

## **CHAPTER 13 MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (SMEs)**

### **ARTICLE 13.1 General Principles**

1. The Parties, recognising the fundamental role of SMEs in maintaining the dynamism and enhancing the competitiveness of their respective economies, shall foster close cooperation between SMEs of the Parties and cooperate in promoting jobs and growth in SMEs.
2. The Parties recognise the integral role of the private sector in the SME cooperation to be implemented under this Chapter.
3. For the purposes of this Chapter, “SME” means small and medium-sized enterprises, including micro enterprises, and may be further defined, where applicable, according to the respective laws, regulations, or national policies of each Party.

### **ARTICLE 13.2 Cooperation to Increase Trade and Investment Opportunities for SMEs**

With a view to more robust cooperation between the Parties to enhance commercial opportunities for SMEs, each Party shall seek to increase trade and investment opportunities, and in particular shall:

- (a) promote cooperation between the Parties' small business support infrastructure, including dedicated SME centres, incubators and accelerators, export assistance centres, and other centres, as appropriate, to create an international network for sharing best practices, exchanging market research, and promoting SME participation in international trade, as well as business growth in local markets;
- (b) strengthen collaboration with the other Party on activities to promote SMEs owned by women and youth, as well as start-ups, and promote partnerships among these SMEs and their participation in international trade;
- (c) enhance cooperation with the other Party to exchange information and best practices in areas including improving SME access to capital and credit, increasing SME participation in covered government procurement opportunities, and helping SMEs adapt to changing market conditions; and
- (d) encourage participation in purpose-built mobile or web-based platforms, for business entrepreneurs to share information and best practices to help SMEs link with international suppliers, buyers, and other potential business partners.

**ARTICLE 13.3**  
**Information Sharing**

1. Each Party shall establish or maintain its own free, publicly accessible website containing information regarding this Agreement, including:

- (a) the text of this Agreement;
- (b) a summary of this Agreement; and
- (c) information designed for SMEs that contains:
  - (i) a description of the provisions in this Agreement that the Party considers to be relevant to SMEs; and
  - (ii) any additional information that would be useful for SMEs interested in benefitting from the opportunities provided by this Agreement.

2. Each Party shall endeavour to include in its website links to:

- (a) the equivalent websites of the other Party; and
- (b) the websites of its own government agencies and other appropriate entities that provide information the Party considers useful to any person interested in trading, investing, or doing business in that Party's territory.

3. Subject to each Party's laws and regulations, the information described in paragraph 2(b) may include:

- (a) customs regulations, procedures, or enquiry points;
- (b) regulations or procedures concerning intellectual property, trade secrets, and patent protection rights;
- (c) technical regulations, standards, quality or conformity assessment procedures;
- (d) sanitary or phytosanitary measures relating to importation or exportation;
- (e) foreign investment regulations;
- (f) business registration and corporate structuring procedures;
- (g) trade promotion programs;
- (h) competitiveness programs;
- (i) SME investment and financing programs;

- (j) employment regulations;
- (k) taxation regulations, accounting and reporting procedures, or enquiry points;
- (l) government procurement opportunities; and
- (m) other information which the Party considers to be useful for SMEs.

4. Each Party shall regularly review the information and links on the website referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 to ensure that the information and links are up-to-date and accurate.

5. To the extent possible, each Party shall make the information in this Article available in the English language.

#### **ARTICLE 13.4 Committee on SME Issues**

1. The Parties shall establish the Committee on SME Issues (SME Committee) comprising representatives of each Party.

2. The SME Committee shall:

- (a) identify ways to assist SMEs in the Parties' territories to take advantage of the commercial opportunities resulting from this Agreement and to strengthen SME competitiveness;
- (b) identify and recommend ways for further cooperation between the Parties to develop and enhance partnerships between SMEs of the Parties;
- (c) exchange and discuss each Party's experiences and best practices in supporting and assisting SME exporters with respect to, among other things, training programs, trade education, trade finance, trade missions, trade facilitation, digital trade, identifying commercial partners in the territories of the Parties, and establishing good business credentials;
- (d) promote seminars, workshops, webinars, mentorship sessions, or other activities to inform SMEs of the benefits available to them under this Agreement;
- (e) explore opportunities for capacity building to facilitate each Party's work in developing and enhancing SME export counselling, assistance, and training programs;
- (f) recommend additional information that a Party may include on the website referred to in Article 13.3 (Information Sharing);
- (g) review and coordinate its work program with the work of other committees and other subsidiary bodies established under this

Agreement, to avoid duplication of work programs and to identify appropriate opportunities for cooperation to improve the ability of SMEs to engage in trade and investment opportunities resulting from this Agreement;

- (h) collaborate with and encourage committees, working groups and other subsidiary bodies established under this Agreement to consider SME-related commitments and activities into their work;
- (i) review the implementation and operation of SME-related provisions within this Agreement and report findings and make recommendations to the Joint Committee that can be included in future work and SME assistance programs as appropriate;
- (j) facilitate the development of programs to assist SMEs to participate and integrate effectively into the Parties' regional and global supply chains;
- (k) promote the participation of SMEs in digital trade enabling them to take advantage of the opportunities resulting from this Agreement and rapidly access new markets;
- (l) facilitate the exchange of information on entrepreneurship education and awareness programs for youth and women to promote the entrepreneurial environment in the territories of the Parties;
- (m) submit on an annual basis, unless the Parties decide otherwise, a report of its activities and make appropriate recommendations to the Joint Committee; and
- (n) consider any other matter pertaining to SMEs as the SME Committee may decide, including issues raised by SMEs regarding their ability to benefit from this Agreement.

3. The SME Committee shall convene within one (1) year after the date of entry into force of this Agreement and thereafter meet annually, unless the Parties decide otherwise.

4. The SME Committee may seek to collaborate with appropriate experts in carrying out its programs and activities.

#### **ARTICLE 13.5 Non-Application of Dispute Settlement**

Neither Party shall have recourse to dispute settlement under Chapter 15 (Dispute Settlement) for any matter arising under this Chapter.