



ROCB
Asia/Pacific

World Customs Organization

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E-NEWSLETTER



ROCB A/P

20th Anniversary Celebration

Foreword

Dear Readers,

Greetings from Bangkok.

The first edition of the Year 2025 starts with a celebrative mood!

It covers the 20th anniversary celebration, co-hosted by the ROCB and the Thai Customs Department. Thai Customs Department planned and implemented gorgeous Celebrations on 20th November, having 31 Members Administration witness our roles as contributing the Region together. Together with Thai Customs and all Members, the ROCB can contribute to the entire Asia Pacific Region on Capacity Building activities.



There are 6 Regions of the WCO and each Region has its ROCB. For example, ROCB East Africa has its office in Kenya, consisting of 6 staffs including ICT officer. They are very active in attending workshops or seminars and organize Regional executive events. ROCB West Africa conducts a unique donor coordination meeting; Customs proposes projects that need funding and donors who are interested in those projects may start discussion for possible funding on those projects. Each ROCB conducts their activities depending on their Members' needs.

ROCB A/P is gearing up its activities.

The ROCB A/P considers the needs survey is one of the most important tasks for the Region, so that the Capacity Building activities of the WCO will be more needs driven and targeted to efficiently support the Member Administrations in its efforts to achieve national goals.

Of course, this edition covers all our activities undertaken from October through December 2024. While thanking your keen interest in our activities and your contribution, I hope you would spare some time to visit our website. The ROCB A/P will be pleased to hear any of your constructive opinions and comments, suggestions and inputs to our activities, including communication and public relations, so that we may better serve to the Regional Member

Customs Administrations. Please rest assured that all of the ROCB A/P staffs are going to remain committed.

Thank you.

Handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the characters '田島' (Tajima) followed by a stylized signature.

Jun Tajima

Head of ROCB A/P

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Dear Readers,

Thank you for taking the time to read the January edition of the ROCB E-Newsletter.

Celebrating Two Decades of Excellence: The ROCB A/P's 20th Anniversary

This edition highlights a landmark event: the WCO Asia Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB A/P)'s 20th Anniversary Ceremony, held on 20th November 2024, at Queen Sirikit National Convention Center (QSNCC), Bangkok, Thailand.



This landmark event celebrated two decades of unwavering dedication to advancing Customs capacity building in the Asia Pacific region. Co-hosted by Mr. Theeraj Athanavanich, Director General of the Thai Customs Department, and Mr. Jun Tajima, the Head of the ROCB A/P. Thai Customs Department has been the ROCB

A/P's host administration since its establishment in September 2004. The ceremony brought together esteemed guests, including Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, the former Secretary General of the World Customs Organization (WCO); Mr. Kin-Kei Li, the Head of the Secretariat Office of Asia Pacific Vice-Chair and Assistant Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department; and the former Heads of the ROCB A/P, including Mr. Takashi Matsumoto, Mr. Yoshihiro Kosaka, Mr. Kazunari Igarashi, and Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, distinguish guests from Thai Customs Department, and key stakeholders who have contributed to the ROCB A/P's success. Reflecting on its history and achievements, this anniversary serves as both a celebration and a call to action for the future. Before officially opening the ceremony, all guests were invited to see the Thai Cultural Performances, which included Thai Drum (Klong Sabat Chai) and traditional Thai dance, symbolizing the host administration. Following this, the celebration ceremony took place, where distinguish guests such as Mr. Theeraj Athanavanich, Director General of the Thai Customs Department, Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, Mr. Kin Kei Li and Mr. Jun Tajima, the Head of the ROCB A/P touched the I-Ball together which symbolizes the region's cooperation for, and commitment to the rooting and blooming of the world's first ROCB in the center of the Asia/Pacific region. The Ceremony was accompanied with a cocktail reception hosted by Mr. Theeraj Athanavanich.



Key Highlights of the Speeches



Mr. Ian Sandars, WCO Secretary General, congratulated the ROCB A/P on its 20th anniversary and acknowledges its significant role in modernizing Customs administrations in the Asia Pacific region. He emphasized the importance of the ROCB A/P for supporting the World Customs Organization by disseminating

WCO tools, bridging WCO headquarters and regional members, and expanding the organization's reach. He expressed appreciation for the collective efforts of Customs administrations, partners, and staff that have contributed to its growth and success over the past two decades. Moreover, gratitude was extended to Thai Customs Department for hosting the office and to Japan, China, Korea, and Hong Kong China for their support through attachés. He concluded with wishes for

continued success, reiterating the WCO's commitment to modernizing Customs administration, ensuring supply chain security, and facilitating trade in the region.

Followed by Mr. Kin-Kei Li, the Head of the Secretariat Office of Asia Pacific Vice-Chair, emphasized a very close collaborative efforts between the Vice Chair Office and the ROCB A/P, as they both play pivotal roles for the Region's development and success. He emphasized the challenges faced by the customs community over past two decades and emphasizes the importance of adaptability and innovation in navigating these evolving circumstances. Moreover, he addressed that Hong Kong Customs, as the new A/P Vice- Chair, pledges to enhance multilateral cooperation, strengthen partnerships, and promote customs efficiency and global trade development. Consequently,



Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, delivered a heartfelt congratulatory speech celebrating the anniversary. Reflecting on its establishment in 2004, he noted the visionary foresight of the Asia Pacific region in creating a hub for Customs capacity building amidst increasing economic integration. He appreciates the Thai Customs Department for its unwavering support and leadership as the host administration. And lastly, Mr. Theeraj Athanavanich, Director General of the Thai Customs Department, congratulated ROCB A/P's 20 years of service and his appreciations to serving the Region together with Thai Customs Department.

