

IEAG PRESS STATEMENT ON FIVE MONTHS OF PUBLICAN AI IMPLEMENTATION AND KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN GHANA'S PORT AND TRADE ENVIRONMENT

**Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media,
Distinguished representatives of Government Institutions,
Members of the Import and Export Community,**

Good Morning. On behalf of the leadership and entire membership of the Importers and Exporters Association of Ghana (IEAG), I wish to thank you for honoring our invitation. The purpose of today's press conference is to present an objective assessment of the **Publican Artificial Intelligence Trade Solution**, which became fully operational at Ghana's ports on **12th March 2026**. From the onset, the IEAG wishes to state unequivocally that we remain committed to every policy and reform that seeks to improve Ghana's trade environment, strengthen customs administration, promote transparency and protect national revenue.

When discussions surrounding the implementation of the Publican AI System began, our Association raised legitimate concerns bordering on stakeholder engagement, transparency, data integrity, system integration and operational readiness. Government, through the Ministry of Finance and the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), engaged us extensively and addressed many of those concerns. Following those engagements, the Association publicly declared its support for the implementation of the system because we became convinced that the objectives behind the reform were in the national interest.

Today, after five months of implementation, we believe it is only fair and responsible to present an honest appraisal of the system based on facts and practical experiences from our members.

WHY IEAG SUPPORTED THE PUBLICAN AI SYSTEM

Our support was informed by several important national considerations. First, for many years there has existed a public perception that importers deliberately under-declare the value of imported goods to evade taxes and customs duties. Unfortunately, this narrative has painted the entire import and export community with the same brush. The truth is that the overwhelming majority of genuine importers are law-abiding business people who only seek fairness, predictability and consistency in customs valuation.

The introduction of an Artificial Intelligence-powered valuation system helps replace subjective assessments with a technology-driven process that relies on verified trade data, global price intelligence and risk indicators. This promotes fairness while protecting compliant traders.

Secondly, we supported the system because Ghana has for years suffered significant revenue leakages arising from under-valuation, misclassification, false declarations and excessive human discretion within customs valuation processes. Any technology capable of reducing these loopholes deserves national support because every cedi recovered contributes towards national development.

Thirdly, the Publican AI System has significantly reduced excessive human discretion in customs valuation. Historically, two importers bringing in identical goods could receive different duty assessments depending on the officer handling the transaction. Such inconsistencies created uncertainty, unnecessary disputes and opportunities for abuse. A technology-driven valuation process offers greater consistency, transparency and predictability.

Fourthly, the system enhances risk management by identifying undervaluation, misclassification, suspicious declarations and inconsistencies in trade documentation, allowing Customs officers to focus attention on high-risk consignments while facilitating legitimate trade.

POSITIVE OUTCOMES AFTER FOUR MONTHS

Ladies and Gentlemen, the results achieved so far demonstrate that Ghana is moving in the right direction. According to the 2026 Mid-Year Budget Review presented by the Minister for Finance, the Publican AI Trade

Solution has generated remarkable outcomes. Between the pilot phase and the rollout period ending 17 July 2026:

- The system increased assessed customs collections by **more than US\$300 million**, representing a **17.5% increase** over values originally declared by importers. The Finance Minister has also indicated that the system has generated over US\$300 million in additional customs revenue in the first 3 months of full operations (GH¢1.3bn - GH¢ 1.5bn per month).
- Approximately **366,000 import declarations** had been analyzed.
- About **24%** of declarations triggered valuation risk indicators requiring further review.
- In **March 2026 alone**, assessed customs collections increased by approximately **US\$73.44 million**, representing a **25.7% uplift**.

These figures clearly demonstrate that technology can significantly improve domestic revenue mobilization without introducing new taxes. Indeed, one of the encouraging developments in the recent Mid-Year Budget Review was that Government was able to present its fiscal update without introducing new taxes or levies. While several economic factors contribute to fiscal performance, strengthened customs revenue mobilization through reforms such as Publican AI undoubtedly supports Government's broader revenue objectives. The Association therefore congratulates Government, the Ministry of Finance, the Ghana Revenue Authority and all officers working diligently to ensure the success of this important reform.

CHALLENGES THAT REQUIRE URGENT ATTENTION

Ladies and Gentlemen, our support for the Publican AI System does not mean the system is without challenges. Like every major digital reform, implementation bottlenecks remain. Our members continue to report concerns regarding:

- 1. Appeals Process;** Although improvements have been made, some importers still experience delays in the review and resolution of valuation disputes. A faster, transparent, and time-bound appeals process is necessary to avoid unnecessary demurrage and business disruptions.
- 2. Duty Fluctuations;** Some importers continue to experience unexpected fluctuations in duty assessments for similar consignments imported at different times. Government should undertake continuous calibration of the valuation database to ensure consistency and accuracy.
- 3. Continuous Stakeholder Engagement;** Technology evolves constantly. There should therefore be regular consultations among the Ministry of Finance, GRA, Customs, freight forwarders, shipping stakeholders and the trading community to continuously improve the system.
- 4. Capacity Building;** Continuous training should be organized for Customs officers, freight forwarders and clearing agents to ensure uniform understanding and application of the Publican AI platform.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the Importers and Exporters Association of Ghana acknowledges that the Publican AI System has introduced a more transparent and responsive mechanism for resolving valuation disputes.

