



## **Report of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the WCO Europe Region National Contact Points for Capacity Building**

**27-29 January 2020  
Baku, Azerbaijan**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the World Customs Organization (WCO) Europe Region National Contact Points for Capacity Building was held from 27 to 29 January 2020 at the Regional Office for Capacity Building for the World Customs Organization Europe Region (ROCB Europe) in Baku, Azerbaijan. Delegates from 19 Member Administrations in the WCO Europe Region, representatives from the WCO Secretariat and ROCB Europe participated in the meeting. The participant list is attached as Annex I.

### ***Opening Session***

The meeting, which was financially supported by China Customs Cooperation Fund (CCF), was inaugurated by Mr. Igbal Babayev, Deputy Chairman of the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In his opening speech, Mr. Babayev mentioned the meeting will play an important role in the exchange of information between the countries of the region, the establishment of effective cooperation and the exchange of experience. He underlined that Azerbaijan has taken important steps towards facilitating international trade. Illustrating the Baku International Sea Trade Port, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line and other large-scale projects, Igbal Babayev said that the customs authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan also contributed to the development of international transit and trade facilitation.

He drew the attention that in a short-term period transparency and corruption were eliminated as a result of reforms in the customs system, and Secretary General of the WCO Kunio Mikuriya, who visited our country last year, said the success of the Azerbaijani customs service was a good example in order to recommend to share experience with other countries.

He also noted that important steps are being taken by the state towards the development of the customs service and reconstruction of the customs infrastructure in Azerbaijan. As a result, significant progress has been made in the fiscal area last year in the area of combating smuggling, simplifying customs procedures and enhancing service culture.

The Director of WCO Capacity Building Directorate Mr. Taeil Kang, in his opening speech, underlined the importance of regional activities and especially the meeting itself. He thanked



the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the ROCB Europe for organizing the meeting at a high level. Taeil Kang stressed that the meeting is of particular importance in terms of enhancing information sharing, sharing knowledge and skills, and exploring best practices, and the event provides important opportunities for effective cooperation among the Member Administrations.

Mr. Eser Çengel, the head of ROCB Europe, highlighted the vitality of capacity building activities in the WCO Europe Region as well as the high attendance to the meeting which showed the importance attached by the members to regional cooperation on capacity building.

### **I. Presentation and Adoption of the Agenda**

The draft agenda of the meeting was adopted and it was reminded that all related documents of the meeting would be available on the ROCB Europe web site member section.

### **II. Update by the State Customs Committee of Azerbaijan**

The delegate of Azerbaijan briefed on "Single Window" principle and adjustment of customs legislation, Smart Customs that consist of C2B Partnership, Green Corridor system and its benefits for trade, integrated electronic customs services under the C2B partnership. Enhanced Public - Private dialogue, organization of meetings, workshops and trainings with more than 4000 private sector stakeholders, 2nd Forum of Foreign Trade Participants were also highlighted.

In addition, Automated Procedures, Single Automated Management System (VAIS), Co-ordinated interventions – Single Window, C2B Partnership - e-Customs Services and Facilitated Procedures – Time Release Study were among the ongoing projects.

### **III. ROCB and its Activities**

Mr. Mirhasan SEYIDZADE, Executive Officer of ROCB Europe, briefed the participants about the ROCB Europe and the activities carried out by the office especially on outreach and communication.

He gave information about mission of ROCB Europe with stating ROCB Europe is the beacon for the work of customs capacity building activities in the WCO Europe Region. It is also mentioned that ROCB Europe aims at enhancing capacities of Customs Administrations in paving the way for more secure and simplified customs processes and international trade operations.

He drew the attention to ongoing project which the ROCB Europe has initiated the work on the Regional Experts Database in order to provide more efficient and inclusive capacity building



delivery and collaborative activity planning in the region. The list is to include experts with comprehensive knowledge from the Member Administrations, whether or not WCO accredited, that are assessed as proficient in their specialized topics as to deliver training or give detailed information.

#### **IV. ROCB Europe Strategy and Initiatives**

Mr. ÇENGEL, in his presentation, gave information about ROCB Europe's Strategic Framework, initiatives on regional strategy and structured communication which included Terms of Reference of ROCB Europe, challenges of financing and staffing faced by ROCB Europe.

