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Reports of rapporteurs

Report of the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Africa (2014–2015)

I. Introduction

1. The period 2014–2015 has been fairly busy in the African region, inter alia with the organization of the second international conference on single windows.
2. The following is a summary of the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur's activities.

A. **Technical workshop on pilot projects for the exchange of certificates of origin in the areas of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), 6–9 January 2014, in Saly, Senegal**

3. As part of the pilot project for the implementation of the electronic exchange platform for certificates of origin, the African Alliance for e-Commerce (AACE) held a technical workshop in Saly, Senegal from 6 to 9 January 2014, with the financial support of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).
4. Representatives of Cameroon, Ghana and Senegal took part in the workshop, the purpose of which was to define the technical requirements for the platform and to draw up specifications for the project.



B. African Alliance for e-Commerce (AACE): 9th meeting of the Executive Committee and fifth General Assembly, 17 and 18 March 2014, Pointe Noire, Republic of the Congo

5. AACE held the 9th meeting of its Executive Committee and its fifth General Assembly on 17 and 18 March 2014 at the Azur le Gilbert's Hotel in Pointe Noire, Republic of the Congo. The opening ceremony was chaired by Mr. Rodolphe Adada, Minister of State and Minister of Transport, Civil Aviation and the Merchant Marine of the Republic of the Congo.

6. Delegations from the following countries and institutions took part in the work: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Senegal; the Commission of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and the World Bank.

7. These events produced the following outcomes:

1. Executive Committee

- Approval of the report of the 8th meeting of the Executive Committee;
- Presentation and approval of the 2013 financial report and annual report;
- Presentation of the latest developments at the national level;
- Presentation and approval of AACE projects for 2014–2016;
- Presentation of the electronic exchange platform for certificates of origin: progress report on the situation in the UEMOA and CEMAC zones.

2. General Assembly

- Review of internal procedures;
- Presentation and introduction of new members;
- Adoption of the report of the AACE Chairman;
- Adoption of the financial report for 2013;
- Approval of the Executive Secretary's business plan;
- Approval of partnerships with international institutions (World Bank, International Trade Centre, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and Pan Asian e-commerce Alliance).

C. International workshop on the impact of single windows on the passage of goods through ports and on the general facilitation of trade, 8–11 September 2014, Douala, Cameroon

8. AACE, in partnership with the World Bank, held an international workshop on the impact of single windows on the passage of goods through ports and on the general facilitation of trade. The workshop followed up on a series of studies conducted on African port facilities using single windows. The main African operators using single windows took part, along with trade facilitation agents.

9. As a side event during the international workshop held by AACE, on 10 and 11 September 2014 another workshop was held by the World Bank at the Hotel SAWA in

Douala. The theme of the workshop was “The single window for foreign trade and the agreements of the World Trade Organization on trade facilitation”.

10. Some 100 delegates representing the following countries and institutions took part in the two meetings: Benin, Cambodia, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Senegal, South Africa, Thailand and Togo; AACE, African Union, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank.

11. In addition to this international feedback workshop, the countries that were subject to peer review (Cameroon, Ghana, Madagascar, Mauritius and Senegal) also held national feedback workshops to share with their stakeholders the outcomes of the reviews.

II. Projects carried out by AACE in 2014

12. Two major projects were implemented by AACE in 2014: the first consisted in assessing the impact of the single window on the passage of goods through ports and on the general facilitation of trade, and the second consisted in the establishment of two pilot platforms for the electronic exchange of certificates of origin in the UEMOA and CEMAC zones.

A. Peer review of the impact of single windows

13. In 2014 AACE conducted an assessment of the impact of the single windows in operation, using a peer-review approach.

14. The main objective of the initiative was to assess the impact of single windows on the passage of goods in the countries in question — Cameroon, Ghana, Madagascar, Mauritius and Senegal — so as to obtain an objective evaluation highlighting the strong points and possible weaknesses of the system.

15. The work was carried out in accordance with the recommendations made when the project had been launched in March 2014, in Pointe Noire. Afterwards, Senegal hosted a regional workshop from 21 to 23 May 2014, in Saly; at that meeting it was possible to share the results of the self-assessment done by each of the countries involved in the project and to set out benchmarks for the assessment.

