



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, September 2019.

**WCO SECRETARIAT ACTIVITY REPORT
WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA**

10th meeting of Contact Points of the WCA Region

Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

24-26 September 2019

Overall capacity building delivery

1. WCO capacity building delivery is based on the **annual Needs Assessment** carried out by the Secretariat together with Member administrations and supported by the Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB).
2. The support provided by the Mercator Programme to the implementation of the **World Trade Organization's (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)**, of which almost all the provisions involve Customs administrations, remains at the heart of the support provided by the WCO, in addition to the traditional capacity building support requested by WCO Members. The Agreement entered into force on 22 February 2017 and has already been ratified by 16 countries in the WCA region. It is binding on all WTO Members and has great bearing on the WCO's capacity building activities in West and Central Africa (WCA), especially as all the WCA countries apart from Sao Tome & Principe (Observer) are WTO Members.
3. The signature of the General Framework of the Agreement on the implementation of the **African Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA)** by the 44 African Heads of State on 21 March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda, commits the African Union (AU), its Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and its 55 Member States to work together to develop intra-African trade and trade with the other continents, notably through concrete facilitation, cooperation and mutual assistance measures. This initiative has a considerable impact on WCA Customs and must henceforth, like the TFA, be a key element of their reform and modernization strategies. The WCO has undertaken to contribute to the implementation of this important project, which entered in force on 7 July 2019. By this very date 54 of the 55 countries had signed the Agreement, after the signing by Nigeria and Benin.
4. For many countries in this region, Security remains a major challenge and is a major obstacle to investment and development. Armed groups continue to operate across borders, and some of them are succeeding in settling permanently in borderlands taking advantage of the border economy as a logistical and fiscal resource. Their harassment strategies or attacks against security and defense forces are aimed at weakening states' ability to control their borders. Customs, at the interface of security and economic policies, are particularly concerned. To address this issue in greater depth, the WCO embarked on a new strategic orientation that will complement and strengthen the current Security Programme. The new approach intends to delineate and promote the specificities of Customs, as compared to security and defence forces, elevate the role of Customs within national border security policies and propose solutions that combine security and the economic dimension of the border. The objective is to make national and regional security policies more inclusive by developing the economic dimension of State responses to insecurity and embedding trade, taxation and Customs matters into them. This approach has been launched through a research programme and cooperation by some Members. At national level, missions have been conducted over this period and particularly in most vulnerable countries of the WCA region (Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad and Mali, Niger and Nigeria).
5. At regional level, Nigerian Customs, in cooperation with the WCO, convened the first meeting of the Technical Committee on **the Security Project (SPC++)** in Abuja in December 2016 with a view to proposing a new framework to tackle security issues in WCA from a Trade and Customs perspective. Five countries from the region participated in the meeting (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Niger and

Nigeria) and adopted concrete recommendations to enhance regional coordination and jointly implement activities in order to provide field analysis which will subsequently serve as the basis for solutions that are specially adapted to the needs and circumstances of Members in the WCA region. In March and September 2017, the WCO conducted two missions in northern Nigeria to explore fiscal and commercial governance implemented by the insurgents and the current impacts of the crisis on Trade and Customs. Similar missions were conducted in Central African Republic, Niger and Burkina Faso. One of the findings of these missions is that cartographic dimension is essential to enhance Customs for a better control of their inland borders, reinforce intelligence function and cooperate with the security and defense forces. Tools implementing intelligence and training modules are being tested. As initial results, spatial risk analysis approach was developed and tested, allowing a participating member to strengthen his links with his national intelligence agency.

6. On the side-lines of the 23rd Conference of Directors General of Customs organized in Guinea in 2018, a new **security project for the WCA region** was presented and launched. This project, financed by Japan, focuses on five priority areas:
 - Controlling substances and products that may be used to manufacture Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), within the framework of Programme Global Shield.
 - Combating the trafficking in and illicit use of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), under the SALW Project.
 - Carrying out passenger checks/combating phenomenon of Foreign Terrorist Fighters using Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR).
 - Controlling the trade in strategic goods, through a programme including a capacity building component and an operational activities component.
 - Combating terrorist financing, which targets illicit trade and money laundering activities, including cash courier and laundering systems under the guise of business operations.

Currently, 10 countries in the area will benefit from all project activities and equipment related to the program. The train-the-trainer activities were conducted in Benin from 7-22 June and 19-30 August 2019.

7. Since April 2018, a series of activities has also been held on **the role of Customs in the protection of cultural heritage (PITCH Programme)**. These activities provide additional opportunities for WCA Customs to tackle the problem of smuggling of cultural heritage and harmonize their national practices and policies that relate also to security and terrorism. This will enable them to take stock of their specific role in managing border security in regions plagued by or in proximity to conflicts. In this context, a regional workshop was held in Burkina Faso in late April 2018, and a train-the-trainer seminar was held in Senegal in December 2018. Following this training, an important seizure for 2 statues from Cameroon, accompanied by fake documents, took place in July 2019 in Burkina Faso.
8. During this period, a significant number of **WCO capacity building missions** have taken place in WCA. They have continued to focus on providing support for Customs reform and modernization efforts, and more specifically on improving strategic management, leadership, management assistance, modern Human Resource Management (HRM), Customs intelligence, holistic risk management, the

fight against cross-border crime, the protection of the environment and heritage, measurement of the time required for the release of goods (Time Release Study - TRS), Customs' ability to regain control of missions outsourced to inspection companies, and performance measurement. Other initiatives have focused more heavily on the harmonization and simplification of procedures, especially through computerization, interconnection, coordinated border management and Single Windows. The latter are increasingly being operated under the Mercator Programme to support Members with TFA implementation.

9. At its last five sessions, the **Policy Commission (PC)** focused, inter alia, on the following six (6) main topics: The Policy Commission (PC), which held its last session in Brussels on 24-26 June 2019, focused, inter alia, on the 9 priorities identified in the new WCO Strategic Plan 2019-2022.

- Coordinated Border Management with a focus on new tools for Single Window, Digital Collaboration and Institutional Cooperation.
- Security and Safety: support to Members through the Security Programme, WCO supports Members in the deployment of the Traveler Assessment and Targeting System (GTAS) and the work on cruise ship passengers. The fight against illegal trade is reaffirmed by two initiatives: the updated UNODC/WCO Container Control Program and the new COLIBRI project which focuses on general aviation. The fight against illegal waste is now a priority for many Members, and the WCO is providing support in this area through the organization of Operation DEMETER, the fifth edition which is scheduled to take place later in 2019. The PC has reiterated the importance of intelligence capacity building in customs administrations through data analysis and access to open source software.
- Revised Kyoto Convention with 118 Contracting Parties. The Secretariat's research on Free Zones and Origin are other areas of study that will subject of a Conference in Chile in 2019.
- Electronic commerce with the need to ensure the implementation of the Standards contained in the Framework for Cross-Border Electronic Commerce, the technical specifications will be discussed at the Policy Commission in December 2019. The PC recognizes the need to include the subject of e-commerce on the agendas of future sessions of the Permanent Technical Committee and the Enforcement Committee and extends the mandate of the Working Group – Electronic Customs until June 2020. It also adopts the draft Joint WCO-UPU Guidelines on Advance Electronic Data between Customs and Post.
- The Harmonized System: The PC is continuing discussions on the need for a strategic review of this global tool.
- The Capacity Building Strategy with the publication of the Mercator Program Report to get more support from development partners.
- Performance Measurement: In addition to supporting the deployment of Time Release Studies, the PC discussed issues related to the Performance Measurement Working Group, and the WCO continues to cooperate with external organizations involved in Customs performance measurement, such as the World Bank's Doing Business team, to ensure that Customs' views are taken

into account in their work. The first meeting of the Working Group will be held in November 2019.

- Integrity: The WCO has launched the Anti-Corruption and Integrity Promotion Program (A-CIP) to help selected Members implement measures to fight corruption and promote integrity in accordance with the 10 measures contained in the revised Arusha Declaration.
- Digital Customs and Data Analysis with the release of the Disruptive Technologies Report, which aims to raise awareness of the latest innovative technologies and their potential.

