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Press Release N° /

“The Continental Free Trade Area will contribute to the completion of the architecture of the African Union System (AUS)”, says the Chair of the CFTA Negotiating Forum



Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria – 20 November 2017. The Department of Trade and Industry of the African Union Commission is organizing the 8th Meeting of the Continental Free Trade Area Negotiating Forum (CFTA-NF) from 20-24 November 2017. The objective of the meeting is to consider and finalize recommendations coming from Technical Working Groups and the Dedicated Session on Trade in Goods. The Meeting will also consider the draft texts of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area; the draft Protocol on Trade in Goods; draft Protocol in Trade in Services and their Annexes and Appendices. The Meeting is being attended by Chief Negotiators and Trade experts from AU Member States, Trade Experts from the eight Regional

Economic Communities (RECs) recognised by the AU (CEN-SAD, COMESA, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC and UMA), African Development Bank (AfDB) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

In his opening remarks, the Commissioner for Trade and Industry of the African Union Commission, H.E. Amb. Albert M. Muchanga, thanked the Government and the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for their hospitality and their generosity. He recalled the achievements of the last Session of the CFTA Negotiating Forum in Addis Ababa, in October 2017 and expressed his appreciation for the commitment of the Member States in moving the CFTA forward. Commissioner Muchanga also recorded his appreciation of the contributions made by the Regional Economic Communities and the technical partners throughout the CFTA process; namely, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the African Development Bank. According to the Commissioner for Trade Industry, the African Union vision of creating ‘an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena’ now has a solid foundation of realization with all the work that has been done by the Chief Negotiators since the launch of negotiations in 2016. “With this visible success, we are attracting supporters. The Afro-Champions Club jointly headed by Chairman Aliko Dangote and Former President Thabo Mbeki. The Afro-Champions Club awaits with enthusiasm, the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area. They want to be part of it. It is their number one priority. They are ready to invest in it”, he underlined. Ambassador Muchanga reported that the members of the Pan African Chamber of Commerce and Industry have positioned themselves to invest in the Continental Free Trade Area. Before he concluded, the Commissioner urged the CFTA Negotiating Forum to come up with very clear recommendations to the African Union Ministers of Trade aimed at building momentum towards the consideration of the documents by Ministers of Trade, their adoption by the Assembly and ultimately their signature and ratification by Member States. “You are bringing Africa where she needs to be: determining her future by creating a unified market, a borderless continent for her people, goods and services; line with the dream of Kwame Nkrumah; in line with the dream of the Lagos Plan of Action; and, in line with the dream of the Abuja Treaty, which are all being brought to life through the African Union Agenda 2063 and its Ten-Year Implementation Plan”, he concluded.

In his opening remarks, Amb. Chiedu Osakwe, Nigerian Chief Trade Negotiator and Director-General of Nigerian Office for Trade Negotiations (NOTN) paid tribute to the African Union Commission (AUC) for choosing Nigeria to organize the last round of the CFTA Negotiating Forum. He pointed out that there is a strategic dimension to establishing the African CFTA. According to him, it is much more than a trade agreement. “The CFTA will be about re-organizing the geo-economic landscape of Africa. It is about shedding the inheritance of a divided continent and fragmented markets. It is about robust growth for job creation, modernization of Africa’s economy and relating with the global economy on a surer footing”, he underscored. Ambassador Osakwe highlighted the fact that historically, the CFTA would be the largest Trade Agreement in terms of members and potential since the coming into force of the World Trade Organization (WTO)

Agreement in 1995. “It is headline news that we are on the threshold of this accomplishment and then we shall turn to the Built-in Agenda”, he concluded.

The Senior Trade Officials Meeting will kick off from 26-30 November and be followed by the 4th African Ministers of Trade Meeting from 1-2 December 2017 in Niamey, Republic of Niger.



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