






ROCB E-Newsletter No. 92

Asia/Pacific

World Customs Organization



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Foreword

Dear Readers,

Greetings from the ROCB.

I wrote in last year's April edition that April is a special season for many of the countries in A/P Region. This year, I would like to note the Nepalese New Year, where I visited for a mission in April.

Nepalese new year usually falls in mid-April; it was on 13th - 14th of April this year. In Nepal, the official calendar is the Bikram Sambat, a system that runs about 56.7 years ahead of the Gregorian calendar, meaning that in the spring of 2026, Nepal welcomes the year 2083! And my Nepalese colleague taught me that it aligns with Nepal's seasonal shift, as the dry winter gives way to renewal, new growth, and the start of the agricultural cycle. Unfortunately, we could not observe the New year there, but I wish to see their new year festival in the next opportunity.



Lovely Nepalese food



"Monkey Temple" in Kathmandu

My mission in Nepal was about a needs survey and gap analysis, came together with a WCO support mission of Time Release Study. We observed how cargo is cleared at the largest land border with the biggest trade partner, India.



Queue of trucks at the border

The discussion with the Deputy Director-General and Nepalese colleagues, as well as development partner which has grave presence in the Region was fruitful, especially after having observed the border area. I refreshed my idea of how we can advance together by reflecting the actual circumstances.



Discussion at border Customs with Deputy Director-General

This issue of ROCB A/P E-Newsletter features our activities undertaken from January through March 2026. In January, we are delighted to welcome Mr. Deokjoon Kim, a new officer seconded from Korea Customs Service to the ROCB. He has ample experiences in Customs field but has worked in RTC Korea as well. His knowledge and experiences surely help enhance the work of the ROCB in the years to come.

Finally, please rest assured that all the ROCB A/P staff remain committed to serve the Region and its Members.

Thank you.

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Workshops and Meetings

ROCB A/P celebrates International Customs Day with Thai Customs

26th January 2026, Bangkok, Thailand



At the invitation of the Thai Customs Department, Mr. Jun Tajima, Head, and his colleagues from ROCB A/P attended International Customs Day 2026 at Thai Customs Department to celebrate International Customs Day. Mr. Gilles Thomas, Head of Unit (Supply Chain Integrity), Implementation and Capacity Development Directorate of the WCO also attended.

At the beginning of the event, the video message of Mr. Ian Saunders, Secretary-General of WCO was presented and it highlighted the theme of this year "Customs Protecting Society through Vigilance and Commitment". Following by presentation of WCO Certificates of Merit to distinguished officers in the enforcement area from Mr. Phantong Loykulnanta, Director-General of Thai Customs.

The ceremony was also attended by embassy representatives based in Thailand and officials from various international organizations.

Customs Agility in a Complex World: 2026 WCO Technology Conference Concludes in Abu Dhabi

30th January 2026, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

The World Customs Organization (WCO) successfully concluded its flagship Technology Conference and Exhibition, held from 28th to 30th January 2026 in Abu Dhabi under the theme “Customs Agility in a Complex World: Securing and Facilitating Trade through Innovation.” The event brought together more than 1,500 participants from over 100 countries, representing Customs administration’s, international organizations, the private sector and academia. As the representative of the ROCB A/P, Ms. Zhengqing Ye, the Program Manager, joined the event.



The Conference provided a global platform for exchanging views on how innovation, digitalization and strengthened partnerships can support Customs administrations in responding to an increasingly complex trade environment. Discussions highlighted that agility is now essential for Customs to effectively balance border security and trade facilitation amid growing trade volumes and emerging risks.

Key sessions explored the role of advanced technologies such as non-intrusive inspection, cloud computing and AI-driven analytics in enhancing risk management, operational resilience and decision-making. Participants also examined digital solutions including Single Window systems, linked data and verifiable credentials, as well as the importance of WCO standards such as the WCO Data Model and the Unified File Format (UFF) in promoting interoperability and seamless data exchange.

Capacity building featured prominently throughout the Conference, with sessions emphasizing the importance of skilled personnel, institutional frameworks and innovative training approaches, including virtual learning and e-learning, to support sustainable Customs modernization. The Conference hackathon further showcased how collaborative innovation can deliver practical solutions to real Customs challenges.

From the perspective of the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB A/P), the outcomes of the Conference will inform ongoing and future capacity building activities in the region. The insights gained will contribute to the development of technical assistance, training programs and regional initiatives aimed at strengthening institutional capacity, promoting interoperability and enhancing cooperation among Customs administrations.

