



**REPORT
OF THE 22ND CONFERENCE OF CUSTOMS DIRECTOR
GENERALS OF THE WORLD CUSTOMS
ORGANIZATION OF WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA
REGION**

King Fahd Palace Hotel - Dakar, Senegal

of 26 and 28 April 2017

I. BACKGROUND:

1. The 22nd Conference of Customs Director Generals of the World Customs Organization of West and Central Africa Region (WCO-WCA) was held at the King Fahd Palace Hotel, Dakar, Senegal, from 26 to 28 April 2017.
2. This important meeting was part of the agenda of activities of the WCO-WCA Region. Its main objective was to assess the implementation of the recommendations of the 21st Customs DGs Conference held at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Abidjan, from 27 to 29 April 2017 and to consider the reports of the Office of the Vice-Chair, WCO secretariat, regional structures and the IT RWG, as well as the level of regional dues and emerging subjects.
3. The meeting was attended by twenty-one (21) Member State administrations out of a total of twenty-three (23), WCO Secretariat, the Regional Capacity Building Office (ROCB), the Regional Training Centers (RTCs) in Ouagadougou, Brazzaville and Abuja, the Regional Liaison Offices in charge of West and Central Africa Intelligence (BRLR-WA and BRLR-CA) Including the African Union Commission, CEMAC and ECOWAS.
4. The List of Participants is attached.

II. OPENING CEREMONY

5. The opening ceremony, chaired by PAPA OUSMANE GUEYE Director General of the Customs of Senegal, first welcomed the various delegations and thanked the member countries of the Region for having massively responded to the meeting.
6. He also paid tribute to WCO Secretary General for his availability and commitment to the reforms undertaken by the administrations in our region. He subsequently expressed his gratitude to His Excellency Mr. MACKY SALL, President of the Republic of Senegal and to the Minister with the Minister of Finance in charge of Budget for their commitment to the Senegalese Customs, which they continue to support. He also, expressed his admiration to them for their determination to make good governance the credo of management of Public

Finance in Senegal.

7. He expressed his sincere thanks to WCO Secretary General KUNIO MIKURYA for his continued support for the activities of WCO-WCA Region, without forgetting to pay a heartfelt tribute to Mr. ISSA COULIBALY, former Vice-Chair of the Region, promoted Minister of Water and Forestry in his country, for his leadership in the conduct of activities on the one hand, and to express his gratitude to all the delegations that made the trip to Abidjan, on the other hand.
8. Continuing his address, he recalled that Customs administrations are part of a continuous process of improving risk management, control of business operations, revenue and border security in order to ensure efficient and effective management of borders well documented by a relevant analysis of economic and security data.
9. Accordingly, he welcomed the relevance of the theme of the 22nd Conference of the DGs in an environment of free international trade and intensification of cross-border crime and the entry into force of Agreement on Trade Facilitation on 22 February 2017.
10. Finally, while acknowledging the contribution of ICTs to the challenges faced by Customs administrations, the Director General wished fruitful discussions to the delegations.
11. Mr. Amadou COULIBALY, Interim Director General of the Customs of Côte d'Ivoire, Vice-Chair of the World Customs Organization West and Central Africa Region, also wished a warm welcome to this 22nd Conference of Director Generals of Customs of our Region.
12. He subsequently expressed his gratitude to the Director General of the Senegalese Customs and his collaborators, as well as to the highest government authorities in Senegal, who accepted to host this important meeting to which they devoted all the necessary support for its organization.
13. He paid tribute to the controller General Issa COULIBALY, former Director General of the Customs of Côte d'Ivoire and former Vice-Chair of WCO for WCA Region, whose merits earned him the promotion to the position of Minister of Water and Forestry of Côte d'Ivoire
14. Finally, he noted that the deliberations under the banner « Digital Customs, for a progressive commitment », challenges

the Region on the need to define a vision and strategies in the short and medium term to face emerging challenges. It is therefore necessary for the Region to adopt a forward-looking and inclusive approach that can meet these challenges. He said that the entry into force of WTO agreement on trade facilitation should be welcomed by all with regard to the opportunities that this instrument offers. Accordingly, he said that the use of advanced technologies involving faster and more efficient methods must be a priority for our administrations.

15. In his speech, Dr. Kunio MIKURIYA, Secretary General of the World Customs Organization, expressed his gratitude to the Government of Senegal and to the Director General of the Customs of Senegal for the friendly atmosphere created and the welcome extended to the delegations.
16. The Secretary General later indicated that the Meeting is invited to consider ways to strengthen the role of Customs in trade facilitation with the entry into force of the TFA, protection of the society against the movement of dangerous goods and improvement of revenue collection as indicated by the Customs Director General in his address. He said that some of these management strategies were supported by WCO.
17. After exploring the emerging challenges in the WCO-WCA region, he advocated for the ownership of the new WCO theme, namely, Digital Customs. He reiterated the readiness of the Secretariat to assist Member Administrations in their reform and modernization processes.
18. He concluded his remarks by wishing the Director Generals fruitful deliberations and renewed his warm thanks to the various delegations for their mobilization which indicates the vitality of this framework of cooperation necessary for the modernization of customs administrations in our Region. Finally, wishing a good and successful meeting, the Chairman of the session declared open the 22nd Conference of the DGs.

III : ELECTION OF THE BUREAU

16. Following the end of the opening ceremony, the bureau of the conference was constituted as follows:

- The meeting is co-chaired by the Office of the Vice-Chair of the Region (Côte d'Ivoire) and the Secretary of WCO, assisted by the Director General of Customs of Senegal,
- Cameroon, Niger, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, for the Office of the Vice-chair and Senegal, host country, were appointed rapporteurs.

