DIRECTORATE OF TRADE DEVELOPMENT AND EXTERNAL ECONOMIC
RELATIONS

Country Questionnaire Results

I MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP OF THE TRADE COMMITTEE ON CUSTOMS FACILITATION

Association of Caribbean States (ACS)

ACS Secretariat, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, January 23, 2013

Customs Facilitation Working Group

List of 12 Participating Countries:

- St. Kitts and Nevis (SKN)
- Colombia (COL)
- Mexico (MEX)
- Panama (PAN)
- Barbados (BDS)
- Trinidad & Tobago (TT)
- Guatemala (GTA)

- St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG)
- Antigua & Barbuda (AB)
- Haiti (HAI)
- Jamaica (JAM)
- Curacao (CRC)

Questionnaire Results

1. **Does your country use the World Customs Organization Harmonized System (WCO HS)?**

Yes/Version		No
6	2007	0
4	2012	
1	1996	

It was observed that among the Latin American Member states, comprising of 4 members, the latest version of the World Customs Organization Harmonized System (i.e. 2012) was used in their Customs offices. The CARICOM members operated using older versions of the WCO HS, i.e. Versions 1996 and 2007. Antigua and Barbuda noted that they had plans to update to the 2007 version in early 2013. St. Kitts and Nevis indicated plans to upgrade to WCO HS 2012 in the near future. Whether the difference in versions used by Member states is a weak point, the extent to which it creates discrepancies in procedures or if it acts as a hindrance to harmonization should be investigated.

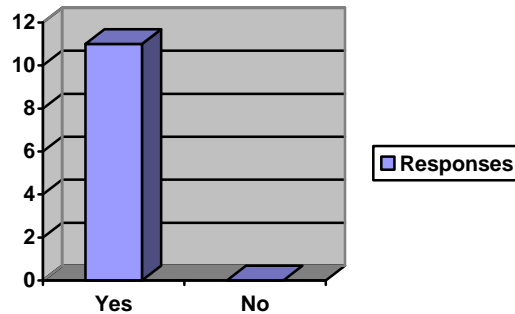*(Curacao is not included at present due to the incomplete questionnaire).*

2. **Which Automated Customs System is being used in your Customs departments?**

Automated Customs System	No. of Countries
ASYCUDA	5 (curacao)
TRIPS	1
SAAI	1
SIGA	1
CASEX (Proprietary)	1
SAQBE	1
CASE (Customs Automated Services)	1
MUISCA (Modelo Único de Ingresas)	1

A wide variety of computerized customs systems are used among Member states, the UNCTAD ASYCUDA being the most popular. St. Kitts and Nevis commented that while they are currently using TRIPS, they planned to change over to ASYCUDA.

(Curacao is not included at present due to the incomplete questionnaire).

3. **Is the digitization of customs systems and processes a priority?**

There was unanimous agreement amongst the 11 Member states who answered this question, that the digitization of systems and processes was a priority for Members. This comes as no surprise due to the greater efficiency and accuracy which can be achieved from automated, computerized processes and cost benefits resulting from the usage of less paper and less man power.

(Curacao is not included at present due to the incomplete questionnaire).

4. **Which processes in your country are digitized?**

a) <u>Table showing countries which have digitized processes (X)</u>

Process	BDS	SKN	SVG	CRC**	MEX	COL	PAN	TT	JAM	GTA	HAI	AB
Manifest	X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	
Import Declaration	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Export Declaration	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tax-duty Calculations	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Selectivity	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Trade Statistics	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Risk Management	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X		

It was noted that quite a few processes had been digitized amongst territories which indicates the transition to paperless customs processing and the growing trend towards computerized, automated process which reflects the responses given in Question 3 Jamaica indicated that it had only partially implemented digitization for processes such as: manifest, export declaration, selectivity and risk management. Antigua and Barbuda stated that they were building profiles for selectivity and risk management processes at present.

b) <u>Table showing frequency of digitization for each process</u>

Process	Frequency of Digitization Among Member States
Manifest	8
Import Declaration	11
Export Declaration	11
Tax-duty Calculations	11
Selectivity	9
Trade Statistics	10
Risk Management	8

Proof of Electronic Value	1

5. Which customs related information can be obtained electronically (online)?

Country	Customs related information available online
St. Kitts and Nevis	Legislation, forms, Common External Tariff
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Reports e.g. manifest, declaration, enforcement etc, and a variety of customs forms
Barbados	None (website currently being upgraded)
Curacao	None (website to be launched in the near future)
Mexico	All information contained in the customs document used for the import and export of goods
Colombia	Consultation Customs Tariff, tariff classifications issued, foreign trade statistics, customs procedures and services, process and trade services, forms, technical regulations, tax, customs and exchange etc.
Panama	All information is provided online
Trinidad and Tobago	(a) Non registered users: B/L Tracking, Manifest Tracking (b) Registered users: Online Tariff, Tax Treatment and owned Declaration processed on the system
Jamaica	Most procedures are available on our website. We can provide any other information upon request via email.
Guatemala	Tariff data, query statements by importers, customs procedures, pending transits, filling instructive goods declarations DUA-GT.
Antigua and Barbuda	Customs law and regulations, HS Tariff and Customs (Control and

	Management) Act
Haiti	Information on customs regulations and an On-line help desk. Website is currently under construction.

