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WAPIS

WAPIS NEWSLETTER



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IN THIS ISSUE

EDITORIAL	1
LEAD STORIES	3
OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES	5
THE MEN AND WOMEN	
BEHIND THE SYSTEM	8
EXPERTS' CORNER	9



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EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

Since 2012, the European Union has supported and financed the WAPIS Programme. This Programme embodies the European Union's commitment to supporting countries in the region with their ambition to consolidate the Rule of Law, security being one of its fundamental pillars. Conceived and applied in a regional context, this initiative also addresses the shared desire of the European Union, ECOWAS and its member States to combat transnational organized crime. This is on the rise in the region as it is throughout the world, where even crime is becoming globalized.

Having a solid basis for processing police and criminal information would appear to be a prerequisite for tackling these threats effectively. Thanks to the setting up of automated national systems that are interconnected at regional and global level, security systems have not only a memory, but also a standardized framework for exchanges that allows more robust investigation of criminal cases.

Although political leaders and police chiefs have been crying out for such a tool, the Programme has taken time to have any effect and we are still in the implementation phase, without it yet being operated at interregional level. The project is now on the home straight: there are 14 months of implementation left to reach conclusive results and achieve our common objectives. It is now vital that we intensify implementation of the Programme, which is due to end in June 2022. Only if everyone is on board and efforts are intensified will the results reflect the investments and efforts made so far.

It was in this spirit that the 5th Programme Steering Committee and the ECOWAS ministerial meeting adopted recommendations with regard to all the countries. I appeal to you to implement them quickly, before June 2021, when we will review with ECOWAS and INTERPOL the state of play concerning the recommendations.

During both these meetings, decisions had to be taken and issues addressed. As mentioned, the European Union is ready to work in greater depth with those partners who are fulfilling their part of the bargain.

However, applying the same logic, the EU can no longer spend its resources, time and funding on supporting the programme's continuation with the same intensity in countries where implementation has not lived up to our collective ambitions.

Therefore, countries that have failed to make the necessary progress in recent years have had their equipment supplies, training and missions put on hold. This position can be re-evaluated as each country makes progress, on a case-by-case basis, in the coming months.



Until now, every country participating in the WAPIS project has progressed at its own rate. Everywhere, but to varying degrees, challenges remain, and every country that will ultimately benefit from the Programme needs to confront these. These challenges require the involvement, action and tenacity of both the decision-makers and the technicians.

Some of these challenges are legal in nature. This is the case with signature of the WAPIS Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), adoption of the national regulatory frameworks for the DACOREs (Data Collection and Registration Centres), for the WANACOs (WAPIS National Committees), and even laws relating to data protection.

There are challenges of a more operational nature, such as construction or renovation of sites housing the DACOREs and making them operational, or even the acquisition and installation of the necessary equipment and technologies.

There is also the challenge of human resources, which are vital, both in terms of training people to use the system and tools, and ensuring they are used correctly. I would also add financial challenges, especially the need to create and feed into a national budget heading to ensure sustainability of the systems you are building.

Finally, there is both a technological and legal issue, such as setting up a regional database to allow exchanges between countries with an operational WAPIS system. This component must be finalized before June 2022 so that the ultimate aim of this information system can be achieved and relevant high-quality information disseminated, through all the national WAPIS systems.

The issue is one of size. We will only harvest the fruits of the seeds we have sown if we take care of them, individually and collectively. We only have fourteen months left to complete implementation of the Programme and ensure its sustainability, in every country and at regional level.

Looking to the future, and in parallel with this WAPIS Programme, in a related field, I'm pleased to inform you that the European Commission is continuing to support police institutions by setting up automated fingerprint identification systems in West African countries. Fifteen million euros were allocated at the end of 2020 in order to work with ECOWAS countries where conditions, particularly legal and technical, will allow this.

Together, we will be able to face the challenges ahead. Let's redouble our efforts!

LEAD STORIES

The ECOWAS Ministerial Committee in charge of implementing WAPIS has reiterated its commitment and taken important decisions associated with implementing the System.

