



MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: 24 JULY 2014

TO: NEWS EDITORS

RE: FIRST MEETING OF SACU'S REGIONAL TRADE FORUM

The SACU Secretariat will be holding the first meeting of the Forum on 24 July 2014 in Johannesburg, South Africa, following its launch on 8 November 2013, in Maseru Lesotho. The purpose of the meeting is for the forum to agree the terms of reference and the working modalities design its work programme and priority areas, and agree on the working structure for the Forum. The Forum will also be apprised on the implementation of the SACU trade facilitation programme and some lessons from the pilot on the Lesotho National Preferred Trader Programme.

The forum is a platform for engagement between the Governments of the five SACU Member States and the private sector. The key issues for discussion will be issues affecting cross border trade as well as issues related to the SACU customs reform and modernisation programme.

It is envisaged that interactions during the forum will give rise to close cooperation and the establishment of networks amongst business people from other countries in the region. Through close cooperation, market opportunities and business strategies can be discussed. In addition, the Private Sector will now be able to make inputs into the proposals for customs reform and modernisation by outlining the specific challenges that may be faced by the private sector during the implementation of the reform agenda.

Trade between SACU Member States has grown consistently since the entry into force of the 2002 Agreement. For instance, intra-SACU imports have grown from R58 649m in 2002/03 to R111 887m in 2013/14, representing growth in excess of 90% since implementation of the Agreement commenced in 2004. The wish is to see an expansion in production capacity in the smaller Member States. This will come from growth in the industrial sector of the entire SACU region. To achieve this, SACU has prioritised the development of an industrial development policy, which emphasises the establishment of regional value chains. In all this, interaction between Government and the private sector is important

The expected outcomes from the forum will involve strengthened communication between Government and the private sector in the region. Another anticipated outcome is that it will provide an opportunity to better understand the concerns of the private sector and using

that to better focus the SACU work programme and initiatives. The forum will provide a platform where the regional business community can advise customs services on the impact of some of the reform and modernisation programmes on business in general. Furthermore, customs services in the region will use this platform to engage and consult trade on any projects, initiatives or changes in the processes and procedures.

SACU Secretariat

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