



AOC/CE9E

**REPORT
OF THE 17TH MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF
EXPERTS OF THE CONFERENCE OF CUSTOMS
DIRECTOR GENERALS OF THE WORLD CUSTOMS
ORGANIZATION OF WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA
REGION**

Sheraton Grand Hotel Conakry, Guinea

19 - 21 December 2016

CONTEXT:

1. The seventeenth meeting of the Committee of experts of the Conference of Customs Director Generals of the World Customs Organization of the West and Central Africa Region (WCO-WCA) was held at Sheraton Hotel, Conakry, Guinea, from 19 to 21 December 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 21st Conference of Customs DGs held at hotel Radisson Blu in Abidjan, from 27 to 29 April 2016, and to consider the reports of the Office of the Vice-Chair, WCO Secretariat and regional structures, as well as financial and emerging issues.
3. The meeting was attended by sixteen (16) of the twenty-three (23) Member State administrations, the Office of the Vice-Chair, WCO Secretariat, Regional Office of Capacity Building (ROCB), Regional Training Centers (RTCs) in Ouagadougou, Brazzaville and Abuja, Regional Liaison Offices in charge of West Africa and Central Africa Intelligence (BRLR-WA and BRLR-CA).
4. The list of participants is attached.

I. OPENING CEREMONY

5. The Opening Ceremony, chaired by **Dr MOHAMED LAMINE DOUMBOUYA**, Minister of Budget of Guinea, was punctuated by four (4) speeches.
6. **Brigadier General TOUMANY SANGARE**, Director General of Guinea Customs, welcomed the various delegations who travelled to Conakry to take part in this meeting of the WCO/WCA Committee of Experts. He took this opportunity to thank WCO General Secretariat and the Office of the Vice-Chair of the region for their involvement in the organization of this meeting, which today accounts for the return of Guinea to the international scene after a health crisis which caused its isolation for a long time. We would like to grab this opportunity commend from the bottom of our heart the momentum of solidarity of the international customs community at the time of this crisis.
7. In his speech, Mr. **ASSADOU MALAN**, on behalf of the Controller General **ISSA COULIBALY**, Director General of Ivorian Customs and vice-chair of the World Customs Organization for West Africa Region, expressed the gratitude of the vice-chair to the highest officials of the Republic of Guinea and to the Director General of Guinean Customs and to his staff, for the perfect organization of this meeting and for the warm and fraternal welcome extended to all delegations.
8. He also identified four major challenges the Region is facing. To the usual challenge of mobilizing revenues for the benefit of the public treasury, we have in addition, but not limited to, those related to trade facilitation, commercial fraud, intellectual property law, intelligence and circulation of narcotics, all this

in a context marked by the exponential growth of transnational organized crime.

9. To face these challenges, our customs administrations must engage in an irreversible and permanent reform process, with the support of WCO and our regional structures, whose tools and instruments are being developed, lead to the development of adaptation capacities.

10. Mr. **BERNARD ZBINDEN**, on behalf of WCO Secretariat and in his capacity as Regional Coordinator for capacity building activities, expressed his sincere thanks to the Guinean authorities for the warm welcome and the good and constructive collaboration with WCO Secretariat.

11. He also reviewed the various activities carried out by WCO with the Guinean customs. Activities that have slowed down with the Ebola outbreak.

12. The Representative of WCO Secretariat reminded the Experts that this meeting is meant to prepare the program and working documents for the 22nd Conference of Customs DGs, which will be held in Dakar in April 2017. For this purpose, Experts will also address some of the priority issues and challenges our Customs are facing. These aspects can not be fully resolved at national level, but require a strategic approach and coordination at regional, even possibly global level.

13. Finally, **Dr MOHAMED LAMINE DOUMBOUYA**, Minister of Budget, first welcomed the various delegations and thanked member countries of the Region for having responded massively to this meeting.

He grabbed this opportunity to express on behalf of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Professor Alpha CONDE, his profound gratitude and sincere thanks for the holding of this important meeting in Conakry.

