

ESA Newsletter



World Customs Organization East
and Southern Africa Regional Office for
Capacity Building (WCO ESA ROCB)



July – September 2020



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EDITORIAL

At the WCO ESA ROCB, we are always looking forward to bring to light the latest news and development strides made by our Members. We are delighted to share with you the third quarter 2020 Newsletter, for the World Customs Organization East and Southern Africa Regional Office for Capacity Building. While we are aware the year may have had its ups and downs during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is largely an incredible year, seeing the activities taking place in our Customs Administrations.

It is worth noting that in this quarter the WCO ESA Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO) launched their website. The development of the WCO ESA RILO website and the training of the NCPs was achieved through the partnership and support of Global Trade Solution (GTS), who are a member of our Regional Private Sector Consultative Group (WCO ESA RPSCG). Herein are articles on the WCO Secretary

General gracing the launch of the WCO ESA ROCB website virtually, Eswatini delivering a COVID-19 baby, Tanzania Customs facilitation role towards a single regional market, Kenya gearing up for AfCFTA 4th High-level policy dialogue, Continued efforts by JICA towards developing a pool of regional trainers and training materials under the Master Trainer Programme (MTP) on Post Clearance Audit (PCA) for East African Customs, Zimbabwe on Customs from prehistoric times among others.

As we come close to the end of the year, 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.

Acknowledgments

Eswatini Revenue Authority

Kenya Revenue Authority

Mauritius Revenue Authority

Tanzania Revenue Authority

Zimbabwe Revenue Authority

Global Trade Solutions

Japan International Cooperation Agency

Regional Private Sector Group



Faith Mosongo
Programme Officer



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World Customs Organisation East & Southern Africa

Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO)

The Regional Intelligence Liaison Office for Eastern and Southern Africa (RILO ESA) is a Regional Centre for collecting and analysing data as well as dissemination of information throughout the Global Customs Enforcement Network (CEN).

RILO ESA Website Launch

The WCO ESA Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB) in conjunction with the WCO ESA Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO) virtually launched the newly developed website of the RILO, www.wcoesarilo.org, on Monday 20th July 2020. The launch ceremony was moderated by the WCO ESA ROCB, Director, Mr. Larry Liza.

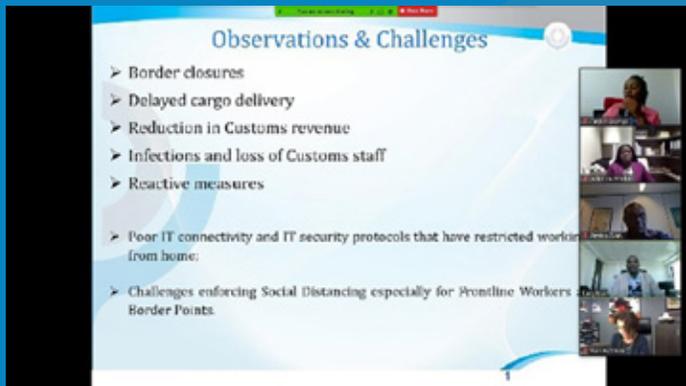
The ceremony was crowned with remarks from the WCO Secretary General, Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, who pointed out that the ESA region has launched another great initiative which is the RILO website. He also praised ESA region for being very proactive and future oriented for adopting many tools to enhance communication even during this time of COVID-19.

The launch was also graced by Commissioner-General & host of the RILO ESA (Zimbabwe), Ms Faith Mazani who pronounced the launch of RILO website as historic and prestigious ceremony and appreciated the technical support and guidance given by all the partners. She went ahead to guarantee ZIMRA's support to do all they can do to administratively continue to support the RILO ESA office and protect regional trade.

The WCO ESA Vice Chair, Mr Philiso P. Valashia (Botswana) consummated the ceremony by applauding RILO ESA for their contribution towards strengthening intra-regional compliance and enforcement. He aspired for the RILO website in the near future to efficiently and effectively uphold compliance for Customs law regulations and procedures in the region and creating enforcements mechanisms to strengthen security, protection of society to enable economic growth and development.

The RILO website is expected to enhance compliance and enforcement activities in the region through greater sharing – of information and best practices and increased interactions among the RILO National Contact Points (NCPs) through a secured platform. The development of the website and training of the NCPs was possible through the generous support of the Global Trade Solutions (GTS).

The Regional Private Sector Group (RPSG) holds its 7th webinar



The RPSG held their 7th official webinar on the 6th of August, with the theme *"Linking ESA via SMART borders and Trade Single Windows: Border lessons learned during COVID-19"*. The event – held online via Zoom – shed light on some important regional cross-border developments.

The webinar was chaired by Dr Juanita Maree (RPSG and SAAFF). She was joined by six leading customs panellists, including the ROCB's very own Larry Liza. Others included Patrick Gyan (WCO), Willie Shumba (AU), Trudi Hartzenberg (Tralac), and Jason Blackman (DHL).

Lastly, the RPSG was also honoured to have Valentina Mintah from Ghana – recently elected to the ICC Executive Board – in their midst.

The outbreak of the pandemic has been impacting life on all levels of business and society. The impact has also been experienced at borders, further emphasising the need to improve trade facilitation.

