

REMARKS BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT  
BY HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT MOKGWEETSI ERIC KEABETSWE MASISI TO  
THE SACU SECRETARIAT, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

THURSDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2020

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Your Excellency, Dr MOKGWEETSI ERIC KEABETSWE MASISI, President of  
the Republic of Botswana

Honourable Ministers,

Your Excellency, Mrs. Tshenolo Modise, Botswana High Commissioner to  
Namibia,

Senior officials of both Governments of Namibia and Botswana,

Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen.

**Dumelang. Good Morning.**

1. On behalf of the SACU Secretariat staff and indeed on my own behalf,  
it is my privilege and honour to welcome you, Your Excellency and  
your delegation, to the SACU Headquarters.
2. We thank you for taking time off your busy schedule, to visit the SACU  
Headquarters and to meet with the Secretariat's staff.

3. I also wish to thank the Government of the Republic of Namibia for facilitating this important visit.
4. Allow me also to extend a special welcome to Honourable Peggy Serame, the Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry in Botswana, whom we have been working with closely as a member of the SACU Commission. We look forward to continuing working with you, Honourable Minister, as a member of the Council of Ministers.
5. Your Excellency, we are truly honoured to have you here. This visit is important to us as it provides us with an opportunity to appraise you, on key developments and the status of the implementation of the SACU Work Programme.
6. This is the third time since the Secretariat was established in 2004, that we receive a visit from a Head of State. This follows visits by His Majesty King Mswati III of Eswatini and that of H.E. Lt. General Dr Seretse Khama Ian Khama, former President of the Republic of Botswana, who visited the Secretariat in May 2017 and February 2018, respectively in their capacity as the Chair of SACU.
7. Your visit is therefore a special one because you are the first Head of State to visit us while not a Chair of SACU. We hope that other Heads of States will follow suit in the future.
8. As Secretariat staff, we continue to work with commitment and dedication to ensure that the SACU Work Programme is successfully implemented. Over the last few years, the Secretariat had made good

progress in the implementation of key priorities, but we also had challenges.

9. Your Excellency may recall that the last Summit of the SACU Heads of State or Government took place in June 2018, in the Republic of Botswana. Since then, the Summit was not able to convene pending the conclusion of bilateral consultations amongst the Heads of State or Government on issues that have been escalated to the Summit for guidance and progress in the implementation of the Work of the Ministerial Task Teams. The issues escalated to the Summit are mainly related to architecture for tariff-setting and on the Review of the Revenue Sharing Arrangement. Consequently, there had been limited progress made in the implementation of the Ministerial Work Programme due to divergent views by the Member States in these areas.
10. We trust that the Heads of State or Government will have an opportunity to reflect on these issues and conclude their bilateral consultations to provide the much-needed direction on the way forward.
11. Notwithstanding the disagreements in the above-mentioned areas of the Ministerial Work Programme, there have been some achievements in the implementation of the Work Programme. These include ongoing work on the Feasibility of establishing a financing mechanism for infrastructural projects in the region; identification of value regional value chains; and development of comprehensive Programme for the Trade Facilitation, amongst others.

12. We have also made considerable progress in the implementation of SACU priorities related to Trade Negotiations, Trade Facilitation, and Revenue Management. I wish to provide few highlights in this regard.
13. In the area of Trade Negotiations, the SACU Member States continued to pursue unified engagement and negotiations of trade agreements with third parties as a bloc. The ongoing SACU Trade Negotiating Agenda includes the negotiations for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which has been concluded recently; the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA), SACU-India Preferential Trade Agreement, and the review of the SACU-EFTA Free Trade Area and the SADC Protocol on Trade, as well as matters around the SACU-US relations.
14. The operational phase of the AfCFTA was launched by the Extraordinary AU Summit in July 2019 in Niger. To date, fifty -two (52) countries have signed the Agreement, twenty-two (22) countries have obtained parliamentary approval while twenty (20) countries have ratified the AfCFTA. In SACU, Eswatini, Namibia and South Africa have so far ratified the Agreement.
15. SACU, Mozambique and UK Engagement was concluded in October 2019 with the signing of the Agreement with the UK aimed at replicating the EU-SADC EPA into a new Agreement post Brexit. This was to ensure continuity of the trading relationship once the UK leaves the EU on 31 January 2020.
16. It is worth noting that in accordance with the SACU Common Negotiating Mechanism, the Republic of Botswana has ably

coordinated and lead the trade negotiations between SACU and third parties which resulted in the conclusion and signature of the following of trade agreements:

- EU-SADC EPA;
- SACU+Mozambique and UK EPA; and the
- Ongoing African Continental FTA negotiations.

17. The Secretariat played a pivotal role in these negotiations through the provision of technical support and advice to member States and coordinating the consultations and preparations among SACU Member States.

18. Under the Trade Facilitation Programme, the Secretariat continued to provide leadership, coordinate and to facilitate the implementation of the SACU Customs Modernization Programme. This Programme seeks to strengthen collaboration and to enhance administrative efficiencies amongst Customs Administrations in the SACU Member States. The key objective of the Programme is to enhance efficiency in order to facilitate cross border movement of goods while securing borders to curb the scourge of illicit trade, as well as to ensure seamless movement of legitimate trade.

19. I am pleased to inform you, Your Excellency that the SACU Secretariat and the Government of the United Kingdom signed a Memorandum of Understanding to support the implementation of this Programme on 20 January in London. An initial funding support

amounting to £158,690.09 has been committed by the UK for the period from October 2019 to 31 March 2020.

20. In the area of human resources, I wish to report that a full staff complement is in place with the exception of few vacant positions including that of the Deputy Executive Secretary. The Secretariat is in the process of reviewing its Conditions of Service to ensure that the Secretariat is able to attract, motivate and retain highly competent staff.
  
21. Going forward, the Secretariat is looking forward to having greater clarity on the SACU Work Programme as this will ensure that the Secretariat develop its strategic plan to attain agreed objectives. In the same vein, we have a highly professional, dedicated and hardworking team of professionals and support staff who are keen to help drive our integration agenda and deliver the desired results whose impact will transcend across nations and societies at large. We proudly call ourselves TEAM SACU because we believe in Teamwork and in working individually and collectively to make the greatest impact.
  
22. The Secretariat remains available to assist and support the Member States and the SACU institutions to ensure that the SACU Work Programme is timely and successfully implemented for SACU to become a vehicle for regional development and integration in support of the economies of the Member States. We look forward to your continued support in this regard.

23. Finally, let me once again thank you most sincerely, Your Excellency, for honoring us with your visit this morning and meeting with our staff. And at this stage, it is my great honour to invite you your Excellency to address us.

24. I thank you.

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