



# NEWSLETTER

## FOREWORD



As we reflect on the final quarter of 2025, I am filled with pride at the collective strides the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) and our member administrations have made toward a more secure, inclusive, and modernized Pacific Customs community. This period has been characterized by intense collaboration, significant capacity-building milestones, and a steadfast commitment to our regional strategic goals.

A central theme of this quarter has been the strengthening of our border security and intelligence network. We successfully delivered advanced regional training for 18 designated Customs Intelligence Contact Points on precursor chemicals and drug trafficking trends, a critical step in enhancing our network's responsiveness to emerging illicit threats. This was further bolstered by our active participation in Operation EVAPER8 alongside the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), targeting the illicit trade of e-cigarettes and dangerous new psychoactive substances across ten of our member nations.

Modernisation through technology remains a cornerstone of our efforts. The Digital Customs Workshop held in Nadi achieved a remarkable 96% participant satisfaction rate, providing 23

participants from 15 member administrations with hands-on experience in tools like the PACOMM Database and ASYCUDA World. Furthermore, the completion of Phase III of our Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) program and the finalization of Time Release Studies (TRS) for the Cook Islands and Samoa underscore our dedication to trade facilitation and operational efficiency.

Inclusivity also took center stage with the successful delivery of the first phase of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Talanoa. With 26 nominations—85% of whom were female—this initiative aligns with the objectives of the OCO GESI Declaration. The final two phases of the Talanoa will take place in January and February 2026.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to our new team members at the Secretariat, Ms. Rima Sivanjali (Finance and Corporate Services Manager) and Mr. Shaneel Lal (Accountant), whose expertise will be vital as we drive operational excellence.

As we look toward to the 2026 calendar, which is already filled with significant events including collaborations with our strategic partners, I urge all members to maintain the momentum we have built. Together, we will continue to safeguard our borders and support the economic prosperity of our Blue Pacific.

