WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DES DOUANES

Established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council
Créée en 1952 sous le nom de Conseil de coopération douanière

Brussels, December 2020.

ACTIVITY REPORT
of the WCO SECRETARIAT
for the
WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

11th Contact Point Meeting
of the WCO West and Central Africa Region

2 - 4 December 2020

(Virtual meeting)

1   Contents

2   Introduction

This document is primarily for Customs of the World Customs Organization's West and Central Africa region (WCO-WCA), and more particularly for participants in the following activities:

➢ Conference of WCA Directors General of Customs;
➢ Committee of WCA Experts;
➢ Meeting of WCA Contact Points.

It is updated periodically by the WCO Secretariat and provides readers with a summary of its initiatives, programmes, activities and operations for this region. These activities are mainly based on the following inputs:

➢ The annual needs assessment carried out by the Secretariat, in collaboration with WCA Customs, and supported by the Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB);
➢ The ad-hoc needs expressed by WCA Customs during this WCO fiscal year;
➢ The assistance programmes, projects and operations that the WCO, supported by its partners, is putting in place to contribute to the reform and modernization of WCA Customs.

To enable readers to understand the background, objectives and overall initiative, projects, programs and operations for WCA are fully documented, since inception. The documentation also includes activities undertaken in the past.

3   Work and decisions at the WCO level

3.1   Annual Report of the WCO

The WCO Annual Report summarizes the WCO's mission and current activities. It includes information and data on WCO membership and is available here:
http://www.wcoomd.org/en/about-us/what-is-the-wco/annual-reports.aspx

3.2   WCO Council – WCA representations at the WCO

The last (135/136th) session of the WCO Council took place virtually on 20 June 2020.

The next (137th) session of the WCO Council will take place virtually from 10-12 December 2020. The following WCA representations are to be confirmed by this Council session:
➢ WCA Vice-chair: Republic of Congo
➢ Policy Commission: Nigeria, DR Congo
➢ Audit Committee: Cameroon
➢ Finance Committee: Gambia

3.3 Policy Commission (PC)

The PC held its 82nd session on 3 to 5 December 2019 in Seoul. During this session, it largely covered subjects such as the strategic review of the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS), free zones, cruise ships, cooperation between customs and financial intelligence units, capacity building and use of technology and data analysis, study of the 2020 customs environment and of the WCO communication strategy.

Delegates also reviewed progress in the area of electronic commerce, as well as gender equality and diversity, focusing in particular on possible measures that the WCO could implement in the near future. The theme of the WCO for 2020 was also presented and discussed.

The PC meeting also provided an opportunity for delegates to hear progress reports on current programmes and initiatives, notably in the context of the four WCO packages: Economic Competitiveness, Monitoring and fight against fraud, Revenue, and Organizational Development.

The 83rd session of the PC will be organized virtually and will be held from 7 to 9 December 2020.

3.4 Customs environmental scan 2020 and the WCO Strategic Plan 2020-2025

The 2020 Customs Environmental Scan focuses mainly on the consequences of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the request of the Policy Commission, it has been drawn up by applying a concrete method of analysis, namely the PESTLE model. The consequences of the crisis are analysed taking into account the various factors defined in this model (political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, legal and ecological).

It should also be noted that this Customs Environment Scan will be the last to be carried out on an annual basis. Indeed, from next year, this study will become triennial and it is on the basis of its conclusions that the WCO Strategic Plan 2022-2025 will be developed. This triennial study on the customs environment will be the result of an inclusive process involving the Secretariat, Members and relevant external stakeholders, who will apply the methods of strategic foresight. As a result, the entire WCO strategy will be established on the basis of a collective forecasting effort aimed at planning and preparing for the future. As advocated by the December 2019 PC and confirmed in the action plan approved by the Permanent Technical Committee in June 2020, consultations to this effect began in September 2020 and will result in a final proposal for the next three-year period to present to the PC and the Council at their June 2021 sessions.

http://www.wcoomd.org/en/about-us/what-is-the-wco/customs-environment.aspx

A virtual workshop for WCA Customs was organized by the WCO on 30 November and 1 December 2020.

3.5 WCO Strategic Plan 2019-2022

During the 2019 WCO Council sessions, Members endorsed a new WCO Strategic Plan for the period 2019-2022 spelling out the nine priorities on which the Secretariat should focus its work, namely: coordinated border management, safety and security, Revised Kyoto Convention, electronic commerce, Harmonized System, capacity-building strategy, performance measurement, integrity, and finally digital customs and data analysis.
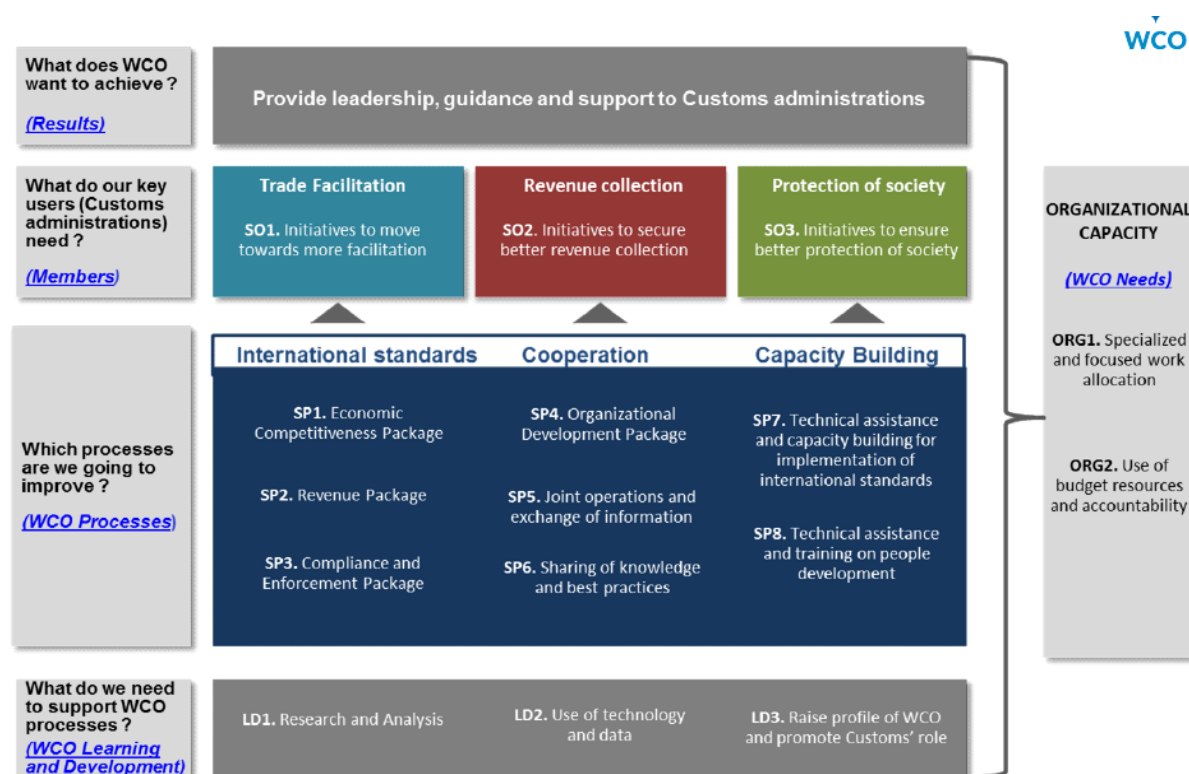
The Secretariat has also set up a transparent mechanism for monitoring activities. It was put online in November 2019 and is updated regularly, based on feedback from the three Directorates of the Secretariat. An implementation plan for 2019-2020 is also available.

These tools are available to Members on the WCO website through the following link: http://www.wcoomd.org/en/about-us/what-is-the-wco/strategic-plan/strategic-map.aspx (identifiers required to access it).

3.6 Capacity Building Committee (CBC)

The 11th session of the CBC took place in Brussels from 4 to 6 March 2020. The first day was dedicated to a joint session with the Trade Facilitation Agreement Working Group (TFAWG).

The most important themes addressed in the margin of this meeting were:
- Progress made under the WTO-TFA and the WCO Mercator programme ;
- The revised capacity building strategy ;

- Capacity building support to stimulate the use of technology and data analysis within customs ;
- Small island economies ;
- Measurement of organizational performance ;
- Management and deployment of accredited and recognized Experts ;
- Customs professionalism, including leadership and management and competency-based human resources management ;
- Integrity ;
- Gender equality and diversity in customs.

The 12th session of the CBC will be held virtually and will take place on 22 – 24 February 2021 with the main theme 'Driving Customs through Troubled Times and Beyond'.

3.7 Revised capacity building strategy

The 11th session of the WCO Capacity Building Committee endorsed the revised version of the WCO Capacity Building Strategy and the proposed implementation plan. The purpose of these instruments is to align capacity building with the WCO's 2019-2022 strategic plan and provide more targeted and effective support to Members.

An improved plan for the implementation of this strategy will be presented to the next CBC in February 2021

3.8 RAMMAP-SWIM platform

The Secretariat recently developed the RAM-MAP / SWIM platform. It provides two tools:

- A reform and modernization database for monitoring of activities and projects (RAM-MAP), and
- A Single Window Interactive Map (SWIM).

The platform is now accessible to Members through the following link:
https://rammap-swim.wcoomd.org.

At present, the RAM-MAP has the following functionalities:

- **WCO global activities:** Map with updated information on past, current and planned capacity building activities. This information will be accessible to users according to different access policies and information levels;
- **Identification of needs by electronic means:** The electronic submission of a "request for assistance" will be the subject of a pilot experiment during the 2020-2021 fiscal year;
- **Electronic evaluation forms:** All WCO activities are subject to evaluation. The RAM-MAP upgrade will introduce a new approach based on extensive automation, not only in terms of architecture and feedback, but also in terms of automated analysis of the assessments provided;
- **International legal instruments:** Map of legal instruments and signatory Members.

3.9   International Customs Day

For International Customs Day 2020, the theme chosen is **"Sustainability at the heart of customs action for people, prosperity and the planet".**

The 2019 WCO Environmental Scan highlights the fact that, in order to move towards a sustainable society whose development promotes a deep respect for the environment, Customs, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, must, wherever possible, perform its activities with a strong, sustainable mind-set, and the WCO must focus, in particular, on setting a good example in this area. Thus, by means of various tools and specific programmes, the WCO is calling for various actions to be taken:

➢ Implement the latest version of the WCO Harmonized System and associated recommendations, apply customs procedures in a consistent and transparent manner and adopt a dynamic approach in order to promote and facilitate the simplification and harmonization of these procedures, while strengthening inter-service cooperation;
➢ Implement the provisions relating to international trade stipulated by MEAs such as the Basel Convention, the Montreal Protocol, the Cartagena Protocol, the Rotterdam Convention, the Stockholm Convention, the World Heritage Convention and CITES;
➢ Apply risk management and data analysis techniques to facilitate trade, stimulate economic growth and attract foreign investment, thereby helping to reduce poverty;
➢ Broaden the scope of the Digital Customs program, by putting more emphasis on modern technologies, in particular with a view to setting up a high-performance dematerialized one-stop shop environment and a solid ICT infrastructure;
➢ Rapidly implement the WCO Framework of Standards on Cross-Border Electronic Commerce, in order to take advantage of the opportunities offered by this type of commerce while ensuring that all can benefit from it and effectively fight against associated challenges;
➢ Reduce the impact of counterfeiting and piracy in order to prevent unfair competition and create an environment conducive to innovation and creativity;
➢ Implement targeted approaches in order to improve customs ethics;
➢ Promote gender equality as a catalyst for sustainable change, given its multiplier effect to accelerate sustainable development;
➢ Operational guide for version 4 of the WCO data model.

4   Environment and initiatives at global level

4.1   COVID-19 – impact and activities of the WCO

On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the current outbreak of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (USPPI). On 11March 2020, the WHO declared the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak a pandemic.

In the face of this global challenge, it is to be expected that the cross-border movement of relief consignments (supplies, drugs and equipment) will increase dramatically. Moreover,

as the WHO indicates in its updated recommendations of 29 February 2020, concerning international trafficking in connection with the outbreak of COVID-19, "… restrictions may interrupt the necessary assistance and technical support, disrupt economic activity, and have negative socioeconomic spillover effects on affected countries". It is therefore essential that customs administrations continue to facilitate customs clearance, not only of relief shipments, but also of all goods in general in order to minimize the overall impact of the COVID-19 epidemic outbreak on our economies and societies. Customs administrations are urged to establish a coordinated and proactive approach with all relevant agencies to ensure the integrity and continued facilitation of the global supply chain.

