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**SMART Testifies on Humanitarian and Economic Impacts of Secondhand Clothing Ban Underway in East Africa Community**

*Violations of African Growth and Opportunity Acts Spark Potential Benefits Eligibility Review*

ABINGDON, Md. (August 31, 2016)— Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association (SMART) Executive Director Jackie King encouraged U.S. officials to review closely whether members of the East African Community (EAC) should continue to be eligible for special trade benefits in light of an impending import ban on her industry's products there.

King's testimony was delivered August 22 before an interagency panel conducting an annual review of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a trade preference program that provides numerous African nations unilateral access to the United States. Her statement comes in response to a March 2016 announcement by the EAC nations of Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania that they are moving forward with a ban on secondhand clothing imports.

King questioned, however, EAC plans to use AGOA benefits to export their new textiles to the U.S. duty-free while simultaneously blocking the trade of secondhand clothing to the EAC. She pointed out that the ban, which is proposed to be phased in over a three-year time frame, directly contradicts requirements that AGOA beneficiaries work towards eliminating "barriers to United States trade and investment" and "economic policies to reduce poverty."

Since March, King told the panel, several of the countries have prepared for the ban by imposing substantial tariff increases on secondhand clothing (as high as 1,150% in Rwanda) which are already hurting the industry. King cited serious economic consequences if the prohibition is allowed to move forward, with some 190,000 for-profit and non-profit jobs at risk in the United States and hundreds of thousands of jobs in the EAC also threatened. Additionally, King said the ban would impose grave economic hardship on the EAC people, who often subsist on the equivalent of \$1.00- \$2.00 or less per day, by eliminating their access to quality, affordable clothing and forcing them to be fully reliant on higher-priced new apparel.

King notes that there are a number of countries like Pakistan, Guatemala and Honduras where the secondhand clothing and new textile manufacturing sectors coexist harmoniously. "It is not necessary for the EAC to take away access to affordable, quality secondhand apparel through a ban in order to champion the development of a thriving textile manufacturing industry of their own."



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She advised the government panel that SMART would be seeking reversal of the EAC's ban and the roll back of the recently increased duties no later than the next EAC Heads of State Summit expected to be held in November.

“Should the EAC fail to reverse their decisions, SMART will pursue an out-of-cycle review of their AGOA eligibility and duty-free access to the U.S. market with the aim of promoting economic, humanitarian and environmental welfare for the people of the United States and the EAC,” said King.

For more information on SMART, visit [www.smartasn.org](http://www.smartasn.org). Please direct media inquiries for SMART to Shannon Cooper at 410-420-2001 or by email at [shannon.cooper@fallstongroup.com](mailto:shannon.cooper@fallstongroup.com).

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### **About SMART**

Established in 1932, the Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association (SMART) is an international nonprofit trade association that strengthens the economic opportunities of its diverse membership by promoting the interdependence of the for-profit textile recycling industry segments and providing a common forum for networking, education and trade. SMART members use and convert recycled and secondary materials from used clothing, commercial laundries and non-woven, off spec material, new mills ends and paper from around the world. SMART member companies create thousands of jobs worldwide, proving each day you can make money by being social responsible.

For more information on SMART, visit the association's website at [www.smartasn.org](http://www.smartasn.org) or view the SMART Media Kit at [www.smartasn.org/about/SMART\\_PressKitOnline.pdf](http://www.smartasn.org/about/SMART_PressKitOnline.pdf). For media inquiries regarding SMART, contact Shannon Cooper at [shannon.cooper@fallstongroup.com](mailto:shannon.cooper@fallstongroup.com) or 410-420-2001.