In 2018, the WCO continued its focus on the safety of passengers through API and PNR-related programmes, also broadening the scope to include the Global Travel Assessment System (GTAS) and the issue of cruise ship passengers. The PC also underlined the importance of developing intelligence capabilities within Customs using data analytics and open-source software - two elements which were driving the Security By Collaboration (SPC++) project in the WCA.

On this topic, in June 2019, the WCO IT Conference and Exhibition opened its doors in Baku, Azerbaijan, with the participation of 900 delegates from some 90 countries from the public and private sectors, academic and research institutes as well as international organizations to discuss, for three days, the use of technologies, challenges and opportunities. The theme of the Conference, "New Technologies for SMART Borders - New Opportunities for Trade, Travel and Transport", was an opportunity to invite WCO Members to look at how Customs can benefit from technological solutions in order to contribute not only to trade but also to passenger movement and transport, ensuring the fluidity and security of all movements across borders. Participants reviewed lessons learned from initiatives and recent pilot projects using technology, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, drones, facial recognition, machine learning and block chains. Among the new topics that were discussed this year, participants had the opportunity to reflect on how Customs can support the efforts of carriers and logistics companies to find environmentally sound and safe solutions with emissions. reduced CO₂, by taking advantage of information gathered through smart devices. Innovations in the transport sector such as autonomous trucks and smart containers were also discussed in view of their potential impact on border regimes and procedures in the future.

10. **International Customs Day:** Theme for 2019 is the swift and smooth cross-border movement of goods, people and means of transport, with the slogan "*SMART borders for seamless Trade, Travel and Transport*"
The SMART Border Concept aims to strengthen government efforts to facilitate trade and the movement of people while reducing threats to cross-border flows.

SMART "borders" refer to the following principles at the heart of the customs duties of control and facilitation:

- Secure borders
- Measure Performance
- Automate processes
- Manage Risks
- Integrate Technology

The West and Central Africa Region

Overall situation

11. Security and revenue collection remain the priority objectives of WCA region Customs, even though trade facilitation boosted by the WTO TFA is also a topical issue. Socio-political crises and attacks by terrorist groups continue to pose major challenges to development, including the implementation of Customs reforms, in the majority of the region's countries.

In oil-producing countries, the drop in the price of that resource is increasing government-driven revenue-collection pressure on Customs. For some governments (Gabon, for instance), the creation of a revenue agency appears to be an important and timely element to tackle this crisis more effectively and increase revenue.

Many WCA countries are suffering depletion of their heritage and natural and cultural resources and extinction of their flora and fauna. The WCO has developed a number of initiatives to enable WCA Customs to take more effective measures to protect a country's heritage, resources and species and thus to protect its society, economy and environment. Unfortunately, some WCA Customs do not appear yet to be committing themselves to meeting these objectives.

Some WCA countries have confirmed the need for Customs to continue, or even step up, their efforts to simplify and expedite Customs clearance for relief consignments, and to train and protect the stakeholders involved. This support continues to be provided by the WCO, and also by other organizations.

The illicit trade in and consumption of drugs and fake medicines in WCA are increasing. It is imperative that Customs become more involved in combatting these ills. It can be observed that Customs administrations are actively participating in operations organized by the WCO to combat fraud, but that their activities and seizures outside those actions generally remain low.

Many markets in WCA are flooded with goods which do not conform to intellectual property rights (IPRs), including goods which pose a hazard to human health and the environment. The specific initiatives and actions of many WCA Customs remain limited.

E-commerce is also developing in WCA, and Customs must take measures to address this new reality. Customs is being asked to develop or improve its Customs clearance procedures and mechanism, above all with regard to goods ordered on the Internet and transported by post or express delivery service.

Statutory activities and follow-up of recommendations

12. **The 24rd Conference of DGs of Customs of the WCO's WCA region** took place in Bangui, Central African Republic from 13-15 March 2019. This important gathering attracted participation of 15 Member administrations, the WCO Secretariat, the ROCB, the RTCs of Ouagadougou and Brazzaville, the RILO for Central Africa, and continental and regional organizations including, in particular, the African Union, ECOWAS, UNCTAD and UN/OCHA.

At the end of the Conference, the DGs put forward the following recommendations for the Secretariat to consider:

- Support the WCA Vice-chair in seeking funding from donors for the continuation and extension of the WCO C-RED + project.
 - Organize training on cultural heritage in order to eventually have a pool of experts.
 - Assist the region in organizing a regional workshop on performance measurement in 2019.
13. As a reminder, the Second **WCA Donor Conference** took place in Lomé (Togo) in June 2017. The principle of a meeting every two years was enacted by the WCA DGs in Conakry at their 23rd Conference in April 2018. The next Conference of Development Partners and WCA Customs will be held in Niamey from 16 to 18 October 2019.

Activities in the WCA region

14. Most of the WCO activities carried out were to assist Customs administrations with implementation of the five strategic objectives set out in the **Regional Strategic Plan (RSP) for 2013-2017 and the new RSP for 2018-2022**. The latter aims to deepen the strategic axes of the previous plan (the leadership, the strategic management, the management of human resources, the partnerships and the customs procedures).
15. **The Leadership and Management Development (LMD) Programme** for Customs continues to address the needs expressed by Members.

For the past four years, eight-day LMD workshops have been incorporated in all the Fellowship Programmes, which a number of WCA Customs officers also benefit from. In October 2017, an LMD workshop was held in the Central African Republic, familiarizing 20 Customs managers with modern management methods and tools, and with leadership practices.

In order to support the LMD Programme more effectively, the WCO has launched another programme for Customs management teams, called the "Top Executive Retreat" (TER). This activity, led by WCO Secretariat experts, lasts 3.5 days and gives top management (Customs DGs and their senior managers) an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the LMD Programme and hold high-level, in-depth discussions about their administration's major challenges and initiatives. A TER was organized in August 2016 for Nigerian Customs, and in October 2016 for Burkina Faso Customs.

In 2018, a TER and an LMD workshop were held in Gambia, and an LMD session in Nigeria.

The Swiss Government has undertaken to support this initiative through a new contract which has been finalized in 2018. This contract will allow the WCO to update and improve the current programme and to develop other complementary activities and materials.

16. **Transit Project - Interconnectivity - The 'Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit' (SIGMAT).**

The **PACIR (Programme d'Appui au Commerce et à l'Intégration Régionale)** contract - Customs segment - financed by the European Union for Côte d'Ivoire - expired at the end of 2015. This contract set aside a significant portion of its budget for establishing interconnectivity between Customs IT systems managing transit between Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Mali. In the meantime, Senegal and Togo have officially joined the initiative and Ghana has played an active role in some activities focusing on interconnection.

This project has resulted in the development of operational and technical specifications and the formulation of budgets and a working plan to set in motion and implement the solution envisaged by the said countries.

Initiatives were taken in 2016, as was the case in 2015, to promote the solution within ECOWAS and throughout the WCA region. ECOWAS has become more closely involved in the project. It has actively contributed to seeking the necessary financing for the development and implementation of the solution (called 'ALISA' by ECOWAS). In this respect, particular emphasis was placed on cooperation between the ECOWAS Commission and UNCTAD to enable the latter Organization to align the existing Transit module with the specifications adopted by the countries involved as well as by the most recent Conference of DGs of Customs of WCA held in Abidjan in 2016.

The funding mobilized from donors thanks to the action of ECOWAS and thanks to support provided by other initiatives have permitted the development of the new Transit module in the ASYCUDA system. They also served to ensure training of IT specialists in the Customs administrations taking part in the project. This work started in October 2017 and enabled the technical experts in the participating administrations to make greater use of the technical solution and ensure the development and maintenance of the system over the longer term. The World Bank, GIZ and JICA contribute to the implementation of the project and base their support on the specifications developed by the PACIR countries.

In the course of 2016 and 2017, the following activities relating to interconnection were also organized under WCO auspices:

- From 8 to 12 August 2016, a workshop was held in Dakar to familiarize participants with the WCO Data Model, and to align with that Model the functional messages to be exchanged between Customs administrations as specified in the framework of the PACIR Project. The workshop was led by a Canadian expert and by the WCO Secretariat, and was attended by participants from the Customs administrations of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal. The

Togolese Revenue Authority (OTR), ECOWAS, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and GIZ also participated.

