

**COMUNIDADE DOS ESTADOS DA
AFRICA DO OESTE**

**ECONOMIC COMMUNITY
OF WEST AFRICAN STATES**



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

ECOWAS – TNCB National Coordinating Committee on Trade (NCCT) meeting

ECOWAS Commission. Abuja, 26 – 28 January 2015

FINAL REPORT

Abuja, 28 January 2015

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The ECOWAS – TNCB National Coordinating Committee on Trade (NCCT) meeting was held at the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja from the 26 to 28 January 2015.
2. The objectives of the Meeting were to review the different reports of the activities of the National Coordinating Committee on Trade (NCCT) of Member States and suggest new ideas to improve on project's functioning.
3. The TNCB Project is co-financed the ECOWAS Commission and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The aim of the Project is to build the negotiation capacity of Member States to enable them benefit from their participation in multilateral trading system.
4. The TNCB National Coordinators, Focal Points or their representatives, from the following Member States were present:
 - 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 Mali,
 - Republic of Niger,
 - Federal Republic of Nigeria,
 - Republic of Sierra Leone,
 - Republic of Senegal,
 - Togolese Republic
5. The ECOWAS Commission was also present.
6. The list of participants is attached as an annex.

II. OPENING SESSION

7. The opening session was marked by the welcoming remarks of the TNCB Project Coordinator and the opening remarks of the Director of Trade, ECOWAS, representing the Commissioner for Trade, Customs, Free Movement and Tourism, ECOWAS.

8. Mr. Kolawole Sofola, the TNCB Project Coordinator, began his welcoming remarks by wishing the delegates, their families and colleagues, a prosperous and healthy New Year. He noted the priority given to the meeting by Member States by their full participation in this special session of the Meeting of National Coordinators of the ECOWAS-TNCB project, which demonstrates the importance of trade for economic development.
9. Mr. Sofola further highlighted the importance for regional integration and development, the decision of 9th WTO Ministerial Conference on the Bali package, the decision of the African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government on the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area, and the decision of the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government on the West Africa – European Union Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET). He also noted the recent signing of the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) between ECOWAS and the United States. As a result of these, and future Agreements, there is a need to continue to strengthen the capacity of Member States to formulate, negotiate, and implement Trade Policy and Agreements.
10. In his speech, Director of Trade, Dr. Gbenga Obideyi, on behalf of His Excellency Ahmed Hamid, Chairman of the TNCB Project Steering Committee, welcomed the delegates to the ECOWAS Commission. He also thanked the President the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the warm hospitality extended to the delegations.
11. He highlighted the capacity gap in trade policy and negotiations in the region. In order to bridge this gap, the TNCB project was set up in 2003 with the aim of strengthening the capacity of trade negotiations of Member States, as well as supporting national Inter-institutional Committees on Trade. As the Project approaches the end of its second phase, it is important that the different actors assess its achievements. As such, the meeting of NCCT will present the experiences of the national IICs and seek the views of Member States on the way forward for the Project. Finally, he declared the meeting open.

III. ELECTION OF THE BUREAU

12. The meeting elected the following bureau:
 - President: ECOWAS Commission
 - Vice President: Republic of Ghana

- Rapporteurs: Togolese Republic; Republic of Cape Verde

IV. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

13. The agenda was adopted as follows:

- Presentation of Project Activity and Financial reports
- Presentation of Country Reports
- Overview of 2015 Budget & Work programme
- Mid-term Evaluation of Phase II
- Way Forward
- Any Other Business

V. OUTCOME OF DELIBERATIONS

Presentation of Project Activity and Financial reports

14. Presented by Mr. Kolawole A. SOFOLA, TNCB Project Coordinator, ECOWAS Commission, the 2013 & 2014 Activity report of trade negotiation capacity-building project focused on: the different phases of the Project; Governance and Budget; implementation of activities; facilitators; communication and awareness, and monitoring-evaluation. The presentation highlighted that the Project has held 54 meetings, totaling 251 numbers of days over the period from 2008 – 2014.

15. The presentation of the 2013 & 2014 Activity report was followed by discussions on, inter alia, the development of annual activity plan of the TNCB project, search for information on the criteria for assistance from Member states of the project, functioning of the project, orders for the opening and closing of national committee accounts.

