

**AFRICAN TRADE POLICY CENTRE**  
**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

**Steering Committee meeting**

**16-17 February 2017**

**Walvis Bay, Namibia**

**REPORT**

## 1. Introduction

The African Trade Policy Centre was established in June 2003 as an initiative of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The Centre has evolved to become a leading trade policy research and technical support institution in Africa.

The Centre is currently staffed by three professional and two administrative staff funded through the ECA regular budget, in addition to the Coordinator (Director), a Programme Management Officer, a Communications Assistant and three fellows (two provided through the Centre's collaboration with the Overseas Development Institute and one by the International Organization of la Francophonie) funded through extrabudgetary resources.

The first two phases of the Centre (ATPC I and ATPC II) both spanned a period of five years, running from 2003-2008 and 2008-2013, respectively. The period 2014-2015 was preparatory to the launch of the third and current phase (ATPC III), which was formally launched in February 2016. ATPC III is focused on boosting intra-African trade, a priority initiative of the African Union targeting increased trade flows among African countries.

To that end, the Centre's work is aimed at enhancing the capacity of member States and regional economic communities to develop and implement policies and programmes on intra-African trade and Africa's international trade. This is achieved through policy research, advisory services and capacity development activities in support of the efforts of member States, the regional economic communities and the African Union Commission.

In preparation for the Steering Committee meeting, the Centre held a retreat on 25 and 26 January 2017 in Hawassa, Ethiopia. The retreat was attended by the Centre's staff and representatives of various collaborating ECA divisions and sections. It provided an opportunity to review the progress made by the Centre during 2016 and to consider and agree on planned activities for 2017.

Following the retreat, the Centre's work programme and budget was finalized for presentation at the Steering Committee meeting on 16 and 17 February 2017 in Walvis Bay, Namibia. As an oversight body in the Centre's governance, the meeting provided a platform to discuss the Centre's 2016 annual report, the 2017 work programme and budget and the preliminary results of the ATPC II evaluation process that is in progress.

The Steering Committee meeting was hosted by the Walvis Bay Corridor Group and was attended by representatives of ECA, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, regional economic communities, the Global Affairs Canada Trade Policy Training Centre in Africa, the Walvis Bay Corridor Group, the University of Ibadan, the Pan African Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the African Centre for Trade, Integration and Development, the Africa Export-Import Bank, the Overseas Development Institute, the Trade Law Centre for Southern Africa and the Centre for Trade Policy and Law. (A list of meeting participants can be found in the annex to this report.)

This report provides a summary of the main issues and recommendations arising from the discussion at the meeting. The recommendations are highlighted in bold. The report follows the ordering of the agenda of the meeting.

## 2. Opening session

Johny Smith, Interim Chair of the African Corridor Management Alliance and Chief Executive Officer of the Walvis Bay Corridor Group, welcomed all participants to Walvis Bay, the small port city in Namibia that he said was proud to be part of the ECA map. He thanked ECA and the Centre for their support for African corridor initiatives and the African Corridor Management Alliance project, which was formally inaugurated as an institution just prior to the Steering Committee meeting from 13 to 15 February in Walvis Bay. He concluded by wishing meeting participants fruitful and exciting deliberations.

In his introductory remarks, David Luke, the Centre's Coordinator, provided an overview of the objectives of the meeting, namely, to review the Centre's progress during 2016 and to approve the 2017 work programme and budget. He emphasized the role of the Steering Committee meeting as an important part of the Centre's governance to ensure accountability to African stakeholders and all partners. He thanked Global Affairs Canada for its support of the Centre's work and the Overseas Development Institute and the International Organization of la Francophonie for their contribution of three excellent trade policy fellows. It was emphasized that those and other relationships and partnerships were central to the Centre's achievements,

Stephane Duval, Vice-Chair of the Steering Committee and a First Secretary at Global Affairs Canada, thanked all participants for attending the meeting. He noted that he was impressed by the emphasis at the recent Africa Trade Week (jointly organized by the Centre and the African Union Commission in December 2016) on the Continental Free Trade Area as an important tool for economic transformation and inclusive growth. He informed the meeting that Canada was seeking to establish a progressive trade agenda focused on least developed countries and emerging markets and was particularly interested in trade policy issues relating to women, young people, energy and climate change. He concluded by emphasizing that Canada was a committed partner in Africa's development.

