USTR Froman Announces New Efforts to Strengthen Ties with the East African Community Under President Obama’s Trade Africa Initiative

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - United States Trade Representative Michael Froman today welcomed the notable progress made on President Obama’s Trade Africa initiative following a U.S.-East African Community (EAC) Trade Ministerial Meeting. The EAC is a regional economic organization comprised of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda and represents a market with significant opportunity for U.S. exports and investment. Ambassador Froman issued the following statement after meeting with the EAC trade ministers and secretary general:

"In Tanzania, President Obama announced his Trade Africa initiative to support greater U.S.-Africa trade and investment, regional integration, and trade competitiveness – starting with the East African Community. Trade Africa builds on and supports the work of the U.S.-EAC Trade and Investment Partnership (TIP).

“I’m pleased to announce that the U.S. and the EAC have agreed to launch formal negotiations on a Trade Facilitation Agreement with a view to concluding these negotiations as quickly as possible. In parallel, we will add new elements to the U.S.-EAC TIP focused on sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures and technical barriers to trade. USAID will transform the East Africa Trade Hub into a U.S.-East Africa Trade and Investment Center to expand U.S. regional trade programs, spur private investment, and scale up business-to-business and association-to-association partnerships. The United States is also forming a new partnership with TradeMark East Africa, a multi-donor funded organization dedicated to supporting greater EAC regional integration by breaking down barriers at the border and facilitating trade.

“The U.S. and the EAC have agreed to continue to work toward an investment treaty, and to seek to build on already notable progress in fostering greater private sector linkages and public-private sector engagement under the U.S.-EAC Commercial Dialogue.”

The five states of the EAC, with a population of more than 130 million people, have increasingly stable and pro-business regulations. They are home to promising local enterprises that are forming creative partnerships with multinational companies. And EAC countries are benefiting from the emergence of an educated, globalized middle class. Intra-EAC trade has doubled in the past five years, and the region’s GDP has risen to more than $80 billion – quadrupling in only 10 years. The U.S. and the EAC first agreed to pursue a Trade and Investment Partnership in June 2012, and have had several technical and ministerial-level meetings since that time to advance this new partnership. In addition, leaders of the U.S. and EAC business communities have formalized a commitment, including through an MOU, to collaborate to advance the Commercial Dialogue and overall Partnership.

Senior members of the Obama Administration from the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, State and Transportation, as well as from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. African Development Foundation also participated in the meeting, as well as members of the U.S. and EAC private sectors.

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