

PRESS RELEASE

TENTH MEETING OF EAC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS TO BE HELD IN ARUSHA, ON MONDAY 8 AUGUST

***- Meeting to consider progress of implementation of EAC Customs Union; and
mechanism to fast track EA Federation -***

The Tenth Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the East African Community will be held in Arusha on Monday 8 August 2005. The meeting will, among other issues on its agenda, review the progress of the implementation of the East African Customs Union Protocol; and consider measures of fast tracking regional integration towards Political Federation.

The meeting will be attended by the Ministers responsible for regional integration in the three EAC Partner States, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. They are Hon Jakaya Kikwete, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, Tanzania who is also the Chairperson of the Council of Ministers of the East African Community; Hon Sam Kutesa, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Uganda, and Hon John Koech, Minister of East African Regional Co-operation, Kenya. Also to attend the meeting will be other Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, and Senior Government Officials responsible for various sectors involved in the East African regional integration process.

The operations of the East African Community Customs Union were launched on 1st January this year. A report by the EAC Secretariat notes that gradual elimination of internal tariffs and other charge of equivalent effect are being addressed within the context of the Protocol and on the basis of the East African Custom Union Management Act 2004. The implementation of the Rules of Origin has already faced some hitches necessitating looking into some relevant rules. The gradual implementation of the Common External Tariff (CET) is also ongoing and some problems have been registered which are being solved on a case by case basis.

Among the matters to be determined by the Council are the establishment of the new post (and department) of Deputy Secretary General for Political Federation Matters; and the holding of wider consultations with the people of East Africa on fast tracking East African

Federation as directed by the 3rd Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State held in Dar es Salaam on 29-30 May 2005.

The 10th Council will also carry out a comprehensive review of ongoing sectoral programmes of the Community in the economic, political and social sectors. A Report by the Secretariat, covering the period since December 2004 notes the steady progress in the implementation of the projects and programmes in, among other areas, Agriculture and Food Security; Energy; Environment and Natural Resources; Trade Industry and Investment; Tourism and Wildlife Management; Interstate Security and Defence; Legal and Judicial Affairs.

The report notes significant breakthroughs were made in the Lake Victoria Development Programme, with the operationalisation of the Lake Victoria Basin Commission; in the various programmes under the social sector, in particular, in the Health sector; and under the institutional matters with the verification of the application of Rwanda to join the Community; and the accreditation of EAC to the AU. Similarly, on Finance and Administration Matters, after protracted deliberations, the proposals for Staff Rules and Financial Rules and Regulations have been finalised and will be considered by the Council for adoption.

Agenda of the Meeting

The Tenth Meeting of the Council of Ministers will have nine items on its agenda, namely:

- The Report on the progress in the Implementation of Previous decisions of the Council;
- Report on the Tripartite Sectoral Programmes and Activities;
- Report on Institutional Matters;
- Progress Report of the Consultancy Study on the East African Power Master Plan;
- Report of the EAC Committee on Trade Remedies on Uganda's List of Raw Materials/Industrial Inputs;
- Finance and Administration Report;
- Progress Report on the EAC Development Fund;
- Report on the Activities of the East African Legislative Assembly and the East African Court of Justice; and

- Report of the Contacts and Outreach Activities.

Preparatory Meetings end today, Sunday 7 August

The series of preparatory meetings for the Tenth Meeting of the Council of Ministers began in Arusha on Thursday 4 August with the sessions of the Senior Officials of the Co-ordination Committee, which ended on Saturday 6 August. This will be followed by the Meeting of the Co-ordination Committee (Permanent Secretaries) on today, Sunday 7 August, which will adopt its Report and Recommendations to be presented to the Ministerial Session of the Council tomorrow, Monday 8 August for consideration.

Dr Cheluget says EAC reached “important stage” of delivering tangible benefits of integration

Addressing the opening session of the Senior Officials Meeting here on Thursday, 4 August, the Deputy Secretary General (Projects and Programmes) of the East African Community, Dr Kipyego Cheluget set out the background to the 10th Meeting of the Council stating that the meeting is taking place against the background of significant developments in the Community since the beginning of this year.

Dr Cheluget said that apart from the launching of the East African Community Customs Union in January, the 3rd Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State was held in May at which the Heads of State made important decisions on fast tracking regional integration. With these developments, he said, the East African regional integration process had reached an important stage where EAC is expected to demonstrate tangible benefits to the East African people.

There are high expectations on the operations of the Customs Union but equally great challenges on the Union to deliver on the expectations of its stakeholders. Some of these challenges are structural others are systemic. On the one hand, there are the structures established at the regional level, which are vested with limited capacity and limited mandate to run the Union. On the other hand, there are entrenched structures and systems at national levels that need time to adjust to the new requirements and their obligations under the Customs Union protocol.

The Customs Union provides the litmus test for the success and sustainability of regional integration. The Heads of State at their 3rd Extraordinary Summit in Dar es Salaam stressed the need to consolidate the Customs Union as the basis for further progress to be made in the regional integration process. The organs and the institutions of the Community and in the Partner States have a major challenge to ensure the success of the Customs Union and that momentum is maintained towards the other stages of integration, including the Common Market, Customs Union and ultimately the Political Federation. Dr Cheluget said this requires commitment and determination by all to positive deliberation of regional issues, so that obstacles and fears, real or imagined, are overcome and the integration process stays on course.

Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers is the policy organ of the East African Community. It consists of the Ministers responsible for regional co-operation of each Partner State and such other Ministers of the Partner States as each Partner State shall determine. Among its functions, the Council promotes, monitors and keeps under constant review the implementation of the programmes of the Community and ensures the proper functioning of the regional organisation.

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