



**REPORT OF THE 24th
CONFERENCE OF DIRECTORS
GENERAL OF CUSTOMS OF THE
WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA
REGION OF THE WORLD CUSTOMS
ORGANIZATION**

Hôtel Ledger Plazza-Bangui, Central Africa

13 to 15 March 2019

I. CONTEXT :

1. The 24th Conference of Directors General of Customs of the West and Central Africa Region of the World Customs Organization (WCO-WCA) held from 13 to 15 March 2019, at the Ledger Plaza Hotel, Bangui, in the Republic of Central Africa.
2. This important meeting that is on the agenda of the activities of the WCO-WCA Region was intended notably to evaluate the implementation of the recommendations of the 23rd Conference of DGs of Customs that held at the Sheraton Hotel in Conakry in Guinea, from 23 to 27 April 2019, and to study the reports of the Vice-Chair's office, the WCO Secretariat, the Regional Structures and the Computer Regional Working Group, as well as the level of regional contributions and emerging issues.
3. The meeting registered the participation of fourteen (14) member administrations of the Region on a total of twenty-three (23), the Secretariat of the WCO, the Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB), the Regional Training Centres (RTCs) of Ouagadougou, Brazzaville and Abuja, Regional Liaison Offices in charge of Intelligence for West and Central Africa Region (RILO-WA and RILO-CA) and international organizations notably, the African Union Commission, CEMAC, ECOWAS, OCHA and UNCTAD.
4. The list of participants is attached to this report.

II. OPENING CEREMONY

5. The opening ceremony that was presided over by **Mr. Marie Henri DONDRA**, Minister of Finance and the Budget, was marked by four (04) speeches.
6. **Colonel Frederic Theodore INAMO**, Director General of Customs of the Republic of Central Africa in his speech, first of all wished a warm welcome to all the delegations and thanked member countries of the Region for the massive attendance of the conference.
7. He equally indicated that this meeting is taking place within an international economic and commercial context marked by the liberalisation and increase in the volume of trade between States, and an environment of emerging threats including terrorism and organized crime.
8. The Director General of Customs of the Republic of Central Africa proposed a regional strategy approach, for the pooling of efforts and best practices, under the guidance of the Regional Office of Capacity Building (ROCB).
9. He expressed the wish that the discussions should lead to proposals on how to deal with emerging issues such as:
 - The Authorized Economic Operators (AEO) auditor's manual ;
 - Transit and Inter-connectivity ;
 - Human Resource management;
 - The challenges relating to Inspection Companies.
10. Security issues, notably the radicalization of terrorist acts equally call for reflection on the way Customs can efficiently contribute in the fight against cross-border crime.

11. Taking the floor in turn, **Brigadier General Toumany SANGARE**, Director General of Customs of Guinea and Vice-Chair of the WCO-WCA Region, on behalf of his peers and on his personal behalf, expressed his sincere thanks to the Authorities of the Republic of Central Africa and the people of Central Africa, for accepting to host the 24th Conference of Directors General of Customs of our region; an eloquent testimony of their support to the efforts at the modernization of our Administrations.
12. He expressed satisfaction that the various themes on the agenda of the deliberations deal with the priority challenges of the region.
13. The Vice-Chair of the Region equally appreciated the fact that this meeting will evaluate the level of implementation of the recommendations of the last Conference of DGs of Customs of the WCO-WCA region, the state of progress of work at the African Union, especially those concerning the AU Sub-Committee of Directors General of Customs and the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area.
14. He ended by expressing the wish that the results of these discussions should be up to the expectations of Custom administrations of the region which aspire to be modern, high performing and virtuous.
15. The Secretary General of the WCO, **Mr. KUNIO MIKURYA**, in his speech, expressed his gratitude to the government of the Republic of Central Africa and the Directorate General of Customs of Central Africa for the convivial atmosphere and the warm reception given to the different delegations.
16. The Secretary General went on to indicate that the discussions should focus on the theme of the International Customs Day, that is, « SMART borders for seamless trade, travel and transport».
17. After reviewing the emerging challenges in the WCO-WCA Region, he called for the ownership of this new theme of the WCO. He once more underscored the availability of the Secretariat General to assist Member Administrations of the WCO-WCA Region in their reform and modernization process.
18. He concluded his speech by wishing the Directors General a fruitful deliberation, and once more expressed his profound thanks to the different delegations for their mobilization, which is testimony of the vitality of this cooperation framework that is necessary for the modernization of Customs Administrations of the Region.
19. In his opening speech, **Mr. Marie Henri DONDRA**, Minister of Finance and Budget, seized the opportunity to express, on behalf of **His Excellency Professor Archange Theodore TOUADERA**, President of the Republic, his gratitude and sincere thanks for the holding of this important meeting in Bangui.
20. He expressed his satisfaction with the outstanding presence of the Secretary General of the WCO at the meeting. He also expressed sincere thanks to the Vice-Chair of the WCO-WCA Region and his peers for their support and significant role in the reform and modernization of Custom Administrations.
21. The meeting he said, was holding in a period of significant challenges facing our Customs, namely: revenue mobilization, the fight against fraud, trade facilitation and security, human resource management, protection of the society and the environment, promotion of partnership, communication and transparency.

22. He requested that in current and future reflections, measures in view of the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area should be taken into account. This new free trade zone will enable the transformation of our economies, their integration and development for the benefit of our peoples he said.
23. He expressed the conviction that the results of these deliberations will be an important landmark in the process of attaining our common objective of making the West and Central Africa Customs administrations springboards for the development of our countries. He then declared open the 24th Conference of Directors General of Customs of the WCO-WCA Region, as he expressed the wish that relevant recommendations will be formulated at the end of the deliberations.