The SMART borders concept – as created by the WCO – encourages members to delve into the realm of technology to find solutions to facilitate the flow of people, goods and conveyances at borders.

The ultimate objective of SMART borders and Single Windows is to reduce the time on the cost of trading internationally. As such, the key message was that priorities – specific to each country – need to be put in place to achieve these objectives. The RPSG further calls to review national trade facilitation strategies and create blueprints rapidly, because there is a long road ahead towards economic recovery for the region. Having these foundations in place will allow countries to bounce back more quickly.

Finally, fast-tracking and achieving the paperless customs agenda in Africa and the recognition that digitalisation is an integral part of a modernised customs environment needs to gain momentum.

The webinar was recorded and is available on the RPSG's YouTube channel. Additional information on the RPSG can be obtained from their website, which has also recently been upgraded.



Eswatini delivers a COVID 19 baby: the web-based online tariff

Introduction

Challenges brought by the COVID 19 situation have seemingly accelerated the Eswatini Revenue Authority (SRA) drive to embracing digital solutions in customs operations. The SRA acknowledged the fact that the impact of COVID-19 has surely redefined Customs operations and this requires smart response strategies such as the online tariff platform.

In 2018, the European Union (EU) and the World Customs Organization (WCO) launched a Joint Programme for the Harmonized System (HS) in Africa (HS-Africa Programme). This multiannual, multi-stakeholder capacity building initiative is funded by the EU and implemented by the WCO. The launch event, which brought together African Customs and Revenue Administration was held in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa.

The long-term objective of this programme is to provide African countries and other stakeholders involved in the HS implementation process with the required organizational capacities and resources to apply future HS versions in a timely, uniform and coordinated manner throughout the respective regional economic communities and ultimately the entire continent. The specific objective of the HS-Africa Programme is that the beneficiary African countries will implement and apply the 2022 version of the HS in 2022. There are a number of deliverables within the HS-Africa Programme which include amongst others supporting African Member countries to implement electronic tariff support tools.

The journey/process

Eswatini participated during this continental event and thereafter took advantage of the invitation by the WCO to its members to submit technical assistance and capacity building support needs to implement the web-based online tariff. SRA's motivation was led by the need to rid the administration of the cumbersome tariff amendment process and so we did not think twice in responding to the call for submission of support. At the SRA one of the criteria to approve a project is that in addition to changing to an automated process, it should further lead to some efficiencies or process improvements that will be beneficial to the organization or the clients who consume our services. The online tariff project does meet the criteria and it presented an opportunity for implementing a platform that will also be used by external stakeholders.

Eswatini has mainly been driven by her desire to fulfil regional and international obligations such as the World Trade Organisation Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA), the Harmonised System (HS) Convention and the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC). For example, The TFA (Article 1.1 (b)) requires members to promptly publish trade related information in an easily accessible manner publish applied rates of duties and taxes of any kind imposed on or in connection with importation or exportation. This projects also fits perfectly in the SRAs aspirations on trade facilitation.

Project Management Approach

The SRA has a defined project management methodology. A cross functional project team was set up in May 2020. These team members were from the Customs Modernisation Unit (Project Manager role), technical unit (Origin, Tariff and valuation), ICT and Innovations, Operational policy (processes and procedures) and Training Unit as part of the sustainability plan for the project. Part of the project team was the Global Trade Solution (GTS) which kindly supported the development of the online tariff platform. A project plan was developed for the period June - September 2020. A change management/awareness plan and communication plan were developed to ensure that all stakeholders are part of the project from its inception stage. Their insights and inputs have also been considered to improve some of the functionalities of the platform.



Benefits of the online tariff

To the Eswatini Revenue Authority (SRA)

- Aligns with the SRA digitalisation programme.
- Improve efficiencies in the Tariff Amendments process (timely amendments – minimises risk for incorrect collections and wrong classification of goods).
- Eliminates errors in tariff amendments (updates are done automatically and on-line).
- Provides an easily accessible source of reference for officers.
- Optimises use of human resource – officers will handle fewer queries on classification, duties and taxes due and can focus on other activities rather than analysing and manually updating the tariff.
- Enhance SRA and country's compliance to obligations that flow from International Agreements i.e. WTO, HS etc.

To the business

- Traders will have easy access to the Tariff and up-to-date information on whatever changes taking place in the tariff and amendments will be automatically and available on-line.
- Contribute effectively to the strategic objectives of the trade facilitation road-map
- Traders will be timely informed and access the tool at any time
- Contribute to the on-going National Trader Portal (the information in the portal will always be up-to-date and this will assist traders in the classification of goods and will help them know the current applicable rates as everything will be done automatically and on-line).
- Assist business community to properly plan and budget before committing on any business transactions.

Success factors

- **SRA Cross functional project team including WCO experts and the GTS(service provider)**
- **Implementation through project management and change management methodology**
- **Administrative will and support**
- **Engagement and involvement of the users**
- **Availability of donor support**



Customs facilitation role towards a single regional market

Addressing the annual meeting of the Harvard Alumni Association on May 30th, 2019, Angela Merkel said, ***“Protectionism and trade conflicts jeopardize free international trade, which is the very foundation of our prosperity”.***

International trade flourishes under vibrant economic integrated blocks. Africa like any other continent has several economic regional blocks. The East and Southern Africa region is home to EAC, SADC and COMESA.

