



July ~ September 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 Pacific's digital tide is rising — and Customs must move with it.



E-commerce is transforming the way Pacific people trade, connect, and grow their businesses.

The Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) is proud to join the **Pacific E-**

commerce Alliance (PacifEcom) as its sixth partner, through our Statement of Intent signed on 4 June 2025.

This partnership marks an important step forward. It's about ensuring our Customs administrations are ready for the fast-paced world of online trade — one where goods must move quickly, efficiently, and securely.

Many of our members already use systems such as ASYCUDA to process trade paperwork, but e-

commerce demands even smarter solutions, stronger coordination, and better data-sharing across borders.

Customs plays a vital role in this space. We help make trade faster, safer, and more transparent — building trust between online buyers and sellers.

This work directly supports **Key Priority Area 3 (Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation)** of the Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy, highlighting how Customs connects digital trade to the real world of goods and delivery.

Through PacifEcom, we look forward to deepening partnerships, sharing expertise, and shaping a region where e-commerce can truly thrive. Together, we move towards a connected Pacific — one that is digital, inclusive, and open for business.

Vinaka Vakalevu,
Nancy T. Oraka
OCO Head of Secretariat

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OUR MEMBERS



July - September Highlights

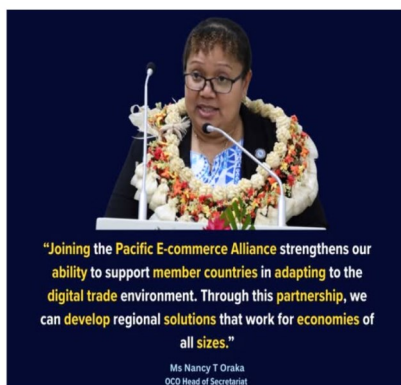
OCO Operations Meets with PIFS Acting Senior Advisor



The Oceania Customs Organisation Operations Team met with Pacific Islands Forum Acting Senior Advisor—Policy, Mr. Terio Koronawa for a networking meeting on July 2nd.

Key discussions were discussed between the two parties on updates to USPTO IPR Project, OCO Work program Priorities on Law Enforcement and Border Security, Coordinated Border Management and to review the BoE Declaration.

Oceania Customs Organisation Joins Pacific E-commerce Alliance



The Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) representing 24 Pacific Island Customs administrations, has joined the Pacific E-commerce Alliance as global digital trade reaches unprecedented levels. The partnership, approved during OCO's annual conference in Guam, brings crucial Customs expertise to the alliance coordinated by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

"This partnership represents a critical step forward in our collective efforts to harness the potential of digital trade for Pacific communities," said Mr Zarak Khan, Director – Programme & Initiatives of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. ***"OCO's expertise in Customs modernisation will be invaluable as we work to create opportunities for Pacific businesses in the global digital marketplace."***

The alliance, established in July 2023, now comprises six partners, which are the Commonwealth Secretariat, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Pacific Tourism Organisation, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, UN Trade and Development, and OCO.

Global e-commerce sales are projected to reach US\$6.56 trillion in 2025, with over 3 billion digital buyers worldwide (eMarketer, 2025).

"The dramatic increase in small parcel shipments through e-commerce has created detection challenges that our traditional systems weren't designed to address," said Mr Udit Singh, Chief Executive Officer of the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service and current OCO Steering Committee Chairperson. ***"We must develop tailored risk management approaches for this new commerce landscape."***

The Asia-Pacific region represents the fastest-growing e-commerce market globally, with countries like the Philippines and India showing growth rates exceeding 20% (UNCTAD, 2025). While many Pacific Customs administrations still operate with outdated systems, there has been progress. Vanuatu, for example, has developed one of the world's most advanced electronic single window systems, achieving several global firsts including the first passenger module created in the Automated Systems for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) worldwide and the first direct online payment between a bank and Customs in the Pacific. The system reduced cargo clearance from three days to less than one day.

