



ROCB
Asia/Pacific

World Customs Organization

E-Newsletter No.82



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Guide for the Illicit Trade Report 2022



Foreword

Dear Readers,

Greetings from Bangkok ROCB A/P.

The first quarter of this fiscal year has passed. I returned to my home country with my family this August for home leave. I breathed in the air of the nostalgic place where I was born and raised and refreshed my mind and body. I also gained energy to work hard in the current fiscal year.



Summer break time after WCO Council Sessions is already over and WCO and ROCB A/P are now in full swing. In addition, several meetings and events have already started in Asia Pacific region as well as Asia Pacific members and Vice Chairs have been actively working as usual. ROCB A/P has begun preparations with the WCO and RTCs to organize workshops. We will strive to deliver as many workshops as possible to Asia Pacific members during this fiscal year and look forward to the strong engagement and active participation of all Asia Pacific members.

The latest E-Newsletter No 82, features activities undertaken with Asia-Pacific members in the first quarter of WCO Fiscal Year 2023/24 (July through September 2023). There is a special essay in this E- Newsletter, namely “Guide for the Illicit Trade Report 2022” by Mr. Louis Chan, Program Manager of ROCB A/P. We sincerely hope you enjoy ROCB A/P’s special essay and read it as reference material for policy officials and field officers.

I would like to briefly touch on our staff updates. I am pleased to say welcome Mr. Jun Tajima, Program Manager as a secondment official from Japan Customs. He joined ROCB A/P in August 2023 and covers South Asia as a Country Manager. In addition, I am also pleased to

welcome Ms. Aksara Mackhawiman (Amm), Assistant Program Manager as a secondment official from Thai Customs. She joined ROCB A/P in September 2023. On behalf of our office, I would like to express my highest appreciation to Japan Customs and Thai Customs for continuously seconding talented officials to ROCB A/P.

The ROCB A/P is always keen to hear any of your constructive comments and suggestions/input to our activities, including our communication and public relations activities, with a view to better servicing regional member Customs administrations. I would like to continue to convey not only ROCB A/P's activities but also members' interesting activities through our E-Newsletters.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of four Japanese characters: 倉本智和 (Norikazu Kuramoto).

Norikazu Kuramoto (Mr.)

Head of the ROCB A/P

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Guide for the Illicit Trade Report 2022



Mr Louis CHAN

Program Manager, ROCB A/P

The World Customs Organization (WCO) has released the 2022 Illicit Trade Report (ITR), a comprehensive document that provides in-depth analysis of the global illicit trade and its impact on citizens, consumers, and economies. The report highlights the significant efforts made by Customs administrations worldwide to combat illicit trade. It is based on an extensive examination of seizure data and case studies from various Customs administrations and covers seven major areas: drugs, environment, cultural heritage, money laundering and terrorist financing, intellectual property rights (IPR), health and safety, and revenue. The analysis primarily relies on data source from the WCO Customs Enforcement Network (CEN), a global database of Customs seizures and offences that supports WCO Members in enhancing their risk targeting capabilities.

The 2022 ITR has been enhanced by incorporating a broader range of data and information sources, including media outlets, reports from Customs administrations and international organizations, and a survey conducted by the WCO Secretariat. A section in the report, titled "Customs Enforcement Scan," presents information from open sources and compares it with data analysis based on the CEN. Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, the WCO Secretary General, emphasizes the importance of comprehensive data analysis in strengthening the effectiveness of Customs law enforcement efforts. He also highlights the need to adapt to the evolving strategies employed by criminal organizations in the global trade environment. The 2022 ITR reflects the WCO's commitment to improving data quality and analysis and contributes to a better understanding of illicit trade within the Customs community.

The 2022 ITR underscores the challenges and threats posed by cross-border illicit trade to citizens, consumers, and economies. Despite the pandemic, criminal organizations demonstrated resilience and took advantage of the situation to evade lockdowns and restrictions. The report emphasizes the crucial role played by Customs administrations in combating cross-border illicit trade and safeguarding the well-being of citizens and economies.

The report covers seven major areas of illicit trade, including:

1. Anti-money laundering
2. Cultural heritage
3. Drugs
4. Environment
5. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), Health and safety
6. Revenue
7. Security

1. Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing

This section provides an overview of the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing (AML-CTF) Programme, funded by Japan Customs Services and the U.S. Department of State. The programme includes two major initiatives: Project TENTACLE and Project OCTAGON, which offer capacity building and operational support to Customs administrations, police services, and Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) across five regions worldwide. In 2022, the Programme trained more than 200 officers and seized \$35M worth of assets during operations in multiple regions, arresting over 70 individuals.

The section discusses Operation TENTACLE-MENA II, a joint operation by the WCO and INTERPOL that targeted illicit financial flows and money laundering in the Middle East and North Africa. The operation led to 1,100 seizures, with the United Arab Emirates Customs reporting the highest number of seizures. Other countries, such as Italy and Morocco, also reported significant seizures of undeclared currencies.

The section then covers Operation TENTACLE-Mediterranea/Neptune IV, which focused on identifying and intercepting terrorists and their associates traveling between

southern Europe and North Africa. The operation resulted in seizures of drugs, undeclared cigarettes, small arms, living wildlife species, and significant amounts of cash.

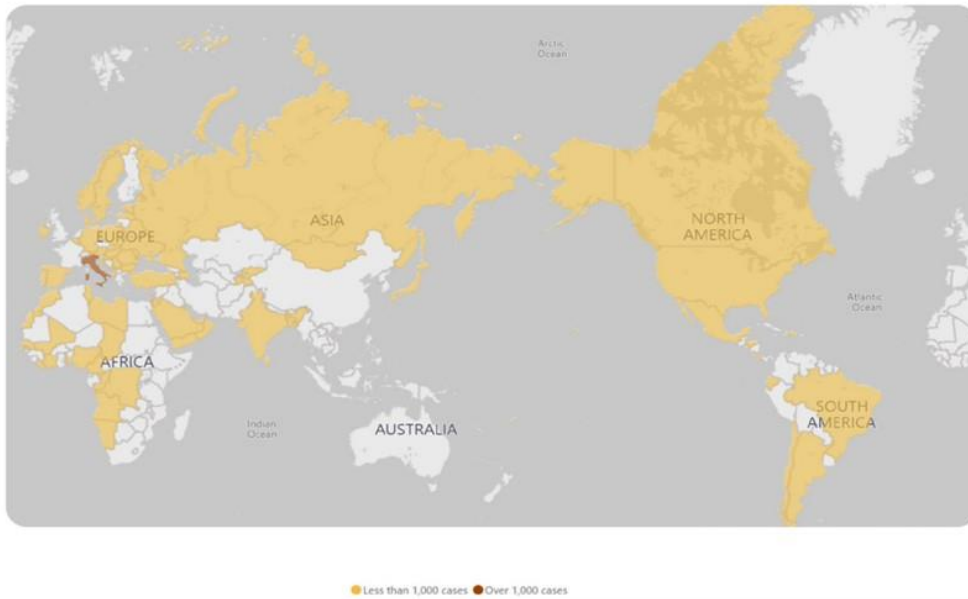
Project OCTAGON, a global law enforcement effort to combat transnational organized crime and terrorism, is mentioned as well. Initiated by the WCO in collaboration with George Mason University and the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units, the project aims to identify specific sub-regional "hot zones" where illicit activities are at the highest risk of occurrence. Drug trafficking is a major concern across all regions, with a noted increase in Trade-based Money Laundering (TBML).

