



**REPORT  
OF THE 9TH MEETING OF CAPACITY BUILDING CONTACT  
POINTS OF CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATIONS OF THE WEST  
AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGION**

**31 OCTOBER TO 2 NOVEMBER 2018, YAOUNDE, CAMEROON**

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*MONTEBÈ* - YAOUNDE, CAMEROUN

**Du 31 Octobre au 02 Novembre 2018**

1. The 9th meeting of the Capacity Building Contact Points of Customs administrations of the West and Central Africa Region was held in Yaounde, Cameroon, from October 31 to November 2, 2018. This meeting is part of the ongoing implementation of the regionalization policy on capacity building and customs modernization initiated by the World Customs Organization (WCO).
2. This important meeting was organized by the Regional Office for Capacity Building, in collaboration with the WCO Secretariat and the Cameroon Customs Administration. The meeting registered the participation of eleven (11) administrations out of the twenty-three (23) members of the region, the Office of the Vice Chair, the WCO Secretariat, the Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB), the Regional Training Centers (CRFs) of Ouagadougou and Brazzaville, and the African Union (AU) Commission.
3. The list of participants is appended to this report.

#### **I. OPENING CEREMONY**

4. The opening ceremony, which was chaired by Mr. FONGOD Edwin NUVAGA, the Director General of Customs of Cameroon, was marked by four (4) speeches.
5. In the first speech, Mr. TAFILI Ebenezer, the Director of the Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB), expressed thanks to the Regional Development Manager as well the Secretariat of the World Customs Organization, for their constant efforts towards the reform and modernization of the Customs administrations of the Region. He equally thanked the Vice Chair's Office, the AU Commission and all other participants, especially the Capacity Building Contact Points, for making the trip to Yaounde.
6. After recalling the theme of the meeting, "**From strategic planning to the effective implementation of reform and modernization initiatives within the Administrations of West and Central Africa**", he emphasized on the objective of the meeting, which he summarized as the sharing of national experiences on the approaches, instruments and tools adapted to our realities, that will enable our administrations to better plan, implement, evaluate and adjust their reform and modernization actions. .
7. He concluded by expressing the wish that the meeting will be marked by frank and fruitful discussions, leading to strong and relevant recommendations for the Directors General, in pursuit of the very noble cause of the development of the Administrations of the Region.
8. In the second speech, **Colonel CONDE KARINKA, Director of the Cabinet of the Vice Chair of the WCO-WCA Region**, expressed his thanks to the Cameroonian authorities for having accepted to host this very important meeting of the Region.
9. He went on to dwell on the role of the Capacity Building Contact Points. He emphasized that as agents of change, they play a key role in coordination and communication between the respective Administrations, the WCA regional structures

and the WCO Secretariat. As such, it is their responsibility to monitor the programming and implementation of the regional strategic plan and the regional coaching program.

10. Before concluding his remarks, he gave assurance of the Vice Chair's determination to continue supporting the effective implementation of all reform and modernization initiatives within the Customs Administrations of the WCO-WCA Region.
11. The third speech was delivered by the Representative of the WCO Secretariat, Mr. Bernard ZBINDEN. He expressed his gratitude on the one hand to the Cameroonian authorities for the warm welcome and for having authorized the holding of the meeting, and on the other hand to the Director General of Customs of Cameroon and his collaborators for their hospitality to the participants.
12. He went on to recall the terms of reference of the meeting and laid emphasis on the total funding of the activity by the Region through the Regional Fund (participation of the ROCB and the RTCs), the Member Administrations (Contact Points' participation) and the host country (local logistics). He highlighted the various items on the agenda and recapitulated the priorities and challenges facing the WCO-WCA Region.
13. While reiterating the availability of the WCO Secretariat in the process of reform and modernization of the Customs administrations of the Region, the Regional Development Manager and representative of the Secretariat urged the Contact Points to play their full role.
14. Taking the floor in the final instance to officially open the meeting, Mr. FONGOD Edwin NUVAGA, the Director General of Customs of Cameroon, wished a warm welcome to all the participants who made the trip to Yaounde.
15. He then recalled the objectives of the meeting and the themes that will be discussed, which augur well for the proper implementation reform and modernisation activities.
16. He finally declared open the 9th Meeting of the Capacity Building Contact Points of the Customs Administrations of the WCO-AOC Region on a note of hope and the conviction that the sum total of experiences and expertise mobilized for the meeting will lead to significant progress, so that by the time of the 10th Meeting of the Contact Points, much ground would have been covered.

