

## **THE CUSTOMS SINGLE WINDOW SYSTEM**

In fulfillment of the highly expected trade facilitation measure popularly known as “Single Window”, Honourable Ravi Karunanayke, the Minister of Finance launched the Customs Single Window System on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2016. The Customs Single Window System was established by the Sri Lanka Customs by connecting all the border regulatory agencies responsible for issuing licenses, approvals, certificates, recommendations and tax waivers and exemptions to the Core Customs Software Application namely ASYCUDA World.

Since the beginning of the automation of the imports and exports cargo clearance process, the Sri Lanka Customs from time to time connected stakeholder entities to the ASYCUDA World System. Such entities include Customs House Agents (Customs Brokers), International Transporting Agencies, Port Terminal Operators, Commercial Banks, Importers and Exporters. However, connecting governmental border regulatory agencies to the ASYCUDA World System in December 2015 was a breakthrough achievement in the implementation of the Customs Single Window.

### **Features of the Customs Single Window System**

In connecting the stakeholders to the Single Window System, up to now 20 border regulatory agencies have been connected to the system. All these agencies digitally upload to the Single Window System their pre-arrival or on-arrival licenses, approvals, certificates, recommendations, tax waivers and exemptions related to imports and exports.

In addition to the above, all the Customs House Agents (Customs Brokers) are connected to the Single Window System enabling them to submit the Customs Declaration (CusDec) digitally to the system for the clearance of imports and exports consignments. All the international transport agencies such as Vessel Operators, Non Vessel Operating Common Carriers (NVOCC), Container Operators and Freight Forwarders are connected to the Single Window System providing them the necessary access to submit Advance Cargo Manifests digitally before the arrival of vessel. The connectivity provided to all three Port Terminal Operators namely Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA), South Asia Gateway Terminal (SAGT) and Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT) has created a secured system to transmit the release order (order by Customs to hand over the container to the Customs House Agent) digitally. All the commercial banks are connected to the Remittance Management System where all the payments by foreign exchange for the importation of goods are digitally uploaded to the system. In addition to that all the collections of import and export tax payments collected by the two state banks namely Bank of Ceylon and People’s Bank are digitally updated in the Single Window System.

### **Benefits of the Customs Single Window System**

The main beneficiaries of the Customs Single Window are the traders involved in the imports and exports business. By integrating into one system and communicating digitally, the efficiency of all the agencies in the supply chain related to Customs clearance has been increased drastically thus reducing the time and cost in the clearance of import and export consignments. On the other hand the border regulatory agencies and Customs have improved the accuracy in exchanging the information. This has also contributed to minimize the commercial frauds committed by the non-compliant traders. The major advantage to the Government is the availability of trade statistics in the digital format giving the flexibility to analyze the same for required purposes.