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WAPIS

NEWSLETTER



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EDITORIAL

West Africa is currently at a crossroads. The security risks the region is facing mean that we have to make bold choices to ensure the safety of our populations and their property. This is why the West African Police Chiefs Committee (WAPCCO) expressed a desire to have modern tools that cross borders in order to tackle terrorism and transnational organized crime more effectively: this gave rise to the WAPIS programme, set up by Interpol and financed by the European Union.

Niger, the crossroads between North Africa and Saharan South Africa, was keenly aware of the many risks inherent in its geographical situation, and made the decision to take part in the WAPIS programme as a pilot country. Hence, since inauguration of the DACORE in September 2015, which officially marked the start of the programme, lots of successful actions have been achieved:

- > INTERPOL's vision is 'connecting police for a safer world', and the WAPIS programme is vital to these efforts.
- > Establishment of a training room and training of 100 operators;
- > Establishment of 26 sites in the town of Niamey;
- > Sites connected to the DACORE;
- > Mission to share good practice between the SPOCs of French- and Portuguese-speaking countries and Niger;
- > Using the WAPIS programme to select participants for the 2019 AU Extraordinary Summit.

However, our country does not intend to rest on its laurels. With the help of the national authorities and our partners, the following actions have been planned:

- > Creation of an operating budget for the WAPIS programme;
- > Expansion of the network to sites in the Regions (provinces).

We wish the WAPIS programme every success in keeping our populations safe!

LEAD STORIES

The ECOWAS Heads of State and Government are urging countries in the region to stick to their commitment to help ensure effective implementation of the WAPIS programme.

The 55th ordinary session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was held on 29 June 2019 in Abuja, in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In the chair was His Excellency Muhammadu Buhari, president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and current Conference Chair, and more than 13 presidents were in attendance.

After reviewing topical issues in the region, the presidents talked about the security situation, especially the fight against terrorism in the region. In this respect, fruitful and constructive talks were held about the West African Police Information System (WAPIS), a tool designed to combat transnational crime and terrorism. At the end of the discussions, in paragraph 36 of the final report, the Conference reaffirmed:

"[...] its attachment to implementing the WAPIS programme and urges member states to fulfil their respective obligations in order to speed up implementation of the programme. The Conference also asked the ECOWAS Commission to continue, in collaboration with Ministers responsible for security, following up this programme in order to roll out the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) component to all Member States."

A few days before the Heads of State and Government meeting, the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council (MSC) reiterated its commitment to the WAPIS programme, asking countries in the region to take all the steps necessary for effective implementation of the WAPIS programme.

This institutional support from the ECOWAS bodies in the programme will help speed up its roll-out in the countries, given the quick setup of the criminal data-sharing platform.

LEAD STORIES

The WAPIS programme came to fame through operation ADWENPA IV

Operation ADWENPA IV, which ran simultaneously in 13 West African countries between 16 and 22 July 2019, involved the participation of WAPIS national centres in three pilot countries (Benin, Ghana and Niger).



Review meeting of operation ADWENPA, 26 July 2019, Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)

Operation Adwenpa is the operational phase of the INTERPOL project to strengthen border management in West Africa, an initiative by the Capacity Building and Training Directorate, which benefits from financial support from the German Federal Foreign Office. With its name meaning "good intention", this project aims to strengthen border management capacity in West Africa, with the help of INTERPOL's policing capacity.

The purpose of participation in the programme was to support Operation Adwenpa so that it could achieve the aforementioned goals by allowing, as well as the tools and services offered by INTERPOL, access to the new national databases. This access consisted of consulting the national WAPIS databases in order to identify persons wanted or

posing a potential threat, stolen vehicles and stolen travel documents, that might be flagged up at national level but not listed in INTERPOL's databases.

This participation played a huge part in the operation's success. Indeed, in one of the countries, the database allowed formal identification of a passenger listed in the database for having committed cybercrime, and therefore posing a potential danger to their host country. The non-member country was warned of this person's arrival on their territory so that they could put preventive measures in place.

