



## Cotonou Declaration against fake medicines – 12 October 2009 – Cotonou (Benin) -

The Director General of Customs of Senegal, Mr. Armand Jean-Jacques Nanga, WCO Vice-Chair for the West and Central Africa Region, represented the WCO at an international meeting on fake medicines held on 12 October 2009.

The meeting was organized in Cotonou by the Jacques CHIRAC Foundation, in co-operation with the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Government of Benin.

The meeting, intended to stress the importance, at the highest level, of combating the traffic in fake medicines, brought together a large number of key figures, including Heads of State or their representatives, former Heads of State and representatives of international institutions such as the UN and the WHO, as well as representatives of civil society. The meeting took place in two parts: the first part was devoted to speeches by keynote speakers, and the second to the Cotonou Declaration.

### ***Keynote speeches***

Several key figures took the floor to contribute their thoughts and voice their support for the initiative launched by former French President Mr. Jacques Chirac. They included :

- The Heads of State of Benin, Senegal and Burkina Faso;
- Representatives of the WHO, the UN and the African Union (AU);
- The Minister of Health of Laos and the French Minister for Co-operation.

One by one, the various speakers drew attention to the seriousness of the situation regarding the trade in fake medicines, which is estimated at 10% of global trade in medication and is worth about 45 million euro.

Several speakers highlighted the situation in developing countries where, according to the WHO, one out of every four medicines is counterfeit and 200,000 deaths could be avoided each year if the anti-malarial medication prescribed was in compliance with the regulations and was actually able to treat the disease effectively.

On the continent of Africa the threat is deemed particularly serious, bearing in mind that in most African countries fake medicines represent up to 50% of the trade in medicines, with peaks of up to 80%.

In the face of a tragedy whose consequences are immeasurable, not only on the medical, public health and social levels, but also in economic and financial terms for countries already hit by a whole series of crises, the speakers were unanimous in calling for the introduction of energetic measures at the national, regional and global levels aimed, in particular, at :

- providing greater access to licit medicines for the poorest populations;

- strengthening legislative and control measures;
- greater commitment to this struggle on the part of the rich countries.

All of which provides the strongest possible justification for the COTONOU Declaration.

### ***The Cotonou Declaration***

Turning to the Declaration itself, President Chirac had no hesitation in qualifying trade in fake medicines as a criminal activity. He said that in the face of this modern-day crime, the Cotonou Declaration was intended as an appeal against impunity and indifference.

This was why the Cotonou Declaration when considering, amongst other things, that the production, international trafficking and illicit marketing of fake medicines must cease as soon as possible, proposed a series of measures, some of which related specifically to Customs administrations and more generally to the World Customs Organization (WCO). These measures include, in particular:

- the strict implementation of legislative and regulatory texts in States where such texts are already in place, and the establishment of a legislative and regulatory framework where none exists;
- the introduction, in the field, of effective instruments to combat this traffic, with trained staff and systems tailored to address the realities of the traffic in fake medicines;
- awareness-raising and public information campaigns on the harm caused by fake medicines.

More information:

[www.fondationchirac.eu/en/international-mobilization-against-the-traffic-of-falsified-medicines](http://www.fondationchirac.eu/en/international-mobilization-against-the-traffic-of-falsified-medicines)  
[www.fondationchirac.eu/en/the-cotonou-declaration-october-12-2009-benin](http://www.fondationchirac.eu/en/the-cotonou-declaration-october-12-2009-benin)



Convention Centre - Cotonou, Benin



Convention Centre – Participants



Louis Michel, EU MEP, giving a speech during the Cotonou Declaration



Jacques Chirac, in the centre with the Cotonou Declaration Honour Committee