

In this issue...

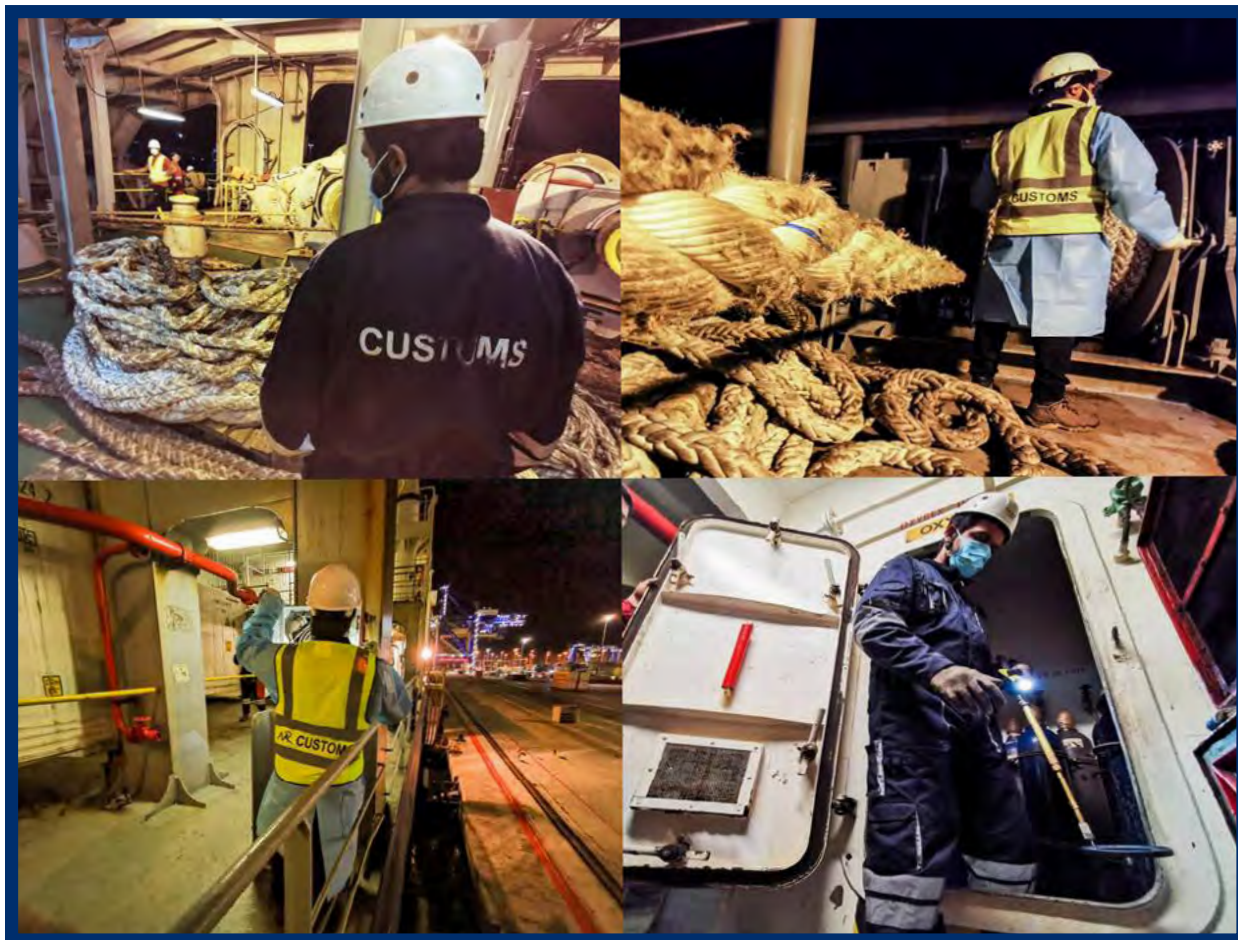
SOTHO PHOTO CONTEST 2020



25th Governing Council (GC) Meeting of the World Customs Organization East and Southern Africa (WCOESA)

The virtual Governing Council (GC) meeting was attended by Mr Ramburrun, Director and Mr C. Hurry, Section Head of Customs Department on 22 June 2020. The GC focused on countering the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, WCO Policy Commission matters, Regional Strategy, as well as Finance and Governance matters.

Moreover, Mauritius was voted as the **2nd Runner-Up** for the 'Sotho' photo contest for the year 2020 in recognition of the photo showcasing the Administration's dedication and bravery in exercising its mandate during the sanitary curfew amid the Covid-19 pandemic.