The section highlights a new trend in gold smuggling identified by the Customs Administration of Armenia. Smugglers are importing gold bars from Russia to Armenia, melting them down, and converting them into coarse gold chains to disguise their value. These chains are then exported to Turkey or the United Arab Emirates for sale and to generate hard currency.

General trends in currency smuggling based on CEN data are also presented. In 2022, the US Dollar was the primary currency seized, and Italy conducted the most currency seizures among all countries. Most currency seizures occurred at airports, and the most common concealment method was within baggage.

The report concludes with heatmaps illustrating the top seizure countries, top departure countries for seizures, and top destination countries for seizures in 2022. Italy conducted the most currency seizures, and the top departure countries for currency seizures were Italy, Switzerland, the USA, and Turkey. The top destination countries for currency seizures were Italy, Egypt, Morocco, and Poland.

Heatmap : Currency seizures, 2022



The countries highlighted orange on the above map indicate countries that have recorded currency seizures in CEN. Gray-highlighted countries have not provided any currency seizure data to CEN in 2022.

Heatmap : Top seizure countries, 2022



The heatmap above shows seizure countries by quantity seized.

As the map above indicates, Italy is the country that has conducted the most currency seizures in 2022 by a significant margin. Italy is followed by Poland, Hungary, the USA, Spain, Saudi Arabia and Mexico, respectively, as highlighted by the seizure activity clusters on the map.

Heatmap : Top departure countries of seizures, 2022



The heatmap above shows the top departure countries of seizures made in 2022.

The top departure countries for currency seizures occurring in 2022 were Italy (4,311), Switzerland (846), the USA (845) and Türkiye (704). Other notable countries include the United Arab Emirates (428), the Russian Federation (351) and Saudi Arabia (350) and the Ukraine (268).

Heatmap : Top destination countries of seizures, 2022



Source: 2022 Illicit Trade Report, World Customs Organization

The heatmap above shows the top destination countries of seizures made in 2022.

The top destination countries for currency seizures occurring in 2022 were Italy (3,192), Egypt (1087), Morocco (832) and Poland (812). Other countries include Türkiye (497), Hungary (421), Spain (380) and the USA (352).

2. CULTURAL HERITAGE

This section focuses on the issue of illicit trafficking in stolen or looted cultural objects, with a particular focus on the situation in Ukraine. The report highlights that the conflict in Ukraine has led to widespread destruction and theft of cultural property, making it one of the largest incidents of its kind in Europe since the 40s.

The section acknowledges that the trade in art, antiquities, and other cultural objects is a highly lucrative industry, with global sales estimated at USD 65.1 billion in 2021. This market attracts criminals, organized crime and terrorists who use the illicit trade of cultural goods to launder proceeds of crime and finance their activities.

Data and information on the illicit trafficking of cultural goods largely rely on reports from member countries through the Customs Enforcement Network (CEN). While the number of reported seizures may be relatively low compared to other areas, there has been a consistent increase in seizures of cultural items since 2019, with a significant rise of 50% in 2022 compared to the previous year.

The section provides examples of customs seizures resulting from the conflict in Ukraine. These cases involve the illegal export of antique weapons with cultural and historical value, as well as intercepted parcels intended for destinations in the USA, UK, France, and Germany. The transit countries also play a role in the illicit trade, as indicated by the detection of a new smuggling route for cultural goods from Ukraine reported by Cyprus.



Source: 2022 Illicit Trade Report, World Customs Organization.

The section also highlights a significant case effected by U.S. CBP at JFK International Airport. The seizure involved a stone axe head and three metal swords arriving from Russia and Ukraine. These items were identified as Ukrainian cultural property and were ultimately repatriated to Ukraine.



Source: 2022 Illicit Trade Report, World Customs Organization.

The section emphasizes the pressing need for cooperation and action to protect cultural heritage. The International Council of Museums (ICOM) has published an "Emergency Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk: Ukraine" to identify the types of objects most at risk and raise awareness among museums, auction houses, art dealers, and collectors. Furthermore, conferences and training sessions have been organized by international organizations like UNESCO and the WCO to strengthen capacities, facilitate information exchange, and combat the illicit trafficking of cultural items.

The section also mentions cases beyond Ukraine, such as the interception of a Picasso painting in Spain and a joint investigation targeting an organized crime group involved in smuggling historical and archaeological artifacts in Bulgaria and Turkey. These cases underscore the necessity of international cooperation among customs agencies to combat illicit trafficking in cultural heritage.

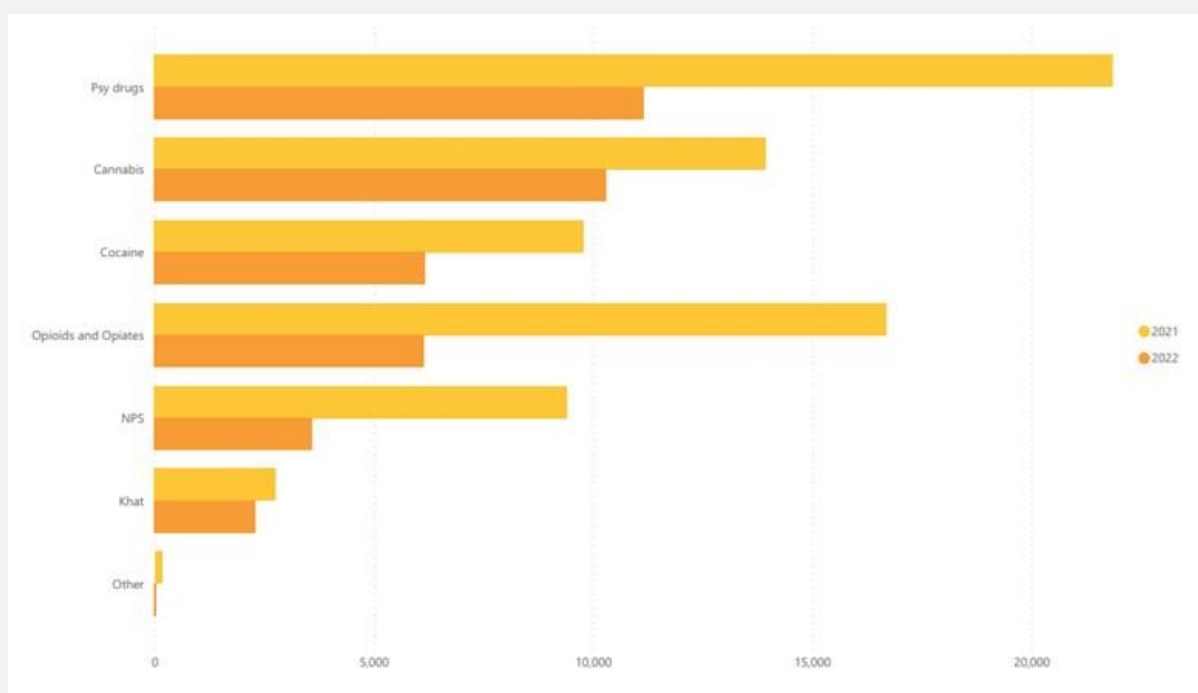
The section, however, acknowledges resource limitations in conducting training programs and participating in operations. The WCO expresses the importance of cooperation and continues to encourage members to report seizure data through WCO platforms to enhance analysis of trends and emerging threats in the illicit trade of cultural goods.

3. DRUGS

This section analyzes the global trends of drug trafficking, focusing on the strategies utilized for both detection and concealment. It further probes into specific categories of drugs such as cocaine, cannabis, khat, PSY, opioids, opiates, and innovative psychoactive substances (NPS). To help fight against drugs like cocaine contaminating international container shipments, WCO has started a plan called "Operation Tin Can" that begins in 2023.

The illicit trafficking of drugs presents a set of challenges globally, with profound implications on public health, societal security, and environmental sustainability. This section provides a detailed summary of the important aspects related to drug trafficking. It covers various types of drugs, methods of transportation, and worldwide efforts to address this urgent problem.

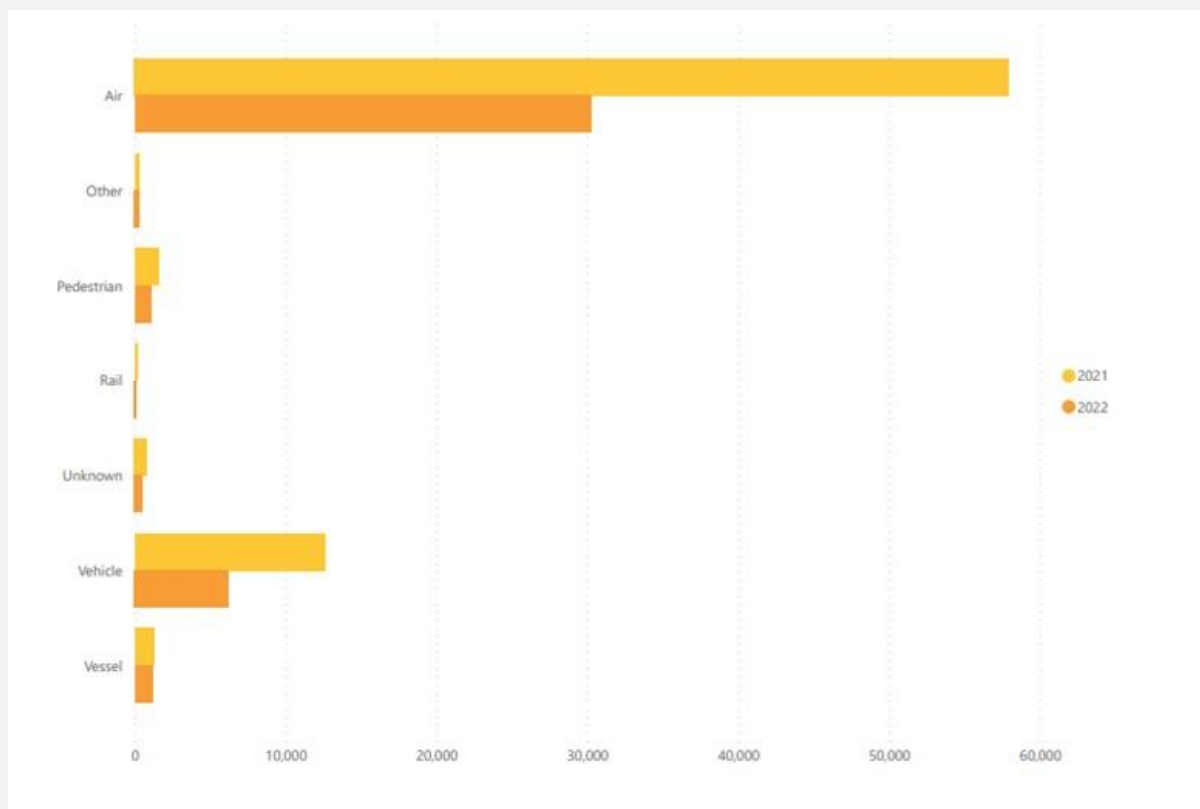
The illicit drug market is characterized by a broad spectrum of substances, including opioids, cocaine, cannabis, amphetamines, and NPS. Opioids such as heroin and fentanyl are a major area of concern due to their high potency and addictive properties. The surge of fentanyl as a substantial threat because of its association with overdose fatalities is particularly alarming. NPS, also known as "designer drugs," pose additional challenges as they simulate the effects of traditional narcotics and are continuously modified to evade legal regulations.



Drug seizures by category, 2021-2022

Source: 2022 Illicit Trade Report, World Customs Organization

Drug traffickers utilize different methods to transport illegal drugs across borders. These methods include using land routes, sea routes, air transportation, and postal services. The complex network of drug trafficking and the use of various transportation modes make it difficult for law enforcement agencies to detect and stop these illegal activities. Furthermore, traffickers often take advantage of vulnerabilities in transportation infrastructure, such as less busy airports or poorly monitored ports, to carry out their illegal operations.



Drugs seized by conveyance method (in cases), 2021-2022
Source: 2022 Illicit Trade Report, World Customs Organization

The international community understands the importance of tackling the illegal drug trade in a thorough and strong way. Many initiatives and organizations are working together to combat drug trafficking and minimize its impact on society. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) plays a crucial role in coordinating global efforts to reduce drug trafficking through different programs and initiatives. The organization focuses on strengthening law enforcement capabilities, promoting international cooperation, and assisting member countries in implementing effective policies to control drug-related issues.

The WCO, along with other international organizations, works together to help customs administrations of member countries in combating drug trafficking. They do this by providing support in areas such as improving capabilities, organizing training programs, and sharing

information. Initiatives like the Container Control Programme (CCP) and the Air Cargo Control Units (ACCU) have been effective in improving risk management, increasing security in the supply chain, and strengthening border control measures to prevent the smuggling of illegal goods.

