

Mauritius hosts a Regional Workshop on Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing

- **MRA: A Core Member of the Hot Zone Prioritisation Forum (HZPF)**

The Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), in partnership with the World Customs Organization (WCO), is hosting a workshop on Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Counter-Terrorism Financing (CTF) from October 7 to 11 at the Integrated Customs Clearance Centre (ICCC) in Le Chaland, Plaine Magnien. The workshop aims at enhancing awareness and strengthening the capacity of WCO member states and financial intelligence units (FIUs) in the Eastern and Southern African (ESA) region to combat financial crimes that threaten global stability.



The opening ceremony of the workshop was graced by Mr. Pranab Kumar Das, Director of Compliance and Facilitation at the World Customs Organization (WCO), WCO experts, and members of the MRA Management Team. The participants are from Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Madagascar, Seychelles, South Africa and Mauritius, while the resource persons are from WCO.



In his keynote address at the opening ceremony, Mr. M. Sudhamo Lal, G.O.S.K., C.S.K., Director-General of MRA, who also happens to be the Vice-Chair of the WCO-ESA region, emphasized the vital role that both governmental and non-governmental organizations play in addressing AML and CTF challenges. He highlighted Customs' unique position at international borders in preventing illicit financial flows.

Mr. Lal stressed upon the partnership among WCO, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and INTERPOL to strengthen joint efforts in combatting these financial crimes. Looking ahead, he announced that the ESA region is committed to prioritizing AML-CTF strategies in its forthcoming Strategic Plan for 2025-2028, which is currently being drafted.

Mr. Lal highlighted the recent legislative measures taken in Mauritius, designed to strengthen national frameworks against financial crime, asserting that Mauritius is largely compliant with FATF's 40 recommendations. He revealed that MRA will become a Core Member of the Hot Zone Prioritisation Forum (HZPF), which aims to identify and address high-risk areas for illicit financial activities.

Commenting on local collaboration, Mr. Lal emphasized that the cooperative efforts of enforcement agencies underscore the essential need for a unified approach in the ongoing struggle against money laundering. He illustrated how shared knowledge and resources can enhance the integrity of financial systems and praised Mrs. Carine Charlette-Katinic, Director of the Financial Intelligence Unit, for her leadership and ongoing collaboration. *"Over the past few years, we have consistently received improved reports and valuable information, and we are truly privileged to have such resources at our disposal. This information is utilized to achieve our ultimate goals,"* he remarked.

For Mr. Lal, the recent enactment of the Financial Crime Commission Act 2023, which came into effect in March 2024, represents a significant progress by the Government in the fight against financial crime, thereby safeguarding the reputation of Mauritius as a compliant jurisdiction at both national and international levels.



Mr. Pranab Kumar Das, Director of Compliance and Facilitation at the World Customs Organization (WCO), laid emphasis on the importance of workshops in enhancing cooperation and building networks to combat money laundering as a predicate offense. He recognized the vital role of the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) in this global fight against financial crime, commending its proactive efforts and dedication to strengthening compliance measures.

Furthermore, he acknowledged the significant contributions of Mr. Lal, whose commitment and leadership have been instrumental in promoting collaboration among various stakeholders in this critical area. Ultimately, the success of our initiatives hinges on the active participation and engagement of all entities involved, underscoring the importance of workshops like this one in equipping professionals with the knowledge and tools necessary to combat money laundering effectively, he said.



In his address, Mr. Vivekanand Ramburun, Director of Customs at MRA, reinforced the organization's commitment to combating transnational organized crime, which threatens national security and hinders societal development. He discussed the global impact of these crimes on the financial system, underscoring the urgent need for effective policies and collaboration to protect integrity and stability.

Mr. Ramburun commended the World Customs Organization (WCO) for its proactive stance in tackling the challenges posed by the smuggling of cash, gemstones, and precious metals. He further highlighted the importance of conducting effective anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing (AML-CTF) investigations, noting how these efforts intersect with broader issues, including environmental and wildlife crimes.

Robust anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing (AML-CTF) training for enforcement agencies is essential not only for safeguarding financial systems but also for enhancing national security and ensuring the integrity of the global economy.