SADC electronic Certificate of Origin to be launched on 7th September 2022

As part of the ongoing efforts to increase seamless flow of intra-regional trade and support regional industrialisation and ultimately, accelerate the regional economic development, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) will launch the SADC electronic Certificate of Origin (e-CoO) in Blantyre, Republic of Malawi, on 7th September 2022 under the theme 'Enhancing trade facilitation through the SADC Electronic Certificate of Origin'.

The official launch will be preceded by a workshop to be held on 6th September 2022, which will draw participants from SADC Member States, East African Community (EAC) Partner States and COMESA Member States, African Continental Free Trade Area – Secretariat, World Customs Organization (WCO) – Secretariat, customs officials and Private Sector to deliberate on the significance of improving the SADC intra-regional trade through the smooth movement of quality goods across the borders with the overall objective of aiding the region's economic development.

The implementation of the eCoO is one of the milestones of the Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP), which is supported by the European Union and GIZ under the "Cooperation for the Enhancement of SADC Regional Economic Integration" (*CESARE*) programme that provides for capacity-building and technical assistance in border cooperation by ensuring the implementation of SADC Coordinated Border Management Guidelines and the provisions of the World Trade Organisation (WTO's) Trade Facilitation Agreement, particularly on improving the efficiency of their operations.

The e-CoO, which replaces the manual SADC Certificate of Origin issued by the issuing authority in the country of origin of the goods, will help the trader to apply on-line, trace the application and get the response on the submission digitally, thus infusing efficiency in the process. Unlike the manual Certificate of Origin, the eCoO will significantly reduce fraud at border posts owing to its security features such as online e-CoO authenticity verification and the optical watermarking technology.

The SADC eCoO Framework was approved by the Committee of Ministers of Trade in 2019. To date Customs Administrations and Revenue Authorities of Eswatini, Malawi and Zambia have developed their eCoO modules and other Member States are working on piloting the Framework. It is expected that all Member States will implement the e-CoO by 2024.

About the SADC e-Certificate of Origin:

The SADC e-Certificate of Origin is an electronically processed and issued by an issuing authority attesting that goods declared by an exporter conform to specific Rules of Origin as per the criteria provided in the SADC Protocol on Trade. Generally, the certificate of origin is a required document by importing country for the purpose of granting duty free and tax free, statistics and risk assessment.

With the SADC e-Certificate of Origin, issuance of certificates is done through a system, and the authorization process, which includes registration of exporters, stamps and signatures, is done in electronic format. The electronic system will allow manufacturers, producers and exporters to electronically register their products for preferential treatment and apply for certificates of origin whenever there is an export shipment. Furthermore, the system allows Customs officers to approve the system electronically.

Benefits of the SADC e-Certificate of Origin:

- The eCoO is paperless making it environmental friendly
- It supports the regional quest to enhance e-Commerce and automation hence addressing some of the communicable diseases such as COVID-19.
- Eliminates Certificates of Origin related fraud since there is an immediate transmission of certified certificate of origin to designated third party recipients in a secure electronic environment
- Saves times as there is no need to visit Customs offices for application and registration. These are done online
- Reduces transaction cost
- Reduces errors and duplicate entries
- Provides direct accessibility of Customs Administration in importing country to the Certificate of Origin issued by the exporting authority
- Allows for properly documented production and process that enables Customs to ascertain origin of goods easily
- Ensures improved record management
- Reduces Cross-border certificate verification time
- Improves available accurate statistical data

You can read more on the certificate of origin here.

For more information, contact

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SADC in Brief
SADC is an organisation of 16 Member States established in 1980 as the Southern African Development Coordinating Conference (SADCC) and later, in August,1992 transformed into the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The mission of SADC is to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic

development through efficient, productive systems, deeper cooperation and integration, good governance and durable peace and security; so that the region emerges as a competitive and effective player in international relations and the world economy. Member States are Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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