



STATEMENT BY, MS TSWELOPELE MOREMI, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF
THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CUSTOMS UNION (SACU) ON THE OCCASION
OF THE SIGNING OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN
THE WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANISATION (WCO) AND SACU AT THE FIRST
SESSION OF THE WCO CAPACITY BUILDING COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2010,

WCO HEADQUARTERS, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

Mr. Kunio Mikuriya, Secretary General of the World Customs Organisation,

Chairman of the World Customs Organisation Council

Chairman of the Capacity Building Committee

Distinguished Director Generals of Customs

Distinguished Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am greatly honoured to address this august gathering on the occasion of the First Session of the World Customs Organisation Capacity Building Committee. At the outset I would like to take this opportunity to thank the WCO for the invitation extended to me and my delegation to this very important meeting. Let me also honour the important work the WCO is doing in amongst others, the facilitation of international trade, the development of global standards, the simplification and harmonisation of Customs procedures, the enhancement of Customs enforcement and compliance activities, and the development of sustainable global Customs capacity building programmes.

Distinguished Delegations

Having been established in 1910, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) is the oldest Customs Union in the world, comprising of the Republic of Botswana, the Kingdom of Lesotho, Republic of Namibia, Republic of South Africa, and the Kingdom of Swaziland. The 1910 Agreement remained in force until the independence of the three High Commission Territories, when it was renegotiated to take into account the changed political environment, leading to the 1969 SACU Agreement. With the political changes that took place with the

accession in 1990 of Namibia to the Agreement (following its independence), the attainment of democracy in South Africa as well as the developments in the global trade environment (following the establishment of the WTO), all the SACU Member States agreed to negotiate a more comprehensive agreement, based on democratic principles and common institutions and policies. This resulted in a new and comprehensive Agreement signed in 2002 and entered into force in July 2004. Therefore SACU has demonstrated the flexibility to adapt and transform itself to continue serving the interests of its Members in response to changing political and economic circumstances.

Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates

SACU, recently launched the celebration of its 100 (hundred) years of existence when the SACU Heads of State and Government met in Windhoek, Namibia on 22 April 2010. I am sure you will agree with me that 100 years of SACU's existence is a remarkable achievement and an extraordinary milestone given the history of the region. During this period SACU has made significant progress in promoting both regional integration and the integration of Member States into the global economy. SACU is a functioning Customs Union, with free movement of goods between Members and a Common External Tariff. The 2002 Agreement, when fully implemented, characterises SACU as more than a Customs Union because it already addresses issues of common policy development, harmonisation, coordination and cooperation in various trade facilitation and investment policies. Recognising this, SACU Heads of State and Government have decided that SACU be transformed into a vehicle for deeper development integration both within itself and within the Southern African region. However, we are at the same time acutely aware of the challenges facing the Organization as we seek to achieve

this Vision. One of the key challenges remains aligning the Customs Union with current developments in international trade.

Ladies and Gentleman,

In this regard SACU Heads of State and Government have identified a number of key challenges and priorities for SACU as we seek to once again transform the organisation to respond to global developments. The changing face of global business necessitates that Customs play a greater role in reducing the transaction costs faced by traders thereby facilitating trade across borders. Modern customs authorities need to balance the objective of facilitating trade with their roles as societal protectors and revenue agents of the state. Recognising this, SACU Heads of State and Government have identified trade facilitation and the promotion of intra-SACU trade as a priority area requiring attention. The support of the WCO therefore comes at an appropriate time as SACU seeks to respond to this challenge and address this priority and transforming it into a deeper level of integration.

Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates

In the process of their introspection, SACU Member States recognised the critical role that Customs plays in regional integration and in the attainment of its new Vision and Mission which was adopted as part of the Centenary Celebration. SACU's new Vision is to be **"An economic community with equitable and sustainable development, dedicated to the welfare of its people for a common future"**. The signing of this Memorandum of Understanding between the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) is therefore a

significant step in ensuring we benefit from international standards and the Customs expertise of the WCO as we embark on this journey.

In an effort to ensure that SACU caters for the needs of a Customs Union in the 21st century and is aligned with current developments in international trade, SACU with the assistance of our partners, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the World Customs Organisation (WCO), has embarked on a comprehensive regional Customs Development Programme. The objective of this programme is to contribute to the development of a sustainable and improved economy in SACU with regard to trade, security and social protection through development of the Customs Authorities as fair and effective trade management partners. The programme aims to assist the SACU Member Countries to comply with international customs instruments and modernize their respective Customs Administrations. Through this regional programme SACU seeks to assist the Customs Authorities in the SACU region design and implement a comprehensive regional reform programme with a focus on developing a uniform set of customs policies and procedures in SACU; establish a general legislative framework for the administration of customs activities in SACU; develop a regional risk management framework that will facilitate trade, compliance and security within SACU; establish trade partnerships that will strengthen customs to business relations; develop and implement standard operating procedures in common areas; and promote regional IT interconnectivity and information exchange.

In conclusion,

It is my sincere belief that the international standards and Customs expertise provided by the WCO have a critical role in promoting not only regional and international trade but also regional integration and international economic prosperity and well being. In this regard, I want to congratulate the WCO on the initiative you have taken to establish this important Committee, which seeks to promote greater dialogue and exchanges in order to strengthen Customs capacity building plans nationally, regionally and internationally.

Finally, I once again would like to thank the WCO and SIDA for the continued support provided to SACU and for this opportunity. I wish you fruitful deliberations on this inaugural meeting of this very important Committee.

Thank You