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Reports of rapporteurs**Report of the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Africa (2015-2016)*****I. Introduction**

1. The period 2015-2016 has been fairly busy in the African region, inter alia, with the organization of the fourth International Single Window Conference.
2. 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 on AACE involvement in implementation of the Bali Agreement, 1-3 December, Saly, Senegal**

3. AACE held a technical discussion workshop on the practical implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Trade Facilitation from 1 to 3 December 2014 in Saly, Senegal. The workshop, which brought together the AACE Task Force, consisting of Cameroon, Ghana and Morocco, helped to identify the articles from the measures agreed to in Bali in respect of which AACE could play an important role in effective implementation.

* This document is consistent with the UN/CEFACT 2015-2016 programme of work, ECE/EX/2015/L.14.



4. The outcome was a matrix that highlights all the articles of the Agreement where single windows could play a positive role in their practical implementation. This information should help most institutions better understand the relationship between the single window and the Trade Facilitation Agreement. The guidelines are available on the AACE website.¹

B. Organization of the Sixth AACE General Assembly, 2-3 February 2015, Somone, Senegal

5. AACE held its tenth Executive Committee meeting and its sixth General Assembly on 2 and 3 February 2015 in the Decameron Hotel, Somone, Senegal. The opening ceremony was chaired by the Chef de Cabinet of the Minister of Trade of Senegal, the President of AACE, a representative of the Director-General of Customs Senegal and the Coordinator of the Economic Commission for Africa African Trade Policy Centre.

6. Delegations from the following countries and institutions attended the meeting: Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Morocco, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo, Senegal, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), UNECA/CLTS and the Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

7. The discussions produced the following recommendations:

- Revise the AACE statutes and rules of procedure;
- Consolidate the platforms for the electronic exchange of certificates of origin in the WAEMU and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) zones;
- Extend the pilot platforms for the electronic exchange of certificates of origin to the other regional economic communities in Africa;
- Assist the AACE member countries with the implementation of the Bali agreements; and
- Organize the fourth International Single Window Conference in Brazzaville in October 2015.

C. Organization of two workshops on the certificate of origin exchange pilot project between Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, 15 April 2015, Dakar and Abidjan

8. AACE held two simultaneous workshops on the certificate of origin exchange project between Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. The workshops helped to increase stakeholders' awareness of how to use the portal and led to a considerable increase in the number of certificates of origin exchanged between Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. The pilot project is sponsored by the WAEMU Commission, which is determined to encourage widespread use of the platform in all its member countries.

¹ <http://www.swguide.org/>.

D. Organization of the fourth International Single Window Conference, 5-7 October 2015, Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo

9. AACE organized the fourth International Single Window Conference, which was held from 5 to 7 October 2015 at the Palais des Congrès in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo.

10. The opening ceremony was held under the chairmanship of the Minister of Transport, Civil Aviation and the Merchant Navy, in the presence of Mr. Eugène Rufin Bouya, Director-General of the Trans-border Operations Single Window (GUOT), Mr. Roy Santana, representing the World Trade Organization (WTO), and Mr. Chiza Charles Chiumya, representing the African Union.

11. During the three days of the Conference, delegates had in-depth discussions on the effective use of single windows in the practical implementation of the Bali Trade Facilitation Agreement.

12. The Conference attracted about 100 participants from the following 29 countries: Belgium, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, France, Gabon, Ghana, Haiti, Mauritius, Japan, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

13. The strong representation of technical partners and regional organizations working on trade facilitation was also noted. They included the African Union, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the World Bank, the International Trade Centre, WTO, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the International Maritime Bureau, the International Organization of la Francophonie, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the International Port Community Systems Association and the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor Organization.

