



Abidjan, 1st March 2019

WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION (WCO)

WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA (WCA)

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR CAPACITY BUILDING, ABIDJAN COTE D'IVOIRE

ACTIVITY REPORT

2018-2019

1 Introduction

This document presents the general situation of activities of the Regional Office for Capacity (ROCB) for West and Central Africa (WCA), for the period 2018-2019. It comprises eight (08) main parts, namely:

- The general situation and evolution of the ROCB in 2018-2019 ;
- The implementation of recommendations to ROCB;
- ROCB external activities for the period ;
- ROCB internal activities for the period ;
- Available expertise ;
- Communication and development of partnerships
- Major challenges ;
- Recommendations.

2 General situation and evolution of ROCB in 2018-2019

2.1 Staff situation

The number of office staff stabilized at ten (10) as at 28-02-2019. Some notable events of the year included the departure of Mr. Souleymane Sangaré, his replacement by Mr. Tafili Ebenezer who was already acting as Technical Attaché to ROCB, and the arrival of a new senior official provided by the Republic of Congo.

Presently, ROCB has a staff strength of nine senior officials and administrative personnel distributed as follows, according to the countries of origin:

- Cameroon : 1
- Côte d'Ivoire : 6
- Gabon : 1
- Republic of Congo : 2

2.2 Staff development

ROCB staff were provided training on project management and human resource management (HRM), during a Training Workshop that held in Abidjan from 9 to 12 October 2018. The workshop, which was conducted by two Experts provided by the WCO Secretariat, had logistic support from the Customs of Côte d'Ivoire.

This training enabled the staff of ROCB to develop competency-based HRM tools, and also design a Human Resource Management Strategy. The application of these tools will contribute to the development of ROCB personnel.

Furthermore, a Technical Attaché of ROCB recently participated in the 77th WCO Fellowship Programme.

2.3 Equipment/Mobile stock :

ROCB has sufficient working space, with a capacity that can contain up to 17 employees, a conference room, a training room, a cafeteria and a library, all equipped with sufficient furniture and computer equipment.

All the equipment and mobile stock are provided by Cote d'Ivoire Customs, which has equally provided ROCB with two service cars.

2.4 Other working conditions

The security and maintenance of the premises, equipment and mobile stock, are ensured by service providers at the employ of Cote d'Ivoire Customs. Water, electricity and fixed telephone bills are equally paid by Cote d'Ivoire Customs.

2.5 Funding/Budget

A total of 220. 770 Euros was earmarked in the 2018-2019 Regional Budget for the funding of ROCB activities. While awaiting the Report of the Finance Committee, it is worth noting that a significant part of this budget was not executed, notably due to the late programming of technical assistance activities to administrations, and the unusual delays in the provision of funds from the regional bank account.

3 Implementation of recommendations to ROCB

The current state of implementation of the recommendations addressed to ROCB is as follows:

3.1 Recommendations of the 23rd Conference of Directors General of Customs WCA

One recommendation was made to ROCB, namely to :

- **Publish all projects that conform to the requirements of partners/donors on the regional web site.**

All projects drafted by the region that can be of interest to donors are published on the web site under the heading devoted to the Conference of Donors.

3.2 Recommendations of the 10th Meeting of the African Union Sub-Committee of Directors General of Customs

There was no direct recommendation made to the ROCB. Three recommendations were made to the African Union Commission, to involve ROCBs in the continent in its work on corruption risk mapping, the development of an Integrity Strategy for African Customs Administrations, and the preparation of a Compendium of best practices and case studies concerning the fight against corruption.

The African Union Commission has not yet launched the said activities.

3.3 Recommendations of the 21st Meeting of the WCA Committee of Experts

Recommendations to the ROCB	Implementation
Publish all reports on the Regional web site	Reports of meetings are published under the devoted headings in the regional web site, as

