



**Vision:** To be recognized as a world class regional Customs Organization that collaborates with regional and global partners to deliver high quality services and sustainable solutions to Member Administrations

# OCEANIA CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION NEWSLETTER

## FOREWORD



Pacific Greetings!

I am delighted to be sharing with you our Quarterly Newsletter for January-March 2023 detailing key activities and programs for this period with the latest news from our Members and planned activities lined up for the year. This past quarter has been nothing short of eventful with the celebration of World Customs Day on 26 January with the World Customs Organisation theme: "Nurturing the next generation: promoting a culture of knowledge-sharing and professional pride in Customs". A most fitting slogan for all Customs officers and future recruits who may envision a career in Customs. We celebrated the graduation of Customs officers from 15 member administrations for the CCES Cert III & Cert IV programs. Noting since the introduction of the course in 2021, 86 Customs officers have graduated with the

certificates. More noteworthy updates include our region's very own female Customs Officer, Akosita Valamalua, from the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service being appointed to WCO Office in Brussels, the signing of the much anticipated EDF11 UNCTAD Sub-agreement which boosts our efforts in the areas of trade facilitation and customs modernisation work with our members, our efforts in promoting and empowering women in roles of leadership continues through the Pacific Womens Professional Development Program (PWPDP) Alumni course held in partnership with ABF and RMIT University. Furthermore, the OCO also conducted a two-week Regional Enforcement workshop in Tonga focused on improving skills on border security with contributions from regional and international experts. There is considerable work being carried out in IPR with the support of the USPTO and the Guam Modernisation Project continues to track well into the second half of the financial year. During this time I was appointed as your Head of Secretariat and I am honored to serve our 23 member administrations in this capacity and I envision a driven, effective and accountable Secretariat team to serve you moving forward. We look forward to working with you and please reach out, connect with us and let us know how we can better serve you as your regional customs secretariat. Vinaka Vakalevu and Thank you.

Head of Secretariat  
Ms. Nancy Oraka

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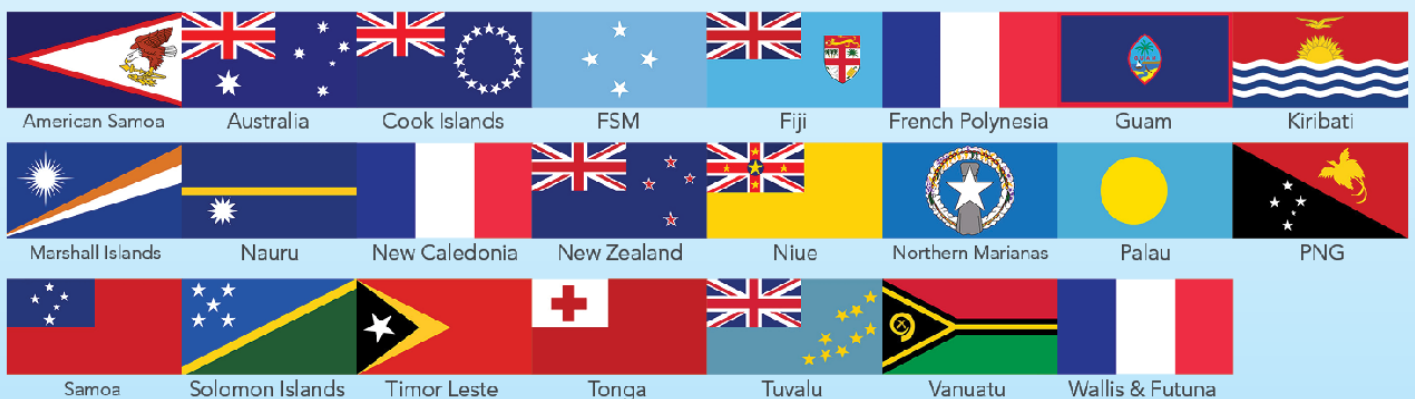
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## OUR MEMBERS



# Jan - Mar Activity Highlights

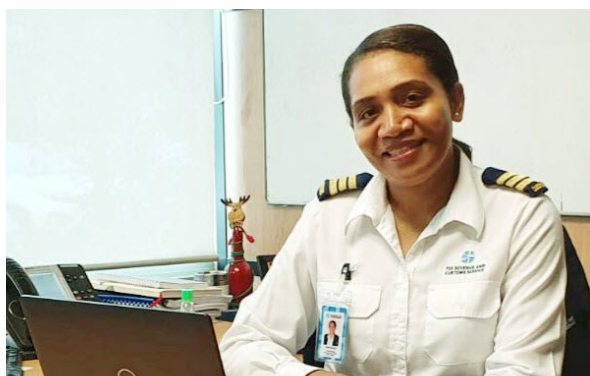
## Customs Administrations celebrate World Customs Day

Customs administrations across the region and the world celebrated World Customs Day on 26th January, which had been themed “*Nurturing the next generation: promoting a culture of knowledge-sharing and professional pride in Customs*”.