The officer-in-charge of the Regional Integration and Trade Division, Stephen Karingi, thanked Global Affairs Canada for its support and recognition of trade as a key driver of Africa's development since the inception of the Centre. He acknowledged the great leadership provided by the Centre's Coordinator, the hard work of the Centre's team and collaboration with the ECA subregional offices, noting that two subregional office directors were present. Moving forward, he recognized the need for the Centre to help to support African negotiators to ensure an inclusive Continental Free Trade Area process and for continued institution-building and partnership-building.

Chiza Charles Newton Chiumya, a customs expert at the African Union Commission Department for Trade and Industry who chaired the Steering Committee meeting on behalf of the African Union Trade and Industry Commissioner (who was unable to attend), delivered the keynote address on behalf of the Commissioner. He began by emphasizing the Commission's appreciation of its relationship with ECA, in particular the Centre. The Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade initiative and the Continental Free Trade Area were highlighted as huge projects assigned to the Commission by African Heads of State, which could not be delivered without the technical support of the Centre. He noted that with the Continental Free Trade Area negotiations now in progress, the emphasis of the Commission's partnership with ECA would need to shift to implementation of the initiative going forward. The Chair concluded by thanking all the Centre's partners present who had helped to support the Commission's trade agenda and specifically recognized the support of Global Affairs Canada and the Overseas Development Institute support to the Centre.

The session concluded with introductions by participants and the adoption of the agenda for the meeting.

### **3. Overview of the African Trade Policy Centre's 2016 work programme and operations**

The Centre's Coordinator delivered a presentation on the implementation of the Centre's 2016 work programme and operations. (The presentation can be found in the annex). He noted that, upon reflection, the Centre had chosen not to deliver on two major outputs included in the current agreement with Global Affairs Canada, namely, agricultural trade information systems and the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade. The reason for that shift was to avoid duplicating the work of the Geneva-based International Trade Centre, which had become established as the leader in trade information systems. With regard to the Action Plan, he maintained that it was illogical to focus on its preparation, with no resources provided to the partners to implement them. Rather, he had positioned the Centre systematically to monitor and evaluate the ongoing activities of the regional economic communities in implementing the Action Plan's clusters. This approach will generate much-needed information on and evidence of, among other things, achievements on the ground, gaps and constraints in order to target remedial action.

It was noted that the 2016 annual report was not a performance-based report. It focused instead on outputs and activities, in line with ECA corporate requirements for annual reports.

In the discussion following the presentation, concerns were raised on both the financial and human resources that were available to the Centre. It was noted that staffing from the regular budget did not provide for optimal capacity within the Centre, which currently lacked no senior-level P-4/ P-5 posts and had only mid-career and entry-level P-3 and P-2 posts. The Centre's Coordinator pointed out that Canadian funds were being used to scale up activities rather than create additional posts, and that this should continue. He was of the view that ECA should demonstrate its commitment to the Centre by providing a senior-level post from its regular budget.

Notwithstanding the existing staff and resource constraints, the Centre was commended for the excellent research produced and contribution to building Africa's trade policy capacity. Solutions to the Centre's capacity problems were recommended, including:

- **Drawing more on existing partnerships** (e.g., the Overseas Development Institute, the Trade Law Centre for Southern Africa, the Centre for Trade Policy and Law, the African Union Commission and regional economic communities) and **establishing new collaborative relationships** with other potential partners such as the African Centre for Trade, Integration and Development in Dakar and the Trade Policy Centre at the University of Ibadan.
- **Strengthening collaboration with other ECA divisions and sections in the Regional Integration and Trade Division.** A good example of this is the existing collaboration between the Capacity Development Division and the Centre on the Continental Free Trade Area and industrialization.
- The need for the **Executive Secretary of ECA to use her authority to reallocate resources/posts to create additional capacity at the P-4 or P-5 level within the Centre.** This could serve as a temporary solution in the face of the existing freeze in the United Nations on the creation of new posts.

- **Taking advantage of the new ECA fellowship policy** that is being overseen by the Capacity Development Division.
- The Centre was praised for the significant progress made in its work with African corridor management institutions, highlighted by the inauguration of African Corridor Management Alliance. In this context, participants called for greater links between the Centre and the Alliance in supporting corridors in Central Africa, which are currently in a rudimentary state of development.

The Vice-Chair congratulated the Centre for its impressive work during 2016 but cautioned that the dropping of activities in the Centre's 2016 work programme, such as the establishment of agriculture information systems and the preparation of the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade, would need further discussion and deliberation before it could be formalized.

#### **4. Presentation of 2016 results according to result area**

The results of the Centre's 2016 work programme were presented according to result area by the Centre's staff: Simon Mevel, Heini Suominen, William Davis and Senait Afework. The performance of each work programme activity was assessed using the following colour code: green (successfully completed), orange (ongoing) and red (not completed). (The presentation is attached in the annex.).

In the discussion that followed, the following was advised:

- **Research papers should be transformed into policy briefs** to improve the dissemination and uptake of the Centre's research.
- **The above should be prepared and disseminated in both English and French.**
- **The Centre should organize more policy dialogues to discuss the outcomes and subsequent adoption of its research findings.** It should draw on the Capacity Development Division's resources for this, given that policy dialogue is one of the modalities of Division's operations.
- **The Centre should strengthen its knowledge delivery platforms.** The proposed revitalization of the Centre's African Trade and Regional Integration portal will help to facilitate this by serving as a one-stop shop for ECA knowledge products on trade and regional integration.

The Centre was commended for the success of the Africa Trade Week, jointly organized with the African Union Commission and held in Addis Ababa in December 2016. Concerns were raised, however, on existing fault lines between the ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa and what happens at the subregional level. It was recommended that the Centre:

- **Should replicate the Africa Trade Week at the subregional level.** The Southern Africa Subregional Office plans to hold a Committee of Experts meeting in June 2017, which could serve as a possible platform for this. A subregional Africa Trade Week could help to provide feedback on the needs and challenges of subregional stakeholders.
- **Should systematically work with regional economic communities.** The subregional offices currently have strong relationships with the trade and investment departments of regional economic communities, which the Centre

should leverage for that purpose. The Centre should also organize a scoping exercise with these communities to present what it is currently doing and brainstorm on how this can be strengthened and better tailored to respond to the communities' needs.

In the discussion, it was further noted that the Centre did not have a “theory of change” in place. It was suggested that this was needed to help to improve the prioritization and sequencing of the Centre’s activities. The lack of a story or narrative to the Centre’s work was also highlighted. In this regard, it was recommended that:

- **The Centre should develop a “clear” theory of change.** The Centre already has a built-in or implicit theory of change relating to core activities that it believes can provide important insights into how it can leverage positive change in other contexts, but this should be made explicit. Specific emphasis should be attached to explaining how activities contribute to outcomes and impacts.
- **The Centre should create a narrative to support its work programme and make explicit the linkages between various results areas and activities, with specific emphasis on their contribution to boosting intra-African trade.** This would help to highlight the important connections between the Centre’s work on Africa’s participation in global trade and intra-African trade. Although the Centre’s niche is intra-African trade, it is important to continue to capture the global dimension, given that intra-African trade is informed by the global context.

Lastly, it was noted at the meeting that, to advance Africa’s agenda, it was important for the Centre’s staff to include more French speakers, noting that two members of the Centre’s staff are fully proficient in French and three members have conversational-level proficiency. The Centre was encouraged to:

- **Continue to ensure that the Centre’s staff had strong language skills in both English and French;**
- **Continue its programme with the International Organization of la Francophonie, which, during 2016, supported the placement of a French-speaking fellow at the Centre.**

## **5. 2016 financial report**

The 2016 financial report was presented by Batanai Chikwene, the Centre’s Programme Management Officer (see annex).

In the discussion that followed, the Vice-Chair questioned why \$184,000 of travel costs were unliquidated. The Centre’s staff provided two reasons for this: some travel expense reports for 2016 were still to be closed and therefore still showed as unliquidated and travel expenditure items were usually overestimated in the budget owing to the unpredictability of some requests that are made to the Centre by member States and partners requiring quick responses. The Centre’s Coordinator also emphasized that staff travel was only a small component of the total travel budget, which reflected in large part the costs of sponsoring participants to attend events such as the Africa Trade Week.

## 6. Presentation of the African Trade Policy Centre's 2017 work programme/result matrix

The following four presentations (see annex) were delivered as part of this session:

- (a) Presentation by the Centre's staff (Simon Mevel, Heini Suominen, William Davis and Senait Afework) on the Centre's 2017 Work Programme by results area;
- (b) Presentation by the Centre's Programme Management Officer, on the proposed performance management framework to be adopted for ATPC III;
- (c) Teleconference presentation by Ahmed Al-Awah, Unit Head of Knowledge Section at the ECA Public Information and Knowledge Management Division, on the African Trade and Regional Integration portal;
- (d) Presentation by Rosemina Naidoo, Centre for Trade Policy and Law Associate, on a collaborative project between the Centre and her organization to document the history of the Continental Free Trade Area and preserve key documents regarding it.

These presentations were followed by a general discussion. It was noted that the Centre was faced with planning challenges, given that it operates in a dynamic environment within a demand-driven organization. Two important dimensions to this were identified, namely, that trade policy is dynamic and that the Centre is faced with ad hoc requests from African Union member States and partners. In this context, it was recommended that the Centre:

- **Should ensure timely responses to new developments and incorporate them into the Centre's research agenda** to ensure ongoing relevance of its research.
- **Should allow for flexibility in its research programme.** In particular, it was recommended that the Centre's work on the implications for Africa of mega-regional trade agreements should now be phased out in the light of the collapse of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership agreements and that Africa's post-Brexit relationship with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland should be given more attention. Other key emerging trade issues highlighted included the increasing appetite for protectionism and trade digitalization, including e-commerce.
- **Should repackage some of its excellent work to make it relevant** in the context of a rapidly changing global trade environment.
- **Should adopt a multi-year planning strategy.** This will help the Centre to focus and prioritize activities and serve as a vehicle for resource mobilization.

It was highlighted that activities and results areas should be demand-driven to maximize the positive beneficiary impact. It was suggested that:

- **Member States should be supported through capacity-building so that they can better identify their needs and capacity gaps.** It was noted that there was a specific need to interface with more disadvantaged member States.

It was also highlighted at the meeting that there was a need for the Centre to strengthen its support for African research institutions on trade policy, given that trade policy expertise on the continent was limited. It was recommended that the Centre:

- **Provide support for student scholarships on trade at African universities.**
- **Continue to establish partnerships with African universities and training institutes**, similar to those in Nigeria, Senegal and the United Republic of Tanzania.

It was noted that recent events such as Brexit and the election of Donald Trump as the President of the United States of America had highlighted the need for an inclusive globalization process. It was suggested that the Centre should prioritize work on inclusive globalization by:

- **Providing support for African negotiations** to ensure that Africa receives a fair share of the gains from globalization.
- **Continuing to analyse the poverty and human rights impacts of the Continental Free Trade Area and other trade agreements** to which African countries are parties and engage with civil society.
- **Working with the Overseas Development Institute and the United Kingdom's Department for Industry and Trade on designing a pro-African post-Brexit trade relationship with the country.**

The Vice-Chair highlighted energy as an important and emerging sector in trade and development. Canada has committed \$150 million to renewable energy projects in Africa. He also praised the Centre for reflecting emerging priorities on gender, young people and climate change in the work programme. It was recommended that the Centre should:

- **Reflect trade-related energy issues in its work programme**, in particular relating to the Centre's existing work on trade and climate change, and using the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade and the Continental Free Trade Area as drivers of industrialization.
- **Initiate a dialogue with the ECA sections and divisions that contributed to the African renewable energy project** housed at AfDB and supported by Canada. This will allow Centre to leverage in-house capacities on renewable energy rather than reinvent the wheel.
- **Explore avenues of further collaboration with ECA to support the Department of Infrastructure and Energy at the African Union Commission** in the area of intra-African electricity trade across borders.
- **Continue to incorporate important emerging priorities such as gender and young people into its work.**

It was observed by the Vice-Chair, however, that the absence of a performance monitoring framework for ATPC III was a key consideration for approving the 2017 budget and work programme. It was recommended that:

- **The Centre's annual report should include the impact of its activities, in particular in relation to the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade and Continental Free Trade Area agendas.** This is of special importance for accountability under the Canada grant agreement.
- **A comprehensive performance management framework should be included as an annex to the Centre's annual reports from 2017 onward.**

- **The Centre should explore relevant data and key performance indicators developed as ECA corporate tools** (mainly the dashboard) and identify those of relevance to the Centre's performance management framework, rather than reinvent the wheel.
- **The Centre's staff should take part in a results-based management training workshop** to sharpen skills in programme performance management and reporting.
- It was also suggested at the meeting that there was a need for an overarching strategic focus for the 2017 work programme. This would help to provide a storyline for 2017 and better link various results areas and activities. Concerns were raised that too much focus had been attached to Africa's participation in global trade in the work programme. On that topic, the Centre's Coordinator responded that the Centre's niche was clearly in intra-African trade. The reason for also analysing Africa's trade with other partners was because intra-African trade is informed by the global context, with much at stake, including policy space in international trade rules for development initiatives. Intra-African trade should not be viewed in isolation. It was suggested that the narrative of the Centre's story be strengthened when it revises its 2016 annual report and 2017 work programme.

