egregious and merciless killing of rhinoceros and mutilating them will be brought to book.

He furthermore said, “Those that are determined to destroy the rich natural endowment of our country, which is a common treasure and heritage for all, that we should look after for future generations, will be met with the unwavering commitment of our officers to enforce the law.”



JICA Customs Capacity Developing Project has started in South Sudan

Customs officers from the National Revenue Authority (NRA), the Republic of South Sudan, Customs Division under the JICA Project for Capacity Development of South Sudan Customs for Introduction of Harmonized System Code Phase 2 (P.I.H.S.2) is a three-year project supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) from 2020-2023. The purpose of this project is that the capacity of Customs tariff collection system toward adaptation of international standards is enhanced in main border points including Juba (capital of South Sudan) and Nimule (a border to Uganda). This project supports NRA with great cooperation of the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA).

NRA has held two series of trainings up to 30 Customs officers and 30 clearing agents from Nimule border station. The training implemented at the Peace Valley Resort Hotel, Nimule from 2nd through 19th February 2021. NRA HS trainers have implemented the training with support of experts of JICA project team through teleconference system due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. NRA HS trainers designed the training. The trainers from HS unit (HS classification special unit), training section and others of NRA Customs Division were fostered as experts on HS and statistics by the Phase 1 of the P.I.H.S. project.

The training aims to build capacity of Customs officers and clearing agents in charge of Customs clearance at the border. It enables them to impose appropriate Customs tariff using HS codes and SAD (Single Administrative Document) filling. The training modules included sessions from general matters of HS code, classification of articles on South Sudan Common External Tariff and SAD.



Trainees from Customs Office



Trainees from Customs Office

Ethiopian Customs Commission awarded best performers of the year 2020 for employees and senior officials

The Customs Commission has awarded to best performance of officers, senior officials and private stakeholders.

FDRE deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonen, awarded best performers of the year 2020. The Deputy Prime Minister has said that the utilization of technology in customs should be strengthened; recognition to loyal taxpayers and to the sector workers has to be sustained.

Minister of Ministry of Revenues in his remark speech has praised for the employees of Customs commission for collecting the country's major income, and thanked for the high performance.

He also said that “ you who love your country, do your responsibility and work for your conscience and shall continue this patriotic deeds in customs and revenue sector to sustain revenue collection performance.

At the end recognition and award has given to the families of those who lost their lives while at fighting against contraband.



Ethiopian Customs Commission celebrates 2021 International Customs Day!

**“Customs
bolstering
recovery,
renewal and
resilience for
a sustainable
supply chain!”
ICD 2021**

The 2021 international customs day was celebrated with small number of participants invited from other government agencies, private sector Associations and Customs.

On the event remarkable keynote speech was delivered by ECC Deputy Commissioner Mr. Mulugeta Beyene. On his speech, he addressed the year 2021 International Customs Day to be marked with the motto “Customs bolstering recovery renewal and resilience for a sustainable supply chain!” He noted the day is celebrated on custom’s recognition of its role and reaffirms its commitment to contribute its stake in international supply chain. He mentioned the damage caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic and demonstrating the need to create an institutional outlook for the global community, the need to constantly work on and implement new solutions, disaster preparedness and response systems. He also stated that the Global Supply Chain is a multi-tiered system involving many government agencies, including the private sector and call for active partnership between customs, other government agencies and the private sector.

He also remarked several reforms and modernization measures taken by the Ethiopian Customs Commission to harmonize and simplify procedures, including the launching of paperless customs service at the late 2020, was one of the manifestation to ECC’s commitment to brought modern working methods, procedures and techniques to reduce the cost of trading across border in Ethiopia. He calls up on all the stakeholders to collaborate with the Commission as these reforms and modernization activities require not only the Commission effort but also the public stakeholders and the private sector too.

During the event, the Message of Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, WCO Secretary General, regarding the International Customs Day 2021 was also delivered to the participants followed by a presentation to create awareness on the ongoing ECC modernization activities to bring new working methods and to build capable customs institution which is conformity with international customs standards.

Finally, Mr. Debele Kebeta, Commissioner of ECC awarded certificate of merit issued by the World Customs Organization to government agencies, private sector associations and customs departments who have played a key role in facilitating the supply chain through their direct intervention and to those who have exerted high effort in reducing crisis caused by the pandemic. Mr. Debele Kebeta congratulates the institutions that have been awarded recognition certificate and delivered a speech stressing on the year's motto , and reminding that the pandemic is still on the rise so be watchful to take care of themselves and the society.



