

MRA combats Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism

The 2018 Mutual Evaluation Report from the Eastern Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG) contains some recommendations for the MRA to assist in the national fight against money laundering. In order to ensure the effective implementation of these recommendations, the MRA has two dedicated Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) Units, in tax and customs operations.

AML/CFT Unit – Tax Operations

The AML/CFT Unit within the Fiscal Investigations Department of the MRA was set up in February 2020. It has developed a legal and operational framework for reporting and sharing information with authorities specialized in combatting money laundering and terrorist financing such as the Mauritius Police Force (MPF), the ICAC, the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), and the Integrity Reporting Services Agency (IRSA), amongst others.

In the pursuit of its investigations, the MRA ensures that tax evaders are assessed for tax and they may also be prosecuted for non-compliance with Revenue Laws. In line with the recommendations of the ESAAMLG Report, cases are also referred to ICAC for suspected money laundering offences, having tax evasion as a predicate offence.

Hereunder are some statistics on investigations, prosecution and referral of cases by the AML/CFT Unit in the Fiscal investigations Department during the period February 2020 to December 2021:

Cases	Number
No. Investigations completed	123
No. of on-going Investigations	111
No. of cases referred for prosecution	47
Amount involved in prosecution cases	Rs101 M
No. of cases referred for money laundering investigations	24
No. of exchange of information with Police, ICAC, FIU & IRSA	280
No. of taxpayers who have been assessed to tax	59
Amount claimed from the 59 Taxpayers	Rs100 M

Out of the 24 cases referred for money laundering investigations, 2 persons have been arrested for money laundering offences, in breach of The Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act (FIAMLA).

AML/CFT – Customs Operations

The Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) Unit in Customs was set up in 2007 and forms part of the Customs Anti Narcotic Section (CANS). The Unit investigates into suspected cross border transportation of currency, BNI, precious stones and metals including gold, diamond and jewellery or any goods of high value including work of arts and also intercepts any person carrying currency or precious stones that are suspected to be related to money laundering or terrorist financing.

Following the investigation carried out, cases are referred to the ICAC and/or Police Counter Terrorism Unit for in depth investigations, if so warranted.

During the period 2016-2021, (see table below), the AML/CFT Unit in Customs has investigated into nearly 250 cases of cross border transportation of currencies. Eight cases were referred to Police and ten to ICAC for in depth investigations. Administrative sanctions have been applied into 245 cases.

Cases	Number
Customs Offence Report	249
Referred to ICAC	10
Referred to Police	8
Administrative Sanctions by MRA	245
On-going Preliminary Investigation	11

MRA fully supports the collaborative mechanism that has been put in place between various Government agencies to fight money laundering and the financing of terrorism. It also wishes to remind taxpayers that tax evasion is a predicate offence to money laundering and may have wide ranging consequences for those who engage in such a practice.