- The Data Model Projects Team (DMPT) met in Brussels from 12 to 16 September 2016. Technical experts from the Customs Administrations of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal and Togo, together with the WCO's Data Model experts, discussed all the technical problems associated with message modelling.
- Another workshop was held at the ECOWAS Computer Centre in Lomé, Togo, from 7 to 11 November 2016. It was led by a Data Model expert from Netherlands Customs and a German expert from the company GEFEG. The workshop was organized by the WCO in collaboration with the ECOWAS Commission, and with financial support from ECOWAS and the WACAM Project funded by Sweden.
- On the initiative of ECOWAS and the WCO, a meeting was held in Abuja in November 2016. It brought together the five countries involved in this interconnection project (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal and Togo) as well as the WCO and some development partners (World Bank, UNCTAD, GIZ, JICA, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), etc.). The aim of this meeting was to deliver a comprehensive presentation on the interconnection project to the donors and give them a greater understanding of the project and its contribution with respect to the enhancement of inter-regional transport and its positive impact on trade facilitation.
- A Global Transit Conference took place in Brussels just after the Council Sessions, in July 2017. It was attended by a number of countries from the WCA region and provided an opportunity to discuss interconnection in greater depth.
- From 18 to 22 September 2017, a meeting of the DMPT was held in Brussels. This allowed technical experts from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Togo Customs to finalize the alignment of messages with the WCO Data Model. This work was examined and validated on the fringes of a workshop organized jointly by ECOWAS, GIZ and the WCO in Lomé from 9 to 13 October 2017. This work, to which 20 IT experts representing the Customs Administrations of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Senegal and Togo have contributed, will provide the basis for development of the interconnection module in ASYCUDA and for the applications to be developed at national level by Ghana and Senegal, which do not use ASYCUDA.
- In November 2017, the WCO Secretariat sent a letter to the UEMOA concerning future cooperation with this Organization, focusing, among other things, on the regional IT interconnectivity project to manage transit. The need to explore options to allow the UEMOA to play a greater role and to coordinate with ECOWAS in this important initiative was underlined.

On 5 March 2018, the Steering Committee met in Abidjan and agreed on the following points:

- The functional and technical specifications as well as the messages developed under PACIR are achievements to be built on within the project to interconnect the Customs IT systems of ECOWAS countries.

- The DGs of Customs undertake to conduct actions aimed at prompting governments to make interconnection a priority project within the ECOWAS Commission.
- The Assembly is responsible for choosing a name for the project to interconnect the Customs IT systems of ECOWAS countries.
- The following scheduling has been adopted with respect to meetings that might be financed by ECOWAS: one (1) meeting of the Steering Committee per year; one (1) meeting of the Monitoring Committee every six months; one (1) meeting of the Project Committee per quarter.
- The Steering Committee has agreed to the participation of technical and financial partners in meetings of the Monitoring Committee.

The documentation, testing and training phases for customs officers and economic operators, as well as the integration of developments in Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, have been completed. After the presentation to ECOWAS in February 2019, the launch of the '**Interconnected System for the Management of Merchandise in Transit (SIGMAT)**' and the successful start of operations for SIGMAT-transits between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire was celebrated on 22 March 2019 in Abidjan, in presence of the WCA Customs Administrations, African Union, ECOWAS, UNCTAD, various other development partners and international organizations (i.e. World Bank, GIZ...) and the private sector.

In June 2019, SIGMAT regional transit was installed between Benin and Niger for all transit operations between these two countries). In July 2019, UNCTAD and ECOWAS IT experts worked with computer scientists in Senegal to share their experience in SIGMAT regional transit development. In September 2019, SIGMAT regional transit must start between Togo, Burkina Faso and Niger. At the same time, UNCTAD plans to install SIGMAT regional transit in Mali until Senegal is ready to start regional transit. The installation of SIGMAT regional transit in Guinea is also planned in the coming weeks.

17. The **WCO-INAMA Project**, in which several WCA Members are involved, is a follow-up to two previous initiatives financed by the Swedish Government (Projects GAPIN I and II). Its aim is to build the capacity of Customs administrations to fight wildlife crime through targeted capacity building initiatives and with support during enforcement operations. It is financed by the CITES Secretariat, GIZ, Sweden and the U.S. Department of State and has made it possible to carry out the following work and activities:

- An intelligence workshop in Kenya, with participation by Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria.
- Development of training material on operations planning.
- Sub-regional intelligence workshop in Cameroon for French-speaking countries – beginner's level.
- Regional workshop in the Republic of the Congo to "steer and approve" the tool for evaluating administrations' institutional capacity to implement the CITES Convention (Institutional Assessment Tool).
- Publication of the Institutional Assessment Tool.
- Development of training material on investigation techniques for countering the illicit wildlife trade.

- Workshop in Tanzania on operations planning to counter the illicit wildlife trade, with participation by Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria.
- Workshop in Zambia on complex intelligence issues, with participation by Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria.
- Workshop in Uganda on investigation techniques, with participation by Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria.
- Workshop in Burkina Faso on complex intelligence issues for countering the illegal wildlife trade, with participation by Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo (Rep. of), Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Gabon, Madagascar and Togo.
- Workshop in Togo on CITES investigation techniques, with participation by Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo (Rep. of), Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Gabon, Madagascar and Togo.
- Workshop in Namibia on operations planning, with participation by Ghana and Nigeria.
- Workshop in Gabon on operations planning, with participation by the Customs Administrations of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo (Rep. of), Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Gabon and Togo.
- Workshop in Cameroon on controlled delivery in collaboration with INTERPOL, with participation by the Customs Administrations, Gendarmerie, Police and Environmental Authorities of the four countries in Central Africa, namely Cameroon, Congo (Republic of) Gabon and DRC, and the RILO for Central Africa.
- International exercise (Operation Save REP) as follow-up to training on operational planning, with participation by the above-mentioned countries.
- Participation of Ghana and Nigeria in the international exercise (Operation Save REP).
- Diagnostic studies on the capacities of the Customs administrations of the countries of Western Africa to implement the CITES Convention. These studies are based on a self-assessment conducted with the help of the tool for evaluating institutional capacity to implement the CITES Convention (Institutional Assessment Tool).
- Institutional assessment mission in the field of enforcement of the CITES Convention and drawing up of an action plan for more in-depth support as part of the INAMA Project in Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Togo.

From January to June 2018, the INAMA Project was given over to the definition of customized programming and detailed organization of activities. Implementation commenced in May with a regional train the trainer and accreditation session in Zambia in May 2018 (with participation of Ghana and Nigeria), followed by another session in Burkina Faso in June 2018 for French speakers from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Gabon and Togo). A regional workshop was also held in Tanzania for English speakers (Ghana, Nigeria). In addition, regional workshops for customs officials and police officers were held in Tanzania for Anglophones (Ghana, Nigeria) and Madagascar for Francophones. The purpose of these workshops was to develop joint Customs-Police operational plans and train participants in risk management with a focus on CITES.

Other national sessions were also organized, covering in particular mentoring and CITES risk mapping:

- Burkina Faso (April, June and November 2018) covering border control support and the development of a CITES database.
- Cameroon (2 missions in June 2018) on the definition of CITES-related occupations.
- Togo (2 missions in August 2018),

In December 2018, 2 workshops were held in Cameroon in Yaounde and Douala to support customs in the finalization of risk mapping and provide a COPES training to aware customs agents to search and questioning processes. These workshops were part of the INAMA development plan in Cameroon, developed in 2017. This action plan was especially the result of the institutional self-assessment on CITES implementation and the diagnostic mission which took place in 2017 as well.

The INAMA Project also initiated the establishment of nCEN in Cameroon through the financing of equipment.

2 global operations against trafficking of CITES products have took place, one in the framework of INAMA (Operation PRAESIDIO) and one in the framework of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC).

8 pays of the region participated in operation Proesidio (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo, but also RILO WA. It took place from 4 February to 3 March. This operation, conducted jointly with INTERPOL, did not only aim to seize prohibited wildlife products and timber, but above all to proceed to arrests and prosecutions for dismantling criminal networks. In this sense, police from the Interpol central offices of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana participated in the operation.