17. After a few amendments, the Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. WCO Agenda Priorities - WCO SG –

 Data analysis - WCO 2017 thematic;

- Situation and challenges in the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

1. WCA activity report of WCO Secretariat (WCA Coordinator).

2. Report of WCA Vice-Chair – continued

- Activity report of regional structures
- Implementation of recommendations
- Discussions

3. Development of the regional strategy and the Regional Strategic Plan

- General presentation
- Outcomes and lessons learned from the 2016 self-evaluation
- Roadmaps 2017
- New strategic plans 2018-2022
- Discussions

4. Presentation and adoption of the Financial Report and 2017/2018 Budget - Financial Committee and WCA Audit

5. Developments and Challenges in Inspection Companies:

- Presentation of the situation and developments – WCA Coordinator (10min)

- Presentation of the situation in the DRC - DRC (10 min)
- Presentation of the situation in Ghana - Ghana (10 min)

6. Developments and challenges in TFA-MERCATOR program

7. Developments and challenges in the interconnection of transit systems

- Current situation
- Fundings

8. Safety/Security

- SPC++ Project - Nigeria
- Discussions

9. Closed door session for Heads of Delegation:

- Issues of governance at WCO
- Date and venue of the next Conference of Customs Director Generals of WCO-WCA
- Date and venue of the next Conference of Customs Director Generals of the Francophonie
- Date and venue of the next meeting of Contact Points
- Date and venue of the next meeting of HR managers and training
- Date and venue of the next meeting of Experts
- Date and venue of the next Donors' Conference
- Program and WCA positions during the next meeting of the sub-committee of Customs DGs of the African Union
- Miscellaneous

10. Presentation of the Regional Guide

11. The Status of WCO regional structures

12. Presentation of the Report of the Closed Door Session

13. Consideration and Adoption of recommendations and of the report of the 22nd Conference of DGs

14. Closing Ceremony of the 22nd Conference of Customs Director Generals:

IV: PROCEEDINGS

IV .1. Priorities of WCO agenda

18. WCO Secretary General made a presentation on five WCO priority areas: trade facilitation, digital technology, security in passenger and cargo control, cooperation between Customs and taxes and the fight against illicit financial flows.
19. Trade Facilitation: trade facilitation is the first priority area of WCO in the context of the entry into force of WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation. To this end, the SG/WCO reminds participants that the RKC is the most appropriate main instrument for the implementation of TFA.
20. Digital technology: The SG recalled WCO 2016 Digital Customs theme, which is a transition for data access: the development of electronic trade raises the customs challenge of combating illegal trade. Customs administrations have to deal with tax fraud with the development of internet purchases and combat illegal trade.
21. Safety in passenger and cargo control: the security issue has become a stake for all Customs. Important initiatives are underway in the Region to address this issue. To this end, the SG recalled the SPC initiative, Collaborative security, developed by Nigeria.
22. Cooperation between Customs and Taxes: mobilization of internal resources is an important factor for governments. Thus, forms of co-operation have to be developed between Customs and Tax Administrations in order to exchange information. This issue is on the agenda of the forthcoming WCO Council meetings scheduled for July 2017.
23. The fight against illicit financial flows: the SG/WCO recalled the mandate given to WCO by the G20 Heads of State to undertake a study on the issue. To this end, he drew up, in agreement with the Vice-Chairs of the six regions, a draft action plan to deal with these illicit financial flows. This draft action plan will be discussed.

IV.2. Presentation and adoption of Activity III.2.1. WCO Secretariat

24. The Secretariat's activity report (January 1st, 2016 - March 1st

2017) was presented by Mr. Bernard Zbinden in his capacity as Regional Coordinator and focused on three major areas: the overall implementation of capacity building, programs and activities of WCO-WCA Region and, finally, the accession of member countries to the various WCO standards.

25. The overall implementation of capacity building: in this connection, Mr. Zbinden pointed out that the Secretariat's program of assistance is based on the annual requests and needs expressed by the member countries of the Region. For the past year, the capacity building program has been strongly influenced by the objectives of the 2013-2017 Regional Strategic Plan, as well as the four major themes of GIC 2016: security/safety, digital customs, the Agreement on Trade Facilitation (entered into force on 22 February 2016) and performance measure.

26. Based on the annual needs assessment, the member countries of the Region have been involved in the various following programs:

- 1- The Swedish funded WACAM program on strategic management of human resources in the Region;
- 2 – the LMD (Leadership in Development Management) program, which is a priority in ESP and is intended for senior managers;
- 3 - PACIR with the major objective of interconnection in transit;
- 4 - CITES to develop the capacity of member countries to collect and process information on protection of protected species;
- 5 - The container control program consisting of the setting up of mixed teams (customs, gendarmerie, port and airport authorities, etc.) for the targeting of risk containers;
- 6 - The COLOMBUS program for the reform and modernization of customs administrations;
- 7 - The MERCATOR program which, in addition to trade facilitation, has finally integrated the previously mentioned COLOMBUS program;
- 8 - The HRMC-WCO-UNCTAD program for the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA);

9 - The C-RED program, which is a solution for the management of humanitarian crises and natural disasters, in collaboration with UNCTAD (prompt delivery relief);

10 - The implementation of the Performance Measure.

II - Operations carried out by WCO in the fight against fraud and involving the WCA Region include the following operations:

27. Westerlies, against drug trafficking by air passengers, which saw the participation of 16 member countries of the Region,

28. African Wings, for the surveillance of small aviation with 17 participating countries,

29. ACIM, to control the trafficking of counterfeit medicines, with 18 member countries taking part,

30. CRIPHARM I and II, the fight against pharmaceutical crime, which was highly satisfactory both from the point of view of local initiative and expertise (by ROCBs WA and CA) and that results are recorded there;

31. Virtual Academy for customs guidance for distance learning of new recruits with 6 participating countries at present, the application being available only in English;

32. The scholarship programs usually offered;

33. Accreditation of associated experts with satisfactory results within the Region, with the exception of the area of transit;

34. In addition, there are a number of noteworthy activities that deserve special mention. These included the workshop organized in collaboration with UNCTAD to improve the standard version of ASYCUDA, the one related to Post Clearance Inspection, AOE, Risk Management and Intelligence.

35. Overall, the level of execution of actions was satisfactory compared to the previous year.

36. The next meeting to be held immediately is the combined workshop on the TF and the 2nd donors' conference scheduled for 29

April 2017 in Lomé.

III - Adherence to WCO standards

37. HS Convention received 22 accessions.
38. KTO with 11 memberships with Benin as new member.
39. TFA-WTO, which has 9 members with the newly-registered membership of Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Chad, Niger, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire.
40. In conclusion, Mr. Zbinden stressed the need for better continuity of anti-fraud operations after holding them and encouraged member countries in the Region to express their needs for assistance more widely. Actions to be carried out in WCO WCA Region.

IV.2. 2 DIGITAL CUSTOMS

41. Digital Customs aligned itself with digital developments, the Office of the Vice-Chair elaborated on digital customs to the IT RWG which held its meeting from 4 to 6 April in Abidjan.
42. The purpose of the meeting was to: (i) Present initiatives in each jurisdiction, (ii) Share best practices.
43. This meeting was attended by fourteen jurisdictions, only nine of which presented their experience. These experiences vary widely, from the implementation of information systems to customs procedures.
44. RWG set up the forum, which is a virtual space to allow RWG administrations to work together.
45. Finally, the presenter focused on setting up DATA CENTERS for data backup in case of disasters.