14. He drew the attention of the experts on the considerable stakes of our customs: mobilization of resources, fighting against fraud, facilitation and security of trade, dematerialization of customs clearance, protection of society and environment, promotion of partnership, communication and transparency.

15. Declaring the deliberations of the Committee open, he expressed the hope that, at the end of the sessions, relevant recommendations would be made.

II: PRELIMINARIES

16. Following the opening ceremony, the Committee's meeting office is constituted as follows:

- The meeting is co-chaired by the representative of the Vice-Chair (Côte d'Ivoire) of the Region and the Regional Coordinator of the WCO, assisted by the Director of ROCB and Guinea;
- Cameroon, Niger, Ghana and Guinea were appointed as rapporteurs.

17. The Committee adopted the following agenda with amendments:

1- CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS:

- Office of the Vice-chair, including the presentation of the vision for his/her mandate
- WCO Secretariat
- Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB)
- Regional Training Centers (CTC)
- Regional Liaison Offices Responsible for Intelligence (BRLR) West Africa/Central Africa
- RWG Information Technology
- Audit and Finance Committee

2- Presentation of WCO Coordinator for WCA Region:

- Intensification of WCA experts' accreditation process
- Preparation of the Coordinator's report on the progress made in the area of capacity building and to the WCO Council

3- 2nd Donor Conference:

- Progress made in maturing projects and preparatory works for the 2nd Donor Conference Summary of the deliberations of the 8th meeting of the African Union DGD Sub-Committee (Harare, November 2016)
- Summary of the 76th session of the WCO General Policy Committee (GPC) (Russia December 2016)

4- Trade Facilitation

- Implementation of WCO TFA:
- Evolution in the management of the MERCATOR program
- Developments in the different countries
- Accession to the revised Kyoto Convention: the situation of individual countries

5- New topics:

- Digital Customs: Presentation of the Dematerialization of Procedures Project at the General Office of Customs of Côte d'Ivoire
- Fighting against growing insecurity in the region: state of progress of Nigeria's SPC++ project
- Status of the interconnection project
- **Status of implementation of the recommendations of the 21st Conference of Customs Director Generals:**

- Office of the Vice-Chair
- WCO Secretariat
- ROCB
- Regional Training Centers (CTC)
- Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO)

6- Summary of the implementation of the recommendations to customs administrations of the region

- Termination of contracts with inspection companies

- Presentation of new WCO activities in the region

7- Drafting of recommendations of the 17th meeting of the committee of experts

8- Discussion on the draft agenda for the next meeting of the Committee of Experts and the 22nd Conference of Customs Director Generals of the WCO-WCA Region in Dakar

9- Adoption of the recommendations of the 17th meeting of the Committee of Experts

10-Closing ceremony

III: PROCEEDINGS:

18. The proceedings of the 17th meeting of the Committee of Experts began with a series of reports on the activities of the various structures.

A) CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS

Office of the Vice-chair, including presentation of the vision of the mandate

19. The representative of the Vice-Chair, in his introductory remarks, recalled that Côte d'Ivoire which succeeded Cameroon, officially took service after WCO Council meeting in July 2016. But beforehand, a ceremony of presentation of specifications was held in Yaoundé.

20. As a participant in regional and international meetings, the Office of the Vice-Chair participated in the Capacity Building meeting of Contact Points held in Bamako at the meeting of the Sub-committee of Customs Director Generals of the African Union in Harare. He also participated in the 76th general policy meeting in Moscow and the 7th annual joint statutory meeting of national correspondents of WCO-WCA region.

21. The Office of the Vice-Chair also sent several mails to certain customs administrations for specific needs.

22. In a second presentation, the office of the vice-chair presented its vision of making WCA region, a region of reference. It revolves around the revitalisation of regional structures, effective structures and modernization of customs administrations in the region. Several objectives have been defined, including: strengthening communication and solidarity, optimizing contributions to the regional fund, providing adequate means to regional structures for their operations, promoting tools and instruments developed by WCO, providing regional structures with the necessary statutes for the good accomplishment of their mission;

Promoting exchange of experience and monitoring the implementation of recommendations etc.