	<p>the final versions of the said reports are forwarded to the ROCB by the organizers of the meetings.</p> <p>Very few of these reports have been forwarded to the ROCB for publication.</p>
Organize training sessions on the use of evaluation tools in view of their ownership (the Mirror, the Forum)	<p>The ROCB sent a correspondence to Administrations in early December 2018, giving them the possibility of choosing the training on the Mirror in view of the ROCB technical assistance mission.</p> <p>Only Burkina Faso expressed the need and a mission in this regard is envisaged for April 2019.</p> <p>A general training session on the Mirror shall be programmed for the next meeting of Contact Points for CB.</p>
Encourage and assist Administrations that are willing, to benefit from the sharing of the experience of members that have developed expertise in competency-based human resource management, project management and stakeholder engagement, in line with the Regional Coaching Programme	<p>The experience of Gambia and Liberia were put on the Regional Capacity Building Market during the 9th meeting of Contact Points for CB.</p> <p>The ROCB is facilitating the sharing of experience in this regard between Cameroon and the Gambia. The ROCB equally uses recognized regional Experts in HRM to assist administrations that make the request.</p>
Improve the ToR of Contact Points to be submitted for adoption by the Directors General	A draft on the improved ToRs will be submitted to the next meeting of Contact Points for a prior examination.
Ensure the sharing of best practices in the area of resource mobilization	Administrations with best practices in the area of resource mobilization shall be invited to share their experience during the 10 th meeting of Contact Points for CB

3.4 Recommendations of the 9th meeting of WCA Contact Points

The ROCB presented the recommendations of this meeting at the 21st meeting of the Committee of Experts for inclusion in the list of recommendations to be submitted for the decision of the 24th Conference of Directors General of Customs.

3.5 Recommendations of the 8th meeting of Managers of Human Resources and Training WCA

The ROCB presented the recommendations of this meeting at the 21st meeting of the Committee of Experts for inclusion in the list of recommendations to be submitted for the decision of the 24th Conference of Directors General of Customs.

4 ROCB external activities for the period

4.1 Overall view in figures:

Regional workshops	Level of involvement of the ROCB		
	Logistics Organisation	Participation	Moderation
Regional	03	07	02
Sub regional/ several Members		02	
Regional accreditation			
Total	03	09	02
National workshops (Place)			
Benin			
Burkina Faso			
Cameroon			
Cape Verde			
Central African Rep.			
Chad			
Congo (Republic)			
Côte d'Ivoire		01	
DR Congo			
Gabon			
Gambia			02
Ghana			
Guinea			
Guinea-Bissau			
Liberia			
Mali			
Mauritania			01
Niger			
Nigeria			
Sao Tome & Principe			
Senegal			
Sierra Leone			
Togo			
Total		01	03
TOTAL	03	10	05

4.2 Details of activities organized by the ROCB

During this period the ROCB organized activities as detailed in the following table:

Place of activity (country and city)	Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
Dates	29 July to 01 August 2018
Subject	1st AU-ROCB/WCA Sensitization Workshop on the Ratification and Implementation of the WCO Trade Facilitation Agreement for the West and Central Africa Region.
Objectives	Sensitization of countries of the WCA Region on the ratification and implementation of the TFA and the sharing of experience.
Results	Two participants (1 from the Customs and 1 from Trade) from the 09 countries of the Region that have not yet ratified the TFA were sensitized on the various TFA measures, the Mercator Programme, the process of ratification and notification.
Contribution to the realization of the regional strategy	Contribution to the realization of the trade facilitation related actions of the Customs Procedures and Partnership strategic focus areas of the 2018-2022 Regional Strategic Plan.
Continuation	Since this workshop, 2 additional countries have ratified the TFA; some of the remaining 7 countries have started the ratification process.
Recommendations/other observations	Assist Custom administrations of the Region in countries that have not yet ratified the TFA, to enable them to engage national stakeholders with the view to ratify the agreement and to notify their categorization of the measures.

Place of the activity (country and city)	Bamako in Mali
Dates	24 to 26 September 2018
Subject	8th regional workshop of Training and Human Resources Managers of Customs Administrations of West and Central Africa.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage the effective application of modern tools for human resource management and training; - Share the experiences and best practices of members in the area of competency-based HRM; - Update the knowledge of Managers of human resources and training on the major guidelines and tools of the WCO in the area of HR; - Make an inventory of training strategies to enhance the professionalism of Custom administrations of the WCO-WCA Region.
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Participants from 16 countries of the Region shared their national experiences on HRM and were sensitized on practical approaches that facilitate the effective implementation of competency-based HRM tools. -An Expert in HRM from the Region conducted the workshop with the Expert from the WCO Secretariat with much satisfaction.
Contribution to the realization of the Regional Strategy	Contribution to the realization of the Human Resource Management Focus Area of the 2018-2022 Regional Strategic Plan.

