Summary

This report aims to update the plenary session on the activities of the regional rapporteur for sub-Saharan Africa of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) since the previous report. It provides an overview of the meetings that have taken place in the region and the key projects that are of pertinence to UN/CEFACT.

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.
I. Projects

A. Project to interconnect the Electronic Certificate of Origin (e-CO) and Africa E-trade Hub (AfTra) platforms and integrate trade data

1. This involves:
   • Updating the regulations on mutual recognition of electronic trade documents, adopted in June 2023
   • Interconnecting the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) Certificate of Origin module with the AfTra hub. The AfTra hub was funded by the African Development Bank to facilitate the interoperability of international trade documents.

B. Project to dematerialize e-CO trade documents within the Central African Economic and Monetary Community region

2. The aims of the project are:
   • Finalization of the e-CO platform by experts from the Guichet Unique des Opérations Transfrontalières (Single Window for Cross-Border Operations) (GUOT), Republic of the Congo
   • Connecting up of the Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of the Congo in order to begin production
   • Initiation of communication work with the AfTra platform by the team working on GUOT and the Guichet Unique pour le Commerce Extérieur (Single Window for Foreign Trade) (GUCE).

II. Statutory meetings, conference and awareness-raising events

A. Organization of the thirteenth General Assembly and the twenty-first Executive Committee meeting, 29-31 March 2022

3. The African Alliance for e-Commerce (AACE) held its thirteenth General Assembly and the twenty-first meeting of its Executive Committee in Nairobi, Kenya on 29 and 31 March 2022, during which the AACE Executive Board was renewed with the following membership:
   • President of the General Assembly: PORTNET, Morocco, Youssef Ahouzi
   • Chair of the Executive Committee: KENTRADE, Kenya, Amos Wangora
   • Vice-Presidents: Côte d’Ivoire, Mozambique (Jonathan Ofori) and Senegal (Mor Talla Diop)
   • Chair of the Technical Committee: Cameroon (Abdoullahi Faouzi)
   • Treasurer: Senegal
   • External auditor: Grant Thornton

B. Regional workshop, 1–2 April 2022, Mombasa, Kenya

4. The workshop was attended by focal points appointed by WAEMU member States, Commission officials, the new Chair of the AACE Executive Committee, experts from AACE and the General Directors of the Cameroon and Côte d’Ivoire single windows.

5. The workshop focused on:
• Defining the functional architecture for interconnecting the e-CO module with the AfTra Data Exchange Hub
• Defining the process, including all flows, stakeholders and data dictionaries
• Identifying any updates to be made to the e-CO and (IV) modules
• Agreeing on an implementation schedule with the member States concerned

C. Webinar on the use of blockchain technology in a single-window environment, 14 November 2022

6. Some of the key recommendations made during the webinar were to:

• Use blockchain to improve the transparency and security of transactions in a single-window environment
• Encourage collaboration between different stakeholders to facilitate blockchain adoption in a single-window environment
• Develop standards and regulations to govern the use of blockchain in a single-window environment
• Make users aware of the benefits and challenges of using blockchain in a single-window environment
• Use blockchain to improve the efficiency and speed of transactions in a single-window environment
• Encourage international cooperation to develop common solutions using blockchain in a single-window environment
• Develop tools to measure and evaluate blockchain performance in a single-window environment

D. Eighth International Single Window Conference, 26–28 September 2022, Marrakech, Morocco

7. The theme of the International Single Window Conference was “The single windows of the future at the heart of digital transformation and the fluidity of cross-border trade”. The discussions culminated in a series of recommendations highlighting the importance of capacity-building for all stakeholders as a sine qua non for accelerating the implementation of single windows in African countries.

III. Relations with international organizations

• Collaboration with the Pan-Asian e-Commerce Alliance and the Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) Consortium-Asia:
  • Share experiences on trade facilitation issues
  • Organize capacity-building sessions for members of the Abidjan autonomous port authority and of AACE
  • Exchange trade documents
  • Help promote harmonized electronic signature practices

IV. Future plans

• Organize the ninth Single Window Conference in Djibouti from 26 to 28 September 2023 on the theme “Accelerating the implementation of the single window for trade facilitation and smart logistics with recent technologies”
• Finalize the integration of foreign trade data from Morocco, Cameroon and Senegal into the trade information portal hub
• Deploy the e-CO platform in all eight WAEMU member States
• Provide the administrations involved in the e-CO exchange process with the necessary equipment
• Install the equipment
• Conduct training and outreach workshops
• Organize a webinar on signature practice