

BORDERLESS ALLIANCE

Éliminer les barrières au commerce en Afrique de l'Ouest
Removing trade barriers in West Africa

6th BORDERLESS ALLIANCE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

THEME: « OPTIMIZING TRADE OPPORTUNITIES: THE ROLE OF TRADE FACILITATION »

FINAL REPORT



Date : 10 au 12 May 2017

Venue : Hotel Laïco Ouaga 2000

Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

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The 6th Borderless Alliance Annual Conference, dubbed BORDERLESS 2017, was held in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), on 10, 11 and 12 May 2017, in the conference room of Hotel Laïco, Ouaga 2000, on the theme: "Optimizing Trade Opportunities: The Role of Trade Facilitation". Organized by the executive secretariat of Borderless Alliance in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Burkina Faso (CCI-BF) and the Burkinabe Shippers Council (CBC), the meeting was attended by 150 private and public sector players from 12 different countries, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Togo, Senegal, Cameroon, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Germany. Technical and financial partners, namely GIZ, USAID, JICA, Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, Regional and Sub-regional Organizations such as ECOWAS, UEMOA also took part in the meeting. Several sector ministries (Transport, Trade, Customs, Police and Gendarmerie) and companies from various activity sectors were also represented.

The event was co-chaired by Mr. **Souleymane SOULAMA**, Minister of Transport, Urban Mobility and Road Safety and Mr. **Stéphane Wenceslas SANOU**, Minister of Trade, Industry and Handicrafts.

This report is on the meeting of the 6th Annual Conference and is articulated around the following items:

1. Opening ceremony;
2. Meeting proceedings and conclusions; and
3. Major recommendations

I. Opening Ceremony



The opening ceremony was chaired by Mr. Souleymane SOULAMA, Minister of Transport, Urban Mobility and Road Safety. It was marked by six (6) speeches: welcoming address, solidarity messages from four (4) partners and opening address:

- In his welcoming address, Mr Hamado SAWADOGO, representing the President of the CCI-BF, on behalf of the business community, lauded the regular holding of the conference. He welcomed the Alliance's efforts at improving the business climate and called for the inclusion of all actors in a spirit of facilitation to substantially and irreversibly grow trade in West Africa;



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- Following the CCI-BF representative, Mr. Ousmane Babalaye DAOU, President of Borderless Alliance, welcomed the achievements recorded by his association in five years of existence; he hoped that the Sixth Conference would be an opportunity for new members to join;
- The JICA representative, Mr. Takemichi KOBAYASHI, third to take the floor, recalled that the facilitation measures were in line with the objectives of the action plan of the sixth edition of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD);
- The USAID representative, Mr. Jim PARYS, said barriers and obstacles of all kinds contribute to slowing the speed of freight truck traffic to 7 km/h; it is against this background that the United States Government undertook to support Borderless Alliance's initiatives;
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- Before the opening address, the Deputy Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr. Joerg MEYER, wished that the Alliance's activities would help to remove the obstacles to the impetus of regional integration to which West African States are committed;
- The Minister of Transport, Urban Mobility and Road Safety, in his opening address, stressed that the 6th edition of the Borderless Alliance Annual Conference is in line with the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which entered into force on 22 February 2017. He also presented trade facilitation as a boost to the National Economic and Social Development Plan's (NESDP) envisaged structural transformation in the tertiary sector by 2020, then declared the meeting open and wished it resounding success.

Following the interventions, an inaugural paper on the "WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation and Optimization of Trade Opportunities" was delivered by the UEMOA Commission. The paper presented the peculiarity of the agreement associated with the implementation according to each State's capacities and technical assistance needs. Finally, the speaker highlighted the expected results of the agreement, namely, cost reduction and delays and the decisive impact on world trade

II. Meeting proceedings and conclusion

Before the actual proceedings of the meeting, the Executive Secretary of Borderless Alliance, Mr Justin BAYILI, presented the status of implementation of activities for the year 2016.