## **II. NOMINATION OF THE MEETING BUREAU**

17. After of the opening ceremony and the introduction of the participants, the meeting bureau was set up as follows:
  - Chairperson: The Director of the Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB), assisted by the representative of the Vice Chair (Guinea) of the Region and the Regional Development Manager at the WCO Secretariat ;
  - Rapporteurs: The Gambia and Togo, assisted by the host country (Cameroon) and the ROCB.

### **III. MEETING AGENDA**

18. After these preliminaries, the agenda was amended and adopted as follows:

#### **SESSION 1 : EVOLUTION OF THE CAPACITY BUILDING PROCESS IN THE WCA REGION**

- Evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations of the 8th Contact Points Meeting.
- Presentation on the vision and functioning of the new Regional Vice-Chair's Office.
- Presentation on the vision of the new management of the ROCB-WCA.
- Role of structures in charge of reform and modernization at national level:
  - ✓ The Capacity Building Contact Point ;
  - ✓ The Reform and Modernisation Committee.
- Secretariat Report on WCO Capacity Building Activities in the WCA Region
- ROCB Report on its capacity building activities.
- New tools and instruments of the WCO
- Presentation of the 2018-2022 Regional Strategic Plan
- Summary of the proceedings of the meeting on the next three-year Strategic Plan of the WCO

#### **SESSION 2 : HOW TO MONITOR AND EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLANS**

- Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of strategic plans:
  - ✓ Regional approach
  - ✓ National experiences
- Mastering project management to ensure the effective implementation of the 2018-2022 Regional Strategic plan:
  - ✓ WCO guidance on project management
  - ✓ National Experiences
- What policy and practices on resource mobilization to support customs reform and modernization initiatives?
- Performance measurement as a tool for driving the performance and progress of Customs administrations:
  - ✓ WCO work in the area of performance measurement.
  - ✓ National experiences in measuring organizational performance
  - ✓ Towards a regional model of performance indicators?
- The strategic dashboard as a lever for decision-making by senior management:
  - ✓ Presentation of the Secretariat (WACAM Project)
  - ✓ National experiences

#### **SESSION 3: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TFA OF THE WTO AND THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (AfCFTA) BY THE CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATIONS OF THE WCA REGION: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND PROSPECTS.**

- The current situation in the implementation of the TFA in the WCA Region:
  - ✓ Presentation on the current situation in the WCA Region
  - ✓ The place of the TFA in the Regional Strategic Plan 2018-2022
  - ✓ National experience

- ✓ The experience of a Regional Economic Community
- The African Continental Free Trade Area (CAFTA): current situation and prospects.

- Round table:

*What contribution and what form of collaboration with the various stakeholders to support the modernization of Customs administrations of the WCA region?*

- Regional Coaching Programme
- Presentation of the draft recommendations
- Closing session

#### **IV. MEETING PROCEEDINGS**

##### **IV-1. Evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations of the 8th Contact Points Meeting:**

19. The participants assessed the implementation of the Recommendations of the 8th meeting of the Contact Points that were made to the WCO Secretariat, the Vice-Chair and Customs Administrations. At the end of this exercise, the recommendations with low implementation rates were carried forward, while those with high rates were removed from the list.
20. The list of recommendations is attached to this report.

