



PRESS RELEASE

Hub and Spokes Programme eyes future trade support to African economies

Gaborone, Botswana (15 May 2018) - Key talks are underway to shape a new support programme that will support African countries' sustainable and inclusive development through technical assistance and capacity building in international trade.

Partners and beneficiaries of the Hub and Spokes Programme, an aid-for-trade initiative of the European Union, the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) Group, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), are holding a three-day planning workshop for the Eastern and Southern African regions on 14 - 16 May.

The aim is to outline the framework for a successor programme that will deliver targeted technical assistance and capacity building, after the current implementation phase ends in August this year (2018). "Trade is essential for sustained growth," said Jocelin Cornet, Head of Cooperation for EU in Botswana and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). "[There is] a role for the programme in partnership development and implementation of EPAs (Economic Partnership Agreements) in the short and medium term."

Teddy Soobramanien, Acting Head of Programme at the Commonwealth Secretariat said: "Africa's trade and development needs vary from region to region, with some countries and regions embarking on modernisation and industrialisation of economies. Trade can certainly be an engine for growth and build resilience of African countries."

The regional meeting proposed that any future framework should build upon current best practice and incorporate new and emerging trade-related issues. It should also be localised to regional and continental contexts, capturing and contributing to regional and continental priorities.

Similar workshops were held in Fiji (Pacific region) in March 2018 and Guyana (Caribbean) in April 2018.

SADC Secretariat Director for Industrial Development and Trade, Mr T Samanga welcomed the approach of the workshop in having member states design a framework for a new programme. “The consultative process gives a window to share the issues faced and how the regions can work together towards a clear future,” he said.

The ACP Secretariat representative Morgan Githinji added: “The Hub and Spokes Programme is one the best examples of South-South and Triangular Cooperation. The interchanging of trade experts within the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific regions is very unique.”

Human capacity building and transfer of skills have been a signature impact of the programme, with at least 4280 professionals in both public and private sectors in both public and private sectors trained in trade policy related areas from 2013 - 2017. About 1,400 were in Eastern & Southern Africa.

The Commonwealth Secretariat manages the programme in Eastern & Southern Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, implemented by a network of 24 trade advisers across these regions. Eight are based in Eastern and Southern Africa, as well as two advisers in the African Union Commission.

The African Union Commission representative Mr Charles Chiumya expressed satisfaction on the benefits received from the programme and indicated the Commission’s commitment to a successor programme.

Trade advisers have focused on: supporting the African Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) negotiations; negotiations and implementation of regional EPAs; developing trade policies and strategies; supporting regional approaches towards the implementation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement in Africa member states; and supporting the Tripartite negotiations amongst SADC, COMESA (Common Market for of Eastern and Southern Africa) and EAC (Eastern and Southern Africa).

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