



**Cabinet du Vice-président de l'Organisation Mondiale des
Douanes pour la Région de l'Afrique Occidentale et Centrale**

**Office of the Vice-Chair of the World Customs
Organization for the West and Central Africa Region**



AOC/CE4E

ACTIVITY REPORT OF WCO-WCA REGIONAL STRUCTURES

This report, which gives an account of the activities of regional structures, including those of the Office of the Vice-Chair, focuses on the following points:

- Activities implemented;
- Challenges faced;
- Perspectives.

I°/ ACTIVITES IMPLEMENTED

I.1 Organization and participation to Meetings

- *At the level of WCA region*
 - 7th Meeting of Contact Points for Capacity Building and Human Resource Managers, held from 24 to 28 October 2016 in Bamako, Mali. (Participants : 14 Administrations, ROCB, Office of the Vice-Chair, WCO Secretariat) ;
 - 7th Joint Statutory Meeting of National Correspondents (NC) of Regional Liaison Offices in charge of Intelligence (BRLR) organized from 14 to 17 November 2016 in Abuja, Nigeria, (participants : 14 Administrations, ROCB, Office of the Vice-Chair) ;
 -
 - 16th Meeting of the Committee of Experts held from 19 to 21 December 2016 in Conakry, Guinea (16 Administrations, the RTC of Ouagadougou, Brazzaville and Abuja, ROCB, BRLRs WA and CA);
 -
 - 1st meetings of the RWG Commissions for IT Development, held from 6 to 7 April 2017 in Grand-Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire (Participants: 16 Customs administrations, Office of the Vice-Chair, IT RWG, WCO Secretariat);
 - Workshop on risk management held from 20 to 25 February 2017 in Abuja, Nigeria.
 - Workshop on Intelligence and Security held from 3 to 7 April 2017 in Lagos, Nigeria.

- *At the level of the African*

8th Meeting of the Subcommittee of African Union Customs Director Generals held from 14 to 18 November 2016 in Harare, Zimbabwe (Participants: Customs Administrations, Office of the Vice-Chair, WCO Secretariat). The topics discussed during this meeting were mainly on juxtaposed checkpoints (JCPs), the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area of 0.2% levy on imports to the continent for the purpose of

financing the operational program of the African Union and budgets of peacekeeping operations from 2017 onwards.

- At the level of WCO
- 76th session of the General Policy Committee held from 5 to 7 December in Moscow, Russia. Several issues were discussed, including trade facilitation, security initiatives, electronic trade, performance measurement, control of illicit financial flows, 2016-2018 strategic plan and budget, and the issue of of statutes of the regional bodies.
- 12th World Meeting of ROCB Officers, RTCs and Office Vice-Chairs, held from 2 to 3 March 2017 in Brussels, Belgium (Participants: Office of the Vice-Chair, ROCB, RTCs).

The main focus of the meeting was the Regional Structure Guide and WCO Mercator Program developed to support Customs administrations in the implementation of TFA. WCA's Office of the Vice-Chair was invited to present the results of the first donors' conference.

For its part, the ROCB-WCA made a presentation on its strategy for capacity-building in the Region, particularly with regard to the process of developing, implementing and evaluating the regional strategic plan

The meeting was also marked by the first meeting of WCO Offices of Vice-Chairs.

- Joint Session 8th meeting of the Capacity Building Committee and 16th meeting of the Subcommittee on Ethics held from 7 to 10 March 2017. The objective of this session was to strengthen the linkages between trade facilitation and capacity building and was largely dominated by WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and WCO Mercator Program. (Participation of the ROCB, RTCs).
- 21st global meeting of BRLRs from 23 to 24 January 2017, in Brussels, Belgium.
- 36th Session of WCO Committee on Fraud from 27 to 31 March 2017, in Brussels, Belgium (Participation of BRLR WA and CA and customs Administrations of the Region).

I.2 Specific activities of structures

- Office of the Vice-Chair
- Preparation of the working document on the status of regional bodies of WCO following a WCO Chair's instruction at the 75th session of the General Policy Committee (GPC). This document served as a basis for discussion at the 76th Session during the December 2017 GPC in Moscow, Russia;
- Harmonization of requests for funds through the development of a single application template;

- Presentation of the Region's Capacity Building priorities by responding to a WCO questionnaire.
- Presentation of the Region's applicants for vacant positions in the WCO's Private Sector Consultative Group (PSCG), in accordance with the Secretary General's Correspondence No. 17SL 0023 of 31 January 2017. To this end, the Vice-Chair addressed a correspondence to all 23 Customs administrations in the Region. Only Togo and Côte d'Ivoire responded with applications that were subsequently transferred to WCO Secretariat;
- Response of the Vice-Chair to a request from Australian Customs for the participation of a representative of the said administration to the 22nd Conference of Customs Director Generals to contribute to the debate on governance within WCO. As this matter was to be discussed during the closed door meeting of the Director Generals, the Vice-Chair did not consider it necessary to have a representative from Australia attending the conference.
- Updating of the Regional Guide through updates taking into account the Regional Working Group for IT Development (RWG), National Development Advisors (NDA) in the terms of reference of ROCB, updating of WCO member countries following the accession of Kosovo, details of the population of the most populated country in the Region, reaching more than 180 million inhabitants;
- Intensification of communication through the availability of working documents of meetings, both in French and English, on the regional website www.omdaoc.org.
 - Regional Office of Capacity Building (ROCB-WCA)
- Collaboration with ECOWAS: Upon request of ECOWAS, ROCB-WCA held a meeting on 18 and 19 October with the department in charge of collaborating with the Customs of this institution in Abuja, Nigeria. The objective of the meeting was to establish a formal cooperation framework between the two structures to identify the needs and priorities of Customs Administrations members of the economic zone. ECOWAS has secured funding from the German Cooperation (GIZ) to jointly conduct missions with ROCB to assess the needs of member Administrations based on the matrix developed by ROCB-WCA.
- Meeting with the Customs of South Korea. This 48 hour working session with ROCB-WCA at its headquarters in Abidjan to establish the basis for a collaboration to strengthen the capacities of the Customs Administrations of the Western and Central African Region.
 - Regional Training Centers (RTCs)