##### **IV.2. Presentation on the vision and functioning of the new Regional Vice-Chair's Office.**

21. Mr PEVE TOURE, Permanent Secretary at the Cabinet of the Vice-Chair, made a presentation on the vision and organisation of the new Vice-Chair's Office.
22. It came out from this presentation that the vision of the Vice-Chair is **to commit Regional Structures and Customs Administrations of the WCO / WCA Region in a dynamic of performance and excellence.**
23. This vision comprises three focus areas, subdivided into objectives, as follows:
  - Focus 1: Strengthening of Regional Structures in line with their mandates. This goal will be achieved by providing the regional structures with the status necessary for the proper accomplishment of their missions, by granting them the means necessary for their proper functioning and by boosting the collaboration between the Vice-Chair and the regional structures.
  - Focus 2: Improving the efficiency and performance of Customs Administrations in meeting their objectives of promoting and implementing the instruments, tools and good practices of the WCO and the Region, of promoting the implementation of the 2018-2022 regional strategic plan and of monitoring the implementation of the recommendations and decisions of regional meetings.
  - Focus 3: Strengthen cooperation and communication between Customs Administrations and all stakeholders, with the aim of promoting collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), promoting collaboration with policy makers and the private sector, and strengthening collaboration between the WCA Region, the WCO and other regions.

24. As to its organisation, the Cabinet consists of a Director of Cabinet, a Permanent Secretary and ten members all appointed by the Vice-Chair, with the support of administrative staff for secretarial and translation work.

#### **IV.3. Presentation on the vision of the new management of the ROCB-WCA.**

25. The new Director of the Regional Office for Capacity Building (ROCB) presented the vision of the ROCB's new management, which can be summarized as follows: **To make ROCB-WCA a veritable center of expertise for relevant, needs-driven capacity building delivery to our administrations.**
26. The implementation of this vision involves the following actions:
- Mastery and promotion of WCO tools and instruments and international and regional best practices;
  - The maintenance and optimal use of the regional pool of experts;
  - Optimal use of resources and institutional reform.

#### **IV-4. The role of structures in charge of reform and modernization at national level:**

- **The Capacity Building Contact Pont:**

27. The presentation updated the participants on the role of Capacity Building Contact Points within a Customs Administration and included the remarks of the ROCB on the way this role is being played.
28. The Capacity Building Contact Points constitute a professional network of individuals or services working within their respective administrations as agents of change and promoters of customs modernization.
29. In line with its mission statement, the Contact Point works in close collaboration with the ROCB-WCA in promoting capacity building and monitoring and evaluation of the modernisation process of its administration.
30. The ROCB noted that some Contact Points are inactive and others are not using the regional electronic mailing system.
31. Following this presentation, some countries shared their experiences.
32. Guinea noted the difficulties encountered by the Contact Point in sharing information with the BRRC using the regional email box.
33. Côte d'Ivoire made a suggestion to the ROCB to develop a monitoring sheet to be sent periodically to the Contact Points so that they could better carry out information sharing work.
34. The Congo Contact Point shared its experience in the field of communication with the BRRC and its senior management in order to carry out its responsibilities, including

the establishment of a secretariat that continuously monitors communication and the easy access to top management.

35. The Gabon Contact Point shared its experience in the context of access to information.
  - **The reform and modernisation committee**
36. The presentation on the Modernization Committee informed the participants about the definition, functions and profile of the members of the Modernization Committee.
37. It should be noted that the Modernization Committee is a high-level internal structure for organizational development, customs modernization and capacity building. To accomplish this mission effectively, the committee must have competencies in strategic planning, project management, change management, strategic risk management and organizational performance assessment.
38. However, some pitfalls prevail, namely the lack of regulatory provisions governing the reform committee in certain administrations and the lack of representativeness within these structures.
39. Following this presentation, The Gambia, Congo and Guinea shared their experiences in this area. The proposal was made to forward these experiences to the ROCB so that other member countries could be inspired by them.

#### **IV-5. Report of the Secretariat on the capacity building activities of the WCO in the WCA Region.**

40. The WCO Secretariat made a presentation on the WCO's capacity building activities in the WCA Region
41. Besides the presentation of the status of implementation of the recommendations made to the WCO respectively by the 23rd Conference of DGs of Customs for WCA (Conakry), the 10th session of the Sub-Committee of DGs of Customs of the African Union (Moroni) and the 8th meeting of the Capacity Building Contact Points (Brazzaville), the report highlighted the WCO Operations which involved the WCA Region, as well as the WCO Secretariat's programs related to the Region. These programs include WACAM, LMD, INAMA, PACIR-ALISA Transit, accreditation of experts, support for the implementation of the Niamey Declaration and various operations in the area of enforcement.
42. The report made the following general observations:
  - The participation of the WCA Region in the activities of the WCO is quite good, despite some members who are still lagging behind;
  - A lot of collaboration tools are implemented within the Region, notably the Customs-Police collaboration manual;
  - The ability to implement strategies and action plans remains inadequate;
  - The main mission of the Customs Administration of the Region remains the collection of revenue and there is still very little commitment to other missions;
  - Many administrations in the Region do not apply the HS2017;

- There is high participation in the programs initiated by the WCO (WACAM, MERCATOR), despite the inability of the members of the Region to implement and apply the results;
- The WCA markets are flooded with counterfeit products and Customs action is still timid;
- The growing problem of drugs and fake pharmaceutical products;
- Emerging challenges related to the expansion of e-commerce;
- More and more experts from the AOC Region are available and mobilized for the WCO assistance missions, despite the low sharing of experience between the members;
- Low level of response to the annual letter of the WCO SG requesting for the expression of capacity building needs.

#### **IV-6. Report of the ROCB on its capacity building activities**

43. The ROCB presented the activities that the Office carried out during the 2018-2019 period. These included the preparation of the 2018-2022 Regional Strategic Plan, the Technical Assistance Missions to the Customs Administrations of the Region, the holding of a session of the Regional Working Group on IT, the Sensitization Workshop on the implementation of the TFA organized jointly with the African Union, the 8th Workshop of Training and Human Resource Managers, the Capacity Building Workshop for staff of the ROCB and Côte d'Ivoire Customs on HRM and Project Management.

#### **IV-7. New tools and instruments of the WCO**

44. The Secretariat reviewed the new instruments and tools of the WCO and the recent updates of existing instruments, in order to raise the interest of administrations in the use of such instruments and tools.
45. New instruments include the confidential handbook aimed at improving cooperation between customs and the police, the new platform created in the e-learning platform for private sector actors who wish to follow training on HS, and a series of WCO publications on E-Commerce.
46. Updates include the revision of the RKC which is underway and the revision of the TRS Guide which has been completed.
47. The representative of the WCO dwelt at length on the new program financed by the European Union and implemented by the WCO, which aims at harmonizing the classification of goods on the basis of the WCO standards for the strengthening of trade in Africa. The program which covers 41 months is valued at five million Euro and comprises three phases: a needs analysis phase which will last 8 months, an implementation phase lasting until the 41st month and the evaluation phase.
48. The presenter clarified that WCO correspondences had been sent out for Customs Administrations wishing to participate in the project to make this known and to designate contact points.



49. A discussion session was opened for further clarifications and sharing of experience.
50. The sharing of experience focused on customs procedures in the context of courier services (express shipments). Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire shared their experiences in this area.

#### **IV-8. Presentation of the 2018-2022 Regional Strategic Plan**

51. The ROCB made a presentation on the focus areas of the new Regional Strategic Plan 2018-2022. Indeed, the plan, which was developed using a participatory approach is based on a holistic approach to customs reform and modernization. A major innovation is the introduction of performance indicators to measure the impact of the implementation of each action on the administration. Another innovation lies in the fact that beyond the strategic goal, there are operational goals for each focus area. Other specificities include alignment with the priorities of the WCO and the Trade Facilitation Agreement, as well as the consideration given to the challenges of the Region, the need to contribute to the competitiveness of the national economies, accelerated processing of expedited shipments, voluntary compliance and electronic commerce.

#### **IV-9. Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of strategic plans**

- **The regional approach**

52. The ROCB made a presentation on the regional strategic plan monitoring and evaluation framework, including the Mirror application. Monitoring and evaluation is based on the Deming cycle (plan-do-check-act). The implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan by the administrations is done through annual roadmaps which are the starting point of the self-assessment exercise.
53. The Mirror is a tool for strategic management, evaluation and decision-making support. Among other things, it enables the identification of country and regional trends as well as good practices in the implementation of the regional strategic plan.
54. In addition, the ROCB drew the attention of participants to the necessity for representativeness in the composition of the people who participate in the evaluation of the implementation of the roadmaps and the quality of the data that must reflect the reality.

- **National experiences**

55. Three administrations reported on their approach to monitoring and evaluating the implementation of their national strategic plans. These are Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo.
56. Senegal presented its national experience on monitoring and evaluation. The steering of the strategic plan is ensured by the Commitments Monitoring Committee (COSE), the Secretariat being held by the DOP, responsible for centralizing the various matrices and preparing the monitoring and evaluation report. The members of the

COSE are Contact Points responsible for monitoring the evolution of the indicators pertaining to their service. The evaluation tools consist of the overall strategic plan matrix, the annual action plan, mission letters and the service indicator matrix. Evaluation is both at the service level and at the strategic level. However, there are some difficulties related to the formulation of certain indicators, the obtention certain data, the lack of ownership of the strategic plan by certain services, and the low level of funding of the Strategic Plan.

57. With regard to Côte d'Ivoire, the monitoring and evaluation of reforms within its Customs Administration are carried out through annual strategic action plans, broken down into strategic objectives, operational objectives and projects that in turn are divided into actions for implementation. These actions are systematically and regularly monitored and evaluated, with reports showing the level of implementation of the actions.
58. Togo's intervention was based on its strategic plan 2018-2022. This plan includes the Authority's vision, missions and values, the organization chart, the presentation of the macroeconomic and social context of TOGO and the report on the implementation of the 2015-2017 strategic plan (lessons learned, challenges and perspectives). The strategic focus areas are: tax and customs revenue mobilization, the promotion of the private sector and investments, the modernization and strengthening of institutional capacities of the OTR.
59. The Regional Development Manager welcomed the progress made in the monitoring and evaluation of reform actions by the Administrations of the WCA Region and urged that these should not be limited to evaluating the actions or results, but to include an evaluation of the impact of the reform actions.
60. A question and answer session followed these presentations.

#### **IV.10 Mastering project management to ensure the effective implementation of the 2018-2022 regional strategic plan.**

- **WCO guidance on project management**

61. The representative of the WCO presented the guidelines of his organization on project management. Indeed, the WCO recognizing project management as an essential tool for contributing to Customs reform and modernization, has included project management in chapter 5 of the Capacity Building Compendium and the documentation of the WACAM Project (seven modules on the subject). The WCO conducted training on project management within the Region. About 80 people benefited from the training. The course content is related to project planning, implementation and evaluation.

- **The Gambian experience**

62. The presentation by the delegate of The Gambia highlighted the experiences of the GRA in designing, implementing and evaluating reform projects. In a process of continuous improvement, it has just acquired a Project Management Methodology

Guide developed with the assistance of the WCO as part of the WACAM Project. This guide defines the project governance framework and the life cycle of projects.

- **The Burkina Faso experience**

63. The representative of Burkina Faso noted that his country received support from the WCO, which enabled the Customs Administration to develop a methodology for project management which rests on four pillars namely, strategic alignment, the methodology, governance and competency management. The approach also focuses on the four phases that correspond to the life cycle of a project: start-up and launch, planning, implementation, closure and evaluation. To conclude, he said that this year Burkina Faso was able to complete four projects using the project management methodology put in place which has become a real asset for the administration. However, resource mobilization remains a challenge in project management.

#### **IV.11 What policy and practices on resource mobilization to support customs reform and modernization initiatives?**

64. This theme was presented by Mr. SANGHO Abdel Kader, WCO Mercator Programme Advisor. He focused on the different steps for developing a resource mobilization strategy, identifying different sources of funding, engaging stakeholders and developing project proposals. He said that in order to mobilize resources effectively, it is important to develop formal strategies aligned with the strategic plan and to develop strong and well-structured business cases to convince partners / donors on the relevance of projects. .
65. He then presented a resource mobilization strategy model and an example of a business case.
66. A question and answer session followed this presentation.

#### **IV.12 Performance measurement and the strategic dashboard as tools for driving the performance and progress of Customs administrations**

- **The work of the WCO on performance management**

67. The representative of the Secretariat made a presentation on the WCO's work on performance measurement. He said that to judge the performance of an Administration, it is not enough to rely on numbers but also to take into account the resources that have been used to implement an action.
68. He emphasized that performance measurement is a decision-making tool which enables the measurement of the reform and modernization of an Administration.
69. Besides, to be effective, performance measurement must take into account qualitative criteria and data integrity.
70. To measure performance, the WCO is working to put in place a number of tools, standards and frameworks to develop performance measurement experts. These tools

include the maturity model, the TRS Guide, the Customs Diagnostic Framework, the WCO Performance Measurement Guide, and so on.

71. The presenter revealed that the WCO is holding discussions with the IMF and the World Bank to find consensus in the area of performance measurement.

- **National experiences**

72. **The Gambia** presented its experience in the development of a strategic dashboard (GRA Strategic Dashboard). This activity is carried out with the assistance of the WCO within the framework of the WACAM Project. It focuses on the development of a decision support tool for senior management and takes into account three critical factors, namely access to reliable data, the ability to analyze data, and a good knowledge of the sources of organizational performance. As such, the tool must be connected to existing data sources such as GAMTAXNET (tax information system), ASUCUDA and HRIS (HRM information system). In addition, other graphical user interfaces (GUIs) are being built to connect other key processes to the dashboard.
73. Key performance indicators have been established for key management processes in the administration, including revenue collection, trade facilitation, human resources management and enforcement.
74. **Côte d'Ivoire** made a presentation on its experience in performance measurement and performance steering. According to this presentation, Ivorian Customs in its strategic governance policy has developed a system for measuring and monitoring its operational activities: The DECISIONNEL
75. The DECISIONNEL is a computer application that allows the monitoring in real time of the activities of the Ivorian Customs Administration and to present information in a synthesized form to help decision-making. It presents a set of indicators in different compartments of customs activity: assessed revenue, selectivity, compromised duties, revenue collected, evaluation of inspectors, etc. With the support of the World Bank, Côte d'Ivoire has extended this tool to all its administrative functions (HRM, IT, Training, Communication, Partnership etc.), such that the DECISIONNEL today comprises a set of 120 performance indicators.
76. Moreover, this performance measurement system has enabled Ivorian Customs to set up a Quality Management System, consisting of operational management dashboards implemented in certain departments, notably at the Port, the airport and Customs investigations.
77. These presentations were followed by a rich and intense debate. The Director of the ROCB drew participants' attention to the existence of a regional model of performance indicators developed during the implementation of the first regional strategic plan

(2009-2013). This model and national initiatives could be used to develop an updated holistic model of performance indicators for the benefit of the Region's administrations.

78. The need was noted for further work on the development of a regional model of performance indicators to meet the urgent needs of administrations in this area, in particular through a virtual working group and the organization of a regional workshop.

### **SESSION 3: Implementation of the WTO TFA and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) by the Customs administrations of the WCA region: challenges, opportunities and prospects.**

#### **IV-12. The current situation in the implementation of the TFA in the WCA Region:**

79. Mr. Patrick YAMEOGO of Burkina Faso Customs, in his capacity as Mercator Programme Advisor (MPA) of the World Customs Organization made a detailed presentation on the implementation of the AFE in the West Africa Region. After outlining the role and initiatives of the WCO in implementing the TFA, the presenter focused on the Mercator Programme, the status of notification and ratification of the TFA in the Region, the steps in the implementation of the TFA and the challenges and opportunities.
80. The presentation concluded that the key objectives of the WCO Mercator Program are technical assistance to Members and tailor-made capacity building, the smooth implementation of the TFA based on WCO instruments and tools and effective coordination of all stakeholders (WCO, Donors, international organisations and WCO members).
81. Within this framework, the WCO Working Group on Trade Facilitation (TFAWG) is the platform for Members to share their experiences in implementing the TFA, to coordinate activities with donors and to interact with other international bodies and organizations, as well as with the private sector. In addition, the expert mentioned more than fifteen WCO instruments and tools that could be used by its members in the implementation of the TFA.
82. The presenter noted that since the entry into force of the TFA on 22 February 2017, almost all countries in the WCA region, like other regions of the WCO, have committed to its implementation which necessarily involves the ratification and notification processes. The ratification situation indicates sixteen (16) countries in the WCA Region have fulfilled this obligation, while seven countries have not yet ratified the agreement. In addition, only eight (08) countries in the region have fully reported their categories of measures. The rest of the countries have notification rates of measures ranging from 55% to 100%.
83. In the list of challenges, the presenter cited political will, management instability, stakeholder coordination, private sector involvement, infrastructure issues and

mobilization of financial resources, among others. However, important opportunities are to be seized, including: the commitment of developed countries and certain international organizations (WB, IMF, UNCTAD, OECD, WCO, etc.) to assist Members to implement the TFA; the commitment of the AU and RECs to support Members through sub-regional implementation strategies; WCO expertise for effective and harmonized implementation of the TFA (pool of experts, tools and instruments).

84. A question and answer session followed this presentation.

#### **IV-13. The African Continental Free Trade Zone (AfCFTA): current situation and prospects**

85. The Representative of the Commission of the African Union, Mr. DHUNRAJ KASSE, made a presentation which focused on the strategy and initiatives of the African Union on Trade Facilitation. This strategy was communicated to all Ministries of Commerce and Industry for comments and contributions.
86. The strategy paper was then presented to the RECs at the 7th meeting of the AU-RECs Customs Cooperation Subcommittee in April 2018, in Morocco.
87. A validation workshop was held in April 2018 in Madagascar, where selected Member States and the private sector were also invited.
88. It was discussed at the Sub Committee of DGs in Moroni, Comoros in September 2018 and will be presented to the Specialized Technical Committees (Trade) for implementation.
89. A few specific initiatives were held during the year, such as the Technical Working Group on the Interconnection and Customs Information Systems held in Dakar, Senegal, from 19 to 21 June 2018, an AU-ROCB-ESA workshop on corruption risk mapping (Port Louis, Mauritius from 22 to 25 May 2018), an AU-ROCB-WCA Workshop on raising awareness on the implementation of the TFA (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from 29 July to 1 August 2018), the 4th AU Forum on Trade Facilitation (Cairo, Egypt, 15-17 August 2018), a workshop on transit (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, August 2018).
90. The presenter then dwelled on the state of play of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which has two phases of negotiations. The legal and institutional framework has been put in place and negotiations are underway on the tariff concession schedules and the rules of origin.
91. Finally, the African Union called for greater involvement of the Contact Points by reiterating the need to take full knowledge of the various recommendations of the DGs, the need to take cognizance of the various reports relating to customs, to ensure that the AU Trade Facilitation Strategy is incorporated and implemented at the national level, the need to become acquainted with the legal texts of the AfCFTA and to begin discussions on the implications of the implementation of the customs provisions of AfCFTA.