The ICWC Thunderball operation took place from 4 June to 3 July 2019. 109 members participated in this joint operation including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, 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 RILO WA participated in the Operation Coordination Center in Singapore.

Finally, in July-August 2019, support were conducted in Cameroon, Togo and Nigeria. The purpose of these missions was to review the implementation of project activities, to make recommendations for the implementation of CITES and to continue the process of accreditation of 5 officers as technical operational expert. The process ended with an accreditation workshop in Zambia from 26 – 30 August, with the success of 4 out of 5 officers.

The main funding for the current project ended on 24 September 2019. Only activities financed by GIZ will continue until May 2020. Nigeria is potentially one of the 3 countries (with Malawi and Vietnam) receiving funding through this fund, which aims to strengthen the risk management of illegal wildlife trade in the 3 countries.

Thanks to the activities conducted since 2014, WCA Customs have significantly increased their capacity to fight against wildlife crime. Many officers have received

CITES technical training, and have benefited more from risk management, intelligence and operational planning training. Officers from 9 WCA administrations also received COPES training. 4 officers have passed accreditation, reinforcing the expertise of the region. CITES has now been included in the fight against fraud training of some WCA countries. Customs Police cooperation has also been strengthened through regional workshops and joint operations.

INAMA is currently being negotiated with its partners for future activities.

18. **The C-RED Project** (*Customs for Relief of Epidemic Diseases*) aimed at countries affected by the Ebola crisis: Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

In May 2016, the WCO and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed a grant agreement to implement the **C-RED Project**, which supports Customs administrations in West Africa affected by the Ebola virus epidemic. This Project is based on the WCO 2011 Resolution on the role of Customs in natural disaster relief.

The project ended on 5 October 2018 and was divided into two components:

- Providing the front-line officers of three beneficiary administrations with self-protection equipment (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone).
- Providing capacity building to react effectively to regional epidemics and natural disasters: Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

As regards the first component, the self-protection equipment was provided by the WCO's partner, the UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD). This equipment was delivered to, and stored at, the UNHRD hub in Accra. The three beneficiary countries have been in possession of their equipment since early 2018.

As regards the second component, on the basis of the underlying data and an initial regional consultation, the WCO offered national support leading to:

- The development of capacity building material to support and guide Customs administrations so that they respond effectively to disasters.
- Support for Member administrations selected in drawing up/examining standard operating procedures (SOPs) in emergencies and their respective capacity to implement them.
- Support for implementing SOPs, including in-situ support and remote support;
- Help preparing simulation exercises for the Member administrations selected to test the SOPs.
- The organization of regional workshops to share experience and develop areas of improvement.

In Nigeria, two missions were carried out which made it possible to identify faults in the Customs clearance of relief supplies and draw up SOPs and recommendations on Customs clearance procedures for relief supplies.

In Guinea, two similar missions took place in July and October 2017. They were given

over to drafting national SOPs, which now provide guidance for the humanitarian community and the various government agencies involved.

In Mali, an exploratory mission took place in September 2017. The Mali Customs authorities are leading the work of all the stakeholders as regards the draft SOPs for the Customs clearance of relief supplies.

In Sierra Leone, a similar initial mission took place in late October 2017. Draft SOPs have been drawn up, as well as recommendations to improve national procedures in place for the Customs clearance of relief supplies.

The WCO is monitoring the completion of the SOPs, their adoption and the implementation of the recommendations drawn up.

In Liberia, an exploratory mission on the SOPs took place in May 2018, then in Senegal.

In July and August 2018, missions to train trainers and for the development/review of SOPs took place in Mali, Nigeria and Liberia; a feedback mission was then held in September in Guinea preceded by two days of training.

Currently the WCO and OCHA are negotiating a new project (C-RED +) with a set of donors. This new initiative would make it possible to continue supporting the WCA but also to extend support to other regions and countries that are facing natural disasters and epidemics, particularly Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau and Burkina Faso. These negotiations are still in progress and it is hoped that the Regional Conference of WCA Customs and their partners, to be held in Niger from 16-18 October 2019 will enable this very important project to mobilize further support.

19. In 2016, the "**UNODC-WCO Global Container Control Programme**", developed and implemented in partnership between the WCO and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), organized the following activities in WCA: training or follow-up workshops in Senegal (six workshops), Liberia (one workshop), Benin (one workshop) and Togo (three workshops).

In 2017, training and follow-up workshops were organized for the following countries: Senegal (two workshops), Mali (three workshops), Benin (one workshop), Ghana (one workshop) and Togo (one workshop).

In the first quarter of 2018, a workshop was held in Benin in February, followed by a feedback mission in September.

Considering the weak results achieved in WCA, the donor has chosen to focus its support on other WCO regions.

20. In 2015, the WCO concluded a partnership with the United Kingdom's Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and UNCTAD to support the substantive implementation of the TFA in certain countries, including three countries in the WCA region, namely Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The **HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD Programme** is designed to provide capacity building support targeting selected developing countries, enabling them to implement the TFA in an effective manner using the available WCO tools and instruments, as well as UNCTAD's expertise in the establishment and development of NCTFs.

Following a needs assessment mission carried out in cooperation with the World Bank in May 2016, the HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD Programme developed a made-to-measure plan to implement the Mercator Programme for Sierra Leone.

In 2017, implementation of this plan continued, and many activities were carried out. In the field of audit and post-clearance audit (PCA), a needs assessment was conducted (March 2017) followed by training to improve the knowledge of the National Revenue Authority (NRA) in that area (September 2017). In order to provide the NRA with greater support in developing the new Strategic Plan for 2018-2022 and continue the work initiated in 2016, a supplementary workshop was organized (August 2017). As part of overall support for risk management, a workshop was organized to help implement and use the nCEN system (February 2017), which was installed in June 2017. Finally, in order to upgrade skills and enable the NRA to take over the activities relating to valuation, classification and controls on origin – Revenue Package, two sets of training were provided (during the February mission and then in October 2017). Finally, to ensure proper coordination with other development partners engaged in the country, this multi-component and multi-year programme continues the dialogue and collaboration with other stakeholders, such as the World Bank and private-sector consultants.

The HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD programme also participated in the organization of an International Forum to support NCTFs. This Forum was organized jointly by the WCO, UNCTAD and the World Bank, amongst others, in Geneva with over 250 delegates from 44 countries.

In 2018, two countries in the WCA area have already received support from this project:

- Sierra Leone in January and February, as regards a monitoring mission/Mercator Programme evaluation mission and also on TRS and PCA.
- From 20 to 24 August 2018 a four-day workshop was organized to strengthen the technical assessment and training capacities of 15 officials of the National Tax Authority. This made it possible to support Customs in its initiative of reclaiming responsibility for Customs valuation, which is currently still assigned to an inspection company. The workshop comprised a reminder of WCO valuation methods, a series of technical exercises and discussions of practical aspects of valuation control, based on the WCO Revenue Package.
- Liberia where, in January, UNCTAD delivered module 4 of the programme to establish Committees on Trade Facilitation.
- In 2019 assistance to Sierra Leone took place from 25 February to 1 March and focused on:
 - Diagnosis on HR management.
 - Modernization of their HR system through the integration of the competency-based approach.
 - Support for the time release study and for stakeholders in the mapping of business processes related to the customs clearance and the release of the goods imported/exported in the port of Freetown.

