**Swedish Statement in the Trade Facilitation Agreement Committee, 22 October 2020**

Honorable members and participants of this assembly,

Let me start by thanking the EC for coordinating the interventions of some of the member states with regards to their support for the implementation of the TFA. As member of the EU, Sweden contributes in various ways, methods, and channels to the implementation of the TFA and I am glad to inform this assembly on some of the Swedish contributions

The Swedish Policy Framework for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance recognized inclusive economic development as a focus area, and free and fair trade as a key part of this endeavour. Free and fair trade is a powerful tool for economic growth, sustainable development and fighting poverty. However, many low and middle-income countries have a limited capacity to exploit the potential of trade.

In 2019, Sweden contributed 4.1bn SEK to the international Aid for Trade agenda and supports partner countries in their efforts to use trade as a means for development. We are a firm believer of multilateralism and the importance of coordinating development partners, which is why we find it useful to support partners such as the Enhanced Integrated Framework, the International Trade Centre and the World Bank Umbrella Facility for Trade.

Trade facilitation is one of our prioritized areas and this includes addressing both the hard and soft constraints for effectively participating in trade. We would like to illustrate this by discussing a long and fruitful collaboration with the World Customs Organization. We are happy to say that we have recently signed a new agreement with WCO on Customs Modernization in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2020-2022, 37.4 million Swedish Krona. This is the third phase of collaboration with the WCO, the previous phase achieved some valuable results, such as accreditation of regional Authorised Economic Operators, IT connectivity and risk management, and the prevention of trade in endangered species. The focus in this phase will be on Trade Facilitation, IT connectivity, green customs, regional harmonisation, gender equality and integrity and anti-corruption.

WCO has highlighted lessons learned in order to implement TFA effectively include political will and commitment, private sector consultation and buy-in, the crucial role of National TF Committees, and training of a crucial body of individuals to act as change enablers. It will involve 6 members of EAC (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi [not South Sudan]) and 7 members of SADC (Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambiqu, Zambia and Zimbabwe). This collaboration will be part of our support to the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade area, for which trade facilitation is an instrumental factor.

Support to the World Bank’s Trade Facilitation Support Program and several multilateral partners are other examples.

More generally, we look holistically at how trade facilitation can contribute positively to sustainable development. We emphasize the importance of a gender equality lens in trade facilitation. Our work on supporting small-scale cross border women traders in the Great Lakes region is one example where Sida through “International Alert” since 2011 focus on women small-scale traders at border crossing points that face long queues and burdensome administrative processes due to inefficient systems and differences in documentation requirements on either side of the border. The existence of multiple and overlapping regional policies and legislation creates confusion. Alert has built up strong relationships with both authorities and small scale traders on all sides of the target areas and work to strengthen information sharing on the trade agreements that have been signed and what these mean for traders and border/customs officials in practice.

The issues of food safety and Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary measures is critical for trade as they contribute to raised incomes for farmers as well as addressing public health and food security concerns. To facilitate, the export of SPS related products from developing countries, Sweden, as one of the major donor to the STDF, contributes in building SPS capacity in a number of countries. The overall purpose is to strengthen systems which will facilitate trade and exchanges of agricultural and food related products complying to international norms and standards. Currently, Sweden is preparing a new support agreement to the STDF for an amount of 4 Millions Euros.

We also support capacity building for trade policy, trade facilitation and standardization in a number of countries bilaterally. A forum such as the Trade Facilitation Committee is vital for us to assess the demand and needs from partner countries, and Sweden remains a committed partner to supporting developing countries in their endeavours to integrate into the world economy.

Thank you for your attention.

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