



ATAF NEWS



July 2019

Special programme to mark ATAF's 10th anniversary



Nkhensani Siweya of the South African Revenue Service.



ATAF Secretariat staff members Desire Ottner (left) and Caroline Mutayabarwa with a banner celebrating the 10th anniversary of ATAF.

ATAF this year celebrates its first decade as an international organisation serving its 38 member countries and championing the interests of African countries in the international tax arena.

In the 10 years since it was launched in November 2009 at a conference in Kampala, Uganda, ATAF has made significant progress and can point to a range of achievements that has cemented its position as the leading organisation on tax matters on the African continent.

To mark this significant milestone, ATAF has put together a 10-year programme aimed at celebrating the achievements of our first decade, reflecting on and learning from our journey and mapping out our future path.

The organisation has planned a number of regional celebrations which will culminate at an

International Conference on Tax in Africa, which fittingly will take place in Kampala, Uganda from 19-22 November 2019.

ATAF's regional celebrations will coincide with the hosting of key events which are scheduled to take place as follows:

North African region – 4 and 5 July 2019: The inaugural meeting of a Master Class for the heads of African Tax Administrations will be held in Rabat, Morocco. Heads of Tax Administrations from all 54 African states have been invited to attend the meeting.

Southern African region – 30 and 31 July 2019: High Level Policy Dialogue meeting of policy makers and tax officials to be held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. This meeting aims to promote an understanding of the nexus between tax policy and tax administration and strengthen the relationship

between policymakers and tax administrators.

West African region – 2-6 September 2019: The 5th ATAF African Tax Research Network Congress to be held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

Central African region – the details are still to be finalised.

East African region – 19-22 November 2019: This region will host the main celebration at the International Conference on Tax in Africa in Kampala, Uganda, as ATAF returns to its birthplace to celebrate its 10th anniversary.

Other elements of the 10-year programme include a special webpage, a commemorative book which highlights the organisation's journey and achievements to date, and a special edition of the ATAF newsletter with the highlights of the main celebrations in Kampala in November.

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Pan African Parliament backs a model double taxation agreement for Africa

In the wake of a presentation made by ATAF which highlighted the problem of double taxation in Africa, the Pan African Parliament (PAP) has backed the adoption of a model double taxation agreement for Africa.

At its sitting on 17 May 2019 in Midrand, South Africa, the PAP mandated its Permanent Committee on Monetary and Financial Affairs to lead the process in collaboration with ATAF and the African Union Commission on International Law (AUCIL) and to ensure that the relevant departments and directorates of

the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, national tax administrations and civil society organisations, actively participate in the process of drafting a model double taxation agreement for Africa.

This process has already gotten underway with over 50 officials from the tax administrations and ministries of finance of 25 African countries meeting in Pretoria in April to discuss revisions to the ATAF Model Double Taxation Agreement (DTA).

In its resolution, the PAP noted with concern that most African countries do not have a tax convention with their real or potential investors and business partners, and that, when such conventions exist, they are unfavourable to African countries due to weak domestic laws, limited exchanges of information, excessive tax incentives and limited technical capacity to deal with the technically sophisticated cross-border transactions of multinational enterprises (MNEs).

It expressed its concern that corporate tax revenue in Africa is lower than value-added tax and personal income tax, resulting in unfair tax systems where rich MNEs pay less tax at the expense of poor citizens, and lowers tax revenue collection on the continent.

It expressed its belief that African countries need to adopt a coherent and harmonized approach in their tax negotiations in order to foster greater tax certainty and a better environment for investment and trade.

“A model double taxation agreement can be an effective tool to promote fair trade and investment between African States, on the one hand, and between African States and non-African States on the other hand,” the PAP said.

In October 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda, ATAF and the Pan African Parliament signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together on tax matters for the benefit of the African continent, with ATAF undertaking to assist the PAP with technical advice.



ATAF Executive Secretary Logan Wort (right) and President of the Pan African Parliament Mr Roger Nkodo Dang being applauded after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in Kigali in October 2018.

New tax bosses for Kenya and Tanzania

Mr James Mburu has been appointed as the new Commissioner General of the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) and will serve for a three-year term from June 2019. He takes over the reins from Mr John Njiraini who steps down after completing two terms as head of the KRA.

Mr Mburu was selected from a shortlist of five. Before his elevation to the top post he held the position of Commissioner of Intelligence and Strategy at the KRA. He has vast experience of tax matters, having served previously in the Tax Administration Department, Domestic Tax, Audit and Investigation at the KRA.

Meanwhile in a surprise move, Tanzania’s President John Magufuli appointed Dr Edwin Mhede as the new Commissioner-General of the Tanzania Revenue Authority on 8 June 2019. Mr Mhede will replace Mr Charles Kichere who was appointed as TRA head in March 2017. Mr Kichere has been appointed as Secretary of the Njombe Regional Administration.