III: SETTING UP OF THE BUREAU

24. The Bureau of the Conference was set up as follows :

- The meeting is co-chaired by Vice-Chair of the Region (Guinea) and the Director General of Customs of the Republic of Central Africa, assisted by the Secretary General of the WCO.
- Benin, Cameroon, the Gambia, Nigeria and the host country are designated as rapporteurs.

25. The Committee adopted the agenda comprised of the following items:

- i. **The Priorities of the WCO - SG WCO**
 - The 2019 WCO theme « SMART borders for seamless trade, travel and transport »
 - The WCO strategic plan
 - Performance Measurement
 - Discussions
- ii. **WCA Activity Report of the WCO Secretariat (WCO Coordinator)**
 - Presentation of the summary
 - Discussions
- iii. **Report of the WCA Vice-Chair**
 - Summary of Activity Reports of regional structures
 - Evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations of the 23rd Conference of DGs
 - Discussions
- iv. **Presentation of recommendations of the 22nd Meeting of the Committee of Experts**
 - Presentation
 - Discussions
- v. **Report on the level of implementation of the 2018-2022 strategic plan (2018 road map)**
- vi. **Study of the Report of the WCA Finance and Audit Committee**
 - Report on annual contributions, disbursements and the state of the Region's bank account;
 - Report of the Finance and Audit Committee ;
 - 2019-2020 Regional draft budget ;
 - Challenges and recommendations.
- vii. **National experience of two (2) countries on performance measurement in WCA**
- viii. **Regional initiatives on Security**
 - Progress and prospects of the SPC++ project; (NIGERIA) ;
 - Presentation of the progress of SPF WCA (WCO Secretariat) ;
 - The fight against the Trafficking of cultural artifacts WCO PITCH (SENEGAL).
- ix. **The next Donor Conference**
 - Approaches and preparation
 - Discussions

- x. **Human resource management**
 - Presentation of realizations and progress of the WACAM Project (WCO Secretariat);
 - Presentation of the ROCB Organizational chart and competency-based HRM tools (ROCB);
 - National experience of two (2) countries on the implementation of the WACAM Project in the Area of HRM (approaches, achievements and prospects) (Mali / Niger) ;
 - Discussions
- xi. **Update on the pool of Regional Experts and the upcoming accreditation programs in WCA**
- xii. **Evolutions and challenges concerning Inspection Companies**
 - Presentation of the situation and evolutions (WCA Coordinator) ;
 - Presentation of the situation in Burkina-Faso ;
 - Presentation of the situation in Côte d'Ivoire ;
 - Presentation of the situation in Niger ;
 - Discussions
- xiii. **Interconnection of transit systems in WCA**
 - Progress on the development of the PACIR/ALISA solution;
 - Progress in relation to funding ;
 - Progress on the putting in place of a legal framework ;
 - Prospects and recommendations for its implementation ;
 - National experience of a country on transit and interconnection ;
 - Discussions
- xiv. **Intelligence and information sharing**
 - Results of efforts made by RILO concerning the implementation of CEN/ CENcom / nCEN in WCA ; prospects, recommendations and work plan ;
 - Discussions.
- xv. **C-RED Project**
 - Balance sheet and Prospects
- xvi. **Deliberations of the African Union : AU Sub-Committee of DGDs and the Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA):**
 - The strategy, plan of action and structures put in place by the African Union;
 - Reminder of the recommendations of the 10th meeting of the AU Sub-committee of DGCs;
 - Challenges and recommendations ;
 - Discussions and recommendations.
- xvii. **Closed door session for Heads of Delegation:**
 - Issues of governance and WCO membership (information) ;
 - Status of WCO-WCA Regional structures (information) ;
 - Date and place of the next Meeting of Contact Points ;
 - Date and place of the next Meeting of Managers of HR and Training (THRM);
 - Date and place of the next Joint Annual Meeting of National Correspondents of RILO ;
 - Date and place of the next Meeting of the Committee of Experts ;
 - Date and place of the next Conference of Directors General of Customs ;
 - Date and place of the next Donor Conference ;
 - Designation of members of the Audit Committee ;
 - Consultations on succession at the WCO :
 - Director of Capacity Building ;
 - Director of Compliance and Facilitation.
 - Other matters.

- xviii. **Presentation of the Report of the closed door session**
- xix. **Fine-tuning of the draft recommendations and the reports of the 24th Conference of Directors General of Customs (team of rapporteurs)**
- xx. **Closing ceremony of the 23rd Conference of Directors General of Customs:**
 - Presentation of the recommendations of the 24th Conference of Directors General of Customs ;
 - Speech by the Director General of Customs of the Republic of Central Africa
 - Speech by the Vice-Chair of the Region ;
 - Speech by the Secretary General of the WCO ;
 - Closing speech (Host Country).