21. **The Master of Trainer Program (MTP)** was developed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Building on the collaboration between the WCO and JICA, as part of the "WCO / JICA Joint Project" launched in July 2016, the MTP is now being implemented through collaboration between the two organizations with the aim of assisting Customs administrations in developing autonomous and more sustainable training capacities in various major disciplines essential to the Customs modernization. After a notable success in Eastern and Southern Africa where it allowed the training of MT specialized in HS classification, Customs valuation and intelligence analysis, it was decided to extend the program to AOC countries for only intelligence analysis component. The countries concerned are Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Benin, Nigeria and Ghana. The first regional workshop was held in Abidjan from 11 to 15 February 2019. The 2nd was held in Ghana from 5-9 August 2019 and a 3rd will be held also in Ghana in February 2020.
22. **GIZ** has also decided, in collaboration with the WCO, to support the Gambia in trade facilitation, more specifically on 2 important TFA topics, Time release study (TRS) and risk management. The first 2 actions took place, in February 2019, one on TRS, the other to perform a diagnostic on risk management. The project has been extended up to March 2020.
23. Following the successful completion of the latest cooperation program between the WCO and the Norwegian Government (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation **NORAD**), a new program focused on promoting the fight against corruption and integrity (**A-CIP**) for customs authorities was launched in early 2019. This new program addresses the high perceived costs of corruption in customs, both for the public and private sectors. The program is designed with the objective of improving governance and customs integrity in some WCO member countries.

These objectives will be achieved by carrying out activities under two components:

- A bilateral component to help WCO countries take action to implement parts of the revised Arusha Declaration. The identified countries of the zone are: Ghana, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone.
 - A multilateral component to create an enabling environment for WCO members to implement A-CIP measures by leveraging other regional and international initiatives in parallel and creating WCO instruments and tools.
24. On 4 October 2018, the WCO signed a 5 million euro financing agreement with the **European Union (EU)** on "Harmonizing the classification of goods based on WCO standards to enhance Africa trade" Programme. The 41-month programme contributes to the implementation of the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO-TFA) and to the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), formally launched by the Assembly of the AU on 21 March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda. Furthermore, the Programme contributes to the EU's External Investment Plan and to the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, adopted at the Lisbon Summit in 2007 and refined at subsequent summits in 2010, 2014 and 2017.

The anticipated outcome of the Programme for 2022 is that the beneficiary African countries will implement and apply the 2022 version of the Harmonized System (HS) in line with the HS Convention, the WTO-TFA and the WCO's Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), together with continental and regional commitments. The longer-term objective is to provide African countries with the required organizational capacities

and resources to migrate and apply future HS versions in a timely manner that is coordinated throughout the entire continent and region.

To date, 49 of the 54 African countries have ratified the HS Convention but only 29 apply the HS 2017. Only 6 countries apply the WCO Council Recommendation on the improvement of tariff classification work and related infrastructure, while only 8 countries apply the Recommendation on advance rulings. The programme offers benefits to Africa's RECs, Customs administrations and relevant stakeholders, including the AU Commission, selected national government administrations and the private sector.

This project has already been presented to the AU Sub-Committee of Directors General of Customs, held in Moroni, Comoros in September 2018. It is managed by a team of 3 people set up in the WCO Secretariat. The program was officially launched on February 27 and 28 in Addis Ababa.

The program, which was officially launched on 27 and 28 February in Addis Ababa, aims to support the customs of African countries for the implementation of the CFTA as well as alignment with the commitments of the TFA (Article 3). In this sense, the program is instrumental in supporting countries, particularly in the first phase of the implementation of the CFTA (the list of tariff concessions) but also in the other aspects (dispute settlement procedures, customs cooperation), trade facilitation and rules of origin).

The specific objective is for all African countries to apply the latest version of the HS and enhance their capacity in classification and related infrastructure.

In the WCA region, the program has 18 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's steering committee. To date, the following activities have been carried out in WCA:

Missions	Objectives	Results	Activities agreed
Niger (December 2018)	HS diagnostic	Work plan established +notification of the migration to HS version 2017	Follow-up mission, including workshop on advance rulings
Gambia (April 2019)	Accession to the SH Convention HS Diagnostic (version 2012)	Deposit of instruments of accession to the HS Convention + work plan established	Technical assistance technique 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 Establish a migration scheme including responsibilities and timelines

Nigeria (July 2019)	HS Diagnostic (version 2012)	Finalization of the migration to HS2017 by 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 CEMAC CETMOA 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 Gabon confirms the finalization of the migration to the SH2017 version by 2020. Equatorial Guinea will explore the options for accession to the HS Convention and accession to the WCO	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
			- Technical assistance for the implementation of an advance ruling system Study visit to Ghana to exchange experiences for the implementation of a Customs laboratory

The planned activities are:

- Technical support so that all countries in the region can align their tariffs with the latest version of HS2017 (by the end of 2020) and be able to migrate to the next versions in time.
- Technical assistance missions for the member countries of the region for the implementation of a system of advance rulings.
- Train the trainer workshops.
- An HS training manual and a new e-learning platform.
- Support to RECs in the region to prepare and make available the CET in time.
- Establishment of an electronic tariff platform gathering all the tariffs of the countries of the region.
- Capacity building for a better tariff infrastructure in the countries of the region.

25. **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 the **ACIM 1 and 2 and MIRAGE** operations and following the suspension of the partnership with the IRACM, the first regional operation to fight pharmaceutical crime in WCA called "**CRIPHARM I**" was held from 27 January to 16 February 2016. It was organized by the West Africa Regional Liaison Offices for Intelligence (RILO-WA) and Central Africa (RILO-CA), under the supervision of the WCA Vice-chair and with the technical support of the WCO Secretariat. This operation recorded 78 seizures of pharmaceuticals and other products (drugs, pharmacopoeia, CITES, etc.).

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 RILOS for the WCA region, 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.

26. Operation **TRIGGER** against illicit firearms trafficking and terrorism, organized jointly by the WCO, INTERPOL and the UNODC was launched in September 2017. It involves, more particularly, the Customs services and national Police services in 10 WCA region countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria). Operation TRIGGER is being carried out in three stages. The first was the leadership training workshop held in Algiers from 4 to 8 September 2017. The operational briefing was given in Abidjan in October 2017 and the operational phase ran from 20/11 to 02/12/2017, followed by a debriefing in Abidjan in late January 2018.

An Operation TRIGGER IV took place in September 2018 but was limited to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

27. **COCAIR Operations.** 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 the two RILOs (CA and WA).

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 zone: 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.

COCAIR VII will not be organized in 2019, for budgetary reasons.

28. **COPES Programme:** The concept of a Compendium of Customs Operational Practices for Enforcement and Seizures (COPES) arose out of an awareness on the part of WCO Members of the need to improve their evidence collection standards so as to integrate the activities of Customs agencies more effectively in relation to the criminal justice system and problems associated with border security.

The objective of the programme remains to raise awareness of the essential role played by the procedures for seizing goods and collecting evidence to support effective and efficient border security practices. It covers evidence gathering, seizures, investigations and prosecutions.

Since 2015, the Programme 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 was run between 24 and 28 September 2018 in Cotonou, Benin. It was attended by 24 Customs officials as part of the general process of modernization, including, in particular, improvements to the enforcement arrangements of the Benin Customs Administration. To this end, it trained a number of its managers and officials on the latest techniques for gathering evidence, making seizures and carrying out

investigations. The training course also enabled the first regional COPES trainer for the WCA region to gain official accreditation.

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

The 2019 activities for WCA are as follows:

- Brussels: from 25 to 29 March 2019, training of trainers in cooperation with the drugs program.
- Côte d'Ivoire: from 15 to 17 April 2019, regional sensitization seminar.
- Benin: from 17 to 21 June 2019, training of trainers in cooperation with the safety program.
- Benin: from 26 to 31 August 2019, training of trainers in cooperation with the safety program.
- Niger: June 2-6, 2019, national training workshop in cooperation with the AIRCOP project.

29. Operation **COSMO 2** saw the participation of the following WCA countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, DR Congo, Guinea Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo.

Cosmo 2 largely consisted of a communication exercise focused on strategic trade controls. As a result, the actions were as follows: inspection of goods, detention and identification, communication with foreign Customs counterparts, communication with the WCO (use of STRATComm), and contacts with industry, obtaining licences, verification of products and licences, and parties involved in the transactions.

The WCO also facilitated this operation by running the OCU in-house at WCO Headquarters, and monitoring and promoting active communication and interaction among participating countries.

30. **The CLiKC! Platform** currently has more than 25000 registered users. It should be noted that only 8% of these (around 2000 users) are from the WCA region. More than 100 new users are being registered each month, and around 300 connect every day.

Elearning courses on the Time Release Study, firearms and passenger screening in an airport environment are now available. The site also hosts many WCO training kits for trainers. These kits allow Member administrations to organize workshops or joint training sessions.

