



**Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Eswatini
to the United Nations**

**Statement by the
Honorable Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade
Mr. Manqoba Bheki Khumalo**

**during the Plenary session of the
Comprehensive High-Level Mid Term Review of the
Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA)
for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCS),**

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New York

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H.E. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the United Nations General Assembly,
H.E. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Kingdom of Eswatini with a population of about 1.2 million people, a geographical landmass of over 17, 000 square meters and surrounded by South Africa and Mozambique, has placed structural economic transformation at the core of its national economic agenda. In this regard, international trade and trade facilitation, infrastructure development and its maintenance, regional integration and cooperation, transit issues and resource mobilization have been prioritized by Government for the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) and paving a way for sustainable economic growth.

Over and above the inherent limitations associated with being landlocked, the kingdom of Eswatini's strategic roadmap (2019-2022) identifies challenges facing the country, including widening fiscal deficit, declining growth rate and the low ranking on the ease of doing business. To address these challenges five key growth sectors are given special attention for reforms, namely, education and ICTs, mining and energy, agriculture, manufacturing and agro-processing and tourism.

Eswatini is implementing the WTO trade facilitation agreement and our multiple membership of different regional economic communities (RECs) places us at a vintage position to address transit bottlenecks that impede the movement of our goods and services across frontiers. The move therefore, towards the liberalization of trade in services in SADC, COMESA, the Tripartite FTA and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will be fundamental in enhancing inter-connectivity, which remains an obstacle to the meaningful trade integration which my country aspires to. The common seven (7) priority sectors that will be liberalized in these regional economic blocs, namely, in communication, financial, business, transport, tourism, energy and construction, give us hope for a strengthened and an emerging resilient regional cooperation in the African continent.

Our industrial and trade policies aim to promote value addition and beneficiation of local primary products into high value processed products, thus developing complete value chains in key sectors of the domestic economy. The main objective is product diversification and to increase the contribution of exports to GDP by 5%. A major milestone in this area is the current development and designation of two Special Economic Zones (SEZs) around our fairly new international airport and a Science and Technology Park.

Distinguished delegates will recall that Eswatini currently ranks 1st in Africa in trading across borders. This is due to a number of trade facilitation reforms that the country has undertaken including the adoption of an Eswatini National Trade Facilitation Roadmap (ENTFR) which serves as a guide to implementing our international and regional trade facilitation commitments.

The ambition of this RoadMap is to facilitate a modern, safe and secure trade supply chain, reducing trade costs and time by 30% in 2022. To deliver on this ambition, the Kingdom has identified a total of seven (7) strategic initiatives namely: Trade Facilitation Institutional

Arrangements, Trade Information Portal, Trade Facilitation Performance Measurement Systems, Compliance and Risk Management, Customs to Customs Corporation, National Single Window (including coordinated border management and business process analysis), and Regional Integration.

Conclusion

The implementation of our obligations under the Vienna Programme of Action is critical for economic growth and improved standards of living. Technical and financial assistance including capacity building support and the capitalization of our development financial institutions remain necessary and key for the effective implementation of this programme.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you.