We are aware that importers who believe their consignments have been overvalued now have the opportunity to seek a review of the assessed duty by submitting the relevant commercial documents supporting their transactions. These include the Commercial Invoice, Sales Contract or Purchase Order, Proof of Payment (such as a bank transfer or SWIFT confirmation), Bill of Lading, and other relevant import documentation that accurately reflects the transaction value of the goods.

Where these documents satisfactorily establish the actual transaction value, Customs has shown a willingness to reassess the valuation and, where appropriate, adjust the duty payable. This represents a significant improvement over the previous system and even the initial stages of the Publican AI rollout, when importers often had limited opportunities to challenge duty assessments through a structured and evidence-based process. The Association considers this a positive development that promotes fairness, transparency and confidence in the customs valuation process. We encourage the Ghana Revenue Authority to further strengthen and expedite this review mechanism to ensure that legitimate importers receive timely redress while safeguarding government revenue.

ADVISE TO IMPORTERS

We also wish to also advise our members and the general importing public to independently verify duty assessments communicated to them by their freight forwarders or clearing agents. The Association has received complaints suggesting that some unscrupulous agents may be exploiting misunderstandings surrounding the **Publican AI System** to quote exaggerated customs charges to unsuspecting importers. We wish to make it clear that not every high duty assessment should automatically be blamed on the **Publican AI System**. Importers must demand proper documentation and seek clarification whenever they have doubts. Where necessary, they should contact the IEAG for independent guidance before making payments.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Importers and Exporters Association of Ghana respectfully recommends that Government:

- Continue investing in improving the **Publican AI System** through regular software updates and data refinement.
- Strengthen the Appeals Secretariat to guarantee quicker resolution of disputes.
- Deepen stakeholder engagement with the trading community.
- Integrate more international pricing databases to improve valuation accuracy.
- Regularly publish implementation performance reports to build confidence among traders.
- Continue using technology to eliminate opportunities for corruption, revenue leakages and arbitrary customs valuation.

CONTAINER CONGESTION AT THE TEMA PORT AND MATTERS ARISING

The IEAG also wishes to draw the attention of the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA) to the urgent need to accelerate measures to address the persistent container congestion at the Tema Port, which is contributing significantly to vehicular and trade traffic within the port enclave and its adjoining areas. We are aware that the Authority has a number of properties and spaces leased to private businesses, with some of these lease agreements approaching their expiration. In view of the current congestion, we urge the Authority to consider not renewing selected leases where appropriate and instead utilize such spaces for the development of ultra-modern container terminal facilities. Such additional capacity would help augment the existing facilities at the main port and Terminal Three, improve cargo handling efficiency, reduce congestion and facilitate the smooth movement of goods and vehicles.

Another issue of serious concern to the IEAG is the apparent disregard by some shipping lines and their agents for the Ghana Shippers' Authority's directive on the regulated Container Administrative Charge (CAC), also referred to as the local handling charge. The current regulatory ceiling places the charge at GH¢720 per Twenty-Foot Equivalent Unit (TEU) for both import and export containers. The directive remains valid and operational, and the GSA has directed shipping lines and their agents to comply fully with it.

The IEAG is concerned that reports of some shipping lines continuing to impose charges above the approved ceiling have the potential to increase the cost of doing business at Ghana's ports, create uncertainty for importers and exporters, and undermine ongoing efforts to make the country's ports more competitive. In view of this development, the IEAG respectfully appeals to the Honorable Minister for Transport to convene an urgent stakeholder meeting involving the Ghana Shippers' Authority, shipping lines, shipping agents, freight forwarders, importers and exporters, and other relevant port stakeholders to resolve the impasse. We believe that an open and constructive dialogue, under the leadership of the Ministry, will help prevent the matter from escalating into a major disruption to port operations and international trade.

SECURITY AT THE PORT

On security at the port, the IEAG calls on the Inspector-General of Police to ensure maximum security within the port enclave to help sustain the 24-hour shift system under the Government's 24-hour economy policy. This call has become necessary following a recent isolated attack on some transporters and individuals who were offloading cargo within the port enclave. We believe that a secure port environment is essential to the success of the 24-hour economy, and we therefore urge the security agencies to strengthen patrols, surveillance and rapid-response measures to protect traders, transporters, workers and other port users.

IMPROVEMENT IN GRA DIGITAL SERVICES AND PAYMENT PLATFORMS

The IEAG further calls on the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) to improve and strengthen its digital services and payment platforms. This concern has been necessitated by the recent breakdown of government digital services and payment platforms at the Port, particularly the Ghana.gov platform. The system was reportedly unavailable for about a week before it was rectified, resulting in significant time and financial losses to businesses operating at the port. We therefore urge the GRA to invest in adequate

system resilience, maintenance, technical support and contingency arrangements to ensure that its digital platforms remain reliable and facilitate a seamless flow of customs and other port-related services.