This success illustrates perfectly the operational relevance of the WAPIS database as an effective tool for preventing and fighting crime in whatever form through automated sharing of police data.

This initial experience offered the programme the possibility of:

- > assessing in a practical way whether national users have mastered the WAPIS tool
- > encouraging countries again to enter information in the database so that it can be used more effectively
- > encouraging national adoption of the WAPIS system
- > listing particular problems so that the app can be updated.

The programme will participate in other operational projects in the region in order to repeat this success.

Senegal makes its participation in the WAPIS programme official by signing the memorandum of understanding with INTERPOL

In the context of its collaboration with beneficiary countries, the WAPIS programme drew up a common memorandum of understanding with these countries in order to ensure it is properly implemented. This MoU restates the rights and duties of each party in the context of implementing the WAPIS system.

Following the example of Sierra Leone, Liberia, The Gambia, Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, Nigeria and Togo, Senegal has also signed this MoU.

This signing ceremony, which took place on Wednesday 19 June 2019, was presided over by Mr Aly N'gouille N'Diaye, Minister of the Interior, and Mr Carl Alexandre, INTERPOL's Executive Director for partnerships and planning.

This signature is bound to have a catalyzing effect on the programme's implementation in the country and will build the technical and operational capacities of Teranga's law enforcement agencies.



Signing ceremony of the MoU between the Senegalese Minister of the Interior and INTERPOL's Executive Director for partnerships and planning, 19 June 2019, Dakar (Senegal)

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Mali's law enforcement agencies adopt the WAPIS programme.

From 26 to 28 June 2019, an information session aimed at law enforcement officers to raise awareness about the WAPIS programme was held in Bamako, Mali.

The opening ceremony was presided over by the Deputy Director General of the National Police, alongside the ambassador, the EU delegation head of mission in Mali, the WAPIS programme director and deputy of the INTERPOL NCB, representing the WAPIS national point of contact.

In their speeches, they each stressed the importance of the WAPIS programme in the fight against crime involving security, especially in Mali, and reaffirmed their commitment to its implementation before inviting participants to become ambassadors for the WAPIS programme once the session was over.

The opening ceremony was also attended by representatives from EUCAP Sahel, EUTM Mali, MINUSMA and the local authorities, as well as officers from the national law enforcement agencies.

Over the three days, the country officer, Mr Akizi AKALA, along with the team from the Data Collection and Registration Centre (DACORE) talked to the participants about:

- > The WAPIS programme: how it came about, its objectives, those involved and the steps in its implementation;
- > The WAPIS system: its role, how it operates and its functions;
- > Implementation of the WAPIS system in Mali: the various stages since 2012, the legal framework, the DACORE and how it operates, officers' experience in entering information in the database on a daily basis, how existing self-governing remote outposts operate and the question of interconnection which is currently in progress;
- > Gave a demonstration of how the WAPIS app works.



Opening ceremony for the information and awareness session, 26 June 2019, Bamako (Mali)

All these modules were followed keenly by the participants, who recognized the positive impact and revolution the system will introduce into the investigative work done daily by law enforcement officers. They wanted to have quick interconnection so that the system could work efficiently.

All the participants were clearly aware of the importance of sharing information in order to fight crime more effectively and of the WAPIS app. The latter can overcome the problem of holding data on paper, which is difficult to keep on top of on a daily basis and, most importantly, will assist sharing with other agencies. They undertook to pass on what they'd learned to other competent authorities who were unable to take part.

In the context of its communication plan, the WAPIS programme intends to hold future information and awareness sessions in Niger, Ghana and Benin from September to boost adoption and better use of the system.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The WAPIS programme donates computer equipment to Liberia and The Gambia so that they can roll out the system



Having joined the programme in November 2017, during the third phase financed by the 11th European Development Fund (EDF), Liberia and The Gambia are the first countries to sign the MoU with INTERPOL in the context of implementing the WAPIS system.

