

THE SACU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS HELD ITS 41ST MEETING ON THE 29TH OCTOBER 2020

PRESS RELEASE

1. The Southern African Customs Union (SACU) Council of Ministers held its 41st Meeting, virtually, on the 29th October 2020. The Meeting was chaired by Honourable Tito Mboweni, Minister of Finance of South Africa and attended by the respective Ministers responsible for Trade and Industry, and Finance in the SACU Member States.
2. The Council deliberated on various strategic issues and reflected on the implementation of the outcomes of the 4th SACU Ministerial Retreat that was held on the 21st September 2020.
3. Among the key issues, the Council noted that the operationalisation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is gaining momentum and approved SACU's initial tariff offer to the AfCFTA. In this regard, the Council reaffirmed the SACU Member States' commitment to ensure that SACU is prepared to start trading under this dispensation on the 1st January 2021.
4. In terms of coordinating trade related measures in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council noted that although the SACU Member States have adopted the SADC Guidelines on the Harmonisation and Facilitation of Cross-Border Transport Operations, the level of implementation varies from Member State to Member State. In particular, measures relating to the treatment of truck drivers and transport operators are not harmonised in the SACU region and this hampers the flow of trade across borders in SACU. As a result, the Council urged Member States to fully implement the SADC Guidelines including measures to ensure common treatment of the truck drivers and transport operators in the SACU region.
5. The Council also noted progress made towards the ratification of the SACU, Mozambique and UK Economic Partnership Agreement (SACUM-UK EPA). Internal processes are currently ongoing in the Member States to deposit the Instruments of Ratification before the 30th November 2020. The SACUM-UK EPA is envisaged to enter into force by 1st January 2021.

6. The Ministers further noted the importance of e-commerce for the SACU region in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and directed Member States to reflect and explore the modalities to develop a regional framework on e-commerce taking into account ongoing work at the national and SADC levels on e-commerce.
7. On operational matters, the Council considered and approved the revised budget for the Secretariat and a Social Media Policy, amongst others.
8. The next Meeting of the Council of Ministers is scheduled for December 2020.

Issued by:

Ms. Paulina M. Elago
Executive Secretary of SACU