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Seychelles: the Virtual One-Stop-Shop to enhance the business climate

An awareness-raising workshop was successfully held on the 24th-25th January 2012 to demonstrate the usefulness of the Virtual One-Stop-Shop (VOSS) as a tool to facilitate the process of starting a business.

Seychelles Investment Board (SIB), in cooperation with the COMESA Regional Investment Agency (COMESA RIA), held a two-day awareness-raising workshop at the International Conference Centre of the Seychelles (ICCS), in Victoria, Seychelles with the support of the ACP Business Climate Facility (BizClim) on the 24th-25th January 2012. The objective of the workshop was to promote the concept of the Virtual One-Stop-Shop (VOSS) to Government bodies and private sector representative organizations, as well as to empower key stakeholders by providing them with specialised knowledge, capacities and analytical skills needed to undertake business environment reforms and create more favorable business and investment conditions in the Seychelles. More than 60 participants from the Investment Authority, practitioners from COMESA and SADC, successful virtual one-stop-shop implementers, government regulatory bodies and private sector representatives as well as international development partners attended the

"Preparation for the setting up of a Virtual One-Stop-Shop, connecting all the business regulatory authorities in Seychelles" workshop, at which a roadmap outlining the steps to be followed in order to implement the one-stop-shop in practice was presented for discussion and adoption.

Towards e-Government

Last year the Government of the Seychelles (GoS) accelerated work on the e-Government project, which, among other things, seeks to computerize and automate all Government services and department. This project is spearheaded by the Department of ICT ("DICT"). DICT has already installed email services and is installing fibre optic cables in the main buildings housing Government operations. In addition, DICT are working in cooperation with some Seychelles regulatory agencies (such as the Revenue Commission, the Registrar of Companies, and the Seychelles Licensing Authority) in order to computerize their operations.



Towards a private sector enabling environment

A Facility financed by the European Union through the European Development Fund

The ACP Business Climate Facility (BizClim) provides technical assistance that is essentially about improving regulations, legislation, the institutional set up and financial measures (the rules of the game) relating to the enabling environment of the private sector in ACP countries or regions and to do so by focusing on possible support to ACP governments or regional institutions and private sector organizations.

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➤ An assessment of the procedures, functions and information management systems of all Seychelles business regulatory authorities have been assessed since October 2011, leading to the design of a project and the specification of an online investor one stop-shop system. In addition to this, an inventory of information to be digitalised and fed into the system has been prepared. In order to ensure that the system is both effective and efficient, recommendations on adjustments to the business processes of the regulatory agencies have also been developed, which aim to minimise negative impacts of the new system on the day-to-day work of the agencies concerned.

A one-step system to facilitate investment

The VOSS Project is focusing on the design and implementation of an IT-driven investment processing system. The Minister for Investment (the Minister responsible for SIB), has committed GoS support for the VOSS, but has also expressed that the Project must look at empowering the private sector by making it easier to conduct business.

In particular, it is the desire of GoS to see the facilitation of both foreign and local investment through the Project.

The VOSS Project is complementary to a number of other projects funded by other development partners in the context of improving the Seychelles business operating environment, as measured by the country's ranking on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business ("EODB") index.

These projects and initiatives include

- 1 World Bank support to reforms that should enable the Seychelles to climb up the EODB rankings (from its current overall ranking of 103 out of 183 countries);
- 2 UNDP support to the computerization of the Department of Environment in order to enhance its regulatory and enforcement capacity and efficiency;
- 3 assistance by other partners for improving land registration and administration. ■



Expected Results: an integrated registration system for investors

The VOSS system (Virtual One-Stop-Shop) will enable the Registry – the first point of contact for investors - to capture all investor information required by all concerned Agencies; the investor does not have to repeat the same information to each of the regulatory Agencies. Once a client has completed the application form, that form must be used for all purposes with only minor additions specific to an Agency. The investor must be identifiable by one identification number (Project or Business/ Company Identity number).

The VOSS system will facilitate the business start-up process, making it faster and much simpler. It will also enable SIB, as facilitator and monitor, to collect information/data from the system for statistical purposes and to flag any bottlenecks in the business registration and establishment process.

REQUESTS

Country /Region	Beneficiary	Title
ECOWAS	NEPAD Planning Agency	African Bioenergy Investment Workshop in West Africa
PACIFIC	PIPSO	Building Business Value Supply Chain in the Pacific Region
The Caribbean	Caribbean Export Agency	Organisation of a Study Tour in Europe for Caribbean Manufacturing and Cultural Industries Business People
West Africa	Centre International d'Echanges et de Promotion des Exportations	Creating a Business Environment that is more favourable to JVs between SMEs from Europe and Africa in the construction sector.