

# Speaking Notes

Director Compliance & Facilitation, World Customs Organization

## Tenth United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Committee Meeting

### Strategic Coordination of Counter-Terrorism Initiatives in Africa: challenges and opportunities

#### SESSION 2: Strengthening counter-terrorism coordination through identifying key challenges and gaps; and sharing of best practices and lessons learned

25 January 2024 - 10am-12pm (EST) - Virtual

*[This session will focus on key challenges, best practices and lessons learnt on preventing and countering terrorism, highlighting tangible action plans to mobilize resources for the Joint Appeal for Counter-Terrorism in Africa and making use of CTC recommendations from CTED Country Assessments]*

- Excellencies, distinguished delegates and, ladies and gentlemen.
- I would like to thank the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact for the invitation to address you today about the contribution of the World Customs Organization, the global leader of 185 Member Customs Administrations, in preventing and countering terrorism in Africa, with a particular focus on West Africa.
- As we are all aware, West Africa and the Sahel region are severely impacted by terrorism and insecurity: different non-state violent extremist groups continue targeting mostly civilian population with attacks resulting in disruption of local economies and undermining of civil society.
- Excellencies, since the adoption of the Punta Cana Resolution in December 2015, the WCO through its Security Programme has worked towards achieving greater involvement of our Member Customs administrations in national and international counter-terrorism activities and meeting their countries' obligations under the United Nations Security Council Resolutions.
- In addition to that, between 2017 and 2022, the WCO conducted field research mainly in West and Central Africa and in the MENA region on what we later called 'fragile borders'.

- One of the outcomes of this work was a better understanding the role of Customs in the national and international security architecture and its contribution to border security within the context of fragile and conflict-affected situations.
- This knowledge helped us to start revising our approach to delivering capacity-building and developing new tools and instruments in order to better respond to the needs of our Members.
- A concrete successful example is the WCO West Africa Security Project launched in 2022 and funded by the German Government's Enhance and Enable Initiative.
- One of the roles of Customs in the West Africa region is to facilitate the growing volumes of trade to and from the region through the Gulf of Guinea ports, while ensuring that it is not used as a supply line for goods used by terrorist and criminal organizations.
- Following a scoping mission and collaborative assessment conducted with the Customs administrations of Togo, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, the Project was launched in the three countries in October 2022, aiming to develop new skills, building capacity and knowledge for Customs officials and in some cases, deliver and deploy new systems and equipment, with focus on gender-responsive and tangible outcomes.
- This regional Project is delivered in conjunction with and support of other projects and Programmes within the WCO security portfolio, namely Programme Global Shield, tackling illicit diversion of dual-use explosive precursors and other components, and Small Arms and Light Weapons Project.
- In addition to capacity-building, the WCO regularly organizes operational activities to put the theoretical knowledge in practice and strengthen inter-agency cooperation. For example, the latest operation codenamed 'Antale' in November 2023 was conducted in conjunction with INTERPOL and targeted the potential use of cargo imported through the sea ports of the three countries to smuggle security-related goods, including small arms and light weapons and explosive precursors used for the production of the Improvised Explosive Devices.
- In the past, the WCO coordinated three regional operations in West and Central Africa codenamed 'Alamba' targeting particularly IED components and explosive precursors. These operations were very successful.

- Coming back to the regional initiatives, I am pleased to inform that with further support from the German Government the West Africa Security Project has recently been extended to the end of 2024 and expanded to include the Customs administrations of Benin and Nigeria, with the Gambia joining the gender equality and diversity component.
- In closing, I would like to emphasize that strong security requires effective collaboration between national customs, other law enforcement and security agencies at the national level and across borders.
- Excellencies, the WCO is also committed to working closely with the members of the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact and other partners to strengthen coordination of our efforts to ensure that collectively we deliver best possible, holistic and Africa-owned outcomes in the critically important area of counter-terrorism.
- I think together 'we can' make a difference and shape a better future.
- Thank you for your kind attention.