The RTC in Abuja has conducted the following specific activities:

- Participation to the aforementioned meeting with ECOWAS and ROCB in Abuja, Nigeria as part of the capacity building needs assessment project initiated by ECOWAS with the support of GIZ;
- Coordination of the Regional Strategy Development Workshop on Risk Management, held in Abuja from 20 to 24 February 2017;
 - o RTC of Brazzaville
- participation to the meetings of the Committee for the Modernization of the Customs of the Congo in the framework of implementation of priority actions recommended by the international institutions;
- participation from 3 to 6 January 2017 to the national workshop on the accession of the Congo to RKC;
- active participation in the revision of the CEMAC Customs Code;
 - o RTC of Ouagadougou
- Regional Liaison Offices in charge of Intelligence (BRLR-WA/CA)
 - Cooperation with WCO Secretariat, Office of the Vice-Chair, other BRLRs, member Administrations and other partners;
 - Collection, analysis and validation of CEN data from 2011 to 2016 and issuance of alerts;
 - Development of the information and analysis newsletter;
 - Strategic meetings with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), INTERPOL, the NGO TRAFFIC and other partners;
 - Organization and participation in anti-fraud operations; (**WESTERLIES 4** for the control of illicit trafficking in Met-Amphetamine from 18 to 27 May 2016, **AFRICAN WINGS 3** concerning the surveillance of private aviation from 7 to 14 June 2016 and **CRIPHARME 2** for the fight against pharmaceutical crime from 29 January to 21 February 2017)
 - Design of three (03) projects related to anti-fraud operations (BONOBO, SENGHOR, BAKWANGA);
 - Initiation project to CEN, CENCOMM at the level of WCO-AOC Region.
- The Regional Working Group (RWG) for IT Development

- Organization of the RWG Commissions materialized by letters sent to the Director Generals under the auspices of the Office of the Vice-Chair, in which Administrations were invited to appoint their representatives to the various RWG commissions;
- Establishment of a Web space dedicated to IT RWG on the site of the ROCB-WCA;
- Setting up discussion forums (virtual space for meetings, exchanges and work of WRG for the IT development): <http://www.omdaoc.org/GTR/forum/>. The stated ambition, with these tools, is to have meetings every day of the year.

II°/ CHALLENGES

II.1 Challenge common to structures

Regional structures have common difficulties which can be summarized as follows:

- Lack of staff and the issue of their status.

The absence of a legal status offering guarantees to the officials of regional bodies is a hindrance to the will of administrations to allocate Workers, hence the recurrent needs expressed by certain structures.

However, it is important to note the provision of one of its senior executives this year by Cameroon, thus responding to a long-term need expressed by ROCB to have English-speaking staff

In addition to these major challenges, other difficulties have been expressed by structures.

II.1- Specific challenges mentioned by structures

- At the level of coordination of activities by the office of the vice-chair

Many Customs Administrations do not respond to correspondence addressed to them or react late. This situation is not conducive to the coordination role of the Office of the Vice-Chair, especially when it comes to obtaining the views of administrations in order to obtain the regional position on a given issue.

- At the level of communication

Requests to Customs Administrations and regional structures to obtain working papers sometimes remain unanswered; this does not allow the translation of the documents, sometimes causing problems of communication during deliberations.

Unavailability of the region's website in English is also an important challenge to be addressed at the level of communication.

- At the level of execution of the regional budget:

Structures do not correctly complete the application form, sometimes omitting to specify the budget line subject of the request. This does not make it easy for the expenditure officer to work.

It should therefore be remembered that many Administrations still owe arrears with regards to their contributions to the regional fund.

- At the level of ROCBs

The following situations hamper the effectiveness of these structures. Namely:

- weak supply of CEN by National Correspondents;
- lack of training and instability at the NC position in some Administrations (BRLR-WA/CA)
- lack of a legal framework for intelligence in certain Member Administrations (BRLR-WA).

III°/ PERSPECTIVES

III .1 At the level of intelligence

- Establishing a permanent flow of information on commercial fraud between NCs.
- regularly publishing CEN information and analysis newsletters;
- continuing national training workshops for Customs officers on intelligence;
- organizing the third edition of CRIPHARM Operation;
- holding a regional training workshop on CEN.
- Inviting NCs to propose to their Administrations the setting up of a platform for communication and exchange of information between various national fraud control bodies;
- improving the number and quality of information to be included in the CEN.

III .2 At the level of information and communication technologies

- Making virtual sessions initiated within the framework of RWG commissions more dynamic;
- Contributing to the optimization of regional website.

III .3 At the level of capacity building

- Finalizing the evaluation of the 2013-2017 strategic plan
- Developing the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan
- Working towards the implementation of WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation
- Seek further support from WCO secretariat for the implementation of the TFA

III.4 with regards to the Office of the Vice-chair

- Coordinating and participate in regional and international meetings in line with its mandate, starting with the second donors' conference scheduled for May 29 to June 2 in Lomé, TOGO.
- Intensifying intra-regional communication and solidarity;
- pursuing initiatives in favour of a legal status adapted to the realities of regional structures;
- continuing to raise awareness for exchanges of experience and best practices;
- continuing to promote the strategic plan and WCO tools in the Region;
- regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of recommendations and decisions resulting from regional meetings.