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Milestones and Achievements

Over the past two decades, the ROCB A/P has established itself as a beacon of excellence in Customs Capacity Building. The ROCB A/P's contributions in conducting workshops and fostering regional cooperation is vast. It also expanded its support to the Pacific region in acceding the Revised Kyoto Convention and joining new Membership to the WCO, with a support from the Oceania Customs Organization. Over the years, by engaging external stakeholders and leveraging resources from Members, the ROCB A/P has built a sustainable and inclusive capacity-building ecosystem.

Mr. Jun Tajima made a presentation on the last 20 years and thanked all stakeholders for their unsparing support for the Office's activities, especially Thai Customs Department which played a pivotal role in supporting ROCB A/P's mission going, offering infrastructure and expertise as the host administration. Their continued commitment, along with support from Customs administrations such as Japan, China, Korea, and Hong Kong China laid the foundation for the ROCB A/P's enduring success by seconding their officials.



Future Directions

As the ROCB A/P enters its third decade, fast-evolving global trade landscape brings challenges in Customs; i.e. the skyrocketing number of transborder e-commerce. To tackle those challenges, Customs community has found solutions with enhanced cooperation. The ROCB A/P's contribution is eminent in this area; by sharing Regional experiences and fostering partnerships, Member Customs Administrations can find their ways to better control their borders, proper and fair collection of duty and taxes while facilitating trade for their economic growth.

ROCB A/P continues its service as a catalyst for both regional and global progress by knowing the situation and needs of Member administrations with better communication.

As the beginning of the new year of 2025, we renew our commitment to contribute to the Customs community in the Region and the WCO, in Customs Delivering on its Commitment to Efficiency, Security and Prosperity, by strengthening Customs cooperation across the region.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter, which provides more insights into the ROCB A/P 20th Anniversary Celebrations and other activities of the ROCB A/P. We also encourage you, our valued readers, to share your thoughts and ideas on how we can further enhance our efforts. Together, we can continue to shape the future of Customs and trade facilitation in the Asia-Pacific region.

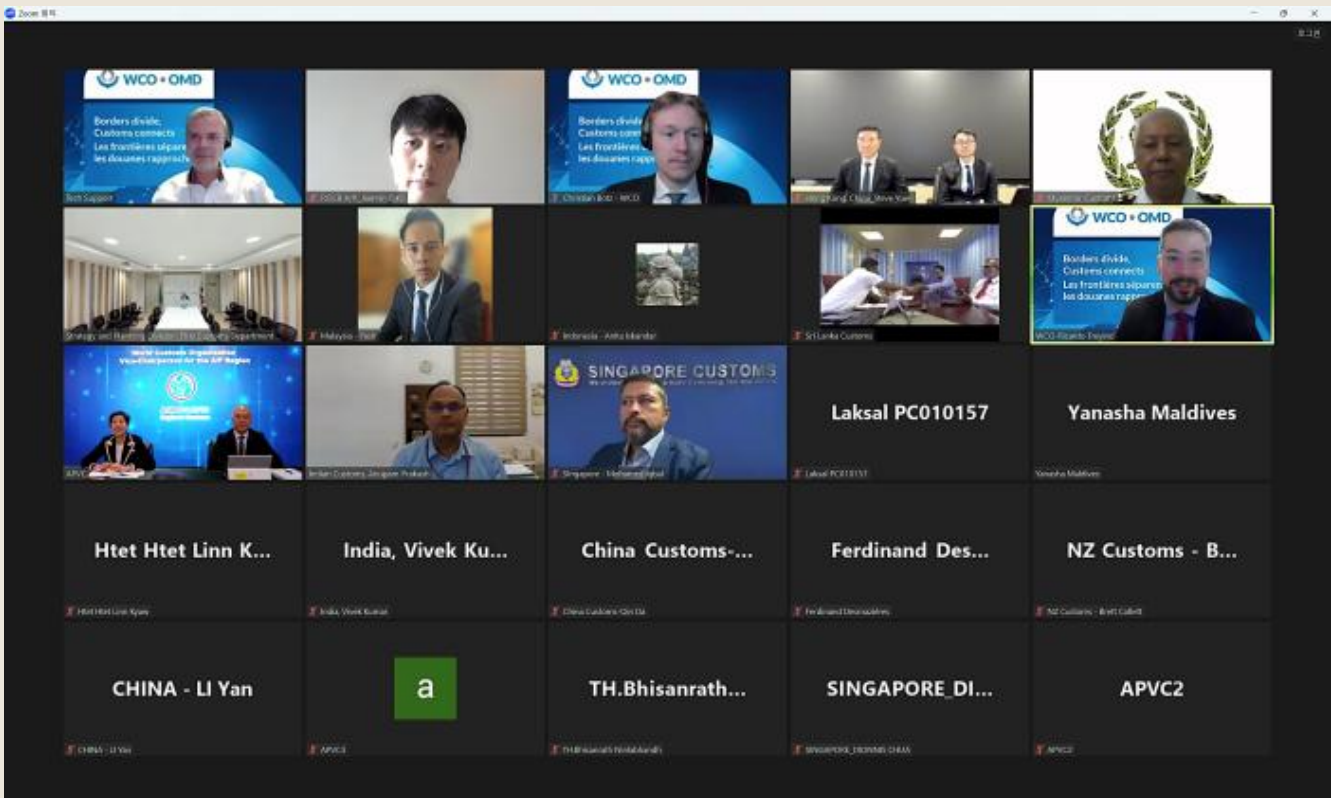
Together, in advance!



Workshops and Meetings

ROCB AP Participates in Virtual Consultation on the WCO Strategic Plan 2025-2028 for the Asia-Pacific Region

4th October 2024, Online



A virtual consultation on the WCO Strategic Plan 2025-2028 for the Asia-Pacific region was held on 4th October 2024, organized by the WCO Secretariat. Mr. Jun Tajima, Head, Mr. Jaemin Cho, Program Manager, and Ms. Asuka Nagamatsu, Program Manager, participated in this meeting. The meeting was attended by delegations from WCO member administrations in the Asia-Pacific region, the Deputy Secretary General of the WCO Secretariat, and the WCO Vice-Chair for the Asia-Pacific region.