Vinaka vakalevu,

**Ms. Latha Reardon**  
OCO Acting Head of Secretariat

### Inside this Issue

Activity Highlights

Pg 2-7

OCO News

Pg 8

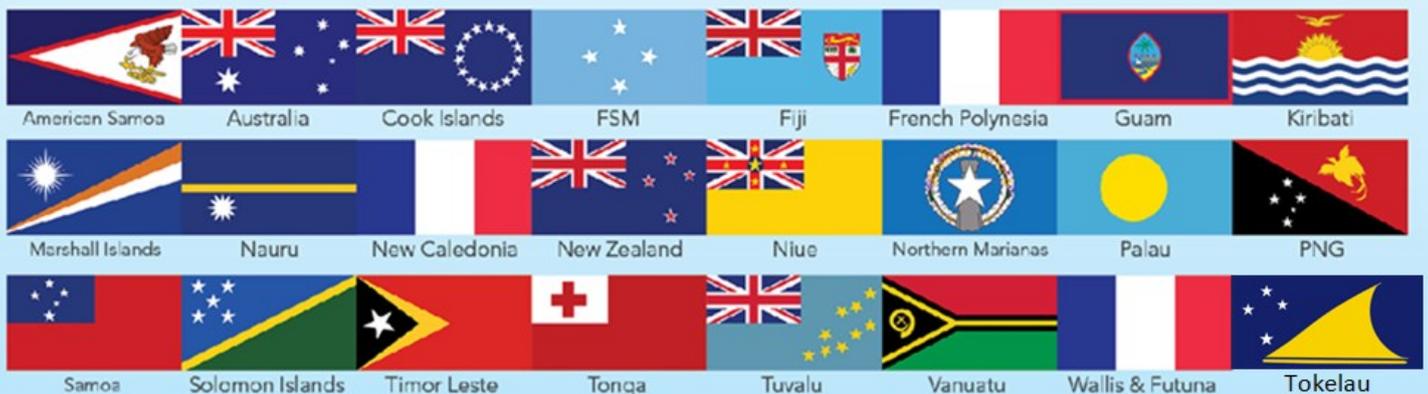
Upcoming Events

Pg 9

Gallery

Pg 10

## OUR MEMBERS



# October - December Highlights

## Regional Training for OCO Intelligence Contact Points (ICPs) on Precursor Chemicals and Drug Trafficking Trends

**“Action is the real measure of intelligence” - Napoleon Hill**



**E**ighteen(18) designated Customs Intelligence Officers from OCO’s member nations including the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Tonga, Tuvalu, Samoa, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Cook Islands, as well as territories like American Samoa, Commonwealth of Northern Marianas, Guam, and the Marshall Islands, were part of a Regional Training which delivered advanced knowledge and practical tools. Australia and New Zealand also sent resource personnel for the training including the Chair of the Information

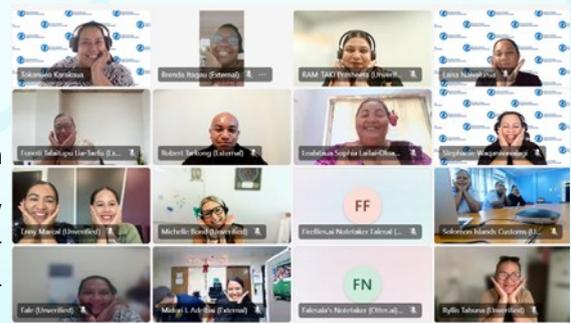
Sharing Working Group, Mr. Jeremy Laga’aia from New Zealand Customs Service and Mr. Chris McKee from the Australia Border Force.

The core objective of the training was to strengthen the operational capacity of the OCO Intelligence Contact Point (ICP) network to profile, detect and effectively respond to the trafficking of precursor chemicals and illicit drugs in the Pacific Region. The last day of the training was dedicated to the first in-person meeting for ICPs which emphasised the collaboration priorities and reporting mechanisms to enhance the network’s responsiveness to emerging threats. [Read more](#)

## Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Update

**“Gender equality is no longer an idea...Gender Equality and Inclusion is a commitment and must be reflected in the national policies and institutions. It is part of the discussions at regional and international level” - Ms. Talaitupu Lia, CEO Samoa Customs**

**S**ixteen (16) members responded to a GESI survey that was circulated in September 2025. Respondents were from Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, FSM, Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tokelau and Tuvalu. A key survey finding was the increase in women holding leadership roles in OCO member administrations. In terms of disability inclusion data, survey responses revealed a low intake of employees with disabilities in Customs in the Pacific. Recommendations from the survey included specialized trainings and awareness, support from the OCO Secretariat in policy development, deployment of GESI specialists and appointment of GESI champions.



The GESI Talanoa was conducted online with the first phase delivered on 18th December 2025. The Secretariat received a total of 26 nominations (85% females) from 11 member administrations. The one-hour session was opened by Ms. Talaitupu Lia, CEO for Samoa Customs and included presentations from the OCO Secretariat on the progress of GESI activities, the relevant strategic indicators in OCO’s strategic Monitoring and Evaluation framework and the principles of the OCO GESI Declaration that was signed and adopted by the Heads of Customs at the 27th OCO Annual Conference in May 2025 in Guam. The final two phases would be held in January and February.

