

AFRICAN UNION

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Creating One African Market

## Africa Integration Day Commemorations

Concept Note for Inaugural Panel Discussion on:

***Theme - COVID-19: The road ahead for African trade,  
economic integration and growth***

**01 July 2020; 14:00-15:30 (Addis Ababa Time)**

## **Introduction**

Africa's journey towards an integrated continent reached an important milestone on 30 May 2019 with the entry into force of the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) following ratification by 22 State Parties. The AfCFTA Agreement had earlier been signed by the first forty-four African Union (AU) Member States in Kigali, Rwanda on the 21 March 2018. This was historic not only because it marked the third stage of the roadmap set out in the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (AEC) of 1991 (Abuja Treaty); but also because of the speed at which this happened. Never before, in the treaty making history of the African Union has a legal instrument of such nature received 22 ratifications in such a short period of time.

During the launch of the operational phase of the AfCFTA in Niamey, Niger on 7 July 2019, the 12<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Summit of AU Heads of States and Government decided that 7 July of each year be designated as “the Africa Integration Day” (AID) without it being a holiday to commemorate the operationalisation of the AfCFTA Agreement and popularise economic integration across the continent as a lever of inclusive sustainable development. Several activities are being organised by the African Union Commission to commemorate Africa Integration Day 2020. These activities will take place from 1 to 7 July 2020. The first activity to be held on 1 July 2020 will be a panel discussion on “*COVID-19: The road ahead for African trade, economic integration and growth*” where high powered panellists will discuss Africa's economic integration future in the light of the current COVID-19 Pandemic which has exposed the vulnerability of African economies through disruption of global and regional supply chains due to government restrictions, and in some economies near collapse of the productive sector due to lockdowns.

## **Objective**

The main objective of the AID Inaugural Panel Discussion is to reflect on progress so far on the implementation of AfCFTA since its launch on July 7 2019 and to explore how the current Covid-19 Pandemic could negatively impact on the implementation. Given that most sectors, including trade, will be negatively affected by the COVID-19, the discussants will also explore how the AfCFTA could significantly address the economic recovery from this impact with the advent of a unified large single market.

## **Meeting format**

Five renowned African economic experts will participate in the panel discussion with an audience from all over Africa and beyond. The meeting will be opened by His Excellency Mr Moosa Faki Mahamat Chairperson of the African Union Commission. The moderator

will be Dr Stephen Karingi from the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) of UNECA. The meeting will take place from 15:00h – 16:30h (EAT) on a Zoom platform.

### **Expected outputs**

1. Increased knowledge and awareness of the AfCFTA and its current status of implementation;
2. Understanding of the potential of the AfCFTA to mitigate negative impacts on Africa of the Covid-19 pandemic;
3. Identification of options and approaches to accelerate Africa Integration as a strategy to build Africa's resilience and reboot African economies Post-COVID-19; and
4. Suggestions on multi-stakeholder initiatives and programmes at the national, regional and continental levels to advance Africa integration.

### **Dates and Working Language**

The Africa Integration Day Inaugural will be commemorated on 1 July 2020. Translation will be available in all AU official languages (Arabic, English, French and Portuguese).

### **Participants**

Invitation to participate in the meeting will be extended to Business Leaders and Captains of Industry, National Private Sector Organizations and Associations and African Policy and Law Makers from AfCFTA State Parties, African Union Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Research Institutions and Government Think Tanks, among others.

### **Main Partners**

- African Development Bank (AfDB),
- African Export and Import bank (Afreximbank);
- Afro-Champions Initiative,
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA),
- Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PACCI);

### **Information**

The following people can be contacted for further information relating to this Conference:

- **Mr. Hussein Hassan**, Acting Director, Department of Trade and Industry, E-mail: [HusseinH@africa-union.org](mailto:HusseinH@africa-union.org); and

- **Mr. Jean-Denis Gabikini**, Acting Director, Department of Economic Affairs and Head, Economic Integration & Regional Cooperation, E-mail: [GabikiniJD@africa-union.org](mailto:GabikiniJD@africa-union.org)