



Towards an NTB-free Africa

On the 25th May, the world celebrated **Africa Day**. First celebrated upon the formation of the **Organisation of African Unity (OAU)** back in 1963 which eventually revamped as **African Union**--Africa Day debuted as the gong cry of the Dark Continent for *Uhuru*. African countries, altogether, wanted freedom for its colonized states, basic human rights and dignity for its people. The power of a common Pan-African initiative eventually led to the realization of these objectives. A wave of decolonization and soon democratization swept across the continent and countries got roped into the tropes of a global liberal capitalist market.

Now spared from the unequalizing treatment it was earlier reserved on global platforms and in global civil agendas, Africa, nonetheless, still has its smaller battles to fight every day. The irony however is that the battles of contemporary Africa revolve mostly around regional integration. Divided along **SADC, COMESA, IOC, ECOWAS, UMA, IGAD, EAC, WAMZ, MRU**, and other similar RECs' identities, African countries are in a constant dual-yet contradictory-process of milking profit from their alignment to their comrades of the region, and at the same time, protecting their respective domestic interest.

And nowhere else is this trysting spirit of African countries been more acutely experienced than in the realm of trade. Though member of several Free Trade Areas in the region, import and export between member countries are still littered by non-tariff barriers. Rules of Origins, product quotas, mutual non-recognition of standards, heavy



paperwork, stringent labelling and packing requirements are some of the excuses African countries use to shy away from free movement of goods across Africa and the Region.

We, Mauritius, are of course much afflicted by these obstacles. Containers withheld in Malagasy ports for indefinite reasons, complex application forms, lengthy processes of obtaining Rules of Origin Certificates, cumbersome and costly standards' testing procedures are some of the experiences reported by Mauritian manufacturers as they attempt exportation towards the continent. These troublesome procedures are reasons enough for smaller enterprises to be reticent in exporting.

This year, African Governments are working relentlessly towards a quick realization of the 2012 project of the Continental Free Trade Area. Therefore, as comprehensive regional integration becomes the leitmotif of all conversations and debates in policy and business milieus in African countries, Enterprise Mauritius brings in its contribution in the form of the ***Exporting to Africa and the Region Workshop*** scheduled for 17th-18th July 2017. The Workshop is designed to train Mauritian manufacturers to understand and address non-tariff barriers experienced when exporting to Africa and the region—an Uhuru, no less!