# October - December Highlights

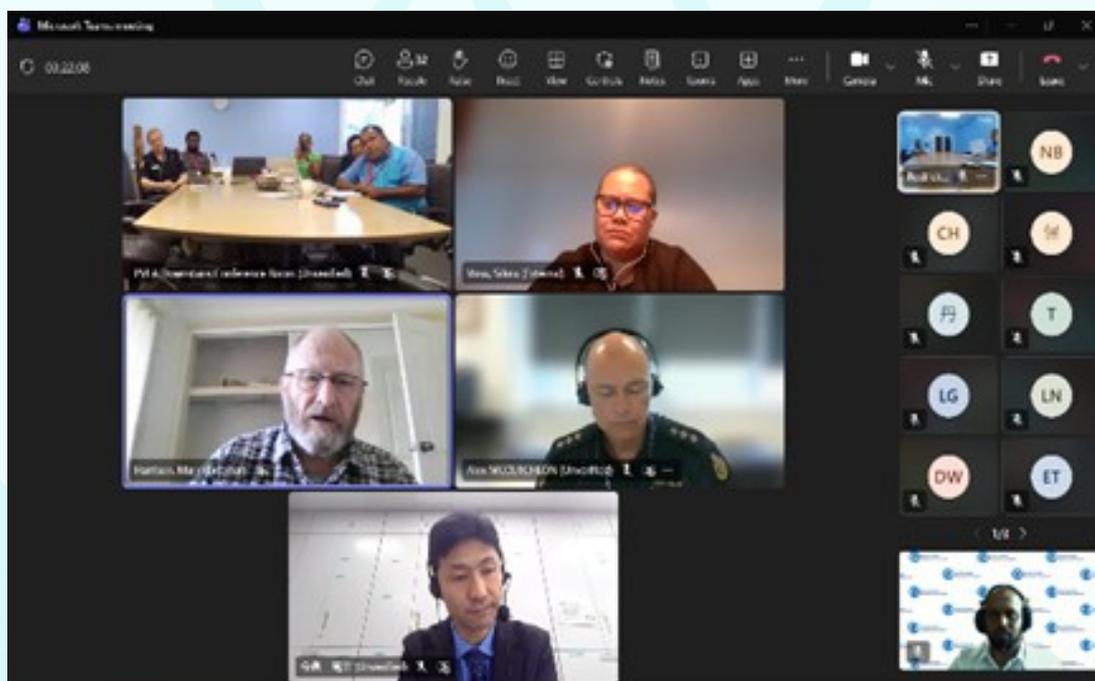
## Information Sessions on Authorised Economic Operator (AEO)

The final two sessions of the Information Session on AEO was held on 15th October and 12th November 2025. The objectives of these sessions was to equip participants with the tools to draft or enhance a national AEO framework and to provide practical guidance for launching and sustaining AEO programmes including Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs).

Fiji Revenue and Customs Service shared its plans where they worked on formalizing its AEO by transitioning from offer letters to legal agreements and updating its framework to regulations, while also actively pursuing MRAs. Japan Customs demonstrated the program's scalability, sharing successful strategies for private sector engagement that have led to over 750 members.

The Pacific region has moved forward in adapting AEO models to its unique context, with detailed discussions on establishing bilateral and regional MRAs. Furthermore, critical enablers for success were solidified, including consensus on the need for robust legislative frameworks, targeted government support for applicants and the development of staff competencies in compliance and risk management, setting a clear and actionable foundation for the next phase of implementation. [Read more](#)

The Centre for Customs and Excise Studies (CCES) at Charles Sturt University (CSU) also joined the panel of experts during the Information Sessions and presented a strong case for greater regional collaboration showing that by collectively OCO members could work together to overcome limited resources by sharing standards, pooling resources and negotiating as one trade bloc through a **regional AEO programme**. This is an idea that aligns with **Strategic Objective 2 of the Pacific Regional Trade Facilitation Strategy where a regional action is the '2.2 Regional Mutual Recognition of Authorized Operators'**. The conclusion of the programme during this quarter marks a significant step towards advancing trusted trader frameworks within the region and highlights opportunities that OCO members can leverage on [Read more](#)



# October - December Highlights

## Study Visit for Guam Customs to Palau Customs

**“The first rule of any technology used in a business is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency. The second is that automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency.” - Bill Gates**

