



ECA KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT DIGEST

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*Contributions of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
towards the realisation of a continent-wide Market:
The African Continental Free Trade Area*

*Resolutions on Trade Integration adopted by the Conference of African
Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (1958 - 2019)*



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Preface

The Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is the realisation of a vision and an ambition for a single African market which was birthed in the immediate post-colonial period even before many countries attained independence, and before the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (now African Union) in 1963. In this era when African countries sought to assert their political and economic independence, the ECA enabled the regular convening of the political leadership of the continent to address the economic aspirations and challenges of the continent. The role of intra-African trade as a critical component, driver and outcome of economic development is articulated in the resolutions which emanated from the annual ECA Conference of Ministers.

In 1961, the Conference of Ministers pointed to the “unanimity of opinion among African Governments on the need for an African common market”. The role of trade as a driver of economic development was emphasised in a 1964 meeting which highlighted the opportunity in intra-African trade to generate the capital required for investment within national economies. A decade later in 1977, intra-continental trade negotiations were foreseen and expected to commence in 1978. Again in 1984, the Conference of Ministers envisaged the establishment of an African common market in 1990. This was not realized but concrete progress was manifested in the creation of sub-regional economic groups, e.g., the Economic Community of West African States (1975), the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa (1981) and the Economic Community of Central African States (1983) on the basis of trade treaties enabling the free flow of people, goods, services and investment. The AfCFTA is now being formed on the prevailing *acquis* of regional economic communities, consolidating progress achieved and drawing from lessons learned.

Fast forward to 2018 when the Conference of Ministers requested that the ECA continue to provide technical support to the African Union Commission and its member States towards the negotiations of the AfCFTA and the development of national AfCFTA implementation strategies. ECA, as the regional body of the United Nations continues to collaborate with countries, regional economic communities, the African Union and international institutions towards the deepening of intra-African trade, and continental economic integration.

The *ECA Knowledge Management Digest* is a series that highlights new developments in the area of Knowledge Management and Library services of the Commission. This volume is a contribution from ECA’s Knowledge repository and draws from its institutional memory in the delivery of its functions as a think-tank providing evidence-based policy recommendations and technical assistance.

Resolutions

Resolutions adopted by the Commission at its Fiftieth meeting of the Third Session (1961)

30 (III). Monetary and financial studies

The Economic Commission for Africa,

Having discussed the report on the impact of western European economic integration on African trade and development (E/CN.14/72 and Corr.1 and 2 and Add. 1).

Recognizing the importance of promoting intra-African trade and economic cooperation,

Recalling its resolution 8(II) of 2 February 1960 regarding the promotion of intra-African trade,

Noting with satisfaction the success achieved by the secretariat in studying vital issues related to African trade,

Realizing the extreme importance of the various monetary zones and systems in Africa in relation to intra-African trade,

1. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to carry out a thorough appraisal and analysis of the various monetary systems used in Africa with reference to their impact on intra-African trade in particular and on problems of African economic development in general and to submit the above-mentioned study to the Commission as soon as possible;
2. *Invites* all member Governments to cooperate fully with the Executive Secretary in carrying out the provisions of the present resolution.

Resolutions adopted by the Commission at its Ninety Fifth meeting of the Fifth Session (1963)

86 (V). African common market

The Economic Commission for Africa,

Having considered the report of the Standing Committee on Trade on its first session (E/CN.14/174 and Corr.1 and Add. 1 and 2) and the report of the Working Party of the Whole of the Standing Committee on Industry and Natural Resources (E/CN.14/192 and Corr.1 and Add.1),

Noting the unanimity of opinion among African Governments on the need for an African common market,

Considering however that such a common market cannot be established until numerous detailed arrangements for customs, differing monetary systems, finance, transport, legislation and other relevant matters have been made,

Recognizing the need for further work by the secretariat on the promotion of subregional trade, in particular of the products particularly mentioned by the Standing Committee on Trade and in the report of the Working Party of the Whole of the Standing Committee on Industry and Natural resources,

1. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to undertake intensive studies on the major problems of an African common market, having particular regard to the balanced integration of economic development in the various African countries, and at the same time to submit to African Governments a preliminary paper on the solution of such problems, for the possible guidance of the Conference of Heads of States and Governments of the African countries to take place in May 1963;
2. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to lend the support of all the technical facilities of the secretariat to whatever body African Governments might set up to examine the question of an African common market;
3. *Calls upon* all the African Governments to lend their fullest support to this work, so that an African common market may be realized in the shortest possible time.