"Joining the Pacific E-commerce Alliance strengthens our ability to support member countries in adapting to the digital trade environment," said Ms Nancy T Oraka, Head of Secretariat for the Oceania Customs Organisation. ***"Through this partnership, we can develop regional solutions that work for economies of all sizes."***

Eight OCO members have implemented components of a regional single window system, reducing clearing times by an average of 37%. This progress is important as global online sales are expected to reach US\$7 trillion by 2027 (eMarketer, 2025). For Pacific Island nations, this growth brings both opportunities and challenges. Countries need to invest in infrastructure while gaining better access to global markets.

To capture this opportunity, the alliance operates under the Pacific E-commerce Initiative, which aims to create a "transformative Blue Pacific economy where all businesses and consumers actively engage in domestic and cross-border electronic commerce." This work is guided by the Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap, endorsed by Forum Trade Ministers in 2021, which provides a coordinated framework for strengthening digital trade across the region.

"By joining the Pacific E-commerce Alliance, we strengthen our unity of purpose and willingness to support one another," Mr Singh said. ***"We understand our collective voice is stronger than our individual ones."***

For OCO, future initiatives will focus on advancing digital transformation across its membership, with emphasis on new technologies and tools adapted to Pacific contexts.

July - September Highlights

Pacific Customs Officers Boost Chemical Security Skills

Customs and government officials from 13 Pacific nations responsible for implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention were recently trained in Brisbane on detecting and preventing the illegal movement of toxic chemicals, as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen regional security.

The week-long program, run by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), brought together officers from Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.



"Our Blue Pacific has strong commitments to peace and security, and Pacific Customs administrations are instrumental in turning those commitments into action," said Nancy Oraka, Head of the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO). ***"By sharing intelligence, building capacity together, and working alongside partners such as OPCW, World Customs Organisation, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and our OCO Members, we are reinforcing a united Pacific shield against emerging threats while keeping legitimate trade moving for the benefit of our island communities."***

The training featured practical demonstrations of advanced detection equipment, including X-ray scanning systems, chemical trace detectors, and detector dogs. Officers also learned about concealment methods used in chemical smuggling, including techniques for hiding dangerous substances in refrigerated containers and other cargo.

"The ABF experts showed us how to use special technology to detect these chemicals better. Watching them use the equipment helped us understand the process," said Tammy Luitolo from Solomon Islands Customs and Excise Division.

The Australian Border Force Container Examination Facility provided real-world scenarios that officers could take back to their home countries.

The training builds on decades of Pacific leadership in creating nuclear-free zones. The region's 1985 Rarotonga Treaty established the South Pacific as nuclear-free, with more recent commitments under the Boe Declaration and 2050 Pacific Strategy extending that peace-focused approach.

"Pacific nations signed the Rarotonga Treaty in 1985 to create a Nuclear-Free South Pacific," said Mohammed Ajaz, Customs Enforcement Advisor for the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO). ***"Now we face a new challenge – weak enforcement of Chemical Weapons Convention standards could allow dangerous dual-use chemicals to spread throughout the region."***

The stakes extend beyond the Pacific itself – as a major maritime crossroads, stronger chemical weapons enforcement here protects both local communities and global security.

"Working together with other countries helps stop illegal toxic chemicals," Ms Luitolo said, highlighting how collaboration strengthens individual nations' efforts.

Officers also committed to updating their countries' chemical profiling systems and creating joint standard operating procedures for handling dangerous substances. Mr Ajaz said the training was part of building what he calls a **"united Pacific shield"** – combining intelligence sharing, capacity building, and international partnerships to stop threats while keeping legitimate trade flowing.

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This marks the second consecutive year OPCW has run chemical weapons training specifically for Pacific nations.

"The hands-on sessions with ABF Container Examination Facility and sharing knowledge with Asia/Pacific State Countries enhanced our ability to manage chemical incidents effectively," Meli Serunituacoko, a customs officer from the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service said.

