



**WCO**

**ROCB**  
Asia/Pacific

# **ROCB A/P**

*Special Essay Collection in FY 2023/24*

**September 2024**

# Preface

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Dear Readers

It is my pleasure to introduce the ROCB A/P Special Essay Collection. On behalf of WCO Asia Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB A/P), I would like to thank you for visiting this edition, but you will not regret the time you are investing on it.



"ROCB A/P Special Essay Collection in FY2023/24" compiled the special essays written by Program Managers of ROCB A/P who have excellent and rich experience working in Customs. In this collection, there are altogether 7 articles included Illicit Trade Report, Customs Good Practice Report on Canine Training and Operations, ROCB A/P Brochures on Regional Entities, Gender Equality, WCO's A-CIP, Induction Training for new recruits and RCL Heads Meeting. I am proud of my dear colleagues, Program Managers of ROCB AP, who put their time and efforts in writing these articles.

To be in line with A/P Regional Strategic Plan (RSP), the ROCB categorized its activities into the following four pillars. These pillars are: 1) Support implementation of WCO conventions, instruments and tools, 2) Further develop partnerships with development partners, 3) Improve needs analysis, planning, delivery and management of capacity building activities 4) Enhance communication and information sharing among members.

In promoting WCO tools and activities under the pillar 4 activity, the role of ROCB A/P acts as a bridge between the WCO and Asia Pacific members through publication. In view of this, our Program Managers initiated summarization and consolidation of the key points of conventions, instruments and tools and activity of the WCO and the ROCB A/P..

We recently set the ROCB A/P's outcome of activity as "Members implement

international standards, so that their practices are modernized". The ROCB A/P sincerely hope that these essays could be useful to facilitate the understanding of international standards and our activities, so that your implementation of these standards become rather easier.

We welcomed your feedback, no matter they are related to our publication or capacity building activities so as to shape our future work in a better way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the Japanese characters '田島' (Tajima) followed by a stylized signature mark.

**Jun Tajima**

**Head of the ROCB A/P**

**[20<sup>th</sup> September 2024]**

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# Guide for the Illicit Trade Report 2022

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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.

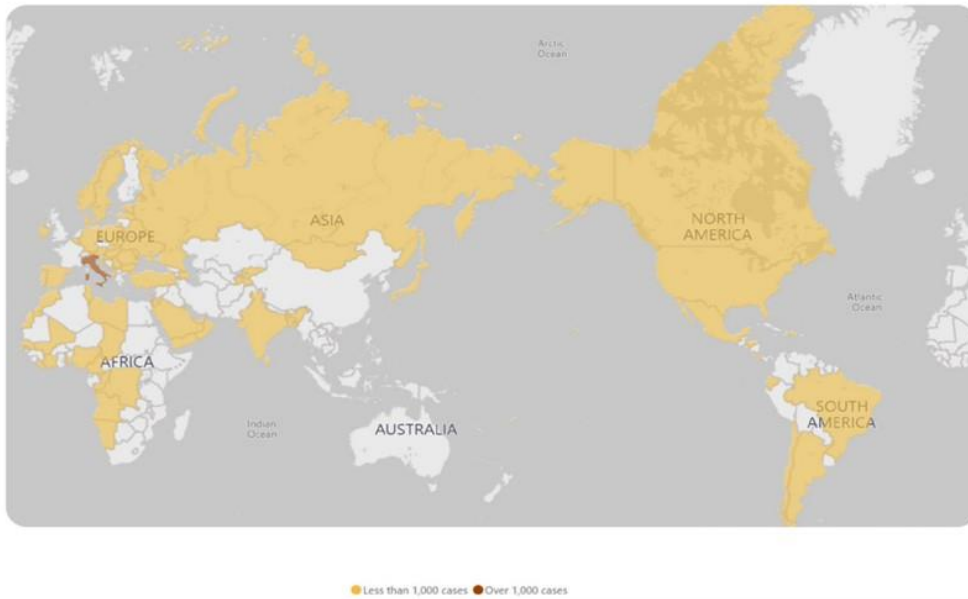
Project OCTAGON, a global law enforcement effort to combat transnational organized crime and terrorism, is mentioned as well. Initiated by the WCO in collaboration with George Mason University and the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units, the project aims to identify specific sub-regional "hot 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.

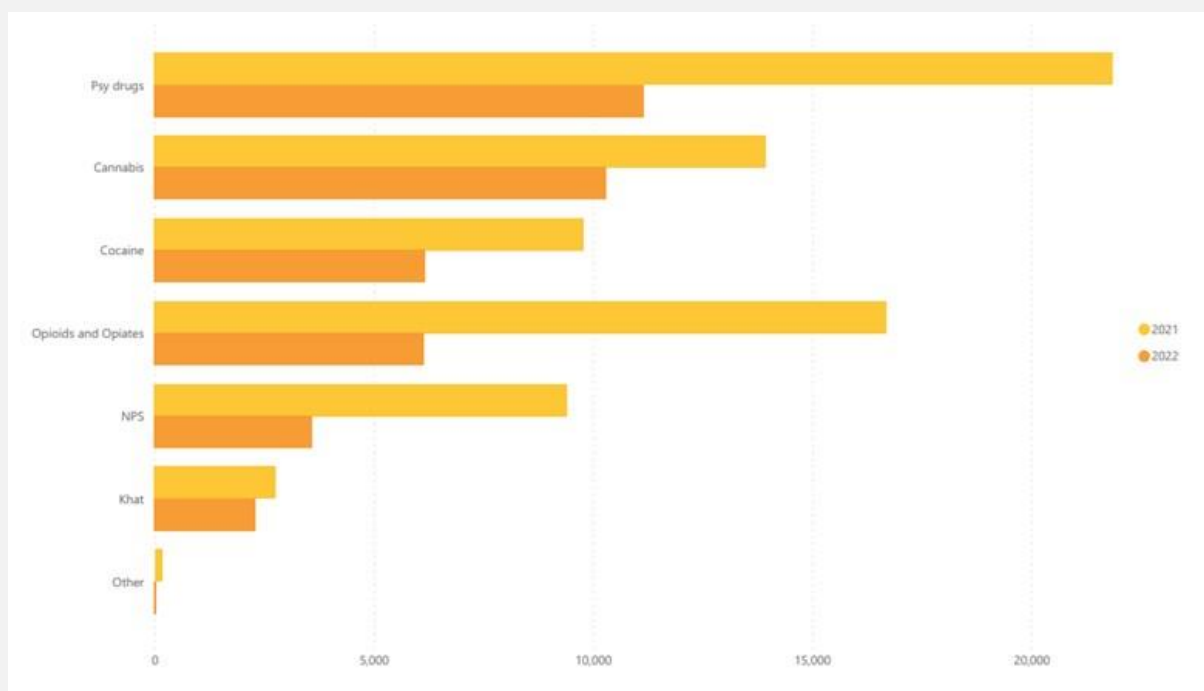
The section, however, acknowledges resource limitations in conducting training programs and participating in operations. The WCO expresses the importance of cooperation and continues to encourage members to report seizure data through WCO platforms to enhance analysis of trends and emerging threats in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

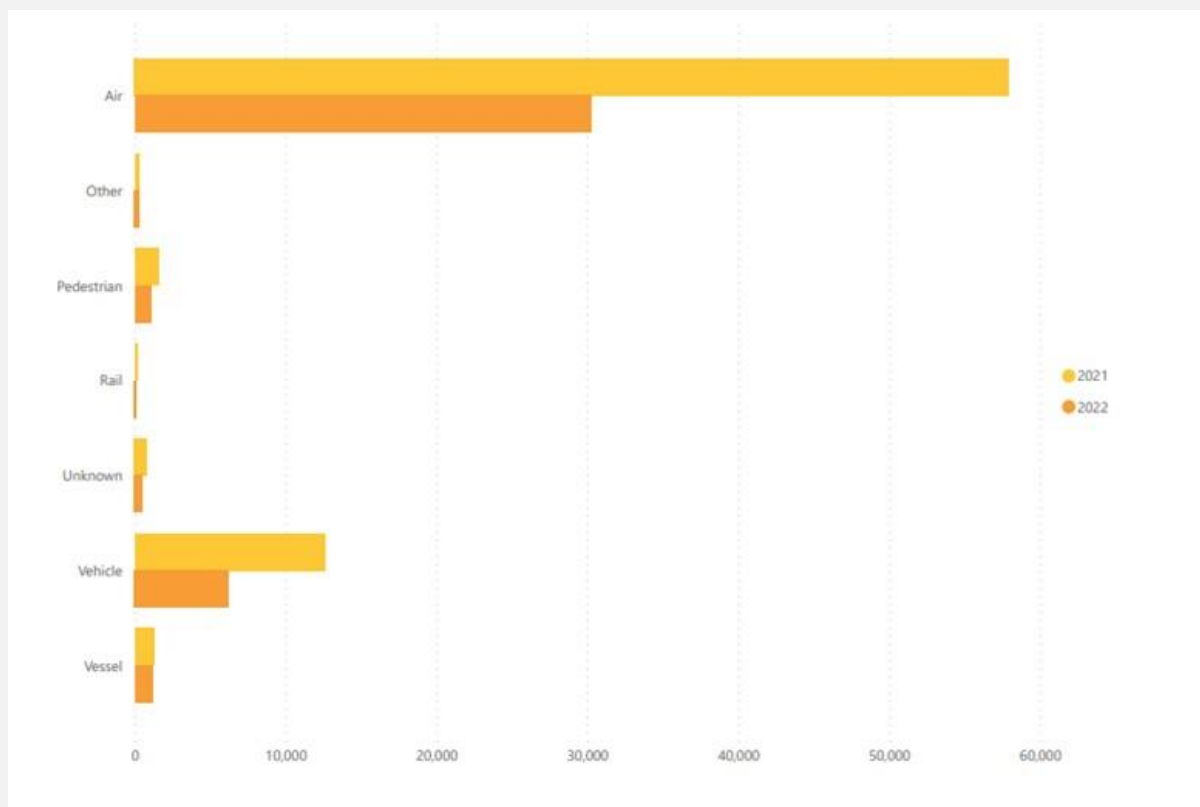
The illicit drug market is characterized by a broad spectrum of substances, including opioids, cocaine, cannabis, amphetamines, and NPS. Opioids such as heroin and fentanyl are a major area of concern due to their high potency and addictive properties. The surge of fentanyl as a substantial threat because 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.

