

Trade Facilitation News
SACU adopts a regional approach to implement the
WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement

The SACU WTO Joint Workshop on Trade Facilitation was held from 25 to 29 January 2016 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The meeting was attended by officials from the Customs Administrations, Ministries of Trade, Agriculture, Standards and the representatives of the Private Sector.

The WTO informed the workshop that the Trade Facilitation Agreement will enter into force once two-thirds majority of the WTO Member States have deposited their Instruments of Acceptance. WTO also indicated that with the current WTO Membership, two-thirds majority translates to 108 Members.

Upon entry into force of the TFA, the WTO highlighted that each Member must ratify the Protocol of Amendment to the Marrakesh Agreement, deposit instrument of Acceptance, and that the Agreement will enter into force at two-thirds majority which is currently 108 Members.

The salient points on notifications, with main focus on Africa, were that 78 notifications have been received and 17 notification from African countries representing 22% of overall WTO membership, majority of the measures have not yet been categorised, 14% have been designated as category A measures.

The WTO provided an update on implementation of the agreement to date as follows: 68 countries ratified (40 remaining for the agreement to enter into force), 78 countries notified Category A and only Zambia notified Categories B & C. The complementary relationship between TFA and the WTO Agreement on Standards and Phytosanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) was also explained. In the SACU region only Botswana and Lesotho have ratified the agreement and Botswana has further notified Category A commitments. Other Member states are advanced in their journey to ratify this instrument.

In this workshop the Member States also noted that all measures will be implemented at a national level, however there are activities that were identified for coordinated at the regional level to support implementation of the WTO TFA. To this end, an agreement was reached for the SACU Secretariat to develop an initial work plan that outlines specific activities to be coordinated at a regional level.