



MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL (10th) MEETING OF THE REGIONAL STRUCTURES OF THE WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION EUROPE REGION

2 December 2020

Virtual (10th) Meeting of the Regional Structures of the World Customs Organization Europe Region under the theme of “Annual Progress and Vision for 2021” was held on 2 December 2020. The meeting, organized by the Regional Office for Capacity Building for the World Customs Organization Europe Region (ROCB Europe), was attended by WCO Secretariat, the WCO Europe Region Vice-Chair and Regional Training Centers (RTCs) of Azerbaijan, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Ukraine, Kyrgyz Republic and North Macedonia. The participant list is attached as Annex I. The agenda which is attached as Annex II was adopted without any changes.

PART I: Opening Remarks and Updates

Mr. Gulu Novruzov, on behalf of the WCO Europe Region Vice-Chair, in his opening remarks, highlighted measures in response to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. In order to develop effective coordinated collective measures to combat COVID-19, the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as Vice-Chair, addresses the countries in the region to share their successful experience in combating the spread of the pandemic. The particular importance of ensuring the smooth operation of customs authorities during the pandemic was also emphasized by Mr. Novruzov.

Mr. Taeil Kang, the Director of the WCO Capacity Building Directorate, also delivered opening remarks. He conveyed his sincere appreciation to ROCB Europe for organizing this Meeting with emphasizing the importance of promoting and supporting the implementation of the objectives of the WCO at a regional level. Mr. Kang also brought to the attention of the participants about recent updates and initiatives by the Secretariat in order to build a sustainable WCO Capacity Building delivery during COVID-19 pandemic and support of WCO Secretariat Capacity Building Directorate in the development of the ROCB and RTCs.

Mr. Eser Çengel, Director of ROCB Europe, thanked the participants for participating to the Virtual (10th) Meeting of the Regional Structures of the World Customs Organization Europe Region. He spoke about the importance of holding a virtual meeting, contrary to what was planned due to COVID-19 pandemic, ROCB Europe had an important role to co-ordinate the activities of the Regional Training Centers, identify training needs and evaluate training impact at a strategic level in the region.

Mr. Mirhasan Seyidzade, Executive officer at the ROCB Europe, made a presentation on ROCB Europe and its activities for 2019/2020. The presentation included information about mission, activities and initiatives of ROCB Europe. He mentioned that the ROCB Europe would continue keeping the web site updated and provide the Members with useful information including Member Profiles section through its web site and social media channels. Mr. Seyidzade reported that in the period from April 2019 to March 2020, the ROCB Europe hosted or coordinated a total of 22 events and was represented in 12 events.

Mr. Eser Çengel indicated the ROCB Europe reacted soon after the outbreak of the disease by providing an all-in-one gateway “Coronavirus Bulletin” for colleagues and Member

Administrations. The Bulletin, which is available at rocb-europe.org/corona, stands as a hub for being updated and reaching information sources from one access point. He also presented printed version of the ROCB Europe Annual Progress Report 2019/2020 that included strategy, road map, activities and events as well as reports by the Regional Training Centers and ROCB Europe prospective Work Plan of the Office for 2020/2021.

PART II: Annual Progress Presentations by the Regional Training Centers

Following, RTCs in the WCO Europe Region reported about their progresses.

Mr. Mejidov, the representative of RTC Baku, spoke about the relationship between the ASCCA's partnership with edX which allows both its students and in particular, the Customs officers, to benefit from numerous courses through the international online learning process. The platform is an open-source allowing the Customs officers to successfully complete online courses on intellectual property law, psychology, innovation, leadership and other areas. Ms. Aliyeva, the representative of RTC Baku, went on the brief the participants about trainings on various themes for the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan territorial and specialized Customs Authorities. She emphasized that nearly 400 Customs officers were trained during more than 20 trainings. Ms. Aliyeva also presented SWOT analysis of RTC Baku.

Ms. Anett Letenovics-Nagy, the representative of the RTC Budapest, stated that the RTC Budapest the first RTC in the world which was established in 2001. Training Center has the necessary facilities for trainings with conference room that equipped with flip-charts, speaker system, interpreters' booth etc. with the capacity up to 70 participants, computer room, restaurant, sauna & swimming pool. She stressed that there is no permanent staff in the facility, events were held by officers of International Department of Hungarian National Tax and Customs Authority (NTCA). Training Center plays active role in the capacity building activity of the WCO. She also gave information about a regional workshop on cross-border E-Commerce for the Europe region from 26 to 29 March 2019 that was held at the RTC Budapest. The workshop was aimed at assisting WCO Members of the Europe region with the implementation of the Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce.

Ms. Irina Kykylyk, Deputy Head of the Directorate - Head of the Division of Organization of the WCO RTC/RDTC Activities, from the RTC Khmelnytsky in Ukraine presented video presentation that covered tasks and history of Training Center, initiatives and activities, annual progress in time of crises of COVID-19. She noted that training in the time of COVID-19 for officers of the State Customs Service were in the various area like International customs control standards, promotion and protection of intellectual property rights, combating customs offences and etc. Ms. Kykylyk also stressed that since the beginning of 2020, 392 officials of the State Customs Service of Ukraine have already been registered on CLIKC! Platform for training. For vision 2021, cooperation with RTCs and ROCB Europe for the implementation of new programs to improve the training of customs personnel in the time of pandemic, improving the distance learning platform, developing pool of accredited experts and promoting the WCO CLIKC! Platform were among the future prospects.

