

As a major trading country Japan will actively promote trade facilitation measures. Free and fair trade is one of the essentials for global economic growth

International Activities

Free and fair trade is one of the essentials for global economic growth. Japan has promoted the multilateral free trading system, whose foundation has been mainly formed by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Besides, Japan has also actively promoted bilateral and plurilateral economic partnership.

Meanwhile, there are trends which should be noted, including those related to the implementation of trade restrictive measures by some countries in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. Against this backdrop, we continue, cooperating with related ministries, to work on maintaining and reinforcing the multilateral free trade system formed on the ground of WTO, in order to develop free, fair, and open international rules.

In addition, as a major trading country Japan will actively promote trade facilitation measures in customs-related fields.



The 8th Japan-EU Joint Customs Cooperation Committee (Tokyo)

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Trade Negotiations

The Customs and Tariff Bureau, as an authority responsible for customs legislation and administration, continues to promote the maintenance and strengthening of multilateral free trade system, with a primary focus on the WTO, in cooperation with other relevant ministries

and contributes to orderly development of international trade by promoting economic partnerships with such regions as the Asia-Pacific region, East Asia and Europe.



11th WTO Ministerial Conference
The copyright-holder: the World Trade Organization

Activities in the field of WTO

The WTO is at the core of a multilateral trading system. In order to respond to any protectionism measures and to mitigate possible damage to domestic industries, we have worked on maintaining and strengthening multilateral trading system through WTO policy tools, including the dispute settlement system, safeguard measures, or discussions at the Trade Policy Reviews.

In recent years, the WTO members have made various efforts toward the WTO reform, based on the understanding that the WTO has not sufficiently dealt with protectionism, unfair trade practices and new challenges caused by technological innovation. For example, there have been ongoing discussions among the WTO members on the reform of the WTO dispute settlement system including Appellate Body and

the international rulemaking on trade-related aspects of electronic commerce.

Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) , which entered into force in February 2017, is the first multilateral agreement concluded by all WTO members since the WTO was established in 1995 and regarded as one of the important outcomes of the Doha Round.

TFA is expected to contribute to global trade facilitation through enhancing transparency and acceleration of customs procedures.

We continue to encourage other WTO members to implement the TFA provisions properly, in tandem with partners including relevant international organizations, and the WTO members who are in the process of ratifying it to finish the process.

Main element of TFA	Expected Results
Note: Japan has implemented all the measures required by TFA	
(1) Measures to be implemented by members Measures enhancing transparency: - Publishing descriptions of procedures on the internet; - Issuing advance rulings on issues including goods' tariff classifications prior to the importation Expediting or simplifying measures: - Adopting pre-arrival declaration/processing and risk-based post-clearance audit; - Endeavouring to establish /maintain a single window for border procedures	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting Japanese enterprises engaging in offshore productions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Expanding trade and investment by reducing total trade costs; and <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promoting further strengthening of the multilateral trading system;
(2) Special treatment for developing country members - They can decide dates for implementation on their own; - They can request support for capacity building	
(3) Application of WTO dispute settlement procedures	
TFA benefits both developed and developing countries: to reduce difficulty operating in developing countries such as lack of clarity on trade procedures (for developed countries) and to increase trade and investment resulted from improved border procedures (for developing countries).	

Promoting Economic Partnership

21 EPAs and related initiatives between Japan and 24 countries/regions have been entered into force or signed as at May 2024.

The RCEP Agreement, which is Japan’s first EPA with China and Korea, entered into force in January 2022. As a result, the ratio of the amount of trade with countries with which EPAs are in effect in proportion to Japan's total amount of trade reaches approximately 79%, including CPTPP, which entered into force in December 2018, the Japan-EU EPA in February 2019, Japan-U.S. Trade Agreement and Japan-U.S. Digital Trade Agreement in January 2020 and the Japan-UK CEPA in January 2021.

Such enhancements of economic partnership are expected to lead to Japan’s economic growth and demonstrate Japan's will to promote free trade to the world.

Japan will continue to promote negotiations on other economic partnerships.

In addition, considering the prospect of expansion of EPA utilization, the Customs and Tariff Bureau will promote the utilization by providing traders further supports continually

through enhancing the Cusroms website, providing the consultation services on customs procedures, and cooperating with public-private partnership organizations.

“Follow-up on the Growth Strategy” which the Japanese cabinet decided in June 2021 notes, "the government will also promote other economic partnership negotiations speedily taking into account strategic perspectives. Domestically, the government will work to promote the utilization of the EPA, and as part of such effort, promote the development of a business environment related to trade, including the digitalization of certificates of origin, while considering the systems of partner countries."