Resolutions adopted by the Commission at its One Hundred Eleventh meeting of the Sixth Session (1964)

95 (VI). African payments union

The Economic Commission for Africa,

Recalling resolution 87 (V) of 2 March 1963 relating to a study of the possibilities of establishing a clearing system within a payments union between African countries,

Having noted with great interest the report of the Group of Experts on an African payments union (E/CN.14/262), as well as the report of Professor Triffin, the great merits of which it has recognized,

Observing that these documents review all the possibilities for developing monetary institutions in the African States with a view to their final integration in a single organization in accordance with a rationally synchronized time-table,

Considering that a development of this kind must:

- (a) Proceed in step with the progress of the economic integration of the African continent and, as a consequence, be linked with the progress of the harmonization of the other sectors such as development plans and the systems of trade within an African common market;
- (b) Take into account the present importance and future development of economic and financial relationships between the African States and the other parts of the world;

Determined to avoid dispersal of resources and duplication of effort, particularly in the collection and utilization of information and in the training of senior staff,

Taking cognizance of the accession of nearly all African countries to the International Monetary Fund and of the resulting obligations of these countries,

1. *Congratulates* the Executive Secretary on the diligence with which he has undertaken the study called for by resolution 87 (V) and on the care with which he has carried out his investigations in the various countries and assembled the information and statistics he needed in order to distinguish the essential facts of the question on the basis of the particular situation of each State;
2. *Expresses the hope* that those Governments which have not yet replied to the Executive Secretary's inquiry, or who have replied incompletely, will supply to the secretariat of the Commission the particulars for which they were asked;
3. *Invites* the Executive Secretary to prepare, on the basis of the information thus collected, a complete and accurate survey showing their monetary institutions, the difficulties experienced in effecting their financial settlements, both between each other and with outside countries, and the means of remedying the situation;
4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to communicate a summary of these documents to member States and, at the same time, the results of the inquiry called for by the Commission's resolution 30 (III), of 16 February 1961;
5. *Invites* the Governments of member States to take into consideration without delay the proposal of the Group of Experts to convene periodically the high monetary authorities of the African States;
6. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to arrange for a first meeting of all African governmental monetary authorities in 1964, in order to submit to them the studies and conclusions reached in the course of the secretariat's work; this first meeting might be preceded by a preparatory meeting of experts delegated by African Governments and by governmental and intergovernmental organizations specializing in African monetary questions;

7. *Requests* the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund, to investigate methods of Collecting, utilizing and disseminating any information and studies on the economic and financial situation, both international and African, that may be valuable in contributing to the solution of African payments problems;
8. *Hopes* that the International Monetary Fund will give special consideration to the particular requirements of its Africa members in the framework of its programme for staff specializing in monetary and financial problems;
9. *Asks* the Executive Secretary to undertake, as part of the studies on the harmonization of the programmes for developing and intensifying intra-African trade, a study on the possibilities of overcoming obstacles to progress in these fields resulting from payment difficulties between African countries, taking into consideration the proposals contained in the report of the Group of Experts (E/CN.14/262, paras. 23 to 28) relating to the establishment of a clearing union.

98 (VI). Economic development of Africa

The Economic Commission for Africa,

Recalling the objectives of the United Nations development Decade, as set forth in General Assembly resolution 1710 (XVI) of 19 December 1961 which states that "Member States and their peoples will intensify their efforts to mobilize and to sustain support for the measures required on the part of both developed and developing countries to accelerate progress towards self-sustaining growth of the economy of the individual nations and their social advancement so as to attain in each underdeveloped country a substantial increase in the rate of growth",

Taking into account the desire expressed by African countries for the establishment of an African common market and the efforts made for that purpose by the Executive Secretary, with the aim, in particular, of promoting intra-African trade,

Bearing in mind the importance of trade as a means of promoting economic development and the need to encourage Africans to engage in such trade with the object of accumulating as quickly as possible the capital necessary for investment in their respective countries,

1. *Calls on* all its members and associate members to consider, as a matter of urgency, measures, including legislation where appropriate, which will ensure the full and complete participation of Africans in the wholesale and retail trade of their respective countries;
2. *Decides* that, in order to facilitate the achievement of the above purpose, member and associate member States of the Commission should establish as quickly as possible in their

respective countries a chain of indigenous commercial banks with the aim of granting sufficient credit and giving encouragement to Africans engaged in trade;

3. *Requests* Governments of member and associate member States to inform the Executive Secretary of the results achieved in pursuance of this resolution and requests the Executive Secretary to report to it accordingly at its seventh session.