Travel restrictions and social distancing rules imposed by Governments to tackle the COVID-19 epidemic have forced development partners, including the WCO, to quickly adapt the ways in which they operate and support their Members.

In the first quarter of 2020, the WCO was forced to cancel or postpone a good number of missions and activities, but its proactive and agile manner enabled it to quickly develop standards, tools and procedures to support its Members in the fight against this epidemic, to equip itself and build its own capacity to replace missions, conferences and physical meetings with virtual activities.

WCO standards, tools and initiatives are available here:
http://www.wcoomd.org/fr/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/coronavirus.aspx

In a more specific way, the action of the WCO in this matter also comprised following initiatives:
➢ Since mid-March 2020, the Secretariat has been working on several initiatives to help Members mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic;
➢ The Secretariat has compiled a directory of Members' practices in response to the pandemic. The repository contains 33 practices from the African continent (12 from the ESA region, 19 from the WCA region and 2 from North Africa);
➢ In July 2020, the WCO launched a new COVID-19 project funded by the Japanese government. This project aims to improve the capacity of customs administrations in developing and least developed countries to address challenges related to COVID-19, other infectious diseases and disruptive events. The project was tasked to develop WCO Guidelines on Disaster Management and Supply Chain Continuity, and carrying out capacity building activities at regional and national levels;
➢ The preliminary draft of the WCO Guidelines on Disaster Management and Supply Chain Continuity was presented to the PC in October 2020;
➢ The WCO and the World Health Organization (WHO) have developed an HS classification reference for COVID-19 medical supplies. The indicative list provides the 6-digit HS 2017 classification code for a limited number of items but has no legal status;
➢ From 11 to 13 November 2020, the WCO organized the WCO TECH-CON 2020 under the theme 'Technology for customs in times of the pandemic - what have we learned?' The DGs of Customs of the Burkina Faso and Benin, as well as the Deputy Comptroller General of Nigeria Customs attended;

- On 17 November 2020, the WCO participated in the virtual meeting of the Expert Working Group to review the 'Continental Guidelines on Trade and Transport Facilitation for the Movement of People, Goods and Services and through Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic ', organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union Commission (AUC), in collaboration with the African Union Development Agency.
- On 24 and 27 November 2020, the WCO participated in the African Union's Sub-Committee of Directors General of Customs and contributed to the consolidation of the AU's Continental COVID-29 Guidelines;
- An interregional workshop for the ESA and WCA regions will be organized within the framework of COVID-19 in the period from 15 to 18 December 2020. Through the COVID-19 project, members of the regional workshops will be invited to contribute to the development of WCO guidelines on disaster management and supply chain continuity. Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire are among the Members eligible to receive support under this project.

WCO efforts in the coming months will focus on helping Members facilitate the cross-border movement of COVID-19 vaccines, when they become available

4.2 The WTO TFA and the WCO MERCATOR Program

The World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) entered into force on 22 February 2017 and has already been ratified by 149 countries. The Agreement is binding on all WTO Members and has a major impact on WCO capacity building activities in WCA, especially since all WCA countries except Sao Tome & Principe (observer), are members of the WTO. The following links provide more information on the TFA and its implementation: www.TFAFacility.org www.tfadatabase.org.

It is recalled that:

- Developing countries had to notify the WTO, by 22 August 2019, of all Category A, B and C measures;
- The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) had to notify the WTO, by 22 February 2020 at the latest, of their technical assistance and capacity-building needs for their category C measures.

The support provided by the **Mercator programme** to the implementation of the TFA remains at the heart of the support that the WCO provides in addition to the traditional capacity building support requested by WCO members.

In November 2020, the WCO released the second edition of the Mercator Program Report. It is available here:
http://www.wcoomd.org/fr/media/newsroom/2020/november/the-wco-launches-the-second-edition-of-the-mercator-programme-report.aspx

The second edition now covers the period up to June 2020 and provides a current overview and highlights some common implementation challenges, outlining how the Mercator Programme is assisting Members in providing tailor-made solutions, delivering relevant support activities to overcome them and then monitoring and recording implementation progress. The report also includes a series of descriptive case studies that demonstrate the connection between the TFA and the real-world application of WCO instruments that are already delivery tangible achievements in many Member administrations with regard to effective TFA implementation.

Since its outbreak, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major disruptions to cross-border trade movements across the world. It is now even more critical that Customs administrations continue to facilitate the international movement of goods to help minimize the overall impact of the pandemic on economies and societies. The Mercator Report reflects on how Customs administrations should continue to maintain a coordinated and proactive approach with concerned agencies to ensure the integrity of the global supply chain. In this regard, the WCO Secretariat has been exploring and utilizing alternative arrangements that have allowed the WCO to continue providing its technical assistance and capacity building support, including through the Mercator Programme, by using various on-line tools and remote delivery activities

5   Environment and initiatives at continental level

5.1   The African Union's CFTA

The signing of the General Framework of the Agreement on the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) by 44 Heads of African States on 21 March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda, commits the African Union, its Regional Economic Communities and its 55 Member countries to work together to develop intra-African trade and that with other continents, in particular through concrete measures of facilitation, cooperation and mutual assistance. This initiative has had a significant impact on WCA Customs and must now, like the TFA, be a key element in their reform and modernization strategies.

The customs issues of the AfCFTA are anchored in the Protocol on Trade in Goods. According to Article 2, the main objective is to create a liberalized market for trade in goods in accordance with Article 3 of the Agreement. The specific objective is to stimulate intra-African trade in goods by the following measures:

➢ The gradual elimination of tariffs;
➢ The progressive elimination of non-tariff barriers;
➢ Improving the efficiency of customs procedures, trade and transit facilitation;
➢ Enhanced cooperation in the areas of technical barriers to trade;
➢ Development and promotion of regional and continental value chains;
➢ Strengthening socio-economic development, diversification and industrialization across Africa.

The following Annexes to this Protocol are particularly relevant to Customs:

1: Schedules of commitments regarding tariff liberalization
2: Customs cooperation and mutual assistance
3: Rules of origin
4: Trade facilitation
5: Non-tariff barriers
8: Transit

The most important texts are available on the following links:

➢ **CFTA Agreement:**
  https://au.int/treaties/agreement-establishing-african-continental-free-trade-area.

➢ **CFTA Appendices:**
  https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/37121-doc-draft_annexes_estbt_of_cfta.pdf

➢ **Signatures:**
  https://au.int/treaties/agreement-establishing-african-continental-free-trade-area

54 out of 55 countries (all except Eritrea) have signed the Agreement and 30 countries have deposited their instruments of ratification. Following this, the AU Summit decided to install the General AfCFTA Secretariat in Accra (Ghana), and to appoint its first Secretary General (from South Africa).

Now AU Members have to file their tariff dismantling schedule with a target of 90% of the goods within 10 years.

The negotiators of this agreement created various Technical Working Groups (TWGs) to assist them by providing technical inputs to the process. Three of the TWGs involving customs administrations are: customs procedures and trade facilitation; Rules of origin; and non-tariff barriers and technical barriers to trade.

6 The West and Central Africa region (WCA)

6.1 Overall situation

Security and customs revenue collection remain the priority missions of WCA Customs, even though trade facilitation boosted by the TFA and the AfCFTA remains a topical issue. However, the COVID-19 epidemic strongly affects WCA countries and reduces economic and tourist activity. This has a direct impact on state revenues and makes it more difficult for Customs to achieve their revenue objectives.

The COVID-19 pandemic constitutes great challenges for the development of the region, trade facilitation and regional integration as targeted by the African Union and the WTO. It confirms the need for customs to intensify their efforts to simplify and accelerate the clearance of relief consignments and then to train and protect those involved.

For many countries in this Region, border security remains a challenge for state services and a major obstacle to economic development, including the implementation of customs reforms. Armed groups have formed and operate in border areas in a sustainable manner, taking advantage of the border economy as a logistical and fiscal resource. Their strategies of harassment or attacks of security and defence forces aim to weaken the ability of states to govern their borders. Customs, located at the interface of security and economic policies, are particularly concerned. This is why the WCO security continues providing significant support to WCA Customs to enable them to more effectively combat these phenomena.

The illicit trade and consumption of drugs and fake medicines have become a major concern of the WCA region. It can be observed that some Customs now participate more actively in the numerous anti-fraud operations organized by the WCO with the support of the WCA RILOs, that they more often use the CEN and CENcom to capture and exchange relevant information and that they seize significant quantities of prohibited products. However, for other WCA Customs these plagues still do not seem to be a priority and their seizures outside these operations remain generally low.

Many WCA countries are suffering from the looting of heritage, natural and cultural resources and the extinction of their flora and fauna. The WCO has developed a number of initiatives (notably the INAMA and PITCH programs) to enable WCA Customs to better protect the country's heritage, resources and species, and through this, protect their society, economy and environment. Some WCA Customs have started to develop frameworks that allow them to fight more effectively against its scourges, but for others do not have the required resources.

Many WCA markets are inundated with products that do not comply with intellectual property rights (IPRs), including products that pose dangers to the health of citizens and the environment. However, the initiatives and concrete actions of a number of Customs WCAs in this area are still timid.

Electronic commerce is also developing in WCA and Customs must take measures to face this new reality. They are called upon to develop or improve their customs clearance procedures and their systems, especially for goods ordered on the Internet and transported by post or express courier.

6.2   Particular challenges of the WCA region

6.2.1   Pre-shipment inspections /destination inspections
In June 2014, the WCO Council empowered the Secretariat to develop guidelines and best practices for Customs to successfully take over their core functions (in particular valuation and classification of goods) from private sector inspection companies and to develop guidelines to make customs procurement procedures more transparent.

Encouraged by the successful termination of inspection contracts and the taking over of

the main functions outsourced by the customs authorities of Kenya, Mauritania and Nigeria, other WCA countries have committed to developing similar initiatives. This trend has been further reinforced by Article 10.5 of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement which states that Members shall no longer use pre-shipment inspection services in connection with tariff classification and valuation and that encourages the Customs not to introduce or apply new requirements for the use of other types of pre-shipment inspection.

In 2013, Niger announced its intention not to renew its existing pre-shipment inspection contract. In 2015 the Government of Niger adopted new organizational structures in charge of tariff assessment and classification. Since December 2018, the WCO has conducted a Revenue Package Diagnostic mission (Value and SH), has trained trainers and has assisted the Customs implementing advance rulings.

Other support provided in 2015 by the WCO and other partners to Ghana and the Democratic Republic of Congo enabled their governments not to renew their inspection contracts and customs to reclaim their prerogatives without any loss of revenue. However, in the meantime the government of Ghana has signed a new 5-year contract with a private sector company to support valuation and advance tariff classification, development of a Single Window and other relevant initiatives.

In 2016 and 2017, the WCO assisted Guinea Customs in this matter. In 2017, their government decided not to renew their contract with the inspection company. Since then, Guinean customs have assumed their full responsibilities for the valuation and tariff classification of imported goods. In the same period, Gabon and Guinea Bissau also successfully completed their comparable initiatives.

The inspection contract in Burkina Faso ended in September 2018 and a support mission took place in October / November 2018 to foster newly developed processes.

Political and technical support provided under the WCO Revenue Package in 2018, supported Côte d'Ivoire Customs in its initiative to take ownership of customs valuation and classification. In March 2019, their Government decided not to renew their inspection contract. Further assistance will be provided to support the Customs in the development of a solution that will require the declarant to declare the goods value and will enable the Customs to apply a valuation control system in line with WTO rules and standards. The support will also help to implement advance rulings.

For Sierra Leone, 4 support missions were carried out which should allow Customs to definitively take ownership of the valuation and classification of goods.

Chad still has a pre-shipment inspection contract. This contract which requires the inspection company to be paid ad-valorem (service costs expressed in% on the value of the goods) was expected to end in November 2019. So far the WCO has not received a request to assist them in this matter.

Other WCO support is still underway to further assist Customs in Benin, Cameroon, the Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo, in their initiatives to take ownership of their missions related to the valuation and the tariff classification of goods. The obligation to go through an inspection company, to present to Customs verifications certificates (VA) and to pay fees which are calculated ad-valorem (% of the value of the declared goods) to remunerate the inspection company for its services related to customs valuation and tariff classification does not comply with the provisions of the TFA and must cease.

