**REPORT
FROM THE 21ST CONFERENCE OF CUSTOMS
DIRECTOR GENERALS OF THE WORLD
CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION OF WEST AND
CENTRAL AFRICA REGION**

Hôtel Rodisson Blu- **Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire**

27 to 29 April 2016

BACKGROUND:

1. The 21st Conference of Customs Director Generals of the World Customs Organization of the West and Central Africa Region (WCO-WCA) was held at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, From 27 to 29 April 2016.

2. The main purpose of this important meeting, which was included in the agenda of activities of the WCO-WCA Region, was to evaluate the implementation of the recommendations of the 20th Customs DGs meeting held at the Transcorp Hotel Hilton in Abuja from 29 April to 1 May 2015 and to examine 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 issues.

3. The meeting was attended by twenty-one (21) Member State administrations out of a total of twenty-three (23), WCO Secretariat, the Regional Office of Capacity Building (ROCB), Regional Training Centers (RTCs) in Ouagadougou, Brazzaville and Abuja, Regional Liaison Offices in charge of West African and Central Africa Intelligence (BRLR-WA and BRLR-CA), and Particularly international organizations, African Union, ECOWAS and UNCTAD.

4. The list of participants is attached.

I. OPENING CEREMONY

5. The opening ceremony, chaired by Mr. **ABDOURAHMANE CISSE**, Minister with the Prime Minister in charge of Budget and State Portfolio, was punctuated by four (4) speeches.

6. Controller General **Issa COULIBALY**, Director General of Customs of Côte d'Ivoire, first welcomed the various delegations and thanked the member countries of the Region for having massively responded to the meeting.

7. He also paid tribute to the Secretary-General of the WCO for his readiness and commitment to the reforms undertaken by the administrations of our region.

8. He subsequently expressed his gratitude to His Excellency Mr. **Alassane OUATTARA**, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and to the Minister with the Prime Minister in charge of Budget and State Portfolio for their commitment with the Ivorian Customs which they continue to support. He also expressed his admiration for their determination to make good governance the creed of Public Finance management in Côte d'Ivoire.

9. He expressed his sincere appreciation to the WCO Secretary General, Mr. **KUNIO MIKURYA**, for his continued support for the activities of the WCO-WCA Region, without forgetting to pay a heartfelt tribute to the Vice-Chair of the Region for his leadership in the conduct of the activities on the one hand, and to voice his gratitude to all the delegations that made the trip from Abidjan.

10. Continuing his remarks, he recalled that it was at the 20th Conference of DGs of the WCA Region, held in Abuja, Nigeria, from 29 April to 1 May 2015, that his country was designated to host this 21st Conference of DG-WCA.

11. He also welcomed the relevancy of the topic of the 21st Conference of DGs in an environment of free international trade and intensification of cross-border criminality.

12. Finally, while acknowledging the contribution of ICTs to be up to the challenges faced by Customs administrations, the Controller General wished fruitful discussions to the delegations.

13. Mr. **EDWIN FONGOD NUVAGA**, Director General of Customs of Cameroon, Vice-Chair of the World Customs Organization of Western and Central Africa Region, in turn wished a warm welcome to this 21st Conference of Director Generals Of Customs of our Region.

He subsequently expressed his gratitude to the Director General of Ivorian Customs and his collaborators, as well as to the highest government authorities of Cote d'Ivoire who have accepted to host this important meeting for which They have devoted all necessary support to organize it.

14. Finally, he noted that the work under the banner of « Digital Customs for a progressive commitment » calls on the Region to define a vision on short and medium term strategies to meet the emerging challenges. It is therefore necessary for the Region to adopt a forward-looking and inclusive approach that can meet these challenges.

15. In his speech, **Dr. KUNIO MIKURIYA**, Secretary-General of the World Customs Organization, expressed his gratitude to the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and the General Office of Customs of Côte d'Ivoire for the friendly atmosphere created through the successful holding of transparent elections in the country. To this end, he expressed his admiration for the example of democracy that Côte d'Ivoire shows to the face of the world.

16. The Secretary General subsequently noted that the Meeting is invited to consider ways to strengthen the role of Customs in trade facilitation, protection of society against the movement of dangerous goods and improved revenue collection as indicated by the Director General of Customs in his remarks. He said that some of these management strategies were supported by the WCO.

17. After addressing the emerging challenges in the WCO-WCA Region, he advocated the appropriation 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 by wishing the Director Generals fruitful exchanges and renewed his warm gratitude to the various delegations for their mobilization which shows the vitality of this framework of cooperation necessary for the modernization of the customs administrations of our Region.

19. Finally, Mr. **ABDOURAHMANE CISSE**, Minister with the Prime Minister in charge of Budget and State Portfolio host of the ceremony, expressed his warm gratitude to the assistance for the choice of Côte d'Ivoire to host the sessions of the 21st Conference of DGs. Faced with the many challenges of customs administrations in the Region, including fluidity of trade and criminal activities, he said that they were called upon to rethink their working methods. Coordination through the pooling of efforts must take place not only between customs administrations but also between customs administrations and the private sector in a partnership framework. Finally, in wishing them fruitful deliberations, the Chairman of the meeting declared open the 21st Conference of DGs.