The Study Visit on Customs Digital Transformation for Guam was planned and organized from 11 to 14 November 2025. Guam Customs and Quarantine Agency sent a multi-agency delegation to Palau to understand how automation of cargo clearance procedures particularly through Asycuda World could support Guam Customs in enhancing safety and quality of life for the people of Guam. The Study Visit was financed through the Guam Modernisation Project managed by the OCO Secretariat and funded by the US Department of Interior Affairs. The Study Visit program included consultations on the roll-out of ASYCUDA World in Palau, stakeholder discussions and site-visits to the operational areas of Palau BCBP including the seaport, airport and post office. [Read more](#)



## Time Release Study

The Time-Release Study for Cook Islands was finally completed and an official copy was disseminated to Cook Islands Customs (CICS) and UNCTAD. The Time-Release Study was funded through the EDF11 IMPACT Project and undertaken by the Centre of Customs and Excise Studies at the Charles Sturt University. The Time-Release Study for Palau was also completed by the OCO Secretariat through the EDF11 IMPACT Project.

The Time-Release Study for Samoa was also finalized during this quarter. This project was managed by the OCO Secretariat through a consultant, however the Secretariat also engaged Small Member Administrations that were interested in building capacity on the TRS methodology by participating in the planning, data collection and validation phases of the TRS in Samoa.

[Read more](#)

# October - December Highlights

## Digital Customs Workshop: Advancing Trade Facilitation and Modernisation through Technology

The OCO Secretariat successfully hosted a Digital Customs Workshop in Nadi from 27th—30th October 2025. This was jointly funded by the PACER PLUS Implementation Unit (PPIU). There was a total of 23 participants from 15 member Customs administrations, achieving near gender parity (11 women and 12 men).

The objective of the workshop was to address inefficiencies in manual systems, bridge uneven digital readiness in the Pacific, promote harmonization and interoperability and strengthen risk management and compliance. The workshop recognized that over 60 percent of OCO members are now using ASYCUDA World (AW) so an expert from UNCTAD was also invited to lead technical sessions on AW modules and latest developments. The workshop program also included presentations from UNESCAP on 'Enabling Paperless Trade' and SPC on the PACOMM database. Participants were also given an opportunity to share their experiences and challenges with regards to AW implementation.

At the end of the workshop, participants worked together on National Digital Customs Roadmaps with clear and achievable next steps, timelines and resource needs. The workshop concluded with a panel session focusing on 'Customs Digitalization in the Future' including strategic outlook, capacity-building needs and financing pathways. [Read more](#)



# October - December Highlights

## Counter Trafficking of Synthetic Opioids, Dangerous Substances and Chemicals

The OCO Secretariat continued to strengthen its partnership with the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) during this period. OCO and INCB extended the term of the cooperation agreement concerning mutual cooperation on matters of common interest for three more years until December 2028. The Secretariat's Customs Enforcement Advisor, Mr. Mohammed Ajaz, attended the 8th Operational Meeting to Counter Trafficking of Synthetic Opioids, Dangerous Substances and Chemicals in Vienna, Austria. Mr. Mohammed Ajaz participated as a presenter providing an overview of the threats and trends in the Pacific from a Customs perspective. Key outcomes from this engagement was the increased use of information sharing platforms developed by INCB including IONICS, identified capacity-building opportunities and partnerships and joint operations.



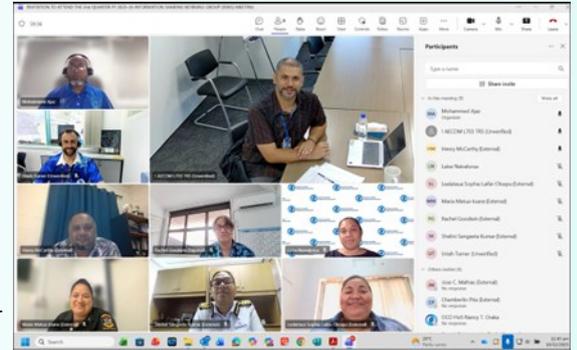
The OCO Secretariat invited members to participate in Operation eVaPER8, a global operation coordinated and led by INCB. Ten (10) OCO members responded with interest including Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Solomon Islands, Niue, Guam, Tonga, Tuvalu, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Samoa. Operation eVaPER8 was a focused, time-bound intelligence gathering operation scheduled from 23 November to 21 December 2025. The operation aimed to identify key illicit sources and (re)distribution points involving electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), vaporizers (vapes) or related products suspected of containing new psychoactive substances (NPS), violative/unauthorized pharmaceuticals (e.g. opioids) or other dangerous substances (e.g. GBL).