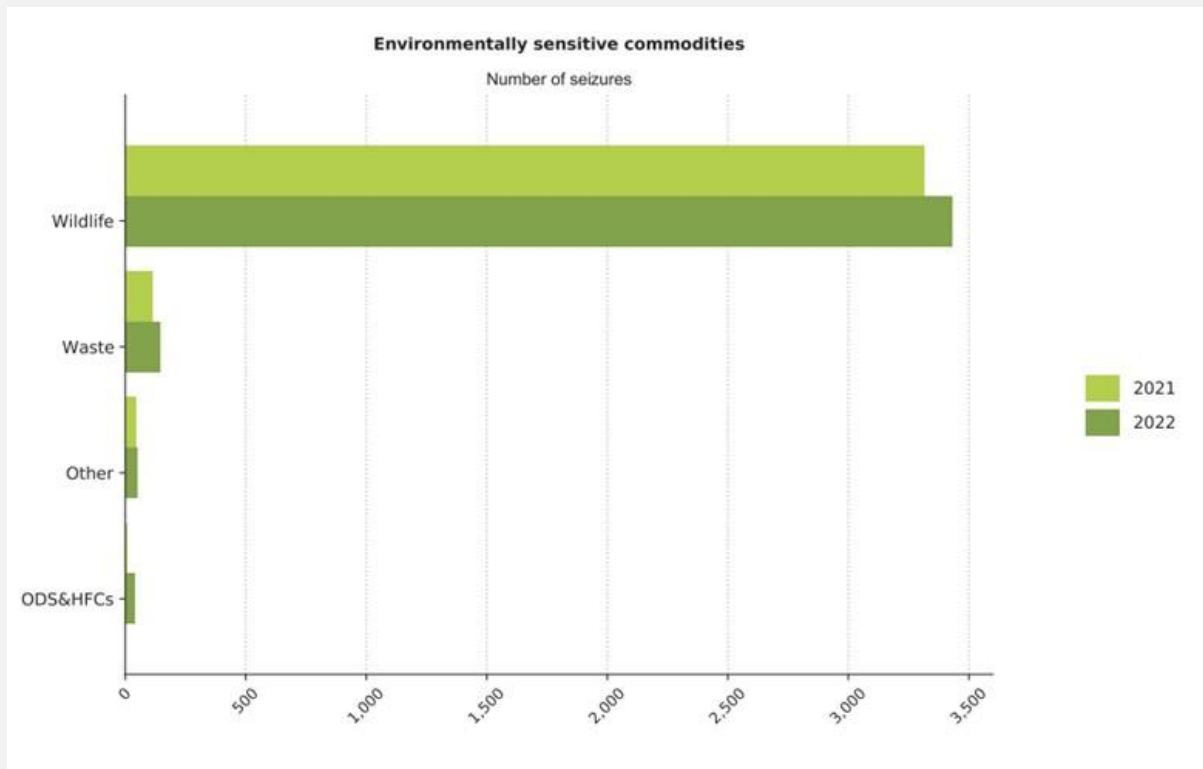
The cooperation among countries and regions is crucial in the fight against drug trafficking. Projects like the COLIBRI Project and the AIRCOP scheme aim to strengthen the capabilities of international airports and general aviation facilities in identifying and intercepting passengers and cargo that pose a high risk. Platforms such as Geoportal and CENcomm facilitate the exchange of intelligence and information, promoting cooperation between different agencies and countries. These efforts effectively disrupt illegal cross-border trades and criminal networks.

However, drug trafficking remains a persistent challenge as it continuously adapts to law enforcement strategies. The section emphasizes the importance of constant vigilance, innovation, and cooperation to effectively address this global problem.

4. ENVIRONMENT

This section highlights a growing problem of environmental crimes, particularly in illegal trades involving wildlife, timber, waste, and hazardous chemicals. Customs authorities play a crucial role in combating these illegal activities across borders.

WCO established its Environment Programme in 2012 to address this issue. The programme assists member countries in preventing the illicit trade of environmentally sensitive goods through various projects and global enforcement operations. This assistance includes providing technical support to customs administrations, promoting cooperation between governments and agencies, and intercepting illegal shipments.



Overview of environmentally sensitive commodities seizures, 2021-2022
Source: 2022 Illicit Trade Report, World Customs Organization

The illegal trade of pesticides, considered an environmental crime, has seen a 30% increase in traded quantities in 2020, largely driven by the high demand for disinfectants during the pandemic. This illicit trade has serious health, environmental, and economic consequences. Europol has been taking enforcement actions to combat this issue, such as Operation Silver Axe, which resulted in the seizure of 4,921 tons of illegal pesticides and exposed the existence of the illegal pesticide trade in Europe.

In 2022, the WCO launched several important projects under its Environment Programme. The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) Project, funded by the European Union and the United Kingdom, improves data collection, enhances resource capabilities, and provides specialized training to strengthen the enforcement actions against illegal wildlife trade.

The INAMA Project, funded by the Department of State, focuses on enhancing the enforcement capabilities of Customs administrations in South America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia to combat illegal wildlife trade under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The project promotes cooperation between agencies and countries while strengthening operational capacities.

The Asia-Pacific Plastic Waste Project (APPW), supported by the Government of Japan, aims to strengthen the capacities of Customs administrations in the Asia-Pacific region to prevent illegal plastic waste trade and promote sustainable waste management practices. The project includes diagnostic missions, capacity-building workshops, and the development of tools.

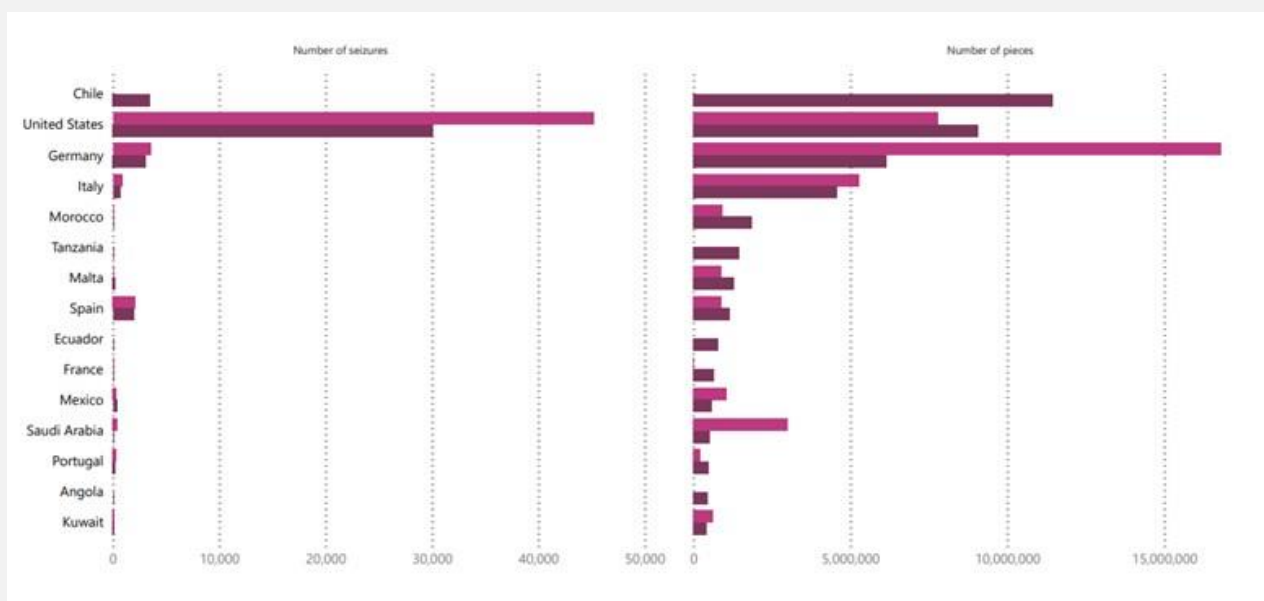
In 2022, the WCO implemented global enforcement operations named THUNDER and DEMETER. THUNDER focuses on wildlife and timber trafficking involving protected and endangered species under the CITES Convention, while DEMETER targets waste and substances controlled under the Montreal Protocol.

This section emphasizes the importance of raising awareness, enhancing cooperation, collecting quality data, and finding innovative solutions to combat environmental crimes. It encourages WCO members to actively utilize available resources and participate in global operations against illegal wildlife trade and environmentally sensitive goods. Overall, the ongoing efforts of the WCO in fighting environmental crime are crucial for preserving the environment for future generations.

5. IPR, HEALTH, AND SAFETY

This section provides a detailed analysis of the current situation regarding illegal trade worldwide, focusing specifically on the trafficking of items that infringe IPR and illicit medicines.

The analysis concentrates on two main areas: IPR-infringing items and illicit medical products. Regarding IPR infringement, the section notes that although there was a 4.7% decrease in the number of import suspensions by Customs compared to the previous year, the overall figure remains high. The European Union (EU) reported a significant increase in detentions of IPR-infringing goods at its borders in 2021, with a notable rise in detentions related to online sales. The United States also recorded a substantial number of IPR seizures, with an estimated manufacturer's suggested retail price of over \$2.98 billion.