The photo as demonstrated above permitted the MRA to bag the third place of the competition with the theme '**Mauritius Customs - Braving the COVID-19 pandemic to safeguard our borders**'. It depicted fully equipped Customs Officers of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) carrying out a rummage of a high risk container vessel at 2.00 a.m. while the country was in sanitary curfew. Although, e-customs enabled the majority of officers to Work-from-Home to ensure business continuity, some daring customs soldiers were physically present at the border when called for duty by the nation.

No vessels, passengers/crew members were allowed entry at the Mauritian port unless they had exceeded the fourteen (14) days' incubation period of COVID-19 as imposed by Health Authorities.

Drug Seizures by the Customs Anti-Narcotics Section (CANS) of the MRA

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) seized 31.5 grams of cannabis resin worth Rs 100,000 at the Parcel Post Office (PPO) on Wednesday 10 June 2020. The drug, in provenance from UK, was concealed in two packages. The consignments being unclaimed, were sent for examination. Sniffer Dog Nacré reacted positively to the content. Upon further examination, one package was found to contain 28g of cannabis resin in a phial and the other one contained 3.5g of the same drug in an aluminium wrapping. One parcel was addressed to a shop in Rose Hill and the other one to an individual of Pointe Aux Biches. The case was handed over to ADSU for further enquiry.



Another seizure took place at the seaport in Port Louis by officers of the Customs Anti-Narcotics Section (CANS) of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA). 39kg of cannabis, including 2kg of cannabis resin and 1kg of cannabis paste, the whole worth around Rs. 31 Million were seized. The drugs, concealed in seven packages, reached Port Louis on vessel LSS Success, departing from Port of East London, South Africa. The vessel was transporting 626 units of live cattle. The crew members of the vessel were of Indian and Tanzanian nationality. Four of them have been arrested. The vessel was targeted by MRA officers, based on intelligence. It left Port East London, South Africa on 31 May 2020 for Mauritius.

On reaching Mauritian territorial waters, it was escorted by a team of the National Coast Guard, based at the Harbour, and the MRA Customs Anti-Narcotics Officers, until it berthed at Quay D wharf in Port Louis. MRA Customs Anti-Narcotics Officers, assisted by Customs K9 Dogs 'Nacré' and 'Cesar' rummaged the ship and secured seven (7) packages containing the drugs from the cabin of a supernumerary, a person who is not part of the crew but who is employed as a superintendent to supervise operations and security of the cargo. Four of the crew members have been arrested by ADSU Harbour for enquiry. The cargo has been allowed to disembark and the vessel has been put on hold by the MRA pending enquiry by ADSU.



Members of the public are reminded that they may report suspected drug cases/ illicit activities to the MRA through the MRA Stop Drug Platform: www.mra.mu or by calling on the **Hotline 8958**.



Training on Ethical Leadership delivered by officers of the Internal Affairs Division

Representatives of the Internal Affairs Division conducted several training sessions during the month of June 2020 on Ethical Leadership for the benefit of officers newly appointed to the rank of Technical Officer and Team Leader. More sessions are scheduled for the month of July 2020.

The first session was delivered on Zoom and the others were carried out face to face at Custom House. The aim of the training was “to sensitise the newly promoted Team Leaders and Technical Officers on the need for Ethical Leadership and its impact on MRA”.



Participants were actively engaged in the various course sessions which covered issues relating to ethical leadership at the MRA, ethical dilemmas and corruption cases involving MRA officers who had been subject to criminal and disciplinary proceedings.



Organisational integrity goes beyond managerial integrity and is more than the presence of individuals with good characters within the organization. It involves ethical leadership, active management and supervision, the right people and effective processes.

Tax Transparency in Africa 2020

The Africa Initiative was launched in October 2014 following a plenary meeting in Berlin to create an African focused programme.

The purpose of the initiative was to recognise the potential of tax transparency and exchange of information for Tax Purposes in Africa by ensuring that African countries are equipped to exploit the improvements in global transparency to better tackle tax evasion.

