



ROCB E-Newsletter No.83

Asia/Pacific

World Customs Organization



In this issue:

- An introduction of the ROCB A/P Customs Good Practice Report on Canine Training and Operations in the AP region (2nd Edition)
- Enhancement of Customs Excellence in the Asia/Pacific Region: Introduction of ROCB A/P Brochures on Regional Entities
- Highlight the New Edition of the Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT)

Foreword



Dear Readers,

Happy New Year 2024 from Bangkok ROCB A/P.

I wish Asia Pacific members and colleagues a healthy and prosperous New Year. We, Customs are 24/7 organizations especially at the frontline of customs enforcement. I would like to pay my sincere respects to all those who welcomed the New Year at their workplaces in the Asia Pacific region. In 2024, we are really looking forward to collaborating with WCO, Asia Pacific members this year even more than last.

Halfway through the WCO's 23/24 fiscal year, we continue to co-ordinate closely with WCO HQs and the Regional Entities to ensure that many workshops are delivered to Asia Pacific members in 2024. In addition, as the Global Meeting of Regional Entities (GMRE) and the Capacity Building Committee (CBC) will be held in Brussels, Belgium at the WCO in February 2024, the ROCB A/P will also actively participate and contribute to meaningful discussions and information exchange on policies for capacity building activities with WCO members.

The latest ROCB A/P E-Newsletter No 83, features activities undertaken with Asia-Pacific members in the first quarter of WCO Fiscal Year 2023/24 (October through December 2023). There are three special essays in this E- Newsletter, namely "Introduction of the ROCB A/P Customs Good Practice Report on Canine Training and Operations in the AP region (2nd Edition)"

by Mr. Jaemin Cho, the Program Manager of ROCB A/P, “Introduction to Brochure of WCO Regional Capacity Building Entities in the Asia Pacific Region” by Mr. Louis Chan, the Program Manager of ROCB A/P and “Highlight on New Gender Equality and Diversity Assessment Tool” by Ms. Aksara Mackhawiman, the Assistant Program Manager of ROCB A/P. We sincerely hope you enjoy ROCB A/P’s special essays in this E-newsletter as reference reading materials for policy officials as well as field officers.

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

Kind regards,

Handwritten signature in Japanese characters: 倉本智和 (Norikazu Kuramoto).

Norikazu Kuramoto (Mr.)

Head of the ROCB A/P

Contents

An introduction of the ROCB A/P Customs Good Practice Report on Canine Training and Operations in the AP region (2 nd Edition)	1
Enhancement of Customs Excellence in the Asia/Pacific Region: Introduction of ROCB A/P Brochures on Regional Entities	7
Highlight the New Edition of the Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT)	11

Workshops and Meetings

ROCB A/P joined discussion on Green Trade with UN alliance	17
Japan Customs DDG visit ROCB A/P	18
ROCB A/P attended 2023 WCO Technology Conference	19
The 34 th National Contact Points Meeting for RILO A/P	20
The WCO Sub – Regional Workshop for ASEAN Member Countries on HS and Advance Rulings	21
ROCB A/P support WCO Sub-Regional Workshop on the Implementation of the Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce	23
ROCB A/P Participates in the 33 rd Session of the World Customs Organization Asia/Pacific Regional Contact Points	24
ROCB A/P discusses to enhance cooperation with Australia Customs	25
21 st Regional Training Center (RTC) Heads Meeting	26
Exploring International Customs Cooperation: Korea Customs Services	28
Young Officials Visit ROCB A/P in Bangkok	
ROCB A/P support WCO Sub-Regional Workshop on Customs Laboratory for ASEAN Members	29
ROCB AP participated in a webinar “Embark on Excellence: Introduction to RDTC Indonesia”	30
ROCB A/P committed to promote Smart Customs development among APEC Members	31

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



Jaemin CHO (Mr.)

Program Manager, ROCB A/P

Preamble

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

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

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



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



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

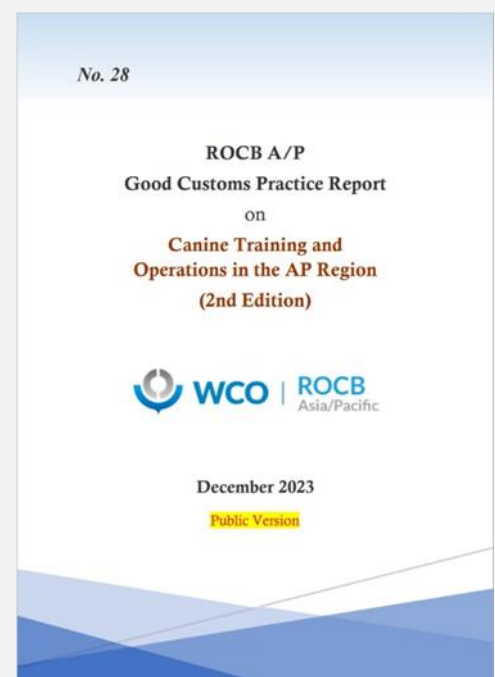


1. Scope of this research

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

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

In particular, the survey revealed that among the 27 countries that responded, 15 currently operate a canine team, with one additional country planning to initiate a canine team within the current year. These active member countries include Australia, China, Fiji, Hong Kong China,



India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Samoa, Thailand, and Vietnam.

