

**OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHAIR**

**WCO WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA REGION**

**Office of the Vice-President of the WCO for the Region of**

**Quest and Central Africa**

**OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER-GENERAL**

NIGERIA CUSTOMS SERVICE

HEADQUARTERS

3 ABIDJAN STREET, ZONE 3 WUSE-ABUJA

**SUMMARY OF THE CONCLUSIONS**

**FROM THE29th CONFERENCE OF CUSTOMS DIRECTORS GENERAL OF THE WCO/WCA REGION**

**Banjul, 04 and 05 MAY 2023**

From 4 to 5 May 2023, the twenty-ninth conference of the Directors General of Customs of the West and Central Africa Region of the World Customs Organization was held at the Dawda Kairaba Jawara International Conference Centre in Banjul, Republic of the Gambia.

This important meeting, planned in the agenda of the activities of the WCO AOC Region, was aimed, among others, to assess the implementation of the recommendations of the 28th Customs Directors General Conference held in Brazzaville and to review the activity reports of the Vice-Presidency, the WCO Secretariat, regional structures and the Regional IT Working Group, as well as the level of contributions of each member country and emerging issues.

**Opening ceremony**

The opening ceremony graced by the presence of His Excellency **Adama BARROW,**  President of the Republic of the Gambia, was marked by six (6) speeches delivered respectively by Mr **Yankuba DARBOE**, Commissioner General of the Gambia Revenu Authority, **Hamed Ibrahim Ali Vice-President of the WCO AOC,** NJEBI VINCENT KWALAR, **Regional Coordinator,** Kunio MIKURIYA**, Secretary General of the World Customs Organization,** Seedy KEITA, **Gambian Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs and finally, that of the President of the Republic.**

During the various speeches, the following points were made:

* the importance of building the capacity of the younger generation of customs officers to face the challenges of the continent;
* urgent management of the issue of fragile borders;
* the excellent work being done by customs in the region and the need to expand the number of accredited experts.
* promoting knowledge sharing between customs administrations in the region and establishing mechanisms to encourage the younger generation;
* the need to take account of technological innovation in the modernisation of customs administrations;
* the adaptation of customs to changes in world trade and cross-border crime.

**Workflow**

After the presentation of the members of the meeting’s bureau and the team of rapporteurs, made up of RILO WA, Senegal, Central African Republic, Congo and Nigeria, the conference amended the agenda as follows:

* presentation of activity reports;
* consideration of general policy issues;
* review of budgetary and financial issues;
* examination of technical issues;
* partnerships.
* **Presentation of activity reports**

The various regional structures presented reports on activities related to current programmes and projects in the WCO WCA region. On this occasion they raised the difficulties encountered and outlined the prospects for the years to come.

* **Examination of general policy issues**

Having recalled the important role played by the Conference of Customs Directors-General in strengthening regional cooperation, promoting efficient and modern customs practices, combating smuggling, terrorism and corruption, The Directors-General made a plea to the Secretary-General of the WCO on the need for continued cooperation between the General Secretariat and the WCA region. In addition, the following points were noted;

* the introduction of mid-term evaluations of the Regional Strategic Plan 2023-2027;
* supporting regional structures with human, material and financial resources;
* the need to strengthen trade facilitation measures to better stimulate intra-regional trade.
* **Review of budgetary and financial matters**

The Conference was able to review the reports of the Regional Fund Manager, the Chairman of the Finance Committee and the Chairman of the Audit Committee. The delay in member input was lamented by stakeholders. The Chairman of the Audit Committee also gave an update on the audit of regional structures.

It should be noted that significant progress has been made in clearing the arrears of contributions owed by the States. The need to adapt our ambitions to our needs, given our limited resources, has therefore been stressed.

* **Review of technical issues**

The conference followed presentations on the implementation of the WCO/WCA Strategic Plan 2023-2027 and WCO anti-fraud tools. The results of **CRIPHARM 7 and ALAMBA 3** were presented. At the end of these presentations, the crucial role played by RILOs in the fight against illicit trafficking was magnified.

* **Partnerships**

The conference followed presentations from partners in the region as part of their collaboration with jurisdictions. These are the AFRITAC Centre, JICA and UNCTAD.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 29th ANNUAL MEETING OF THE DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CUSTOMS IN THE WCA REGION**

At the end of the two days of work, the 29th Conference of Directors General of Customs of the WCO WCA region made the following recommendations to the various stakeholders:

**UNDER THE REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN**

* **To the Vice Presidency:**
	+ Popularize the new Strategic Plan 2023-2027 with the Customs Administrations;
* **To Customs Administrations:**
	+ Consolidate and/or reactivate modernization committees;
	+ Establish mechanisms for periodic monitoring and evaluation of the modernization process;
	+ Ensure ongoing evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations from the Customs Directors General Conferences;
* **To the ROCB :**
	+ Pooling efforts and promoting mutual aid at regional level

**THE FUNCTIONING AND STATUS OF REGIONAL STRUCTURES**

* **To the Vice Presidency:**
	+ Establish a matrix to assess the impact of regional structures on the activities of member administrations;
	+ Continue efforts to obtain status for other regional structures based on the ROCB model;
	+ Update the regional guide.

