

Rwanda agents happy as Dar shipping lines waive container deposit fees

Local clearing agents in Rwanda have welcomed the decision by shipping lines at Dar es Salaam port to waive container deposit fees. Maersk and Safmarine shipping lines recently agreed to give a waiver on container cash deposit to members of the Rwanda Freight Forwarders Association to reduce the cost of doing business.



[Image Source: CCTV Africa](#) - Dar es Salaam port terminal

The scheme will first be rolled out as a pilot phase before it can be fully adopted. The development follows bilateral talks held last month between Rwanda and Tanzania to address the current constraints affecting traders at the port, including the question of cash deposits.

Fred Seka, the chairperson, Rwanda Freight Forwarders Association (ADR), said both parties agreed to use an insurance guarantee covered by UAP Insurance to facilitate ease of doing business at the port. According to Seka, Tanzania Shipping Line Ltd accepted the proposed use of Insurance guarantee by UAP and will conduct due diligence to determine clearing agents to be granted the waiver and those that should use insurance guarantee.

"Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) has so far granted full access to TANCIS customs system to 30 clearing firms out of the 54 companies that requested to have access to the system; the TPA is working to issue the okayed firms badges and forward the list to Tanzania Ports Authority so that they can have full access to the port and be able to follow up clearance of goods within the port premises," Seka said in a statement.

Facilitating the ease of doing business

He also denied media reports indicating that local clearing agents want to replace clearing agents from Tanzania at the port. "We are only coming to deal with Rwandan cargo and not to take Tanzanian jobs," he said adding that the agents are equally seeking for strong partnerships with their counterparts in Tanzania to further facilitate the ease of doing business along the central corridor.

The two sides further discussed a number of constraints including the high container deposits required by the shipping lines, and non-recognition of Rwanda Standards Board's (RSB) standard mark by Tanzania Food and Drug Authority (TFDA), and agreed to follow up on implementation of commitments by Tanzania Revenue Authority to facilitate and authorise Rwanda Freight Forwarders to lodge documents into their customs system.

Vincent Safari, the national coordinator, Rwanda National Monitoring Committee on NTBs, at the Ministry of Trade and Industry, reassured that Rwandans will only go to clear cargo belonging to Rwandans and urged both parties to ensure strong business ties to facilitate regional trade.

"It is out of fear that allowing Rwandans full access to ports will translate into loss of business on the Tanzania side, which is not true," he said, adding that there is a need to understand the scope of the single customs territory which is designed to ease regional trade. Recently, Tanzania Ports Authority (TPA) announced it will open a liaison office in Kigali next month.

The country office means that importers, clearing agents, and exporters will be able to clear goods from Kigali without having to travel to Dar es Salaam. Eng Deusdedit Kakoko, the TPA director general, said in an interview with The New Times last week that the move aims at bringing services nearer to the Rwandan business community, "which will help cut the cost of doing business, and reduce the hurdles within the logistics and supply chain."

Rwanda-TZ trade numbers Tanzania's Port of Dar es Salaam is by far the most important port for Rwanda, accounting for over 70 percent of Rwandan international maritime trade. More than 90 percent of other exports (apart from tea and coffee) go through Dar es Salaam, according to figures from the Ministry of Trade and Industry. However, statistics indicate that total trade with Tanzania declined to \$68 million in 2015, from \$105 million in 2013. Tanzania is Rwanda's third largest trading partner in the EAC bloc.

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