2. Findings

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

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

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

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

This edition of the report also delves into the procurement process of detector dogs with more detail. Each member's approach to acquiring detector dogs extends beyond the internal

breeding or external purchases; this report identifies various procurement methods. For instance, some countries receive detector dogs as donations from the members, while others obtain them through bilateral agreement.

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

3. Current challenges

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

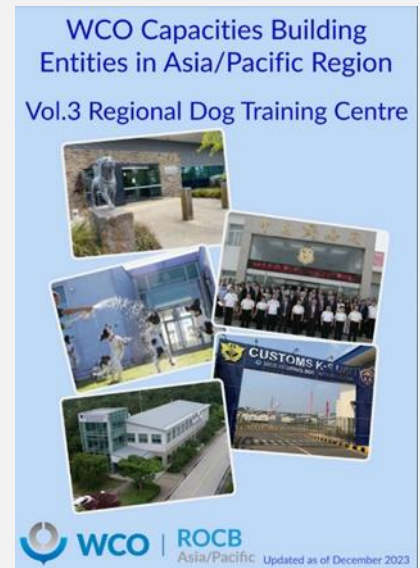
According to ROCB A/P's re-survey in 2023 to assess the current landscape, the result indicates that, while progress has been made, primary concerns still revolve around programs for enhancing handlers, knowledge of emerging threats, and budget considerations for facility and program management.

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

4. Conclusion

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

Recently, the significance of the WCO RDTC in the Asia Pacific region has been highlighted. Since 2023, additionally three more members' centers¹ have been designated as WCO RDTC to play a pivotal role in facilitating the sharing of canine training programs and facilities among customs administrations. The Asia Pacific region is commended for its exemplary regional cooperation in the canine domain, with many members operating Canine units and actively trying to contribute to collaborative efforts. This indicates that there is the positive and cooperative atmosphere in the Asia Pacific region regarding Customs Canine operations.



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

If you are interested in Customs Canines and the WCO RDTC in the Asia Pacific, I recommend visiting the ROCB AP website (<http://www.rocb-ap.org/>) and exploring the 'ROCB AP Good Practice Report on K9²' and the 'Brochure of RDTC in the Asia Pacific region³'. I hope these documents will be helpful for members in understanding Customs Canine operations.

For further inquiries regarding the article, please contact me at jaemincho@rocbap.org.

¹ The mentioned three members are Australia, Hong Kong China, and Indonesia.

² For detailed information, please refer to the website "ROCB AP". Available at: <http://rocb-ap.org/service/11/> (Accessed: Jan 10, 2024).

³ Ibid., http://www.rocb-ap.org/file_media/file_image/Brochurevol3.pdf (Accessed: Jan 10, 2024)

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



Mr. Louis CHAN

Program Manager, ROCB A/P

Overview of the ROCB A/P Brochures on Regional Entities

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

Understanding the Role of Regional Entities

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

In the AP region, these entities are crucial in improving customs competencies and promoting collaboration. They include Regional Training Centres (RTCs), Regional Customs

Laboratories (RCLs), and Regional Dog Training Centres (RDTCs), each focusing on vital areas of customs knowledge and practice.

Enhancing Capacity Building through Regional Entities

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

- **RTCs (Regional Training Centres):** This brochure highlights a total of 10 RTCs, each featuring its unique strengths and capabilities (China, Fiji, Hong Kong, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand). These centres prioritize specialized training for regional beneficiaries, hosting workshops and WCO Human Resource Development Programs, developing training expertise and enhancing the blended learning network. This initiative equips customs officials with essential knowledge and skills for customs function in the international trade.
- **RCLs (Regional Customs Laboratories):** In this, you'll find information on a total of 5 RCLs, each distinguished by its specific areas of expertise (China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea). Specializing in chemical analysis for classification and trade control, RCLs are critical in maintaining the accuracy and efficiency of customs operations. Through hosting workshop and WCO RCL Professional Programme, they provide vital training and information exchange to support classification and trade control endeavors.
- **RDTCs (Regional Dog Training Centres):** Featuring a total of 5 RDTCs (Australia, China, Hong Kong, China, Indonesia, Korea). RDTCs are instrumental in combating illicit trafficking through specialized canine operations. They offer essential training, equipping customs administrations to effectively tackle smuggling and bolster border security. For detailed insights into the Canine (K9) units' roles and challenges in Customs enforcement in the Asia Pacific region, refer to the ROCB A/P Good Customs Practice Report on Canine Training and Operations in the AP Region (2nd Edition), released in December 2023 (<http://rocb-ap.org/service/11/>).

