



CALL FOR PAPERS

AU ECHO 2023 EDITION

The Year of AfCFTA

THEME: "Acceleration of AfCFTA Implementation"

Introduction:

[Agenda 2063](#) places great importance on the role that trade plays in developing economies and recognises that trade is a powerful engine for economic growth and development. In Africa barriers to trade have resulted in a fragmented regional economy that has overtime, positioned Africa's role in the global trade market as fundamentally being a raw material (commodities) supplier in exchange for manufactured goods, and rendering the continent's share in global trade insignificant. The challenges arising from continually fluctuating commodities prices and Africa's limited value addition to its natural resources renders Africa vulnerable to the external shocks derived from export dependency.

The Agenda 2063 flagship project: [African Continental Free Trade Area \(AfCFTA\)](#) refers to a continental geographic zone where goods and services move among member states of the AU with no restrictions. The AfCFTA aims to boost intra-African trade by providing a comprehensive and mutually beneficial trade agreement among the member states, covering trade in goods and services, investment, intellectual property rights and competition policy. Other continental frameworks include [Boosting Intra African Trade \(BIAT\)](#), which aims to deepen Africa's market integration and significantly increasing the volume of trade that African countries undertake amongst themselves from the current levels of about 10-13% to 25% or more within the next decade, and [The Action Plan for the Accelerated Industrial Development of Africa \(AIDA\)](#), which aims to mobilise both financial and nonfinancial resources and enhance Africa's industrial performance.

AfCFTA is a high ambition trade agreement, with a comprehensive scope that includes critical areas of Africa's economy, such as digital trade and investment protection, amongst other areas. By eliminating barriers to trade in Africa, the objective of the AfCFTA is to significantly boost intra-Africa trade, particularly trade in value-added production and trade across all sectors of Africa's economy.

The AfCFTA is the world's largest free trade area bringing together the 55 countries of the African Union (AU) and eight (8) Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The overall mandate of the AfCFTA is to create a single continental market with a population of about 1.3 billion people and a combined GDP of approximately US\$ 3.4 trillion.

As part of its mandate, the AfCFTA is to eliminate trade barriers and boost intra-Africa trade. In particular, it is to advance trade in value-added production across all service sectors of the African Economy. The AfCFTA will contribute to establishing regional value chains in Africa, enabling investment and job creation. The practical implementation of the AfCFTA has the

potential to foster industrialisation, job creation, and investment, thus enhancing the competitiveness of Africa in the medium to long term.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement entered into force on 30 May 2019 for the 24 countries that had deposited their instruments of ratification with the African Union Commission (AUC). This date marked 30 days after the 22nd instrument of ratification was deposited, as stipulated in [Article 23 of the AfCFTA Agreement](#). The operational phase of the AfCFTA Agreement was officially launched on 7 July 2019. In line with a Decision and Declaration adopted during [the 13th Extraordinary Summit of the Assembly of the Union](#) on 5 December 2020, start of trading under the AfCFTA regime began on 1 January 2021 under an 'interim arrangement'.

Financial and Economic inclusion for African Women demands collective focus and actions on critical issues such as access to financial resources and services, scaling up the capacities in a dynamic global environment, access to land ownership, property and other productive assets, as well as skills and market information.

To meet these conditions, the AU Commission established, in 2020, the Trust Fund for African Women (TFAW) as the main tool for implementing the Decade for Financial and Economic Inclusion (2020-2030).

With the launch of trading under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in January 2021 that would leverage women's financial and economic inclusion.

The expectations are high as relates to the expanded business prospects for women-led businesses, which will unlock the potential for African women to grow their businesses from micro to macro enterprises. The Agreement establishing the AfCFTA recognises the need to build and improve the export capacity of both formal and informal service suppliers, with particular attention to micro, small and medium size enterprises in which women and youth actively participate. Furthermore, the AfCFTA Protocols on Trade in Goods, Trade in Services, Investment, Intellectual Property Rights and Competition Policy, provide clear guidelines to ensure emerging enterprises and infant industries are protected thus adding impetus to the Agenda 2063 goals of gender equality, women empowerment and youth development.

