



DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

MEDIA ADVISORY

THIRD MEETING OF THE CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA
NEGOTIATING FORUM (CFTA-NF)

INVITATION TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEDIA

- When:** Friday 3-7 October 2016
- Where:** Medium Conference Hall - AU Headquarters, Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia
- Who:** Organised by the Department of Trade and Industry

Objective: The main objective of the Third Meeting of the CFTA Negotiating Forum (CFTA-NF) is to consider and adopt Terms of Reference (TOR) for the remaining Technical Working Groups; and to consider and adopt the Modalities for the CFTA Negotiations in trade in goods and trade in services. The main expected results are therefore adopted Terms of Reference (ToR) for the remaining Technical Working Groups (on Rules of Origin, Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures, Trade Remedies and Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation) as well as an adopted Modalities for the CFTA Negotiations in trade in goods and trade in services.

Participants: The meeting will be attended by Chief Trade Negotiators from all eligible Member States of the African Union. It will also be attended by Trade Officials from the following RECs and institutions; AMU, CEN-SAD, COMESA, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC, UNECA and the African Development Bank.

Background: The 25th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union which was held in Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2015 launched the negotiations for the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA). The launch of the negotiations marked a major milestone in the implementation of the Summit decision to establish a Continental Free Trade Area by 2017. The objective of negotiating the CFTA is to achieve a comprehensive and mutually beneficial trade agreement among the Member States of the African Union. The CFTA Negotiating Forum was established by the Assembly and is composed of Officials from African Union Member States. It has the responsibility of conducting trade negotiations at the technical level and it reports to the Committee of Senior Trade Officials on its negotiation activities. The CFTA Negotiating Forum also has the responsibility of preparing quarterly reports on progress made in the negotiations highlighting areas requiring higher level intervention to the Committee of Senior Officials, Ministers of Trade, the High Level African Trade Committee (HATC) and the Assembly.

To date, two CFTA Negotiating Forum meetings have successfully been conducted. In particular, the Second Meeting of the CFTA Negotiating Forum was organized back to back with the Meeting of Senior Trade Officials and African Ministers of Trade at the Headquarters of the African Union Commission from May 16 – 24, 2016. On this occasion, the Meeting of the African Union Ministers of Trade which was held on May 24, 2016 adopted the Rules of Procedure for the CFTA Negotiating Institutions (TI/CFTA/AMOT/ROP/Final); the Definitions for the CFTA Negotiations Guiding Principles (TI/CFTA/AMOT/1/GP/Final); and subject to adoption of the Modalities, the work plan for the CFTA NF.

Journalists are invited to cover only the Official Opening Session on 3rd October 2016 and the Closing Session on 7th October 2016.

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