



**ACTIVITIES OF THE AFRICAN ORGANISATION FOR STANDARDISATION (ARSO)
RELATED TO THE WORK OF THE WTO TBT COMMITTEE**

STATEMENT BY ARSO

This document contains information provided by ARSO at the TBT Committee meeting of 29-30 March 2017 under Agenda Item 4 (Technical Cooperation Activities)

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. ARSO is an intergovernmental Organisation established by the Organization of African Unity (OAU, currently African Union (AU)) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in 1977, with 21 African Governments. ARSO attained its observer membership in the WTO TBT Committee in November 2015.

1.2. The principal mandate of ARSO is to harmonise African Standards and conformity assessment procedures in order to reduce Technical Barriers to Trade to enhance intra-African and international Trade as well as industrialization and Integration in Africa. For this ARSO:

- a. Harmonises national and/or sub-regional standards as African Standards and issues necessary recommendations to member bodies for this purpose;
- b. Initiates and co-ordinates the development of African Standards (ARS) with reference to products which are of peculiar interest to Africa;
- c. Encourages and facilitates adoption of international standards by member bodies;
- d. Promotes and facilitate exchange of experts, information and co-operation in training of personnel in standardisation activities;
- e. Coordinates the views of its members at the ISO, IEC, OIML, Codex and other international organisations concerned with standardisation activities.

1.3. Currently ARSO has 36 member States (Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Sudan, South Sudan, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

1.4. The ARSO Standardisation Agenda is driven by AU Decisions on specific areas of interest, the latest which lays greater importance on Quality Infrastructure in Africa and establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area y 2017, are the decisions of the 9th Ordinary Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Trade of 1-5 December 2014, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, that directed that:

- All AU Member States that are currently not Members of ARSO should endeavour to attain membership by the year 2017;

- ARSO and other Pan African Standards organisations to refer to the year 2017 as African year of Quality Infrastructure;
- The AUC and ARSO should increase awareness and mobilize all stakeholders on the role of Quality Infrastructure;
- The AUC and Quality Infrastructure Institutions should assess the status of Quality Infrastructure in Africa; and develop a Strategic Plan on Quality Infrastructure in Africa.
- The AUC and ARSO to develop a work plan on Quality Infrastructure to be submitted to the Senior Officials meeting.

1.5. Understandably, in order to shape the CFTA as a comprehensive legal framework for the 21st Century challenges and for the CFTA to fulfil its promise in helping Africa to industrialise and boost intra-African trade, understanding the link between standards, technical regulations, conformity assessment and trade remains crucial in the design of broader development programs that will create new industrialisation and trading opportunities and enhance the Trade within the regional value chains, countries and regions in Africa and facilitate Access to global value chains.

1.6. In retrospect, the AU and UNECA under the document on boosting intra-African trade and the establishment of a CFTA have undertaken to highlight the responsibilities of the African countries and RECs in the CFTA Programme to Boost the Intra-African Trade:

"The CFTA members will need to appreciate and recognise the importance of standards, metrology, conformity assessment and accreditation...CFTA members will need to harmonise their practices in this area to achieve mutual product recognition...Cooperation with national, regional and international standards bodies will need to be promoted. Members will thus need to develop and adopt a policy framework consistent with the provisions of the relevant WTO agreement (AU 2012)."

1.7. In response, ARSO has been engaged, under its 2012-2017 Strategic Framework, in the following activities:

2 STANDARDS HARMONISATION THROUGH THE ARSO TECHNICAL HARMONISATION COMMITTEES (THCS)

2.1. During this period, the following ARSO THCs held their Harmonisation meetings based on the WTO TBT Agreement guidelines, Annex 3 on Code of Good Practice for the Preparation, Adoption and Application of Standards:

- ARSO THC 07 – Textile and Leather, 8–10 March 2017, Nairobi, Kenya
- ARSO THC 05 – Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, 28–31 March, Nairobi, Kenya
- ARSO-THC 02 – Agriculture and Food Products, 12–14 April 2017, Kampala, Uganda
- ARSO-THC 02 – Agriculture and Food Products, 25–28 April 2017, Nairobi, Kenya
- ARSO/THC 03 - Building and Civil Engineering, 7–9 June 2017, Moka, Mauritius.

2.2. Partners - African Development Bank, PTB-Germany, UNECA. Experts are drawn from the Public and Privates Sectors, Academia and NSBs form all African Countries.

2.3. ARSO is currently discussing with CEN-CENELEC (Europe) on how to ensure that Standardisation enhances the operations of the CFTA in similarities with the EU New Standardisation Approach of 1985.

3 CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT

3.1. Strengthening of the ARSO Conformity Assessment Programme (ARSO CACO) that is focusing on harmonisation of the Conformity Assessment Procedures and encouraging Mutual Recognition Arrangement Agreements among African countries.

- First launching meeting was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in November 2016, the second meeting of the ARSO CACO Experts was held in Kigali, Rwanda on 20–22 February 2017 to develop relevant documentations.
- Participating Countries - Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, DR. Congo, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia.

4 AWARENESS CREATION ON QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE

4.1. ARSO organised an Awareness Creation on Quality Infrastructure and the Launching of the celebrations of the 2017 as Africa's Year of Quality Infrastructure.

- On 1-4 March 2017 at the Elephant Hills Hotel, Victoria Falls, in Zimbabwe, ARSO held the 2nd ARSO President Forum and the Made in Africa Conference and Expo 2017 under the theme: Made in Africa as A Pillar for African Economic Integration, Industrialisation and Transformation Agenda, in an event attended by Sixteen (16) African countries (Benin, Botswana, DR Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Liberia, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, South Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and Observer Missions (ACP-EU-TBT Programme, UNECA, RECs (ECOWAS) and Zimbabwe Companies.
- Discussions addressed the role non-tariff measures (TBT/SPS) and related capacity constraints play in promoting Made in African Products and trade. The meeting agreed that putting in place measures to strengthen the capacities, competitiveness and innovative capabilities of domestic enterprises should be an integral part of the African development policy and increased emphasis on compliance to standards, technical regulations and strengthening quality infrastructure is one part of the overall context of reform Agenda. Further details are available [here](#)

5 INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

5.1. Under the ARSO Documentation and Information Networks (ARSO DISNET) ARSO together with the ACP-EU-TBT Programme continues to develop the Africa Trade Web Portal as a tool for information dissemination on Trade and TBT/SPS requirements of various African Products to facilitate Trade.

5.2. On 23 November 2016 in Douala, Cameroon, ARSO jointly with the ACP-EU-TBT Programme organised a workshop for ARSO DISNET Experts from 25 Countries (Botswana, Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, DR. Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zambia) to facilitate this process.

6 PAN AFRICAN QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE (PAQI) MEETING IN KIGALI, RWANDA ON 6-8 FEBRUARY 2017 FOCUSING ON THE TBT CHAPTER OF THE CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA NEGOTIATIONS

6.1. ARSO and other Pan African Quality Infrastructure ([PAQI](#)) institutions (AFRIMETS, AFRAC, AFSEC) held a consultative meeting in the side-lines of the African Union/CFTA Technical Working Group on the Technical Barriers to Trade (TWG/TBT/SPS) held from 9-10 February 2017 in Kigali Rwanda to continue strategizing for a strong, sustainable and integrated approach to the continent's quality infrastructure, encompassing metrology, standards, accreditation and quality assurance and as a major player in the implementation of the CFTA.

6.2. ARSO also held a sideline bilateral meeting at the same time, in Kigali Rwanda, with the British Standards Institute (BSI) Officials focusing on ARSO- BSI cooperation on BSI standards

development priorities and how they link to domestic, regional and international priorities; The economic and societal benefits of standards; How to increase use of standards; How African NSBs are integrating the ISO strategic plans into their NSB strategies; and National and regional engagement.

7 BILATERAL AGREEMENTS

7.1 Bilateral Agreements with SMIIC and CROSQ

7.1. On 28 November, ARSO Signed an MoU with the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC). SMIIC is an affiliated institution of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and a mechanism for harmonisation of standards and eliminating technical barriers to trade among the OIC Member States. This will help in addressing TBT issues among the African and OIC member States and boost International trade.

7.2. On 19 January 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya during the ACP-EU-TBT Programme Workshop "TBT GOOD PRACTICES" held at the Boma Hotel in Nairobi, ARSO signed and MoU with CROSQ - the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality Headquartered in Barbados. CROSQ is the Caribbean regional centre for promoting efficiency and competitive production in goods and services within its 15 member countries, through the process of Standardisation and the verification of quality. This will help in addressing TBT issues in the ACP regions.

7.2 ARSO and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) Cooperation

7.3. ARSO-RECs cooperation is influenced by the fact that the need to address the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT/SPS issues) has become more critical as African leaders are fast-tracking and deepening regional and continental Integration as depicted by the COMESA, EAC and SADC Tripartite agreement and the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) by 2017, as Flagship projects Agenda 2063.

7.4. ARSO had on 25-26 April 2016 signed an Agreement on Guidelines for the implementation of MoUs with the RECS (COMESA, EAC, ECOWAS, SADC) to facilitate quality infrastructure as a means of attaining a coherent and effective continental harmonization of standards and conformity assessment.

7.3 ARSO and ECOWAS

7.5. ARSO and ECOWAS through the Swedish International Cooperation (Sida) and Swedish Standards Institute (SIS) are jointly implementing a project "Capacity building in international standards setting with ECOWAS region as a case study"; the project was initiated (2014) to facilitate the involvement of ECOWAS member states in influencing international standards processes and applying international standards, emphasizing on ECOWAS and Africa priorities.

7.6. In May 2016, in Lomé Togo, ARSO Secretary General addressed the ECOWAS Ministers of Trade and Industry and Technocrats on the project. An inception meeting was held on 13-15 June 2016, a second meeting was held on 15-17 February in Paris France, hosted by AFNOR. The third meeting is on 20-22 March 2017 in Cape Verde.

7.4 ARSO-COMESA

7.7. ARSO and COMESA are engaging in a "COMESA Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) to enhance Regional Integration and Trade project being supported by the Trade ComII-ACP Trade Capacity Building Programme/COLEACP-Le Comité de Liaison Europe-Afrique-Caraïbes-Pacifique, and targeting 19 countries within COMESA.

7.8. On 9-10 March 2017, ARSO held a meeting with COMESA and Trade ComII-ACP Officials at ARSO Central Secretariat in Nairobi to discuss the implementation of Project.

7.9. Under the COMESA, EAC and SADC Tripartite agreement, Annex 10, ARSO has a mandate of harmonising the Tripartite Standards which would be recognised as African standards to serve the purposes of trade within the CFTA.

7.5 ARSO-SADC

7.10. On 13-17 March 2017, ARSO participated in the 32nd Annual Meetings of SADC Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Cooperation Structures, Ezulwinin, Swaziland, as part of strategies to fulfil the Tripartite Agreement.

7.6 ARSO-EAC

7.11. On 27 February–3 March 2017, ARSO participated in the Regional Meeting for Consideration of Public Review Feedback on the Draft EAC Staple Foods Standards in Kigali, Rwanda.

7.12. The ARSO 2017-2022 is currently being reviewed with strategies focusing on ARSO Programmes meant to:

- a. Facilitate the implementation of the Continental Free Trade Area and Africa's industrialisation and Integration
- b. Strengthen Quality Infrastructure in Africa through the PAQI Forum and cooperation with African Union, UNECA, RECs and development Partners.
- c. Increased Harmonisation and implementation of African Standards and relevant international standards.
- d. Strengthen the Conformity Assessment to serve the interest of African industries, farmers, producers and consumers.
- e. Promote greater implementation of the WTO TBT Committee Agreement in Africa to respond to the challenges of global trade.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1. Boosting intra-African trade and deepening regional market integration constitute a necessary response to the challenges facing Africa in the multilateral trading system and the global economy. The boosting of intra-African trade and the deepening of Africa's market integration, by fostering competition among African countries, will assist in enhancing their capacity and prepare them to compete more effectively on the global market. The issues of Technical Barriers to trade as highlighted under the WTO TBT Agreement remains crucial and ARSO is open to more Technical Cooperation, based on article 11 of the WTO TBT Agreement to address the TBT issues in Africa and within the ACP region. For further Information please contact:

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