Continuation	The ROCB received several requests for technical assistance from administrations on the implementation of the competency-based HRM approach. The ROCB has just undertaken such a mission for Mauritania Customs, and other missions are envisaged for other countries. The mission was led by a regional Expert in HRM, assisted by a Technical Attaché from the ROCB. Missions for the sharing of experience between countries on the same theme have equally been programmed.
Recommendations/other observations	Considering the real needs and demand, technical assistance in HRM should be increased for Customs administrations of the Region. The ROCB should capitalize on the positive results of the MADAO project to provide increased assistance. However, the three day period set by the Regional budget for technical assistance missions, does not allow the structure to satisfactorily conduct this kind of a mission.

Place of the activity (country and city)	Yaounde, Cameroon
Dates	31 October to 02 November 2018
Subject	The 9th Meeting of Contact Points for Capacity Building of Customs administrations of West and Central Africa Region.
Objectives	<p>-Improve on the effective implementation of reform and modernisation initiatives within Administrations of West and Central Africa, through sharing of national experiences on approaches, instruments and tools adapted to the realities of the region.</p> <p>-Enable administrations of the Region to better plan, implement, evaluate and adapt their actions in reform and modernization.</p>
Results	<p>Participants from 11 countries of the region shared their national experiences and were sensitized on practical approaches that facilitate monitoring and evaluation of the effective implementation of strategic plans, well as project management, organizational performance measurement, the conception and use of strategic dashboards, and the mobilization of additional resources to fund the reform process.</p> <p>Participants were equally provided capacity building on the implementation of the TFA and the African Continental Free Trade Area, and the need for collaboration with the other stakeholders.</p>
Contribution to the realization of the Regional Strategy	Contribution to the realization of the Strategic Management Focus Area of the 2018-2022 Regional Strategic Plan.
Continuation	The ROCB received several requests for technical assistance to administrations on action planning. There were equally requests for

	missions for the sharing of experience between countries on the monitoring and evaluation of reform initiatives and the strategic dashboard, within the framework of the Regional Coaching Programme. Some are currently being programmed.
Recommendations/other observations	<p>-The organization of training workshops on project management for Customs administrations.</p> <p>-The organization of a regional workshop on performance measurement.</p>

4.3 Details of other activities in which ROCB participated

During this period, ROCB participated in the following activities organized by other structures:

Place of the activity (country and city)	Banjul, Gambia
Dates	29 May to 1st June 2018
Subject	Technical Assistance Mission to the Gambia Customs on strategic management, within the framework of the WACAM project. This assistance enabled Gambia's administration to design both its project management methodology and key performance indicators with the view to develop its strategic dashboard.
Lessons for ROCB	The establishment of a project management framework, as well as performance measurement are highly beneficial activities for Customs Administrations of the WCA Region. ROCB should invest in these areas.
Recommendations/other observations	Strengthen the capacities of Custom Administrations of the WCA Region in the area of project management and performance measurement.

Place of the activity (country and city)	Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
Dates	9 to 12 October 2018
Subject	Workshop on project management and human resource management for the Regional Office for Capacity Building for West and Central Africa (ROCB-WCA) and Cote d'Ivoire Customs.
Lessons for ROCB	The training received enabled ROCB to design its competency-based HRM tools.
Recommendations/other observations	It is necessary to further strengthen the capacities of ROCB, as well as those of Customs administrations of the Region in the area of project management, in order to improve on the implementation of reform and modernization programs.

Place of the activity (country and city)	Cairo, Egypt
Dates	15-17 August 2018
Subject	4th AU Forum of Custom Experts on trade facilitation in Africa. Theme : <i>Implementation of Authorized Economic Operators and Mutual Administrative Agreements for Trade Facilitation in Africa</i>
Lessons for ROCB	ROCB should develop more initiatives in the area of trade facilitation
Recommendations/ other observations	-It is necessary to promote a regional approach to AEO. -Integration of the SME dimension for the success of all AEO programmes in the Region.

Place of the activity (country and city)	Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania
Dates	29 to 31 August 2018
Subject	4th AU Workshop on the management of regional transit in Africa.
Lessons for ROCB	Considering its importance and the challenges related to its management for our administrations, transit should remain a priority in ROCB's capacity building strategy
Recommendations/other observations	-Promote experience sharing between custom administrations of the region in the area of transit. -Support the inter-connection of customs clearance systems and the electronic monitoring of goods on transit. -Promote international instruments and tools in the area of transit.

