



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR

HM CUSTOMS
Custom House
Waterport



PRESS RELEASE

No: 625/2018

Date: 11th October 2018

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and HM Customs Gibraltar Training Seminar

HM Customs Gibraltar continues with its long-standing successful experience of organising and delivering Customs and Customs-related training events for a number of Customs Services in the European, Central and South Asia regions as well as regional and international organisations.

OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) has initiated the IMPACCT Project (IMPortation And Customs Clearance Together!). In partnership with HM Customs and UNCTAD, a three day seminar is being held at the Customs Training Wing to ensure that the stakeholders involved in emergency responses are aware and trained on the process to import relief goods.

The seminar will include discussions on the role of Customs in the clearance process, the role of other entities involved in the importation of humanitarian aid, import duties and exemptions for relief goods and the IMPACCT project. Attendees include United Nations personnel from different bodies, World Customs Organisation, NGO's, international logistics organisations and HMGoG Civil Contingencies Coordinator. A further seminar will run next week as a result of the interest expressed in attending this event.

Mr Constantin Ciuta, representing UNCTAD presented **ASYREC** (the **A**utomated **S**ystem for **R**elief **C**onsignments) designed by OCHA and UNCTAD to assist the National Disaster Management Authorities (NDMAs), Customs Administrations and Cross Border Regulatory Agencies (CBRAs) to prioritize and speed up the processing of humanitarian relief. The ASYREC system was nominated for the 2017 Secretary General Awards under the category "Innovation and Creativity".

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Ms Virginie Bohl, emergency relief project manager for OCHA said “Bottlenecks at Customs entry points are constantly reported by humanitarian actors, during the response to an emergency. Customs officials sometimes also report a lack of understanding of rules and procedures. Therefore, the need for an induction course on Customs procedures was identified to minimize the impact on the humanitarian operations. As a result, OCHA, HM Customs Gibraltar, WCO and UNCTAD are running the very first induction course on Customs procedures. Thanks to the support of the HM Customs Gibraltar, 20 participants are attending this course. Understanding the international legal framework, general Customs processes and the ASYCUDA and ASYREC systems will help them in their daily operations. This is a unique opportunity to raise awareness among the humanitarian community about the role of Customs.

Mr Samson Bilangna, Senior Technical Officer in the WCO Compliance and Facilitation Directorate expressed the view that “the World Customs Organization (WCO) is happy to use the opportunity of this important Seminar to promote and share views on relevant international standards related to the management of emergency situations from the customs perspective. Thanks to the support of HM Gibraltar Customs, this is happening within the framework of two Memoranda of Understanding signed by WCO with UN-OCHA and UNCTAD. He hopes this will help to strengthen the cooperation between the Customs administrations and the Humanitarian Agencies worldwide. The WCO will continue this cooperation with UN-OCHA and UNCTAD to support the Customs administration so as to proceed with the clearance of relief consignments in an efficient and effective manner.

The Collector of Customs John Rodriguez thanked OCHA and UNCTAD for collaborating with HM Customs in bringing these seminars to Gibraltar. He stressed that an understanding of how customs administrations are managed is essential to ensure that humanitarian aid can move efficiently and in a judicious manner to disaster zones and trusts that these seminars will serve as a basis for the development of an e-learning programme for stakeholders.