Taking into consideration above-mentioned policies of the government, the Customs and Tariff Bureau will promote economic partnerships with such regions as the Asia-Pacific, East Asia and Europe in its capacity of overseeing customs legislation and administration.



RCEP Agreement Signing Ceremony (15 November 2020) (Photo: Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

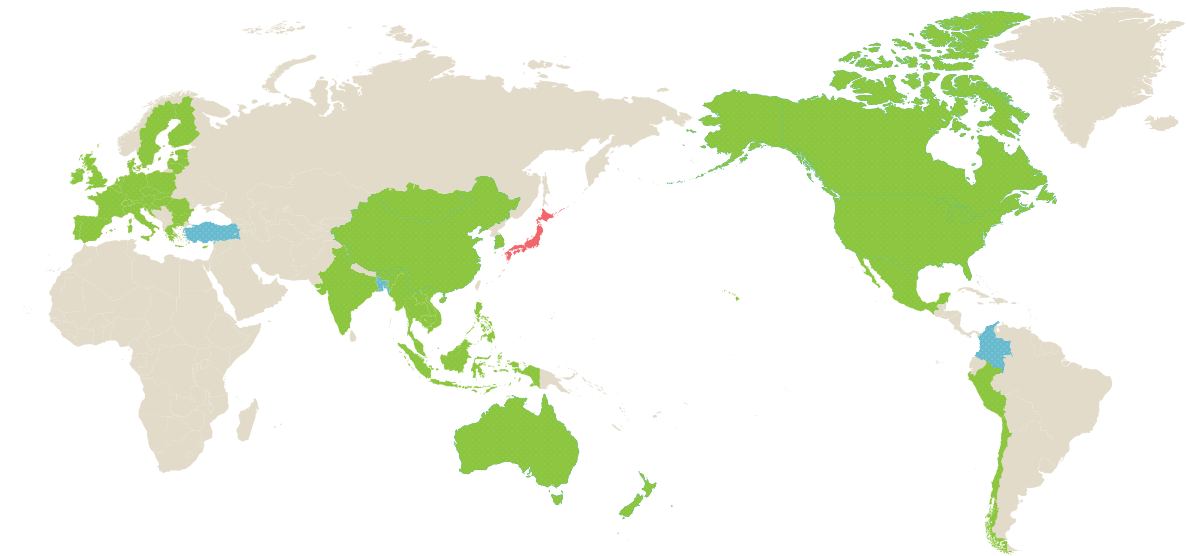
The Ministry of Finance constitutes Japan’s economic partnership negotiation team along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

As an agency which is in charge of customs administration, such as maintaining safeguards or duty quotas and enacting the necessary domestic legislation for EPA, the Customs and Tariff Bureau participates in the negotiations on economic partnership in areas such as customs procedures, information exchange, customs co-operation, trade facilitation, rules of origin, market access of products under MOF's jurisdiction (alcohol, tobacco and salt), intellectual property border measures, and non-tariff border measures.



Japan-UK CEPA signing ceremony (23 October 2020) (Photo: MOFA)

Japan's Negotiations on Economic Partnership



Concluded or Signed	Singapore, Mexico, Malaysia, Chile, Thailand, Indonesia, Brunei, ASEAN, Philippines, Switzerland, Vietnam, India, Peru, Australia, Mongolia, TPP12, CPTPP, EU, U.S., UK, RCEP
Negotiating	Colombia, Japan-China-ROK, Turkey, Bangladesh

[As of May 2024]

Japan’s EPA/FTAs in progress

As of May 2024

In Force

- Singapore (November 2002 (September 2007 Amendment)) ● Mexico (April 2005 (April 2012 Amendment))
- Malaysia (July 2006) ● Chile (September 2007) ● Thailand (November 2007) ● Indonesia (July 2008)
- Brunei (July 2008) ● ASEAN (December 2008 (August 2020 Amendment)) ● Philippines (December 2008)
- Switzerland (September 2009) ● Vietnam (October 2009) ● India (August 2011) ● Peru (March 2012)
- Australia (January 2015) ● Mongolia (June 2016) ● CPTPP (December 2018) ● EU (February 2019)
- U.S. (January 2020) ● UK (January 2021) ● RCEP (January 2022)

Signed

- TPP12 (February 2016)

Under Negotiation

- Colombia ● Japan-China-ROK ● Turkey ● Bangladesh (Negotiations suspended: GCC, Korea, Canada)

