Borderless 2019
Conference Report

FACILITATING INTRA-REGIONAL TRADE IN WESTAFRICA: EMERGING TRENDS

24th -26th April 2019,
Swiss Spirit Alisa Hotel,
Accra, Ghana
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<td>ABORNE</td>
<td>African Borderlands Research Network</td>
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<td>AFCFTA</td>
<td>African Continental Free Trade Area</td>
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<td>AfCFTA</td>
<td>African Continental Free Trade Agreement</td>
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<td>AFRIGOS</td>
<td>African Governance and Space</td>
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<td>AFTRP</td>
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<td>AFRIGOS</td>
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<td>AGRA</td>
<td>Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa</td>
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<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<td>B2B</td>
<td>Business to business</td>
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<td>CCI-BF</td>
<td>Burkina Chamber of Commerce</td>
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<td>CET</td>
<td>Common External tariff</td>
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<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of West African States</td>
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<td>ETLS</td>
<td>ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme</td>
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<td>EU</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross domestic product</td>
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<td>GIZ</td>
<td>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</td>
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<td>GRA</td>
<td>Ghana Revenue Authority</td>
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<td>GSA</td>
<td>Ghana Shippers Authority</td>
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<td>KAIPTC</td>
<td>Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center</td>
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<td>MOTI</td>
<td>Ministry of Trade of Industry of Ghana</td>
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<td>Meridian Port Services</td>
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<td>National Trade Facilitation Committee</td>
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<td>SIGMAT</td>
<td>Interconnected Transit Goods Management System</td>
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<td>TFWA</td>
<td>Trade Facilitation in West Africa</td>
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<td>UEMOA</td>
<td>West African Economic and Monetary Union</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
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Introduction
Borderless Alliance held its annual regional conference at the Swiss Spirit - Alisa Hotel in Accra, Ghana, from the 24th-26th April, 2019. The event, already in its eighth edition, aimed to create a regional annual fixture for stakeholders to discuss, deliberate and share knowledge and updates about the state of regional trade and transport in West Africa. The conference, which was held on the theme “Facilitating Intra-Regional Trade in West Africa: Emerging Trends”, was hosted by Ghana Shippers Authority (GSA), under the auspices of the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Trade of Industry of Ghana (MOTI), with focus on three main sub themes; the Status of Trade facilitation on the International Scene; Doing Business and Trading across West Africa; and the State of Cross Border Trade in West Africa.

Participants also got the opportunity to participate in a field trip visit to the Port of Tema and acquaint themselves with progress on the new expansion project by Meridian Port Services (MPS).

Day 1
Opening Ceremony
The conference was officially inaugurated in a high-level and colourful opening ceremony, with more than 180 participants and featuring dignitaries and officials from sector ministries of the Government of Ghana, representatives of the regional economic communities- the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA)- high level experts from both private and public sectors, industry players, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), National Security, development agencies -World Bank, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-and the media among others.

Welcome Address by Ms. Benonita Bismarck, Chief Executive Officer, GSA
In her address, the Chief Executive Officer of Ghana Shippers Authority (GSA), Ms. Benonita Bismarck, said her outfit has been collaborating with the West Africa Trade Hub, and subsequently Borderless Alliance, for the past 13 years to pursue the agenda of fluidity in trade traffic in the sub-region through advocacy and the development of innovative products for addressing bottlenecks to trade along Ghana’s transit corridor.

She said concerted efforts have been made by the GSA in addressing issues of inadequate tracking devices, red-tape along the road corridors, detention of Ghanaian trucks at the Burkina Faso border, “Goro boys” (informal brokers), and high cost of laissez-passer, among others.

She reiterated her outfit’s commitment to addressing recurring challenges affecting transit shippers and impeding trade facilitation.
Remarks by Mr. Jonas Lago President of the Executive Committee of Borderless Alliance
On his part, the President of the Executive Committee of Borderless Alliance, Mr. Jonas Lago, indicated that since his organization’s establishment seven years ago, it has received strong support from its partners, which led to concrete results in improving governance and trade in West Africa.

He took the opportunity to invite all companies to join the Alliance, in their difficult but inspiring mission to facilitate trade and transport.

