EU Ambassador to Malawi tours SQAM project

One on One with EU Ambassador to Malawi

New Metrology Equipment Improves Service Delivery and Offering New Services

Development of a Robust Standardization, Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Metrology (SQAM) project
EU Ambassador to Malawi tours SQAMP project activities and MBS Laboratories

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COVER PHOTO
The EU Ambassador to Malawi, His Excellency Marchel Gerrmann being briefed on the progress of the construction works of the new MBS laboratory and office complex by a representative of MBD Consults, who are supervising the construction works.

EDITORIAL
The project on the development of a “Robust Standardization, Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Metrology (SQAM) in Malawi”, is aimed at improving and increasing Malawi’s exports by reducing the cost of doing business by reducing the need for re-testing, re-inspection, re-certification abroad through acceptance of measurements, tests, conformity assessment results issued in Malawi. The project aims at ensuring that Malawian producers have access to accredited SQAM services which are accepted abroad thereby reducing the cost of SQAM services currently being sought outside the country.

The European Union (EU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Malawi Government are financing the project. On 28th February 2017, the EU Ambassador to Malawi, His Excellency Marchel Gerrmann, visited the construction site at Chichiri in Blantyre, where the new Malawi Bureau of Standards (MBS) laboratory and office complex is being constructed, as part of the project. His Excellency Gerrmann also visited the MBS metrology laboratories at Ginnery Corner in Blantyre.

The new laboratory and office is complex is expected to house new and state of the art testing equipment. It is expected to be completed in April 2018.

This edition of the SQAM Newsletter therefore is, among other issues, highlighting the visit by the EU Ambassador, and other activities that have taken place between January and March, 2017. It is our hope that you will find this newsletter helpful and will keep you posted on the developments of the SQAM project.

Enjoy reading it!

The European Union (EU) Ambassador to Malawi, His Excellency Marchel Gerrmann, toured the construction site of the new Malawi Bureau of Standards (MBS) laboratory and office complex on Tuesday, 28th February, 2017. The complex is being constructed as part of the project on the development of a “Robust Standardization, Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Metrology (SQAM) infrastructure in Malawi. The construction of the complex is funded by the Malawi Government as part of its contribution towards the SQAM project which is being financed by the EU and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The complex is being constructed in Blantyre, behind the Chichiri Trade Fairgrounds.

Speaking during the visit, the EU ambassador said the European Union recognises the Malawi Government’s commitment towards the SQAM project, which is demonstrated in Government’s financing of the construction of the SQAM complex in its entirety, amounting to US$10.5 Million. The EU ambassador further said he was looking forward to the successful completion of the complex. “A major milestone that I am looking forward to is the completion of the construction of this impressive complex, and ultimate procurement and installation of the necessary testing equipment and subsequent international accreditation status of the MBS”, said the EU ambassador.

On his part, the Deputy Director for Industry in the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Mr Clement Phangaphanga, said he was happy that progress on the work is good and that construction of the MBS Laboratory Complex is now at 40% completion, following launch of the project by the Vice President, Right Honourable Dr Saulos Klaus Chilima, on 25th January 2016.

He further highlighted that the Malawi Government will be submitting a request for further support from the EU on the second phase of the SQAM project so that it should start immediately after completion of the first phase. The construction of the new MBS laboratory complex is expected to be completed in April 2018.

‘As Malawi Government were are very excited with all developments which are meant to realize our vision of transforming this country from a predominantly importing and consuming, to a predominantly producing and exporting one. We are therefore very grateful to the EU Delegation through your Excellency for the support rendered through this very important project which will greatly improve socio-economic development of our country’ said Mr Phangaphanga.

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Cover Photo:
The EU Ambassador to Malawi, His Excellency Marchel Gerrmann being briefed on the progress of the construction works of the new MBS laboratory and office complex by a representative of MBD Consults, who are supervising the construction works.

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The SQAM Newsletter is produced by the Malawi Bureau of Standards. It is published quarterly. It contains updates on the project, news and features about the MBS laboratories, and other developments of the SQAM project. It is distributed to stakeholders and partners of the project. It aims to keep readers informed about the progress of the project and to raise awareness of its significance. The SQAM Newsletter is available in both print and electronic formats. It is available on the MBS website at www.mbsmw.org.

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One on One with EU Ambassador to Malawi, His Excellency, Marchel GERRMANN

“The EU wants to continue its support towards achieving growth in Malawi through collaborating with Government and all relevant stakeholders to develop programmes that focus on addressing private sector needs”

The Malawi Bureau of Standards is implementing a project on the development of a “Robust Standardization, Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Metrology (SQAM) in Malawi”, which is aimed at improving and increasing Malawi’s exports by reducing the cost of doing business by reducing the need for re-testing, re-inspection, re-certification abroad through acceptance of measurements, tests, conformity assessment results issued in Malawi.

The project is jointly sponsored by the Malawi Government, European Union (EU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with technical support provided by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO).