IEAG SUPPORTS THE GSA STANDARDISATION POLICY

The IEAG fully supports the Ghana Standards Authority's planned implementation of the Pre-Shipment Inspection and **Vehicle Age Verification (PVoC)** programme for imported used vehicles, which takes effect from October 1. The PVoC programme, which is intended to prevent the importation of substandard and unsafe vehicles, will contribute significantly to ensuring compliance with Ghana's safety and environmental requirements, while also improving the traceability of imported vehicles and helping to address concerns relating to stolen and accident-damaged vehicles. The IEAG believes the steps taken by the Ghana Standards Authority to undertake a series of engagements with industry players are in the right direction, and we fully support such engagements. We are therefore urging all our members to holistically embrace the new system, which will ultimately inure to their own benefit and help create a more trader-friendly environment while addressing loopholes associated with the importation and purchase of vehicles into the country.

CONTRIBUTION OF GOLDBOD AND BANK OF GHANA TO IMPORT AND ECONOMIC STABILITY

We also wish to commend the Ghana Gold Board (GoldBod) and the Bank of Ghana (BoG) for the significant contribution they have made towards economic and business stability during the period under review, particularly in supporting the foreign exchange market and creating a more conducive environment for importers and exporters. The IEAG recognizes the important role played by GoldBod's gold trading and related policies in strengthening Ghana's foreign exchange position and improving the availability of foreign exchange for legitimate business activities.

The relative stability in the foreign exchange market has provided greater predictability for businesses engaged in international trade and has helped importers plan their transactions with greater confidence. The current volumes of imports recorded at the country's ports provide some indication of the improved business environment and the continued flow of trade. We equally commend the Bank of Ghana for its efforts towards maintaining macroeconomic and financial stability, particularly through its monetary policy interventions, foreign exchange market operations and measures aimed at strengthening the country's external buffers. The Bank's efforts to maintain price stability, improve confidence in the financial sector and promote a more stable exchange rate environment are critical to the operations of importers and exporters, whose businesses are directly affected by inflation, exchange rate movements and the cost of foreign currency. The Bank has also continued to use its monetary policy tools to improve the transmission of lower inflation and declining policy rates into market interest rates.

The IEAG particularly welcomes the downward movement in interest rates and the gradual easing of borrowing conditions. The Bank of Ghana's Financial Stability Review indicates that the average lending rate declined from 30.3 percent in December 2024 to 20.5 percent in December 2025, alongside significant reductions in the Monetary Policy Rate and Treasury bill rates. We believe that continued reductions in the cost of credit, subject to prevailing economic conditions, will provide much-needed relief to businesses, particularly importers and exporters who require working capital to finance their operations, purchase

goods and meet their international trade obligations. We further commend the Bank of Ghana for measures aimed at improving foreign exchange market operations and price discovery, as well as strengthening the resilience of the country's external position.

The IEAG believes that the combined efforts of GoldBod, the Bank of Ghana and other relevant economic management institutions have contributed to a more stable business environment. We therefore encourage both institutions to sustain and deepen these interventions, particularly as we approach the Yuletide, when demand for foreign exchange, credit and imported goods is expected to increase significantly.

COMMENDATION TO GHANA LINK

Lastly, we take this opportunity to commend Ghana Link for its tremendous services at the country's ports through its ICUMS platform during the year under review. From the beginning of the year to date, there have been little or no major complaints regarding challenges associated with port clearance through the Ghana Link system, and we believe this is largely attributable to the improved technical services and interventions undertaken by the company. We all recall how the company came under heavy criticism last year over similar challenges and how it assured stakeholders that adequate steps would be taken to address them. It is therefore important and appropriate to commend Ghana Link for the significant improvement recorded this year and for the efforts made to provide a more reliable service to port users.

CONCLUSION

Ladies and Gentlemen, in conclusion, the Importers and Exporters Association of Ghana (IEAG) reiterates its commitment to supporting policies and reforms that promote transparency, revenue mobilization, trade facilitation and a more efficient business environment. While we maintain our support for the Publican AI Trade Solution and acknowledge the progress recorded so far, we believe that its success, as well as the broader objectives of Ghana's trade reforms, must be complemented by efficient port infrastructure, reliable digital systems, enhanced security and effective stakeholder engagement. We therefore call on the relevant authorities to urgently address the challenges of container congestion, port security and digital service disruptions, while encouraging the Ghana Standards Authority, Ghana Gold Board and Ghana Link to sustain the positive initiatives and improvements recorded in their respective areas.

The IEAG remains committed to constructive engagement with Government and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that Ghana's ports remain competitive, secure, transparent and responsive to the needs of legitimate businesses. We believe that an efficient port system must not only protect national revenue but also reduce the cost of doing business, facilitate the smooth movement of goods, enhance investor confidence and support economic growth. We therefore encourage all stakeholders to work together to consolidate the gains made, address emerging challenges and build a modern, efficient and business-friendly trade environment that supports Ghana's economic development.

Thank you! Long Live Importers and Exporters!! Long Live Ghana!!!

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