

BORDERLESS

Removing trade barriers in West Africa

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PRESS RELEASE

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Partners release 2nd joint report on road harassment

Cotonou, Benin, Aug. 26, 2010 – Road harassment remains a serious issue affecting the free movement of goods and services across West Africa, the second joint report on the issue shows. It was released today by Borderless, the public-private partnership to remove trade barriers across West Africa.

The new report is the second to be produced through the collaboration of the World Bank-funded Abidjan-Lagos Corridor, USAID's West Africa Trade Hub, USAID's Agribusiness and Trade Promotion project, the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union and ECOWAS. It was formally released by public and private transport stakeholders including U.S. Ambassador James Knight.

"West Africa's road transport costs are among the highest in the world," Ambassador Knight said. "Every delay and every bribe that drivers experience when they are transporting goods translates into higher prices at market for everyone. And makes exporting more expensive, too."

The report presents data on bribes and delays at the hundreds of checkpoints along roads and highways in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. ALCO and USAID's Trade Hub and ATP projects collect the data via drivers along primary trade corridors in the countries.

"This report represents the commitment by public and private sector transport stakeholders to confront and resolve this problem directly," said Dr. Justin Koffi of ALCO. "We call on government and business to join the Borderless initiative to remove trade barriers across the region."

The report singles out Senegal and Togo for their recent pledges to remove dozens of checkpoints. It also highlights the negative impacts the barriers have on importers and exporters, whose activities have wide ranging effects on millions of people in the region. Every delay and bribe ultimately is passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices for everything from powdered milk to batteries to textiles. For exporting companies, the bribes and delays make competing in world markets more difficult.

Borderless is the ECOWAS vision of free movement of people, goods and transport. The combined action of public and private stakeholders makes realizing that vision possible. www.borderlesswa.com

