Government Initiatives to Support Services Suppliers under the WTO LDC Services Waiver

Presentation by Emmanuel MUTAHUNGA at the WTO Council for Trade in Services Webinar: LDC Services Export Performance & Facilitating Implementation of Preferences Notified Under the LDC Services Waiver, 2\(^{nd}\) – 3\(^{rd}\) June 2021
Introduction

• Appreciation to the WTO CTS for organizing the Webinar on this topical subject

• An opportunity for us as LDCs, preference-granting WTO Members, and even non-preference-granting developed/developing WTO Members, to do a self-assessment
LDC Services Waiver – Spirit and Rationale

• Very important Decision reached in 2011
• Important process: the LDC Collective Request
• The process of Notification of the Preferences under the Waiver by Members
• Utilization of the Preferences by LDCs?
• Rationale/Spirit: increase the participation of LDCs in international trade in Services – what do the statistics say!
Notifications of Preferences under the Waiver

• 2015 - Waiver period was extended to 2030 – is the pace of Notifications encouraging?

• Is the LDC utilization of the notified preferences encouraging?

• Literature: desired impacts of preferences granted under the services waiver has not yet been realized

• Why?: cases of notified measures reflecting the applied MFN regime; and some notified measures reflect commitments found in preferential trade agreements which also reflect the applied regime
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• The 2008 National Trade Policy identifies Services as a priority area for Uganda
• This prioritization informed and drove Uganda’s spirited engagement in the WTO Services negotiations processes
• After the Services Waiver Decision, & then the Notifications, Uganda developed the National Policy on Services Trade, complete with an Implementation Plan (2017)
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• National Policy on Services Trade Objectives:
  i. Promoting domestic capacity development in Services trade and enhancing firm level competitiveness
  ii. Strengthening human and institutional capacities
  iii. Increasing market access opportunities
  iv. Strengthening regulatory and institutional framework
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• **National Policy on Services Trade Objectives**

  v. Mainstreaming Services Trade in national development planning frameworks
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• Specific Policy Actions under the **National Policy on Services Trade**:  
  i. Improving firm level competitiveness,  
  ii. Improving Export Market Access {incl.  
      ‘Developing Strategies for Uganda Services Suppliers to take Advantage of the WTO LDC Services Waiver’};  
  iii. Establishing Services Specific Planning Mechanism, and  
  iv. Strengthening Regulatory and Institutional Frameworks
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• Activities under ‘Developing Strategies for Uganda Services Suppliers to take Advantage of the WTO LDC Services Waiver’ include:
  ✓ Analysis of market preferences notified under the WTO
  ✓ Conducting market entry studies
  ✓ Sensitizing the private sector of the available opportunities and how to harness them
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Activities (Continued):

- Capacity assessment for domestic services suppliers
- Development of a Market Sustainability Strategy
- Continued engagement in Trade in Services at Multilateral level
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• What has been done so far: Policy implementation is ongoing, but the pace could be better

• Private sector has been organized, and process continues. More capacity building needed

• Public sector capacity building in the area of Services Trade ongoing
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• Important role of Services Trade in enhancing Merchandise Trade now greatly appreciated among wider stakeholders

• At multilateral level, we need to bring our the ‘preference’ aspect more as we notify so that we remain within the spirit of the Waiver
A lot done; much more to do

• Thank You