IV.2.3. Office of the Vice-Chair and regional Structures

46. The Office of the Vice-Chair presented his report and the one of

regional structures.

47. The Vice-Chair, in his introductory remarks, recalled the vision of the Office of the Vice-Chair which is to make WCA region a region of reference. It revolves around the revitalisation of the structures of the Region, the establishment of effective structures and the modernization of customs administrations in the region.

48. For the participation in regional and international meetings, the Office of Vice-Chair participated in the meeting of the Capacity Building Contact Points held in Bamako at the meeting of the Subcommittee of Director Generals of the African Union in Harare. He also participated in the 76th meeting of the General Policy Committee in Moscow and the 7th joint annual statutory meeting of the National Correspondents of WCO-WCA Region;

49. The 78th meeting of the General Policy Committee focused heavily on governance and status of regional structures. To this end, WCA Region contributed fundamentally;

50. The Office of the Vice-Chair also participated in the following meetings: the 12th Global Meeting of ROCB Directors, RTCs and the Office of the Vice-Chair in Brussels from 2 to 3 March 2017; The 8th session of the capacity building Committee and the 16th meeting of the ethics subcommittee;

51. The Office of the Vice-Chair drew up a working paper on the status of regional bodies of WCO. This document served as a basis for discussion at the CPG meeting in Moscow.

52. The Office of the Vice-Chair also presented regional applications for vacant positions within the WCO Private Sector Consultative Group to obtain a classification of the needs of WCA region in a priority order in ten specific areas.

53. The Office of the Vice-Chair responded to a request from Australian Customs to participate in the 22nd Conference of DGDs.

54. In terms of outlook, the Office of the Vice-Chair will organize the 2nd donor conference, continue to coordinate the activities of the regional structures and promote the strategic plan as well as WCO tools.

55. With regard to the activities of FR Abuja, the Vice-Chair described the organization of a regional training workshop on customs valuation as one of its activities.

56. He also informed that the center hosted a Workshop on Intelligence in February 2017. He also participated in the meeting of the 8th session of the capacity building committee.

57. As for the RTC in Brazzaville; He noted that the center participated in the meeting of contact points in Bamako, Mali and at the 17th meeting of the Committee of Experts. The Brazzaville RTC took an active part in the revision of CEMAC customs code.

58. As for the Ouagadougou RTC, it also participated in the 17th meeting of the Committee of experts held in Conakry, Guinea, as well as at the RTC Global Meeting. The Center also planned to organize a workshop on post clearance inspection, but this activity could not be carried out due to lack of resources and availability of trainers. However, a similar workshop was organized in Cameroon. RTC provided logistics for the workshops on HS2017 amendments, rules of origin and the organization of in-depth training for the INAMA Project.

59. Concerning the activities of BRLRs, the report indicates that they are limited to participation in several workshops at regional and international level. Thus BRLRs participated in the following operations: WESTERLIES V., Methamphetamine Control and African Wings 3. (Private Aviation Control);

60. The two offices also successfully organized the second edition of the CRIPHARM operation (Combating Pharmaceutical Crime), which registered 84 seizures of prohibited goods, including more than 10 tons of medicines. Other operations recorded the participation of the two BRLRs. The Vice-Chair also informed DGDs that the two offices are planning to organize operations such as BONOBO, SENGHOR.BAKWANGA;

61. With regard to the feeding of CEN, the Vice-Chair indicated that BRLR WA representative pointed to a relative increase in the entry of data at regional level,

62. Training on intelligence and risk analysis has been provided in

some jurisdictions in the region by BRLRs;

63. As for the activities of ROCB, the Vice-Chair indicated that they were related to participation in the following meetings: 21st Conference of Director Generals (Abidjan), WCA meeting (Bamako), Meeting with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Meeting with the Customs Administration of South Korea (12 and 13 December 2016, Abidjan).

64. He also recalled the meeting of the ROCB with ECOWAS, which focused on deepening ECOWAS/ROCB-WCA/WCO Secretariat relations; to establish a basis for collaboration between the two (2) structures for the benefit of ECOWAS Customs Administrations and to jointly organize a seminar on customs valuation and development of a subregional value file thanks to a GIZ support.

65. With respect to assistance, the Office of the Vice-Chair informed that ROCB monitored the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Customs of Guinea Bissau and those of Senegal

66. ROCB also had a meeting with the Korean Customs. The purpose of this meeting is to develop a framework for mutualisation in the organization and running of seminars organized by one of the parties and the exchange of experiences, best practices and experts among ROCB-WCA and KCS.

67. In the same line, Korean Customs is committed to supporting ROCB-WCA in implementing its capacity building strategy for member Administrations in the Region by facilitating access to the Korea Customs Cooperation Fund (KCF) Based at WCO.

68. ROCB took part in the 17th meeting of the committee of experts held in Conakry, Guinea.

69. ROCB-WCA conducted six (6) missions to assist Administrations in the Region with the objectives of: sharing a performance management model with strategic planning in the host country; to analyze national trends in recent years and to identify needs of the Customs Administration of the host country in the area of capacity building.

70. ROCB evaluated the 2016 Roadmap.

71. ROCB participated in the meeting of WCO capacity building Committee in 2017.

72. It has also developed several tools such as the regional website, the decision support tool called "mirror", the needs identification matrix and finally the establishment of a national development coordinator; for each of the customs administrations in the region.

73. Concerning the summary of activities of IT RWG, the presenter indicated that since the last meeting of DGDs which adopted the organizational structure of RWG in April 2016 in Abidjan, the group continued its work by setting up the three committees, namely: (1) the information technology governance committee, (2) the IT solutions development committee within customs administrations, and (3) the customs administration collaboration committee.

74. The members of various committees were appointed as well as the coordinators of each of them. Thus, for Committee 1, the members are: Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sao Tome and Senegal which is the coordinator; for Committee 2, members are: Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone and Cameroon ensuring coordination and finally the Committee 3 members: Benin, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Mauritania, Tchad, Togo, which is the coordinator of the group. However, the presenter indicated that some countries had not yet appointed their experts. These include Cape Verde, Gabon, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone and Chad.