The blocks have a wider market with over 600 million populations. Notwithstanding paramount achievements hitherto, remarkable challenges still hamper international free trade. Lack of knowledge and conflicting interests are some of the shortcomings which cause single regional market goal unrealizable. To add insult to injury, **COVID19 pandemic** has exacerbated the setbacks.

Cross border road transport continues to be disrupted by a number of COVID19 related challenges (SADC Secretariat, 2020). Hence, the member states have recently approved The Tripartite Guidelines on the Movement of Transport during COVID19 on 29th July 2020.



Territorial borders are internationally recognized boundaries of legal jurisdictions. These borders conversely constrain a spontaneous flow of international trade. Down through history, societies have struggled with various systems to create globe linked routes to ensure the mobility of goods and people to far ends. Customs facilitation seeks to reduce trade transaction costs across borders.

According to an article titled, A Brief History of Customs on borderbee.com, evidence suggests that complex systems of controls and taxes on traded commodities were in existence well before industrialization, as well as the reasoning behind them. It was easy to see among small populations that unmitigated dependence on foreign merchandise would in-debt and stress the community. Despite major advances, the essence of Customs has neither disappeared nor changed. While today's agencies screen for a variety of novel threats, from security to the environment, **protecting the local market** is the motivation behind every decision, even if it is not always clear to the importer.

Under the Regional Integrations philosophy of Common Market, Partner States normally agree on various matters which include removing all barriers and restrictions on the movement, sale, investment and payments of capital. They also agree on removing any discrimination based on the nationality or the place of residence of the persons or on the place where capital is invested. Nonetheless, sporadic **trade conflicts** still prevail in the blocks here and there.

Eventually, it is obvious that there exists a **tradeoff** between **a single regional market dream** realization and **protectionism** ambitions. Until this paradox is resolved appropriately, the dilemma will go on for generations.

Evanse. K. Muchunguzi (CO II)
Mtwara Port.

Gearing for AfCFTA

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement has the potential to attract a market of approximately 1.2 billion people. According to the African Union (AU), the agreement, which was scheduled to kick-off on 1st July 2020, will create a continental free-trade zone with a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of USD\$3.4 trillion.

If fully implemented, the treaty will become the largest in the world. The AfCFTA is one of the flagship projects of the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan (2014-2023) under the AU's Agenda 2063 - "The Africa We Want."

The purpose of the agreement is to create a single market for goods across the continent. The agreement is designed to facilitate the free movement of investments, people and goods in pursuit of a coordinated and harmonized Customs union.

For AfCFTA to thrive, the Customs Union is expected to enhance the framework for competitiveness, the exploitation of opportunities and continent-wide market access for products. Additionally, the continent is required to strengthen supply chains as well as fiscal and monetary policy in order to ensure that the benefits of the agreement are maximized.

Kenya was among the first signatory countries to sign and ratify the AfCFTA. A baseline study of the continent's preparedness towards operationalizing AfCFTA trading ranked Kenya second (2nd) in commitment and readiness for the implementation of AfCFTA among other African Union member states. The *AfCFTA Year Zero Report* published by *AfroChampions* in May, 2020 highlighted Kenya's performance as follows; overall commitment to AfCFTA - 70.95%, overall implementation readiness - 65.8%, overall performance - 67.89%. Rwanda was ranked the best performing country in commitment and readiness, with an overall performance score of 74.26%. A key approach that Kenya has put in place to reap the full benefits of the AfCFTA is the establishment of *Kenya's AfCFTA Strategy* that augments *Kenya's Integrated National Export Development and Promotion Strategy*. This is aimed at expanding and diversifying the country's export products.

Speaking at the 4th *High-Level Tax Policy Dialogue*, organized by African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF), African Union Commission and supported by the African Development Bank (AfDB), Kenya Revenue Authority's (KRA) Deputy Commissioner for Revenue & Regional Coordination, Customs & Border Control Department, Mr. Joseph Kiago Kaguru, highlighted that AfCFTA presents substantial benefits to Kenya's domestic revenue efforts. Mr. Kaguru cited that, the reduction of tariffs and non-tariff barriers emphasized under the AfCFTA agreement is the first step for improving the prospects for diversification. He noted that this will in-turn increase revenue derived from the demand for manufactured goods exports.

In Kenya, the Manufacturing sector was in the past among the main revenue driver, contributing approximately 15% of domestic revenue. This has since dwindled to about 8% of current revenue. Mr. Kaguru attributed the reduction in revenue to trade cost from non-tariff barriers, which contribute significantly towards the cost of production among others.





He further noted that the agreement creates a borderless Africa in terms of trade in goods, services, jobs, investment, free movement of people, intellectual property rights and competitiveness. Mr. Kaguru reassured the audience that this was not a new concept in Africa. He cited the Single Customs Territory (SCT), implemented by the East African Community (EAC) member states, as a successful example. He said that SCT has facilitated full attainment of the EAC Customs union by the removal of duties and other restrictive regulations. He said that the system has minimized internal border Customs controls on goods moving between partner states with an ultimate realization of free circulation of goods.