The WCO Secretariat convened this meeting to introduce the concept note for the WCO Strategic Plan 2025-2028, outlining the proposed approach, the next Mission and Vision of the WCO, the structure and overarching content of the Strategic Plan, focus areas, and the way forward regarding Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Many delegations expressed their appreciation for the WCO Secretariat's efforts and actively contributed insights and feedback on the WCO Secretariat's initial thought and concept of the Strategic Plan. The WCO Secretariat will take these comments into account for the future development of the plan.

ROCB AP Participates in Regional Private Sector Group (RPSG) Asia-Pacific Meeting

21st October 2024, Hong Kong, China



On October 21st, 2024, the RPSG-AP meeting was held at the Hong Kong SkyCity Marriott Hotel, bringing together Customs and industry representatives from the WCO Asia/Pacific Region. The session, chaired by Mr. Kit Hickey of Fonterra Cooperative Group Ltd. and co-chaired by Ms. Wendy Stanton of IKEA Australia, featured discussions focused on enhancing trade facilitation and compliance through Customs-Industry cooperation.

Mr. Jun Tajima, head of the ROCB A/P, introduced the WCO and ROCB A/P outlines, underscoring the need for Customs administrations to adopt a forward-thinking approach, developing solutions collectively with the customs community, including businesses and other stakeholders.

A key highlight was the introduction of the Valid AP initiative by Mr. Kin Kei Li, the Head of the Asia/Pacific Vice Chair Office and Assistant Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs and

Excise Department, designed to streamline document verification using blockchain technology. Participants from the private sector congratulated the initiative, pointing out the time consumed for the verification of certificate of origin at times. Participants also discussed supply chain resilience, with Ms. Kimberlee Clydesdale from the Australian Border Force stressing the importance of data sharing between Customs and industry. Other topics included AEO benefits, transshipment processes in Hong Kong, and New Zealand's trade good practices.

The meeting concluded with a focus on the role of Customs-Industry collaboration in fostering trust and efficiency in international trade, setting the stage for future cooperative efforts.

ROCB A/P joined the 34th session of the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Contact Points (RCP) Meeting

22nd – 25th October 2024, Hong Kong, China



The Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department, in its capacity as the Vice-Chair for the WCO Asia/Pacific Region, held the 34th RCP meeting in Hong Kong, China, from October 22nd to 25th, 2024. The four-day meeting was attended by 70 representatives from Asia/Pacific region.

The ROCB A/P, as the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building, delivered the presentations on Updates of ROCB and Regional Strategic Plan (RSP) Focus Area 3–Capacity Building.

Mr. Jun Tajima, as the head of the ROCB A/P, highlighted the ROCB A/P's intention of focusing more on the quality of WCO workshops by improving the needs analysis, WS arrangement and communication with AP members. Mr. Tajima also pointed out that the ROCB A/P planned to involve, on a pilot basis, in WCO national WSs with more effective needs analysis and evaluation from the next FY.

Ms. Asuka Nagamatsu, Program Manager updated the Training management Project and Ms. Zhengqing Ye and Mr. Jaemin Cho, Program Managers shared implementation status of Focus Area 3 with all the members at the meeting. The Meeting also reviewed and discussed issues on the Region's administrative decision and noted presentations such as "Data Strategy and Big Data Application", and "Relationship Between Transnational Organized Crimes and Money Laundering Activities".

This conference provided AP members and regional entities with an important platform to discuss and review regional Customs policies, put forward proposals and keep updated of the latest Customs initiatives. These exchanges will promote regional cooperation in response to rapidly changing global challenges. Moreover, with the view of promoting regional development, the Vice-chair shared its innovative concept of establishing a certification platform by using blockchain.

JICA Consultant Team's Visit to ROCB A/P

28th October 2024, Bangkok, Thailand



A team of consultants from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) paid a courtesy visit to ROCB A/P on 28th October 2024.

During the visit, Mr. Jun Tajima, Head of the ROCB A/P, extended a warm welcome to the JICA consultant team. The visit served to reaffirm the strong partnership between ROCB A/P and JICA, emphasizing their shared commitment to

enhancing customs efficiency and coordination through capacity building activities.

The discussions during the visit centered around JICA's ongoing project, namely, "The Project for Strengthening Customs Efficiency for Enhancing Mekong Connectivity," which commenced in August 2024. The goal of the project aims to improve customs coordination and trade facilitation across Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos through capacity building activities. The JICA team provided an overview of the project's detailed planning phase, which includes baseline surveys and reviews of existing frameworks, leading up to a comprehensive implementation phase set to begin in March 2025. Key outputs of the project include enhanced trade facilitation capacity, improved Authorized Economic Operator program, and strengthened human resource development capacity in customs administration.

