EU-WCO HS AFRICA PROGRAMME

FACILITATING TRADE

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<tr>
<td>AUC</td>
<td>African Union Commission</td>
<td>HS2017</td>
<td>The sixth edition of the Harmonized System, entered into force on 1 January 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Customs Administration</td>
<td>HS2022</td>
<td>The seventh edition of the Harmonized System, entering into force on 1 January 2022</td>
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<td>CEMAC</td>
<td>Central African Economic and Monetary Community</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information technology</td>
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<td>CET</td>
<td>Common External Tariff</td>
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<td>CRATES</td>
<td>Customs Reform and Trade Enhancement Somalia Project</td>
<td>REC</td>
<td>Regional Economic Community</td>
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<td>DG</td>
<td>Director General</td>
<td>SACU</td>
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<td>EAC</td>
<td>East African Community</td>
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<td>ECCAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of Central African States</td>
<td>TFA</td>
<td>Trade Facilitation Agreement</td>
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<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of West African States</td>
<td>TOA</td>
<td>Technical and Operational Advisor</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>UEMOA</td>
<td>West African Economic and Monetary Union</td>
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<td>GTS</td>
<td>Global Trade Solutions (company)</td>
<td>WCO</td>
<td>World Customs Organization</td>
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<td>HS</td>
<td>International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System</td>
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<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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Executive Summary

This action, funded by the European Union under the PANAFRICA Programme contributes to the EU support initiatives to African partners in the implementation of the AfCFTA. The action is implemented by the World Customs Organization and aims to support various stakeholders in Africa towards a coordinated implementation and uniform application of one of the fundamental trade facilitation instruments – the Harmonized System (HS) Convention of the World Customs Organization.

The HS is referred to in both the WTO-TFA and the AfCFTA. Likewise, the first phase of the implementation of the AfCFTA, which requires the submission of tariff offers by member countries, implies that countries use the latest version of the HS and submit their offers in terms of that version. Hence, the adoption of the WCO HS Convention and a uniform application of the latest version of the HS by African countries is a key prerequisite for the successful implementation of the AfCFTA and the WTO-TFA.

EU-WCO Programme for HS in Africa is one of the most efficient initiatives of the WCO that has encouraged and motivated the Ethiopian Customs Commission to finalize the migration to the HS 2017 version and develop a national coordinated action plan to implement HS 2022 on time. We are pleased to thank the WCO and the EU for this unique initiative and for their effective assistance so far.

Kassaye Ayele MOLLA
Ethiopian Customs Commission
After one year of operative implementation, the programme has conducted 21 activities directly benefiting 6 RECs and 23 countries. One country submitted its instrument of accession to the HS Convention, 3 countries migrated to the HS2017, 2 countries implemented advance ruling system, 11 sets of recommendations and work plans for Customs reform developed and 9 demand-driven technical assistance requests received.

The programme is progressing efficiently, in close co-operation with the Capacity Building Directorate and the Tariff and Trade Affairs Directorate of the WCO and the different partners. The first year of the implementation has been successful in terms of achievement of deliverables and in terms of engaging with partners. During the subsequent years of implementation the programme will focus on assisting the remaining countries to complete the migration to the HS2017, supporting the RECs that have common external tariffs in transposing them to the HS2022, assisting CAs to implement HS2022 and advance ruling systems, finalizing a new training manual, developing a new HS e-learning course, exploring ways to enhance the role of the AUC in ensuring timely implementation of HS amendments and harmonizing tariffs in Africa, and examining possibilities of further contributing to the attainment of the programme results, such as evidence-based research and technology.
1. About the EU-WCO HS Africa programme

The EU-WCO Programme on the Harmonized System in Africa is a multi-stakeholder initiative funded by the European Union and implemented by the World Customs Organization. The anticipated outcome of the Programme is that partner African countries implement and apply the 2022 version of the HS in line with the HS Convention, the WTO-TFA and the WCO’s Revised Kyoto Convention, as well as the relevant continental and regional commitments. The longer-term objective is to provide African countries and other stakeholders involved in the HS implementation process with the required organizational capacities and resources to apply future HS versions in a timely and coordinated manner throughout the respective regions and the entire continent.

