



Press Release

Chairperson Receives the Secretary General of the World Customs Organization



Chairperson Ping (R) exchanges views with the Secretary-General of the World Customs Organization, Dr. Kunio Mikuriya (Photo AUDIC)

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 07 September 2012 --- The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Jean Ping, on 7 September 2012, in his office at AUC Headquarters in Addis Ababa, received a delegation from the World Customs Organization, led by the organization's Secretary General, Dr. Kunio Mikuriya. The courtesy visit was organized as part of the 4th Sub-Committee Meeting of the Directors General of Customs of the African Union, which took place in Addis Ababa from 3 to 7 September 2012.

Welcoming his guests, the Chairperson underscored the importance of the relationship between the AUC and the WCO and indicated that the meeting of Directors General was a valuable platform to develop the cooperation further. He recalled that the ties of cooperation between both organizations were formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2010.

Chairperson Ping lamented the low levels of intra-African trade which currently stand at about 10%, due to various reasons including the lack of adequate infrastructure and the delays experienced at borders as a consequence of lengthy customs procedures. However, he noted that regional integration in Africa has made notable progress, as evidenced by the Tripartite Initiative between SADC, COMESA and EAC, as well as ECOWAS.

This was to be commended and the Chairperson called on the regions with success stories to share their experiences and encourage those Regional Economic Communities (RECs) facing difficulties in the area of economic integration. He invited the World Customs Union to be a true partner to the Continent and advise Africa on how best to overcome impediments to its regional and sub-regional integration.

On his part, Secretary General Mikuriya commended the African Union Commission for adopting this year's theme: "Boosting Intra-African Trade", and stated that the World Customs Organization has placed emphasis on connectivity this year and adopted the theme: " Borders Divide, Customs Connect".

The Secretary General highlighted some of the areas of technical cooperation between the WCO and AU Member States and Regional Economic Communities, which include the development of various instruments that can be accessed by Member States.

Both personalities exchanged views on other issues of mutual interest including the importance of trade facilitation and various aspects of customs cooperation aimed at enhancing Africa's ability to boost its competitiveness, as well as the challenges and opportunities of informal trade.

The Secretary General stated that the World Customs Organization stands ready to support the work of AU Member States through sharing success stories and facilitating strategic planning. He further observed that ongoing political support is welcomed and needs to be sustained, with a view to achieving the vision of moving the Continent forward by boosting Intra-African and international trade.

The Chairperson thanked the WCO for its partnership and reassured the Secretary-General that Africa remains committed to its continental trade and development agenda, adding that cooperation with the World Customs Organization will continue.

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