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Coalition of Concerned Exporters, Importers and Traders Rejects Proposed Smart Port Note, Calls for Policy Reassessment

ACCRA, Ghana, December 29, 2025 — A Coalition of Concerned Exporters, Importers and Traders has reviewed the Ghana Shippers' Authority (GSA) notice regarding the mandatory rollout of the Smart Port Note (SPN) effective February 1, 2026. The Coalition fundamentally opposes this policy, warning it will impose unnecessary costs and bureaucratic burdens on Ghanaian traders, defeating the government's trade facilitation agenda.

Questioning the Policy Justification

While the GSA cites goals of trade facilitation, compliance, cargo monitoring, and the availability of reliable shipping and logistics data, no position paper has been provided to demonstrate how the SPN uniquely achieves these outcomes. The policy appears to be designed solely to generate revenue for the service provider, Inter-Ocean Maritime and Logistics Institute (IOMLI), contradicting GSA's core mandate to protect shippers from unnecessary costs. Previous stakeholder objections to similar schemes have been ignored.

Lack of Mandate and Practical Deficiencies

The SPN, an advance shipment notification platform, is a tool for **pre-shipment inspection** and compliance. This is a function outside the GSA's jurisdiction and in conflict with the Ghana Revenue Authority's (GRA) **destination-inspection** regime. Critically, the GSA has not shown alignment or approval from the GRA to introduce this system. Furthermore, while Antaser Afrique can compel importers or their agents to submit trade data, it holds no legal authority to compel suppliers at ports of origin to submit such data, rendering its verification capability ineffective. This fundamental flaw, among others, explains why CTN/SPN has failed to deliver proven benefits elsewhere in the region.

Duplication with National AI Strategy and Added Costs

The SPN directly risks duplicating the government's own announced plans to deploy Artificial Intelligence through customs to combat revenue leakage. This creates an uncoordinated, parallel system that undermines national digital modernisation efforts.

Critically, the claim that the SPN imposes "no additional cost" on Ghanaian traders is misleading, as all fees charged to exporters are ultimately passed to Ghanaian consignees, for whom it will be a direct, new financial burden.

Ineffectiveness as a Cargo Monitoring Tool

Ghana's existing Integrated Customs Management System (ICUMS) already provides full cargo data and inventory history. The current framework combines carrier tracking, risk profiling, scanning and audits. The SPN adds no real-time tracking, risk analysis, or verification capability. It is merely an administrative transaction that introduces an unnecessary bureaucratic hurdle, defeating the objective of trade facilitation.

Conclusion: An Urgent Call for Full Reassessment

The Coalition of Concerned Exporters, Importers and Traders calls for an immediate and full reassessment of the Smart Port Note initiative. The policy lacks justification, duplicates existing systems, increases costs, and was developed without exhaustive stakeholder consultation.

The GSA is reminded that its strengthened mandate under the Ghana Shippers' Authority Act, 2024 (Act 1122) is to sanitise the shipping industry and protect Ghanaian traders from exploitative practices by shipping service providers, especially the shipping lines—not to introduce them.

The Coalition remains ready to collaborate with the Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Finance, the Ghana Revenue Authority, the Ghana Shippers' Authority and all relevant bodies to develop policies that genuinely reduce the cost of doing business and facilitate trade.

About the Coalition of Concerned Exporters, Importers and Traders:

The Coalition is composed of exporters, importers and traders who have come together to advocate for policies that enhance fair trade, reduce operational burdens, and promote economic growth.

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