# October - December Highlights

## OCO's Information Sharing Working Group

The second quarter meeting for OCO's Information Sharing Working Group (ISWG) was held on 10th December 2025 whereby members of the Working Group (WG) were updated on the progress of key information sharing initiatives by the Australian Border Force and the OCO Secretariat. The establishment of OCO's Information Sharing Working Group was agreed to at the OCO Annual Conference in 2015 in recognition of the growing threat of transnational organized crime to the Pacific region. Given the limited resources available to Pacific Island Customs administrations, strengthening collaboration among Members was one way to enhance their law enforcement capacity.



New Zealand Customs Service is the current Chair of the ISWG and members include Australia, CNMI, Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue and Samoa.

## Other Stakeholder Engagements

The OCO Secretariat continues to acknowledge and appreciate strategic engagements with members and partners in implementing work program activities that align with the Strategic Priority Areas of OCO's Strategic Plan 2022-2027.

Customs Leadership	Law Enforcement and Border Security	Trade Management and Facilitation	Revenue Management and Compliance	Institutional Strengthening of Small Member Administrations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enhance leadership capability to enable Customs' modernization reforms</b></li> <li>• <i>Frontline supervisory training</i> – New Zealand Customs Service, New Zealand Public Service Commission (Fale Online)</li> <li>• <i>GESI Talanoa</i> – WCO Gender Diversity Programme, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (Pacific Women Lead), Pacific Disability Forum, Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat</li> <li>• <i>Customs integrity</i> – UNODC, WCO Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion Programme, ABF/WCO Supply Chain Integrity Workshop</li> <li>• <i>Pacific Women's Professional Development Programme</i> – Australian Border Force and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology</li> <li>• <i>Pacific Leadership Programme for Guam and CNMI</i> – New Zealand Customs Service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To enhance regional cooperation in compliance and border security</b></li> <li>• <i>Regional training on passenger profiling and targeting</i> – New Zealand Customs Service</li> <li>• <i>Intelligence attachment programme for WCO OCO members</i> – WCO Regional Intelligence Liaison Office</li> <li>• <i>Intellectual Property Rights</i> – US Patents and Trademarks Office</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To promote the facilitation of legitimate trade</b></li> <li>• <i>Guidance note on accession to Revised Kyoto Convention</i> – Palau Customs</li> <li>• <i>WCO JICA Master Trainer Programme</i> – Japan International Cooperation Agency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To promote fair and efficient revenue collection</b></li> <li>• <i>Twinning arrangement on Post-Clearance Audit</i> – Fiji Revenue and Customs Service, FSM Customs, Tuvalu Customs</li> <li>• <i>Excise Compliance Programme</i> – Solomon Islands Customs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Accelerate Members' compliance to international standards</b></li> <li>• <i>Diagnostics for American Samoa Customs</i> – US Department of Interior Affairs</li> </ul>