This action contributes of the EU’s External Investment Plan and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy adopted at the Lisbon Summit in 2007 and refined at the Summits in 2010, 2014 and 2017. It also contributes to the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area formally launched by the Assembly of the African Union at its tenth extraordinary session held on 21 March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda; and operationally launched in the summit of Heads of States and Governments of the AU on 7 July 2019 in Niamey, Niger. A key objective of the AfCFTA is to facilitate and increase intra-African trade and with the rest of the world, including the European Union. This further contributes to the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement that entered in to force on 22 February 2017.

The Programme will benefit selected African Regional Economic Communities, African Customs administrations and relevant stakeholders, including the African Union Commission, selected national government administrations and the private sector, all of them being involved in the process of application of the HS. Customs administrations will be the primary partners of the action since they have to develop, implement and apply the national tariffs in line with the HS Convention and RECs’ common external tariffs.

**Vision**

- Contribute to the successful implementation of the AfCFTA and the WTO-TFA.
- Contribute to trade facilitation and increasing intra-African trade, trade between Africa and Europe and Africa and the rest of the world.

**Outcomes**

- Accession of non-contracting parties in Africa to the HS Convention.

**Objective**

Working with African partners in building the required organizational capacities and resources to apply the future HS versions in a timely and coordinated manner.

“The EU – WCO Programme for HS in Africa afforded the South Africa Administration an opportunity to exchange with other African countries on technical knowledge on tariff classification work and other related matters to achieve a higher level of regional consistency in this area. South Africa’s participation in the Inaugural Conference in Addis Ababa in February 2019, the diagnostic mission for Lesotho in Maseru, in November 2019, and the SACU Regional Consultation held in Cape Town in January 2020 has assisted South Africa to give a new impetus to the work towards achieving the objectives of the AfCFTA and the WTO-TFA to enhance African trade and to modernize tariff classification work.

*Lydia MADILENG*

South African Revenue Service
2. The approach

In order to ensure coherence and consistency with the outlined objective and outcomes, the action has been designed around the following four components: AU and RECs (1), CAs (2), relevant government administrations (3), and other stakeholders, in particular from the private sector (4).

During the first year of implementation, the programme pursued its objectives and expected outcomes to:

1. ensure engagement, commitment and ownership of potential partners in the programme,
2. collect inputs from countries and all stakeholders with the aim of developing work plans and recommendations for improving HS management and infrastructure, including the implementation of advance rulings,
3. work with countries that are not Contracting Parties to the HS Convention to initiate the accession process, and
4. take the initial steps to provide capacity building support to different partners.

Given the considerable number of potential partners in the action (all African countries), a first research and desk analysis has been conducted to optimize the way in which RECs and CAs can be put in meaningful groupings and be targeted during the implementation period. Subsequently the programme has organized its activities in this year of implementation in the following configuration:

- **Engagement with and support to countries** that are not Contracting Parties to the HS Convention (Gambia, Seychelles, Equatorial Guinea, Somalia, South Sudan)
- **Support and technical assistance** to RECs that have a Common External Tariff (ECOWAS, UEMOA, CEMAC, EAC, SACU)
- **Support and technical assistance** to countries that are not applying the current version of the HS (Gambia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Mauritania, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Gabon, Sao Tome et Principe)
- **Follow up with** countries that have not yet notified WCO on the status of implementation of HS versions
- **Tailor-made capacity building mechanism** to provide assistance to partners upon their requests on HS-related matters, including advance rulings systems and Customs laboratories.

This methodology has contributed to reaching out to 49 countries and achieving concrete results within one year of implementation.

*The HS-Africa Programme, through the comprehensive diagnostic mission conducted in West Africa in 2019 and constant engagement, has already demonstrated its ability and readiness to boost the capacity of West African countries and ECOWAS to implement the Harmonized System correctly and in a timely manner.*

*Felix Kwame KWAKYE*
*ECOWAS Commission*
3. 2019 Highlights

During this year of cooperation with the different partners and stakeholders, the programme has conducted 21 activities directly benefiting 6 RECs and 23 countries. The programme has also been represented in 10 international, continental and regional fora relevant to the AfCFTA.