100 (VI). African common market

The Economic Commission for Africa,

Recalling its resolution 86 (V) of 2 March 1963 whereby it requested the Executive Secretary "to undertake intensive studies on the major problems of an African common market, having particular regard to the balanced integration of economic development in the various African countries",

Noting that the basic document regarding the creation of an African common market (E/CN.I4/STC/20 and Add.1-2 and Add.2/Corr.1) submitted by the secretariat to the Standing Committee on Trade is, as stated in its introductory remarks, merely, "a modest first response to this resolution", and that the same report states in paragraph 97 that "information on quantitative restrictions applied by African countries is scarce and difficult to analyze",

Considering that the study of such restrictions, the reason for their existence and the possibilities of removing them, is an essential part of a study of the possibilities of establishing an African common market,

Recognizing that the study of the possibilities and methods of harmonizing development plans is still in the exploratory stage,

Noting that the reports submitted to it do not deal fully with the effects of the establishment of an African common market on the revenues of African States, which for the time being are to a large extent derived from import and export duties.

1. *Notes with appreciation* the work already done by the Executive Secretary and his staff for promoting the establishment of an African common market;
2. *Endorses* the programme of action outlined in document E/CN.14/261 and Corr.1 in respect of the African common market and customs tariffs, and requests the Executive Secretary to report to it at its seventh session on the progress achieved;
3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to give his special consideration to:

- (a) Quantitative restrictions at present imposed on the movement of goods between African States and the possibilities of removing them;
- (b) Possibilities of increasing trade between African States by a fair distribution of productive activities, in particular of industries processing the natural resources special to each State;
- (c) Means of ensuring an equitable distribution between the African States of the taxes imposed on those industries the outlets for which would be expanded as a result of the African common market, so as to compensate for any eventual loss in revenue suffered by States which replace imports from outside Africa by imports of African goods;
- (d) Progress made in monetary cooperation between African States on the basis of the results of the periodical meetings of high African monetary authorities.

Resolutions adopted by the Commission at its One Hundred Twenty Sixth meeting of the Seventh Session (1965)

142 (VII). Economic integration

The Economic Commission for Africa,

Recalling its resolutions 86 (V) of 2 March 1963 and 100 (VI) of 28 February 1964 on economic integration in Africa,

Noting the statement of the Executive Secretary on Economic Integration in Africa (E/CN.14/L.273), the report by the Chairman of the sixth session of the Commission (E/CN.14/L.223) and the document on the setting-up of working parties (E/CN.14/L.244),

Noting the resolution of the Summit Conference of the Independent African States, held at Addis Ababa in 1963, on the establishment of a free trade area, a payments union and clearing system and a common external tariff on Africa, as well as the relevant decisions of the Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the Organization of African Unity,

Inspired by the acceptance by both developed and developing countries, of General Principle Ten of the Final Act of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development held in Geneva in 1964, Which supports the promotion of economic integration among developing countries,

Noting the declarations of member States during the session on the need for concrete steps to be taken towards the desired goal of economic integration in Africa,

Conscious of the notable efforts which have been made towards economic cooperation in Africa, at both the regional and subregional levels, most especially the East African Common Market; the Senegal, the Niger and Chad Basin Commissions; the economic cooperation institutions of the Maghreb countries; the Equatorial Africa Customs Union and the conference on Industrial Coordination in West Africa, held in Bamako,

Bearing in mind the establishment of the African Development Bank and the Institute for Economic Development and Planning as important institutions for economic integration,

Convinced that the setting-up of an institutional framework for economic integration will accelerate the attainment of the objective of an African Common Market,

1. *Recommends* to the member States to set up at an early date, at the subregional level, intergovernmental machinery responsible for the harmonization of economic and social development in the subregion, taking into account the experience of similar institutional arrangements inside and outside Africa;
2. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to provide, as early as possible, the necessary assistance for the establishment of the intergovernmental machinery at the invitation of the Governments;
3. *Recommends* that intergovernmental consultations should be undertaken as soon as possible, so that within the next six months the appropriate machinery could be set up;
4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to report on the progress made in the implementation of this resolution at the next session.

Resolutions adopted by the Commission at its One Hundred Ninety First meeting of the Eighth Session (1977)

296 (XIII). Economic cooperation

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling that the terms of reference of the Commission require it to "initiate and participate in measures for facilitating concerted action for the economic development of Africa, including its social aspects, with a view to raising the level of economic activity and levels of living in Africa, and for maintaining and strengthening the economic relations of countries and territories of Africa, both among themselves and with other countries of the world" and to "assist in the formulation and development of coordinated policies as a basis for practical action in promoting economic and technological development in the region",

Recalling further;