16. After the presentation, the meeting made the following recommendations:

- i. Planning and coordination meetings, such as ECOWAS – TNCB National Coordination Committee on Trade (NCCT) and Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings should be held annually
- ii. Member States should submit their proposed Annual Work Programmes to the TNCB Project
- iii. Member States should regularly share reports of related Trade Capacity Building meetings/workshops with the TNCB Project

- iv. TNCB should facilitate the dissemination of information and best practice across Member States
- v. Communication flow should be improved between the Project and the Member States. Specifically, name of National Coordinators and Focal Points should be regularly reviewed and updated as necessary.
- vi. TNCB Work programme should ensure equity in the implementation of activities across Member States
- vii. Appropriate financing mechanisms should be identified in order to decentralize the implementation of activities.
- viii. Funds should be made immediately available to support the functioning on the IICs. Special focus should be given to the operationalization of the IIC secretariat.
- ix. Need for improved coordination and where necessary, rationalization of similar structures

Presentation of Country Reports

- 17. Member States presented country reports on their respective IICs. The presentations covered the following areas: (i) Composition of IIC; (ii) Summary and Key recommendations of IICs; (iii) Overview of IIC Work Programme & Achievements; (iv) Assessment of Needs; (v) Priority activities of the Ministry of Trade.
- 18. Summaries of the country presentations are attached as an annex to this report.
- 19. Following the presentation, the meeting made the recommendations:
 - i. Need for the improvement of the operationalisation of the national committees;
 - ii. Need for TNCB Project to support the national committees in terms of capacity building and functioning, especially material and financial resources for the achievement of their objectives;
 - iii. Reconsideration of the decision to close accounts of the national committees;
 - iv. Development of procedure manual for the management of fund in the accounts of the committees;
 - v. Disbursement of the funds initially earmarked for activities of the committees;

- vi. Build the capacity of the coordinating ministries of the committees, to create a link between their work and ECOWAS national units for sustainability
- vii. Need to establish/ reinforce regional national trade facilitation committees

Overview of 2015 Budget & Work programme

20. The Project Coordinator presented the indicative budget of UA 743,589, which is jointly financed by ECOWAS and SIDA, and highlighted the following planned activities for 2015:

- Planning and coordination meetings (i.e. Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting, National coordinators meetings, other coordination/consultation meetings)
- Technical assistance (i.e. Technical advisers, TNCB Internship/fellowship programme, Trade policy research & analysis)
- Training (i.e. E-learning, Onsite trade policy courses)
- Inter-Institutional Capacity Building (IIC) (i.e. Support to Inter-Institutional Committee meetings and National IIC work programmes)
- Communication & Outreach (i.e. Website; Publications; Brochures; Banners)

21. Regarding Communication & Outreach activities, the Project Coordinator presented the TNCB website, which will be launched in the first quarter of 2015. The website was designed based on international best practice and will be progressively upgraded to include more functionalities.

22. Following the presentation, the meeting made the following recommendations:

- i. Importance of communication and outreach in order to reach wider audience and increase visibility of Project
- ii. TNCB should support MS in the identification and utilization of other sources of funding
- iii. Need to ensure the sustainability of the Project
- iv. IIC Secretariat should be properly equipped and staffed
- v. Provision of \$10,000 towards the functioning of each IICs and their related work programmes

Mid-term Evaluation of Phase II

23. An evaluation of Phase II of the Project (2008 – 2015) is being conducted to assist the ECOWAS and SIDA, in their consideration of possible future collaboration, for another phase of the project. The evaluation aims to describe and assess the results of the second phase of the “Trade Negotiation Capacity Building Project” (TNCB II), as compared to its objectives.
24. As part of its evaluation, ECOWAS has started distributing questionnaires in November 2014. On its part, SIDA has commissioned an independent evaluator to interview all Member States. As part of the independent, the SIDA evaluator participated at the NCCT and held interview with each delegation.