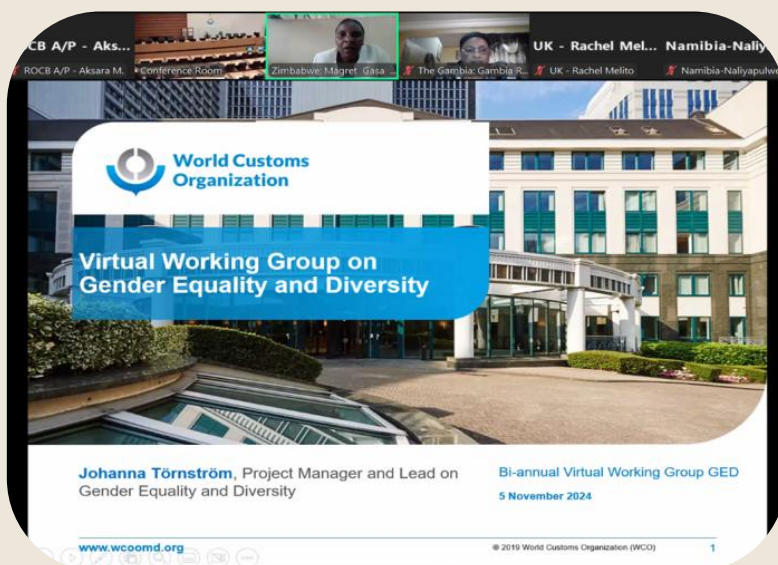
Mr. Tajima shared insights into ROCB A/P's role in serving the Asia-Pacific region through implementing WCO conventions, fostering partnerships, and advancing capacity-building. He outlined the 2024-26 regional strategic plan, emphasizing trade facilitation, compliance, capacity building, and resilience, with objectives for resource deployment and support for small island economies. He highlighted the Training Management Project aimed at enhancing human resource development in customs training management, with sub-regional workshops for ASEAN, South, East, and West Asia, and the Master Trainer Program for the Pacific Islands demonstrating ROCB A/P's commitment to enhance training management system in the region. Mr. Tajima also emphasized the value of accredited experts and explored collaboration opportunities for local

capacity building. Additionally, he introduced the CLIKC! platform, a WCO e-learning tool that strengthens customs capabilities in areas like the Time Release Study, which ROCB A/P actively promotes for regional development. During the meeting, Mr. Louis Chan, Program Manager of ROCB A/P, also highlighted capacity building activities conducted in the previous fiscal year for Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, tailored to each country's assessed technical assistance needs.

The visit resulted in productive discussions, emphasizing the importance of close cooperation between JICA and ROCB A/P in advancing customs efficiency through capacity building. Both parties expressed their readiness to maintain open communication and work together towards achieving the project's goals.

The Virtual Working Group on Gender Equality and Diversity

5th November 2024, Online Meeting



The Virtual Working Group on Gender Equality and Diversity (GED) met on November 5th, 2024. Ms. Aksara Mackhawiman, Assistant Program Manager of ROCB A/P attended.

During the meeting, a presentation on the updates of the WCO was made in promoting Gender Equality and Diversity (GED). Key

highlights included updates on the Network for GED conference, held in October 2023. This event featured panels on enhancing gender equality and inclusion through the prevention of harassment, gender-based violence, discrimination, and promoting gender-responsive and inclusive policies and procedures in trade facilitation.

Followed by the progress of the development of the Compendium for GED in Customs, Edition III, the development of the pool of recognized GED experts were also shared. Currently, there are 7 fully recognized GED experts. The updates of the Virtual Working Group folder on the CLIKC! platform was presented. This folder serves as a vital resource hub for GED-related

materials. An overview of the recent GED capacity-building activities was provided. This includes the GEOAT introductory session. Additionally, country experiences from Namibia and the UK were shared, detailing how they conducted assessments and developed action plans to further GED initiatives.

ROCB A/P reported its activities to the Capacity Building Directorate of the WCO

7th November 2024, Bangkok

The ROCB held an online meeting with the Capacity Building Directorate of the WCO on November 7th, 2024, to make the first quarterly report of the ROCB A/P in 2024/25, based on the ROCB Annual Workplan. The meeting was attended by Mr. Ebenezer TAFILI, the Deputy Director, Mr. Tetsuo Mizunuma, the Regional Development Manager, Mr. Dashgin ALIYEV, Technical Office of the Capacity Building Directorate; and by Jun Tajima, the Head of the ROCB, Ms. Grace Ye, Mr. Louis Chan Ms. Asuka Nagamatsu, and Mr. Jaemin Cho, Program Managers from the ROCB A/P.



Mr. Jun delivered the presentations of the background of the report, activities of the Office, and future plan of ROCB A/P, highlighting the ROCB A/P's intention of focusing more on the quality of WCO workshops by improving the needs analysis, WS arrangement and communication with AP members. Mr. Tajima also pointed out that the ROCB A/P planned to involve, on a pilot basis, in WCO national WSs with more effective needs analysis and evaluation.

Mr. Tafili appreciated the opportunity of the meeting to facilitate mutual understanding of the activities by both the WCO and the ROCB A/P. He also showed his appreciation especially on its alignment of ROCB's activities with the WCO Strategic Plan. Mr. Tafili said he was impressed with the ROCB A/P's enhanced needs assessment and follow-up actions after WCO Workshops, both of which are very important for the beneficiaries to make impact through Capacity Building activities of the WCO. Mr. Tafili showed his expectations to the ROCB A/P on further supporting WCO activities in the near future.

This meeting provided the managers of the WCO Capacity Building Directorate with the understanding of ROCB A/P, and also staffs of ROCB A/P with the expectation of the WCO toward regional entities. Both sides agreed that this exchange of information should be held again on another occasion of periodical reporting.

ROCB A/P delivers a session for the 7th Joint Customs Middle Management Programm

11th November 2024, Online Meeting



The ROCB A/P was invited virtually at the 7th Joint Customs Middle Management Programme (JCMMP) hosted by Singapore Customs, and Mr. Jun Tajima and Ms. Asuka Nagamatsu contributed the program. The 7th JCMMP serves as a platform for enhancing intra-ASEAN cooperation as well as a dialogue with partners such as Australia and Japan, sharing best practices among Customs administrations.

During the program, Ms. Nagamatsu delivered a presentation on the WCO 2024 Theme – "Customs Engaging Traditional and New Partners with Purpose". In the presentation, she introduced WCO's role and ROCB A/P's strategic initiatives aimed at strengthening Customs capacities and fostering international partnerships. The session also highlighted the importance of collaboration in Customs reform and modernization and further improving capacity building and knowledge sharing in the region by introducing the ongoing ROCB A/P's initiative "WCO

Training Management Project” and stressing the important role of middle-management. The ROCB A/P encouraged exchanges of ideas among participants and that led to active questions and answers.