IV: MEETING PROCEEDINGS

1. Priorities of the WCO agenda

- 26. The WCO Secretary General made a presentation on the WCO 2019 theme which is « SMART borders for seamless trade, travel and transport. »
- 27. He indicated that the concept of SMART borders aims at enhancing the efforts of public authorities to facilitate trade and the movement of persons, while mitigating the threats inherent in cross-border movement of goods, travelers and means of transport. The acronym, SMART, refers to the principles that must guide the Customs and be placed at the centre of the Customs functions of control, enforcement and facilitation :
- 28. **Securing the borders** through the control of passengers and goods: The problem of security has become an important stake for all Customs. Major initiatives are on-going in the Region to handle this problem. The Secretary General recalled in this regard that, the SPC++ initiative, (sécurité par collaboration in French, that is “Security through collaboration”) developed by Nigeria and the SPF WAC project of the WCO funded by Japan.
- 29. **Performance measurement:** This entails the measurement of the real performance the Customs in trade facilitation, border control and the evaluation of the global work of the Customs Organization which constitute the two fundamental pillars for informed decision making for administrations.
- 30. **Automation of procedures:** This underpins every aspect of the work of every modern Customs administration, through resorting to information and communication technology.
- 31. **Managing risks:** A risk management framework based on intelligence and data enables Customs administrations to improve in terms of efficiency, particularly at the level of decision making, as well as the level of targeted interventions. The Customs should focus on a common approach in order to identify potential risks and counter them in a more dynamic manner.
- 32. **Integrating technology:** Besides these six priorities, the WCO Secretary General noted a potential seventh priority, notably the implementation of the RKC. It is for this reason that he encouraged Customs administrations of the Region to ratify this convention.

2. Activity report of the WCO Secretariat (WCA Regional Development Manager)

- 33. **M. Bernard ZBINDEN**, in his capacity as Development Manager of the WCO-WCA Region presented the report centered around two (2) main axes, namely the global implementation of capacity building and the general situation of the WCO-WCA Region.
- 34. On the global implementation of capacity building, **M. ZBINDEN** recalled that, the capacity building program was highly influenced by the theme retained by the WCO for the year 2019, and by the six (6) major themes of the Policy Commission for the past five

years, which are security/safety, the digital customs/e-commerce, the Trade Facilitation Agreement (which entered into force on 22 February 2016), performance measurement, illicit financial flows and Customs-Tax Administration cooperation.

35. The implementation of the WCO capacity building program is based on the annual evaluation of needs conducted by the Secretariat, in collaboration with member Administrations, and supported by the Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB).

36. As such, member countries of the Region were involved in various programs and actions as follows:

- The support provided by the **Mercator program** in the implementation of the Trade Facilitation agreement (**TFA**) of the World Trade Organization (**WTO**) ;
- The signing of the general framework of the Agreement on the implementation of the African continental Free Trade Area (**AfCFTA**) ;
- Security at the borders which remains a challenge for several countries of the Region ;
- The presentation and launching in Conakry on the sidelines of the **23rd Conference of WCA DGs** of a new **project on the Security of the WCA Region**. This project is funded by Japan and focuses on five (05) key areas;
- Organising a series of activities on **the role of Customs with regard to the protection of Cultural Heritage**;
- The **Customs Leadership and Management Development Programme (LMD)**, which is a priority in the in the Regional Strategic Plan and designed for top level officials, continues to address the needs expressed by members;
- The **PACIR** project whose main objective is the interconnectivity of transit operations;
- The **WCO - INAMA Project** for building member States' capacities in the area of intelligence gathering and processing on the conservation of protected species;
- The **C-RED Project** which is a solution for tackling humanitarian crises and natural disasters, in collaboration with **OCHA** (expedited clearance of relief consignments);
- **UNODC-WCO Global Container Control Programme**;
- the **WCO-HRMC-UNCTAD Programme** for the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA);
- The **EU-WCO** "Harmonizing the classification of goods based on WCO standards to enhance African trade".

37. For the past year, other WCO activities helped Customs Administrations to implement the five strategic objectives indicated in the 2018-2022 Regional Strategic Plan:

- **The West African Customs Administration Modernization Project (WACAM)** whose second phase ended in December 2018;
- **ACIM**, for countering counterfeit medicines, with the participation of 16 member States;

- **The Master Trainers Programme (MTP)** which was designed by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (**JICA**);
- The launching, at the start of 2019, of a **new Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion (A-CIP) Programme** for Customs Administrations;
- **MIRAGE**, to enhance border checks in order to tackle counterfeit and illicit medicines, pirated and potentially dangerous goods which are likely to compromise the health and security of consumers on the African continent;
- **CRIPHARM II and III** designed to combat pharmaceutical crime which was very satisfactory in terms of the initiative and local expertise (by the WA and CA RILOs) as well as the results achieved;
- **TIGGER**, to combat firearms trafficking and terrorism jointly organized by WCO, INTERPOL and UNODC;
- **COCAIR VI**, aimed at establishing cooperation and operational information sharing between airports, so as to intercept cocaine shipments and other illegal products destined for Europe. Sixteen (16) member countries took part in the initiative;
- **COPES**, a programme that helps to highlight the key role played by seizure and evidence collection procedures in building efficient and effective security practices at the borders.
- **COSMO 2**, a programme which centred mainly on a communication exercise focused on strategic commercial controls and attended by 09 member countries of the Region.

38. Among some of the meetings and activities coordinated by the WCO Secretariat to build the capacities of Customs Administrations in the Region are:

- Participating in the Regional Workshop of Training and Human Resources Managers in Bamako, held from 24 to 26 September 2018, the 9th Meeting of Capacity Building Contact Points and WCA Customs Reforms Advisors held in Yaounde, from 31 October to 02 November 2018 and the 10th Session of the AU Sub-Committee of Directors General (DGs) of Customs on the topic “Tackling Corruption within Customs to efficiently implement the Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)” held in Moroni from 20 to 21 September 2018.
- Organising 8 accreditation workshops (Customs modernization and Trade Facilitation, Customs Modernization Advisors, Transit Operations, Revised Kyoto Convention, Post-Clearance Audit, Origin and Mercator Experts).
- Participating in CLiKC Platform! (5% from the WCA Region), the Virtual Customs Orientation Academy (VCOA), the scholarship programme.

