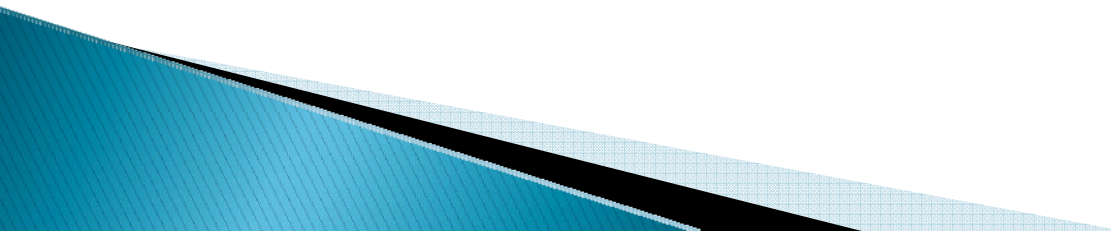# Border Management in Afghanistan
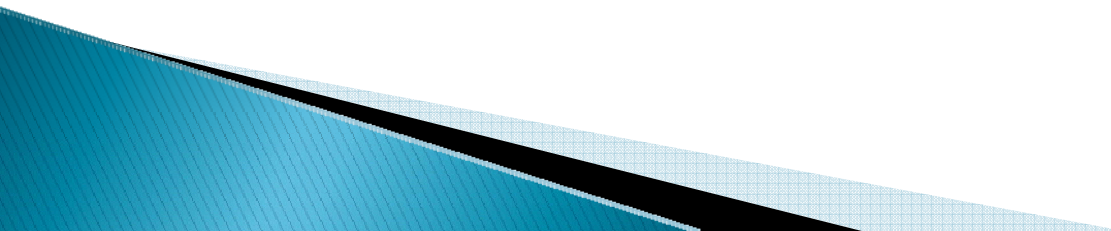
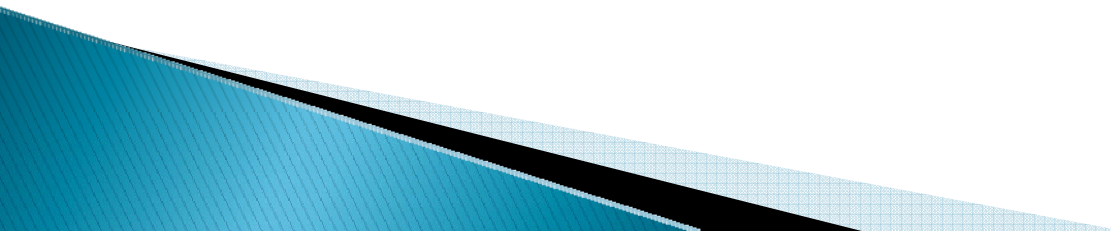Efforts to evolve a suitable model

What is Border Management?

- Securing borders to prevent any unauthorized entry or exit of persons or goods across borders, i.e. to prevent illegal immigration and smuggling of drugs, arms and other contrabands
- Facilitating movement of legitimate international trade across borders by providing efficient clearance of goods
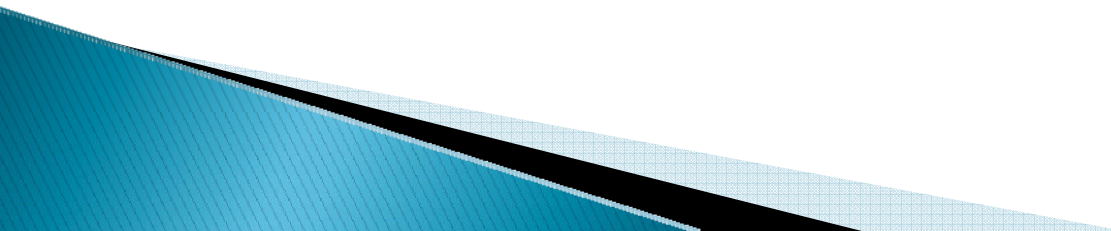
Agencies at the border

Which are the different agencies at the border and what are their roles?

➢ Border Police

➢ Immigration

➢ Customs

➢ Counter-Narcotics

➢ Plant and animal quarantine

➢ Ministries of Commerce & Industry, Culture, Education, Transport, Travel & Tourism etc
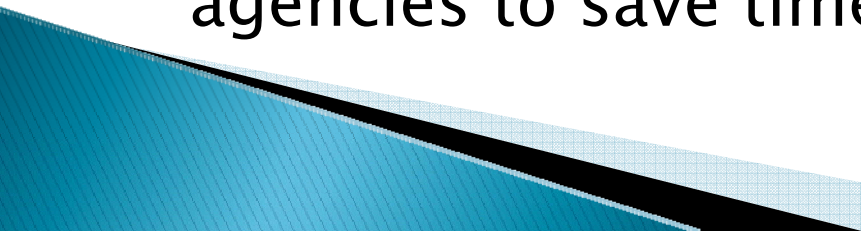
Mandate of various agencies

