

Fostering Trade through Private-Public Dialogue

Business Implications of EPA Negotiations for SADC

Stellenbosch, South Africa, 11-12 June 2007

Regional Experts Meeting

CONCEPT PAPER

The International Trade Centre (ITC), in collaboration with the Trade Law Centre for South Africa (TRALAC) will organize a “Regional Experts Meeting” for South African Development Community (SADC) in Stellenbosch, South Africa on 11-12 June 2007 focusing on the business implications of negotiations on Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union and issues relating to regional integration.

Based on the ITC’s expertise on business advocacy, this initiative aims at increasing the common understanding on the business implications of trade negotiations and about the ways and means for business and negotiators to jointly define their priorities; seizing the opportunities and coping with the challenges.

Fostering communications between business and government will lead to devising negotiating positions in line with national needs and be inclusive of the real and concrete economic and commercial interests of the countries concerned. The discussions will encompass: (i) Market Access opportunities in Agriculture and Manufactured goods including implications of appropriate rules of origin in preferential trade (ii) Trade facilitation: measures need to be taken together with their implications for facilitating regional trade (iii) Investments: experiences of attracting foreign direct investments in various sectors and the impact on businesses/regional level; and (iv) Regional integration as a means to enhance competitiveness through production synergies and harnessing economies of scale.

The participants will benefit from the expertise of TRALAC, ITC, WTO, UNCTAD, trade negotiators and key business players from the region. Their contributions will help in integrating business priorities into trade negotiations.

The meeting will target participation from national teams representing the private sector and trade negotiators of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, and Tanzania. Representatives from each of the following secretariats will also participate: the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Communauté Economique et Monétaire de l’Afrique Centrale (CEMAC), the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) and the African Union (AU).

Background

ITC is the joint technical cooperation agency of the United Nations (through UNCTAD) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) for business aspects of trade development. Established in 1964, ITC has progressively adopted a pragmatic approach in helping the business sectors of developing and transition economies to develop exports (more information on www.intracen.org).

The support for the business community, with the participation of trade negotiators, has been channelled mainly through ITC's World Trade Net program and the "Business for Development" (B4D) initiative. The main objective of the B4D series is to foster dialogue between national teams of business and trade negotiators at the regional level, to enable a more transparent and effective consideration of business inputs by governments in WTO negotiations.

ITC also organizes Geneva-based Roundtables gathering key experts from developed and developing countries representing business advocacy groups, academicians, trade policy analysts and negotiators to debate on WTO negotiations with a view to deepen the understanding of commercial and economic implications related to the negotiations. (www.intracen.org/mts)

In addition to these events, ITC is organizing – in partnership with renowned research and academic institutions, a series of Regional Experts Meeting with the aim of analyzing the implications of regional integration and bilateral trade negotiations for the business sector.

Objectives

The Experts meeting will contribute to deepening the dialogue on trade negotiations among trade negotiators, business and trade policy analysts/ academicians. The aim is to bring out commercial and economic implications of these negotiations as they impact on different sectors.

Methodology for the interactive debates

The format of the meeting follows an interactive methodology. The well tried out practice of inviting national teams composed of business and government interests will be continued. An expert, outlining the main issues, will introduce each thematic session. Then, two respondents, one policy-maker and one business representative will enrich the general presentation with their specific perspectives. This will be followed by an interactive discussion involving all participants. There is no formal recording of views expressed, although a statement will be issued at the end of the meeting, highlighting main issues of common concern and interest.

All participants are expected to submit a short written contribution (e.g. in the form of a country paper or case studies which will be subsequently posted on the World Trade Net) or to prepare a verbal contribution. An analytical paper, "Summary of the Meeting" will be prepared after the meeting and distributed to all participants as well as other members of the World Trade Net.

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