**Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Paperless Submission of Customs Declarations via ASYCUDA system for AEOs.**

Directorate: **Declaration Directorate – Long Room (CBHQ1)**

Effective Date: **August 18, 2025**

1. **Purpose**

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) outlines the process for paperless submission of Customs Declarations (CusDecs) and digital copies of supporting documents required for cargo clearance to the ASYCUDA World system for consignments imported by Authorized Economic Operators (AEOs). The objective is to eliminate the requirement for physical document clearance at the Declaration Directorate and to reduce the need for in-person visits.

1. **Digital Signature Requirement**

AEOs and their respective Declarants are required to obtain valid digital signatures issued by a recognized Certification Authority (CA), in accordance with the provisions of the Electronic Transactions Act No. 19 of 2006 and its Amendment Act No. 25 of 2017.

1. **Procedure**
   1. **Document Preparation by the AEO**
      1. Each digital copy of the supporting documents required for cargo clearance, submitted together with the CusDec, must be digitally signed by an authorized representative of the AEO using a valid digital signature.
      2. The AEO must submit a digitally signed proxy, granting the respective Declarant the authority to process the CusDec on their behalf.
   2. **Submission of CusDec and Supporting Documents**
      1. An authorized representative of the Declarant or AEO company must log in to the ASYCUDA system using a valid digital signature and submit the relevant CusDec.
      2. The Declarant or AEO must upload digital copies of the supporting documents required for cargo clearance, along with the proxy—both of which must be digitally signed by an authorized representative of the AEO—as “Scanned Documents” on the relevant CusDec.
      3. Payment must be made in accordance with the taxes and other levies specified in the Assessment Notice of the relevant CusDec.
   3. **Notification to Customs**
      1. Upon completion of payment for the relevant CusDec, the Declarant or AEO must notify Customs by sending a WhatsApp message to the designated mobile number of the Paperless Clearance Unit at the Declaration Directorate.

*Message Format:*

*CusDec No: [2025 CBHQ1 I 1234]*

*Company Name: [ABC COMPANY PVT LTD]*

* 1. **Document Review**
     1. Upon receiving the notification from the Declarant or AEO, the authorized Customs Officer shall commence processing of the relevant CusDec.
     2. If the submitted documents are non-compliant, unclear, or require additional information, a query may be raised and the same should be recorded in the Information Tab of the relevant CusDec.
     3. The authorized Customs Officer shall also communicate the query via WhatsApp, using the same number from which the initial notification was received.
     4. The AEO must respond promptly to any queries raised. This may necessitate the physical presence of the Declarant or AEO at the Declaration Directorate.
     5. If the Declarant or AEO proposes any amendments to the submitted CusDec, or needs to submit further documentation (e.g., supporting documents), their physical presence at the Declaration Directorate is required.
     6. If the CusDec contains an NPC value other than ‘000’, or any code present in cage 36 (Preferential code), the authorized Customs Officer must verify the relevant approvals from the D Branch under the Inspection Act of the respective CusDec.
     7. If there is an internal query related to the CusDec, it will be referred to the relevant Appraiser, who will be appointed through the Inspection Act of the CusDec.
     8. Once the Customs Officer is satisfied with the electronic submission and the digital copies of supporting documents, the document processing will be finalized by triggering the Release Order function in the ASYCUDA system.
     9. The AEO will then be permitted to clear the consignment from the relevant terminal.
     10. In an event that the consignment is selected for Valuation based on the selectivity criteria — as indicated in the Selectivity tab of the Inspection Act of the relevant CusDec — the Declarant or AEO must promptly notify the Valuation Directorate by sending a separate WhatsApp message to the designated mobile number.
     11. In an event that the consignment is selected for physical inspection based on the selectivity criteria, the AEO or its representative must be present at the examination yard with the original set of documents (CusDec).
  2. **Referral to the D Branch**
     1. If the CusDec contains an NPC value other than ‘000’ or any code present in cage 36 (Preferential code), the Declarant or AEO must send a separate WhatsApp message to the designated mobile number of the D Branch to notify them accordingly.
     2. The authorized Customs Officer at the D Branch shall validate the NPC and Preferential code submitted by the AEO by entering the necessary approvals in the Inspection Act of the relevant CusDec.
  3. **Referral to Appraiser (Internal Query)** 
     1. A designated Appraiser will be assigned for internal queries raised regarding AEO companies.
     2. The authorized Customs Officer will refer the relevant CusDec to the assigned Appraiser, who will be appointed through the Inspection Act of the CusDec.
     3. The assigned Appraiser must update the Inspection Act accordingly.
  4. **Referral to the Valuation Directorate**
     1. Upon receiving a WhatsApp message from the Declarant or AEO, the authorized Customs Officer at the Valuation Directorate shall verify the values declared in the Inspection Act of the relevant CusDec.
     2. If further inquiries are necessary, a query may be raised via WhatsApp communication. In such cases, the AEO or its representative must be present at the Valuation Directorate with the original set of documents and the relevant CusDec.