For smaller Pacific nations like Tuvalu, the training represents a significant opportunity to build capacity that might otherwise be difficult to access. Falesala Imalesa Kofe, Senior Collector Preventive at Tuvalu Customs Department, said her key takeaway from the workshop was **"the importance of international cooperation in preventing the misuse of chemical materials."**

"I gained hands-on exposure to practical tools and methods that I had not used before," Mrs Kofe said. ***"Going forward, Tuvalu will seek assistance from OCO, OPCW and other partners in ensuring these practices are embedded into our national operations."***

She added that the training's impact extended beyond individual participants.

"I am committed to integrating these approaches into our work and mentoring colleagues so the benefits extend not just to those attending but to others that have not attended this OPCW training," she said.

For many participants, the training reinforced that protecting their island communities from chemical threats wasn't just about enforcement – it's about education, clear regulations, and working together across the vast Pacific.

July - September Highlights

Guam Customs & Quarantine Agency Officers with Biosecurity Task Force respond to an Alert

Guam Customs and Quarantine Agency officers with the Biosecurity Task Force responded to an alert from [Port Authority of Guam](#) personnel of potentially harmful spiders among cargo originating from Hawaii on July 15 at the Jose D. Leon Guerrero Commercial Port.

BSTF officers initiated a physical inspection of the flat rack the spiders were discovered on, as well as the shipping vessel carrying it. As a result, officers confirmed the presence of two kinds of live spiders - one species that appeared brown in color, and another that appeared to be a venomous black widow spider.

The officers collected specimens of the spiders, which were referred to Guam State Entomologist Christopher Rosario with the Guam Department of Agriculture and University of Guam Extension Entomologist and Assistant Professor of Entomology Alfred Daniel Johnson, Ph.D.

Rosario confirmed one specimen to indeed be a black widow spider, while the other specimen was forwarded to Johnson, who determined it to be an Argiope or Neoscona juvenile spider of the Araneidae family.

With concurrence from Rosario, BSTF officers successfully treated the areas where the spiders were found.



The vessel was cleared with no further action required.

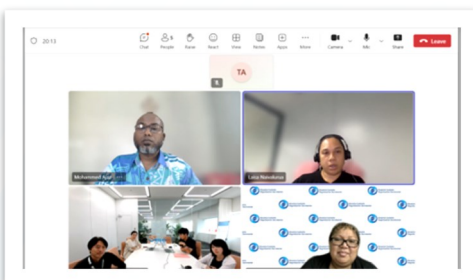
"This type of coordinated response reflects the strong value of our continued collaboration with the Guam Department of Agriculture, the Port Authority of Guam, all partners in environmental protection, and the effective execution of established response protocols. Through such efforts, we enhance Guam's operational readiness and biosecurity posture, helping to prevent the entry of detrimental and injurious species that pose risks to our island's resilience and security," said CQA Director Ike Peredo.



DOAG Acting Director Christine Fejeran advised, ***"Successful multi-agency collaborations, such as these, reinforce the message that we are stronger and more effective when we join forces and work together in the defense against invasive species."***

"At the Port Authority of Guam, we take our role in safeguarding the island's biosecurity seriously," said Port General Manager Rory Respicio. ***"The discovery of these spiders underscores the effectiveness of our established protocols, which are designed to quickly report and address potential risks to the respective agency. Our ongoing collaboration with the Customs and Quarantine Agency, along with the swift action of our personnel, ensures that we are always prepared to protect Guam's borders from threats. This incident reinforces the importance of our protocols and proactive measures in preventing harmful species from entering our island community."***

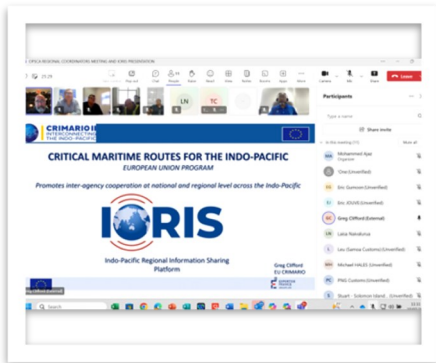
OCO & WCO Regional Intelligence Liaison Office A/P Explore Future Collaborations



The Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) met with the WCO Regional Intelligence Liaison Office Asia Pacific (RILO AP). The meeting was to introduce the new Head of RILO AP and staff members and to provide an opportunity to explore future collaborations between the two agencies specially in Enforcement and Intelligence field. The meeting was a online e-meeting.