- (a) The various resolutions aimed at enhancing economic cooperation, and in particular Commission resolution 86 (V) of 2 March 1963, requesting the Executive Secretary to undertake intensive studies on major problems of an African common market, having regard to the balanced integration of the economic development of African countries, and Commission resolution 176 (VIII) of 24 February 1967, elaborating the framework within which economic cooperation in Africa was to be undertaken,
- (b) Resolution CM/ST.12 (XXI), containing the African Declaration on Cooperation, Development and Economic Independence, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity in 1973, underlining the importance attached by African countries to collective self-reliance and economic independence and providing a framework for regional, subregional and sectoral cooperation,
- (c) The recommendations adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity at its eleventh extraordinary session in Kinshasa in December 1976 on the adoption of various programmes and mechanisms for accelerating economic cooperation,
- (d) General Assembly resolutions 3202 (S-VI) of 1 May 1974, containing principles and objectives forming a Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, and 3362 (S-VII) of 16 September 1975 on development and international economic cooperation,

Taking into account the prolonged recession and severe inflationary pressure in developed market economies, and the constant and rapid rise in the prices of manufactured goods and services exported by those countries, the adjustment of oil prices, fluctuations in other export produce prices, balance-of-payments difficulties, and the disappointing results thus far of the fourth session of the United Nations Conference of Trade and Development and the Conference on international Economic Cooperation.

Bearing in mind the strategy and guidelines for an action programme set out in the "Revised framework of principles for the implementation of the new international economic order in Africa, 1976-1981-1986", which emphasizes the long term objective of multinational cooperation for achieving optimal national development,

Mindful of the need to promote harmonization of national development plans with subregional and regional programmes and to internalize economic cooperation in each country's framework of socio-economic policies,

Aware that the multiplicity of organizations in the subregions could give rise to duplication of effort, inconsistencies and fragmentation,

Concerned at the problems faced by existing multinational multipurpose intergovernmental organizations at the subregional and regional levels,

Recognizing that existing and future difficulties need not detract from the basic desirability of multinational cooperation, and subsequent subregional economic integration,

Welcoming the establishment by West African member States of a subregional intergovernmental organization, which encompasses a large number of countries and cuts across linguistic, cultural and geographical boundaries inherited from European colonizations,

Welcoming also the establishment of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes,

1. *Reaffirms* the need to promote collective self-reliance among African countries and strengthen their unity of action with other developing countries so as to make them less dependent on developed countries;
2. *Invites* member States to make all possible efforts to restructure the existing intergovernmental economic organization and rationalize their operations by:
 - (a) Establishing appropriate mechanisms for:
 - i. Coordinating their programmes in such a way that neighbouring organizations with identical or similar projects can join forces in their implementation;
 - ii. Strengthening the limited multisectoral organizations and encouraging them to cooperate in the preparation and implementation of their programmes, thus leading to greater comprehensive involvement among neighbouring groupings and States;
 - (b) Effecting a gradual integration of the smaller and limited multisectoral groupings in each subregion into multipurpose and possibly larger cooperation arrangements, which are oriented to a much higher degree of formal economic integration;
 - (c) Formulating joint schemes of mutual assistance in resource mobilization and manpower development;
3. *Recommends* that the multipurpose multinational economic organization existing in each of the four administrative subregions of the Commission should constitute the framework for the progressive integration of the limited sectoral or smaller groupings in each subregion, and ultimately serve as the multipurpose multinational machinery for promoting subregional economic cooperation as a step towards regional economic integration;
4. *Further recommends* that, in order to promote national self-reliance and facility multinational cooperation, the integration of sectors should be effected at the national level while Africanizing the major production units from the point of view of ownership,

control and direction, thus reducing dependence on developed countries for exports and imports;

5. *Invites* the Executive Secretary to provide all possible assistance, through the Commission's Multinational Programming and Operational Centres, to member States and intergovernmental organizations in promoting the coordination of programmes of existing intergovernmental subregional organizations and their gradual integration into larger subregional multipurpose arrangements;
6. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to assist the countries concerned in activities directed towards strengthening and improving the performance of existing multipurpose arrangements at the subregional and regional levels;
7. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to submit periodic reports on progress and problems regarding the implementation of paragraphs 4 and 5 of the present resolution to the Executive Committee and the Conference of Ministers;
8. *Appeals* to all United Nations agencies and financial institutions such as the African Development Bank and the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa to provide resources for promoting subregional and regional cooperation.

Resolutions adopted by the Commission at its One Hundred Ninety Third meeting of the Eight Session (1977)

322 (XIII). Multilateral trade negotiations among African Countries

The Conference of Ministers,

Having in mind the pressing need for African countries to strengthen economic cooperation among themselves, and in particular substantially to expand intra-African trade with a view to assisting in their mutual economic development,

Recalling the Action programme adopted by the Second Symposium on the Development of Intra-African Trade as a Condition for African Economic development and the Establishment of an African Common market, held in Algiers from 4 to 7 October 1976,

Expresses its strong support, in particular, for the recommendation made by the Symposium for the convening by the Conference of African Ministers of a meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Trade and Development whose establishment was envisaged at the fourth meeting of the African Ministers of Trade in order to prepare for the launching at the beginning of 1978, by the above-mentioned Conference, of multilateral trade negotiations between African countries on the basis of studies already undertaken in this field by the ECA secretariat.