II : <u>ELECTION OF THE BUREAU</u>

20. Following the the opening ceremony of the session, the meeting bureau of the Conference was constituted as follows:

- The meeting is co-chaired by the Office of the Vice-Chair of the Region (Cameroon) and the WCO Secretary, assisted by the Director General of Customs of Côte d'Ivoire;

- the Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, Gambia, Niger and Côte d'Ivoire, the host country, were designated as rapporteurs.

21. The Committee adopted, without amendments, the agenda, which was based on the following points:

a). **The priorities of WCO agenda**

b). **Evolution of the regional strategy**
- Regional Strategic Plan - Evaluation and Evolution - ROCB;
  - ➢ Overview;
  - ➢ Results and lessons learned from the 2015 self-assessment;
  - ➢ Roadmap 2016;
- Prospects for WCO-WCA Region faced with of emerging challenges- Senegal.

C). **Leadership and Management:**
Leadership et Management:
- Presentation of the LMD program - WCO Secretariat;
- Implementation of WCA program;
  - ➢ Experience of Cameroon;
  - ➢ Experience of DR Congo;
- Relevance of the program for Customs DGs and discussions – Secretariat

d). **Customs in the WCA Region faced with security challenge:**
- Punta Cana resolution on the role of Customs in the security context - WCO Secretariat;
- Illicit trafficking and financing of cross border crime - Africa TWIX Project (Trafic Central Africa);
- Presentation of the results of Operation CRIPHARM - ROCB;
- Situtational analysis of the Regional Agreement on exchange of maritime information - Senegal.

e). **Human Resource Management:**
- Presentation of the approach advocated by the WCO-WCO;
  - ➢ Implementation of WCA program
  - ➢ Experience of Gabon - Gabon;
  - ➢ Experience the Gambia - the Gambia;
- Relevance of the program for Customs DGs and discussions – Office of the Vice-Chair;

  - Vice-Presidency
    f). **Presentation and Adoption of WCA Activity Report**
- WCO Secretariat
- Office of the Vice-chair

g). **Presentation and adoption of the Financial Report and Budget**

For 2016/2017 - WCA Financial and Audit Committee

h). Presentation of the Regional Manual

 i). Presentation and adoption of the TORs of the IT RWG
j). Results and lessons from the 2nd session of RWG

k). Presentation and adoption of the report of the Committee of WCA Experts

l). Coordinated Management of Borders – Results and lessons:
- WCO Secretariat;
- Office of the Vice-chair.

m). Digital Customs
- Presentation – WCO Secretariat
- Office of the Vice-chair

n). Presentation of recommendations of General Policy Commission – Office Vice-chair

o). Present the work WCO does in the area of Governance

p). WCA donors' Conference

q). Developments concerning customs management of humanitarian assistance in crisis or disaster situation and transboundary insecurity in WCA Region:

- Reminder of WCO instruments on customs management of humanitarian assistance in crisis and disaster situations - WCO Secretariat;
- Presentation of United Nations - Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs;

r). Closed door session for Heads of Delegation

III: <u>CONDUCT OF DELIBERATIONS:</u>

III.1. Priorities WCO agenda

22. WCO Secretary General opened the meeting and shared with DGs the priorities of WCO agenda. From his point of view, it is clear that, in view of the global environment marked by insecurity and international

terrorism, WCO has intensified its efforts to strengthen the role of Customs in the fight against these phenomena.

23. He stressed that international terrorism sometimes finds its funding in illicit trade, which is becoming increasingly widespread in the Region. Africa, once a transit area for narco-trafficking, is now a consumer. Similarly, trafficking in cultural heritage is gaining momentum in the world with the resurgence of armed conflicts.

24. To overcome these phenomena, partnership is indispensable. This is why WCO has opened a dialogue with the border services, including the police with Interpol, and tax services. Memoranda of understanding are envisaged in this direction.

25. Another priority of WCO is the increase in customs revenue, which, due to the fall in part of the price of the oil barrel on the global market, is declining. However, these revenues constitute one of the main sources of funding of the budget of the States in the Region. This calls for reflection in order to find solutions.

26. Customs administrations as a whole are often more advanced in digital matters. It is therefore their responsibility to share these IT tools with other stakeholders in the logistics chain.

27. Finally, capacity building remains a priority to enable Customs Administrations to readjust their strategies, techniques and materials to face these new challenges. To achieve this, WCO is deployed in all Regions. WCO-WCA Region is benefiting more from these capacity building initiatives.

III.2. Evolution of regional strategy

III.2.1. Regional Strategic Plan – Evaluation and evolutions – ROCB

III.2.1.1. General presentation

28. The Director of the Regional Capacity Building Office in his presentation first gave a brief history of the capacity building process, recalling the evolving world trade context that led WCO to strengthen the capacities of Customs Administrations to Make them more efficient. He also stressed that the challenge of inspection societies has also forced Customs Administrations to define appropriate strategies in order to be competitive.

29. A strategic plan 2009-2013 has been developed with five (5) axes. An evaluation in 2012 found that the results of the implementation were unsatisfactory and that an additional year should be extended to better evaluate the results obtained.

30. This evaluation led to the implementation of a new strategic plan 2013-2017 with five (5) areas (Leadership, Management, Customs Procedures, Partnership and Human Resources Management). This 2013-2017 Strategic Plan was accompanied by a 2013 roadmap for all Customs Administrations. The evaluation of the latter has made it possible, starting in 2014, to develop roadmaps tailored to the specificities of each administration according to its evolution by areas on the basis of an annual self-assessment.