Dr Mhede has been serving as the Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment (MITI) since July 2018. Prior to that he had held a number of senior posts in the public sector and in the private sector with the World Bank.

During his previous stint at the MITI, Dr Mhede had the opportunity to lead Tanzania’s technical working groups to the discussion on the regional industrialization and trade agenda in the East African Community and Southern African Development Community.



Mr James Mburu
CG of the Kenya Revenue Authority



Mr Edwin Mhede
CG of the Tanzania Revenue Authority

Other positions held include manager of the Research and Advisory Department with the Tanzania Agricultural Development Bank, and as a board member of Dar es Salaam Water and Sewerage Authority.

ATAF Council in move to go paperless



Meeting of the ATAF Council in Sandton, South Africa.

Following on from its orientation meeting in January, the ATAF Council held its first meeting since its election at the 5th General Assembly in Gaborone, Botswana in October last year.

The meeting took place in Sandton, Johannesburg, in April 2019 and was preceded by meetings of the Council’s Governance and Organisational Development Committee which is chaired by Uganda and the Research Capacity Building and Technical Assistance Committee which is chaired by Eswatini.

Council was given an update on the ATAF work programme via progress reports from ATAF’s three directorates i.e. Tax Programmes, Research and Strategic Partnerships, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. The Secretariat’s plans for the year to celebrate ATAF’s 10th anniversary was also shared with Council.

The Executive Secretary Logan Wort also took the opportunity to bring before Council some of the issues the organisation is dealing with in the international tax arena.

He specifically highlighted the fact that the EU has placed a number of African countries on its grey list as “non-cooperative jurisdictions” who fall short of the criteria the EU has set as key requirements in the implementation of its BEPS action plan. Although ATAF is working with affected member states to help them put the required measures in place, the problem for many African countries was that resources that are required for other priorities and ill spared were being diverted into meeting what was ostensibly a voluntary process.

These concerns were raised with the EU and the African Union and further dialogue was in the offing, Mr Wort said.

At the meeting, members of the ATAF Council were also given a crash course on an online system that will enable the Council to eventually go paperless for its meetings. Members all received an iPad loaded with proprietary software that allows meeting documents to be shared with members in real time and for notes and other editorial and formatting changes to be made on line.

The software also enables the chair of the meeting to control and direct the meeting, and for members to interact with each other virtually, i.e. without being in the same room.

Piyush Nagar of Convene SA conducted a brief training session for members before the start of the Council meeting and the system was then “test run” live. Despite a few teething glitches, the system proved to be easy to use.

Mokgadi Maila, manager in the office of the Executive Secretary, explained that the decision to go paperless will be implemented gradually to ensure that all members are comfortable with the switchover to the online system.

“In addition to reducing printing costs and allowing longer lead times in the preparation of documents, the online system means members will no longer have to travel with files of documents. All the meeting document can be found on the iPad at a click of a button. It makes it easier to ensure that all members are working on the latest version of any document and, as working documents, all the changes can be done online,” she explained.



Piyush Nagar demonstrates the functionality of the new online system to members of the ATAF Council.



Ms Doris Akol, the Commissioner General of the Uganda Revenue Authority and chair of the Governance and Organisational Development Committee, shares a lighter moment with Mr Vijay Rammundun who represented Mr Sudhamo Lal, Director General of the Mauritius Revenue Authority.

African dress, food on the menu as Secretariat staff celebrate Africa



Staff of the ATAF Secretariat in Pretoria dressed up in African costume in celebration of Africa Day.

ATAF's identity as a proudly African organisation was much in evidence as the staff of the ATAF Secretariat in Pretoria gathered together to celebrate Africa Day. The Secretariat's staff of 29 reflect the diversity of the continent and hail from Rwanda, Uganda, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi and South Africa.

Staff members dressed up in traditional African dress and shared food representative of the diverse cuisines of Africa. Amongst the items on the menu was tilapia from Uganda, cassava in banana leaves prepared Gabon style, couscous from Morocco and pilau from Tanzania.

Fittingly, all the food was extremely healthy, in line with the 2019 Africa day theme of a "Healthy Lifestyle Prolongs Life". This theme was selected by the African Union (AU) to emphasize the significant relationship between

unhealthy lifestyle and premature mortality. It is in line with Aspiration 1 of the AU Agenda 2063 which is "A prosperous Africa, based on inclusive growth and sustainable development".

Africa Day is celebrated on 25 May annually across Africa and amongst the African diaspora countries across the world. A number of African countries have also declared it a public holiday.

The date marks the day on which the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was formed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1963. The OAU evolved into AU on May 25, 2001, where South Africa paved the way as a founding member. The headquarters of the AU are in Addis Ababa and the AU's legislative arm, the Pan-African Parliament, is situated in Midrand, South Africa.



Some of the typical African cuisine brought by staff to enjoy on African Day



Caroline Mutayabarwa explains the many uses of the kanga, a versatile item of apparel in Tanzania for women and men.