39. Regarding the Conference of Donors, the Representative of the WCO Secretary General recalled that priority projects with a regional and national focus were submitted to Partners present during the meeting held in Lomé from 1 to 2 June 2017. WCO reiterated its commitment to support regional projects.

40. In conclusion, **Mr. ZBINDEN** emphasized the need for collaboration within the WCA region in matters of security/safety to improve significantly, especially through the SPC++ project initiated by Nigeria and other on-going projects and research. He also urged the Customs Administrations within the region to ratify the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (15 countries in the WCA Region have ratified the agreement so far) and to sign the Framework Agreement for the implementation for the AfCFTA which will help to strengthen cooperation and develop coherent and holistic strategies and concrete actions to facilitate trade.

3. WCA Vice-Chair's Report

41. In his opening remarks, the Vice-Chair reiterated that Guinea, which took over from Côte d'Ivoire, had officially assumed duty after the WCO Council Session of June 2018. A ceremony for the handover of the Vice-chairmanship was held on 24 and 25 July 2018 in Abidjan.

42. Regarding attendance at regional and international meetings, the Vice-Chair's Office has attended:

- The regional meeting on WCO's Three-Year Strategic Plan for 2019-2022 in Yaounde;
- The 9th Meeting of Capacity Building Contact Points held in Yaounde;
- The 8th Meeting of Training and Human Resources Managers held in Bamako;
- The 9th Joint Annual Meeting of National Correspondents of RILOs in Conakry;
- The 10th Meeting of the African Union Sub-Committee of Directors General of Customs held in Moroni;
- The WCO Global Conference on the Comprehensive Review of the Revised Kyoto Convention held in Brussels;
- The Regional Training of Trainers Seminar on the C-RED Project in Conakry ;
- The Regional Workshop on the Standardized Operational Procedures Guide, C-RED Project in Conakry;
- The 20th Meeting of Customs Administrations from partial or completely French-speaking countries held in Tourcoing;
- The 4th Meeting of ECOWAS DGs of Customs in Abuja.

43. The Vice Chair's Office also addressed several correspondences to some Customs Administrations for specific needs.

44. The Vice Chair's Office presented its vision as follows: "Regional entities and Customs Administrations of the WCO-WCA Region aligning with the Performance and Excellence Dynamic"

This vision is broken down in three pillars:

Pillar 1: Strengthening Regional bodies in consistence with their mandates;

Pillar 2: Improving the efficiency and performance of Customs Administrations;

Pillar 3: Enhancing cooperation and communication between the Customs Administrations, regional bodies and stakeholders at large.

Each of the pillars has attendant operational objectives to be met.

45. On the way forward, the Vice-Chair's Office will organise the Conference of Donors, continue coordinating the activities of the regional entities and pursue efforts to endow them with a legal status, keep promoting the Strategic Plan and WCO instruments and track the implementation of the recommendations and decisions arrived at during regional gatherings.

4. Presentation of the Recommendations of the 22nd Meeting of the Committee of Experts (Rapporteurs)

46. The team of rapporteurs presented the recommendations of the 22nd Meeting of the Committee of Experts.
47. The Conference of DGs expressed its complete satisfaction with the weight and relevance of these recommendations. It expressed its profound gratitude to the experts. The Conference of DGs also took note of the recommendations submitted for review and subsequent adoption.

5. Report on the Level of Implementation of the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan (2018 Road Map)

48. The Director of the Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB-WCA) **Mr. Tafil Ebenezer** recalled the five (05) pillars of the Strategic Plan which are:
49. Leadership, Strategic Management, Human Resource Management, Partnerships and Customs Procedures.
50. Next, he presented the various steps of the self-assessment exercise which can be summarized in four (04) phases: Identifying implementation deadlines for Strategic Plan actions, data collection, data analysis and presentation of findings.
51. In 2018, sixteen (16) administrations responded to the self-evaluation exercise.
52. The general regional trend currently scores 2.98 on a scale of 5 in terms of the level of implementation and 2.18 for the results achieved.
53. He mentioned that looking at the regional trend per pillar; human resource management is lagging behind contrary to leadership.
54. Finally, he encouraged the Customs Administrations of the WCO-WCA Region to carry on with the self-assessment exercise.

6. Review of the WCA Finance and Audit Committee Report

55. The Conference decided to postpone the review of the report on annual contributions, disbursements and statement account for the region as well as that of the Finance and Audit Committee for consideration during the in camera session of the Directors General.
56. However, the Committee presented the 2019-2020 regional budget.

7. National Experiences of two (02) Countries on Performance Measurement.

Messrs Koua Charles, of Côte d'Ivoire Customs and **Pagou Louis**, of Cameroon Customs made presentations on the topic "Performance Measurement" respectively and the implementation of the same within their Administrations as a high-level steering and performance management tool. Cameroon was the first country to launch "Performance Contracts" in 2007 as a corrective step to meet the revenue objectives and facilitate border crossings. Côte d'Ivoire on its part developed a computer application which allows one to measure and track customs activities in real-time: the DECISIONNEL. Defining SMART indicators appears to be an efficient tool for performance management.