Remarks by Mrs. Janean Davis, Acting Deputy Mission Director of USAID
The Acting Deputy Mission Director of USAID in Ghana, Mrs. Janean Davis, highlighted the United States Government’s continued commitment to increase trade and investment, as a tool for West Africa’s development, and support its journey to self-reliance, as echoed by the ‘Ghana Beyond Aid’ agenda. “We believe that West African countries stand to realize major economic benefits by integrating their economies with each other and with the rest of the world. We are committed to promoting intra-regional trade in the region, by collaborating with other development partners, to co-fund the Trade Facilitation in West Africa [TFWA] Programme” she said. She added that TFWA supported regional organizations such as ECOWAS and UEMOA to design and implement regional trade facilitation measures. Mrs. Davis added that the measures were developed to improve regional trading conditions and facilitate the movement of goods along selected corridors. She assured that her outfit will continue to support the work of Borderless Alliance to advocate and promote intra-regional trade and integration in the sub-region.

Remarks by Mr. Helge Sander, Deputy Head of Mission of German Embassy
The Deputy Head of Mission of German Embassy, Mr. Helge Sander, in a speech read on behalf of the German Ambassador to Ghana, H.E. Christophe Retzlaff, said that at the regional level, new steps have been taken by the two Regional Economic Communities, ECOWAS and UEMOA, aimed towards strengthening the regional integration process and complying with international best practices in terms of trade facilitation. As the region moves closer towards establishing a joint customs territory, he commended the adoption of the Community Customs code, a document approved by the ECOWAS commission which is fully in line with the World Trade Organization’s Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO/TFA) and the revised Kyoto Convention.

He however mentioned that a setback in realizing the region’s full trade potential is the slow implementation of the Single African Air Transport Market. According to him only half of the 28 signatories to the Agreement have signed the memorandum for implementation, and out of that, only 3 countries are actually implementing it. According to the African Union (AU), this measure alone would liberalize 80% of the existing air transport market in Africa, leading to a $1.3 billion higher gross domestic product (GDP) and 155,000 additional jobs in Africa.
The Federal Republic of Germany along with the European Union (EU), Netherlands and USAID is funding the four year TFWA program aimed at reducing the time and cost of trade, to enable free and efficient trade in the region, as well as strengthening the ability of regional trading networks, to take advantage of the various trade protocols and agreements.

Remarks by His Excellency Salou DJIBO, Chairman of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme Task Force
In his message of support to Borderless Alliance, His Excellency Salou DJIBO, Chairman of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme Task Force, recalled the reasons that led to the creation of the Task Force. He then reviewed the first advocacy mission conducted by the Task Force in all fifteen ECOWAS member states, with support from Borderless Alliance, which identified major obstacles to the free movement of goods, and hence to regional integration. He hoped, however, that the numerous instruments available to ECOWAS and the international commitments made by member states will help "to support the efforts being made to remove these obstacles and make the ECOWAS Free Trade Area more effective ".

Remarks by Mr. Tiemtore Salifou, Director of Customs at the ECOWAS Commission
Mr. Tiemtore Salifou, Director of Customs at the ECOWAS Commission, began with a tribute to Borderless Alliance, on behalf of the President of the Commission, for organizing annual conferences since 2012, which have proved to be a key public-private dialogue platform for providing an opportunity to discuss ways and means to accelerate the process of regional integration. He then welcomed the choice of the theme of the conference, which was built around instruments that ECOWAS has very recently adopted and implemented, with a view to strengthening the regional integration process, in order to be in line with international best practices in trade facilitation. He pointed out that these reforms were binding on ECOWAS, with the adoption of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and the adoption of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA). Mr Tiemtoré listed a number of reforms underway in the region, which were aimed at achieving "flexible rules that take into account the interests of economic operators".

Remarks by Mr. Joaozinho MENDES, Commissioner in charge of the Regional Market and Cooperation Department of the UEMOA Commission
Mr. Joaozinho MENDES, Commissioner in charge of the Regional Market and Cooperation Department of the UEMOA Commission, stressed the importance of trade facilitation, which is a key tool for development, despite the obstacles throughout the sub-region. He noted that the ongoing dialogue between ECOWAS and UEMOA aimed at agreeing on the instruments governing trade and transport in West Africa. He ended his remarks by mentioning the establishment of the free-movement system, "which will lead to the elimination of procedures at the region's internal borders, free intra-regional trade from all the obstacles observed when crossing borders, and relaunch intra-regional trade with beneficial effects on business competitiveness, economic growth and the well-being of citizens."
Remarks by the Minister of Transport, Hon. Kweku Ofori-Asiamah

The Minister of Transport, Hon. Kweku Ofori-Asiamah, in a speech read on his behalf by the Deputy Transport Minister, Hon. Titus Glover, expressed his Government’s commitment to tackling issues of road transport by working closely with industry players, to ensure the smooth movement of goods and people in the West Africa sub-region.

According to him, the Government of Ghana recognizes the crucial role of transport in trade facilitation, social development and the regional economic growth.