The trend of inspection companies to move from pre-shipment inspection to destination inspection, and to offer other services (including Single Window and tracking of cargo by geolocation) can be observed

6.2.2 Tracking of transit cargo by satellite

More and more WCA Customs are concluding contracts with service providers specialized in tracking cargo in transit by geolocation (satellite). On this subject, the following can be observed:

➢ In general, the Governments and Customs of the WCA region invest in this technology with the objective of securing the transits which until recently have been operated only at the national level and for which there are not sufficient guarantees to fully cover duties and taxes suspended;

➢ There is no regional or sub-regional policy and strategy in this area. In most cases, contracts are negotiated individually between the governments of a single country with a private sector service provider. As a result, the contracts are multiple and diverse;

➢ In most cases, geolocation systems are heterogeneous and used at the national level only. The tracking devices are affixed at the start of the transit and removed again at the exit of the country;

➢ For transits that cross two or more countries, the economic operator may have to change the devices for each country and pay for the geolocation service, country by country. This makes transîts more expensive and does not contribute to the objective of speeding up formalities at the border;

➢ In some cases, devices are affixed to trucks and trailers that transport bulk goods and that cannot be sealed. In these cases, the devices make it possible to follow the means of transport but not necessarily the goods in transit;

➢ At the sub-regional or regional level, there are currently no relevant studies to assess the added value of geolocation.

It seems useful to thematise the monitoring of cargoes by geolocation at the level of the WCA region or at the level of its Regional Economic Communities in order to assess its relevance, to develop a common policy and to optimize the use of this tool, especially in the context of SIGMAT which provides a new procedure for regional transit and for which a new solution for regional guarantees is currently developed.

6.3 Accession to WCO

On 13 July 2020, the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea informed the WCO of the ratification of the Convention establishing the Customs Cooperation Council and of its willingness to deposit the instruments of accession with the Belgian authorities. The

accession to the WCO of this Spanish-speaking country and its integration as the 24th country in the WCO-WCA region is expected soon.

6.4   Accession to international standards

6.4.1   WCO standards

Following accessions of WCA countries to the main WCO Conventions could be registered:

➢ **Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) :**
   At present 17 WCA countries are contracting parties to the RKC (all except The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, CAR and Chad). Latest accessions:

   ➢ 2017: Benin; Sao Tome & Principe, Burkina Faso and Republic of Congo.
   ➢ 2019: Ghana.

➢ **Harmonized System (HS)) :**
   All of the 23 WCA countries are contracting parties to the HS Convention. The Gambia was the last to ratify this Convention in 2019.

6.4.2   TFA - WTO

So far, the TFA has been ratified by 18 WCA countries (all except Guinea-Bissau, DR Congo, Liberia, Mauritania and Sao Tome & Principe): Latest accessions:

➢ 2019: Republic of Guinea.
➢ 2020: Cabo Verde.

6.4.3   AfCFTA - African Union

All WCA countries have signed the Agreement. All except Benin, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and CAR have ratified it. Cameroon and Nigeria still need to deposit the instruments of accession.

6.5   The capacity building priorities in WCA

During this period and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, several WCO capacity building activities took place for the benefit of the WCA region (statistics see chapter 7.17.1). Most of them were organized in virtual mode and concerned support for the following themes: fight against the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and support for health crisis management, application of HS2017 and preparation for migration to HS2022, implementation of TFA and AfCFTA, development of advance rulings, appropriation by Customs of missions outsourced to inspection companies, holistic risk management, fight against trafficking of counterfeit medicine and cross-border crime, time release study, transit-interconnectivity-transit and finally integrity promotion.

Other initiatives have aimed more at the harmonization and simplification of procedures, in particular through computerization, interconnectivity, coordinated border management and Single Window. These are being carried out more and more often in the context of the MERCATOR Programme to support Members in the implementation of the TFA.

6.6 The WCA statutory activities

6.6.1 WCA Conference of Directors General of Customs

The 24th Conference of Directors General of Customs WCA, was held in Bangui in the Central African Republic from 13 to 15 March 2019. It recorded the participation of 15 Member administrations of the region, the WCO Secretariat, the ROCB of Abidjan, the RTCs of Ouagadougou and Brazzaville, the RILO Central Africa, as well as continental and regional organizations, in particular, the African Union, ECOWAS, UNCTAD, and UN / OCHA.

At the end of the work, the following recommendations were addressed to the WCO Secretariat:

➢ Support the Vice-Chair of the WCA region in the search for funding from donors for the continuation and extension of the C-RED + project.
Current situation: A new project funded by Japan was developed by the WCO in summer 2020. The first activities were initiated in autumn 2020 and benefit also the WCA region.

➢ Organize training courses in the field of protection of cultural goods in order to ultimately have a pool of experts.
Current situation: A training planned in February 2020 in Niger for several WCA countries and for Morocco had to be postponed.

➢ Help the region organize a regional workshop on performance measurement in 2019:
Current situation: The virtual workshop for the WCA region on the use of strategic foresight methods in the definition of the WCO strategy, held on 30 November and 1 December 2020, touched on performance measurement and allowed WCA Customs to improve their knowledge.. Other activities will be organized once the relevant WCO tools are validated.

On 25 September 2020, Members of the WCO - West and Central Africa (WCA) Region held their **first virtual conference of Directors General of Customs**. This important activity chaired by General Toumany Sangaré, Director General of Customs of the Republic of Guinea and outgoing Vice-chair of the WCA region, and organized with the support of the WCO Secretariat, brought together 20 of the 23 WCA customs administrations and all its regional structures.

The conference elected Mr. Guénolé MBONGO KOUMOU, Director General of Customs of the Republic of Congo as the new Vice-chair of the WCA Region and thanked the outgoing WCA Vice-chair for his leadership during his mandate which has lasted more than two years and which has enabled the WCA region to strengthen cooperation and progress in reform and modernization.

To enable the Region to continue its collaboration and activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference decided to organize a series of virtual activities and use part of the regional funds to purchase licenses, equipment and interpretation services for its videoconferences. These licenses and equipment will be acquired and managed by the ROCB in Abidjan and will allow it to organize, in a virtual and more autonomous way, the

statutory meetings of the Region and to contribute to the organization of other regional online activities.

6.6.2 WCA Experts Committee

The 23rd Meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Conference of Directors General of Customs of the WCA Region, was held on 19, 20 and 21 November 2019 in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo. This meeting recorded the participation of 12 out of 23 member administrations of the region, of the Vice-Chair, the WCO Secretariat, the ROCB, the RTCs of Ouagadougou and Brazzaville, the RILO-CA and WA, the Regional working group on ICT and of the AU Commission.

This Committee made the following recommendations:
➢ The Vice-Chair to set up a tool for evaluating the performance of Regional Structures in collaboration with the WCO Secretariat;
➢ The WCO Secretariat to support the WCA RILOs for the holding of a regional training session on information exchange tools for the benefit of National Correspondents; <u>Current situation:</u> Planned for the 2020-2021 fiscal year.
➢ The ROCB to develop a programme to strengthen the capacities of the customs administrations in terms of project management;
➢ The Customs Administrations to :
  o strengthen their project management capacities;
  o develop and implement a data analysis strategy in accordance with the WCO Manual;
  o and produce an annual report on the capacity building programmes and results of their administration and of the theme of the International Customs Day.

6.6.3 Meeting of WCA contact points

From 24 to 26 September 2019, the 10th Meeting of WCA Contact Points for Capacity Building was held in Kinshasa, DR Congo. The presentations and interactive debates focused in particular on the following themes:

➢ The role of National Contact Points (NCPs) for Capacity Building and potentials to improve their contributions to the planning, monitoring and evaluation of customs reform, but also to the coordination of the Customs' activity with the WCO and with its regional structures;
➢ Monitoring the implementation of the 2018-2022 Regional Strategic Plan;
➢ The situation of the region in relation to the measurement of the performance of customs activity and the choice of indicators, in particular for monitoring the implementation of the WTO TFA;
➢ Data analysis and project management as modern and efficient tools for the implementation of customs reforms.

Progress made at the level of "The mirror", a tool developed by the ROCB and also used by WCA Customs, to monitor and evaluate the implementation, at national and regional level, of the regional strategic plan and the "regional coaching programme were also presented.

6.6.4 WCA Conference of Customs and their development partners

The 3rd WCA Conference of Customs and development partners was held in Niamey from 16 to 18 October 2019. 17 WCA Customs the Vice-Chair, the ROCB, the RTCs and the two RILOS of the region, and many development partner institutions, including the African Union, ECOWAS, the African Development Bank, the Commission of the European Union, UNESCO, the World Bank, FMI-AFRITTAC, JICA, GIZ, UN -OCHA, UNCTAD, EIED of CEMAC, French Customs, the Embassy of France and the United States, and the WCO Secretariat participated.

The conference allowed the participants to present the concept of SMART Borders and to discuss its relevance and its application in WCA, more particularly to facilitate legal trade, fight against fraud and to secure cross-border trade.

Following the thematic discussions, the development partners presented their initiatives and priorities and WCA Customs presented the following projects:

➢ The WCA Customs' Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit (SIGMAT);
➢ The regional project for the modernization of the WCA Customs' human resources;
➢ The regional WCA Customs capacity building project in internal control and audit;
➢ The regional project for the implementation of an AEO Program in the ECOWAS region;
➢ The project for the establishment in WCA of a Training Programme for Trainers in post clearance audit and compliance management;
➢ The regional project for WCA countries on Time Release Studies (TRS);
➢ The WCA Customs Capacity Building project in data analysis;
➢ The RILO project for the strengthening of Intelligence in WCA and for the implementation of the nCEN application (national Customs Enforcement Network).

At the end of the discussions, the following recommendations were made:

➢ Technical and financial partners to support the projects presented at this conference and to coordinate their interventions in support of customs administrations;
➢ The Vice-Chair to maintain the dynamic of dialogue between the partners and the customs administrations of the region;
➢ The WCO Secretariat to prepare an advocacy for the political decision-makers of the Member States to include security as one of the priorities of the customs;
  Current situation: The tools of the WCO security programme already contain this advocacy and a good number of activities of this programme address or involve directly or indirectly decision-makers and stakeholders. The role and contribution of Customs to security is also integrated into the new WCO strategic plan.
➢ The Regional Economic Communities to speed up the adoption of the implementing provisions for their Community customs code and to popularize them;
➢ Customs administrations to strengthen collaboration with the Private Sector and other Development Partners; to continue modernization efforts through the use of new technologies and tools; to develop synergies with other border control services.

6.6.5 Meeting of WCA Human Resource and Training Managers

The Regional Vice-Chair, the ROCB-WCA in collaboration with the WCO Secretariat, the Customs Administration of Burkina Faso and the RTC of Ouagadougou, organized the 9th Workshop of Human Resources and Training Managers of the WCA Region in Ouagadougou from 28 to 30 October 2019. The main focus of this workshop was: Investment in human capital, an essential lever for the performance of WCA Customs. The objectives of this workshop were as follows:

➢ Identify the challenges, obstacles and prospects for implementing the skills-based human resources management (HRM) approach within WCA Customs;
➢ Propose appropriate solutions to decision-makers for the effective implementation of the competency based HRM approach;
➢ Promote the exchange of experiences between the different training institutions at regional and national level;
➢ Create a strong will within the region in favour of investment in training as a means of ensuring the professionalization and performance of customs.

At the end of this workshop, the **Ouagadougou declaration** was adopted by all the participation Customs administrations and in presence of the African Union and the UEMOA. These administrations, convinced that the implementation of a modern competency-based Human Resources Management system will allow WCA Customs to improve their performance and successfully complete their reform and modernization processes, agree that:

➢ Training and human resources managers must:
  ➢ Participate in their personal development to fully assume their responsibility for the modernization of Human Resources management within their administrations;
  ➢ Fully play their role as strategic partner and change agent within their administrations for better organizational performance;
  ➢ Implement modern HRM competency-based tools, particularly in terms of recruitment and training.

➢ Customs in the WCA region must:
  ➢ Develop and defend arguments with governments to adequately provide the structures in charge of human resources management and training, with the necessary resources (human, material and financial);
  ➢ Set up a modern, transparent and competency-based Human Resources Management system including all management practices: recruitment, mobility, rotation, promotion and training.

The line ministries are called upon to commit themselves through concrete actions to energize and operationalize the HR modernization initiated within the customs administrations. The WCO and other technical and financial partners are asked to:

➢ Support Customs in dialogue and advocacy with governments;
➢ Coordinate capacity building activities between the different partners;

➢ Continue to support the Customs Administrations in their human resources modernization programmes.

6.7 Programmes and projects for the WCA region

The WCO has the following programs and projects to support Members in the WCA region.

