

Workshop to enhance trade opportunities and regional collaboration in the Southern African region.

PRESS RELEASE

Windhoek, 26 May 2023 -- The Southern African Customs Union (SACU) Secretariat, in collaboration with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), will host an information sharing workshop on the AfCFTA and a regional dialogue on emerging market opportunities for the SACU region. This initiative follows collaboration between the AfCFTA Secretariat and the Team Europe Technical Assistance Facility to Support the AfCFTA and Continental Economic Integration (EU-TAF).

The two-day event is scheduled to take place on 1 and 2 June 2023 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The event aims to disseminate information to relevant stakeholders within the SACU region, thereby creating synergies for the effective implementation of the AfCFTA. The outcomes of this seminar will also be used as insights for the ongoing work of sensitizing the business community on the trade agreements concluded by SACU.

SACU regards the AfCFTA as a strategic continental instrument; hence, the implementation and leveraging of the AfCFTA has been prioritized as one of the pillars that underpin the recently approved SACU Strategic Plan for 2022-2027.

SACU aims to position itself to take full advantage of the AfCFTA through industrialization, the development of regional value chains, export promotion and investment attraction and promotion.

The primary objectives of the workshop are to:

- a) support and complement SACU Member States' efforts in publicizing and creating awareness about the implementation of the AfCFTA;
- b) sensitize the business community in SACU on trade and investment opportunities available under the AfCFTA;
- c) provide information to the business community on trade-related measures under the AfCFTA;

- d) provide information to the business community, governments and other stakeholders on various financing facilities and instruments available to support the implementation of the AfCFTA;
- e) provide a platform for business-to-business networking and cross-regional economic and trade blocks to enhance business interactions across different regions of the continent and showcase; and
- f) present potential export and sourcing opportunities for SACU businesses within the AfCFTA market.

The target audience for the workshop will, among others, include traders, MSMEs, youth and women (mainly engaged in cross-border trade or planning to do so) from SACU and other regional trade blocs, government officials from SACU Member States, Chambers of Commerce and Industry, customs administrations, export/trade promotion agencies, investors, research institutions, key civil society organizations and academia.

Through this initiative, SACU is committed to ensuring that the African Union theme of the year 2023, "The Year of AfCFTA: Acceleration of the African Continental Free Trade Area Implementation" is realized.

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About SACU

SACU predates modern trade and customs agreements, and to date it remains a customs union. It was originally established by the British colonial power in the 1880s and was not created through negotiation by its Member States. The current members of SACU are the Republic of Botswana, Kingdom of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Kingdom of Lesotho, Republic of Namibia and Republic of South Africa. The SACU Headquarters is in Windhoek, Namibia, where the SACU Secretariat is based. Like other customs unions, a key feature of SACU is that the economic structures of the

Union are linked by a single tariff – the Common External Tariff (CET) – and a common customs territory where no customs duties are applied on goods traded among the members. This means the Member States form a single customs territory in which tariffs and other barriers are eliminated on all trade between them, provided the products originate in these countries. The CET applies to non-members of SACU. Learn more at www.sacu.int or follow us @SACUSEC on Twitter, @SACU Secretariat on Facebook and LinkedIn.

About the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is one of the flagship projects of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and entered into force on 30 May 2019. It is a high ambition trade agreement, which aims to bring together all 55 Member States of the African Union, covering a market of more than 1.3 billion people, with a comprehensive scope that includes critical areas of Africa’s economy, such as digital trade and investment protection, amongst other areas. By eliminating barriers to trade in Africa, the objective of the AfCFTA is to significantly boost intra-Africa trade, particularly trade in value-added production and trade across all services sectors of Africa’s economy, at a potential of 52.3 percent.

About UNDP

UNDP is the leading United Nations organization fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality, and climate change. Working with our broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, we help nations to build integrated, lasting solutions for people and planet. Learn more at <https://www.undp.org/> or follow us @undpafrica on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

