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Reports of rapporteurs

Report of the UN/CEFACT Rapporteur for Africa (2011)

Africa

I. Introduction

1. The period 2010–2011 was an eventful one for the African region, featuring in particular the second International Single Window Conference.
2. The following is a summary of the Rapporteur's activities.

II. The second International Single Window Conference, the sixth summit of the Asia-Europe Alliance for Paperless Trade (ASEAL) and the second Forum of the African Alliance for e-Commerce, Dakar, Senegal, 6 to 9 June 2011

3. The second International Single Window Conference, organized by GIE GAINDE 2000, was held from 8 to 9 June 2011 at the Meridien President Hotel, Dakar, under the auspices of the Government of Senegal, represented by the customs administration of Senegal. Senegal had been chosen for the second time in succession to host the event out of recognition by those involved in trade facilitation of the country's efforts to meet the highest international standards in the field.
4. In advance of the Conference, Senegal, as an observer member, hosted the sixth summit of the Asia-Europe Alliance for Paperless Trade (ASEAL) on 6 June 2011. The purpose of the summit, which was held on African soil for the first time, was to lay the foundations for the establishment of a worldwide alliance for paperless trade.

5. Following the sixth ASEAL summit, the second Forum of the African Alliance for e-Commerce (AAEC) was held on 7 June 2011 at the Meridien President Hotel with the aim of consolidating progress, welcoming new members and discussing the possibility of establishing regional single windows. The purpose of the Alliance was to bring together African single window operators for the purposes of promoting the single window concept in Africa and providing technical assistance to countries planning to set up national single windows.
6. An exhibit on single window solutions was held to coincide with the Conference in order to focus contacts between partners involved in organizing the event and delegates from some 20 countries in Africa and beyond.
7. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) strongly supported the organizational aspect of the event by sponsoring the participation of African delegates who were AAEC members and, on the scientific side, by sending a sizeable delegation led by Dr. Magdi Farahat to take part in the various sessions. The presence of representatives of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) was also highly appreciated.
8. An overview of the meetings is provided below.

1. ASEAL summit

9. The sixth ASEAL summit, the first to be hosted on African soil, was held on 6 June 2011 in advance of the African Forum. It was co-chaired by Mr. Jean Marc Dufour and Mr. Ibrahima N.E. Diagne, respectively Chairman of ASEAL and Chairman of AAEC. The various presentations addressed the challenges and the technical, organizational and legal requirements of paperless trade; they provided participants with an opportunity to discuss recent developments in trade facilitation, where the general trend had been towards the dematerialization of procedures and cross-border trade. In accordance with the recommendations made at the fifth ASEAL summit in Kuala Lumpur in 2009, the participants considered the possibility of including ASEAL in a worldwide alliance. The outcome was a decision to hold a preparatory meeting in September 2011 to coincide with a conference held by ECE on single windows, in Geneva. Subsequently, a constituent general assembly would convene in December 2011 to establish the worldwide alliance for paperless trade.

- Date: 6 June 2011
- Venue: Meridien President Hotel, Dakar
- Number of participants: 30
- Number of presentations: 6
- Outcomes
 - Agreement to establish a worldwide alliance for paperless trade
 - Sharing of experiences on the technological, legal and organizational requirements of paperless trade
 - Greater visibility for paperless trade projects around the world

2. African forum

10. The second Forum of the African Alliance for e-Commerce (AAEC) was chaired by the Director-General of the customs administration of Senegal. It was attended by delegates

from various countries, including Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Kenya, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, the Republic of the Congo, Togo and Senegal. The Forum was held the day after the ASEAL summit, which meant that delegates from Belgium, Germany and Malaysia were able to attend and that it was also honoured by the presence of Dr. Farahat, the head of the delegation from the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

11. In addition to presentations by members of the Alliance on their achievements, discussions were also held on the short- and medium-term outlook for the Alliance's three committees: the Projects Committee, the Standards and Technology Committee and the Organization and Promotion Committee. Contributions from the Chairman of ASEAL and the representative of the Pan-Asian e-Commerce Alliance (PAA) served to strengthen Alliance members' commitment to moving towards a worldwide alliance capable of bringing together paperless trade initiatives from around the world.

12. The session on the admission of new members resulted in applications from Burkina Faso and the WAEMU Commission, subject to approval by the supervisory authorities. The WAEMU representative suggested that other countries in the region should be invited to join the Alliance, with a view to establishing a regional single window. An application for observer membership from the Trade Point Foundation (Senegal) was accepted. However, an application from the *Réseau africain de soutien à l'entrepreneuriat féminin* (RASEF) (African support network for women entrepreneurs) was referred to the Alliance's board, as there was no provision for membership by employers' organizations. Mali, already an observer member, indicated its wish to upgrade its status to that of full member. It was agreed that a letter should be sent to all the regional economic communities informing them of the Alliance and the possibilities of membership.

13. In order to promote the Alliance, it was recommended that the regional economic communities should be included, and also that more international organizations should be approached in order to raise their awareness of the Alliance and to secure their financial assistance.