"The EU-WCO Programme for HS in Africa has helped us accede to the HS Convention as a Contracting Party, as well as lead to our final migration from HS 2012 to HS 2017. This will further give an opportunity to our administration to benefit from future training, especially in advance rulings.

Alhagie k. Mbye
Gambia Revenue Authority

COUNTRIES ENGAGED IN THE PROGRAMME

1. Algeria
2. Angola
3. Benin
4. Botswana
5. Burkina Faso
6. Burundi
7. Cabo Verde
8. Cameroon
9. Central African Republic
10. Chad
11. Comoros
12. Congo, Democratic Republic of the
13. Congo, Republic of the
14. Cote d'Ivoire
15. Egypt
16. Equatorial Guinea
17. Eswatini
18. Ethiopia
19. Gabon
20. Gambia
21. Ghana
22. Guinea
23. Guinea-Bissau
24. Kenya
25. Lesotho
26. Liberia
27. Mali
28. Mauritania
29. Mauritius
30. Morocco
31. Mozambique
32. Namibia
33. Niger
34. Nigeria
35. Rwanda
36. Sao Tome and Principe
37. Senegal
38. Seychelles
39. Sierra Leone
40. Somalia
41. South Africa
42. South Sudan
43. Sudan
44. Tanzania
45. Togo
46. Tunisia
47. Uganda
48. Zambia
49. Zimbabwe

RECS ENGAGED IN THE PROGRAMME

1. Central African Economic and Monetary Community – CEMAC
2. East African Community – EAC
3. Economic Community of Central African States – ECCAS
4. Economic Community of West African States – ECOWAS
5. South African Customs Union – SACU
6. West African Economic and Monetary Union – UEMOA
2019 results

- Gambia acceded to the HS Convention
- Gambia migrated to the HS2017 version
- Ethiopia migrated to the HS2017 version
- Ethiopia established a coordination mechanism for the management of tariff and migration process
- Nigeria migrated to the HS2017 version
- Central African Republic implemented advance rulings
- Algeria implemented advance rulings
- Seychelles initiated the process of accession to the HS Convention
- RECs drafted work plans for future application, adoption and migration of their CETs to new versions of the HS
- Gabon established a documented migration process to migrate to the HS2017 and future versions
- Establishment of a pool of pre-accredited African French-speaking experts on WCO Revenue Package
- Several countries notified WCO on the date of application of HS2017 and acceptance of WCO HS-related recommendations
- 9 demand-driven technical assistance requests received and attended to
CONTINENTAL AND REGIONAL
Continental Kick off conference, 27 to 28 February 2019

To mark the official launch of the Programme, the Continental Inaugural Conference, hosted by the AUC, was held from 27 to 28 February 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The conference was attended by over 70 representatives from 38 African member administrations, the African Union Commission and African Regional Economic Communities (RECs), as well as representatives of international organizations and the private sector. Besides marking the launch of the programme and galvanizing ownership, the conference was a unique opportunity for stakeholders contributing to the implementation and application of the HS to exchange views on ways to streamline the migration to the next version of the HS entering into force on 1 January 2022. The launch conference also marked the establishment of the programme’s steering committee.

Accreditation Regional Workshop for Technical and Operational Advisors on the Revenue Package for the administrations of French-speaking African countries, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (4 – 8 March 2019)

As part of its Capacity Building strategy, and under the patronage of the EU-WCO Programme for HS in Africa, the WCO organized an accreditation workshop for Technical and Operational Advisors on the cross-cutting tools on classification, origin and valuation developed under the Revenue Package. This workshop was conducted from 4 to 8 March 2019 at the WCO’s Regional Training Centre in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, with the participation of twelve Customs officials from French-speaking African countries.

This workshop marked an important step in the implementation of the WCO Capacity Building strategy as well as the objectives of the programme, as it should help expand the pool of TOAs able to carry out diagnostic and planning missions on behalf of the WCO, particularly in the context of activities targeting the administrations of French-speaking African countries.

