

# **National Committee on Trade Facilitation (NCTF)**

## **Case study: SWAZILAND**

### **1. Introduction**

The Swaziland National Committee on Trade Facilitation (NCTF) was re-launched on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 2014 to facilitate both domestic coordination and implementation of the TFA in through the involvement of all cross-border trade stakeholders. The NCTF was first established in preparation for the first needs and priority assessment for Swaziland conducted by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). This saw the participation of various stakeholders during the assessment process. However it has always been a challenge to maintain and sustain the NCTF, a challenge faced by various countries. The Bali agreement has however given new momentum to the operation of the NCTF. During the re-launch, the NCTF worked on the WTO notification of Category A Commitments and crafted a way forward on the implementation of the TFA. It is worth mentioning that the role of the NCTF will not only look after the TFA and also the implementation of all trade facilitation related initiatives in Swaziland including ASYCUDA World, Coordinated Border Management and the Investor Road Map etc.

### **2. Objective of the NCTF**

The objective of the NCTF is to bring together all stakeholders and role players in order to understand the Trade Facilitation Agreement, its requirements and to collaborate efforts in order to implement the provisions of the TFA and the National TF agenda at large.

### **3. Main Functions**

- To develop a TFA Implementation Plan;
- To evaluate the compliance level for each proposed trade facilitation measure as provided in the TFA and other international instruments;
- Identification of special and differential treatment, technical assistance and capacity building needs and priorities;
- Develop capacity to continue the assessment of needs and priorities and review the TFA Implementation Plan accordingly;
- To recommend the simplification and harmonization of the roles and procedures of various border and regulatory agencies with an objective to enhance trade facilitation;
- To monitor implementation of agreed strategies and identify gaps that have to be addressed;
- To provide support to the Swaziland Delegates participating at the WCO and WTO Committees on Trade Facilitation;

- To advance trade facilitation agenda in the regional economic communities (RECs) and other trade arrangements that Swaziland belongs to;
- To take a lead in sensitizing the nation about the trade facilitation initiatives and how important trade facilitation is in the economic development of Swaziland;
- To formalize formation and functions of subcommittees on Standards, Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS), Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), Trade & Investment and Customs;
- Formulation of agenda items for NCTF meetings including deliberations and voting procedures
- Mobilize financial and other resources as well as technical assistance for the NCTF activities and implementation of the TFA Plan.
- Regular review of the Terms and Reference
- Provide progress reports on implementation of the TFA implementation plan and other trade facilitation initiatives

#### **4. Secretariat Services**

The Ministry of Commerce Industry and Trade provides secretariat services with the help of the SRA which leads from behind all the time. The SRA will prepare all the paper work and documentation and submit to MICT for endorsement and circulation to all stake holders.

#### **5. Reporting**

The NCTF reports to the Steering Committee. Membership of the Steering Committee on Trade Facilitation (SCTF) comprises of Principal Secretaries in Government Ministries and Chief Executive Officers in other agencies including the private sector. Observers are also invited to meetings held by the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee also approves, Memorandums of Understanding, and for adopting reviewed legislation, processes and other Customs and trade related policies after incorporating new requirements.

The NCTF has brought together all the key national trade facilitation initiatives including the Investor Road Map implementation which reports to a Cabinet Sub-Committee every fortnight. The report of the Sub Committee forms part of the Agenda of the main Cabinet meeting. This has now enabled the agenda of the TFA to get political attention through this same process.

#### **6. Composition**

The NCTF is made up of 35 members drawn from Government Ministries and Departments, Private Sector representatives and Non-Governmental Organizations. The NCTF was established at two levels, technical and senior level. At the senior level it is chaired by the PS

Ministry of Commerce Industry and Trade and Co-chaired by the Commissioner General of the Swaziland Revenue Authority. There is a provision that once it has stabilized, private sector will have an opportunity to Co- Chair the NCTF

## **7. Membership**

### **Government agencies**

- Ministry of International Trade (Chair);
- Swaziland Revenue Authority (Co-Chair);
- Ministry of Commerce Industry and Trade
- National Agricultural Marketing Board;
- Dairy Board;
- Veterinary Services;
- Import Permit – Ministry of Finance;
- Government Computer Services;
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- Trade Promotion Unit;
- Ministry of Health;
- Road Transport;
- Swaziland Environmental Authority;

### **Private Sector (Other stakeholders)**

- Railways;
- Swaziland Civil Aviation;
- Swaziland Standards Authority;
- Swaziland Investment Promotion Authority;
- University of Swaziland;
- CANGO;
- Immigration;
- Royal Swaziland Police;

- Competition Commission;
- Federation of employers and Chamber of Commerce;
- Federation of Swaziland Business Community;
- Clearing Agents Association;
- Attorney General;
- Ministry of Natural Resources;
- Parliament Representative;
- Public Policy Coordination Unit;
- Swaziland Road Freight Association; and
- Swaziland Defence Force

#### **8. Lessons learnt**

- It is very crucial to scan the environment and align with other important national initiatives which have already garnered political will and support.
- Avoid creation of similar and parallel structures which have similar objectives. The agreement provides for the utilisation of existing structures.
- The NCTF needs to have an agenda and a champion to be sustainable
- Customs/Revenue administrations can lead from behind and still achieve the same objectives however should endeavour to lead at the front.