



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

**STATEMENT BY HON. LUCIA IIPUMBU
MINISTER OF INDUSTRIALISATION AND TRADE
ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL AUTHORISED
ECONOMIC OPERATOR (AEO) AWARENESS SESSION
WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

THURSDAY, 30 MARCH 2022

HILTON HOTEL, WINDHOEK

Director of Proceedings: Mr. Yarukeekuro Ndorokaze:

Dr. Kunio Mikuriya - Secretary General of the World Customs Organisation;

Mr. Thabo David Khasipe - Executive Secretary of SACU;

Mr. Sam SHIVUTE - Commissioner of the Namibia Revenue Agency;

Ms. Stacey Pinto - Chief Executive Officer for Namibia Trade Forum;

Captains of industry and Sector representatives;

Distinguished Invited Guests and Panelists,

Senior Government officials

Officials of SACU Secretariat & NamRA

Members of the Media

Participants in National Authorised Economic Operator Awareness Session

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to firstly express my sincerest gratitude to NamRA and SACU Secretariat for hosting this National Authorised Economic Operator Awareness Session under the **THEME: "AUTHORISED ECONOMIC OPERATOR PROGRAMME AS THE FUTURE OF DOING BUSINESS IN NAMIBIA"**

The increased global trade and the dynamics in international supply chain have created new demands on the role of Customs Administrations and Other Government Agencies (OGAs) on trade facilitation. In this environment, the business community endeavours to move goods faster, at reduced cost to maintain their competitiveness.

Customs Administrations and Other Government Agencies are therefore expected to improve the processing of increased number of cargo with lesser reliance on physical intervention and with greater efficiency and speed, without

compromising the safety and security, revenue collection, and enforcement responsibilities. To achieve these objectives, it is critical for Customs Administrations, Other Government Agencies and Businesses to collaborate and establish mutually beneficial partnerships.

It is pleasing to note that SACU has adopted and prioritised the implementation of the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Programme to strengthen compliance, safety, and security within the supply chain, and in order to address inefficiencies amongst Customs and Other government Agencies.

The AEO Programme is therefore a Voluntary Accreditation Programme designed by the World Customs Organisation (WCO) as a global standard used by Customs Administrations, Other Government Agencies, and Private Sector to strengthen compliance, safety, and security of the supply chain, whilst also building mutual trust and partnerships between government and businesses. It is based on the WCO SAFE Framework of Standard that “enables integrated and harmonized supply chain management for all modes of transport”. Globally there are more than eighty (80) AEO Programmes that are operational, and more are developed annually.

The AEO status can be awarded to manufacturers, importers, exporters, brokers, carriers, consolidators, intermediaries, ports, airports, terminal operators, integrated operators, warehouses, distributors, freight forwarders, etc. Countries can enter into Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRA) to confer AEO status to qualifying businesses that are trading in their territories to ease entry into each other’s markets.

Director of Ceremonies,

In SACU, the AEO is a flagship Programme for the Customs Modernisation Programme under the SACU Trade Facilitation and Logistics Programme. The AEO Programme for the SACU region is envisaged to support industrialisation and the trade agenda (with AfCFTA as a priority) to enable the region to achieve the following expected results:

- (a) improved administrative efficiencies through digitisation, as well as automation of data exchange;
- (b) reduction of time and cost associated with cross-border trade;
- (c) improved compliance and security of the supply chain; and
- (d) enhanced competitiveness of the SACU Member States.

The SACU region is therefore implementing the AEO Programme in phases. The initial phase was focused on developing the tools and frameworks required for voluntary compliance programme. To date, all SACU Member States have established and are implementing their respective AEO Compliance Programmes using the minimum standards and criteria developed at regional level.

Drawing on lessons learnt under the Member States' AEO Compliance Programmes, the region further developed a three tiered Regional AEO Programme that include all pillars - compliance, safety and security. The three tiered Regional AEO Programme was approved by the Council of Ministers in June 2022. The 2023/24 Financial Year will witness the promotion of the AEO Compliance Programme and to work on the required operational tools to fully implement all pillars of the SACU Regional AEO Programme.

Distinguished Guests,

Let me conclude by emphasizing that it is of critical importance to note that the SACU region has embarked on this vital exercise to promote the visibility and use of AEO Programme by businesses, and Namibian Businesses are encouraged to actively participate in this great opportunity.

The hosting of engagement session with the stakeholders from Customs, Other Government Agencies, and the Private Sector, such as the one we are attending today, ensures that we are all moving in the same direction, and none of us should feel left out. Presentations will be done on AEO Compliance Programme, its benefits, and areas of improvement, as well as on the SACU Regional AEO Programme that entails compliance, safety, and security and the benefits for traders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me, to once again thank NamRA and SACU Secretariat, all invited institutions, as well as participants who have made this event to be a great accomplishment. I wish us all rewarding engagements!

I Thank You.