75. The first meeting of the committees took place on 6 and 7 April 2017 in Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire with the participation of representatives of the 14 Customs administrations, ROCB, WCO Secretariat and the Office of the Vice-Chair.

IV.2.4 Evaluation of the implementation of Recommendations of the 21st Conference of DGD

76. The Office of the Vice-Chair began presenting the implementation of the recommendations through the use of the methodology used, which is based on the WCO theme of data

analysis. In this way, the data collection and analysis enabled the office of the vice-chair to draw up a table presenting the results of each administration.

77. Also, the analysis of the results made it possible to categorize the implementation of the recommendations into three categories: non executed, partially executed or fully executed. It should be noted that 32 recommendations were made at the 21st DGD conference. They are subdivided into 11 recommendations in the field of intelligence; 08 recommendations on ICTs and 13 recommendations on capacity building.

78. For the results recorded, it is generally noted that 18 administrations responded to the self-evaluation exercise of the recommendations and 5 administrations did not respond.

79. The result shows that for the intelligence 22% of the recommendations were not implemented, 44% were partially implemented and 34% completely implemented. For ICT, it is noted that 9% of the recommendations have not started being implemented, 32% are partially implemented and 59% of the recommendations are fully implemented. The last area on capacity building was as follows: 13% of the recommendations were not implemented; 43% of recommendations are being implemented and 44% of recommendations are fully implemented.

80. The Office of the Vice-Chair encouraged the sharing of experiences for the implementation of the recommendations. It also invited Customs administrations to initiate national projects to be submitted to donors at the WCA regional donors' conference and to seize the opportunities offered by TFA (category C measures technical assistance)

81. The Office of the Vice-Chair also advocated the withdrawal of fully implemented recommendations to more than 60 per cent to avoid over-reporting and to keep Recommendations executed at less than 60 per cent to ensure their implementation.

82. This proposal was the subject of discussion among the participants. The Conference finally decided to separate the former recommendations from the ones by drafting them in an annex.

IV.3. Evolution of the Regional Strategy and Regional Strategic Plan

83. The Director of the Regional Capacity Building Office, Mr Souleymane SANGARE, made a presentation focused on two points: the assessment of the 2013-2017 cycle and the perspectives of the 3rd 2018-2020 planning cycle.

84. With regard to the outcome of the 2013-2017 planning cycle, the Director of ROCB reviewed the context of Customs capacity building in a rapidly changing world. He said that Customs Administrations, because of their central position, had to face concerns related to globalization, security of the logistics chain and the competitiveness of companies.

85. To meet these challenges, the Region adopted a strategic plan 2013-2017 based on the following five areas: Leadership, Strategic Management, Customs Procedures, Partnership, Human Resources.

86. For all these areas, ROCB has developed a global trend on the progress made by the region based on the self-evaluation exercise presented in the methodology. It also highlighted progress per country, although in general some challenges remain, notably in terms of ethics and good governance, developing the capacities of the staff responsible for modernization within management of human resources in relation to staff mobility, coordinated border management, partnership with other administrations and the fight against transnational organized crime.

87. For the prospects of the 2018-2022 planning cycle, the current strategic plan is coming to an end. The Region will enter a third planning cycle 2018-2022.

88. The Director of ROCB outlined the orientations of the future plan which will repeat the five areas. However, the following changes may be made:

- Improve the goals and add new orientations for each area;
- Improve the reliability of self-assessment exercises;
- Align national strategies with the regional strategy;

- Adapt reform strategies and orientations to the realities of administrations;

89. Strengthen collaboration between administrations through the regional coaching program.

IV.4. Presentation and adoption of the Financial Report and Budget for 2016/2017

- WCA Finance and Audit Committee

90. The Committee first presented the state of the contributions of each country and the report on the implementation of the regional budget 2016-2017 and secondly the draft budget for 2017-2018.

IV.4.1. Consideration of the WCA Report of the Finance and Audit Committee:

91. The report of the Finance and Audit Committee was examined in two stages: presentation of annual contributions and implementation of the regional budget.

92. The Commission presented the 2016/2017 regional budget and the financial statements for 2015/2016 at the Conference of Director Generals in April 2016.

IV.4.2. Report on annual contributions, disbursements and status of the bank account of the Region

93. The Finance and Audit Committee presented a table summarizing the contributions of each member administration to the Regional Fund. It appears from this presentation that only the contributions of six member administrations (Ghana, Nigeria, Côte

d'Ivoire, Guinea, Gabon and the Central African Republic) were effectively transferred to the regional account on 25 April 2017.

94. For some administrations (Republic of Congo, Niger, Benin, Mali, Mauritania and the Gambia), proof of payment has been made, but the sums have not yet been transferred to the regional fund account.

95. This situation results from the incorrect filling of the payment form.

96. Finally, the Committee commended the administrations which paid their dues and encouraged the other countries to pay them as speedily as possible.

IV.4.3. Report of the Finance and Audit Committee

97. The Committee presented the Financial Statements for the period from April 1st, 2016 to March 31st 2017.

98. The expenditure is established on the approved the budget of € 439,600 for the year under study.

99. Expenditure charged to this budget reached € 208,439 (47.4%), leaving a surplus of € 231,161 (52.6%).

100. The total entries for the period from April 1st, 2016 to March 31st 2017 amounting to € 110,460 versus total expenditure of € 208,439 leaving a deficit of € 97,979.

101. The total accumulated fund amounting to € 487,599 which represents the current balance in banking.

102. The reality is that the contributions of member administrations have not been able to finance the operations of the region. So an additional fund of € 97,979 of the first bank balance was used to support the operations of the year under study.

IV.4.4. 2017-2018 Regional Budget Plan

103. The draft budget for 2017-2018 for the region was presented to

the Committee of Experts and amounts to € 555,970.

104. This budget was the subject of discussions at the level of the Committee of Experts, which considered that, in view of the importance of capacity building activities, the budget would be increased by € 75,000 or € 25,000 per RTC. This readjustment will bring the regional budget to € 586,970.

105. The consolidated budget for the financial year 2017-2018, reviewed by the Finance and Audit Committee, amounts to € 555,970. This amount is intended to finance the most relevant activities in the Region.

106. This budget does not include the operating costs of the administrative services of the various structures which are taken care of by the host administrations.

107. In order to ensure a proper implementation of the regional budget, the Finance and Audit Committee made the following recommendations: (i) Member countries' contributions should be made during the financial year (April 1st to March 31st) each year; (ii) the Office of the Vice-Chair shall begin sending reminders to Member Administrations 3 months prior to 31 March requesting them to receive copies of the SWIFT for easy traceability of payments; and (iii) the Office of the Vice-Chair shall work with administrations that have arrears in order to understand the reasons for the arrears and proceed with their recovery.