Resolutions adopted by the Commission at its Two Hundred Thirty Third meeting of the Nineteenth Session (1984)

516 (XIX). Development of Intra-African Trade

The Conference of Ministers,

Mindful of the cardinal importance which the Lagos Plan of Action and Final Act attach to the promotion of intra-African trade as the mainstay of the African strategy for socio-economic development and collective self-reliance,

Conscious of the need for the creation and strengthening of African subregional economic groupings with a view to establishing an African Common Market by the year 1990, as required in the Lagos Plan of Action,

Bearing in mind the important contribution made by the project financed by UNDP on the development of intra-African trade and monetary and financial cooperation in the pursuit of the above-named objectives.

Noting with satisfaction the result of that project in assisting in the establishment of the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern African States, the Economic Community for Central African States and other supporting institutions, and the strengthening of existing economic groupings,

Noting further the urgent need for continued assistance in the development of these newly created institutions and the establishment of links among the various economic groupings with a view to facilitating the gradual establishment of an African Common Market,

Taking note of the report of the third meeting of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee on Trade and Finance for Development, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 9 to 14 May 1984,

1. *Deplores* the fact that ECA does not have the necessary resources to continue the project despite the encouraging results achieved so far in the implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos, particularly in the area of promoting intra-African trade;
2. *Invites* the member States of ECA to promote Intra-African trade and to facilitate such trade particularly the removal of non-physical barriers,
3. *Appeals* to all African countries and African institutions, especially the African Development Bank (ADB) and the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), to provide financial support for activities in this field;
4. *Expresses* its gratitude to UNDP for having provided the necessary financial resources for the implementation of the project between 1979 and 1982;

5. *Requests* the Governing Council of UNDP to review the results of the project and reconsider the possibility of continuing financial support so that ECA may continue to assist African member States in the development of intra-African trade and monetary and financial cooperation.

522 (XIX). Strengthening subregional and regional cooperation

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling its resolutions 335 (XIV) of 27 March 1979, 418 (XVI) of 10 April 1981, and 450 (XVII) of 30 April 1982 on Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs) and its resolution 479 (XVIII) of 2 May 1983 on the strengthening of MULPOCs and the United Nations General Assembly resolution 37/138 of 17 December 1982 on the funding of the core staff of the MULPOCs from the regular budget of the United Nations, and taking note of the catalytic role the MULPOCs have played and continue to play in assisting member States towards the fulfilment of their commitment to the promotion of subregional and regional cooperation and integration,

Recalling further the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, meeting at its second Extraordinary Session devoted to the economic problems of Africa, held at Lagos, Nigeria, on 28 and 29 April 1980, particularly the provisions concerning the strengthening or creation, as necessary, of subregional and regional economic groupings as a first step towards the establishment of an African Economic Community by the year 2000,

Further recalling with appreciation the continuing efforts to strengthen further the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), established on 28 May 1975, the establishment of the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and southern African States (PTA) on 21 December 1981, and the establishment of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) on 18 October 1983,

Aware of the activities of the various intergovernmental and other subregional organizations concerned with the economic and social development of the African region,

Noting with appreciation the overall assistance that the UNDP has given to subregional and regional cooperation and integration in the African region over the years,

Convinced of the continuing need to strengthen subregional and regional cooperation and integration amongst the member States as a first step towards the establishment of the African Economic Community called for by the year 2000 under the Lagos Plan of Action and Final Act of Lagos,

1. *Appeals* to the member States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty for the establishment of the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern African States;
2. *Urges* the member States that have signed the Treaty establishing the Economic Community of Central African States to ratify the Treaty as soon as possible;
3. *Appeals* to member States to increase their support for the MULPOCs by pledging generously to UNTFAD for general or specific projects and by seconding, if possible, at their expense, experts to the MULPOCs on short-term basis;
4. *Urges* member States and Intergovernmental Organizations within each subregion to use the MULPOCs in their respective areas as executing agencies for the implementation of specific projects;
5. *Appeals* once more to the UNDP to provide financial support to the operational activities of the MULPOCs in addition to the assistance currently extended to the Women's Programme in the MULPOCs;
6. *Requests* the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to intensify his efforts to secure funds for the operational activities of the MULPOCs;
7. *Appeals* to all United Nations specialized and other agencies to give financial and other assistance to the African region in the implementation of subregional and regional projects whose final objective is the establishment of an African Economic Community by the year 2000 in accordance with the Lagos Plan of Action and Final Act of Lagos;
8. *Calls upon* all agencies of the United Nations system to collaborate more closely with the MULPOCs in implementing their multinational subregional programmes and projects.

