

World Customs Organization

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World Customs Organization
Progress made in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action in the period
January 2020 – March 2021

The World Customs Organization (WCO) gratefully acknowledges the long-standing and fruitful cooperation that exists between the Organization, the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) and other development partners. The WCO has contributed to improving transit systems for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) by setting standards for simplified and harmonized border procedures, delivering capacity building projects and enhancing cooperation and coordination with other development partners.

amended, widely known as the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), is the blueprint for modern and efficient Customs procedures in the 21

st century. The RKC promotes trade facilitation and effective controls through its legal provisions that detail the application of simple, effective and predictable Customs procedures. During the reporting period (January 2020 - March 2021), two LLDCs (Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) acceded to the RKC, thus bringing the number of LLDCs that are RKC Contracting parties to 21 (66% of the LLDCs).

(2) Compendium of Best Practices in the area of Transit

Following the launch, in July 2017, of the WCO Transit Guidelines, from November 2017 to April 2019, the WCO delivered regional workshops for all six WCO regions to promote the implementation of the Guidelines, further discuss challenges and possible solutions, and collect regional and national best practices in the area of transit. The best practices collected through these regional workshops and as a result of a call for submission of best practices have been compiled in a Compendium of best practices in the area of transit. The Compendium includes a total number of 34 best practices, grouped per WCO region. Twelve of the submissions deal with transit policy issues in LLDCs.

The best practices included in the Compendium provide practical examples of how WCO Members, both developed and developing, simplify and harmonize their Customs procedures and implement technology-driven and information and communications technology solutions to reduce trade costs and expedite international trade. Thus, the objective of the new tool is to support Members in their efforts to enhance the transit regimes efficiency and effectively implement the relevant international legal framework such as the WCO RKC and the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization (WTO TFA), among others.

The Compendium was endorsed by the WCO Policy Commission and Council in December 2020 and is available [here](#).

(3) Harmonization of Customs transit procedures in railway transportation

Responding to the accelerated development of railway transport corridors, the WCO is undertaking work aimed at the harmonization of Customs procedures in railway transportation, including the following issues:

- Development of Guidelines for establishing an international postal rail transport service, in cooperation with the Universal Postal Union;
- Possibility of harmonizing data elements to be used for Customs transit procedures by rail in cooperation with the relevant international organizations related to railways, based on the WCO Data Model (e.g. data element name, definition, common code);
- Possibility of introducing passenger controls in rail travel, utilizing advance passenger data; and
- Development and discussion of the draft WCO Railways Guidance based on WCO Members best practices to be collected via field studies and workshops. The first draft of

the WCO Railway Guidance will be submitted to the WCO Permanent Technical Committee (PTC) in April 2021 for discussion.

(4) Mitigating the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic

Since the World Health Organization (WHO) categorized the outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) as a pandemic on 11 March 2020, the WCO has been working relentlessly to support the Customs administrations worldwide in their efforts to facilitate the cross-border movement of relief and essential supplies, support the economy and sustain the supply chain continuity, as well as protect the Customs staff and the society.

In December 2020, the WCO Council unanimously adopted a [Resolution on the role of Customs in facilitating the cross-border movement of situationally critical medicines and vaccines](#).

The WCO has issued the following non-binding guidance material:

[HS classification reference for COVID-19 medical supplies](#) developed in cooperation with the WHO;

[List of priority medicines during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) developed in cooperation with the WHO;

[HS classification reference for INN List 124 COVID-19 \(Special Edition\)](#) developed in cooperation with the WHO;

[HS classification reference for vaccines and related supplies and equipment](#) developed in cooperation with the WHO;

Secretariat Note on [How to establish and utilize essential goods lists during a disaster](#);

Secretariat Note on [What Customs can do to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic](#);

Secretariat Note on the [Role of Customs in facilitating and securing the cross-border movement of situationally critical medicines and vaccines](#);

The WCO is developing Guidelines on disaster management and supply chain continuity.

The final draft of the Guidelines will be submitted to the PTC in April 2021 for endorsement.

(5) Gender equality and diversity

In December 2020, the WCO Council unanimously adopted a [Declaration on Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs](#), concerning efforts to make Customs administrations more inclusive. The

The sub-regional workshop on transit for the ASEAN Members had 11 participants from six of the ASEAN Members. The Workshop was aimed at providing support to ASEAN Members in addressing any challenges they may face in the process of implementing the relevant international legal instruments in the area of transit, such as Article 11 of the WTO TFA and the ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Goods in Transit.

The national workshop for the State Revenue Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan had more than 45 participants and was aimed at providing information on the WCO instruments, tools and initiatives on transit facilitation, as well as at sharing and discussing good practices and challenges in implementing the relevant international legal framework, including Art. 11 of the TFA.

In addition, the WCO took part in the Annual Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries held on 23 September 2020, where the WCO Secretary General highlighted the contribution of the Organization to an accelerated implementation of the VPoA in areas such as transit, trade and transport facilitation; ICT infrastructure and digital connectivity; public-private dialogue and private sector development; and the impact of COVID-19 on LLDCs.

On 23 March 2021, the WCO Secretary General participated as a panelist in a Meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on LLDCs organized by UN-OHRLLS and Kazakhstan as a session of the WTO Aid for Trade Stocktaking event.

[\(2\) Support for West and Central Africa on interconnectivity of transit systems](#)

Interconnectivity of Customs systems to manage transit regimes between them is a priority for the Customs administrations in West and Central Africa, but also for economic operators, international institutions and development partners working in this region. The objective of interconnectivity is to secure, simplify and speed up the flow of commercial goods in transit, especially those coming from seaports and destined for the land-locked countries.

From 2013 to 2019, the WCO has supported the implementation of the VPoA in West and Central Africa through various initiatives, including the development of a regional transit framework, the implementation of the VPoA in the region, and the implementation of the VPoA in the region.

those of LLDCs. The “tailor-made” track includes needs assessments, strategic planning and implementation, followed by monitoring and evaluation. Tailor-made assistance may come in the form of multi-year Mercator Programme plans or support for implementing specific TFA articles as part of on-going reform and modernization efforts. Moreover, the support includes establishing National Committees on Trade Facilitation (NCTFs), action planning, technical assistance in specific areas, etc.

The WCO implements numerous programmes and projects that involve, inter alia, Capacity Building support to LLDCs. A non-exhaustive list would include the UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme, the COVID-19 Project funded by Japan, the ESA Regional Project funded by Finland, the WCO/JICA Joint Project on Trade Facilitation, the WCO–Norad Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion (A-CIP) Programme, the HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD TFA Capacity Building Programme, the UK FCO-WCO / .148 j001 Tcl (l)-1The ancomContr