

Quarterly SACU Customs Bulletin April to June 2012

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1. SACU ADVANCES THE PREFERRED TRADER PROGRAMME



SACU Trade Partnership Workshop

Trade Partnership is one of the priority instruments that has been identified by the SACU Council of Ministers as a valuable tool for the achievement of trade facilitation within SACU. It will serve as a useful tool for encouraging voluntary compliance by traders. SACU

seeks to adopt a Trade Partnership strategy that is based on an Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) programme, which rewards compliance; facilitates legitimate trade; and promotes mutual recognition among Member States as well as with third parties.

In August 2011, SACU developed a high level framework for the implementation of the Preferred Trader Programme as a first step towards an AEO programme. In taking this work forward, SACU held a working group meeting from 7- 10 May 2012 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The objective was to develop a set of benefits that can be offered to the private sector at the pilot phase of the Preferred Trader Programme. The working group identified five key benefits that can be offered to the private sector as part of the implementation of the pilot programme. Following this, some preparatory activities including an assessment of the current state of play as well as capacity requirements in Member States have commenced.

Further to this work on the Preferred Trader Programme, the working group deliberated on the approach towards strengthening engagement with the private sector at a regional level. The working group noted that in each Member State, the private sector platforms for engaging with national customs administrations have been

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established and these need to be leveraged to establish a regional forum.

2. SACU COLLABORATION WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR



SACU and private sector delegates

SACU continues to implement the Customs Development Programme with the assistance of the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). One of the pillars of the programme is to establish partnerships with trade through the strengthening of dialogue and engagement. This principle has been embedded in the customs policy document as well as within the structure of the programme. Within the programme structures, the Steering Committee, which is the decision making body for the programme, is designed to include a representative of the private sector.

During the customs policy consultation that took place from March to May 2011, Member States were required to

nominate a private sector representative who will serve as a national contact for purposes of engaging the wider private sector in SACU. On 14 May 2012 SACU held its first meeting with the representative of private sector from each SACU Member State. The primary objective of the meeting was to engage on the overall Trade Partnerships Project, initiate work towards establishment of the regional Customs Trade Forum and to discuss the implementation of the Preferred Trader Programme together with the identified benefits for Preferred Traders.

The Private Sector requested that as part of ensuring predictability, SACU should consider developing standardized operating procedures that cover the region in order to minimize inconsistencies experienced at SACU borders by regional traders.

Towards establishing a regional customs trade forum, the SACU Secretariat shared draft terms of reference for the forum which representatives undertook to consult on at the national level with their members. It is anticipated that the first Regional Customs to Trade Forum will be convened in October 2012.

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3. SACU HEADS OF CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATIONS MEETING



SACU Heads of Customs Administrations meeting

SACU Heads of Customs Administration met on 10th May 2012 in Johannesburg to review progress on the implementation of the Customs Development Programme. This meeting of Heads of Customs also considered the progress update in other areas of the programme such as the IT Connectivity initiative, Risk Management and Enforcement.

Following their deliberations, Heads of Customs Administrations approved the IT work programme that is intended to be in line with the WCO data model version 3 and uses other WCO connectivity instruments. Further to this, Heads of Customs Administrations re-emphasized that work must continue in the areas of customs enforcement with a purpose of strengthening enforcement capacity and risk management in SACU. To this end it was

recommended that a meeting of Heads of Customs Enforcement be convened to explore regional risks and identify opportunities for joint operations.

Customs Commissioners further expressed a desire to have their future meetings take place at the border posts in order to allow for a practical oversight on border operations.

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