



SETTING THE SCENE FOR THE RETREAT

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**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF SACU ON THE OCCASION OF THE
MINISTERIAL STRATEGIC RETREAT**

30-31 AUGUST 2012,

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

Honourable Chairperson of Council of Ministers,

Honourable Ministers,

Commission Members;

I would like to also start by extending a warm welcome to you Honourable Ministers and their officials to this Retreat. I would also like to thank our Host, the Minister of Finance, Namibia and her staff for the spirit of cooperation and support which Namibia displayed even at the time of uncertainty on the date for the Retreat. This has resulted in the excellent arrangements made for this Retreat at a short notice.

Honourable Ministers, the preparations for the Retreat started in 2011 under the Chairmanship of Swaziland. The commitment and leadership demonstrated by Swaziland during the preparations were instrumental in getting us to this stage of the Retreat materializing. In the same vein we look forward to Botswana's leadership in taking us through this Retreat to achieve a successful outcome.

Background

By way of background, Honourable Ministers, the decision to convene this Ministerial Retreat emanates from the 23rd SACU Council meeting that was held on 24 June 2011 in Windhoek, Namibia. In the course of developing and implementing programmes to address the priority areas identified by Heads of State and Government, Council took a decision to have a strategic and forward looking discussion on the fundamental

issues that can inform and provide impetus to implementation of SACU's work programme . Council agreed that such issues be adressed by Ministers outside the normal Council meetings which normally has a focussed Agenda and does not facilitate broader discussions. This was the basis for convening the Ministerial Retreat.

However, in contrast to the Kasane Ministerial Retreat in 2008, which was convened in response to specific challenges facing SACU at the time, the need for this Retreat arose as SACU seeks to now advance in deepening integration. This second retreat should therefore be a more forward looking retreat that examines issues related to the achievement of the new SACU Vision and Mission advancement of the associated work programme, identification of the concomitant capacity and resource requirements as well as other developments at the regional, continental and global level. The retreat should therefore provide an opportunity to consider the full implications of pursuing the new SACU work programme against these developments.

Consultations with Member States

Honourable Ministers,

Following the decision to convene a retreat, Council directed the Secretariat to undertake consultations with Member States on the proposed **Agenda, Structure, Timing and Venue** for the Retreat. The Agenda before you is the outcome of those

consultations as approved by Council at its 25th Meeting on 2nd December 2011 in Swakopmund, Namibia.

During consultations, Member States were unanimous that the Retreat should not engage on operational issues related to the work programme but rather focus on broad strategic matters and principles affecting SACU Member States, its Institutions and the Customs Union as a collective. It was emphasised that the Retreat should focus more on the fundamental issue of operationalising the new SACU Vision to be **“An economic community with equitable and sustainable development, dedicated to the welfare of its people for a common future”**.

In addition, Member States recalled the decisions taken at the 2nd Summit of Heads of State and Government, where Summit decided that SACU can play a role in Southern Africa as a building block for deeper regional integration, given its level of integration. Member States viewed the Retreat as an opportunity to discuss the operationalisation of this decision, taking into account ongoing regional, continental and global developments and the implications for SACU.

Finally, Member States underscored the need to have strong Institutions to support SACU's integration initiatives. It was recognised that this matter has not yet received adequate attention during the past Council meetings and that the Retreat would provide an opportunity to further deliberate on the way forward.

Honourable Ministers,

Based on the outcomes of the consultations, the Secretariat developed a comprehensive proposal on possible themes for the Retreat. The proposal centered on the three broad strategic themes highlighted by the Chairperson of Council. This proposal was approved at the 25th Council meeting held on 2 December 2011 in Swakopmund, Namibia.

Retreat Facilitation

During the 25th Council meeting, Council also considered the option of an independent facilitator for the Retreat. Council recognised that it may be difficult and time consuming to find a candidate that would be acceptable to all Member States. . Taking into account that the first Retreat was facilitated by the Chairperson of Council and the nature of the issues to be discussed, it was decided that the Chairperson of Council also be the facilitator for this Retreat.

Documentation for the Retreat

Finally, regarding the documentations, at the 25th Council meeting, Council also decided that a preparatory meeting of Senior Officials be convened to distil the specific issues that the Retreat should discuss under each theme and provide a

framework for the Retreat discussions. Subsequent to this, the Secretariat expanded on the themes and developed an Issues Paper which was tabled to the Commission.

A preparatory meeting of Senior Officials for the Retreat was convened on 18 May 2012 in Johannesburg. The Commission discussed the Issues Paper and took decisions on how to frame it to facilitate Retreat discussions. The Issues Paper before you is the outcome of that input and was later adopted by the Commission at its 29th meeting held on 7-11 July 2012 in Windhoek. The Issues Paper provides a context for the themes I and raises specific issues under each theme for consideration during the Retreat.

The Chairperson of the Commission will introduce the Issues Paper to the Retreat.

I thank you for this opportunity and trust that you will enjoy fruitful deliberations.