Secretariat of WCO

23. The report presented by WCO secretariat focused on the Global Implementation of Capacity Building. To this end, Mr **BERNARD BZINDEN** focused on issues related to organizational development. He noted WCO's support for Customs reform and modernization in the region, particularly in the areas of strategic management; Managerial management; Modern management of human resources and development of relations with stakeholders.

A particular emphasis was placed on WCO's support to Customs administrations in the region as part of the implementation of the WTO's TFA through the MERCATOR program.

24. With regard to the activities carried out, he recalled the organization of the 1st Donor's Conference and several other supporting activities for the implementation of the 5 strategic objectives from the 2013-2017 regional strategic plan (Leadership, strategic management, HR, partnerships and customs procedures, and said that the MADAQ project, funded by Sweden, has started its second phase and several countries have benefited from projects such as the development of HR tools, relations with stakeholders (Implementation of the CNFE, TRS Study and Strategic Management. The Inter-connectivity Project of IT Systems for Transit Control also has a very important position among the activities organized by WCO for the benefit of administrations in region.

25. Certain operations such as **WESTERLIES 3** for the control of illicit trafficking of Met amphetamine, **African Wings 2** on surveillance of private aviation, **COCAIR V** for the control of cocaine trafficking, etc., were supported by WCO with very satisfactory outcomes.

26. Concluding his remarks on all his activities, Mr BERNARD made a few observations, which are summarized as follows: frequent changes in heads of customs administrations and positive impacts on capacity-building, particularly with regard to certain priority issues for administrations: Revenue File (HS, Value, Origin), Trade facilitation, fight against fraud, inappropriate ownership of certain WCO tools etc.

Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB)

27. ROCB's technical attaché first presented the functioning of the regional structure, which is based on a dozen officers largely provided by the host country. He stressed that Cameroon had assigned one of its senior officers to support the regional office.

28. As regards the activities carried out, they concern participation to the following meetings: 21st Conference of Director Generals (Abidjan), Meeting of the WCA contact points (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).

29. The main purpose of the meeting with ECOWAS is essentially to deepen relations between ECOWAS/ROCB-WCA/WCO Secretariat; develop a basis for collaboration between the two (2) structures for the benefit of ECOWAS Customs Administrations and jointly organize a seminar on customs valuation and development of a sub regional value file thanks to the support of the GIZ.
30. With regard to the meeting with Korean Customs, it aims at developing a framework for mutualisation within the organization and facilitation of seminars organized by one or the other Party, and exchange of experience, best practices and experts between ROCB-WCA and KCS.
31. On the other hand, Korean Customs are 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.

Regional Training Centers (RTC)

32. The three heads of the regional centers respectively presented their activity reports.
33. Thus, the RTC of Ouagadougou indicated that, in relation with its specifications, it was only able to develop a national directory of specialized trainers. Nevertheless, some training activities have been carried out in this center. In particular, a training on HS 2017 from June 26th to July 1st and a seminar on intelligence followed by another on the origin. The presenter also mentioned the forthcoming publication of the second edition of the journal. He also underlined that the center increased its reception capacities, notably through the renovation of the conference room and the provision of pedagogical material.
34. The head of the RTC of Abuja reported that the organization of a regional workshop for the validation of ECOWAS member countries Customs Code was organized among other activities. He also informed that the center will host a workshop on intelligence in February 2017.
35. The head of the RTC of Brazzaville pointed out that his center was supposed to host two important meetings, namely the meeting of human resource managers and a workshop on training engineering. But difficulties encountered could not allow the two meetings to be held. However, contacts are established with the Office of the Vice-Chair in order to carry out these activities.

Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices (RILOs) West Africa/Central Africa

36. The person in charge of ROCB WA presented the activities carried out by its structure for the period from May 1st to December 1st, 2016. They are mainly summarized in support of Operation WESTERLIES 4 which took place from 18 to 27 May 2016. This operation recorded some 270 drugs seizures, CITES products and other prohibitions. He also notified the participation of his structure in the operation African Wings which took place from 7 to 14 June 2016 and which permitted the inspection of some 170 aircrafts. This operation had induced effects in terms of seizure of drugs, arms and ammunition as well as other illegal products.

37. He also indicated that ROCB issued a warning message following a seizure of AK47 rifles by the Malian customs, concealed in the engine compartment of a Mercedes car.

38. With regard to the data entered in the CEN, he indicated that it remains relatively low compared to the region's potential, despite a 19% increase compared to the previous year (1,791 cases in 2015 versus 2,135 cases on December 1st, 2016).

39. In terms of capacity building, the head informed that the two ROCB organized a seminar on intelligence in Bangui, another on CENcom in Guinea Bissau.

40. While initially recalling ROCB missions, ROCB WA official gave an update on the activities of his structure. In addition to participating in the 7th annual joint meeting of national focal points and other meetings, disseminating alerts and information and analysis reports, ROCB-WA developed two projects of operations to combat major trafficking. It is referred to as the **BONOBO** project to combat illicit trafficking of CITES products, including large primates, pangolins and elephants, and the **SENGHOR** project to combat trafficking of cultural property.

41. He also outlined some of the challenges faced by the RILOs, including the lack of personnel for their proper functioning, low reactivity of NCs, insufficient data entered in the CEN, etc.

RWG Information Technology

42. Côte d'Ivoire, lead country of RWG Information Technology, presented the report of activities of this working group.

43. After a reminder of the deliberations of the second meeting held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 20 to 22 January 2016, the RWG presented, for each of its three committees: member countries, the topic of discussions and the expected results of their deliberations.

44. He also announced the implementation on the regional site of the RWG working tools, namely: an area dedicated to the working group, a form for the online registration of the delegates of member countries and a forum per commission. These tools will enable the commissions to start their work.

45. Finally, He announced the deliberations of the commissions scheduled between February and March 2017.

Finance and Audit committee

46. The Finance and Audit Committee, first presented a summary table of the contributions of each member to the regional fund. This presentation shows that 14 member administrations paid their contribution for the year 2016 on 17 December.

47. The Committee also indicated that the 2016-2017 budget had been partly disbursed and that the disbursement would continue for the next four months of the budget year.

48. For the eight (8) months of the financial year, the resources amount to € **110,283** for expenditure of € **92,048**, which shows a balance of € **18,235**.

49. The balance of the account as of November 30, 2016 cumulates a total of resources of € 603,813 for total expenses of € 585,578, therefore a balance €18,235.

50. The Committee noted with satisfaction the payment into the Regional Account of the amount of € **3,269** by ROCB, representing the remainder of an amount made available to them.

51. Finally, the Committee commended the administrations which paid their dues and encouraged other countries to comply with them as expeditiously as possible.

B) PRESENTATION OF WCO COORDINATOR FOR WCA REGION:

• Intensification of WCA experts' accreditation process

1. The WCO Coordinator for WCA region reviewed the accreditations of the experts from the WCA region.

2. For the accreditation of the MERCATOR Program Advisers (MPA): a continental workshop was organized in 2016 in Yaoundé with funding from the African Union and OM and 15 Applicants from the region were pre-selected, including 5 who have been granted pre-accreditation.

3. Concerning accreditation for CKR, a global workshop was organized in Brussels in 2016 with the participation of WCA Experts, but no applicant was accredited.

4. With regard to LMD accreditation, the Coordinator indicated that the Secretariat's ambition is to accredit a limited number of Experts who can facilitate LMD workshops; but, it is not the ambition of the Secretariat to organize regional accreditation workshops at this time.