ROCB A/P informs new procedures by the WCO and the Region's Capacity Building

February 2026, Bangkok, Thailand

As the annual occasion of WCO Member Needs Survey has arrived, the ROCB A/P has produced a presentation material along with a video presentation explaining the new changes and procedures according to the WCO's new "Capacity-Building Paradigm" as well as introducing a newly developed regional questionnaire.



The main purpose of the video presentation produced by ROCB A/P is to inform and facilitate three essential topics. First, to let Members be familiarized with the new Capacity-Building Paradigm and understand the importance of the change relating to the WCO Member Needs Survey. Second, to introduce the new Regional Questionnaire initiated by the ROCB A/P, in collaboration with Region's Capacity Building co-coordinator, Japan Customs, and its significant role in helping Members' needs to reach WCO more effectively. And finally, to inform you of new procedural changes for each workshop.

The presentation material and the video presentation have already been distributed to all AP Members at the end of January 2026. The ROCB A/P is looking forward to your responses and welcomes any queries or requests for assistance.

Second Secretary of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran Visits ROCB A/P

19th February 2026, Bangkok, Thailand



Mr. Emad Oboudiyat, Second Secretary of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, paid a courtesy visit to the ROCB A/P on 19th February 2026.

Mr. Jun Tajima, Head of the ROCB A/P, together with his colleagues, Mr. Deokjoong Kim, Ms. Asuka Nagamatsu, Ms. Chananchita Rueng-O-Cha warmly welcomed Mr. Oboudiyat and held

focused discussions on cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Mr. Deokjoong Kim, Program Manager, provided an overview of the World Customs Organization's capacity-building framework and activities.

Key discussions included IRICA's intention to contribute to neighboring sub-regional Members. The ROCB A/P conveyed its appreciation the Government of Iran, as well as IRICA on its goodwill. In addition, Mr. Oboudiyat shared the sub-Regions' situation on border control, and the ROCB A/P shared some of the WCO's initiatives on Risk Management for better border control, such as a project co-organised with international organisations such as UNODC, and its own capacity building plan for IRICA. With a fruitful discussion, both parties agreed to continue coordination to facilitate further progress on the plan.

The visit concluded with both sides reaffirming their commitment to cooperation and maintaining communication on future capacity-building initiatives.

ROCB A/P shared its initiatives to the Global Meeting of the Regional Entities

23rd – 24th February 2026, Brussels, Belgium



With an invitation from the WCO Secretariat, ROCB A/P shared regional priorities and support for the new Capacity-Building Paradigm in the 21st Global Meeting of the Regional Entities established by the WCO Members and the Council Vice-Chairs' Offices (GMRE), held at the WCO Headquarters in Brussels from 23rd to 24th February 2026. Representatives from WCO Regional Entities and Council Vice-Chairs' Offices worldwide attended both in person and online. Mr. Jun Tajima, Mr. Deokjoong Kim, Ms. Grace Ye, and Ms. Asuka Nagamatsu represented ROCB A/P at the Meeting. The Meeting opened with an address by the Director of the Implementation and Capacity Development Directorate (ICDD) and remarks by the Chairperson.

In one of the sessions, Mr. Tajima and Ms. Ye presented an overview of ROCB A/P's recent activities and future direction, including regional priorities and support for the new Capacity-Building Paradigm.

During the Meeting, the Secretariat provided updates on ongoing work and developments related to WCO Regional Entities, including the progress of the self-assessment of Regional Customs Laboratories, as well as updates on the WCO Distance Learning Strategy and new e-learning materials developed by the BACUDA Project.

Each Regional Entity, including the ROCB A/P, exchanged good practices not only during an experience-sharing session, but also during the before/after sessions.

ROCB A/P will continue to align its efforts with the new Capacity-Building Paradigm and work in close cooperation to support the WCO and its Members in the Asia/Pacific region.

ROCB A/P exchanged views with Director Isolde Murphy on Capacity Building cooperation

23rd – 24th February 2026, Brussels, Belgium



Following the 21st Global Meeting of the Regional Entities (GMRE), the ROCB A/P met with Director Isolde Murphy of the Implementation and Capacity Development Directorate at the WCO Headquarters in Brussels on 24th February 2026.

