



January – March 2025

Vision: The OCO to be recognised as a dynamic Regional Customs Secretariat that collaborates with regional and global partners to develop and deliver high quality and sustainable outputs to Member administrations.

OCEANIA CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION NEWSLETTER

FOREWORD

The Critical Role of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Customs



Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in customs operations represent a fundamental transformation in how governmental institutions approach trade, border management, and public service delivery. Far from being a mere bureaucratic checkbox, GESI is a strategic imperative that enhances organisational effectiveness, promotes social justice, and drives economic development.

Customs departments have traditionally been male-dominated environments with rigid hierarchical structures that often marginalise women and individuals from diverse social backgrounds. By systematically implementing GESI principles, these institutions can break down historical barriers and create more inclusive, representative workforces that reflect the communities they serve.

The benefits of GESI in customs extend far beyond internal organisational dynamics. Inclusive customs practices ensure fair treatment for all traders, regardless of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or other demographic characteristics. This approach reduces discrimination, minimises unconscious bias in trade regulation and border control, and creates more transparent and equitable systems of international commerce.

Moreover, diverse teams bring multiple perspectives that enhance problem-solving capabilities. Women and individuals from varied backgrounds often introduce innovative approaches to risk management, technological implementation, and customer service. Their unique insights can help customs agencies develop more nuanced, effective strategies for addressing complex challenges in global trade. By championing gender equality and social inclusion, customs agencies can become models of progressive institutional transformation. They demonstrate that fairness is not just a moral imperative but a practical approach to building more robust, adaptable, and effective public services that truly serve all members of society.

Nancy T. Oraka
OCO Head of Secretariat

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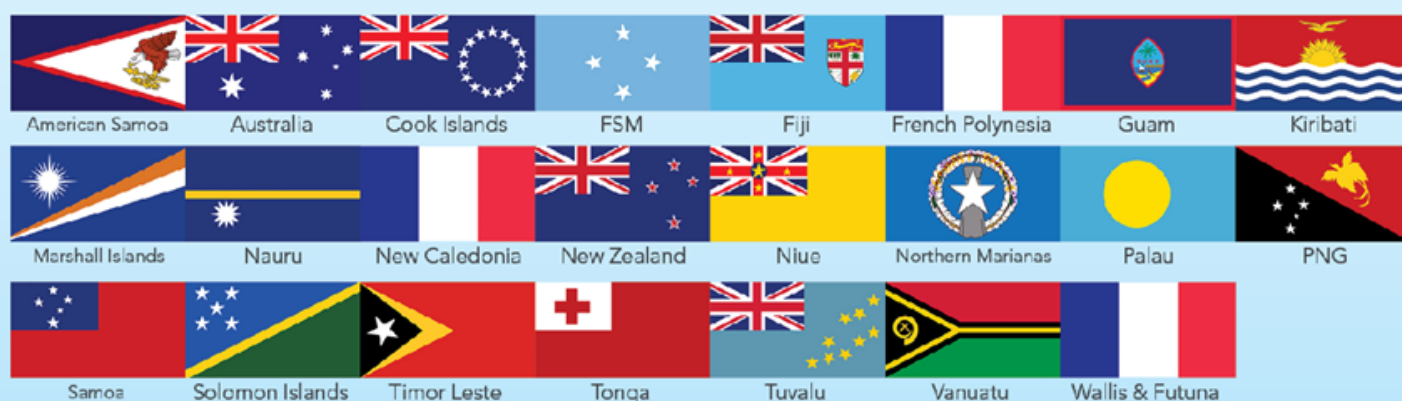
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OUR MEMBERS



January - March Highlights

Pacific Womens Professional Development Programme (PWPDP)

off to a Great Start

The Australian Border Force (ABF) and the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) partnered with RMIT University to deliver the fourth annual *Pacific Women's Professional Development Program* (PWPDP). PWPDP 2025 focused on 'Advancing Future-Ready Customs Leadership'.

The PWPDP program started 23rd January with orientation session by RMIT and then the first online module went live on the 27th January. The program consisted of **30 female leaders** who were from 17 of OCO member countries and included 2 from the OCO Secretariat. It also had an alumni, **Ms. Stephanie Waqanivalagi**, as a Mentor and OCO's representative in terms of coordination.

This was the first occasion for the program to include an online component followed by a residential component in Suva, Fiji.

PWPDP was initiated in 2022, and provides a positive opportunity for emerging women Customs officers to:

strengthen their leadership skills and develop their leadership toolkit build their Customs networks and learn from each other's experiences for a safer, more secure Blue Pacific prepare for future Customs developments with an adaptive, innovative and collaborative mindset

ABF and OCO recognize that gender diversity at all levels within Customs administrations ensures more effective outcomes for global trade facilitation, revenue management, enforcement and national security. Together, the ABF and OCO are committed to taking proactive steps to invest in women's advancement in Customs leadership.

