

Mauritius hosts the 23rd WCO RILO ESA National Contact Points Meeting

Advancing intelligence-led Customs cooperation for a safer region

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) hosted the 23rd Annual Administrative Meeting of National Contact Points (NCPs) of the World Customs Organization Regional Intelligence Liaison Office for East and Southern Africa (WCO RILO ESA), from 25 to 27 August 2026 at the MRA Integrated Customs Clearance Centre (ICCC), Le Chaland Road, Plaine Magnien.



The regional meeting reaffirms Mauritius's commitment to intelligence-led Customs cooperation and the collective fight against transnational crime.

A Regional Platform for Collective Action

Convened under the theme ***“Collaboration & Intelligence-Led Vigilance: Our Commitment to a Safer Society,”*** the meeting brought together twenty-five (25) participants representing ten (10) RILO ESA member countries: Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Rwanda, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It provided a valuable forum for Customs administrations to exchange intelligence, share operational experience and deepen cooperation in confronting transnational crime.

Strengthening Collective Responses

Over three days, participants examined ways to strengthen regional intelligence cooperation, improve information-sharing mechanisms and coordinate responses to emerging threats. National Contact Points are also sharing best practices and identifying new avenues for collaboration to support more agile and effective Customs enforcement across the region.

In his keynote address, Mr. Anandsing Acharuz, Financial Secretary and Chief Guest, underscored the importance of intelligence sharing in responding to cross-border threats that are becoming increasingly complex and interconnected. ***“Hosting the 23rd meeting in Mauritius exemplifies our unwavering commitment to regional cooperation. Mauritius’s prosperity is intrinsically linked to the stability and economic security of the entire region,”*** he said.

Mr. Acharuz further situated this cooperation within the region’s broader drive towards economic integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). He stressed that the objective is clear: to make trade among nations faster, more affordable and seamless.

Mr. Rohit Ramnawaz, Director-General of the MRA, recalled that Mauritius had previously hosted the 9th RILO ESA NCP Meeting in 2009 and the 16th Meeting in 2019. This year therefore marks the third occasion on which the country is hosting this important regional forum, he highlighted.

Referring to this year’s WCO theme, *“Customs protecting society through vigilance and commitment,”* Mr Ramnawaz stated that it aptly encapsulates the vital role of Customs in safeguarding communities. He emphasised that protecting society extends well beyond enforcement and constitutes a shared responsibility requiring vigilance, agility, resilience, timely intelligence-sharing and sustained international cooperation.

Illustrating the importance of such collaboration, he pointed out that the exchange of intelligence between the French and Mauritian authorities had led to drug seizures in both Mauritius and Réunion Island last year. As organised criminal networks continue to evolve and adopt increasingly sophisticated methods, Customs administrations must remain responsive to emerging threats and strengthen collective action, he added.

Mr. Adrian Swarres, Deputy Director, Enforcement, WCO, echoed the need for coordinated action. He observed that meetings of this nature strengthen both Customs enforcement and operational cooperation, and highlighted the importance of sustained collaboration and effective information sharing among administrations in safeguarding society.

Mr. Sitheni M. Ncube, Head of WCO RILO ESA, emphasised the shared commitment of participating administrations to facilitating the timely flow of information and strengthening cooperation. Highlighting the pivotal role of National Contact Points, he noted that the meeting enables participants to learn from the experience and practices of their counterparts across the region.

Advancing Customs Intelligence

The WCO RILO ESA serves as a regional hub for collecting and analysing Customs-related data and disseminating actionable intelligence through the Customs Enforcement Network (CEN). As one of twelve (12) Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices worldwide, it supports the WCO's enforcement strategy by enabling timely intelligence and information exchange among Customs administrations, strengthening their collective capacity to anticipate risks, disrupt illicit activity and protect society.