6.7.1 The WCO Security Programme

On the side-lines of the 23rd WCA Conference of DG of Customs, organized in April 2018 in Guinea, a new security project for the WCA region was presented and launched. This Japanese-funded project revolves around five priority areas:

➢ Control of substances and products that can be used in the manufacture of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), as part of the **Programme Global Shield**;

➢ The fight against illicit trafficking and use of small arms and light weapons, within the framework of the **SALW Project;**

➢ The control of travellers / the fight against the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, by using **API and passenger records (PNR);**

➢ **Control of exchanges of goods a strategic nature,** through a programme that includes a component 'capacity building and a component 'operational activities ;

➢ **The fight against the financing of terrorism**, which targets illicit trade and money laundering activities, including the systems of money couriers and money laundering under the guise of commercial operations;

As part of this Project, the WCO organized, on 11 and 12 December 2019, a security conference in Brussels entitled: "Security challenges from an African perspective". It brought together more than 150 delegates who came to represent more than fifty countries (including many WCA countries) and organizations to debate security challenges affecting customs work in Africa.

14 countries of the WCA region benefit from all of the project activities and of the equipment provided. The programmes' trainer trainings took place in Ouidah, Benin, from 7 to 22 June and from 19 to 30 August 2019.

The control of precursors and other components used in the manufacture of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), as part of the Global Shield Program, was the subject of 2 pre-operational seminars in Dakar organized in January and March 2020. They were attended by with all the National Contact Points (NCPs) of the participating countries and the two WCA RILOs and dealt with the WCA security challenges, CENComm 3 training and the preparation of the operation.

Operation Alamba 2020 was carried out within the framework of the Global Shield Program and took place virtually from 7 to 22. It enabled participating countries (Benin; Burkina Faso; Cameroon; Chad; Central African Republic; Côte d'Ivoire; Democratic Republic of Congo; Guinea; Liberia; Mali; Niger; Nigeria; Senegal and Togo) to carry out 119 seizures of which 52% of targeted products, i.e. 39 tonnes of cyanide; 7.8 tons of explosive components; 5,200 pieces and 24 rolls of detonating cord; 1052 litres of nitric acid, 660 parts of igniters; and 220 litres of hydrogen peroxide.

6.7.2 SPC ++ project (Security by Collaboration in the WCA Region)

At the regional level, Nigerian Customs, in cooperation with the WCO, organized in Abuja, in December 2016, the first meeting of the Technical Committee on the security project (SPC ++), with a view to proposing a new framework to tackle security issues in WCA from a commercial and customs point of view. Five countries from the region participated in the meeting, namely Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, the Central African Republic and Chad. They adopted concrete recommendations to strengthen regional coordination and jointly implement activities.

In March and September 2017, two missions were led by the WCO in northern Nigeria to explore the fiscal and trade governance implemented by the insurgents and the current impact of the crisis on trade and customs. Identical missions were carried out in the Central African Republic, Niger and Burkina Faso. One of the findings of these missions is that the development of the cartographic dimension is essential for customs to better control their land borders, strengthen their intelligence function and cooperate with the security and defence forces. Tools implementing intelligence and training modules are being tested. As first results, a spatial risk analysis approach was developed and tested, allowing a participating member to strengthen its links with its national intelligence agency.

6.7.3 PITCH (protection of the cultural heritage)

Since April 2018, a series of activities has been organized on the role of customs in the protection of cultural heritage (PITCH Programme). These activities provide opportunities for WCA Customs to tackle the problem of contraband cultural heritage and to harmonize their national practices and policies which also relate to security and terrorism.

In this context, a regional workshop was held in Burkina Faso in May 2018 and a train the trainer workshop was organized in Senegal in December 2018. Following these training, a major seizure took place in July 2019 in Burkina Faso on 2 statues from Cameroon accompanied by false documents.

A training planned in February 2020 in Niger for several WCA countries and for Morocco had to be postponed and will be organized at a later stage in Senegal.

6.7.4 LMD (Leadership and Management Development

Since the first workshop in November 2011, the outline of the Leadership Development Programme and its content has been regularly updated and aligned with the needs of beneficiary Members. Since 1st of January, 2020, the LMD workshops have been carried out using new material and the new approach, developed in 2019 and adopted during the 10th session of the Capacity Building Committee. The new capacity building approach of the LMD Programme is based on three key principles: sustainability, ownership, and combining organizational and technical development:

➢ **Sustainability:** In order to bring about changes within the organization as a whole in terms of leadership and management culture, the programme now offers support on three different levels: executives, senior managers and middle managers. It aims to profoundly transform leaders and senior managers on a personal level. To achieve this, participants from beneficiary Member countries are invited to work on the following areas: knowing

yourself; managing yourself; understanding others well and have a positive impact on them. It is planned to develop the programme further to support the regions and the large customs administrations in developing their own expertise in LMD.

➢ **Ownership:** The LMD Programme aims to work for and with Members who know and understand that building and developing modern leadership and management culture are the prerequisites of an effective Customs Administration. It starts with what is most important - building trust and creating the right conditions for cooperation with the organization's top managers.

➢ **Combine organizational and technical development:** The LMD Programme understands the need and wants to fully assume the responsibility of offering organizational development that goes hand in hand with technical support (e.g. facilitation, security, etc.). The programme is an essential element and the lever of organizational development which allows progress in the technical fields. This is the reason why the programme aims to cooperate in the context of projects that focus more on technical support. Such cooperation implies carrying out the activities of the LMD Programme (Top Management Retreat, LMD Workshop, Development workshop for middle managers), and in parallel, a more suitable approach. The programme can coach senior managers and their teams who wish to implement technical changes and can also provide another type of tailor-made support for follow-up.

The new LMD workshop material has been developed around these key principles. It covers 10 development areas / modules: Leadership and modern customs; Self-awareness; Strategic management, Vision and values; Leadership; Communication; Integrity; Negotiations; Management; People management; Change management. Most of these areas of development were already part of the existing material but are now presented from a different angle and with new content.

Most of the material can be obtained, presented and shared online. This maintains the relevance, quality and level of information and eliminates the need to print the material.

For several years now, 8-day LMD workshops have been integrated into all the scholarship programs which also benefit a good number of WCA customs officers.

The Swiss government has already provided funding to the WCO since 2018 to support this initiative. However, since January 2019, no LMD / TMR workshop has been organized for WCA Customs.

In 2020, the LMD team continued to develop modules for workshops intended for the development of middle managers but no LMD workshops were organized for the WCA region(those planned in Côte d'Ivoire and DR Congo have not taken place yet)..

6.7.5 SIGMAT (transit Interconnectivity)

This project, jointly supported by the WCO, the ECOWAS Commission and a pool of development partners (in particular: World Bank, African Development Bank, UNCTAD, GIZ, European Union, JICA, USAID, etc.) is in its implementation phase. Its objective is to simplify, speed up and make transits between countries in the WCA region safer and less costly. It was planned to interconnect the transit systems of ECOWAS countries in 2020 and to extend the interconnection to Central African Customs.

The launch of the **Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit (SIGMAT)** and the start of transit operations managed by SIGMAT between Burkina Faso and Côte

d'Ivoire were celebrated on 22 March 2019 in Abidjan, in the presence of WCA Customs, the African Union, ECOWAS, UNCTAD, various other development partners and international organizations and the private sector.

SIGMAT is currently operational in the following countries: Burkina Faso, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger and Togo.

From 28 to 30 October 209 and from 13-17 January 2020, two meetings were held in Ouagadougou and Abidjan with Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, in the presence of the WCO Secretariat, the World Bank and SITARAIL. These meetings made it possible to develop the framework and a timetable to extend SIGMAT in 2020 to rail transits, primarily on the Abidjan-Ouagadougou corridor.

From 13 to 15 November 2019, the ECOWAS Commission organized a meeting with WCA Customs and development partners to assess the implementation of SIGMAT, further consolidate the additional act of the Community which will provide the legal framework for the IT solution and for regional guarantees for transits operated by SIGMAT.

In February 2020, Senegal and Mali entered the test phase, which made it possible to test the interface between the GAINDE system and AsycudaWorld. The Republic of Guinea has also started its tests.

Also in February 2020, the WCO went to The Gambia to present SIGMAT to executives of the Gambia Revenue Authority and to initiate interconnection. In the same period, UNCTAD was there to support the Customs to migrate to AsycudaWorld.

In March 2020, the SIGMAT developers of the WCA region and the Customs who have already operationalized its use were to meet in Lomé to develop a mobile version of this application and to let it approve by customs transit experts.

Work to consolidate and adopt the new ECOWAS regulatory framework for SIGMAT and to connect other countries to this system continues and the concepts and tools to monitor its implementation are in the development phase.

Now the most important works are focused on:
➢ Finalization of the ECOWAS Additional Act which will provide a modern regulatory framework for SIGMAT;
➢ Development by ECOWAS of the regulatory framework for the regional guarantee;
➢ Migration for certain countries to AsycudaWorld;
➢ Connection, country by country, to SIGMAT and signing of framework agreements.
➢ Establishment of a monitoring / evaluation mechanism to guarantee the compliant implementation of SIGMAT and to solve specific challenges on the ground.

Countries that already apply SIGMAT, supported by the WCO and ECOWAS, have developed functional and technical specifications for a SIGMAT website. This website would inform the public about the project and its progress and provide Customs with a platform to share documents and reference data necessary for the proper functioning of regional transit. However, Members who could contribute to the development of this site require external funding for this initiative, which has stalled this project so far.

6.7.6 INAMA (combat wildlife crime)

The WCO-INAMA project in which several WCA Members participate is a follow-up to two previous initiatives funded by the Swedish government (GAPIN I and II projects). It started in 2018. Its objective is to strengthen the capacity of customs administrations to combat wildlife crime through targeted capacity-building actions and support provided during enforcement operations.

In 2019, 2 global operations to combat trafficking in CITES products took place, one within the framework of INAMA (Operation PRAESIDIO) and one within the framework of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC).

➤ 8 countries in the region participated in the **Praesidio operation** (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo as well as the RILO WA. It took place from 4 February to 3 March 2019 This operation, carried out jointly with INTERPOL, did not only aim to seize prohibited wildlife and wood products, but above all to make arrests and prosecutions to dismantle criminal networks. Police officers from Interpol central offices in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana participated in the operation.

➤ The **Thunderball operation** carried out within the framework of ICCWC took place from 4 June to 3 July 2019. 109 members participated in this joint operation including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, DR Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria and Togo. With the support of INAMA, an accredited expert from Burkina Faso and an expert from the ROCB in Abidjan participated in the Operation Coordination Center in Singapore.

In July-August 2019, support missions were conducted in Cameroon, Togo and Nigeria. The objective of these missions was to take stock of the implementation of project activities, to formulate recommendations for the implementation of CITES and to continue the process of accreditation of 5 officers as operational technical advisers. The process ended at an accreditation workshop in Zambia from 26 to 30 August 2019 with the success of 4 out of 5 officers.

Additional support provided to Nigeria in November and December 2019 enables the Customs and their stakeholders to better manage the risks associated with the illegal wildlife trade.

INAMA II ended at the end of 2019. The new INAMA III project focuses on 13 countries in the world including 4 in Africa and 2 in WCA - Cameroon and Nigeria. Activities for these two countries will start in early 2021.

In 2020, under the aegis of the International Consortium to Combat Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), and in collaboration with INTERPOL, it was planned to hold a regional CITES workshop in Cameroon from 25 March to 3 April 2020. Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Guinea and Madagascar were invited to take part in this event, intended for law enforcement officers, but also for police and environmental authorities. However, due to the COVID-19

pandemic, this workshop has been postponed and replaced by COPES webinars from 15 to 19 June and online technical training on CITES running from June to September 2020.

The commitment and flexibility of the accredited French-speaking experts and their administrations (Burkina Faso and Togo) is to be congratulated. On the other hand, some countries that had nominated participants for the physical workshop did not nominate anyone for the online workshop.

Finally, some of the WCA region countries participated in **Operation Thunder 2020** (WCO and INTERPOL) with several notable seizures in Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and DRC.

6.7.7 HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD (Trade facilitation)

The HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD Programme was designed to provide targeted capacity building support to selected developing countries (3 countries in the WCA region, namely Sierra Leone, Ghana and Liberia). It supports the beneficiaries in the implementation of the WTO-TFA, in particular by using the available WCO instruments and tools, as well as the expertise of UNCTAD on the establishment and development of National Trade Facilitation Committees (NCTF).

In **2016,** following a needs assessment mission carried out in collaboration with the World Bank, the programme developed a tailor-made Mercator Implementation Plan for Sierra Leone and participated in the organization of an International Forum to support the NCTFs. The Forum was jointly organized by the WCO, UNCTAD, the World Bank and others in Geneva with more than 250 delegates from 44 countries.