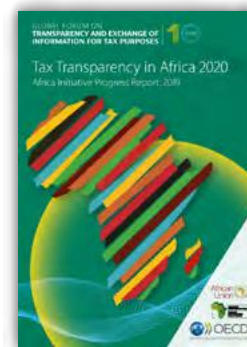
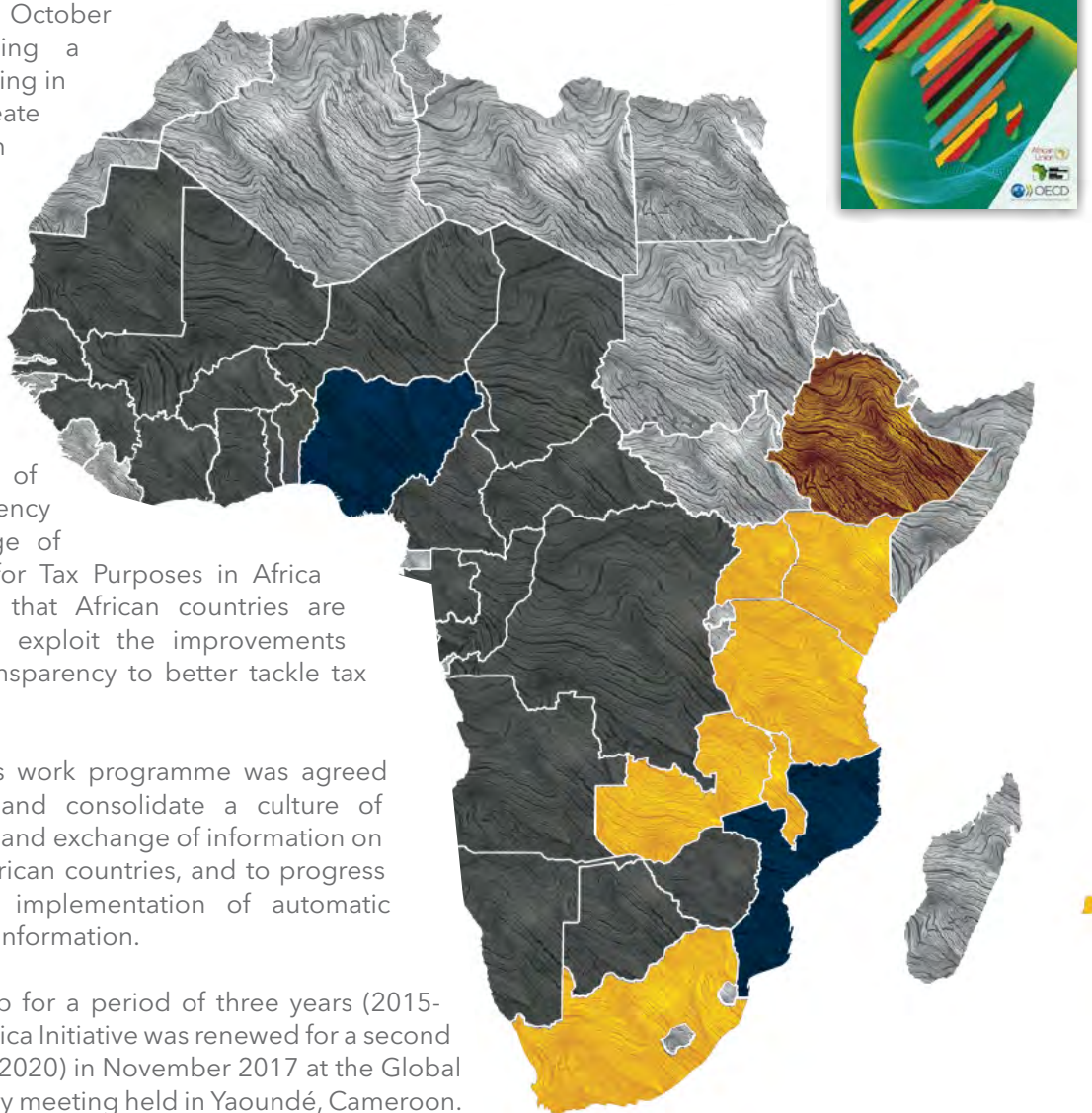
An ambitious work programme was agreed to develop and consolidate a culture of transparency and exchange of information on request in African countries, and to progress towards the implementation of automatic exchange of information.