Japan Tobacco International provided an insight on tobacco smuggling to ROCB A/P

11th November 2024, Bangkok, Thailand



Japan Tobacco International (JTI), represented by Mr. Masayuki Yuguchi, Japan Affairs Director for the Asia Pacific region, and Ms. Sayako Takahashi, Japan Affairs Manager for Asia Pacific, paid a visit to ROCB A/P.

During the meeting, they provided an overview of their business operations in the Asia region, focusing on their role in the tobacco industry and the challenges they face, particularly in relation to illicit trade on tobacco. One of the key points raised by them was the growing issue of illegal tobacco trafficking, which has significant implications for both the national revenue and public health.

To better understand and combat illicit tobacco trade, JTI introduced their use of the Empty Pack Survey, a periodical and established survey conducted to assess the flow of illegal tobacco products. JTI shared a video explaining the survey methodology, highlighting how it is used to gather data on the types and distribution of counterfeit tobacco products. They also presented findings from their recent survey in Thailand, which provided valuable insights into the patterns of illegal tobacco trade in the country.

Throughout the visit, the Head of ROCB A/P, Mr. Jun Tajima and a Program Manager, Ms. Nagamatsu took notes on JTI’s findings and methodology. ROCB A/P explained the role of Customs and how they tackle illicit trade on tobacco, especially recent activities in the region. JTI expressed its interest in working with the ROCB A/P in future to address concerns related to illicit tobacco trade in the Asia-Pacific region.

ROCB A/P attended 2024 WCO Technology Conference

12th – 14th November 2024, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



The 2024 WCO Technology Conference was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil over the period 12th – 14th November 2024. Under the theme “Digital Frontiers: Customs Embracing Innovation with Traditional and New Partners”, this event brought together nearly 1,300 registered participants from 117 countries. This conference is targeted to exchange ideas, explore innovative approaches, and highlight best practices that Customs can harness by strategic engagement with new partners to better perform the core functions of facilitating legitimate trade, protecting the society and ensuring fair and efficient revenue collection.

Ms. YE Zhengqing, the representatives from the ROCB A/P raised the question about the challenges of collaboration among Customs administrations, industry partners, and academia. during the Q&A session of the panel discussion “Innovative Horizons: R&D Success Stories Shaping Detection Technology and the Green and Digital Transitions”. With no doubt, this event provided a unique platform for customs officials and private sectors to share experiences and exchange best practices to address these challenges that most Customs Administrations were facing at the moment.

This 3-day event covered many topics such as technological advancements in the various modes of transport, detection technology advancements, digital solutions for global trade

facilitation, the benefits offered by Single Window platforms, data exchange and AI applications within Customs. This global conference reflected on the key insights and discussions from all the stakeholders and has outlined a strategic vision for the future of Customs operations in the digital era.

ROCB A/P delivered a session at the International Seminar on Geopolitical Dynamics and National Logistics Ecosystem

15th November 2024, online



The Polytechnic of State Finance STAN (PKN STAN), in collaboration with the Indonesian Ministry of Finance, hosted the international seminar “Geopolitical Dynamics and National Logistics Ecosystem: Challenges and Opportunities in Customs Policy”, and ROCB A/P delivered a session on international cooperation in Customs.

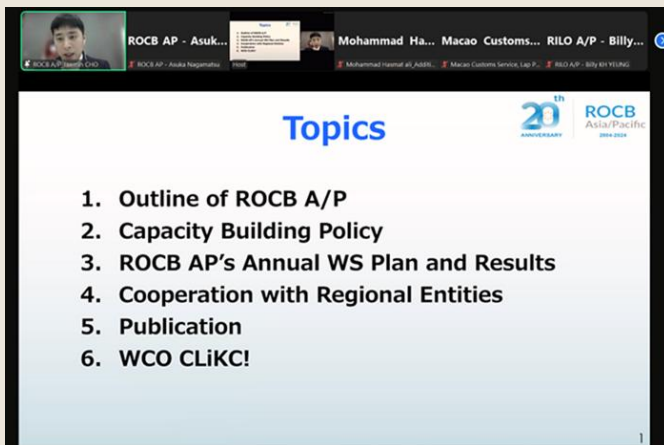
The seminar was attended by over 500 participants including the internal PKN STAN students. They have learnt the impact of geopolitical changes on global trade and customs policy. The seminar included panelists and online speakers’ presentations and Mr. Jun Tajima, Head of ROCB A/P introduced the WCO and discussed the WCO’s role in international trade, as well as ROCB A/P’s contributions for the WCO’s strategic goals. By request, he touched upon the impact

of geopolitical changes on Customs based on the Environmental Scan of the WCO, and the WCO's efforts toward resilience.

The panelists and speakers' presentation stimulated the discussion, with many questions from participants on how Customs can adapt to the complexity of global trade.

The 35th National Contact Points (NCP) Meeting

18th – 19th November 2024, Hong Kong, China



At the invitation of the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office for Asia and the Pacific (RILO A/P), Mr. Jaemin Cho, Program Manager of ROCB A/P, and Ms. Asuka Nagamatsu, Program Manager of ROCB A/P on behalf of ROCB AP, participated online in the 35th National Contact Points (NCP) Meeting of RILO A/P, held in Hong Kong,

China, from 18th – 19th November 2024.

During the meeting, Mr. Jaemin Cho delivered a detailed presentation highlighting the work of ROCB A/P and providing updates on regional capacity-building activities, including the WCO CLiKC! platform. He also introduced blended learning methods and shared examples of how this methodology can be applied in upcoming workshop activities to enhance capacity-building efforts in the field of investigation.