Mr. ÇENGEL drew the attention to the fact that however much ROCB Europe was supported by Azerbaijani Customs, the office should be supported by the members in the WCO Europe Region in terms of seconding staff.

He went onto say that the keystone strategic goals of ROCB Europe is to promote the work on customs capacity building and WCO instruments, foster customs reform and modernization process of Member Administrations, strengthen regional cooperation among Member Administrations and enhance collaboration with stakeholders, development partners and donors. He underlined that in this regard, it was very difficult for ROCB Europe to operate effectively in the absence of adequate funding and staff.

#### **V. Revised Terms of Reference for the ROCB Europe**

It was stated that in order for the ROCB Europe to function in a more structured way with regard to its objectives, a Terms of Reference was drafted by the ROCB Europe, which is attached. The draft document was prepared taken into consideration of a number of documents as well, namely, WCO Europe Region 2011 CB Think-Tank: Capacity Building Strategy, WCO Europe Region 2011 CB Think-Tank: Concept Paper for the ROCB in Baku / Azerbaijan, MoU establishing ROCB Europe, ROCB Europe Strategy, Terms of Reference of the WCO Council, Capacity Building Structures (Annex IV to Doc. SC0090E1a), Status of Regional Bodies (SP0605E1a.) The participants had a consensus that the draft document would be circulated among Member Administrations and accordingly submitted to the next Heads of Customs Conference for endorsement.



## **VI. Revised Role of Capacity Building Contact Points in the WCO Europe Region**

It was explained that it would be also beneficial to revise the document for the role of capacity building contact points in the WCO Europe Region. The document covers the role and tasks of a Capacity Building Contact Point which covers matters with respect to cooperation with the WCO Secretariat and the ROCB Europe, promoting and coordinating Capacity Building efforts, monitoring and evaluating the modernization process and expert mobilization and support to Capacity Building Delivery.

A delegate said that the document looked as if it includes matters for the contact points from Member Administrations which are focusing on customs capacity building mostly and it did not include points for contact points from advanced Member Administrations in customs.

As a result, it was agreed that the draft document would be circulated among Member Administrations following the addition of matters that would comprise roles for contact points from all Member Administrations regardless of the level of development in customs and accordingly submitted to the next Heads of Customs Conference for endorsement.

## **VII. WCO Strategic Plan 2019-2022**

The Director of WCO Capacity Building Directorate Mr. Taeil Kang briefed the participants on WCO's Strategic Plan and the connection between the Strategic Plan and regional priorities which were Coordinated Border Management, Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), e-Commerce, Harmonized System, Capacity Building Strategy, Performance Measurement and Digital Customs and Data Analytics.

He mentioned that the World Customs Organization develops international standards, fosters cooperation and builds capacity to facilitate legitimate trade, to secure a fair revenue collection and to protect society, providing leadership, guidance and support to Customs administrations and focus on the concrete implementation of activities in the three areas of customs mission (trade facilitation, revenue collection and protection of society), through the development of standards, the provision of capacity building and the promotion of cooperation.

The Strategic Plan 2019-2022 was endorsed during last Policy Commission and Council sessions and it contains 29 KPIs and 9 priorities for which specific action plans were set up with the support of Directorates and Units.

## **VIII. Organizational Development and Capacity Building**

The Director of WCO Capacity Building Directorate Mr. Taeil Kang expressed Capacity Building as to develop or acquire the skills, competencies, tools, processes, and resources needed to



improve the capacity of the administration to carry out its allotted functions and achieve its objectives.

He gave information about a New Strategy for Capacity Building which covers a priority activity under the new WCO Strategic Plan 2019-2022, importance of the regionalization approach and the need for WCO to play its full role of developing and evaluating the regional entities as well as to reinforce their roles in capacity building continuum, need to engage and secure new donors and serious concerns about the application of WCO tools and instruments (ownership) as an internal context.

For external context, high expectation from WCO members and stakeholders, need for a more targeted, coordinated and sufficiently well-resourced approach to Customs capacity building to succeed in the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, new challenges with the E-Commerce and the ever-increasing opportunities to use technologies and achievement of the sustainable development goals by the Member Administrations were taken into consideration.