Place of the activity (country and city)	Moroni, the Comoro Island;
Dates	17-21 September 2018
Subject	10th ordinary meeting of African Union Sub-Committee of Directors General of Customs Theme: « The fight against corruption in the customs for an effective implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Zone (ZLECAf) ».
Lessons for ROCB	ROCB should further mainstream the theme of the fight against corruption in regional meetings under its charge, and develop regional initiatives as concerns the promotion of customs ethics.
Recommendations/ other observations	-The mainstreaming in the WCA Regional Strategy, of the AU Trade Facilitation Strategy approved by Directors General of Customs of the continent during the meeting. -The promotion of the Declaration of DGs on the fight against corruption.

Place of the activity (country and city)	Yaounde, Cameroon
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Dates	29 to 30 October 2018
Subject	Meeting for West and Central Africa Region (WCA) on the WCO 2019-2022 Strategic Plan.
Lessons for ROCB	<p>-ROCB was satisfied with the meeting in its strategic alignment strategy and consultation of interested parties in the designing of the regional strategic plan.</p> <p>-ROCB should give significant importance to regional initiatives in the preparation of the regional strategy.</p>
Recommendations/ other observations	The Region should follow up deliberations on the adoption of the 2019-2022 WCO Strategic Plan by the WCO policy organs, in order to ensure the mainstreaming of the Region's priorities.

Pace of the activity (country and city)	Brussels, Belgium
Dates	12 to 13 November 2018
Subject	19th Meeting of the Management Committee of the RKC
Lessons for ROCB	The personnel of ROCB should take ownership of the RKC to improve on the quality of its capacity building activities.
Recommendations/ other observations	The WCA Region should closely follow up and actively participate in discussions on the revision of RKC.

Pace of the activity (country and city)	Abuja, Nigeria
Dates	19 to 21 November 2018
Subject	21st Meeting of the Committee of Experts
Lessons for ROCB	ROCB should invest more in the organization of regional meetings and in the drafting and conservation of reports and decisions coming out from the said meetings.
Recommendations/ other observations	<p>-The Region should ensure an increased rate of participation of members in this important meeting.</p> <p>-Special effort should be made to ensure the participation of Anglophone and Portuguese speaking countries.</p>

Place of the activity (country and city)	Arusha, Tanzania
Dates	20-22 February 2019
Subject	<p>8th Meeting of the AUC-REC Sub-committee on Customs cooperation</p> <p>Objective: Ensure the proper coordination of projects, programmes and activities concerning customs modernization and trade facilitation, in conformity with the Abuja Treaty.</p>

Lessons for ROCB	ROCB should be active at the regional level in the search for partnership with donors and RECs for the reform and modernization of Customs Administrations of the Region.
Recommendations/ other observations	Develop regional projects in the area of customs cooperation and trade facilitation that can meet the requirements of donors

Pace of the activity (country and city)	Banjul, Gambia
Dates	4 – 8 February 2019
Subject	WCO national workshop on the study of the necessary delay for the release of goods(TRS)
Lessons for ROCB	Only 5 out of the 23 countries of the Region have carried out the TRS. This low rate concerns ROCB which should ensure the promotion of this tool among members of the Region.
Recommendations/ other observations	Design a project to submit to donors on Time Release Studies for all Customs Administrations of the Region.

Place of the activity (country and city)	Nouakchott, Mauritania
Dates	19 to 21 February 2019
Subject	Technical assistance mission by ROCB to Mauritania Customs in the area of modernization of human resource management based on the competency approach.
Lessons for ROBB	The needs of Custom Administrations of the Region in HRM are real and should be addressed by ROCB. Regional Expertise is being put in place but the financial means is a handicap.
Recommendations/ other observations	As the HR component of the WACAM has come to an end, additional funds should be sought to take care of the increasing needs expressed by Administrations of the Region in the area of HRM.

Place of the activity (country and city)	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
Dates	27 to 29 February 2019
Subject	The Continental Inaugural Conference on the EU-WCO Programme “Harmonizing the classification of goods based on WCO standards to enhance Africa trade.”
Lessons for ROCB	It is important for ROCB to closely monitor the participation of WCA Customs Administrations in this programme and take ownership of the achievements for perpetuation within the Region.
Recommendations/	Customs administrations of the Region should designate competent

other observations	Contact Points within the framework of this programme and work actively within the appropriate structures of their RECs, in order to make the best out of the programme.
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4.4 Other participations.