The meeting of the ECOWAS Ministerial Committee in charge of implementing WAPIS was held on Wednesday 31 March 2021 via videoconference. It was chaired by Ghana's Minister of the Interior, Mr Ambrose DERY, and was attended by several ministers in charge of implementing the Programme, including Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Guinea Bissau. Also present at the meeting were Mr Francis Béhanzin, ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Mr Jürgen Stock, Secretary General of INTERPOL, and Mrs Sandra Kramer, Africa Director in the Directorate General for International Partnerships in the Commission of the European Union, and Mr Jobst von Kirchmann, Ambassador of the European Union in Côte d'Ivoire.

This meeting was an opportunity, for both INTERPOL and the ECOWAS and European Union Commissions, to review the progress of Programme implementation in the various participating countries 15 months before the end of the Programme scheduled for June 2022.

In view of the Programme being scheduled to end in June 2022 and aware of the constraints associated with its implementation, the Ministerial Committee took important decisions, including suspension with immediate effect in some countries deemed at risk and who have fallen behind in introducing the prerequisites for implementing the System. Nonetheless, a review will be conducted on a case-by-case basis according to the progress made between now and June 2021, based on the recommendations formulated by this Steering Committee.

The Fifth Steering Committee Meeting of the WAPIS Programme was held on 30 March 2021 as a side event to the ECOWAS Ministerial Committee. This technical meeting of the WAPIS



ECOWAS Ministerial Committee meeting on the implementation of WAPIS, 31 March 2021, videoconference.

Programme national points of contact, the operational stakeholders in the Programme, was an opportunity to formulate recommendations that were validated during the ECOWAS Ministerial Committee meeting. Apart from the national points of contact, this Steering Committee meeting was also attended by Mr Michel Laloge, the Head of Cooperation to the European Union Delegation in Abidjan, Mr Dirk Allaerts, INTERPOL's Director for Planning and Development, and Mr Abdouramane Dieng, Head of the ECOWAS Commission's Regional Security Division.

Côte d'Ivoire, more determined than ever to integrate WAPIS in its security arrangements.

In order to give a boost to the WAPIS Programme initiated by INTERPOL, ECOWAS and the European Union, a strategic mission was organized to Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire, on 29 March 2021.

This mission provided an opportunity to meet the Côte d'Ivoire authorities in order to review the progress of Programme implementation and remind them of their commitment, but especially to enquire about the status of the legal texts needed to roll out and commission the System in Côte d'Ivoire.

Hence the tripartite delegation, consisting of the ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, the Ambassador of the European Union in Côte d'Ivoire, INTERPOL's

Director for Planning and Development, the Head of INTERPOL's Regional Office for West Africa and members of the WAPIS project team, met the Director General of the National Police and the Minister of the Interior and Security in Côte d'Ivoire respectively, in order to discuss these different matters.

General Vagondo Diomandé, Côte d'Ivoire's Minister of the Interior and Security, was keen to reassure the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire's commitment to implementing the System. He also promised to chase up the progress of signature of the various decrees needed to implement the System.

LEAD STORIES

The new Ministers of the Interior in Senegal and of Internal Affairs in Sierra Leone learn about WAPIS

From 20 to 26 February 2021, a delegation from the WAPIS Programme conducted a mission to Senegal in order to enquire about progress of the Programme and the WAPIS legal framework, and especially to present the WAPIS Programme to the new Minister of Internal Affairs in the Republic of Senegal, Antoine Félix DIOME.

During the meeting with the Minister, a presentation was made to him, especially about the difficulties in implementing the Programme. In his turn, the Minister expressed his keen interest in the Programme and promised to resolve the problems associated with the legal framework with all haste.

This mission was also marked by several meetings with national partners, but also with diplomatic representatives, notably the delegation from the European Union and the Italian Embassy, in order to obtain their support and find a way out of the impasse associated with implementing the WAPIS legal framework in Senegal.

The WAPIS Programme delegation also took advantage of this mission to visit the "Police data collection and registration centre" in Senegal, whose renovation was funded by the Programme.

Earlier in the month of February, the new Minister of Internal Affairs in Sierra Leone had met the WAPIS Programme delegation in the same context. It was still a matter of presenting the Programme to the new Minister and ensure he was committed to continuing his predecessor's work. Questions concerning the conditions for implementing the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), creation of a budget heading and making the System operational were discussed during this important meeting, along with other matters.