This year's NCP meeting featured presentations and updates by WCO Members and RILOs on recent enforcement activities, operational projects, and proposals for improving coordination, particularly regarding CEN issues such as data management, utilization, and best practices. Representatives from other international organizations, including INTERPOL and UNODC, also joined the meeting to discuss cooperation and explore new initiatives.

ROCB A/P attended Operation DEMETER Debriefing and Interim Evaluation Meeting

19th November 2024, Xiamen, China



The Operation DEMETER Debriefing and Interim Evaluation Meeting, organized by the WCO in cooperation with China Customs, was hosted in Xiamen from 19th - 21st November 2024. This event saw the attendance of the WCO Deputy Secretary General Ricardo Treviño Chapa, Vice Minister of China Customs Wang Lingjun, officials from the European Anti-Fraud Office and the BRS Secretariat, and representatives from partner international organizations. At the invitation of the WCO Secretariat, Ms. Zhengqing YE, the representatives of the ROCB A/P, participated in this event.

The WCO Operation DEMETER, which was first launched in 2009, has demonstrated Customs' commitment to protecting the health of both people and the planet, by enforcing Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) which regulate cross-border movements of environmentally sensitive commodities. With the participation of a record number of 110 Customs administrations, the Operation Demeter X targeting illicit trafficking of waste, ozone depleting substances (ODS) and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) was successfully conducted from 15th July to 15th September this year. In the course of Operation DEMETER X, 450 seizures related to

the targeted commodities were reported by 47 Customs administrations via CENcomm, the WCO's secure and encrypted communication tool.

Taking the opportunity of this event, our office had a chance to exchange ideas with the WCO Secretariat and participating members regarding the specific capacity building needs of Green Customs Initiative (GCI). The ROCB A/P will continue making more efforts to promote GCI in Asia Pacific region and supporting members in preventing the illegal trade in environmentally sensitive commodities and substances.

The WCO Regional Workshop on Training Management

19th - 21st November 2024, RTC Thailand, Bangkok



From November 19th to 21st, 2024, the WCO Regional Workshop on Training Management was hosted at RTC Thailand with the sponsorship of the Customs Cooperation Fund Japan (CCF/Japan). This WCO workshop, part of a two-year project initiated by ROCB A/P in 2023, provided participants with valuable insights into various aspects of training management and development in Customs administrations across the Asia-Pacific (A/P) region. The workshop focused on enhancing training systems, addressing challenges, and sharing best practices in line with WCO's capacity-building goals.

A total of 31 participants from 28 Customs administrations attended the workshop. The workshop aimed to enhance the training management capability of the Members in the A/P

Region, providing a platform for participants to discuss common challenges and exchange experiences and insights. Mr. Jun Tajima, Head of ROCB A/P, Mr. Takashi Nakao, Director of International Technical Cooperation, Customs and Tariff Bureau, Ministry Finance Japan, Ms. Asuka Nagamatsu, Program Manager and Ms. Aksara Mackhawiman, Assistant Program Manager of ROCB A/P, served as facilitators for the workshop.

Key topics of the workshop included strategy for knowledge sharing within Customs administrations. Facilitators also introduced the first draft of the Compendium on Training Management in A/P region, a resource to help Member administrations improve their training managements.

The workshop also focused on strategic areas on training such as identification of needs, designating and training of trainers, evaluation of training, and also it covered partnership with external partners, gender equality and diversity and utilization of the WCO Tools and Workshops in Customs administrations. Presentations from participants provided practical examples and key solutions to these challenges. Participants were provided a chance to an observation tour to the RTC Thailand (Thai Customs Academy).

The workshop concluded successfully, with participants gaining valuable knowledge and insights from the region. We strongly believe that this collaborative approach fostered a deep understanding of shared challenges and innovative solutions and enhanced the collective expertise of the participants.

ROCB A/P's 20th Anniversary Milestones in Regional Capacity Building

20th November 2024



On the occasion of our 20th Anniversary, ROCB A/P, with the support of Thai Customs, co-hosted an event to reflect our history and future, highlighting key milestones and the path forward. The celebration was held on November 20th, 2024, in Bangkok Thailand.

The celebration began with a video message from Mr. Ian Saunders, Secretary General of the World Customs Organization (WCO). He acknowledged the contribution of the ROCB on the modernization and development of Customs administrations in the Asia-Pacific region by supporting the WCO's capacity building activities and promoting the dissemination of WCO tools. Distinguished speakers, Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, former Secretary General of WCO, Mr. Kin Kei Li, Head of Secretariat Office of the WCO Vice-Chairperson for the A/P Region, underscored ROCB A/P's role as a key regional hub for coordinating capacity building activities.

ROCB A/P was established in 2004 with the vision of enhancing capacity building across the Asia-Pacific region. Over the years, the ROCB A/P has grown significantly from its humble

beginning, China Customs started to dispatch attaché to ROCB A/P in 2007, followed by Hong Kong China Customs, and Korea Customs in 2011. A notable achievement during these years has been ROCB A/P enhancement of regional coordination through various initiatives, including the RTC Heads Meetings and Training Management Project. These efforts have proven effective and efficient.

As ROCB A/P embarks its next chapter, our core values of listening to Members needs remain unchanged. We continued committed to bridging A/P Members and the WCO, enhancing collecting Member feedback through good communication, reaffirming our dedication to advancing regional cooperation and capacity building.

WCO and UN ESCAP Jointly Organize the 7th UNNEXT Masterclass: Electronic Single Windows and Data Analytics for Trade Compliance and Facilitation

25th –29th November, Cheonan, Korea



The 7th Masterclass workshop, jointly organized by the WCO, ROCB A/P, and UN ESCAP, took place in Cheonan, Korea, from November 25th to 29th, 2024. Supported by the Korea Customs Service, the event received financial backing from the Customs Cooperation Fund of Korea (CCF/Korea) and the UN Fund. The workshop was attended by 17 participants representing Customs administrations and relevant border agencies from 16 countries.

