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REPORTS OF THE RAPPORTEURS

Report of the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Africa^{1 2}

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The African region is continuing to make progress in establishing measures to facilitate trade. The lack of a formal permanent framework for trade makes it difficult to submit a comprehensive report on all the national and regional initiatives in Africa. Many countries have begun to focus with great interest on trade facilitation, however, through the Doing Business benchmarking tool, and national initiatives are beginning to thrive.
2. The UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Africa has participated in many international meetings dealing with trade facilitation throughout the world and imparted an African perspective through presentations or during discussions.
3. The following is a summary of the Rapporteur's activities.

¹ This document was submitted on the date indicated above because of limited resources.

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II. AFRICA IN THE WORLD OF TRADE FACILITATION

A. Interoperability pilot projects

4. Senegal has embarked on a programme to increase paperless trade with the support of the Investment Climate Facility in Africa. The programme includes plans for a cross-border trade pilot project between Senegal, Kenya and the United Kingdom. It is scheduled to be in place by 2008-2009.

5. Senegal and France organized a workshop on dematerialization of procedures between France and Senegal within the framework of the Asia-Europe Alliance for Paperless Trade. GAINDE 2000 and Place International are partners in this pilot project, which should also be running by 2008-2009.

B. Participation in international meetings on trade facilitation

6. Global Facilitation Partnership for Transportation and Trade (GFP) meeting: The GFP holds meetings on a regular basis. The Rapporteur for Africa was able to attend only the November 2007 meeting in Washington, D.C., where he was invited to make a presentation on the conditions necessary for Africa's increased participation in this forum. The GFP secretariat announced at this meeting that the next GFP meeting would be held in Cape Town, South Africa.

7. World Customs Organization (WCO) Information Technology (IT) Conference: The 2007 IT event took place in Veracruz, Mexico, in April, and the Rapporteur had been invited to speak on single windows in Africa. With more than 300 participants, including many Africans, this meeting gave several African countries the opportunity to share their experiences and learn about others.

C. Participation in the work of UN/CEFACT

8. Senegal participates in UN/CEFACT forums on a regular basis. It is active in the working groups on digital paper (TBG 2) and on international trade procedures (TBG 15). Africa remains marginally represented. Nigeria attended the forums in Delhi and Dublin, but was absent at Stockholm and Mexico. This lack of interest may stem in particular from:

- (a) The highly technical nature of the work;
- (b) The lack of information on the part of African Governments on UN/CEFACT work;
- (c) The absence of a linkage at the national and regional level between UN/CEFACT work and local and regional initiatives;
- (d) The level of funding for African experts' participation in the work.

III. REGIONAL LEVEL

9. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) organized a meeting from 18 to 19 June in Addis Ababa on the use by small businesses of new technologies for trade facilitation. Participants from all parts of Africa were able to exchange experiences and the productive discussions helped them to identify where progress needs to be made. The ECA secretariat has undertaken to ensure that the outcomes of this work are followed up.

10. ECA also sponsored an African delegation to the international trade facilitation forum in Amman, Jordan, from 14 to 15 November 2007. This forum comprising all United Nations regional commissions was an ideal framework for enabling African experts to learn about the many initiatives throughout the world and to share African experiences. The single window experiences were the subject of broad discussions.

IV. SUBREGIONAL LEVEL

A. West Africa

11. The Commission of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), supported by International Lawyers and Economists against Poverty, continued its discussions on the regional single window concept. A seminar including all WAEMU countries was held in Lomé from 12 to 14 May 2008. A report on the regional single window concept for WAEMU was presented to the WAEMU country experts at this meeting. The WAEMU secretariat decided to continue consultations beyond the seminar for the implementation of this idea.

B. Central Africa

12. The Rapporteur for Africa did not carry out any activity in or receive any information from this region.

C. Southern Africa

13. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) workshop on trade facilitation was held in Cape Town from 11 to 13 June 2008 immediately following the first meeting of the Global Facilitation Partnership for Trade and Transport (GFP), which was held in the same location two days earlier. The OECD workshop dealt with the southern African region. It involved the sharing of interesting experiences and enabled participants to take stock of trade facilitation in this region. The GFP meeting was comprehensive and, as in past meetings, it allowed for significant interaction on trade facilitation. The GFP secretariat once again took an interest in the conditions necessary for increasing Africa's involvement in GFP activities and took note of the participants' requests in this area.

D. East Africa

14. The Rapporteur for Africa did not carry out any activity in or receive any information from this region.

E. North Africa

15. The Rapporteur for Africa did not carry out any activity in or receive any information from this region.

V. AFRICAN REGION'S PROSPECTS WITHIN UN/CEFACT

A. Thirteenth UN/CEFACT Forum (Africa)

16. Senegal is organizing the first UN/CEFACT Forum to be held in Africa, from 10 to 14 November 2008 in Saly. The Senegalese Government authorities are involved in this first-time event through the Ministry of the Economy and Finance and the customs administration and expect it to be a great success. A day of meetings for national experts will be held in Dakar on Wednesday, 12 November 2008. It will be an opportunity for UN/CEFACT to share information on its progress with the private sector at the national level.

B. International conference on single windows

17. As a lead-up to the UN/CEFACT Forum, an international conference on single windows will be held in Dakar from 5 to 7 November. It will involve fostering discussion on the single window concept and the conditions for implementing it. This meeting will also serve as a framework for sharing experience among various regions in the world. It will again be organized by GAINDE 2000 under the auspices of the Ministry of the Economy and Finance and the customs administration of Senegal. A number of international partners are included in this event to ensure its international and neutral character.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

18. **Africa's trade facilitation efforts are on the right track. Many initiatives have been taken and the climate is favourable. Although, admittedly, some of the initiatives are rather slow to get under way that is offset by the genuine awareness of the trade facilitation dimension to be found among many Governments. The Rapporteur for Africa plans to take advantage of the international conference on single windows to put forward the idea of an African alliance for paperless trade and thus have a formal framework for discussion and exchange similar to the one in the Asian region.**

19. **The 2008-2010 mandate will thus focus on formalizing the African alliance to enhance the continent's integration in international efforts on trade standards and facilitation.**