III.2.1.2. Results and lessons learned from the 2015 self-evaluation

31. An assistance mission was initiated by ROCB from 2015 to help administrations better conduct self-assessment exercises, the purpose of which is to assess the results of each administration, to measure the impact of reforms in such administration, highlight lessons learned and reframe actions.

32. The Director of ROCB presented the results of the 2011 and 2012 evaluations, during which 11 and 13 administrations participated in this exercise. As from 2013, the 23 customs administrations regularly participated in the self-assessment exercise.

33. He also presented the 2015 trend of consolidated self-assessment results. It is clear that all administrations have made progress and the leadership area is clearly progressing, Customs procedures area has been rated 3 and HRM axis has encountered challenges in implementation especially at the level of Central Africa Region.

34. He also presented to the participants of the 21st Conference the trends, area by area, of each member administration of WCA region. This presentation showed that the trend is stable in almost all administrations and that the exercise of self-evaluation is mastered by administrations of WCA region

III.2.1.3. Road map 2016

35. The 2016 Roadmaps were made available to Customs administrations in the region in January in accordance with one of the recommendations

of the 20th Conference of DGs held in Abuja and many administrations carried out a mid-term evaluation.

36. The ROCB will continue to support administrations in the implementation of the self-assessment exercise through assistance missions.

III.2.2. Outlook for the WCO-WCA Region
With regards to emerging challenges

37. Senegal, a lead Country presented the conclusions of the sessions of this working group, the objective of which is to identify and short list all challenges faced by customs administrations of member countries of the region and to propose draft solutions.

38. The Working Group identified eleven (11) major challenges in the region. These challenges include over-politicization of customs administrations, involvement of inspection societies, high reliance of customs IT systems to UNCTAD's Sydonia, impact of the Economic Partnership Agreements on capacities of customs administrations to mobilise revenues, transit management, organized cross-border crime, coordinated border management and implementation of WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

39. Faced with all these challenges, the Working Group has identified, by thematic approach, the orientations and tools developed by WCO to provide solutions to such challenges. These include CKR, GPEEC, LMD program, Niamey Declaration on Inspection Companies, SAFE Framework of Standards, WCO transit manual, MERCATOR Paragraph, interconnection of computer systems, exchange of information, etc.

40. After taking note of the document, participants invited administrations and regional structures to take ownership of the document and to send their contributions to the RWG one month before the 17th meeting of the Committee of Experts.

III.3. Leadership and Management:

III.3.1. Presentation of LMD programme

41. The Regional Coordinator explained the Management Program resulting from the findings of many Customs Administrations. He noted that the systems put in place for the management of human resources are not

satisfactory. Also, he said that the people dedicated to this task do not have the proper training of managers.

42. As for leadership, he pointed out that it is another side of the personality of the manager who usually does it in an authoritarian manner based on his legitimacy. So, he said, this creates frustration. That's why the leadership program provides training to help leaders stimulate the work of the team they lead without using legitimacy.

43. The 10-day LMD program revolves around modern customs, capacity to self-assess, assimilation of management styles, promotion of ethics, communication, change in management and diversity at workplaces.

44. He also pointed out that this program is evolving by integrating e-Learning program as a preparatory phase and that an evaluation tool has been developed.

45. The Coordinator also referred to the three-and-a-half-day withdrawal program for executives.

46. He also informed participants that more than 42 LMD workshops have been organized at global level, some of them in WCA countries. Currently, 25 countries have applied for this program.

47. He concluded his remarks by telling administrations that in order to benefit from the LMD program, the requesting administration should reflect this need in a strategic plan and demonstrate its commitment to provide the necessary training and management in charge of the logistical aspects related to training.

III.3.2. Implementation of WCA program

III.3.2.1. Experience of Cameroon

48. The Customs Administration of Cameroon has so far benefited from two (2) training sessions for the LMD program, the first in 2010 and the second one recently in 2015. Although a rigorous scientific study has not yet measured the impact of these sessions, it can be observed that the good results of Cameroonian customs in recent years are partly related to the 2010 session. Because the reforms of this administration bear the stamp of beneficiaries of this session. At individual level, evidence gathered indicates an improvement in behavior.

49. At the end of the 2015 session, participants developed, to the satisfaction of the Director General, a project for the reappropriation of the outsourced tasks to the inspection company.

50. The major challenge at the end of this training is the ability of the participants to keep the flame alive. A manual of the Secretariat would be welcome.

III.3.2.2. Experience of DR Congo

51. In addition to the lessons learned and the evaluation of the workshop on LMD module, the Deputy Director General of the DRC focused his presentation on the contribution of LMD module.

52. To this end, the speaker indicated that the officials of his administration who had benefited from the training gave various assessments, namely:

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- better internalization of the missions devolved by the Government to customs;
- maintenance of social peace in the administration through efficient management of staff;
- application of positive sanctions on deserving officers and negative sanctions to those who do not comply with legal and regulatory provisions;
- better ownership of the DGDA Strategic Plan and its implementation;
- easier implementation of WCO instruments (CKR, SAFE Framework of Standards, Columbus Program, PICARD Program, Revised Arusha Convention, etc.);
- and finally, the acquisition of the skills needed to drive change.

III.3.3. Relevance of the program for Customs DGs and discussions

53. The Secretariat reviewed the current status of the program, through an on-going review, the introduction of 2 e-learning modules (to be followed before the LMD workshop), the re-institution of the Program Advisory Committee and the implementation of the new concept of supervision and evaluation.

