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MRA hosts workshop on fight against money laundering

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), in collaboration with the French Customs, hosted a workshop entitled ***"The Fight against Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism"***, at the Regional Training Centre, Custom House, Mer Rouge from Monday 24 to Friday 28 June 2019.

Participants from enforcement agencies namely the Bank of Mauritius, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), the Mauritius Police Force (MPF), the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), the Financial Services Commission (FSC) and the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance, along with officers from the MRA, availed themselves of the technical expertise of the resource persons from the French Customs. The experts were Mr. Erwan Chauveau and Mr. Thomas Fevre from France, and Mr. Thierry Atchamah-Souramah from Reunion Island.



The objective of this workshop was to enhance knowledge and skills on money laundering investigations and the fight against the financing of terrorism. It included techniques of gathering information and evidence for prosecution.

His Excellency, Mr Emmanuel Cohet, French Ambassador to Mauritius graced the launching ceremony of the workshop on Monday 24 June 2019.



H.E, Mr Cohet underlined the importance of regional cooperation in different fields through the exchange of ideas and information regarding the tracking of drug dealers and the setting up of joint interactive groups. He also explained how Mauritius is a key partner to the European Union. He highlighted the close collaboration between the Customs Anti-Narcotics Section (CANS) of the MRA and the customs administrations in Reunion Island and Madagascar in the fight against drug trafficking.

For his part, Mr. Sudhamo Lal, the Director-General of the MRA laid emphasis on the harm money laundering is causing to the integrity and stability of the financial sector and thus discouraging foreign investment, which seriously impacts on the economic and social development of a country. He also underlined the importance of cooperation and assistance among law enforcement agencies, financial institutions and financial regulatory bodies in the fight against money laundering and the financing of terrorism.



This was the second workshop on Money Laundering in Mauritius, and this time, it focused particularly on investigation and the means to implement effective repression, because, as Mr Lal pointed out, there can be no real security and no effective fight against the multiple threats without repressing those who conceal, transform or transfer illegal products.

He underlined the importance of teamwork at both national and international levels since Customs alone cannot combat money laundering. He added that this seminar was a joint collaborative endeavour of the Director-General of the International Relations of the French Customs, the Regional Customs and the Préfecture of the Reunion Island, and of course, the MRA.



Workshop on enhanced IT Connectivity in Africa

The Commission of the African Union held its 6th Technical Working Group Meeting on Interconnectivity of Computerised Customs I.T. Systems in Africa from 12 to 14 June 2019 at the seat of WCO-ESA Regional Training Centre, Mauritius Revenue Authority, Custom House, Mer Rouge. This meeting was a follow-up to the fifth workshop held from 19 to 21 June 2018 in Dakar, Senegal. It was equally recommended by the Directors General of Customs Administrations during the 10th Ordinary Session held in Moroni, Comoros in September 2018. They had also proposed that member states adopt the WCO Globally Networked Customs (GNC) concept to allow interconnectivity and data exchange, as well as the WCO Data Model to allow harmonization of data elements.



The Seychelles Revenue Commission, for example, uses the IT platform, ASYCUDA (Automated System for Customs Data), as compared to CMS (Customs Management System) used by the Mauritius Revenue Authority, thereby making it difficult for exchange of information. Hence, the aim of this workshop was to bring representatives of Customs Administration within the African Union to reflect, share ideas and elaborate on the way forward for the mapping of Data Elements so that African Union Member States can benefit from interconnectivity in a harmonised and coordinated manner.

Mr. Sudhamo Lal, Director-General of the MRA, highlighted the need for interconnectivity in line with the African Continental Free Trade Agreement officially in force on the 30th of May 2019.



Mr. Ibou Moussa, Head of Customs Cooperation Division, Department of Trade and Industry, African Union Commission, laid emphasis on the harmonisation of data by customs administrations among member states, in line with the model of the World Customs Organisation to enable exchange of electronic data.

According to the participants, the workshop was a highly fruitful one. They emphasized that African countries, members of the African Union, can benefit from the expertise of Mauritius.

It makes no doubt that recourse to ICT by Customs will reduce duplicative processes and that data capture will help increase efficiency of Customs administrations within the African Union.

Consultancy Project by the Korean Customs Service

A team of Korean Customs Officials and IT experts led by the Deputy Director of the Korean Customs Service, Mr. Kyungwook Min, was in Mauritius for the implementation of the 2nd phase of a consultancy project relating to UNI-PASS, the Korean Customs Management System.



The team visited the different economic operators along the logistic supply chain in order to understand the actual clearance process and make recommendations based on best practices.

