



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Workshop Strengthens Regional Customs Administrations

APIA, Samoa – Today marks the commencement of the Regional Workshop on Harmonised System (HS) in Apia, Samoa. The workshop, jointly organised by the PACER Plus Implementation Unit and the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) under the European Union funded Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade project implemented in partnership with United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, which will run from 21st-25th of August 2023. The five-day event aims to support Pacific Island countries in successfully implementing the Harmonised System Nomenclature 2022, the world's global standard for classifying goods in international trade.

The HS Nomenclature 2022 brought about 351 sets of amendments, posing significant challenges to customs administrations in the Pacific. Only a limited number of Pacific countries, including Northern Mariana Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna, have successfully implemented HS 2022 to date. This highlights the need for further assistance in the transposition of HS 2022 to retain historical concessions and ensure market access conditions remain unaffected by technical revisions to scheduled tariff commitments.

Mr. Roy Lagolago, Head of the PACER Plus Implementation Unit, stated, "The complexity and scale of the HS amendments have presented technical and time-consuming challenges for our members. This workshop is a crucial step in assisting Pacific countries to complete the HS 2022 transposition work by December 2023. It will enable us to enhance the uniformity in the interpretation and application of the HS Nomenclature 2022, fostering greater regional trade facilitation."

The workshop's main objectives include providing an overview of the Harmonised System, HS 2022 Amendments, and the Pacific Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (PACHS 22) work. It will also facilitate discussions among members to share progress and experiences in implementing HS 2022 amendments and resolving outstanding issues that may hinder the process. Additionally, technical discussions and reviews will focus on the transposition of PACER Plus Tariff Schedules from HS 2012 to HS 2017. Moreover, the workshop will also raise awareness on iEPA and its requirements.

Ms. Nancy T. Oraka, Head of OCO, emphasized, “Collaboration and capacity-building are essential in navigating the complexities of the HS amendments. By working together, we can enhance the efficiency and transparency of customs administrations in the region, ultimately benefiting businesses and consumers alike.”

Attending the five-day workshop are customs administrators and stakeholders from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Fiji, Guam, Nauru, Palau and Timor-Leste, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

The Regional Workshop on Harmonised System marks a significant step forward in promoting regional economic cooperation and fostering sustainable development in the Pacific. By overcoming challenges and enhancing customs practices, the workshop seeks to create a conducive environment for trade in the region.

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Media Contact:

Darryl Ikbal Darryll@ocosec.org