



**EUROPEAN UNION**

DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA AND SADC

## 10<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund

Tripartite Workshop and Seniors Official Meeting on  
'Vehicle Overload Control and Enforcement'

10<sup>th</sup> November 2014

Gaborone Sun Hotel, Gaborone

Remarks by Alexander BAUM

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First of all, I would like to thank SADC for this invitation this morning.

The Delegation and the Secretariat are working hard to ensure that the regional integration agenda's flag is raising high in the sky on a daily basis.

As you know, the EU is a long-standing supporter of regional integration and cooperation and is committed to remain so. Regional integration is a clear priority under the "EU Agenda for Change", the blueprint for a higher impact, more results-oriented EU development policy.

**1. Road transport plays a fundamental role** in the economic and social growth of Africa. It is the dominant mode of freight and passenger transport.

If the road infrastructure network is not in good condition, the economy of a country is negatively affected.

**Vehicle overloading leads to rapid deterioration of road pavements and imposes a heavy cost**, forcing the countries to spend increasing amounts on road rehabilitation. The available statistics indicate that incidence of overloading in the Tripartite region ranges currently from about 10 – 50 percent. Overloading coupled with inadequate funding for road maintenance contributes significantly to poor road conditions and high transport costs, **estimated to be typically four to five times higher than those prevailing in countries with adequate road maintenance and vehicle overload control**. Based on available information from South Africa, the cost of overloading is estimated to be of the order of US \$1.5 billion per annum just in that country. If we extrapolate this figure to the Tripartite region, the indicative cost of overloading would be in excess of US \$4 billion.

The PIDA (Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa) evaluation of Africa's transport sector revealed the total economic cost the inefficiencies of African Regional Transport Infrastructure Networks to be \$172 billion.

**2. The enforcement of a sound axle load policy** requires a solid governance structure in one country. Unfortunately, the road authorities who have the responsibility for preserving the road infrastructure have limited role in regulating vehicle loading.

Criminal responses to overloading result **in low conviction rates**. Weighbridge operations tend to be conducive **to malpractices** (bribery and corruption). The usually low fines paid by the commercial transport operator hardly compensate the costs for repairing the road structure damaged by the overloaded truck.

Current regulations are not often harmonized amongst adjacent countries resulting in different approaches to overload control and affecting transport efficiency along regional corridors.

**3. Overloading trucks is a major issue for Development Partners like EU.** In the past twenty years, EU has significantly contributed to the maintenance or construction of new roads in the tripartite region.

*The EU Court of Auditors* in a report about the EU support to road investments in Africa has recently highlighted the importance of "good governance" to secure the sustainability of these investments. For the transport sector, fight

against vehicle overload and adequate road maintenance have been considered by the Auditors as the two key elements.

Under the 11<sup>th</sup> EDF, we are committed to address these inefficiencies by participating in investments for the improvement of the major regional intermodal transport corridors, but as the PIDA recognises, these high transports costs are not only due to the need for better physical infrastructure, but also due to failures in the soft elements, such as the non-implementation of trade facilitation measures or of trade policies.

Our envisaged support towards the improvement of physical infrastructure under the 11<sup>th</sup> EDF **will be linked to progress in addressing vehicle overload at national and regional level in a** coordinated and efficient manner.

Establishing the right institutional arrangements at both the national and regional levels is indeed very important. Trucks need to travel between countries that currently do not have harmonised rules. Harmonization and coordination are critical and avoid potential inefficiencies, for instance by siting weighbridges in key points along the main corridors agreed between the different countries crossed by these corridors.

It is for this need for harmonisation and coordination that we have put all our efforts to ensure that all the key stakeholders are represented at this workshop.

**4. We commend the efforts** already undertaken by the 3 Tripartite RECs (COMESA, EAC and SADC) to develop and implement a harmonised vehicle overload control strategy and enforcement regime in the region. We are aware

that harmonised implementation and enforcement at country level is challenging and requires the adoption of a common *Strategy and Implementation Plan*. There are many lessons that have been drawn from the current status quo and that we need to address.

There is a need for physical and operational integration of overload control networks, policy convergence between countries, joint road planning, harmonisation of standards and operations, joint cross border operations, harmonised law enforcement and transposition of regional agreements and protocols.

We are willing to continue our support under the 11<sup>th</sup> EDF to ensure that this Strategy and Implementation Plan to be agreed upon and adopted at this workshop are effectively implemented. They will define the key actions to be undertaking and a schedule, as well as provide an estimation of the cost.

I trust that all of you present here will work to ensure a successful outcome for this important workshop that will form the basis for our cooperation in the near future.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the team at the SADC Secretariat for their hard work and commitment in preparing this important workshop and the documents that will be discussed and adopted. Let me equally thank you all for attending the workshop and for your commitment in making our cooperation a success.