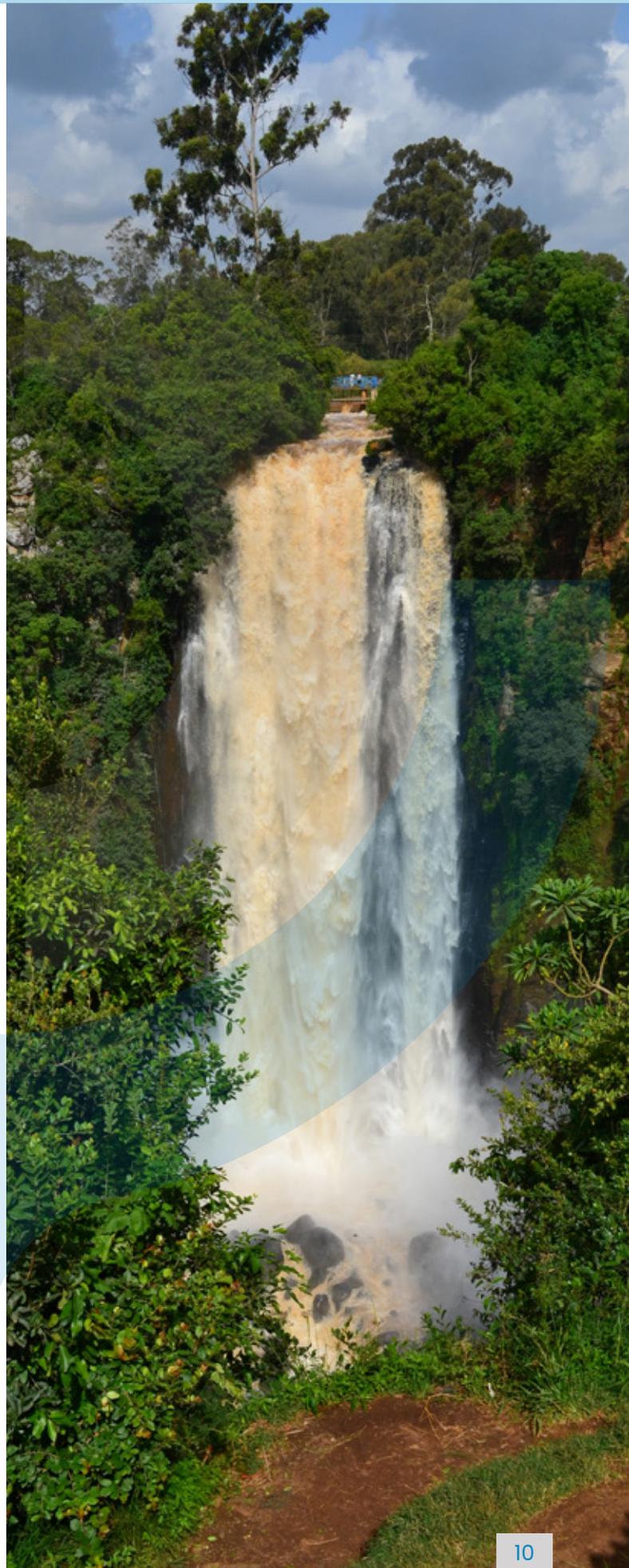
Other accrued benefits from the implementation of SCT include but not limited to; reduced cost of doing business by eliminating duplication of processes, reduced risks associated with non-compliance on the transit of goods as taxes are paid at the first point of entry for all the partner states, and reduced truck turnaround time from 22 to 5 days. These are some of the potential benefits of trading arrangements expected with the implementation of AfCFTA.

