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PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DON'T POLITICIZE GHANA'S TRADE REFORMS: IEAG DEFENDS ICUMS, COMMENDS LCB WORLDWIDE AND CALLS FOR GREATER SUPPORT TO DEEPEN PORT MODERNISATION

The Importers and Exporters Association of Ghana (IEAG) has taken note of a press conference organized by certain Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), namely the New Voter Forum (NVF) and Democratic Credentials Network Ghana (DCN-Ghana), in which a number of claims were made regarding the operations and performance of the Integrated Customs Management System (ICUMS) and port-related services.

As the foremost association representing the interests of Ghana's importers and exporters, and as active stakeholders within Ghana's international trade ecosystem, we consider it necessary to set the records straight and provide factual clarification on several inaccurate, misleading and unsubstantiated assertions made against ICUMS and other critical trade facilitation interventions operating at Ghana's ports.

Since its introduction in June 2020 by the Government of Ghana through the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), the Integrated Customs Management System (ICUMS) has become the backbone of customs administration and trade facilitation in Ghana.

The system was introduced to replace fragmented customs processes, reduce revenue leakages, improve transparency, enhance compliance and accelerate cargo clearance procedures.

Today, ICUMS has successfully integrated customs processes, improved risk management systems, strengthened revenue assurance mechanisms and enhanced stakeholder visibility across the international trade value chain.

The suggestion by the CSOs that ICUMS is a “dysfunctional system breeding national loss” is not supported by empirical evidence and runs contrary to the actual experiences of many traders, freight forwarders, customs brokers and industry stakeholders who interact with the system daily.

Revenue Performance Under ICUMS Has Been Historic

Contrary to the claims that ICUMS is causing national losses, available customs revenue data demonstrates that the system has become one of the most effective revenue mobilization tools in Ghana's history. Since the introduction of ICUMS, customs revenue collections have witnessed remarkable growth.

In 2024 alone, customs revenue reportedly increased to approximately GH¢44.3 billion from GH¢30.6 billion in 2023, representing one of the highest annual increases recorded within the customs sector.

Additionally, available industry data indicates that customs revenue exceeded US\$3.17 billion by September 2025, reflecting sustained growth in trade volumes, improved compliance levels and enhanced revenue assurance mechanisms.

Indeed, various reports have indicated that over GH¢120 billion in customs revenue has been mobilized through ICUMS since its implementation. These achievements cannot reasonably be reconciled with the narrative that ICUMS is causing revenue losses to the state. If anything, the evidence points to a system that has significantly reduced loopholes, strengthened accountability and enhanced government revenue mobilization.

Addressing Claims of System Downtime

The CSOs alleged that frequent downtimes have rendered ICUMS ineffective and detrimental to business operations. While no digital platform anywhere in the world is entirely immune from occasional technical interruptions, portraying such incidents as systemic failure is both unfair and inaccurate.

The reality is that Ghana Link Network Services and relevant stakeholders have consistently upgraded the system to improve performance, processing speed, cybersecurity protection and operational resilience.

Like all major customs management systems globally, including those in advanced economies, ICUMS undergoes periodic maintenance, upgrades and optimization exercises. Importantly, many of the operational challenges experienced over the years have been promptly addressed through stakeholder engagements, software improvements and infrastructure investments. It is therefore misleading to characterize isolated technical interruptions as evidence of institutional failure.

ICUMS Has Improved Transparency and Reduced Human Interference

One of the most significant benefits of ICUMS has been the reduction of excessive human intervention in customs processes.

Through automation, electronic documentation, digital payment systems, integrated risk management and cargo tracking functionalities, opportunities for discretionary decision-making and revenue leakages have been substantially minimized.

Prior to ICUMS, stakeholders had long complained about fragmented systems, duplication of processes and inefficiencies that increased transaction costs. Today, many of those inefficiencies have been addressed through a centralized digital architecture that provides greater transparency and accountability.

It is important to emphasize that ICUMS is not a static platform but a continuously evolving system designed to adapt to emerging trade realities and international best practices. Recent technological upgrades, enhanced integration with stakeholder institutions and infrastructure investments demonstrate a clear commitment to continuous improvement.