During this mission, the WAPIS Programme delegation also met the Minister of Justice and the new Director General of Police.



Meeting between the WAPIS Programme team and the Minister of Internal Affairs in Sierra Leone, 2 February 2021; Freetown (Sierra Leone)

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The Government of Mali is ready to ramp up WAPIS implementation



Meeting between Mali's Minister of Security, ECOWAS and INTERPOL delegation, 19 February 2021, Bamako (Mali)

From 16 to 19 February 2021 Mali, a WAPIS Programme pilot country since 2012, was visited by an ECOWAS and INTERPOL delegation whose mission was to discuss the progress made with the Programme, and especially the challenges encountered in implementing the Programme, in order to find a way forward.

This delegation, consisting of INTERPOL's Director for Planning and Development, the Head of the WAPIS Programme and the Head of the ECOWAS Commission's Regional Security Division, set up a number of meetings with the national authorities and the embassy teams to try and find solutions to the obstacles observed in implementing WAPIS, including the absence of a legal framework for the Data Collection and Registration Centre (DACORE), or even creation of a budget heading dedicated to the System.

To this end, high-level meetings were held with the Minister of Security and Civil Defence, the Minister of Justice, and the Minister of Finance. The various government representatives in Mali were keen to stress the importance of WAPIS to Mali's security architecture.

The Ministers of Security and Justice reassured the delegation as to their commitment to taking the necessary steps to sign the decree establishing the Centre.

For his part, during his meeting with the delegation, the Minister of Finance reassured them of the validity of the customs exemption for donations from the WAPIS Programme, while taking good note of the requirement to create a budget heading in the 2022 budget as soon as the decree establishing the Data Collection and Registration Centre (DACORE) has been signed.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

West African law enforcement agencies at the WAPIS school.

With the easing of restrictions on movement and gatherings related to COVID19, the first quarter of 2021 has been a successful start to the year for the WAPIS Programme, especially with several different countries organized to participate in the Programme.

In fact, in Guinea, the first trainer training course took place from 11 to 22 January 2021. Six police officers and five gendarmes were trained as national trainers. The courses focused on the theoretical and practical aspects of WAPIS, with particular emphasis on personal data. To allow them to put the training received into practice, six of the new trainers ran a training course in the following week for users consisting of five police officers and five gendarmes, under the supervision of the WAPIS team.

Two months later, on the initiative of the national trainers, two training sessions for around twenty data entry operators were held from 15 to 19 March and from 22 to 26 March 2021.

Benin, a pilot country, also benefited from several capacity-building sessions aimed at WAPIS trainers, administrators and validators. In total, thirteen trainers, two administrators and three validators participated in special training sessions according to their role in the System roll-out.

Adoption of the Programme and training modules by the national trainers has been a real success story in the participating countries; in fact, more and more training courses are delivered by trainers without any WAPIS team members being present, underlining how the System has been adopted at national level. These national training courses have taken place in countries such as Togo and Senegal.



Training people to use WAPIS, Conakry (Guinea)

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Nigeria and Cabo Verde have adopted the legal framework in the context of implementing WAPIS.

Implementing the WAPIS Programme in the 17 participating countries involves logistic and technical prerequisites, as much as legal ones. As concerns the ad-hoc national legal framework designed to ensure the legality and continuity of WAPIS, including setting up a suitable budget heading, it revolves around adoption of a regulation to establish, attribute and operate the police data collection and registration centre (DACORE), the WAPIS System and the WAPIS Programme Steering National Committee (WANACO). With this in mind, via signature of the MoU with INTERPOL on Programme implementation, the participating countries are fully committed to adopting this legal framework in order to guarantee optimum adoption and use of the System on their territory.

Despite the problems associated with the current global health crisis, Cabo Verde and Nigeria have recently managed to adopt the required legal framework. As concerns Cabo Verde, a law establishing the DACORE and the System approved in the Council of Ministers was adopted on 25 March 2021. Similarly, in Nigeria, two regulations establishing the DACORE and the System on the one hand, and the WANACO on the other hand, were signed by the Minister of Police Affairs on 25 and 27 March 2021 respectively. These legal instruments are based on model texts drafted by the WAPIS Programme's legal team and shared with the participating countries. This legal assistance extends, if necessary, to adapting these model texts to the legal framework of the countries concerned.

Since it is a System that leads to the processing of personal data, WAPIS necessarily requires conformity with both national and regional regulations, as well as international good practice concerning protection of personal data. In this respect, given that Cabo Verde has had relevant legislation since 2013 and a national data protection commission, it is now up to this authority to deliver the System's conformity certificate, if applicable. As concerns Nigeria, it was recommended to the countries, at the last Programme Steering Committee meeting followed by the ECOWAS ministerial meeting on the Programme on 30 and 31 March 2021, that they should publish in the Official Journal the ECOWAS Supplementary Act A/SA.1/01/10 relating to protection of personal data in the ECOWAS space, while waiting for the relevant national regulations applicable to WAPIS to come into force.

Considering that the WAPIS Programme is scheduled to end in June 2022, the need to adopt a suitable legal framework for WAPIS is an essential factor in the Programme's success. Even though the state of progress on this point differs according to the country, the WAPIS Programme team is still committed to supporting and assisting national authorities in this process of adopting the fundamental WAPIS texts in order to achieve the aims of this common project.

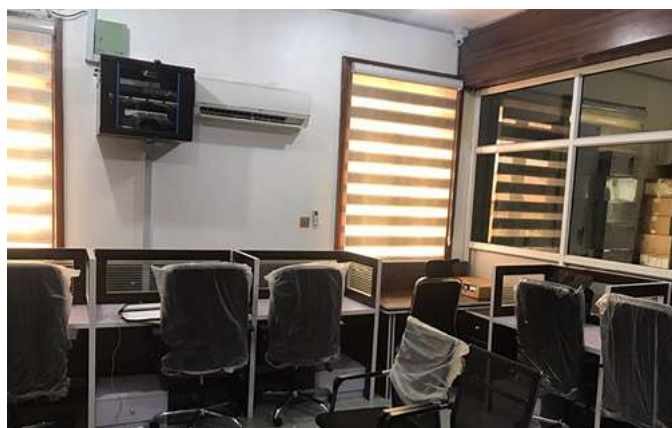
The WAPIS Programme has completed renovation work on the Data Collection and Registration Centres (DACOREs) in several countries. The inaugurations are scheduled to take place from May onwards.

In the context of implementing WAPIS, the WAPIS Programme has completed renovation work on the Data Collection and Registration Centres (DACOREs) in several participating countries. This work was done by local firms, selected following tender procedures run by INTERPOL.

Hence, the DACOREs in Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Liberia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Chad have benefited from renovation work and are ready for actual implementation of the System in their countries. Renovation work is still ongoing in Guinea and Togo and should be completed in the next few months.

As a reminder, the DACORE is the regulatory body managing the System. The DACORE needs to perform four essential functions to ensure that the WAPIS system works properly: administrative and financial management, operational assistance, technical maintenance and training.

The inauguration of these DACOREs is due to happen from May in the various countries, once the System has been installed and staff have been appointed and assigned to this structure.



Renovation work on the WAPIS Centre, ABUJA (Nigeria)

It must be stressed that the DACOREs in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali and Niger are up and running, and have been able to input more than 375,000 records relating to lost/stolen items, wanted persons, stolen documents, or even stolen vehicles in the WAPIS database.

THE MEN AND WOMEN BEHIND THE SYSTEM

Cabo Verde joined the WAPIS programme in November 2017, during the third phase financed by the European Development Fund (EDF). The country has signed the MoU and taken the necessary steps to set up the System at national level.



National Director of the Cabo Verde Judicial Police
Head of INTERPOL's National Central Bureau

In order to highlight the excellent communication between our two entities, Mr António Sebastião Sousa, the WAPIS Programme Point of contact and Director of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in Cabo Verde, spoke to us for this issue of the WAPIS Newsletter in order to share his thoughts.

1. Please tell us a bit about yourself. How long have you been working on the implementation of the WAPIS programme?

My name is António Sebastião Sousa and I have been the National Director of the Cape Verde Judicial Police and Head of INTERPOL's National Central Bureau since August 2016. I was appointed WAPIS National Focal Point by decision of the Minister of Justice and Labour, via letter no. 34/GMJT/2018 of 23 April, sent to the head of the WAPIS programme.

