



tralac Alumni Workshop Report, 3-4 May 2018

On 3-4 May 2018, tralac held its first Alumni Workshop in Cape Town. All participants were graduates of tralac's capacity building programmes, including the post-graduate diploma and masters degree programmes that were accredited and awarded by the University of Cape Town, e-Learning courses and internships. The alumni shared how tralac training has shaped their careers. tralac alumni who are working in the public sector, academia and intergovernmental and international organizations, like the World Bank, African Union and United Nations Development Programme, shared their experiences and provided rich feedback on the impact of tralac's training programmes.

In her opening remarks, tralac's Executive Director Trudi Hartzenberg underlined the importance of trade-related capacity building for Africa. She noted that while building technical expertise of individuals is important, it is equally important to focus on institutional capacity building. She also noted the ongoing collaboration between tralac and the network of alumni in research, training and policy advocacy. In addition to sharing their experiences and tracing their career development since tralac training, alumni also provided updates on Africa's trade and integration agenda. She emphasised that tralac's work supports sustainable development goal #16 'Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.'

Many alumni are actively involved in policy making and trade negotiations, including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) negotiations. They, together with the tralac team provided an update on the AfCFTA negotiations, the Kigali Summit (21 March 2018) and what happens after the Summit. The discussion showed that there is still a lot to clarify when it comes to this ground-breaking undertaking. The role of the regional economic communities (RECs) vis à vis the AfCFTA was examined. The Agreement makes it clear that the RECs will continue to trade according to their trade regimes. Alumni provided updates on the status of the RECs in east and southern Africa. The resurgence of interest in industrial development was noted; with key focus on the relationship between regional industrial development and market integration. In this connection the pernicious effects of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) hampering both intra-regional trade but also the development of regional value chains was examined. Many NTBS are associated with customs and border management and this makes the trade facilitation agenda important both in the context of the RECs' own integration agendas but also for the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the World Trade Organisation. tralac research has shown that, when considering the impact of continental integration, a 20% reduction in transit time (transport time and time at the border) would make a larger contribution to intra-Africa trade, than complete elimination of tariffs.

A lively discussion on the implications of Brexit for Africa's relationship with the United Kingdom (UK), and also with the European Union (EU) was facilitated by Professor Gerhard Erasmus. There is still

uncertainty about the future relationship between the UK and the EU; with current discussion focusing on whether or not the UK will remain in the EU customs union. What is clear is that for the those southern Africa countries that are party to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) – EU Economic Partnership Agreement; this agreement provides a basis for ensuring uninterrupted trade following the exit of the UK from the EU.

Several recommendations were made by alumni for tralac's research and training programmes; including work to support the tariff liberalisation negotiations and the second phase of the AfCFTA negotiations. It was also recommended that tralac expand its AfCFTA country workshops to raise awareness about this important integration endeavour and the work that is required to make an integrated Africa, a reality.

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