



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

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**OPENING REMARKS ON THE MEETING WITH EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS ON
THE PROGRESS OF THE NATIONAL TRADE PORTAL**

HOTEL AFRICAN

12th SEPTEMBER 2018

- 1) Executive Directors
- 2) Heads of Departments
- 3) Print and Electronic media
- 4) Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very proud to be associated with this function on the briefing occasion of the development of the National Trade Information Portal. The National Trade Information Portal Project is a Tripartite undertaking between the EAC Secretariat, The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and Trade Mark East Africa, and implemented by Member States.

The Trade Portal is an electronic platform which enables all interested parties to have the opportunity to access all information regarding procedures, documentation, fees and other related charges with respect to exportation, importation and transit of goods in one place.

The development of this portal is premised on the Trade Facilitation Agreement which came into force on 22 February 2017 where 2/3 WTO members ratified the agreement, Uganda inclusive.

I must thank UNCTAD, Trade Mark East Africa and the EAC Secretariat for working together to roll out the development and implementation of Trade Portals in the Region. Kenya launched theirs late last year, Rwanda did the same a few months ago and Uganda is ready to go.

Uganda is also a signatory to a number of other Trade and Trade-related agreements like the East African Community Customs Union; the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific- European Union (ACP/EU) Partnership Agreement (Cotonou Agreement). All these Agreements require not only removal of customs duties, but also ensuring that movement of goods and services among the member states is enhanced.

Enhancing movement of goods across borders involves improving on: transparency, efficiency and simplification of procedures; documentation, charges and fees relating to exportation, importation and transit of goods among Member States.

I must say that at the regional level, a lot of work has gone in reforming Trade. The East African Community Member States have been implementing various Trade Facilitation (TF) measures which include the following:

- Harmonization and simplification of Trade documentation;

- The One Stop Border Post facilities;
- Harmonization of procedures and documentation for export, imports and transit;
- The Electronic Single Window, which allows traders to clear their goods online.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I must thank all the Trade facilitating Agencies that are here for the great work so far done in improving on border crossing and transit procedures. We have so far achieved a great deal in the following

- Fast tracking the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit;
- Promotion of transparency in customs regulations and administration.
- Promotion of cooperation among agencies dealing with clearance of goods.
- Promotion of electronic systems in documentation and clearance of goods.
- Streamlining of fees, charges and taxes to ease clearance and release of goods

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am confident that the implementation of the Trade Portal will enable traders to access and obtain trade related information on a single platform and will thus significantly reduce on the time and cost of accessing information

The Trade information portal will complement the Electronic Single Window. Whereas the Single window enables the traders to clear their export, import and transit goods online, the Trade Portal, will enable the traders to access all the information regarding the documentation, procedures, fees, and changes that is needed before the traders go into the clearing Process.

In short, the Trade Information Portal is a platform for information provision required for transaction on the Electronic Single Window System.

As a Ministry, our priority in implementing the National Trade Portal is aimed at enhancing our export, first to the regional markets, where over 60% of our exports goes, and Secondly to target the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises who constitute over 70% of our Exporters.

The World Bank doing of Business Report ranks Uganda at number 122, while Rwanda is at number 27, and Kenya at number 80, all out of 190 countries surveyed. The report highlights the cost of doing business by looking at key parameters that affects the business environments such as paying of taxes, border procedures, starting a business, getting connection to power lines, resolving business disputes among others.

Uganda has registered some improved performance due to the deliberate reforms undertaken in cross border trade facilities such as One Stop Border Posts, the Electronic Single Window brought Uganda's ranking from 134 in 2016, to 122 in 2018. But a lot still needs to be done.

I must also thank the team that have been putting together the portal. I must thank UNCTAD for the technical support and TMEA for the financial support.

Colleagues, as I conclude, let me reaffirm government commitment in improving the doing of business environment, promoting Trade and Investment which are critical in promoting socio economic transformation in the country.

I thank you