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Reports of the Rapporteurs

Report of the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Africa, Mr. Ibrahima Nour Eddine Diagne (Senegal)

Introduction

1. The period 2008–2009 was particularly productive for the African region. A number of international events were organized and several major initiatives were launched. The African region is thus better than ever placed to implement the main recommendations on electronic trade facilitation.
2. The following is a summary of the Rapporteur's activities.

I. Organization of international conferences in Senegal on trade facilitation

A. International Single Window Conference (Dakar, 5–7 November 2008)

3. Organized at the initiative of the Government of Senegal, in partnership with UN/CEFACT and several international partners, the conference provided a forum for exchanges on the “single window” concept with participants from the various regions of the world.
4. Contributions came from countries with proven experience in this field, from organizations that favour the introduction of single windows and from international experts. This first conference enabled the participants to gain a precise idea of the single window concept and the various approaches to its implementation.
5. The outcomes of the conference included a consensus on the establishment of a pan-African single windows network (the African e-Commerce Alliance), along the lines of the

Pan-Asian e-Commerce Alliance, and also the introduction, over the next three years, of a regional single window model for West Africa. The conference statistics were as follows:

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|-----|----------------------------|-----|
| (a) | Foreign participants: | 148 |
| (b) | Nationalities represented: | 32 |
| (c) | Speakers: | 25 |

B. Thirteenth UN/CEFACT Forum (Saly, 10–14 November 2008)

6. The first UN/CEFACT Forum in Africa was held in Saly, Senegal, from 10 to 14 November 2008. The proceedings were opened on behalf of the Minister of State, Ministry of Economy and Finance, by the Secretary-General of the Ministry. The logistical arrangements fulfilled the expectations of the forum organizers and the proceedings thus took place under excellent conditions. Despite the fact that the forum was being held in Africa, it was noted that few of the African representatives who had just been at the International Single Window Conference were present. The holding of the forum provided the opportunity to organize a national workshop on e-commerce moderated by UN/CEFACT experts on Wednesday, 12 November in Dakar. The Forum had 108 foreign participants.

II. Africa in the world of trade facilitation

A. Pilot interoperability projects

7. Senegal has embarked on a major project on the dematerialization of foreign trade procedures. This will involve not only creating the requisite national conditions but also finding international partners for international documentation exchange. The project is supported by the Investment Climate Facility for Africa and the pilot stage should start at the beginning of 2009.¹

8. As regards the new African alliance, it is planned to set up pilot projects among member countries with a view to the implementation of this scheme. The challenge now is to find international partners to finance these activities at the level of each subregion. The alliance will finalize its programme and start promoting the project very shortly.

B. Participation in international meetings on trade facilitation

1. Summit of the Asia-Europe Alliance for Paperless Trade

9. Morocco and Senegal participate as observers in meetings of the Asia-Europe Alliance for Paperless Trade (ASEAL).² Their observer status gives these countries the opportunity to engage in pilot projects on dematerialization with European and Asian countries. One result of the summit in Taiwan Province of China was to consolidate the observer status of Senegal and Morocco and enable them to give an account of their experiences.

¹ www.icfafrica.org/7/fr.

² www.aseal.biz.

2. Invitation to the Pan-Asian e-Commerce Alliance

10. As part of its initiative to build an African alliance, Senegal requested an invitation to a meeting of the Pan-Asian e-Commerce Alliance (PAA)³ in order both to learn from the Asian model and to forge partnership links for future cooperation between PAA and the future African alliance. Senegal was thus invited to take part in the meeting in Hong Kong, China, on 8 December 2008.

3. World Customs Organization Information Technology Conference

11. The 2009 conference took place in Marrakech, Morocco, in April 2009, the theme being single windows. The Rapporteur for Africa was invited to make a presentation on the situation of single windows in Africa. With more than 400 participants, including a large number of Africans, this meeting gave many African countries the opportunity to share their experiences and learn about others.

III. Creation of the African e-Commerce Alliance

12. The African e-Commerce Alliance was officially launched on Friday, 13 March 2009 in Addis Ababa, in the presence of the Acting Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), to coincide with a workshop on trade facilitation and aid for trade.

13. The idea of setting up an African e-commerce alliance on the lines of the one already existing in the Asian region, the PAA, had first been discussed in Dakar in November 2008 at the International Single Window Conference. A group of countries volunteered to consider the question in depth and organize a constituent general assembly.

14. ECA, represented by the African Trade Policy Centre, announced at the Conference that it was willing to host the general assembly of the African Alliance in Addis Ababa in March 2009 to coincide with a workshop on trade facilitation that it had organized.

15. The constituent general assembly of the African Alliance was held as planned and elected an executive committee chaired by Senegal, in the person of Mr. Ibrahima Nour Eddine Diagne, general manager of Gainde 2000. The executive committee also comprises Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Morocco, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the Congo. The other founder members are Madagascar, Gabon and Togo.

16. The principal aim of the Alliance is to strengthen and promote single trade windows in Africa. It has the following three technical committees:

- (a) Organization and Promotion Committee;
- (b) Technology and Standards Committee;
- (c) Projects Committee.

IV. Regional initiatives

West Africa

17. The Commission of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, supported by International Lawyers and Economists against Poverty, a non-governmental organization

³ www.paa.net.

based in Toronto, Canada, continued its discussions on the regional single window concept. A feasibility study was carried out during 2009 and a workshop will be organized during September to consider its conclusions.

Central Africa

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

Southern Africa

19. The secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) organized a high-level conference on the North-South Corridor Programme. Four heads of State (from Zambia, South Africa, Kenya and Uganda) attended the opening ceremony, as well as the Director-General of the World Trade Organization and the President of the African Development Bank. Donors and stakeholders were brought up to date on the Programme and firm commitments of support were given by donors.

East Africa

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

North Africa

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

V. Conclusions and recommendations

22. In the months ahead, the main task will be to consolidate the African Alliance and set up viable pilot projects in the African economic regions. As regards the promotion of know-how in the application of standards, it will also be necessary for Africa's development partners to provide assistance in the organization of the relevant awareness-raising and training workshops.