14. The following decisions were taken at the end of the meeting:

- To organize a working group workshop in July 2011 to prepare for the implementation of the projects approved at the last AAEC General Assembly
- To hold an Executive Committee meeting in September 2011 in Geneva, to coincide with the preparatory meeting on the establishment of the worldwide alliance for paperless trade
 - Date: 7 June 2011
 - Venue: Meridien President Hotel, Dakar
 - Number of participants: 80
 - Number of presentations: 12
 - Outcomes
 - Agreement to establish a worldwide alliance for paperless trade
 - New members
 - Opportunities for donor funding of single window and paperless trade projects

3. International Single Window Conference

15. Under the chairmanship of Mr. Amadou Niang, the Senegalese Minister of Trade, and in the presence of the Director-General of the customs administration, the second International Single Window Conference provided an opportunity for constructive discussions on the single window concept, which was increasingly gaining importance as information and communication technologies became more predominant.

16. A total of 24 speakers took their turn at the lectern to share experiences related to the implementation of single window initiatives and emerging projects and also concerning opportunities for funding from donors interested in such an innovative concept.

17. The subjects discussed focused on two complementary areas:

Phases of implementing single windows

- Session 1: Consensus phase: how to achieve a broad and solid consensus
- Session 2: Design stage: how to balance legal, technical and organizational issues when identifying an appropriate single window model
- Session 3: Operating phase: how to establish a successful single window and to ensure continuous improvement

Future prospects

- Session 4: The changes needed for the next decade
- Session 5: Donors and single windows
 - Date: 8–9 June 2011
 - Venue: Meridien President Hotel, Dakar
 - Number of participants: 80
 - Number of presentations: 24
 - Side events: An exhibit of GAINDE 2000 products and a boat trip organized by *Liaison Maritime Dakar Gorée*

Recommendations of the Conference

18. At the end of the Conference, the participants made and adopted the following recommendations:

- To consider whether to establish a worldwide alliance for dematerialized cross-border trade
- To promote the dissemination and use of international standards and recommendations for effective and interoperable trade
- To encourage bilateral, subregional and regional pilot projects
- To foster the sharing of experiences with a view to quickly moving towards single window models based on best practice
- To advocate an enabling environment, and make technical assistance and funding for national single window projects attractive
- To encourage the creation of a network of regional experts in Africa to provide support in preparing for and implementing paperless trade along the lines of UNEXT CAP

- To introduce regional data models

III. Discussions on the establishment of a regional single window at the regional workshop on trade facilitation for WAEMU member States to be held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, from 24 to 26 October 2011

19. As part of a regional workshop on trade facilitation for WAEMU member States, AAEC was invited to make a presentation and raise awareness among participants of a WAEMU regional single window concept.

20. In view of recent developments such as the launch of the Benin single window and the securing of funding for the Burkina Faso single window, there would appear to be a favourable environment for the implementation of a regional single window, in view of the following:

- Three countries already met the initial requirements, namely Côte d'Ivoire, Benin and Senegal
- Burkina Faso would soon be starting the implementation phase (before the end of 2012)
- Mali had launched its project, currently in the feasibility phase
- Togo had included its project in its 2010 letter of intent to the International Monetary Fund
- Only two countries had yet to initiate the single window process: Niger and Guinea-Bissau

21. Nevertheless, as part of efforts to move towards closer integration, it was recommended that the regional single window should be implemented in two phases:

- Implementation of a regional pilot project between Senegal, Benin and Côte d'Ivoire on the basis of the regional single window model (if another country met the requirements, it would be able to join). At the end of a 24-month period, the experience of the three countries would have thus helped lay the foundations of the regional single window and enable the other countries to anticipate the pitfalls inherent in any new undertaking.
- Introduction of a programme to enable the other countries to reach the required level for a regional single window within 24 months.

IV. African and regional meetings on trade facilitation and electronic commerce

1. Meeting of the Advisory Committee of the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC), Accra, Ghana, 2 and 4 November 2011: Approval of action plans and the 2011–2012 budget and consideration of AAEC projects

22. The ATPC Advisory Committee meeting was devoted to reviewing the May 2010–June 2011 programme of work and approving that programme and the 2011/12 budget.

23. The meeting provided an opportunity for the Alliance to present its projects and to thank ATPC for its ongoing support since the establishment of AAEC in March 2009.

24. Financial assistance for AAEC was approved. It will be used for promoting the Alliance and preparing a guide for establishing single windows.

2. African ICT week 2011, organized by the African Union on the theme “Contribution of ICT in intra-African trade”, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 14 to 20 November 2011

25. African ICT week was held from 14 to 20 November 2011 on the theme “ICT, tools for youth empowerment for sustainable development”.

26. As is customary, in preparation for the next summit of Heads of State in January 2012 on the theme “Boosting Intra-African Trade”, AAEC was invited to moderate a discussion, on the “Contribution of ICT in intra-African trade”, with the following two sub-themes:

- How ICT can contribute to African trade integration
- Best practices in Africa in the use of ICT to boost trade

27. In addition to the free movement of goods, the issue of the free movement of people was also highlighted, especially with a view to achieving the objectives of the African Union.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

28. In the months ahead, the main task would be to consolidate the African Alliance and set up viable pilot projects in the African economic regions.
