

STATEMENT BY THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND
FIFTH MEETING OF TRADE MINISTERS OF LANDLOCKED
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

23-24 JUNE, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

- Your Excellencies Honourable Ministers
- H.E. Mr Gyan Chandra Acharya, Secretary General of the Conference
- Excellencies
- Distinguished Delegates
- Ladies and Gentlemen

We are meeting in Geneva at a crucial time for the global economy, where post financial crisis economic growth continues to wallow in the single and negative digits for developed countries, emerging countries that were recognised to be the industrial engines of global growth have seen dramatic shrinkages in global demand for their products, and where low commodity prices and climatic disturbances have jeopardized and at times reversed the gains made by the small and vulnerable countries of the world. We are also meeting in a period after the world re-committed itself in several international fora, to redouble efforts to help developing countries achieve equitable, inclusive and sustainable development within concrete funding frameworks.

I am delighted to highlight the progress we have made in Swaziland since the launch in December, 2014 of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) for landlocked developing countries. In the area of regulatory reforms to improve the investment climate, Swaziland has moved up five (5) places in the World Bank Ease of Doing Business ranking, that is, from 110 in 2015 to 105 in 2016. This improvement is attributed to progress made in indicators such as in trading across borders and the registration of property. For instance, in trading across borders, Swaziland has made a quantum leap from a ranking of 127 to 30 primarily as a result of extended border opening times, a reduction in the number of documents required from traders, a migration from ASYCUDA ++ to the more effective ASYCUDA World, and the implementation of the recommendations of a time release study funded by the World Bank.

Swaziland like most modern economies, and especially as a landlocked country, recognizes the increasing role of the services' sector and its contribution to diversification and productivity growth for the overall competitiveness of her economy. To this end, at the regional level, Swaziland, in both the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA; is negotiating trade in services in six priority sectors commonly identified in the two Regional Economic Communities (RECs), namely, Transport,

Communication, Tourism, Financial, Energy and Related services as well as Construction and Related-Engineering services. Similarly, at the Tripartite level which is further inclusive of the East African Community (EAC), trade in services negotiations have been included as part of the regional integration agenda. Additionally, at the Continental Free Trade Area level, trade in services will be negotiated in parallel to the negotiations in trade in goods under Phase One. Moreover, Swaziland is currently negotiating trade in services with the European Union (EU) under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), whilst simultaneously developing a trade in services strategy with funding from cooperating partners, to identify key offensive and defensive interests in all these platforms.

I take this opportunity to thank our cooperating partners, who have funded the urgent projects that we have prioritized under our Aid for Trade Strategy. We consider this Strategy to be a living document, with funded projects already systematically phased out and new ones duly included. To this end, I would like to mention that we have started a process both at policy and legislative levels to designate our new international airport and our science technology park as special economic zones (SEZs), with the view to attracting both foreign and domestic investments to locate in these two strategic areas. We therefore further request our cooperating partners to commit to rendering

additional financial and technical support to realise these short to medium term objectives.

In conclusion, Swaziland recognizes the crucial importance of enacting real reforms in the area of trade facilitation, not only to reap the rewards of greater trade activity and economic growth, but also to provide certainty and predictability to current and potential investors. In this regard, we have initiated a process of operationalizing a Trade Portal or online one-stop-shop where importers, exporters and investors can obtain information and seek necessary authorization for their activities. Also, on Customs co-operation, Swaziland, through the Swaziland Revenue Authority (SRA), has agreed on trade data exchange with their counterpart, South African Revenue Services; as well as eliminated the double payment of VAT between Swaziland and the Republic of South Africa where, a trader would previously pay VAT at source (RSA) and again at entry into Swaziland (to claim back at a future date). Work also incorporated in the SRA strategic plan for 2015-17 for possible funding under the SADC Trade Related Facility include full automation of gate control systems as well as the procurement and installation of automated cargo tracking systems to be interfaced with the paperless, risk management ASYCUDA World.

With regards to our notification and ratification commitment obligations under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, I am pleased to inform this meeting that our formal submission has been made to Parliament for consideration and approval, for forwarding to the WTO Secretariat at the earliest.

I thank you for your attention.