52. Concerning the participation of WCA experts in WCO missions, he stressed that experts from the region had participated or were going to participate in certain missions of the secretariat. These include the Phase 3 mission in Gabon (1 WCA expert); mission phase 1-2 CAR (January 2017 with 3 WCA experts confirmed); mission phase 3 in Cameroon (Experts to be confirmed).

53. Various other missions were also carried out with the active participation of WCA experts trained by the MADAO project, in particular with regard to HRM and stakeholder engagement, HS, origin and preparation of the Coordinator's report on the progress made in capacity building and WCO Council.

54. To conclude his remarks, the Coordinator focused on the TFA by stating that, to date, only 7 signatures are still expected for this agreement to enter into force. He urged Member Governments to take steps to implement it. He specified that accreditations in specific areas will take account of this agreement in several of their aspects.

- **Preparation of the Coordinator's report on the progress made in the area of capacity building and with WCO Council**

55. On the subject, he further invited participants to reflect on how to collect information in a rational manner, in order to prepare reports on the developments in capacity building in each of the administrations of the region.

C) CHALLENGES OF WCO-WCA REGION AND ATTEMPTS OF SOLUTIONS (SENEGAL)

56. Senegal, a leading country, first presented the genesis of creation of the RWG which worked on this thematic. It comes from an observation during the 15th meeting of the committee of experts held in Niamey to set up a working group that will reflect on the challenges the region is facing and outline solutions.

57. The approach adopted by the RWG consists in presenting all the challenges without prioritization with a view of taking a global responsibility and then highlighting the interest of their management of the WCO strategic approach and of WCA Region; highlighting WCO guidelines and tools that can address such challenges; and finally raising the interest of Director Generals on the importance of these challenges and the need to address them.

58. The results obtained by the RWG have identified eleven (11) areas, namely: (I) Customs politicization, (II) leadership, (III) human resource management, (IV), multiple interventions of inspections companies, (V) dependence vis-à-vis SYDONIA, (VI) updating and harmonization of community codes, (VII) economic partnership agreement, (VIII) regional transit, (IX) cross-border organized crime, (X) coordinated border management, and (XI) trade facilitation agreement.

59. For each of the challenges identified, tools and instruments developed by WCO have been proposed as solutions. As examples, it can be said that for the challenge of political interference, leadership and the Projected Management of Jobs and Skills (PMJS) emerge as the solution. Concerning the problem of human resources management, tools such as the Projected Management of Jobs and Skills (PMJS) can be one of the modernization actions of customs administrations, in view of the deficiencies witnessed in this area on the one hand, and on the other hand, on the central role human resources must play in the development and the performance of administrations.

60. Other tools such as the West African Customs Administrations Modernization Project (MADAO), the job framework, the competency framework, the dictionary of skills and job descriptions appear to be solutions.

61. Finally, the speaker noted that the document was adopted by the 21st Conference of DGs and that it was recommended to take ownership of the summary document on the challenges of the region by integrating it in the national strategic plans and in the current and future regional strategic plan.

D) A) 2ND DONORS' CONFERENCE:

- Progress made in the maturation of projects and preparatory work of the 2nd Donors' Conference Summary of deliberations of the 8th meeting of DGDs Sub-committee of the African Union (Harare, November 2016)**

62. The Office of the Vice-Chair presented regional and national projects. Therefore, the following regional projects will be subject to maturation by countries or leading structures: Extension of the MADAO Project, Strengthening intelligence through the use of CEN and nCEN, AEO Regional Program, Regional Coaching Program, Training Workshop of Trainers and Managers of Human Resources, Monitoring Program Evaluation of the Implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan of West and Central Africa, Project for the Continuation and Extension of Sea-maritime Intelligence, ICT Interconnection Project of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal, Regional Security Project - SPC ++, Accreditation and Professionalization of Experts from African Customs.

63. As of today, only the following projects are matured: the strengthening of intelligence through the use of CEN and nCEN ; the regional OEA program and the IT technology interconnection of the Customs of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal.

