 Customs administrations provide the infrastructure for trade by ensuring connectivity at borders. Given the particular economic benefits for LLDCs, the WCO considers transit as a priority issue and therefore published the WCO Transit Handbook in 2014.

As a follow up, the WCO is now developing the Transit Guidelines, which have clear guiding principles and recommended practices for transit regimes, in close cooperation with other international organizations, based on best practices of transit countries and landlocked countries.

To develop the Transit Guidelines, the WCO will organize a workshop on transit from the next Monday (27 June) at Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire. The UNOHRRLS, the WTO, the UNCTAD, the UNECE and other development partners would send their experts to our workshop.

The WCO is planning to hold the Global Conference on Transit on 10 July 2017 to launch the new Transit Guidelines. It would be wonderful if we could reflect our discussion during the Meeting of Trade Ministers of LLDCs into the Transit Guidelines.

In 2014, the WCO launched the Mercator Programme aiming to increase global interconnectivity, expand trade volumes and enhance economic competitiveness by providing tailor-made assistance for implementing trade facilitation measures.

The Mercator Programme is aimed at assisting governments worldwide to implement trade facilitation measures expeditiously and in a harmonized manner by using core WCO instruments and tools such as the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC). It reduces the risk of a non-standardized approach, which may lead to divergent implementation practices.

Under the Mercator Programme, the WCO provides tailor-made support for implementing trade facilitation measures, based on a wealth of expertise and experience in technical assistance and capacity building with a network of accredited experts. For instance, since the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action in November 2014, more than 30 national workshops or seminars have been organized in LLDCs to support the modernization of their Customs procedures and the implementation of various trade facilitation measures.

The WCO is also working with Western African countries which has resulted in standardized electronic data sets for facilitating transit trade, and which will be used by ECOWAS for 15 countries in Western Africa. The WCO is supporting a similar inter-connectivity project in SACU, which has 5 countries. In addition, the WCO is developing a regional AEO programme with EAC to connect businesses along transit corridors.
I would like to confirm that the WCO would continue to develop international standards for effective transit regimes and trade facilitation, deliver tailor-made capacity building for LLDCs, and enhance cooperation with all stakeholders.