The workshop was also a platform for exchanges of views and experiences on HS, origin and valuation among the participants.

First Steering Committee meeting, Brussels, Belgium, 2 May 2019

During the Continental Inaugural Conference held in February 2019 in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) the programme Steering Committee was established and its composition was agreed upon to be as follow: the EU, the WCO, the AUC, the ECOWAS, the CEMAC, the UEMOA, the EAC, the ECCAS, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Morocco.

The SC held its first Meeting on 2 May 2019 at the Headquarters of the WCO in Brussels (Belgium). The meeting was held at the margin of the WCO Conference on the future of the HS to allow the Steering Committee members to engage in discussions on strategic dimensions of the HS and have a better understanding of the key role that it plays in the regional and the continental integration, its value as trade facilitation instrument and its prominence in the work of the WCO and its Members.
The SC examined the programme governance structure, the key objectives to be achieved, the strategic vision of the implementation phases and the overall planning process. The Committee approved the proposed way forward, encouraging more African RECs and CAs to join the programme as its beneficiaries.

Consultation with the ECOWAS and the UEMOA, Abuja, Nigeria (15 – 16 July 2019)

Given that the ECOWAS is one of the African RECs that have implemented a CET, and, at the same time, has Member countries that have not migrated to the HS2017 in a timely manner or are still applying earlier versions of the HS, a consultation was conducted from 15 to 16 July 2019 in Abuja, Nigeria (at the ECOWAS headquarters) and gathered experts from the UEMOA Secretariat and CAs of Liberia and Nigeria, which allowed receiving feedback and proposals from a wider audience of stakeholders within the region.

The consultation was conducted as a series of meetings on various issues related to the implementation of HS amendments at the regional and the national level. Possible avenues to optimize and streamline the existing co-operation mechanisms between the ECOWAS, the UEMOA and Members of the two Communities were examined with a view to ensure that all members complete the migration to the new version of the HS by the date of its entry into force. In conclusion of the workshop, a proposed timeline for migration to the HS2022 version and a roadmap of follow-up activities to strengthen co-operation between the WCO, the ECOWAS and the UEMOA have been adopted.

Consultation with CEMAC and ECCAS, Libreville, Gabon (22 to 26 July 2019)

The CEMAC is another African RECs having a CET. Yet only two of its Members countries have migrated to the HS2017 with a delay while the four other Members still apply HS2007 or HS2012.

The programme conducted a consultation from 22 to 26 July 2019 in Libreville, Gabon. The event brought together tariff experts of the six CEMAC Member CAs (Cameroun, the Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon) as well as the programme Focal points from the CEMAC and the ECCAS, the two communities having overlapping membership and close partnership relations.

Participants of the seminar reviewed the current situation with regard to the implementation of the HS by the sub-region, paying special attention to the application of the current version of the HS in the CEMAC countries and the implementation of advance rulings. The main topic of the agenda was establishing an inclusive co-operation framework to streamline the process of migration of the Community CET to new versions of the HS and timely implementation of the HS2022 by the CEMAC and its Members.

A number of specific technical issues related to the implementation of the HS were discussed during the seminar and recommendations seeking to achieve sustained improvement in that area were agreed upon by the two Communities and their Members. Concrete steps to harmonize HS-related work at the sub-regional level and at the level of national administrations were planned. A roadmap of follow-up activities strengthening co-operation between the WCO, the CEMAC and the ECCAS was agreed upon.
Consultation with EAC, Mombasa, Kenya (10 – 13 September 2019)

Another African REC with a CET is the EAC. Five of its Members have migrated to the HS2017 with a delay, while one is still applying an earlier version of the HS.

Representatives of the six Member States of the EAC gathered between 10 and 13 September 2019 in the WCO Regional Training Centre in Mombasa, to review their work in the area of implementation of the HS.

