



Kenya Ships Agents Association

KSAA: Linking East Africa to the world

Mombasa Port is the beating heart of Kenya's economy and the shipping lines are the vital arteries that keep it pumping.

And making sure the whole process runs smoothly is the Kenya Ships Agents Association.

From their offices in Mombasa's shipping district in Kilindini Road, near the port, KSAA which represents the interests of over 40 shipping lines and agents, plays a leading role in ensuring Kenya's trade with the world continues to flourish.

The association's chief executive officer, Mr Juma Tellah, told The East African: "Our principal function is to ensure a sound shipping industry which contributes to the development of the economies of the region."

"We are also very active in promoting more efficiency and reliability in shipping practices and management in order to attain higher standards."

He added that transit cargo was an important focus of the association's work, promoting and assisting traffic through the Kenya to and from neighboring countries. Transit cargo through Mombasa accounts for over 30% of the total throughput, with Uganda registering about 70%. It is anticipated that Southern Sudan will considerably boost volumes once the political climate settles.

KSAA chairman, Mr. David Mackay, pointed out that the association works very closely with all relevant

government departments, adding: "All the agencies involved recognise the tremendous impact our activities have on the economy of Kenya and the region."

"The business of logistics is a fairly complicated one and there are occasional disagreements on various issues. But I think it's fair to say we all respect one another and the jobs we do. We always aim for a constructive dialogue and quickly aim to address specific service failures or complaints where possible."

"One of our most important roles is to provide a forum for dialogue and communication with the government" which we are now doing more and more in order to support all the growth plans Kenya is targeting over the next decade .

The association is optimistic going forward, pointing to the steady expansion of capacity at the port, now standing at over 600,000 TEU, with Phase 1 of the Second Terminal on completion in 2016 adding another 450,000. And finally 1.2 Million TEUs when the project is finally completed.

Although volumes dropped last year after the elections, they anticipate the steady upward curve of recent years to continue. The first quarter of this year, for example, registered a healthy 15% growth.

They also welcome other recent developments, including the Electronic Single Window System, being developed and implemented by the Kenya Trade Network Agency

(KENTRADE).

Additionally, implementation of Single Customs Territory by the East Africa States' Customs Authorities, namely Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda will also faster movement of cargo since import taxes will be paid at destination countries hence eliminating escort of cargo and transit bond placement.

Mr. Tellah said: These systems will definitely improve efficiency in documentation if embraced by all relevant stakeholders, but in order to achieve this some procedures must be done away with and clear timelines enforced and observed.

"Since documents will be lodged online, human interaction will be eliminated and so hopefully corruption. The end result will be reducing cost of doing business through Mombasa and efficiency enhancement."

In common with many logistics agencies, the association would welcome action to smooth the flow of cargo through the Northern Corridor.

Mr. Mackay said: "They have been many problems, including numerous weighbridges, police roadblocks, the poor state of the roads, and duplicated customs inspections. However, with political good will by the Three Heads of States of Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda, these have been addressed by the introduction of high speed in motion weighbridges, weighing cargo at point of entry and exit. The cumulative effect is to greatly increase transit times."

"The planned dual carriageway between Mombasa and Malaba can't come soon enough-

"Establishing one-stop centres at the border posts would also help. These would be used by the customs officers of two neighboring countries and would make a vast difference."

As well as liaising with government departments, KSAA also works closely with the business community on efficiency issues, for example sensitizing the trade community on documentation processes in order to speed clearance procedures.

As anyone perusing the 'glossary of shipping terms' on the KSAA website will discover, the shipping industry is a complicated business and the association does its best to ensure a steady flow of young well-trained executives joining the sector.

The shipping lines and agents offer training attachments both in offices and onboard ships to marine trainees and the total number of Kenyans employed in the sector is growing rapidly.

So successful has this been that Kenya is now a proud 'exporter' of shipping executives around the world, most notably the Gulf

Commented Mr. Tellah: "This shows we must be doing something right. Kenyan expatriates are now working in many countries around the world and we are extremely proud that these Kenyans are rated very highly by all of the International Shipping Groups operating in Kenya."



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