This equipment was officially handed over in The Gambia on 3 July 2019, in the presence of the Minister of the Interior and representatives from ECOWAS and the European Union, then in Liberia on 5 July 2019, with the participation of

In order to deliver on the above commitment and get started on the work of digitizing paper-based police data, the WAPIS programme has donated equipment consisting of workstations, scanners and servers.

the Minister for Public Administration and representatives from ECOWAS and the European Union. INTERPOL was represented at both these ceremonies by the Director for Planning and Development.

It should be emphasized that The Gambia and Liberia have also found premises to host their future WAPIS data collection and registration centre and are working on refurbishing them. Inauguration of these centres is expected to take place at the end of 2019.

As a side event to this ceremony, the delegation from the WAPIS programme was able to discuss the strategy for implementing the system at national level with the local authorities of these two countries.

The programme national points of contact trained in the WAPIS system in Niger and Ghana.

Visit by the WAPIS programme English-speaking points of contact to the data collection and registration centre (DACORE), 10 July 2019, Accra (Ghana)

The WAPIS programme organized a mission to share good practice with Niger and Ghana, aimed at the programme's national points of contact, so that the new countries could benefit from the experience of the pilot countries.

These exchange missions were held respectively in Niger on 11 and 12 June 2019 with the French- and Portuguese-speaking national points of contact, and in Ghana on 10 and 11 July 2019 with the English-speaking national points of contact.

After taking part in the mission to Niamey, the national points of contact from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Cape Verde, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal and Togo had the opportunity to meet the Nigerian authorities, whose national point of contact is the Director General of Police and National Gendarmerie Deputy High Commander. These authorities gave them advice on how to implement the WAPIS programme effectively in their respective countries. A guided tour of the System facilities, including the WAPIS centre and remote sites (especially the Gendarmerie's central files division), helped participants understand the workings of the system and its architecture.

Since they share the same goals, the national points of contact from The Gambia, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone have benefited from Ghana's experience. As well as fruitful and instructive discussions with the national point of contact, the Director General of Police and the General Immigration Controller, they were given the opportunity to observe the work of data entry operators in the WAPIS centre, and also at the immigration service and the Kaneshie police station.

These missions sharing good practice also helped create a synergy between the national points of contact and lay the foundations for lasting open cooperation between them in the context of implementing the WAPIS programme.



Visit by the WAPIS programme French- and Portuguese-speaking points of contact to assist with the National Gendarmerie's files in Niger, 11 June 2019, Niamey

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

INTERPOL's Executive Director for partnerships and planning discusses implementation of the WAPIS programme with the Côte d'Ivoire authorities

As host country to the WAPIS programme team since November 2017, Côte d'Ivoire received a visit from Mr Carl Alexandre, INTERPOL's Executive Director for partnerships and planning, on 19 and 20 June 2019. This visit was intended to revitalize implementation of the WAPIS programme in this country.

In pursuit of this objective, the Executive Director met several members of the Côte d'Ivoire authorities involved in the process of implementing the WAPIS programme. They held discussions with, respectively, the Head of INTERPOL's National Central Bureau, Director of the Criminal Police, Director General of the National Police, the Private Secretary to the Minister of the Interior, the European Union Representative in Côte d'Ivoire

and the National Gendarmerie High Commander.

During these meetings, the discussions revolved around the involvement of the Côte d'Ivoire authorities in the successful implementation of the WAPIS programme, and also signature of the memorandum of understanding between the Côte d'Ivoire government and INTERPOL, which had been set to take place no later than September 2019 by the most recent programme steering committee.

At the end of these talks, the Côte d'Ivoire authorities stressed the importance of the WAPIS programme in stabilizing the security environment in West Africa, and reassured their host of the Côte d'Ivoire's commitment

and determination to implement the system successfully. They also reassured INTERPOL that the MoU would be signed imminently.

The Ghana National Police donates a liaison vehicle to its WAPIS centre

The Ghanaian authorities have given a liaison vehicle to the WAPIS data collection and registration centre.

Resulting from their desire to secure the WAPIS programme's future, this vehicle will serve as a link between the DACORE and the various remote sites in its capital Accra and, in the near future, in the regions in order to resolve technical problems linked to the system.