Introducing the ROCB A/P Brochures on Regional Entities

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

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



Accessing the Brochure

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

A Heartfelt Thank You to Our AP Region Members

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

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

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



Ms. Aksara Mackhawiman

Assistant Program Manager ROCB A/P

Introduction

A new edition of the GED tool has arrived at last December. This is a sign of the WCO's continued commitment to the importance it places on this subject, Gender Equality and Diversity and supports further efforts and improvements in the situation of its members. The updates include new indicators in the Communication, Integrity, Cross-cutting policies, Recruitment and Hiring and Health Benefits areas. Moreover, a new standalone chapter on Security and Safety has been added, as well as a new template aimed at helping Members use the GEOAT indicators and prepare the elaboration of a dedicated GED action plan. The tool has also been given a new design to make it more appealing to users, and its structure has been improved to make it more user-friendly. ⁴This article will provide an overview of the Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs and the Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT), with the focuses on the updates in the new edition of GEOAT.

⁴ <https://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2023/december/a-new-edition-of-the-gender-equality-organizational-assessment-tool.aspx>

Recall of the Background of Gender Equality and Diversity in Customs

Gender equality and Diversity (GED) is a fundamental human right. Achieving Gender Equality and empower all women and girls is one of the Goal of Sustainable Development of the UN's International Development Agenda for 2030⁵. To align with the goal, Gender equality and Diversity has been widely promoted in many organizations and addressed in numerous publications.

To support this approach, WCO issued the declaration of the Customs Co-Operation Council on Gender Equality and Diversity in the Customs, the declaration outlines its action in encouraging administrations to adopt a policy of non-discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity and/or any other grounds as stated in anti-discrimination laws in Member's respective countries. In this connection, it also encourages Members to ensure that all Customs staff be treated fairly based on performance and ability, and be awarded equal opportunities with regard to hiring, promotion, salary, benefits, disciplinary measures, termination and layoffs⁶.

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

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

The Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool (GEOAT) is a tool which has been developed by WCO to assist members to assess their current policies, practices and activities to address GED issues, with a focus on gender equality. However, the GEOAT is not to determine if we have successfully implemented the GED, but rather to highlight the areas in which we are lack in order to achieve this goal and areas that require intention. The GEOAT originally launched in 2014



⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

⁶ The declaration of the Customs Co-Operation Council on Gender Equality and Diversity in the Customs.

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

1. Redesigns the structure

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

Principle 1: Strategy, Governance and Leadership

Key element A: Cross-cutting policies

Key element B –Governance, management and leadership

Key element C – Multiple discrimination/intersectionality

Key element D – Communication

Key element E – Integrity

Principle 2: Employment, Career Development and Compensation

Key element A – Recruitment and hiring

Key element B – Career advancement

Key element C – Wages, benefits and pay equity

Principle 3: Work – Life Balance

Key element A – Flexibility policies

Key element B – Dependent and family care

Key element C – Health benefits

Principle 4: Gender – Based Violence and Harassment

Key element A – Gender-based violence (GBV)

Key element B – Harassment including sexual harassment

Principle 5: Border Operations and Stakeholder Relations

Key element A – Customs policies, procedures and border operations

Key element B – Stakeholder relations

Principle 6 : Security and Safety

Key element A – Risk profiling

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

Key element C – Conduct and safety of employees

2. Adding the Principle 6

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

Key Element A: Risk Profile

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

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

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

Key Element C: conduct and safety of employees

It consist of the indicator to assess out work in the process of providing training for border officials on the implications of stereotypes in passenger control and enforcement procedures to avoid any bias, Consult with female customs officer to facilitate women to take on enforcement position, Conduct regular health and safety audits/inspections, Have a publicity-displayed zero tolerance policy, communicate that the firearm/other weapon are only provided for workplace

duties, provide a means for reporting unacceptable behaviors, Assess the physical security procedures at the remote border posts and the safety of employees, particularly female when travelling.

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

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

The document is also recommended the evaluation scale for the GEOAT indicators that can be used to assess and track the progress of the implementation. This would be benefit to in enabling in the decision -making and foster a culture of continuous the improvement of the Gender Equality and Diversity in our administration.

