

Advancing the “Aid For Trade” Implementation Agenda in Africa

Addis-Ababa-26 June 2008-ECA: Concerted efforts are now underway to ensure speedy and effective implementation of the Aid for Trade (AFT) initiative in Africa , under the leadership of the AFT Working Group, which was recently established by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

At the Working Group's first meeting, held at AfDB Headquarters in Tunis on 23 rd June, the Group discussed a concept note prepared by ECA; agreed on a draft action plan to present at the Aid for Trade Advisory Group meeting to be held on 11 July 2008 at the WTO in Geneva; and developed a draft work programme for the Aid for Trade (AFT) Review Meeting which is due to be convened in the second quarter of 2009.

The key issue discussed in terms of implementation modalities , concerned the establishment of the Regional Africa AFT Network. In that regard, the Working Group considered the possible structure of the network and the consensus was that there should be two tiers: a Pan-African network and also four sub-regional groupings (West Africa, East and Southern Africa, Central Africa and North Africa). The membership of the networks will include representatives from government and the private sector in member states as well as donor agencies and regional institutions and organizations including the African Union, the NEPAD Secretariat, Regional Economic Communities, the AfDB, ECA and WTO.

Additionally, agreement was reached on the following criteria for identifying bankable projects to benefit from Aid for Trade:

- The projects must be within the priority areas as agreed in the Africa AFT review meeting in Dar-es-Salaam in 2007 i.e. infrastructure, trade facilitation and standards;
- Emphasis on ownership by RECs and member countries;
- The projects must be bankable; and
- The projects must increase trade.

The Working group also agreed to create an AFT Knowledge Network for Africa portal. Practitioners and policy makers will be invited to be part of this network. The portal will include documents, events and projects on AFT.

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