8. Regional Initiatives on Security

57. **Mr. Bernard Zbinden** recalled the WCO Project on security which aims to help member Administrations of the WCO-WCA Region to overcome security challenges brought about by the threat of improvised explosive devices through its Global Shield Programme.
58. Nigeria, as lead country, presented the genesis of the Security by Collaboration Project "SPC++", a regional initiative with five members (Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Chad and the Central African Republic) aimed at tackling the growing insecurity in the region and expounded on the progress of the project.
59. **Mr. Wale**, the presenter reminded participants that the WCA Region is experiencing security challenges with the rise of cross-border crime and terrorism. Concerning the progress made and the SPC++ Technical Committee, he highlighted the definition of a common framework for Customs role in security, the establishment of a formal connection between security and development and the need for intelligence sharing. In spite of the relevance of this project, several challenges remain at the borders, considering the need to build data analysis capacity (commercial, flows and traded goods), a joint database for intelligence and the designing of a basic training programme on fragile borders.
60. In addition, **Mr. Jean Christophe Diatta** from Senegal Customs presented WCO's PITCH or Prevention of Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Heritage Manual to fight the illicit trafficking of cultural goods. He stressed that the United Nations Security Council has adopted a series of resolutions on the absolute need to protect all cultural goods as well as the need for States to prevent and counter illicit trafficking. The Security Council urges WCO and other partner organisations in Resolution No 2347 of 24 March 2017 to "strive, if need be and as part of their respective mandates, to assist member States in their efforts to prevent and counter destruction and plundering including trafficking in cultural goods of any sort.

61. It is in this respect that the World Customs Organisation (WCO) adopted a Resolution in July 2016 specifying the role of Customs in preventing the illicit trafficking of cultural goods.

9. Human Resource Management

62. Under this point, the WCO-WCA Regional Development Manager mentioned the West African Customs Administration Modernization (WACAM) Project which was funded by the Swedish government and whose 2nd phase ended in December 2018. After Phase 1, the project components evolved. The project dealt with three components namely: Strategic Management, Human Resource Management and Stakeholder Engagement.
63. He emphasised that resource pooling was not left behind as such, considering that it was mainstreamed in the “Stakeholders Engagement” component since dialogue with donors remains crucial for countries in the region.
64. Mali and Niger took turns to share their experience with the Directors General on the implementation of the WACAM project in their respective administrations.
65. According to both presenters, human resource management based on best practices in recruitment, training, mobility and competency development is a guarantee of efficiency.

10. Progress and Challenges regarding Inspection Companies:

66. The WCO-WCA Regional Development Manager first presented the overall situation and progress of inspection companies in the region and this was followed by presentations Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire on their experiences in implementing programmes for the termination of the services of these companies.

Presentation on the Situation and Progress of Inspection Companies within the WCA Region

67. The WCO Regional Development Manager recalled that addressing the issue of inspection companies began in 2013 with the Niamey Declaration which urges Customs Administrations in the region to take ownership of the outsourced functions.
68. Thereafter, the WCO set up the “Revenue Package” which is an instrument capable of helping Customs Administrations to terminate programmes with inspection companies.
69. In just a few years, many Customs administrations have succeeded to terminate their contracts with inspection companies: this was the case with Mauritania and Nigeria in 2013, Ghana in 2015, DRC in 2016, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire will soon follow suit.
70. He also indicated that technical assistance missions were sent to some countries. These assistance missions can be conducted either at policy level to raise leaders’ awareness on the need for Customs administrations to retake ownership of outsourced missions, or at strategic level to aid in planning, or at the technical level by carrying out trainings with support from WCO experts on evaluation, rules of origin or tariff classification.
71. The Development Manager specified that Inspection Companies now offer other services to Governments on other topics such as tracking cargo by satellite, scanners, one-stop shops, risk management, etc. He also called on our Customs Administrations to build their capacities to avoid resorting to these companies.

72. He concluded by stating that even though all contracts with inspection companies provide for technology transfer, no administration has benefited from it so far.

Presentation of the Situation of Burkina Faso.

73. The flagship reform of Burkina Faso Customs was the creation of a Steering Committee to draft and implement a Strategic Plan to resume ownership of its outsourced functions.
74. This was followed by a diagnostic study using the SWOT analysis tool. As a result, the VALUATION module in ASYCUDA was activated, a Valuation Control Unit was set up and a Supervision and Transition Committee created.
75. The results obtained are very enlightening. The progress rate of Customs revenue collection from September to 31 December 2018 compared to the same period in 2017 stands at +16 %.
76. Over the same period in 2018, the rate of achievement on projected revenue stands at 116.35%.

Presentation of the Situation in Côte d'Ivoire

77. In Côte d'Ivoire, the contract which was due to end in June 2018 was extended for another nine (09) months to allow for an effective transfer of skills. For that reason, a Skills Transfer Committee has been set up with Sub-Committees for evaluation, risk analysis, IT and training.
78. At the end of this process, computer equipment and web applications will be transferred.
79. After these presentations, discussions ensued in the presence of a representative of the Minister of Economy and Budget on the case of the Central African Republic which, after much insistence from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is currently negotiating the signing of a contract with a private inspection company. It was mentioned that countries stand to gain more by investing resources in the training of Customs staff rather than paying handsome amounts to inspection companies for an uncertain outcome.

11. Progress and Challenges regarding the Interconnection of Transit Systems

80. This point was discussed by experts from UNCTAD, ECOWAS and Côte d'Ivoire Customs. The goal is to facilitate trade and secure the supply chain by setting up a Regional Trade Information System (RTIS), as well as the facilitation of the transportation of goods between the territories of member States with the electronic tracking of vehicles and transit goods.
81. The prospects for this project include the deployment of PACIR instead of standard transit between Niger and Benin in May 2019, the transfer of PACIR competence, deployment on mobile technology and extension of the regional transit solution to CEMAC.