Participants from Customs administrations of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda discussed avenues to modernize the model of implementation of HS amendments in the Community, with a view to establishing an inclusive, sustainable and efficient mechanism of managing the EAC CET. The EAC Secretariat presented a detailed report on the migration process used during the implementation of previous versions of the HS, emphasising the need to adopt a holistic approach to the development of the CET and encouraging active involvement of Member States in the process.

Concrete steps to be taken by CAs to harmonize HS related work at the regional level have been agreed upon. A timeline for the migration to the HS2022 as well as a roadmap of follow-up activities strengthening co-operation between the WCO, the EAC and its Member States were adopted.

Consultation with SACU, Cape Town, South Africa (27 – 30 January 2020)

The Southern African Custom Union (SACU) is one of the African RECs that have implemented a CET, while some of its Members countries are reported to have migrated to the current version of the HS with some delay or to have failed to notify the WCO of the implementation of the current version of the HS.

A regional consultation for the Union was conducted from 27 to 30 January 2020 in Cape Town, South Africa, which brought together tariff experts from the five SACU Members (Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa), the SACU Secretariat and the WCO.

During the consultation a wide range of issues was discussed, in particular, harmonization of national models of implementation of HS amendments, establishment of an inclusive and well-functioning regional framework to ensure timely migration to new versions of the HS, setting up programmes of advance rulings and alignment of the tariff classification work at the national level on the international standards and best practices. The consultation was the first in the series of activities that the SACU region will be organizing in cooperation with the WCO within the framework of the EU-WCO Programme for HS in Africa.
Diagnostic mission for Niger, Niamey, Niger (17 – 21 December 2018)

Upon request from the Niger Customs administration, the WCO conducted a diagnostic mission on classification and valuation from 17 to 21 December 2018. In December 2016, Niger has terminated its contract with the pre-shipment inspection company COTECNA and thus enabled the Directorate General of Customs to reclaim its customs tariff classification and valuation functions (as per the standards of the WTO-TFA). The objective of the mission was to assist Niger in building its institutional and operational capacity with the aim of reviewing its tariff classification and Customs valuation work models taking into account the increased responsibility of Customs in those areas.

This diagnostic mission was the first of its kind in the framework of the action, with the participation of representatives of the private sector, namely the Chamber of Commerce of Niger. The resulting assessment highlighted future challenges for the Niger Customs and identified a number of measures that could be enacted specifically to improve the situation regarding the inspection of goods imported into Niger. A series of recommendations and a draft action plan were developed during the mission, which would be further implemented within the framework of the action. Niger officially notified the WCO on the migration to the HS2017.

Diagnostic mission for the Gambia, Banjul, Gambia (15 – 18 April 2019)

The programme team conducted a diagnostic mission to support the Gambian Customs administration in its efforts to accede to the HS Convention and finalize the migration to the HS2017. The mission, which took place in Banjul, Gambia, from 15 to 18 April 2019, was a good opportunity to hold a series of meetings and consultations with the Gambian Customs senior management, tariff classification experts and officers from other relevant units as well as senior officials at the Ministry of Finance to discuss the process of becoming a Contracting Party to the HS Convention.

The discussions during the different meetings highlighted that proper implementation of the HS at the national level would stretch far beyond the formal procedure of depositing an instrument of accession to the HS Convention and must always be supported by a sound tariff classification work model, including a set of respective policies, practices and infrastructure.

Following the mission, the Gambia deposited its instrument of accession to the HS Convention at the WCO Council Sessions in June 2019 and successfully migrated to the HS2017. Follow-up activities to enhance classification infrastructure have been subsequently discussed and will be implemented under the action.

Diagnostic mission for Seychelles, Mahé, Seychelles (27 – 31 May 2019)

Seychelles is not yet a contracting party to the HS convention. The programme team organized a diagnostic workshop on the implementation of the HS and to support in streamlining the process of accession to the HS convention. The workshop was held in Mahé, from 27 to 31 May 2019 and was attended by representatives of several units within the Seychelles Revenue Commission as well as the Ministry of Finance, Trade, Investment and Economic Planning that have a stake in the tariff classification work and the administering of the national tariff.
During the five days of the workshop, a thorough examination of the national tariff classification work model was carried out, with a particular emphasis on the prospects of Seychelles’ becoming a Contracting Party to the HS Convention. Another key point discussed at length was the rationalization of the process to implement the 2022 version of the HS in a timely manner.

