

AFRICAN UNION

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Addis Abeba, 10 April 2019: The Chairperson received the instruments of ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) from the representatives of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia today in Addis Abeba.

Flanked by HE Albert Muchanga, the Commissioner of Trade and Industry whose department is spearheading the flagship AfCFTA process, the Chairperson noted that the ratification by the host country of the African Union Commission was indicative of the commitment of the Ethiopian government and the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in advancing the African integration agenda

The Chairperson further noted that since assuming office, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has taken concrete steps such as the issuance of visas on arrival for citizens from AU member states, as a demonstration of the country's commitment towards the Free Movement of People Protocol as an integral component of the AfCFTA. He further noted the key contribution and leadership that Ethiopia has shown in promoting the Single African Air Transport Market

For his part, Mamo Mihretu Senior Advisor and Chief Trade Negotiator in the Prime Minister's Office, said that his country's ratification was a historical occasion, marking the first ever free trade agreement Ethiopia has ever signed. He further assured the Chairperson that Ethiopia intends to continue playing an active role in the roll-out of the AfCFTA.

Ethiopia is the 19th country to have deposited instruments of ratification. Deposits of ratification are expected from Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and The Gambia whose Parliaments have approved ratification of the AfCFTA Agreement. The Agreement will enter into force one month after receipt of the 22nd instrument of ratification. Currently, the ratification processes are at advanced stages. It is hence expected that more African Union Member States will deposit instruments of ratification by the time the Assembly convenes in July this year in Niamey, Niger.

When operational, the AfCFTA will be the largest free trade bloc in the world.