



TFA enters into force

The World Trade Organisation's (WTO) Director-General announced on Wednesday, 22 February, 2017 that the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) has entered into force after two thirds of members completed their domestic ratification process.

The TFA aims to simplify international import and export procedures to provide certainty and predictability on customs formalities and transit requirements, which is also an area of focus for the OCO. Given that eight of our members are WTO members, the implementation of the TFA would be very critical. According to the World Trade Report 2015, full implementation of the TFA would reduce members' trade costs by an average of 14.3percent, with developing countries having the most to gain. The important issue to note is that the requirement to implement the Agreement will be directly linked to the capacity of the country to do so and that assistance and support should be provided to help them achieve that capacity.

The OCO promotes and play an important role in trade facilitation by ensuring forward looking implementation of the TFA and working with key partners continue to provide technical assistance and capacity building to help members meet their obligations. Furthermore, given that trade facilitation features prominently in some of the Regional Trade Agreements, the OCO will also be working with our non-WTO members to assist in the implementation of trade facilitation customs measures.

The OCO is actively engaging with key Organisations such as the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and World Bank on trade facilitation issues and capacity development for member administration. In the forthcoming OCO Annual Conference to be held in Guam on 2-5 May 2017, the OCO Strategy for Regional Implementation of the TFA will be on the Agenda and it will provide opportunity for members to share experiences and lessons in implementing trade facilitation measures.

In partnership with Korea Customs Service, the OCO in June 2017 will be convening a Regional Workshop for members on the Implementation of the WTO TFA. Through this Workshop, it is anticipated that members will formulate a coordinated approach to the implementation of the TFA. The OCO is optimistic that with the treaty now in force, the early implementation will ensure the realization of TFA's substantial benefits for our members and our region.