

14th Annual Conference of the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO)

“Promoting Connectivity: Borders Divide, Customs Connect”

Communiqué

The 14th Annual Conference of the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) was hosted by the Department of the Treasury Customs Border Protection and Excise Tax Division, Government of American Samoa and was held from the 30th April - 4th May 2012 at the Lee Auditorium/Fale Laumei, Pago Pago, American Samoa.

1. Delegates of Member Administrations from American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Norfolk Island, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Fiji, Republic of Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Vanuatu, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu attended.

Apologies were received from the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, Timor Leste and Wallis & Futuna.

The WCO Regional Office of Capacity Building sent its sincere apologies that due to unforeseen circumstances beyond its control the Deputy Head of ROCB could not be present at the conference.

2. American Samoa and Papua New Guinea were elected as Chair and Vice Chair respectively.
3. Invited representatives from the ASYCUDA Support Mechanism (ASMP), DHL (Australia), Fiji Customs Brokers and Freight Forwarders Council, Japan Customs, Office of the Chief Trade Advisor (OCTA) Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO), Peoples Republic of China, Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP), Pacific Immigration Directors Conference (PIDC), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Pacific Islands Law Officers Network (PILON) Rangitisa Consultants, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Program (SPREP), United Nations Cooperation on Trade And Development (UNCTAD) and United States Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) also attended.
4. The Conference was opened by the Lieutenant Governor of American Samoa, the Honourable Faoa Aitofele Sunia, at which he welcomed all Delegates and thanked the OCO for allowing the opportunity for American Samoa to host the Conference in Pago Pago. He stated that the theme for this Conference, *“Borders Divide, Customs Connects”* could not have come at a more opportune time given the challenges facing our islands such as geographical isolation, small populations and limited market access and vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters. Regional approaches and collaboration such as those spearheaded by OCO play an important role in supporting our member governments meet these complex demands. New strategic approaches such as Customs networking; co-ordinated activities by border agencies; use of risk management techniques based on intelligence and information sharing and exchange; building Customs-Business partnership and the use of modern working methods and

techniques coupled with the use of effective and contemporary tools and technology can contribute to meeting the challenges.

5. The Conference adopted the **2011 OCO Annual Report**, the **2011 Financial Audit Report**, the **2012 Annual Work Plan**, the **amended OCO Operational Fund Rules** and the **2012 Annual Budget**.
6. The Conference, following discussions, endorsed the paper presented by the Secretariat regarding the **OCO Future Core Funding Options** and that the Secretariat prepare a Funding Proposal for submission to New Zealand Aid before September 2012.
7. The Conference agreed that an independent corporate review and institutional capacity assessment be undertaken as required under the two (2) Core Funding Memorandum of Understanding between the OCO Secretariat and Australia and New Zealand.
8. The Conference adopted the report tabled by Rangistisa Consultants relating to Phase II of the OCO Governance Structure and agreed that:
 - i. The OCO Executive Committee (Committee of the Whole) shall meet Annually;
 - ii. The OCO Conference shall be held annually in conjunction with the meeting of the Executive Committee;
 - iii. The host administration will automatically be the Chair of the OCO Executive Committee and the OCO Conference whilst the Outgoing Chair and the next host will both assume the position of Vice-Chair; and
 - iv. The OCO Charter will be revised by the Secretariat to reflect these changes.
9. The Conference discussed the extension of the Contract of Employment of the Head of Secretariat which has since expired and renewed it for a period of two (2) years effective from the date of the decision being taken by this Conference and will expire on the date of the 2014 Conference.
10. The Conference adopted the **OCO 10 Year Strategic Plan** and the **Human Resources Development Plan**.
11. The Conference noted the papers submitted by the WCO Regional Office of Capacity Building relating to Connectivity and the various technical assistance provided to WCO Members within the Oceania region.
12. The Conference noted the presentations made by the Fiji Customs Brokers and Freight Forwarders Council and DHL (Australia) highlighting the importance of partnership and cooperation between Customs and the private sector.
13. The Conference noted the presentations made by a number of Customs administrations and the OCO Secretariat in relation to specific Customs topics as follows:
 - i. Fiji - Understanding and implementation of the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC).
 - ii. PNG – Benefits of Harmonized System (HS) Nomenclature.
 - iii. Samoa – Automation.
 - iv. Tonga- Post Clearance Audit.
 - v. Australia – Technology as an Aid to Border Management.

- vi. Japan – Japan’s Role in the development of Customs administrations in the Pacific region.
- vii. Cook Islands – Modernisation of Customs Legislation.
- viii. New Zealand – Emerging Risks in relation to Illicit Goods.
- ix. Secretariat – IT Solutions for Smaller Administrations.
- x. Secretariat - The changing role of Customs in Revenue and Trade Policies.
- xi. Secretariat – Linkages between Customs Modernisation and Enhanced Revenue Collection.
- xii. Secretariat – Importance of the OCO Centralised Trade and Customs Database.

14. The Conference endorsed the recommendations contained in the presentation by the Secretariat on the possible IT Solutions for smaller administrations in the region.

15. The Conference further discussed during the retreat and adopted the recommendations contained in the Law Enforcement and Security presentation entitled “Managing Information-Strengthening Regional Networks for Information Sharing”

16. The Conference noted the following presentations on regional cooperation in law enforcement and border security:

- i.** PICP-Safe and Secure Communities for the Pacific
- ii.** PIDC- PIDC Report
- iii.** PILON – PILON Brief
- iv.** PIFS – Regional Framework on Information Management
- v.** SPC – Importance of Regional Cooperation in Law Enforcement and Bio-Security.

17. The Conference noted the preparations by Tonga to host the 15th Annual Conference in 2013.

18. The Conference noted the interest shown by Palau to host the 16th Conference in 2014 which is subject to further discussions within their national administration and that the Secretariat will coordinate with Palau regarding the matter and keep Members informed of the final outcomes. However, other members are not precluded from making an offer (s) to host the Conference in 2014.

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