

Counterfeit Pharmaceuticals: 2024 African Regional Workshop



The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) hosted a workshop entitled **“2024 African Regional Workshop on Counterfeit Pharmaceuticals”**, from Tuesday 04 to Friday 07 June 2024, at the Integrated Customs Clearance Centre (ICCC), Le Chaland, Plaine Magnien. This four-day workshop has been organized by the Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in partnership with the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Centre (IPR Centre) and the United States Department of Justice.

The workshop united 42 participants from various African countries, including Mauritius, Seychelles, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa. The workshop focused on enhancing intellectual property enforcement through interactive sessions, case studies, and practical exercises, aimed at addressing complex challenges and exploring innovative approaches to combat infringement. The training featured an applied trade enforcement exercise at DHL Courier Services. It also highlighted the importance of pooling resources and expertise to develop robust strategies against evolving threats.

Strengthening Regional Cooperation

The kick-start of the programme was given by Mr. Satrajit Sardar, the Chargé d’Affairs/ Deputy Chief of Mission, who underscored the significance of regional cooperation in fostering a safe and prosperous environment. Mr. Sardar lauded Mauritius as a significant leader in the region and



emphasized the critical need for close collaboration among nations. The workshop, he noted, provided a valuable platform for exchanging ideas and strategies to address pressing challenges, particularly the scourge of illicit trade and counterfeit goods which not only support criminal enterprises in both the USA and Mauritius but also undermine intellectual property rights and jeopardize public health. Mr. Sardar warned against the grave risks posed to citizens who unknowingly consume counterfeit pharmaceuticals and stressed the need for concerted efforts to hold malign actors accountable. Expressing gratitude for the participation and support of MRA, Mr. Sardar highlighted the workshop's role in fostering regional solidarity and advancing international cooperation. He urged attendees to share best practices and committed to supporting future collaboration initiatives with the Mauritian government. He looked forward to the outcomes of the workshop's discussions and the collective efforts to enhance the global community's well-being.

MRA Customs aims at Strengthening Security and Combating Counterfeits



In his address, Mr. Vivekanand Ramburun, Director of Customs, expressed gratitude to his colleagues from the region for their collaborative efforts. He underscored the critical role of Customs officers as agents not only of revenue collection but also the protection of citizens; particularly against threats like money laundering, counterfeit goods, and illegal drugs. Emphasizing Mauritius' membership in the

World Trade Organization, Mr. Ramburun underlined the evolving nature of the responsibilities of Mauritian Customs officers, with a growing focus on ensuring the importation of permitted pharmaceuticals and combating the influx of counterfeit products. He stressed the importance of leveraging technology and forging partnerships to enhance Customs operations and tackle emerging challenges. Mr. Ramburun underscored the role of MRA in the fight against counterfeit pharmaceuticals and emphasized the will for continuous modernization and capacity building through this workshop. Reflecting on recent successes, including the seizure of 160kg of heroin, he highlighted the crucial role of Customs officers in safeguarding the nation's interests. He extended gratitude to the U.S. government for selecting MRA to host the workshop. Mr. Ramburun officially declared the workshop open, emphasizing the collective commitment to strengthening Customs operations.

Closing Ceremony and Presentation of Certificates

The workshop concluded with a closing ceremony on 07 June 2024 featuring the presentation of certificates. Mr. Bryan McPherson, Regional Attaché for Homeland Security Investigations at the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria, South Africa, together with Mr. Dhoojanaden Maunikum, Director of Human Resources and Training graced the ceremony.



The training initiative is a testimony of reinforced commitment to continued regional cooperation and capacity building in the fight against illicit trade.

