



WELCOME REMARKS

BY THE

COMMISSIONER GENERAL OF THE ESWATINI REVENUE
SERVICE (ERS), MR. BRIGHTWELL NKAMBULE

AT THE AEO ACCREDITATION PROGRAMME WITH THE
PRIVATE SECTOR

6 APRIL 2023

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;
Chief Executive Officer Business Eswatini,
Mr E.Nathi Dlamini
Chief Executive Officer Federation of Eswatini Employers,
Mr. Mavela Sigwane
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.

Ladies and gentleman allow me to begin my remarks by welcoming everyone to the ERS for the Joint SACU and ERS National Consultations for one of our regional flagship programmes, the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) which is a build-up process to the main event that is scheduled from 29-31 May 2023. I wish to thank the SACU Secretariat for partnering with the ERS in promoting this programme. It has been a busy week; the SACU Secretariat has really kept us busy for the past two days including today. On the first day we had internal engagement as SACU and ERS and yesterday we engaged with our partner agencies who are also represented at the National Committee on Trade Facilitation.

Ladies and gentlemen the genesis of the AEO programme is the World Customs Organisation (WCO) Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), the Safe Framework of Standards (SAFE) with the three pillars that promote and provide guidelines and standards on *Customs to Customs Cooperation, Customs to Business Cooperation and Customs to other Partner Agencies Cooperation*. In 2017 Eswatini ratified the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) which also puts an obligation to the country to implement the AEO Programme. After assessing the economic benefits to be derived from this programme the SACU Council of Ministers prioritised this programme together with IT Connectivity where Eswatini and South Africa piloted data exchange in the region and globally.

Ladies and gentlemen Eswatini continues to participate in the SACU Trade Facilitation Agenda, including implementation of the AEO programme. Though the journey has not been easy, as we currently have two accredited operators, we hope to increase the adoption of the programme following these joint efforts between Secretariat and the member states including Eswatini. The implementation of other trade facilitation initiatives have posed a threat to the programme. Benefits that were meant to be introduced with the programme for the accredited economic operators came freely within the general trade facilitation agenda, one good example is deferred VAT. These then means we need to design more attractive benefits, and aggressively market the programme. I have however received positive feedback that the sessions have re-set the team, and gave them new strategies and approaches towards increasing adoption of the programme.

Ladies and gentlemen building upon initiatives such as Coordinated Border Management, ASYCUDA integration with other partner agencies should shorten the journey towards the realisation of the Single Government AEO as recommended at regional level by the members. The National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) appointed Business Eswatini to be the lead agency and champion of the programme. I am hopeful that these fruitful three days will leave us with positive energy to restructure the programme to a Single AEO Programme.

I therefore challenge all of us in this session to prepare for the new journey with business and all the partner agencies.

With these few words ladies and gentlemen please feel most welcome to the ERS and let us engage towards building a better Eswatini through the AEO Programme.