(Note1) TPP12 (Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement) : Canada, Australia, Singapore, Chile, Japan, New Zealand, Brunei, United States, Vietnam, Peru, Malaysia, Mexico (12 countries)
(Note2) CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership) (CPTPP) : Canada, Australia, Singapore, Chile, Japan, New Zealand, Brunei, Vietnam, Peru, Malaysia, Mexico, UK (12 countries)
In Force : Canada, Australia, Singapore, Japan, New Zealand, Mexico (December 2018) , Vietnam (January, 2019) , Peru (September, 2021) , Malaysia (November, 2022) , Chile (February, 2023), Brunei (July, 2023)
(Note3) RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) : ASEAN (Indonesia, Cambodia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Brunei, Vietnam, Malaysia, Myanmar, Laos) , Japan, China, Korea, Australia, New Zealand (15 countries)
In Force : Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand (January 2022), Korea (February 2022) , Malaysia (March 2022) , Indonesia (January, 2023) , Philippines (June 2023)
(Note4) GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) : United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain Japan and the GCC concurred on resuming the JGFTA negotiations, and hold the next round in 2024.
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Activities for Development of International Trade

Japan Customs is engaged in strengthening the relationship with foreign customs toward the sound development of international trade.

APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation)



Facilitating trade in the Asia-Pacific region

APEC is a forum to discuss economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region with a focus on liberalization and facilitation of trade and investment. Delegates from Customs and Tariff Bureau have been participating in the APEC activities, especially those of the Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) under the Committee on Trade and Investment (CTI), to promote trade facilitation through the harmonization and simplification of customs procedures and to secure international supply chain in the region. To be specific, Customs and Tariff Bureau has been contributing to the promotion of the trade facilitation and Customs Reform and

Modernization in the APEC region by taking initiative in the promotion of digitalizing customs procedures and the enhancement of capacity of risk management in the areas such as border enforcement on intellectual property rights and against illicit trafficking.



2024 APEC Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP) Meeting (Peru, Lima)

Customs Cooperation

Mutual assistance with foreign customs administrations including enhanced exchange of information

Aiming to promote more effective border enforcement against illegal goods, such as illicit drugs and IPR infringing goods, the Customs and Tariff Bureau is building cooperative framework by such measures as concluding an agreement (Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement) which facilitates information exchange between customs administrations and to strengthen cooperation in the area of trade facilitation. As of March 2024, Japan has built such frameworks of mutual assistance with 41 countries and regions around the world.

Dialogues with foreign customs administrations

The Customs and Tariff Bureau is actively engaged in dialogues with foreign customs administrations at various ranks as well as on different occasions, such as on the margins of regular meetings at the WCO, with a view to strengthening effective partnerships with them. The 32nd Japan-Korea Bilateral Customs Heads' Meeting was held in Seoul, Korea on September 2023. In the meeting, both sides discussed a wide range of customs related topics and reaffirmed the importance of the strengthening of customs cooperation.



ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting)



Advancing further cooperation between Asia and Europe

ASEM is a process of dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe in a wide range of areas including politics, economy, culture and society. Delegates from Customs and Tariff Bureau have actively participated in ASEM Customs Directors-General/Commissioners Meetings (DGs meetings) and the Working Group on Customs Matters (AWC). At their

13th DGs meeting in Vietnam in 2019, DGs agreed on priority areas and actions for the next two years (2020-2021), including effective and efficient border enforcement by utilizing disruptive technologies for which Japan acts as a coordinator of the members. The next DGs meeting and AWC meeting have been postponed since the spread of COVID-19.



13th ASEM Customs Directors General/Commissioners Meeting (Vietnam, Ha Long)



International cooperation among Customs administrations

Japan Customs contributes to further growth of international trade through harmonization and unification of customs procedures internationally as well as enhanced international cooperation.

World Customs Organization (WCO)

