Boosting Intra-African Trade
A Key for Regional Economic Integration and African Competitiveness

On August 26, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) held a seminar on intra-African trade at the Kenya Revenue Authority in Nairobi.

This official side event was held for government institutions from African countries, development partners and private companies to review past and ongoing interventions for facilitating and expanding trade in Africa, as well as to discuss future directions to be taken by public and private stakeholders in order to promote further intra-African trade.

For the opening of this event, Mr. Julius Musyoki, Acting Commissioner of Kenya Revenue authority, and Mr. Asahiko Mihara, Acting President of Japan-AU Parliamentary Friendship Association made the opening remarks with presence of Mr. Daishiro Yamagiwa, Secretary General of the Japan-AU Parliamentary Friendship Association. Following those remarks, Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, Chief Executive Officer of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Agency delivered the opening statement and launched the second edition of One Stop Border Posts (OSBP) Sourcebook.

The presenters and panellists from Africa included Mr. Symerre Grey-Johnson, Head of Regional Integration, Infrastructure and Trade, NEPAD Agency, and Mr. Peter Kiguta, Director General of Customs and Trade at the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat. The panel was also joined by Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, Secretary General of the World Customs Organization (WCO); Mr. Takashi Hattori, Senior Managing Director of Toyota Tsusho Corporation; and Mr. Masaaki Kato, Senior Special Advisor of JICA.

During the first part of the event, presentations were made by NEPAD Agency, JICA, the WCO, the EAC and Toyota Tsusho Corporation. NEPAD Agency offered an introduction of its recently launched MoveAfrica Initiative and key projects as examples of its engagement in regional integration, infrastructure and trade. JICA explained the necessity of comprehensive corridor development, including physical infrastructure and human resource components, in Africa home to countries disadvantaged in trade and
foreign direct investment, such as six landlocked countries and 25 small countries with fewer than 10 million people. JICA also presented some of its initiatives for corridor development. Dr. Mikuriya made remarks on WCO’s contributions toward trade facilitation and regional economic integration from a perspective of customs administration, while the EAC presented the role of regional economic communities (RECs) for trade facilitation. Additionally, Toyota Tsusho Corporation provided an overview of its business in Africa and shared some challenges to encourage investors to RECs.

In the second half of the event, there were discussions on the expansion of intra-regional trade and on trade facilitation with comments and questions from the floor. There were wide range of issues touch on by the floor, including the importance of free movement of people in trade facilitation, the necessity of strong political commitment to corridor development initiatives, and security and political stability which are key for private sector. Through the discussions, it was confirmed that it is important to promote the multi-sectoral approach for corridor development with a more comprehensive manner and forge stronger partnership among international, regional, national and private stakeholders.

At the end of the event, Mr. Kato, Senior Special Advisor of JICA, summarized the key message coming out of the event and expressed appreciations to co-organizer and participants for their contribution to the event.

This event covered transportation infrastructure development and policy/institutional development for OSBP and the modernization of customs administration in a comprehensive manner, which had been discussed separately. The roles of each stakeholder for comprehensive corridor development and expansion of intra-regional trade were also discussed and confirmed. It is expected that the discussions at this event will be reflected in future efforts to boost intra-African trade. JICA will continue to play an instrumental role, working closely with other development partners to promote comprehensive corridor development.

■ Speakers for this event

Master of Ceremony: Mr. Philip Wanjoji Wambugu, Director for Infrastructure, East African Community (EAC)
Opening remark:
  - Mushoki, Julius, Acting Commissioner General and Commissioner (Customs & Border Control, Kenya Revenue Authority
  - Mihiara, Asahiko, Acting President, Japan-AU Parliamentary Friendship Association

Opening Statement and Continental Launch of OSBP Sourcebook
  - Mayaki, Ibrahim Assane, CEO, NEPAD Agency

Presentation/Discussion:
  - Grey-Johnson, Symerre, Head, Regional Integration, Infrastructure and Trade, NEPAD Agency, “NEPAD engagement in regional Integration, Infrastructure and Trade”
  - Kato, Masaaki, Senior Special Advisor, JICA, “JICA's Comprehensive Approach for Corridor Development in Africa”
  - Mikuriya, Kunio, Secretary General, WCO, “WCO's approach toward Trade Facilitation and Regional Economic Integration”
  - Kiguta, Peter, Director General, Customs and Trade, EAC Secretariat, “The One Stop Border Posts and Corridor Development Projects in EAC and Lessons for Regional Approach”
  - Hattori, Takashi, Senior Managing Director, Toyota Tsusho Corporation, “Toyota Tsusho Corporation and Africa”

Closing remarks:
  - Kato, Masaaki, Senior Special Advisor, JICA

Launch of the second edition of One