Number of IPR products seizures and quantity seized by country, 2021-2022
Source: 2022 Illicit Trade Report, World Customs Organization

In the illicit medicine market, the section highlights those medicines accounted for 91% of total seizures. These illegal medicines were often concealed in mail packages, representing 66% of the total seizures. However, the number of mail seizures declined by 62% in 2022, while vehicles became the primary method of transport, accounting for 85% of the total. Mali, Guinea, Peru, Cameroon, Jordan, and Hungary were notable countries reporting a significant number of vehicle seizures.

Import seizures were the most frequent, comprising 91% of the total seizures and 48% of total illicit medicines. The United States, the United Kingdom, and Italy were the main countries reporting import seizures. Internal seizures, while less frequent, involved larger quantities. Africa and Latin America were the primary regions reporting internal seizures.

The use of sea vessels for transporting illicit medicines has been increasing since 2021, despite an overall decrease in seizures. Togo, Turkey, France, Jordan, and Israel were the main countries reporting vessel seizures.

In terms of concealment methods, small parcels and baggage were commonly used. The majority of illicit medicines were found in vehicles, accounting for 84% of the total quantity. There was also a significant increase in the use of vessels to conceal illicit medicines, with a rise of 514% since 2021.

The section emphasizes the need for collaboration among governments and enforcement agencies worldwide, as the illicit trade in IPR-infringing items and medicines

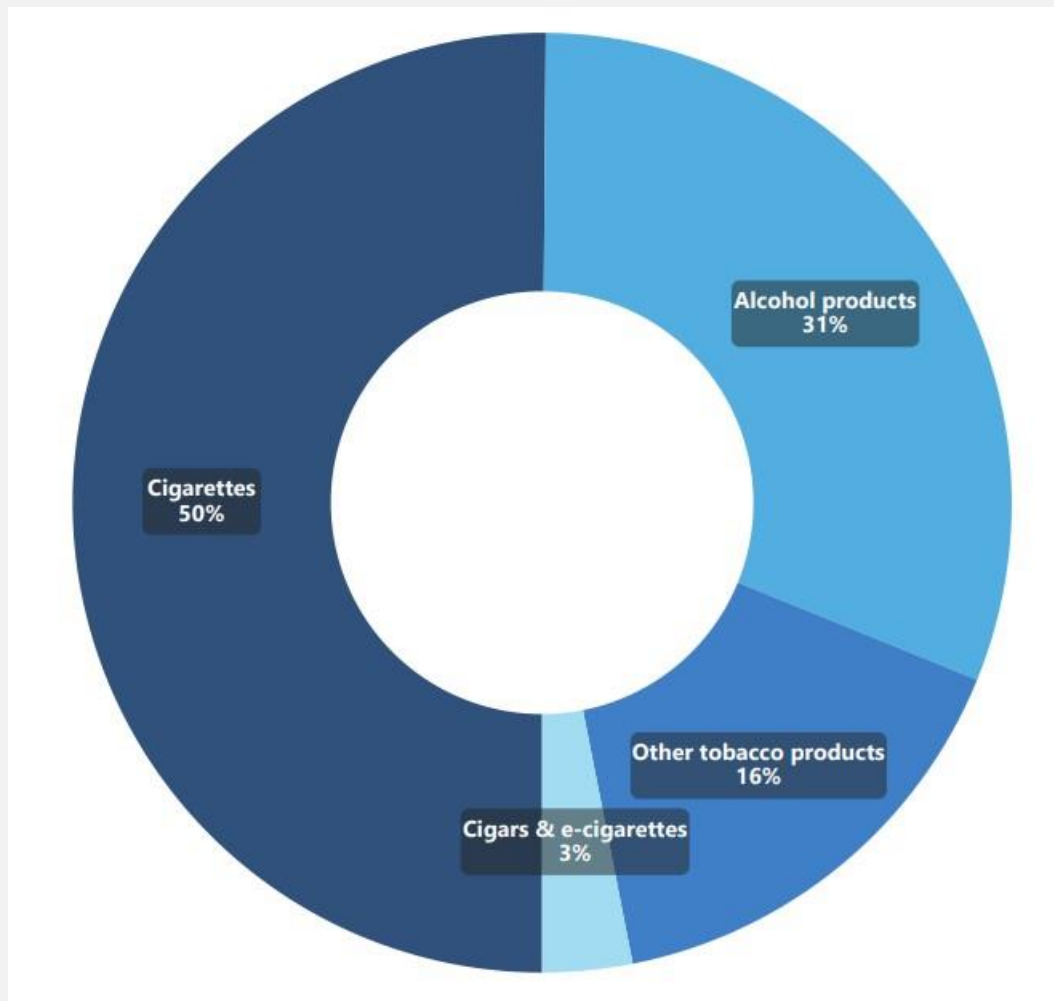
poses escalating challenges. It underscores the importance of strengthening risk profiling, promoting cross-border collaboration, and proactive law enforcement to effectively address this persistent global issue.

6. REVENUE

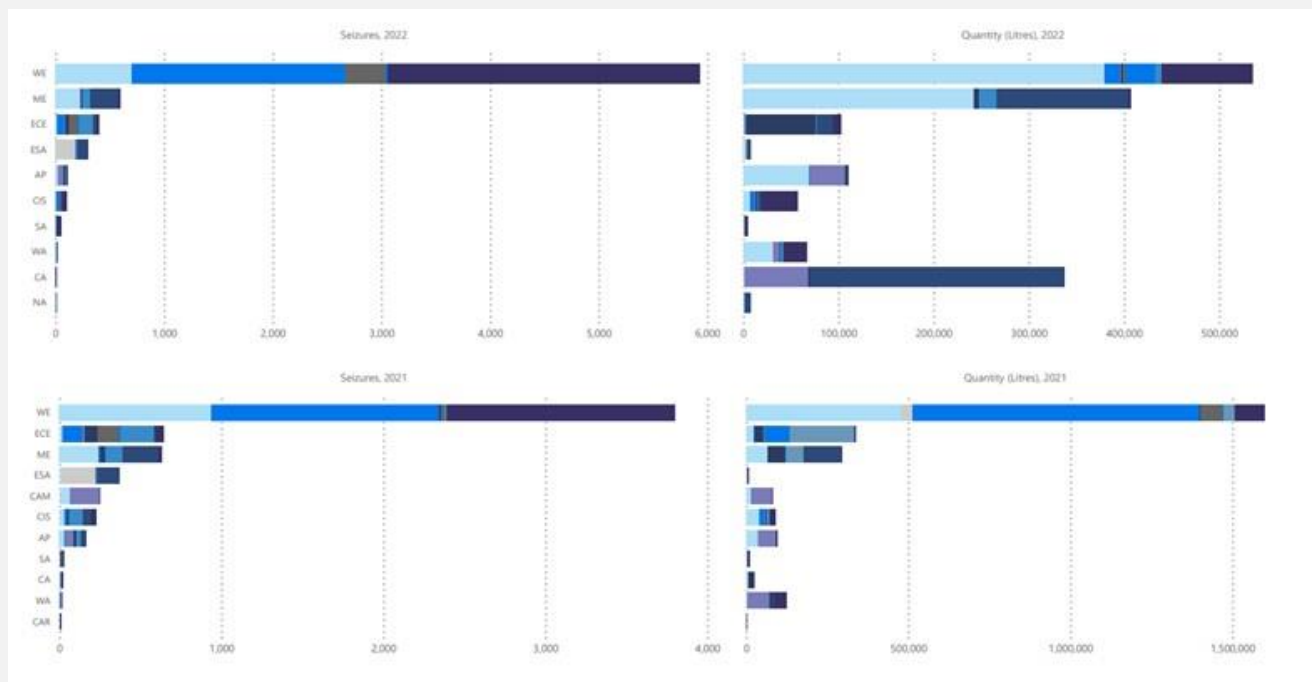
This section provides a comprehensive analysis of global illicit trade trends, with a specific focus on tobacco products and alcohol. The report highlights the significant efforts made by participating countries and their administrations to combat illicit trade and provides evidence-based insights to support decision-making strategically.

