
JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ BY THE SACU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

THE U.S. RECIPROCAL TARIFFS

12TH MAY 2025

1. The Member States of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) have noted with concern the rise in unilateral measures that fragment global trade, including the recent decision by the U.S. Administration to introduce tariffs effective on 9th April 2025 and the implications that this decision has, not only for exports to the U.S. but for the entire Multilateral trading system.
2. While recognising that the reciprocal tariffs have been paused for 90 days (effective until 9th July 2025) and a universal 10% will now apply in the interim, the uncertainty for SACU exports to the U.S. remains. There is therefore a need to address this issue as a matter of urgency.
3. Given the historical ties between the African continent and the U.S. and Member States of SACU in particular, the U.S. is not only a strategic partner but also remains one of SACU's biggest trading partners. The economic relations between SACU and the U.S. have been largely administered through the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) principle; and African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the U.S. Generalised System of Preference (GSP), unilateral preferential schemes which provide duty-free treatment to designated beneficiary countries. These unilateral frameworks have contributed significantly to mutually beneficial trade relations that have promoted US investments, intra-industry supply-chains between the two sides that have fostered economic development, job creation and industrial growth.
4. The U.S.'s unilateral action to raise tariffs without prior consultations with the affected Members States is a departure from the norm and will have significant implications on global trade and the foundational principles of the multilateral trading system. For the SACU region, the imposition of tariffs would reverse the gains made with the U.S. which supported to lift millions out of poverty on the Continent. Further, the tariffs risks transforming of

exports from predominantly more value-added manufactured to a more extractive relationship.

5. In this regard, SACU wishes to call upon the U.S. to consider observing differential treatment more especially to consider exempting LDCs and AGOA-eligible countries from these tariff measures.
6. SACU Members reaffirm their support for a predictable, development-oriented, transparent, fair, inclusive, and rules-based multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core. SACU Members acknowledge the critical role that the WTO has played in fostering global economic growth and encourage the WTO to serve as a forum for dialogue to help prevent escalating trade conflicts and to utilise the WTO for constructive engagements. The SACU Members further emphasise the need for the urgent reform of the WTO to among other address existing imbalances and provide policy space for Africa's industrialisation.
7. In order to preserve the internal market, SACU Members will ensure that in any efforts to conclude partnerships with the U.S., the common external tariff is preserved, and due regard is taken not to undermine regional industrial capabilities. The SACU Members also commit to prioritise the implementation of the AfCFTA; including finalising the outstanding rules of origin on clothing and textiles, and automotive; the development of regional value-chains to set SACU on a more sustainable development trajectory and to coordinate export strategies to leverage existing trade agreements that SACU is party to.
8. The SACU region is ready to engage with the U.S. to find an amicable solution to its trade concerns and to seek cooperative solutions that promote mutually beneficial trade and investment relations, as well as preserve existing supply-chains.

DONE AT PROTEA MARRIOT OR TAMBO, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA ON MONDAY, 12TH MAY 2025.



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