## **7. Overview of the African Trade Policy Centre 2017 budget**

The 2017 budget was presented by the Centre's Programme Management Officer (see annex).

The Vice-Chair proposed the adoption of the 2017 budget and work programme on the understanding that the Centre would provide a supportive narrative on the linkages between activities and boosting intra-African trade.

The 2017 work programme and Budget were formally adopted subject to the recommended revisions.

## **8. Update on the evaluation of ATPC II**

Eskeदार Nega, Chief of the Evaluation Section of ECA, provided the background to the rationale for the evaluation of ATPC II, which ran during the period 2008-2013. She informed the meeting that the evaluation was being conducted as a corporate requirement in the context of a number of management decisions that put evaluation at the core of ECA practices. The ECA corporate evaluation policy required that all projects and programmes that receive more than \$1 million in funding must be systematically evaluated and that all other projects must be evaluated at least once in their life cycle. She also emphasized the importance of evaluation for informing improvements in operational effectiveness. It was also noted that the evaluation of ATPC II was a collaborative effort whereby the Evaluation Section worked closely with the Centre's team to identify the scope and evaluation parameters.

Kassem El-Saddik, independent consultant and Team Leader for the ATPC II evaluation, presented the preliminary findings of the evaluation, which covered the period 2008-2014/15 (including the transition to ATPC III). He informed the meeting that the evaluation team was midway through the evaluation, so the findings were not yet conclusive. The team expected the evaluation to be completed by mid-April. A number of limitations were identified, including that the evaluation was taking place three years after the end of the ATPC

II programme cycle in 2013, that there had been delays in the sharing of some of the relevant documentation needed to inform the evaluation and that there was a lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation reporting mechanisms internal to the Centre. He emphasized that the preliminary findings had captured both intended and unintended outcomes, which highlighted the ability of the Centre to adapt to emerging events and requests from member States. Preliminary findings also indicated that the sustainability of the Centre was an issue due to its heavy reliance on external funds, as was staff mobility due to the limited job security provided in such a context. (The presentation is included in the annex.).

In the discussion that followed, the work and rigorous methodology adopted by the ATPC II evaluation team was praised. It was noted that the evaluation results should be used as an important learning instrument for the Centre and ECA. It was recommended that:

- **The ATPC II evaluation findings should be internalized into existing frameworks and business processes and inform the design of a clear theory of change for the Centre.**

It was also recognized at the meeting that what came out clearly from the evaluation's preliminary results was that the Centre's strength had always been in the area of research and publications. The Centre's Coordinator emphasized that, as a trade policy think tank, that was something that the Centre was continuing to prioritize and build upon.

## **9. Other business**

Lily Sommer, Trade Policy Fellow at the Centre, provided a summary of the main recommendations of the meeting followed by a general discussion.

## **10. Closing session**

Brief closing remarks were made by the Centre's Coordinator, the Vice-Chair, the officer-in-charge of the Regional Integration and Trade Division and the Chair. All participants were thanked for their active involvement and participation in the Steering Committee meeting. It was agreed that a number of very useful recommendations had emerged from the discussions, which would help to feed into the improved performance of the Centre. The Vice-Chair indicated that Global Affairs Canada would consider making additional funds available for an expert to monitor the trade and gender programmes of the regional economic communities. The Chair concluded that the meeting had achieved its objectives and suggested that the Centre review all recommendations for incorporation into its work.

The meeting was formally closed.

## Annex

### A. List of participants

African Trade Policy Centre Steering Committee meeting

16-17 February 2017

Walvis Bay, Namibia

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## **B. Presentations**

All the presentations made during 2017 Steering Committee meeting are annexed to this report, namely:

1. Overview of the Centre's 2016 work programme and operations
2. 2016 results according to result area
3. Financial report
4. The Centre's 2017 work programme/result matrix

5. Performance measurement framework of ATPC III
6. Special project in collaboration with the Centre for Trade Policy and Law to document the Continental Free Trade Area substantive provisions and process and preserve key documents regarding it
7. Overview of the Centre's 2017 budget
8. Update on the evaluation of ATPC II

### **C. Background documents**

All the background documents that were referenced during the 2017 Steering Committee meeting are annexed to this report, namely:

1. Programme of the Steering Committee Meeting
  2. The Centre's 2016 annual report
  3. The Centre's 2017 work programme and results matrix
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