Note for The Trade Facilitation Agreement – Ratification and impact on the LLDC

The implementation of the TFA is an important element of the VPoA and it will contribute to predictable and modernized trade procedures and reduce trade costs and clearance times at borders. Many organizations have already developed very concrete statistics and evidences of economic benefits or impact of the TFA implementation.

I would like to emphasize the importance of technical assistances for the implementation of the TFA. The WCO launched the Mercator Programme to deliver capacity building projects for the TFA implementation in 2014.

Under the Mercator Programme the WCO has delivered around 180 technical assistance missions to more than 70 countries in the past 2 years.

- Authorized Economic Operators (Article 7.7): 69 missions
- Time Release Study (Article 7.6): 29 missions
- Post-Clearance Audit (Article 7.5): 11 missions
  Coordinated Border Management (Article 8): 10 missions
- Single Window, including Data Model (Article 10.4): 12 missions
- NCTF and stakeholder engagement (Article 23.2): 10 missions

Other TFA related areas in which technical assistance and capacity building (TA/CB) support was provided include Risk Management (Article 7.4), Pre-arrival Processing (Article 7.1), Enquiry Points (Article 1.3) and Advance Rulings (Article 3) which account for a further 29 missions.

In addition to our technical assistance on particular articles of TFA, the Mercator Programme provides tailor-made support that takes into account local conditions and environment for implementing trade facilitation measures. The WCO moves on to this tailor-made assistance for countries that need strategic advice by providing analysis of previous needs assessment, by conducting TRS, or supporting the establishment of NCTF as a platform for coordination.
In our Technical assistance on the implementation of the TFA, we reconfirmed the importance of technical guidance based on good practices. As you know, the WCO has developed a number of technical guidance to support the implementation of the TFA such as Transparency Guide for Article 1, Customs Business Partnership Guide for Article 2, Advance-ruling guide for Article 3. Those new tools are parts of the WCO TFA implementation Guidance. The point is that the WCO is developing them based on best practices of Members. They are not legal binding tools but practically useful to implement the TFA Articles.

We also found that the number of experts who know the TFA and Customs issues should be increased to deliver more capacity building projects. The WCO expands its network of accredited experts of Mercator Programme Advisors (MPAs); technical and operational advisors (TOA) and training experts. Accreditation of MPAs began in 2015 and the WCO has capacity to mobilize experts from its 180 Members covering various topics relevant to the TFA agenda;

Finally, coordination among different border agencies is a key for all trade facilitation measures. Customs administration is a key agency of implementation of Trade Facilitation measures. Without involving Customs, you may not implement most of TF measures. However, it does not mean that Customs may implement every provision without cooperation with other border agencies.

Considering the harmonized and effective implementation of TFA, having technical and practical knowledge on TF measures, having enough number of experts for capacity building and coordination among different agencies are key elements.