On 28th February 2017, the European Union (EU) delegation in Malawi led by the EU Ambassador to Malawi, His Excellency, Marchel GERRMANN visited the construction site for the SQAM project in Blantyre to appreciate the progress of the work.

The SQAM Newsletter crew sat down with His Excellency, Marchel GERRMANN to shed more light on the significance of his visit and other issues related to the project.

Your Excellency, why the visit?

To begin with, I am happy to have this opportunity to visit the SQAM project and to interact with the team on the ground, who are putting in a lot of effort to make this project a success. I always look forward to visiting project sites as it gives me the opportunity to fully appreciate the positive information I read through project reports and relate it to what is happening on the ground.

Your Excellency, so what is your assessment of the progress of the work?

Well, the progress has been good and I am very impressed with the speed and the quality of the work that is being done, and I am confident that it will be completed within the specified period.

Your Excellency, what is your assessment of the Malawi Government’s commitment towards the project as well as other partners?

The EU recognises Government’s commitment towards the SQAM project, which is demonstrated in Government’s financing of the construction of the SQAM complex in its entirety, amounting to US$10.5 Million. It is this complex that will house the modern testing equipment that is being procured by the SQAM project.

I also recognise the work of the NORAD funded MATCB project (Market Access and Trade Capacity Building Support for Agro-Industrial Products Project), that has provided support towards the Metrology Laboratory.

The EU further recognises the work of all partners that are working together to ensure the success of the project. These include UNDP, UNIDO, MBS, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (MCCC), representatives from the private sector, and other key Ministries and Government Departments. All these entities have joined the EU, UNDP and UNIDO in trying to achieve the ultimate goal of the SQAM project, which aims to, “develop a sustainable solution to promoting Malawi’s exports that meet international standards”.

Your Excellency, can you shed more light on the work of the EU and the private sector in Malawi?

As far as our work with the private sector is concerned, the EU sees itself as a “Partner for Growth”.

I believe that all countries are looking for growth in their economies in an effort to stimulate productivity, create employment, and reduce inequalities. The EU, together with the Government of Malawi, understands the critical role that the private sector plays towards achieving this growth.

In light of this drive for growth, I hope you will agree with me that Malawi’s market is currently quite small and cannot entirely absorb the increased production that will come from the private sector. Malawi’s private sector therefore has to look beyond the borders for markets. This means that regional integration and international trade are very critical for Malawi’s growth path. I hope you will also agree with me that international markets have a wide array of technical and sanitary and phytosanitary requirements that need to be satisfied if a product is to be accepted in the given foreign market.

Your Excellency, regarding international markets, from the EU perspective, what is the current status and how does the EU sees the SQAM project improve the situation?

Currently, Malawian exporters are required to undertake re-inspection and re-certification of products through private providers, located abroad, and this involves high cost and significant time delays. The SQAM project aims to eliminate this hurdle by contributing to:

- Strengthening Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) infrastructure;
- Improving the efficiency and sustainability of the Malawi Bureau of Standards;
- Supporting the drive for better technical regulations in Malawi;
- Enhancing the capacity of the Malawi Bureau of Standards; and
- Enhancing the capacity of the National Enquiry Points; among others

Your Excellency, it’s been some time now since the project started, what are some of the notable milestones or achievements that you have recorded so far?

The project is now in its 5th year of implementation, and has recorded a number of results. Some of the notable achievements include:

- Development and launch of the Malawi National Quality Policy and Strategy. The strategy led to the set-up of an NQS Coordination Committee which is to coordinate and guide the implementation of the NQS at national level
- Procurement of some metrology equipment, which is already being utilised by the MBS and is improving the efficiency of the Bureau;
- Capacity building for the MBS technical staff in various areas relating to laboratory testing and accreditation
- A functional review of the MBS was conducted and approved by Government for implementation
- Development of a marketing unit within MBS as one of the outcomes from the functional review
- Development and implementation of Accreditation Roadmaps
- Development of the SPS Infrastructure Roadmap
- Commencement and positive progress of construction of the SQAM complex

Wow! That’s quite remarkable Your Excellency...

Yes it is indeed great progress. A further major milestone that I am looking forward to is the completion of the construction of this impressive complex, and ultimate procurement and installation of the necessary testing equipment and subsequent international accreditation status of the MBS.

Any last word Your Excellency?

As a final point, I would like to reiterate that the EU wants to continue its support towards achieving growth in Malawi through collaborating with Government and all relevant stakeholders and to develop programmes that focus on addressing private sector needs effectively.

