BOC Creates One Stop Shop to Expedite Release of Donated Relief Goods from Abroad

Posted 12 November 2013

In response to the need to facilitate the rapid movement of donations and relief goods from the international community to the provinces devastated by super typhoon Yolanda, Bureau of Customs (BOC) Commissioner Ruffy Biazon, in a November 11, 2013 Customs Memorandum Order (CMO), directed the BOC District Collectors at the Ports of Tacloban, Cebu and Ninoy Aquino International Airport to activate a One Stop Shop in their respective ports to expedite the processing and release of all donated relief goods for the Yolanda victims from abroad.

"The typhoon victims in Central Philippines have already suffered a lot. Many of them have lost their loved ones, homes, and for some, even their hopes. And to help them cope with the tragedy, the government is doing everything to get the much needed relief goods to them at the soonest possible time." Biazon said, adding that, "The one stop shops at the ports of Tacloban, Cebu and NAIA, would then, enable the BOC to facilitate the timely release of all donations and relief goods from abroad."

According to Biazon, the one stop shop shall be available 24 hours and seven days a week. It shall be responsible for coordinating with other government agencies concerned in the processing and documentation of donated relief goods, articles and equipment to facilitate release within 24 hours from filing of import entry.

"The three international ports are the most strategic and closest points to the calamity areas. Hence, these are ideal staging points for the supply chain of relief goods and donations from the international community." Biazon added.

Under the Order, the documentary requirements for the release of donated relief goods have been streamlined and simplified. To facilitate their immediate release, only a letter of intent to donate goods, bill of lading or airway bill, and a packing list and/or a commercial invoice among other documents as may be required, are needed.

The order is, however, clear that all donations shall only be to the account of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and/or any DSWD registered relief organization.

Meanwhile, in an earlier meeting between customs officials and stakeholders to discuss the planned establishment of a Customs Trade Facilitation Office (CTFO), Biazon stressed the rationale of creating the office. "We would like to perpetuate the open-engagement working relationship between customs officials and stakeholders." Biazon said, even as he added that, "With the enhanced partnership between the BOC and stakeholders, we should not only be able to improve our services, but more importantly, we should also be able to apply only the best practices in the industry."

The meeting which was attended by the officers of the Port Users Confederation (PUC), Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), American Chamber of Commerce (ACC), Korean Chamber of Commerce (KCC) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) among others, was the first of a series of three meetings to discuss the issues and provisions that would be considered in developing the Customs Memorandum Order creating the CTFO.

The Trade Facilitation Office is designed to assist the country’s importers and exporters with their customs needs and it will be manned by both customs officials and stakeholders.

For his part, Customs Deputy Commissioner for Assessment Operations and Coordinating Group (ADCG) Agustín Uvero said that, considering the nature of the Trade Facilitation Office, it might be a wise decision to open a satellite trade facilitation office at Makati as that is where many exporters and importers are based.
BOC Creates One Stop Shop to Expedite Release of Donated Relief Goods from Abro...