16. At the end of the workshop it was decided to continue the project with a peer-review phase. Consultants, working with peer assessors, evaluated each single window involved in the project.

17. At the end of the series of assessments, each country held a national feedback workshop to share with its national stakeholders the outcomes, the objective being to draw lessons from the assessment and to draft recommendations to improve the effectiveness and impact of the single windows. Each assessment was summarized in a country report, which could serve as a reference for new single window projects or for those already being implemented. The reports were to be published during the first quarter of 2015.

B. Establishment of two electronic exchange platforms for certificates of origin in the UEMOA and CEMAC zones

18. Following up on the workshop held by AACE in Saly in January 2014, the aim of which was to draw up technical requirements for the development of platforms and to minimize costs, two members — GAINDE 2000 of Senegal for the UEMOA zone, and

GUCE of Cameroon for the CEMAC zone — volunteered to make available the technologies required for the implementation of the pilot project.

19. Thanks to the institutional support of the UEMOA Commission, the project was officially launched in Senegal in February 2014 and in Abidjan in July 2014.

20. The project was launched in the CEMAC zone during a mission carried out in Douala by the Guichet Unique des Opérations Transfrontalières (Transborder Operations Single Window) (GUOT) of the Congo, from 30 June to 2 July 2014.

21. The certificate of origin is an element attesting to the admissibility of certain goods covered by customs declarations when they are loaded or unloaded. The certificate makes it possible to identify goods as having an origin in a given country or group of countries and serves as documentary evidence of the origin of the goods.

22. The main objectives of the project are:

- To establish an electronic exchange platform for certificates of origin between Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal;
- To ensure the secure transmission of certificates of origin;
- To make data available to the various stakeholders;
- To set up an organizational framework for the operation of the electronic exchange platform for certificates of origin;
- To regularly produce statistics to keep track of certificates of origin.

III. Projects on the horizon

A. Generalization of the pilot phase of the electronic exchange project for certificates of origin in the UEMOA and CEMAC zones

1. Portal for foreign trade formalities in Africa

23. The aim of the portal is to promote intra-African trade by making available information on trade formalities, costs, logistical operators and the top 100 importers and exporters in each African country.

2. Expansion of awareness workshops on the single window concept

24. AACE is seeking new donor partners to fund an expansion of the workshops to other countries.

IV. Participation in international meetings

1. Participation in the PortNet S.A information and awareness day on the impact of single windows on company competitiveness and the economy in general, 3 November 2014, Casablanca, Morocco

2. E-Commerce Postal Forum for Africa, 22–23 September 2014, Hammamet, Tunisia

25. The Tunisian Post, chair of the E-services Committee of the Pan African Postal Union (PAPU), organized the e-Commerce Postal Forum for Africa jointly with PAPU on 22 and 23 September 2014 at the Alhambra Hotel in Hammamet, Tunisia, under the theme “Keeping the promise of e-commerce in Africa”.

26. The forum gave postal operators and their partners the opportunity to discuss and exchange best practices to promote e-commerce and to increase revenue.

27. The postal authorities of the following countries and the following international institutions were represented: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Gabon, Kenya, Malawi, Niger, Senegal, Tunisia, Turkey; AACE, the Universal Postal Union (UPU), PAPU and the Postal Union for the Mediterranean.

3. Conference on the facilitation of world trade, 23–27 October 2014, Bangkok

28. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in partnership with the Asian Development Bank, held a forum on the facilitation of world trade from 23 to 27 October 2014. The meeting provided an opportunity for AACE to make a presentation on the theme “Single window systems and beyond: Ensuring that small and medium-sized enterprises can use them and benefit from them” and to make itself known by presenting an exhibit stand. The forum also made it possible to promote the guide for the implementation of single windows, published by AACE.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

29. In the light of the conclusion of international trade facilitation negotiations with the Bali agreement, AACE has developed a strategy to support the successful implementation of the agreement in African countries. As from 2015, AACE will invest its potential to the greatest possible extent and within its field of expertise to support donors and countries concerned with Africa's place in trade facilitation.