A new version of the CLiKC platform! will soon be launched, allowing easier access by users and gradual dematerialization of registration to all training activities proposed by the WCO. The role of the national coordinator will also be strengthened. It is important for this purpose that Member Administrations confirm and / or designate for this purpose an official focal person that corresponds to the detailed profile specified in the letter sent by the Secretariat in June 2019.

The WCO Framework of Principles and Practices on Customs Professionalism, available on the CLiKC! Platform, provides Members of the WCA region with a chapter on Customs Competency-Based Training Guidelines

Despite the installation of local e-learning platforms in 11 WCA administrations, access to and use of this tool remains too limited and poorly integrated in the training strategies of WCA Customs.

31. A new e-learning initiative, **the WCO Academy**, went live in May 2018. This site provides access to WCO e-learning courses by businesses, students or private individuals, thus allowing access to Customs knowledge for as many people as possible. Administrations in the region are invited to take note of this new site and to promote it in their dialogue with the private sector if training needs are mentioned. It should be noted that there is a charge to access the site, to cover the costs incurred by the WCO Secretariat in its maintenance. Access to CLiKC!, reserved for Customs officials, remains completely free of charge.

32. The **Virtual Customs Orientation Academy (VCOA)** comprises four compulsory modules accompanied by online coaching and two optional modules. It was designed based on WCO Members' best practices and its primary aim is to provide newly-recruited Customs officials (recruited less than four years ago) with general Customs knowledge and skills. It describes to these new recruits the typical roles and functions of Customs administrations, concepts of Customs clearance procedures and practices, international conventions and agreements, and the principles of capacity building. It can be accessed from the WCO CLiKC! Platform.

The 8th session ran from 3 September to 7 December 2018. Some 27 representatives from various Customs administrations, including two from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, attended the session. Eleven candidates, including the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have successfully completed the training. Three Customs Administration experts from Ghana attended the Academy as a virtual tutor.

The 9th session ran from 4 March to 7 June 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, have successfully completed the training. Three experts from Ghana attended the Academy as a virtual tutor.

The 10th session began on 2 September 2019, with no representatives from the region.

It is still planned to hold sessions for French-speaking customs officers in the future, subject to funding for the translation of the Academy.

33. Since 2015, the annual **Fellowship Programme** organized by the WCO has seen participation by Fellows from some WCA region countries, namely:

- 65th Session (French-speaking): 5 WCA beneficiaries out of 14 participants worldwide. They were Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Senegal and Togo.
- 67th Session (English-speaking): 2 WCA beneficiaries out of 17 participants worldwide. They were Ghana and Liberia.
- 68th Session (French-speaking): 7 WCA participants: 1 from Burkina Faso, 1 from Cameroon, 2 from Central African Republic, 1 from Côte d'Ivoire, 1 from DRC and 1 from Togo.
- 70th Session (English-speaking): 1 WCA participant from Ghana.
- 71st Session (French-speaking): 7 WCA participants out of 15 worldwide, from Benin, Cameroon, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo.
- 72nd Session (Spanish-speaking): No participants from the WCA region.
- 73rd Session (English-speaking): No participants from the WCA region.
- 74th Session (French-speaking): 6 WCA participants out of 14 (Benin, Cameroon, Guinea, Mali, Senegal and Togo).

- 75th session (Spanish-speaking): No participants from the WCA region.
 - 76th session (English-speaking): 2 WCA participants out of 12 (Gambia and Nigeria).
 - 77th session (French speaking): 6 WCA participants (Niger / Burkina Faso / Côte d'Ivoire / Senegal / Benin / Togo).
 - 78th session (Spanish speaking): no WCA participants.
 - 79th session (English speaking): no WCA participants.
34. **Professional Associates:** The WCO Career Development Programme, financed by Japan, has existed for a number of years and lasts 10 months. It gives rigorously selected beneficiaries an opportunity to undertake work at the WCO Secretariat and acquire knowledge, skills and international work experience. Many countries in the WCA region have already benefited from this Programme.
- For the 2017-2018 Programme, two experts from WCA (Burkina Faso and Nigeria) were among the 10 experts selected.
 - For the 2018-2019 session, only one expert from Nigeria has been selected.
 - For the 2019-2020 session, only one expert from the Gambia has been selected.
35. Since 2016, the WCO has been organizing **accreditation workshops**, attended by WCA region Customs experts.
- Two accreditation workshops focusing on Customs Modernization and the TFA for English-speaking experts were held in South Africa from 1 to 5 and then 8 to 12 February 2016. One expert from Gambia and two experts from Liberia were able to take part; the workshops enabled the WCO to pre-accredit 15 candidates, including the one from Liberia.
 - A global accreditation workshop for Technical and Operational Advisors specialized in TRS was organized in French in Brussels from 25 to 29 April 2016. A participant from Cameroon was awarded the pre-accreditation during the workshop and was able to complete the accreditation process in 2019.
 - The workshop to accredit French-speaking experts as Customs Modernization Advisors (CMAs) and Mercator Programme Advisors (MPAs) was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 20 to 24 June 2016. This workshop, funded by the AU and the WCO, was attended by 13 candidates carefully preselected by the WCO and hailing from African Customs administrations. At the end of this highly demanding workshop, seven candidates were short-listed and will be invited to take part in a mission, in a Co-Facilitator capacity, in order to complete their accreditation process. These candidates are from Burkina Faso (2 participants), Cameroon (1), Madagascar (1), Mali (1), Togo (1) and Tunisia (1). Through the accreditation of these experts, the WCO will be able to provide French-speaking Members with greater support for reform planning and, more specifically, for implementing the TFA by means of the WCO Mercator Programme.
 - Three experts hailing respectively from Mali, Burkina Faso and Togo completed their accreditation process following their participation in missions, specifically in the Central African Republic for the first (diagnostic and strategic planning mission), in Gabon for the second (progress evaluation mission: Columbus Phase 3) and Cameroon for the third (progress evaluation mission: Columbus Phase 3). These three experts have just received their WCO accreditation certificates. The other pre-accredited experts from the WCA region will be invited to take part in missions to complete their accreditation process.

- The workshop to accredit Transit experts was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 27 June to 1 July 2016. It was attended by 44 candidates preselected by the WCO and coming from Customs administrations of the MENA region (2), WCA (24) and other regions and international organizations. At the end of this highly demanding workshop two candidates, from the Czech Republic and Peru, were short-listed. None of the 26 candidates from the WCA and MENA Customs administrations were short-listed.
- The workshop to accredit Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) experts was held in Brussels from 12 to 16 September 2016. It brought together participants from various WCO regions. In all, seven participants were pre-accredited, including one from Gabon who finalized her accreditation process in the meanwhile.
- From 15 to 19 May 2017, an accreditation workshop on PCA was held for French-speaking experts at the WCO Secretariat. Candidates from WCA region countries were invited to take part. Four candidates from Benin, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Togo were selected as pre-accredited experts.
- The first Francophone Technical and Operational Advisor accreditation workshop took place in Brussels from 20 to 23 November 2017. Two experts from the WCA region were pre-accredited: Senegal (now fully accredited) and Gabon.
- An accreditation workshop on Origin was held in Burkina Faso from 23 to 27 April 2018. 7 participants from the WCA region have passed this first step and have been selected as pre-accredited Experts (Mali, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso (2 for this country), Togo and Benin).
- From 2 to 6 July 2018, a global workshop for Mercator experts enabled the validation of two experts from Côte d'Ivoire as Mercator Programme Advisors (MPAs). In the meanwhile, one of these experts has successfully completed his accreditation mission.
 - 1 accreditation workshop¹ was held at the beginning of 2019 in Brussels for customs modernization consultants in HR (2 participants from Liberia and Gambia have been accredited). Another was organized from 18 to 22 March for Transit Experts (4 experts from Mali, DRC, Togo and Benin have been accredited). A workshop was also held in Burkina Faso from 4 to 8 March 2019 for French-speaking technical advisers on the Revenue Package (with 6 from Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Niger, Senegal and Togo).
- The situation as per 30 September 2019 for WCA experts is as follows:

