The regional headquarters of the A-eTrade Group for Southern Africa and West Africa have been awarded to the Kingdom of Eswatini and the Republic of Guinea respectively, two Member States of the African Union.
This announcement is one of the two significant events of the Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU), which was held from July 4 - July 8 2019, in the Niger capital city.

The other major event, which is at the same time unprecedented, is that the Niamey Summit launched the operational phase of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The A-eTrade Group will be on the ground one of the key facilitators of national and regional AfCFTA implementation in order to eventually create a single digital market in Africa

After October 18, 2018, the A-eTrade Group and the African Union Commission (AUC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding, the announcement at the Summit is the second milestone for the AeTrade Group. In December 2018 AU Member States were invited to show their interest in hosting the A-eTrade Group’s continental headquarters and the five regional offices: North Africa, Southern Africa, East Africa, West Africa, and Central Africa.

Fourteen AU Member States expressed their interest. Several of them received the A-eTrade Group’s exploratory missions in their capital at the ministerial level. Each country also responded to a questionnaire specifying the nature and scope of its offer.

Then a high-level committee chaired by the AUC Commissioner for Trade and Industry was convened to review all the offers. At its meeting on 17 June 2019 in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), based on objective criteria, this committee identified the offers submitted by the governments of Eswatini and Guinea as having met those criteria. The A-eTrade Group Board of Directors then approved the committee’s recommendation.

Mr. Mulualem Syoum, CEO of the A-eTrade Group, said:

"Following the signing of October 19, 2018, with the African Union Commission, the announcement of this day marks a new stage in the emergence of the A-eTrade Group as a social enterprise offering a platform for trade and related services across the continent. The group is now ready to start operations. It is extremely exciting to attend the launch of the Group’s digitization of trade activities in Africa at the historic launch of the AfCFTA operational phase. As some say, the AfCFTA is a "digital-born" trade deal. The A-eTrade Group spares no effort for the success of the AfCFTA and intra-African trade. This success will only be possible thanks to the massive participation of SMEs, the youth, and women from all over Africa.

We look forward to finalizing the Headquarters Agreements soon with these two Member States: the Republic of Guinea and the Kingdom of Eswatini."

Ambassador Albert Muchanga, Commissioner for Trade and Industry, congratulated the two countries for their comprehensive submission of the Bid which resulted in the decision by the AeTrade Board to award the opportunity to host the
regional offices. Noting that this project will be championed by the Head of State of the hosting country and implemented by the AeTrade Group, the Commissioner reassured them of the support of the Commission during the implementation of the project.

In Niamey on 7 July 2019, on the sidelines of the AU Extraordinary Summit, His Majesty King Mswati III of Eswatini received an A-eTrade Group delegation led by Mr. Mulualem Syoum. The King expressed his satisfaction that his country has been chosen to host the regional office of the A-eTrade Group for Southern Africa. He promised the delegation the full support of the Kingdom to make the regional office the dynamic hub of Southern Africa region’s digital economy.

"New technologies are a source of growth and jobs," said King Mswati III, "Eswatini’s government is engaged in a program to build several technology parks that will strengthen the kingdom’s capacity to add value in the products and services it trades."

The same July 7, still in Niamey, His Excellency Professor Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, received Mr. Mulualem Syoum, head of the A-eTrade Group delegation. **President Alpha Condé expressed his enthusiasm for Guinea’s choice as the headquarters of the A-eTrade Group for West Africa.**

After thanking the delegation of the A-eTrade Group for that choice, the Guinean Head of State announced that he had created at the Presidency of the Republic of Guinea, a focal leader for the nation’s digital economy. **This leader will be the A-eTrade Group’s direct correspondent. In addition, continued President Conde, the A-eTrade Group will have access to five Guinean ministries in charge of facilitating the activities of the A-eTrade Group not only in Guinea, but in the entire West Africa.**

According to the announcement, the identification of the location of the headquarters and other regional and sub-regional offices of the A-eTrade group will be finalized quickly in the coming months. Any AU Member State that has ratified the AfCFTA may, if it meets the criteria and wins the competition, host any of the remaining A-eTrade Group offices.
NOTE TO EDITORS:

The African e-Trade Group is a social enterprise initiated by a group of African, multi-stakeholder and multi-talented professionals and entrepreneurs. The A-eTrade Group works to empower the African digital economy. This work focuses on a trading platform and capabilities that boost African trade and African exports.

The A-eTrade Group builds alliances between the public and private sectors, to develop new technology projects that offer opportunities and benefits for African entrepreneurs, especially the youth and women.

The A-eTrade Group will use the resources of Artificial Intelligence to modernize the management of SMEs, increase their capacity to innovate, boost their management’s mentality, and raise them to a level of global competition.

The A-eTrade Group will promote, on a large scale, services as well as African agricultural, industrial and craft products in the regional and global markets.
E-commerce or the digital business aspect of the business will have to go hand-in-hand with the e-government agenda that aspires to build smart nations in Africa. This is possible through the widespread use of ICT as a means of continuously improving good governance.

This will, for example, allow the tax authorities to have a transparent tax collection and reporting system, which will also have a better return. That transparency, that better performance, will enhance citizens' trust in the state. Trust is the best foundation for any nation's prosperity.

For more information, please contact Mr. Mulualem Syoum at African e-Commerce Development International (a non-profit component of the A-eTrade group), by e-mail: mulualem@aecdi.org or by phone at +1 (514) 4969-0440.

**Media contacts:**

**Patient Atcho** Department of Trade and Industry – Tel: + 251 929335250 - Email: atchop@africa-union.org and **Esther Azaa Tankou**, Directorate of Information and Communication, AUC Tel. +251 911361185, E-mail: yamboue@africa-union.org

**For further information:** Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: DIC@african-union.org | Web Site: www.au.int | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia

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