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Achievements of AfCFTA to date:

1. Commissioning and operationalisation of the AfCFTA Secretariat
2. Launch of trade under the AfCFTA
3. Reaching 43 State Parties as of April 2022, following the 43rd deposit of the instrument of ratification by the Kingdom of Morocco
4. Launch of the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) in collaboration with the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank)
5. Signing of the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund Management Agreement with Afreximbank
6. Inauguration of the AfCFTA Advisory Council on Trade and Industrial Development
7. Launch of private sector engagement plan in partnership with the MasterCard Foundation. The focus is on four initial priority sectors or value chains: agro-processing, automotive, pharmaceuticals, and transportation and logistics for quick

wins, based on the potential for import substitution and existing production capabilities on the continent

The Call:

Referencing Decisions of the AU as well as other documented pronouncements and actions by the African Union, and in line with the theme of the year, interested parties are hereby called upon to submit for the 2023 Edition of the AU Echo, incisive and evidence based articles on the potential and progress made in the various sectors as well as innovative initiatives that are being undertaken at institutional, country and continental level to promote trade, based on the AU's decisions. Such articles should be based on the implementation of AU decisions, regarding trade and or its relevance to accelerating human capital and social development.

The following AU decisions, resolutions and policy documents and resources should serve as reference for the articles.

1. [The Agreement Establishing The African Continental Free Trade Area](#)
2. [Compiled Annexes on the Establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area](#)
3. [A study on the opportunities in the AfCFTA for women in the Informal and Cross-Border Trade](#)
4. [AfCFTA Questions & Answers](#)
5. [Dispute Settlement Mechanisms for Trade Agreements](#)
6. [Training Module of Rules of Origin](#)
7. [AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment 2018-2028](#)
8. [The African Women's Decade Report \(2010-2020\)](#)

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Submission Requirements & Deadline:

- Contributions will be accepted from institutions, organs and employees of the African Union, AU member states, African academic institutions, think tanks, civil society organisations and representative groups (e.g. women, youth), industry experts and the wider public. The editors reserve the right to reject papers they deem to be inconsistent with the guidelines outlined in this call for papers.
- Languages: Articles for publication may be submitted in English or French. Word count: Not more than 2000 words per article.
- Images: Pertinent Photographs and other illustrations that enhance the articles are welcome. These must be original to the author and/or under a creative common license. Authors must confirm their ownership of such illustrations and captions must be provided.
- All submissions must contain the full name and contact of the sender, his/her organization / job title (if applicable).
- Submissions will only be accepted through email which **must be titled** as given below and can only be submitted through the email accounts listed below for consideration.

- **Title / subject of email: SUBMISSION – AU ECHO 2023- (INSERT TITLE OF ARTICLE)**
- **Receiving emails:**
 - Send all manuscripts and correspondence to MusabayanaW@africa-union.org and Gamalk@africa-union.org
 - Copying: DIC@africa-union.org
- **DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION**
 - Manuscripts must be received before or by **17.00 East African Time (GMT+3)** on **2nd November 2022**

About the AU ECHO:

The AU ECHO provides a platform for the 55 Member States of the African Union, and African citizens to profile the successes of Africa, and to impart knowledge and experiences borne from African led initiatives, based on the instruments and decisions of the African Union. It is published on an annual basis by the Directorate of Information and Communication of the AUC with content largely related to the AU's Theme of the Year.

The AU ECHO is distributed to AU Heads of State and Government, Ministers, senior policy makers' delegates, and media during the AU Summits and other substantive meetings and conferences as well as to offices of the African Union. Distribution is also made to development partner organisations and Consulates / Embassies in Addis Ababa. Soft copies are posted online on www.au.int.