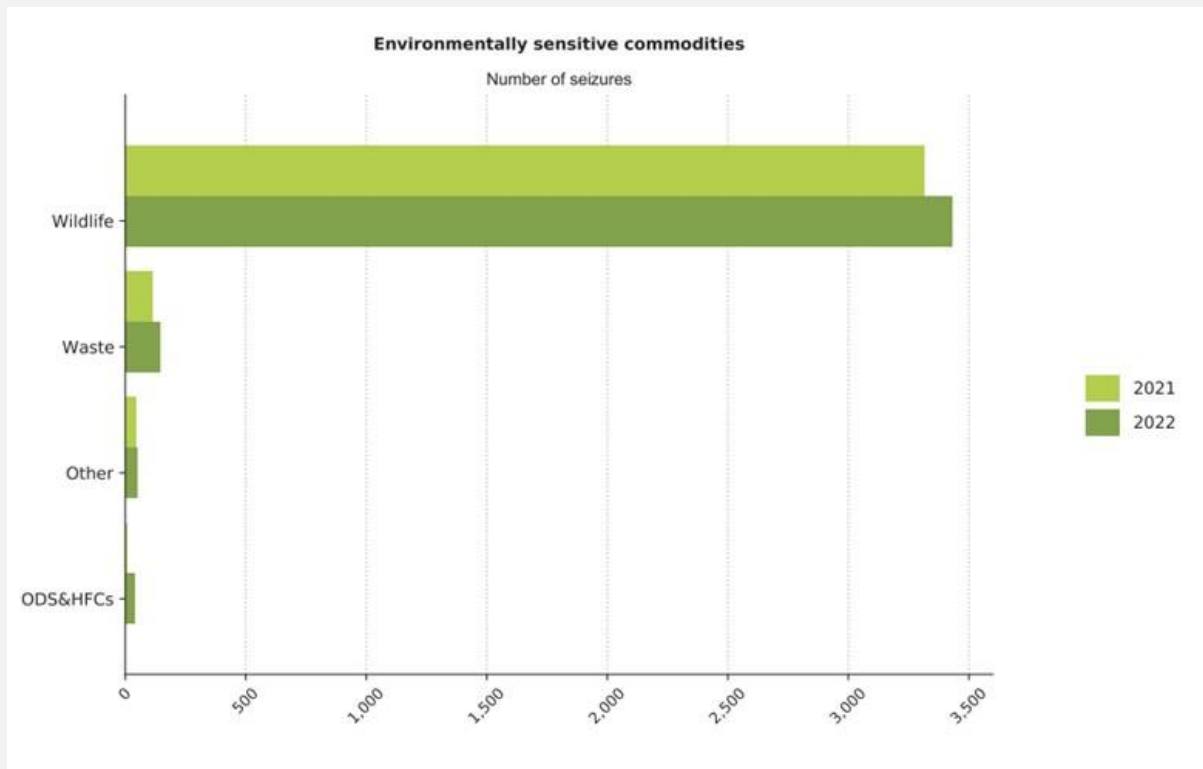
The cooperation among countries and regions is crucial in the fight against drug trafficking. Projects like the COLIBRI Project and the AIRCOP scheme aim to strengthen the capabilities of international airports and general aviation facilities in identifying and intercepting passengers and cargo that 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.

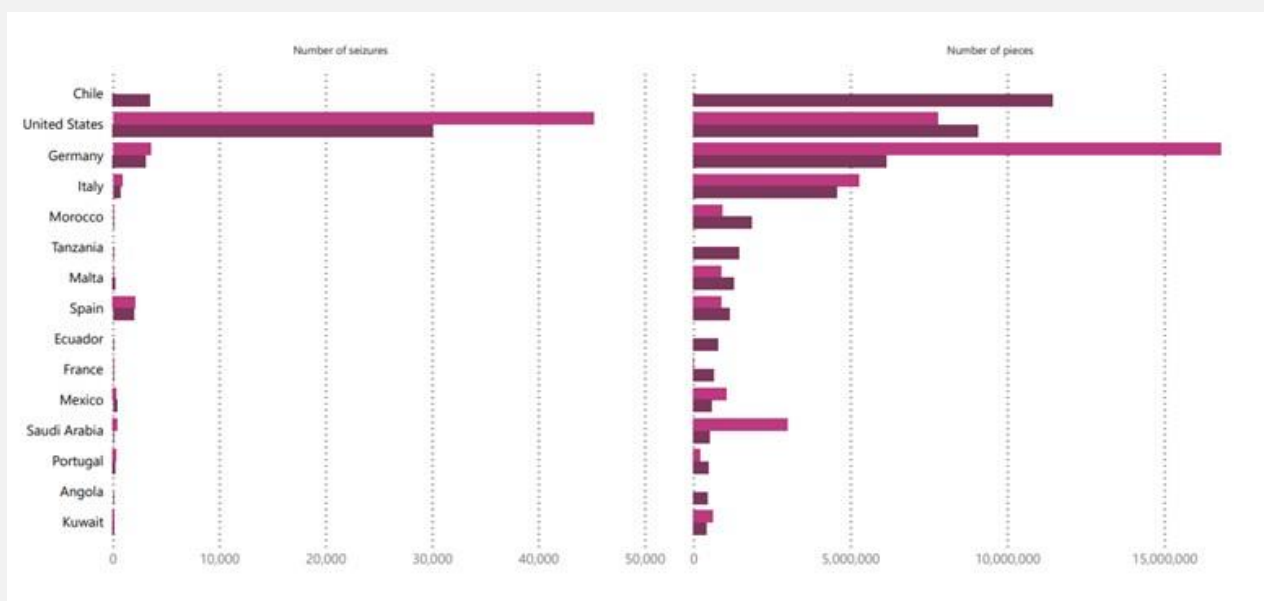
In 2022, the WCO implemented global enforcement operations named THUNDER and DEMETER. THUNDER focuses on wildlife and timber trafficking involving protected and endangered species under the CITES Convention, while DEMETER targets waste and substances controlled under the Montreal Protocol.

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

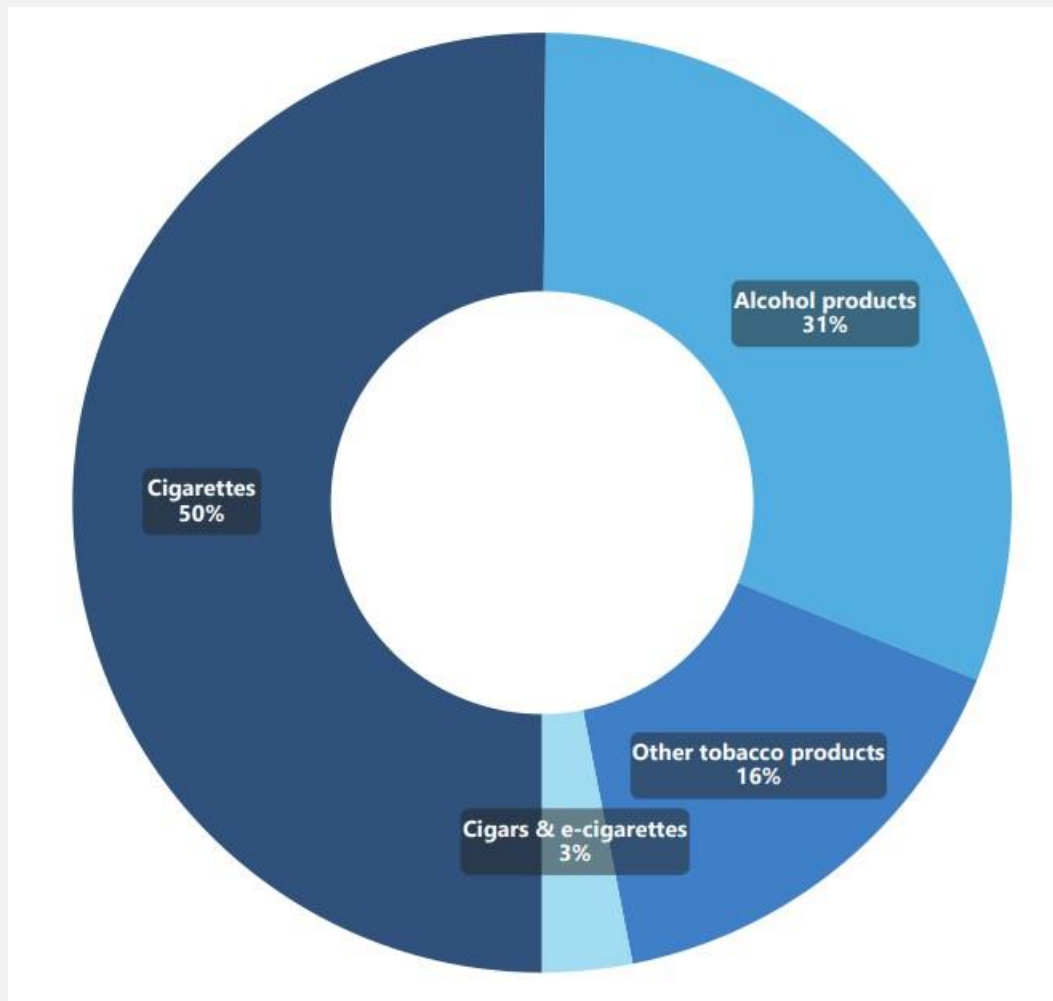
poses escalating challenges. It underscores the importance of strengthening risk profiling, promoting cross-border collaboration, and proactive law enforcement to effectively address this persistent global issue.

