

EASTERN AFRICA COMMUNITY

SUPPORT TO THE EAC FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRIPARTITE FTA AGREEMENT-TRADE POLICY AND EXPORT DEVELOPMENT TO THE EU MARKET

INCEPTION MEETING

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The kick-off meeting for launching of the programme “**Targeted Support to the EAC for the Implementation of the Tripartite FTA Agreement-Trade Policy and Export Development to the EU Market**” was held on 27 March 2017 at the EAC Secretariat in Arusha, Tanzania.

The meeting chaired by the Ag DG Customs and Trade, **Kenneth Bagamuhunda** and co-chaired by the Director for Trade, **Alhaj Rashid I. Kibowa** was also attended by **Geoffrey Osoro** - Tripartite Coordinator, **Vonesai Hove** Project Coordinator for the TradeCom II Support Programme, **Emmanuella Habizimana** - Trade Export Officer, and the Technical Assistance Team composed by the **Amanda Sunassee** - Team Leader, **Charles Nuwagaba** (Trade Facilitation and competitiveness expert) and **Staicy Wagala** – Legal Expert.

Alhaj Rashid I. Kibowa opened the meeting, welcoming the Team of Experts and gave a brief overview of the programme, highlighting the fact that the programme had been formulated slightly over six months ago, and that the activities which were earmarked in the programme were important and a priority for the EAC Secretariat and the Member States.

Kenneth Bagamuhunda pointed out the need to ensure that the activities foreseen under the programme, complement existing activities to avoid duplication. He emphasised the need for building ownership and ensuring that Member States benefit from the outcome of the programme.

Amanda Sunassee (Team Leader) presented the team and she made a presentation of the methodology to be used in implementing the activities foreseen in the Terms of Reference (ToR) and providing clarifications and responses to the major points raised by the EAC Secretariat.

Main points of discussion were on the NTB regulations and the EAC Export Strategy. On the NTB regulations Geoffrey Osoro, the Tripartite Coordinator, pointed out that the NTB Act was still in the process of being assented by Rwanda and Burundi thus the Team of experts would need to focus more on the operational procedures. Given the informal nature of the trade associated with the Simplified Trade Regime (STR) and the fact that STR related NTBs touched mostly women and youth, the mapping exercise would require field work. And a detailed modus operandi should be envisaged for setting up of a trade remedies committee.

With respect to the Export Strategy, he emphasised that prior to drafting the successor plan, consultation with the Member States would be critical. Also, for the Strategy 2017-2021, it will be important to assess what were the weaknesses of the previous Strategy as stipulated in the ToR.

With respect to the NTB regulations and operational procedures, **Amanda Sunassee** - Team Leader - suggested that different data collection options could be explored, and OSBP (One Stop Boarder Post) could be visited from the Arusha base. Concerning the Export Strategy, suggested that the implementation of such activity should focus on adding value to the national strategies and focusing on providing strategic vision on common shared challenges including creating regional public goods to support the Member States’ national export strategies.