

Annual Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)

Theme: Partnering for accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and achieving sustainable development in LLDCs

23 September 2020, 8.00-11.00 AM (EST)

Statement by Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, Secretary General of the World Customs Organization (WCO)

1. Mr. Chairperson, thank you for inviting the WCO to this important meeting.
2. I would like to commend Kazakhstan and the OHRLLS¹ for the initiative to develop and launch a UN Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA).
3. The WCO contributed to the development of the Roadmap and remains committed to support LLDCs by setting standards for simplified and harmonized border procedures, delivering capacity building projects and enhancing cooperation and coordination with other development partners.
4. As outlined in the Roadmap, the WCO contribution will be in the following four areas:
 - Transit, trade and transport facilitation;
 - ICT infrastructure and digital connectivity;
 - Public-private dialogue and private sector development;
 - The impact of COVID-19 on LLDCs.
5. Just a few examples of WCO instruments and tools are the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures, as amended, widely known as the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), the Transit Guidelines, and the draft Compendium of Best practices in Transit. The WCO Mercator Programme supports the application of the WCO tools, institutional development of Customs and the uniform implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization.
6. The disruptions brought by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of freedom of transit and the need for smooth functioning of transit, transport and trade corridors. Recognizing the specific challenges faced by LLDCs, on 29 May 2020, OHRLLS and the WCO issued a joint statement calling upon LLDCs and transit countries to maintain the continuity of international and regional supply chains during the pandemic.
7. Partnering with other international organizations and the private sector are only part of the avenues followed by the WCO in its efforts to support and guide its 183 Members to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure the supply chain continuity. Since March we've been developing new guidance material for Members, sharing best practices and supporting Customs enforcement activities to protect the society.
8. Greater support for LLDCs is indeed essential, as the international community embarks on the Decade of Action to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and strives to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.
9. The WCO is committed to supporting the LLDCs in the context of the SDGs with its theme of the year "Customs fostering Sustainability for People, Prosperity and the Planet".
10. I thank you for your attention.

¹ the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States