GEOAT indicator	Strategic alignment	GEOAT evaluation scale	Current activities	Suggested forward activities	Units to involve/ resources needed	Timeline	Targets and Monitoring indicators
Enter the GEOAT indicator that you are assessing.	Enter the policy or legal framework that is related to the GEOAT indicator you are assessing.	Enter the level of implementation that your administration has reached based on the GEOAT evaluation scale.	Enter the current activities that your administration has implemented related to the GEOAT indicator that you are assessing.	Enter suggestions for future activities that need to be put in place to reach a higher level of implementation of the GEOAT indicator that you are assessing.	Enter the units to be involved in the future activities.	Enter the timeline for implementation of suggested future activities.	Enter existing sex disaggregated data or suggestions for indicators to monitor the implementation and performance of the suggested future activities.
5	Full implementation	Policy and implementation plan in place that is widely accepted and utilized*, and monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.					
4	Advanced implementation	Policy and implementation plan in place that is partially accepted or utilized*, but not monitored and evaluated on regular basis.					
3	Moderate implementation	Policy and implementation plan in place that is not yet widely accepted or utilized*.					
2	Beginning implementation	Policy in developmental phase, or pilot programme, and/or minimal implementation					
1	Ad hoc arrangements	Arrangements made for specific cases.					
0	Non-existent	No policy or plan in place; need information to get started.					
N/A	Not applicable	Particular key element is not relevant to organization's operations					

Way Forward

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

Workshops and Meetings

ROCB A/P joined discussion on Green Trade with UN alliance

3rd – 4th October 2023, Bangkok, Thailand



Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, the Head of the ROCB A/P, along with Mr. Jaemin Cho, Mr. Jun Tajima, the Program Managers actively participated in the workshop as part of the 41st UN/CEFACT Forum, which was held at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand from 3rd to 4th October 2023. The workshop was jointly organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN

ESCAP), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Regional Organizations Cooperation Mechanism for Trade Facilitation (ROC-TF).

During the workshop, Mr. Kuramoto highlighted ROCB A/P's capacity-building efforts in the Asia-Pacific region on digitalization for sustainable and green trade. He also stressed how important Customs function is in the enforcement of illegal trade under the environment treaties. He also encouraged International Organizations and development partners to collaborate with Customs administrations in the Asia Pacific region especially with capacity building activities.

Delegates representing various International Organizations such as ADB, UN ESCAP, UN ECE, UNCTAD, WCO, ITC, UN/CEFACT, UNEP, CITES Secretariat, OECD, and UNODC, attended this workshop. Additionally, government agencies and private organizations such as Infocomm Media Development Authority Singapore, Thai Customs, Deloitte India, the Standards and Trade Development Facility, the Dagang Net Technologies, ASEAN Secretariat, Chatham House, Customs and Excise of Cambodia, Ministry of Trade in Indonesia, and Ministry of Industry in Lao PDR, attended.

This workshop covered a diverse range of topics including fostering Green Trade Facilitation, ESG in trade, digitalization in trade finance, Green customs Initiatives, Safeguarding biodiversity, Electronic documents, Advancing the circular economy, Tackling waste trafficking, etc.

Japan Customs DDG visit ROCB A/P

9th October 2023, Bangkok Thailand



Mr. Yojiro Uchino, Deputy Director General, the Japan Customs paid courtesy visit to Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, the Head of the ROCB A/P accompanied by his colleagues on 9th October 2023.

Mr. Kuramoto and his colleagues welcomed Mr. Uchino to visit the ROCB A/P. Taking this opportunity, Mr. Kuramoto introduced his colleagues and their roles in ROCB A/P. In addition, He overviewed ROCB A/P's work in Asia Pacific region. In addition to that, Mr. Kuramoto expressed his highest appreciation to Mr. Uchino and the Japan Customs for its long-standing support of ROCB A/P and looked forward to a continued close relationship with Japan Customs.

ROCB A/P attended 2023 WCO Technology Conference

10th – 12th October 2023, Ha Noi, Viet Nam



The 2023 WCO Technology Conference was held in Ha Noi, Viet Nam over the period 10th – 12th Oct 2023. Under the theme “Embracing the Digital Age: Leveraging Technology, Fostering Innovation, and Nurturing the Next Generation of Customs Professionals”, this event brought together various stakeholders from the customs administrations, academia, and private sectors to examine strategies for leveraging technology to ensure resilience and supply chain continuity. This conference offered an opportunity to exchange ideas, explore innovative approaches, and highlight best practices that could be adopted by different administrations to better perform the core functions of facilitating legitimate trade, protecting the society and ensuring fair and efficient revenue collection.

Tran Luu Quang, Deputy Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, Nguyen Van Can, Director General of Viet Nam Customs and Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, Secretary General of the World Customs Organization were invited to deliver opening remarks. All the speakers emphasized the importance of leveraging cutting-edge technology to enhance connectivity at borders.

