

## **Resolution 34: Informal Cross-Border Trade**

This Sixth International Congress of StreetNet:

**Noting** that the people of West Africa have been trading and peacefully relating among themselves for centuries before colonialism,

**Also noting** that informal cross border trade accounts for a significant proportion of trade and commerce among the peoples of West Africa, involving the participation of millions of people of the sub region, especially women who derive their livelihoods therefrom,

**Aware** that addressing cross border trade facilitation issues will further deepen regional integration which is lagging in many continents,

**Concerned** that potential to develop trade across regions has been hampered by a lack of political consensus and a vision for regional trade development, limiting the potential for regional trade to flourish,

**Conscious** of the many challenges traders, majority of whom are women, face in the course of trading activities in several regions and subregions which include; multiple and arbitrary charges and loss of goods, multiplicity of checkpoints along the roads where traders pay informal taxes and bribes, imprisonment and detention, ambushes and robberies, and sexual harassment,

The three collaborating informal workers organizations the Sierra Leone Traders Union (SLeTU), the Federation of Petty Traders and Informal Workers Union of Liberia (FEPTIWUL) and Federation of Informal Workers of Nigeria (FIWON) referred to hereinafter as the Facilitating Partners, given their commitment to the development of mutual economic cooperation among the various regions, recognizing that the free movement of goods and services requires effecting mutually agreed measures, hereby resolve to:

- ❖ **Promote** joint initiatives and programmes including organizing stakeholders' meetings at the relevant border posts within and among regions. Stakeholders to be included in such initiatives include Trade Union Representatives, Police, Customs Officials, Local Authorities, Representatives from the three Countries Trade and Internal Affairs Ministries, Foreign Ministry Officials, and officials of the Finance Ministries in the different regions of the world.
- ❖ **Campaign** for the principle of "ONE STOP SHOP" within the context of a holistic Simplified Trade Regime (STR) to reduce barriers to trade for small scale and informal traders by simplifying customs and border procedures. It further helps to improve intra-regional trade data, through more accurately and efficiently capturing informal trade – which suffers from significant under-reporting. The regime also helps to reduce prevalent Cross-Border Trade (CBT) issues of corruption, bribery and safety at borders, easing travel formalities at all border crossing and reduce the burden of over taxation, extortion and harassment of Cross Border Traders and other nationals travelling across international boundaries and border crossing points.

- ❖ **Advance** the need to enforce the harmonization of customs tariffs, removal of stringent travelling requirements like Lasse passé and Emergency Travelling Certificate as prerequisites for crossing international borders and canvass for the replacement of these cumbersome travel requirements by unified regional identities.
- ❖ **Encourage** training of informal cross border traders, customs, immigration, police and other security officials on the need for a Simplified Trade Regime (STR) within the context of the Economic Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) protocols.
- ❖ **Promote** trade corridor development – principally one stop border posts, integrated border management and trade ICT systems; ports modernization to reduce high first point of entry and corruption costs; modernisation of the customs agencies and systems; and harmonisation of the regulatory environments in the various regions of the world.
- ❖ **Exchange** on a regular basis information about laws and statutory acts related to economic activity, including on issues of cross border trade, taxation, as well as on issues of transport and customs, StreetNet affiliates shall without delay notify each other about the changes in national legislation that may impact on the performance of this Resolution.
- ❖ **Organize**, with all relevant institutions and bodies, “**Joint Market Days**” within the boarder countries and trade corridors to enhance good and cordial working relationship among countries.
- ❖ **Work** and collaborate with all sub-regional government, trade union and civil society institutions such as the Mano River Union (MRU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the International Trade Union Confederation of Africa (ITUC) the Organization of Trade Unions of West Africa (OTUWA) and similar organisations across the regions as well as StreetNet International to support all activities related to promoting cross border trade and Simplified Trade Regimes (STR) across the various regions.

**We therefore so recommend these resolutions to provide a template for all regions adapt as a common strategy within their specific realites.**

**PROPOSED** : FEPTIWUL Liberia, FIWON Nigeria, SLeTU Sierra Leone

**SECONDED** : Unanimous