The meeting was held in plenary and organized in three panels:

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Participant asking questions on the theme of discussion of the first panel

- The first Panel on the "Trade Facilitation Agreement: Opportunities and Challenges for West Africa", provided an opportunity to present the reforms needed to simplify, harmonize and standardize commercial transaction procedures. Light was shed on the benefits of the agreement and its challenges for the private sector;



Participant asking questions on the theme of discussion of the second panel

- The second Panel brainstormed on the Promotion of Efficiency of Corridors and Borders in West Africa. Various modern approaches to making West African borders efficient have been evaluated with successful examples and steps taken in specific sectors. The greatest difficulties of landlocked countries were shared and deliberated on with a view to developing concrete measures;



Participant asking questions on the theme of discussion of the third panel

- Finally, the "Community Rules: trade facilitation tools for agricultural products", constituted the focus of the third panel. The panel outlined Community regulations adopted with a view to achieving economic integration. Challenges of the private sector to better capitalize on the benefits of the ECOWAS CET and the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (SLE) were discussed.

The exchanges gave rise to several concerns. The major ones are as follows:

- Inadequate harmonization and coordination of trade facilitation initiatives in the sub region;
- Multiple barriers and illicit practices;
- Institutional deficit in managing facilitation issues, including the ineffectiveness of corridor management committees and facilitation committees in the sub region;
- Low level of professionalization of transport operators and unsuitable means of transport;
- Inadequate collaboration among border agencies;
- Multiplicity of technical problems that negate the benefits of facilitation initiatives;
- Multiplicity of tracking systems without possibility of interoperability;
- Low involvement of key actors in the transport chain and trade in the implementation of regional facilitation measures;
- Non-implementation of facilitation related protocols and regulations;
- No concomitant and harmonized application of UEMOA Regulation 14 on weight and axle load control;
- Inadequate political will in the application of Community texts;



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- Obstacles to free movement of approved products and optimal implementation of the ETLs;
- Low involvement of the private sector in the implementation of regional measures; and
- Weak organization of the private sector to defend its general interests in taking regional measures.

In the light of the said concerns, specific cross-cutting recommendations were formulated.

III. Major recommendations

Cross-sectional Recommendation:

- Identification of the role of each actor and involvement in the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Specific recommendations to:

1. Public Administration:

- Promotion of initiatives to reduce transit time at borders;
- Interconnection of Customs administrations' computer systems;
- Dematerialization of administrative procedures;
- Continuation of initiatives to modernize customs procedures and tools;
- Taking on board the socio-economic impacts of Community facilitation projects;
- Harmonization of electronic transit monitoring systems in the countries of the region;
- Implementation of the provisions of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and other regional measures;
- Concomitant implementation of UEMOA Regulation 14 on weight, axle load and gauge control by all West African States;
- Revamping of the institutional structures responsible for the management of transport corridors;
- Taking on board the problems related to licensing means of transport;
- Effective application of the certificate of origin rules;
- Elimination of obstacles to free movement of approved products and the optimal implementation of regional measures, just like the TLS;
- Integration of information and awareness-creation phases in the process of implementing Community measures; and
- Improvement of the license issuing system.



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2. Private sector:

- Involvement of the private sector in the implementation of regional measures (ETLS ...), and
- Better organization with a view to greater leverage on Community decisions.

3. Technical and Financial Partners:

- Partnering the States and private organizations in the implementation of Community texts and the facilitation of regional trade.

4. Single guarantors

- Implementation of the Single Inter-State Road Freight Guarantee of goods on the various corridors of the sub region.

5. Executive Secretariat of Borderless Alliance

- Mobilization of resources to establish border information centres in all West African countries including ports;
- Improving the development of statistical data on transparency at borders (transparency in terms of fraudulent and honest traders), which will promote the analysis of the real causes of the bad practices observed; and
- Advocacy with the States to reduce road transit costs and delays.

At the end of the meeting, the Executive Secretariat of Borderless Alliance was mandated to monitor the implementation of the recommendations.

Done at Ouagadougou on 12 May 2017

Participants