MRA had sought the technical assistance of the Korea Customs Service (KCS), which generously agreed to share its expertise to benchmark MRA Customs operational processes, risk management framework and MRA Customs Management System with the Korean system.

The UNI-PASS System is Korea's e-clearance system developed and used by the KCS for more than 20 years now and has been internationally acclaimed for its functionalities, effectiveness and stability. The World Customs Organisation (WCO) has acknowledged UNI-PASS as Korea's automated customs administration system which has been implemented in over 10 countries including Kazakhstan, Nepal, Tanzania, Cameroon, Ethiopia, and Ecuador. The UNI-PASS is at its 4th generation phase - adapting mobile concepts with the goal to create an intelligent customs administration system based on smart clearance.

The World Bank Report on Ease of Doing Business has recognised the UNI-PASS as one of the first 100% electronic clearance systems comprising several modules such as Cargo Management, Clearance Management, Integrated Risk Management (IRM), Single Window, Investigation, Audit and Advanced Passenger Information System. The WCO Technology Network has appraised UNI-PASS for providing a complete customs administration solution, fully customizable to fit in any economic environment. Such a sophisticated system, if adopted by Customs Departments, promises to optimise customs clearance processes.

At the kick-off meeting of the consultancy project, the Director-General of the MRA, Mr. Sudhamo Lal expressed his gratitude to the government of South Korea for providing technical assistance and for funding this important project. He also stressed on the importance to reform and modernise processes at MRA Customs with a view to attaining the conflicting objectives of trade facilitation and control.



The Consultancy project started on 11th June and ended on 06th July 2019.

MRA hosts the WCO Workshop on Small Island Economies

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) hosted a WCO workshop on Small Island Economies (SIEs) at Custom House, Mer Rouge from 11 to 14 June, 2019 for customs administrations in the Indian Ocean region. Officials from Comoros, Madagascar and Seychelles Customs administrations participated in the workshop along with their counterparts from the MRA.



The objective of the workshop was to assist SIEs in addressing their unique challenges in the pursuit of customs modernization and reform programmes, including accession to, and implementation of, key WCO instruments and tools. In a broader context, the aim of the workshop was to discuss and suggest potential measures to assist SIEs in integrating the global supply chain, while strengthening their capacities for effective risk management, trade facilitation, security and revenue collection.

Such workshops are organised in 3 geographical locations: Caribbean Islands, Indian Ocean Islands and the Pacific Islands. The workshop in Mauritius will be followed by one in the Pacific Islands, after which virtual meetings will be held to apprise Small Island Economies Customs Administrations about the outcome and possible solutions to challenges already being faced by Customs Administrations.

The Director-General of the MRA, Mr. Sudhamo Lal pleaded that small island states be treated differently. Our limited resources, low product differentiation and great susceptibility to natural disasters and vulnerability must be acknowledged, he added.

M. Samson Bilangna, resource person from the World Customs Organisation, underlined the importance of helping Small Island Economies facing difficulties due to their geographical positions. It is now more than necessary to equip them with the necessary tools and competences which are achievable through regional cooperation, he said.



IMF Technical Mission

The Director-General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), Mr. Sudhamo Lal welcomed two consultants from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) at the MRA Head Office on Friday 21 June, 2019 in the presence of MRA Management Team, officials of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED), Financial Services Commission (FSC), Statistics Mauritius and the Bank of Mauritius.



The IMF consultants were in Mauritius to look into the aspects of compilation of the National Accounts Statistics and Tax Statistical issues in view of the globalisation of the world economy. The meeting was interactive and it helped to contribute to the general aim of the IMF consultants of having an overview on the compilation of statistics at the MRA.

Drug Seizures

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) made two seizures in June.



On Tuesday 11 June, 2019, a crystalline substance, suspected to be dangerous drugs, was seized at the Parcel Post Office (PPO). The suspected drugs, posted from the United Kingdom, came in four different parcels which were consigned to residents in the vicinity of Port Louis. A field test for Crystal Meth carried out on the substance was positive.



A week later, on Wednesday 19 June, 2019, an unclaimed parcel was intercepted at the PPO and officers of the Customs Anti-Narcotics Section (CANS) of the MRA initiated an inquiry. Upon verification, they found about 8.98 grams of cannabis resin, worth Rs 27,000, wrapped in a transparent re-sealable plastic sachet. The parcel was assigned to a resident of Poste La Fayette and it was sent from Le Mans, France.

'Cesar', the K9 sniffer dog, was deployed and it reacted positively to the substance.



The MRA reiterates its appeal to the public to report suspected drug cases anonymously through the **MRA Stop Drug Platform** on www.mra.mu or by calling on the **Hotline 8958**.