The meeting focused on the implementation of Capacity Building under the WCO Capacity-Building Paradigm, including needs assessment, coordination between the WCO Secretariat and Regional Entities, impact assessment, and future cooperation.

ROCB A/P shared its approach to needs assessment and screening, as well as recent practices such as pre-workshop online meetings that help identify Members' needs and

support better preparation by experts. Discussion also highlighted challenges related to impact assessment and the importance of flexible and regional approaches.

Other topics included the role of Regional Training Centres (RTCs) in regional capacity development, the visibility of WCO projects in the region, and the need for timely policy and technical updates. Director Murphy encouraged the sharing of good practices across regions and closer cooperation among ROCBs.

ROCB A/P will continue to work closely with the WCO Secretariat to support effective implementation of the new Capacity-Building Paradigm in the Asia/Pacific region.

ROCB A/P attended the 17th Session of the Capacity Building Committee

25th – 27th February 2026, Brussels, Belgium



ROCB A/P attended the 17th Session of the Capacity Building Committee (CBC) of the World Customs Organization, held in Brussels, Belgium, from 25th to 27th February 2026. The meeting was convened under the theme “The Impact Imperative: Exploring Ways to Measure and Communicate Capacity-Building Success.” Mr. Jun Tajima, Head of ROCB A/P, together with his colleagues, Mr. Deokjoong Kim, Ms. Asuka Nagamatsu, and Ms. Grace Ye participated in the Session in person, while Ms. Chananchita Rueng-O-Cha joined the meeting online.

The Committee focused on strengthening the impact assessment of WCO capacity-building support and promoting more evidence-based and sustainable reforms. ROCB A/P actively contributed to the discussions by making interventions from the floor, particularly encouraging the Secretariat to make greater use of WCO Diagnostic Tools or similar tools when defining objectives and assessing impact. ROCB A/P also suggested that the Secretariat take the lead in establishing a discussion platform for Accredited Experts to better utilize these tools and to keep their knowledge up to date.

Further discussions addressed the operationalization of the Capacity Building Paradigm, including the blended-first learning approach, standardized curriculum development, and the integration of performance evidence into reform design. ROCB A/P reiterated that Regional Offices could contribute by reflecting regional conditions and supporting the coherent implementation of WCO frameworks.

The Secretariat reported on progress in advancing Gender Equality and Diversity (GED). An update on the implementation of the Mercator Programme was also presented, highlighting responsiveness and the long-term sustainability of reform efforts. In addition, the Secretariat orally reported on the development of the ROCB Reference Document, which remains under drafting. ROCB A/P welcomed the update and emphasized the importance of continuing consultation with ROCB to ensure clarity of roles and alignment with regional needs.

During the Session, ROCB A/P also engaged in discussions with the Secretariat and Member administrations during the breaks, strengthening partnerships and exploring further collaboration aimed at enhancing effective and impactful capacity building in the region.



ROCB A/P attends the 25th Session of the WCO Integrity Sub-Committee

2nd – 3rd March 2026, Brussels, Belgium



The 25th Session of the Integrity Sub-Committee (ISC) of the World Customs Organization was held from 2nd to 3rd March 2026 in Brussels, Belgium. Ms. Zhengqing Ye, Programme Manager of ROCB A/P, attended the meeting as the representative of the Office.

The session brought together WCO Members and stakeholders to explore key developments and emerging priorities in the field of integrity. Discussions covered a wide range of topics, including new directions under the WCO Strategy and Implementation Plan 2025–2028, integrity in trade facilitation, revenue collection, and the protection of society. Particular attention was given to strengthening integrity in high-risk environments such as maritime operations, as well as promoting collective action and leveraging data-driven approaches to enhance transparency and accountability.

Throughout the meeting, Members shared experiences and best practices, highlighting the importance of embedding integrity principles into Customs operations, procedures, and capacity building initiatives. The discussions reaffirmed that integrity remains a cornerstone for effective and modern Customs administration, supporting both trade facilitation and enforcement objectives.

The participation of ROCB A/P in the ISC reflects its ongoing dedication to fostering a culture of integrity in the Asia/Pacific region. In line with the priorities discussed during the session, ROCB A/P will continue to facilitate WCO capacity building activities, promote the use of WCO tools and instruments, and assist Members in addressing emerging integrity challenges. ROCB A/P will continue making meaningful contributions to supporting sustainable modernization efforts in Customs administrations.