Ms. YE Zhengqing, the representative from the ROCB A/P joined the panel discussion “Boosting Customs Control with Smart Solutions”. She discussed with presenters the challenges of keeping balance between "efficient customs control" and "fast clearance" and the shortage of human resources. Without doubt, the conference provided a unique platform for customs officials and private sector to share experiences and exchange best practices to address these challenges that most Customs Administrations are facing at the moment.

This 3-day event was targeted to promote partnerships and cooperation between the government, industry and academia. An enhanced understanding within Customs administrations of the importance of data governance, building a data ecosystem and standardization were some of many aspects related to technology deployment that were highlighted.

The 34th National Contact Points Meeting for RILO A/P

11th-13th October 2023, Tokyo, Japan



At the invitation of the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office for Asia and the Pacific (RILO A/P), Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, Head of ROCB A/P, and Mr. Louis Chan, Program Manager of ROCB A/P, actively participated in the 34th National Contact Points (NCP) Meeting of RILO A/P, held in Tokyo, Japan, from October 11 to 13, 2023.

During the event, Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto delivered a comprehensive presentation introducing the work of ROCB A/P and providing updates on regional capacity-building activities. He encouraged NCPs to make effective use of capacity building as the privilege of WCO membership and also to maintain and improve knowledge for intelligence officers. He asked that capacity building requests be shared with ROCB A/P in the Annual Needs Survey. He pledged continuous support to enhance Members' enforcement capacity in the fight against transnational crimes in the region.

This significant gathering convened more than 45 delegates, including representatives from 16 Member Administrations, esteemed international organizations (WCO, RILO ME, ROCB AP, UNODC, INCB, and WWF), and regional entities (RILO AP and RILO ME). Throughout the meeting, participants engaged in insightful discussions and knowledge-sharing sessions focused on the evolving challenges encountered in Customs enforcement within the region. Key topics included the latest trends in drug trafficking, international wildlife trafficking, prevalent modus operandi in duty/tax evasion, and commercial fraud.

The WCO Sub – Regional Workshop for ASEAN Member Countries on HS and Advance Rulings

16th–20th October 2023, Bangkok, Thailand



The WCO Sub – Regional Workshop for ASEAN Member Countries on HS and Advance Rulings was held from 16th – 20th October 2023 at the RTC Thailand under the sponsorship of Customs Cooperation Fund Japan (CCF Japan). A total of 19 participants from 9 Customs Administrations in ASEAN attended the workshop. Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, Head of the ROCB A/P, Mr. Jun Tajima, Program Manager, Ms. Aksara Mackhawiman, Assistant Program Manager, and Ms. Kanyawarat Sitthikunpanit, Program Coordinator also attended the workshop as facilitator/coordinator.

In the opening remarks, Mr. Kuramoto expressed his greatest appreciation for the Thai Customs Department for their hosting and Japan Customs for their financial support in this workshop. He highlighted the importance of HS Classification and Advance Rulings and encouraged participants engage in the workshop.

Mr. Tajima introduced the roles of ROCB A/P in assisting Member Administrations and its work in identifying the needs of Members through the Annual Needs Survey. He also encouraged participants to utilize their acquired knowledge and experience from the workshop and contribute to their home Administration. Ms. Sitthikunpanit introduced the evaluation activity and Follow-up Action Survey. She highlighted that the feedback will be critical to the workshop improvement.

During the workshop, participants were introduced and provided information on the Harmonized System Convention, the General Rules for the Interpretation of Harmonized System (GIRs), Tools and Instrument, and the updates in HS 2022 Amendment by the WCO experts, as well as the Advanced Rulings System in Japan by the expert from Japan Customs. Participants engaged in extensive discussion on various case studies in the classification of goods following the principle of HS Convention and actively shared their experiences in the implementation of the HS 2022 Amendment and Advanced Rulings System, including challenges in their home administrations.

ROCB A/P support WCO Sub-Regional Workshop on the Implementation of the Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce

23rd - 26th October 2023, Colombo, Sri Lanka



The WCO Sub-regional Workshop on the Implementation of the Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 23 to 26 October 2023 with the financial support of the Customs Cooperation Fund of China (CCF-China). A total of 16 Customs officials from Bangladesh, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka attended the workshop in-person. As the representative of the ROCB A/P, Ms. Zhengqing Ye, the Program Manager and Operation Manager of the CCF-China joined this workshop.

