East African Legislative Assembly, Bujumbura, Burundi; March 26, 2015: EALA has enacted the East African Community Customs (Amendment) Bill, 2015 in a move to ensure the smooth operationalization of the Single Customs Territory (SCT) and boost trade in the region.

The Bill was introduced by the Council of Ministers in January 2015 at the sitting of EALA in Arusha.

The object of the Bill is to amend the East African Customs Management Act, 2004 to facilitate the discharge of the functions of the Directorate of Customs and Trade as provided for in the Act and to facilitate smooth implementation of the Act, particularly on the procedures that facilitate the implementation of the EAC Single Customs Territory.

The passage of the Bill was preceded by adoption of a report of the Committee on Communication, Trade and Investment. The report was presented by the Chairperson of the Committee, Hon Mukasa Mbidde. In his remarks, the Chair noted that the Committee had discussed the provisions of the Bill with experts and the council of Ministers and introduced a number of amendments to the Bill. He lauded the Council for the initiative to facilitate smooth implementation of trade noting that it would anchor the Single Customs Territory.

The Committee proposes changes to 5 clauses across the EAC Customs Management Act, 2004. A new section (248A) is introduced providing for persons intending to import goods to make a written application to the Commissioner for advance rulings on either tariff classification, rules of origin or customs valuation.

The Bill was scrutinized on clause by clause mode at the Committee stage during the second reading before it sailed through the third reading.

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