## **6. REVENUE**

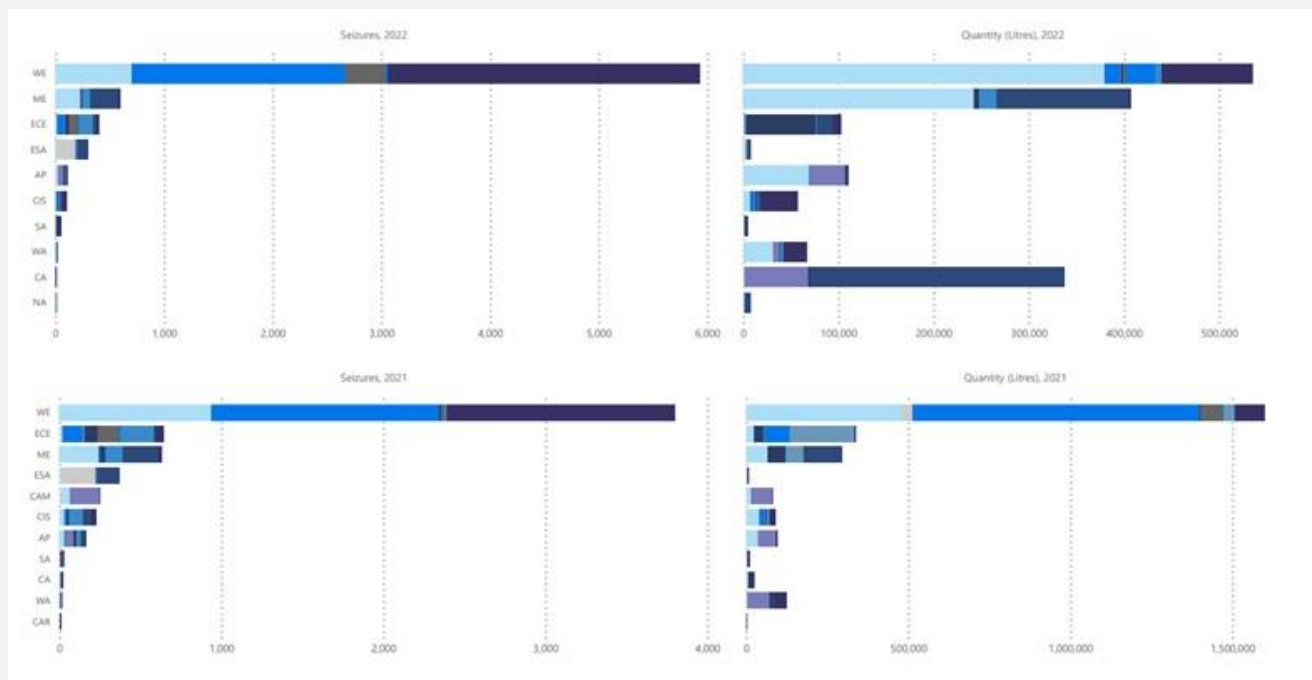
This section provides a comprehensive analysis of global illicit trade trends, with a specific focus on tobacco products and alcohol. The report highlights the significant efforts made by participating countries and their administrations to combat illicit trade and provides evidence-based insights to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

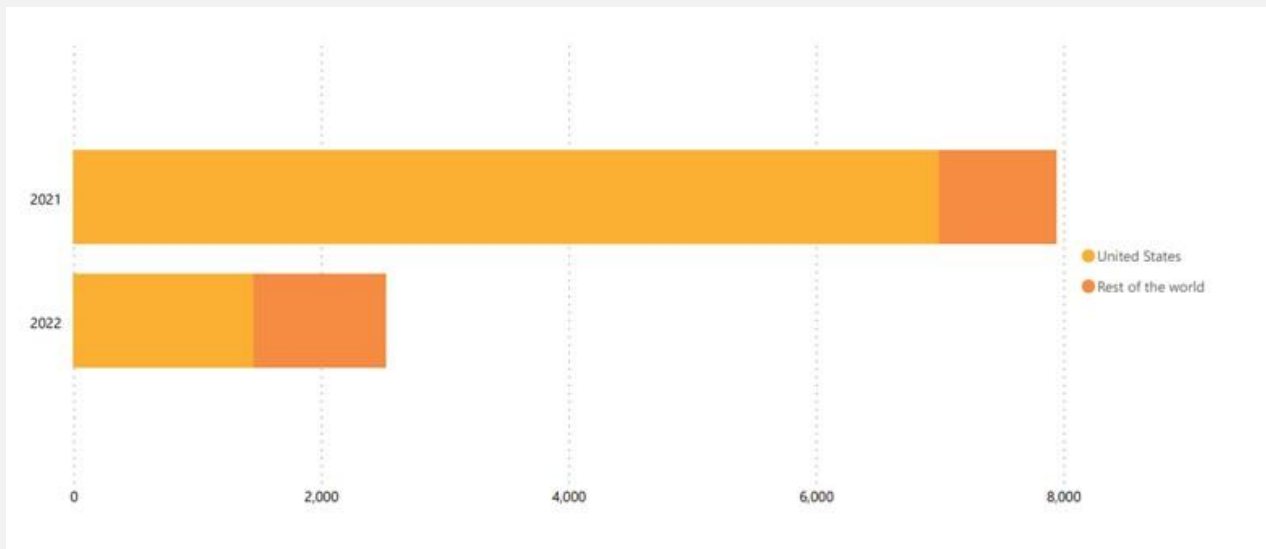
The section emphasizes the need for increased cooperation between countries and agencies to combat these illicit activities. Operation OPSON XI, a successful joint effort by Europol and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), resulted in significant seizures of illicit products and the disruption of multiple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

# An introduction of the ROCB A/P Customs Good Practice Report on Canine Training and Operations in the AP region (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)

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Jaemin CHO (Mr.)

Program Manager, ROCB A/P

## Preamble

I am delighted to introduce here the ROCB A/P Customs Good Practice Report on K9 Training and Operation with enriched and updated contents as a new edition.

In the current era of customs clearance procedures, there has been a broad integration of advanced technologies, specifically highlighting the adoption of the non-intrusive inspection (NII) methods. This approach is geared towards guaranteeing an enhanced level of security. Despite the continual development of high-tech clearance methods in combating drug trafficking and addressing fraudulent activities, the role of detector dogs remains indispensable for traditional non-intrusive detection methods. In the present context of customs crime, law enforcement agencies globally are introducing canine units to detect trafficking attempts involving currency, endangered species, explosives, firearms, and to safeguard intellectual property rights.

Recognizing the crucial role of canine units, the World Customs Organization (WCO) has long emphasized their importance and has been organizing the Global Canine Forum since 2011. This forum serves as a platform for WCO members to deliberate on the latest developments in utilizing dogs for detecting drugs, firearms, explosives, currency, CITES species, and goods protected by intellectual property rights. Additionally, it facilitates the

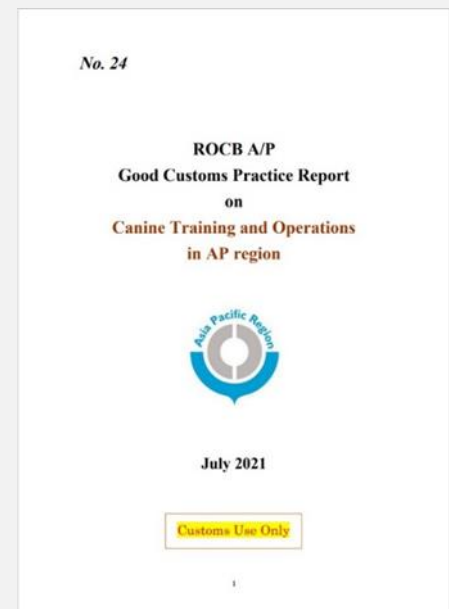
exchange of best practices in terms of dog breeding and the management of canine training centers.



In parallel to WCO's initiatives, the WCO Regional Office of Capacity Building for the Asia Pacific (WCO ROCB AP) has been actively contributing to capacity building activities, organizing workshops on Canine for Asia Pacific members. The most recent regional workshop on Canine in 2022, generously funded by CCF-Korea and hosted by the WCO Regional Dogs Training Center (RDTC) in Korea, focused on discussions about drug trends, seizure cases, and the sharing of best practices. After the workshop, ROCB A/P conducted a follow-up action survey, revealing a resounding success with 85% of participants rating the workshop as "very good" and 15% as "good."



Observing a surge in the number of WCO RDTC members in the AP region from 2 in 2021 to 5 in 2023, ROCB A/P acknowledges the escalating demand for capacity building activities. Against the backdrop of the evolving post-COVID-19 landscape and emerging challenges, ROCB A/P has decided to publish the second edition of the 'ROCB A/P Good Customs Practice Report on Canine Training and Operations in the AP Region'. Highlighting the fact that the inaugural edition was released in September 2021, it is noteworthy that the second edition was published two years later. In the subsequent sections of this essay, I will introduce and elucidate the contents of this significant report.

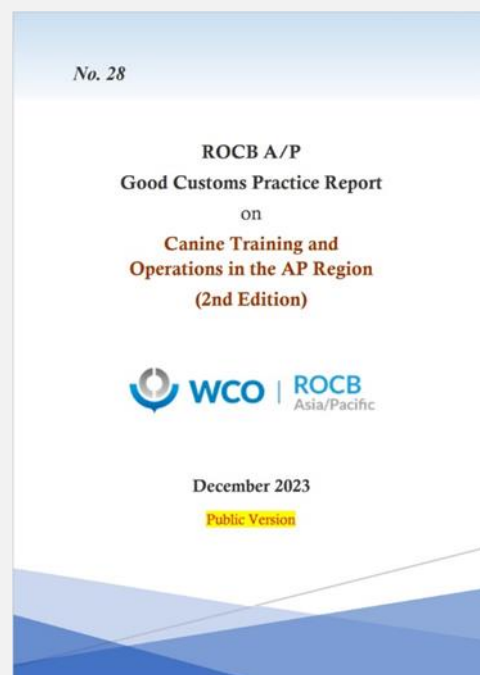


## 1. Scope of this research

This research report aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the operational landscape of detecting dogs among WCO members in the AP region. The focus encompasses the purpose behind the utilization of detecting dogs, the current status of dog breeds, the presence of veterinarians, the training programs, the primary duty zones of these detecting dogs, and the contemporary challenges faced in this area.