Mr. Jaemin Cho, Program Manager of ROCB A/P, facilitated the workshop and presented ROCB A/P's capacity building activities and policies. The workshop featured hands-on training sessions and thematic discussions on topics such as: "Data Analytics Algorithms and Use-cases", "The Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA)", "Legal Frameworks and Technical Standards for Electronic Single Window", and "Leveraging innovative technologies for cross-border paperless trade".

Participants actively engaged in exercises involving algorithms (such as AI HS and DATE¹) and Large Language Models (LLM²). Additionally, they took part in group discussions to develop a master plan for establishing single windows and arranging electronic data exchange under various scenarios.

The program also included a study visit to Incheon Airport Customs, where participants visited the Express Cargo Clearance Center, the Advanced Passenger Information System Center, and the WCO Regional Dog Training Center (RDTC) in Korea.

WCO RDTC Canine, Enforcement and Detection Capacity Building Workshop

26th - 29th November 2024, RDTC Hong Kong, China



From November 26th - 29th 2024, WCO RDTC Canine, Enforcement and Detection Capacity Building Workshop was hosted in Hong Kong, China. With a generous invitation from Hong Kong Customs, Mr. Jun Tajima, Head of ROCB A/P, participated in the workshop.

Organized in collaboration with Hong Kong Customs and the ROCB A/P, the workshop brought together 25 participants from 15 Customs Administrations. The goal was to strengthen canine-based law enforcement capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region by addressing emerging smuggling trends, sharing best practices, and promoting regional cooperation.

¹ DATE: Dual-Attentive-Tree-aware-Embedded neural network model to assist Customs administration to better detect transactions presenting risks of fraud.

² LLM: A type of computational model designed for natural language processing tasks such as language generation.

Several presentations were made by the participants and they asked many questions regarding their operations, as well as exchanged views on breeding, training methods and new IT equipment for K9 management among others.

Participants were also given an opportunity to explore facilities at Hong Kong Customs College (HKCC), the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB), Hong Kong WCO RDTC and Kwai Chung Customhouse (KCCH), where participants witnessed K9 team in action.

The workshop successfully enhanced the expertise of Customs Administrations in the region, promoting stronger partnerships and innovative solutions to tackle international smuggling challenges.

Regional Seminar on International Cooperation on Drug Trafficking

2nd - 4th December 2024, Bangkok, Thailand



The French Embassy in Thailand organized a regional seminar on the issue of illicit drug trafficking in Southeast Asia. At the invitation of the French Embassy, Ms. Zhengqing YE, Ms.

Asuka NAGAMATSU, and Ms. Aksara Mackhawiman, the representatives of the ROCB A/P, participated in the event.

The seminar brought together key actors from both local and international agencies working to combat the growing drug trade in the region. Presenters and attendees included police, Customs, and justice officials from Southeast Asia, as well as French law enforcement representatives. Representatives from the embassies of Japan, South Korea, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as officials from the UNODC's Asia-Pacific regional office, were also present.

The seminar was held to fight increasing drug production and trafficking in the region, particularly the rise of synthetic drugs like methamphetamine. The seminar aimed to achieve three main objectives: 1) to review the current state of drug production and trafficking in the Asia-Pacific region, 2) to present the responses already in place to address this issue; and 3) to assess potential changes in the drug market due to geopolitical developments and discuss appropriate actions to address these challenges.

The seminar marked an important step in strengthening international cooperation to address the growing drug trafficking and organized crime in Southeast Asia.

ROCB A/P has shared its thoughts with the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO) A/P on this Seminar, as regular exchanges of information. ROCB A/P will continue to strengthen its cooperation with RILO, supporting their activities and collaborating to improve capacity building in the region. This ongoing partnership will play a key role in tackling the evolving challenges of drug trafficking and organized crime through enhanced regional coordination and intelligence-sharing.

Korea Customs Service Young Officials Visit ROCB A/P in Bangkok

3rd December 2024, Bangkok, Thailand



As part of the Korea Customs Service's Global Future Talent Program, aimed at fostering the next generation of experts in international cooperation, the ROCB A/P hosted a study visit by nine officials from Korea Customs. This program seeks to provide young internal officials with valuable insights into international cooperation.

Mr. Jun TAJIMA, Head of ROCB A/P, along with Mr. Jaemin Cho, Program Manager, extended a warm welcome to the officials, who were accompanied by Mr. Shin-young Kim, Deputy Director, and Mr. In-sung Choi, Program Coordinator of the Global Future Talent Program. Mr. TAJIMA expressed his gratitude for the visit and highlighted the importance of Korea Customs Service's support in cultivating the next generation of professionals.

During the meeting, Mr. Jaemin Cho introduced ROCB A/P, provided an overview of the WCO, and outlined the key roles of WCO in international affairs. He also shared insights into the primary roles, responsibilities, and notable achievements of the ROCB A/P.

The visiting officials expressed their appreciation for the opportunity, describing the visit as an invaluable chance to gain a deeper understanding of the WCO and to learn more about the

activities of the ROCB A/P, a leading international organization in the field of the Capacity Building.

CBP Delegation's Visit to ROCB A/P

4th December 2024, Bangkok, Thailand



Delegation from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), including representatives from the Global Targeting Advisory Division (GTAD) and the Container Security Initiative (CSI), paid a courtesy visit to ROCB A/P in Bangkok on 4th December 2024.

Mr. Jun Tajima, Head of ROCB A/P, warmly welcomed the delegation led by Director David Dodson, reaffirming the longstanding partnership between US CBP and ROCB. The meeting focused on enhancing risk management and targeting capacity building across the Asia Pacific region.

