



PRESS RELEASE:

European Union supports PNG to raise awareness on the National Trade Policy and the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement

Beginning 17 March 2016, the Trade Division of the Department of Trade, Commerce and Industry held the first of three stakeholders' consultation workshops with support from the European Union under the Trade Related Assistance programme phase 2 (TRA 2). The workshops were to consult on the draft National Trade Policy and raise awareness on the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

Ambassador Max Rai, the outgoing Director General for Trade Division and newly appointed Ambassador to the United Nations in New York officially launched the National Trade Policy Consultations at the Holiday Inn on 22 March 2016. More than 100 participants from the industry, government, non-governmental organizations and development partners attended. Ambassador Rai said that trade policy is currently being conducted in an "ad-hoc and uncoordinated manner which is not sustainable for the country in the long run. We need to ensure that decisions affecting trade are not made in isolation as is the practice". He further explained that different government agencies and organizations have been performing trade functions resulting in duplication and wastage of resources. He also said that trade policy affects different segments of society in different ways therefore the policy needs to take into account the views of all stakeholders.

Participants expressed their appreciation as it allowed them the opportunity to share their views and concerns on an important national policy and the WTO TFA workshop gave them a better understand about the WTO TFA.

In officiating at the National Consultation Workshop of the National Trade Policy, EU Ambassador Ioannis Giogkarakis-Argyropoulos said, "Today's event is a milestone towards the approval of PNG's National Trade Policy, for PNG to be better equipped to tap into the potential that international trade can offer for sustainable development". The Policy he said is expected to give a clearer direction to develop an inclusive domestic market and to connect PNG market to the world. He reaffirms the EU's full commitment to continue supporting the integration of PNG into the world's trade for the sustainable and inclusive development.

The EU Ambassador also said that the Policy is expected to "facilitate PNG's efforts to tap into the full potential of trade agreements such as the interim Economic Partnership Agreement which has been a success story in the fisheries sector for PNG".

The WTO TFA Awareness Raising workshop was the last of three stakeholders' consultation workshops aimed to inform participants of the current status of the WTO TFA and PNG's obligations and commitments under the WTO and the role of the National Trade Facilitation Committee. The workshop also provided information to trade actors and stakeholders on the assistance PNG can gain through the WTO TFA when PNG ratifies the Agreement.

Background:

A regional and a national consultation workshops on the draft National Trade Policy were held in Lae on 17 of March 2016, and in Port Moresby on 22 March 2016 respectively, while an awareness raising workshop on the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) was also held in Port Moresby on 23 March 2016.

The main objectives of the workshops were to discuss the draft National Trade Policy and obtain views of stakeholders prior to its submission to the National Executive Council, whereas the WTO TFA Awareness Raising workshop informed participants of the current status of the WTO TFA.

Since independence in 1975, Papua New Guinea (PNG) has not had a comprehensive trade policy and therefore, the draft National Trade Policy is long awaited after 41 years.

The EU Ambassador also told participants that the European Union has launched last year, a new trade policy strategy with the title "Trade for all: Towards a more responsible EU trade and investment strategy" based on three key principles – effectiveness, transparency and values that aims to ensure that trade policy benefits as many people as possible; it is to this end, that the European Union will continue to work closely with Papua New Guinea to help draw the maximum benefits out of the current EU-PNG bilateral trade agreement, the so-called interim Economic Partnership Agreement (iEPA), for sustainable "green" development.

The EU continues to support PNG realise its trade potential. The EU Trade Related Assistance phase two (TRA 2) programme, is one such support, which began in April 2014 with a budget of around K20 million. The programme aims to assist PNG in its efforts to use trade for inclusive development by building on the work undertaken during the first edition of the programme (TRA1). The EU K10 million support in TRA 1 provided useful ground work for the development of a draft trade policy and capacities of quality infrastructure agencies and strengthened trade actors. The success of the second edition of the programme will depend on the three key results by end of 2018: 1) the establishment of a network of key trade institutions, 2) an integrated national trade policy framework reflecting PNG priorities and 3) improved trade facilitation for easier trade flow including progress in the establishment of a single window at customs to streamline import and export processes and support to quality infrastructure agencies to meet higher standards in certification and accreditation.

Press Contact:

Delegation of the European Union to Papua New Guinea:

Neraemarimahu Haihavu - Press & Information Officer

neraemarimahu.haihavu@eeas.europa.eu Ph. (+675) 308 2400

Trade Division, Department of Trade, Commerce and Industry

Bridgette Kamish, Bridgette.Kamish@dc.gov.pg

Philip Mercado, Philip.Mercado@dc.gov.pg