WCO facilitators held a side meeting with Ambassador Maurice J. L. Loustau-Lalanne, Minister of Finance, Trade, Investment and Economic Planning, and agreed that the required national procedures to accede to the HS Convention will be initiated without delay to ensure that Seychelles become a Contracting Party to the HS Convention soon.


The Ethiopian Customs Commission hosted a workshop on the implementation of the 2017 version of the HS and organization of tariff classification work related infrastructure, which was held from 24 to 26 June 2019 in Addis Ababa. By the time when the mission took place Ethiopia was still applying HS2012.

The workshop brought together Customs officers from several units as well as representatives of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, which is the key authority responsible for the implementation of the HS in Ethiopia. A thorough examination of the procedures applied to implement new versions of the HS in Ethiopia revealed a considerable potential to streamline and shorten some of the phases and steps in that process.

The mission resulted in Ethiopia’s migrating to the HS2017, the establishment of a working group in charge of the HS implementation and the development of a new migration matrix, which will streamline the process of implementing future versions of the HS. Ethiopia has also notified the WCO on the acceptance of several WCO HS-related Recommendations. A work plan for enhancing classification work has been established and would be implemented under the programme.


Nigeria is one of the partner countries that have not yet implemented the current version of the HS by the time when the programme was launched. A workshop was organized in Abuja on 17-19 July 2019 to coordinate with Nigeria Customs and relevant stakeholders the migration to HS2017 and modernize its tariff classification work model.

The workshop was attended by a representative of the ECOWAS, who informed the participants of the upcoming work to implement the 2022 version of the HS in the ECOWAS CET and other initiatives in the area of tariff classification work at the Community level. He highlighted the importance of timely implementation of the HS 2022 by all ECOWAS Members and undertook to work closely with the Nigeria Customs to make it happen in Nigeria.

The programme team reviewed the process of the migration and implementation of the CET and proposed recommendations to streamline the work for effective and timely migration.

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1 Council Recommendations on the introduction of programmes for binding pre-entry classification information (1996), on the use of standard units of quantity to facilitate the collection, comparison and analysis of international statistics based on the Harmonized System (2016) and on the application of Harmonized System Committee decisions (2001)
The workshop resulted in Nigeria migrating to the HS2017 already in August 2019 and created momentum for the implementation of other improvements that could be tackled under the programme.


On 15 and 16 September 2019 the programme team organized a series of meetings with representatives of the Customs Administration of Somalia in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meetings were attended by an expert from the Customs Reform and Trade Enhancement Somalia Project (CRATES), jointly funded by the EU, the UK Department for International Development and the USAID. The project is assisting Somalia in its efforts to implement a comprehensive strategy of modernization in the area of Customs’ work.

Participants discussed a number of topics concerning implementation of the HS, focusing on accession by Somalia to the HS Convention and establishment of essential elements of a well-functioning tariff classification work model and related infrastructure. Since the CRATES Project has already been cooperating with the Somalia Customs towards implementation of the HS, it was agreed that joint efforts of the Somalia Customs, the CRATES Project and the EU-WCO Programme for HS in Africa would be the optimal approach to paving the way for sustained progress in that area.

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2 Somalia is a non-contracting party to the HS Convention and has not yet fully implemented an HS-based national tariff nomenclature

**Participation of the Gambia at the HS Committee as a Member, Brussels, (18 – 27 September 2019)**

Following the accession of the Gambia to the HS Convention as a direct result of the assistance provided by the programme, two tariff experts from the Gambia Revenue Authority attended the HS Committee representing the Gambia as a new Member of the Committee.

