

COMMUNAUTE ECONOMIQUE DES  
ETATS DE L'AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST

ECONOMIC COMMUNITY  
WEST AFRICAN STATES



Original: French

**MID-YEAR MEETING OF NATIONAL APPROVALS COMMITTEES  
ON THE ECOWAS TRADE LIBERALISATION SCHEME**

Cotonou, 30 June - 2 July 2011

**F<sub>INAL</sub> R<sub>EP</sub>ORT**

Cotonou, July 2011

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The Mid-Year Meeting of the National Approvals Committees (NAC) of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) was held from 30 June to 2 July 2011 at the Hotel du Lac, Cotonou (Republic of Benin).
2. The following Member States were represented in the meeting:
  - Republic of Benin
  - Burkina Faso
  - Republic of Cape Verde
  - Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
  - Republic of The Gambia
  - Republic of Ghana
  - Republic of Guinea
  - Republic of Guinea Bissau
  - Republic of Liberia
  - Republic of Niger
  - Federal Republic of Nigeria
  - Republic of Sierra Leone
  - Republic of Senegal
  - Togolese Republic

The following organisations also participated in the meeting:

- West African Monetary Institute (WAMI)
- Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEWACCI)
- USAID Agribusiness and Trade Promotion (ATP) Project
- GIZ (German Cooperation)

The list of participants is attached as an annex.

## **II. OPENING SESSION**

3. During the opening ceremony of the meeting, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, the Acting Director of Customs of the ECOWAS Commission and the representative of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Small and Medium Scale Enterprises of the Republic of Benin delivered speeches.
4. In her speech, Mrs. Beatrice Archibong, Counsellor in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria and Chairperson of the meeting thanked the delegates for making the effort to participate in the meeting. She



expressed the hope that this meeting will make it possible to identify the obstacles to the free movement of goods and find solutions to them.

5. On behalf of the President of the ECOWAS Commission, His Excellency, Amb. James Victor Gbeho, and the Commissioner of Trade, Customs, Mines, Industry and Free Movement, Hon. (Alhaji) Mohamed Daramy, the Acting Director of Customs, Mr. Salifou Tiemtoré welcomed participants to the meeting.
6. Mr. Tiemtoré mentioned the various stages of the West African regional integration process, the first and main component of which is the free trade area. He pointed out the failure of Member States to fully and completely apply the ECOWAS trade liberalisation scheme which is the key to the free trade area mechanism.
7. The Acting Director of Customs underscored the crucial role of the National Approvals Committees (NAC) in the structural arrangement of the trade liberalisation scheme and specified the objectives of the meeting as follows:
  - consideration of drafts of some harmonized technical documents of ECOWAS and UEMOA on the trade liberalisation schemes of the two organizations,
  - report of the consultation meeting of ECOWAS/UEMOA on the two liberalization programs
  - reports of the National Approvals Committees on the application of the scheme in each Member State, and
  - consideration of the terms of reference of the *ad hoc* Committee for the review of legal texts on the ETLS.
8. The Director General of Industry, Dr. Abdoulaye Assoudo representing the Minister of Industry, Trade, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises, of Benin, pointed out the need for the completion of a free trade area. He stressed the importance of making the ECOWAS trade liberalization scheme effective given its role as the mechanism created for the attainment of the major ECOWAS objective of creating an Economic and Monetary Union for the promotion of economic growth and the development of West Africa. Dr. Assoudo urged Member States to ensure compliance with the legal texts of the scheme. He also encouraged them not to any obstacles in the way of free



movement of originating products since this was necessary for strengthening the regional integration process. He ended his speech by inviting the representatives of Member States to make optimum use of the next three days to deliberate on the issues hindering the attainment of this objective, so that at the end of this meeting the desired results would have been achieved.

### III. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

9. The following bureau was elected:

- Chairman: Nigeria
- Rapporteurs: The Gambia  
Burkina Faso

### IV. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

10. The following agenda was adopted:

1. Status of implementation of recommendations of the last annual NAC meeting
2. Report of ECOWAS/UEMOA Consultative Meeting
3. Presentation of Terms of Reference for proposed Ad-hoc Committee on ETLS Text Review
4. Presentations by the NACs and discussions
5. Divers



## **OUTCOME OF DELIBERATIONS**

### **Item 1: STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LAST ANNUAL NAC MEETING**

11. The ECOWAS Commission made a presentation on the status of implementation of the Second Annual Meeting of the National Approval Committees held in December 2010 in Cotonou. The discussions that ensued at the end of this presentation were on:
  - a. list of prohibited goods: The ECOWAS Commission would prepare a situation report for presentation at the next NACs meeting
  - b. training of trainers on the scheme: The ECOWAS Commission made the following two proposals:
    - Organization of a regional meeting of NAC experts to participate in the training;
    - Ensuring that trained trainers will be in charge of the training of experts involved in the scheme at the national level.
  - c. inclusion of standards agencies in the composition of the NAC, the ECOWAS Commission expressed concern on the complexity of the issue and assured the meeting that it would prepare a concept note with a view to shedding light on the issue at the next meeting.

