
Towards a Continental Free Trade Area

Addis Ababa, 26 March 2015 (ECA-AUC) - 2015 offers a historic opportunity for a major step to be taken towards the integration of the African continent. On 28th March, 2015, the Economic Commission for Africa will convene a meeting to discuss the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) during the 2015 Conference of Ministers taking place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia between 25-31 March, 2015. The meeting seeks to draw attention to the CFTA agenda and gather momentum towards the negotiations for a continental free trade area, which are expected to commence in 2015 in accordance with the road map.

The decision to establish the Continental Free Trade Area was taken during the 18th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union which was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2012. It brings together fifty-four African countries, with a combined population of more than one billion people and a combined gross domestic product of more than US\$1.2 trillion.

Both the AUC and the ECA have underscored the timeliness of the meeting in light of the importance of industrialisation, which, according to a joint 2014 Report by both partners “is a precondition for Africa to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth.”

The event will be chaired by African Union Director of Trade and Industry, Ms Treasure Maphanga, with presentations from the East Africa Business Council, among others. Speaking at an earlier meeting of experts, Ms Maphanga stressed that the CFTA provides an important opportunity to develop and harmonise regulations in a number of trade-related service sectors that will backstop the industrialisation process. She said: “We are seeking to develop an agreement that enables deep integration amongst all African economies, with a focus on boosting intra-African trade and implementing the Action Plan that includes trade-related aspects, infrastructure, productive capacity and trade facilitation”.

Notes to Editors

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For more information, please go to <http://www.uneca.org/cfm2015> [5].

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Jointly issued by the ECA and the AUC

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