

URA challenged to reduce cargo clearing time to six hours

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URA Commissioner General Doris Akol.
FILE PHOTO

KAMPALA. The Mutukula border post has finally been handed over to Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) after being turned into a modern facility.

However, the return on investment will be decided by how fast the \$7.2m (Shs240b) facility clears cargo and facilitates trade and movement across the two border points of Uganda and Tanzania.

Already, TradeMark East Africa (TMEA), one of the funders of the Mutukula One Stop Border Post (OSBP), is expecting to see tremendous decline in time spent clearing goods.

According to URA commissioner

customs Dicksons Kateshumbwa, currently clearance at Mutukula border takes slightly more than one and a half days, in itself an achievement, considering it would take weeks if not months to clear a single consignment. But TMEA country manager Allen Asiimwe, thinks the tax body can do more, saying the lesser time spent on navigating laborious custom bureaucracies—clearance, the better the business environment and the lesser the cost of doing business gets, making Uganda and the region attractive for trade and investment.

Speaking during the handover of the facility last week in Mutukula, Ms Asiimwe, whose organisation injected \$7.2m into the construction of the OSBP, said if time spent on clear-

ing goods at the new facility drops to hours from currently slightly less than one and a half days, the result will be amazing.

When asked by how many hours they are looking at, TMEA programme officer Damali Ssali, said: “We would like to see it being done in not more than six hours. This is achievable because we have seen it happen elsewhere.”

In response, Mr Kateshumbwa said the tax body will crack the whip to have clearance at the custom quicken. He said delay will not be tolerated, warning clearing agents who slow the process will have their licences withdrawn. “We have an obligation to facilitate trade. And now everything will be done under one roof so

we have no excuse but to work hard and bring down time spent clearing goods,” he said.

URA commissioner general Doris Akol gave assurance that the facility, which government contributed nearly Shs 20billion to will be well looked after and its dream to boost trade and investment while easing collection of taxes will be realised.

Speaking on behalf of ministry of Works permanent Secretary, the project coordinator and also director of transport, Eng Benon Bagonza, said despite the facility taking more time to complete than earlier planned, its intention has never changed—to reduce cost of doing business and facilitate movement of people across the border.