Resolutions adopted by the Commission at its Two Hundred Fifty First meeting of the Twenty Second Session (1987)

593 (XXII). Establishment of a preferential trade area in North Africa

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling the provisions of the Lagos Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa, 1980-2000 and the Final Act of Lagos which call for the establishment of a preferential trade area for the countries of North Africa,

Recalling further the resolutions on trade promotion in North Africa adopted by the Council of Plenipotentiaries at its meetings held in April 1985 and March 1986,

Reiterating its resolution 568 (XXI) of 19 April 1986 inviting member States to accelerate the process of economic integration within the existing subregional groupings,

1. *Notes with satisfaction* the acceptance by and the commitment of the respective governments to the establishment of a preferential trade area for North African countries;
2. *Undertakes* to create between member States of the subregion a preferential trade area and a payments and clearing arrangement;
3. *Decides* to convene an intergovernmental group of experts to define actions in view of establishing the preferential trade area,
4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to institute measures to convene the first meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating team to discuss the modalities for the establishment of the proposed preferential trade area and to submit a progress report to the next meeting of the Council of Plenipotentiaries of the Tangier-based MULPOC and to its own next meeting;
5. *Requests* the United Nations Development Programme to support the intergovernmental group of experts in their efforts to define actions for the establishment of the preferential trade area.

Resolutions adopted by the Commission at its Two Hundred Fifty Fifth meeting of the Twenty Third Session (1988)

636 (XXIII). Preferential Trade Area for North Africa

The Conference of Ministers,

Having examined the report of the North African Multinational Programming and Operational Centre (MULPOC) on the Preferential Trade Area for North Africa,

Recalling the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos which call for the establishment of subregional economic groupings for the promotion of economic integration in Africa leading towards the establishment of an African Common Market and an African Economic Community by the year 2000,

Referring to the resolution on trade promotion in North Africa adopted by the Council of Plenipotentiaries of the Tangier MULPOC at its meetings held in 1985, 1986 and 1987,

Reiterating resolution 593 (XXII) of 24 April 1987 on the commitment of member Governments of the subregion to the establishment of a Preferential Trade Area in North Africa and the need to define actions in view to establishing the Preferential Trade Area,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Intergovernmental negotiating Team of Experts on the establishment of the PTA at its inaugural meeting held in December 1987;
2. *Invites* the countries of the North African MULPOC to participate fully and effectively at the highest level of expertise in the process of negotiations leading to the establishment of the preferential Trade Area;
3. *Endorses* the programme of negotiations as proposed by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Team of Experts at its inaugural meeting in December 1987 and amended by the Council of Plenipotentiaries of the Tangier MULPOC;
4. *Urges* the Tangier MULPOC countries to establish appropriate national coordinating committees to deal with all sectoral issues for negotiations by the national negotiating team of experts;
5. *Calls upon* member States to provide all necessary data and information to assist the ECA secretariat in the preparation of the studies called for by the Intergovernmental negotiating Team of Experts and to designate national experts to act as counterparts to the experts and consultants appointed to carry out the required studies;
6. *Reiterates* its request to the United Nations Development Programme to provide financing support for the successful establishment of the Preferential Trade Area and its secretariat.

649 (XXIII). Multisectoral economic integration projects of the African intergovernmental Organizations

The Conference of Ministers,

Considering the Lagos Plan of Action and, in particular, the Final Act of Lagos which invites African States to set up subregional economic communities over the entire continent of Africa,

Considering that resolution ES-2/1 adopted by the special session of the ECA Conference of Ministers on 30 October 1986 in Addis Ababa requested the Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Secretary of ECA to continue working closely in carrying out all activities concerning the preparation, formulation and implementation of the African regional programme under UNDP's Fourth Programming Cycle,

Noting with satisfaction the general agreement which has emerged on the concept of and multisectoral approach to the formulation and implementation of the multisectoral projects submitted by the economic integration entities and by the river and lake basin development organizations,

Noting further with satisfaction UNDP's decision to designate ECA as the main executing agency for multisectoral subregional projects formulated by the economic cooperation and integration organizations and by the river and lake basin development organizations with ECA assistance,

Having considered in-depth the modalities for implementation of multisectoral economic integration projects as worked out by the meeting with intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), including more specifically the appointment of a coordinator for each project, the priority to be given to the recruitment of regional and subregional experts and consultants, the close association of IGOs in project implementation and the establishment of a steering committee for each project that would comprise the main executing agency, UNDP, the specialized agencies and the 100 concerned to monitor project implementation and provide the guidance necessary,