**CAPACITY BUILDING**

* **To the WCO Secretariat:**
	+ Finalize the accreditation process for pre-accredited experts in the region;
* **To the Vice Presidency:**
	+ Promote the fight against corruption and integrity through the A-CIP project;
	+ Invite customs administrations to conduct the road map self-assessment exercise to assess their performance and guide capacity building needs;
* **To the ROCB :**
	+ Promote accredited experts from the region in capacity-building missions;
	+ Strengthen the momentum of the HR modernization of customs administrations in the region through the implementation of a competence-based HR strategy;
* **To Customs Administrations:**
	+ participate in regional workshops organized in collaboration with partners in capacity building.
* **To the RILOs:**
	+ Strengthen training activities in the field of intelligence and risk management.

**IN THE FIGHT AGAINST FRAUD, CRIME AND TERRORISM**

* **To the Vice Presidency:**
	+ Support the RILOs in establishing new partnerships in the organization of anti-fraud operations (CRIPHARM and ALAMBA);
* **To Customs Administrations:**
	+ Strengthen the participation of national operational units in CRIPHARM and ALAMBA operations;
	+ To promote the sharing of experiences during anti-fraud operations;
	+ Consider setting up special inter-State operations with a view to better securing the supply chain;
	+ Strengthen, through bilateral agreements, greater cooperation between border units to better combat terrorism and major trafficking.

**UNDER THE REGIONAL FUND**

* **To the Vice Presidency:**
	+ Seek alternative funding to enhance the potential of the Regional Fund;
	+ Continue efforts to raise awareness among debtor administrations about the payment of all arrears;
	+ Instruct the Finance Committee to allocate a budget to the IT WG to fund its activities.
* **To the Directors General:**
* Take ownership of the regional financial procedure manual to optimize the follow-up of their annual contributions and the settlement of disputes inherent to malfunctions in banking transactions;
* Ensure that each member jurisdiction is up to date on its annual contribution.
* **To the Finance Committee:**
* Ensure that regional structures comply with the rules laid down in the budget and financial procedures manual.

**INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES**

* **To the Vice Presidency:**
	+ Include on the agenda of the next Directors General conference, a project to implement a human resources management information system (HRMIS), in collaboration with the WCO, taking into account the administrative and strategic dimensions for the benefit of the administrations of the region;
* **To Customs Administrations:**
	+ Ensure the effective participation of Member Country CIO’s in the WCO Secretariat’s ICT activities;
	+ Strengthen the capacity of agents in the field of emerging technologies;
	+ Promote and increase the use of emerging technologies for customs value management and administrative process modernization.

**FOR THE FACILITATION OF CUSTOMS PROCEDURES**

* **o To Central African customs administrations:**
	+ - In the context of the implementation of the AfCFTA, commit to the interconnection of transit systems, with SIGMAT as the standard, and designate national project leaders by May 20, 2023.

**Done at Banjul, 05 May 2023**

**REPORT OF THE CLOSED-DOOR SESSION OF HEADS OF DELEGATION**

On the occasion of the 29ème Conference of Directors General of Customs of the World Customs Organization Region for West and Central Africa held from 4 to 05 May 2023 at the Dawda Kairaba Jawara International Conference Centre in the Republic of The Gambia, the Directors General and Heads of Delegations met in a closed-door session on Friday 05 May 2023 from 13:20 to 16:15 under the chairmanship of **General Hamed Ibrahim Ali**, Vice President of the WCO-WCA.

Nineteen (19) customs administrations attended the closed-door session.

Following the adoption of the amended agenda and after discussions and exchanges of views, the following decisions were taken:

1. **Payment plan to clear arrears**

The administrations in debt are invited to pay their outstanding contributions and to present a payment plan for clearing their arrears in the margins of the June 2023 WCO Council meeting.

1. **Dates and venues of the next statutory meetings**
* The Thirtieth Conference of Directors General of Customs in the WCO region will be held in 2024 in Mali.
* The Central African countries have unanimously nominated the Democratic Republic of Congo to host the 31st Conference of Directors General of Customs of the WCO region in 2025. The DRC accepted but will have to clear this with its higher authorities.
* For all other statutory meetings, the Vice President's Board will urgently transmit the list and the dates to all administrations, who are urged to give their suggestions at the latest in the margins of the Council meeting in June 2023.
1. **Election of the WCO-WCA Vice-Chair**

The Federal Republic of NIGERIA is unanimously re-elected.

1. **Appointment of regional representatives to the WCO**

WCO Vice-Chair (Nigeria)

CPG Members: Anglophone (01) GHANA

 Francophone (01) DRC

Finance Committee: Gambia (Chair), Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Gabon,

Audit Committee: Sierra Leone (Chair), Togo, Senegal.

1. **Position of the WCA region on the election of the WCO Secretary General**

The closed-door session decided to table this issue in the margins of the WCO Council meeting in June 2023 for a decision.

**Done in Banjul, on 05 May 2023**