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WAPIS

NEWSLETTER



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EDITORIAL

In my role as INTERPOL’s Director for Planning and Development, I have had the honour, in recent years, of being able to keep a very close eye on implementation of the WAPIS programme.

In this editorial, I would like to share with you a report on the activities of a project which, over the course of the past year, has had a definite impact on the region’s security architecture.

2021 began full of hope after 2020, a year fraught with difficulties due to the pandemic that has affected us all deeply.

My team was able to undertake operational and strategic missions that helped re-energize implementation of the Programme in countries where activities had come to a standstill.

This reboot was also possible thanks to the strict but necessary recommendations imposed by the Steering Committee and the ECOWAS ministerial meeting on 30 and 31 March 2021. Since then, we have been hard at work, active on all fronts in order to implement all the recommendations of these committees.

We’ve rolled up our sleeves and I personally have been closely involved in this process at the team’s sides, notably through strategic missions to Mauritania and the Gambia, that allowed us to revitalize the commitment of the authorities in these countries at the highest level.

And thus it was that from September, the seeds sown during the first part of the year started to bear fruit, especially in certain countries where the project had been suspended, as you will be able to see during the presentation of country-by-country progress, in the final section of this newsletter.

2021 gave us new hope for the success of the Programme, with some important results: for example, signature by the last outstanding country, namely Ghana, of the MoU on implementation, or even adoption by Cape Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, the Gambia, Mauritania and Nigeria of the legal framework required for the System.

We also inaugurated three DACOREs, in the Gambia, Mauritania and Nigeria, between May and October of this year. Data entry has therefore started in these countries and has already led to encouraging results, demonstrating the countries’ commitment.



Since the beginning of the Programme, 439 law enforcement officers, including 57 women, have been trained by my team to use the WAPIS System. The databases for all the countries already contain more than 155,422 entries on individuals, suspects or victims.

The WAPIS Programme will end in June 2022. Huge efforts are still needed in this race against the clock. I am therefore urging the countries and my teams to continue their efforts and maintain their commitment to the success of the Programme.

Moreover, I can tell you that negotiations are ongoing with the European Union in order to find new solutions to tackle organized crime and terrorism in West Africa. These tools will be made available to countries who have demonstrated their willingness to tackle international crime and will contribute to improving the safety and well-being of every citizen in West Africa.

I would like to end my editorial by addressing my sincere thanks to the European Union and members of the European Union delegations in the various countries, who have pulled out all the stops to support us on a daily basis during our missions, and for the resounding success of the Programme in the countries for which they are responsible.

Last but not least is our strategic partner, the ECOWAS Commission and all its representatives in our beneficiary countries, who have taken responsibility for the Programme and are working alongside us to shake up the direction of policy to ensure effective Programme implementation.

I'd like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the member States represented by the SPOCs and to all staff involved in the WAPIS system for their day-to-day work. This commitment, made at the highest political level, must become a reality to ensure the safety of people and property in the West African region in the face of the rise in terrorism that is increasingly knocking at our door.

Finally, I'd like to offer huge thanks again to my team, especially the country officers who are travelling constantly, to the support staff who take care of all the administrative, procurement and communication tasks, and to the Programme Director, Richard Gotwe, who devotes the whole of his time to implementing the Programme.

I leave you in the certain knowledge that a police information system will soon be up and running in West Africa, which will simplify the day-to-day work of police officers and will improve the safety of every citizen in West Africa.

Connecting police officers to create a safer world is our goal here at INTERPOL, and it is also the goal of the WAPIS system.

LEAD STORIES

Inauguration of the national Data Collection and Registration Centre (DACORE): Mauritania has a new tool to help fight against transnational organized crime and terrorism

The government of Mauritania inaugurated the national Data Collection and Registration Centre (DACORE) on 1 October 2021 at the head office of the Directorate-General for National Security in Nouakchott.

This ceremony was presided over by Mr Mesgharou Ould Sidi, Director General of National Security, in the presence of Mr Jérôme Lebouc, representing the Head of the European Union Delegation in Mauritania, Mr Dirk Allaerts, INTERPOL's Director for Planning and Development, as well as representatives of the law enforcement agencies and the Ministry of Finance.

The DACORE is a police data collection and registration centre that will be responsible for managing the West African Police Information System (WAPIS) in Mauritania.

This centre will act as a catalyst for strengthening security and synergy between law enforcement agencies in the country, by involving them in the process of collecting, storing and sharing criminal data at national, regional and global levels via INTERPOL's I-24/7 secure communications channel.

The DACORE will thus make it easier for front-line agents to conduct their day-to-day work on criminal investigations, as well as in processing the movements of people and property at border crossing points.

This inauguration ceremony was preceded by a WAPIS National Committee, consisting of various law enforcement agency managers responsible for defining the guidelines for Programme implementation, which adopted the action plan for implementing WAPIS in the country for 2022.



