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MEDIA RELEASE

SADC, European Union, and German Embassy Launch East and Southern African Trade and Transport Facilitation System in Botswana

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A new digital information system to monitor and speed up cross border truck movements and driver health checks at land borders in Eastern and Southern Africa was launched on 20th May 2022 at Tlokweng Border Post in Botswana.

Part of the Team Europe's Global Gateway initiative and response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Corridor Trip Monitoring System (CTMS) was funded by a €1.6 million grant from the European Union (EU) and more than €500,000 from the Federal Republic of Germany.

The CTMS has now been installed at major commercial border posts in Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, along sections of three regional transport corridors, and will soon be installed in other Eastern and Southern African countries. The CTMS is spearheaded by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on behalf of COMESA, EAC and SADC.

Once fully operational, the system will minimise the need for paperwork and speed up border procedures, reduce waiting and transit times and allow trucks to deliver essential goods more quickly, while ensuring health and safety measures under COVID-19 protocols.

In his remarks, Honourable Thulaganyo Merafe Segokgo, MP, Minister of Communications, Knowledge and Technology for the Republic of Botswana underscored that the Corridor Trip Monitoring System has proven to be a highly effective and efficient digital solution in the management of safe cross border road transport and compliance to COVID-19 requirements by operators and drivers, and most importantly enhancing trade facilitation and movement of goods across the Southern African region and beyond.

Dr Thembinkosi Mhlongo, the SADC Deputy Executive Secretary for Regional Integration stated that the CTMS further enhances collaboration among and between the Tripartite members of COMESA, EAC and SADC through increased information and data sharing and standardisation of procedures, including for testing, vaccination and for mutual recognition of COVID-19 test results and vaccination certificates using a common monitoring and surveillance tool at all Points of Entry and in-country check points.

“The system we are showcasing at Tlokweng will boost transport efficiency from Cairo to Cape Town,” said Mr Jan Sadek, the European Union's Ambassador to SADC and Botswana, at the Launch. “Economic integration is in the EU's DNA, and we are delighted to help build a transit system that will ultimately streamline trade and travel between all parts of Africa.”



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The system equips border agents with hand-held devices to check, validate and register the COVID-19 health status of truck drivers and their crews, as well as the compliance of their vehicles with cross-border regulations and road safety rules. Transport operators will use a custom-made app to upload vehicle and driver health information onto the CTMS website. This information can then be instantly accessed by authorised border and law enforcement officials in the country of destination and transit by scanning QR codes shown by drivers. The CTMS also allows authorities and operators to monitor driver trip progression and deviations against pre-approved routes and designated rest areas.

The system builds on the achievements of the €21 million EU-funded Tripartite Transport and Transit Facilitation Project (TTTFP). Key results of the TTTFP include the development of the Guidelines for Transit of Essential Goods during the pandemic state of emergency and the two Tripartite Multilateral Agreements (the Vehicle Load Management Agreement and the Multilateral Cross Border Road Transport Agreement). These agreements harmonise transport rules through a body of model laws, regulations and standards on vehicle loads, transport and road safety, and information on vehicles and drivers (axle load limits, driving licence, vehicle registration, vehicle dimensions and standards, third-party motor vehicle insurance, etc.).

Aside from the truck drivers' health status and road transport modules, many more functionalities could eventually be added to the system, including cargo and vehicle advance customs clearance, visa and passport information and a security module to improve responses and support to drivers and vehicles involved in accidents and other incidents.

BACKGROUND

The Tripartite **Transport and Transit Facilitation Programme (TTTFP)** had developed harmonised road transport norms (multilateral agreements, laws, regulations, standards, IT systems) for the 25 continental beneficiary Member/ Partner States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), i.e. the Tripartite. This will boost efficiency in cross-border road transport and reduce the costs of trade and road travel. This €21 million (2017-2023) programme is funded by the European Union and implemented by SADC, EAC and COMESA with the technical assistance of Fischer Consulting, a South African firm.

In mid-2020, the **Corridor Trip Monitoring System (CTMS)** was added to the TTTFP to tackle the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on cross-border transport and trade, which slowed to a trickle as governments rushed to impose their own coronavirus test requirements on truck drivers at border posts, resulting in multi-day queues of transport vehicles at numerous Tripartite country border crossings.

The CTMS is based on a harmonised road transport regulatory framework in the form of regional guidelines to monitor the COVID status of truck drivers at the border in order to reduce the transit times of healthy drivers and facilitate the continuation of cross-border trade of goods and the movement of persons. The EU provided an extra €1.6 million to develop the CTMS, and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development subsequently provided an additional amount of €570,000 through GIZ to procure and set up the telecommunications equipment needed to roll out CTMS at border posts in a number of SADC countries.

The CTMS will be implemented in conjunction with the Tripartite **Transport Registers and Information Platform System (TRIPS)** using the same digital infrastructure as CTMS. TRIPS will complement CTMS functionality to enable cross-border road transport operators, drivers, regulators and law enforcement agents to record and monitor driver wellness and truck driver movements against pre-approved route plans. TRIPS provides roadside access to



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operator, vehicle and driver information to all law enforcement agencies in the East and Southern African regions. Both TRIPS and CTMS are underpinned by the legal provisions in the Tripartite Multilateral Cross Border Road Transport Agreement. CTMS and TRIPS will be hosted by the Namibia Road Authority.

For more information, please contact:

European Union:

Bester Gabotlale, Press & Information Officer, +267 721 12660, Bester.GABOTLALE@eeas.europa.eu

Website: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/botswana_en

Twitter: @JanSadek

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/euinbotswana>

SADC:

Barbara Lopi, Senior Officer, Communications and Public Relations. +267 72112560, blopi@sadc.int

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sadc.int/>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/SADC_News

Instagram: @sadc_secretariat

GIZ:

Daniel Bagwitz, Country Director GIZ Botswana, daniel.bagwitz@giz.de

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GIZ-SADCBotswana-105385987735215>

Website: www.giz.de

Embassy of Germany:

Annelene Bremer, Development Counsellor, German Embassy in Botswana, wz-1-a@gabo.auswaertiges-amt.de

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GermanEmbassyBotswana>

Website: www.gaborone.diplo.de