



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
16 January 2017  
English  
Original: French

---

## Economic Commission for Europe

Executive Committee

### Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

**Twenty-third session**

Geneva, 3-4 April 2017

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

**Reports of rapporteurs**

## Report of the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Africa in 2016

### I. Introduction

1. The following is a summary of the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur's activities.

### II. Activities organized by the African Alliance for e-Commerce (AACE)

#### A. Organization of a technical workshop to update the Guidelines for Single Window Implementation, 30 November-2 December 2015, Casablanca, Morocco

2. AACE held a technical workshop in Casablanca, Morocco, to update the April 2013 Guidelines for Single Window Implementation in Africa.
3. During four days of intensive work, the AACE experts adapted the Guidelines in line with the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements, particularly those relating to trade facilitation.
4. To make it easier for countries to implement the single window options, the new version takes account of relevant developments that have taken place and international standards. The new version of the Guidelines will be published officially in 2017.

GE.17-00637 (E) 230117 230117



\* 1 7 0 0 6 3 7 \*

Please recycle The recycling symbol, consisting of three chasing arrows forming a triangle.



**B. Co-organization of a regional workshop on the evaluation of the pilot phase of electronic exchange of West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) certificates of origin, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso**

5. The certificate of origin electronic exchange project was evaluated in August 2016, after a two-year pilot phase. Feedback from the evaluation was given at a regional workshop organized with funding from WAEMU from 24 to 26 August 2016 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

6. Although the level of adoption of the exchange platform had been fairly low, the representatives of the eight States recommended that, given its importance, the Commission and AACE should extend the project to the other member States and rectify the shortcomings identified during the pilot phase with a view to its wider introduction.

**C. Organization of the fifth International Single Windows Conference, Marrakesh, Morocco**

7. AACE, in partnership with Portnet SA, organized the fifth International Single Windows Conference on the topic of “Electronic single windows for foreign trade: the requirement of inclusive cooperation.”

8. The Conference took place from 5 to 7 September 2016 in the conference centre in Marrakesh, Morocco, and was chaired by the Minister of Equipment, Transport and Logistics, supported by the Minister responsible for trade and in the presence of various senior figures from Morocco and elsewhere in Africa.

9. The Conference attracted around 231 participants, of whom 145 were international delegates from 28 different countries. The following organizations were represented: the World Customs Organization (WCO), the African Union Commission (AUC), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and its Working Group on the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Commission of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the Maritime Organization for West and Central Africa (MOWCA), the Africa Transport Policy Programme (SSATP), the Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PACCI), the Islamic Development Bank and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The Rapporteur for Africa has summarized the conclusions of the Conference below.

**1. Recommendation 1: Evaluation of single window facilities**

10. Single window facilities must be subject to objective assessment of their actual contribution to trade facilitation in the countries where they are located. The appropriate tools and methodology for such an exercise must be developed. A first step in that direction was taken with the voluntary peer review mechanism implemented with World Bank support in 2014. The countries concerned were Cameroon, Ghana, Madagascar and Senegal. AACE expects the technical and financial partners to provide support for the development of this tool and that regular impact assessments will be made of the single window facilities in the African region.

**2. Recommendation 2: Adoption of standards and harmonization**

11. The adoption of international standards and data harmonization are prerequisites for all single windows that have not already taken that step. Regional integration and the future construction of a continental-level free trade zone mean that all the trade facilitation

systems in place in the countries concerned need to adopt the same standards in order to facilitate the exchange of data and electronic documents. The results of the work of UN/CEFACT have been widely adopted by the major trading powers in Europe and Asia. Hence an upgrade programme needs to be introduced in Africa through the single window facilities to improve the efficiency of cross-border trade.

### **3. Recommendation 3: Dialogue and inclusion for performance**

12. Lastly, the Conference expressed the wish that parties with an interest in national single window facilities should become more involved. The performance of a single window depends on the level of involvement and participation of the various stakeholders.

13. Since single window facilities can only help to bring procedures and formalities together, those organizations that own the procedures must work on the basis of collaboration and information-sharing to make exchange of information easier and thus reduce both the costs and the time involved. The Conference therefore strongly encouraged States to promote regular inclusive dialogue between the stakeholders, to eliminate all duplication and thus to make the African region a more competitive zone in international trade. AACE undertakes to promote this dialogue through its members and to offer a platform for sharing good practices in this regard. A specific programme could be designed for this purpose and submitted to the technical and financial partners who are interested in the issue.