In **2018,** two countries in the WCA region benefited from support through this project:

➢ Sierra Leone in January and February for a follow-up/evaluation mission of the Mercator programme as well as on the TRS and post clearance audit. From 20-24 August, a Revenue Package workshop to strengthen the valuation skills of 15 officials from the Sierra Leone Revenue Agency took place. This helped support Customs in its initiative to reclaim customs valuation, now still entrusted to an inspection company;
➢ Liberia, where UNCTAD provided support to establish and operationalize the National Trade Facilitation Committee.

In **2019,** additional assistance to Sierra Leone took place from 25 February to 1 March and focused on the improvement of the organization's Human Resource Management (by integrating the competency-based approach) and in the mapping of operational business processes for customs clearance at the port of Freetown;

In **2020,** actions which were to focus on supporting Sierra Leone for the Time Release Study and post-clearance audit were cancelled due to the health crisis. However, a new contract was signed in the meantime to implement phase 3 of this program until 2022. This enabled Liberia to benefit from a Mercator diagnostic mission in September 2020 (with the support of an expert from Cameroon) and support for the TRS in October 2020. Other activities are

yet to be confirmed. Negotiations with the donor to extend the program to other WCA countries are underway.

6.7.8 JICA-MTP (Master Training Programme)

The Master Trainer Program (MTP) is a program to help Customs administrations develop more sustainable training capacity on a variety of key issues necessary for Customs modernization by developing

➢ a pool of expert trainers
➢ unique training materials
➢ a training program designed to address the regional issues and challenges.

Taking advantage of the enhanced collaboration between the WCO and JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) through the "WCO/JICA Joint Project" launched in 2016, the MPT is now implemented through the strong collaboration between the two organizations.

After the notable success of MTP in East Africa where it enabled to develop a pool of approximately 90 trainers specialized in HS classification, customs valuation, and intelligence analysis, the WCO and JICA decided to extend the Programme to support the WCA regional policy on the development of "expert pool".

While the MTP in West Africa started with the 6 countries along the JICA-supported trade corridor in West Africa, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, and Togo, the MTP is expected to bring a significant benefit for the entire WCA region through the training to be delivered by the regionally available quality trainers.

The MTP for WCA focuses on risk management and intelligence analysis and is composed of five progressive sub-regional activities.

The first sub-regional workshop was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from 11 to 15 February 2019 with the 18 Working Group members nominated by the countries and the invited experts from the WCO and Japan Customs.

The 2nd sub-regional workshop was held in Accra, Ghana from 5 to 9 August 2019 and the third sub-regional workshop (Working Group activity 3) was held in Cotonou, Benin from 3 to 7 February 2020 respectively where the Working Group members demonstrated their strong ownership to the Program and made excellent progresses to achieve the objective of the MTP.

At the third workshop, the Working Group members started their work on the development of the locally featured training material with the support extended by the experts from the WCO and Japan Customs and are currently continuing their intercessional efforts to complete the materials at the fourth workshop (Working Group four) expected to take place in Lomé, Togo in late 2020 (TBD based on COVID -19 situation).

It is worth mentioning that once this training material is finalized it will be the first official training material on Risk Management and Intelligence for the majority of the participating countries available in English and French.

Due to COVID-19, a number of planned activities have been postponed after consultation between the WCO, JICA, ROCB A/P and member countries. However, negotiations are underway to develop a new joint WCO/JICA project agreement which is expected to start in July 2021.

6.7.9 GIZ – The Gambia (Trade facilitation)

Since October 2018, the German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the WCO have had a programme to support the Gambia Revenue Authority and its stakeholders in the implementation of trade facilitation measures. This programme has 2 essential components, the Timer Release Study (TRS) and risk management. To this end, a series of activities have been carried out since February 2019 to:

➢ Conduct a TRS at the port of Banjul and initiate concrete measures recommended by the TRS report. This assistance also aims to sign Gambia's Revised Kyoto Convention and to connect the Customs soon to SIGMAT in order to speed up the removal of transit goods at the port of Banjul;
➢ Develop strategies and tools (risk registers) for more modern and effective risk management at both, the Revenue Agency and at the Customs level;
➢ Develop a compliance strategy;
➢ Improve the intelligence database;
➢ Train Customs Trainers in risk management and support them in their first training activities.

The project has fully achieved its objectives and ended in June 2020. Negotiations with GIZ to initiate a new project for the benefit of the GRA are underway

6.7.10 NORAD – ACIP (promotion of integrity and fight against corruption)

Following the success of the previous cooperation programme between the WCO and the Norwegian government (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Norad), a new programme focused on the promotion of integrity and the fight against corruption (A-CIP) for the attention of customs authorities was launched in early 2019. This new programme responds to the high costs of customs corruption, both for the public and private sectors, and aims to improve customs governance and integrity in certain WCO member countries.

These objectives will be achieved by carrying out activities within the framework of two components:

➢ A bilateral component intended to help the WCO countries to implement the ten building blocks of the revised Arusha Declaration. The first countries identified in the region are: Ghana, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone, followed by Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger.

➢ A multilateral component in order to create an environment conducive to the implementation of A-CIP measures for WCO members, while drawing on other regional and international initiatives in parallel, and drawing on the WCO instruments and tools.

COVID-19 forced the WCO to temporarily suspend all missions in recipient countries, but an alternative "A-CIP COVID-19 response plan" for remote assistance was agreed with the donor. The first assistance activities were organized for Mali, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. The project also launched a web-series addressing various topics related to customs and integrity. 6 episodes are now available online.

6.7.11 European Union – HS (Harmonized System for Africa)

On 4 October 2018, the WCO signed a financing agreement with the European Union of € 5 million for the programme "Harmonize the classification of goods based on WCO standards to strengthen trade in Africa".

This multi-year programme contributes to the implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and to the deployment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa, officially launched at the Assembly of the African Union on 21 March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda. The programme is also part of the EU's external investment plan and the Common EU-Africa Strategy, adopted at the Lisbon summit in 2007 and defined more precisely at the following summits, in 2010, 2014 and 2017.

The objective is to provide African countries benefiting from the programme with the capacity to implement the version of the WCO Harmonized System (HS) which will enter into force in 2022 in accordance with the provisions of the HS Convention, the WTO TFA, the WCO's Revised Kyoto Convention and following the commitments made at the continental and regional scales.

In the longer term, the programme aims to provide African countries with the resources and organizational capacities required to migrate to future versions of the HS and apply them in a timely and coordinated manner across the continent.

To date, 51 out of 54 African countries have ratified the HS Convention but only 42 countries apply HS 2017.

Only 7 countries apply the WCO Council Recommendation on improving tariff classification work and related infrastructure (1998), and only 15 countries apply the Recommendation on advance rulings (1996).

Among the countries of the WCA region, 4 countries migrated to the current version of the HS after the start of the program (Cameroon in January 2019, Nigeria in July 2019, Gabon in January 2020 and The Gambia in February 2020), and 3 countries have set up their advance ruling systems (Cameroon in April 2019, the CAR in October 2019 and Niger in August 2020). Seven countries in the WCA region have not yet notified the WCO that they are applying HS 2017.

The program has benefits for Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Customs administrations and other interested stakeholders on the African continent, notably for the African Union Commission, some national public services and the private sector. It was already presented at the meeting of the Sub-Committee of Directors General of Customs

of the African Union, organized in Moroni, Comoros, in September 2018. It is managed and led by a team of 3 people installed since early 2019 at the WCO Secretariat.

In the WCA region, the program has 23 committed countries as well as ECOWAS, UEMOA, CEMAC and ECCAS. These regional economic communities as well as Cameroon and Burkina Faso are members of the program steering committee.

To date, the following activities have been carried out in WCA:

Missions	Objectifs	Résultats	Actions convenues
Niger (December 2018)	HS diagnostic	Work plan established +notification of the migration to HS version 2017	Follow-up mission, including workshop on advance rulings. Advance rulings implemented since 12/08/2020.
Gambia (April 2019)	Accession to the HS Convention HS Diagnostic (version 2012)	Instruments of accession deposited + work plan established	Technical assistance for the migration to HS2017 and implementation of an advance ruling system
ECOWAS/UEMOA + Liberia and Nigeria (July 2019)	Consultation on the ECOWAS TEC and situation with regard to the application by the Member States Relation with UEMOA and format of the cooperation	Definition of the RECs and the Member States roles in the migration and application of the CET work plan and list of technical support activities established	2 meetings of the Tariff ad-hoc Committee to finalize CET2022 Validate a migration scheme including responsibilities and timelines
Nigeria (July 2019)	HS Diagnostic (version 2012)	Finalization of the migration to HS2017 end of 2019 Establish a schema for the migration and application of the CET	Technical assistance for the implementation of an advance ruling system Study visit to Ghana to exchange experiences for the implementation of a Customs laboratory
CEMAC/ECCAS + Member countries (July 2019)	Consultation on the CEMAC CET and situation with regard to the application by Member States Situation of the Member States with regard to advance rulings. Relation CEMAC/ECCAS	Definition of the roles of RECs and Member States in the migration and application of the CET / Definition of the difficulties and needs of the countries Work plan and list of technical support activities established Gabon has finalized its migration scheme and process and the establishment of a migration team Equatorial Guinea will explore the options for	2 meetings of the Tariff ad-hoc Committee to finalize CET2022 Establish a migration scheme including responsibilities and timelines Technical assistance for the implementation of an advance ruling system

		accession to the HS Convention and accession to the WCO.	
Central African Republic	National workshop on the establishment of an advance ruling system	Project national regulations are drafted for adoption.

Notification of acceptance of the WCO Recommendation on Advance Ruling Programs (1996) received by the WCO. | Promotion of advance rulings by the Central African Customs administration.

Migration to HS 2017 |
| Sao Tome and Principe. | HS Diagnostic, HS migration2017/2022.

Advance ruling system. | Action plan developed,

Plan for migration to version SH 2022 written | Technical assistance for implementation of an advance ruling system.

Technical assistance for the migration to the 2017 SH version and then the 2022 version. |
| Nigeria (January 2020) | National workshop on the establishment of an advance ruling system | Draft national regulations are drafted to be finalized soon | Follow-up with Nigeria Customs.

Promotion of advance rulings by the NCS |
| Niger (August-September 2020) | National workshop on advance rulings and HS | National legislation validated. Reception by the WCO of the notification of acceptance of the WCO Recommendations on advance ruling programmes (1996). | Promotion des décisions anticipées, organisation des formations sur le SH |
| Liberia (July2020) | National workshop on the implementation of the WCO HS Recommendations (virtual) | Reception by the WOC of the Notification of acceptance for t6 WCO Recommendations.

Action plan established for the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the improvement of the tariff classification et related tariff infrastructures (1998) | Assistance technique pour la mise en place des éléments manquants des infrastructures des travaux de classement tarifaire

Provision des publications SH de l'OMD SH 2017 |
| ECOWAS(September 2020 | Consultation about the HS 2017 situation in the Member countries and about the mode of cooperation for the implementation of HS2022, ECOWAS TEC and advance rulings. | Action plan for the implementation of HS20202 of the ECOWAS TEC validated.

List of technical support activities established. | Organization or regional meetings to develop the SH20202 version of the ECOWAS TEC.

Technical assistance for the member countries for the migration to HS2017 and implementation of the advance rulings system.

Adoption of a regional map for the national advance rulings systems. |

			Development of electronic tariff platforms.
CEMAC (October 2020)	Consultation about the HS 2017 situation in the Member countries and about the mode of cooperation fo the implementation of HS2022, CEMAC TEC and advance rulings.	Action plan for the implementation of HS20202 of the CEMAC TEC validated. List of technical support activities established.	Organization or regional meetings to develop the SH20202 version of the ECOWAS TEC. Technical assistance for the member countries for the migration to HS2017 and implementation of the advance rulings system. Adoption of a regional map for the national advance rulings systems. s

The next planned actions are:

➢ Technical support for CAR, Chad and Equatorial Guinea for the implementation of HS2017;
➢ Technical support adapted for the ECOWAS countries who do not apply the current HS version;
➢ Technical assistance missions for the WCA countries to establish advance ruling system, with the participation of accredited experts, namely from Cameroon for a workshop in CAR and from Liberia for a workshop in Nigeria;
➢ Training workshops for trainers;
➢ A training manual on the HS and a new e-learning platform;
➢ Support to regional RECs for the preparation and timely provision of their TEC, compliant with HS2022 (with the participation of Experts from Nigeria and Liberia).