The attendance of the two Gambian experts was a good opportunity to present the programme to a larger audience and showcase the concrete assistance that the EU provides to partner countries in Africa, in collaboration with the WCO. It also marked the first experience of Gambia’s attendance to the HS Committee sessions with all the rights and benefits of a Member. Besides networking and exchanging experiences with other countries, the delegates of Gambia Revenue Authority held a coordination meeting with the programme team to set up modalities and planning for follow up activities to ensure the migration to the HS2017, training and implementation of advance rulings.
Workshop on the implementation of an advance ruling programme for Central African Republic (CAR), Bangui, (28 – 31 October 2019)

Following a request from the CAR and on basis of the outcomes of the CEMAC consultation, the programme team organized a workshop for the Customs administration of CAR on the implementation of an advance ruling system in line with WCO recommendations and the provisions of the WTO-TFA. The workshop took place in Bangui, CAR from 28 October to 1 November with the participation of an expert from Cameroon (only country in CEMAC that has implemented an advance ruling system) and an expert from the French Customs.

The objective of the workshop is to assist CAR in establishing a draft legislation and a work plan for the implementation of an advance ruling system at national level in line with the WCO recommendations, the obligations under WTO-TFA and the CEMAC new Customs code. CAR has implemented an advance ruling system and notified WCO accordingly.

"This programme will certainly have a positive impact on the functioning of the HS responsible structures for all African countries. In Algeria, we are starting to collect the fruits of this programme through the effective implementation of an advance rulings system from March 1, 2020 with the support of WCO experts and we are ready to make our experience available to Africa.

Toufik SACI
Algeria Customs Administration"

Diagnostic mission for Lesotho, Maseru, Lesotho, (04 – 08 November 2019)

At the request of the Lesotho Revenue Authority, the programme conducted a diagnostic workshop in Lesotho on 4-8 November 2019. The objectives of the workshop was to assist 1) Lesotho in implementing an advance ruling system, 2) review classification infrastructure with the aim of improving the working model, 3) discuss coordination mechanism between SACU and its member countries for the implementation of the SACU TEC 4) review training strategies at national level.

A representative of SACU attended the sessions of the workshop to shed the light on the role of the REC in tariff classification and how to enhance cooperation between the REC and member states. Tariff experts from South Africa Revenue Services attended the meeting to promote the exchange of best practices and experiences between SACU member countries.

The workshop resulted in a review of the legislation for the implementation of an advance ruling system in Lesotho, the establishment of a work plan to ensure the implementation of an advance ruling system and exchange on the role of SACU and how it could be better enhanced to guarantee better application of the HS and of advance ruling systems at regional and national level.

Training on HS2017 and HS2022 amendments for Ethiopian Customs, Addis Ababa, (11 – 15 November)

Following the migration of Ethiopia to the HS2017 and based on a request by Ethiopian Customs Commission (ECC), the programme mobilized resources to conduct a training on the HS2017 version and introduction of the
HS2022 amendments targeting the Ethiopian Customs, officials from the Ministry of Finance and private sector representatives. The training was facilitated by a WCO accredited expert from Kenya Revenue Authority and by a previous WCO senior technical officer with extensive experience on HS and training.

The resolution behind holding this training, is to keep the momentum of achievements of Ethiopia in the framework of the programme, embark national stakeholders in the efforts undertaken by the ECC and concluded with the migration to the HS2017 version, and prepare solid cooperation grounds for the future exercise of migration to the HS2022 version.

**Diagnostic mission for Sao Tome e Principe, Sao Tome, Sao Tome e Principe, (19 – 22 November)**

As per the desk analysis and consultation with the national focal point of Sao Tome e Principe during the kick off launch conference in Addis Ababa, February 2019, Sao Tome e Principe still applies the HS2012. In line with the intervention logic, the programme team conducted a mission to take stock at the process of migration and application of the HS and analyse the gaps and challenges hindering the timely migration to the latest version of the HS.

The objective of the mission was to support Sao Tome and Principe in its efforts to migrate to the HS2017 through a revision of its national processes. The mission further allowed to carry out a comprehensive organizational diagnostic analysis of the HS-related work and infrastructure. The WCO team met with the Minister of Finance and Director of customs, both committed to following up on the finalization of the migration to HS2017 and enhance the process for timely migration to the future versions of the HS.