64.

65. Other structures or countries are requested to forward their presentations before the 22nd donors' conference in Benin.

66. National projects have also been presented to the participants, namely the project for the building and equipment of a National Academy of Customs (Benin), communication Strategy/Clothing (Cape Verde), supporting Project for the development of a web site and intranet (Gabon), Project for institutional capacity building of Customs (Gambia).

67. However, the office of the vice-chair expressed the financial challenges Benin is facing to host this activity. Nevertheless, WCO Secretariat has been able to secure a support from China for the funding of this conference which will be coupled with a TFA workshop. The period of the 1st quarter of 2017 has been selected for the organization of these two activities. The office of the vice-chair also launched an appeal so that countries could express their willingness to replace Benin in case they formally declare themselves unable to organize this activity.

- **Summary of the deliberations of the eightieth session of the DGD subcommittee of the African Union (Harare, November 2016)**

68. The 8th session of the SC-DGD-UA was held from 17 to 17 November in Harare. The office of the vice-chair which presented the summary of this session indicated that it was held on the topic «from barriers to bridges » and was attended by many countries of WCA region.

69. This meeting was the opportunity to talk about the Continental Free Trade Zone and the Customs Union planned for 2063 and 2022 respectively. These projects aim at promoting trade in African countries, increase inter-African trade and the competitiveness of African enterprises and the facilitation of the free movement of goods and people.

70. To carry out these projects, the AU relies on regional economic communities (RECs) such as ECOWAS, CEMAC, etc. leading to the creation of the customs Union and the multiplication of Juxtaposed Control Points (JCPs), many of which are already operational in the WCA region.

71. To this end, accompanying measures such as reduction of border control points, harmonization of procedures, interconnection of computer systems and improvement of infrastructure are foreseen.

72. The meeting also addressed other issues of no less importance, such as the review of the accreditation of the WCO accreditation workshop and the decision on the imposition of a 2.5 % On all imports from 2017. In this regard, a Working Group has been set up to examine the modalities of implementation of this decision and to make proposals to the AU Commission at the next meeting Held in Cameroon.

- **Summary of the 76th session of the WCO General Policy Committee (GPC) (December 2016)**

73. The office of the vice-chair, which participated with Benin and Ghana in the 76th General Policy Committee held in Moscow from 5 to 7 December 2016, made the summary of the deliberations.

74. It appears from this summary that the meeting took place in two phases, including the first phase devoted to presenting reports on developments in the field of economic competitiveness, the fight against fraud, Digital Customs, etc.

75. The second phase of the deliberations was devoted to e-commerce, trade facilitation, security initiative, performance measurement, 2016-2018 strategic plan, status of regional structures and governance.

76. The speaker indicated that the office of the vice-chair actively participated in the deliberations on the various topics, notably in chairing the workshop on financial flows. As regards the security initiative, the office of the vice-chair presented the results of the work of the SPC ++ project on the document on the status of regional structures.

77. With regard to the status of regional structures, the office of the vice-chair presented three assumptions: the first consists in considering these structures as dismemberments of WCO, in which case it is necessary to apply the ongoing practices to them. The second assumption consists of considering them as autonomous entities in order for them to have their own legal personality. Finally, the last is to consider them as neutral entities, in which case, they should be offered a legal framework. The European Union welcomed this initiative and decided to put it on the agenda of its next meeting. Countries such as China and the USA also supported the project and proposed its inclusion in the agenda of the next WCO Council.

78. Commenting on the discussions on governance, he said that the issue pertaining to the limitation of the terms of the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General was put to the vote for lack of consensus. However, neither the supporters of the status quo nor the advocates of change obtained the required 2/3 majority. So the status quo was maintained and he recommended to put this item on the agenda of the next Conference of DGs

E) FACILITATION OF TRADE

- Implementation of WCO TFA:**

- Evolution in the management of the MERCATOR program and Evolution in the different countries**

79. The regional coordinator recalled that it only remains seven (7) signatures for the TFA to enter into force. He said that probably the agreement could enter into force in February 2017 and that it will be binding for all countries including those that have not signed it.

