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NEWS RELEASE

Southern Africa Primed to Expand Exports to the United States

Durban, South Africa: Distinguished representatives from the United States Government and Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN), together with various South African business chambers and export councils, members of the business and manufacturing communities, and local government officials gathered April 15 at the Sun Coast Conference Center in Durban for a *Regional Export and Trade Facilitation Workshop*.

Experts from USAID's Southern Africa Trade Hub discussed national and multilateral initiatives underway across the region to expedite the movement, release, and clearance of goods. Vital aspects of this include the development of National Single Windows for trade facilitation, establishment of World Trade Organization (WTO) National Enquiry Points (NEPs) and trade portals, and improved interagency coordination to increase cross-border trade.

"The United States is proud to be KwaZulu-Natal's largest trading partner," said U.S. Consul General Frances Chisholm. "And we see many opportunities to broaden that relationship. Working with U.S. companies not only gives our South African and other regional partners access to the world's largest consumer market, it also introduces them to the latest technologies and management systems, which make all players sharper. The benefits of bilateral trade are immense, and we see enormous potential for growth."

The workshop also explored the opportunities manifest across Southern Africa to increase regional trade with special focus on the export potential offered by the vast U.S. market. Of particular interest in KwaZulu-Natal are growing export opportunities for agribusiness and processed food producers as well as for apparel and footwear manufacturers to the United States.

Under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a U.S. Government trade preference program, African producers are offered the opportunity to export thousands of goods to the US without import duties. AGOA has been instrumental in attracting investment, creating jobs, and elevating how business is done across the continent.

Renewal of AGOA is currently under review but it continues to provide duty-free and quota-free treatment for goods made in qualifying countries until September 30, 2015.

Proximity and access to the Port of Durban, the largest and busiest shipping terminal in Africa, offers distinct advantages for producers and exporters across Southern Africa. Durban handles over 81 million tons of cargo per year and is serviced by the world's leading shipping companies with the vast majority of goods shipped to the United States from Southern Africa arriving directly in Newark, New Jersey, and Charleston, South Carolina.

With a team of regional and international experts based in Johannesburg, South Africa, and Gaborone, Botswana, USAID's Southern Africa Trade Hub provides targeted technical assistance to governments, the private sector, and civil society organizations to advance regional trade within Southern Africa. It also plays a pivotal role in strengthening trade across the region by enhancing value chain development, increasing export opportunities to the U.S., and expanding quality standards and entrepreneurship.

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