Desirous of speeding up the process of economic integration in each African subregion as one of the factors that would hasten the economic development of the African countries,

1. *Welcomes* the good working relationship existing among UNDP, ECA, the specialized agencies and the IGOs in their formulation and implementation of economic integration projects under the Fourth Programming Cycle;
2. *Requests* UNDP to do its utmost to speed up the approval of projects during 1988 covering all the subregions in order to expedite the implementation of the priority integration projects by the various agencies and institutions;
3. *Invites* ECA, OAU and UNDP to consult each other on the joint organization of intersecretariat annual meetings as a way of harmonizing the activities of subregional economic communities aimed at establishing an African common market and regional economic community, monitoring the implementation of those multisectoral projects approved by UNDP and reporting on them periodically to the ECA Conference of Ministers;
4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary of ECA to invite African financial institutions to participate regularly in such meetings.

Resolutions adopted by the Commission at its Forty Fifth Session (2012)

891(XLV). Accelerating regional integration and boosting intra-African trade

The Conference of Ministers,

Conscious of the need for and the importance of accelerating the process of regional integration and boosting trade among African countries,

Cognizant of African Union Assembly decision 394(XVIII) endorsing the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade and the Road Map and Architecture for Fast-tracking the Establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area by 2017,

1. *Commends* the efforts of the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission and other collaborating partners that contributed to the adoption of the landmark decision 394(XVIII);
2. *Urges* member States to deepen and consolidate their regional integration agenda by harmonizing regional and subregional initiatives in order to be more resilient to external shocks and crises;
3. *Also urges* member States to implement decision 394(XVIII) expeditiously and fast-track the establishment of a continental free trade area;
4. *Further urges* member States to mainstream various other initiatives, such as the Minimum Integration Programme and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, in national plans, strategies and budgetary allocations;
5. *Welcomes* the initiative by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community to establish a grand free trade area, and urges other regional economic communities to do likewise so as to speed up implementation of the continental integration agenda;
6. *Expresses appreciation for* the role played by the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the regional economic communities in supporting member States in their efforts to implement regional integration programmes, and calls on development partners to continue their support to the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union Commission;
7. *Commends* the African Trade Policy Centre for providing technical support to member States and regional economic communities on advancing the continent's trade agenda; and
8. *Acknowledges* the existing support provided by development partners to the Centre, and calls on them to enhance their support in order to ensure its continued and sustainable operation.

Resolutions adopted by the Commission at its Forty Ninth Session (2016)

950(XLIX). Report of the seventh meeting of the African Union Subcommittee of Directors General of Customs

The Conference of Ministers,

Aware of the ultimate objectives of the African Union integration agenda, as provided for in the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, the Constitutive Act of the African Union and Agenda 2063 and the global objectives under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals,

Respectful of the decisions and declarations of African Union, in particular its decisions Assembly/AU/Dec.394 (XVIII), on boosting intra-African trade and fast-tracking the continental free trade area, and Assembly/AU/DEC.531(XXIII), on trade issues, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union at its eighteenth and twenty-third ordinary sessions, held in Addis Ababa on 29 and 30 January 2012 and in Malabo on 27 June 2014, respectively.

Convinced that customs administrations in Africa play an important role in collecting government revenue, protecting society, facilitating legitimate trade and collecting vital statistics to support policy formulation,

1. *Requests* member States to continue to support the work of the African Union Subcommittee of Directors General of Customs, as it has a direct impact on continental integration;
2. *Urges* member States of the African Union to make adequate resources available to their respective customs administrations to enable them to fulfil their mandates effectively;
3. *Undertakes* to build the capacity of African customs administrations on matters that are vital for revenue collection, including trade facilitation and integration;
4. *Affirms* its commitment to implementing the recommendations, policies and programmes on the single-window concept, coordinated border management and the interconnectivity of computerized customs clearance and information systems, and other allied trade facilitation measures, based on international best practices;
5. *Requests* partners and other international organizations to continue to support the implementation of initiatives for regional integration in Africa, and the programme on boosting intra-African trade;
6. *Undertakes* to enhance the effectiveness of customs administrations in Africa.

