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**Creating One African Market**

**OPENING STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ALBERT M. MUCHANGA  
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSIONER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY  
DELIVERED AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE  
7<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA NEGOTIATING  
FORUM  
HELD IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA ON  
2<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER, 2017**

**Chairperson;**

**Your Excellences Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives;**

**Distinguished Chief Negotiators and Representatives of African Union Member States;**

**Distinguished Representatives of Regional Economic Communities;**

**Distinguished Representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa;**

**Distinguished Representatives of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development;**

**Distinguished Representatives of other International Organizations;**

**African Union Commission Directors and other Members of Staff;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Good morning.

I warmly welcome you all to the Seventh Session of the Negotiating Forum of the Continental Free Trade Area and to the African Union headquarters.

I do so, on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, who sends his greetings and best wishes for this session of the Negotiating Forum.

A special welcome to our technical partners; namely, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

We greatly value your contributions to the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area.

**Chairperson;**

**Chief Negotiators,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

You have made tremendous progress since the start of negotiations to establish the Continental Free Trade Area.

I congratulate you all for the progress attained so far but hasten to add that there is still a lot of work to be done before you finish your historic task.

In the same breath, I express confidence in the good work that you are doing and your capacity to deliver on time and in full.

**Chairperson;**

**Chief Negotiators,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

The test of the success of this session is to build momentum on progress registered so far.

The African Union Ministers of Trade are waiting with anticipation.

Their guiding light is the deadline set by our Heads of State and Government which is December this year.

The larger vision is as defined by the African Union Agenda 2063: to build ‘...an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena’.

This Negotiating Forum and the Ministers of Trade cannot disappoint the African Union Heads of State and Government just as much as you cannot disappoint Africa at large.

You have to do the right thing. And I am confident that you can and will do it.

**Chairperson;**

**Chief Negotiators,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

You have a dynamic foundation to finalize your work and deliver as expected.

From the time that you started the epoch defining negotiations after their launch in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2015, you have negotiated and secured important commitments that can lead us to the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area.

In addition, you have also received valuable inputs from the Technical Working Groups.

The last set of Technical Working Group meetings held in Durban, South Africa towards the end of August and early September this year produced outputs which I am sure will greatly assist you in your important work this week.

I was briefed that all the Technical Working Groups made substantial progress in drafting various pieces of legal texts for your consideration.

I, therefore, urge you to apply your efforts towards adopting the legal framework that would produce desired results and show the rest of the world that Africa is determined in creating her future.

Some observers have commented that Africa is moving faster than anticipated in establishing the Continental Free Trade Area.

Show them you have greater energy to deliver on time and in full.

Some researchers have produced results showing that the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area is premature.

We respect their opinions just as much as we respect our experience and conviction that the future of Africa does not lie in small and isolated economies competing to export the same commodities to the rest of the world. We are convinced that we are doing the right thing for Africa and her people.

Our task is to prove them wrong, guided by our lessons of experience, convictions and resolve.

Let us also prove to ourselves and the rest of the world that the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area is not just overdue, but will open up substantive opportunities for structural transformation of our economies and expanded intra-African trade as well as broad-based prosperity for our people.

**Chairperson;**

**Chief Negotiators,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Against this background, I urge you all to set minimum targets for yourselves for this week in order to sustain the momentum to deliver on time and in full.

In my view, these minimum deliverables should include: coming up with the draft Agreement Establishing the Continental Free Trade Area; the draft Agreement on Trade in Goods, to be referred to as **Annex A**, and the draft Agreement on Trade in Services, to be referred to as **Annex B** to the main draft Agreement.

I count on you to deliver these outputs during the course of this week.

**Chairperson;**

**Chief Negotiators,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

You are fully aware as experts that the draft Agreement on Trade in Goods cannot be adopted and implemented without its appendices. To give an example, we will require Continental Free

Trade Area Rules of Origin which would assist us in attracting investments into the manufacturing sectors across our continent.

The manufacturing sector has the highest potential of boosting intra-African trade and generating decent employment opportunities for our youth. In fact, we are working on a plan to convene a meeting of African National Manufacturers Associations next year to see how we can jointly promote the development of regional value chains as well as use it as the African level platform, in collaboration with our partners, in the implementation of the United Nations resolution on the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa (2016-2025).

Equally important, the main draft Agreement cannot be adopted and implemented in the absence of schedules of commitments for both tariff and services liberalization.

I would like at this stage to also inform you that during the course of your negotiations, the Chairman of the Negotiating Forum will brief you on the political engagements being undertaken to champion the process of establishing the Continental Free Trade Area since the last Negotiating Forum held in June this year in Niamey, Niger.

Let me as well stress that I am expecting at the end of your deliberations, that you will assist me reaffirm my current conviction that the negotiations are on track and on schedule.

You hence have a huge task ahead of you.

**Chairperson;**

**Chief Negotiators,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

The African private sector welcomes your efforts to establish the Continental Free Trade Area. However, what they also want is to see an elaborate Pan-African payments system to facilitate efficient trade in goods and services across the Continent.

We are working with African financial institutions to bring about such a payments system by the time the Continental Free Trade Area starts to operate.

There is, however, no harm in you coming up with a general provision in the Draft Agreement Establishing the Continental Free Trade Area that will commit Africa to creating a payments system that will facilitate timely settlements in trade in goods and services under the Continental Free Trade Area, and in the process, provide a policy incentive to spur increased trade across the Continent.

**Chairperson;**

**Chief Negotiators,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

I would also like to point out that trade in counterfeit goods is becoming a global challenge and is growing.

Africa is not immune from this theft of intellectual property and cultural heritage.

Condemning the counterfeiters is not enough.



We are in this connection, working with young African entrepreneurs to broaden the use of counterfeit tracking technology that they have developed to undermine the profit bases of counterfeiters and also shame them.

Beyond that, we also need to come up with appropriate language in relevant sections of the Draft Agreement Establishing the Continental Free Trade Area or future Annexes that would commit Africa to severely sanction counterfeiters so that they stop profiting from theft.

To the counterfeiters, I say we know you; and we are coming after you. Your days of profiting from theft in Africa are numbered.

**Chairperson;**

**Chief Negotiators,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

You have a lot of work between today and the seventh of this month.

I would like to leave you to get down to work.

But before I do that, let me remind you that there are less than hundred days to the deadline.

I am, however, very hopeful that you will build on the progress attained so far and deliver to the people of Africa and the Assembly of the African Union Heads of State and Government by December this year, a legal instrument establishing the Continental Free Trade Area, with some Annexes.

You are contributing to building the new Africa of opportunity.

You are also defining your place in history in the creation of the future of a united, integrating and prosperous Africa. So far, you are on the right side of history. Keep it that way.

The output of your work will transform African lives for the better.

Africa is watching you with anticipation.

Africa will revere you when you have delivered according to her expectations.

You are almost there.

Make the final push.

You have the capacity.

At the end of this week, you will all be proud of yourselves in your efforts to meet Africa's expectations.

I am proud of you just as much as I have confidence in you.

I know you can and will do the right thing.

**Chairperson;**

**Chief Negotiators,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

It is now my distinct honour and privilege to officially declare open, the Seventh Session of the Continental Free Trade Area Negotiating Forum.

I wish you success in your deliberations.

I look forward to receiving and reviewing your outcome documents, whose minimum set I outlined in earlier sections of this statement.

I thank you all for your kind attention.