He however noted that it is unfortunate that the implementation of the several regional policies such as the axle load regime, the ECOWAS Common External Tariff, the protocol on free movement of goods and persons across the sub-region, have been confronted with challenges like multiple checkpoints, harassment and diversion of goods that militate against national, regional and continental efforts to industrialize.

He said that the inadequate number of roadworthy trucks is also a major reason for the high costs of transportation. There is therefore the need for more high quality trucks that are appropriate for the terrain of the sub-region. He urged the leaders of industries and commerce to work in partnership with government agencies to ensure that this deficiency is rectified.

“Reducing cost, delays and removing all unnecessary obstacles within the transport corridors in our sub-region will not only make trading more competitive and accessible but will also bring about development”, he assured.

Remarks by Hon. Alan Kyerematen, Minister of Trade and Industry

The Minister of Trade and Industry, Hon. Alan Kyerematen, in a speech read on his behalf by the Deputy Minister for Trade, Hon. Carlos Ahenkorah, said that if we are to experience an increase in intra-regional trade within West Africa, we need to double our efforts and develop a trading environment that will allow the region to become a hub for both agricultural and industrial development. Collectively, we all stand to benefit from an increase in regional trade. He reiterated his Government’s resolve to ease the movement of goods at the ports, with the introduction of the paperless ports system and the Tema Port Expansion project. He further stated that Ghana commits to adhering to regional treaties (the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme - ETLS and the ECOWAS Common External tariff - CET), as well as the international trade facilitating agreements; the World Trade Organization’s Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO-TFA), and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), which recently received the required 22 ratifications to enter soon into force. He congratulated all the countries that have ratified this agreement and urged the remaining countries to come on board.

Ghana has officially submitted its bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat in Accra, in view of its favourable business environment, stable democracy, famous hospitality and its ambitious objective to become the top destination for doing business in the sub-region.
In conclusion, he urged the private sector, civil society organizations and advocacy groups like Borderless Alliance to continue to engage and dialogue with ECOWAS governments, to push for reforms in trade facilitation across the region.
Day 2
Presentation by Mr. Justin Bayili, Executive Secretary, Borderless Alliance
The first session began with a general overview of the past year’s activity of the Borderless Alliance, delivered by its Executive Secretary, Mr. Justin Bayili. In his presentation, he summarized proceedings from Borderless 2018 conference, as well as the major activities, recommendations and the success stories that were chalked over the past year.

The second day of the conference also featured two plenary sessions, the first panel was on “International Trade Update: The Impact of International Instruments on Regional Trade”, while the second was on the topic “Trade Across West Africa and the latest developments”.

Panel 1: International Trade Update: The Impact of International Instruments on Regional Trade
The panel was moderated by Dr. Kofi Mbiah, former Chief Executive Officer of Ghana Shippers Authority and current Chief Executive Officer of the Ghana Chamber of Shipping. The panel comprised of Markus Wauschkuhn, Project Manager for the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation; Mr. Anthony Nyame Baafi, Co-Chairman of the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTC) of Ghana and Director for Multilateral, Regional and Bilateral Trade at the Ministry of Trade and Industry; and Mr. Serigne Ndanck Mbaye Chief Executive Officer for West Africa & Country Head for Ghana of DHL.

Markus Wauschkuhn gave participants an overview on the World Trade Organizations’ Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO/TFA). He highlighted some reforms and the overall objective of the WTO agreement. He emphasized the underlying objective of the WTO agreement, which was to reduce trade cost by significantly reducing bureaucracy at the borders and create new jobs. He added that ill-resourced border agencies, lack of skilled staff and logistics constraints in some ports are the main barriers impeding the smooth implementation of the agreement, hence forestalling free flow of goods at the various ports.

Mr. Anthony Nyame Baafi took participants through an overview of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and its importance to trade facilitation efforts across the African continent. He mentioned that the objective of the AfCFTA is to increase intra-African trade, enhance competitiveness of entrepreneurs, add value to Africans natural resources which is expected to create jobs and enhance living standards of the people on the continent. Mr. Baafi, opined that 22 out of 52 member states have so far ratified the AfCFTA. He stressed that the AfCFTA has enormous benefits that will increase exchange and free flow of goods across the borders of Africa and will present the continent as a strong force to reckon with in the world. He concluded that Ghana, together with stakeholders, CSO and private sector, is ready to support in terms of resources to make the implementation of the agreement a success.

