1. INTRODUCTION

The Vienna Programme of Action for landlocked developing countries for the decade 2014-2024 is implemented focusing on six priority areas:

   i. Fundamental transit policy issues;
   ii. Infrastructure development and maintenance;
   iii. International trade and trade facilitation;
   iv. Regional integration and cooperation;
   v. Structural Economic Transformation; and
   vi. Means of implementation.

2. PROGRESS TO DATE

2.1. Zimbabwe has registered great progress in the implementation of the aforementioned six priority areas. Zimbabwe is a landlocked country that depends on neighbouring states\(^1\) with coastal links to access offshore markets. Its central location in the southern part of Africa makes the country a transit hub linking Southern Africa to the Great Lakes in Central and Eastern Africa. Three major transport corridors traverse the Zimbabwean territory and these are North-South Corridor (NSC), Beira Corridor and Trans-Kalahari Corridor. The NSC extends from Durban in South Africa to Kolwezi in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It serves as the main trade corridor for the SADC region and Southern and Central African

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\(^1\) Mozambique and South Africa
countries that are in COMESA and EAC regions. The corridor is served by both road and rail. The Beira Corridor links Zimbabwe through road, rail and pipeline to the port of Beira in Mozambique. It also provides the shortest road distance to any port from the DRC and Zambian copper belt. Trans-Kalahari Corridor links the Zimbabwe’s industrial hub of Bulawayo to Botswana, Namibia and Angola through Plumtree and Kazungula Border Posts.

2.2. Zimbabwe has undertaken a number of initiatives to ensure seamless flow of transit traffic. The country harmonised transit policies in compliance with the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, COMESA and SADC Protocols on transit trade, transit facilities, and the COMESA third party motor vehicle insurance schemes. Policy initiatives implemented to facilitate transit traffic include the following:

i. Adopted the COMESA Yellow Card Insurance Scheme;

ii. Adopted the COMESA Carrier License;

iii. Harmonized road transit charges with SADC;

iv. Standardised Axle load limits with SADC and COMESA requirements;

v. Standardised Vehicle (truck) dimensions with SADC and COMESA;

vi. Implemented the electronic cargo tracking system;

vii. Zimbabwe is part of the corridor management institutions of Beira and North-South-Corridors;

viii. Significantly reduced the number of police road blocks and checkout points;

ix. Use the regional NTB online reporting portal.

x. Adopted the COMESA Regional Customs Bond Guarantee Scheme (RCTG); and
xi. Implemented the Electronic Temporary Import Permit system (e-TIP)

2.3. The country is in the process of developing its road infrastructure along major trade corridors that serve the East and Southern Africa. The major roads include Harare – Nyamapanda, Harare-Bulawayo, Bulawayo – Beitbridge, Bulawayo – Victoria Falls, Harare – Beitbridge and Harare – Chirundu. The Mutare-Harare-Bulawayo-Plumtree highway, which connects the Beira Development Corridor to the North-South Corridor and Trans-Kalahari Corridor was rehabilitated. According to the Costs-Time-Distance study by the Ministry in 2017, the rehabilitation of the Mutare-Harare-Bulawayo-Plumtree road has increased the average speed by heavy trucks to 48km/h from 33km/h between Harare and Mutare road section. This does not only reduces transit time and costs, but also improves competitiveness. The Government has also embarked on the dualisation of the Beitbridge-Harare-Chirundu road which is along the busiest North-South-Corridor. The project is projected to significantly reduce transit times and costs.

2.4. Whilst only about 29 percent of the rail network is still in good condition, the National Railway of Zimbabwe (NRZ) operations are affected by serious shortage of operating locomotives, wagons and coaches, hence the rail network is currently operating at 15 percent of its 18 million tonne capacity. These challenges are exacerbated by the long distances encountered to ferry commodities to ports en-route to international markets. In that vein, the Diaspora Infrastructure Development Group (DIDG)/ Transnet Consortium is partnering the National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ) in a US$400 million recapitalization project. The project will involve the rehabilitation and renewal of plant, equipment, rolling stock, signalling and
telecommunications infrastructure and the supporting information technology systems. The project will also see the repairing and rehabilitation of infrastructure such as locomotives, wagons and coaches and a phased modernization of the train control system. It was expected that the National Railways of Zimbabwe would move 4 million tonnes of freight in 2018, up 25 percent from 2017 figures.