108. The 2017-2018 Budget of an amount of € 555,970 was adopted by acclamation.

IV.5. Presentation of the recommendations of the 18th meeting of WCA Committee of Experts

109. The team of rapporteurs presented the recommendations of the 18th meeting of the Committee of Experts held on 25 and 26 April 2016 at the King Fahd Palace Hotel in Dakar.

110. The Directors General expressed their satisfaction following the presentation of the various reports of the regional structures and of the IT working group.

111. The Conference took note of the recommendations for consideration and subsequent adoption.

IV.6. Evolution and Challenges in Inspection Companies:

112. The WCO Coordinator first presented the situation and the general evolution of inspection companies in the region and DRC and Ghana presented their experiences of exit programs with such companies.

- Presentation of the situation and developments of inspection companies in the WCA region

113. The regional WCO coordinator said that the management of the issue of inspection companies began in 2013 by the declaration of Niamey which encourages customs administrations of the region to take ownership of outsourced functions.

114. Subsequently, WCO set up the « Revenue File », which is an instrument that can help customs administrations to exit programs with inspection companies.

115. In a few years, several customs administrations managed to end contracts with inspection companies: Mauritania and Nigeria in 2013, Ghana in 2015, DRC in 2016 and Guinea-Bissau on 31 May 2016. Some countries such as Burkina Faso, Togo, Ghana and Sierra Leone have sent requests for assistance to WCO.

116. He also indicated that technical missions had been carried out in some countries. These assistance missions can be carried out either at the political level to sensitize the leaders on the necessity for customs administrations to reappropriate the outsourced missions, either at the strategic level to assist in the planning or at the technical level by setting up trainings through WCO experts in evaluation, rules of origin or tariff classification.

117. The Coordinator pointed out that inspection Companies now offer other services to governments on other topics such as satellite cargo tracking, scanners, single windows, risk management, etc.

He therefore calls on our customs administrations to build their capacities to avoid the use of such companies.

118. He concluded his remarks by noting that although all contracts with inspection companies have provided for the transfer of technology, no administration has benefited from it.

- Presentation of the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

119. The Customs Director General of DRC, after congratulating and thanking the Senegalese customs for the quality of the organization of the conference, shared with the assistance the experience of DRC in taking ownership of missions of inspection Companies by his administration.

120. The flagship reform of the Congolese Customs consisted in setting up a targeting structure known as the Orange System and composed of well trained managers exclusively responsible for the valuation of goods through the setting up of a risk management mechanism based on Evaluation.

121. In this respect, the Orange System issues opinions on declarations based on the information and documents provided, thus enabling field auditors to review their method of calculation, especially on goods that have a significant impact on revenue collection.

122. To date, five out of 12 Sales Departments are connected to this system, pending its generalization to all provinces of DRC.

123. The Orange System has therefore allowed for a significant increase in the level of revenue collection and a gradual decrease in the undervaluations, especially for the year 2016, marking the systematization of the reform initiated.

124. There are also additional reforms. These include signing the mutual administrative Assistance Agreements with a certain number of countries such as Uganda, Angola, Tanzania, Zambia, etc., with the dispatch of permanent representatives to certain capital cities. This

allows for a permanent exchange of data between the signatory countries.

125. The implementation of an electronic tracking system for goods is also of considerable value as it allows the operational services to follow the evolution and trajectory of goods in transit.

126. Finally, DRC looks at the interconnection of all its financial agencies.

127. Challenges to carry out these reforms in a timely and efficient manner are many. These include better control of energy, a permanent and widespread connection of services, and capacity building for Customs officers, particularly in terms of assessment, classification and control of telecommunication and electronic commerce tools; therefore, requiring substantial funding.

- Presentation of the situation in Ghana

128. Customs valuation is based on the coding system based on WTO agreements on commodity valuation.

129. Ghana had initiated from inception the pre-inspection program by CÔTE CNA and SGS, followed by the destination inspection by BIVAC and ICS.

130. The increase in freight traffic to GHANA prompted the government to recruit additional companies from two to five until 2012 with the mandate of:

- Assessing goods entering GHANA;
- Giving a classification to its goods

131. The fact is that its various inspection companies were never held responsible for the mistakes of evaluation and classification, and each inspection company had its own database.

132. At the end of its contracts, which had come to an end and in support of the Niamey declaration of 2013, the government asked customs to resume its evaluation and classification functions.

133. In order to do so, GHANA customs administration asked the World Customs Organization to support them in training in the area of valuation.

134. The government then started the revision of the regulatory framework in order to give this mandate to the customs administration, which set up a committee to start the assessment of goods entering GHANA

135. This committee has put in place an action plan to take charge of this function of evaluating goods with a communication plan (with the media) in order to communicate with the users.

136. For better management, the government recruited a company to support this committee.

137. The work of this committee is carried out solely by internet without paper support; The users submit their request for evaluation via the internet on the platform

138. The copy of the evaluation report is sent electronically to the customs office by the user.

139. IV.7. Developments and challenges in the interconnection of transit systems.

140. Colonel NIAMBE Yvonne of the Customs of Côte d'Ivoire gave a presentation on the interconnection project of the Customs administrations of Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Togo.

141. She focused on the project context, objectives, expected results, management structure, activities, and financial evaluation

142. With regard to the context of the project, she said that the development of international trade and the need for trade facilitation required customs administrations to modernize procedures, in particular the field of interconnection of computer systems.

143. To address this concern, various experiences have been developed in the Region. Indeed, ECOWAS had already adopted the TRIE Convention, which had shortcomings in implementation, as did the ALIX software developed by Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

144. As part of the implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreements, the European Union and Côte d'Ivoire have initiated the Customs Administrations interconnection project between Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Burkina Faso. The project has been extended to Senegal and Togo.

145. Elaborating about the objectives of the project, she stressed that it is about:

- Facilitating and securing international trade through the implementation of best commercial practices in accordance with WCO Standards framework;
- improving effectiveness and efficiency of transit procedures;
- improving the prevention and detection of fraud
- Simplifying and secure transit operations
- allowing electronic exchange of transit data;
- Establishing a regional transit database;
- Obtaining electronic cargo information in advance to confirm government revenue;
- Reducing the falsification of documents

146. The expected results are as follows:

As for the expected results, they are declined as follows:

- Fraud and smuggling are reduced in the region therefore customs revenues are secured;
- Goods movements are monitored; statistics are reliable for better targeting of risk management profiles;
- Unique data capture will contribute to speedy customs clearance operations and reduced costs at border crossings;

- The business environment in the region is improved.