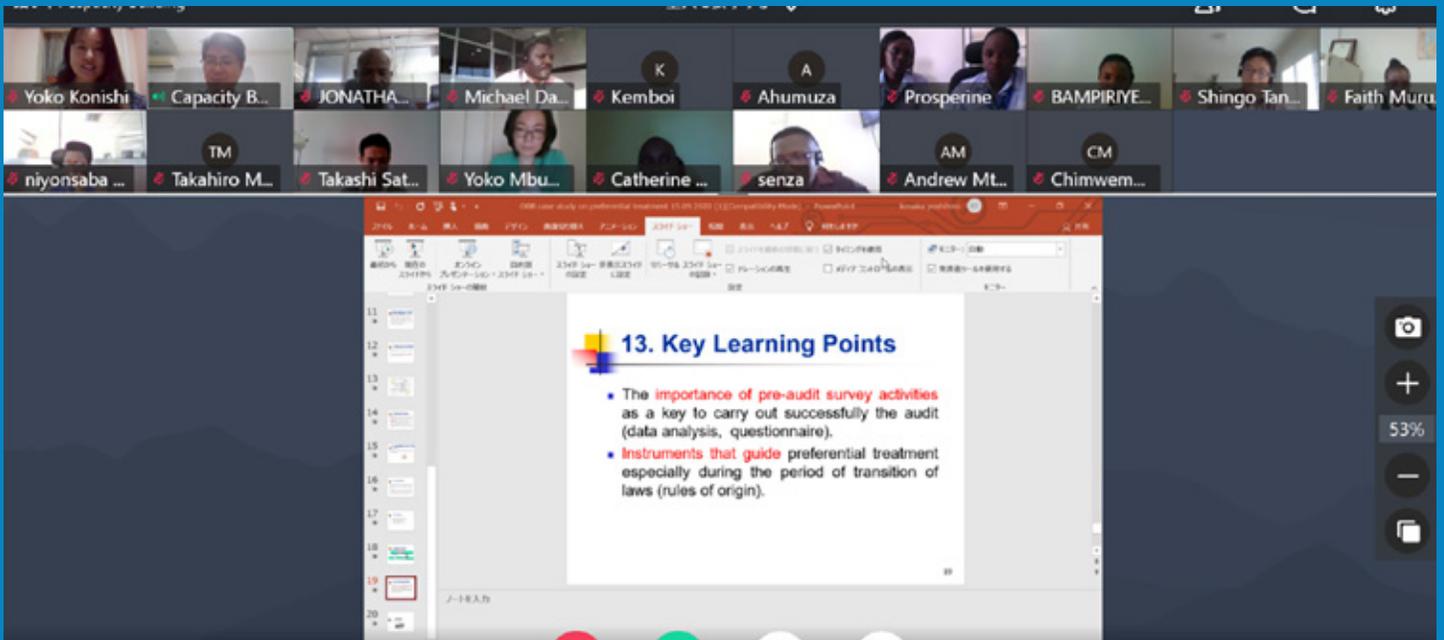
In his address, Mr. Kaguru also noted AfCFTA's immense potential for Africa to negotiate beneficial deals with other trading partners. He emphasized that AfCFTA will accord African countries the collective effort towards a strong block that can negotiate Africa's economic matters with international power houses. These include key international trade issues like transfer pricing. The G7 for instance are among Africa's main trading partners.

In 2019, Kenya's trade with G7 countries was 3-times the value of trade it had with African states (49 countries combined). This is why the agreement will give Africa a strong voice in the negotiation arena.

With the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) drawing nearer to its homestretch in 2025, there is no doubt that AfCFTA presents a stronger block for African countries to effectively influence global policy and participate in profitable international trade.

By: Loice Akello
International Relations & Diplomacy
Kenya Revenue Authority





Continued efforts towards developing a pool of regional trainers and training materials under the Master Trainer Programme (MTP) on Post Clearance Audit (PCA) for East African Customs

Under the partnership between the Revenue Authorities of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan Customs, the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat, a regional Master Trainer Program (MTP) on Post Clearance Audit (PCA) started in September 2018. The purpose of the MTP on PCA is to build their sustainable capacity in delivering training by developing regional trainers and regionally featured training materials to enhance their Customs administrations' capacity to conduct post clearance audit more effectively. A total of 19 officers, who were nominated as the future master trainers on PCA from five Revenue Authorities in East Africa, formed a Working Group (WG) and have been

working on (i) to improve their expertise on PCA as well as training delivery skills, (ii) to develop and update the package of training materials (presentations on EAC PCA manual, cases studies, sample questions) through the 5 planned progressive activities with the support from the experts from the WCO, Japan Customs, JICA and the EAC Secretariat.

Through the last four WG activities organized so far, the participants (WG members) have improved their expertise and training skills. WG members are currently making collective/individual efforts to (1) finalize their responsible part of the training package reflecting the suggestions made by the expert team, (2) complete the PCA training module on CliKC (WCO on-line training platform) and (3) study useful WCO tools and instruments on PCA.



While the last WG activity (WG5) is now expected to be held in early 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, WG members, with the support extended by the Project expert team, started a series of “virtual WG (VWG) activities” to present each one’s responsible part of the training package and to exchange views for the further improvement of the materials and their training delivery skills since May 2020. So far, fifteen (15) VWGs were organized and their collective efforts are progressing well to achieve the objectives of the MTP. In the meantime, Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) WG members also piloted the training materials with a total of 36 staff to be deployed at Audit in July 2020 where those staffs appreciated the quality of training and the materials used. More VWGs will follow in the coming months and WG members will continue their effort to enjoy this outstanding opportunity for their further improvement.



Customs from prehistoric times

From being a payment to allow one to trade in a certain jurisdiction, to a revenue-collecting agency, Customs has developed over years while taking a myriad of other roles. Regardless of this, Customs developmental phases have been dissonant and in some cases undocumented. In this regard, this article gives an outline of changes in the Customs' face since prehistoric times.

Chirikure, 2017, says trade in prehistoric times was conducted by anybody, anywhere, depending on circumstance. By the third millennia BC, trade had flourished among many kingdoms. Scholars believe that the earliest Customs fees were voluntary, offered by travelling merchants for the privilege of trading in a particular kingdom. Traders, when they brought their wares for sale into a kingdom, made a payment that became known as "Customs", denoting a customary due paid to a ruler in return for favorable treatment and protection from harassment, Bisson, 1982.