54. The range of modules proposed illustrates the diversity and complexity of this program, which, in fact, is the bearer of many changes in a recipient administration. To qualify for the LMD Program, certain

conditions are required, including: consideration of LMD as a priority and purpose of the process and reform plan, commitment to improving ethics, request to the WCO Secretariat and Logistic and financial contribution (local costs).

55. The discussions that followed illustrate the value of the LMD Program for WCO-WCA Region. Some Member Administrations have undertaken to request training in the coming months.

III.4. Customs in the WCA Region faced with security challenge

III.4.1. Resolution of Punta Cana on the role of Customs in the context of security

56. Customs administrations contribute to national and international security in many areas. The basis for this contribution is the power to control cross-border movements of goods and passengers.

57. At the 74th Session of the Policy Commission held in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, in December 2015, WCO re-examined the issue of border security risk and assessed the response of the Customs community in the face of existing and emerging security issues. This resulted in the adoption and publication of a Resolution on the role of customs in the context of security.

58. The resolution calls on Customs administrations, in particular to integrate security into their mandates and functions, where appropriate, by including security in their strategic plans and by relaying this objective to front-line services.

III.4.2. Illicit Trafficking and Crime Financing - Africa TWIX Project (Central Traffic South Africa
Trafics illicites et financement de la criminalité transfrontalière – Projet Africa TWIX (Trafic Central Africa

59. In the absence of Trafic Central Africa, Nigeria made a presentation about its experience with the terrorist acts of the Boko Haram group.

This presentation, which was considered as information, did not generate any reaction from participants.

III.4.3. Presentation of the results of Operation CRIPHARM - The BRLR

60. Organized from 27 January to 16 February 2016 by the two BRLR-WCA, Operation CRIPHARM is the first operation initiated by these regional structures under the coordination of the WCO Secretariat whose CENcomm secure communication tool formed the platform for exchanges during the operation. The other peculiarity is that it has been fully funded by the Regional Fund.

61. It was attended by 18 of the 23 countries in the Region. The results of this operation are more satisfactory with 42 seizures of counterfeit drugs worth evaluated to more than 40 tons. Other important seizures of absolutely prohibited products have been made, including psychotropic products and even weapons.

62. In the light of the stocktaking exercise, it is necessary to perpetuate this important initiative by encouraging these two regional structures to continue in the same way.

III.5. Human Resource Management:

III.5.1. Presentation of the approach advocated by WCO

63. The Regional Coordinator presented the role of HRM in the Customs context that must be involved in the management team when strategic decisions are made and to advise senior management on strategic choices.

64. He then pointed out that competence-**based HRM** is the symbol of a new paradigm that places people at the heart of Customs and transforms them into a partner responsible for organizational performance.

65. He also described HR processes ranging from recruitment to performance management through training, career management, compensation, etc.

66. He further added that the MADAO approach of HRM advocates capacity building through coaching and expert advice and remote assistance.

67. Also, he presented the results achieved by specifying that 21 Administrations in the region have benefited from regional workshops on HR awareness and training; More than 1,000 officers have been sensitized to competency-based HRM and HR tools have been developed, including: skills framework, skills dictionary, job baseline and job descriptions. In addition, HR management strategies are being developed (recruitment policies, training strategy, technical specification for the HRM IT system and their implementation/steering). Finally, he said that the region is building a pool of regional HR experts.

68. In closing, he outlined a number of challenges that still need to be overcome in the context of HRM. This is the case with the lack of a critical mass of HR specialists in the Administrations, to which must be added a limited understanding of the importance of HRM for organizational performance. Other challenges, such as lack of recognition of HR managers' teams within Administrations (HR Position = Punishment position); the limited capacity to manage reform or project management and change management, are also to be taken into account in HRM.

III.5.2. Implementation of WCA program

III.5.2.1. Experience of Gabon – Gabon;

69. The representative of the Customs Administration of Gabon like the Regional Coordinator, presented the steps taken by her administration to put in place results-based HRM.

70. She Also explained that the first step was to make a comprehensive analysis of HRM situation. The second step was the appropriation of the MADAO approach through the design and implementation of a competency-based HR management system. This approach consisted in developing job and skills references by categorizing them in 3 and 4 respectively. A skils dictionary was also developed.

71. The implementation of this program began with the site of the Libreville airport office with around 100 officers, as well as the development of a basic and continuous training plan and HR planning.

72. In order to achieve better HR management, she advocated to the administrations concerned that there should be a number of

prerequisites: an organizational culture by repositioning customs staff in the organizational value chain and instilling a new culture and a state of mind based on core values such as competence and performance. In addition to this, it is necessary to ensure a good political involvement by soliciting not only the permanent support of political authorities but also financial support even if the general economic situation is not very bright for all the States. Finally, we must obtain the support of all the staff.

III.5.2.2. Experience of the Gambia – the Gambia;

73. After presenting the consistency of the HRM according to the MADAO approach in the context of the Revenue Authority, there was no mention of the status, progress achieved, challenges for the future, next steps and what assessment can we make.

74. To date, thanks to the MADAO project, the HR Strategy (2014-2019) has been implemented, the recruitment policy was approved by the management staff in November 2015, and recruitment procedures in March 2016. Also, the job-skills catalog based on job descriptions and the skills dictionary were finalized in March 2016.

