

International Customs Day 2018

“A secure business environment for economic development”

Closing Remarks

Mogola Makola, Chief Officer: Enforcement

I have been invited by my colleague on Exco, Jed Michaletos to give the closing remarks today which is, indeed, an honour. As one of the newer members of the SARS Exco it has been fascinating for me to learn more about our Customs and Excise division at events such as this – and it just hits home to me how much we have to be proud of as an organisation.

Today is a day that recognises the important role of SARS’ men and women who protect our borders and help facilitate trade – and after seeing the various parades and demonstrations of our capabilities and resources, I can confidently say that our Customs and Excise division can hold their heads up high.

My colleague, Jed, welcomed you to this event by touching on some of the history of this day and also on this year’s theme and its meaning for Customs administration and for SARS. He also outlined some of the projects which are high on his division’s strategic priorities for the coming year, such as NCAP and improvements to the State Warehouse infrastructure.

The Commissioner eloquently expanded on how SARS Customs ensures an environment that enables businesses to better participate in and benefit from international trade.

He also reflected on the challenges and complexities of the customs and border environment, the role of SARS, the need to collaborate with our partners in trade and government and the direction we are moving in.

Since I have the platform, allow me to also add a bit more on how what you have seen and heard today fits into the overall SARS strategy.

This month SARS celebrates its 20 years of existence as an autonomous tax and customs revenue service. The role of SARS in these past 20 years has been critical in ensuring that our democratically elected government has the resources of ensuring a better future for all who live in our country – especially the disadvantaged.

In support of building a capable state, SARS has adopted a strategic shift from an isolated departmental view before 1994 to a whole-of-government stance which sees SARS assisting in the enhancement of value chain activities both before and after it enters SARS's domain. Tax and customs are part and parcel of an ever-changing local and international landscape.

The Customs and Excise division supports the country's economic competitiveness in a fiercely competitive international trade and business environment, while ensuring compliance with the laws governing international trade. The mandate of Customs and Excise is to be the first line of control over the movement of goods across our country's borders.

We also ensure that all excisable goods manufactured and administered within the country are correctly accounted for and compliant with the laws of the state. For our compliant clients, we want to be a swift and seamless service. For those that do not comply, we want to crack down hard to ensure a fair and level playing field for importers, exporters and the domestic market.

We need a balanced approach between measures that, on the one hand, cut red-tape and simplify trade and travel, and, on the other, maintain controls in order to ensure the safety and security of our economy and society.

Much of what Jed and our Acting Commissioner spoke about refers to this approach and it is gratifying to hear and see for ourselves today several ways in which Customs is working towards achieving this.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for taking the time to be here with us today. Many thanks also to the SARS staff for their hard work in making today happen.

Thank you.