Here in the region, OCO also celebrated the graduation of 35 Customs officers from 15 countries with a Certificate IV in Customs Regional Administration from the Centre for Customs and Excise Studies (CCES) at Charles Sturt University in Canberra in partnership with the Oceania Customs Organisation.

“It is befitting that the graduation of our Customs officers, 17 of which are women is in the same week as the World Customs Day, which promotes knowledge sharing as well as professional pride in our work,” OCO Operations Manager, Irma Daphney Stone said. “These graduates are now included in our pool of experts who can conduct training in their own countries or in the region.” [Read More](#)

## Fijian female Customs Officer, Valamalua is ready to serve Asia Pacific Region



Akosita Valamalua previously held the position of Principal Customs Officer and then as Executive Transformation Support at the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service. She was recently appointed Expert Trainer at the World Customs Organisation Asia Pacific office based in Brussels, becoming the first Pacific islander to join the WCO. This is a brief interview with her before she took up her new posting.

### Can you describe your journey in Customs?

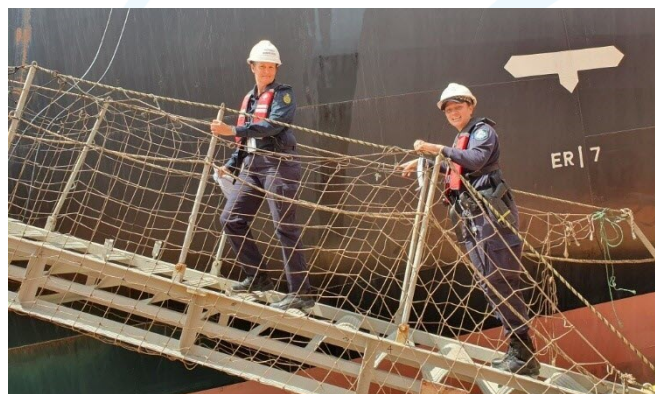
My journey in Customs started in November, 2008 when I joined the then Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority as a Customs Officer posted at the Nadi Port. From the first day, I never looked back and I worked towards meeting day to day deliverables. [Read More](#)

## From a small town in Australia, Kim Hockey makes it big in Customs leadership

Senior Border Force Officer Kim Hockey grew up in the small Australian town of Innisfail in Far North Queensland. Officer Hockey first began her Customs journey at just 17 years of age straight out of high school, following her sitting of a public service test.

“As a teenager, I had never heard of the Australian Customs Service – now Australian Border Force – and had in fact never even seen a Customs officer in real life,” Senior Border Force Officer Hockey said.

“After I began my career in Customs, I was supported by an amazing mentor who I heavily relied on for a number of years. [Read More](#)



## UNCTAD and OCO Sign Agreement to Boost Trade Facilitation and Customs Procedures



The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) signed an agreement under the European Union funded ‘Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade’ (IMPACT) Project that aims to improve Customs processes and boost trade in 15 Pacific nations.

Through the Agreement, UNCTAD will provide 1.5 million EURO to OCO to implement IMPACT Project activities to improve trade facilitation and harmonise customs operations in Fiji, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Timor Leste, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. [Read More](#)

## Empowering Women who Protect our Borders



Airports and seaports across the Pacific are gateways for the movement of international goods and passengers.

While these ports have traditionally been male-dominated workplaces, progressive Customs agencies across the Pacific are advancing opportunities for women in leadership.

Thanks to a recent initiative between the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO), Australian Border Force (ABF) and RMIT University, the next generation of women Customs officers is being empowered to lead positive protection measures at our international borders. [Read More](#)

## Palau Customs Leverage Women in IT

Joline Spesungel is the IT Specialist (II) at Palau Customs, and is the National Project Manager for the implementation of UNCTAD's ASYCUDA (Automated System for Customs Data) Project funded by the European Union.

Interestingly, Joline joined Palau Customs with a background in Business Administration, started as Administrative Assistant, then Statistics Specialist II, and moved up the ranks by working closely with the IT Head of the Ministry of Finance offering innovative Information Technology (IT) solutions for managing customs data in a structured way that included having a customs information system. [Read More](#)



## Customs Administrations Work Towards Gender Equality in Skills



Twenty-four women Customs officers recently graduated with a Certificate III in Regional Customs Administration as Customs administrations across the region work towards improving gender balance in the workplace.