Mr. Serigne Ndanck Mbaye brought to the fore the perspectives of the private sector on the WTO/TFA and AfCFTA. He highlighted some of the numerous challenges the private sector faces as far as trade facilitation is concerned- double taxation, high cost of duties and other charges at the
ports and high levels of standards. He called on ECOWAS and UEMOA to address these challenges to make doing business at the various ports faster, convenient and safer.

Panel 2: Trade across West Africa and the latest developments
The panel was moderated by the former Commissioner of Customs for Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), Mr. Wallace Akondor. The panel comprised Mr. Salifou Tiemtoore, the Director of Customs at the ECOWAS Commission; Dr. Godfred Okoh Appiah, the Tema Sector Commander for the Customs Division of GRA; and Mr. Emmanuel Yoda, the Deputy General Manager of Burkina Chamber of Commerce (CCI-BF) and President of ECOWAS Single Guarantors Association.

Mr. Tiemtoore Salifou, took participants through the new ECOWAS Customs Code and new rules to appreciate the origin of goods under the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS). He also referred to the Interconnection Project for Customs Administrations in the region, called the Interconnected Transit Goods Management System (SIGMAT), which will now allow ECOWAS Customs Administrations to exchange specific messages on cargo goods in transit from one state to another.

Dr. Godfred Okoh Appiah, switched to the national level and went through the Customs Administration perspective in Ghana. He explained the various ECOWAS and Customs codes, protocols and procedures at the ports. Dr. Okoh stressed the introduction of the Common External tariff (CET) and other regulations which make ECOWAS a Customs Union. He called on various stakeholders, including private sector representatives and CSOs, to collaborate with the Customs authorities in order to facilitate intra-community trade.

Mr. Emmanuel Yoda presented a case study on ECOWAS Single Guarantors System, which is currently being implemented on Burkina-Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina-Ghana corridors.
Day 3
Activities on the last day were organized in 3 events: two plenary sessions and a closing ceremony. The first session was on the topic “Security Challenges in Border Management” and the second session was on the topic “New Regional Initiatives on Trade Facilitation in West Africa”.

Panel 1: Security Challenges in Border Management
The panel was moderated by Mr. Fechin Akoto, the Chief Revenue Collection Officer of Customs at GRA. The panel comprised Mr. Osei Bonsu Dickson, the National Coordinator of Security Governance Initiative (Ghana) and Chief Legal Advisor of the National Security Council of Ghana; Mr. Jonas Lago, Public Relations Director and Facilitation Advisor for Scanning Systems, and President of the Executive Committee of Borderless Alliance; Dr. Edu-Afful, Dep. Program Head of the Peace Support Operations at Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center (KAIPTC); and Mr. Ziad Hamoui, Executive Director of Tarzan Enterprise Ltd. and National President of Borderless Alliance for Ghana.

Mr. Osei Bonsu Dickson gave an overview of the many challenges associated with trade and the need to instill stricter monitoring mechanism along the borders and at border crossings to manage cross border crime issues like smuggling, armed robbery and trafficking. He said that the rule of law must be made to apply at border posts to prevent serious revenue leakages for government.

Next, Mr. Jonas Lago discussed the role of joint border posts in Trade facilitation. Joint Border Posts (JBPs) are indeed a solution and a critical tool for improving cross-border trade in West Africa. However the objectives of these JBP's necessarily involve taking into account the constraints identified. For this reason, the private sector advocates for stronger public-private dialogue as well as a focus on speed, transparency and harmonization of control for the efficient management of land borders in order to accelerate the achievement of regional integration goals for smooth trade and unhindered movement of people and goods.

Dr. Edu-Afful focused his contribution on security risks and crime fighting along porous borders. He said that African borders are generally very porous and that most African states are incapable of adequately managing them. Border cooperation is still elusive because there is no real information sharing among agencies, due to the lack of political will, intelligence sharing, shared trust or proper coordination mechanisms. There is a need to develop border community oriented solutions in order to address the security situation at the borders in a meaningful way.

Wrapping up the panel, Mr. Ziad Hamoui stressed the need to balance security and free movement of people and goods in West Africa. He said that the cost and risk of doing business in West Africa is preventing the region from taking advantage of the huge market potential that exists. There is the need to enhance cross-border trade, without compromising security. This can be achieved by building a win-win partnership between government agencies, decision makers, thought leaders, strategic partners and private enterprises in order to promote regional economic integration and the free movement of goods and people, to the benefit of all.
Panel 2: New Regional Initiatives on Trade Facilitation in West Africa

The second panel discussion was moderated by the Director of Trade at the ECOWAS Commission, Mr. Tiemtore Salifou, under the topic “New Regional Initiatives on Trade Facilitation in West Africa”. Participants were educated on two key regional projects coming up in West Africa; the “Trade Facilitation West Africa Program” (TFWA), which was presented by Mrs. Evelyn Ayivor from the World Bank Group, and the “Africa Food Trade & Resilience Program” (AFTRP), which was presented by the Head of Regional Food Trade for Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Mr. Daniel Njiwa.

