



**Remarks by the Executive Secretary at the Workshop on Diplomacy
and Practice for the Staff of the Secretariat**

8-9 March 2012

Kalahari Sands Hotel, Windhoek

Ladies and gentleman,

It is my honour and privilege to welcome you all to this Workshop on Diplomacy and Practice. This Workshop will cover among other things, the following areas: **basics of diplomacy; diplomatic practices, etiquette and protocols; diplomatic relations; and understanding and complying with the Host Country Agreement.**

I am confident that over the next two days, you will learn and gain a lot on these topics and others to be covered in the Programme. My confidence stems from the fact that this team of facilitators from the Centre for Professional Development, International University of Management based here in Windhoek, will acquit themselves well and deliver, as they have efficiently done so in the past. In addition, with the presentation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia to be delivered on the second day, that should certainly make **“diplomats”** out of most of you. My expectation and that of the leadership of the Secretariat is that after these two days, you will all **“practice what will be preached in this Training”**.

Distinguished participants,

As you may all be aware, the Secretariat is an institution of SACU established under the SACU Agreement, 2002. Under this Agreement, the Secretariat is tasked with the responsibility of the day to day administration of SACU. Consequently, the nature of the business of the Secretariat requires a fair appreciation of international relations and diplomatic practice by all Staff as they operate within an international environment. In line with the SACU policies, Staff of the Secretariat who discharge this mandate, come from different national, technical and cultural backgrounds from all the five SACU Member States, who may not all necessarily have been exposed to the world of diplomacy.

Taking this into account, the leadership in the Secretariat has deemed it fit to arrange this training to equip staff with the necessary appreciation and skills to discharge their mandate. Although this training has in the past not been provided on a more regular basis, this is the third session that is being convened since the Secretariat started operating in 2004. Let me assure you that going forward, it is the commitment of the leadership in the Secretariat that similar training will be undertaken on a more regular basis as part of the induction programme. In addition, refresher sessions will be arranged to ensure that all Members of Staff keep abreast of developments in this area.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The basis for the training is largely informed by the SACU Agreement of 2002, as well as the Headquarters Agreement that has been signed between SACU and the Republic of Namibia to host the headquarters of SACU. In terms of these legal instruments, the Secretariat and its staff are given the parameters within which to discharge their functions. It is within this context that issues of a seemingly conflicting nature may also arise, for which interventions such as this Workshop, assist in providing a common understanding to all Staff.

The Headquarters Agreement in particular, distinguishes between **locally recruited staff** and **expatriate staff** in terms of the immunities and privileges that are accorded to the Staff that fall within these categories. These immunities and privileges are solely extended to facilitate the work of the Staff of the Secretariat, and can be waived in case of abuse. I must hasten to indicate that there is no malice behind this classification. All this stems from the statutory and policy provisions of the relevant Agreements, and is consistent with international best practice.

The Secretariat has the responsibility to abide by the foregoing legal commitments. Where there are seemingly glaring provisions that adversely affect the welfare of Staff and indeed the operations of the Secretariat, the Secretariat engages the relevant authorities to address the issues. It should be noted that it may not always be the case that the outcome of such engagements concords with the expectations of the Members of Staff.

I want to however assure you that the leadership will continue to engage the relevant authorities through the appropriate structures of SACU, to pursue these matters to finality. In addition, the Secretariat will also continuously engage our hosts, the Republic of Namibia as appropriate. Just recently, I undertook consultations with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, as part of these continued interactions.

Distinguished participants,

Before I venture into the details on the salient issues that will be covered in this Workshop, let me stop here and thank you very much for making the time to attend this Workshop. I wish you fruitful and engaging deliberations and do earnestly hope that you will leave this place equipped with knowledge on Diplomacy.

To our facilitators, on behalf of the Secretariat and my own behalf, I want to express my sincere gratitude for availing yourselves to provide this Training and look forward to future collaborations

With these remarks, it is my singular honour to declare this Workshop officially open. I wish all the women in this room and indeed to your female relatives, a happy womens' day.

I thank you.