75. Since the adoption of this approach, progress is being made, the HR Strategy (2014-2019) gives more predictability, multidisciplinary HR working groups are set up. An HR Steering Committee, made up of the Top Management and led by the Commissioner General, is working. There is clear political will and support.

76. Despite the good results obtained, challenges remain, and it is a matter of continuing this work by assessing skills, establishing a pool of trainers in July 2016, recruiting staff by August 2016, recruiting based on the established policy and procedures, deploying staff on the basis of competencies, develop and implement the 2017-2019 recruitment Plan, develop and implement the competency-based training strategy from January 2017.

III.5.3. Relevance of the program for Customs DGs and Discussions- the Office of the Vice-chair

77.   Human resources management is the weakest area of Customs administrations of WCO-WCA Region. Indeed, Phase I of Colombus Program assessment reports and the self-evaluation exercises for the implementation of the 2013-2017 Regional Strategic Plan reveal that all

administrations in the Region are experiencing delays in this area, despite capacity building and availability of WCO tools.

78. However, thanks to the MADAO Project, competency-based HR management is being implemented in some administrations in our region, including the Gambia, Gabon, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Congo, DRC, Togo, Benin, and Côte d'Ivoire. The Gambia and Gabon have already developed and published their GPEC tools and have just presented them at the 7th session of the WCO Capacity Building Committee. It was pointed out that the Vice-chair encouraged administrations to renew their efforts in this process.

79. The discussions following these presentations revolved around the need to capitalize on all these achievements and to encourage regional coaching.

III.6. Presentation and adoption of WCA activity Report

III.6.1. WCO Secretariat

80. The regional coordinator of WCO regional focused in his presentation on the implementation of capacity building in the region mainly through active programs therein, namely :
   - MADAO dedicated to the topic of human resources managementand the stakeholders commitment generating good results;
   - LMD which is being requested a lot but of which the impact at organizational level is difficult to measurable;
   - COLUMBUS program not much used even though certain administrations have completed their strategic plan;
   - The Virtual customs Orientation Academy which aims at ensuring the gardianship of new customs officers of requesting countries. This program is for the time being available in English only;
   - MERCATOR which aims at assisting customs administrations in implementing the WCO agreement on Trade Facilitation;
   - The PACIR program on interconnection in the area of transit between Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Mali, inviting other countries to join the project;

81. In the same speech he mentioned certain programs which are only known in the customs administrations of the WCA from those involved in intelligence or the fight against fraud. These include:
   - Container control program to assist administrations in the targeting and control of containers;

- INAMA program for the control of floral and wildlife trafficking of certain species;

82. He also took stock of the involvement of the region's administrations in operations such as Westerlies3, which was attended by 15 countries in our region; African Wings with 15 participating WCA countries, COCAIR V, with a total of 15 WCA participating countries, CATALIST and SKYNET, respectively, attended by 5 and 17 WCA countries.

83. By comparing the results of this period with that of the previous period, he observed a net increase. He also presented the status of ratifications of the international instruments, pointing out that 22 of the 23 WCA countries have ratified the HS Convention, 10 ratified the CKR and 4 signed the TFA.

84. The Regional Coordinator expressed regret that despite the various recall correspondences, Customs administrations in the region did not largely respond to the invitation to the Information Technology Forum to be held in Dakar, Senegal, in May 2016 notwithstanding the fact that participation will be free of charge. The same applies to the correspondence addressed to the members of the region asking them to present their needs and to send them to the secretariat for the purpose of seeking funding. He noted the low interest of Customs administrations in promoting other Customs missions.

85. Referring to the environmental context in which Customs administrations operate, the Regional Coordinator explained that it is characterized by security challenges related to terrorism, declining revenues due to the decrease of oil prices and consumption , Instability at the head of customs administrations, etc. All these challenges deserve responses from Customs administrations.

86. He ended his remarks with a statement that is summed up by a decline in interest for the COLUMBUS program.

87. following discussions, participants adopted the report presented the WCO Secretariat.

III.6.2. office of the Vice-chair

88. In addition to continuing the work carried out a year ago, the Office of the Vice-Chair also carried out actions arising from the recommendations of the 20th DGD Conference held in Abuja, Nigeria.

89. As part of the strengthening of communication, various actions have been taken, including the creation of WCO-WCA Regional Newsletter, available online on the regional website, the amendment sessions on the Regional Guide and the Multiple correspondence addressed to administrations and regional structures, in order to create a permanent environment of information exchange.

90. All statutory regional meetings have been held despite a compelling environment. The first WCO-WCA Regional Donors' Conference in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on 8-9 July 2015, is a good initiative to capitalize on.

91. To these formal meetings, two meetings were added, namely the meeting of the regional structures held on 15 October 2015 in Dakar, Senegal, on the sidelines of the 6th Meeting of Contact Points for Capacity Building and the meeting of the RWG On IT development, which took place from 20 to 22 January 2016 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

92. In the framework of capacity building, the region benefited from several training workshops with the support of the Office of the Vice-Chair.

93. The Office of the Vice-Chair also took part in international meetings at the headquarters of the World Customs Organization or in other countries as well as in several workshops organized for the administrations of the region.

94. It also supported Togo and Gabon through intelligence training sessions, CEN and the financing of Operation CRIPHARM organized by the two Regional Liaison Offices in charge of Intelligence.

95. He pointed out that, despite the significant progress noted in the review of activities in the region, capacity-building actions will shift towards narrowing the gap between the administration and intensifying the sharing of good practices and information.

