

## **CGC Gets Fresh Mandate as WCO Regional Vice-Chair**

Directors-General of Customs Administrations in West and Central African Region of the World Customs Organisation have re-elected Dikko Inde Abdullahi, the Comptroller-General of Nigeria Customs Service as Vice –Chair for a second term of two years.

The new mandate follows the decision of the DGs to return Abdullahi unopposed at the end of the Regional conference which ended last week in Cotonou, Capital of Benin Republic.



Announcing the decision of the Directors-General taken during a close session of the conference, The Director-General of Cameroon Customs, Mrs Libomli Minette informed delegates that the impressive performance of the Comptroller-General during his first term in office and the remarkable performance of the Regional structures informed the decision to give Dikko Abdullahi a second term.

In his acceptance speech, the Comptroller-General expressed his gratitude to his colleagues and promised to continue offering visionary leadership to the region.

The Regional Conference was declared opened by Benin's Minister of Economy and Finance Adidjatou Mathys, who pledged the support of the Government of Benin Republic to the modernization programs of Benin Customs Administration.

In his opening address, the WCO Vice Chair, Dikko Abdullahi enumerated a number of challenges faced by Customs Administrations in Africa and called for a concerted action to tackle them. He noted that in addition to economic issues, Customs Administrations in the sub region must now accord priority attention to regional security concerns.

At one of the plenary sessions during the conference, the customs Administration of Nigeria gave an account of her stewardship as Regional Vice Chair since her unanimous election in Bamako, Mali two years ago. The contribution of the Vice-Chair towards the Regional Capacity building plans, the successful signing of MOU with the west African Regional Economic Bloc ECOWAS and bilateral assistance programme between Nigeria and Sierra Leone were some of the activities that were recalled.

Directors General reviewed and adopted recommendations on a number of strategic issues, including the focus areas of capacity

building and the regional structure as well as its funding. The recommendations had been drawn up by the preparatory meeting of experts that was held earlier.

The Directors General in other plenary sessions, appreciated the regional coaching programme, implemented by the Regional Office for Capacity Building, ROCB for sharing best practice in Customs reform in the region.

Presentations on the use of technology, including Senegal's paperless GIANDE system and Benin's Single Window system, attracted interest and questions from participants. Directors General also appreciated and encouraged continuation of WCO work on the Revenue Package and advocacy of Customs to political leaders.

Responding to the concerns expressed regarding pre-shipment and destination inspection services that are widespread in the region, Secretary General Kunio Mikuriya clarified the WCO policy in this regard, stating that these programmes should be seen as temporary measures, adding that where a government has decided to engage such a service, Customs should work with the inspection companies to strengthen Customs' capacity to conduct revenue functions and develop a strategy to terminate existing contracts at the earliest opportunity. He stressed that this requires Customs to focus on modernization and the development of partnerships with business based on trust.

The next regional meeting will be hosted by The Customs Excise and Preventive Service of Ghana in the first quarter of next year.