

***Conveys President Obama's Message to EAC***

**PRESS RELEASE**

**East African Community Headquarters, Arusha, Tanzania, 1 July 2009:** The US Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources, Mr. Jacob Lew paid a one-day working visit to the EAC Secretariat and held talks with the EAC Secretary General, Amb. Juma Mwapachu on Wednesday 1 July 2009 in Arusha, Tanzania.

Accompanying the Secretary General to the talks were the Deputy Secretaries General in charge of Finance and Administration, Dr. Tanguis Rotich; in charge of Planning and Infrastructure, Mr. Alloyce Mutabingwa; in charge of Productive and Social Sector, Mr. Jean Claude Nsengiyumva; the Executive Director of CASSOA, Mr. Mtesigwa Maugo; Director for Trade, Dr. Flora Musonda; Director for Productive and Social Sector, Dr. Caleb Weggoro; and other senior officials from the EAC Secretariat.

The US Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources, Mr. Jacob Lew was accompanied by a contingent of 8 senior US government officials, who included among others; the Regional Director, USAID, Mr. Lawrence Meserve; the Chief of Party, COMPETE Program, Mr. Steve Walls; and the East Africa Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam, Mr. David Scott.

During the talks, Amb. Juma Mwapachu briefed the US Deputy Secretary of State on the current developments in the EAC regional integration process specifically highlighting milestones in the EAC Customs Union, which he said the region had benefitted enormously from and EAC was now gearing towards establishing a duty free regime come 2010.

Amb. Mwapachu briefed the US dignitaries on the ongoing negotiations of the EAC Common Market Protocol, assuring them that it will be in place by 2010. The Secretary General also briefed his Guests on the ongoing EPA negotiations and the EAC-COMESA-SADC Tripartite efforts towards establishing a Free Trade Area (FTA).

The Secretary General reiterated that the EAC Secretariat was to launch, as a matter of high priority, a comprehensive and robust integrated infrastructure development programme for the region involving railways, roads, air transport, ICT and energy development. “We have in place, among others, the East African Power Master Plan, the East African Road Network Plan, the East African Railways Master Plan and these are all strategic underpinnings for the development of the region”, said Amb. Mwapachu.

The US Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources, Mr. Jacob Lew pledged commitment to further strengthening of the ties between United States of America and EAC. He said he was proud of the role the US government was playing in the region in terms of disease control and collaborating in general to create the expertise, information, and tools that people and communities need to protect their health – through health promotion, prevention of diseases, and preparedness for new health threats. He said the USA’ government’s role in humanitarian needs and emergency assistance will continue in the region.

He informed the EAC officials that the US government was committed to the Doha development agenda.

The Regional Director, USAID, East Africa, Mr. Lawrence Meserve, briefed the EAC officials on USAID regional economic growth activities, while Mr. Steve Walls, Chief of Party, COMPETE Program highlighted on the COMPETE programme concept, which in a nutshell focuses on the private sector-led competition.

Concluding the talks, the US Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources, Mr. Lew hailed the Secretary General, Amb. Juma Mwapachu and his team at the Secretariat for being well focussed in driving the East African regional integration agenda. He said the US government was happy with the whole concept.

Mr. Lew conveyed US President Barack Obama’s special message to the EAC that is “the US

government views the USA-EAC relations as being very successful and important and the US government is prepared to take this relationship to a higher level”.

Mr. Jacob Lew assured the EAC of his country’s continued firm support to the regional integration programme.