96. After some discussions, the reports were adopted

III.7. Presentation and adoption of Financial Report and Budget for 2016/2017 - WCA Financial and Audit Committee

97. The Committee first presented the stuation of contributions of each country (see Financial Committee report).

98. Ghana as Chair of this Committee informed the Experts that in addition to the annual contributions of Members, the Regional Fund

benefited from a transfer of € 69,300 from the PACIR funds. After examining the accounts of the Regional Fund, it emerges that the region has as of 31 March 2016 a sum of 585,578 Euros on a cash basis, which does not take into account contributions and expenditures made as from that date.

99. The new budget for regional structures 2016-2017 still presented by Ghana amounts to 439 800 Euros. This budget was adopted after several discussions which led the regional structures to delay the implementation of certain activities for a later period.

100. The Finance and Audit Committee suggested that other sources of funding should be explored to meet the funding requirements for activities of regional structures.

101. He also invited regional structures to review their budgetary requirements downwards, by drawing up rational budget proposals in the future, in line with the availability of the Regional Fund.

III.8. Presentation of the Regional Guide

102. The Office of the Vice-Chair presented the regional guide, which is a communication tool, the consolidation of which was validated by the 15th Meeting of Experts held in Niamey. He explained that this is the first edition.

103. He therefore invites Customs administrations to communicate with partners so that they may have a better visibility of activities organized in the region.

III.9. Presentation and adoption of the TORs of IT RWG

104. The Office of the Vice-Chair, which was mandated to produce the TORs of the IT RWG Structure, made the following proposals:
   - the place of the meeting of the structure must be in the lead country or in one of the member countries when the latter proposes to host the meeting;
   - the calendar of the meeting: it must be held every two years for the period January-February;
   - Participants include IT managers and IT specialists from Customs administrations, WCO secretariat, ROCB, the Office of the Vice-Chair and customs experts appointed by the administrations, development partners or representatives of international organizations and resource persons as observers;

- funding must be provided by customs administrations for the participation of their members and the Regional Fund for Structures;
- the duration of the session is 3 days;

105.   The presenter also advocated the creation of three committees on computer governance, IT development and the topic of information technology as a means of intelligence. These committees meet annually. He also invited the participants to reflect on the modalities of distribution of members in committees and the schedule of the sessions.

106.   The discussions following the presentation of the TTR led the experts to validate the document as submitted subject to its validation by the Conference.

107.   After a fruitful debate, the TORs have been adopted without amendment to allow their implementation and to evolve over time.

III.10. Results and lessons learned from the 2nd session of RWG

108.   The meeting of RWG was held in Abidjan from 20 to 22 January 2016 under the theme « computer, tool and partner of WCA Customs Administrations for trade facilitation and security of customs revenues ».

109.   This important meeting was attended by 13 of the 23 countries in the region, the Office of the Vice-Chair, WCO Secretariat, ROCB and UNCTAD.

110.   During the meeting several presentations were made and reflections were made on the interconnection with the presentation of the technical solution of UNCTAD on transit and the interconnection of Information Systems between Customs Administrations.

111.   The recommendations of RWG meeting were presented to the Director Generals.

III.11. Presentation and adoption of the report of WCA Committee of Experts

112.   The Office of the Vice-Chair presented the report of the 16th meeting of the Committee of Experts held on 25 and 26 April 2016 at Hotel du Golf d'Abidjan.

113.   He noted that the experts expressed their satisfaction with the reports of regional structures as well as those of the IT working group and the lead countries responsible for the maturation of regional projects.

114.   The recommendations arising from the deliberartions of the Committee of Experts were also presented at the conference, which took note of it for consideration and subsequent adoption.

III.12. Coordinated Border Management – Results and Lessons learned

III.12.1. WCO Secretariat

115.   Coordinated Border Management (CBM) is one of the emerging issues, especially in the current context of insecurity and requirements of facilitating cross-border trade. For WCO, this concept must be understood at several levels.

116.   The Secretariat shall, at the national level, promote concerted action with all agencies involved at borders, both public and private. At regional level, Customs Administrations should base their actions on joint initiatives.

117.   WCO, through its various partnerships with agencies and bodies such as the WTO, Interpol and others, is leading the way in the framework of the CBM.

III.12.2. Office of the Vice-chair

118.   WCO has dedicated the year 2015 to Coordinated Border Management (CBM). At the 20th Conference of Customs Director Generals of the WCO-WCA, reflections had been initiated. The Council of Ministers for Economic Affairs and Integration of the African Union devoted a whole session to it in 2015, with a commitment to support the CBM initiatives.

119.   It was about highlighting concrete actions of good practices and examples of successful partnerships at various levels. Some CEOs shared their experience with CBM.

120.   At the end of the exchanges, it was agreed that digital is an important vector of CBM. The example of interconnection of customs systems is rather illustrative of the role of IT.

III.13. Digital Customs

III.13.1. Presentation – WCO Secretariat

121.   The Digital Customs concept aims at providing a thematic overview of the existing tools and instruments of WCO. Its purpose is to provide a conceptual framework to assist member administrations in apprehending and deploying ICT-based tools, instruments and guidelines that have already been developed by WCO.

122.   The issue of digital customs was discussed for the first time during the discussions of WCO's political bodies at the 72nd session of the General Policy Commission in Recife, Brazil, in December 2014. It was Part of the questions on the future of customs that WCO Council President identified for further reflection. During the June 2015 sessions of the Council, the President came back to the issue, noting the sustained pace of change that occured in information and communication technology (ICT) and highlighting the ongoing work of WCO in this area. He then highlighted the need for a strategic vision that gives WCO Members an overview of all the possibilities offered by information technology.