Mrs Ayivor stated that the TFWA Program is a multi-donor initiative to improve the efficient movement of goods in the region and internationally, by reducing the time and cost of trade borne by the private sector in West Africa. The four-year program is being funded by the Federal Republic of Germany along with the European Union (EU), Netherlands and USAID and is implemented by the World Bank Group and GIZ.

Mr Njiwa informed participants that the Regional Food Trade and Resilience Initiative was aimed at stimulating an increase in regional food trade between surplus and deficit areas in sub Saharan Africa (SSA), contributing to satisfying a growing food demand through regional food value chains even under climate shocks and change, and generating more resilient income for farmers and rural jobs. The initiative is supported by UKAID.

After this session, members of Borderless Alliance and designated key stakeholders headed to the Annual General Meeting to discuss the internal affairs of the organization, while other participants engaged in networking, Business to business (B2B) discussions and further information exchanges.

Overall, participants were excited to be at the conference and the opportunities it gave them. “It was a very good networking opportunity and my time was spent wisely. I am today responding to attendees who have already reached out to me over the weekend [after the conference]. I was impressed by the seniority and relevance of presenters and attendees that were attracted”, said Mr. Martin Hiles, Senior Consultant with SMEC who attended the full program, when reached for feedback following the conference.
Conference Recommendations

The following recommendations were presented to the participants of Borderless 2019 conference and adopted:

- Borderless Alliance should engage more with the grassroots, private sector and trade and transport industry players on their challenges and recommend solutions to these challenges to spur growth and boost trade;

- Borderless Alliance must organize more sensitization workshops to enlighten traders at the grassroots and national levels on the WTO/ TFA and AfTCFA Agreements;

- Borderless Alliance needs to dialogue and advocate together with private sector and other CSOs to government to fast track the full implementation of various trade agreements, protocols and policies;

- Borderless Alliance should collaborate with ECOWAS, Private Sector, Customs to educate women at the grassroots and national levels to equip them with the protocols and agreements governing trade in the region;

- The ECOWAS Commission should support in building a robust digital system, that will address all bottlenecks and reduce human interference at the various maritime ports across the region. The system security should be reinforced to prevent hacking.

- Borderless Alliance must advocate for the consolidation of West Africa’s main regional economic communities, ECOWAS and UEMOA, to form a solid and unified front that can help build the African continent;

- Borderless Alliance should increase the number of women at the panel level to ensure gender equity and balance in subsequent conference;

- Borderless Alliance needs to lobby government and decision makers to help develop the political will to flush out corrupt officials at the various ports and land borders;

- Borderless Alliance should ensure that the conference and its proceedings are used as a platform to advocate to government officials on key challenges and concerns of stakeholders and industry players in the region. Therefore, the next conference should have government officials and representatives sitting through the entire duration and activities;

- Borderless Alliance must increase its advocacy on trade facilitation in West Africa;
The 8th Borderless Conference

- Borderless Alliance should engage the academic community from projects like African Governance and Space (AFRIGOS) and African Borderlands Research Network (ABORNE), which can provide fact-based evidence from in-depth research on topics directly relevant to the work of Borderless Alliance and its members.

Closing Ceremony
The event climaxed with a closing ceremony, which included the submission of the conference’s key resolutions and recommendations, the reading of messages of appreciation and the “hand-over” ceremony, which is the official transfer of the responsibility of organizing the next edition of the annual regional conference. As such, the National Committee of Borderless Alliance in Ghana handed over the responsibility to organize Borderless 2020 to the National Committee of Borderless Alliance in Cote D’Ivoire.

Certificates of appreciation were also presented to sponsors and partners who through their financial support made the conference a great success.

The Chairman of the Executive Committee of Borderless Alliance, Mr. Jonas Lago, thanked the Ghanaian authorities, partner institutions, the National Committee of Ghana and the Executive Secretariat for their efforts in successfully organizing the 8th Annual Conference.

Closing Remarks
Mr. Fred Asiedu-Dartey, the Head of Freight & Logistics at Ghana Shippers Authority, on behalf of the Chief Executive Officer of the Local Host Institution in Ghana, gave the closing remarks. He congratulated Borderless Alliance for successfully organizing the conference and thanked all participants from the region and beyond for their active participation, which made the event a resounding success.

The next Borderless Conference was scheduled for Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire in 2020.