



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

STATEMENT BY

HON. LUCIA IIPUMBU,

**MINISTER OF INDUSTRIALISATION AND TRADE ON THE
OCCASION OF THE SADC-EU EPA TRADE FORUM AND THE
LAUNCH OF THE EPA IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.**

DATE: 31 OCTOBER 2022

**VENUE: WINDHOEK COUNTRY CLUB AND RESORT
WINDHOEK**

**Director of Ceremonies - Ms. Hilda Basson-Namundjembo,
Hon. Verna Sinimbo - Deputy Minister of Industriation and Trade
H.E. Mekondjo Kaapanda – Girnus - Namibian Ambassador to the
Benelux Countries,
H.E. Sinika Antilla - EU Delegation Ambassador to the Republic
of Namibia,
Senior Government Officials, Ministries and Agencies,
Captains of Industry,
All Dignitaries Present,
Distinguished Invited Guests and Exhibitors,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentleman**

Good morning,

I am delighted to join you this morning to officiate the SADC - EU EPA Trade Forum which is held under the befitting theme ***"Towards increased and diversified trade under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) by ensuring inclusivity, sustainability and economic growth"*** and at the same time launch the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) Implementation Plan for Namibia. This Forum is the first of its kind jointly organised by the Ministry of Industrialisation and Trade (MIT) and the Delegation of European Union to Namibia.

As you maybe aware, Namibia as Member of the Organisation of the African Caribbean Pacific (OACPs) Countries is party to the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) which superseded the Cotonou Agreement.

The Cotonou Agreement which replaced the Lomé Conventions, has been the basis for ACP - EU development cooperation since 1975. Since the First Lomé

Convention in 1975, the European Union (EU) granted non - reciprocal trade preferences to OACPs Countries. Under the Cotonou Agreement the Trade Chapter was replaced by the Economic Partnership Agreements. This new arrangement provides for reciprocal trade agreements, meaning that it is no longer only the EU that provides duty - free market for OACPs exports, but OACP countries also provide market access for EU exports.

Namibia and five (5) other SADC Member States (Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique and South Africa) signed the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in June 2016, which provisionally came into force in October 2016 and was fully implemented in February 2018 upon ratification. The EPA provides, duty-free, quota free market access into the EU for exports from partner states like Namibia, subject to rules of origin and adherence to international and regional quality standards.

The Agreement aims to boost trade and business opportunities in Namibia in order to contribute towards sustainable and inclusive economic development in the frameworks of the ACP - EU Partnership and the EU - SADC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). It further aims to promote regional integration, economic cooperation and good governance to establish and implement an effective, predictable and transparent regional regulatory frameworks for trade and investment between the Parties and among the SADC EPA States.

Director of Ceremonies,

The EPA efforts are concentrated on improving conditions for increasing investment and the private sector environment, focusing on supply capacity and constraints issues, competitiveness and economic growth. The parties similarly

wishes to strengthen the existing relations by enhancing commercial and economic relations amongst them.

It has been observed that there is no sufficient public awareness of the EPA and the opportunities it offers in Namibia, thus this has contributed to limited success in diversification and expansion of mutual trade. Furthermore, numerous trade barriers such as, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS), technical barriers to trade (TBT), stringent Rules of Origin (RoO), more specifically on cumulation among SADC-EPA States and other non-tariff barriers (NTB) limit regional integration.

This forum must therefore play a crucial role in providing information to the business community on potential bottlenecks that the Private Sector experience in utilising the EPA. The Trade Forum must also endeavors to identify opportunities that would increase the export of goods produced in Namibia to the EU and to increase overall trade between Namibia and the EU. This Trade Forum must further initiate the momentum for the hosting of the Trade and Investment Forum envisaged to take place next year.

Ladies and Gentleman

The EPA Implementation Plan for Namibia which we are also launching here today is geared towards attaining the objectives of the SADC - EU EPA and ensuring that the potential benefits that can accrue from it are fully utilised by the intended beneficiaries, which include exporters, importers, consumers and the entire business fraternity. The Namibian EPA Implementation Plan was developed with the support of financial assistance from the EU. We are further happy to note that the Plan is being implemented with the support of the EU through a Financing Agreement between National Planning Commission (NPC) and the European Union Delegation. The launch of the implementation plan and its implementation was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic interruptions.

The EPA Implementation Plan identifies key focus areas at impact level and their specific actions to be implemented or adopted by Government institutions for an effective EPA implementation. The specific objective actions will be implemented as the short, medium and long-term targets.

The plan is based on review of documents related to the Agreement, the Namibian economic policy environment as well as stakeholder consultations which includes Government, Private Sector and Civil Society. Gaps were identified that informed the EPA Implementation Plan. The focus of the Implementation Plan is based on the following:

- Ensuring an enhanced coordination and cooperation among institutions and agencies addressing aspects relevant to EPA implementation, which is spearheaded by MIT as a coordinator;
- Setting up and/or strengthening operations of relevant institutions involved in EPA implementation; and
- Making a case for technical assistance to strengthen requisite legal, institutional and infrastructural systems for Namibia's EPA implementation.

As I conclude, allow me to urge everyone to fully utilise this platform to learn, engage and forge long lasting partnerships. Additionally I appeal to local businesses to ensure quality, and high standards of their products in order to be competitive, not only locally but regionally and globally as it is paramount for business survival.

I therefore have no doubt that this Trade Forum will ease the flow of interaction among the companies exhibiting here, those joining virtually as well as those that facilitate trade. With these remarks, it is my distinct honour to declare the Namibian EPA Implementation Plan officially launched.

I thank you all!!