147. The project management structure is based on three bodies: a steering committee; a technical committee and a project committee.

148. The presentation of the activities focused on the different stages of the project: the study phase, the implementation phase, bilateral projects and actions to be carried out.

149. The financial evaluation of the project was carried out in relation with the different member countries. Its financial cost is estimated at US \$ 13,144,933. The implementation of the project is subject to the acquisition of funding.

150. The representative of ECOWAS Commission, speaking in turn, said that ECOWAS would build on the PACIR project and would establish a partnership with UNCTAD to develop the various modules. He said that the sum of 774,050 US dollar is released for training Customs IT specialists from the PACIR member countries for the development of the module.

151. He underlined that a partnership is under way with GIZ to support ECOWAS in order to continue the interconnection project. The same applies to the 3rd EDF, a large part of which will be allocated to the interconnection project.

IV.8. Safety/Security: SPC ++ Project - Nigeria

152. Nigeria, the lead country, first of all elaborated on the genesis of SPC ++ and then developed all the evolutions of the SPC ++ Project which was endorsed by the conference of DGs held in Abidjan in April 2016 as a regional initiative to combat insecurity in the region.

153. The presenter noted that the first approach consisted in the preparation by Nigeria of the project concept note sent to the participating project administrations (Benin, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, CAR and Chad) for their comments and invite them to nominate their experts to the Technical Committee.

154. As a second stage, the project was promoted to workshops and seminars such as the joint BRLR National Correspondents' annual meeting, the PICARD Conference held in Manila and Universities such as Victoria in Canada.

155. Other organizations such as WCO Secretariat, the Global Initiative against Organized Crime, the MENA region and Tunisia have expressed interest in this project and provided support at the first meeting of the Technical Committee.

156. At this first meeting of the Technical Committee, border areas common to the countries participating in the project were identified for study with the support of WCO Research Unit on the vulnerability of customs presence and the role of customs in areas of conflict or potentially "conflict prone". This study will ultimately measure the costs and effects of border fragility on trade.

157. The Abuja meeting also adopted the principle of establishing a legal framework based on the model of WCO protocol on mutual administrative assistance, the development of an advocacy document for DGDs and the definition of a timetable for the implementation of the Project.

158. He noted that the meeting in Abuja highlighted the need for a common framework on the role of customs in security, the establishment of a formal link between security and development and the need for intelligence sharing; These are the lessons learned from the first meeting of the SPC ++ Technical Committee.

159. Taking over, the Controller General of the Customs of Nigeria announced the presentation of the SPC ++ Project during the next donors' conference. In addition, he required the commitment of all administrations to make the SPC ++ project a global reference.

160. The customs administration of Mali reiterated its commitment to be part of the six countries that are leading the project.

IV.9. WCA donors' conference:

- Second Conference 2017: Outcomes and Conclusions**

161. The Vice-Chair indicated that the second donors' conference

will take place from 29 May to 02 June 2017 in Lomé, Togo. This meeting will be preceded by the TFA workshop.

162. The Office of the Vice-Chair indicated that on that date, only seven customs administrations have registered.

163. He also recalled that eleven regional projects and six national projects have been identified. Only Senegal sent its project.

164. As a result, administrations that have announced national projects have been invited to send their project to the Office of the Vice-Chair within one week of the end of this conference.

IV.10. Closed door Session for Heads of Delegation:

165. The closed door meeting of the Director Generals and Heads of Delegations from the Member Countries of the Region, at the end of its proceedings decided:

166. **(I) Regarding Governance at WCO:** Discussions focused on Australia's proposal on the terms in office of the Secretary General and the deputy Secretary General. The document developed by Australian Customs proposes to renew the term once and is expected to apply after the next elections of the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

167. As a reminder, at the Council's session in July 2016, the issue of limiting the renewal of terms was raised and resulted in a vote which maintained the status quo, in the absence of a qualified majority for a change (absence of limitation of terms). It was also recalled that following this, the General Policy Committee held in Moscow in December 2016 addressed the issue without reaching a decision.

168. The Director Generals, after analyzing the Australian proposal, recalled the Region's common position on the status quo, which was adopted at the closed session of their 21st Conference. They have thus indicated the need to remain constant in relation to this position already expressed, all the more in their view, it is too early to reopen this debate and not timely to question a decision democratically adopted by the Council only during its last session.

169. The Director Generals and heads of delegation thus reaffirmed their position in favor of maintaining the status quo (absence of

limitation of term).

170. In addition, they invited to call on a possible application from the Region in 2018, for the position of deputy Secretary General, which has become vacant.

171. ***(ii) On the renewal of membership in the Region in the entities of WCO: The Director Generals have nominated for:***

172. Finance Committee: The Gambia;

173. Audit Committee: Gabon and Togo;

174. General Policy Committee: Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

175. ***(iii) On the venues and dates of the next meetings: The Director Generals requested the Office of the Vice-Chair to consult with all members for possible applications. Consequently, the venues and dates of the next meetings will be finalized at the regional meeting which will take place in the sidelines of the next Council meeting scheduled for July in Brussels.***

176. ***(iv) On the meeting of the Sub-committee of the African Union Customs Director Generals, scheduled for next May in Abuja:*** The Director Generals, after acknowledging the need to discuss issues related to the Continental Free Trade Area and the 0.2 per cent levy of the African Union, urged members to participate massively.

177. The Director Generals also recalled that the effectiveness of the AU levy remains subject to the determination of practical modalities for its implementation. They therefore strongly emphasized the need to hold the sessions of the Technical Committee set up for this purpose at the 8th meeting of the Subcommittee of African Union Customs Director General of the.

178. ***(v) On the various issues:*** The Director Generals have:

179. Invited the Finance Committee to consider the possibility of issuing supporting documents to members when paying contributions;

180. Noted the appropriateness of inviting members of the Private

Sector as observers during future meetings to strengthen the partnership between Customs Administrations and the latter;

181. Indicated the need for better coordination between the experts' meeting and the conference itself.

IV.11. Presentation of the Regional Guide

182. The Conference considered that the presentation of this item was not relevant.

IV.12. The Status of WCO Regional Structures

183. The Office of the Vice Chair indicated that it was during the 75th session of the Council that the Office of WCA Region Vice Chair was asked to carry out a reflection on the status of regional structures (ROCB, RTC and BRLR).