During the visit, both parties engaged in productive discussions about potential collaboration opportunities. Mr. Tajima provided an overview of ROCB A/P's mission and activities, highlighting the organization's role in implementing WCO standards and tools, fostering partnerships, and advancing capacity building across Asia Pacific members.

The CBP delegation shared their capacity building efforts in Asia Pacific Region, such as conducting International Border Interdiction Trainings (IBIT) and Trade Risk Management (TRM) workshops. The TRM workshop, which utilizes standard spreadsheets to teach targeting and risk analysis concepts, was emphasized as an accessible tool for customs administrations with limited capabilities.

The meeting concluded with mutual appreciation for the opportunity and with further discussion on the collaboration in future engagements.

Both ROCB A/P and CBP look forward to working together to enhance customs operations, targeting, and risk management within the Asia Pacific region.

ROCB A/P Participates in the Regional Workshop on Advancing Paperless Trade Facilitation for Sustainable Development

10th -11th December 2024, Incheon, Korea



The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), the Ministry of Economy and Finance of the Republic of Korea, and the Korea Customs Service

co-organized the Regional Workshop on Advancing Paperless Trade Facilitation for Sustainable Development in Incheon, Korea, from 10th to 11th December 2024. The two-day event was attended by 63 delegates from UN Asia-Pacific member states and other international organizations.

During the opening session, remarks were delivered by the Director General of the Customs and Tariff Bureau of the Ministry of Economy and Finance of the Republic of Korea, the Director General of the International Affairs Bureau of the Korea Customs Service, and the Head of the East and North-East Asia Office of ESCAP.

Mr. Jun Tajima, Head of the ROCB A/P, delivered the Capacity Building strategy to emphasize the office's commitment to improving the quality of WCO workshops by refining needs analysis, workshop arrangements, and communication with Asia/Pacific members. He also spoke on WCO's Green Customs to support the discussion on sustainable developments with participants.

Mr. Jaemin Cho, Program Manager at ROCB A/P, delivered an in-depth presentation on the legal framework for establishing national single window and shared the best practices based on Korea Customs' UNIPASS system. He also compared the WCO Single Window Compendium with relevant national laws and UN documents that received very positive feedback from participants.

The workshop provided a valuable opportunity for participated Asia-Pacific members and international organizations to discuss and review the status of paperless trade facilitation, taking best practices of participating countries especially Korea's example, and the way forward through capacity-building initiatives. As for the delegations from international organizations, UNESCAP, UNODC, UNCITRAL, ADB, GIZ, and ROCB A/P participated in this workshop.

ROCB invited to join APPU Postal Policy and Regulation Workshop in Vietnam

10th - 12th December 2024, Hanoi, Vietnam



The APPU Postal Policy and Regulation Workshop was held in Hanoi, Vietnam, from December 10th to 12th 2024, with 29 participants from 16 countries in attendance. This event provided a platform for in-depth discussions on postal regulatory reforms, offering opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing across the Asia-Pacific region. Ms. Zhengqing YE, the representative of ROCB A/P, was invited to attend this workshop.

The workshop began with opening remarks delivered by Mr. Bui Hoang Phuong, the Deputy Minister of Information and Communications (MIC) of Vietnam and Dr. Vinaya Prakash Singh, the Secretary-General of APPU, setting a positive tone for the event. The APPU Consultancy Section presented the initial draft of its research report, offering an overview of regulatory trends across the region. There were two online presentations from La Poste France and Australia Post offering valuable insights related to key strategies for sustaining the Universal Service Obligation (USO) amidst changing market dynamics and enhancing the role of Designated Operators (DOs) in the e-commerce value chain.

During the 3-day Workshop, Ms. Zhengqing YE delivered a presentation on WCO initiatives and strategies to strengthen collaboration between postal operators and customs authorities. She introduced the relevant WCO instruments and tools for strengthening the existing cooperative relationship between Customs and postal operators at the national level so as to enhance each other's capabilities in facilitating postal items in a growing e-commerce environment whilst ensuring effective compliance with various regulatory requirements.

Taking the opportunity of this event, ROCB A/P expressed a continued interest in engaging the APPU activities for further enhancing the collaboration between Customs and Postal Operators.

New Customs Attaché from New Zealand Customs Service visited ROCB A/P

16th December 2024, Bangkok Thailand



Mr. Jun TAJIMA, the Head of ROCB A/P and his team met with Mr. Tim Williams, the new Customs attaché from New Zealand Embassy in Thailand accompanied by the former attaché Mr. David Radovanovich on December 16th, 2024. This visit aimed at introducing the new Customs

attaché for further enhancing collaboration between the ROCB A/P and the New Zealand Customs Service on Customs Capacity Building.

Mr. TAJIMA welcomed the attachés of New Zealand Customs Service and showed his appreciation to the New Zealand Customs and its attaché for its consistent support for the office. Mr. Tajima delivered a brief overview of the ROCB A/P highlighting the ROCB's main function for the WCO capacity building activities, introduced the office's 20th anniversary celebration in November this year, and expressed his keen interest in the information exchange on capacity building activities. Mr. Williams, whose expertise is on risk management and targeting, mentioned that the New Zealand Customs had attached great importance in that area and both parties discussed recent visit of the RILO A/P to New Zealand Customs Service, which showcased the sound cooperative relationship between the New Zealand Customs Service and the WCO regional entities.

During this courtesy visit, Mr. David Radovanovich, the outgoing Customs attaché, expressed his appreciation for long standing close collaborative relationship between ROCB A/P and New Zealand Customs Service, and emphasized that with the new appointment of the Customs attaché, the New Zealand Customs Service would continue to collaborate with the WCO and the ROCB.

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