

**COUNCIL OF MINISTERS STATEMENT ON THE TRAVEL BAN  
IMPOSED ON THE SACU MEMBER STATES DUE TO THE OMICRON  
COVID-19 VARIANT**

**09 DECEMBER 2021**

**WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA**

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1. We, the SACU Council of Ministers responsible for Finance, Trade and Industry of the Republic of Botswana, the Kingdom of Eswatini, the Kingdom of Lesotho, the Republic of Namibia, and the Republic of South Africa, met virtually on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021, and wish to express our concern and regret on the travel ban and restrictions imposed by the several countries in Europe and other countries abroad against travellers from our countries following the detection of the Omicron COVID-19 variant.
2. We believe that the decision to impose travel bans on the region is unfair, irrational, unscientific and will negatively impact transparency in the sharing of information relating to COVID-19 in the future. We believe it is an act against and punishment for, openness, transparency and discourages high quality scientific practices.
3. The travel ban will impact negatively on the economies of the region, undermine the recovery efforts and further increase poverty and hunger amongst our people. The ban is particularly a crushing blow to our tourism industry and for the many lives and livelihoods that depend on it.
4. We call upon the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to expedite the decision on the TRIPS Waiver that enables its Member States to produce vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and support the discovery of the new variants.

5. We further commended and welcomed the start of Johnson and Johnson vaccination production in the Republic of South Africa that would enable the Continent to have access to the COVID-19 vaccines.
6. Finally, we wish to implore the world community to work together to develop a coordinated global response to the pandemic in order to respond effectively by ensuring equitable access to vaccines, with adequate tracing and vaccine manufacturing capabilities.

Issued by:



**Ms. Peggy O. Serame**

**Chairperson of the SACU Council and Minister of Finance and Economic Development,  
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