184. The Vice-Chair adopted a methodology which consisted in compiling all WCO documents dealing with regional structure issues and conducting a consultation with those responsible for these structures. The analysis shows that regional structures have been established based on the the agreements signed between WCO and the host countries. As a result, the staff working in these structures only have a technical attaché status, which deprives them of the privileges granted to staff working in international organizations.

185. Thus, the region has come up with three assupmtions that can be assigned as status to regional structures: (i) to consider regional structures as breakups of WCO and hence WCO signs a headquarters agreement with host countries; (ii) consider regional structures as autonomous entities, in which case they should have their own legal capacity; (iii) finally, as a final assumption, regional structures should be considered as mixed WCO/Region entities and in such case the responsibilities of each structure must be clarified and their legal framework defined.

186. Speaking on the subject, the representative of the Secretariat said that WCO was currently reviewing the three proposals and the outcome would be presented to the General Policy Committee in July.

IV.13. Consideration and adoption of recommendations and report of the 22nd Conference of DGs

187. The report of the 22nd Conference was not considered by the Conference of DGs. It will be sent by the Office of the Vice-Chair to Customs Administrations for comments.

188. The recommendations were adopted after amendments by the Conference of DGs and are attached to this report

IV.14. Visit of the Minister of Finance and Planning

189. Not having been able to attend the opening ceremony, the Minister of Finance and Planning addressed the Conference of DGs on the second day of session.

190. In his address, he wished, on his own behalf and on behalf of His Excellency Mr. MACKY Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal and of the Prime Minister, the warm welcome to all participants and expressed his satisfaction for the choice of Dakar to Host for the second time the Conference of DGs of the World Customs Organization Region for West and Central Africa, just after the Forum on Information Technology.

191. He encouraged all administrations to intensify the use of information technology for better risk management, but also for speedy customs operations.

192. He stressed the important role that customs administrations play despite all the challenges they face. He urged them to fully invest in the proposed Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA)

193. He concluded his remarks by reiterating the commitment of the highest authorities to support the implementation of the recommendations that will emerge from the deliberations.

IV.15. Presentation of Awards by ROCB

194. On the sidelines of the 22nd Conference, ROCB presented the Kunio MIKURYA Prize FOR REGIONAL COACHING to the Customs Administration of Senegal for the assistance provided to Guinea Bissau Customs.

195. The second prize was awarded to the Information Technology Department of Côte d'Ivoire for helping the region set up its website and all the applications developed there.

VI.CLOSING CEREMONY

196. Mr. PAPA OUSMANE GUEYE, Director General of Customs of Senegal, concluded by commending the quality of the discussions which led to relevant recommendations. Accordingly, he stressed the importance of their immediate implementation, given the vitality and relevance of the issues of customs modernization.

Done in Dakar, this 28th Day of April 2017

The Conference of DGD/WCA



Recommendations of the 22nd Conference of Customs Director General of WCO- WCA Region

The twenty second Conference of Customs Director Generals of WCO West and Central Africa Region was held at the King Fahd Palace Hotel, Dakar, Senegal, from 26 to 28 April 2017.

This important meeting, included in the agenda of activities of WCO-WCA Region, was attended by twenty-one (21) Member State administrations out of a total of twenty-three (23), WCO Office of the Vice-Chair, and Secretariat, the Regional Capacity Building Office, the Ouagadougou, Brazzaville and Abuja Regional Training Centers, the Regional Liaison Offices, responsible for Intelligence in West and Central Africa, the African Union Commission, ECOWAS and CEMAC Commissions.

At the end of the deliberations, the Director Generals made the following recommendations:

I. With respect to information and communication technology

To Customs Administrations:

- draw up a risk map of departments or IT divisions;
- acquire decision-making tools with a view to a better steering of activities;
- strengthen Electronic Document Management (EDM) process with the aim of fully dematerializing procedures and services;
- have counselling and assistance services dedicated to users;
- make a firm commitment to the interconnection of systems;
- invite customs Administrations to make the necessary arrangements for the computerization of Customs intelligence management.

To ECOWAS and CEMAC:

- establish a legal and regulatory framework for the management of international transit.

To IT RWG:

- propose a strategy for a better ownership of Sydonia by the administrations that use it.

II. With respect to intelligence-related actions

To the Office of the Vice-Chair:

- work towards the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding for the exchange of information and intelligence between Customs administrations of the countries of the Region;

To Customs administrations:

- continue efforts to acquire and set up national databases on customs fraud;
- take ownership of WCO intelligence tools and instruments, including the BRLR network, CEN and nCEN.

III. With respect to measures to be taken to address the major challenges of the region:

To the Office of the Vice-Chair:

- draft and make a regional guide on WCO-WCA Region priority areas and invite Member Customs administrations to contribute more to its improvement;
- develop cooperation between the WCO-WCA region and other regions on best practice;
- organize as soon as possible a regional workshop with all stakeholders to carry out a thorough reflection on the issue of the transit guarantee;
- conduct a study on juxtaposed checkpoints (JCPs) in the context of trade facilitation.

To Customs administrations:

- contribute to the ratification of the Bali Agreement to be notified to the WTO;
- enrich the document proposed by the RWG on the major challenges of the WCO-WCA region and forward it to the lead country before the next meeting of the Committee of Experts.

IV. With respect to capacity building

To ROCB:

- Carry out a survey of all the accredited experts in the region in order to design a directory of trainers available to the regional training centers.

To Customs Administrations:

- disseminate WCO tools and instruments by enrolling them in the training modules of their staff;
- create conditions for the feedback of knowledge acquired during regional trainings or workshops.

V. With respect to the Regional Fund

To Customs administrations:

- pay their financial contribution by 31 March of each year latest;

To the Office of the Vice-Chair:

- send reminder letters of contributions to member administrations 3 months before the deadline of 31 March of each year.

VI. With respect to the assessment of implementation of recommendations

To the Office of the Vice-Chair:

- send the implementation follow-up matrix to the customs Administrations two months before the meeting of the Committee of Experts.

To Customs administrations:

- carry out the monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations and forward the matrix to the Vice-Chairperson one month before the meeting of the Committee of Experts.

Decisions

The Conference of Customs Director Generals decided:

1- With respect to the finance and regional audit:

- giving discharge for the financial management of the financial year 2016-2017 and to adopt the budget for the financial year 2017-2018.

