





ROCB E-Newsletter No.89

Asia/Pacific

World Customs Organization



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Foreword

Dear Readers,

Greetings from the ROCB.

After the Summer season (April) in Thailand, WCO Members and the ROCB moves into the busiest season. It began with the Regional Heads of Customs Administration Conference in May, in Hong Kong. After re-writing my work permit in Thailand, I then set off to Brunei Darussalam for ASEAN Directors-General Meeting in early June. Since the Secretary General of the WCO, Mr. Ian Sanders was unfortunately unavailable for that Meeting, I was the only representative from the WCO. After sitting in on an interesting UN Meeting in Bangkok, I participated in the WCO Council Sessions at the end of June in the heart of Europe. My colleague, Ms. Ye Zhengqing attended Executive Council (EC) Meeting of Asia Pacific Postal Union (APPU) in early July in Ulaanbaatar. Phew! What a busy couple of months of the year!

Among the cities and people visited, let me introduce Brunei Darussalam for this edition. It was my first visit to the country for the DG Meeting and became a very memorable one. I would like you to refer to subsequent articles for the accomplishments of the Meeting, so here I will reference one of the memorable moments of my time in Brunei Darussalam.

Brunei Darussalam is a country of about 440 thousand people and comprised of over 5,765 square kilometres of land. Some websites shows that it is the twice the size of London, slightly larger than the island of Maui in Hawaii, or the same size as Trinidad and Tobago. Mmm... Please compare it with a province in your country; it is a small-scale country but with such a nice people, for sure.

Royal Customs and Excise Department (RCED) of Brunei Darussalam is a department under Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE), headed by Acting Controller Mr. Muhammad Azizil Hakim bin Haji Brahim. He appointed a liaison for my stay; she was the person responsible for training and one of the participants of a WCO Workshop (WS) that I facilitated. She made a presentation during the WS on her innovative approach to

training; and I found her to be full of energy and fun to talk with during my stay.

She took me many places, but I particularly enjoyed the batik boutique. She let me try many designs and I felt like an old model. She told me that this one has a traditional Brunei design and it was really nice.



This Batik is truly a Brunei design



Wow! Very innovative design

Although I couldn't tell them apart, she could recognize which colour is Indonesian-like or Malaysian-like. Together with a dinner at a local market, those are good memories and souvenirs of my Brunei Darussalam trip.

This issue of ROCB A/P E-Newsletter features the first National Workshop conducted in Palau, which became the 186th Member of the WCO in February 2024. One of the experts who facilitated the WS is a Pre-Accredited Expert from Fiji, who was identified through the WCO / JICA Master Trainer Programme. The ROCB always encourage the WCO to use pre-accredited experts in WCO WS's. This enables the opportunity to become Accredited Customs Experts of the WCO, at the Virtual Working Group of Expert Deployment under the WCO Capacity Building Committee. We were particularly happy to see his accreditation and we are sure that he'll continue to contribute to the development of HS knowledge in the Pacific, and AP Regions.

All the staff of the ROCB wish you good work and good life in this season. We look forward to seeing you at the next Regional activity such as the upcoming Heads of Regional

Training Centres of the WCO in October in Bali, Indonesia. Or the Regional Contact Point Meeting in October in Hong Kong, China. Until then, let's work hard and move forward with our collective efforts.

Together, we advance!

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the Japanese characters '田島 純' (Tajima Jun) written in a cursive style.

Jun TAJIMA

Head of ROCB A/P

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The First WCO Workshop held in Palau

- National Workshop on Harmonized System for Palau Customs -



1. Workshop Overview

The Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (BCBP) successfully held a four-day Harmonized System (HS) Workshop from June 9 - 12, 2025, at the Civic Center in Koror. The workshop was facilitated by three experts from the World Customs Organization (WCO) and was made possible through generous funding support from the Customs Cooperation Fund (CCF) Japan. The event aimed to strengthen the technical knowledge and skills of BCBP officers in classifying goods accurately under the international Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System. ROCB A/P played a key role in facilitating coordination between the WCO Secretariat, the WCO experts, and the Palau Customs Administration.

2. Highlights from the Workshop



Ten officers from the Bureau participated in this intensive workshop, including four supervisors and six officers from various divisions. The selected participants were those involved in tariff classification and frontline customs operations. The training provided an important opportunity to reinforce core knowledge and align local practices with international standards under the HS.

