
PUBLIC INVITATION
15th Public Dialogue on Trade:
Regional Integration in Southern Africa: Challenges for Namibia

22 October 2008 – 8h00 – 10H30 (Registration: 7h30)
Nampower Convention Centre, Windhoek

Introduction and Background

The Agricultural Trade Forum (ATF) in cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is organizing its 15th public dialogue on trade, to examine and inform on the position of Namibia in the regional integration processes currently unfolding.

Namibia is firmly rooted in the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and – like all other SACU countries – also a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Only two months ago, the SADC Free Trade Area has been officially launched, providing for the free flow of goods among SADC member states.

Economic and trade integration provide many opportunities. But there are also serious challenges, which should not be overlooked. These challenges come from outside of the region as well as from within. Externally, the European Union, the region's most important external trading partner, wants to impose different trade regimes for South Africa and the rest of SACU. Internally, total liberalization of trade flows within SACU or SADC may be desirable politically, but may well turn out to be problematic for the long-term development of a diversified Namibian economy.

To Namibia, the integrity of the SACU Agreement is of high importance and the full implementation of the 2002 SACU Agreement will give Namibia the policy space to develop its own industries and trading position in SACU.

The ambitious integration agenda of SADC's Regional Indicative Development Plan (RISDP), on the other hand, in particular the project of creating a SADC Customs Union with a common external tariff by 2010, is not easily reconcilable with the current tariffs policy of SACU. The 2010 deadline might therefore be unrealistic.

Furthermore, the meeting will have to examine the likely costs and benefits of the proposed new trading arrangements between member states of the East African Community (EAC), the Common market for Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa) and SADC, due to be signed on 15th of October 2008 in Kampala, Uganda.

To address these developments, ATF and FES invited the Honorable Minister of Trade and Industry, **Dr. Hage Geingob**, as keynote speaker to this 15th public dialogue on trade.

Mr. Peter Draper, Research Fellow and Project Head : development through Trade at the South African of International Affairs (SAIIA), and **Mr Rolf – Joachim Otto**, Deputy Director: Trade Negotiations , SACU secretariat, will act as discussants.

Kindly confirm your participation with *Ms. Sylvia Mundjindi* before **21 October 2008** via E-mail sylvia@fesnam.org.na, by Tel. **061-237 438** or by fax (see attached confirmation form)