

BUSINESS UNITY SOUTH AFRICA URGES FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SADC FREE TRADE AREA

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The Trade Ministers of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are due to meet on Friday 19 June in Cape Town. Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) has urged the Ministers to address the outstanding issues impeding the full implementation of the SADC Free Trade Area (FTA). "Business in the region welcomed the launch of the FTA in 2008," explained Mr. Jerry Vilakazi, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of BUSA. "We believe the FTA is an important initiative for deepening economic integration and growth in Southern Africa but it has not yet lived up to its potential."

BUSA members have identified difficulties in accessing up to date information on the tariffs applied by SADC countries and have proposed the establishment and maintenance of a database for the region. "Challenges exist in getting the necessary certificates of origin in some SADC countries," added Mr. Vilakazi. "SADC members must take action to ensure that their customs officials are fully aware of the FTA and its implications. Improving trade facilitation is key for the growth of the region."

South African business calls on SADC Trade Ministers to work with Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to ensure that they are soon able to fully participate in the FTA. BUSA also requests that urgent steps are taken to achieve the implementation of existing commitments by SADC FTA participants, especially Malawi and Zimbabwe.



SADC Trade Ministers are expected to also discuss a range of other issues of interest to South African business, and developments will be monitored closely by BUSA. "We believe there is considerable scope for greater involvement of the private sector in SADC matters," said Mr. Vilakazi. "We hope that Trade Ministers will see the value in the input we have made and consider providing more opportunities for linkages with the business community in SADC in the future."

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