



Workshop on Strengthening Harmonized Systems (HS) in the Pacific



Apia, Samoa, August 29, 2023- the Oceania Customs Organization (OCO) and the PACER Plus Implementation Unit successfully conducted a Regional Workshop on the Harmonized System (HS) Nomenclature in Apia, Samoa. Held within the framework of the European Union (EU) funded Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade (IMPACT) project implemented in partnership with United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and OCO, the five-day event enhanced the capacity of Pacific countries in successfully implementing the Harmonized System Nomenclature 2022, the world’s global standard for classifying goods in international trade.

The workshop, which took place in Apia, Samoa, brought together Customs experts and representatives from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Cook Islands, Fiji, Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu, to evaluate and refine their capacity on HS and PACHS. Several notable outcomes emerged from the event, shaping the future of customs procedures across the Pacific.



The first major accomplishment was the successful review of country's transposition of HS 2022 to retain historical concessions and ensure market access conditions remain unaffected by technical revisions to scheduled tariff commitments. Participants collaborated with regional experts during the workshop to critically analyze the existing framework, ensuring alignment with international best practices and standards. This comprehensive review establishes a solid foundation for further advancements in Harmonized Systems.

Moreover, the workshop provided an opportunity to raise awareness on the EU-Pacific States interim Economic Partnership Agreement (iEPA) applied by EU 27 Member States, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Samoa. On the first day of the workshop, Trade Facilitation Expert Mr. Michael Ligo presented on the iEPA and expounded on the benefits of the Agreement between Pacific Island States and the EU. Michael Ligo also provided a detailed background on the initial initiatives between EU and the Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific States, and how it developed to the current bi-lateral Economic Partnership Agreement followed up by further analysis into the EU Market Access Offer (MAO), and the tariff requirements for Pacific States. In addition, Mr. Massimo Diomedi Camassei, Trade Correspondent/Programme Manager at the EU Delegation for the Pacific added that presently the iEPA governs the liberalization of Trade in Goods between the parties. Currently, the parties are considering the option to include the liberalisation of Trade in Services as a new component of the agreement. To support Pacific Island Countries to benefit from the iEPA, the EU funded a €37 million Pacific Regional Integration Support Programme of which IMPACT is one of the project and will continue working with Pacific States to facilitate their accession if interested and the creation of trade opportunities in the future.

"PACER Plus will continue to offer its support in the implementation of HS and PACHS 2022 considering its significant importance in customs functions," PPIU Operations and Secretariat Manager, Mrs. Laisiana Tugaga said. She added, "Implementing the latest version of the HS is critical amongst the Pacific Island Countries to simplify intra-regional trade transaction and enhance the quality of trade statistics compiled in the region, we are very grateful to the input from our experts during the workshop for their assistance."

"The workshop was excellent, and the facilitators were great, and the information and assistance provided was practical. The knowledge on iEPA and its requirements is something that I will take back to my administration", expressed Ms Sharon Manaseitava, Customs Officer, Fiji.

Similar sentiments were also shared by Ms Grace Isaia Leone from the Samoa Ministry of Customs, she stated that, "the information received on iEPA will be used to conduct further consultations on how best to implement iEPA and its requirements".

The experts leading the workshop recognized the participants for their commitment and proactive approach to the training sessions. The participants maintained consistently high levels of interest, critical thinking, and active participation. Ms. Nancy T. Oraka, Head of OCO, expressed appreciation for the participants' eagerness to unlearn old thinking and embrace new methodologies reflects their dedication to continuous improvement and the pursuit of best practices in harmonized systems.



The workshop was jointly organised by the PACER Plus Implementation Unit and the Oceania Customs Organization (OCO) under the European Union (EU) funded Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade (IMPACT) project implemented in partnership with United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).



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Media Contact:

Darryl Ikbal DarrylI@ocosec.org