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**Economic Commission for Europe****Executive Committee****Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business****Twenty-fifth session**

Geneva, 8-9 April 2019

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

**Reports of rapporteurs****Report of Rapporteur for Africa****I. Introduction**

1. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) Rapporteur for Africa has conducted several activities to promote UN/CEFACT work and e-commerce throughout Africa. This report contains the activities of the Rapporteur and the activities of the African Alliance for Electronic Commerce (AACE), which is the formalized organization dealing with trade facilitation and Single Window (SW) implementation in the African region.

2. This is the report of the Rapporteur for Africa, covering several important sessions on trade facilitation in the region since the twenty-fourth session of the UN/CEFACT Plenary in April 2018.

**II. Activities conducted by the Rapporteur****A. Participation in the twenty-fourth UN/CEFACT Plenary and thirty-first Forum, April 2018, Geneva**

3. The 2017 report was presented during the Plenary and comments were received and considered. During the Forum, the focus of the Rapporteur was to contribute to the Single Submission Portal project and the Recommendation 33 revision project.

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**B. Participation in the e-commerce week, organized by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), April 2018, Geneva**

4. During this event, version 2 of the AACE Guide to Single Window implementation was released. The Rapporteur contributed to two sessions dedicated to the Internet of Things (IoT) and blockchain technology in trade and organized a session on e-commerce and Africa which was attended by senior officials and senior private-sector stakeholders from the continent.

**C. Participation in the sessions of the e-commerce Working Group of the World Customs Organization (WCO) in Brussels**

5. The Rapporteur participated to two sessions in 2018 of the WCO Working Group on e-commerce. He contributed to the discussion by giving relevant inputs regarding the context of Africa in the global supply chain. Many African delegations attended.

**D. Participation in the first Forum of the African national committee for Trade Facilitation, November 2018, Addis Ababa**

6. The Rapporteur was invited to make a presentation on Single Window implementation, marking more than ten years of SW experience on the continent. The presentation was focused on the remaining challenge related to implementation, operation and governance. He provided guidance based on the work of UN/CEFACT and AACE.

**E. Participation at the Hangzhou Forum of the UN/CEFACT, October 2018, Hangzhou**

7. The African continent was represented by Senegal, Nigeria and the Congo. The Rapporteur was involved in the work of three projects: Single Submission Portal, Recommendation 33 revision and Integrated Services for Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in International Trade (ISMIT) project. The work was intensive, and the outcomes were positive.

**F. Participation in Africa e-Commerce Week, organized by UNCTAD, December 2018, Nairobi**

8. The Rapporteur organized a high-level panel on e-commerce with the Minister of Trade representative of Senegal, The Executive Director of the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Director of Trade Facilitation for the WCO on how e-commerce can support trade facilitation in Africa. The Rapporteur was also invited to contribute to a panel on small parcels and customs.

**G. Participation in the Forum on trade facilitation alongside the first Intra-African Trade Fair, December 2018, Cairo**

9. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa organized a panel on Single Window implementation alongside the first Intra-African Trade Fair (organized by the African Union Commission). The Managing Directors of the Single Windows of Senegal and

Kenya and the Directors of Foreign Trade of Senegal and Morocco were invited to give both public and private perspectives on the importance of the construction of an efficient framework for a SW to perform adequately. UN/CEFACT and AACE works were highlighted to the attendees as important resources when considering SW implementation.

#### **H. Participation at the WTO 2018 Public Forum, September 2018, Geneva**

10. The Rapporteur was invited to participate in various panel discussions. He shared his views on how Africa could take benefit from the digital era of trade and again referred participants to UN/CEFACT and AACE works.

### **III. Activities conducted by the African Alliance for Electronic Commerce (AACE)**

#### **A. Participation in the WCO e-commerce Cross-border trade, February 2018, Beijing**

11. The World Custom Organization invited AACE to the meeting on e-commerce in cross-border trade in February 2018 in Beijing. A presentation on the AACE was made by the Vice President in charge of Promotion.

#### **B. Participation at the Conference on Digital Trade in Africa, May-June 2018, Addis Ababa**

12. The African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) co-organized a conference on the topic of “Digital Trade in Africa, Implications for Inclusion and Human Rights”. This event was attended by public and private-sector delegates from across the continent. The Vice President of Promotion took part in the meeting and acted as moderator for a session.