14. The following recommendations were made:

- Governments are invited to better oversee the establishment of their national trade facilitation committee, whose mission is to involve key stakeholders in the coordination and development of a roadmap for the practical implementation of the agreements;
- The single windows are invited to work in collaboration with the customs organizations within the national trade facilitation committee so as to avoid duplication of resources;
- Countries with a single window should take account of the needs of the regional economic commissions and landlocked countries to ensure greater interoperability;
- Innovative ways should be sought of facilitating access to information for the private sector and particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises so that they can benefit fully from trade facilitation measures;
- A policy of capacity-building for all stakeholders should be implemented;
- The single windows model for billing must be consistent with article 6 of the WTO agreements;²
- The regional economic commissions are invited to develop roadmaps for the implementation of regional single windows;

² https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/mc9_e/desci36_e.htm#art6.

- The regional economic commissions are invited to harmonize their efforts in the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement.

E. Organization of a technical workshop to update the guidelines for single window implementation, 30 November-3 December 2015, Casablanca, Morocco

15. AACE held a technical workshop in Casablanca to update the April 2013 guidelines for single window implementation in Africa.

16. During four days of intensive work, the AACE Task Force adapted the guidelines to the WTO agreements, particularly those relating to trade facilitation.

17. To make it easier for countries to implement the single window options, the new version takes account of developments that have taken place and international standards. The new version of the guidelines is also set in the context of the Bali agreement.³

18. The new version of the guidelines will be published officially in the second quarter of 2016.

III. Participation in international meetings

A. Participation in the Round Table on Single Window Interoperability, 18-19 February 2015, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

19. The Round Table was held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva from 16 to 19 February 2015. The main purpose of the meeting was to reflect on guidelines for the interoperability of systems; it allowed AACE to share its recent work on a project on the electronic exchange of certificates of origin in the CEMAC⁴ and WAEMU zones. The meeting was attended by representatives of a number of AACE member countries, including Cameroon, Morocco and Senegal.

B. Participation in two meetings on trade facilitation in Africa, organized by the African Union Commission Department of Trade and Industry, 4-6 March 2015, Antananarivo, Madagascar, and 19-21 August 2015, Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo

20. AACE attended two meetings on trade facilitation in Africa organized by the African Union Commission Department of Trade and Industry. The meetings were an opportunity for the African Union to find out more about AACE and the single windows ecosystem.

21. The participation of the single windows of Cameroon, Madagascar, Mauritius and Senegal in these important events allowed them to share their experiences of dematerialization of international trade procedures.

³ https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/mc9_e/balipackage_e.htm.

⁴ <http://www.cemac.int/>.

C. Participation in the World Customs Organization (WCO) Information Technologies Conference, 6-8 May 2015, the Bahamas

22. AACE attended the WCO Information Technologies Conference between 6 and 8 May 2015 in the Bahamas. At the meeting, the AACE President explained how information technologies could support regional integration processes and coordinated border management and spoke about the fourth International Single Windows Conference.

D. Participation in regional information and awareness workshops on good practices in trade facilitation for the national administrations of WAEMU Member States, 27-31 July and 26-30 October 2015, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

23. The regional information and awareness workshops were intended to enable the WAEMU member countries to subscribe fully to the international agreements. The revised Kyoto Convention and the Bali Trade Facilitation Agreement were examined. AACE presented its WAEMU certificate of origin electronic exchange project to both meetings. The WAEMU Commission supported the scaling-up of the project to all its eight member countries.

E. Participation in the e-Commerce in Africa Steering Committee meeting organized by the Mediterranean World Economic Foresight Institute (IPEMED), 21 September 2015, Paris

24. IPEMED organized a discussion workshop for the e-Commerce in Africa Steering Committee in Paris on 21 September 2015. It provided an opportunity to discuss the initial outcome of the report. Possible partnerships between the two structures on e-commerce development are envisaged.

F. Participation in the eleventh Africa Telecom People forum, 8-9 October 2015, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

25. Experts on information technology and public and private institutions met for two days in Abidjan to assess the challenges facing e-commerce in Africa and to identify opportunities to better address the potential constraints. The meeting was attended by experts from Algeria, Gabon, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal and Tunisia.

G. Participation in the seventh Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF), 19-23 October 2015, Wuhan, China

26. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held a forum in Wuhan from 19 to 23 October 2015 on the topic of deepening regional integration through trade facilitation in Asia.