#### **IX. WCO Needs Assessment Process and Role of National Contact Points**

In the context of planning and delivery of WCO capacity building support, the WCO Secretariat delivered a presentation on annual needs assessment process and WCO Mercator Program respectively.

It was explained that the WCO approaches to customs administrations only since the most provisions of the Trade Facilitation Agreement were about customs and that the issue was sensitive since there were other national institutions dealing with trade facilitation issues such as trade ministries.

It was underlined the need for a closer and enhanced cooperation especially on regional capacity building initiatives. It was also highlighted that the ROCB Europe would play an important role in coordinating these initiatives in collaboration with the WCO Secretariat.

#### **X. WCO Mercator Program “Tailor-Made Track”: Country Experience (Kyrgyzstan)**

The delegate of Kyrgyzstan gave brief information about Kyrgyz Republic in summary, strategy of the Development of The State Customs Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic from 2019 to 2022. In the presentation, she drew the attention to TFA Implementation with assistance of the WCO Mercator Programme and Capacity Building efforts in the frame of the Regional Training Centre in Leninskoe.



## **XI. WCO Mercator Program “Tailor-Made Track”: Country Experience (Kazakhstan)**

With the presentation made by the delegate of Kazakhstan, general information was given about Kazakhstan as well as the process of implementing the Mercator Program and related activities.

It was explained that the main responsible state body for the implementation of the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation is the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan, on the basis of which the National Trade Facilitation Committee was created in 2018.

The related strategy covers a long-term development plan for customs administrations and includes support from the World Customs Organization for institutional development, engaging stakeholders and donors, and evaluating and monitoring activities to implement the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement.

## **XII. Capacity Building Country Experience: Initiatives and Prospects (Iceland)**

The delegate of Iceland made a presentation which included brief information about Iceland and Iceland Customs Administration together with the information on the experience with regard to capacity building developments.

The presentation also covered the information about Iceland Revenue and Customs that as of 1 January 2020, the Directorate of Customs and Directorate of Internal Revenue were merged and become Iceland Revenue and Customs. The comparison between the state of play before and after the merge was also shared with the participants.

## **XIII. Capacity Building Country Experience: Initiatives and Prospects (North Macedonia)**

The delegate of North Macedonia made a presentation on customs strategic priorities, capacity building, statistics and challenges. It was mentioned that more than 20 trainings for 684 external users took place at the Regional Training Center in Skopje. Additionally, statistics of trainings for economic operators and customs officials were also shared.

## **XIV. Capacity Building Country Experience: Initiatives and Prospects (Turkey)**

The delegate of Turkey made a presentation on Facilitation of Trade and Border-Crossings through Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures among the Silk Road Countries giving broad information about Caravanserai Project.



With stating necessity of revitalization of the Silk Road, it was mentioned that the share of Silk Road Countries in the world trade is increasing, the landlocked countries cannot benefit from this increase in world trade, and today 80% of manufactured goods are distributed by sea containers, the current Euro-Asian traffic along the ancient Silk Road represents less than 1% of trade and increase in container transportation cause a density at the ports. In this sense, the simplification through customs processes in Silk Road would bring additional benefits.

#### **XV. Capacity Building Country Experience: Initiatives and Prospects (Serbia)**

The delegate of Serbia a made presentation on main priorities of Customs Administration of Serbia that consist of protection of economic, fiscal and financial interests of the Republic of Serbia, safety and security of citizens and environment, preventing and fighting violation of legislation and fast and efficient flow of goods and passengers.

General information about country, customs offices, posts and border crossing points were also shared. The presentation also covered matters about organizational scheme, human resource, gender structure, qualification of the employees, age structure of Customs Administration of Serbia.

#### **XVI. Capacity Building Country Experience: Initiatives and Prospects (Turkmenistan)**

The delegate of Turkmenistan made a presentation on the development program of the system of customs authorities of Turkmenistan for 2017-2021 that implies to improve activities and information technology, the legal framework to protect the economic security of the country, cooperation with foreign states, international organizations, and effective fight against customs violations.