Cutting the ribbon at the inauguration of the national Data Collection and Registration Centre (DACORE), Nouakchott, 1 October 2021

LEAD STORIES

The Gambia strengthens its security architecture with the inauguration of its WAPIS Centre



Photo of the WAPIS Centre, Banjul (the Gambia), 1 October 2021

WAPIS achieved a crucial milestone in the Gambia with the inauguration of the WAPIS Data Collection and Registration Centre in Banjul on 1 October 2021.

This ceremony, presided over by the Minister of the Interior, Mr Yankuba Sonko, was attended by Mr Vabah K. Gayflor, Special Representative of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the Gambia, Mr Corrado Pampaloni, Ambassador to the European Union Delegation in Banjul, Mr Richard Gotwe, WAPIS Programme Director, as well as a number of law enforcement agency managers and ambassadors to ECOWAS member states based in the Gambia.

Concluding the series of speeches during the ceremony, the Minister of the Interior noted that the WAPIS programme

was a godsend for the country, because it will considerably strengthen regional and global co-operation efforts in terms of security to deal with the insecurity caused by threats from transnational organized criminal networks, especially maritime crimes such as piracy and other illegal activities on sea, off the coast of West Africa and, more generally, in the Gulf of Guinea. Lastly, he underlined the importance of the Programme for his ministry and, by extension, for the Gambia.

As in Mauritania, the inauguration was followed by a WAPIS national Committee, which adopted the implementation action plan for 2022.

Moreover, in the context of the WAPIS programme, six training sessions in use of the system have already been organized and 72 people have been trained. This training has been followed by the deployment and installation of 40 WAPIS work stations in the DACORE, as well as in miscellaneous law enforcement agencies in the capital, notably the police, immigration services and the Drug Law Enforcement Agency (DLEA).

The Gambia is one of the new beneficiary countries in which the WAPIS programme has been implemented in the context of its third phase since November 2017. The MoU between the government of the Gambia and INTERPOL was signed on 19 January 2019.

The WAPIS Centre in the Gambia is the 8th operational data centre in West Africa, after Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria.

The Benin authorities raise awareness in law enforcement agencies about WAPIS

The Minister of the Interior and Public Security, Mr Alassane SEIDOU, opened the WAPIS programme information and awareness-raising session on 11 October 2021 in the conference room at the Ministry of Finance in Cotonou.

This INTERPOL WAPIS Programme information and awareness-raising session, organized by the Public Security Documentation Centre (CDSP) with support from the INTERPOL WAPIS programme, took place over three days and had the objective of raising awareness of law enforcement officers about the role of WAPIS and how it could be used to strengthen the security architecture in Benin.

Over the course of these three days, the national Point of contact, Mr Denis OGAN, as well as the CDSP team supported by INTERPOL's WAPIS team, discussed several topics relating to the implementation of WAPIS in Benin, including the need to comply with the principles of personal data protection.

These information and awareness-raising sessions have inspired over 500 participants from all the law enforcement agencies and the country's criminal justice system. Also represented

were the Republican Police, the Justice System, Water and Forestry and Customs services, as well as the Authority for the protection of personal data (APDP) in Benin.

In order to make WAPIS accessible to the participating countries, INTERPOL is planning to organize several information and awareness-raising sessions from the start of 2022.



Photo of the opening ceremony, Cotonou (Benin), 11 October 2021

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Data quality at the heart of the regional training organized by the WAPIS Programme

After the 1st regional training session on data quality which took place in Cotonou from 14 to 18 June 2021, a 2nd session was held from 7 to 9 September 2021 aimed at law enforcement officers and system users from five countries participating in the Programme, four of which are English-speaking and one Portuguese-speaking. These are Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau.

This training, delivered by INTERPOL's WAPIS Programme experts and Mr Christian Aghroum, a data quality expert consultant, improved WAPIS users' ability to process usable high-quality data in the System. Particular emphasis was placed on compliance with the principles of personal data protection when processing data in the WAPIS System.

The opening ceremony for this training was attended by the Director of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Mr Isaac Ken Yenboah, representing the Director General of Ghana's Police service, the ECOWAS resident Representative in



Family photo of the training opening ceremony, Accra (Ghana), 7 September 2021

Ghana, Mr Baba Gana Wakil, as well as Mr Jean Pierre Bardoul and Mr Akizi Egnim Akala, Representative of the Ambassador to the European Union Delegation in Ghana and INTERPOL Operations Coordinator respectively.

Ghana's WAPIS system now connected to INTERPOL's I-24/7 system

The WAPIS centre (DACORE) and INTERPOL's National Central Bureau in Accra embody the MoU signed on 28 October 2019 concerning the granting of direct access to INTERPOL's I24/7 information system.