Later, collection of what had become an essential revenue was a king's requirement. The Collection was outsourced to persons who became known as publicans or tax farmers. These farmers would use any means necessary, including violence, to collect the tax. To avoid disputes, the first written Customs tariff, engraved in stone and resembling the modern Customs nomenclature, as shown below, was used around 167AD.

Presumptuously, by the 5th to the 15th century, the agency collecting the Customs dues became known as "Customs" while the dues became known as "Customs duty". Customs roles then included protecting society through controlling imports and exports and creating a level playing field for commerce through curbing trade malpractices. By the 21st century, Customs roles have evolved to include enhancing state competitiveness and promoting predictability in international trade.

From a freewill tribute permitting one to trade, to a legal payment around which Customs administrations were built, Customs has metamorphosed over the years. The agency has continuously aimed at strategically dealing with new and unique demands from its environment and this determination has ensured its existence to date.

REFERENCE

A Brief History of Customs - <https://borderbee.com/2016/05/20/brief-history-customs/>

Lillian Musarandega
Zimbabwe Revenue Authority



Camel load of olive oil in alabaster jars;

Seven dinarii...

Camel load of salted provisions;

Ten dinarii...

Asakura, 2003.

Customs modernization in sophisticated and high-tech tools for detection is a must in order to cope with dynamic modus operandi of professional smugglers at border crossings.

Smuggling is the clandestine importation or exportation or carriage coastwise or transfer of goods contrary to the Customs Laws. Smuggling is mostly practiced to circumvent the payment of Customs duties/taxes or restrictions or prohibitions imposed on certain types of goods in the cross-border transactions.

“**Smuggling**” has a long and controversial history, probably dating back to the history of border criminologies in the World. The early smuggling efforts were purposely made to evade the territorial Laws (French, Spanish, American Laws, etc.) on restrictions to the labor mobility and exclusionary immigration policies imposed upon certain type of immigrants.

However, in 18th Century, the emergence of Industrial Revolution led to new crimes associated with new forms of trade and transport in which “**Golden Age of**

Smuggling” was amongst the major crimes of the time. Golden Age of Smuggling involved the cloak-and-dagger movement of contraband cargoes (mainly; tea, coffee, wool, wines, hides, spirits, lace, etc.) across national borders and was commonly known as transnational Smuggling.

Since that era, smuggling has been rampant from the coast (where it had started) to the interior areas due to globalization which was accelerated by an advancement in transportation and communication technology. Over time, the smugglers have been strategic and logistic proactive in changing their **modus operandi**.

Amongst the commonly used **modus operandi** are; Body packing (**Fig. 01**); Imported greeting cards and postage stamps smeared with a paste made from crushed Opioids or other Narcotics (**Fig. 02**); Drug mules: Usually swallow or Insert drug packets within the gastrointestinal tract or other Orifices (**Fig. 03**); Use of possible concealments in motor vehicles (**Fig. 04**).

Nevertheless, despite the challenging environment in poor detection of cloak-and-dagger movement of contrabands, Customs officials have been using border intelligence and individual skills to cope with the dynamic modus operandi of professional smugglers at the border crossings.

Therefore, Customs authorities of developing countries need to be enhanced with sophisticated and high-tech systems of detection of contrabands in order to cope with the dynamic modus operandi of professional smugglers.



Ernest Elias Myenda
Senior Customs Officer, TRA (Tanzania)

Figure 1.

A person intercepted by Customs officials wrapping and taping his body with cellular phones to circumvent the payments of Customs duties/taxes upon arrival at Julius Nyerere International Airport in Dar es salaam, Tanzania in June, 2019.

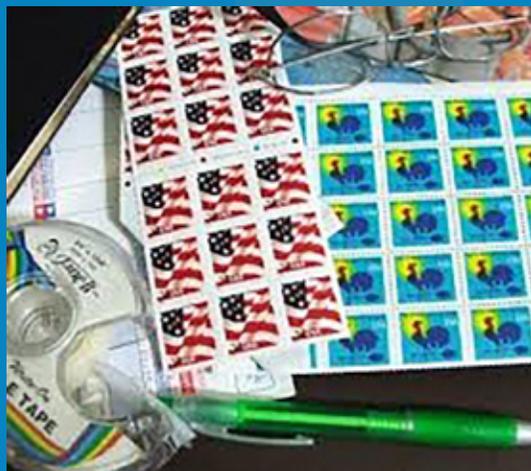


Figure 2.

Imported postage stamps smeared with a paste made from crushed Opioids or other Narcotics as clandestine importation/exportation of contrabands across the Customs checks.

Figure 3.

An image of X-ray scanned human abdomen piled up with Cocaine pills.

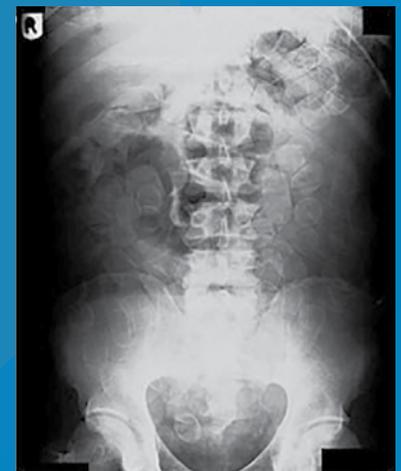


Figure 4.