Mr. P.B.S.C. Nonis, the DG of the Sri Lanka Customs joined the official opening ceremony and expressed his gratitude to the WCO, the ROCB A/P and the CCF China for choosing Sri Lanka as the host country. He also emphasized the great efforts that the WCO had made for this region to enhance Member's capacity and addressing challenges such as the incredibly growth in cross-border E-Commerce. Ms. Ye expressed appreciation to Sri Lanka Customs for hosting this workshop and demonstrated ROCB A/P's commitment to assisting AP Members in building their

capacity in her opening remarks. During the workshop she also introduced ROCB A/P's capacity building activities such as 2023/24 ROCB Action Plan, Training Management Project and official publications. Furthermore, she introduced the Follow-up Actions Survey conducted by the ROCB A/P to encourage the participants to utilize lessons learnt from this workshop to improve their home administrations' ability to adapt to the fast-evolving e-commerce environment.

Over the span of 4 days, important Customs topics relating to 16 standards of the WCO Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce were examined and discussed. The beneficiary Members were invited to deliver presentations focusing on the current development and challenges of cross-border e-commerce, which were the basis for valuable exchanges of information on possible solutions.

This Sub-Regional workshop provided an ample opportunity for Member Administrations to leverage the knowledge obtained during the workshop to implement the E-Commerce FoS with the view of addressing challenges emanating from growing volumes of e-commerce.

ROCB A/P Participates in the 33rd Session of the World Customs Organization Asia/Pacific Regional Contact Points

30th October – 3rd November 2023, Melbourne, Australia



The 33rd Asia Pacific Regional Contact Points Meeting was held in Melbourne, Australia, from 30th October to 3rd November 2023, hosted by the Asia Pacific Vice Chair. Mr. Norikazu KURAMOTO, Head of the ROCB A/P, along with Program Managers, Ms. Zhengqing YE, Mr. Jun Tajima, Mr. Jamin CHO, and Mr. Louis CHAN, who actively

participated in the meeting.

Mr. KURAMOTO provided a comprehensive overview of ROCB A/P's initiatives, emphasizing its active role in delivering workshops planned for the fiscal year and its collaborative efforts with regional entities in the Asia Pacific region. He also presented the Focus Area 3 for the

Regional Strategic Plan for 2022-2024, offering updates on Capacity Building on behalf of Japan and ROCB A/P. Furthermore, Mr. KURAMOTO expressed his gratitude toward member administrations, including Cambodia, for their commitment to enhancing the region's training capabilities by establishing regional training centers. During the session, members endorsed a proposal from Cambodia to establish a Regional Training Centre at Cambodia's Customs National School. Mr. Jun Tajima, Program Manager of the ROCB A/P, also seized the opportunity to deliver a comprehensive presentation on the Training Management Project for the Asia/Pacific and discussed ways to support the Project.

The session, among others, also featured presentations themed "nurturing the next generation," delivered by members, and presentations themed "gender diversity and equality," also delivered by members, which were followed by lively discussions on the topics.

The RCP meeting included Asia Pacific members as well as representatives from the WCO Secretariat, RILO AP, and ROCB A/P. Participants received updates on WCO policy and initiatives, listened to a keynote address from the RCP Chair and the WCO Regional Development Manager, and were briefed on the Concept Note on Strengthening Customs-Industry Resilience, emphasizing the meeting's focus on collaborative progression and innovation.

ROCB A/P discusses to enhance cooperation with Australia Customs

10th November 2023, Bangkok, Thailand



On 10th November 2023, Mr. Michael Cymbalista, Australian Border Force (ABF), Counsellor Mekong region of the Australian Embassy in Thailand and his colleagues at the Australian Embassy in Thailand, visited ROCB A/P.

Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, the Head of the ROCB A/P, and his colleagues welcomed them and expressed his appreciation for the continuous support from the ABF for the activities in Asia Pacific region.

In this occasion, they discussed possibilities to strengthen existing collaboration and the potential for cooperation between ROCB A/P and ABF in capacity building activities in the Asia Pacific region, with a significant emphasis on each other's capabilities for the benefit of the Members in the region. The ABF Counsellors emphasized ABF's dedication to supporting for the future capacity building activity in the Asia Pacific region with its expertise and resources. Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen their cooperation to support the Members in the Asia Pacific region.

21st Regional Training Center (RTC) Heads Meeting

14th -16th November 2023, at RTC Japan in Kashiwa, Japan



The 21st Meeting of the Heads of Asia/Pacific WCO Regional Training Centres (RTCs) was held from 14th -16th November 2023, at RTC Japan in Kashiwa, Japan. The event was co-organized by the Asia/Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB A/P) and Japan Customs. The meeting commenced with welcoming remarks from Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, Head of ROCB A/P, Mr. AOYAMA Shigetoshi, Managing Director of Japan Customs, Dr. Taeil Kang, the WCO Director of Capacity Building, and virtual remarks from the APVC, Australian Border Force (ABF) Commissioner, and Comptroller-General of Customs, Mr. Michael Outram APM.

