



Press Release

The Second Meeting of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) Technical Working Groups (TWGs) discusses the Draft texts of the CFTA Agreement



Nairobi, Kenya – 24 April 2017. The African Union Commission is organizing the Second Meeting of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) Technical Working Groups from 24 April to 5 May 2017 in Nairobi. The objectives of the Meeting are amongst others, to provide inputs to the relevant annexes and appendices of the draft CFTA Agreement for the Negotiating Forum's consideration. It is also to provide the experts

with an overview of the draft legal text and appendices which will be used as inputs to the negotiations. The meeting is being attended by relevant experts, in the technical areas as determined by each African Union Member States together with the relevant experts from the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), other members of the Continental Task Force (CTF) namely, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB).

The meeting takes into account the first aspiration of the 10-year plan of Agenda 2063 whose objective is to see "A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development". With this in mind, the Meeting focused on fast-tracking the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) by the indicative date of 2017. In so doing, the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) focused attention to Trade in Services (TIS), Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBTs), Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures, Rules of Origin (RoO), Legal and Institutional Affairs, Trade Remedies, and Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation.

In his introductory remarks on behalf of Mrs. Treasure Thembisile Maphanga, Director for Trade and Industry of the African Union Commission, Mr. Prudence Sebahizi, Head of the CFTA Unit, expressed the gratitude of the AU Commission to the Government and People of Kenya for hosting this Meeting. He also congratulated Morocco for joining for the first time one of the CFTA Meetings since its readmission as the fifty-fifth African Union Member State. He

underscored the importance of the Technical Working Groups' work during the two weeks and mentioned that the outcomes of the Meeting will allow the negotiating institutions recognized by the Rules of Procedures for CFTA Negotiations, i.e. the Negotiating Forum, the Senior Trade Officials, and African Trade Ministers to reach consensus and have a smooth landing zone. He noted that the AUC Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) continues to be grateful for the technical support it has received from its partners to the CFTA negotiating structures and the overall CFTA negotiation process. According to Mr. Sebahizi, such support will make it possible for the AUC and the Member States to stay on track with the CFTA negotiation process. "We are also encouraged by the offer of the President of Niger to act as the Champion of the CFTA, and are very grateful for his Excellency's offer to host the next meeting of the CFTA Negotiating Institutions in Niamey in early June. It is my sincere hope that his efforts in pushing for the conclusion of the CFTA by the end of the year will bear fruit", he emphasized. The Chief Technical Advisor urged participants to demonstrate their sense of responsibility and to remember that Experts are not negotiating in Technical Working Groups' Meetings but are building text based on technical expertise and good sense for presentation to the Negotiating Forum for their consideration. "All of us bear a great responsibility in this regard and I am sure that we will all be equal to the task, including by keeping the ball rolling in these two weeks of intense discussion, cogitation and intervention" ; he concluded.

The Chair of the Meeting, Mr. Mohamed Samir Mahmoud, General Manager in Rules of Origin Department at the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Egypt, thanked the Commission and the Department of Trade and Industry for the preparation procedures of the Meeting and also welcomed Morocco's Delegation. "I am sure they will learn quickly about the CFTA process and add value to our Meetings", he pointed out. He called on Delegates to show their expertise and work hard to achieve successfully the planned agenda.

The Chief Manager of Exports Management at the Kenya Revenue Authority, Mrs. Ebby Khaguli stressed that Kenya was highly privileged to host this 2nd round of the Technical Working Groups to discuss the opportunities for enhancing Intra-African Trade and Industrialization as part of the Continental Free Trade Area. Before she declared open the Meeting, Mrs. Khaguli wished Delegates success in their deliberations and hoped for early harvest of outcomes on the issues on the table for Expert's intervention.

For further information, please contact **Mr. Prudence Sebahizi, Chief Technical Advisor and Head of the CFTA Unit** - Email: SebahiziP@africa-union.org

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