The illicit trade of tobacco products continues to grow due to its profitability and relatively low-risk nature. There was a remarkable increase of 28.6% in tobacco product seizures from 2021 to 2022, highlighting the widespread nature of this issue. Cigarettes were the most commonly seized tobacco products, followed by water pipe tobacco and raw tobacco. Western Europe, particularly influenced by the UK, reported the highest number of seizures. The most common trafficking routes were within the same region, particularly from Eastern to Western Europe.

Illicit trade in alcohol remains a global challenge, with various products ranging from beer to undenatured ethyl alcohol involved. Seizures of alcohol products increased by 22.2% from 2021 to 2022. While 21 countries reported more than ten seizures each, there were significant variations in seizure patterns, with specific categories representing over 50% of all seizures in certain countries. For instance, beer seizures accounted for 57.9% of all seizures in Denmark, while grape distilled spirits seizures made up 76.7% in Italy. Western Europe had the highest number of seizures, and Ireland alone accounted for 76.9% of all reported seizures, significantly impacting the overall findings of the report.



Percentage of seizures by product, 2022
Source: 2022 Illicit Trade Report, World Customs Organization



Number of alcohol products seizures and quantity seized by category and region, 2021-2022
Source: 2022 Illicit Trade Report, World Customs Organization

The section highlights the importance of regional trafficking flows. Western Europe, for instance, served as both an origin and destination region for illicit trade. Some internal flows can be attributed to domestic distillation and the illegal use of alcohol originally intended for medical or cleaning purposes, which is then diverted to the black market.

Proximity and external trade play a significant role in illicit trafficking flows. For example, seizures reporting the UK as the departure country often occurred in Ireland, while seizures reporting the Russian Federation as the departure country were realized in Azerbaijan. Administrations have encountered new smuggling routes and concealment methods, highlighting the ongoing evolution of complex illicit trade networks.

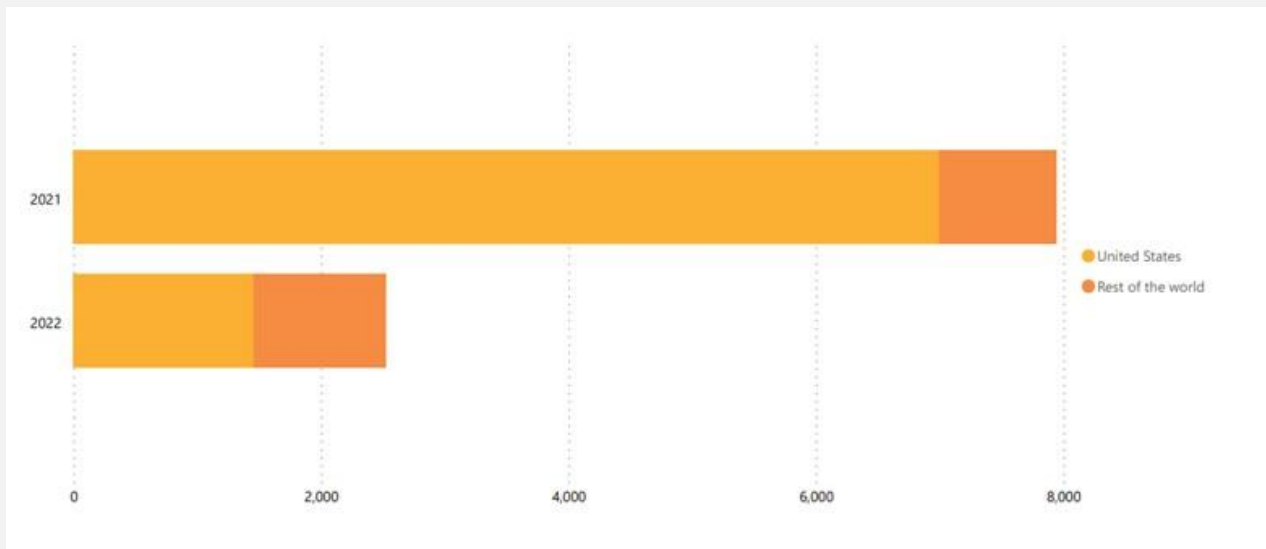
The section emphasizes the need for increased cooperation between countries and agencies to combat these illicit activities. Operation OPSON XI, a successful joint effort by Europol and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), resulted in significant seizures of illicit products and the disruption of multiple criminal networks.

Overall, this section serves as a valuable resource, shedding light on the pervasive issue of illicit trade and highlighting the importance of heightened vigilance, improved data collection, and strengthened inter-agency collaboration on a global scale.

7. SECURITY

This section provides a detailed overview of the challenges and initiatives regarding enhancing border security and combating illicit trade. It focuses on addressing the illicit trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), strategic goods, preventing the production or acquisition of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) by terrorists, and other illegal activities that pose significant threats to global security. The analysis includes the situation in Haiti, the efforts of the World Customs Organization (WCO), and the implications for fragile border regions. The section highlights the importance of strengthening border control measures, promoting interagency cooperation, and implementing effective firearms control policies.

The illicit trade of SALW between the United States and Haiti has seen a remarkable increase in both quantity and firepower. Seizures of assault rifles, pistols, ammunition, and counterfeit currency have been reported. Urgent action is called for to counter this trend, including enhanced border control measures, thorough inspections of cargo shipments, and collaboration with international partners.



Number of weapons and ammunition seizures by country, 2021-2022
Source: 2022 Illicit Trade Report, World Customs Organization

The WCO plays a crucial role in enhancing border security and combating illicit trade. The Strategic Trade Control Enforcement (STCE) Programme, established in response to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, focuses on supporting Customs administrations in implementing effective enforcement measures. The programme provides training sessions to equip Customs officers with the necessary knowledge and skills to identify and prevent the illicit trade of strategic goods.

The WCO's Security Programme is involved in two regional projects aimed at enhancing security in relation to SALW and narcotics trafficking. These projects offer comprehensive training and capacity building to Customs officers in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Caribbean regions. By empowering Customs officers with specialized knowledge and skills, these initiatives contribute to strengthening security efforts and effective law enforcement measures.

The WCO actively assists countries in enhancing their targeting capabilities to identify high-risk passengers, including Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs). The Global Travel Assessment System (GTAS) and collaboration with the United Nations Office on Counter-Terrorism's Counter Terrorism Travel Programme enable precise targeting of individuals with high-risk profiles. In the maritime domain, the WCO works with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to establish standards for passenger controls and risk management.