Participating in the meeting were the Heads of the RTCs in the region, including RTC China, RTC Hong Kong China, RTC India, RTC Indonesia, RTC Japan, RTC Korea, RTC Malaysia, and RTC Thailand. Representatives from the WCO, the Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair's Office, and the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office for Asia and the Pacific (RILO A/P) also attended.

During the meeting, RTC leaders engaged in discussions aimed at strengthening Customs capacities and contributing to modernization efforts in the region. Mr. Kuramoto provided a comprehensive report on capacity building activities conducted in the A/P region, emphasizing the importance of cooperation among RTCs. Program managers from ROCB A/P presented updates on publications, follow-up action surveys, training management, and shared the WCO CLiKC! experience. RILO A/P outlined their activities, and each RTC shared their recent initiatives, focusing on enhancing Customs professionalism and fostering mutual learning regarding training strategies. These initiatives aligned with the theme of the year, "Nurturing the next generation by promoting a culture of knowledge-sharing and professional pride in Customs," with an emphasis on training for younger generations, including curriculum and methods of induction training. The WCO regional development manager also provided updates on WCO policies and initiatives, with a particular focus on assessing the impacts of capacity building.

The Heads of RTCs also exchanged views on the evolution of Customs training, particularly in light of the pandemic's impact on learning methodologies. Delegates shared insights on the use of innovative tools such as e-Learning platforms, video conferencing, and blended learning approaches that became essential components of training during the pandemic. As in-person training resumed, participants explored ways to leverage rapidly advancing technologies to enhance the effectiveness of training programs. These discussions aimed to identify good practices and strategies for improving the in-person Capacity Building activities of the WCO, making the most of recent technologies for enhanced learning experiences.

Furthermore, during the event, delegates had the privilege of visiting the advanced Customs Learning Centre in Kashiwa, Japan, gaining valuable insights into the advanced training facilities. Additionally, an informative site visit was organized to Yokohama Customs, where participants had the opportunity to learn about AI-powered risk profiling in mail center and explore Yokohama Customs' headquarters facilities.

Exploring International Customs Cooperation: Korea Customs Services Young Officials Visit ROCB A/P in Bangkok

4th December 2023, Bangkok, Thailand



An initiative of the Korea Customs Services to foster the growth of the next generation in the area of international cooperation, ROCB A/P proudly welcomed the study visit of five officials from the Global Future Talent Program to the ROCB A/P. The objective of this program is to provide young internal officials with valuable insights into international cooperation and customs administrations.

Mr. Norikazu KURAMOTO, Head of the ROCB A/P, along with Program Managers, extended a warm welcome to officials, accompanied by Ms. Won-young Sung, Program Coordinator of the Global Future Talent Program. Mr. Kuramoto conveyed his appreciation for the visit and emphasized the significance of Korea Customs Services' support in nurturing the next generation of professionals.

Throughout the meeting, Mr. Kuramoto introduced the colleagues of ROCB A/P, providing an overview of the WCO, and delineated the essential roles of member administrations. The lecture commenced with Mr. Jaemin Cho, Program Manager, delivering an insight on international affairs, with a focus on ROCB AP's main roles, duties, and outstanding performances.

The officials articulated their appreciation of acknowledging the visit as a valuable opportunity to gain a comprehensive understanding of WCO and acquire in-depth knowledge of ROCB A/P activities, a pivotal international organization in the area of international cooperation.

ROCB A/P support WCO Sub-Regional Workshop on Customs Laboratory for ASEAN Members

4th - 8th December 2023, Jakarta, Indonesia



The WCO Sub-regional Workshop on Customs Laboratory for the ASEAN Member Countries was held in Jakarta, Indonesia from 4th to 8th December 2023 with the financial support of the Customs Cooperation Fund of China (CCF-China). A total of 19 customs officials from the Customs administrations of Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam attended the workshop in-person. As the representative of the ROCB A/P, Ms. Zhengqing Ye, the Program Manager and Operation Manager of the CCF-China joined this workshop.

Ms. Anita Iskandar, Director of International Affairs, Indonesia Customs and Excise, highlighted that hosting this workshop was a testament to Indonesia Customs and Excise Laboratory's commitment as a Regional Customs Laboratory. She also expressed her appreciation to the WCO, the ROCB A/P and the CCF China for providing the valuable platform for exchanges among the ASEAN customs chemists. Ms. Ye expressed the sincere gratitude to Indonesian Customs for hosting this workshop and demonstrated ROCB A/P's commitment to assisting AP Members in building their capacity in her opening remarks. During the workshop she also introduced ROCB A/P's capacity building activities such as 2023/24 ROCB Action Plan, Training Management Project and official publications. Furthermore, she introduced the Follow-up Actions Survey conducted by the ROCB A/P to encourage the participants to utilize lessons learnt from this workshop to improve their daily work at the customs laboratory.