OCO Secretariat News

OCO Pacific Small Craft Application (OPSCA) Regional Coordinators (RC) Talanoa



The OPSCA RC Talanoa reconvened on July 10th with a strong dedication to learning more about the IORIS intelligence tool. The tool is a sophisticated platform for sharing maritime information and an awareness session was conducted by a IORIS Regional representative to enlighten OCO Regional Coordinators regarding integration of the IORIS and OPSCA tools to enhance maritime monitoring and surveillance. A date for this training was to be confirmed later on.

OCO and SPC to Strengthen Working Relationships & Experiences

The OCO Operations team met with SPC SAFE Pacific Project Team to discuss opportunities to strengthen working relationships and experiences between Customs and Quarantine agencies in the Pacific especially through a Single Window Environment.

**PACOMM Trade Database**

The OCO Secretariat Team collaborated with SPC's Statistics Office in Suva for the launch of the Pacific Commodity Trade Database, PaCComtrade—a landmark tool that transforms how trade data is collected, processed and shared for the region. Countries that have successfully piloted the implementation of this database are Kiribati, Tonga and Tuvalu.

OCO Operations meets with New Zealand Customs Services



The Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) operations team met with New Zealand Customs Services (NZSC) staff Ms. Nicky Mark and Ms. Monica Hoeg to discuss work program activities and possible collaborations between the two agencies.

UPCOMINGEVENTS

October
2025

WCO Master Trainer Program on Risk Management and PCA (WG3)

29 Sep - 03 Oct

8th Operational Meeting to Counter Trafficking of Synthetic Opioids, Dangerous Substances & Chemicals through Postal, Express Courier & Air Cargo Services

30 Sep - 03 Oct

Regional Training for OCO Intelligence Contact Points on Precursor Chemicals and Drug Trafficking Trends

13 - 16 Oct

Virtual Dialogue on the development of an Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) framework—Phase ii—Framework Development and Design

15 Oct

OCO Intelligence Contact Point Meeting

17 Oct

Digital Customs Workshop: Advancing Trade Facilitation and Modernisation through Technology

27 - 30 Oct

Maritime Domain Awareness Talanoa Group Meeting

30 - 31 Oct

November
2025

Regional Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Talanoa

03 - 07 Nov

Virtual Dialogue on the development of an Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) framework—Phase iii— Implementation and Sustainability

12 Nov

USPTO/ OCO Regional Workshop on Customs Recordation

27—29 Nov

Launch of OCO Customs Integrity Framework

09 Dec

ISWG Meeting

10 Dec

December
2025

GALLERY



New Zealand's Minister of Customs Hon. Casey Costello visits Tonga Customs.

The Ministry of Revenue and Customs in Tonga hosted NZ Minister of Customs, Casey Costello in August. Minister Costello met with her Tongan counterpart, Hon. Mateni Tapueluelu to discuss the challenges facing Tonga's borders and explore how New Zealand can continue to support efforts to strengthen border security and resilience.

Hon. Costello and Hon. Tapueluelu visited key frontline operations, including a site visit to the Customs container inspection area and the Maritime Coordination Centre.



Guam Customs and Quarantine Agency Officers with the Maritime Interdiction Task Force, Agriculture Canine Unit, and Airport and Maritime sections, completed the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's International Seafood Trade and Seafood Import Monitoring Program Container Inspection Training administered Aug. 4-8 at the CQA headquarters.



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