Africa's women's minister seeks voice for women in AfCFTA



23 February, 2021

Addis Ababa, 23 February 2021 (ECA) – South Africa's Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Ms. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, called for women's voices to be heard in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement.

Ms. Nkoana-Mashabane spoke during a virtual conference on leveraging the agreement to boost women's economic empowerment jointly organized by the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC), a unit of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); and Business Unity South Africa (BUSA), a private sector organization.

The minister noted that women and young people remained among those most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the need for a gender-sensitive post-COVID-19 economic recovery. On inclusive AfCFTA implementation, the minister emphasized the importance of extending the benefits of the AfCFTA to both formal and informal sector women, disability and youth enterprises. "This means that we must address issues of challenges in access to markets, provide skills development and training, provide appropriate education, increase opportunities to funding and credit, increase access and training in new technologies and provide marketing networks," said Ms. Nkoana-Mashabane.

It is therefore critical for women's voices to be taken on board in the implementation of the trade pact," she said.

In his remarks, the Coordinator of the ATPC, Mr. David Luke, said the conference was taking place one month after trading started under the AfCFTA treaty on 1 January when the world was grappling with recovery from the worst economic crisis for nearly a century.

The extent to which women will be able to take advantage of opportunities created through the AfCFTA agreement in priority economic sectors, in e-commerce and regional value chains is dependent on the design and implementation of gender-responsive policies and complementary measures that reduce discrimination toward women while mitigating the potential risks from AfCFTA implementation.

During the panel discussions, other speakers dealt with the critical relationship between gender and AfCFTA Phase II issues of investment, competition policy and intellectual property rights, while exploring actions to support a gender-responsive AfCFTA trade facilitation agenda.

The outcome of the conference will be used to support the design of gender-responsive measures that will help to build back better in a post-COVID-19 economy, accelerating delivery on the 2020-2030 African Women's Decade of Financial and Economic Inclusion.

The AfCFTA promotes entrepreneurship and economic empowerment opportunities for women-owned businesses through increased access to new regional export markets and expanded opportunities across key sectors. Except for Eritrea, the remaining 54 member-countries of the African Union (AU) have signed the treaty establishing the AfCFTA among which 36 have ratified the agreement.

Issued by:
Communications Section
Economic Commission for Africa

The Malagasy Customs Canine Brigade soon Operational

It's done! Malagasy Customs has its own canine brigade. Established in Nanisana with a specially equipped infrastructure, this brigade is made up of 12 handlers and 6 sniffer dogs. The creation of this brigade comes at the right time and will strengthen the actions of the Malagasy Customs in terms of surveillance to apprehend all new forms of customs fraud. Training for trainers and dogs began on February 22 and will last 4 weeks under the aegis of an international consultant. During this apprenticeship, alternating between practice and theory, the dog handlers will be trained in the fundamentals of training and in canine control techniques. Learners and dogs will be divided into 2 groups depending on the area of intervention: drug tracking and currency tracking.





The outcome of this project is the result of a partnership between the Embassy of Japan, IOM and Malagasy Customs within the framework of the project “Response to emerging criminal activities and other maritime threats in Madagascar (REACT Madagascar). “It is a day marked with a milestone for the administration and for the country because it materializes the efforts made to modernize the Malagasy Customs” underlined the Director General of the Customs of Madagascar during his opening speech of Training. A promotion and official handing over ceremony for the dogs will be organized at the end of this training. Note that the Malagasy Customs still intends to expand its canine brigade to make it available to all border offices.

The General Directorate of Customs of Madagascar

ZRA NODS FOR BORDER AGENCY COOPERATION

The Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) says Intra-State Border Agency Cooperation has helped improve trade facilitation and security at the borders.

ZRA Commissioner Customs Services Mr. Sydney Chibbabbuka said that stakeholder engagements with security wings, government agencies, Clearing Agents Associations, Importers and Exporters have made it easy for all parties to play their role in trade facilitation.