**Workshop on the implementation of an advance ruling programme for Algeria, Algiers, (13 – 16 January 2020)**

In response to a request by the Algerian Customs, the programme team organized a workshop on the implementation of a national system of advance rulings in Algeria. The workshop was conducted in Algiers from 13 to 16 January 2020. It was facilitated by a WCO Senior Technical Officer and a WCO accredited trainer from the French Customs.

During the workshop, the legal framework formally establishing the advance ruling system was finalized and approved. Moreover, two one-day information sessions were held – one for the benefit of economic operators and Customs brokers and the other for Customs officials. Each of the information session gathered more than 100 participants.

The effective launch of the procedure is scheduled for 1 March 2020. The Algerian Customs Administration has notified the WCO Secretariat of its acceptance of the WCO’s Recommendation of 18 June 1996 on the introduction of programmes for binding pre-entry classification information.
Workshop on the implementation of an advance ruling programme for Nigeria, Abuja, (14 – 17 January 2020)

Following the action plan agreed upon during the diagnostic mission on the implementation of the HS conducted by the programme in July 2019, the Nigeria Customs Service has embarked on the establishment of a national advance ruling system. This initiative was launched during a recent national workshop, held from 14 to 17 January 2020 in the Nigerian capital Abuja.

As it emerged from the discussions during the workshop, Nigeria had already been issuing advance rulings on tariff classification of commodities, in response to requests from economic operators. It was felt that the Nigeria Customs Service should work towards aligning its existing system on the relevant international standards, in particular, by creating an adequate legal framework, revising some of the existing practices, and updating certain elements of the national tariff classification work infrastructure.

The meetings were co-facilitated by experts from the WCO and two African countries in which national advance ruling programmes were already up and running – Ethiopia and Liberia. They shared their experience with Nigerian colleagues and provided their perspective as to how best to get off the ground a modern, well-functioning and user-friendly system of advance rulings. The Nigeria Customs Service intends to finalise the preparatory work and launch its advance ruling programme in the coming months.
4. Vision for 2020

2020 is marked by the adoption of the WCO HS2022 amendments. The programme will focus on ensuring that proper and timely action is taken by partner countries and RECs to efficiently launch the migration process with the aim to implement the HS2022 by 2022. Furthermore, the demand-driven facility will provide tailor-made assistance to partners seeking to enhance their classification work model, including establishment of advance ruling systems.

The main objectives 2020 are:

- RECs finalize their CETs and communicate them to their respective member states by the end of the year.
- Partners still applying previous versions of the HS implement HS2017 and notify WCO.
- Countries not applying CET launch the migration process to the HS2022.
- Selected partner countries implement advance ruling system and notify WCO.
- Finalizing the HS training manual and developing a new HS e-learning course.
- Mobilizing resources to attend to countries’ requests for specific technical assistance.

For 2020, based on previous year consultations and established work plans, the programme has scheduled 13 regional activities and 12 national activities.

The programme remains open to Customs administrations and RECs in Africa wishing to efficiently implement the HS, set up advance rulings systems and enhance their classification work model. We invite you to send us your request to WCOhsafrica@wcoomd.org.

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The programme created a platform and brought together for the first time the HS experts in SACU to engage and share information on HS and the management of the Common External Tariff (CET) in the region. Being part of the team that recognised the importance thereof, and made recommendations for the establishment of the HS Experts Working Group in SACU will remain the highlight and the biggest achievement by both the programme and all who participated in this process once the relevant SACU structures approves the recommendations. This has designed a foundation for future management and engagements on all HS matters within the region.

Selloane MOLEBATSI
South African Revenue Service

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5. Overview of Expenditure

The table below is an extract from the financial report for the first year as communicated to the EU (donor) and covering the period from 25 September 2018 to 30 September 2019. However, the results and activities included in this annual report cover the period up until January 2020.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUDGET LINE</th>
<th>EXPENDITURE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inaugural Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Component 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Component 2</td>
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<td>Component 3</td>
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<td>Component 4</td>
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<td>Programme steering and coordination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tools and Publications</td>
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<td><strong>GRAND TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>407,471.63</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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