At the end of the discussions, the meeting approved the two proposals

### **Item 2: REPORT OF THE ECOWAS/UEMOA CONSULTATIVE MEETING**

12. The ECOWAS Commission gave an account of the meeting of the ECOWAS/UEMOA Consultative Meeting held in Lomé from the 28<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2011. The meeting was on the trade liberalisation schemes of the two institutions, namely: the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) and the UEMOA Community Preferential Tariff (TPC).
13. The ECOWAS Commission reaffirmed that the consultative meeting was aimed at considering the difficulties and obstacles to the implementation of the trade liberalisation scheme, and also proffering proposals and recommendations in order to amend and harmonise the legal texts of the two institutions in force in the region.



14. The ECOWAS Commission also presented the draft harmonised application form and gave clarifications on the proposed amendments (attached as an annex to this report).

At the end of the meeting, several recommendations were made which are in the report of the ECOWAS/UEMOA Consultative Meeting, copies of which were made available to participants of this NACs meeting.

15. After some amendments, the participants commended the work undertaken by the two Commissions and encouraged them not to relent in their efforts. These amendments were mainly on the draft harmonised Application Form and proposal for additional items as an annex so as to improve upon the formula relating to the value added calculation.
16. Another presentation was made, for the information of participants, by the representative of the USAID/ATP on the difficulties encountered by exporters of agricultural products in the region. He outlined possible solutions to these difficulties as they relate to Community agricultural products.

**Item 3: PRESENTATION OF THE DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR) ON THE CREATION OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE SCHEME**

17. The ECOWAS Commission presented the draft terms of reference on the creation of an « Ad-hoc Committee » for the review of the legal texts of the scheme. The Commission emphasised that the Committee will evolve as a working group and will be assisted by necessary competent persons to prepare technical documents for consideration and approval during subsequent meetings of the NAC. The participants amended and adopted the draft TOR as presented.

**Item 4: PRESENTATION BY THE NATIONAL APPROVALS COMMITTEES AND DISCUSSIONS**

18. Member States that were present in this meeting made a presentation on their NACs and obstacles to the application of the scheme. At the end of these presentations, it was observed that some of the Member States in the meeting have their NAC



operational. These presentations made it possible for Member States to interact and exchange information on the movement of originating products and the difficulties being encountered at the borders.

19. On the issue of funding for sensitization programs by the NACs, the meeting proposed that the funding should be through the Community levy.
20. These presentations revealed the inadequacies in the implementation of the scheme at the national and regional levels. It was evident that there was a problem with the choice of the competent issuing authority of the Certificate of Origin because the ECOWAS text on the scheme does not specify this authority. The main difficulties mentioned were generally on the certificate of origin which should be harmonised (period of validity, mode of completing the form, the signatories, etc.); communication modes and deadlines for notifying Member States of approvals by the ECOWAS Commission; the removal of non-tariff barriers; and the problems of standards and products quality.

**Item 5:     ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

21. No item was raised.

**VI.            CLOSING SESSION**

22. In his closing remarks, the Acting Director of Customs of the ECOWAS Commission, Mr. Salifou Tiemtoré, commended the delegates on the work undertaken and the quality of discussions during the meeting. He stressed that the recommendations made during this meeting would be diligently considered and wished participants safe journey to their respective destinations.
23. During the closing ceremony, Mrs. Beatrice Archibong, Counsellor in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria and Chairperson of the meeting thanked participants for their keen participation throughout the session. She also thanked the ECOWAS



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Commission for its determination and commitment to ensure that the Trade Liberalisation Scheme becomes a reality. Finally, she wished all delegates safe journey to their various destinations.

**DONE IN COTONOU, THIS 2<sup>ND</sup> DAY OF JULY 2011**



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**MRS. BEATRICE ARCHIBONG**  
**CHAIRPERSON**

**For the Meeting**





**MID-YEAR MEETING OF NATIONAL APPROVAL COMMITTEES  
(ECOWAS TRADE LIBERALISATION SCHEME)**

*Hôtel du Lac, Cotonou, the 30<sup>th</sup> of June to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2011*

**VOTE OF THANKS**

The participants in the Mid-year Meeting of the National Approval Committees (NAC) on the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme held in Cotonou, Republic of Benin from 30 June to 2 July 2011 expressed their deep gratitude to His Excellency **Dr. Yayi BONI**, President of the Republic of Benin, the Government and people of Benin for the warm and fraternal welcome accorded them and the excellent facilities placed at their disposal to ensure the success of their deliberations.

Done in Cotonou, this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of July 2011

**THE PARTICIPANTS**