The report derives its insights from a survey conducted across all WCO Asia Pacific members. It is important to note that the information presented herein is confined to those countries within the Asia Pacific region that responded to the survey. The analysis is limited to the member countries that actively engaged in the survey.

In particular, the survey revealed that among the 27 countries that responded, 15 currently operate a canine team, with one additional country planning to initiate a canine team within the current year. These active member countries include Australia, China, Fiji, Hong Kong China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Samoa, Thailand, and Vietnam.



## 2. Findings

The primary objective of operating canine units typically revolves around the detection of illegal drug trafficking and fraudulent activities during customs clearance procedures. Likewise, according to this report, each member predominantly deploys canines to combat drug trafficking. Additionally, this report indicates the versatility of Canines in detecting explosives, currency, firearms, and tobacco as well.

This comprehensive report also sheds light on the diverse range of detector dog breeds employed by each member. While various breeds are utilized, the Labrador stands out as the most prevalent choice. Besides Labradors, the report identifies the use of nine other breeds and acknowledges the inclusion of mixed breeds in the detector dog workforce. For more detailed insights, this report offers a thorough examination.

In comparison to the inaugural edition of this report, this version introduces an expanded analysis, incorporating the presence of veterinarians at detection dog training centers and the primary work areas of the detector dogs as additional subjects. Concerning the employment of veterinarians, it has been confirmed that six countries have full-time veterinarians. Furthermore, there are indications suggesting the existence of part-time and outsourcing arrangements to support veterinary services besides the full-time type.

In terms of work areas of Canines, the deployment areas, as outlined in this report, encompass a wide array of customs clearance zones. These include customs-controlled areas, land border control points, express transit centers, container yards, international post offices, inland freight depots, container X-ray facilities, commercial vessels, yachts, cruise terminals, cruise vessels, wharves, bonded warehouses, air freight stations, rail stations, train stations, seaports, airports encompassing passengers, luggage, aircraft, entry, and tarmac area. This report confirms their versatile deployment across virtually all customs clearance areas. Despite this broad capability, the universally recognized primary deployment areas for each member, as highlighted in this report, are international airports, seaports, and international mail centers.

This edition of the report also delves into the procurement process of detector dogs with more detail. Each member's approach to acquiring detector dogs extends beyond the internal breeding or external purchases; this report identifies various procurement methods. For instance, some countries receive detector dogs as donations from the members, while others obtain them through bilateral agreement.

An analysis of each member's dog training programs and instructors at the detection dog training center is presented in this report as well. Notably, variations exist across countries in terms of the number of instructors, the annual production of detector dogs, and the training duration.

### **3. Current challenges**

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the 'ROCB AP Good Customs Practice Report on Canine Training and Operations in the AP Region,' significant reviews have been made in identifying challenges and implementing solutions to enhance canine training and operations. This aims to shed light on the efforts made to address the challenges outlined in the inaugural edition. The inaugural edition of this report pinpointed several challenges faced by the Asia Pacific region, ranging from enhancing programs dedicated to both canines and handlers to difficulties in sourcing high-quality dogs. These challenges underscored the complexity of managing canine units effectively.

According to ROCB A/P's re-survey in 2023 to assess the current landscape, the result indicates that, while progress has been made, primary concerns still revolve around programs

for enhancing handlers, knowledge of emerging threats, and budget considerations for facility and program management.

To address these challenges, as per this report, some member administrations propose establishing a network for sharing information on evolving threats. For instance, member administrations need to establish standard training programs, implement performance appraisals, and activate knowledge-sharing initiatives to enhance handler capabilities. It is also mentioned as crucial for operational effectiveness to allocate distinct budgets for the Dogs Training Center and Canines Field team, as financial support is key for sustainable canine training and operations. In summary, collaborative efforts, research, standard training, and strategic budgeting are essential for Customs Canine Operations to effectively combat emerging threats and ensure border security.

## 4. Conclusion

Considering the distinct role played by Canine units in customs enforcement, it is acknowledged that there is a lack of specific rules or guidelines within the WCO. Nevertheless, the imperative of international cooperation is underscored, prompting efforts to exchange information and experiences among member countries.

Recently, the significance of the WCO RDTC in the Asia Pacific region has been highlighted. Since 2023, additionally three more members' centers<sup>1</sup> have been designated as WCO RDTC to play a pivotal role in facilitating the sharing of canine training programs and facilities among customs administrations. The Asia Pacific region is commended for its exemplary regional cooperation in the canine domain, with many members operating Canine units and actively trying to contribute to collaborative efforts. This indicates that there is the positive and cooperative atmosphere in the Asia Pacific region regarding Customs Canine operations.



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<sup>1</sup> The mentioned three members are Australia, Hong Kong China, and Indonesia.

Against this backdrop, the role of ROCB AP is expected to be significant as well. To live up to these expectations, ROCB AP will do its best to organize workshops on canine regularly and periodically publish related research reports, update the organizational status of the WCO RDTC to assist members' administration. At the same time, ROCB A/P would like to continue encouraging participants to actively attend workshops.

If you are interested in Customs Canines and the WCO RDTC in Asia Pacific, I recommend visiting the ROCB AP website (<http://www.rocb-ap.org/>) and exploring the 'ROCB AP Good Practice Report on K9<sup>1</sup>' and the 'Brochure of RDTC in the Asia Pacific region<sup>2</sup>'. I hope these documents will be helpful for members in understanding Customs Canine operations.

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed information, please refer to the website "ROCB AP". Available at: <http://rocb-ap.org/service/11/> (Accessed: Jan 10, 2024).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., [http://www.rocb-ap.org/file\\_media/file\\_image/Brochurevol3.pdf](http://www.rocb-ap.org/file_media/file_image/Brochurevol3.pdf) (Accessed: Jan 10, 2024)

# Enhancement of Customs Excellence in the Asia/Pacific Region: Introduction of ROCB A/P Brochures on Regional Entities

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Mr Louis CHAN

Program Manager, ROCB A/P

## Overview of the ROCB A/P Brochures on Regional Entities

The Asia/Pacific (A/P) region, recognized for its leading role among all World Customs Organization (WCO) regions in capacity building, emphasizes strong coordination and collaboration among member countries and regional entities. To foster this partnership and the ongoing efforts of training entities in the region, the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB A/P) has released the "Brochure of WCO Regional Capacity Building Entities in the Asia Pacific Region." This brochure provides comprehensive information about the WCO Capacity Building Entities in the region.

## Understanding the Role of Regional Entities

To appreciate the resources provided by ROCB A/P, it is critical to understand the role of regional entities. These entities, are fundamental to the regionalization approach of the World Customs Organization (WCO), address the distinct requirements and challenges of specific global regions. The WCO, an international governmental organization, comprises 185 member countries, organized into six regions.

In the AP region, these entities are crucial in improving customs competencies and promoting collaboration. They include Regional Training Centres (RTCs), Regional Customs Laboratories (RCLs), and Regional Dog Training Centres (RDTCs), each focusing on vital areas of customs knowledge and practice.

## **Enhancing Capacity Building through Regional Entities**

Regional entities with the ROCB A/P significantly impact capacity building and regional cooperation activities. They form the foundation of two basic roles. These are to support in delivering capacity building in the region and to contribute in enhancing regional cooperation from each core competent for knowledge exchange, training, and skill development in the AP region. Each entity contributes as follows:

- **RTCs (Regional Training Centres):** This brochure highlights a total of 10 RTCs, each featuring its unique strengths and capabilities (China, Fiji, Hong Kong, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand). These centres prioritize specialized training for regional beneficiaries, hosting workshops and WCO Human Resource Development Programs, developing training expertise and enhancing the blended learning network. This initiative equips customs officials with essential knowledge and skills for customs function in the international trade.

- **RCLs (Regional Customs Laboratories):** In this, you'll find information on a total of 5 RCLs, each distinguished by its specific areas of expertise (China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea). Specializing in chemical analysis for classification and trade control, RCLs are critical in maintaining the accuracy and efficiency of customs operations. Through hosting workshop and WCO RCL Professional Programme, they provide vital training and information exchange to support classification and trade control endeavors.

- **RDTCs (Regional Dog Training Centres):** Featuring a total of 5 RDTCs (Australia, China, Hong Kong, China, Indonesia, Korea). RDTCs are instrumental in combating illicit trafficking through specialized canine operations. They offer essential training, equipping customs administrations to effectively tackle smuggling and bolster border security. For detailed insights into the Canine (K9) units' roles and challenges in Customs enforcement in the Asia Pacific region, refer to the ROCB A/P Good Customs Practice Report on Canine

Training and Operations in the AP Region (2nd Edition), released in December 2023 (<http://rocb-ap.org/service/11/>).

## Introducing the ROCB A/P Brochures on Regional Entities

In line with its mission to improve customs competency and regional cooperation, ROCB A/P introduces the "Brochure of WCO Regional Capacity Building Entities in the Asia Pacific Region." This brochure, comprising three volumes, is dedicated to each key regional entity:

1. Volume 1 - RTCs: This volume showcases 10 RTCs (China, Fiji, Hong Kong, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand). It provides insights into Regional Training Centres, offering details about their facilities, equipment, and operations. This volume serves as a crucial resource for enhancing customs knowledge.
2. Volume 2 - RCLs: In this volume, you'll find information about 5 RCLs (China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea). It explores the operations of Regional Customs Laboratories, explaining their role in chemical analysis of goods, classification, and trade controls.
3. Volume 3 - RDTCs: This volume introduces 5 RDTCs (Australia, China, Hong Kong, China, Indonesia, Korea), highlighting their significant contributions to customs enforcement through canine operations.



## **Accessing the Brochure**

Please visit ROCB A/P's website and access the materials through the 'Resource' tab. You can also find the 'Brochure of WCO Regional Capacity Building Entities in the Asia Pacific Region' directly at <http://www.rocb-ap.org/service/547/>.

## **A Heartfelt Thank You to Our AP Region Members**

We express our sincere gratitude to the members of the Asia/Pacific region for their invaluable contributions and updates, ensuring these brochures remain living documents, constantly up-to-date, and relevant resources. Your ongoing support and commitment have been crucial in the development and continuous improvement of these materials. Together, we are forging a stronger future in customs practices and capacity building.