Images showing Cargo X-ray scanning at Customs checks with visible contraband.

KRA seizes 1,000 pieces of explosive detonators at Taveta border

Customs officers based at the Taveta-Holili One-Stop Border Post (OSBP) on Friday evening seized 1,000 pieces of explosive detonators at Mwakitau along the Taveta-Mombasa highway. Three suspects were arrested in connection to the incident.



Detonators seized by KRA officials in Taita taveta County

Ag Coordinator Southern region Me John Bisonga said the KRA team, backed by administration police officers attached to the OSBP, while on routine patrols intercepted the devices while being transported together with Tobacco by a truck no T143ARG at around 5.30 pm, one kilometre away from Maktau roadblock, Taita Taveta County.

He added the consignment in the vehicle had been declared at the border point as raw tobacco from Moshi Tanzania and was destined to Mombasa. "However, on being stopped and upon rummaging by Customs officers, and checking the cabin, the officers found two packages of Supreme Plain detonators in the vehicle," Mr Bisonga explained.

The truck was escorted back to the OSBP. Upon being interviewed, the driver claimed the detonators were handed over to him at Taveta town to be delivered to the owner at Mwatate.

The acting RC further said, a joint verification by the multiagency team from KRA, Directorate of Criminal Investigations office and officers from the National Police Service confirmed the parcel contained 1,000 pieces of detonators, which had been packed in 10 boxes containing 100 pieces each. The vehicle and the detonators were detained and deposited in the Customs warehouse.

He stated that the suspects including a person who presented himself at the station with a mining permit and claiming to be the owner of the detonators, the driver of the truck and a turn boy, who are both Tanzanian nationals, were arrested and handed over to the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit. They will be charged with contravening the Explosive Act.

Ends.

By Victor Mwasi

Detection of 30kg of narcotics on board a Livestock Carrier by MRA Customs Anti-Narcotics Section

Enhanced intelligence work, which lasted for more than six (6) months, prompted the Customs Anti-Narcotics Section (CANS) of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) to target Livestock Carrier 'LSS Success' sailing from the Port of East London, South Africa for a major operation at sea.

Following a detailed intervention plan and a briefing at the Customs Headquarters, a discreet sea surveillance operation and land patrol were carried out in the night of 12 June 2020. To reduce the risk of any contraband being thrown overboard, Fast Interceptor Boats (FIB) of the National Coast Guard (NCG) subtly approached the target on her port and starboard sides upon her entry in the territorial waters of Mauritius, off the Southern coast. Livestock Carrier 'LSS Success' was escorted until she was moored at quay in the early morning of 13 June 2020. As soon as the vessel berthed, MRA CANS, backed by Customs Narcotics Sniffer Dog Unit, took control of the ship to carry out a rummage operation.

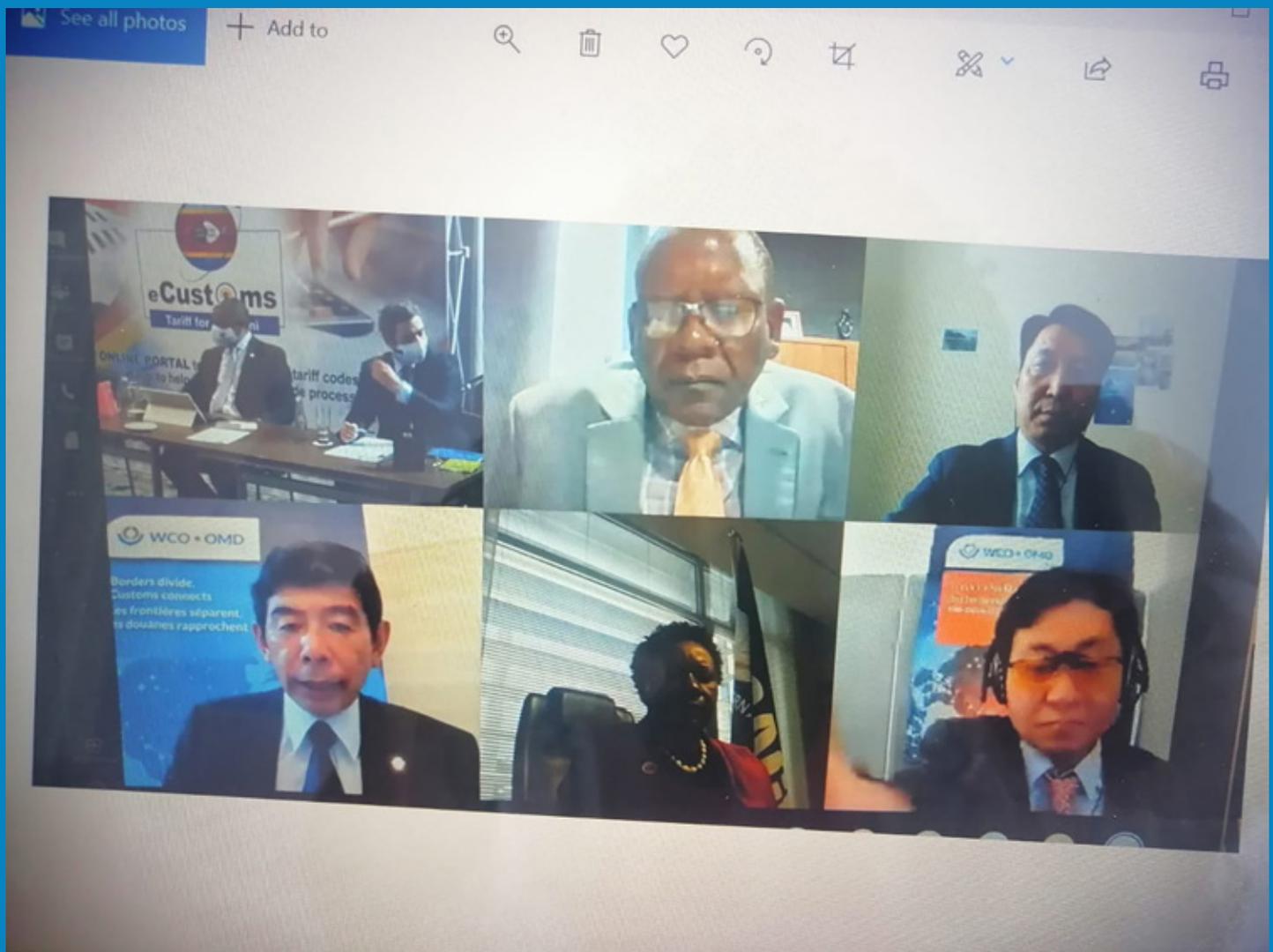
The search of the cabin of a supernumerary resulted in the detection of seven parcels wrapped in black plastic bags and tied with rope beneath the bed. Each parcel was cut open and found to contain several packages with approximately 36kg of cannabis, 2kg of cannabis resin and 99ml of cannabis oil (in 99 syringes). Approximate total street value of drug seized: € 690,000.

