



DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Press Release

The 3rd Continental Free Trade Area Technical Working Groups (CFTA-TWGs) undertake to Move Forward the CFTA Process

Durban, South Africa, 21 August 2017- The African Union Commission is organizing the third Meeting of the Continental Free Trade Area Technical Working Groups (CFTA-TWGs) from 21 August – 01 September 2017 in Durban. The objective of the Meeting is to continue the work that has already been undertaken since the beginning of the CFTA process by providing inputs to the relevant annexes and appendices of the CFTA Agreement for consideration by the CFTA Negotiating Forum.

The meeting is being attended by Delegates from each African Union Member States together with the relevant Experts from the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Representatives from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB).

The Meeting takes into account the first aspiration of the 10-year plan of Agenda 2063 whose objective is to see "A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development". With this in mind, the Meeting focused on fast-tracking the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) by 2017.

In his introductory remarks, Mr. Prudence Sebahizi, Head of the CFTA Unit, on behalf of the Director for Trade and Industry of the African Union Commission, expressed his appreciation to the South African Authorities for having offered to host the Meetings of CFTA Technical Working Groups. Mr. Sebahizi updated the Meeting on recent developments in the CFTA negotiations since the last CFTA Technical Working Groups' Meeting in Nairobi.

He underscored the fact that the AU Ministers of Trade agreed on both modalities for trade in services negotiations and tariff liberalization with a level of ambition of 90%. He reminded the Meeting that AU Ministers of Trade also revised the schedule of meetings to enable Members States conclude the negotiations by December this year in line with the Assembly directive.

The Chief Technical Advisor on the CFTA also shared with participants the decisions made during the 29th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government after a Progress Report presented by H.E. Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of Niger and Champion of the CFTA Process. According to him, among those Decisions, Heads of State and Government called upon AU Member States to undertake nationwide stakeholder sensitization activities so that all citizens of African countries are fully aware and own the process of establishing the Continental Free Trade Area.

Mr. Sebahizi emphasized that the journey before the Meeting is to create one Africa with One Market and One Strong Voice, in line with the vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena". "We owe it to ourselves and future generations to create an integrated market that expands opportunity for our socio-economic progress", he insisted.

While addressing the Meeting, Mr. Chiedu Osakwe, CFTA Chief Negotiator of the Ministry of Trade and Investment of Nigeria and Chair of the Meeting, pointed out that the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area will attract investments from both Africa and the world at large and create employment opportunities for our young people all around the Continent.

The Chairperson recalled the work that has already been undertaken so far by the Technical Work Groups, the Negotiating Forum and the African Union Ministers of Trade and Commended Technical Experts for the advanced stage of the draft Agreement Establishing the Continental Free Trade Area. He urged the Meeting to think strategically and come up with proposals and suggestions that will move forward the CFTA process.

Before he declares the Meeting open Mr. Wamkele Mene, CFTA Chief Negotiator of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) of South Africa expressed his gratitude to the President of Niger for the role that he has been playing so far with regards to the CFTA

Process. He acknowledged the leadership role of the Champion of the CFTA process and thanked him for hosting in Niamey, Niger in June 2017, the third Meeting of the African Union Ministers of Trade. He urged all participants to keep up the Niamey Spirit over the next few days as there is still an outstanding technical work to achieve in order to set up the path that symbolizes significant progress of the CFTA process.

The breakaway Sessions of the CFTA Technical Working Groups on Legal and Institutional Affairs (LIA), Non-Tariffs Barriers and Technical Barriers to Trade (NTBs & TBT), Rules of Origins (RoO) and Trade in Services (TS) will be held from 21st – 25th August 2017. And from 28 August – 1st September 2017 the Sessions of the CFTA Technical Working Groups will be dedicated to Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation (CP&TF), Trade Remedies (TR) and a Dedicated Session of CFTA Chief Negotiators to consider Annex A: Agreement on Trade in Goods.



For further information

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