123.   The 74th session of the General Policy Committee of December 2015 in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, agreed:

– On the need to encourage the sharing of experience and best practices in the area of digital customs;

– On the importance of the oversight function, namely that Customs administrations should be aware of developments in the trade and transport environment in order to avoid delays;

– that the Secretariat should monitor technological developments of interest to Customs, take them into account in its capacity building programs and other programs, and keep Members fully informed.

III.13.2. Office of the Vice-chair

124. The concept of Digital Customs as developed by WCO is structured around six pillars: leadership, legal bases, coordinated border

management, modernization and reform, protection of society and communication .

125. The vision of the Office of the Vice-Chair was articulated on the occasion of the official visit to Brussels in June 2014: "Strengthening regional cooperation and communication" and the concept of Digital Customs is common through Digital Customs and strengthening of regional cooperation on the one hand, and on the other hand Digital Customs and strengthening of regional communication.

126. Looking ahead, there is a long-term focus on strengthening regional approaches to the regional digital customs vision. In the short term, the identification of good practices and innovative solutions for Digital Customs in the Region, in line with the letter of the WCO SG, and relayed by the Office of the Vice-Chair, must be done in the shortest possible time. It is therefore an urgent appeal to react to this correspondence.

III.14. Presentation of the recommendations of the General Policy Committee – Office of the Vice-Chair

127.   The Office of the Vice-Chair presented the outcome of the 74th Session with emphasis on the Communication of the international Customs Community on the implementation of WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA), the set up of a Working Group to agree on a series of proposals on governance issues raised during the discussions, for presentation to the Council in July 2016

128.   He also mentioned the case of elections of WCO Council President and elections to positions within WCO Secretariat (Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General) and Directors, explaining the modalities of such elections.

129.   He indicated that the possible contributions of the Regions on this issue should be transmitted to the Working Group before the Sessions of the general policy Commission and the Council in July 2016

III.15. Provide information on WCO's work on in the area of Gouvernance

130.   After reviewing the status of the governance issue in WCO, the Office of Vice-Chair came back to the activities of the Working Group to that effect. The last meeting of this WCO Working Group on Governance issues took place on 8 March 2016 in Brussels, Belgium. The

Vice-Chairperson did not take part physically because of the late reception of the invitation, but nevertheless submitted his written contribution, which was taken into account during the work. The contribution of the Office of the Vice-Chair was read at the conference.

131.   The Secretary General of WCO, in turn, wished to recall the real stakes of this issue, which revolves around the election of WCO officials. WCO as a technical organization should avoid sacrificing skills for political considerations.

132.   At the end of the discussions, the Conference of DGs endorsed the Office of the Vice-Chair's contribution to the Working Group, stating that these positions will be further defended before the General Policy Committee and Customs Cooperation Council.

III.16. WCA donors' Conference

The Office of the Vice-Chair first set the context by explaining that the donors' conference was set up due to difficulties in financing modernization projects, problems in the coordination of donor interventions and information deficit on priorities of administrations and the ones of donors;

133.   He recalled that the objective of this conference is first and foremost to create a network of donors working in synergy and in favor of an integrated approach to customs reform and modernization in the Region; Secondly, to increase mutual understanding between donors and customs in the Region and to increase the interest of politicians and donors in customs reform within the Region in order to ensure visibility for Donor funded projects in the Region and to present the regional strategic plan and some priority projects for funding and donor support.

134.   Several national or regional projects have been identified and administrations have been designated for the maturation of the projects.

135.   Some projects have been funded (project for the accreditation of experts in modernization), others have begun implementation or a very satisfactory level of maturation (computer interconnection project, project for pooling river-maritime intelligence, training workshop for HRM trainers, etc.) or are being developed by the beneficiary countries with the assistance of member countries (The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Mali.

136.   He concluded by saying that the experts agreed that maturation of the projects should be finalized no later than one month before the next donors' conference

III.17. Developments concerning customs management of humanitarian aid in situations of crisis or disaster and cross-border insecurity in Region WCA:

III.17.1. Reminder of WCO instruments on Customs management of humanitarian aid in Crisis or disaster situation – WCO Secretariat

137.   The secretariat presented WCO instruments for the management of humanitarian assistance in crisis or disaster situations. Namely:

- **Resolution of the Council of June 2011,** which recommends that States revise their legal instruments in the area of emergency management, institute simulation exercises for natural disaster management, provide training for officials in charge of managing natural disasters, etc.
- **Annex J5 to the revised Kyoto Convention** which addresses humanitarian shipments and which has been accepted by 21 customs administrations, some of which fall under WCA region;
- **Annex B9 to the Istanbul Convention,** which addresses temporary admission of relief shipments without security deposit or customs declaration;
- **Cooperation with OCHA and IFRC (IFRC):** in the framework of its implementation, a standard agreement has been drafted for customs processing of humanitarian shipments and the memoranda of understanding have been signed with WCO
- **Seminars** were held in Bangkok, Santo Domingo and Addis Ababa to sensitize customs administrations to put in place humanitarian aid shipment facilitation procedures;
- **New program (WCO/Netherlands)** for countries affected by Ebola. It is a 12-month program that concerns the 3 countries affected by Ebola and their neighboring countries. It has two components: a material supply component and a technical assistance component.