Resolutions adopted by the Commission at its Fifty First Session (2018)

960 (LI). Harnessing the potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area and creating fiscal space for jobs and economic diversification

The Conference of Ministers,

Reaffirming its commitment to regional integration as a major factor behind inclusive economic development in Africa,

Noting with deep appreciation the efforts of the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and other development partners, to promote regional integration in support of broad-based and inclusive development in Africa,

Welcoming the milestone reached in economic integration in Africa through the signing of the agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area in Kigali on 21 March 2018 and the call for its ratification and effective implementation,

Acknowledging the potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area to advance African industrialization, value addition, economic diversification and development to promote businesses, trade and job creation on the continent, consonant with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want of the African Union,

Reaffirming its commitment to supporting the African Continental Free Trade Area to the greatest extent possible, in accordance with the agreed road map to its establishment,

Recognizing that potential tariff losses emanating from the African Continental Free Trade Area in the short term could be offset in part in the medium and the long term by other taxes, such as value added taxes, as a result of economic diversification brought about by the African Continental Free Trade Area,

Mindful that current levels of tax revenue are not sustainable, and that enhancing fiscal space, including through mobilizing additional domestic resources, therefore remains critical,

Recognizing the importance of securing policy space for the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area,

Noting the need to strengthen knowledge and capacity on issues relating to the African Continental Free Trade Area,

Committed to pursuing integrated policies, including through targeted efforts to implement the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade and to undertake the action necessary to make the most of the opportunities presented by the African Continental Free Trade Area,

Noting that the realization of the full benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area requires the mobilization of massive resources and investment to address boundary constraints,

Noting also the importance of regularly tracking progress on the state of implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area,

Resolved to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure and to tackle corruption,

1. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to provide technical support to the African Union Commission and the member States of the African Union to conclude the negotiations of the agreement to establish the African Continental Free Trade Area;
2. *Also calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to work closely with the African Union Commission and other regional, continental and international institutions, such as the regional economic communities, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, to provide technical support to facilitate the ratification process and implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area;
3. *Further calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to support member States in their efforts to enhance their structural transformation through industrialization, economic diversification and value addition;
4. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to work, in collaboration with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the African Capacity-Building Foundation, the African Development Bank, and the regional economic communities, and other continental institutions, to support the member States of the African Union in developing national strategies to benefit from the African Continental Free Trade Area that complement the broader trade policy of each State party to the agreement to establish the African Continental Free Trade Area and in identifying the key trade opportunities, current constraints and steps required to take full advantage of the African market;
5. *Also requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to support the member States of the African Union in enhancing their fiscal space and mobilizing additional domestic resources through strengthening tax administration, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending, tapping into private financing and improving the sustainability of borrowing;
6. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the African Union Specialized Agency for Capacity Development, the African Development Bank, the regional economic communities, and other continental institutions, to formulate a comprehensive capacity development and training programme on issues relating to the African Continental Free Trade Area for the benefit of its member States;

7. *Urges* member States to maintain the policy space and coherence necessary while negotiating international trade and investment agreements, with a view to realizing the full potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area and attaining the continental structural transformation goals;
8. *Requests* the member States of the African Union that have signed the legal instruments of the African Continental Free Trade Area to ensure their rapid ratification and effective implementation, and calls upon the member States that have not yet signed the instruments to take the action necessary to do so;
9. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa and other development partners to support the mobilization of resources and promote investment to facilitate the harnessing of the full benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area;
10. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to monitor progress and report regularly on the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, and to measure its impact on structural transformation through industrialization, economic diversification and value addition.

Conclusion

The AfCFTA entered into its operational phase on 30 May 2019. ECA is providing countries and regional economic communities with technical assistance on implementation strategies which address barriers to trade, identify opportunities for exports and support the emergence of regional value chains. ECA also provides support for strengthening trade policy institutions. ECA facilitates public/private sector dialogues to support AfCFTA implementation. Building on its well-established record on trade and economic integration, ECA today takes a holistic approach to trade-related research, policy advice and technical assistance, covering a wide range of established and emerging issues in regional and international trade including trading in a digitalising world, the concerns of small island states, diversification and industrialisation. This is with the aim of ensuring that the objectives of the AfCFTA are achieved and contributing to the fulfilment of Africa's Agenda 2063 development aspirations.

Trading within the African common market which was foreseen half a century ago will commence on 1 July 2020. This market will be realised through the removal of tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade, liberalization in trade in services, as well as cooperation on issues of investment, intellectual property and competition policy which are to be addressed in the second phase of AfCFTA negotiations. Looking to the future, it is crucial that implementation of the AfCFTA is based on effective cooperation between AfCFTA State Parties in all relevant areas such as standards harmonisation for goods and services, regulations, trade monitoring, resolution of disputes, digital industrial policy and digital trade/e-commerce, amongst others. Behind and across borders, greater levels of investment will be needed to boost capacities for trade and improve the underpinning infrastructure for the movement of people, goods, and services. In a rapidly transforming world, the strength and negotiating positions of individual African countries will be enhanced through the continent-wide market. Africa stands on the cusp of change, and the AfCFTA is primed to contribute to the economic and social transformation that will realise the vision of Agenda 2063, the Africa We Want.



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