6.7.12 COPES (Operational customs practices for enforcement and seizures)

The Compendium of Customs Operational Practices for Enforcement and Seizures (COPES) was developed to support the Customs in the improvement of their evidence collection standards, and to better integrate their action in the criminal justice system and in border security issues.

The objective of the programme is to increase the visibility of the critical role that seizure and evidence-gathering procedures play in supporting effective and efficient border security practices. It covers the areas of evidence gathering, seizures, investigations and prosecutions.

Since 2015, COPES has also fully taken on board security aspects such as those set out in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 of 2004 and the Punta Cana Resolution issued by the WCO in December 2015. This initiative has a crosscutting function that impacts on all the WCO's enforcement priorities, starting with issues relating to the safety of passengers and goods, and including the Strategic Trade Control Enforcement (STCE) Programme, the Container Control Programme (CCP), Project AIRCOP (establishing secure

operational communications between international airports) and Project INAMA (to combat trafficking affecting endangered species).

A COPES training course, organized in partnership with the Benin Customs Administration took place from 24 to 28 September 2018 in Cotonou, Benin. It was attended by 24 Customs officials and provided an opportunity to train a number of managers and officials on the latest techniques for gathering evidence, making seizures and carrying out investigations. The training course also enabled the WCO to accredit the first COPES trainer from the WCA region.

A COPES / INAMA workshop was held in Madagascar from 26 to 30 November 2018 with a number of WCA participants, followed by a restitution from 18 to 20 December in Cameroon.

The activities carried out in 2019 for the WCA region are as follows:

➢ Brussels: 25 to 29 March 2019, training of trainers in cooperation with the drug programme.
➢ Côte d'Ivoire: 15 to 17 April 2019, regional awareness seminar.
➢ Benin: 17 to 21 June 2019, training of trainers in cooperation with the security program.
➢ Benin: 26 to 31 August 2019, training of trainers in cooperation with the security program.
➢ Brussels: 16 to 20 September 2019, training of trainers with the participation of a Benin customs officer.
➢ Niger: 2 to 6 June 2019, national training workshop in cooperation with the AIRCOP project.

The activities carried out **in 2020** for the WCA region are as follows:
➢ Benin: 18 - 22 May 2020, virtual national workshop as part of Operation "STOP".
➢ Cameroon: 15 – 19 June 2020, virtual regional workshop in cooperation with the INAMA program.

6.7.13 European Union – COLIBRI
The European Union-funded COLIBRI project aims to improve surveillance and control of general aviation along the cocaine route.

More specifically, it has 3 objectives:
➢ Strengthen the capacities of national administrations; training of trainers and tutoring;
➢ Creation of a global general aviation database and a geo-portal integrating technical and dynamic information;
➢ Organization of coordinated international operations targeting private business and leisure aviation.

This project also targets several WCA countries and the first exploratory missions have already taken place in Cabo Verde, The Gambia, Mali and Niger. A first online training is scheduled in November 2020 for Mali. Other exploratory missions will take place during the first half of 2021 (Mauritania, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria).

6.8 WCO operations in WCA

This chapter documents operations that are not an integral part of a project or program documented in chapter 6.7.

6.8.1 CRIPHARM

The initial Operations against Counterfeit and Illicit Medicines were organized jointly by the WCO and the International Institute for Research Against Counterfeit Medicines (IRACM).

After operations **ACIM 1 and 2 MIRAGE** and following the suspension of the partnership with IRACM, the first regional operation to fight pharmaceutical crime in WCA called **"CRIPHARM I"** was held from 16 to 27 February 2016. It was organized by the two RILOs of the WCA region, under the supervision of their Vice-Chair and with technical support from the WCO Secretariat. This operation recorded 78 seizures of pharmaceutical products and other products (drugs, pharmacopoeia products, CITES etc.)

CRIPHARM II took place from January 29 to February 21, 2017 and concerned all the countries of the WCA Region. The Operational Coordination Unit was installed in Kinshasa in the DRC and brought together, in addition to the 2 RILOs from the WCA region, 8 countries from the latter. Several seizures of prohibited and restricted goods have been made in the region. These are the following goods: drugs, medicines and pharmaceuticals, cigarettes, CITES products, weapons and ammunition, etc. A total of 81 seizures made, compared to CRIPHARM I which had recorded 78 seizures.

CRIPHARM II ran from 29 January to 21 February 2017 and covered all the countries in the WCA region. The Operational Coordination Unit (OCU) was set up in Kinshasa (DRC) and, in addition to the two WCA RILOs, brought together eight WCA countries. Several seizures of prohibited and restricted goods were made in the region. They covered the following goods: drugs, medicines and pharmaceutical products, cigarettes, CITES goods, arms and ammunition, etc. A total of 81 seizures were made, compared with 78 during Operation CRIPHARM I.

CRIPHARM III took place from 26 March to 16 April 2018. This third operation to combat pharmaceutical crime again involved the 23 countries of the WCA region, and the OCU was set up in Abidjan. 1,598 messages were exchanged via CENcomm. These resulted in 60 seizures, 67% involving pharmaceutical products totalling 93,400 kg. 94% of these seizures were made at land and airport borders, and on Customs territories.

CRIPHARM IV was held from 25th January to 23 February 2019 with an OCU hosted in Togo from 4 to 13 February. 7464 messages were exchanged during this period, including 219 seizure messages in 14 WCA countries. In this total amount, pharmaceutical products accounted for 69.41% of the total number.

CRIPHARM V was held from 24 January to 22 February 2020 with an OCU hosted in Banjul (The Gambia) from 3 - 12February. Over 13,994 CENcomm traffic flows were recorded

between the 96 users of the Operation. The seizure messages totalled 314, coming from 16 WCA countries. Of these seizures, pharmaceuticals accounted for 54% of the total number.

6.8.2 COCAIR

The operational phase of **COCAIR VI** was held from 9 to 17 December 2017, with participation by 37 airports from 33 countries in Africa, Latin America/Caribbean and Europe, including 16 countries in the WCA region. An OCU, set up at WCO Headquarters and comprising experts from some of the participating countries, managed the exchange of information through CENcomm. The WCA was represented within the OCU by Mali and it two RILOs

The objective was to establish operational cooperation and information sharing between airports in order to intercept shipments of cocaine and other illicit products bound for Europe. This Operation, in keeping with previous instalments, was conducted by the WCO under the auspices of Project AIRCOP, with financing by the European Commission and in collaboration with UNODC and INTERPOL. The Project AIRCOP Joint Airport Interdiction Task Forces (JAITFs) were also directly involved in the Operation.

Outstanding results were achieved during this Operation, both in terms of the volume of information shared between airport units and the quantities of drugs seized. The quantities of cocaine seized have more than doubled. Accordingly, some 98 seizures were recorded into the CENcomm, covering a total of 1,469 kg of drugs including over one tonne of cocaine and 150 kg of Khat. The following seizures were recorded for the WCA region: 144 kg of drugs, 95 kg of medication, 8030 pieces of cigarettes and CITES goods, and USD 98,000 of currency.

Given the success of COCAIR VI, an operation **COCAIR VII** was carried out in December 2018 on the same principle. The operation was preceded by two train-the-trainer sessions that took place in Lima and in Abidjan in November and focused on the recognition of illicit drugs, an introduction to risk analysis, control of IFFs and the use of CENcomm. COCAIR VII showed good overall results for WCA, including 26 seizures with 184 kg of narcotics, 160112 cigarettes and $ 31,445 in foreign currency.

Because of lack of funding, **COCAIR VIII** has not been organized yet.

6.8.3 African Wings

This 6th edition 2019 organized by French customs focused on the control of light aviation involved 16 countries in the region: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, CAR, Senegal, Chad and Togo.

The WCO has once again supported this operation by allowing CENCom access and by hosting the UCO in RILO premises in Dakar. In addition to significant litigation results, the volume of exchanges by CENCom has improved significantly (379 messages in 2019 compared to 188 messages in 2016).

In 2020, with a view to the deployment of CENcomm 3 (New version of CENcomm), airport anti-traffic units (CAAT) were trained online to allow them to thoroughly test the application in order to allow them to formulate recommendations.

➢ Training of CAATs from Benin (CAAT Cotonou), Mali (CAAT Bamako), Niger (CAAT Niamey) and Senegal (CAAT Dakar DIASS) from 27-29 October 2020;
➢ Training of CAATs from Cameroon (CAAT Douala, CAAT Yaoundé), Ivory Coast (CAAT Abidjan), Guinea-Bissau (CAAT Bissau) and Togo (CAAT Lomé) from 10-12 2020;
➢ Training of CAATs from The Gambia (CAAT Banjul), Ghana (CAAT Accra) and Nigeria (CAAT Abuja, CAAT Lagos) from 25-27 November 2020.

Advanced training will be organized in 2021, before going into production.

6.8.4 STOP

Operation "STOP" is the immediate and urgent response of the WCO, 99 Members, the RILOs with the support of UNODC, Interpol, Europol and OLAF, in the face of the increase in trafficking illicit drugs and medical equipment linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thus, for 63 days, participating Members simultaneously carried out targeted inspections of shipments likely to contain certain types of counterfeit, poor quality and / or illegal pharmaceuticals and other medical equipment. The success of this operation was also the fruit of a close collaboration with the private sector, in this case the firms Novartis, Servier, Pfizer, Sanofi as well as the UL Company as part of the online training provided to the Customs officers involved in the operation.

Operation STOP was a real barometer of illicit trafficking linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. The exceptional results obtained by Members confirm the relevance of the WCO tools and instruments used during this operation, in particular the COVID-19 checklist.

The WCA region took a very active part in the conduct of operation STOP from 11 May to 16 July 2020, with 16 countries namely: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, RCA, DR Congo, Senegal and Togo.

The regional analysis of drug seizures / detentions reveals that 99.45% come from the West and Central Africa region with 305,536,649 drug units distributed in particular in 62 seizures in Togo, 43 in Nigeria and 29 in Benin.

The scale of the plague is once again confirmed. As a reminder, during the WCO's operation ALAMBA on IEDs organized in March 2020 over 15 days, 9,049,486 pieces of drugs had already been seized incidentally in the same region.

6.9   Other WCO programmes for WCA

6.9.1   CLIKC! Platform

This platform now has more than 28,000 registered users. It should be noted that only 8% of these users (approximately 2000) are from the WCA region. More than 100 new users are registered each month and around 300 log in daily.

E-learning courses on the Study of Release Times, Firearms and Passenger Control in an Airport Environment are now available. The site also hosts numerous WCO training kits for trainers. These kits allow Member administrations to organize workshops or joint training sessions.

The framework of principles and practices on customs professionalism available on CLiKC! makes available to Members a chapter dedicated to directives for training policies based on the specific skills of the Customs Profession.

A new version of the CLiKC! Platform was launched and allows easier access for users and the gradual dematerialization of registration for all training activities offered by the WCO. However, a large number of courses still need to be migrated to run on new technology platforms and translated into other languages to be useful to non-English speaking Members.Despite the installation of local e-learning platforms in eleven WCA administrations, access to and use of this tool is still too limited and poorly integrated into WCA Customs training strategies.

6.9.2   WCO Academy

The WCO Academy (https://academy.wcoomd.org/) launched in May 2018 is a new e-learning initiative. This site provides access to WCO e-learning courses for companies, students and individuals, thereby allowing access to customs knowledge for the greatest number. Administrations of the region are invited to promote this new site during their dialogue with the private sector if training needs are raised. It should be noted that access to this site is chargeable in order to cover the costs incurred by the WCO Secretariat for its maintenance. Access to CLiKC!, restricted for customs officials, remains completely free.

6.9.3   Virtual Customs Orientation Academy (VCOA)

VCAO is made up of 4 compulsory modules accompanied by online tutoring and 2 optional modules. It was designed based on the best practices of WCO Members and has the main objective of providing newly recruited customs officials (less than four years of service) with general customs knowledge and skills. It introduces new recruits to the characteristic roles and functions of customs administrations, the concepts of customs clearance procedures and practices, international conventions and agreements, and the principles of capacity building. It is accessible from the CLiCK! platform of the WCO.

The 9th session took place from 4 - 7 March 2019. Some 23 representatives from different customs administrations attended the session, including two from the WCA region. Sixteen candidates, including the representative from Sierra Leone, successfully completed the training. Three experts from Ghana attended the Academy as a virtual tutor.

The 10th session took place later in 2019, without any representative from the region.

The 11th session took place from 9 March to 12 June 2020. Some 30 representatives from different customs administrations attended the session, including two from the WCA region. Twenty-three candidates, including two representatives from Ghana, successfully completed the training.