- Most agencies responsible for regulating movement of persons and goods and hence are engaged in checking documents, goods or persons- leading to multiplicity of checks
- Few others aim to provide useful information & other facilities to travelers and trade
- Need to coordinate these checks and inspections to eliminate delay and avoidable duplication of jobs in clearing legitimate passengers and cargo and facilitate trade
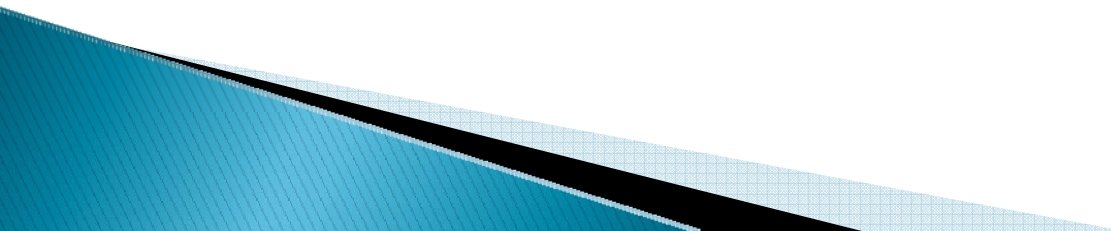
IMF Benchmark for Border Control

- Afghanistan being at the cross roads of major trade routes needs to have an efficient border management so as to attract trade & investment
- As per the IMF benchmark for Afghanistan, a new business model of border controls clarifying the roles of each Ministry (MOF, MOCI, and MOI etc.) at the border, consistent with internationally accepted best practices has to be put in place for better customs controls at the border in consultation with other stakeholders
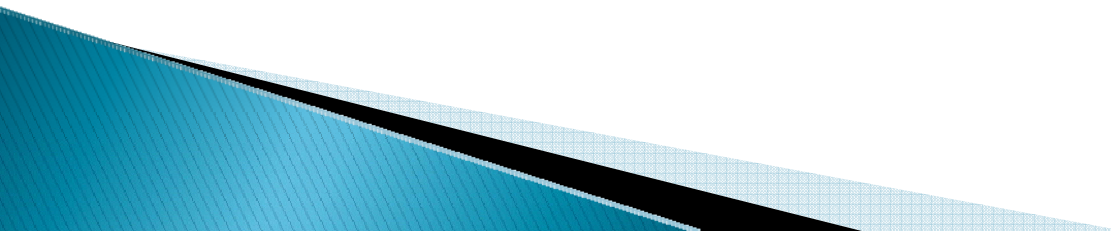
Global practices in Border Management

- Globally, there are varying models of Border Management but they can be categorized into two basic frameworks
- Special unified agency set up as in US, Canada and now in UK, where immigration and customs functions are handled by a single agency
- Coordinated mechanism among different agencies, like in EC countries, Australia, NZ and many developing countries where one agency carries a joint mandate on behalf of other agencies to save time & resources
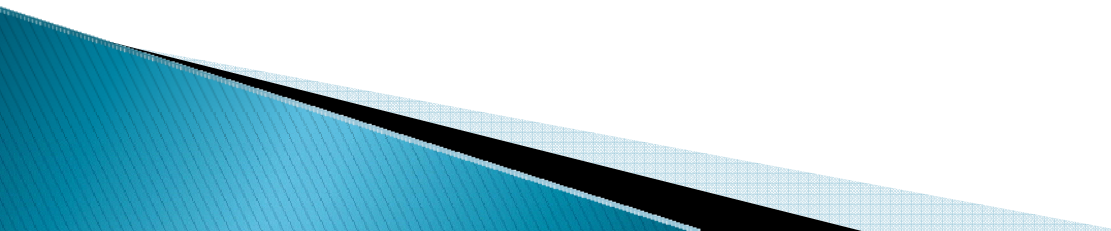
Model for Border Management

- Afghanistan trying to develop a mechanism for coordinated border management with Customs playing a lead role

- Customs with its dominant presence at all the border crossing points and having automated and centralized system for capture of trade data is in a unique position to take primacy and provide one stop service, but need to coordinate and integrate with other agencies to share data and responsibilities

Identification of roles & functions

- Need to identify roles and responsibilities of various agencies clearly
- Avoid duplication or repetitive functions
- Coordinate effectively to carry out basic responsibility of providing & collecting information, creating documentation and exercising preliminary checks on passengers, carriers and trade to ensure they are legitimate and have paid due taxes/duties
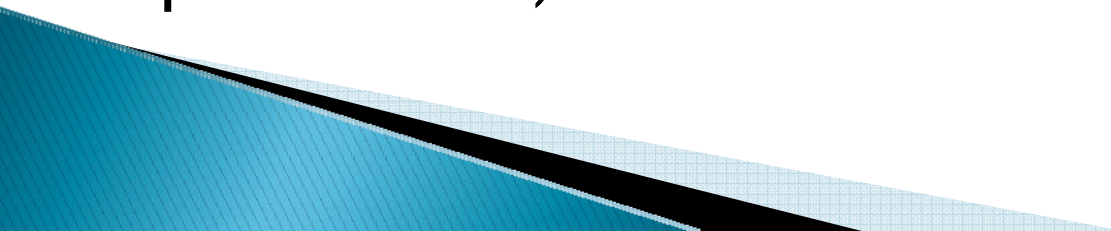
Delegation of authority