The establishment of modern Information Technology infrastructure and operational support facilities in Kumasi by Ghana Link Network Services, including investments aimed at strengthening system resilience and stakeholder support services, further underscores the commitment of operators and government agencies to improving trade facilitation across the country.

LCB Worldwide: A Critical Partner in Port Health Security and Trade Facilitation

The Importers and Exporters Association of Ghana is equally concerned by the unfair and unsubstantiated attacks directed at LCB Worldwide Ghana Limited, the company implementing the Disinfection Health Service at Ghana's ports and points of entry under the supervision of the Ghana Health Service.

As a major stakeholder in Ghana's international trade ecosystem, IEAG can state without hesitation that the services provided by LCB Worldwide have become an important component of Ghana's border health security architecture and have contributed significantly to safeguarding trade activities from disruptions associated with cross-border disease transmission.

The company operates within internationally recognized public health frameworks aimed at preventing, detecting and controlling the spread of infectious diseases through international trade routes while ensuring minimal disruption to legitimate commercial activities.

In an era where global health threats continue to pose significant risks to economies and supply chains, the importance of maintaining effective disinfection and fumigation services at ports and points of entry cannot be overstated.

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a stark reminder of the devastating consequences that public health emergencies can have on trade and economic activities. It is therefore imperative that Ghana maintains robust preventive measures to protect both public health and commercial interests.

Contrary to the impression created by the CSOs, the implementation of port disinfection services has not hindered trade activities. Rather, it has strengthened Ghana's preparedness against biological threats and enhanced confidence in the safety and integrity of Ghana's trade corridors.

The Association recognizes the significant contribution of LCB Worldwide and the Ghana Health Service in promoting safer cargo handling practices, improving biosecurity standards and supporting Ghana's compliance with international health and safety obligations. As Ghana positions itself as the preferred logistics and trade hub in West Africa, investments in health security, fumigation services and border biosecurity must be viewed as strategic national assets rather than obstacles to trade.

The Importers and Exporters Association of Ghana fully supports constructive criticism and stakeholder engagement aimed at improving Ghana's trade ecosystem.

However, such advocacy must be anchored on facts, data and objective analysis rather than conjecture, sensationalism and politically colored narratives.

The sweeping allegations made by the CSOs fail to acknowledge the significant gains made under ICUMS in revenue mobilization, trade facilitation, transparency, customs modernization and the strengthening of Ghana's port health security systems.

We urge all stakeholders to engage responsibly and avoid creating unnecessary uncertainty within Ghana's international trade environment.

Call for Greater Government Support

The Importers and Exporters Association of Ghana commends the Government of Ghana, the Ghana Revenue Authority, Customs Division, Ghana Link Network Services Limited, the Ghana Health Service and LCB Worldwide Ghana Limited for their respective contributions toward improving trade facilitation and strengthening operational efficiency at Ghana's ports.

We respectfully call on government to continue providing the necessary policy, technical and institutional support required for the further enhancement of these critical systems.

Specifically, we encourage greater investment in:

- System capacity expansion;
- Continuous software upgrades;
- Stakeholder training and sensitization;
- Enhanced cybersecurity architecture;
- Increased interoperability among trade-related institutions;
- Strengthened port health and biosecurity infrastructure; and
- Additional technological innovations to support the 24-hour economy agenda.

The future of Ghana's international trade depends on modernization, digitization, innovation and strong institutional collaboration.

ICUMS represents one of the most important digital reforms undertaken within Ghana's customs administration framework, while the port disinfection programme remains a critical pillar of Ghana's border health security system.

While there is always room for improvement, the overwhelming evidence points to interventions that have significantly enhanced revenue mobilization, improved transparency, strengthened trade facilitation and contributed to safer and more resilient port operations.

The Importers and Exporters Association of Ghana therefore rejects attempts to mischaracterize these important national initiatives and urges all stakeholders to support ongoing reforms aimed at making Ghana's ports and trade systems even more efficient, secure and globally competitive.

SIGNED

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