It is still planned to organize sessions for French-speaking customs officials in the future, subject to the funding of the Academy's translation.

6.9.4 Fellowship programme

This program, organized each year by the WCO, has had the participation, since 2016, of fellows from following WCA countries:

Session	Language	WCA participants
70	EN	1 Ghana
71	FR	1 Mali, 1 Togo, 1 Benin, 1 Cameroon, 1 Mauritania, 1 Niger, 1 Senegal
72	ES	-
73	EN	-
74	FR	1 Senegal, 1 Cameroon, 1 Mali, 1 Republic of Guinea, 1 Togo, 1 Benin
75	ES	-
76	EN	1 Gambia, 1 Nigeria
77	FR	1 Niger, 1 Burkina Faso, 1 Côte d'Ivoire, 1 Senegal, 1 Benin, 1 Togo
78	ES	-
79	EN	-
80	FR	1 Niger, 1 Mali, 1 Senegal, 1 Benin, 1 Togo, 1 CAR
81	ES	-
82	EN	1 Nigeria, 1 Cameroon, 1 Liberia, 1 Gambia

Given the current COVID-19 pandemic, the 83rd Fellowship Program, intended for a group of French-speaking customs officials, will be delivered according to a mixed approach (that is to say by alternating virtual and face-to-face sessions). It will start on 25 January 2021.

It can be observed that there have never been participants from the following WCA countries: Cabo Verde, Chad, Republic of Congo, DR Congo, Guinea-Bissau and Sao Tome & Principe.

6.9.5 Professional Associates

The WCO career development programme, funded by Japan, exists since 2010. It allows rigorously selected beneficiaries to work for 10 months at the WCO Secretariat and acquire knowledge, skills and expertise in international work. The latest editions of the programme were attended by following WCA representatives:

Session	Language	WCA participants
2017/2018	EN	1 Burkina Faso, 1 Nigeria
2018/2019	EN	1 Nigeria

| 2019/2020 | ES | 1 Gambia |
| 2020/2021 | EN | 1 DR Congo, 1 Sao Tomé & Principe |

6.9.6 Accreditation workshops /Accredited and recognized Experts

The WCO is committed to working effectively to build the capacity of its Members. To this end, it has developed and improved its network of qualified experts who are called upon to assist it in its capacity-building activities.

The following categories of accredited experts now exist:

Diagnostic Facilitators (DF)	Conduct holistic organizational assessments and review organizational reform and modernization programmes.
Customs Modernization Advisors (CMA)	Lead strategic discussion on reform and modernization at a senior Customs level.
Mercator Programme Advisors (MPA)	Support administrations with implementation of the WTO TFA.
Technical and Operational Advisors (TOA)	Engage with middle and senior management and provide advice on organizational development of specific programmes or projects (ten sub-categories).
Expert Trainers (ET)	Deliver learning events on specific subjects together with providing related coaching and mentoring support and when possible e-tutoring (six sub-categories).
Leadership and Management Development Advisors (LMDA)	Facilitate and deliver LMD workshops.

The accreditation process takes place in the following 3 phases: 1. Pre-assessment of candidates; 2. Successful participation in a WCO accreditation workshop; and 3. Assessment during a field mission alongside another qualified expert. Administrations commit to second their accredited experts for periods of up to 12 weeks during the three years following their official accreditation.

In addition, the WCO has also recently defined the following categories of experts whose work complements that of the WCO Accredited Experts.

Recognized Experts (RE)	They may not have undergone formal WCO accreditation but have known experience and expertise in a particular field. Status is only afforded to current serving Officers from Member administrations.
External Experts (EE) and Expert Consultants (EC)	They can be from the private sector, international organizations or former serving Customs officials. They are only approached when a WCO Accredited Expert or a WCO Recognized Expert is unavailable or unsuitable or there is a very specific reason to utilize someone externally.

Since 2016, WCA customs experts participated in following accreditation:

Topic	Location	Pre-accredited
2016		
MERCATOR Programme Advisers	South Africa	1 Liberia
TRS	Belgium	1 Cameroon
Customs Modernization Advisers	Cameroon	2 Burkina Faso, 1 Cameroon, 1Togo, 1 Mali
Transit	Côte d'Ivoire	None
Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC)	Belgium	1 Gabon
2017		
Post Clearance Audit	Belgium	1 Burkina Faso,1 Senegal,1 Togo, 1 Benin
Coordinated Border Management	Belgium	1 Senegal, 1 Gabon
2018		
Origin	Burkina Faso	1 Mali, 1 Senegal, 1 Côte d'Ivoire, 2 Burkina Faso, 1 Togo, 1 Benin
2019		
Human Resource Management		1 Liberia, 1 Gambia
Transit		1 Mali,1 DR Congo,1 Benin,1 Togo
Revenue Package		1 Burkina Faso, 1 Benin, 1 Côte d'Ivoire, 1 Senegal, 1 Togo
Drug Law Enforcement	Belgium	1 Mali, 1 Senegal

Statistics concerning Accredited and Recognized Experts of the WCA region are available in chapter 8.2 of this report.

6.9.7 Visits at the WCO by the French and Belgium Customs Academy

At the request of the Belgian Customs Academy, and as part of their 9-month training in Belgium, groups of around twenty trainees from almost all of the different French-speaking African countries of the WCA region, regularly carry out visits to the WCO headquarters. The trainees follow various presentations led by officials of the Secretariat. Interventions relate to several themes that may interest future executives of beneficiary administrations. The last visit was planned to take place in November 2020 but had to be postponed, due to COVID-

Similar visits are organized for African trainees undergoing training at the National Customs Academy in Tourcoing, France. The last visit was planned to take place in June 2020 but had to be cancelled due to COVID-19.

7 Statistics

7.1 WCO capacity building activities for WCA

During the period, the following missions were organized by the Secretariat for the WCA region:

Regional activities		1 July 16 – 30 June 17	1 July 17 – 30 June 18	1 July 18 - 30 June 19	1 July 19 – 30 June 20	1 July 20 – 1 December 20 mission/blended/online
	Multi regional					0/0/2
	Regional	14	7	4	14	0/0/3
	Sub-regional	13	7	18	22	0/0/2
	Accreditation		2	2		0/0/0
	Total	**27**	**16**	**24**	**36**	**0/0/7**
National activities						
	Benin	3		5	3	0/0/0
	Burkina Faso	6	8	3	2	0/0/0
	Cameroon	3	7	4	2	0/0/0
	Cabo Verde	1	1	1	1	0/0/0
	Central African Republic	1	1	2	2	1/1/0
	Chad				1	1/0/0
	Congo (Republic)	2	4			0/0/0
	Côte d'Ivoire		5	4	3	0/0/0
	DR Congo		2			0/0/0
	Gabon	1	3			0/0/0
	Gambia	1	3	5	10	0/0/0
	Ghana	5	3	2	1	0/0/0
	Guinea	4	4	2		0/0/1
	Guinea-Bissau					0/0/0
	Liberia	6		5	2	0/1/1
	Mali	3	2	1	3	0/0/0
	Mauritania			1		0/0/0
	Niger	1	1	6	3	0/0/0
	Nigeria	8	5	6	5	0/0/0
	Sao Tome & Principe				1	0/0/0
	Senegal		1	6		0/0/0
	Sierra Leone	6	6	5		0/0/0
	Togo	2	4	4	3	0/0/1
	Total	**53**	**60**	**62**	**42**	**2/2/3**
TOTAL		**80**	**76**	**86**	**78**	**2/2/10**

7.2 Accredited and recognized Experts from the WCA region

Source : WCO ACE data base on 01/02/2020:

Topic	Accredited	Pre-accredited	Recognized	Total
Customs Modernization Advisers (CMA)	3	1		4
Mercator Programmme Advisers (MPA)	7	1		8
DPI (IPR)			1	1
Single Window (SW)	1			1
Post clearance Audit (PCA)		4		4
RKC		1		1
Risk Management		1		1
Time Release Study (TRS)	1			1
Revenue Package	1	1		2
Harmonized System	3	4	0	7
Valuation	5	2		7
Integrity			3	3
Human Resource Management		2		2
Wildlife crimes/CITES	2	3		5
Resource mobilization			1	1
E-Learning			1	1
Origin	1	5		6
Non Intrusive Inspection (NII)		1		1
LMD		0		0
Transit	2	1		3
Electronic commerce		1		1
Drug Law Enforcement	2			2

7.3 CEN/NCen in WCA (February 2020)

Source : CEN data base on 01/12/2020:

Below Table 1 indicates the number of seizures entered in the CEN by the countries of the WCA region between 2018 and 2020.

Table 1

Countries	2018	2019	2020
Benin	52	3	4
Burkina Faso	100	66	36
Cameroon	246	181	36
Cabo Verde	18	0	0
CAR	7	12	16
Chad	0	1	2
Congo (Republic of)	1	19	2
Cote d'Ivoire	83	18	43
DR Congo	46	71	34
Gabon	30	13	19
Gambia	3	0	1
Ghana	25	1	3
Guinea	26	6	9
Guinea-Bissau	0	0	0
Liberia	0	0	2
Mali	246	171	495
Mauritania	0	0	0
Niger	1	0	1
Nigeria	106	88	23
Senegal	54	96	113
Sao Tome et Principe	0	0	0
Sierra Leone	0	0	0
Togo	92	80	64
Total	**1136**	**826**	**903**

Figure 1 documents the results of table 1.

Figure 1

Number of seizures entered into CEN
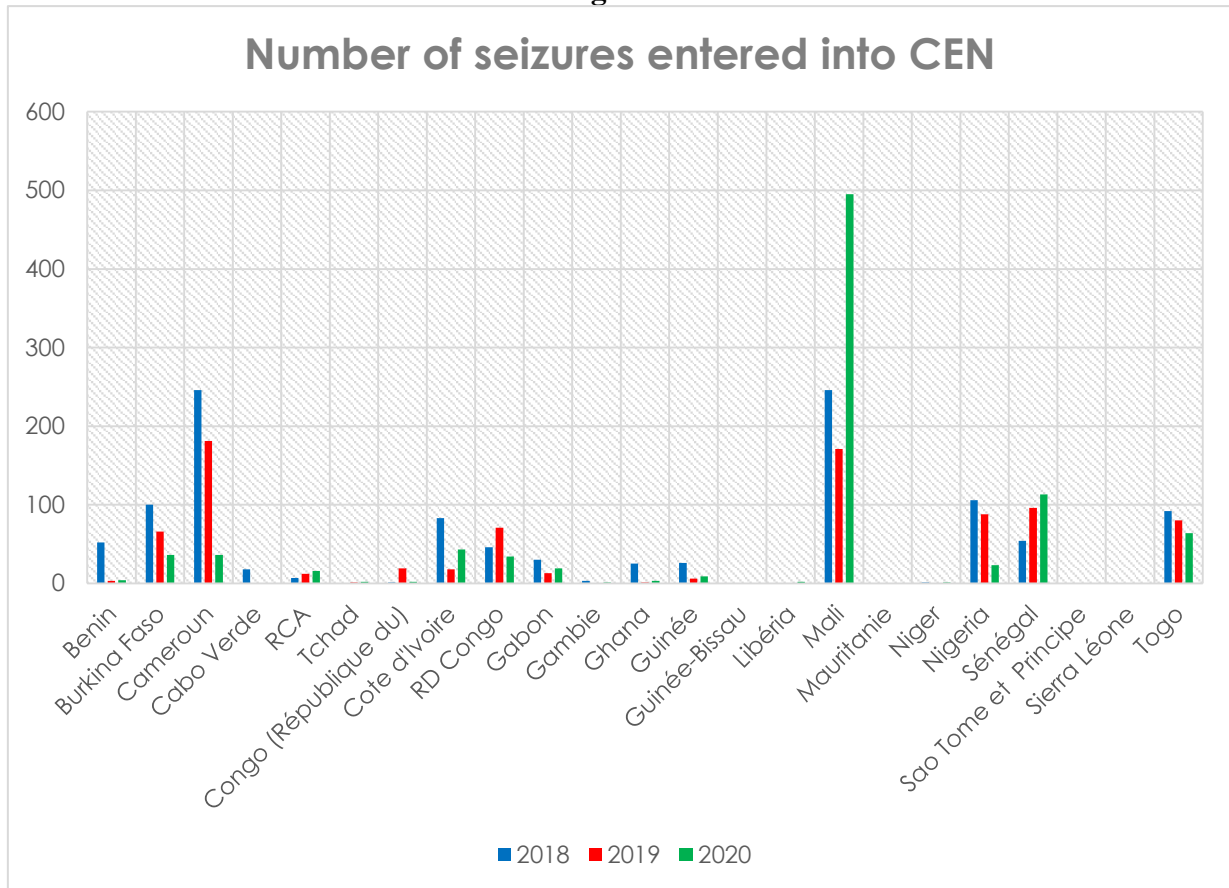
The analysis of this table 1 shows that in general, Mali, Cameroon, Senegal, Togo, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, DR Congo, and Côte d'Ivoire are the countries that provide the most CEN information at the regional level.

