



The AfCFTA Start of Trading Ceremony Webinar:

1 January 2020

CONCEPT NOTE

Introduction

On 1st January 2021 trading under the AfCFTA will start in Africa. This is a historic milestone for the continent as Africa will really start to trade with Africa. To mark the occasion, a lunch time ceremony including speeches by some African Union Heads of State and Government, representatives of development partners and the private sector as well as showing of videos on different aspects of trade and development in Africa is being organised by the AfCFTA Secretariat. African citizens from all over the continent are invited to witness this historic and important event on New Year's Day 2021.

Currently, the percentage of trade that African countries do with each other is a mere 16 - 18%. The bulk of the continent's trade is with the rest of the world, and most African exports are in raw materials including extractive commodities like oil, gas and minerals which are vulnerable to market volatility.

Under AfCFTA trading, tariffs on various commodities where rules of origin have been agreed will be drastically reduced and traders of all sizes will have access to a much bigger market than they used to before. Non-tariff barriers (NTBs) to trade will also be addressed and a mechanism for speedy reporting and resolution of NTBs has been put in place (www.tradebarriers.africa). The bigger market will spur producers to upscale and so support increased industrialization and value addition on the continent. More employment opportunities will thus be generated for Africa's burgeoning youth population.

It has already been demonstrated that to mitigate the Covid-19 pandemic medicines and personal protective equipment need to be produced and moved to where they are needed expeditiously. The AfCFTA will be a tool for mitigation of Covid-19 by allowing free and unhindered trade in health products across the continent.

The AfCFTA Market

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will cover a market of over 1.2 billion people and a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$2.5 trillion, across all 55 member States of the African Union. In terms of numbers of participating countries, the AfCFTA at full strength will be the world's largest free trade area since the formation of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Trading under the AfCFTA will start between those countries that have ratified the AfCFTA Agreement and have finalised their goods and services tariff offers. To date 34 countries have ratified the agreement and the rest of the African Union members are expected to also join these AfCFTA State Parties in the near future.

The AfCFTA Start of Trading Webinar Objective

The AfCFTA Start of Trading webinar is being organised to celebrate a moment in Africa's history where a great stride in continental integration is being witnessed. The webinar will be the first of a series of events that will take place virtually and physically over the next

few weeks to mark this important occasion in Africa's fulfilment of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) founding fathers' dream of a truly united and integrated continent.

Participation

All African citizens, the African diaspora and friends of Africa are invited to be part of this AfCFTA Start of Trading ceremony. Participants are also invited to post their goodwill messages for the successful implementation of the AfCFTA agreement on the chat.

Register in advance for this webinar:

https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_sXzsVzExR8eu1Wiw6jKMXQ

Date and time

The AfCFTA Start of Trading ceremony and webinar will take place on New Year's Day 2021 (1 January 2021) from **11:00 – 12:00h GMT**.

Programme

The programme for the day will comprise addresses by H.E. Mr. Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa President of the Republic of South Africa and current Chairperson of the African Union; H.E. Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou President of Niger and AU Champion of the AfCFTA, H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and H.E. Mr. Wamkele Mene the Secretary General of the AfCFTA. These contributions will be followed by addresses from representatives of African Union development partners and the private sector. The speeches will be interspersed with videos about African trade and development issues as well as commentary by a moderator.

The audience will be invited to participate by posting comments and messages of goodwill in the Chat.

The programme will end with a proclamation by the AfCFTA Secretary General on the AfCFTA start of trading.

Contacts:

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