We invite you to delve into these brochures, benefit from the extensive capacity building resources they provide, and join us in our unwavering commitment to advancing customs excellence and regional collaboration in the Asia/Pacific region.

# Highlight the New Edition of the Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT)

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Ms. Aksara Mackhawiman

Assistant Program Manager ROCB A/P

## Introduction

A new edition of the GED tool has arrived at last December. This is a sign of the WCO's continued commitment to the importance it places on this subject, Gender Equality and Diversity and supports further efforts and improvements in the situation of its members. The updates include new indicators in the Communication, Integrity, Cross-cutting policies, Recruitment and Hiring and Health Benefits areas. Moreover, a new standalone chapter on Security and Safety has been added, as well as a new template aimed at helping Members use the GEOAT indicators and prepare the elaboration of a dedicated GED action plan. The tool has also been given a new design to make it more appealing to users, and its structure has been improved to make it more user-friendly<sup>1</sup>. This article will provide an overview of the Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs and the Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT), with the focuses on the updates in the new edition of GEOAT.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2023/december/a-new-edition-of-the-gender-equality-organizational-assessment-tool.aspx>

## Recall of the Background of Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs

Gender equality and Diversity (GED) is a fundamental human right. Achieving Gender Equality and empower all women and girls is one of the Goal of Sustainable Development of the UN's International Development Agenda for 2030<sup>1</sup>. To align with the goal, Gender equality and Diversity has been widely promoted in many organizations and addressed in numerous publications.

To support this approach, WCO issued the declaration of the Customs Co-Operation Council on Gender Equality and Diversity in the Customs, the declaration outlines its action in encouraging administrations to adopt a policy of non-discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity and/or any other grounds as stated in anti-discrimination laws in Member's respective countries. In this connection, it also encourages Members to ensure that all Customs staff be treated fairly based on performance and ability, and be awarded equal opportunities with regard to hiring, promotion, salary, benefits, disciplinary measures, termination and layoffs<sup>2</sup>.

The WCO also established the working bodies; Virtual Working Group (VWG) on Gender Equality and Diversity, and Network for Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs. It also developed tools for the GED; the Compendium on Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs and the Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT).

## What is the feature of the New Edition of Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT)?

The Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT) is a tool which has been developed by WCO to assist members to assess their current policies, practices and activities to address GED issues, with a focus on gender equality. However, the GEOAT is not to determine if we have successfully implemented the GED, but rather to highlight the areas in which we are lack in order to achieve this goal and areas that require intention. The GEOAT



<sup>1</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

<sup>2</sup> The declaration of the Customs Co-Operation Council on Gender Equality and Diversity in the Customs.

originally launched in 2014 and was first updated in 2019. The GEOAT was recently revised in 2023 to redesign the structure of the key element in the principle. To make it more user friendly.

## **1. Redesigns the structure**

The new edition redesigns the structure of the Principles and Key Elements, merging and separating other to make the tool more friendly-user, The updates is also included adding new indicators in the area of communication, integrity, safety and security as well as additional indicators in the area of cross-cutting policy, recruitment, and hiring, health benefits.

### **Principle 1: Strategy, Governance and Leadership**

Key element A: Cross-cutting policies

Key element B –Governance, management and leadership

Key element C – Multiple discrimination/intersectionality

Key element D – Communication

Key element E – Integrity

### **Principle 2: Employment, Career Development and Compensation**

Key element A – Recruitment and hiring

Key element B – Career advancement

Key element C – Wages, benefits and pay equity

### **Principle 3: Work – Life Balance**

Key element A – Flexibility policies

Key element B – Dependent and family care

Key element C – Health benefits

### **Principle 4: Gender – Based Violence and Harassment**

Key element A – Gender-based violence (GBV)

Key element B – Harassment including sexual harassment

## **Principle 5: Border Operations and Stakeholder Relations**

Key element A – Customs policies, procedures and border operations

Key element B – Stakeholder relations

## **Principle 6: Security and Safety**

Key element A – Risk profiling

Key element B – Collaboration with other border agencies and stakeholder relations

Key element C – Conduct and safety of employees

## **2. Adding the Principle 6**

Principle 6: Security and Safety , was newly added to the GEOAT, will focus on the effort in ensuring the health and safety of our staff, stakeholders, member of the society, particularly in area of cross border. The following are the highlight of the indicator of each Key Element.

### **Key Element A: Risk Profile**

The indicator will assist us to assess our work in the process of building risk profiles, to avoid gender bias in detecting smugglers and or terrorist, and monitor the detection of harmful goods, to identify those targeting specific segment of population.

### **Key element B: Collaborating with other border agencies and stakeholders relations**

This element contains the indicators with the focus on the work in relate for example the way to treat migrants, refugees and victims of human trafficking to ensure the protection of human right , ensure that the administration's code of conduct, client/Taxpayer Charter is clearly visible at the border, providing appropriate infrastructure at the border taking into account the specific needs of different groups including women, children, a person with disability, Provide infrastructure/requirement in different language.

### **Key Element C: conduct and safety of employees**

It consist of the indicator to assess out work in the process of providing training for border officials on the implications of stereotypes in passenger control and enforcement procedures to avoid any bias, Consult with female customs officer to facilitate women to take

on enforcement position, Conduct regular health and safety audits/inspections, Have a publicity-displayed zero tolerance policy, communicate that the firearm/other weapon are only provided for workplace duties, provide a means for reporting unacceptable behaviors, Assess the physical security procedures at the remote border posts and the safety of employees, particularly female when travelling.

### 3. A template table that can be used to fill the information when implementing the GEOAT

The updates are also included an introduction of a template table that can be used to fill the information when implementing the GEOAT. This document recommended the working group to input the data in the below table so that they can utilize the most of the data. This is an effective tool for summarizing and analyzing the data, it helps us organize information in a systematic and structured manner. It will enable users to review the key point of the information.

GEOAT indicator	Strategic alignment	GEOAT evaluation scale	Current activities	Suggested forward activities	Units to involve/ resources needed	Timeline	Targets and Monitoring indicators
Enter the GEOAT indicator that you are assessing.	Enter the policy or legal framework that is related to the GEOAT indicator you are assessing.	Enter the level of implementation that your administration has reached based on the GEOAT evaluation scale.	Enter the current activities that your administration has implemented related to the GEOAT indicator that you are assessing.	Enter suggestions for future activities that need to be put in place to reach a higher level of implementation of the GEOAT indicator that you are assessing.	Enter the units to be involved in the future activities.	Enter the timeline for implementation of suggested future activities.	Enter existing sex disaggregated data or suggestions for indicators to monitor the implementation and performance of the suggested future activities.

5	Full implementation	Policy and implementation plan in place that is widely accepted and utilized*, and monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.
4	Advanced implementation	Policy and implementation plan in place that is partially accepted or utilized*, but not monitored and evaluated on regular basis.
3	Moderate implementation	Policy and implementation plan in place that is not yet widely accepted or utilized*.
2	Beginning implementation	Policy in developmental phase, or pilot programme, and/or minimal implementation
1	Ad hoc arrangements	Arrangements made for specific cases.
0	Non-existent	No policy or plan in place; need information to get started.
N/A	Not applicable	Particular key element is not relevant to organization's operations

## Way Forward

While we have been working in raising awareness of gender equality for a decade, there's still a lot of effort needed to achieve the Gender Equality and Diversity to improve member's situation. In the Asia Pacific region, the Asia Pacific Regional Strategic Plan for 2022/24 encourages Asia Pacific members to improve its situation through the capacity building actions. Needless to say, promoting for GED in the workplace is a challenge for every organization but it will contribute to create a productive workplace. The GEOAT can be regarded as an attempt to initiative the implementing of the GED in our Administration to enhance and raise the awareness of the GED as well as to embrace diversity and promoting gender equality. The ROCB A/P encourages Asia Pacific members to utilize the new edition of GEOAT for further improvement.

# WCO's A-CIP Always Welcome New Donors Wholeheartedly

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Norikazu Kuramoto

Head of ROCB A/P

## Introduction

As you know, the WCO Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion (A-CIP) Programme is a wonderful scheme to achieve healthy Customs organizations through improved integrity. This programme provides support to WCO members as is guided by the key factors of the WCO Revised Arusha Declaration (<https://rad.wcoomd.org/>).

The A-CIP Programme (link on [wcoomd.org](https://wcoomd.org)) was made possible with an initial investment from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). As a multi-donor WCO Programme, a further investment from Canada combined with that of Norway further expanded the support available through the Programme. These tranches of funding end in March 2024 (Canada) and September 2025 (Norway); therefore, further funding is being sought to allow the A-CIP Programme to continue providing support to its members.

Thanks to the great investments from Norway and Canada, the A-CIP Programme supported more than 20 beneficiary countries. However, interest from other Members remains high. For example, although corruption was identified as a critical issue to Members from the East Asian sub-region, funding to support Members from this region through the A-CIP Programme has not yet been available.

## Latest achievements of A-CIP

The A-CIP activities leverage collective action, performance measurement and data analysis, as well as synergies with other initiatives as implementation principles for achieving results.