It was said that since January 1, 2017, a system for determining the geolocation of vehicles using GPS has been introduced in the customs authorities of Turkmenistan with stating the GPS device is used for all vehicles engaged in the international transport of goods through the customs territory of Turkmenistan.

#### **XVII. Capacity Building Country Experience: Initiatives and Prospects (Moldova)**

The delegate of Moldova made a presentation on professional development, policies and organizational evolutions, integrity, Technical Assistance Projects and gender equality.

She mentioned that main objectives of Customs Training Center are efficient planning and organization of internal and external training activities, ensuring the evaluation of the training



process and of the trainees, and the elaboration of the training programs on specialized fields, development of e-learning system and permanent revision of training needs.

Training programs generally consist of initial training course for newly employed customs officers, refreshment courses for senior customs officers, specialized training and English language course.

It was also mentioned that the number of training activities and trained personnel in 2019, which were 278 and 1561 respectively.

### **XVIII. Capacity Building Country Experience: Initiatives and Prospects (Tajikistan)**

The delegate of Tajikistan made a presentation on “Medium term program on Customs Reform for 2020-2024 years” and its influence on further development of capacity building in Tajikistan customs with stating that the Program objectives to define the main directions of development of the Tajikistan Customs Service, considering the impact of customs regulation, as a means of state regulation of foreign trade activity in the process of integrating the national economy into the international.

It was mentioned that the goals of the Unified Automated Information System (UAIS) are to automate customs processes in order to ensure effective control of customs procedures; facilitate customs procedures; reduce the number of processed paper documents; supply accurate and detailed information about customs procedures, financial flows of duties and other customs fees; provide a faster and more accurate way of accounting for state revenues; provide accurate and comprehensive statistical information.

About joining to Mercator Program of WCO, the delegate drew the attention to that 47 member-states currently benefiting from Mercator Programme partnerships, and said that TCS is in the process of joining to the Mercator Program. Thus, TCS intended to be beneficiary of WCO standards and tools to modernize TCS.

### **XIX. WCO Expert Mobilization: Accreditation and Deployment Process**

The WCO Secretariat explained the WCO process with respect to expert mobilization which included information about three-phased approach for WCO Accreditation Process that consist of pre-assessment of candidates, successful participation at a WCO accreditation workshop and evaluation during an in-field mission with another qualified Experts.

It was underlined that the accreditation benefits for the expert and the seconding administration is increased knowledge of WCO tools/standards and Capacity Building principles and benefit



from the individuals development, for the recipient country is provision of qualified and standardized services.

It was also mentioned that the accreditation profiles cover 6 core competencies Customs Modernization Advisors, Customs Diagnosticians, Expert Trainers, LMD Advisors, Mercator Program Advisors, Technical and Operational Advisors.

## **XX. Digital Marketing Strategies to Enhance Stakeholder Engagement**

The WCO Secretariat informed the participants about digital marketing strategies to enhance stakeholder engagement explaining the goal which becoming aware of the prevailing tools and methods and what are the basic factors affecting strategic decision making in developing an engaging Digital Marketing strategy.

The difference between inbound marketing and outbound marketing was also explained that outbound marketing is what is used to just be known as "marketing." It's interruptive and it pushes itself at an audience, whether the audience wants it or not. However, inbound marketing is a relatively new marketing concept where marketers attempt to "pull" in potential customers with interesting content. Inbound marketing involves creating blog posts, social media, infographics, white papers, e-mail newsletters, and other content that people actually want to read.

## **XXI. WCO Academy: Expanding Global Outreach and Impact**

The WCO Secretariat explained that WCO Academy, as private sector's point of access to the World Customs Organization's expertise, offers a wide range of Customs e-learning courses, real-time training via webinars and many other tools and features including Global Customs News and Forums with the purpose of helping businesses work with Customs more efficiently by upskilling professionals from the private sector and thus further facilitate trade.

## **XXII. Any Other Business**

No any other business was raised by the participants.

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In closing, the participants expressed their high level of satisfaction with respect to the constructive and cooperative nature of the meeting and stated their intention for further continuation of the collaborative approach and close communication.