Ms. Narynkul Tagainazar kyzy, Head of the professional development department of the RTC Bishkek, gave an update with regard to ongoing process at the RTC in Kyrgyzstan. With stating RTC Bishkek was the youngest RTC in the WCO Europe region, she mentioned that the main priorities of the RTC is the training of high-quality of instructors with the assistance

of WCO experts, invitation of WCO experts to conduct analysis and assessment of RTC and participation in WCO events and cooperation with WCO RTCs. Ms. Tagainazar told the Annual Action Plan of the RTC Bishkek for 2021 contains modernization and digitalization of the education process and facilitation of the co-operation with ROCB Europe and RTCs in the region.

Ms. Anna Lakunina, Deputy Head of the International Cooperation Department at RTC Moscow, briefed on the progress made by the Regional Training Center in 2020. According to the briefing, Russian Customs Academy takes an active part in implementation of WCO Capacity Building Strategy in the field of staff training to improve their professional skills. She told about training of Customs officers of Kyrgyz Republic in the operational application of Russian-made inspection system. The officers worked out necessary actions aimed at performing both X-ray scanning of vehicles and ensuring radiation safety. 48 officers were trained during the said workshop.

Ms. Irena Kikerkova, Head of the RTC in the North Macedonia, noted that the 14th edition of the annual WCO PICARD Conference became one of the main platforms for Customs and academia to outline their latest research, needs and gaps. Ms. Kikerkova gave information about trainings stating that within a year starting from October 2019, a total of 195 trainings were delivered with a total number of 2466 participants-customs officers. She mentioned that during the outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic, main challenge for the relevant institutions was to provide new equipment and tools, to enhance competencies of the trainers and employees for delivering distance learning trainings.

Ms. Sara Abylkassimova, Deputy Head of Training Methodical Centre of the SRC MF RK, informed the participants about the events that took place during the reporting period. She gave information about, among others, a WCO Online National Workshop under the theme of “National Transit Coordinator – Article 11 of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization (WTO TFA)”. Ms. Abylkassimova mentioned that an international webinar on «Time release study» with the participation of representatives of OSCE, GIZ, regional representatives of bodies of state revenues of the Republic of Kazakhstan was important from point of view of to review concept, methodology, benefits and stages of the TRS WCO.

PART III: Way Forward for Enhancing RTCs

Mr. Eser Çengel, Head of ROCB Europe, said that RTCs in the WCO Europe Region were involved in various activities and events through either organizing or participating during the reporting period up to 56 events and the number of the events already planned by RTCs was 35. He also presented the result of the survey of RTCs as it was combined in a table. The mentioned table is also incorporated in the 2019/2020 Progress Report of the ROCB Europe.

The delegates were invited to share their experience, opinions and suggestions on how to move forward on further development of the RTCs as well as on the possible ways for planning in order to enhance the functionality and monitoring the performances in a structured manner.

There were inquiries from the RTCs on online trainings for improving the knowledge of customs officials in pandemic times, method for a more frequent communication, and access to pool of experts. Mr. Çengel responded that for trainings, there is already a mechanism for requests made through WCO Annual Capacity Building Needs process. In that way, Member Administrations could forward their requests for technical assistance. In the meantime,

emerging needs that could arise outside of that process would be communicated to the ROCB Europe so that trainings would be carried out provided that necessary resources were secured. With regard to communication among RTCs, Mr. Çengel stated that the ROCB Europe is in the process of establishing a communication portal in the near future which would enable virtual groups among other features. Lastly, accessing to pool of experts was not possible since Member Administrations should show consent for this kind of a permission, according to information from the WCO Secretariat stated in various past meetings.

As for the second topic of this part, specialization by the RTCs was evaluated. Expertise constitutes an essential part of capacity building efforts. WCO Europe Region has a robust resource on customs expertise. Concentrating specific expertise on the basis of individual Regional Training Centers would be beneficial with respect to resource mobilization. Some of the RTCs have already intense expertise on a specific topic. In this context, each RTC in the WCO Europe Region might become a center of excellence for a certain topic in customs. The delegates were invited to share their opinions and consider a possible regional initiative in that regard.

According to the RTCs survey, five out of seven RTCs are willing to specialize on certain customs topics. It was agreed that the ROCB Europe would request mentioned possible topics as well as information on experts, and necessary equipment, if needed.

PART IV: Any Other Business

Mr. Dashgin Aliyev, Regional Development Manager and Regionalization Manager of WCO Secretariat, gave information about decision that made on including Regional Dog Training Centers (RDTCs), Regional Customs Laboratories (RCLs), and Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices (RILOs) to 16th Global Meeting of the WCO Regional Structures. He stressed importance of establishing and developing a draft of the ToR in order to clarify the mandate of the Global Meeting of Regional Structures and that provide the framework for its organization and functioning is one of the important issues ahead. Mr. Aliyev went on inform the participants about new guide how organize and develop virtual trainings for RTCs and training schools.

Closing

Mr. Gulu Novruzov, mentioned that the Meeting aimed at strengthening cooperation between Regional Structures of the World Customs Organization Europe Region. He noted that as a result of ROCB Europe's activities, enhancing cooperation and coordination with WCO Secretariat, RTCs and other regional entities in the region had been developed.

The meeting was then adjourned.

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Annex I: Meeting Agenda
Annex II: List of Participants