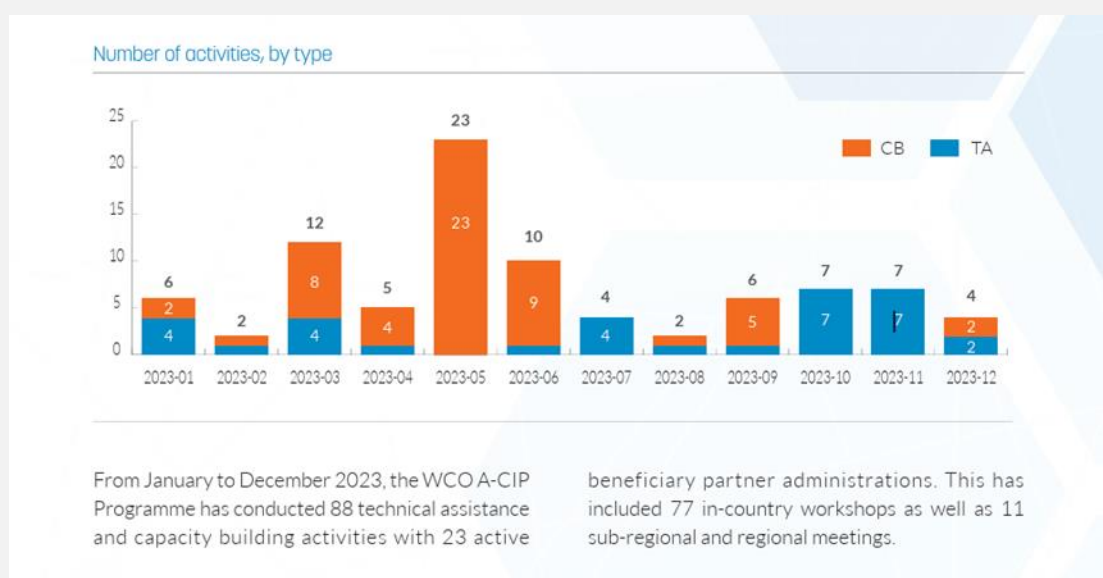
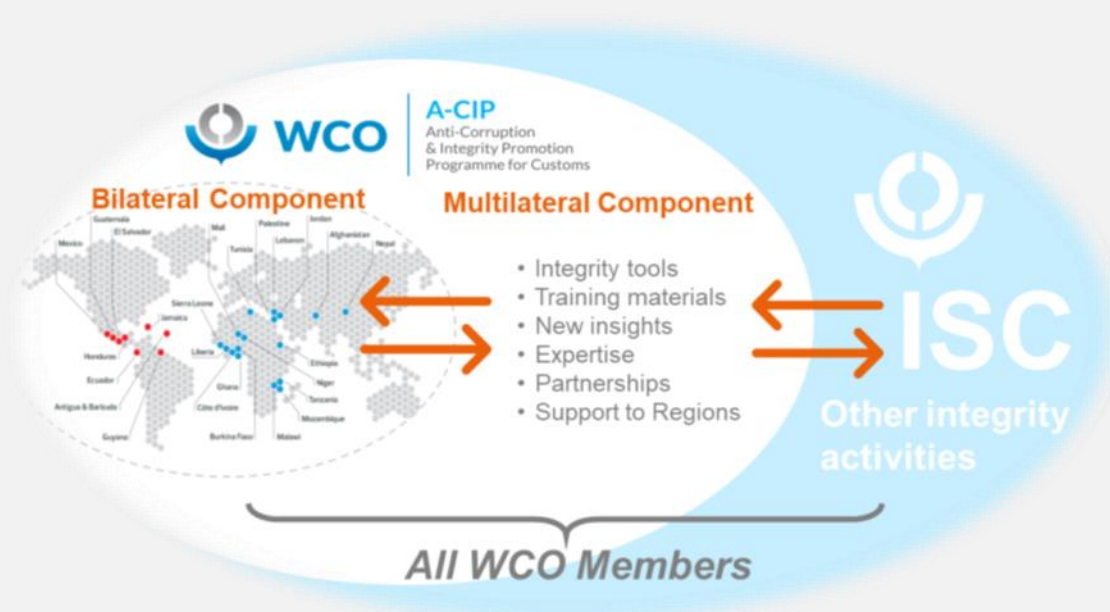
Specific examples of new resources and tools developed through the A-CIP Programme and now available to all WCO Members include:

- E-learning modules on Integrity and Internal Affairs in a Customs context (accessed via the WCO CLiKC! platform and completed by more than 7,000 Member officials to date).
- Revised Arusha Declaration Implementation Resources Center (accessed via the WCO website with almost 5,000 views to date).
- Training material on Customs integrity-related topics (accessed via WCO capacity building initiatives, with nearly 3,000 Member officials trained to date).
- Integrity Web series (accessed via the WCO website and YouTube channel, with nearly 13,000 views to date)
- Gender Equality, Diversity and Integrity Guidance Note and Video (accessed via the WCO website and YouTube channel).



## Major Activities

The bilateral component of the Programme involves the delivery of WCO technical assistance and capacity building to help selected WCO member countries undertake measures to implement priority areas of the Revised Arusha Declaration. For each administration, a multi-annual action plan is developed along with clear benchmarks and performance measurement criteria. The Programme also contains a multilateral component to create an enabling environment for WCO Members to implement A-CIP Programme measures by leveraging regional and international initiatives in parallel, and to build WCO instruments and tools.





## Situation in the Asia Pacific

The A-CIP already identified corruption in the Asia Pacific region as a critical issue to its members. Needless to say, one of the good solutions to this is technical cooperation. In addition, increasing the number of recognized experts on Integrity within Asia Pacific region will contribute to the reduction of corruption in member administrations, as well as to the awareness raising of the AP region through their contributions to regional workshop and sub-regional workshop. Therefore, the continuation of the A-CIP Programme is sincerely desired.

As members of the Asia Pacific region are aware, improving integrity is stipulated in Focus Area 3 (Capacity Building) of the Regional Strategic Plan for the Asia Pacific region and I appreciate all efforts of Asia Pacific Members to improve integrity.

## Way forward

As I explained earlier, the A-CIP Programme is sincerely looking for donors to help continue the project, and if any donors are interested in accompanying A-CIP Programme to improve the integrity of the Asia Pacific region, please contact A-CIP at the WCO Secretariat ([a-cip@wcoomd.org](mailto:a-cip@wcoomd.org)).

The ROCB A/P always pays attention to Members' needs and focuses on strengthening capacities in promoting Customs modernization including integrity.

# Induction Training for new recruits in Customs Administrations

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Ms. Aksara Mackhawiman

Assistant Program Manager ROCB A/P

## Introduction

Stepping in the fast-paced work environment within the Customs Environment, is a challenge for new employees. While the new employees come with different background and varying levels of the familiarity with Customs, this can make it difficult for them to perform their duties effectively from the beginning. Training Courses for new recruits will be helpful in navigating the new employee through the early stages of their employment. It is highly recommended for Customs to establish a solid foundation for the new employee to be able to adopt and handle their work at the frontline. With this background, my essay presents relevant WCO tools and tips for providing fulfilling training for new recruits.

## Necessity of training for new recruits

The key areas to be covered in the induction training course for new employees in Customs include comprehensive knowledge in various aspects of Customs to equip the new employee with a background in key competencies such as Tariff Classification, Valuation, Customs Procedure, and Customs regulations. It is also essential to provide new recruits with the background knowledge in the international trade such as trade agreements, conventions, the role of stakeholder in the international trade, international trade transactions etc. This will enable the new employee to understand the complexity of the Customs environment.

Providing the introduction to the organization will also form the understanding of the role, mission, and strategic plan, enabling them to understand their role and responsibilities as well as familiarization with organization culture. In addition, comprehensive skills such as communication, time management, language and computer skills will help them to deliver their daily work more effectively.

By providing the comprehensive knowledge associated with the unique challenges in the Customs environment, the new employee will be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate their work in the Customs environment effectively and contribute to the success of the organization. When providing such training, it must be well-designed and delivered systematically, taking into account the level of knowledge and appropriate skills required for the position.

## **WCO Tools**

WCO has developed several tools to support Members to develop their capacities in a sustainable manner. This essay will explore the induction training in the WCO framework of Principles and Practices on Customs Professionalism and the guide to implementing competency-based human resource management in a Customs Administration environment, in the area of the induction training

### **1. The WCO framework of Principles and Practices on Customs Professionalism**

The framework was developed to equip Members with a blueprint to design comprehensive workforce development strategies and programmes for Customs administrations as well as pooling methods on the related key concepts including development and learning.

The framework provides an explanation regarding the induction training that the main purpose of these courses is to introduce newly recruited officers to basic Customs procedures who will be assigned to work for the first time in Customs Administrations. Core course components usually include:

- Structures, roles, values, ethics and functions of the administration; and

- Basic information about Customs Laws, procedures and practices, international agreements and conventions and the environment of Customs etc<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. The Guide to implementing competency-based human resource management in a Customs Administration environment

The guide was developed to present the steps to be followed by Customs administrations and/or merged authorities including Customs (revenue authority, border surveillance agency, etc.) to establish a competency-based human resource management system. It provides an example of a Basic Training course, which was designed for newly recruit Customs officer as below;

**Tab. 12 : Plan de formation de base régionale au profit des inspecteurs et équivalents**

Modules		Number of sessions	Classroom-based training	E-learning training	In-service training	Trainers	Hours	Days
							1,5	6
Job-related competencies								
1	Customs Code	16	12	4	3 months	To designate	16	4
2	Customs legislation and regulations	32	24	8		To designate	32	8
3	Agreements, conventions	28	22	6		To designate	28	7
4	Rules of origin	32	20	12		To designate	32	8
5	Customs duties	32	24	8		To designate	32	8
6	Customs valuation of goods	32	20	12		To designate	32	8
7	Customs clearance procedures	32	24	8		To designate	32	8
8	Economic Regimes	32	20	12		To designate	32	8
9	Tariffs and classification	42	28	14		To designate	42	11
10	Anti-fraud investigations and enforcement	24	20	4		To designate	24	6
11	Risk management and analysis	16	8	8		To designate	16	4
12	International trade techniques	16	16			To designate	16	4
13	Surveillance techniques	8	8			To designate	8	3
14	Brigade management	8	8			To designate	8	3
	Seminar on the Agreement on Trade Facilitation						To designate	8
	Seminar on techniques for Customs inspection of companies					To designate	4	2

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/capacity-building/activities-and-programmes/people-development.aspx>

Support and transferable competencies								
1	General presentation of Customs administration	8				To designate	8	2
2	Writing for business and report-writing	12				To designate	16	4
3	Office technology	16				To designate	16	4
4	Information system (ASYCUDA World)	20				To designate	24	6
5	Basics of accounting	28	16	12		To designate	28	8
6	Languages	20	4	16		To designate	24	6
7	Professional ethics and code of conduct	8	8			To designate	12	3

Managerial and behavioural competencies								
1	Interpersonal skills and communication	10	10			To designate	12	3
2	Team working	8	8			To designate	8	2
3	Management techniques	24	24			To designate	32	8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>110</b>			<b>528</b>	<b>132</b>

**N.B : 1 training session = 1 hour and 30 minutes**

Source: Guide to implementing Competency-Based HRM in a Customs Administration Environment

The Basic Training Course is designed for a period of nine months, including three months of in-service training with two months of training, followed by one month of in-service training in a Customs office. This plan will allow new employees to familiarize themselves with the context of work and fostering a deeper understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

The course covers three key competency areas; professional competencies which offer comprehensive and technical knowledge in Customs to support new employees in their duties, support competencies which covers the essential skill sets for daily tasks, and managerial competencies which focuses on developing the behavioral skills necessary for effective leadership and decision-making<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/capacity-building/activities-and-programmes/people-development/competency-based-human-resources-management.aspx>

## Challenges in designing the induction program for new employees?

1. New employees often join the induction training course with limited background knowledge and experience in the Customs environment and a volume of information is presented to them, processing and retaining all this information at once can be a challenging and this information might easily fade from their memory. In addition, due to their lack of work experience in Customs, new recruits may struggle to envision how the work will be and how the knowledge they learned to be utilize in their work.

