

**Press Release N°02/23rd AU SUMMIT****The African Union High Level African Trade Committee (HATC) to meet on 25 June 2014 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – 20 June 2014. On the sidelines of the 23rd Ordinary Session of the Summit of the African Union being held from the 20th to 27th June, the Department of Trade and Industry will convene the 3rd High Level African Trade Committee (HATC) meeting on the 25th of June 2014 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. The HATC meets and provides policy orientation and recommendations to the summit on the acceleration and deepening of Africa's market integration agenda. This time HATC is expected to take a higher political profile due to the expected participation of Heads of States of AU member countries, H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Fatima Haram Acyl, Commissioner of Trade and Industry, and Chief Executives of the Regional Economic Communities among others. The meeting will be chaired by H.E. Idriss Deby Itno, President of Chad.

The HATC's main responsibility is to facilitate and unlock the blockages in the implementation of the framework, road map and architecture for fast-tracking the establishment of the continental free trade area (CFTA), and the action plan for boosting intra-African trade (BIAT) which became AU policy in January 2012.

Based on progress during the past two years, the Heads of State and Government demonstrated their commitment to fast track the establishment of the CFTA by requesting AU Ministers of Trade to convene an extraordinary session to prepare for the launch of the CFTA negotiations in 2015. The HATC urged the member states to consider and report on Africa's response and key developments on Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and their implications on Africa's integration agenda. This decision was a significant signal that economic integration at a continental level is engaging a higher gear as evidenced by strategic consultations between the PRC and the African Union Commission led by the AUC Chairperson at a retreat held in April 2014, with further consultations with Chief Executives of Regional Economic Communities (RECs), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), African Development Bank (AfDB), NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) as well as Ministers of Foreign Affairs at the beginning of June 2014. The Commission has commenced regional consultations, with the first one held in collaboration with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Gaborone, Botswana in May; with a target to consult all AU-recognised RECs during the coming months.

The Extraordinary Session of the Conference of Ministers of Trade was held in Addis Ababa on 27-28 April 2014 as directed and made recommendations on the issues identified by the last HATC meeting. The June 2014 HATC meeting is expected to consider the key recommendations from the Extraordinary session of the Conference of

AU Trade Ministers and present their report to the Assembly. In addition, it will assess the progress made on trade integration efforts on the continent and provide its political guidance to the African Union Assembly.

The High Level African Trade Committee is made up of the Chairpersons of the eight (8) Regional Economic Communities i.e. The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CENSAD), the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The current members of the HATC are Chad (Chair of ECCAS and CENSAD), Côte d'Ivoire (Chair of ECOWAS), Ethiopia (Chair of IGAD), Kenya (Chair of EAC), Libya (Chair of AMU), Malawi (Chair of SADC) and Uganda (Chair of COMESA), The African Union is the key institution driving Africa's Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) initiative, with the Department of Trade and Industry having the primary responsibility for the CFTA within the AU Commission.

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