1. **Responsibilities**
   1. **Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) / Declarant**
      1. Digital Signature & Proxy
         1. Obtain a valid digital signature from a recognized Certification Authority.
         2. Submit digitally signed supporting documents.
         3. Submit a digitally signed proxy authorizing the Declarant.
      2. Document & CusDec Submission
         1. Log in to ASYCUDA using a digital signature.
         2. Submit the CusDec and upload all digitally signed supporting documents and proxy under “Scanned Documents”.
         3. Make payments according to the Assessment Notice.
      3. Customs Notification
         1. Maintain a designated mobile number to communicate with Customs regarding the Paperless Process.
         2. Notify the Paperless Clearance Unit via WhatsApp upon payment.
         3. Notify the Valuation Directorate via WhatsApp if the consignment is selected for valuation.

*Message Format:*

*CusDec No: [2025 CBHQ1 I 1234]*

*Company Name: [ABC COMPANY PVT LTD]*

* + - 1. Notify the D Branch via WhatsApp if the CusDec contains an NPC other than ‘000’, or any code present in cage 36 (Preferential code)

*Message Format:*

*CusDec No: [2025 CBHQ1 I 1234]*

*Company Name: [ABC COMPANY PVT LTD]*

* + 1. Compliance and Queries
       1. Respond promptly to any queries raised via WhatsApp.
       2. Be physically present (or ensure a representative is) at the Declaration Directorate or Valuation Directorate when required.
       3. Be present at the examination yard with original documents if physical inspection is selected.
  1. **Authorized Customs Officer – Declaration Directorate**
     1. Document Review & Processing
        1. Begin processing the CusDec upon WhatsApp notification.
        2. Review and validate the digital supporting documents.
     2. Query Management
        1. Raise queries via WhatsApp if documents are unclear or non-compliant.

*Message Format:*

*QUERY RAISED FOR CusDec No: [2025 CBHQ1 I 1234]. REFER THE “INFORMATION TAB”.*

* + - 1. Record all queries in the *Information Tab* of the CusDec.
    1. Inspection & Release
       1. Verify NPC approvals from the D Branch.
       2. Finalize processing and trigger *Release Order* in ASYCUDA upon satisfactory validation.
  1. **Authorized Customs Officer – D Branch**
     1. NPC Validation
        1. Upon WhatsApp notification from Declarant/AEO, validate the submitted NPC.
        2. Enter the necessary approvals in the *Inspection Act* of the CusDec.
        3. Request physical presence of AEO or representative with original documents when needed.
  2. **Authorized Customs Officer – Valuation Directorate**
     1. Valuation Review
        1. Upon WhatsApp notification, verify the values declared in the *Inspection Act* of the CusDec.
     2. Further Inquiry Handling
        1. Raise additional queries via WhatsApp if required.
        2. Request physical presence of AEO or representative with original documents when needed.
  3. **Designated Contact Numbers (for WhatsApp Notifications)**

**Long Room (Paperless Clearance Unit): 0704752817**

**D Branch: 0704752834**

**Valuation: 0704752809**

***Note:***

*For the piloting of Paperless Submission of Customs Declarations via ASYCUDA system Sri Lanka Customs has selected 03 AEOs and 01 Declarant.*