Activities in the WCO

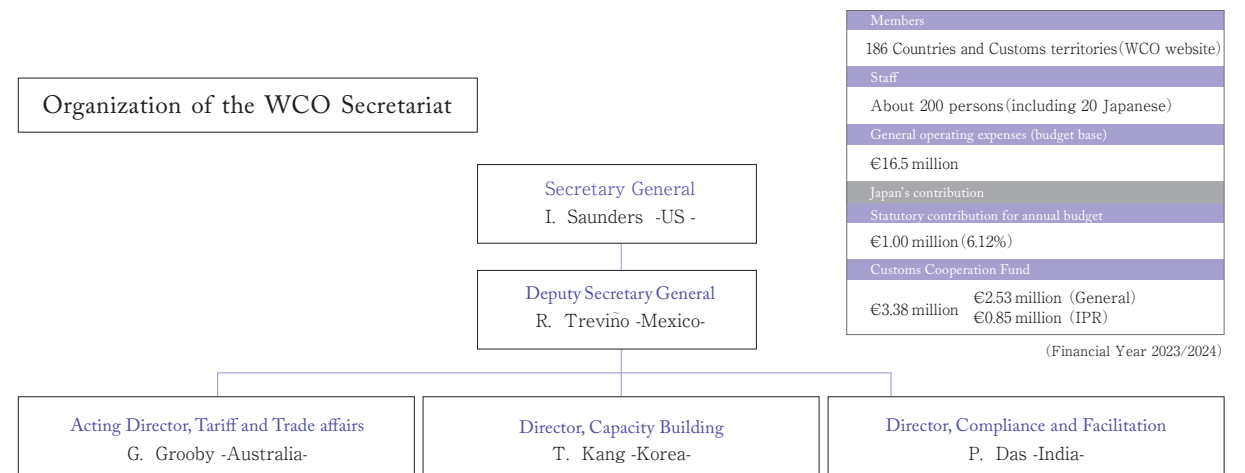
As the volume of international trade grows, harmonization and unification of tariff classification and customs procedures as well as promotion of international cooperation have become increasingly important. For example, differences in customs procedures in exporting and importing countries lead to extra work and trading costs. International cooperation is also essential in addressing issues that significantly affect national safety and economy, such as illicit drugs and goods infringing intellectual property rights. The WCO is the sole intergovernmental organization on customs matters tackling these issues from early years.



Profile of the WCO

The WCO, its headquarters located in Brussels, Belgium, is an intergovernmental organization established in 1952 to contribute to development of international trade by promoting harmonization and unification of customs procedures among its Members. The primary tasks of the WCO are as follows; (1) The WCO drafts and revises conventions related to customs classification and customs procedures and provides a unified interpretation of these conventions. (2) The WCO drafts and promotes guidelines on security and facilitation of international trade. (3) The WCO considers

technical matters on the WTO conventions on customs valuation and rules of origins for their unified interpretation and application. (4) The WCO promotes international cooperation among its Members for control and enforcement on illicit drugs and IPR infringing goods as well as customs capacity building. Japan joined the WCO in 1964 and since then, the Customs and Tariff Bureau, MOF has enhanced international cooperation among customs administrations to promote harmonization and unification of customs procedures in cooperation with the WCO.



Contribution by Japan

Japan has been providing a significant contribution to the WCO's policymaking and implementation by seconding 20 staff to the headquarters and regional bodies in Asia and the Pacific.

Among the regional bodies, the 'Regional Office for Capacity Building Asia Pacific (ROCB A/P)' in Bangkok, Thailand and the 'Regional Intelligence Liaison Office Asia Pacific (RILO A/P)' in Tokyo, Japan, are both under the leadership of Heads dispatched from Japan.

* Dr. Kunio Mikuriya served as the first WCO Secretary General from Asia, holding the position for fifteen years from January 2009 to December 2023.

Main Activity of Regional Bodies

- ROCB A/P: Lead the regional capacity-building activities, including a needs survey, planning and implementing workshops, and coordination with donors Customs, to ensure that the Customs administrations can effectively and efficiently achieve their missions and goals in a sustainable way.
- RILO A/P: Serve as the focal point of intelligence analysis and liaison for enforcement cooperation with Member Customs administrations in the Asia Pacific region and beyond to create conditions for efficient enforcement actions and controls.

In terms of financing, Japan is the third-largest financial contributor to the WCO, providing 6.12% of the total amount of statutory contribution behind the United States and China in 2023/2024, and also the largest donor to the Customs Cooperation Fund of the WCO, which is the financial resource for customs capacity building, providing 21.3% of the total amount of voluntary contribution in 2022/2023.

With growing needs for security and facilitation of international trade, the WCO plays more important roles, and Japan Customs continues its active contribution to the WCO.



Japan Customs at the Forefront of Customs Capacity Building

Japan Customs is a leading administration in providing capacity building activities to Customs administrations of developing countries.

Customs Capacity Building

As part of official development assistance (ODA) activities, Japan Customs provides capacity building activities based on the needs from the customs administration of recipient countries. Assistance for the reform and modernization of customs administration in recipient countries will contribute to the further facilitation of international trade through the harmonization and simplification of customs procedures, prevention of smuggling and the fight against terrorism through global cooperation among the customs administrations. In addition, it will lead to improvement of the convenience of the trade environment for local Japanese companies and other related companies and will be very beneficial for the realization of a safe and secure society and trade facilitation, not only for recipient countries but also for Japan. The forms of the capacity building activities include “dispatch of experts,” in which Japan Customs officers are dispatched as experts to customs administration in recipient countries, and “acceptance of customs officers”, in which customs officers from recipient countries are invited to Japan Customs for lectures and site visits.

