

**Speech by Ambassador Love Mtesa, Chairman, Consumer Unity and Trust
Society (CUTS) International Lusaka,
During the AGOA Zambia Civil Society Workshop
5th June, 2012, Cresta, Golfview**

The Deputy Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Hon Keith Mukata MP;

The US Ambassador, Mark Storella

Representative of COMESA;

Representatives of Civil Society;

The Media Present;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of CUTS International, it is indeed a great pleasure and honour for me to sincerely welcome all our distinguished guests to this special workshop for the Civil Society Organisations in Zambia to reflect on some of the commitments made during the Tenth AGOA forum and present our collective analyses and observations as well as help chart the way forward.

Allow me, at the outset, to express our sincere thanks to Caritas Zambia for the generous financial contribution which has made it possible for us to convene this workshop.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

First and foremost, allow me to say a few things about CUTS International. This is an organisation that started in Jaipur, India, in 1983 as a consumer society championing the cause of consumers. They observed that consumers were being given a raw deal for their money.

Over a period of time CUTS International has grown and covers subjects such as International trade and Development, Competition, Investment, Economic Regulations and good governance etc. Having implemented projects on various elements of social and economic policy issues in India, CUTS realised over time that its experience as a Civil Society Organisation aiming to influence such policies through research would be fundamental in involving an informed civil society in other parts of the developing world as well. It's against this background that CUTS International Lusaka was established in Lusaka in 2000. A similar office was established in Nairobi, Kenya. Today more such offices have opened in Hanoi, Vietnam and Geneva where the office is serving as an important research centre particularly in WTO negotiations for developing countries especially the LDCs.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me now to say some few things about the importance of this workshop. It is disturbing to learn that, despite the reported marginal increase in Zambia's trade with the US, statistically the country is still lagging very much behind compared to other countries in the region whose economies are much smaller than ours. This development comes at the backdrop of successfully hosting of the Tenth AGOA Forum and pledging to improve its trading capacity to fully exploit the duty free, quota free market access opportunity under the AGOA programme.

The Eleventh AGOA forum is being held in June 2012 in USA. The event comes amidst a number of commitments and demands that were made during the Tenth AGOA forum. Therefore, realising that civil society organisations in Zambia were at the core of this event, it will be in the best spirit of us the CSOs in Zambia to meet and reflect on some of the commitments and come up with a

position that will feed into the overall CSOs declaration of the forthcoming Eleventh AGOA forum.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to elaborate more on how important trade is to our wonderful country. To start with, International trade is an important source of external finance for sustainable growth and poverty reduction.

International trade would allow Zambia to benefit from specializing in products and services in which the country has comparative advantages. If there was no international trade, it would mean that Zambia and other countries would have to meet its own needs. In other words, Zambia would have to manufacture its own medicines and other products which the country needs but doesn't produce. Even if this were possible for Zambia to produce such items, it would be highly inefficient. Through international trade it is possible for Zambia to specialize in certain products and services. This increases productivity and thus raises the living standards of its people.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me take this opportunity to commend the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Zambia for our continued efforts of working very closely with government and the private sector in order to realise the dividends of international trade through ensuring that trade opportunities are utilised to the full.

We the Civil Society Organisations have continued to play a watch dog role which has resulted into the recorded modest growth in trade volume in Zambia.

It is imperative that we exploit one of our major advantages which is that we work closely with the marginalised groups in this country. This enables us to help formulate common positions and articulate our views and interests. This is a role that the government would not perform very well because it's preoccupied with major issues like the macro economic issues.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to end by saying that we as CSOs are better placed to push for the much needed enabling environment for traders to take advantage of this duty free and quota free market. At the same time we should as Zambian CSOs urge the parties involved to ensure that commitments that are made year in and year out in the said fora should come to pass before the next forum thereby avoiding deliberating on the same issues in subsequent fora.

With these few words, I once again welcome you and I wish you success in your deliberations.

I thank you