



**REMARKS
BY THE SG OF THE SADC-PF
UPDATE ON THE AfCFTA and Global Related Trade
Developments**

**WEBINAR
9TH FEBRUARY 2023**

Honourable Members and distinguished participants,

In my capacity as Secretary General of the SADC-PF, I wish to thank you for participating in this important Webinar. Allow me to also appreciate the commitment of Ms Trudi Hartzenberg, the Executive Director of Trade Law Centre (tralac), and Dr Gerhard Erasmus for always coming forward to capacitate Parliaments, Madam your commitment is unparalleled. Thank you Tralac team.

As you aware, the Forum is committed to advance globalization through the reinforcement of economic and trade bonds within the SADC region and the African Union, and we believe that the African Continental Free Trade Area is poised to make

headway towards the attainment of this noble objective.

Today, we are meeting for an Update on the AfCFTA and to consider global trade governance developments, both of which are important to ensure that the momentum towards domestication and further negotiation of the AfCFTA continues.

We also meet today because we believe the voice of Parliamentarians is important to the process, especially as Parliaments are considered as prime agents of socio-economic change situated at the helm of the State.

We believe MPs can exercise oversight initiatives over the Executive to spearhead negotiation of phases 2 and 3 of the AfCFTA and further represent their constituencies to ensure that their demands and expectations are met through the Free Trade Area.

Updates are important for MPs, especially to identify bottlenecks and challenges to domestication, and to explore avenues how Parliamentarians can promptly act to close existing gaps.

The Forum is also committed to promote the AfCFTA from the parliamentary perspective to ensure that it remains a live document on the recurrent agenda of SADC Member States, such that the impetus for negotiation is maintained until all countries reap full advantages under the Agreement and partake in a common pool for trade in goods, services and more, at competitive rates.

Moreover, as we take stock of the update today, the Forum remains committed to mainstreaming gender, health, human rights and the protection of the environment through developments surrounding the AfCFTA such that progress made is inclusive, sustainable, eco-friendly and responds to other international commitments taken by Member States.

We believe that the AfCFTA can be a robust instrument to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including through trade in goods and services, and to assist in bringing Africa Agenda 2063 to reality.

We are thrilled today to be collaborating with the TRALAC which is also concerned with advancing the AfCFTA through trade developments that are gender sensitive and which contribute to sustainable economic development. Indeed, there are opportunities to promote women entrepreneurship and empowerment under the AfCFTA and its protocols such as the draft Protocol on Investment, and these potential gains need to be fully tapped.

While we are aware that the mainstay of today's presentations will be focused on the update relating to the negotiation phase and to consider global trade developments such as the Russia-Ukraine crisis, MPs are encouraged to continue reflecting on inclusive development and factors that may influence same, especially as women continue to be disproportionately marginalized in the business and trade sectors.

We look forward to further collaborating with the Tralac for further updates as knowledge of these are crucial to inform parliamentary processes.

With these words, I wish you a pleasant session and thank you for your attention.

Thank you.

***Ms B.Sekgoma,
Secretary General,
SADC-PF***

9th February 2023