



## **Press Release**

**Date: 08 October 2015**

### **SACU Secretariat keen on collaborative partnership with USAID Southern Africa Trade Hub**

Experts from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Southern Africa Trade Hub, met with the Deputy Executive Secretary of Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU), Mr. Thabo Khasipe briefly on Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup> 2015, to discuss matters of mutual interest between the two entities.

The goal of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Southern Africa Trade Hub is to increase international competitiveness, intra-regional trade and food security in Southern Africa. The Trade Hub is supported by USAID and works closely with Southern African countries.

The Director for Enabling Environment at the Trade Hub, Mr. George Makore used the occasion of the meeting to acquaint the SACU Secretariat with the objectives and activities of the Trade Hub in the Southern Africa Region.

The purpose of the courtesy was for Trade Hub to understand the SACU-wide programs regarding investor roadmap, standards development and the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) issues and to get SACU Secretariat's input. The input will feed into the technical assistance implementation action plan that can be considered for the SACU Member States in relation to AGOA considering the recent extension of AGOA by the United States of America Government.

Expressing delight, the Deputy Executive Secretary opined that there exists a need for further deepening of collaborative engagements between the SACU Secretariat and the Trade Hub especially with a focus towards Trade Promotion within the confines of the signed trade agreements such as the SACU-EFTA agreement.

However, in view of the fact that the current Trade Hub programme was in its last six months, the Deputy Executive Secretary alluded to the potential for capacity building collaboration as the most viable initiative that can be pursued with a particular emphasis on ensuring full understanding, by Member States, of the new AGOA and the opportunities it presents to SACU Member States.

With a team of regional and international experts based in Gaborone, Botswana, the Trade Hub provides targeted technical assistance to governments, the private sector and civil society organizations to advance regional trade within Southern Africa while incorporating gender integration, environment compliance and strategic outreach in all activities.

As a regional program, the Trade Hub works to: Reduce the time and cost of transporting goods across borders by deploying modern trade facilitation tools such as customs connectivity and national single windows in selected countries.

- Strengthen the competitiveness of the grain, soy and groundnut value chains by reducing post-harvest losses, introducing better seeds and technologies, strengthening regional agricultural institutions and supporting trade and investment links.
- Increase trade and investment in Southern Africa's textile and apparel sector through the annual Source Africa trade show in Cape Town.
- Increase capacity for regulating and enhancing the clean energy sector to increase investments.
- Improve the regional trade, investment and integration enabling environment through regulatory reform and the promotion of harmonized standards.

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## **ABOUT SACU**

The Southern African Customs Union (SACU) consists of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland. The SACU Secretariat is located in Windhoek, Namibia. SACU was established in 1910, making it the world's oldest Customs Union in operation.

The customs union collects duties on local production and customs duties on members' imports from outside SACU, and the resulting revenue was allocated to member countries in quarterly instalments utilizing a revenue-sharing formula. Negotiations to reform the 1969 Agreement started in 1994, and a new agreement was signed in 2002. The new arrangement was ratified by SACU Heads of State.

The Economic structure of the Union links the Member states by a single tariff and no customs duties between them. The Member States form a single customs territory in which tariffs and other barriers are eliminated on substantially all the trade between the Member States for products originating in these countries; and there is a common external tariff that applies to non-members of SACU.