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Experts discuss the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - 07 April, 2014 - The 2nd Meeting of the Continental Task Force (CTF) on the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) kicked off today at the African Union Commission Headquarters in Addis Abeba. During two days, the participants from the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and representatives from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), discussed relevant documents that are needed to launch CFTA negotiations in line with the roadmap , as reaffirmed by Heads of State and government at their Summit in January 2014.

Negotiations for the CFTA are expected to take place in 2015-2016 and the CFTA should be launched by an indicative date of 2017. The main objectives of the CFTA are therefore, to

create a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of business persons and investments, and thus pave the way for accelerating the establishment of the Customs Union. It will also expand Intra African trade through better harmonization and coordination of trade liberalization and facilitation and instruments across the RECs and across Africa in general. The CFTA is also expected to enhance competitiveness at the industry and enterprise level through exploitation of opportunities for scale production, continental market access and better reallocation of resources.



In her opening remarks, the Director for Trade and Industry, Ms. Treasure Maphanga welcomed the participants to the meeting. She noted that the role of the CTF in the CFTA negotiations is critical as it has the responsibility of coordinating and managing the CFTA process by ensuring appropriate prioritization and by tackling adequate and all relevant issues pertaining to the negotiation process. “We are requested to work jointly to make sure that we mobilize the necessary technical and financial resources that will be required for the successful negotiations at Continental level”, she emphasized.

The meeting was attended by delegates from the following RECs: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Community of Saharan and Sahelian States (CENSAD).