It's important to remember that more than 35 WAPIS units have been set up in the capital, split between the various law enforcement agencies, including the police, the immigration services and the prison service.

This action by the Ghanaian police hierarchy deserves to be commended and demonstrates the country's commitment to implementing the WAPIS programme effectively throughout its territory.

CONCLUSION

So where are we at?



Richard Gotwe

WAPIS Head of Programme

head of mission in Mali, the WAPIS programme director and deputy of the INTERPOL NCB, representing the WAPIS national point of contact.

In recent months, the team has made considerable efforts on the ground to get the WAPIS programme up and running. Since the programme has been implemented in several phases since 2012, there is clearly a resulting disparity in the state of progress in the countries. This is summarized below, and I will then briefly set out the next major programme milestones.

The pilot countries are of course at a much more advanced stage. They have all been given a WAPIS centre (DACORE), although the degree to which they are operational varies from one country to another. The DACOREs established in these countries provide them with the capacity to collect, centralize and record police data. Instances where the system has been used to help solve cases have been recorded. The participation of Benin, Ghana and Niger in the most recent operation ADWENPA, an INTERPOL initiative funded by the German government that aims to strengthen border security in West Africa, is a clear sign of the progress that has been made. These pilot countries are now in a phase where they are expanding the WAPIS programme beyond the DACORE in their capital, and even outside the capital in the case of Benin. Our aim is to continue training as many officers and operators as possible to use the system,

so that, by the end of the year, we can connect these countries' national systems to INTERPOL's I-24/7 network, thus allowing officers and operators to consult INTERPOL's global databases from their national WAPIS unit. It should also be noted that since Niger already has an Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), the programme will start work, in the coming weeks, on linking up this system and the WAPIS system.

We experienced some delay in launching phase 3 of the transition, which began in 2016. The first results of our action were seen in 2018. To date, scanning stations have been rolled out in Chad, premises allocated by the authorities in Chad to house the DACORE have been refurbished and are awaiting the installation of servers in the next few weeks. In Burkina Faso, donation of an initial batch of equipment allowed further expansion of the IRAPOL national system that the authorities in these countries have decided to keep. Thanks to signature of the memorandum of understanding with this country, we will be able to start the rest of our action in the next few days, in particular connecting to INTERPOL's I-24/7 network. Mauritania has received its first batch of equipment, has almost finalized implementation of the legal framework, and has already allocated premises to set up the DACORE.

As for the other countries that joined us in November 2017, in the context of phase 3 of the general roll-out, significant progress has also been made with implementation. In fact, with the exception of Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, all these new countries have already signed the MoU on implementation of the programme with INTERPOL. Guinea is the only country to have adopted all the texts relating to implementation of the programme. To date, Gambia and Liberia have already received the first batch of WAPIS equipment. The first training sessions were delivered in August and early September respectively. Equipment for other countries that have signed the MoU is in transit and will be delivered in September.

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The next major programme milestone over the coming three months is undoubtedly the ECOWAS Expert committee which will discuss the following points:

- > Follow-up of the recommendations formulated during the WAPIS programme legal seminar held in March 2019, in order to identify potential challenges and the solutions to be found;
- > Consideration and possible adoption of the draft WAPIS programme good practice guide on personal data protection;
- > Consideration and possible adoption of a recommendation supporting the proposal to expand the scope of data recorded in the WAPIS system;

- > Consideration and possible adoption of a recommendation to update the list of offences.

Another major milestone in the next few months is the programme Steering Committee, which meets twice a year to work on progress and the activity plan for the coming months.

The WAPIS programme team is at your service.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Information session to raise awareness about the WAPIS programme and its use

9 – 11 September 2019: Niamey, Niger

3rd WAPIS programme legal seminar

22 – 24 October 2019: Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

Information session to raise awareness about the WAPIS programme and its use

12 - 14 November 2019: Accra, Ghana

3rd Steering and coordination committee

26 – 27 November 2019: Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire



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