

Report of the Second Meeting of Delegates from the Geneva Missions of East African Community Countries

CUTS Geneva Resource Centre Conference Room, 12 May 2010

Delegates from the Geneva Missions of East African Community (EAC) countries had an informal working breakfast at CUTS GRC on Wednesday, May 12, 2010. The discussion focused on policy challenges in the EAC integration process based on a draft paper circulated by CUTS GRC. The objective was to solicit inputs from the delegates as well as provide a forum for them to discuss other issues of their interest. Below is a summary of the discussion.

1. The research being undertaken by CUTS under the Building an Inclusive EAC project was appreciated as a timely input for the EAC regional integration initiatives, and delegates looked forward to receiving final research studies when ready. On the draft study on policy challenges, it was suggested that it should also explore opportunities in addition to identifying the challenges.
2. The challenges faced by EAC in the integration process such as informal cross-border trade, migration, non-tariff barriers and policy harmonization are long term issues that require continuous efforts to address them. These challenges also exist in other economic groupings that have existed for a longer period.
3. Standards are the key barrier to trade. Though EAC member countries are required to recognize each other's certification of standards, cases of re-verification continue to arise, hence impeding trade.
4. Building regional capacities on harmonization of standards in EAC is underway between Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda while Rwanda and Burundi will follow later. However the fact that some member countries have not yet established National Standards Bodies makes the harmonization exercise difficult.
5. A bigger challenge is for trade to be mainstreamed into national and regional economic development programmes. Currently vital Ministries such as those responsible for Finance are not adequately engaged in trade mainstreaming programmes and yet effective policies cannot be implemented without them.
6. Four of the five EAC member countries are LDCs and qualify for EIF support. The issue arises as to how regional projects initiated under EIF can be implemented in the EAC with one non-LDC. It was suggested that this could be achieved by coordinating the EIF and AfT programmes. It was decided that a priority regional project will be identified by the delegates as

a test case and presented in the next quarterly informal meeting. CUTS offered to draft a proposal for the region on the project identified, to be presented to the EIF and prospective donors under AfT initiative. CUTS will also circulate the legal/technical study it recently undertook to assess the scope and mandate of the EIF.

The delegates were introduced to the Secretary General of CUTS International Mr. Pradeep S. Metha who happened to be in Geneva. They expressed their appreciation of the work done by CUTS, especially facilitating these informal meetings that are helping them to better coordinate their work.