## New Staff Appointments

### Rima Sivanjali appointed as OCO Finance and Corporate Services Manager

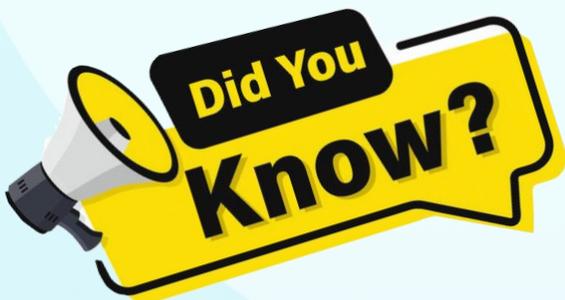


OCO is pleased to welcome Ms. Rima Sivanjali as the new Finance and Corporate Services Manager, a seasoned professional with over 15 years of experience spanning the public, private, and international sectors. Her expertise lies in financial management, corporate services, and human resources, underpinned by her credentials as a Chartered Accountant. Ms. Sivanjali has led transformative finance operations, reinforced governance frameworks, and strengthened systems that drive accountability and enhance organisational performance. Her previous leadership roles include serving as Finance & Administration Manager for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Fiji and Head of Finance & Administration at Lautoka City Council, where she also acted as CEO. She holds a Master of Commerce in Accounting from the Fiji National University and is a member of the Fiji Institute of Accountants. Her appointment marks a strategic addition to OCO's leadership team, bringing financial acumen and a commitment to operational efficiency.

### Shaneel Lal appointed as OCO Accountant



Mr Lal is an accomplished finance professional with over 7 years of experience in financial management, tax consultancy, and business analysis across sectors including banking, local government, energy, conservation, and private consultancy. He holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Accounting and a Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting and Information Systems from the University of the South Pacific. Mr Lal specializes in IFRS-compliant financial reporting, budgeting and forecasting, tax compliance, audit preparation, and internal controls. As an Associate Accountant with the Fiji Institute of Accountants, he is recognized for his strategic thinking, leadership skills, and commitment to excellence, consistently delivering solutions that enhance financial integrity and operational efficiency.



**Our Office Has Moved**  
to a New Location

**FRCS BUILDING 3 1st Floor**  
Fiji Revenue & Customs Service,  
Nasese, Suva.

Contact information remains the same  
Phone: +679 3313110  
Fax: 3313126  
Website: [www.ocosec.org](http://www.ocosec.org)

# Upcoming Events

January  
2026

Phase II—Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Virtual Talanoa (Theme: Gender Mainstreaming as an Enabler of Growth in Pacific Customs Administrations) **14 Jan**

Online Briefing on Regional Operations Deployment Framework by Joint Heads of Pacific Security (JHoPS) Secretariat **28 Jan**

February  
2026

Phase III – Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Virtual Talanoa (Theme: Creating an inclusive and enabling environment for Customs communities in the Pacific) **11 Feb**

PWPDP Advancing Intelligence Management (AIM) – Alumni Virtual Workshop **16 Feb – 13 Mar**

OCO Financial Sub-Committee (FISCO) Online Meeting **26 Feb**

NZCS-OCO Pacific Leadership Programme—Guam: Workshop 1 **23-25 Feb**

March  
2026

NZCS-OCO Pacific Leadership Programme—CNMI: Workshop 1 **2-4 Mar**

OCO Information Sharing Working Group (ISWG) Online Meeting **11 Mar**

WCO/ABF Supply Chain Integrity Workshop, Suva, FIJI **9-13 Mar**

OCO Train-the-Trainers Post-Clearance Audit (PCA) Regional Workshop **23-26 Mar**

Intelligence Attachment Programme at WCO Regional Intelligence Liaison Office, Tokyo, JAPAN (WCO OCO members) **26 Mar – 22 Apr**

OCO Twinning Arrangement for PCA Unit hosted by Fiji Revenue and Customs Service (Tuvalu Customs and FSM Customs) **30 Mar – 10 Apr**

OCO Steering Committee Online Meeting **25 Mar**

# Gallery



**Oceania Customs  
Organisation Secretariat**

Fiji Revenue & Customs Services Building 3 Level 1  
Lot1, Corner of Queen Elizabeth Drive &  
Ratu Sukuna Road, Nasese.  
Private Mail Bag, Suva, Fiji Islands

Phone: +679 331 3110  
E-mail: [info@ocosec.org](mailto:info@ocosec.org)  
Web: [www.ocosec.org](http://www.ocosec.org)