Police officers in Ghana's police service working in the WAPIS centre, Accra (Ghana)

Indeed, the aim of this agreement signed between the two parties is to authorize the WAPIS centre, in accordance with Article 31 of INTERPOL's Data processing regulations and the "Charter for access to INTERPOL's information system by national entities", to look up data processed in INTERPOL's I-24/7 information system directly.

This agreement has just come into force with the effective extension of INTERPOL's I-24/7 system to the national WAPIS system via the DACORE. This connection will henceforth allow WAPIS users in Ghana to benefit from direct access to INTERPOL's criminal databases, thus strengthening the capacity of the various agencies equipped with WAPIS to tackle terrorism and transnational organized crime more effectively.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The WAPIS Programme strengthens the capacity of IRAPOL officers in Burkina Faso concerning personal data protection

On 17 November 2021 in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), the WAPIS Programme delivered training to 16 IRAPOL system users on the principles for processing personal data.

The IRAPOL system is a national automated police data processing system for tackling transnational crime and terrorism more effectively. It includes the processing of various types of data, including personal data.

Training has placed particular emphasis on the need to comply with the principles of personal data protection. This will ensure a balance between security needs and basic human rights.

The opening ceremony was presided over by Mr Issiaka Tou, national point of contact representing the Head of the IRAPOL Project, who took pains to thank the partners for the support given to IRAPOL through the WAPIS Programme in order to strengthen capacity in Burkina Faso with regard to the fight against terrorism.

A number of law enforcement agencies, including the Police and the Gendarmerie, were represented during this training.



Training IRAPOL officers, Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), 17 November 2021

The WAPIS Programme shares its experience in the field with an expert from the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA)

From 22 to 24 September 2021, the WAPIS Programme was visited by Mr Yves Thierry SOME, Community Visa Officer in the UEMOA Commission.

In the context of implementing the Supplementary Act on a common UEMOA policy regarding movement and residence of non-citizens of the Union, the plan is to:

- Establish a single visa;
- Harmonize and simplify the administrative procedures concerning conditions of entry and residence for citizens of third-party States in the UEMOA area;
- Contribute to creating a community environment that promotes investment and tourism in the UEMOA.

In order to get this common policy up and running, it was necessary to create national databases and a community database, alongside the development of an information-sharing system for visas and movement of people in the subregion.

In view of the above, INTERPOL was asked for assistance because of its expertise and experience in implementing the WAPIS Programme in the region. Individual and team meetings have provided an opportunity to discuss the challenges encountered in implementing WAPIS and, especially, to make recommendations to the expert on how to implement the UEMOA project.



Visit of the WAEMU community Visa Officer, Abidjan, 22 September 2021

THE MEN AND WOMEN BEHIND THE SYSTEM

With the adoption of the legal framework for effective implementation of WAPIS, setting up the organizational architecture of the System requires the appointment of a director/manager of the Data Collection and Registration centre (DACORE), who will manage the administrative and operational aspects of the Centre. We are therefore going to meet these directors so we can find out who these men and women behind the System are in Côte d'Ivoire and the Gambia.



Lahai Joseph, Director of the Sierra Leone DACORE

Professional experience:

Enlisted into the Sierra Leone Police Force in 1993 as University Graduate Constable holding a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Sierra Leone. Served as a Criminal Matter Investigator, Operations Officer and Administrator. Entered the College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences, University of Sierra Leone and graduated with a Bachelor's in Pharmacy with Honours and appointed

Surname: Lahai

Forename:
Joseph

Grade: Grade
9 Police
Commissioner

In post since:
December 2021

as Commanding Officer of the Anti-Drugs Unit in the Sierra Leone Police Force.

In 2015, was awarded a Fulbright scholarship and travelled to the United States of America where he studied Latent prints (finger, palm, foot and tyre prints) and Forensic Toxicology, at the Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond City, Virginia State and returned home with a Postgraduate Certificate in Forensic pattern evidence and Forensic Toxicology. Promoted recently to the rank of Commissioner of Police.

Vision of WAPIS:

- Establishment of a fully-functional WAPIS in Sierra Leone
- Capacity-building of Staff in the WAPIS structure (In-service training)
- Enhanced cooperation and collaboration with regional WAPIS structures
- Extended networking with similar structures across Africa and even beyond
- Unhindered operations of WAPIS on a 24-hour basis
- Instilling our presence and operations into the minds of criminals and by so doing deterring their plans
- Expansion of the WAPIS Programme across the country
- Collection and preservation of Criminal Data at all times.