In addition, in cooperation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), we send Japan Customs officers to ASEAN countries with which Japan has close ties on a long-term basis, and we also send officers to the WCO in Belgium, and engage other capacity building activities for the modernization of Customs. For example, our activities have made tangible contributions to institutional improvement and enhanced capacity in customs in recipient countries, such as strengthening risk management in ASEAN countries, supporting the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, and training trainers in African and Pacific Islands countries. In addition, the WCO Scholarship Program, with conducted CCF/ Japan, provides an opportunity for customs officers from recipient countries to study at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) and the Aoyama Gakuin University (AGU), where they can obtain a master’s degree while overlooking customs administration from an academic perspective. In this program, Japan customs officers also give some lectures and supervise their thesis.

Furthermore, we are strengthening the network among authorities through holding policy dialogues with top-level customs officers in recipient countries.



Seminar on Enforcement for Bangladesh Customs



WCO Fellowship Program



Workshop on Risk management and Passenger control for Thai Customs

WCO Regional Training Centre

In June 2004 the Customs Training Institute (CTI) in Japan was designated as the WCO Regional Training Centre (RTC)* in the Asia-Pacific region. Since then, the CTI has hosted a number of WCO regional workshops in cooperation with the WCO Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB) in Bangkok.

The CTI hosted The 21st WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building/ Regional Training Centre Heads’ Meeting in November 2023, and WCO Asia Pacific High-level Roundtable on Enhancement of Data/ Intelligence Analysis and Regional Cooperation Network in February 2024.

* WCO Regional Training Centres: The RTCs host Workshops for WCO Member Administrations. Currently, 32 RTCs are operating in the world and ten of them are in the Asia-Pacific region. (Japan, China, Fiji, Hong Kong China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Korea, Malaysia, and Thailand)

In addition, the CTI contributes to promote Customs reform and modernization through the WCO Scholarship Programme conducted at the GRIPS and AGU for Customs officials from overseas. The CTI lecturers share knowledge and skills required for Customs reform and modernization and the CTI arranges on-site visit to Japan Customs to show the practices on how Customs related international standards are implemented.

The CTI continuously contributes to enhance the ability of customs officials to realize Customs missions as the WCO RTC through collaboration with the WCO, the ROCB and other relevant agencies.



The 21st WCO Asia/pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building/ Regional Training Centre Heads’ Meeting



WCO Regional Workshop

WCO Regional Customs Laboratory

By virtue of the Memorandum of Cooperation for the establishment of WCO Regional Customs Laboratory (RCL) for the Asia Pacific (A/P) region signed by the WCO and Japan Customs in June 2014, the Central Customs Laboratory (CCL) was designated as the world’s first WCO RCL. Since then, the CCL has contributed to promote capacity building for Customs Laboratories of the members particularly in the Asia Pacific region.

The CCL has engaged in the capacity building activities such as assisting foreign Customs administrations in establishing their own laboratory and enhancing their chemical analysis technics. Collecting and disseminating the good practices on Customs chemical analysis is also the CCL’s major activities as an information sharing. Then, the CCL accept about 4 trainees from foreign Customs administrations in regional as well as non-regional members and provide practical training on Customs analysis every year. The CCL also provide the technical assistance by our experts for overseas Customs to support Customs administrations which aim to establish and further enhance their own Customs laboratories.

In November 2016, WCO Regional Workshop on Customs chemical analysis was held, attended by a total of 29 participants from 23 A/P members and 5 experts from other regional members. In April 2023, a meeting of Heads of the WCO Regional Customs Laboratories in A/P region was held with 24 members including representatives of 5 Regional Customs Laboratories.

Through these activities, a network of Customs laboratories is being developed within and between regions, which helps to promote further mutual cooperation.



WCO RCL Professionals Programme

Type of Capacity building

Dispatch of Experts to Other Countries

Long-term Expert: dispatched for a term of one year or longer
Total of 7 experts to 6 countries (as of March 2024)
Short-term experts: 114 experts were dispatched to 54 workshops
(Implemented in FY2023)

Customs officials from developing countries

30 workshops in Japan were provided for 330 participants
(To be implemented in FY2023)

High-level Policy Dialogue

Policy dialogues with high-level executives of Customs administrations of developing countries