ROCB equally participated in the following activities:

- Activities of the C-RED Project organized in Senegal and in Liberia in May 2018;
- The June 2018 session of the WCO Council

5 ROCB internal activities for the period

5.4 Handing over between the in-coming and out-going Directors of ROCB

This event took place on Thursday 24 July 2018, at the ROCB head office in Abidjan, presided over by the Vice-Chair of the Region, in the presence of the Customs Administration of Côte d'Ivoire and the WCO Secretariat.

On the sidelines of the handing over ceremony, ROCB staff and the WCO Secretariat, represented by Messrs. Bernard Zbinden and Thierry Ivars, held working sessions in order to enhance consultation and collaboration between the two parties, for a better coordination of capacity building activities within the Region.

5.5 Development of competence-based HRM tools

This activity enabled ROCB to develop the following tools for the improvement of its human resource management:

- An organizational chart ;
- A job catalogue ;
- A competency framework ;
- All the job descriptions ;
- A human resource management strategy.

The ROCB HRM approach shall be presented at the 24th Conference of Directors General of Customs of the Region, for approval.

6 Available Expertise

The ROCB lacks sufficient internal expertise to properly conduct its missions. There is only one accredited expert (Mercator Programme Counsellor) in the ROCB. Although some staff have developed strategic planning skills, the level of Customs professional competence and knowledge of WCO instruments is still average.

Considering these insufficiencies, the ROCB has made the professionalization of its staff a priority area of its 2019-2022 HRM Strategy. The office staff is encouraged to participate in various WCO high level training programmes and in the E-learning programme. A senior official recently

participated in the Scholarship Programme. An internal mutual training programme will begin in May, to encourage knowledge sharing.

Furthermore, a pool of quality regional experts, though working in their respective administrations, is available to the ROCB to conduct capacity building activities, in conformity with the prescriptions of the Conference of Directors General of Customs.

7 Communication and partnership development

With regard to communication, ROCB has a regional web site and messaging system.

Important information concerning the functioning of the Region, regional structures, regional statutory meetings, other regional events, as well as the regional strategy are published on the regional web site. During the period 2018-2019, efforts were made by the ROCB to make the site more accessible to members of the Region, our partners and the public. The web site is henceforth bilingual (French and English). Efforts were made to ensure the regular updating of information on the site.

Besides, work to improve on the Mirror, the on-line tool for the evaluation of the implementation of Regional Strategic Plan, is currently being finalized. This will enable administrations to conduct their self-assessment exercises directly on-line.

There have equally been improvements on the regional messaging system that was migrated to a new host. An increased use of the messaging system by administrations, regional structures and partners has been observed.

However, more effort is still needed as concerns the regular update of the web site and the concurrent availability of information in English and French. A third phase of the development of the web site shall consist in making it trilingual to take into account the Portuguese speaking countries of the Region.

As concerns partnership, cooperation relations have been strengthened with ECOWAS, as well as with the African Union Commission through reciprocal participation in relevant meetings organized by the two parties, and the joint organization of capacity building activities.

8 Major challenges

During the 2018-2019 period, the ROCB encountered the following difficulties in the exercise of its missions:

- Insufficient staff in quantity and in quality and especially the absence of representativeness with regard to the three official languages of the Region ;
- Lack of internal expertise in certain domains ;
- Low level of motivation of staff essentially due to the absence of job profiles and the lack of understanding by some senior officials of their roles and responsibilities ;
- Insufficient financial means to organize capacity building activities (workshops, seminars, conferences etc.);

- Lateness in the provision of funds for activities funded by the Regional Fund.

9 Recommendations

ROCB recommends the following for the period 2019-2020:

- Support to the ROCB in the implementation of competence-based HRM tools and the HRM Strategy that it has developed;
- Improvement of the disbursement process from the Regional Fund;
- Translation of the reports of regional meetings in English, French and Portuguese;
- Organization of the 3rd Donor Conference;
- Development of regional projects that could be of interest to donors;
- Organization of regional workshops in relevant and current areas (Electronic trade, performance measurement, etc.);
- Creation of an information bulletin by the ROCB.

END