The opening day of the workshop began with a brief visit by BCBP Director John Tarkong Jr., accompanied by division chiefs from Customs, Immigration, and Biosecurity, as well as the Director of Budget and Planning, Kaleb Udui Jr., who previously served as Minister of Finance. The delegation welcomed the WCO experts and took a moment to discuss the importance of ongoing capacity-building efforts for BCBP personnel. Director Tarkong emphasized BCBP's commitment to improving trade facilitation, strengthening compliance, and investing in the professional development of officers through strategic partnerships.

"As we continue building a modern, responsive, and well-informed Customs administration, training like this HS Workshop are critical," Director Tarkong said. "They not only enhance our officers' understanding of tariff classification but also prepare us to address

the growing complexities of international trade and enforcement. We are grateful to our partners at the WCO and the Government of Japan for their continued support.”



Following the opening remarks, the WCO Experts provided a comprehensive overview of the Harmonized System and introduced the structure and objectives of the workshop. The Bureau then delivered a short presentation to introduce its internal structure, its operational divisions, and the background of the participating officers. Chief Robert Tarkong of the Division of Corporate Services led this introduction, while Joline Spesungel, IT Specialist and ASYCUDA Project Manager, presented a country report detailing the history and development of the HS in Palau, including how its use has progressed over time within BCBP.

Throughout the workshop, participants engaged in exercises focused on the General Interpretative Rules (GIRs) and their role in determining correct classifications. The WCO experts introduced a range of HS tools and instruments, including explanatory notes and the decisions of the HS Committee. These resources are essential for ensuring consistency and accuracy in classification work.



Practical exercises formed the core of the workshop. Participants were provided with a variety of sample products and tasked to classify them according to the HS chapters. Officers explained their reasoning before receiving clarification and guidance from the WCO experts, who reviewed each case and explained the official classification. Topics ranged from agricultural and food products to textiles, medicines, and alcohol.

The workshop also opened space for meaningful dialogue. Participants raised real-world challenges they face in applying HS codes—particularly with commonly imported goods into Palau. A notable example discussed was the classification of alcoholic beverages. Officers shared that current procedures in Palau do not always account for alcohol content when assigning classifications or applying taxes. This led to a broader discussion on the need for more standardized and consistent approaches across BCBP, which could benefit both enforcement and revenue collection.

On the final day of the workshop, the WCO Experts introduced the concept of advance rulings in the context of the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement. They discussed how advance rulings can support clarity and predictability in customs decisions and

provided practical guidance on how they may be applied in Palau's future classification framework.

This four-day workshop proved to be a highly productive and informative training experience for BCBP officers. The direct interaction with WCO Experts allowed officers to ask questions, explore classification challenges, and strengthen their technical confidence. It also reinforced the importance of international cooperation and professional development in building an effective and modern customs administration.

The Bureau of Customs and Border Protection extends its sincere appreciation to the World Customs Organization, the Government of Japan through CCF Japan, and all participants who contributed to the success of the Harmonized System Workshop. The knowledge gained will support BCBP's ongoing efforts to improve customs procedures, strengthen compliance, and facilitate legitimate trade in the Republic of Palau.

3. Looking Ahead

To support the participant's retention and application of what they learned during the workshop to their daily tasks, the ROCB A/P is planning to do a follow-up activity, such as encouraging them to take the WCO's e-learning modules on the HS that are available on the WCO CLiKC! platform. It is in line with the WCO's Capacity Building New Paradigm adopted by the Council in June 2025, aiming at more usage of blended-learning and showing tangible outcome. The ROCB A/P believes that this will allow participants to assess their understanding and support Palau Customs in applying the HS more accurately and consistently.

Column 1: Message from the Master Trainer

Being part of the WCO facilitation team of HS trainers was a privilege. I am honored to train officers from different Customs backgrounds. Most officers were there for the first time attending this type of HS workshop. Despite the difference in their HS knowledge, the level of information given has laid the foundation of long-lasting learning. The eagerness to understand the principles of classification shows they need more development and future collaboration. (Mr. Noa Buredua)

Column 2: Comment from the Mission Leader

It was an honour for me to have closed my decade long tenure at the WCO in a mission supported by CCF Japan. As a Senior Technical Officer in the Tariff and Trade Affairs Directorate I had the opportunity to conduct several missions around the world, in all WCO regions, and each one of them was a learning experience for me. My journey with the WCO started 20 years ago with the Fellowship Programme, in October 2005, being sponsored by Japan Customs. At that time, I had the chance to visit Japan and several of its Customs facilities for two weeks and that work trip had a very positive impact on my professional development. Closing the current working cycle as a WCO Accredited Expert in a mission funded by CCF Japan had a special meaning, as it was a reminder of how important the cooperation between the WCO and Customs administrations is and the actual positive results it can have.

