



DUTY TRAVEL REPORT

CONFERENCE ON ENFORCING EFFECTIVE CUSTOMS CONTROL OF THE TRADE IN TOXIC CHEMICALS IN THE PACIFIC REGION

Staff Member	Mohammed Ajaz	
Destination:	Port Vila, Vanuatu	
Source of funding:	Fully sponsored by OPCW	
Travel Dates:	Departure Date:	23 September 2024
	Arrival Date:	27 September 2024
Purpose of Travel:	To attend the conference, including participate in panel discussions and facilitated a session on Customs Officers safety in handling dangerous goods.	
Activity description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Conference on Enforcing Effective Customs Control of the Trade in Toxic Chemicals in the Pacific Region was successfully held from 24 to 26 September 2024 in Port Vila, Vanuatu. The event brought together participants from across the Pacific region, including Customs officials, government representatives, and international organizations, to address the growing threat of illicit trade in toxic chemicals.• The key objective of the conference was to strengthen Customs and National Authorities' capabilities to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and improve cooperation in preventing the unlawful transfer of hazardous substances.• Thirty-four (34) officials attended from various government departments across 14 countries (Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshalls, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu). There were 14 Customs Officers from 12 countries in the OCO membership (Customs from Palau and Tuvalu could not attend).• OPCW representatives introduced the Chemical Weapons Convention and its verification regime. The discussion focused on capacity building in the Pacific and the key responsibilities of Customs officials in enforcing chemical controls whilst highlighting the need and the role of the Government department that takes lead in progressing the conventions protocols.• The conference held interactive sessions (Q&A and Panel Discussions) that allowed participants to clarify and address the pressing issues of toxic chemical control in the implementation of the CWC and discuss broader security challenges in the Pacific.	

<p>Outcomes:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customs officials and National Authorities were provided with a detailed overview of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), its verification regime, and the role of Customs in enforcing the transfer regime of scheduled chemicals. This led to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased awareness and knowledge among Pacific nations about the legal frameworks surrounding the CWC. ○ Improved ability of Customs officials to identify and manage chemicals covered under the CWC. • The conference focused on regional cooperation initiatives and support mechanisms for Customs and National Authorities. This will future enable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stronger partnerships and collaboration between Pacific Island Customs administrations, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and international organizations like UNODC and OCO. ○ Better cross-border cooperation to tackle the illicit trade in toxic chemicals, including the creation of joint strategies and actions to mitigate shared challenges. • The participants have been tasked to report back to OPCW with a country plan on their next steps and what technical assistance the national authorities require from OPCW and OCO in progressing their implementation of strategic trade control enforcement.
<p>Recommendations/follow up activities:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The conference was a first for the enforcement officers in the Pacific and the 2.5-day event has reflected upon the need to integrate the CWC in national legal framework. The National Authorities and Customs will work together to see the legal framework is strengthened for the enforcement purposes. • Customs role is crucial in combating illicit trade in toxic chemicals and the conference realize the need for stringent capacity building for members through the “Training the Trainers” program. The program encapsulates risk management and profiling, use of detection tools, regulatory knowledge and collaboration and intelligence sharing. The OPCW assure to respond to national requests for capacity building as well. • The OPCW and the OCO, both partners wish to see that once members are ready with their legislative powers for enforcement, a regional joint inspection procedure could be developed for enhanced efficiency and compliance.
<p>Acknowledgement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OCO extends sincere gratitude to the OPCW and the DCIR, Vanuatu for the outstanding organization and hosting of the first Conference on Enforcing Effective Customs Control of the Trade in Toxic Chemicals in the Pacific Region. The event fostered constructive dialogue, knowledge sharing, and capacity building among Pacific nations in the scope of chemical control and enforcement.

<p>Meeting documents where available (to put on server with hyperlink):</p>	<p>The documents to training can be found here.</p>
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Photos:

