

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR MISS LERATO NTLOPO - LESOTHO  
INAUGURAL TRALAC ALUMNI WORKSHOP, FRIDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2011  
CAPE TOWN SOUTH AFRICA  
SESSION 3: TRADE CAPACITY BUILDING EXPERIENCE IN EAST AND  
SOUTHERN AFRICA**

From the onset, allow me to most sincerely thank Tralac for this timely and opportune workshop. I say so because it offers me and others present here a unique opportunity to share our post-graduation experiences and in particular how and whether the Tralac Programme transformed us. I also thank the Dutch Embassy for funding the Programme.

Trade policy has and is becoming increasingly more complex and challenging as it is no longer limited to tariffs and quotas; not only to trade in goods but also to trade in services. Trade Capacity Building needs for developing countries and especially Least Developed Countries (LDCs) should be a major component of any Aid for Trade programme. The landscape of World Trade is constantly changing not to forget the dynamics of regional integration within the Regional Economic Blocs which is a core agenda of many African Countries' Trade Policy today. Consequently, African Countries need to be well positioned with the requisite Technical and Institutional Capacity to engage meaningfully and effectively in pursuing their Trade Policy interests both Regionally, Continentally including the Multilateral Trading System.

Therefore, broad knowledge of Trade Regulation; enhanced negotiations skills; improved research capabilities and trade data management, are indispensable as ingredients for any meaningful Training for Officials of these Countries in facilitating their integration into the Multilateral Trading System. The lessons I learned from the Tralac Programme were a very first and necessary step in enhancing my capacity so as to enable me fully appreciate and understand the whole realm of Trade Policy as applicable in Regional and International Trade and more importantly be able to engage fully and competently in trade negotiations.

Indeed I must appreciate here that the Tralac Programme provided about the right mix in ensuring that the necessary and appropriate capacity was established in me to deliver on that need. It enhanced my technical and professional knowledge as well as sharpened my skills on managing trade policy, analytical and technical knowledge of trade law and regulations; enhanced my understanding of the economic underpinnings of trade policy and a deeper knowledge of the institutions and rules of international trade. Therefore the Tralac *mix of* management practice, trade law and policy was a good combination in enhancing my capabilities in trade negotiations. Presently, and I can say with confidence that, I am capable of undertaking both economic and legal analysis on a Trade Policy related issue, and to provide the necessary information and policy advice to negotiating teams with regards to Lesotho's position in bilateral negotiations within South African Customs

Union (SACU), in Southern African Development Community (SADC) Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) negotiations and the World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations..

The Programme immensely enriched first, my personal development as an individual who dares to pursue her goal and desires to enhance her personal competencies; second, my knowledge to be a complete citizen who always wishes for the development of her homeland. At a more personal level, the management component helped develop me into a dedicated and vigorous worker, also equipped with techniques to endure work related pressure. The Systemic Management component of the Programme exposed me to the functionality of a System, the importance of value creation and mindfulness which has enabled me to become a better planner. In addition, the weekly reflections assisted in time management and improving writing skills, while the Small Wins (PDCA process) focused on strategies to achieve goals. I also learned that with self-discipline, perseverance and determination, anything is possible. Without undue pride, I consider myself a great asset to the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Cooperatives and Marketing and it is my great honour to make an effective contribution to my country. I am also a potential asset at regional (SADC, SACU), continental (AU) and global (WTO) levels.

Last but not least, the Programme elevated my appetite and desire to study more on International Trade Regulation and WTO Law; and I am happy to say here that as a result, I successfully enrolled and completed a Master of International Law and Economics (MILE) at the World Trade Institute, Berne, Switzerland in 2009/2010. Upon completion, I was lucky again to be nominated to participate in a 10 months WTO capacity building Mission Internship Programme for the Lesotho Mission in Geneva. During my Internship in Geneva, my key roles involved among others, assisting in collection, analysis, interpretation of data and organisation and preparation of negotiating briefs and other relevant materials of interest to Lesotho's pursuits in the WTO. I also in addition represented Lesotho in WTO negotiations and regular meetings as was necessary. Future similar Tralac Programmes may wish to consider focusing a little bit more on analysis of proposals from other WTO Members.

I am grateful that Tralac subscribes to Robert Brault adage that: *'When you have brought up kids, there are memories you store directly in your tear ducts.* The continued support after completion of the Programme is well appreciated.

**Thank you Tralac**

**KHOTSO!!!**

**PULA!!!**

**NALA!!!**