138.   Several countries took part in this presentation and shared their experience through the role of their administration in the management of certain crises or disasters.

III.17.2. Presentation United Nations - Office of the Coordination of humanitarian affairs

139.   In the absence of the representative of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, this presentation did not take place.

III.18. Closed door session for Heads of Delegation

140.   The closed door meeting of the 21st Conference of Director Generals and heads of delegations of Member Countries of the World Customs Organization of West and Central Africa Region was held on Thursday, 28 April, from 4 PM.

141.   Led by the Office of the Vice-Chair of the Region, the working session was attended by all the delegations present at the Conference. The feedback of the deliberations was carried out in a plenary session by the Head of delegation of Sierra Leone. Decisions of the closed door meeting are attached as an appendix to this report.

IV- <u>CLOSING CEREMONY</u>

142.   Closing the proceedings, Mr. Director of Cabinet of Mr. Minister with the Prime Minister in charge of Budget and State Portfolio, appreciated the quality of the debates that led to relevant recommendations. He therefore stressed the importance of their immediate implementation, given the vitality and relevance of the issues of customs modernization.

Done in Abidjan, this 29th day of Aril 2016

The conference of DGD-WCA

Recommendations

I-   Regarding actions relating to Intelligence

WCO Secretary

- Perpetuate the CRIPHARM operation;

Customs Administrations

- Incorporate in their national regulations the customs management of humanitarian aid in situations of 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 policies through an exchange of information to fight cross-border insecurity;

- Allocate substantial funding to fight cross-border insecurity;

- Encouraging collaboration with military and other governmental security forces to fight cross-border insecurity;

- Strengthen border controls through the increased use of intelligence, risk management and advanced technologies in order 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 Directors-General of Customs Conference;

- Develop and sign a framework instruction on intelligence in accordance with the model adopted by the 15th Directors-General of Customs Conference;

- Set up targeting cells at airports and ports.

II- Regarding information and communication technology

ECOWAS Commission

- Accelerate work on the regional interconnection project on transit;

Customs Administrations

- Give a strategic position to the services in charge of information systems and to be more committed to IT governance;

- Set 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 interconnection projects for information systems relating to 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;

- Ensure that computer systems comply with regional and international standards;

- Promote a better integration of computer scientists in customs administrations.

III. Regarding capacity building

Vice Chair

- Continue with the publication of the monthly information bulletin and, if necessary, to examine the possibility of reviewing its periodicity and the means of its financing in order to ensure its sustainability;

WCO Secretary

- Provide assistance in setting up an E-learning platform in administrations with a human resource management and a training strategy;

- Extend the training component of the MADAO Project to the entire region;

Regional Capacity Building Office

- Drawing up instruments for assessing the relevance and impact of capacity-building initiatives of the WCO Secretariat in the Region;

- Take the necessary steps to make the regional website available in English;

Customs administrations and Regional Capacity Building Office

- Appropriating the synthesis document on the challenges of the region by integrating it into the national strategic plans and the current regional strategic plan;

Customs administrations and regional structures

- Appropriating the synthesis document on the priority areas of the WCO-WCA region relating to new challenges;

Customs administrations

- encouraging specialization in Human Resources Management and allowing non-customs officers to occupy the positions of Human Resources Managers with a view to better management of careers and skills;

- to participate more fully in the work of the WCO, including:
The CKR Management Committee, the Data Model, the Working Group on AFE, Technology and Non-intrusive Control, the IT Subcommittee and the Air Cargo Security Working Group.

- involving training and human resources managers in the self-assessment exercise of the strategic plan;

- Appropriating the various programs for modernizing training in human resources management initiated in the region by the WCO or the BRRC-WCA;

- Request from the WCO Secretariat more sessions on the LMD program;

Regional Training Centers

- Set up training programs in human resources management initiated by themselves on the basis of the current resources made available to them by the regional fund pending a possible increase in their budget allocation;

DECISIONS
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1. The Conference of Directors-General noted the need for closer collaboration among members for more effective management of cross-border security challenges and endorsed the pilot project COLLABORATION SAFETY (SPG ++) with the initial involvement of Customs administrations of the following countries:

- Benin;
- Cameroon;
- Central African Republic;
- Chad;
- Niger;
- Nigeria

Nigeria is designated as a leading country and is mandated to work with the Office of the Vice President in the development of a concept paper for the implementation of the Project.

2- The Directors-General endorsed the Vice-Presidency's communication to the WCO Working Group on Governance Issues and requested that the guidelines articulated in the Communication be further advocated by the Policy Committee and the WCO Council.

3- The Conference of Directors-General adopted a draft budget for the period from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

4- On the occasion of the election of the Vice-President of the WCO for the WCA Region, the Directors-General chose Mr. ISSA COULIBALY, Comptroller-General of Customs of Côte d'Ivoire, for a mandate of two (2) years;

5- The schedule of regional meetings was adopted as follows:

- The 7th Meeting of Contact Points will be held in Mali in September 2016;

- The 7th Workshop of Human Resources and Training Managers at the RTC in Brazzaville, between September and October 2016;

- The 17th Meeting of the Committee of Experts in Guinea in November 2016;

- The 2nd Donor Conference of the WCO-WCA Region in Benin between July and August 2016;

- and the 22nd Conference of Directors-General of Customs, in Senegal between March and April 2017.