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PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ABOA Opposes the Deployment of Algorithmic Systems for Customs Valuation and Tariff Classification at Ghana's Port

Ashanti Business Owners Association (ABOA) wishes to express its deep concern and objection to the recent deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems as a primary tool for assessing import values and determining tariff classifications at Ghana's ports of entry.

While we acknowledge the importance of digital transformation and support efforts by authorities to modernise port operations, the current application of AI in customs valuation and classification raises significant operational, legal, and economic concerns that must be urgently addressed.

Our Key Concerns

1. Lack of Transparency and Explanability

The AI systems being deployed operate largely as "black-box" mechanisms, offering limited visibility into how values and classifications are determined. This undermines the principles of transparency and due process, which are fundamental to fair trade practices.

2. Conflict with Trade Facilitation and Predictability Objectives

Under the World Trade Organisation (TFA), Ghana is obligated to ensure:

- Predictability in customs procedures
- Advance rulings on classification and valuation
- Expedited clearance processes

The current AI-driven framework introduces non-deterministic outcomes, undermining:

- Pre-import cost estimation
- Contract pricing certainty
- Supply chain planning

This creates implicit trade barriers, contrary to Ghana's trade facilitation commitments.

3. Risk of Arbitrary and Inflated Valuations

Preliminary feedback from importers suggests a growing trend of arbitrary increases in declared values, resulting in excessive duty assessments. Without clear justification or a standardised appeal mechanism, this leaves businesses vulnerable to unnecessary financial burdens.

4. Inconsistency with International Customs Standards

The use of AI in valuation appears to conflict with established principles under the WTO Customs Valuation Agreement, which emphasises transaction value as the primary basis for customs valuation. Any deviation from this framework risks placing Ghana at odds with international trade obligations.

5. Limited Human Oversight and Responsibility

The apparent over-reliance on automated decision-making reduces the role of experienced customs officers and limits accountability. Complex trade scenarios require human judgment, which AI systems cannot replicate.

6. Eroding of all economic gains

High import duty costs have a huge economic impact of increasing the cost of doing business, distorting pricing structure, raising inflation, depleting working capital, stagnating economic growth and reducing government expected revenue in the medium and long term.

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Our Position

We are not opposed to the integration of technology in customs administration. However, such deployment must be gradual, consultative, and compliant with international best practices. AI should serve as a support tool not a substitute for established valuation principles and professional judgment.

Our Recommendations

We respectfully call on the Ghana Revenue Authority (Customs Division) and the Ministry of Finance to:

1. Suspend the full-scale deployment of AI-driven valuation and classification systems pending comprehensive stakeholder consultations.
2. Address the high import duty cost to ensure full compliance and reduce the tendencies of undervaluation, misclassification and import duty evasion
3. Publish clear guidelines outlining how AI-generated values and classifications are derived.
4. Establish a transparent and efficient dispute resolution mechanism accessible to importers.
5. Ensure alignment with WTO valuation principles and Ghana's international trade commitments.
6. Adopt a hybrid decision architecture, where AI outputs are advisory and subject to validation by qualified customs officers
7. Pilot the system within controlled environments before nationwide rollout.

Conclusion

The integrity of Ghana's trade ecosystem depends on fairness, predictability, and adherence to internationally accepted standards. While innovation is essential, it must not come at the expense of businesses and economic growth

We urge the relevant authorities to engage stakeholders meaningfully and recalibrate this initiative to ensure that it fosters trade facilitations and reduces cost of importation while enhancing government revenue

Signed:

Charles Kusi Appiah Kubi
Executive Secretary