The Programme Global Shield (PGS) is a longstanding WCO initiative that focuses on controlling the legal movement of chemical precursors to counter the illicit diversion of

explosive precursors used in the production of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The WCO collaborates with INTERPOL and the US Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) to provide capacity building support to WCO Members. Additionally, the WCO addresses the challenges posed by fragile borders, particularly in African countries, through comprehensive assessments, technical training, and the integration of Customs in security policies.

Enhancing border security and combating illicit trade require a comprehensive approach that includes strengthened border control measures, interagency cooperation, and effective firearms control policies. The efforts of the WCO, in collaboration with international partners, play a vital role in addressing these challenges. By empowering Customs officers, implementing targeted training initiatives, and leveraging modern technologies, significant progress can be made in ensuring global security and preventing the proliferation of illicit trade activities.

CONCLUSION: COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS AND ENHANCED UNDERSTANDING OF ILLICIT TRADE

The 2022 Illicit Trade Report (ITR) showcases the dedication of the WCO to enhancing data quality and analysis. Throughout 2022, Customs administrations have actively contributed to reporting high-quality data in the WCO CEN. This data serves as a foundation for the comprehensive analysis presented in the report.

The production of the ITR has been made possible by the active participation and support of WCO Members, partners, and stakeholders. Their invaluable contributions, including sharing data, providing case studies, and responding to surveys, have greatly contributed to the Customs community's improved understanding of illicit trade. The collaborative efforts of all involved have played a crucial role in developing an evidence-based report that informs strategic decision-making and facilitates effective measures against illicit trade.

Workshops and Meetings

ROCB A/P supports Member's initiatives to build a culture of integrity

3rd -7th July 2023, Melaka, Malaysia



The WCO A/P Regional workshop on Integrity Promotion was held at the RTC Malaysia in Melaka over the period 3rd - 7th July 2023 sponsored by the CCF-China. From the ROCB A/P, Ms. Zhengqing Ye, the Program Manager and Operation Manager of the CCF-China participated in this workshop.

Due to the importance of Integrity for government administrations, high-ranking officials attended the workshop. Mr. Wu Ge, Deputy Chief Inspector, of the Discipline Inspection and Supervision Office of CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the National Commission of Supervision of the PRC at the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC) encouraged workshop participants in his opening. In addition, high-ranking officials from the host country were also present, Honourable Datuk Seri Hj. Ahmad Bin

Maslan, Deputy Minister of Finance of Malaysia, and Dato' Zazuli Bin Johan Director General of Royal Malaysia Customs and welcomed the participants from Asia Pacific.

During the workshop, Ms. Ye, the representative of the ROCB A/P, introduced regional capacity building activities such as organizing workshops and publishing various material for sharing of information. She demonstrated the commitment ROCB A/P to assisting AP Members in building their capacity. She also explained the Follow-up Actions Survey, which takes a snapshot of the impact of WCO capacity building activities on AP Members' performance and encouraged the participants to take action to utilize lessons learnt from this workshop.

There were 25 participants from the Asia/Pacific region selected to represent their respective Customs administrations. All participants presented on each key factor of the Revised Arusha Declarations, giving their insight not only with their observations and experience of implementing measures in their selected key factor, but also provided recommendations on ways forward based on their analysis of gaps and weaknesses identified during their research.

The 5-day WS has confirmed that in-depth trends analysis of different customs administrations and their factors that affect their motivation is essential to better address integrity issues. "One size fits all does not fit at all". Moreover, it is important to engage the private sector to cultivate positive relationships.

ROCB A/P active Participates in the 25th OCO Annual Conference

18th - 19th July 2023, Pohnpei, Micronesia



Upon the invitation of the Oceania Customs Organization (OCO) Secretariat, Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, the Head of the ROCB A/P, actively participated in the 25th OCO Annual Conference at Pohnpei, the Federated Stats of Micronesia.

During the Conference, Mr. Kuramoto introduced the capacity building activities of the ROCB A/P in close cooperation with WCO in the last fiscal year. He highlighted workshop activities including the Mater Trainer Program on HS and CV for Pacific members. He also briefly explained the WCO SIEs initiative started in 2018 and WCO SIEs Guidance document issued in December 2020 which is supporting and reference material to address the unique challenges for Pacific members. In addition to that, he introduced WCO Human Resource Development programs namely the Carrie Development Programme, Fellowship Programme, and Scholarship Programme as well as WCO CLiKC! E-Learning platform as wonderful privileges and benefits of WCO Membership.

In his opening session, Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, the Secretary-General of the WCO provided a video message. In this message, he expressed his warmest congratulations to the OCO Secretariat for organizing the 25th OCO Annual Conference in Pohnpei, in Micronesia. We also welcomed Solomon Island Customs as a new WCO Member in January 2023. He also welcomed some non-WCO members already acceded the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) and he is really looking forward to welcoming more WCO members very soon because there are many membership benefits such as workshop opportunities, Internship programmes and E-learning programmes. He also stated that the WCO's SIEs Guidance document in 2020 is a very useful tool for Pacific members.

This OCO annual conference was attended 15 OCO members with partner administrations and organizations namely the ROCB A/P, Japan Customs, UNCTAD, UNDOC, etc. During the conference, OCO members provided updates and recent challenges as well as discussed common interested matters and future cooperation among OCO members and partners.

ROCB A/P collaborates in supporting LLDCs with UN alliance

22nd - 23rd August 2023, Bangkok, Thailand



Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, the Head of the ROCB A/P, actively participated in the High-Level Euro-Asia Review Meeting of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) for Decade 2014-2024 in Bangkok, Thailand, upon the invitation of the

UNECE, UNOHRLLS and ESCAP.

During the meeting, Mr. Kuramoto introduced capacity building activities done by ROCB A/P in close cooperation with WCO in Asia Pacific region including workshop activities. He also briefly explained the progress made by LLDCs in the implementation of WCO instruments namely the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC). In addition to that, he stressed that

Trade facilitation, Transit and Digitalization and Use of advance technologies could be the key areas for improving the situation for LLDCs.

ROCB A/P participated in the RPSG AP Meeting

30th – 31st August 2023, Bangkok, Thailand



Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, Head of the ROCB A/P and his colleagues actively participated in the Regional Private Sector Group for Asia Pacific (RPSG AP) which was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 30th to 31st August 2023. Delegates from various trade and logistics-related companies and private trade association in Asia Pacific region attended this meeting as well as WCO Asia Pacific Vice Chair, Australia Customs, New Zealand Customs and Thai Customs also attended.

During the meeting, Mr. Kuramoto introduced ROCB A/P's achievements in capacity-building activities during the last fiscal year in the Asia-Pacific region. He also provided a brief overview of its annual work plan for this fiscal year and explained how to access the latest information including ROCB AP's publications as well as promoted WCO learning tools such as CLiKC! and the WCO Academy.

This meeting reviewed the regional activities of Asia Pacific Customs administrations and WCO throughout the year by private sector. The discussions covered topics such as digitalization in the private sector, regional experiences of customs brokers and forwarders, as well as the experiences of separate countries with customs-related systems. Furthermore, participants discussed on the possibility of collaborating with RPSG to enhance Capacity Building in the Asia-Pacific region.

