



25th OCO ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2023

“Fostering an inclusive Customs that promotes knowledge-sharing and integrity for a stronger Pacific”

COMMUNIQUE

1. The Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) convened its 25th Annual Conference from 18-20 July 2023 in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia. The Conference adopted the theme “**Fostering an inclusive Customs that promotes knowledge-sharing and integrity for a stronger Pacific**”, emphasising the importance of Pacific Customs administrations to build on collective ability for smart decision making and better productivity.
2. The conference was attended by 14 Heads of Customs Administration of the Governments or their respective nominees from Australia, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Member Administrations unable to attend were American Samoa, Fiji, French Polynesia, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Wallis & Futuna.
3. The invited partner agency representatives from the IMF Pacific Financial and Technical Assistance Center (PFTAC), Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP), Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Japan Customs and Tariff Bureau, Pacific Islands Tax Administration Association (PITAA), Immigration New Zealand, United States Coast Guard (USCG), International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and WCO Regional Office for Capacity Building for Asia Pacific (ROCB A/P) attended the open session of the conference.
4. The Conference was opened by the Vice President of the Federated States of Micronesia, H.E. Mr. Aren B. Palik. His Excellency welcomed the conference participants to Pohnpei and expressed his gratitude to visitors from all over the Pacific. He reflected on the theme of the conference and challenged the Customs leaders as to how the new “Inclusive” Customs would look like in the future.
 - a. WCO Secretary General-Dr. Kunio Mikuriya addressed the conference by a video and emphasized his Secretariats hard work on pursuing support to members with trade facilitation and governance guidelines towards best practice. He also congratulated the OCO and wished good luck for reconvening a face to face annual conference.
 - b. The OCO Chair- Mr. Randy Sue welcomed the members and partners to the conference. He alluded to some of the work activities accomplished during the

fiscal year 2022-23 and thanked the current and former leadership of the OCO Secretariat. Also acknowledged was the support of the EU and UNCTAD for supporting the FSM Customs and Tax with its new ASYCUDA Customs clearance system.

- c. The OCO Head of Secretariat, Ms. Nancy Oraka reported on highlights that the OCO delivered in the past fiscal year and applauded the members for maintaining and fostering the close ties within the membership.
5. The Conference commended the updates provided by Member administrations stating their progress with Customs modernization plans and implementing the international standards and best practice in trade and security regime. Following the member updates, the Conference:
- a. Noted the importance of developing the mechanisms of sharing import and export information in the Pacific trade regime.
 - b. Emphasized the challenges of sustainability and enhancement of the ASYCUDA system in future business development plans.
 - c. Expressed the need for more innovation such as Non-Intrusive Inspections and K9 capability, noting both initiatives can be expensive to maintain. Proper research and planning are vital to this initiative.
6. The Conference:
- a. Welcomed the implementation of ASYCUDA Customs Clearance system in the Pacific. Two-thirds of the OCO membership now have this capability. The Conference also welcomed the IMPACT project which will support their trade facilitation capability as required by the WTO-TFA agreement.
 - b. Noted the OCO's progress with the EDF11 activities in reforming the members trade facilitation program and improving Customs leadership.
 - c. Commended the achievements of Vanuatu Customs and Inland Revenue with the Single Window and Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) implementations.
 - d. Acknowledged the PACComtrade Database progress being led by Secretariat of the Pacific Community and supported by the OCO. The session also witnessed the signing of the PACComtrade Database Agreement between SPC and specific Customs Administrations. Tonga and Kiribati signed the agreement whilst the conference also acknowledged Tuvalu and Vanuatu for signing the similar agreement with SPC prior to the conference.
 - e. Acknowledged the progress made by the Guam CQA in its journey towards Customs Modernisation as they implement new trade and revenue initiatives.
 - f. Noted OCO's update on capacity building with legislation and enforcement capabilities for members with IPR infringements.

- g. Welcomed the WCO-ROCB, Japan Customs and IOM work activities and their continued support for further strengthening Customs capacity building programs.
 - h. Supported the conduct of an operation to address revenue leakage in the Pacific to enhance information sharing, interoperability and joint operations amongst the membership.
 - i. Re-affirmed the importance of gender equality and workplace diversity in Customs Administrations.
 - j. Noted the challenge of countering transnational organised crime and of maritime security, and welcomed the support of PIDC, UNODC, PICP and PIFS.
7. During the close session the members approved the future budget and workplan, and received an update on priority trade facilitation initiative PACHS 2022.
8. The conference expressed their deep gratitude to the Government and people of the FSM for the excellent arrangements in hosting the 2023 Annual Conference, and for the kind hospitality extended during their stay in Pohnpei.
9. The conference thanked Mr. Randy Sue for his contribution as Chairperson of the OCO Conference and Steering Committee in the past term, and welcomed Mr. Xavier Mitchell of Cook Islands as the new Chair and Cook Islands as the venue for the 2024 Annual Conference.