

Positive trends in Africa's Aid for Trade, but more interventions needed to overcome constraints says Janneh

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Addis Ababa, 20 July 2011 (ECA) -Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa – ECA said this week that although Aid for Trade in Africa is starting to show results, interventions are urgently needed to overcome the short and long term constraints. Mr. Janneh made this remark at the Third Aid for Trade Global Review held this week in Geneva during a debate on progress in Africa.

He elaborated on progress documented in an ECA-led study: "African Case Stories: A Snapshot of Aid for Trade on the Ground in Africa". The publication captures the African experiences on how AFT is progressing in the continent from a total of 114 submitted case stories.

"Since the AFT Initiative was launched in the Hong Kong Ministerial Meeting in 2005, Africa has received technical and financial assistance for trade-related activities. In addition, "AFT funding has been kept and priority areas and categories identified by beneficiaries are being targeted," said Janneh.

The study's baseline period (2002-2005) shows the momentum of increasing commitments and disbursements has been sustained, with the structure of allocations remaining the same.

"The latest AFT statistics also show us that in 2009 Africa surpassed Asia, becoming the first recipient of AFT disbursements since the initiative was launched," he said.

Although AFT continues to be primarily channeled to infrastructure, a growing share of commitments is going to building trade capacities and trade policy and regulations. This progress, according to Janneh, is promising - largely because Aft is increasingly matching expectations in the continent and all partners are showing strong willingness in supporting the initiative.

Janneh pointed out that AFT aimed at projects with a regional dimension "is on the rise, with an emphasis on economic infrastructure, building productive capacities and trade facilitation." "More interventions are urgently needed to overcome the short and long term constraints," he said.

He however, noted, that it has been difficult to target greater employment, diversification or positive gender or poverty impacts through AFT interventions.

"It is still too early to measure actual results and improved M&E mechanisms and tools are needed in order to fine-tune AFT responses to desired outcomes," he cautioned, and added that ECA remains committed to conduct more work through our African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC).

Issued by:

ECA Information and Communication Service
P.O. Box 3001
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Tel: 251 11 5445098
Fax: +251-11-551 03 65
E-mail: ecainfo@uneca.org
Web: www.uneca.org

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