12. Intelligence and Information Sharing

82. Regarding the activities of the RILOs, the report indicates that they boil down to participation in several workshops at regional and international level. Thus, the RILOs participated in the following operations: WESTERLIES V on the fight against methamphetamine and African Wings 3 on control of private aviation.

83. The two Offices also successfully organised the second CRIPHARM Operation (combating pharmaceutical crime) which witnessed the seizure of 84 prohibited consignments with over 10 tons of drugs. Other operations saw the participation of two RILOs. The vice-chair also informed the DGs that the two offices plan to organise operations such as BONOBO, SENGHOR BAKWANGA.

84. With regard to populating the CEN, the Vice-Chair indicated that the WA RILO Head had reported a relative increase in data entries within his region.

85. Trainings on intelligence and risk analysis were held for some administrations within the region by RILOs.

13. The C-RED Project

- Results and Outlook

14. African Union Activities: AU Sub-Committee of Directors General (DGs) of Customs and the implementation of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA):

15. Closed Door Session of Heads of Delegation

86. The closed door session focused on the following points:

- Governance issues within WCO;
- WCO membership;
- Date and venue of the next meeting of Contact Points;
- Date and venue of the next meeting of Training and HR Managers;
- Date and venue of the next meeting of the Regional Working Group on IT Development;
- Date and venue of the next meeting of Experts;
- Date and venue of the next Conference of Directors General of Customs;
- Date and venue of the next Conference of Directors General of Customs of the Francophonie;
- Date and venue of the next Conference of Donors;
- Appointment of the ROCB Director;
- Appointment of the Vice-Chair for the WCO-WCA Region;
- Other Matters.

16. Presentation of the Closed Door Session Report

87. The Director of Cabinet of the Vice-Chair read out the said report, which is attached to this report.

16. Review and Adoption of the Recommendations of the Report of the 24th Conference of DGs

88. The Conference of DGs examined and adopted the attached recommendations.

17. Closing Ceremony of the 24th Conference of Directors General of Customs

89. The closing ceremony was marked by three (03) speeches.
90. First by **Colonel Frédéric Théodore Inamo**, Director General of Customs of the Central African Republic. In his statement, he thanked all the delegations for coming to Bangui in spite of the security situation. This proves the importance which is given to these meetings. Furthermore, he expressed his gratitude to all those who contributed to organise the said conference.
91. Taking the floor, **Brigadier General Toumany Sangare**, Director General of Customs for Guinea and Vice-Chair of the WCO-WCA Region thanked the Central African Republic authorities for the facilities offered to the participants and the excellent organisation of the conference.
92. He also appreciated the quality of the discussions which led to relevant recommendations whose implementation now rests with Customs Administrations. Finally, he expressed his profound gratitude to the President of the Central African Republic for decorating him, though the credit for this honorary distinction goes to his Peers in the Region.
93. The **Director of Cabinet of the Minister of Finances and Budget**, representing the Minister who was unavoidably absent, commended the conference attendees for the topics discussed which are consistent with the concerns within the Region.
94. He urged Customs Administrations to implement the recommendations formulated during this conference to enhance their performance and help them better serve the population. In conclusion, he wished all delegations a safe return to their respective countries.
95. On the sidelines of these activities, the Heads of Delegation were received in audience on the afternoon of Thursday 14 March 2019 at the presidential palace, during which CAR President, Professor Archange Théodore Touadera decorated WCO Secretary General and the Directors General of Customs for Guinea (Vice-Chair of the WCO-WCA Region) and CAR.

Done in Bangui, on 15 March 2019

Conference of DGC/WCA

ANNEXES



ANNEXE 1

**Recommendations of the 24th Conference of
Directors General of Customs of the WCO-WCA
Region**

The twenty fourth Conference of Directors General of Customs of the West and Central Africa Region of the World Customs Organization (WCO-WCA), held from 13 to 15 March 2019, at the Ledger Plaza hotel, Bangui, in the Republic of Central Africa.

This important meeting that is on the agenda of activities of the WCO-WCA Region, registered the participation of fourteen (14) member administrations of the Region, on a total of twenty-three (23), the Vice-Chair, the WCO Secretariat, the Regional Office for Capacity Building, the Regional Training Centres of Ouagadougou and Brazzaville, Regional Intelligence and Liaison Offices of West and Central Africa, the African Union and ECOWAS Commissions, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) and UNCTAD.

At the end of the deliberations, the Directors General formulated the following recommendations:

Recommendations

I. On the Donor Conference

To the ROCB

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

II. On the strengthening of communication

To the Office of the Vice-Chair:

- To arouse the consultation of projects that conform with the requirements of partners/donors published on the regional website ;
- To share with the Directors General, the reports and conclusions of meetings in which he represented the

Region ;

- To inform the Directors General on the progress realized by the SPC ++ and C-RED+ projects and encourage them to support the projects.

To Custom Administrations:

- To respond to requests addressed to them within the deadline;

To the ROCB:

- To publish all reports on the web site as soon as received.

III. On information and communication technology

To Customs Administrations:

- To continue efforts at connecting internal Customs offices to the customs computer system ;
- To intensify the interconnection of the customs computer system with those of airport and seaport platforms within the framework of the management of manifests ;
- To put in place mechanisms that guarantee the availability and continuity of services and operations (Data center minimum tiers-3 and plan of continuity of service in case of unavailability of the system) ;
- To take greater ownership of the tools (the mirror, the forum, the regional directory) available on the regional web site, for a better evaluation of the implementation of their recommendations ;
- To integrate their IT services in the Committees for the Reform of Custom Administrations ;

- To put in place a unit for monitoring the implementation of the solution on the interconnection of regional transit;

To WCO Secretariat:

- To provide support to RWG on IT for the organization of a benchmarking mission within the framework of the optimization of the use of IT in cargo management.