Thank you, Your Excellency, Zikomo Kwambiri.
In order for the MBS to improve its service delivery and offer new service to the Malawi industry, a number of state of the art pieces of equipment have been procured under the SQAM project. Below is a summary of the equipments that have been procured and their impact on the operations of the MBS:

**EQUIPMENT PROCURED UNDER THE SQAM PROJECT IMPROVES SERVICE DELIVERY AND OFFERS NEW SERVICES**

This workshop crane is very important in conducting inhouse calibrations of weights of 1 tonne which are used for verification of weighbridges. It is used to lift one tonne weights during the calibration of weights to be used for verification of weighbridges. Previously the MBS did not have the capacity to calibrate the 1 tonne weights, as a result the MBS was only using 20kg weights. The use of 20 kg weights to calibrate the weighbridges was a tedious process that most of the times would take the whole day to calibrate a single weighbridge. And with that, the margin of error was wide because of the many 20 kgs that were needed to properly calibrate the weighbridges. With the acquisition of the crane, the MBS is now able to calibrate the 1 tonne weights. This means that the MBS is now using the well calibrated 1 tonne weights to calibrate the weighbridges.

This has tremendously cut the time by almost 70%. Instead of calibrating a single weighbridge for the whole day, it now takes only about 3 hours to complete calibration of a weighbridge. This has significantly improved service delivery by the MBS to its clients, and has also sharply reduced the margin of error.

With this improvement you are therefore assured that your weighbridges can be calibrated within the shortest period allowing you to continue with your businesses without interrupting you for the whole day. With improved accuracy because of the reduce margin of error, you are assured that your weighbridges are reading correctly and that you are not losing precious tonnage of your products.

Through the project, the MBS has acquired a state of the art mass verification system which comprise a truck, forklift and 30 pieces of one tonne weights. The forklift is being used for lifting one tonne or bigger weights. Earlier, the MBS was using 20 kg weights for verification of weighbridges which, as mentioned earlier, was tedious, and was taking the whole day to complete the verification process. With the new heavy mass verification system and the forklift, verification of weighbridges is now being done within 3 hours. Most surprisingly, despite all these improvements, the cost of calibration has significantly reduced on the part of the client because earlier on the client used to bear transportation and labour costs of transporting the weights from one point to another, which currently does not happen. In addition to the reduced cost, the client is even gaining more because their weighbridges are being calibrated fast allowing them to continue with their business within the shortest period of time thereby moing goods fast for more sales.

The 2,500 L trailer mounted proving tank is used for the calibration and verification of bulkflow meters, that are used in the verification of fuel volumes in the petroleum industry. In the past the MBS could borrow such equipment from other service providers in the country. This means the cost of the service was expensive because MBS had to factor in the cost of borrowing in its pricing schedule. With the acquisition of this prover tank, the cost of calibrating bulkflow meters has significantly reduced. The time of service delivery has also sharply reduced, previously when a client requested for the service, it would take some days for the MBS to deliver the service because it had to deal with logistics of borrowing the equipment. With the coming in of the prover tank, once a client has requested for the service, the calibrations are conducted timely, thereby allowing the client to continue with their business. Furthermore, the borrowed equipment was not modern as this one, meaning that this is taking much less time to calibrate bulkflow meters. Previously it would take about 4 hours to calibrate a bulkflow meter, with the new equipment it only takes about an hour to complete a calibration. The impact of the significance of the time reduction to the industry cannot be overemphasized.

| (a) Floor workshop crane |
| (b) Forklift |
| (c) Trailer mounted 2500L proving tank |
| (d) Mass Comparators |

Portable master flow meter

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A mass comparator is a device that is used to determine masses of weights during calibration of mass pieces that are used for industrial operations and mass standards that are used for verification of weights and balances used in trade, vital for the calibration of laboratory weights that are used by the industry and in-house calibration of mass standards to complete a traceability chain. Additional uses would be any weighing application requiring absolute weighing with an extremely high resolution. The mass comparators in the picture have a high resolution of 0.01 mg which will increase accuracy in as far as calibration of mass pieces is concerned. Before acquisition of the mass comparators, the best mass balance available in the MBS had a resolution of 0.1 mg – this is a tenfold increase in accuracy! Coupled by automated data capturing mechanism which is computer enabled, the acquired balances will lead to a reduction of human errors that could arise during calibration.

The F2 weight set with a range of 1 mg to 20 kg is used for the calibration of (i) Weights of classes lower than F2 and (ii) on-site calibration of laboratory balances and counter scales of capacities up to 20 kg. The acquisition of a complete set of F2 class weights has increased the calibration range at the lower end (1 mg to 1 g) as the previous set had no weights smaller than 1 g.

The Servo Hydraulic 150 Tonne (1500) Type Universal Testing Machine is used for conducting tests like Tension, Compression, Bending, and Shear, among others, on metals and other materials. The machine is electrically driven and specimen loading is achieved hydraulically.

The acquisition of this machine has drastically redefined the construction materials testing landscape. While MBS used to rely on other laboratories, now it is able to independently test and verify materials such as Cement block, steel, ordinary building block. This has been good news to the industry especially cement manufacturers, steel importers, hardwares and other since the MBS does this work at a very competitive price and is quick.