- Reaching an understanding with primary agency like Customs or Police to entrust it with basic responsibility of exercising checks
- Leaving out specialized function of detailed examination or scrutiny to the concerned agency itself, but customs to coordinate
- Need to have detailed MOUs signed among themselves delegating these responsibilities and developing mechanism for coordination
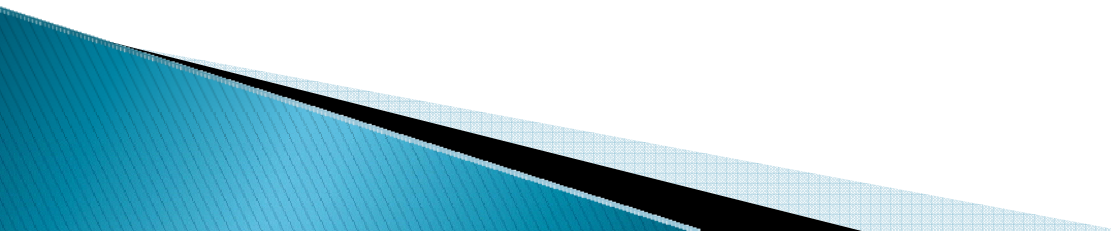
Steps towards Border Management

- Initiated dialogue with other Ministries/agencies at the border for agreement on coordinated roles & functions to evolve a system of Single Window clearance to save time and resources in clearance of international cargo

- Talks under way to delineate roles of Customs & Border Police in anti-smuggling efforts- Revising existing MOU between MOF & MOI to work out legitimate spheres of mandate for efficient border control with trade facilitation
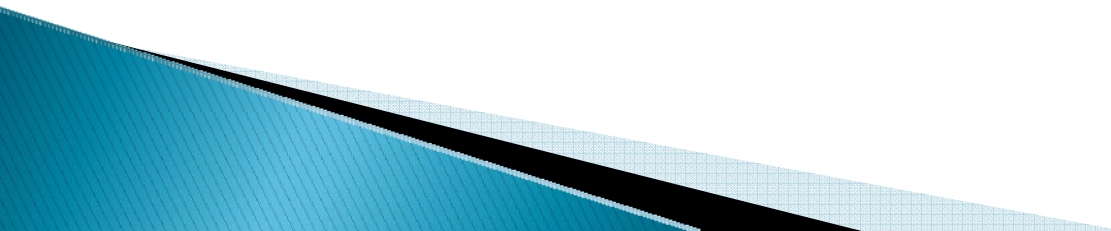
Single Window System of Clearance

- Customs with uniformed presence at the border and having a computerized country-wide network is best suitable for exercising regulatory trade control on behalf of other agencies
- Coordination presumes clear agreement with them for extent of delegation & when to revert for detailed scrutiny by specialized agency
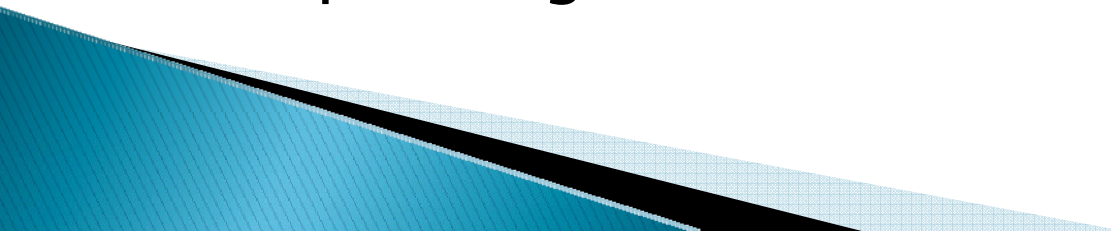- Coordination also requires institutional (legal, procedural) and administrative framework

SW and C2C Cooperation

- Concept of Single Window (SW) Clearance also presupposes greater customs-to-customs (C2C) cooperation among neighboring countries for exchange of information on anti-smuggling and trade
- It may also be extended to joint checks and inspection for which bilateral C2C cooperation treaties and supporting legislation would need be evolved

Key issues requiring attention

- Porous borders and difficult terrain leading to weak border control by Border Police- Need for internal as well as external coordination
- Reports of a large number of illegal border crossings used for smuggling of arms and drugs etc causing threat to security & revenue loss which requires efficient deployment of personnel & resources
- Need to strengthen border control and equip Customs with greater powers and resources

Need to equip Customs

- Customs to be given powers of search, seizure, arrest, detection, and investigation in line with the best international practices
- Customs to be delegated responsibilities by other Ministries like Agriculture, Public Health, Industry etc for exercising checks on their behalf
- In order to allow Customs fulfill greater role, Customs Police to be transferred from MOI to MOF, since dual control interferes with command structure and discipline and customs enforcement set up strengthened

Thanks

Said Mubin Shah
Deputy Minister of Customs & Revenue
with
Gul Pacha, Technical Director, Afghan Customs Department

Ministry of Finance
Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan