

# **Authorized Economic Operator Programme**

## **Definition**

**Authorized Economic Operator (AEO)** includes an importer, exporter, customs agent, warehouse operator, or any other person involved in the international movement of goods and has been approved by the Customs administration as complying with WCO supply chain security standards;

## **1. Introduction**

The AEO program is derived from the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards. The SAFE Framework was adopted by the Directors General of Customs representing the members of the WCO at the June 2005 annual Council Sessions in Brussels. In June 2015, the WCO Council adopted the updated edition of the SAFE Framework 2015.

The Customs Administrations of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda are members of the WCO and each of them have submitted a letter of intent to implement the WCO SAFE Framework. The EAC PS Customs Administrations adopted the SAFE framework and agreed to implement the AEO program as a region in 2007.

### **1.1. Background**

The 21st century has been characterized by globalization of trade, tremendous growth in volumes of imports and exports within the East African region. Customs is faced with an ever increasing demand for faster clearance and fewer trade bottlenecks against a need for proper control, providing increased security to the global supply chain and contributing to socio-economic development through revenue collection.

The introduction of an AEO program aims to fundamentally change the relationship between businesses and the Customs Administrations by implementing preferential treatment to those businesses that are established to be compliant through a structured assessment of risk (authorisation). The AEOs shall benefit from simplification of procedures and/or facilitation with regard to Customs controls, including those related to security and safety throughout the EAC Region.

### **1.2. Scope**

This Manual describes processes and procedures for implementing the Regional AEO program as envisaged in the WCO SAFE Framework and the EAC Compliance and Enforcement Regulations, 2012 within the EAC PS. The implementation of the AEO program shall also be in line with the Single Customs Territory business processes.

### **1.3. Eligible applicants**

Any economic operator that is established in at least one of the EAC PS, involved in the international supply chain and carries out Customs related activity in the EAC can apply for the Regional AEO authorisation irrespective of the size of the business.

These operators include:

- Exporters
- Importers
- Freight forwarders
- Customs Agents
- Bonded warehouse owners
- Manufacturers
- Transporters
- Terminal operators

A person may apply for authorisation under one or more of these client categories. If the application for authorisation is approved, authorisation will relate to the specific client categories that the client has qualified for.

### **1.4. Legal provisions**

The AEO program derives its mandate from the provisions for Trade Facilitation and Customs modernisation under the EACCMA, 2004 and the EAC Compliance and Enforcement Regulations, 2012.