(Ms. Yara Novis)

For more information:

Visit the Palau Customs website: [WCO HS Workshop in Palau – BCBP – Bureau of Customs and Border Protection](#)

Learn more about WCO: <https://www.wcoomd.org>

Learn more about ROCB A/P: [ROCB-Asia/Pacific](#)

Workshops and Meetings

Strengthening Customs Integrity through WCO's Training Kits

9th April 2025

On 9th April 2025, ROCB A/P attended a virtual WCO meeting introducing the newly developed Integrity Training Kits on Internal Affairs and Culture of Integrity. This initiative underscores the WCO's ongoing commitment to promoting integrity, professionalism, and operational excellence within Customs administrations worldwide. As a regional office for capacity building, the ROCB A/P will collaborate with Regional Training Centers (RTCs) to promote these training kits across its member administrations.

Customs are critical to trade facilitation and border security, but their effectiveness depends on a strong culture of integrity. To support this, the WCO has developed two comprehensive Training Kits on CLiKC! Platform: Internal Affairs and Culture of Integrity, which are designed to equip Customs officials with the knowledge and tools to combat corruption, enhance transparency, and build resilient institutional cultures.

Internal Affairs Training Kit covers 15 topics including corruption prevention, investigations and disciplinary processes. Culture of Integrity Training Kit focuses on 8 topics such as ethical leadership, diversity and communication. Both kits can be delivered using different delivery modes: e-learning, virtual workshop, distance learning event or in-person. By leveraging these resources, Customs administrations can build more robust, ethical, and efficient operational frameworks. In the future, the WCO is planning to organize regional workshops to demonstrate kit usage and develop additional modules based on Member feedback.

The WCO's Training Kits are not just a tool. They are the foundation for a new era of trusted Customs administrations. By integrating these tools, Customs administrations in the Asia Pacific region can fortify their integrity frameworks and align with global standards.

ROCB A/P highlights strategic role in advancing regional capacity building at the 26th WCO A/P Regional Heads of Customs Administrations Conference

19th – 22nd May 2025 Hong Kong, China



The 26th World Customs Organization (WCO) Asia/Pacific (A/P) Regional Heads of Customs Administrations Conference, hosted by Hong Kong Customs in its capacity as the WCO Vice-Chair for the A/P Region (APVC), successfully concluded on May 22nd, 2025. Over the course of four days, the Conference brought together senior Customs officials from across the region to advance strategic collaboration, capacity building, and innovation in Customs operations.

Member

During the main sessions on May 19th, ROCB A/P delivered its annual report and Implementation Status of Regional Strategic Plan 2024-2026 Focus Area 3 Capacity Building, which provided updates on the office's core activities, including support for WCO workshops, technical assistance, and the annual needs survey. ROCB A/P emphasized the alignment of its efforts with the proposed WCO capacity building paradigm, which promotes more Member-driven, needs-based, and outcome-oriented approaches to Customs development.

On May 20th, ROCB A/P led a dedicated session on the WCO Training Management Project, offering Member administrations a detailed overview of the project's objectives, tools, and implementation strategies. Mongolia and Sri Lanka Customs made their contributions by presenting their achievements after Project's Workshop in India, in May 2024, highlighting the importance of proper planning of domestic training and continued information exchange among neighboring Members. The presentations underscored ROCB A/P's commitment to assisting Members in enhancing training governance and modernizing HR development frameworks under the new paradigm.

ROCB A/P further reinforced its role through high-level bilateral meetings. In a meeting with WCO Secretary General Mr. Ian Saunders, the Secretary General introduced the background and strategic vision of the new capacity building paradigm and acknowledged ROCB A/P's proactive efforts in its implementation. ROCB A/P reaffirmed its continued support for helping Members understand and operationalize the paradigm once it is endorsed at Council Session next month.

Additional bilateral meetings were held with the Maldives Customs Service and the Royal Malaysian Customs Department. During these engagements, ROCB A/P presented the core concepts of the new paradigm, explained how future capacity building activities would be structured, and expressed its readiness to support Members in developing customized plans tailored to their national priorities and development goals.