Data shows that a wide variety of information is available online. Some states (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis and Curacao) were extremely limited in the scope of material available online. Where it was indicated that there was little or no information available online, there are plans to launch or upgrade websites to provide information online.

6. Overall assessment of customs facilities and infrastructure:

Country	Overall Assessment
St. Kitts and Nevis	Good physical infrastructure. I.T. infrastructure is up to date.
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Current customs infrastructure is congested. Awaiting completion of two new buildings in 2013 to resolve congestion.
Barbados	Customs and Excise Department is good condition due to recent renovations. I.T. infrastructure received major enhancement with the implementation of a risk management tool, an IT tool for the managing of VAT, and the upgrade of the Website which is currently on-going. Additionally, a number of desk tops were made available to the extent that each officer's desk is now complete with a computer. It is proposed that (i) an upgrade to ASYCUDA World will commence before the year; (ii) the implementation of a Document Management Workflow System will be implemented shortly; (iii) the implementation of an Electronic Single Window is being considered
Curacao	Physical Infrastructure: Most buildings are recently renovated and in good condition, however there are a few which require upgrades to meet customs standards. I.T.: Systems are up to date.
Mexico	Considering that in Mexico there are 49 customs

	in their territory, some of which take a greater volume of daily transactions. These are equipped with infrastructure, equipment and automated processes to improve foreign trade facilitation control and customs clearance.
Colombia	In general terms, customs facilities and infrastructure are good. However there are certain shortcomings within Directorates being screened by the competent agency in the state.
Panama	General infrastructure of Panama Customs is in good condition and the whole system is automated.
Trinidad and Tobago	The IT infrastructure is good, the physical infrastructure is lacking. Currently awaiting approval for occupation of new office building.
Jamaica	ICT infrastructure is good as they have a Central Data Center, high speed wide area network and local area network, voice over IP telephony and computer workstations at most locations.
Guatemala	General conditions of the customs infrastructure of the republic are acceptable, but there is still much to be done to the organizing the infrastructure for example properly defining the primary zone and provide greater safety for our staff and visitors.
Antigua and Barbuda	Poor working conditions, lacking in physical infrastructure and facilities.
Haiti	Rehabilitation and Construction programme under way. All services relating to operations are available in Customs offices.

Overall, customs facilities in the Greater Caribbean Region were said to be in good condition. Among CARICOM Member States, physical infrastructure was a major concern. Some found that current physical infrastructure was lacking as indicated by Barbados (who had recently renovated), Curacao, Trinidad and Tobago and especially Antigua and Barbuda. Information Technology systems were a strong point among participants, with most being up-to-date. Another concern noted was the need for better organization within the Customs agency as noted by Colombia and Guatemala which has been pinpointed for review to improve operations.

7. Main priority needs for Customs Facilitation in your country

Country	Areas of priority
St. Kitts and Nevis	1. Advanced Cargo/Passenger Information Systems 2. Electronic Integration of Customs and Ports.
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	1. Comprehensive public relation mechanism 2. Upgrade to ASYCUDA World 3. Implementation of a Customs website and CCTV 4. New Customs legislation 5. Effective (port) Auditing system
Barbados	1. Capacity Building 2. Training
Curacao	1. Upgraded IT systems and computers 2. Capacity building related to linguistics and team building 3. Modernization of customs techniques 4. Improved physical infrastructure
Mexico	1. Streamlined procedures through a "one stop shop" 2. Unobtrusive equipment 3. New scheme of certified companies
Colombia	1. Publication: legislation and administrative procedures on the Internet, points of view of customs procedures, draft standards 2. Clearance of goods within 48 hours after the arrival of the goods or advance declaration initial direct download 3. Shipments 4. Automation 5. Risk management
Panama	1. The main priority is the New Customs Management System (SIGA)
Trinidad and Tobago	N/A
Jamaica	1. Refining of existing procedures (Business Processes) in accordance with best

	practices. 2. Training 3. Full implementation of automated systems.
Guatemala	1. Enhancement of Customs facilitation: Due to its great importance to the tax administration to achieve their goals, it is developing many projects in support of customs facilitation and to expedite the passage through Customs such as paperless customs procedures.
Antigua and Barbuda	1. Proper update of equipment and tools 2. Update to computerized systems 3. Detailed training in customs related fields 4. Proper laboratories and testing devices and equipment
Haiti	1. Reinforcement of the automated system. 2. Establishment of a Control Service a posteriori 3. Creation of a Fraud Statistics Database. 4. Establishment of a service to users at customs offices 5. Implementation of Risk Management procedures.

While many areas were highlighted for improvement amongst member states, a few stood out as more prevalent. The issue of making increased efforts to modernize processes for streamlining customs procedures featured prominently in the Greater Caribbean. Further updates to the current technology were needed to improve operations at Customs facilities. Capacity building and training was also highlighted in order to have a properly educated the work force about systems and thereby increase efficiency in the work place. Lastly, a supportive and cohesive legislative arm which reflects the changes and evolution of customs transactions throughout the region was also mentioned, reflecting the importance of the governmental arm to the success of the improvements to Customs facilitation.