“As a contracting party to the Trade Facilitation Agreement, we take the recommendation for Border Agency Cooperation under Article 8 very seriously, and in this case, we have intra-state and interstate border agency cooperation”, Mr. Chibbabbuka said

He further said that intra-state border agency cooperation has been enhanced resulting in 66 illegal immigrants being captured by Customs officers of ZRA on two separate incidences within the same week” The truck driver submitted that he was transporting Fifty (50) bags of maize bran that he had loaded along the way as he was traveling to Lusaka to load clinkers for subsequent export to Malawi.

However, the driver was hesitant to remove the tent that covered the said maize bran from the trailer, the alert officers decided to carry out a physical inspection. It was discovered that the truck was carrying illegal immigrants and not bags of maize bran as stated by the driver.

Mr. Chibbabbuka commended the officers and immigration department for working closely so that border security is enhanced under both domestic and international law.



A ZRA Customs officer with other government agencies after capturing illegal immigrants at Mwami Border Post



Illegal immigrants caught by ZRA Customs officers

Ethiopian Customs Commission /ECC/ has implemented paperless customs operation.

Ethiopian Customs commission had been officially launched paperless customs operation a day after the new Ethiopian year celebration. During the launching ceremony, the initial business process analysis and work flow of paperless customs operation presented to participants. ECC commissioner Mr. Debele Kabata on his speech emphasized on the need to develop new working methods and technologies in customs practice. Moving away from paper based systems and enhance the utilization of digital technologies will lead to greater efficiency in clearance processing.

He further mentioned the objective and expected result of transforming ECC from paper based customs procedure to paperless operation. He noted that digital customs service will promote more transparency and accountability, secure information exchange, minimize the time and cost of traders, and reduce corruption.

He disclosed adequate training is given to government agencies, private sectors and customs officials and call for all stakeholders to take responsibility for the successful implementation of the paperless customs service. Any type of request to service and clearance procedure shall be made without the physical presence of customers and applications, goods declarations and supportive documents shall be lodged electronically from the date of its commencement.

On the inauguration ceremony, prime minister Abiy Ahmed (Phd) appreciate the initiative taken by the Ethiopian Customs Commission and recommend other government agencies should also digitalize their service provision and office management. He recognized the world has no place to inactive learners and traditional and paper based system is not accepted in digital era.



(photo left to right; Mr. Debele Kabeta, Commissioner of Ethiopian Customs; Dr. Abiy Ahmed, prime minister of Ethiopia, and Mr. Lake Ayalew, minister of the ministry of revenues.)



20 Customs officials to scoop Awards

TWENTY Namibian customs officials on Tuesday received awards from Kunio Mikuriya, the secretary general of the World Customs Organisation. The awards are in celebration of World Customs Day on 26 January, which recognises the role of customs officials and agencies in maintaining border security. Ministry of Finance spokesperson Tonateni Shidhudhu says the official's demonstrated commitment to 2021's theme: 'Customs bolstering recovery, renewal and resilience for sustainable supply chain'.



Save a life through First Aid and CPR.