With 20 years of experience, ROCB A/P is uniquely positioned to assist Members in translating the WCO's global vision into concrete, locally adapted outcomes. Through responsive and collaborative efforts, ROCB A/P remains committed to strengthening the effectiveness, innovation, and resilience of Customs administrations across the Asia/Pacific region.



Strengthening Customs Cooperation in the Pacific: ROCB Participates in OCO Annual Conference in Guam

22nd – 23rd May 2025, Guam



The Oceania Customs Organization (OCO) Annual Conference, graciously hosted by the Guam Customs and Quarantine Agency and the Oceania Customs Organization, was held with participation from Customs administrations across the Pacific region, partner agencies, and international institutions. The event provided a dynamic platform to strengthen regional cooperation, enhance technical capabilities, and discuss shared goals in customs modernization.

The Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB) was honoured to attend as a partner agency, engaging with World Customs Organization (WCO) Members and non-Members in an open and collaborative spirit. The Conference facilitated constructive dialogue around shared challenges and solutions in Customs, such as technology adoption and institutional strengthening.

On Day 2 of the Informal Customs Heads and Partners Conference, there was a panel discussion on “Building Capacity and Empowering Customs Administrations through Training and Technology,” moderated by Professor David Widdowson of the Centre for Customs and

Excise Studies (CCES). The ROCB contributed to this session as one of the panelists, sharing insights into the activities of WCO's Capacity Building and the role and direction of the ROCB. It also attracted non-Members of the WCO to enroll in order to receive its support.

In addition to formal sessions, the conference allowed for a range of informal discussions and bilateral meetings, where ROCB connected with Customs leaders and stakeholders to better understand the specific assistance needs of Pacific Island. ROCB also engaged in productive discussion with the OCO Secretariat, exploring better collaboration.

Another significant meeting took place with representatives of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). This dialogue focused on more concrete cooperation to support the Pacific's Customs modernization efforts, particularly through technical assistance on Regional collective needs. The ROCB provided feedback to the ADB on its idea, and both sides committed to continued dialogue to move it forward.

The ROCB extends its sincere appreciation to the OCO, Guam Customs and Quarantine Agency, and all other participants for contributing to the discussions. The ROCB remains dedicated to continuing its work with partners across the Pacific through capacity-building activities.

EU Humanitarian Aid Regional Coordinator Visits to ROCB A/P

29th May 2025, Bangkok, Thailand

On 29th May 2025, Mr. Juan Alfonso Lozano Basanta, Regional Coordinator for Asia and the Pacific from the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) paid a courtesy call on the Head of the ROCB A/P, Mr. Jun Tajima. He was welcomed along with Program Managers Mr. Jaemin Cho, Ms. Grace Ye, and Ms. Asuka Nagamatsu.



During the meeting, Mr. Alfonso provided an overview of ECHO's humanitarian framework, including its coordination role in disaster response and humanitarian access across the region. He also introduced initiatives such as the IMPACCT program that ECHO financially supports, which aims to streamline Customs procedures in emergency situations.

Both sides exchanged views on potential areas of cooperation and discussed the way of aligning ECHO's needs to the WCO's Capacity Building policies. The meeting concluded with a friendly atmosphere and agreement on continued dialogue.

Strengthening Regional Collaboration at the 14th ASEAN-WCO Consultation Meeting in Brunei Darussalam

3rd –5th June 2025, Brunei Darussalam



The 14th ASEAN-World Customs Organization (WCO) Consultation Meeting was successfully held during the 34th Meeting of the ASEAN Directors-General (DG) of Customs, hosted in the serene and welcoming environment of Brunei Darussalam. The Royal Customs and Excise Department of Brunei, serving as this year's host, offered warm hospitality to Jun

Tajima, Head of the ROCB A/P who participated in-person, and showed excellent organization, helping to create an atmosphere for cooperation, productive dialogue and future planning.

The ASEAN-WCO Consultation Meeting serves as a critical platform for direct engagement among the WCO Secretariat, the ROCB A/P and the Customs Administrations of ASEAN Members. It is an opportunity to exchange updates, align Regional and Global Customs priorities. This year, Timor Leste participated as an observer for the Meeting.

The Consultation was conducted in a manner that mutually exchanged updates on the latest policy priorities and strategic initiatives. Mr. Ian Sanders, Secretary General of the WCO explained the Strategic Plan to be discussed in the Council Session later this month and encouraged ASEAN to disseminate its good practices to other Regions through the WCO. It also provided the ROCB A/P with an invaluable opportunity to hear the collective voice of ASEAN. The WCO Secretariat and the ROCB A/P welcomed their comments of the region's priorities.