Utilizing technology and integrating interactive training methods such as simulation, role play, and exercises, can significantly enhance retention during the induction training. Various teaching methods, such as video tutorials, can be employed to help new employees with the limited background in visualizing scenarios effectively.

Incorporating microlearning is also helpful, the content in the microlearning is designed to be concise and focus on the essential information. In addition, the microlearning is also designed with the repetition technique, this will enhance retention. It is a useful tool to deliver the content on the specific learning objective.

After a period of time, offering a refresher course will help the new employee to review and update the knowledge and information. These courses can be conducted in various formats such as in-person training, or e-learning. The refresher course can also serve as platform for employee to share their insights and challenges associated with their experience and the lessons learned from the job.

2. In certain circumstances, organizations urgently require the manpower and cannot afford to wait for the new employee to undergo the long – term induction training, the organization may manage to provide the short training programme consist of the necessary information for them to start working quickly , or provide resources such as manual or online material that contain enough information for them to perform the duties, and allow them to learn and tailor the training course to match their needs.

3. Designing a training program, especially the long-term training programme, coordinating with various stakeholders for the schedule is a challenge, the long – term programme often last over a period of weeks or months. It requires abilities in planning and negotiating to be able to find the suitable time to accommodate most of the stakeholders. This

includes the ability to adapt to the change in certain circumstances, they must modify the schedule and communicate effectively to all stakeholders.

## **Way forward**

As the main asset of Customs, employees play a pivotal role in an organization. Providing necessary knowledge and skills to new employees is a significant step in establishing a solid foundation for new employee. However, the support should not end at the induction training. Employees encounter new challenges every day, providing continuous support and assistance to employees at all stages of their work is essential to the success of an organization.

It is ROCB A/P commitment to support Members in the Asia Pacific Region in enhancing their capacities by organizing capacities building activities in various aspects of customs, at national level, sub-regional level, and Asia-Pacific regional level, based on the result of the annual need survey, collecting from Members. Additionally, WCO has developed several tools and resources to provide support to its Members in term of capacity building. This effort will contribute to the sustainable development of Members in the Asia Pacific Region.

# 3<sup>rd</sup> RCL Heads Meeting: A Cornerstone for Collaboration Among Customs Laboratories Worldwide, Beyond the Asia-Pacific Region

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## 1. World Customs Organization (WCO) Regional Customs Laboratories (RCLs)

In today's ever-changing environment, Customs laboratories are increasingly tasked with broader responsibilities beyond traditional functions. These include analysis for Advance Ruling, protection of health and safety, verification of the origin for Free Trade Agreements (FTA), safeguarding Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), and enforcing laws related to illegal drug trafficking. To meet these evolving demands, Customs laboratories leverage their specialized expertise in item analysis.

The history of Regional Customs Laboratories (RCLs) traces back to the Asia-Pacific region. Recognizing the need for collaboration and capacity-building among Customs laboratories, the WCO has authorized certain customs laboratories as WCO RCL within their respective regions. In 2014, RCL Japan became the world's first RCL. As of May 2024, the Asia-Pacific region have five RCLs, located in China, India, Indonesia, Japan, and Korea. With the global economy becoming increasingly interconnected, Customs laboratories and RCLs are expected to conduct analyses swiftly and accurately while fostering enhanced cooperation on a global scale.

## 2. The 3<sup>rd</sup> RCL heads meeting was held in Jinju, Korea, marking the second in-person meeting

In the previous year, the ROCB A/P successfully organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of Heads of WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Customs Laboratory (referred to as the “2<sup>nd</sup> RCL Heads Meeting”) in April 2023. As the first in-person meeting after



the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2<sup>nd</sup> RCL Heads meeting was held in a hybrid format, combining both in-person and online attendance. This year, with RCL Korea eager to organize the RCL Heads meeting, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of Heads of WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Customs Laboratory

(hereafter referred to as the “3<sup>rd</sup> RCL Heads Meeting”) was conducted in person, with all delegations from RCLs in the Asia Pacific region participating in this meeting in person. This underscores the significance of the 3<sup>rd</sup> RCL Heads meeting, being the first meeting where all RCL participants attended in person.



The 3<sup>rd</sup> RCL Heads meeting was attended by 31 participants and observers from all RCLs in the Asia Pacific region, alongside representatives from the WCO Secretariat, RILO A/P, ROCB A/P, and 4 African Customs administrations. The meeting was convened with the following objectives: (I) To provide updates and insights regarding WCO, RILO A/P, and ROCB A/P; (II) To facilitate the exchange of current information on Customs Laboratory affairs, covering activities, analysis experiences, key expertise, analysis items, and trends in illegal drugs; (III) To foster discussion and cooperation among WCO Regional Customs Laboratories in the Asia/Pacific region, with a focus on the RCL Professionals Programme; (IV) To share experiences and address challenges in the realm of drug analysis and enforcement, incorporating the latest information. Additionally, participants were afforded the



opportunity to tour RCL Korea and the Busan Main Customs' laboratory. The subsequent section will provide an overview of the topics addressed and deliberated upon during the 3rd RCL Heads meeting.

### 3. Stakeholders' remarks and update presentations

As the organizers of this meeting on behalf of ROCB A/P, Grace Ye, the Program Manager, and I, Jaemin Cho, the Program Manager, had the honor of serving as Co-Chairs at the 3<sup>rd</sup> RCL Heads meeting. The meeting commenced with welcoming remarks from Mr. Min Han, Director General of the Audit and Revenue Bureau of Korea Customs Service, followed by Mr. Sujin Yuk, Senior Technical Officer of the WCO Secretariat, Mr. Jincheol Yang, Head of RCL Korea, Mr. Osawa Toshihiko, the Head of RILO A/P, Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, the Head of ROCB A/P, and Ms. Kimberlee Clydesdale, WCO Asia Pacific Vice Chair Secretariat. All remarks welcomed the 3<sup>rd</sup> RCL Heads meeting and emphasized the importance of fostering cooperative relationships among participants.

Following the opening session, the Tariff and Trade Affairs Directorate of the WCO Secretariat, RILO A/P, and ROCB A/P provided updates on recent information related to its activities and developments, while participants shared their perspectives on the topics discussed. Especially, Participants expressed interests in 2028 HS Amendment and Green Customs. The insights shared by stakeholders from the WCO, African region, and Asia Pacific region were highly significant for RCLs.

### 4. RCLs' presentation



Each RCL delivered a comprehensive presentation detailing their facilities, responsibilities, human resources, and other key aspects, including testing capacities, RCL history, administrative structure, and challenges. They actively engaged in exchanges of views among RCLs, observers, and other entities. For instance, African customs expressed interest in sample management systems, procedures, and importer appeal systems.

Safety management of material systems garnered interest from all participants, with the WCO suggesting uploading this material to their website. By sharing information among RCLs and participants, the 3<sup>rd</sup> RCL Heads Meeting proved to be a valuable forum for gaining insight into each other's operations, exchanging valuable strategies, and promoting greater cooperation moving forward.

## 5. WCO Regional Customs Laboratory Professionals Programme

The WCO Regional Customs Laboratory Professionals Programme was launched in 2013 as the WCO/Japan Regional Customs Laboratories Programme. This programme provides an opportunity for technical officers to expand and update their knowledge and skills in the chemical analysis of samples for Harmonized System (HS) classification purposes.

As of today, RCL India, RCL Japan and RCL Korea are actively supporting this programme. It is designed for laboratory analysts who are or will be working in Customs laboratories. Participants will gain practical experience at RCL India, RCL Japan or RCL Korea and gain knowledge about the HS at WCO Secretariat as well. Under this Programme, selected Customs officials of an



WCO RCL Professional Programme in RCL Japan in 2023

appropriate technical level will be given an opportunity to study for one week at the WCO Secretariat and then, will be divided into three teams for six weeks at RCL India, RCL Japan or RCL Korea, to acquire practical experience. In October 2023, The WCO successfully organized the 'WCO Regional Customs Laboratory Professionals Programme,' which was followed by a six-week training session at RCL India, RCL Japan and RCL Korea from October to November 2023.

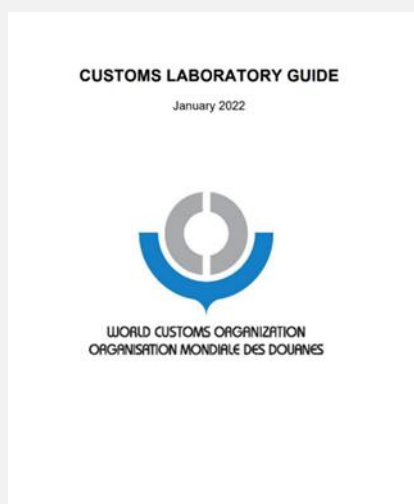
During the 3<sup>rd</sup> RCL Heads Meeting, RCLs from India, Japan, and Korea presented their training schedules and highlighted challenges encountered during the WCO Regional Customs Laboratory Professionals Programme in 2023. While participants expressed satisfaction with acquiring new methods and best practices, several challenges also emerged. There is a clear need to introduce a class specifically focused on managing a customs laboratory. Additionally,

it is imperative that RCLs allocate ample time for participants to familiarize themselves with each analytical equipment and adequately prepare final reports and presentation materials.