27. The meeting gave AACE an opportunity to share information about its ongoing regional integration projects in Africa, including the electronic exchange of certificates of origin between Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire.

H. Participation in the workshop on Single Window Modality and e-Trade and their Role in Promoting Intra-OIC Trade, 9-10 November 2015, Casablanca, Morocco

28. The workshop on Single Window Modality and e-Trade and their Role in Promoting Intra-OIC Trade was held in Casablanca on 9 and 10 November 2015. Organized by the Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade, the workshop was designed to bring together all the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member countries to discuss a project for setting up a regional single window to help promote exchange between the OIC member countries. Four AACE member countries (Cameroon, Egypt, Morocco and Senegal) took part in the event.

29. They were able to present their national experiences, discuss the challenges and propose possible solutions that would, as a first step, allow member countries to exchange the documents required for cross-border trade in order to work gradually towards the establishment of a regional window.

I. Participation in the International Single Window Stakeholder Conference on Collaboration Toward a Facilitated Trade Environment, organized by the Ghana Revenue Authority

30. The Conference, which was organized by the Ghana Revenue Authority and saw a strong level of representation from the Ghanaian authorities, testifying to the Government's commitment to the idea, gave stakeholders an opportunity to learn from both theoretical and practical experiences.

31. Topics addressed ranged from the development of single windows, WTO facilitation agreements and WCO recommendations to good practices and the institutional arrangements needed for the establishment of a single window. The experiences of other countries such as Nigeria and Senegal were presented.

J. Participation in the first African Development Bank Transport Forum, 26 and 27 November 2015, Abidjan

32. The first African Development Bank Transport Forum on 26 and 27 November 2015 brought together representatives of Governments and international organizations and experts to discuss the challenges Africa is facing in its transport sector.

33. During two days of intensive work, the experts reviewed issues including innovation in funding, sustainability and regional integration.

IV. Links with other international organizations

A. African Development Bank (AfDB)

34. On 21 January 2015, the AACE President was received by the AfDB Transport Division for in-depth discussions on the implementation of three projects for which the agreement in principle for funding had been granted following a call for proposed projects launched by AfDB in 2013. They concerned: (a) the establishment of an African trade portal and (b) the extension of the certificate of origin exchange pilot project.

B. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

35. On 19 and 20 October 2015, a meeting was held in Abuja, Nigeria, between AACE, GAINDE 2000 and representatives of the ECOWAS Commission Directorate of Trade, Directorate of Customs and Community Computer Centre and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).

36. The main objective of the meeting was to present to the ECOWAS Commission the exchange platform developed by AACE for the dematerialization of WAEMU certificates of origin.

37. Convinced of the strategic importance of the project in improving the efficiency of information processing in intra-Community trade, the Commission expressed its interest in cooperating with AACE to extend the project to the 15 ECOWAS member countries.

V. Planned projects

A. Scaling-up of the pilot phase of the certificates of origin electronic exchange project in the WAEMU zone

38. AACE will hold workshops in eight WAEMU Member States with financial support from the Union. The aim of the workshops will be to dematerialize the WAEMU certificate of origin in all eight countries.

39. In addition to this financial support from the WAEMU Commission, in 2016 AACE will also receive AfDB funding to help it consolidate its pilot projects and extend them to some of the regional economic communities.

B. Portal for foreign trade formalities in Africa

40. 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. Expansion of awareness workshops on the single window concept in six African countries on the list of least developed countries

41. AACE intends to continue its extension work on the single window concept in six African countries with funding from the Economic Commission for Africa.

D. Support from AACE Member countries for the practical implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreements

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

42. Many events were held in 2015 on topics related to dematerialization. This highlights the growing interest shown by most African countries in issues relating to areas such as paperless trade, information systems and the interconnectedness of the system in order to simplify foreign trade procedures and strengthen economic integration.

43. In 2016, the rapporteur for Africa will work to consolidate the platforms developed by AACE.