On the sidelines, Mr. Tajima had a meeting with the Chair of the DG Meeting, Controller Azizil of Brunei Customs. Discussions focused on the importance of human resource development. Another significant exchange took place with the Commissioner of Timor-Leste Customs Authority, as the country prepares to join ASEAN. The dialogue centred on identifying capacity development needs and exploring how the WCO can best support Timor-Leste's efforts.

Meetings also included valuable engagement with the private sector, offering insights on the impact of Customs modernization of ASEAN for business operations. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of transparency, efficiency, and stronger public-private partnerships.

The outcomes of the consultation reaffirm the strong partnership between ASEAN, the WCO and the ROCB A/P with a shared commitment to continue modernizing Customs, and supporting their regional integration.

The ROCB A/P extends its sincere appreciation to the Royal Customs and Excise Department of Brunei Darussalam for their warm hospitality and excellent organization. Their efforts contributed greatly to the success of this important event.

ROCB A/P Attended the Paperless Trade Week 2025 Organized by UNESCAP

9th–13th June 2025, Bangkok, Thailand



At the invitation of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Program Managers Mr. Jaemin Cho, Ms. Asuka Nagamatsu, and Mr. Mark Ho, participated in the Paperless Trade Week 2025, held from 9th to 13th June 2025 in Bangkok, Thailand. Mr. Jun Tajima, Head of ROCB A/P also participated part of its side-events. The Paperless Trade Week included the 4th Session of the Standing Committee and Council of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA).

During the week, 22 side-events were held, focusing on topics such as digital trade, Single Window systems, and emerging technologies in the context of paperless trade. The sessions of the Standing Committee and Council were attended by delegates from CPTA member countries and various international organizations.

During the Standing Committee session, Mr. Jaemin Cho emphasized the importance of partnerships between Customs and other relevant agencies. He also highlighted the collaborative workshop jointly organized by ROCB A/P and UNESCAP, which took place in November 2024 in Cheonan, Republic of Korea. This event, the 7th UNNExT Masterclass

Workshop for officials from Customs and relevant border agencies, focused on facilitating cross-border paperless trade and using data analytics to update and share essential information. It was co-organized with UNESCAP, ROCB A/P, and the Korea Customs Service, with financial support from the WCO Customs Cooperation Fund of Korea (CCF-Korea). For more details, please see this article.

The 4th Session of the Standing Committee and Council of CPTA reviewed progress in digitalizing key trade documents (e.g., certificate of origin, phytosanitary certificate, invoice), discussed mutual recognition models, and encouraged the implementation of pilot projects.

ROCB A/P attends Hong Kong Customs' AML Capacity Building in Asia/Pacific

9th – 12th June 2025, Hong Kong, China



To support the growing demand for effective anti-money laundering (AML) measures in the Asia/Pacific region, the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB A/P) was invited to participate in the Regional Workshop on AML Frameworks: Tackling

Traditional and Modern Challenges in the Digital Age, co-organized by Hong Kong Customs and the University of Hong Kong (HKU) from 9th to 12th June 2025.

The workshop provided a timely and dynamic platform for Customs officials and AML practitioners to deepen their understanding of both conventional and emerging money laundering threats. Over four days, participants from the WCO members, RILO A/P, academia, and private sectors engaged in expert-led discussions, practical case studies and interactive exchanges with speakers.

Speakers from the Department of Justice of HKSAR, OKLink, OSL, Nanyang Technological University, Hong Kong Customs, and Hong Kong Police Force provided participants with a comprehensive understanding of AML frameworks relevant to both traditional financial systems and rapidly evolving digital platforms.

A highlight of the workshop was the emphasis on the pivotal role Customs administrations play in combatting money laundering and enhancing international cooperation. As financial crimes grow in complexity, the Customs community is increasingly expected to go beyond traditional enforcement and embrace new tools, partnerships, and regulatory insights.

This workshop marks a significant step forward in the region's collective AML capability. ROCB A/P will continue to support the WCO's initiative on AML efforts.

Japan Customs AEO Experts Visit ROCB A/P

12th June 2025, Bangkok, Thailand

On 12th June 2025, Mr. Riki Tamaki, Director for AEO, Customs and Tariff Bureau, Ministry of Finance Japan, Mr. Shinpei Sasaki and Ms. Asuka Niwa from the AEO Center, Japan Customs together with Mr. Kazushige Saito, JICA long-term expert, and Mr. Shuhei Namba, Second Secretary at the Embassy of Japan in Thailand, visited the ROCB A/P Office in Bangkok.