ROCB A/P contributes to Regional Conference on Smart Customs

11th - 13th March 2026, Hong Kong, China



The Regional Conference on Smart Customs, organized by the Asia/Pacific Regional Vice-Chair Hong Kong Customs, was held from 11th to 13th March 2026 in Hong Kong, China. The Conference brought together Customs administrations, regional entities, and private sector representatives to explore innovative, technology-driven solutions for modern Customs operations. Mr. Jun Tajima, Head of ROCB A/P, and Ms. Zhengqing Ye, Programme Manager of ROCB A/P, attended the Conference as representatives of the Office.

Mr. Jun Tajima served as facilitator for a key panel session entitled “Innovative Equipment and Emerging Technologies: Empowering Customs and Enhancing Private Sector Partnerships for Global Supply Chain Security and Integrity.” The session explored the integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and drones into Customs operations to enhance both security and efficiency. Panelists from the private sector presented practical applications, including smart border solutions that significantly reduce clearance times, AI-powered tools that automate document review and case processing, and unmanned systems for surveillance and inspection in hard-to-reach areas. Hong Kong Customs highlighted its “Smart Customs” initiative, featuring “Xiaohui,” a 24/7 virtual customer service ambassador, and “CRYSTAL,” an internal AI tool that rapidly drafts responses to public enquiries. Panel discussion fostered dynamic exchanges among participants and

emphasized that technology is evolving from a conceptual tool into an integrated partner in building smarter, more secure, and more efficient Customs processes.

The three-day Conference featured a comprehensive program, including presentations on the WCO Smart Customs Project, artificial intelligence and data governance, and supply chain integrity management. Private sector representatives also showcased advanced and innovative solutions aimed at enhancing Customs operations.

On the third day, participants undertook field visits to Customs facilities in Macao, Zhuhai, and Hong Kong, gaining valuable first-hand insights into the practical implementation of Smart Customs concepts. The delegation visited a K9 training centre, demonstrating how traditional enforcement methods can be effectively combined with modern technologies. At Hengqin Port, participants observed the deployment of advanced Smart Customs solutions, including inspection systems supported by artificial intelligence. The application of AI-assisted inspection and risk management significantly enhances operational efficiency and accuracy.

On the sidelines of the Conference, by the invitation of the Vice Chair office, Mr. Tajima, together with Mr. Thomas Gilles, Technical Officer of the WCO Secretariat, discussed with Independent Commission Against Corruption of Hong Kong SAR how the Commission can collaborate with the Capacity Building activities of the WCO.

Throughout the Conference, ROCB A/P demonstrated its strong commitment to supporting regional Members in their modernization journey. By facilitating discussions and promoting knowledge-sharing, ROCB A/P reaffirmed its role as a key regional coordinator in advancing capacity building activities and encouraging the effective use of WCO instruments and tools. The active engagement of ROCB A/P highlights its continuous efforts and meaningful contributions to the Asia/Pacific region.



ROCB attends the WCO Enforcement Committee which highlights innovation and cooperation at its 46th Session

23rd – 26th March 2026, Brussels, Belgium

The ROCB attended the 46th Session of the World Customs Organization (WCO) Enforcement Committee (EC), which was successfully held from 23rd to 26th March 2026 at WCO Headquarters in Brussels, bringing together Customs administrations, experts,

and stakeholders from across the globe. The meeting reaffirmed the critical role of Customs in safeguarding society, securing trade, and enhancing international cooperation in an increasingly complex global environment. Ms. Zhengqing Ye, Programme Manager of the ROCB A/P, participated in the session.



The session was officially opened by Ian Saunders, Secretary General of the WCO, alongside Bashir Adewale Adeniyi, the WCO Council Chairperson, marking the first time both leaders jointly inaugurated the Enforcement Committee. This milestone underscores the growing strategic importance of enforcement within the WCO framework.

Under the 2026 theme, “Customs Protecting Society through Vigilance and Commitment,” discussions emphasized the interconnected roles of Customs in combating illicit trade, ensuring revenue collection, and facilitating legitimate commerce. The session highlighted that effective enforcement today requires not only vigilance but also the deployment of advanced tools, data-driven systems, and strong international collaboration.

The Committee addressed a wide range of strategic and operational issues, reflecting the evolving enforcement landscape: Members were invited to review proposed revisions to the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Enforcement Committee, aiming to modernize its mandate and align it with current global challenges. New instruments were introduced, including the Customs Enforcement Operations Handbook, as well as guidance on information exchange and mutual administrative assistance. Updates to risk management tools and free zone guidance were also discussed to further strengthen operational effectiveness.

