



# Ministry of Commerce Industry & Trade



Keynote Address by the Honourable Minister for Commerce Industry  
and Trade

Delivered on the event of the **SACU – ERS Engagement on the  
Authorised Economic Operator Programme with Private Sector**

- The World Customs Organization Secretary General, Dr. Kunio Mikuriya;
- The Executive Secretary of the Southern African Customs Union, Mr. Thabo Khasipe;
- The Principal Secretary in the Ministry for Commerce Industry and Trade, Mr. Siboniso Nkambule;
- The Commissioner General for the Eswatini Revenue Service, Mr. Brightwell Nkambule;
- Representatives of the South African Customs Union; the ERS Executive Committee members,
- Government Officials
- Representatives from Industry / private sector,
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and gentlemen, good morning to all of you.

It is a pleasure and honour for me to be part of this session that has been jointly coordinated by the Southern African Customs Union and the Eswatini Revenue Service to engage and discuss with the private sector on the implementation of the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Programme. I really appreciate this collaboration whereby the Secretariat is visible in extending its support to member states towards the implementation of the AEO Programme. This demonstrates commitment

to the resolution made by the SACU Council of Ministers that AEO shall be one of the flagship programmes for driving the trade facilitation agenda for the region.

It is also appropriately fitting that the ERS has internalised this regional strategic direction and is able to translate it to its operational context as you are aware that the CG is one of the co-chairpersons of the Eswatini National Trade Facilitation Committee (ENTFC). It is evident that the theme that has been identified for the context of the discussions today, directs the focus of the AEO programme to the benefits that can be enjoyed by the businesses and companies that choose to participate in the accreditation programme.

Such an approach is important for the Government of the Kingdom and the Ministry of Commerce Industry and Trade as we continuously seek to remove hurdles and create an enabling environment for businesses to operate and thrive. It is for this reason that we were happy that the AEO programme shall be implemented under the stewardship of the ENTFC.

This makes it possible for the private sector to have inputs towards the formulation of value adding benefits which can be incorporated under AEO. I therefore encourage all who are present today to urge the associations, bodies and federations to which you affiliate to actively participate and contribute in the ENTFC discussions as this will make your voice to be heard.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are all still living with the negative effects of the COVID – 19 pandemic. The challenges this brought require that we really become pro-active and adaptive. Let us make the best use of all avenues that are being opened or even be the ones who pioneer such initiatives to bring about change that will steer the economy back to recovery. We cannot afford to continue using methods that we were comfortable with prior to the COVID era. This includes changing our mindset and being

open to collaboration and building partnerships. The AEO programme is one such partnership programme with a promise to distinguish the treatment of entities based on their willingness to walk the compliance journey with the regulatory agencies. This will bring real benefits to you as business. I therefore urge business to use this opportunity today to understand the programme requirements to be able to qualify for the accreditation status, which will not just deliver benefits at country level but also across the region as this is a SACU initiative. In this way, the program will deliver a 'win-win' situation for all.

As I conclude let me emphasize that as much as this programme is positioned as a Trade Facilitation Programme, regulatory compliance is very important; and amongst these is Tax compliance status. Without going much into that space which is the prerogative of the ERS, the AEO benefits have already been stated and they are lucrative, however, they can only be enjoyed by TAX COMPLIANT businesses. I have been assured that the Eswatini Revenue Service is willing to assist entities who want to be part of this programmes to meet the qualification criteria for this programme Thank you very much and may the Lord God Almighty bless you all.