

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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IATF a key platform in propelling continental economic transformation - African Heads of State.

The Intra-African Trade Fair (IATF2021) kicked off with spectacular fanfare on 15th November. Under the theme “Building Bridges for a successful AfCFTA”, the fair attracted thousands of visitors at the Durban International Convention Centre on its Opening Day.

In a formidable demonstration of pan-African leadership support for the Intra- African Trade Fair, underscoring its importance and beneficial impact in driving dramatic trade



growth and investment across Africa, its opening ceremony was addressed by seven African Heads of States: H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa, (South Africa); H.E. Muhammadu Buhari, (Nigeria); H.E. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo, Chairman of the Advisory Council of IATF; H.E. Hakainde Hichilema, (Zambia); H.E. Lazarus Chakwera, (Malawi); and H.E. Emmerson Mnangagwa (Zimbabwe).

H.E. Hussein Mwinyi representing H.E. Samia Suluhu Hassan, (Tanzania); and Rt Hon. Edouard Ngirente, (Rwanda Prime Minister), attended the event representing H.E. Paul Kagame.

H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa, declared in his keynote address that South Africa is ready to work with other African countries to drive more balanced, equitable and fair-trade relations for the benefit of the continent. “This Trade Fair is about building bridges. It is about connecting countries. It is about connecting people as well. Now Africa is taking concrete steps to write its own economic success story and this Intra-African Trade Fair is part of that story. Africa is opening up new fields of opportunity” he asserted.

On behalf of the Africa Union Chairperson, H.E. Moussa Faki, the [AU commissioner Economic Development, Trade, Industry and Mining, H.E. Amb. Albert M. Muchanga](#), in his address to delegates at the opening ceremony congratulated the Government of South Africa for hosting the 2nd Intra-African Trade Fair and expressed the importance of the IATF in bringing about economic transformation on the continent, a key catalyst of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) coming into force and subsequently start of trading.

“In collaboration with African Export Import Bank, we have created the Intra Africa Trade Fair (IATF) an All-Africa Trade Fair that is leveraging trade information in boosting intra-African trade and consequently, attaining and sustaining accelerated development which is both inclusive and sustainable... we also have the African Trade Observatory developed with financial support from the European Union and technical assistance from the International Trade Centre. AU Commissioner Muchanga said to demonstrate the great impact of Partnership in the creating of One African market.

In conclusion, H.E Muchanga, invited the delegates the African Union Pavilion to learn about the progress of the Africa Union development blue print, Agenda 2063.

H.E. Mr. Wamkele Mene, Secretary-General of the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat in his speech, said “The next wave of investment in African markets must focus on productive sectors of Africa’s economy in order to drive the continent’s industrial development in the decades to come.”

Addressing the delegates at the ceremony, Prof. Benedict Oramah, President and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Afreximbank, the event’s promoters, said in his opening keynote address that the IATF2021 is a demonstration of Africa’s defiance of the dark clouds gathered by the Covid-19 pandemic, and that, in the words of Ghana’s founding President Kwame Nkrumah, the convergence of Africans to chart the Continent’s trade and investment future, is a departure from the colonialists’ intention of partitioning the Continent along physical boundaries stretching over 87,000km, not for the benefit of Africans, but for their own. Prof. Oramah remarked that “the stimulation of economies isn’t about trade, it’s about job creation and holistic economic recovery backed by political support. It offers a comprehensive solution - it is not just a trade fair.”

The opening ceremony was concluded with the ribbon cutting ceremony of the IATF Exhibition Centre by the host H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa.

The event which runs through to 21st November is expected to close upwards of US\$40billion worth of deals signed and is being attended by over 1,100 entities exhibiting their goods and services to over 10,000 delegates, visitors and buyers from over 95 countries from the continent and beyond.

In recognition of the potential of the youth in the Continent, this year’s event will have a designated youth agenda - [African Youth Startup](#) – where a one stop pavilion will provide information for the youth on necessary business startup knowledge as well as hold their hands. More than 300 youth carefully selected from the whole of Africa are participating in the pavilion because the Youth are the continent’s future for investment trade and development

Of note though are two new initiatives aimed at spurring investment and trade in the continent: The Creative Nexus Africa which focus on the creative industry in line with the [AU 2021 theme of the year under the theme ‘Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want’](#) and automotive forum, having appreciated the role played by the industry in spurring trade and investment.

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