

Private sector sets up trade forum

By Samuel Kamndaya

Private sector organizations will soon start delivering concerns, needs and priorities on trade negotiations to the government through the Private Sector Trade Issues Forum (PSTIF).

Dr David Matayo, the deputy minister for Industry, Trade and Marketing, said in Dar es Salaam yesterday that the forum will provide an institutional framework through which private sector organizations air grievances to policy makers and trade negotiators at bilateral and multilateral levels.

Efforts in setting up the forum are underway as stakeholders met in Dar es Salaam yesterday to come up with the structure, functions and the way PSTIF will be communicating with international and national trade policy makers.

Dr Matayo, opening the PSTIF general meeting yesterday, said he hoped the forum would help the government determine the best line of action while making trade policies and negotiations.

Mr Anthony Kaijage, the PSTIF steering committee chairman, said the forum was meant to drive govern-

ment policies in negotiating trade to represent the private sector, the main beneficiaries and at times losers in the process.

Mr Douglas Carpenter the head of economic affairs at the delegation of the European Union, said a lot was still needed for developing countries to utilize their market preferences, while the private sector seeks meaningful involvement in trade policy and negotiations. Governments and development partners had a role to help businesses in developing countries meet the required quality standards to utilize market opportunities like

Everything But Arms (EBA) offered by the EU, he said.

"Let me tell you there is ignorance on both sides - policymakers and negotiators often know little of the reality of trading," he declared.

He said this was true of meeting food hygiene standards and minimum pesticide residue levels, clearing customs, cutting logistic costs, exemptions, and getting value for money in the provision of water and electricity.

"These are just some of the so-called 'supply side' challenges to successful commerce," the mission official noted.