To ECOWAS:

- To envisage in its 2018-2019 agenda, those activities forwarded by the Office of the WCO-WCA Vice-Chair, relating to training for the IT services of the region ;

To UNCTAD:

- To develop a module for the management of goods deposits and auction sales in the ASYCUDA system;

To the RWG on IT:

- To ensure the follow up of the implementation of the recommendations from the WCO-UNCTAD Workshop on ASCUDA, that held on 29 and 30 November 2016, in Lome, Togo;
- To develop a model software for human resource management for the region ;
- To provide technical support to the regional working group on the computerization of Customs litigation, risk management and selectivity.

IV. On the status of regional structures;

To the Office of the Vice-Chair:

- To supervise the working group (WG) comprised of the host country of the said structures, the heads of the structures, Cape Verde, the Gambia and Ghana, in charge of making proposals on the status of regional structures, and which shall submit its first conclusions at the next meeting of the Committee of Experts.
- To organize a regional workshop on the status of regional structures.

To Custom Administrations:

- To designate technical attachés to the regional structures (ROCB, RILO) ;
- To ensure the functional stability of appointed Contact Points and provide them with the necessary support ;

To RILO WCA:

- To propose to the Conference of Directors General TOR on the organization of operations for the fight against major trafficking in relation to problems of the Region (ALPC, CITES, cultural artifacts, currency, drugs etc.).

V. On capacity building:

To the Office of the Vice- Chair:

- To invite the Directors General to engage in the Master Trainer Programme (joint WCO-JICA programme).

To the WCO Secretariat:

- To support RILOs of the WCO-WCA in the holding of a regional training sessions for National Correspondents on intelligence sharing tools.
- To prepare and make available to the WCO-WCA Region the directory of its Accredited Experts ;
- To organize regional accreditation workshops for Experts on

transit and integrity;

- To support the Office of the Vice-Chair of the Region in the search for funding from donors, for the extension of the C-RED+ project of the WCO;
- To organize training sessions on cultural artifacts, in order to eventually build a pool of experts;
- To assist the region to organize a regional workshop on performance measurement in 2019.

To ROCB-WCA:

- To encourage and assist Administrations that so desire, to benefit from the sharing of experiences of members who have developed expertise in the area of competency-based human resource management, project management, resource mobilization and the engagement of stakeholders, within the framework of the Regional Coaching Program;
- To improve on the TORs on the role of Contact Points to be submitted for adoption by the Directors General.

VI. On the Regional fund:

To Custom Administrations:

- To honor, within the deadline, their commitment with regard to contributions to the Regional Fund for the funding of the activities of the regional structures (ROCB, RILO, RTC, RWG).

To the Nigeria Customs Administration:

- To facilitate the disbursement of funds allocated for the regional structures.

To Member Administrations of the Finance and Audit Committees: -- To effectively participate in the meetings of the said committees.

To Regional Economic Communities (RECs):

- To strengthen their contributions for the funding of projects for the modernization of Customs Administrations of the region.

To ECOWAS:

- To confirm the insertion of the capacity building support project (ex C-RED) for the 15 Member States within the framework of the trade facilitation project for West Africa, steered and partly funded by GIZ.

VII. On strategic management

To Custom Administrations:

- To support the structures in charge of modernization for the purpose of a better monitoring and evaluation of all the high-level steering tools (regional strategic plan, national strategic plan, performance contracts, etc.) ;
- To put in place their own methodology for project management;
- To design a national plan of action on the role and activities that the Customs should carry out in liaison with the other government entities and humanitarian organizations, in order to implement Customs facilitation procedures for the importation of humanitarian aid in case of natural disasters or epidemics ;
- To conceive and use strategic dashboards as decision making tools;
- To ensure initial training for Customs staff on the basics of the customs function, in conformity with the basic Regional training kit.

To RILOs:

- To propose to the Office of the Vice-Chair, a Memorandum of Understanding for information and intelligence sharing between Custom administrations of countries of the region.

VII. On the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

To Custom Administrations:

- To ensure the greater involvement of Customs in the deliberations of African Union bodies and the RECs in the implementation of the African continental free trade Area (AfCFTA);
- To implement the recommendations of the 10th meeting of the AU Sub-Committee of Directors General of customs.

To the AU Commission:

- To popularize its trade facilitation strategy with the stakeholders, especially Customs administrations and the private sector;
- To support Customs Administrations in the implementation of the **NIAMEY DECLARATION**.

Done in Bangui, on 15 March 2019

The Conference of Directors General of
Customs of the WCO-WCA Region



ANNEXE 2

**24th CONFERENCE OF DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CUSTOMS
OF THE WCO-WCA REGION
REPORT OF THE CLOSED DOOR
SESSION OF HEADS OF DELEGATION**

**LEDGER PLAZZA HOTEL
BANGUI 15 MARS 2018**

**24th Conference of Directors General of Customs of the WCO for West and
Central Africa Region**

Report of the closed door session of Heads of Delegation

During the 24th Conference of Directors General of Customs of the WCO for West and Central Africa Region that took place in Bangui from 13 to 15 March 2019, the Heads of Delegation held an closed door session on 15 March 2019 at the LEDGER PLAZZA Hotel, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The session was presided over by Brigadier General Toumany SANGARE, Vice-Chair of the WCO-WCA region.