14. The Conference made these recommendations in view of the forthcoming entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, in which single windows are a central issue. Those involved in single window facilities therefore need to anticipate and implement the recommendations, which can help to improve trade efficiency in the continent.

15. The Conference also stressed that single window facilities should become increasingly involved in promoting e-commerce, as they already interconnect most of the actors engaged in this form of trade.

## **III. Participation in international meetings**

### **A. Participation in a seminar organized by the Japan Association for Simplification of International Trade Procedures (JASTPRO), 4-14 February 2016**

16. The meeting was an opportunity to present the achievements of Senegal in trade facilitation and the work of AACE at a national workshop organized by JASTPRO. Participants in the interesting discussions were told about the situation in Africa and shared information on the good practices used in trade facilitation in Japan.

### **B. Participation in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) workshop on e-Commerce, 16-17 February 2016, Geneva, Switzerland**

17. The aim of the meeting, which brought together 20 international experts on e-commerce, was to prepare an Aid for E-Trade initiative prior to the UNCTAD E-commerce week and the UNCTAD conference in Nairobi.

**C. World Customs Organization (WCO) annual Information Technology (IT) Conference, 1-3 June 2016, Dakar, Senegal**

18. The annual WCO IT Conference was held in Dakar from 1 to 3 June 2016. This year's theme was: "Digital Customs: Accelerating Connectivity — Bridging the Divide".

19. AACE facilitated a workshop on "Single windows and customs: a complementarity for trade facilitation", which was attended by several AACE members. An exhibition stand was set up to enable AACE to share the achievements and projects of its members.

**D. Participation in the strategic workshop on monitoring and evaluation of the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade (BIAT), organized by the African Trade Policy Centre, 11-12 July 2016, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

20. AACE participated in the technical workshop on monitoring and evaluation of the African Union's BIAT Action Plan. This included an inventory of the seven major clusters that could lead to implementation of the Continental Free Trade Area.

21. The participation of AACE in these important events allowed us to share experiences in the dematerialization of foreign trade procedures.

**E. Participation in the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 17 to 22 July 2016, Nairobi, Kenya**

22. The Rapporteur for Africa participated actively in the session on the private sector initiative on e-commerce. He gave a presentation of the AACE view of the development of e-commerce. The Conference also offered a real platform for exchange and sharing on the following issues:

- Investment
- Commodities, among others

**F. Participation in the 28th UN/CEFACT Forum, 23 to 30 September 2016, Bangkok, Thailand**

23. This forum attracted the highest participation from Africa. The delegations of the Congo, Cameroon, Kenya, Morocco and Senegal took an active part in its work. Morocco, Kenya and Cameroon had been invited to give presentations on their experiences of single windows.

**G. Participation in Africa Trade Week 2016, 27 November-2 December 2016, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

24. During Africa Trade Week, the Rapporteur for Africa took part in the high-level panel session on single windows and port community systems. The forum was attended by several stakeholders from a number of regional economic communities (RECs) and a variety of public and private sectors. In his presentation, the Rapporteur spoke of the major role that single windows could play in the practical implementation of trade facilitation agreements and the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade (BIAT).

#### **IV. Links with other international organizations**

25. On 3 December 2016, during Africa Trade Week, the Chair of AACE and Rapporteur for Africa was received by the African Union Customs Division. During the meeting, the Commissioner for Trade spoke of possible areas for collaboration. AACE will engage with the Commission to accelerate the implementation of the BIAT Action Plan.

#### **V. Planned projects**

##### **A. Dematerialization of certificates of origin in the WAEMU zone**

26. In 2016, in addition to the financial support from the WAEMU Commission, AACE will also receive African Development Bank funding to help it consolidate its pilot projects and extend them to some RECs.

##### **B. Portal for foreign trade formalities in Africa**

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

##### **C. Extension of workshops to raise awareness of the single window concept in six African countries on the list of least developed countries**

28. AACE intends to continue to raise awareness of the single window concept in six African countries with support from the Economic Commission for Africa.

#### **VI. Conclusion and recommendations**

29. In 2017, the Rapporteur for Africa will work on consolidating the platforms developed by AACE and extending them to other RECs.

---