Digitalization was a central focus throughout the session. Discussions highlighted the use of key WCO tools such as the Customs Enforcement Network (CEN), Cargo Targeting System (CTS), and Geoportal. A dedicated panel explored the application of artificial intelligence, non-intrusive inspection (NII) technologies, and data-sharing frameworks to enhance risk management and targeting capabilities.

The outcomes of the 46th Enforcement Committee will contribute to shaping future WCO policies and operational strategies, with a strong emphasis on innovation, coordination, and resilience. As global trade continues to evolve, Customs administrations are expected to play an even more critical role in balancing trade facilitation with effective enforcement. ROCB A/P will continue to support Members by translating these global discussions into targeted capacity-building activities, facilitating knowledge sharing, and strengthening regional cooperation.

Staff Updates

Farewell Message from Mr. Jaemin Cho



Over the past three years, time has felt both long and remarkably short. As my assignment with the WCO ROCB A/P comes to an end, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to each and every one of you who made these years truly meaningful.

ROCB A/P has been, for me, a place of learning and joy, a professional training ground, and at times, a playground where curiosity and collaboration were always welcome. Looking back, I feel deeply grateful for the opportunity to work with my colleagues in the office and with partners across the region, advancing important activities and building lasting partnerships. These experiences have been invaluable, and I will carry them with me for a long time.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all former and current Heads of ROCB P who consistently worked to strengthen our teamwork, and to my colleagues whose warm consideration and steady support made even demanding days feel manageable. Most of all, I want to thank every colleague, because it was the many small moments in our daily work, often quiet and ordinary, that made my life at ROCB A/P truly special. I will remember them with genuine appreciation.

As I prepare to return to the Korea Customs Service, I do so with valuable lessons learned and with relationships I deeply cherish. While my time here is ending, I sincerely hope that our cooperation and connection will continue, and that we will meet again someday, perhaps sooner than we expect.

I wish ROCB A/P, my colleagues in the office, and everyone I have had the privilege to work with in Bangkok and across many countries continued growth, good health, and lasting success. Although my assignment is concluding, please feel free to stay in touch at any time. If there is ever a way I can be of help, please do not hesitate to reach out.

As the WCO's beloved motto says, "Borders divide, customs connects", in that same spirit, ROCB A/P has been a place where borders may divide, but we stay connected.

Thank you, truly, and from the bottom of my heart.

Welcome Message from Mr. Deokjoong Kim (Ryan)



Greetings,

My name is Deokjoong Kim (Ryan), and it is a great honor to serve as a Programme Manager at ROCB A/P. I previously worked as a Deputy Director at the Human Resource Development Institute of the Korea Customs Service, where I was responsible for the planning and management of Customs training programmes. I am pleased to join and work closely with colleagues across the Asia-Pacific region.

I graduated from the Korean National Tax College in 1998 and joined the Korea Customs Service in the same year. Throughout my career, I have accumulated extensive professional experience in Customs clearance, risk management, investigations, and HRD.

Drawing on over two decades of experience and expertise in Customs administration, I am committed to contributing to the effective implementation and advancement of capacity-building programmes in close cooperation with Customs Administrations and colleagues throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

I'm looking forward to working with you and to meeting you in person in the near future.

Farewell Message from Ms. Kanyawarat Sitthikunpanit



Dear ROCB A/P Colleagues and friends,

As I am preparing to move forward to the next stage of my professional journey, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the opportunity to work with such an outstanding team over the past four years.

During my time here, I have had the privilege of collaborating and coordinating with various internal and external parties, which has significantly enriched my professional experience and development. Serving as a Program Coordinator and supporting the team's operations has been both rewarding and fulfilling. I am truly grateful for the trust and support extended to me throughout my tenure.

Most importantly, I deeply value the relationships and memorable experiences shared with my colleagues. The guidance, collaboration, and teamwork I have experienced have played an important role in shaping both my professional growth and personal development.

It has been a great honor to be part of the ROCB A/P team. I sincerely hope our paths will cross again in the future and that we will have the opportunity to work together once

more. Lastly, I sincerely thank you for your support, encouragement, and friendship. I wish the team continued success and prosperity in the future.

Warm regards,

Ploy ROCB A/P

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