24 Women were part of the 37 Customs officers that took the 10-month long virtual course delivered by the Centre for Customs and Excise Studies (CCES) at Charles Sturt University in Canberra, and the Oceania Customs Organisation. Since the introduction of the course in 2021, 86 Customs officers have graduated with the certificate.

[Read More](#)

## Customs and Postal Officers Improve Skills on Border Security

Tonga's Minister of Revenue and Customs, Honourable Tiofilusi Tiueti has called on greater information sharing between Pacific Island nations as transnational crimes continue to increase especially in the maritime domain.

Hon. Tiueti opened a two-week workshop in his country, conducted by OCO with the support of the Australian Border Force, Secretariat of the International Narcotics Control Board, US Postal Inspection Service, and the Universal Postal Union.

"I am glad to mention that the Oceania Customs Organisation has its beginning here in 1998 – 25 years ago- when its rebranding took place from the Customs Heads of Administration Meeting (CHARM) to the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO)," Hon Tiueti said. [Read More](#)



## Member & Partner News

### **Signing of MOJ-MOF MoU on Joint Operations in Border Management**



The Bureau of Public Safety, Ministry of Justice, and the Palau Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, Ministry of Finance, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) today to further expand their partnership through joint cooperations to ensure effective law enforcement in border management.

The signing ceremony was attended by the Honorable Vice President and Minister of Justice Senior and Director Aguon of the Bureau of Public Safety and Director Tarkong, Jr. from the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection and on behalf of the Honorable Minister of Finance Udoi, Jr. His Excellency Hiroiyuki Ori-kasa, Japan's Ambassador to Palau, also attended the ceremony. [Read More](#)

### **UNCTAD Workshop Focuses on Trade Facilitation and Digitalization in the Pacific**

Heads of Customs and Senior Trade officials from fifteen Pacific Countries convened in Fiji to explore ways of achieving trade facilitation reforms through digitalisation and cooperation among government agencies.

Organized by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) ASYCUDA Regional Office for the Pacific, the *Supporting Trade Facilitation, Digitalization and Digital Transformation in the Blue Pacific* workshop was officiated by Fiji's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Co-operatives and SMEs and Communications, Honourable Manoa Kamikamica [Read More](#)



### **Digitalized Customs Management System Increases Revenue for Tuvalu**



Tuvalu has reported a twenty per-cent (20%) increase in its revenue collection due to improved transparency, compliance and efficient clearance of goods, after it automated its customs management system.

This was revealed by the Deputy-Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Mr Pedro Moreno during UNCTAD's regional workshop in Fiji on 27 March 2023. In highlighting the impressive figures, Mr Moreno shared that UNCTAD takes pride in its collaborations and partnerships that have yielded tangible outcomes in the Pacific.

[Read More](#)

## OCO SECRETARIAT NEWS

### **Nancy Oraka appointed as OCO Head of Secretariat**

The OCO Secretariat welcomed onboard its new Head of Secretariat Ms. Nancy Oraka.

Originally from Papua New Guinea, Ms. Oraka most recently worked as a senior executive in the PNG Customs Service, where she was responsible for Southern Region Operations. She has over ten years' experience in PNG Customs Service where she has also worked on modernisations projects, and within the Capability Development and International and Public Relations Sections. Ms. Oraka has extensive experience in the PNG Internal Revenue Commission and worked also in a number of private sector entities. Ms. Oraka is a Graduate of the University of Papua New Guinea and holds a Master's Degree in Customs Administration from the Charles Sturt University.

The OCO together with its members wishes Ms. Oraka the very best in her new role.

[Oraka shares plans for Oceania Customs](#)



# UPCOMINGEVENTS

April  
2023

Customs Brokers Familiarisation Training 05 Apr  
Customs Modernisation Workshop 18 - 21 Apr  
X-Ray Image Training 19 - 29 Apr

May  
2023

Indo-Pac Regional Workshop 9 - 12 May  
Guam Awareness Workshop 15 - 19 May  
UNEP Consultation 16 - 17 May  
Steering Committee Meeting 23 May

June  
2023

ISWG 4th Qtr Meeting 06 Jun  
Multi Agency Desktop Exercise 05 - 09 Jun  
Country visit to Nauru - IPR 13 - 15 Jun  
HS2022 Workshop 12 - 16 Jun

# GALLERY



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