Way Forward

25. The Project Coordinator provided an overview of the orientation of Phase 3. The key areas of intervention include (i) Planning and coordination meetings; (ii) Technical assistance; (iii) Training; (iv) Inter-Institutional Capacity Building (IIC) (i.e. Support to Inter-Institutional Committee meetings and National IIC work programmes)
26. The meeting agreed with the orientation presented and requested that ECOWAS should prepare a proposal for Phase 3 in order to ensure continuity of the Project. They therefore called upon all development Partners to support the Project, which has been effective in building the capacity of Member States in Trade Policy formulation, implementation and Negotiation.

Any Other Business

27. The ECOWAS Commission provided an update of the West Africa – European Union Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).
28. Final approval by Heads of State and Government during the 45th Summit held on 10 July 2014. Overview of activities after the approval of the EPA by ECOWAS Heads of State and government:
 - Joint formalisation of the conclusions of the EPA negotiations between West Africa and the European Union, 15 July 2014
 - Adoption by the EU of Regulation No. 1025/2014 of 25 July 2014 authorising the continuation of the granting of preferences to Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana beyond 1 October 2014

- Legal review and the editing of the Agreement text for signature
 - Continuation of information and awareness campaigns on EPA in the West African States
 - Launching of negotiations on Association Agreement with Mauritania, Nouakchott, 14 November 2014
 - Process for the signature of the Agreement by the States in the region
 - Elaborating institutional bodies and mechanisms and bodies (e.g. Joint EPA Management Bodies; EPA Regional Fund; Competiveness Observatory)
29. In an update on the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) the Commission informed the meeting that the content of the regional tariff together with the package of support measures were approved by the Authority of Heads of States and Government in October 2013 in Dakar. The Authority further approved 1st January 2015 as the effective implementation date of the ECOWAS CET in all member states. Subsequently, a series of training and sensitization activities were rolled out in the year 2014 for Customs officials, Freight forwarders, officials of Ministries of Trade and Industry, and the private sector. Evaluation missions to all member states were also undertaken to assess level of preparation and address potential technical challenges. To kick-start the implementation of the CET on 1st January 2015, the Authority of Heads of States formally launched the take-off of the CET on 15th December 2014 at their 46th Ordinary Session held in Abuja.
30. The meeting was also informed of the draft Aid for Trade strategy, which will be presented to the Regional Aid for Trade Experts Group for validation prior to the 5th WTO-OECD Global Review meeting scheduled for Jun/Jul 2015.
31. As part of its ongoing communication and outreach efforts, the TNCB project circulated copies of TAF toolkits.
32. Following the presentation, the meeting made the following recommendations:
- i. Text of the EPA Agreement should be further circulated
 - ii. Additional copies of the ECOWAS CET book should be provided to the NCCT

- iii. Member States, in collaboration with the ECOWAS Commission, should continue sensitization on EPA and CET
- iv. The draft Aid for Trade Strategy should be circulated for further comments
- v. ECOWAS – TNCB website should be gradual upgrade to include social media and country specific pages.

VI. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

- 33. The delegates adopted the report of the meeting.

VII. CLOSING SESSION

- 34. The official closing ceremony was marked by speeches by Dr. Gbenga OBIDEYI, Director of Trade, and Mr. Kolawole SOFOLA, TNCB Project Coordinators.
- 35. In their closing remarks, they thanked the delegates for their contributions, which resulted in a number of recommendations that would guide the formulation of the extension of the Project (Phase III). They urged Member States to ensure the effective operationalization of their respective IICs and reiterated the support of the TNCB project towards supporting them in this area. Finally they wished all the delegate a successful journey back to their respective homes

DONE THIS DAY 28TH DAY OF JANUARY 2015 IN ABUJA.

**Mr. Kolawole SOFOLA
TNCB Project Coordinator
CHAIRPERSON**

FOR THE MEETING

I.

**COMUNIDADE DOS ESTADOS DA
AFRICA DO OESTE**

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**COMMUNAUTE ECONOMIQUE DES
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VOTE OF THANKS

The participants at ECOWAS meeting of ECOWAS – TNCB National Coordinating Committee on Trade (NCCT) expressed their gratitude and their sincere thanks to His Excellency President Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Government and People of Nigeria, for their hospitality and warm reception and for the facilities placed at their disposal which contributed to the success of the workshop.

DONE THIS DAY 28TH DAY OF JANUARY 2015 IN ABUJA.