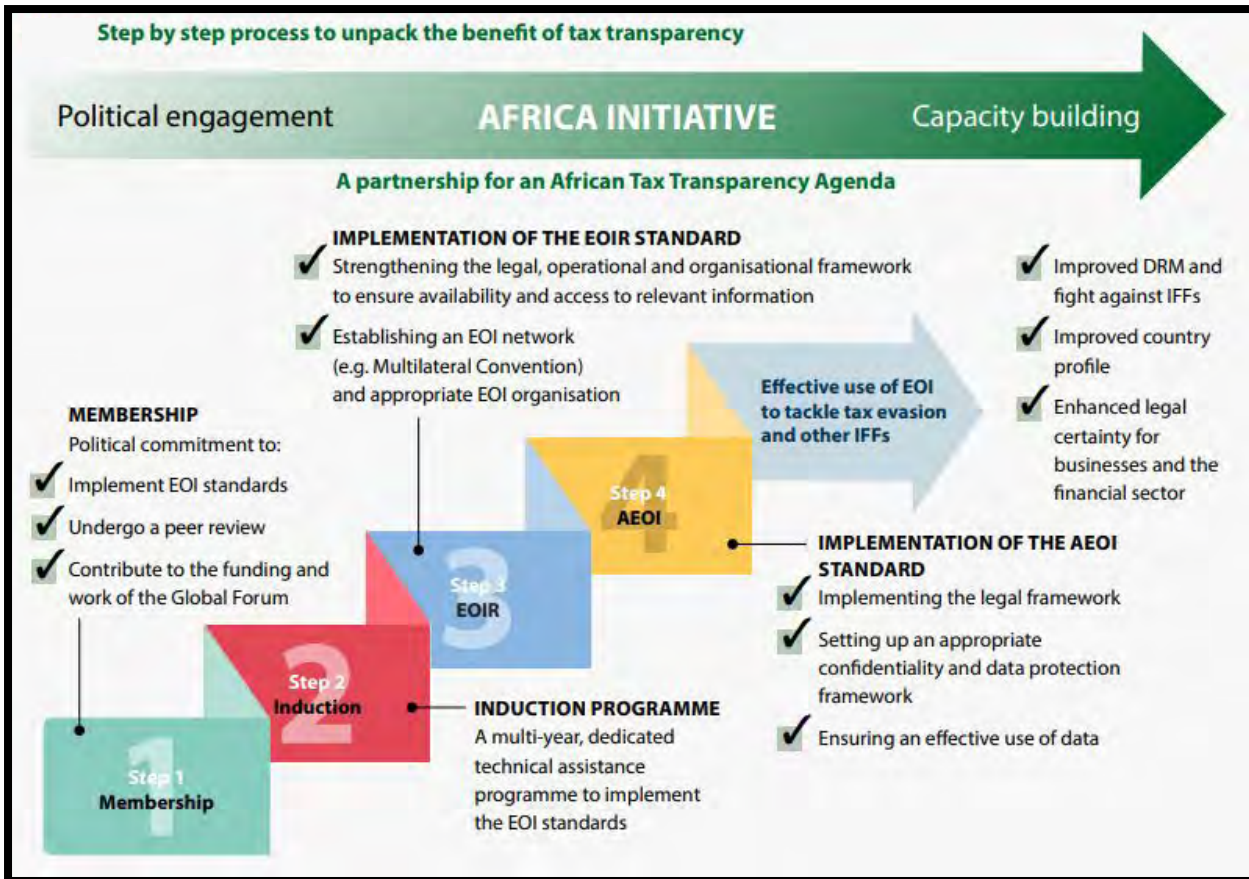
Initially set up for a period of three years (2015-2017), the Africa Initiative was renewed for a second phase (2018-2020) in November 2017 at the Global Forum plenary meeting held in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

The Africa Initiative is open to all African countries and currently has 32 African member jurisdictions namely: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia and Uganda.

The Africa Initiative is supported by 11 partners and donors namely: African Development Bank, African Forum on Tax Administration, African Union Commission, Cercle de réflexion et d'échange des dirigeants des administrations fiscales, European Union, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (France), Norwegian Agency for Cooperation and Development (Norway), State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (Switzerland), Department for International Development (United Kingdom), West African Tax Administration Forum and World Bank Group. The Africa Initiative members meet every year to take stock of the progress made and reflect on the remaining challenges.

Tax Transparency in Africa 2020 shows significant progress made on the two pillars of the Africa Initiative: firstly, by raising political awareness and commitment in Africa and secondly, by developing capacities in African countries in tax transparency and exchange of information. The diagram below shows a step by step process to adhere to the programme and benefits from the exchange of information.





Source: Tax Transparency in Africa 2020

The Mauritian jurisdiction implemented the Exchange of Information on Request (EOIR) and it was rated largely compliant in the first round in 2014. The implementation of the EOIR standard was found compliant in the second round of EOIR reviews in 2017. The Exchange of Information (EOI) infrastructure is in place (EOI unit, dedicated staff, procedures, etc.) as well as a clear strategy to enhance the use of EOI in tax audits and investigations. The Multilateral Convention has been in force since December 2015. Automatic Exchange of Financial Account Information (AEOI) is implemented on a reciprocal basis with first exchanges in 2018.

One-Minute radio programme



For the period July 2019 to June 2020, around 150 "One-minute radio programme" were produced and broadcast on Kool FM and MBC Radio. The selected topics are based on latest happenings at the MRA which include assistance schemes, Value Added Tax, fringe benefits, employee declaration form, Customs etc. The one minute radio programmes are aired during the prime time and share pertinent information to listeners.

The Taxpayer Education and Communication Department (TECD) is aiming to broadcast over 200 spots for the forthcoming year 2020/21.





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Ehram Court, Port Louis.

For additional information, visit MRA website or
phone MRA helpdesk on 207 6000.