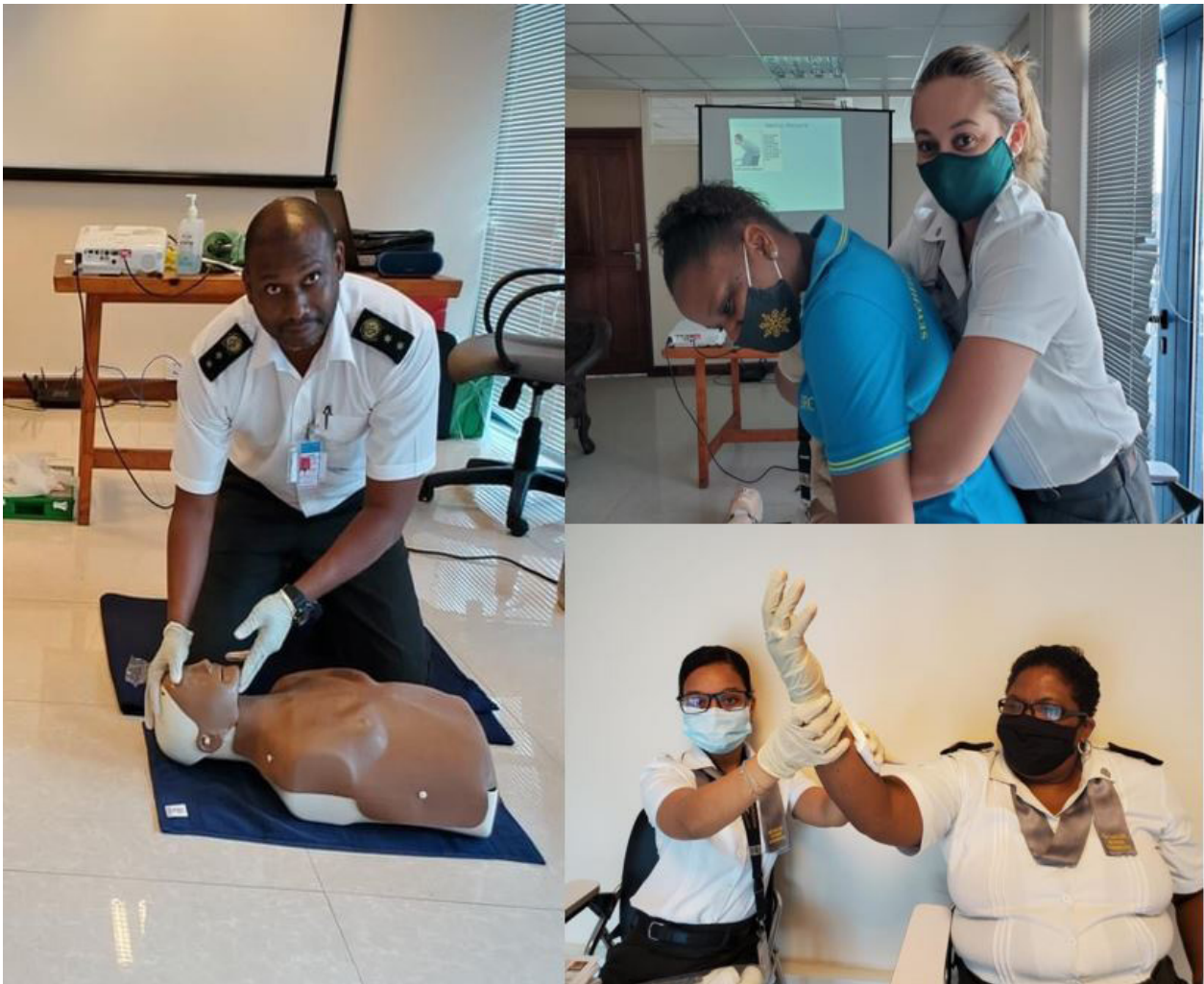
First Aid and CPR are simple easy life saving skills that empower people to help themselves, their families, their neighbors, their colleagues and their communities – aspiring words from First Aid & AED instructor - Anne Rose-Innes.

Since October 2020, the Seychelles Revenue Commission (SRC) has launched a journey to provide its staff with skills in basic first aid. Delivered by Mrs. Rose-Innes, ten in-house training sessions were successfully delivered in this field where well over fifty fascinated staff of the Seychelles Revenue Commission; ranging from its three divisions; (i) Taxation, (ii) Customs & (iii) Support Services Division benefited from it.

The energetic and eye-opening sessions delivered by the instructor herself, consisted of presentations, class discussions as well as practical sessions where participants had to put into practice the different skills taught by Mrs. Rose-Innes on how to administer first aid and CPR to people in need. With a very busy schedule, the topics covered throughout the sessions ranged from dealing with:

- external bleedings as a result of wounds, embedded objects, & amputation,
- assisting to choking situations in both adults & infants,
- administering lifesaving techniques such as CPR (Cardiopulmonary resuscitation) - a technique useful in many emergencies, including heart attacks or near drowning, in which someone's breathing or heartbeat has stopped.
- dealing with allergic reactions,
- and the use of epi-pens amongst several others.

Many of the participants especially the Customs officers, described the sessions as being very useful and very eye-opening. Some even said that if one day should a situation arise, with the skills acquired, they would definitely be in a better position to assist those in need and not remain as a bystander, and why not even help save a life! All the participants, that followed-out the training, were later recognized with an attendance certificate for attending the Practical Course in 'Primary First Aid and CPR'- a certificate which is valid for two years from the applicable training month.



Photos above: Employees of the Seychelles Revenue Commission (SRC) conducting First Aid and CPR training practical – skills that can help save a life.

SRC Contributes Towards Homes of the Elderly

To mark the occasion of International Customs Day which was on 26th January and as part of its continuous effort in contributing towards the society, on Friday 29th January 2021, the staff of the Seychelles Revenue Commission (SRC) made a heartfelt contribution towards the National Council for the Elderly.