2- With respect to intelligence-related actions

- the establishment of a Regional Technical Committee on computerization of Litigation, risk analysis and selectivity;

3- With respect to the presentation of recommendations

- separate the new recommendations from the old
Which should be attached to the Report of the meeting

**Done in Dakar, this 28th Day of April
2017**

**The Conference of Customs Director
Generals**

ANNEXES

ANNEX I

OLD RECOMMENDATIONS

I- With respect to intelligence-related actions

To WCO Secretariat:

- perpetuate Operation CRIPHARM;

To Customs administrations:

- integrate into their national regulations customs management of humanitarian aid in situations of crisis, disaster or cross-border insecurity in the WCA Region
- capitalize on the experiences of Chad, Mali and Nigeria in the fight against cross-border crime;
- develop cooperation or collaboration policies through an exchange of information to combat cross-border insecurity;
- allocate substantial funding to tackle cross-border insecurity;
- encourage collaboration with the military and other governmental security forces in order to combat cross-border insecurity;
- Strengthen border controls through increased use of intelligence, risk management and advanced technologies to contribute more effectively to the fight against insecurity and terrorism;
- allocate to the intelligence service a substantial fund for its operation;
- provide working equipment to the National Correspondent in accordance with the recommendation of the 15th DGD Conference;
- develop and sign a framework instruction on intelligence in accordance with the template adopted by the 15th DGD Conference
- set up targeting units at airports and ports.

II- With respect to information and communication technology

To ECOWAS Commission:

- expedite the work on the regional interconnection project on transit.

To Customs administrations:

- give a strategic position to the services in charge of information systems and be more involved in IT governance;
- put in place mechanisms to ensure the continuity of the service (Data Center, Emergency Sites, Disaster Recovery Plans, etc.);
- adopt the standard developed within the framework of PACIR for the implementation of projects for the interconnection of information systems in transit;
- provide the structures in charge of the management of Information Systems (IS) with flexible mechanisms for financing and acquisition of equipment in order to enable them to provide services on time;
- take all necessary steps to ensure the effective participation of their IT departments in regional and international ICT activities;
- Ensuring compliance of computer systems with regional and international norms and standards;
- promote better integration of IT specialists in customs administrations.

III. With respect to capacity building

To the Office of the Vice-Chair:

- continue the publication of the Monthly Information Bulletin and, if necessary, examine the possibility of reviewing its periodicity and the means of its funding in order to ensure its sustainability.

To WCO Secretariat:

- assist in the implementation of the E-learning platform in administrations with a human resources management strategy and a training strategy;
- extend the training component of the WACAM Project to the entire region.

To ROCB:

- develop to the attention of member administrations instruments for assessing the relevance and impact of WCO Secretariat's capacity building initiatives in the Region;
- take the necessary steps to make the regional website available in English;
- make a list of all accredited experts from the region in order to provide a directory of trainers for regional training centers.

To Customs administrations and to ROCB:

- take ownership of the summary document on the challenges of the region by integrating it into national strategic plans and the current regional strategic plan.

To Customs administrations and regional structures:

- take ownership of the summary document on the priority areas of WCO-WCA region in the face of new challenges.

To Customs administrations:

- encouraging specialization in Human Resource Management and allowing non-customs officers to occupy the positions of Human Resources Managers with a view to better management of careers and skills;
- participate more fully in the work of the WCO, including: the CKR Management Committee, the Data Model, the TFA Working Group, Technology and Non-Intrusive Control, the IT Sub-committee and the Air Cargo Security Working Group;
- involve training managers and human resources in the self-assessment exercise of the strategic plan;
- take ownership of the various programs for modernizing training in human resources management initiated in the region by WCO or ROCB-WCA;
- request from WCO Secretariat more sessions on the LMD program; disseminate WCO tools and instruments by including them in the training modules of their staff;
- create the conditions for the feedback of the knowledge acquired during the regional trainings or workshops

To RTCs:

- set up training programs in human resources management initiated by themselves based on the current resources made available to them by the regional fund pending a possible increase in their budget allocation.

ANNEX II

Closed door Session of Directors-General and Heads of Delegations

The closed door session of the Director Generals and Heads of Delegations of member countries in the Region was held on Thursday, 27 April 2017 and decided the following:

1. On WCO governance:

As a reminder, at the Council's session in July 2016, the issue of limiting the renewal of their terms was raised and resulted in a vote which maintained the status quo, in the absence of a qualified majority for a change (no limitation of terms). It was also recalled that following this, the General Policy Committee held in December 2016 in Moscow addressed the issue, without however reaching a decision.

The Director Generals, after analyzing the Australian proposal, recalled the Region's common position on the status quo, which was adopted at the closed door meeting of their 21st Conference. They pointed to the need to remain consistent with this already expressed position, all the more in their view, it is too early to reopen this debate and not timely to question a decision democratically adopted by the Council only at its last session.

The Director Generals and heads of delegation thus reaffirmed their position in favor of maintaining the status quo (absence of limitation of term).

In addition, they called for a possible application from the Region in 2018 for the position of Deputy Secretary-General, which has become vacant.

2. On the renewal of membership of the Region in WCO entities:

The Director Generals have nominated for:

- Finance Committee: The Gambia;
- Audit Committee: Gabon and Togo;
- Commission for General Policy: Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

3. On the venues and dates of next meetings:

The Director Generals requested the Office of the Vice-Chair to hold consultations with all members for possible applications. Consequently, the venues and dates of next meetings will be finalized at the regional meeting which will take place in the sidelines of next Council meeting scheduled for July in Brussels.

4. On the meeting of the Sub-committee of the African Union Customs Director Generals, scheduled for next May in Abuja:

After acknowledging the need to discuss issues related to the Continental Free Trade Area and the 0.2 per cent levy of the African Union, the Director Generals, invited the members to participate massively.

The Director Generals also recalled that the implementation of the AU levy remains subject to the determination of the practical modalities for its implementation. They therefore strongly emphasized the need to hold the sessions of the Technical Committee set up for this purpose at the 8th meeting of the Sub-committee of the African Union Customs Director Generals.

5. On various issues:

The Director Generals have:

- invited the Finance Committee to examine the possibility of issuing supporting documents to members when paying contributions;
- noted the relevance of inviting members of the private Sector as observers at future meetings to strengthen the partnership between the Customs Administrations and the latter;

- indicated the need for better coordination between the experts' meeting and the conference itself.