#### **IV-14. Round table discussion:**

##### **What contribution and what form of collaboration with the various stakeholders to support the modernization of Customs administrations of the WCA region?**

92. Under the moderation of Mr. SANGO, ABDEL KADER, Mercator Program Advisor, a round table discussion was held on the existing forms of collaboration and the new avenues to explore.
93. Taking the floor, the African Union Commission noted that it collaborates with the various stakeholders including the private sector, which it always invites to the statutory meetings, as well as with the ROCBs of all the regions in the area of experience sharing. In addition, the African Union has a range of capacity building programs from which RECs benefit.
94. The WCO Secretariat, while noting the need to understand the environment, proposed a three-stage approach to the Customs Administrations of the WCO-WCA Region, namely stakeholder analysis, the designation of a structure in charge of the collection and processing of information and the designation of contact points to build relationships with each stakeholder.
95. The Vice-Chair's representative, speaking on the subject, noted in the first place the low level of the collaboration between the Vice-Chair and the RECs. In this sense, the Vice-Chair's action plan will incorporate actions geared at enhancing collaboration among stakeholders. One perspective is to see the ROCB establish memoranda of understanding with the RECs in order to identify areas of cooperation.
96. The Director of the ROCB, who was asked about the mechanisms that he will use to mobilize project funding, presented his strategy, which is based first of all on the collaboration and consultation with the Secretariat of the WCO, to gain more capacity-building activities and increased collaboration with the States of the Region.
97. He added that the ROCB's annual action plan awaiting validation by the Vice-Chair, incorporates the development of regional projects to be presented to donors for funding. Also, the support of the African Union, the RECs and the Customs Administrations have been highly solicited by the ROCB.
98. A recommendation was made to Customs administrations and Regional Structures to identify stakeholders and to create functional relationships.

#### **IV-15 THE REGIONAL COACHING PROGRAMME**

99. Under this agenda item, the Gambia shared its experience on the application developed by the Gambia Customs Administration on the management of Human Resources, which application incorporates a dashboard that summarizes all personnel information.
100. The following national experiences were placed on the regional capacity building market:
  - ✓ The competency-based HRM system of The Gambia;

- ✓ The competency-based HRM system of Liberia;
- ✓ The DECISIONNEL of Côte d'Ivoire;
- ✓ The Gambia Project Management Framework;
- ✓ The Burkina Faso Project Management Framework;
- ✓ The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework of the Senegal Strategic Plan;
- ✓ The Strategic Dashboard of the Gambia.

101. In addition, the Contact Points were granted a period of one month to express the interests of their administrations, after consultation with their senior management, on the various experiences placed on the regional market for capacity building.

#### **V. CLOSING CEREMONY**

102. Three interventions marked the closing of the 9th meeting of the WCO-WCA Contact Points for Capacity Building: the vote of thanks from the participants, the word of thanks from the Director of the Vice Chair's Office for the WCO-WCA Region and the closing remarks of the Representative of the Director General of Customs of Cameroon, unavoidably absent.
103. In her word of thanks, the representative of the participants Ms. NANA BIRAGO, of Ghana Customs, thanked Cameroon for the hospitality and arrangements made to ensure a pleasant stay for the participants. She thanked the participants for the quality of the discussions and urged them to implement the recommendations within their Administrations.
104. The Director of Cabinet at the Office of the Vice-Chair of WCO-WCA Region, thanked the Cameroon authorities for having accepted to host and ensure proper logistics for the meeting. He also thanked the Director General of Customs especially, for all the measures he took to make the participants' stay enjoyable. He congratulated the WCO Secretariat for the relevance of its interventions. He made the commitment to take the recommendations to the Vice-Chair of the WCO-WCA Region. He finally thanked the African Union for their constant participation in the events of the Region.
105. Finally, the Representative of the Director General of Customs of Cameroon, on behalf of the Director General, expressed his thanks to the Vice-Chair of the Region, the WCO Secretariat and the ROCB for the quality of the moderation of the meeting. He also congratulated the Contact Points for their contribution during the sessions. He extended the encouragement of the Minister of Finance to the Organizing Committee as well as the representatives of the media for the visibility given to the meeting. He made the commitment to carry out actions towards CEMAC for a greater implication of this structure in the activities of the Region. He wished a pleasant return home to each of the participants and declared closed the proceedings of the 9th Meeting of the Capacity Building Contact Points of Customs Administrations of the WCO-WCA Region.

**Done at Yaounde on the 2nd of November 2018**

**The participants**