ROCB A/P Engages in a Productive Online Meeting with Cambodia Customs on Regional Training Centre (RTC) Establishment

5th September 2023, Online Meeting



At the invitation of the Cambodia General Department of Customs and Excise (GDCE), Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, the Head of ROCB A/P, and Mr. Louis Chan, the Program Manager of ROCB A/P participated in a comprehensive online meeting on 5th September 2023. Their primary goal was to exchange views on the establishment of an RTC in Cambodia. The WCO Regional Development Manager also attended the meeting virtually.

Initiating the session, Mr. Kuramoto briefed GDCE on the roles of RTCs, the process of their establishment, training venue prerequisites, and WCO's expectations. He further discussed RTC's support role, keys to success, and references from regional entities. Placing emphasis on capacity-building and regional cooperation, he highlighted the significance of effective communication. Moreover, he shared insights on facilities, expectations, and introduced a brochure of ROCB A/P detailing various regional entities.

In response, GDCE presented the features of their Cambodia National Customs School. Equipped with modern facilities and advanced equipment, it boasts administrative offices, conference halls, a laboratory, workshop rooms, a library, and sports halls. Such infrastructure exemplifies the highest standards of professionalism, solidifying their position at the forefront of customs training. GDCE elaborated on their preparations for the RTC's establishment, elaborating on their mission, vision, strategic goals, and past achievements – a testament to their steadfast dedication to the cause.

Concluding the session, Mr. Kuramoto conveyed his deep appreciation for GDCE's unwavering commitment and proactive efforts toward the establishment of the RTC, aimed at bolstering capacity-building activities for regional members. Reciprocally, GDCE thanked Mr. Kuramoto, for addressing their inquiries and clarifying the timeline and related procedures. All participants agreed that the meeting was fruitful, fostering a constructive dialogue and facilitating a significant exchange of essential ideas.

ADB's Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist's Visit to ROCB A/P

15th September 2023, Bangkok, Thailand



Ms. Kanya Satyani Sasradipoera, Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist at the Asian Development Bank (ADB), along with her ADB colleague, paid a courtesy visit to Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, the Head of the ROCB A/P on 15th September 2023.

During this visit, Ms. Sasradipoera received a warm welcome from Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, Head of ROCB A/P. The visit served to reaffirm the unwavering commitment of ROCB A/P and ADB to regional cooperation and development initiatives.

The discussions during the visit encompassed a range of important subjects, including coordinated border management, e-commerce, and electronic data exchange for pre-arrival goods in developing nations across South Asia. Mr. Kuramoto also elaborated on ROCB A/P's annual needs assessment survey, designed to evaluate the technical assistance requirements of regional Member administrations, thus providing invaluable insights for the strategic planning of capacity-building activities. Furthermore, both parties engaged in discussions on topics such as the WCO SAFE Framework and the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement, as well as the challenges faced by developing countries within the region.

Mr. Kuramoto expressed his dedication to exploring additional collaboration opportunities in the realm of capacity-building activities and assured Ms. Sasradipoera of ROCB A/P's commitment to fully support ADB's initiatives. The visit resulted in fruitful discussions between ROCB A/P and ADB, highlighting the profound importance of regional cooperation.

Korea Customs executive visit ROCB A/P

26th September 2023, Bangkok, Thailand



Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, the Head of ROCB A/P, received a courtesy visit from Mr. Heon Park, a Director General from the Korea Customs Service, accompanied by Ms. Jieun Jung, Customs Attache at the Korea Embassy in Thailand, on 26th September 2023. During this visit, Mr. Park was warmly welcomed by Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, and he expressed his gratitude to ROCB A/P for their support in capacity-building and related activities in the Asia Pacific region.

Seizing this opportunity, Mr. Kuramoto introduced the activities and members of ROCB A/P and expressed his appreciation for Korea Customs for its continuous support to the ROCB A/P and reiterated Korea Customs' commitment to further support capacity-building initiatives in the Asia Pacific region.

ROCB A/P paid courtesy call to Director-General, Thai Customs Department

27th September 2023, Bangkok, Thailand



Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, the Head of the ROCB A/P and his colleagues paid courtesy call to Mr. Patchara Anuntasilpa, Director-General, the Thai Customs Department.

On this occasion, Mr. Kuramoto expressed his sincere gratitude for the generous support of the Thai Customs Department in hosting the ROCB A/P office and called to continuous support to the ROCB A/P.

He also introduced new members of the ROCB A/P to the Director-General. Mr. Anuntasilpa welcomed the new members of the ROCB A/P and expressed his willingness to continuous support to the ROCB A/P and the collaboration between the Thai Customs Department and the ROCB A/P.

Staff Updates

Welcome Message from Mr. Jun Tajima

Hello Members!

My name is Jun TAJIMA and it is my great pleasure to be assigned as one of the Programme Managers of the ROCB A/P. As my previous position was Deputy Director in charge of Capacity Building in Japan Customs Headquarters, I am very excited to work with Asia Pacific Members and colleagues of the ROCB A/P in broader perspective.



I started my work career in Osaka Customs, Japan in 1997. After several enforcement roles, I assumed a post as a junior officer to implement Capacity Building policies and activities. It was good old days: workshops that Japan Customs conducted were one- to three-month long (!) and the participants and I enjoyed not only the intellectual part but also the sight-seeing on weekends.

Years passed and we focus more on how Capacity Building programmes contribute to the real problem solving. With my experiences in the WCO as a lead official of PCA Programme, I will try to make WCO events more effective. For that purpose, I would like to talk with people in need as much as I can, so that we can achieve the goal together.

I am looking forward to meeting you either in your country or in Bangkok.

Jun TAJIMA

Farewell message from Ms. Pavida Tarapoom

Dear Colleagues,

Time flies!! Time passes very quickly. Working here at the ROCB A/P, I have learned to work in international circumstances and improved my knowledge of international standards from both my colleagues at ROCB A/P, WCO and Members. It is my great honor to be here and it is very valuable for me to work with them.



I also had a great experience on how to organize workshops/meetings online during COVID-19 which is totally different from face-to-face workshops. Through this situation, it enhanced my skills a lot.

I hope that I will have a chance to work with ROCB A/P colleagues and A/P Members in very near future.

Welcome Message from Ms. Aksara Mackhawiman



Dear Colleagues,

My name is Aksara Mackhawiman, a new Assistant Program Manager at the ROCB A/P. It is my great pleasure and honor to work with the WCO and be a part of the ROCB A/P Team. I would like to take this opportunity to briefly introduce myself.

I started my career with Thai Customs Department by working at the Customs Academy, where I acquired valuable experiences in planning and organizing the capacity building activities. I arranged for seminars workshops and training courses. In 2016, I was transferred to the Tax Incentives Division. In this role, I worked primary in the area of the

establishment of Bonded Warehouse, Free Zone and Duty Drawback Scheme, which has become a particular field of my interest. My work had included assisting on Bonded Warehouse and Free Zone compliance issues and promoting those schemes to importer and exporter who are interested in.

I am grateful to be given this opportunity to work with WCO and the members in the Asia Pacific Region. I am looking forward to working with you.

Aksara Mackhawiman

WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION

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Ms. Grace YE

Mr. Jaemin CHO

Mr. Louis CHAN

Ms. Aksara MACKHAWIMAN

Ms. Jate-Arpa BENJAPHONG

Ms. Vareemon CHAIRUNGSRILERT

Ms. Kanyawarat SITTHIKUNPANIT

Regular Supporters: Mr. David RADOVANOVICH and Mr. Michael CYMBALISTA