Topic	Accredited	Pre-accredited	Recognized	Total
Customs modernization	3	1		4
Mercator Programme (MPAs)	8			8
IPR			1	1
Single Window	1			1
Post-clearance audit (PCA)		4		4
RKC	1			1
Risk management		2		2
Time Release Study (TRS)	1			1
Revenue Package	1	8		9

Harmonized System (HS)	3	4	1	8
Valuation	5	3		8
Integrity			2	2
HR		2		2
Environmental crime			2	2
Resource mobilization			1	1
E-Learning			1	1
Origin		9		9
Non-intrusive inspection (NII)		1		1
LMD		1		1
Transit		4		4

36. **Development and financing programmes:** The Secretariat has set up a new link on the WCO website, providing access to ongoing development and financing programmes administered by the Organization. The link is as follows:

<http://www.wcoomd.org/fr/topics/capacity-building/activities-and-programmes/cooperation-programmes.aspx>

Pre-shipment inspection/Destination inspection

37. In June 2014, the WCO Council empowered the Secretariat to continue with the initiatives already taken, develop guidelines and best practices on this topic and prepare guidance for rendering Customs procurement more transparent. Some WCO Members which have been able to successfully take over from inspection companies have pledged to assist the WCO Secretariat in this respect.

Boosted by the successful termination of inspection contracts and the takeover of the main outsourced functions by Customs in Kenya, Mauritania and Nigeria, other WCA countries have committed to developing similar initiatives. This trend has been further accelerated by Article 10.5 of the WTO TFA which stipulates that Members shall not require the use of pre-shipment inspections in relation to tariff classification and customs valuation and encourages Members not to introduce or apply new requirements regarding their use.

In 2015, the WCO actively supported Ghana and DRC. The Governments of these two countries expressed their wish not to renew the existing contracts and asked for WCO support to build Customs' capacities in order to regain their powers gradually, with no loss of revenue. The support offered to Customs enabled these two Governments not to renew their contracts and for Customs to regain its powers.

Nevertheless, the Government of Ghana signed a fresh five-year contract with a private-sector company to support the organization of the new process recently developed in the area of valuation and advance tariff classification, with the development of a Single Window and with other relevant initiatives.

In 2013, Niger announced that it did not intend to renew its existing pre-shipment inspection (PSI) contract. In 2015, Niger's Government adopted new organizational structures for valuation and tariff classification and the staff was appointed. In December 2018, the WCO conducted a Revenue Package a diagnostic mission (Value / HS) to initiate the next phase of support.

In 2016 and 2017, the WCO assisted Guinea Customs in this respect. In 2017, the Government chose not to renew its contract with the inspection company that had been in place for several years. Since then, Guinean Customs is currently assuming responsibility for the valuation and tariff classification of goods entering the country.

In the same period, Gabon and Guinea Bissau completed their comparable initiatives successfully.

WCO support is still ongoing to assist Customs in Togo, Benin, Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone in the reassigning of their missions related to valuation and tariff classification.

The inspection contract in Burkina Faso ended in September 2018 and a support mission took place in October / November 2018.

Côte d'Ivoire's inspection contract expired in March 2019; a Revenue Package Diagnostic mission was conducted in December 2018 (Valuation/ HS). A follow-up assistance mission is planned to provide further assistance to Côte d'Ivoire Customs in this area.

For Sierra Leone, 4 support missions were carried out and should enable the Customs in 2019 to definitively take ownership of valuation and classification.

Chad still has a pre-shipment inspection contract. This contract, which requires the remuneration of the inspection company ad-valorem (expressed in% of the goods value) will end in November 2019. By now the WCO has so far not received any request to assist in the matter.

There is a noticeable trend of inspection companies shifting from PSI to destination inspection and offering other services (especially a Single Window and cargo tracking via GPS).

Visit to the WCO by African trainees from the Belgian and French Customs School

At the request of the Belgian Customs School, and as part of their nine months' training in Belgium, groups of 20 or so trainees, almost all of whom are from various French-speaking African countries in the WCA region, regularly pay visits to WCO Headquarters. The trainees enjoy a number of presentations given by Secretariat officials. The presentations focus on several themes of possible interest to future senior managers of the beneficiary administrations. The last visit took place on 28 and 29 November 2018. The next visit will take place from 25-27 November 2019

Similar visits are organized for African trainees undergoing training at the National Customs School of Tourcoing, France. The last visit was on June 5, 2019.

Accessions to WCO standards

38. The following **accessions** by WCA countries to the main WCO Conventions have been recorded since 2016:
- **HS:** No further accessions since January 2016. Currently, 22 WCA countries are contracting parties to the HS Convention (all except the Gambia).

- **RKC:** latest accessions: Benin (5 January 2017); Sao Tome & Principe (May 2017), Burkina Faso (July 2017); Congo (Republic of the) (December 2017), Ghana (June 2019). Currently 16 countries of the WCA region are contracting parties to the RKC (all except the Gambia, Guinea, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania and Chad).

WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)

39. 16 countries in the WCA region have ratified the **WTO TFA** to date: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Republic of the), Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

Bearing in mind that the TFA covers a wide range of topics, the majority of WCO activities can be carried out within this framework.

African Union (AU)

40. The Tenth Session of the **AU Sub-Committee of Directors General of Customs**, under the theme "Combating corruption in Customs to effectively implement the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)", took place in Moroni, Comoros, on 20 and 21 September 2018.

At this session the WCO underlined the importance of the contribution of Customs to the future implementation of the CFTA, thanks to the use of WCO instruments.

During the Committee meeting, chaired by the Director General of Comoros Customs, the Directors General reviewed the report of the Expert Meeting held from 17 to 19 September, finalized the draft AU Trade Facilitation Strategy, and adopted the Moroni Declaration on Customs' Fight against Corruption. Delegates also enjoyed a panel session on the fight against corruption in Customs.

The last session was held in Kampala, Uganda, from 16 -20 September 2019.

Conclusions

41. The WCO Secretariat's **main conclusions** for the period under consideration are as follows:
- A. At present, all WCA countries are active Members of the WCO, except Gabon.
 - B. Fiscal and security missions remain predominant in the majority of WCA countries.
 - C. This period was again marked by a large number of changes at the level of Heads of WCA Customs Administrations (Cape Verde, Chad, Congo, Gabon, Niger, Mali, Sao Tome, Togo).
 - D. Several new projects financed by donors and managed by the WCO have just been concluded and will support WCA Customs over several years. From now on, the majority of activities conducted for the WCA are part of a medium or long-term assistance project or program. Isolated or one-off activities are fewer and fewer.

- E. However, due to the lack of political stability of the WCA countries, the organizational weaknesses of the WCA Customs and the often insufficient results in the initiatives already implemented, some donors are considering or have already made the decision to reorient their support to other regions of the WCO, particularly to eastern and southern Africa. This must challenge the WCA region on the future capacity to mobilize development partners.
- F. Cooperation within the WCA region on the security/safety aspect is improving, also supported through the SPC++ Project launched by Nigeria, the Security Project for West Africa and ongoing research activities. A wide range of activities have been held to support WCA and continue the development of a regional risk management and intelligence strategy. However, it must also be noted that some WCA Customs, although affected by security problems, do not participate much in these programs and activities.
- G. The entry into force of the TFA requires countries which have ratified it to implement it within the prescribed timeframe. This intensifies the pressure on the WCA Customs administrations in question and requires greater focus on the trade facilitation aspect. However, it has been established that only 16 of the 23 WCA countries have ratified this Agreement and that many national Strategic Plans still do not contain strategies to ensure compliant implementation of the necessary reforms.

WCA countries are on the list of developing countries and least-developed countries and benefit from TFA special and differential treatment. They need to operationalize their NTFC, categorize A, B and C measures, and notify the results of the categorization to the WTO. The missions conducted make it possible to note the progress made but also underscore the need for many countries to improve relations between Customs and the Ministry of Trade to ensure better collaboration in this field and to more fully involve other structures in the work.