Over the span of 5 days, important topics such as the role and needs of Customs Laboratories, the HS and tariff classification related to Customs Laboratory matters, and WCO Customs Laboratory Guide and other tools were discussed. A visit to the Customs laboratory in Tanjung Priok was also arranged for participants to know the equipment and methods of analyzing certain merchandizes along with the sampling techniques.

This Sub-Regional workshop provided ample opportunity for Member Administrations to leverage the knowledge obtained during the workshop and addressed the challenges of classification during their daily work. Moreover, this workshop set up a network among ASEAN members, which will enhance the cooperation and communication in the future.

ROCB AP participated in a webinar “Embark on Excellence: Introduction to RDTC Indonesia”

13th December 2023, Online Meeting



At the invitation of the Directorate General of Customs and Excise of the Republic of Indonesia (DGCE), Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, the Head of ROCB A/P, and Mr. Jaemin Cho, the Program Manager of ROCB A/P participated in a webinar “Embark on Excellence: Introduction to

RDTC Indonesia” on 13th December 2023. The purpose of the webinar was to familiarize attendees with RDTC Indonesia's facilities, personnel, training programs, and to share DGCE's insights into developing and managing Customs K-9 units.

As a keynote remarks, Mr. KURAMOTO expressed gratitude and congratulations to Indonesia Customs for establishing RDTC Indonesia. He highlighted the importance of regionalization in customs cooperation and acknowledged Indonesia's active role in the Asia Pacific region with RTC, RCL, and RDTC. Despite the digital shift, he emphasized the irreplaceable role of K-9 in detecting illegal activities. He mentioned looking forward to RDTC Indonesia's contributions and collaboration, wishing them great success.

The webinar also featured a presentation by DGCE on the history, training program, quality assurance, and achievements of RDTC Indonesia, including a virtual tour. The session concluded with participants engaging in a discussion about RDTC Indonesia.

ROCB A/P committed to promote Smart Customs development among APEC Members

19th - 20th December 2023, Sanya, China



The APEC Seminar on Smart Customs: Smart Customs Control and Services for Better Development of Free Trade Ports/Free Zones was held in Sanya, China from 19th to 20th

December 2023 in a hybrid form. This Seminar gathered around 180 representatives from customs administrations of 19 APEC economies, 9 international organizations and 11 private sector and academic partners. At the invitation of China customs, Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto, the head of the ROCB A/P and Ms. Zhengqing Ye, the Program Manager and Operation Manager of the CCF-China joined this workshop online.

Mr. Wang Lingjun, Vice Minister of the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC), Dr Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria, Executive Director of APEC Secretariat, Mr. Edward Kieswetter, Customs Cooperation Council Chairperson of the World Customs Organization (WCO), Mr. Zafar Uddin Mahmood, Policy Advisor to the Secretary General of Boao Forum for Asia (BFA), Ms. Kitjaluck Srinuchart, Deputy Director General of Thai Customs, Mr. Nguyen Van Tho, Deputy Director General of Viet Nam Customs, and Mr. Chen Huaiyu, Vice Governor of Hainan Province delivered remarks at the opening ceremony, conveying the shared vision of APEC economies and relevant international organizations on promoting Smart Customs development and cooperation for safe, stable and smooth international trade.

Mr. Norikazu Kuramoto was invited to attend the High-Level Dialogue as a speaker under the theme of “Promote Smart Customs through Technology and Innovation, Serve the Development of Free Zones”. Mr. Kuramoto introduced the function of the ROCB A/P, 2023/24 Workshop Plan and the WCO’s Practical Guidance on Free Zones. Furthermore, he highlighted that data, proper Customs function, legal conditions, digital Literacy and knowledge of Customs officials were essential to the success of building Smart Customs. He also briefed the newly launched Training Management Project when replying to the question how the ROCB A/P support the human resources modernization under the Smart Customs Initiative. During the session, Mr. Kuramoto expressed ROCB A/P’s commitment to assisting Members in building smart customs.

This seminar aims to advance the technological transformation, reform and innovation, communication and mutual learning, and win-win cooperation among APEC Customs, encourage Smart Customs cooperation partners to work together to meet global challenges, and safeguard regional and global trade security and facilitation. Moreover, the APEC Smart Customs Partnership Initiative was put forward by China Customs, which calls on all parties to strengthen technological support in customs work, explore to set up a Smart Customs Case Repository and expand the Smart Customs cooperation partnership for more efficient customs control and unimpeded cross-border trade.

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