2. What was the starting point when implementing the WAPIS programme in Cape Verde? What were the different stages?

- The starting point and stages for implementing the WAPIS programme in Cape Verde were as follows:
- Expression of interest and appointment of a National Focal Point for the Programme;
- Participation in a meeting of Government Experts in March 2018, in Abidjan;
- Visit to Cape Verde by a delegation of Experts from INTERPOL;
- Appointment of Focal Points in national public institutions;
- Signature and ratification of the memorandum of understanding for the implementation of the programme in Cape Verde;
- Appointment of a technical expert and a legal expert;

- Approval of Decree-Law no 24/2021 of 25 March, creating the Data Collection and Registration Centre (DACORE) and the Police Information System;
- Submission of a request to the National Commission for Data Protection (CNPd) for its opinion on the merits of Decree-Law 24/2021 of 25 March relating to protecting the data of natural persons.

3. What are the challenges involved in implementing the WAPIS Programme?

- The main challenges relating to implementing the WAPIS Programme are as follows:
- Identifying space for the DACORE to operate;
- Mobilising resources to fund the DACORE;
- Acquiring administrative equipment for the DACORE;
- Receiving and installing IT equipment for the DACORE;
- Appointing personnel to work in the DACORE;
- Capacity building for DACORE personnel;
- Signing a memorandum of understanding with the INTERPOL National Central Bureau;
- Presenting the annual budget proposal for 2022.

4. What advice would you give to other countries participating in the WAPIS Programme?

Given the beneficial effects that sharing police/criminal information among various ECOWAS countries, Mauritania and Chad will have on crime prevention and reduction in the region, I would advise countries to accelerate the implementation of the system and carry out the following actions in particular:

- Approve the institutional legal framework required to implement the WAPIS programme;
- Make facilities available;
- Appoint and train personnel;
- Allocate a budget for the operation of the DACORE.

EXPERTS' CORNER



Christian AGHROUM is the WAPIS programme's quality consultant. A former Police Chief Inspector, he has worked particularly in CID and has headed up numerous services fighting organized crime and terrorism in France. A trainer and expert with the Council of Europe, he has regularly been involved in international programmes to develop police and judicial skills.

Quality at the heart of WAPIS.

It would not be possible for a digital platform for sharing police information, such as WAPIS, to exist without the quality of data being taken into account. A lack of quality would indeed compromise the System's future.

Quality relies on a multiplicity of combined factors: adaptation to need, accuracy, completeness, homogeneity, reliability and timeliness. Measuring the degree of quality of data helps identify errors and prevents consequences that could be tragic. These errors must be corrected.

A data quality management system has therefore emerged that describes all activities already done or due to be undertaken. This System combines processes and resources and is intended to ensure continuous improvement in results and performance.

The quality management system is based on the existing global management system. It is not intended to call it into question, but gives it the means to increase its competence in terms of quality while contributing to better management of the overall system.

The benefits of enhanced data quality, whether inserted, modified or contained in the WAPIS system, will be shared by:

The users themselves:

Fighting organized crime and terrorism is part of a necessarily quality-driven approach. Only by searching out the truth is it possible to present to the judicial authority an investigation whose impartiality cannot be questioned. This quest for truth requires permanent verification of data managed and recorded in a system whose ultimate goal is to help law enforcement agencies work more efficiently.

The States:

Taking part in an ambitious project, each country concerned will find a coherent tool, that allows lasting exchanges within the country, and also at regional and international levels. The quality of data and the efforts made in this direction also illustrate the willingness of each country to be part of a truth and justice process. The international reputation of each country is an action within its competence in this qualitative approach.

The contributors:

INTERPOL, the European Union and ECOWAS have all invested heavily and deserve a return on their investment in the form of a sustainable system being maintained, that is recognized by all stakeholders as consistently adding guaranteed value compared to the existing one. Quality is included in the definition of this added value.