This working session was attended by the 14 Heads of Delegation of Customs Administration present at the Conference, and in the presence of the Secretary General of the WCO and his collaborators.

After the adoption of the agenda amended to provide for the nomination of the Vice-Chair, and following the discussions and exchange of view points, the Heads of Delegation took the following decisions:

1. Issues of governance and membership of the WCO :

The Vice-Chair of the WCO-WCA Region reported on the conclusions of the 80th session of the Policy Commission (PC), relating to:

- The limitation of the number of mandates to two (2) years for the position of Secretary General of the WCO and Deputy Secretary General of the WCO ;
- Rules of succession to the position of Deputy Secretary General ;
- The code of conduct for the election of the Director of Capacity Building and the Director of Compliance and Facilitation (currently vacant positions) ;
- Working Group on membership issues: The two representatives of the Region, Nigeria and Sao-Tome and Principe were reminded to participate in the first

meeting of this working group, to hold in Brussels from 11 to 12 April 2019.

2. Status of WCO-WCA Regional structures :

After recalling the problem of the status of regional structures, the Office of the Vice-Chair revealed that the virtual working group created for this purpose by the 23rd Conference of Directors General of Customs, was unable to propose any status.

As it stands, despite the several letters forwarded to members, only three (3) out of seventeen (17) reacted. It is therefore necessary to organize a workshop on the status, whose conclusions will enable decision making, in accordance with the recommendation of the 22nd meeting of the Committee of Experts.

3. Date and place of the next Meeting of Contact Points

The Democratic Republic of Congo accepted to host the meeting in September 2019.

4. Date and place of the next meeting of Managers of human resources and Training;

Burkina-Faso accepted to host this meeting in October 2019.

5. Date and place of the next meeting of regional Working Group on IT Development (RWG on IT) ;

Senegal will host the next meeting in April 2019, and Nigeria will host the following meeting in January or February 2020.

6. Date and place of the next meeting of Experts;

Congo-Brazzaville accepted to organize this meeting in November 2019.

7. Date and place of the next Joint Meeting of National Correspondents of RILOs ;

Cameroon accepted to organize this meeting in November 2019.

8. Date and place of the 23rd Meeting of the Committee of Experts and the 25th Conference of Directors General of Customs;

Benin accepted to organize these meetings in March or April 2020.

9. The 26th Conference of Directors General of Customs will hold in Gambia, in March or April 2021.

10. Date and place of the next Donor Conference

Niger accepted to organize this meeting in the month of August 2019.

11. Renewal of Members of the Finance and Audit Committees

The Finance Committee that comprises NIGERIA, GHANA and the GAMBIA was not renewed. The status quo was maintained, while awaiting reception of the audit report that will be produced by Nigeria and forwarded to the Vice-Chair within three weeks.

Concerning the Audit Committee comprising DR-CONGO and GABON, it was strengthened by including Sierra Leone.

12. Designation of the Vice-Chair of the WCO-WCA Region:

The Directors General of Customs unanimously renewed the mandate of Brigadier General Toumany SANGARE, Director General of Customs of the Republic of Guinea as Vice-Chair of the World Customs Organization for West and Central Africa Region, for one (1) year.

On his part, after accepting the renewal of trust placed on him by his peers, Brigadier General Toumany SANGARE, on behalf of the Government of Guinea, thanked all the participants at the 24th Conference of Directors General of Customs of the WCO-WCA and made the commitment to honour the renewed trust placed on him.

13. On the Regional Fund :

The meeting noted the explanations provided by Nigeria on the management of the Regional Fund and its commitment to forward to the Vice-chair within three weeks, the report on the investigation report that it had initiated. The Vice-Chair shall then state the way forward after informing the Directors General.

As a result, it was decided to suspend the sending of a mission of the Audit committee to Nigeria.

14.The Regional Budget :

The Heads of Delegation postponed the adoption of the balance sheet of the 2018-2019 budget, while awaiting the consolidation by the Finance Committee of the accounting statistics provided by Nigeria.

The 2019-2020 draft budget was adopted.

15.Concerning Regional Structures :

The Heads of Delegation approved the draft organizational chart and the competency-based approach to human resource management, of the Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB).

16.Consultation on succession at the WCO for the election of the Director of Capacity Building and the Director of Compliance and Facilitation :

The Heads of Delegation were informed of the candidature of Mr. Bernard ZBINDEN, Regional Development Manager of WCO-WCA, for the post of Director of Capacity Building and eventually, that of Mr. Samson BILAGHA, of Cameroonian nationality for the post of Director of Compliance and Facilitation.

The Heads of Delegation expressed their willingness to support them.

17.Other matters :

Portuguese speaking countries were highly encouraged to participate in our meetings.

The low participation rate of members in the Conference of Directors General of Customs was noted. The participation of a large number of Directors General of Customs in subsequent conferences is highly expected.

The duration of the deliberations of the Meeting of the Committee of Experts which is still maintained for two (days) was raised. It was maintained for two days for the first session and three (3) days for the second. Meanwhile, the Conference of DGCs shall last for three days and shall among other things, examine the draft recommendations and proposals prepared by the Experts.

Done in Bangui, this 15 March 2019

ANNEXE 3

LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

**24ème CONFERENCE DES DIRECTEURS GENERAUX DES DOUANES DE
LA REGION DE L'ORGANISATION MONDIALE DES DOUANES POUR L'AFRIQUE OCCIDENTALE ET CENTRALE (OMD-
AOC)**

14-mars-19

Lieu : Salle de Conference LEDGER

(Bangui, RCA) LISTE DES

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