This seizure is the first in its kind effected by MRA Customs. First-hand information suggests that the drug packaging had been designed to protect the narcotics from water damages and that the cannabis seized is of very good quality. Moreover, detection of cannabis oil is seldom. Such types of vessels (other than container ship) which are less frequently subject to enforcement actions (rummage, surveillance) may be considered as risky ones by Customs administrations.

The supernumerary has been arrested and investigation is underway by Police.



Cannabis oil in syringes



Electronic tariff platform goes live in Eswatini

On 1st September 2020, the Eswatini Revenue Authority (SRA) held an inauguration ceremony to announce the official launch of a national electronic tariff platform. At the invitation of the SRA Commissioner General Dumisani E. Masilela, the event was virtually attended by WCO Secretary General Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, SACU Executive Secretary Paulina M. Elago and senior policy makers and managers from the SACU Member States. The ceremony was held in Mbabane, Eswatini where the Minister of Trade Mancoba Khumalo, the

Minister of Finance Neal Reckingburg, Co-Chairs and Members of the National Trade Facilitation Committee, representatives of the European Union Delegation in Eswatini and a wide audience of Customs officers and private sector stakeholders were present.

In his opening remarks, Honorable Minister Mancoba Khumalo recalled that Eswatini had ratified the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement as early as 2017 and was committed to the full implementation

of the standards enshrined therein. He stressed that the online tariff platform will complement that important endeavour, emphasizing the particular relevance of online tools for the ongoing digitalization of Customs processes. He expressed his sincere appreciation to the WCO for its continued support, and to the European Union for the generous funding provided under the EU-WCO Programme for the Harmonized System in Africa, which were key to the successful implementation of the electronic tariff platform in Eswatini.

Concurring with the previous speaker, Dr. Mikuriya congratulated the SRA on bringing to fruition the important effort of creating a new electronic tool that would provide access to accurate and up-to-date information to trade operators. He recognized that complexities inherent in the regulatory landscape of the international trade and Customs were set to increase further, which called for efficient solutions based on cutting edge technology to ensure that traders had reliable access to all the information needed in order to plan and carry out trade transactions. He welcomed the initiative stressing that it would not only be a visible achievement for stakeholders in Eswatini but also a very good example for other countries in the region and in Africa as a whole, especially given the progressive

implementation of the AfCFTA and considering the WTO TFA requirements.

Other speakers took the floor to pay tribute to the hard work of the project management team within the SRA and good cooperation with all the parties involved in the creation of the new electronic tariff platform. They commended the strong and consistent commitment of the SRA to the modernization of Customs and providing accurate data to the trade community and other stakeholders, stressing that the many challenges related to the Covid-19 made the need for digitalization in Customs even more obvious and the case for electronic tools stronger.

In the conclusion of the ceremony, various aspects of the functioning of the new electronic tariff platform were presented to the participants and a series of questions raised from the floor were responded to by the presenters. Commissioner General Dumisani E. Masilela expressed his appreciation to all those who attended the ceremony, officially declared the new electronic tariff platform in Eswatini open and congratulated all the partners involved in the process on the successful completion of the launch phase.



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