80. He invited the WCA countries to operate the National Committees set up by specifying that there are flexibility measures for developing countries that can

benefit from assistance in the context of the implementation of category A and C measures.

81. The following countries are to be included on the list of countries which have acceded to the TFA. These are Niger, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, the only countries having ratified the TFA so far.

- **Accession to the revised Kyoto Convention: the situation of individual countries**

82. This presentation is based on the Regional Coordinator's report of the previous day. Cameroon, Niger and Sierra Leone are the only WCA countries that have submitted their CKR instruments of ratification.

83. The Coordinator encouraged other countries to move more towards implementing the instruments developed by WCO on behalf of its members.

F) NEW SUBJECTS:

- **Digital Customs: Presentation of the Dematerialization Project of Procedures at the General Office of Customs of Côte d'Ivoire**

84. The process of computerization of customs services began in 1982 and today is marked by the implementation of numerous reforms (SYDAM WORD, DECISIONNEL, etc.). This 24-month project aims at optimizing and dematerializing services offered to users, facilitating access to services, reducing costs, strengthening existing systems and combatting documentary fraud.

85. The organization of this project through the steering committee, the functional committee and the project team is a major asset in its implementation. To date, the project is progressing in the implementation phase and the Customs Administration of Côte d'Ivoire remain fully available to share this experience with Member Administrations in the region.

- **Fighting against the growing insecurity in the region: state of progress of Nigeria's SPC ++ project**

86. Nigeria, the lead country, has 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 the growing insecurity in the region.

87. He noted that the first step consisted in developing Nigeria's concept note for the project, which was sent to the administrations included in the project (Benin, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, Central African Republic and Chad) in order to collect their observations and invite them to nominate their experts in the technical committee.

88. In a second phase, the project was promoted during workshops and seminars such as the annual joint meeting of ROCB National Focal Points, the PICARD Conference held in Manila and Universities such as Victoria in Canada.

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

90. At this first meeting of the technical committee, common border areas of the participating countries were selected for a study with the support of WCO Research Unit on Vulnerability of Customs presence and the role of customs in areas of conflict or with a potential « conflict ».

91. The meeting also adopted the principle of establishing a legal framework on the basis of the model of WCO Protocol on Mutual Administrative Assistance.

- **Status of the interconnection project**

92. Since the last DGD Abidjan Conference, Togo joined the pilot group, increasing the number of countries to six (06). The project was matured and sent to the office of the vice-chair in preparation for the 2nd Donor Conference.

93. In addition, the project team took part in a meeting with ECOWAS in Abuja, Nigeria, from 07 to 09 November 2016, as well as a workshop organized in Lomé, Togo, by ECOWAS and WCO on data modelling.

G) STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 21ST CONFERENCE OF DIRECTOR GENERALS OF CUSTOMS:

- **Office vice-chair**

94. Implementation of the two recommendations of the office of the vice-chair is under way and these recommendations are sufficiently taken into account in the the vision of the office of the vice-chair.

- **WCO Secretariat**

95. For its part, WCO Secretariat implemented the recommendations made for it, even though it received no request for E-learning. The extension of the MADAQ project to Central Africa began with the support given to Gabonese customs and the participation of Central Africa in the activities of the MADAQ project.

- **ROCB**

96. The ROCB has made significant progress in the implementation of the recommendations, which is reflected, *inter alia*, in the consideration of the

strategic document on the challenges of the region in the draft regional strategic plan 2017/2021.

- **Regional Training Centers (RTC)**

97. The RTCs as a whole have not experienced significant implementation of recommendations. They were also invited to invest.

- **Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO)**

98. ROCB - WCA that do not have direct recommendations in charge did however participate in the implementation of the intelligence related recommendations.

H) SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATIONS IN THE REGION

1. out of the 23 Members of the Region, only 09 responded to the questionnaire sent by the office of the vice-chair on the evaluation of implementation of the recommendations. This low rate of reactivity has been criticized.

2. The evaluation methodology adopted was widely appreciated by the participants. The results of this evaluation call on Customs Administrations to intensify implementation of the recommendations.

3. The office of the Vice-Chair called for more responsiveness to ensure that sampling is representative and therefore reliable.

- **Termination of contracts with inspection companies**

99. The Secretariat reaffirmed its willingness to support Administrations wishing to terminate contracts with inspection companies. Since 2013, Nigeria, Ghana, Mauritania and D.R. Congo have achieved this goal. These Administrations are available to share their experiences.

100. Burkina Faso, Benin and Togo expressed their intention to WCO through a request for assistance.

101. Niger, for its part, unlike the usual procedure, just had the inspection company requested on its own initiative the end of the contract. A transition committee has been established.

- **Presentation of new WCO activities in the region**

102. Three fully funded regional workshops are planned, in particular on post-clearance control (CAP) in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on risk management strategy in Abuja and on intelligence in

103. The DGD conference is scheduled for April 2017 in Dakar, Senegal. In addition, the Conference of Francophone DGDs is announced in November 2017 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

I) DRAFTING OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE 17TH MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

104. The team of rapporteurs consolidated all the recommendations for adoption by the plenary

J) DISCUSSION ON THE DRAFT AGENDA FOR THE NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS AND THE 22ND CONFERENCE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERALS OF CUSTOMS OF WCO-WCA REGION IN DAKAR

105. A group consisting of the office of the Vice-Chair, WCO Secretariat, ROCB, Senegal and Nigeria has been designated for this purpose.

K) ADOPTION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 17TH MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

106. The team of rapporteurs submitted the draft recommendations for adoption by the experts. At the end of the discussions, the following are the recommendations adopted:

I. Under capacity building

To customs administrations in the region:

- Publicize WCO tools and instruments by including them in the training modules of their staff;
- Create conditions for the restitution of the knowledge acquired during the regional trainings or workshops.

To ROCB:

- Publicize WCO tools and instruments by enrolling them in the training modules of their staff;
- Create the conditions for the restitution of the knowledge acquired during regional trainings or workshops. Carry out the inventory of all accredited experts of the region in order to render a directory of trainers available to the regional training centers

II. Under the regional fund

To the office of the vice-chair:

- send letters of reminder of contributions to Member Administrations at least three months before the end of the year in order to meet budget planning requirement;

III. Under information technology and communication

RWG Information technology

- propose a strategy for a better ownership of Sydonia by administrations using Sydonia.

IV. Under the evaluation of implementation of recommendations

To the office of the vice-chair

- send the matrix of monitoring of implementation of recommendations two months prior to the meeting of the committee of experts.

to customs administrations:

- start the exercise for the monitoring of the implementation of recommendations and submit the matrix completed to the office of the vice-chair one month prior to the Committee of experts' meeting.

V. Under the measures planned to face the major challenges of the region:

To the office of the vice-chair

- Develop cooperation among WCO-WCA region and the other regions namely in the search for best practices
- Timely organize a regional workshop with all the stakeholders to carry out an in-depth reflection on the issue of guarantee in transit;
- Carry out a study on Juxtaposed Control Points (JCP) in the context of trade facilitation.

To customs administrations:

- contribute to the ratifying of the Bali agreement that should be notified to WCO;
- Enrich the document proposed by the RWG on the major challenges of the WCO-WCA region and submit it to the lead country latest in February.

CLOSING CEREMONY

118. While closing the deliberations, **Brigadier General TOUMANY SANGARE**, Director general of the customs of Guinea, appreciated the quality of the discussions which led to relevant recommendations. Also, he insisted on the importance of their

immediate implementation, because of the vitality and relevancy of the issues pertaining to customs modernization.

Done in Conakry, this 21st Day of December 2016

The Committee of Experts