Figure 2 below gives the average breakdown by country of the data entered into CEN during the last 3 years. This figure highlights the weakness of the region's contribution to CEN's overall statistics, especially compared to the North Africa and the Near and Middle East region which have the smallest number of countries (see table 2) of the regions. OMD;
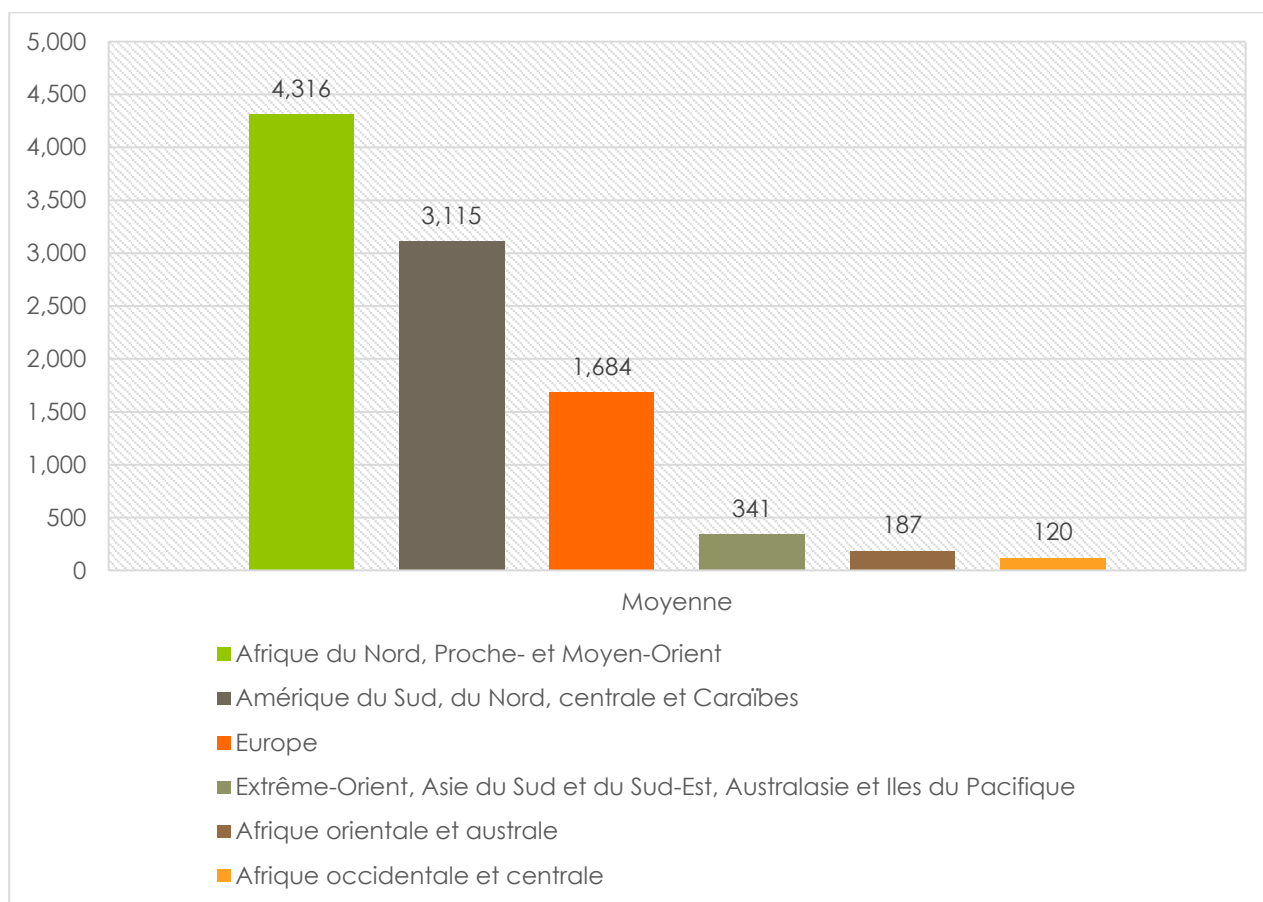
Legend:
- Afrique du Nord, Proche- et Moyen-Orient
- Amérique du Sud, du Nord, centrale et Caraïbes
- Europe
- Extrême-Orient, Asie du Sud et du Sud-Est, Australasie et Iles du Pacifique
- Afrique orientale et australe
- Afrique occidentale et centrale

Table 2 : Number of countries per WCO region

Région	Number of countries
Europe	52
Asia/Pacific	33
Americas	33
ESA	24
AOC	23
MENA	18

8 Conclusions and recommendations

The following conclusions were retained by the WCO Secretariat for the period considered:

A. **Equatorial Guinea** is on the verge of becoming a Member of the WCO and the 24th Member of the WCA region.

B. **The COVID-19 pandemic** is having a huge impact on WCO Members and the drastic decline in economic activity is increasing the pressure that Governments place on Customs for their contributions to the state budget.

   This pandemic has also forced development partners, including the WCO, to adapt their strategies, programs and tools to support Customs reform and modernization. The implementation of tools and procedures to provide online training and organize remote conferences and workshops had to be gradual and adapted.

   The WCA region made the decision to provide the ROCB with the necessary resources to organize virtual activities. This will increase the activity of the ROCB and the WCA region at a lower cost.

   The support that the WCO, in collaboration with UN-OCHA and other partners and donors had provided through the C-RED project has proven to be very useful for the beneficiaries of this project. It enabled them to better manage relief consignments and better protect Customs officials during the new pandemic.

   The WCO, with the support of Japan, has just launched a new project to support its Members, including some WCA countries, in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

C. The **ROCB-WCA**, with the support of the WCO Secretariat, consolidated its new vision and strategy, documented its required competencies and its envisaged organizational structure. WCA Customs are invited to take on board the needs of the ROCB and to assess the possibility of supporting this structure, in particular by making more qualified staff available

D. From next year, the **Customs Environment Scan will become triennial and will be the basis for the development of the WCO Strategic Plan 2022-2025**. The WCA region is requested to contribute to this work and study the impact on its regional strategic plan.

E. The **WCO's RAM-Map platform** allows Members to have better visibility into the activity of the WCO. However, the platform is still little used by the WCA region.

F. The activity of the African Union, Regional Economic Communities and African Customs to implement the **AfCFTA** is intensifying. It is important for Customs and WCA regional structures to mobilize the necessary resources to closely monitor this work and to implement the measures of this Agreement. Coordination with the work for the

implementation of the WTO-TFA and the National Trade Facilitation Committee is strongly recommended.

G. Despite the considerable support and the organization of numerous support missions organized by the WCO, both at national and regional level, **human resources management** remains the weak jersey of many WCA Customs and is incompatible with the competency based approach recommended by the WCO. Frequent changes in the leadership of Customs administrations and inadequate recruitment, training and staff turnover remain for many WCA Customs major obstacles to sustainable reform and modernization. They are invited to take more ownership of the **WCO's competency based approach and the Ouagadougou Declaration.**

H. Several **new projects funded by donors and managed by the WCO** have been concluded and will support WCA Customs over several years. The most recent projects for WCA Customs are documented in Chapter 6 of this document; These include the following initiatives: A-CIP, COLIBRI, COPES, INAMA, MTP, PITCH and SH-Africa. Now, the majority of activities carried out for WCA are part of a medium or long-term assistance project or program, including Mercator. Isolated or occasional activities are less and less numerous. WCA Customs are encouraged to participate actively in the initiatives from which they benefit and to take organizational measures to sustain strengthened capacities and acquired knowledge.

I. The **Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit (SIGMAT)** launched in March 2019 is operational in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger and Togo. Mali and Guinea are in the test phase. Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire are leading the work to apply SIGMAT to transit by rail on the Abidjan-Ouagadougou corridor.

Work to connect other ECOWAS countries is underway but is lagging behind due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some WCA countries still have to migrate to AsycudaWorld before installing the SIGMAT module.

The development of the **SIGMAT website** is not progressing due to lack of funding. It would be useful for WCA Customs, the first beneficiaries of SIGMAT, to make resources available to finance this very important small project.

The finalization of the ECOWAS Additional Act and the adoption of a legal framework for regional guarantees are necessary to provide a modern regulatory framework for SIGMAT.

J. Many WCA countries are suffering from the **plundering of heritage, natural and cultural resources and the extinction of their flora and fauna**. The WCO has developed a number of initiatives to enable WCA Customs to better protect the country's heritage, resources and biodiversity, with the perspective of protecting society, its economy and its environment. These WCO initiatives have made it possible to mobilize certain Customs in the WCA region but others do not give priority to this theme or do not allocate sufficient resources to effectively combat this scourge which allows some to finance criminal activities or terrorism.

K. Activities and operations carried out in the region with the support of the WCO and other partners demonstrate that **the illicit trade in and consumption of drugs and fake medicines** in WCA is becoming increasingly important. Some WCA Customs have taken measures that allow them to become more involved in the fight against these scourges, to coordinate at regional and global level and to make more seizures. This is also valid for products which do not comply with **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)**, including products which pose dangers to the health of citizens and to the environment and which have flooded the markets in WCA. However, other Customs do not have the necessary resources or still do not give enough importance to these issues.

L. It can be observed that the Customs participate actively in the **enforcement operations** organized by the WCO, but that the activities and seizures of some administrations outside these activities remain weak. It is recommended that WCA Customs ensure that the right people are appointed to participate in these operations, that the designated participants share their experiences with their collaborators and that they contribute to the development of organizational measures that will improve the capacity of Customs. To sustainably fight against fraud.

M. According to the statistics documented in Chapter 7.3 of this report, some WCA Customs still do not or insufficiently use **CEN**. These administrations are invited to take more ownership of CEN and to ensure its efficient use by their national correspondents and their users of the system.

N. Many WCA Customs still do not have **statistics** and do not communicate enough on the **results of their actions related to the security and protection of society**. As a result, the contribution of Customs to these missions remains poorly understood by Governments and citizens. WCA Customs are invited to develop such statistics and also make them available to its stakeholders, including the media.

O. The COVID-19 pandemic contributes substantially to the development of **electronic commerce**, also in WCA. Customs must take measures to deal with this new reality. They is called upon to develop or improve their customs clearance procedures and their system, especially for goods ordered on the Internet and transported by post or couriers.

P. **The WCO continues to provide assistance and training on technical matters, such as HS, customs valuation, origin, and general enforcement**. This support has also contributed significantly to the appropriation by certain customs administrations of sovereign missions outsourced to various **inspection companies**.

However, it is noted that several countries in the WCA Region still do not apply **HS 2017** and are therefore not in line with the commitments they have made at the international level. Some of these countries are waiting for their competent Regional Economic Community with a Common External Tariff (including CEMAC) to provide them with the necessary elements to migrate to the SH 2017 version. Others have these elements but still do not apply them at the national level. This constitutes a major obstacle for certain

bilateral, interregional or global negotiations relating to trade facilitation and rules of origin.

The 'SH-Africa' project, funded by the European Union and managed by the WCO, started in 2018 and has already achieved certain objectives, including the development of a standard procedure for planning and implementing at the level of the RECs and WCA Customs, future HS migrations which are required every 5 years. The beneficiary RECs and Customs are thanked for their collaboration within the framework of this project, congratulated for the notable progress and invited to continue the work started.

Q. **Use of inspection companies**: Thanks to the TFA and the assistance of the WCO, a positive development can be observed. The fact that the Customs of Burkina Faso, DR Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Gabon, Ghana, Niger, Mauritania, Guinea and Guinea Bissau were able to successfully reclaim outsourced missions, motivates other countries to follow the same approach. The WCO stands ready to further strengthen its assistance and support, in particular to Benin, Cameroon, Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Chad and Togo. The obligation to go through an inspection company, to present to Customs verifications certificates (VA) and to pay fees which are calculated ad-valorem (% of the value of the declared goods) to remunerate the inspection company for its services related to customs valuation and tariff classification does not comply with the provisions of the TFA and must cease.

R. It can be seen that WCA Customs are participating more and more actively in the various training programs offered by the WCO Secretariat, including **the fellowship program, the scholarship program, the career development program and the Virtual Academy of Customs Orientation.**

***END ***