#### **C. Participation at the African Union Conference on e-commerce, July 2018, Nairobi**

13. The African Union Commission invited AACE to the conference on e-commerce in Africa. The conference was attended by the Chairman. A presentation was made on AACE projects. While attending the meeting, the Chairman received an expression of interest from Djibouti to join the Alliance.

#### **D. Participation at the SSATP Annual General Meeting, July 2018, Abuja**

14. The Africa Transport Policy Program (SSATP) organized its Annual General Assembly meeting from 2 to 6 July 2018 in Abuja. The Secretariat attended the meeting and shared with World Bank one of the of AACE project proposals on SW assessment guidelines, which is looking for funding. Following a brief presentation of that project, the World Bank showed interest in funding it. A lump sum of US\$ 200,000 could be mobilized for the activities.

**E. Participation at the meeting on the Electronic Certificate of Origin and TFA measures, July 2018, Ouagadougou**

15. Following a study on the legal framework of the Electronic Certificate of Origin (ECO) implementation, The West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), in partnership with the ITC, organized a workshop to share the results of the study with all stakeholders involved in the electronic issuance of the Certificate of Origin. The meeting was attended by the African Trade Fund (AfTra) exchange document lead from Cameroon.

**F. The African Trade Policy Centre project implementation:**

16. The African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) has continued to support the African Alliance for Electronic Commerce by providing a grant for the publication and dissemination of the Single Window concept in the amount of US\$ 177,000. The grant was signed on 18 September 2017.

17. The Project implementation period is one year, and includes the following components:

- Production, publication and promotion of version 2 of the Guide for Single Window Implementation in Africa;
- Translation of the new guide into English;
- Printing of hard copies for African trade actors;
- Update of version 2 of the guide on [www.swguide.org](http://www.swguide.org);
- Organization of six regional workshops to raise awareness of Single Window implementation in Africa (Angola, Chad, Malawi, Guinea, Liberia, Namibia); and
- Capacity building through a fellowship program at the ATPC.

18. Between March and October 2018, AACE successfully implemented five of the listed activities. Only one activity – the fellowship – remains.

**G. Participation in the Regional Economic Communities Transport Coordination Committee meeting, November 2018, Dar el Salam**

19. The AACE was invited to participate in the Regional Economic Communities Transport Coordination Committee (REC-TCC) meeting, organized by the the Africa Transport Policy Program (SSATP) in partnership with the Central Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency. During that meeting, the SSATP highlighted the AACE project proposal for Single Window assessment guidelines. The project proposal should be finalized and submitted by January 2019.

**H. Participation at the ECCAS regional meeting, December 2018, Kigali**

20. From 4 to 6 December 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) organized a regional meeting on trade facilitation. The meeting brought together public and private-sector organizations from the region. The AACE was invited to present the bilateral project on the eCertificate of origin between Cameroon and Congo.

21. Following a co-presentation by the two countries, ECCAS decided to add the project to their list of project proposals to be submitted to the African Development Bank for funding. The AACE began its collaboration with ECCAS during its participation at the Continental Dialogue on Enhancing the Contribution of Preferential Trade Agreements to Inclusive and Equitable Trade, 23-24 October 2017 in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

**1. Partnership with international organizations**

22. International Maritime Organization (IMO): in October 2018, an application for consultative status was sent to the Secretary General of the IMO.

**2. Perspectives in 2019**

- Continuation of the ECO pilot project of WAEMU: thanks to the financial support of WAEMU, the AACE will organize the second phase of this project in 2019. It aims to organize awareness workshops and to set up the ECO platform in the eight members' countries. The grant was extended to 2019 to better highlight AfTra and WAEMU synergies during their implementation;
- Implementation of the AfTra Project: the grant signed between AACE and the African Development Bank (AfDB) was extended to December 2019. A non-objection letter was sent to AfDB before the tender process began.
- New membership applications: in 2018, the AACE received two requests for membership:
  - CCAC (the Central Africa Shippers Council); and
  - ANETIC (Association for boosting IT in Niger).

## **IV. Conclusions**

23. Next year will be the tenth anniversary of the AACE. An international event will take place. The AACE will continue to work to implement regional projects, to maintain an advocacy role to influence senior policymakers to make use of UN/CEFACT and AACE materials, and to promote trade facilitation and digital trade.

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