

**STATEMENT
BY
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PERMANENT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF
UGANDA
DURING THE 3RD TRADE AND BUSINESS FACILITATION SYMPOSIUM 12-14
AUGUST 2019, MOMBASA**

The Hon. Amelia Kyambadde, Minister of Trade Industry and Cooperatives
Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners,
Representatives of the Business Community here present,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Uganda and Kenya have historical and excellent relations that have been sustained in the spirit of pan Africanism; brotherhood and mutual respect. This is evidenced by the exchange of visits that have taken place at the level of Ministers, Senior Officials, Members of the Private Sector, and at the Level of Heads of State. It will be remembered that not so long ago at the invitation of H.E President Uhuru Kenyatta; H.E President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, paid a successful State Visit to the Republic of Kenya in March of this year. The visit further cemented the strong bonds of friendships that had already existed between the two Heads of State

This warm and brotherly relationship between our two Leaders has allowed a shared space for trade and investment to flourish between our two countries. It is therefore no wonder that today we are in this beautiful city of Mombasa engaging in the 3rd Trade and Business Facilitation Symposium. Indeed, it is in the same vein, and informed by the great desire to better the lives of the people that they lead; that President Museveni and President Kenyatta are among the co-creators of the Northern Corridor Integration Projects, established with the view to fast track the integration agenda of the East African Community through the implementation of key projects in order to promote shared growth and prosperity by removing barriers to trade, harmonizing legal and regulatory mechanisms, liberalizing movement of capital, services and labour and developing common infrastructure.

Your Excellencies,

As a region, we must purpose to ensure that we adopt a collective posture to determine that bilateral relations are not an end in, and of themselves but rather, ought to have a direct and positive impact on the regular guy in our respective countries, to whom we owe an account. In Uganda, we have had a paradigm shift in our approach to foreign policy. Whereas we believe that peace and security are important; we also hold the strong view that in order to sustain the peace, there is need to create a nexus between Peace, Security and Development. To that end, therefore, Trade and Business Facilitation is a critical part of that nexus.

Your Excellencies,

The Port of Mombasa is the main gateway to the sea for the Northern and Central Corridor, covering the Republic of Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It therefore means that whatever happens in Kenya has a direct impact on Uganda and all those that rely on this gateway. We applaud the Government of Kenya for the reforms and infrastructural developments, that have been put in place at the Port of Mombasa. According to the Kenya Ports Authority in its 2018 report; it indicated that Uganda was the leading user of the Port of Mombasa in terms of transit cargo which covers about 82% of all imports and exports.

Kenya is a key strategic and trading partner of Uganda. The volume of trade between our two countries is approximately USD1.2BN. While we believe that there is room for improvement, we are pleased with the commitment of the Government of Kenya and other partners to promote increased and shared prosperity along the Corridor.

Your Excellencies,

May I observe, that this has only been possible, in part, due to a number of reforms that have been adopted along the Northern and Central Corridor. Some of these have included the establishment of 15 One Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) such as but not limited to: the Mutukula OSBP, Malaba; Busia; Namanga; Nimule/Elegu; Kobero/Kabanga; Taveta/ Holili, Mirama Hills/Kagitumba; etc. The implementation of the Busia OSBP, for instance, has resulted in a reduction of border crossing clearance time by an average of 80 per cent, strengthened co-operation between Kenya and Uganda, and improved co-ordination of all the border regulatory agencies led by the respective country revenue authorities.

Your Excellencies,

As you may recall on 28th October, 2013 their Excellences the Heads of State of the Northern Corridor Integration projects launched a Single Customs Territory for the Northern Corridor. The Single Customs Territory (SCT) model relies on three pillars: free circulation of goods; a revenue management system; and an adequate legal and institutional framework. The introduction of the SCT removed multiple weighbridges, police and customs checks along the Mombasa-Kampala-Kigali route and introduced computerized clearance; and Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking; and other innovations that have overturned many of the hurdles to free trade or Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) that the Northern Corridor was infamous for.

This has reduced the cost of doing business by about 50 per cent in the East African region. The system has reduced the time taken to move cargo across the region from eighteen (18) days to four (4) between Mombasa and Kampala. It also used to take six days instead of 21 for a truck to move from Mombasa to Kigali before the current challenges happened. Similarly, on the Central Corridor, the turnaround time between the port of Dar es Salaam and Kigali (or Bujumbura) has been reduced from over 20 days to 6. We applaud these achievements. We aspire for, and continue to work towards, even greater trade and business facilitation along the Corridor.

Before, I close, I would like to salute Amb. Katureebe, the Consul General of Uganda to Mombasa for this innovative approach to Trade and Business Facilitation. These annual symposia are a good opportunity to bring together officials from Government and the members of the private sector to exchange views and share experiences on how to make the region more competitive and attractive in building the future we want. Our duty as Government officials is to listen to the private sector with the view to creating an enabling environment for business to flourish, through inter alia addressing all non-trade facilitating measures and implementing decisions that have already been agreed to in a timely manner.

Your Excellencies,

Due to the excellent bilateral relations that Uganda has with Kenya and many members along the Northern and Central Corridor; a number of measures have been undertaken through the framework of Joint Permanent Commissions and others, to remove all non-trade facilitating measures, through inter alia convening regular meetings of not only the Joint Permanent Commissions but also Joint Business Fora for members of the private sector. The Joint Business Fora are a platform for members of the private sector to share experiences,

identify opportunities and challenges and agree on appropriate measures to promote trade and investment. It is therefore important that we maintain the momentum that we have achieved so far, in our relations but also in the number of reforms that have been undertaken along the Northern and Central Corridor.

These reforms if fully implemented, without being rolled back, will be our generations best gift to posterity in bequeathing a future to our children better than our current circumstances.

I thank you

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