- H. The entry into force on 7 July 2019 of the Framework Agreement for the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) reinforces the need for African Customs to develop coherent and holistic strategies and concrete actions to facilitate trade. To this end, WCA Customs should update their strategic plans and action plans.
- I. The launch of the Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit (SIGMAT) in March 2019 and its gradual implementation in WCA continues in accordance with the schedule. It is important to monitor the implementation and evaluate the results periodically to ensure compliance, efficiency and security of the system and procedures and to ensure that program objectives are achieved. It is also necessary to continue promoting SIGMAT in countries that are not yet connected, included in Central Africa.
- J. Many WCA countries are suffering depletion of their heritage and natural and cultural resources and extinction of their flora and fauna. The WCO has developed a number of initiatives to enable WCA Customs to take more effective measures to protect a country's heritage, resources and biodiversity and thus to protect its society, economy and environment. The WCO initiative has motivated some WCA Customs to mobilize on this issue, but others do not yet seem to be sufficiently involved in these missions.

- K. The illicit trade in and consumption of drugs and fake medicines in WCA are increasing. It is imperative that Customs become more involved in combatting these ills. It can be observed that Customs administrations are actively participating in operations organized by the WCO to combat fraud, but that their activities and seizures outside those actions generally remain low. Many WCA Customs still do not have statistics in the subjects and do not communicate enough on the results of their actions. As a result, the contribution of Customs to the protection of society remains poorly understood by governments and citizens.
- L. Many markets in WCA are flooded with goods which do not conform to intellectual property rights (IPRs), including goods which pose a hazard to human health and the environment. The specific initiatives and actions of many WCA Customs remain limited.
- M. E-commerce is also developing in WCA, and Customs must take measures to address this new reality. Customs is being asked to develop or improve its Customs clearance procedures and mechanism, above all with regard to goods ordered on the Internet and transported by post or express delivery service. Some recent WCO activities have brought together the WCA Customs and the Postal Union to improve collaboration, but other actions are also planned to further thematise the clearance of goods by express couriers.
- N. Some WCA Governments that intended to create revenue agencies (e.g. DR Congo and Gabon) seem to slow down their initiatives and re-evaluate these projects. Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo already have revenue agencies. The new WCO tools for Customs-Tax cooperation are useful for Customs when advising their governments on this matter.
- O. Following the various workshops organized by the WCO at both national and regional levels, and particularly thanks to the support of the WACAM program, some WCA region Customs administrations are beginning to attach great importance to the human factor as the main element in the conduct of change and are showing increased interest in the implementation of WCO tools on organizational development (LMD, competency-based approach, HR strategy, training strategy, etc.).

WACAM support has also made it possible to establish a pool of WCA experts. These experts are now able to assist other administrations in this respect and have already been involved in leading missions organized by the WCO. However, frequent changes in heads of Customs administrations and shortfalls in terms of recruitment, training and rotation of staff remain, for many WCA region Customs administrations, major obstacles to reform and sustainable modernization. At present, and despite the support provided by the WCO, no WCA Customs administration, apart from Gambia, actually applies skills-based HRM.

- P. Regarding the Revenue Package, the WCO has organized several training sessions on technical subjects such as the HS, Customs Valuation, Origin and Enforcement in general. This support begins with a diagnostic and is primarily aimed at structures, experts and trainers in these domains. This approach helps to empower trainees and contributes to long-term institutional development. This support has also made a considerable contribution in terms of assisting certain Customs administrations to reclaim sovereign powers outsourced to various inspection companies.

It has, however, been noted that several countries in the WCA region are still not applying the HS 2017 and are consequently not delivering on their international commitments. Some of these countries expect that their competent REC with a Common External Tariff (particular CEMAC) will provide them with the necessary elements to migrate to the HS 2017 version, while others have these elements but do not always apply them at national level. This is a major obstacle for some bilateral, interregional or global negotiations on 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 goals, including the development of a standard procedure for planning and implementation at the level of the RECs and WCA Customs the future migrations of the HS which are imposed every 5 years.

- Q. As regards the use of inspection companies, through TFA and WCO support a positive development can be observed in terms of the high-level commitment by some countries to terminate the contracts that bind them to such companies. The fact that the Customs Administrations of Burkina Faso, DR Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Gabon, Ghana Mauritania, Niger, Guinea and Guinea Bissau have been successful in reclaiming outsourced tasks motivates other countries to follow suit. The WCO is willing to further strengthen its assistance in this matter and is currently expanding its support to Chad, Benin, Cameroon, Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo. Several of them still have pre-inspection contracts and pay the inspection company ad-valorem.
- R. The Regional Workshop on Coordinated Border Management (CBM), organized by the WCO in February 2018 in Abuja, revealed that there is no operational Single Window (SW) in WCA corresponding to the definition of a SW in UN/CEFACT Recommendation 33 and to the WCO's understanding of this concept.

Many WCA countries have ongoing SW initiatives. However, they are all limited in terms of their scope and the services provided (restricted functions and/or limited number of stakeholders connected) or in terms of their geographical focus (most often restricted to port operations). Some countries have more than one SW initiative.

There is a range of infrastructures for Juxtaposed Control Offices in WCA. However, only one of them is currently operational, despite support from and significant investment by development partners and donors. In this respect, WCA is lagging far behind East and Southern Africa.

- S. It is worth noting the active participation, using their own resources, of many Customs administrations in the region's various conferences, committees, meetings and activities, in the RWG on IT Development and in some other regional activities. Unfortunately, some countries participate very rarely, presumably for budgetary reasons, and this has been the case for a number of years now. A good practice implemented by some WCA Customs is to include in the Customs' annual budget annual contributions to the WCO and to the WCA region, but also the costs for the Customs' participation in important and predictable activities of the Secretariat and the WCA Region.
- T. The region currently has a certain number of tools that will enable it to communicate more easily and inform and involve regional structures and persons acting within the framework of the WCO and for the development of WCA Customs (e.g. regional website, regional e-mail addresses, Regional Guide,

Vice-Chair's Newsletter). The WCO Secretariat notes the frequent use of regional e-mail addresses by the regional structures and certain countries with an active contact point. Others do not appear to use this tool efficiently.

- U. It can be seen that WCA Customs are increasingly participating in various training programmes provided by the WCO Secretariat, and particularly in the Fellowship Programme, Scholarship Programme, Career Development Programme and the VCOA. The Fellowship Programme also enables a large number of Customs officers to be trained in LMD.
- V. For the past four years, African Customs officers taking part in internships and training provided by the Customs Schools in Tourcoing (France) and Brussels (Belgium) have been visiting the WCO Secretariat. These visits help promote WCO standards and tools and raise the awareness of a greater number of WCA Customs officers about these topics.
- W. A great deal of effort is now being made to add to the pool of experts who can support the WCO in conducting its many assistance missions. Several accreditation workshops have been held to this end and will still continue in the near future. These workshops are also aimed at candidates from WCA Customs. WCA Members are encouraged to respond more frequently to invitations and to put forward qualified and available candidates.
- X. Certain active Members in the WCA region seek hardly any support from the WCO.

WCA capacity building activities

42. During this period, the following missions were organized by the Secretariat in the WCA region:

Regional workshops		1 July 2016 – 30 June 2017	1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018	1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019
	Regional	14	7	4
	Sub-regional/several Members	13	7	18
	Accreditation		2	2
	Total	27	16	24
National workshops				
	Benin	3		5
	Burkina Faso	6	8	3
	Cameroon	3	7	4
	Cape Verde	1	1	1
	Central African Republic	1	1	2
	Chad			
	Congo (Republic of the)	2	4	
	Côte d'Ivoire		5	4
	DRC		2	
	Gabon	1	3	
	Gambia	1	3	5
	Ghana	5	3	2
	Guinea	4	4	2
	Guinea-Bissau			
	Liberia	6		5
	Mali	3	2	1
	Mauritania			1
	Niger	1	1	6
	Nigeria	8	5	6
	Sao Tome and Principe			
	Senegal		1	6
	Sierra Leone	6	6	5
	Togo	2	4	4
	Total	53	60	62
TOTAL		80	76	86

Planning of WCA activities

43. The WCO Secretariat's Regional Development Manager periodically sends a list of all delivered and upcoming activities to WCA regional structures and Contact Points and to some development partners.