Both the online and residential programs engaged a diverse group of specialist presenters and experts from international Customs agencies, academia, government and non-government agencies. The Participants had the opportunity to engage with guest presenters and their Customs colleagues through a diverse program of live and pre-recorded presentations, live interactive workshops, panel discussions, and syndicate group activities which was hosted at the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service complex, WCO Regional Training Centre in Suva, Fiji. (links to OCO PWPDP interviews - [Toka](#) , [Meliki](#), [Stephanie](#))



Corporate Governance, Succession Planning and Mentoring Workshop



Facilitated by the Centre of Customs and Excise Studies, this workshop was to prepare current leaders to:

- * Develop risk mitigation strategies and enhance business continuity for sustainable and future-ready Customs.
- * Foster accountability, transparency and compliance.
- * Contribute effectively to the development of strategic plans and corporate governance frameworks for member administrations.

* Cultivate a pipeline of talented individuals prepared to assume key leadership roles.

The workshop consisted of 17 participants (59% male; 41% female) and was also attended by the Finance and Corporate Services Manager, Mr. Raginald Khan, as a capacity-building opportunity for the Secretariat. A pre-workshop evaluation and post-workshop evaluation was conducted on the participants. The findings from the evaluation highlighted a positive learning experience with participants learning about business continuity measures including strategic planning tools, the concept of succession planning and mentoring. [Read more](#)

January - March Highlights

Regional Effort to Tackle Customs Fraud



OCO and **ABF** launched Operation Domino II, a regional initiative aimed at tackling customs fraud across the Pacific.

Operation Domino II aims to address the undervaluation of dutiable commodities, which undermines government revenue collection and creates unfair market advantages. The operation will also target potential trade-based money laundering activities across the Pacific region.

"The success of our first operation demonstrated the critical importance of data-driven approaches to customs enforcement," **said OCO Head of Secretariat, Nancy T Oraka**. "With Operation Domino II, we're building on a proven model that has already identified significant revenue discrepancies, and we are now strengthening expertise and capability to prevent revenue leakages in the Pacific, ensuring more effective Customs enforcement across the region."

The operation began with a five-day workshop in Nadi, focusing on advanced data management and analysis techniques. Customs officers from participating countries will be trained to efficiently manage trade data and derive actionable insights through trade transparency techniques, particularly the mirroring of import and export data.

[Read more](#)

OCO Presents Capacity Building Initiatives at WCO Forum

The Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) recently shared its capacity-building initiatives at the World Customs Organization (WCO) Capacity Building Committee meeting in Brussels, highlighting the unique challenges and achievements of customs administrations across the Blue Pacific.

OCO Operations Manager, Laisa Naivalurua, presented to the 300 delegates representing Customs administrations, WCO regional entities and partner organisations who gathered at the 16th session of the WCO Capacity Building Committee (CBC), held from 26 to 28 February 2025.

The session was conducted under the theme "Reimagining the WCO Capacity-Building Paradigm – Thriving with Strategic Purpose and Resource Optimization" and provided an important platform for the OCO to showcase its role in supporting its 23 member customs administrations.

OCO Secretariat News

Amitesh Prasad appointed as OCO IPR Project Coordinator



The Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) welcomes Mr Amitesh Prasad as their new IPR Project Coordinator., Mr. Prasad is an experienced international development professional specialising in Programme Management, donor coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and stakeholder engagement and communication across the Pacific.

His expertise includes strengthening governance and democratic resilience, leading stability and security initiatives, fostering blue economy partnerships, and capacity

building. He is committed to fostering partnerships and sustainable development through collaboration with governments, multilateral agencies, and civil society organisations including community leaders.

Stephanie Waqanivalagi appointed as OCO Training Coordinator



The Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) welcomes Ms Stephanie Waqanivalagi as their new Training Coordinator., Ms. Waqanivalagi plays a pivotal role in ensuring the successful implementation and delivery of capacity development programs for our 23 member administrations across the region. She is formerly OCO's Executive Assistant and is a Pacific Womens Professional Development Programme (PWPDP) Alumni and Mentor.

Artika Kumar appointed as OCO Executive Assistant



The Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) welcomes Ms Artika Kumar as their new Executive Assistant., Ms. Kumar is an extensive expertise in administration, financial management, and organizational operations. With a strong background in accounting and information systems, she has developed a keen eye for detail, ensuring efficiency in executive support, stakeholder coordination, and process optimization.

UPCOMINGEVENTS

April
2025

Operation Domino II

10 Mar-20 April

Command and Control Training

7-11 Apr

OCO/WCO Joint advanced workshop on HS and CV

28 Apr - 2 May

OCO Steering Committee (Qtr 4/2025) Meeting

TBC

Formulate Excise Guidelines for Members

TBC

May
2025

Executive Leadership Retreat 2025, Guam

19/05/2025

27th OCO Annual Conference 2025, Guam

19 - 23 May

ABF Trade Enforcement Alumni Working Group

TBC

HS Contact Points Meeting

TBC

June
2025

PIDC Conference (RAM)

TBC

144th - 145th WCO Council Session, Brussels, Belgium

TBC

ISWG Quarter 2/2025 Meeting

TBC

FSRS Meeting & PRNSC Conference 2025

TBC

Operation Domino II Debrief in Brisbane

2-4 Jun

GALLERY

Pictures: PWPDP cohort 2 Graduation.

Bottom: PWPDP attendees and OCO staff were invited to the Australian High Commissioner's residence



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