In a small ceremony, which took place at the SRC Headquarters based at the Maison Collet Building in Victoria, a batch of several useful items used by the National Council for the Elderly such as adult diapers, sanitizers, mops, packets of toilet rolls, facemasks, disinfectants, hand wash, Ovaltine, juice & tea packets were amongst the batch of care and support supplies that was donated to the National Council for the Elderly by representatives from the Seychelles Revenue Commission.

To note that the full donation comes to a total of SR 16,255 and consists solely of funds raised through voluntary contributions made by the staff of the organization for the benefit of senior citizens within the nine different elderly homes maintained by the Council.

On behalf of the Seychelles Revenue Commission, it was Ms. Genilla Valentin – SRCs Manager for Airport Terminal Operations, Customs Division, who had the honor of handing over the donation to Mr. Vincent Germain the Director for the National Council for the Elderly. “We are very pleased with the contribution raised by our staff and we hope that this donation will be put to good use by the National Council for the Elderly especially during these challenging times. We hope that we have been able to make a difference in the lives of the elderly who will be benefiting directly or indirectly from today’s donation” – as stated by Mrs. Veronique Herminie, the Commissioner General of Seychelles Revenue Commission.

It has been customary each year for SRC to celebrate International Customs Day with a mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, but this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic it has not been possible to organize any major event. The Seychelles Revenue Commission nonetheless hopes to be able to organize other charitable donations through its social activities.



Photos above: Seychelles Revenue Commission (SRC) donates care and support supplies to Seychelles National Council for the Elderly.

Namibia achieves customs connectivity with South Africa

The month of February 2021 marked a milestone for Namibia's customs connectivity journey with the implementation of phase one of the rollout of a project that will see the country achieving connectivity with the SA Revenue Service (SARS) in South Africa.

Providing some background to the development, Global Trade Solution's founder and managing director Louise Wiggett explains that in 2016 the SA Customs Union (SACU), adopted the IT Connectivity Framework consisting of an IT Connectivity Blueprint, which includes the Unique Consignment Reference (UCR) and the World Customs Organization (WCO) Utility Block for transmitting customs declaration data between member states.

The blueprint defines a common standard to which all SACU member states must adhere to enable the transmission of the data between the member states – and this process is commonly referred to as Customs to Customs connectivity (C2C).

The framework allows interoperability between the various member states and is a major step forward for the region.

Once all the member states had agreed on the connectivity blueprint and legal framework, Eswatini and South Africa championed the journey with the first set of data exchange achieved in 2017 and other member states coming on board thereafter.

Namibia, however, has lagged on this front, but thanks to generous support from the government of the United Kingdom, it now comes on board with both the use of the C2C and the UCR.

The solution that assists with the regional customs connectivity, says Wiggett, is the "Customs Connect" software developed by GTS.

“Not only does it adhere to the standards embedded in the SACU IT Connectivity Blueprint, but it also adheres to the Globally Networked Customs toolkit of the WCO.

Namibia has chosen to implement the UCR and technical connectivity in phases to ensure that all stakeholders can familiarize themselves with the use of the UCR and the Customs Connect solution.

Wiggett believes it will substantially increase the success of the project and allow Namibia to reap the benefits quickly, which in turn will increase the level of data matching.

The first phase includes non-mandatory use of UCR in Namibia and the second is mandatory use for all imports and export transactions with South Africa, alongside the activation of the technical aspects of the project.

Anton Eccles, a solution architect at GTS, who has been working closely with Namibian Customs & Excise to create connectivity to the SARS system, explains that the UCR is assigned to a consignment of goods and has to be the same on both sides of the border. This is done for tracking purposes throughout the supply chain from origin to destination.

“It is about linking export and import declarations using a common reference. It will enable data exchange between the countries and facilitate trade within the SACU region. Overall, there will be far more visibility in the system, with discrepancies being rooted out more easily”, says Eccles.

“It introduces real risk management capabilities to the supply chain.”

According to the commissioner of Customs & Excise in Namibia, Jacqueline Gawanas, the connectivity will support risk profiling and service at the borders, which will further support the trade facilitation focus of Namibian customs and excise.

Wiggett sees the connectivity project as a big step forward in enabling smart borders within the SACU region.

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