Ould Béchir Moctar, Director of the Mauritania DACORE

Professional experience:

- **2007:** Awarded Police Officer grade
- **2008/2009:** Head of the Monitoring and Follow-up Department at DAF/DGSN
- **2009/2012:** Secondment to the Ministry of Finance/IT Department
- **2012/2018:** District Commissioner in certain towns in the country

Surname: Ould
Béchir

Forename: Moctar

Grade: Police
Commissioner (IT
Engineer)

Position: Head of
Center CREDP/DPJ/
DGSN/

In post since:
18 October 2021

- **2020:** Trained in the Police Commissioner grade at the Royal Morocco Academy
- **18/10/2021:** Director of the WAPIS police data collection and registration centre

Vision of WAPIS:

Our country is proud and honoured to be implementing the WAPIS Programme in order to tackle the terrorism and organized crime that is rife in the West African region and the Sahel in particular.

At national level, WAPIS aims to increase collaboration between law enforcement agencies via communal sharing of our criminal information. WAPIS will make it easier to solve criminal investigations once the national database is up and running. In terms of expanding the system, we have already opened four sites in the police and gendarmerie services in Nouakchott, and we plan to open six new sites in the near future. At regional level, WAPIS will allow police officers and other defence and security forces in West Africa to access crucial police information in order to identify criminals who hold sway in the region.

CONCLUSION



Richard GOTWE
WAPIS programme director

Dear readers,

Here we are again at the end of the year. Another year that has been so busy for the Programme that we haven't noticed the months going by.

2021, despite being a year that was still marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, was dominated by the relaunch and acceleration of implementation of activities in the beneficiary countries after a 2020 that was, as we are all well aware, a year that was significantly affected by this pandemic.

Since January, with the lifting of restrictive travel measures, we resumed our operational and strategic missions. This year was kicked off with the 5th Steering Committee Meeting and the ECOWAS Ministerial Committee Meeting on the implementation of WAPIS, held on 30 and 31 March 2021. These meetings allowed the state of play post-COVID-19 in the beneficiary countries to be established, and above all to give the Programme a roadmap for implementing WAPIS in the different countries.

We should also welcome the commitment of the WAPIS Programme beneficiary countries which, despite the health restrictions, have demonstrated resilience and have never skimped on the resources needed to continue inexorably to get closer towards achieving our common goal: tackling transnational crime and terrorism.

To illustrate this commitment, we can mention the adoption, with just one exception, of the legal framework required for WAPIS System implementation by all the beneficiary countries, and the following results that have been achieved:

- Renovation of the DACOREs completed in Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Nigeria, Mauritania, Togo and Guinea;
- Inauguration of the DACORE in Nigeria, Mauritania and the Gambia. These DACOREs are still operational today, raising the number of operational DACOREs from six to nine;
- Organization of two regional sessions on data quality for beneficiary countries, in Ghana for the English-speaking countries and in Benin for the French- and Portuguese-speaking countries;
- Organization of an information and awareness-raising session on WAPIS in Benin, attended by more than 500 participants;
- Training of more than 400 law enforcement officers during a number of sessions aimed at WAPIS trainers and users in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania, Nigeria and Togo.

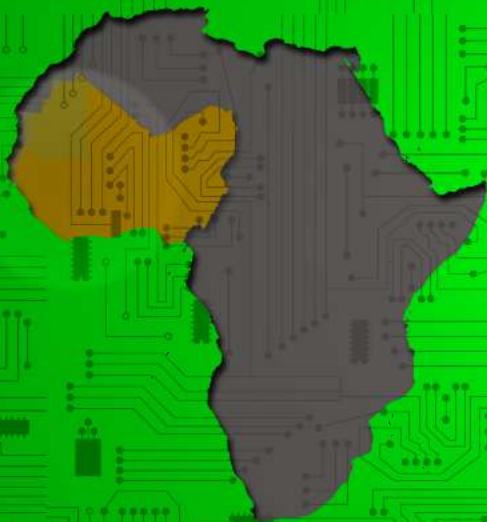
2022 will be a pivotal year since we will be contractually six months from the end of the Programme, which means that we need to redouble our efforts to consolidate what we've learned and ensure the continuity of WAPIS in the beneficiary countries. A number of priority actions are already in our sights, especially getting the new DACOREs up and running, extending the WAPIS system, boosting the number of work stations in the countries, and finally starting up the ECOWAS data sharing regional platform.

Before concluding, I would like to express my thanks to the European Union for its unwavering support, and also to the ECOWAS Commission, our strategic partner, for its fruitful collaboration in the context of this Programme.

Not forgetting the beneficiary countries: thanks in particular to our national points of contact (SPOCs) who work alongside us, to the legal and technical experts in every country, the administrators, operators, validators, and finally the users who make the WAPIS system work on a daily basis.

During the coming year, we will be even more motivated and determined to give the best of ourselves so that WAPIS becomes your daily work tool and that it contributes effectively to increasing your capacity to tackle transnational crime and terrorism, thanks to improved management and sharing of police information.

With many thanks again for your unwavering support, I wish you a very happy festive season and good health, and hope you stay safe from the COVID-19 pandemic, which is still with us.



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