2.5. The Government of Zimbabwe demonstrated political will in the furtherance of the trade facilitation agenda. On 17 October 2018, the country deposited with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Secretariat its instrument of ratification of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), becoming the 139th (and 31st African) WTO Member State to ratify the Agreement. The country also set up the National Trade Facilitation Committee and notified to the WTO Secretariat its Category A designations of the WTO TFA.

2.6. Zimbabwe has so far implemented a number of trade facilitation reforms as enshrined in the WTO TFA and these include the following:

- Government has made considerable progress in the application of ICT solutions to facilitate trade. Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (Customs) use the latest version of ASYCUDA World 4.0.32 upgraded in 2018. The system enables electronic risk management, electronic pre-lodgement of customs declarations and supporting documents and e-payment. Non-intrusive inspection equipment has been deployed at the major border post and airports. Efforts are underway to implement the National Electronic Single Window System, a system that will bring deeper integration and coordination of Government border agencies and other trade stakeholders.
• The Government, in 2018, launched the e-licensing systems for imports and exports licenses further reducing the cost and processing time.

• In order to share trade information, Government implemented the Trade Information Portal (TIP). TIP provides comprehensive, single-point access to market intelligence, current trade news and information on trade regulations, duties, taxes, and other services that facilitate trade.

• Several other trade facilitation reforms that were implemented include rolling out the Authorised Economic Operators programme to promote self-regulation and expedite clearance and release of cargo, implementation of the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime (STR) for SME cross border traders; and

• Establishment of One Stop Border Posts (OSBP) to improve border facilities and streamline border crossing procedures and formalities. The country has one operational OSBP at Chirundu Border Post between Zambia and Zimbabwe. Implementation of three more OSBPs is underway and these are Victoria Falls OSBP between Zimbabwe and Zambia, Beitbridge OSBP between Zimbabwe and South Africa and Plumtree OSBP between Botswana and Zimbabwe.

2.7. These raft of trade facilitation measures has significantly reduced the costs and time to trade. On average, commercial traffic reduced border crossing time from over 120 hrs in 2009 to about 25hrs in 2016, buses reduced border crossing time from 2hrs to 1hr between 2009 and 2016, and passenger cars reduced border crossing time from 1-2hrs to 20min between 2009 and 2016 at Chirundu OSBP. The time savings are valued at US$600 000 a day for heavy traffic. Trade flows also responded to these trade facilitation reforms.
Establishment of Chirundu OSBP induced between US$ 2.2 and US$3.1 million of Zimbabwe's annual exports to Zambia.

2.8. The country adopted a systematic approach to implement trade facilitation reforms through developing a 4 year trade facilitation implementation road map through the assistance of UNCTAD. The Government of Zimbabwe ensures that all international trade related policies are harmonised and these include Zimbabwe National Industrial Development Policy, National Trade Policy and the Export Promotion Strategy.

2.9. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development launched in 2015 identifies trade as a means of implementation of sustainable development goals (SDGs). It is critical to note that growth of trade also creates winners and losers within and across countries. This has faced with the recent breaking down of political consensus on free trade and economic integration in states that are traditional supporters of global liberalism i.e. the United States of America withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the exiting by the United Kingdom from the European Union, (BREXIT). This creates dilemma in the future of trade policy.

2.10. There is need for deliberate policy intervention to make trade more inclusive and its gains shared by allowing participation of various societal groups in both urban and rural areas. Transport connectivity and trade facilitation interventions, by virtue of their characteristics of being public or quasi-public good and non-reciprocal, are suitable to make trade inclusive and amenable to achieving SDGs.
2.11 Zimbabwe implemented the Simplified Trade Regime (STR), a policy initiative targeting micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) cross border traders and these comprise of vulnerable groups that include women and youth in rural and urban areas. The STR policy facilitates the said category of traders to engage in trade with COMESA member states increasing their income and reducing inequality and poverty incidences.

2.12 Besides funding from Treasury, Zimbabwe has been able to unlock funding for various trade facilitation and infrastructure development programmes from various sources that include development partners, public-private partnerships, Programme on Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), among others.

2.13 Whilst the WTO TFA provides for aid for trade facilitation, the provisions are not mandatory thus one is not guaranteed to get support. Development partners have higher affinity of funding soft infrastructure relative to hard infrastructure. Our border posts require both type of infrastructure. Financing border infrastructure with private capital can result in high user access fees which may defeat the trade facilitation agenda.

2.14 Transport connectivity and trade facilitation interventions are made at national level. This results in connectivity gaps in the region. The national approached is also faced with interoperability challenges inhibiting cross border exchange and usability of data and information that enables seamless flow of cargo and people.