To help each member country boost its quality, a "data quality management system guide" has been published in three languages (French, English, Portuguese). This document is complemented by a "practical guide to boosting and maintaining quality in the WAPIS database", which is the general document to be used as a basis for drafting national permanent operational procedures. A self-assessment document will help each member country and will highlight outstanding national needs. Finally, training for trainers will complete the quality system, allowing the WAPIS programme to make progress with the success of its roll-out.

CONCLUSION



Richard GOTWE
Head of Programme

Dear readers,

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to weigh heavily on our thoughts. 2021 began in the same way as 2020, but with a glimmer of hope on the horizon due to the arrival of the vaccines. I hope that your friends and family, your colleagues and you yourselves remain in good health.

We have just held the 5th Programme Steering Committee meeting, using remote meeting technologies, more than a year since the last Committee meeting held in November 2019, because of the Covid-19 crisis.

Given the difficulties in implementing the Programme in some participating countries, and the fact that the WAPIS Programme is due to end in June 2022, after the Steering Committee we organized a meeting of the ECOWAS Ministerial Committee on implementing the Programme. This Ministerial Committee meeting, chaired by Ghana's Minister of the Interior, was attended by a number of ministers, including the ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, the Secretary General of INTERPOL, the Ambassador of the

European Union in Côte d'Ivoire and the Africa Director - Directorate General INTPA - European Commission, who also wrote the editorial for this issue, for which we thank her.

Two essential matters were discussed during these two meetings:

- The delay in several participating countries in adopting the legal framework required for the WAPIS System at national level, which constitutes a major obstacle in making the System operational
- The political commitment to continuing with the WAPIS Programme beyond the end of the implementation phase in June 2022

The ministers attending the ECOWAS Ministerial Committee meeting reiterated the commitments of their respective countries in relation to the Programme and endorsed all the Steering Committee's recommendations.

The positive effects of these two meetings are beginning to be felt, notably via signature of the MoU on implementation by the last awaited country, namely Ghana, or even adoption by Nigeria of the legal framework required for the System.

An update on the progress in implementing these recommendations is scheduled for June 2021. Thereafter, the Programme team will be deployed in the field proactively to speed up implementation in the countries, and strategic visits will be organized in order to remind the political authorities at the highest level of the urgency and importance of delivering on their commitments with regard to the Programme.

And to finish, some recent results from the Programme:

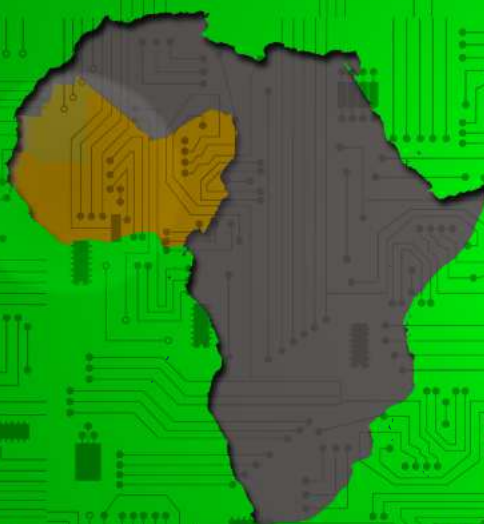
- Renovation of the DACORE premises has been completed in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, The Gambia, Sierra Leone

and Mauritania. These countries now have premises where they can get started with data entry, which will be possible once the legal framework is in place. The process is still ongoing in Guinea and Togo.

- The programme has purchased and supplied IT equipment to Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Togo, Mauritania, Sierra Leone and Guinea.
- While strictly adhering to social distancing measures, we have managed to organize training sessions attended in person by law enforcement officers in Benin, Guinea, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo and The Gambia.
- The first version of the data quality management system guide has been drafted. Quality audits in Ghana, Mali and Niger are ongoing.
- The specialist data protection training module based on the WAPIS Best Practice Guide on data protection and a training action plan have been drawn up.
- A new version of the WAPIS System, including updated technical components, as well as the new administrative data field, is in its final test phase before being rolled out.

All these results demonstrate that the dynamism and commitment from the team I'm leading is no less intense despite the pandemic, and that with the determination of the participating States, a police information system for West Africa is achievable.

Thank you again for your commitment and your contribution to helping the vision expressed by Police Chiefs in the sub-region in 2010 become a reality.



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