Mr. Jun Tajima, Head of ROCB A/P, warmly welcomed the delegation and provided an overview of ROCB A/P's mission and ongoing activities in supporting WCO Asia-Pacific members through targeted capacity-building efforts. The meeting included a lively discussion with many questions and exchanges of ideas.

This visit was arranged at the occasion of the AEO Workshop as a part of JICA Project held on 10th–11th June at the Thai Customs Academy. Mr. Tamaki, Mr. Sasaki and Ms. Niwa participated in the workshop as expert lecturers from Japan Customs.

ROCB A/P Supported the ASEAN Regional Workshop on Product-Based Classification

17th – 18th June 2025, via Video Conference

The ROCB A/P supported the successful organization of the Regional Workshop on Product-Based Classification, held virtually on 17th–18th June 2025. The event was organized by the ASEAN Secretariat and brought together more than 500 officers from all ASEAN Member countries.



This workshop formed part of the Technical Sub-Working Group on Classification's (TSWGC) regional key initiatives under the Strategic Plan of Customs Development (SPCD) 01 on Customs Tariff Classification. It was designed to support the timely and uniform implementation of the ASEAN Harmonized Tariff Nomenclature (AHTN) 2022, and to raise awareness among customs officials on the new structure, modifications, and deletions under the updated nomenclature. The workshop particularly focused on technical assistance for the classification of selected product categories, namely textiles, metal, and machinery.

At the request of the ASEAN Secretariat, the ROCB A/P facilitated the coordination with the WCO Secretariat and introduced two Technical Officer as experts:

- Ms. Sujin Yuk, Senior Technical Officer, Nomenclature, Tariff and Trade Affairs, WCO Secretariat
- Mr. Toshihiko Yamate, Technical Officer, Nomenclature, Tariff and Trade Affairs, WCO Secretariat

Both experts delivered highly informative sessions under the Classification of Machinery session, sharing practical insights, methodologies, and case studies related to tariff classification. Their contributions were highly appreciated by the participants and significantly enhanced the quality of discussions throughout the workshop.

The workshop also featured the participation of the Chair of TSWGC and other HS experts from ASEAN Dialogue Partners, fostering a platform for technical exchange and future cooperation in the field of customs classification.

The ROCB A/P remains committed to supporting regional efforts in capacity building and facilitating meaningful engagement between WCO experts and ASEAN Members.

WCO Council 2025: Together we advance, through a New Capacity Building Paradigm

26th - 28th June 2025, Brussels, Belgium



The World Customs Organization held Council Sessions, the governing body of the organization. The Heads of Customs administrations gathered in Brussels for its annual meeting. Jun Tajima, the Head of ROCB A/P participated as an observer.

The Keynote address was made by the Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. She pointed out geopolitical tensions and threats to multilateralism but showed a beacon of light that both Organizations can show that border procedures are not an additional barrier to trade, but a bridge to secure predictable trade.

Mr. Ian Sanders, the Secretary General of the WCO responded in stressing the importance of coordinated efforts in trade facilitation, security, and combating illicit trade. Customs remains committed to transparency, efficiency, and supporting a safe, prosperous global trade environment.

During the Council, the Capacity Building New Paradigm, which was proposed by the Secretary General, was adopted with overwhelming support by Members. It mentions WCO's unwavering commitment to Member centricity while it centres around the strategic alignment of the WCO Strategic Plan, evidence-based assistance, more use of WCO accredited experts and so on.

As the closest partner to Member Administration, the ROCB A/P communicated with the Secretariat officials with a series of meetings on the sideline of the Sessions, to understand the idea and the procedures that come into effect after July 2025.

The New Paradigm also provides for the engagement framework, and it discusses the role of the Regional Entities, and ROCB among others. It recognizes that the ROCBs have a pivotal role in the implementation of the CB Paradigm and the WCO will develop a practical Reference Document on the ROCBs in coming years. The ROCB A/P is committed to engage, or even to lead the discussion by showing the best examples of the ROCBs.

The ROCB A/P keeps close communications with the Secretariat and Members so that the New Paradigm will turn the WCO's assistance in a better way, and this transition period would not affect the delivery of Capacity Building activities in the Region.

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