



Sao Tome and Principe Trade Facilitation Project



Press Release

Closing Workshop for Single Windows for External Trade Project

Sao Tome and Principe

Sao Tome and Principe (STP) has concluded the implementation of a Single Window for External Trade project, which established an online system through which importers and exporters can process all their customs clearances. The single window system links all government institutions dealing in international trade facilitation so that all inspections, clearances and permits are obtained in one place.

The project closing workshop, held at the Customs Administration on July 02, 2015, was attended by Heads of all institutions involved in the Project and respective Focal Points..

This trade facilitation initiative was jointly financed by the Government of Sao Tome and Principe, the Investment Climate Facility for Africa and the International Finance Corporation. UNCTAD was responsible for the technical implementation of the project.

The implementation of the project took almost 2 year to complete and achieved the long sought reductions in the number of procedures and time to process trade documentation. Time to import was reduced to two and even one day in cases of full compliance with valuation, classification and other customs rules, and Project was able to eliminate twelve main forms from trade processing, some of which were filled out in duplicate and triplicate.

This reform initiative has made possible the integration of Customs and Internal Revenue information systems. It has also instituted a facility for border agencies to work together for faster processing of trade documents using the Customs automated processing system. The STP Single Window system brings together Government agencies that are involved in the clearing of import and export goods. These include the Ministry of Finance (Customs and Internal Revenue), Ministry of Agriculture (Department of Livestock, Phitosanitary Department), Ministry of Health (Pharmaceutical Department), and Ministry of Public Works (Transport Department) in their capacity of authorizing the importation of goods. Additionally, Customs Fiscal Police, Airport and Port Authorities are also included in the system. All fees and taxes directly related to import/export are now paid in a single instance. The Internal Revenue, Department of Commerce, and National Institute of Statistics can now log into the Single Windows System and directly download live trade data for statistics and for tracking import of selected products and especially foodstuff.

Customs General Director, Mrs. Ilza Amado Vaz, who spoke on behalf of the Honorable Minister of Finance, highlighted the importance of the Single Window. “The successful implementation of this Project allowed for a profitable integration of Customs and border agencies, making Customs a leader in reforms related to improving the trade climate. Results are now clear, and that includes the efficient project management and rigorous financial controls, which in a way will encourage Project sponsor to further assist the country. With this Project, and just in its first assistance, ICF has efficiently helped Sao Tome and Principe to considerably reduce trade procedures and integrate institutions intervening in foreign trade facilitation,” she said.

Mr. Segesmundo Vieira, ICF Project Manager, congratulated the Project team for being able to implement all activities in an efficient manner. “ICF decided to assist STP to implement this Project in order to improve the investment climate in the country. Reducing the number of procedures, and excessive paperwork, needed to process cargo clearances helps importers and exporters to spend less time and money clearing their goods. This will help to stimulate the economy and make STP a more attractive place to do business,” he said. .

In his intervention, Mr. Octávio Mendonça, the President of the Chamber of Brokers, an entity that represents importers/private sector, praised the initiative, indicating that it will certainly have an impact on the local economy. “Even though of a semi-private nature, the Chamber of Brokers, as the intermediary between importers and trade authorities, will always be available to give its helping hand in order to solve any problems that may arise so that this system is always operational,” he said.

While presenting project results, the National Project Director, Mr. Daniel Neto Vaz, stressed the importance of the initiative, pointing that “Implementing a Single Window system is just one of the phases in carrying out the Government’s overarching strategy for improving the country’s business climate”.



Participants during the closing workshop for the Single Window for External Trade Project

Notes to editors:

- **The Investment Climate Facility for Africa (ICF)** is a pan-African development organization whose aim is to reduce barriers to doing business in Africa. ICF works with businesses and African governments to create a conducive legal, regulatory and administrative environment for businesses, both big and small, to invest and grow. ICF believes that an improved investment climate is critical for job creation, income growth and poverty reduction across the continent.
- Apart from trade facilitation, ICF also provides support in the areas of property rights and contract enforcement, business registration and licensing, strengthening financial markets, commercial justice, infrastructure facilitation, and tax.
- ICF is supported by development partners and the private sector. For more information, please visit www.icfafrica.org

Media contact:

Segesmundo Vieira, Project Manager, Investment Climate Facility for Africa, Mobile: +238 950 97 39, Email: svieira@icfafrica.org

Eunice Urio, Communication Manager, Investment Climate Facility for Africa, Tel: 255 22 212 9211, Email: eurio@icfafrica.org