



MEDIA RELEASE

The Joint Meeting of the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Sectoral Ministerial Committee took place on 29th -30th May 2015 in Dar es Salaam. The purpose of the meeting was to consider progress made in preparation for the Third COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Summit to be held on 10th June 2015.

The Tripartite Summit launched the Free Trade Area in 2011 when SADC took over the chairpersonship and will be handing over the chairpersonship to COMESA at the third Summit scheduled to take place in June, 2015. Negotiations are at advanced stages and the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area is expected to be launched at Sharm El Sheikh on 10th June, 2015.

When concluded, the Tripartite FTA will encompass 26 Member States, that is, half of the African Continent with a GDP of over US\$1.2 trillion that represents over 50% of the Continent's GDP, and a population of 625 million. When operational, it will become a means for enhancing economic inter-linkages and enabling business environment to unlock regional potentials, scale up productive capacities and competitiveness, stimulating beneficinations and value chains, enhancing technological set-ups. More importantly, the TFTA will also address the issue of overlapping membership that has resulted in a number of challenges for the region's business and trading community. It is foreseen that the TFTA will constitute an important foundation for the continental free trade area negotiations that will be launched by the African Union Summit in June 2015 towards the realisation of Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

Ministers reiterated the importance of making tariff offers and concluding related negotiations expeditiously. In this regard they decided that Member States that had not exchanged tariff offers do so within 6 -12 months and those that have exchanged and are negotiating tariff offers should endeavour to conclude within 12 months. They noted that rules of origin are a crucial element for the TFTA and therefore Member States needed to expedite work to finalise outstanding areas and agree on the Tripartite rules of origin that will be applied in the new TFTA.

The Meeting also endorsed the transitional arrangements on trade remedies that will apply to the TFTA pending the finalisation of a complete Annex in this area. It should be noted that the TFTA Agreement already includes detailed dispute settlement disciplines and a completed Annex on Tripartite Dispute Settlement Mechanism.

It is worth noting that the SADC region has adopted a Strategy and Roadmap on Industrialisation and therefore the incorporation of the pillars on Industry and Infrastructure are important and strategic components for the success of the Tripartite agenda. From a SADC perspective the Industrialisation work programme should result in the economic and technological transformation of the region, engender competitiveness as an active process

to move from comparative advantage to competitive edges, reinforce regional integration and ultimately the development and economic prosperity of the Community. SADC would be implementing this strategy jointly with other regional priorities outlined in the Regional Infrastructure Development Medium Term Plan and the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan.

The SADC Industrialisation Strategy is anchored on three pillars, namely: Industrialisation as a champion of economic and technological transformation; competitiveness as an active process to move from comparative advantage to competitive edges, and Regional integration and geography as the context for industrial development and economic prosperity. The important features of the Industrialisation Strategy are focused programmes aimed at enhancing economic inter-linkages to unlock regional potentials, scaling up productive capacities and competitiveness, stimulating beneficinations and value chains, enhancing technological set-ups, and improving the business enabling environment. The implementation of the strategy will be underpinned on sound policies and appropriate enabling environment across the Member States.

In the area of ICT, commendable progress has been made in the SADC region with the roll out of Digital Terrestrial Migration equipment given the looming ITU switch-over deadline of 17 June, 2015.

SADC has developed and adopted the Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan (RIDMP) which defines SADC's infrastructure development strategy and constitute basis for prioritization of projects, as well as the modus operandi for implementation. The RIDMP constitutes the approved SADC Regional Infrastructure Development Programme and guides the process of selection and implementation of regional infrastructure projects at the level of feasibility assessments, preparation for bankability and investment. It also constitutes the basis for SADC Member States commitment to a common infrastructure development programme.

Dar es Salaam
United Republic of Tanzania
31st May, 2015