However, language barriers, time management issues, and participants' knowledge of HS still persist as significant concerns and obstacles. Therefore, it appears crucial to assess the programme candidates' backgrounds thoroughly in chemical expertise and prior experience in customs analysis when selecting participants.

## 6. Updates of the HS Classification and the Customs Laboratory Guide

The Tariff and Trade Affairs Directorate of the WCO delivered a comprehensive update on the organization's latest developments. Among the key topics discussed was the progress in the area of HS classification. The WCO provided insights into the outcomes of the 72<sup>nd</sup> and 73<sup>rd</sup> HS Committee meetings, the 62<sup>nd</sup> and 63<sup>rd</sup> HS Review Sub-Committee sessions, and the 39<sup>th</sup> Scientific Sub-Committee gathering.



Of particular focus was the amendment for HS 2028. The WCO introduced the provisional adoption of 160 sets of HS amendments, notably including categories such as 'substances used in the illicit manufacture of drugs' and 'plastic waste'. Noteworthy discussions during the 39<sup>th</sup> session of the Scientific Sub-Committee involved deliberations on 12 technical and 6 general questions. During this session, the WCO shared valuable information, including a self-assessment tool for RCLs and updates on the Customs Laboratory Guide (CLG).

Regarding the CLG, significant amendments have been made. These include updated summary information on Customs Laboratory (Appendix III), regional contact points, and links to relevant information (Appendix V), as well as the incorporation of capacity-building activities for RCLs (Appendix V). The WCO shared these updates during the meeting,

emphasizing the importance in enhancing the capabilities and effectiveness of customs laboratories all around the world.

## 7. Illegal Drug Trend and overview

Understanding the trends in illegal drug detection is paramount, as laboratories play a pivotal role in identifying the types of drugs seized by Customs authorities. RILO A/P has implemented a range of activities, including Intelligence Liaison, CEN Management, Capacity Building, International Cooperation, Joint Operations, and Intelligence Projects. RILO A/P extends assistance to member



Customs Administrations in handling specific cases regionally and collaborates with Customs Administrations across the WCO Global RILO Network on an international scale.

RILO A/P shared the findings of a drug survey indicating that 'Methamphetamine' has been and is projected to remain the most commonly seized drug, posing significant concerns for both past and forthcoming years. Furthermore, the 'Golden Triangle' and South America have been identified as major regions of concern for drug sourcing. According to the survey, RILO A/P underscored the potential risks associated with 'Methamphetamine,' 'Ketamine,' and 'Fentanyl,' while also highlighting challenges in combating illicit drugs. These challenges include a scarcity of sufficient seizure data for thorough analysis, a lack of methodologies for visualizing connections among criminal organizations, and inadequate analysis of the "typical behaviors" of criminal groups to effectively track illicit drug trends in the region.

## 8. Sharing drug analysis experiences and challenges of enforcement



At the 3<sup>rd</sup> RCL Heads meeting, ROCB AP designed a new session for RCLs to share information and experiences on specific realm of customs enforcement. This time, the focus was on sharing drug analysis experiences. Thankfully, all RCLs expressed their willingness to share their experiences in advance, allowing for a deep discussion during the meeting.

RCL China provided insights into its testing functions, and also introduced their latest scientific research project, including the establishment and application of a test method for restrictive new psychoactive substances like fentanyl.

RCL India explained the role of customs laboratories in drug control and highlighted major challenges, including staying updated with the latest technologies and methods, handling and preserving drug samples, identifying new substances, collaborating with international counterparts, exchanging intelligence and analytical data, data interpretation and reporting, capacity building, and quality assurance and accreditation.

RCL Indonesia explained Narcotics Psychotropic and Precursor Testing, covering techniques such as Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR), Gas chromatography/mass spectrometry (GC/MS), High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC), X-ray diffraction (XRD), and Elemental Testing. They emphasized that each technique has its own strengths and limitations, with the choice depending on factors such as sensitivity, specificity, and the elements of interest.

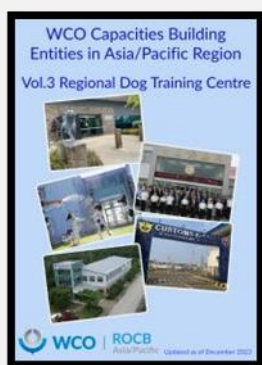
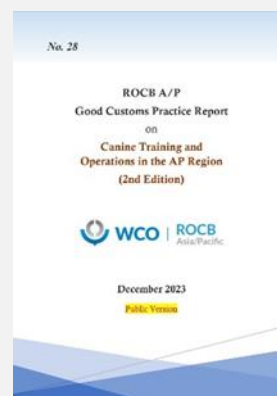
RCL Japan explained preliminary test methods and equipment usage. They also discussed current challenges related to New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and the analysis of substances like LSD, THC, and Mitragyna Speciosa.

RCL Korea explained analysis methods for genes, narcotics, and illegal food and drugs, citing examples such as Human Flesh, Viagra, and Prescription drugs. They also introduced various narcotics analysis cases, including GHB, various Hemp products, synthetic cannabis, LSD, MDMA, YABA, Psilocybin, and more.

## 9. ROCB A/P: Overview of capacity building activities and future plan

Enhancing customs enforcement capabilities through capacity-building is a pivotal strategy in the modernization of customs. In the fiscal year 2023/2024, ROCB A/P engaged in several capacity-building activities and outlined its work plan for 2024/2025.

Throughout the fiscal year 2023/2024, ROCB A/P fostered collaboration with numerous regional entities across the Asia/Pacific region through workshops, conferences, and scheduled meetings. Additionally, ROCB AP introduced publications related to customs affairs in the Asia/Pacific region, such as quarterly E-newsletters, Annual Reports, Special Essays Collections, Customs Good Practice Reports on K9 Training, Follow-up Action, and the "Brochure of Regional Entities Vol.3," focusing on Regional Dog Training Centers (RDTCs).



Furthermore, ROCB A/P unveiled its annual work plan for 2024/2025, which includes initiatives such as the annual needs survey and needs analysis. ROCB AP emphasized collaborative efforts with WCO regional entities, underscoring the importance of cooperation in enhancing customs enforcement capabilities.

## 10. A new Initiative for fostering cooperation

At the 3<sup>rd</sup> RCL Heads Meeting, a fresh cooperation initiative was deliberated, with the goal of fostering collaboration among RCLs in the Asia/Pacific region. This discussion aimed to expand communication channels among RCLs and other regions beyond the realm of customs chemical analysis to include a wider array of pertinent topics.

Since the 2<sup>nd</sup> RCL Heads Meeting, RCLs established a system for collecting best practices on Customs Chemical Analysis, with RCL Japan taking a leading role in collecting and

editing these materials. Additionally, RCLs have compiled and periodically updated a list of contact points on customs analysis and scientific matters in the WCO Asia and Pacific region, facilitating communication among RCLs in the A/P region. Moreover, the number of hosting RCLs in the AP region for the WCO-RCL Professional Programme has increased to three, playing a key role in fostering cooperation among members. Since the 2<sup>nd</sup> RCL Heads Meeting, the RCL Heads Meeting has evolved into an interregional cooperation platform, with delegates from the EU-WCO HS and RoO Africa programme participating as observers.



The 2<sup>nd</sup> RCL Heads meeting in Japan in 2023

Various opinions were discussed during the meeting, including the sharing of analysis experiences such as a timber analysis, which would serve as a good example of active cooperation among RCLs. Some participants suggested expanding the scope of information sharing beyond RCLs in the AP region to include customs laboratories in other regions, thus enhancing cooperation. Following the 2<sup>nd</sup> RCL Heads Meeting, several African WCO members expressed a need for assistance in setting up customs laboratories. So, it seems that there is a high possibility that the RCL Heads Meeting in AP can serve as a platform for discussion with all RCLs and explore possible ways to provide more support to African members.

In summary, the primary objective shared by RCLs is to establish a robust communication platform enabling RCLs to exchange views on the Collection of Best Practice on Customs Analysis, share information about capacity-building experiences, the WCO RCL Professionals Programme, workshops, and collaboration with other regions.

## 11. Customs Laboratory Tours

During this meeting, RCL Korea offered the opportunity to tour the Korea Central Customs Laboratory (RCL Korea) and the Busan Main Customs' Laboratory. Participants thoroughly enjoyed exploring various laboratory facilities and analyzing equipment, while also learning how to effectively utilize these machines at RCL Korea and the Busan Laboratory. During the visits, participants engaged in lively discussions with chemists actively involved in these tours.



## 12. Way forward

The concluded 3<sup>rd</sup> RCL Heads Meeting served as a pivotal platform for RCLs in the A/P region to convene, exchange insights, and chart a collective path forward. Against the backdrop of evolving challenges and opportunities in customs enforcement, participants actively engaged in robust discussions, drawing from their diverse experiences and expertise.

Of particular interest was the enthusiastic reception towards initiatives such as the WCO Regional Customs Laboratory Professionals Programme, underscoring a shared commitment to professional development and capacity-building. Moreover, the emergence of a new collaboration initiative among customs laboratories in other region reflects a collective aspiration to strengthen cooperation and address common challenges.

The in-person nature of the meeting encouraged active participation, facilitating fruitful exchanges of knowledge and best practices. The success of the 3<sup>rd</sup> RCL Heads Meeting underscores the effectiveness of collaboration among key stakeholders, including the WCO secretariat, ROCB A/P, RILO A/P, RCLs, and African members, in advancing regional cooperation and capacity-building in customs laboratory enforcement.

Importantly, the meeting provided a platform for deepening understanding of emerging trends in illicit drugs and sharing the drug analysis experiences, equipping participants with valuable insights to tackle evolving threats effectively.



Looking ahead, ROCB A/P reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the work of the RCLs and serving as a channel for communication and collaboration among RCLs in the A/P region. As the organizer, ROCB A/P will continue to lead efforts in organizing initiatives aimed at sharing key tools, conventions, instruments, and customs issues with RCLs.