

**AFRICAN UNION**

**الاتحاد الأفريقي**



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**DEDICATED SESSION OF EXPERTS AND SENIOR  
OFFICIALS followed by MINISTERS OF TRADE ON THE  
CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (CFTA)**

**08-15 May 2015**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**AU/TD/DS/AM/01**

**Original: English**

**Aide Memoire**

**Dedicated Session of Experts and Senior Officials followed by Ministers of Trade  
08-15 May 2015, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**I. Introduction**

1. Following the recommendation of the 9<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Conference of African Union Ministers of Trade (CAMOT 9) held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in December 2014, the AU Executive Council in January 2015 directed the AUC to organize a Dedicated Session of Senior Trade Officials preceded by a meeting of experts in preparation for the launch of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) negotiations (Ref:EX.CL/Dec.857 (XXVI)). In addition, the January 2015 Assembly of Heads of State and Government reaffirmed its commitment to launch CFTA negotiations in June 2015 and requested Ministers of Trade to meet and finalise preparations for the launch (Ref: Assembly/AU/Dec.555(XXIV) .

2. It is in this context that the African Union Commission (AUC) is organising a Meeting of trade experts/Senior Trade Officials followed by a meeting of Ministers of Trade to be held from 08 – 15 May 2015 at the African Union Commission Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

**II. Preparations for the launch of the CFTA negotiations**

3. CAMOT 9 emphasised the importance of technical studies in the preparation for the launch of the negotiations. In response to the request of the Ministers, the Commission, working in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), United Nations Trade and Development Conference (UNCTAD), Trade Law Centre (Tralac) and the Trade Advocacy Fund (TAF) commissioned a number of technical studies. The areas covered by the studies include Rules of Origin regimes in Africa, gap analysis of existing studies on the CFTA, the role of trade in services in CFTA negotiations, options on levels of trade liberalization for the CFTA, among others.

4. During the Meeting, Experts/Senior Officials will consider a number of essential technical documents that will enable the Assembly to launch the CFTA negotiations in June 2015 as scheduled. These documents are as follows: Draft Objectives and Guiding principles for the negotiations of the CFTA, the Draft Terms of Reference of the CFTA Negotiating Forum (CFTA-NF), the Draft Roadmap for the CFTA Negotiations and the Draft Declaration and Decision launching the CFTA Negotiations. The Institutional Arrangements for the CFTA negotiation were agreed upon during CAMOT.

5. Experts/Senior Officials will be expected to deliberate and agree on the objectives and principles that will guide the negotiations for the establishment of the CFTA. The meeting is also expected to discuss and agree on the Terms of Reference for the CFTA-Negotiating Forum, the Draft Roadmap for the CFTA Negotiations and consider the Draft Declaration and Decision launching the CFTA Negotiations for submission to the Ministers. Senior Trade Officials are also expected to give guidance of the nature of activities that will mark the launch on the negotiations as well as ways of strengthening the capacity of the AUC to support CFTA negotiations.

6. The Ministers of Trade will consider the recommendations of the Senior Officials as well as the revised working documents and give guidance on the way forward as Africa builds up to the launch of CFTA negotiations.

### **III. Objectives of the Meetings**

7. The main objectives of the Meeting of Experts/Senior Trade Officials are to consider all the preparatory issues and develop a Road Map towards the launch of the CFTA negotiations for consideration by the Ministers of Trade. Specifically, they will undertake the following:

- i. Review studies on various technical areas on the CFTA such as Rules of Origin, trade in services, among others;
- ii. Consider and adopt the Draft Objectives and Principles Guiding the negotiations of the CFTA,
- iii. Consider and adopt the Draft Terms of Reference for the CFTA-Negotiating Forum;
- iv. Consider and Adopt the Draft Road Map for the establishment of the CFTA;
- v. Consider and adopt the Draft Approach and Schedule for the CFTA negotiations;
- vi. Consider and adopt the Draft Declaration and Decision launching the CFTA Negotiations.

### **IV. Venue and Dates of the Meetings**

8. The Meeting will be held from 08 – 15 May 2015 at the African Union Commission Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

### **V. Format of the Meetings**

9. The Meetings of the of Experts/Senior Officials/Trade Ministers will be organised as follows;

**08 – 10 May 2015: Meeting of Trade Experts**

**11 - 13 May 2015: Meeting of Senior Trade Officials**

**14 – 15 May 2015: Meeting of Ministers of Trade**

10. The meetings will be divided into various sessions as detailed in the agenda annexed to this aide memoire. During each session, participants will have the opportunity to exchange views and make proposals for improvements to the draft documents proposed by the Continental Task Force on the CFTA.

#### **I. Participation and Funding**

11. The Meeting of Senior Trade Officials will be attended by Senior Officials from all AU Member States. Trade Experts from the following RECs: COMESA, EAC, SADC, ECCAS, IGAD, ECOWAS, CEN-SAD and AMU and the representatives of Regional Private Sector bodies, UNECA, African Development Bank and other collaborating institutions will also participate in the meeting.

12. The AUC will sponsor the participation of one Trade Expert or Senior Official from the relevant Ministry to attend the Dedicated Session of Trade Experts/Senior Trade Officials and Ministerial, one Trade expert from each REC, and one representative of the 8 sub-regional business associations by providing a return economy class air ticket and a daily subsistence allowance at the conditions and applicable rates of the AUC for the duration of the Meeting.

#### **II. Documentation and working languages**

13. The Meeting shall be conducted in Arabic, English French and Portuguese languages. Working documents for the Meeting will be sent in advance to the Member States and will also be provided by the Commission during the Meeting.

### **III. Immigration Requirements**

14. It is the responsibility of the participants to find out in their home country the visa requirements for their entry to Ethiopia. Participants requiring an entry visa should obtain visas from the Embassy of Ethiopia in their respective countries before departure. For those without Ethiopian Embassies in their countries of origin (departure), arrangements will be made for the issuance of visa on arrival on demand.

### **IV. Contact Persons**

15. For more information on the organisation of the meeting you are kindly requested to direct all your inquiries to Batanai Chikwene on the following e-mail [chikweneb@africa-union.org](mailto:chikweneb@africa-union.org) and Tarana Loumabeka at [loumabekat@yahoo.com](mailto:loumabekat@yahoo.com) /or fax to +251 11 518 29 70.

### **V. Confirmation of Participation**

16. Please send your confirmation to participate in the Meeting by e-mail to Mr. Mekonnen Tadesse Mekonnen [MekonnenTM@africa-union.org](mailto:MekonnenTM@africa-union.org), [loumabekat@yahoo.com](mailto:loumabekat@yahoo.com) and Ms Genet Giday [GenetG@africa-union.org](mailto:GenetG@africa-union.org) by Friday 27 February 2015. Confirmations can also be faxed to fax number +251 11 518 29 70.