

AUECHO

2023 Annual Magazine



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ACCELERATION OF
AfCFTA
IMPLEMENTATION

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In Article 3 of the AfCFTA agreement, the objective of an “integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, as envisaged in the African Union’s Agenda 2063” is stated. This includes the promotion of e-commerce and digital payments, which will “increase intra-regional trade”, as well as “improve access to the African continental market for external actors” and thus establish a truly “digital economy” on the continent.

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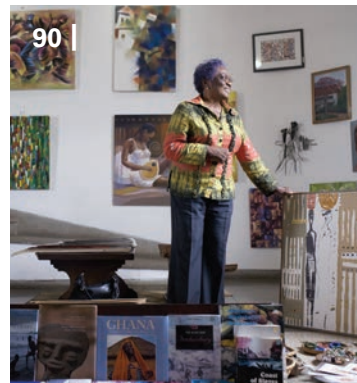


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Six months, 26 weeks and 180 days of telling the African story to the world



The year 2023 promises to be pivotal in driving Africa’s economic integration goals with the focus on driving the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

In 1963 during the 1st Summit of the Union in Addis Ababa Ethiopia, the African leaders gathered at the meeting all recognised that if Africa did not integrate, develop its industries collectively and trade with each other and speak with one voice on international matters, the continent would be hard pressed to achieve its development goals. This is aptly captured in the excerpt below from the 1963 speech by H.E. Fulbert Youlou, President of Congo (Brazzaville)



...The principle of African unity must be the foundation stone of the foreign policy of African States...

...The African States conduct very little mutual trade. Most of their trade is between Europe and Africa. Exports consist mainly of raw materials, and agricultural, forestry and mining products. Imports consist mainly of manufactured goods. Economically speaking, the African States are competitive rather than complementary. Often, they supply the same products. On the whole, their purchasing power is fairly low.

...African development depends on industrialization. Only by producing itself the essential manufactured goods it needs, can Africa ensure its development and reach a higher standard of living....

...African industrial production should benefit, on the home market, by a special customs tariff agreed by all States, offering preferential treatment for any article manufactured in Africa.

...The idea of a Common Market is compelling, and must be reckoned with, even if it is difficult to achieve in the present state of inter-African trade. It adds a further element to the African consciousness; namely, the idea of mutual economic assistance to attain together and sooner an improvement in the living standards of the people.

...Working separately each state is unable to take action, except competitively, with other African States. Their grouping, however, as a sort of Inter-State Co-operative, would lend great weight to their negotiating power with the international purchasers of African products.

Excerpt from the 1963 speech by **H.E. Fulbert Youlou**, President of Congo (Brazzaville)



Leslie Richer,
Director | Directorate of
Information & Communication

The launch of the AfCFTA was long overdue; but now that it is here, it behoves us to ensure that it succeeds. Hence the decision by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union to declare 2023 the “**Year of Acceleration of AfCFTA Implementation.**” The AfCFTA is expected to increase intra-African trade and Africa’s trading position in the global economy and boost income by 7% to US\$450 Billion by 2035. The focus on the AfCFTA in 2023 is therefore aimed at increasing the level of ratifications by Member States, advancing and finalising the various AfCFTA protocol and operational instruments as well as increasing actual trade between countries.

As we look forward to increased regional trade on the continent, we must not lose sight of the fact that for the AfCFTA to succeed at the levels envisioned, several other Agenda 2063 flagship programmes must receive equal or even higher attention as their

implementation directly impact the ability of African countries to effectively trade with each other. Key amongst these Agenda 2063 flagship programmes is the African Passport and Free Movement of Persons on the continent. Enabling Africans to enter, reside and establish commercial enterprises within AU member states is a necessary ingredient for the free trade regime to succeed. If we continue holding on to the greatest barriers for Africans to discover themselves as a people with a common heritage and desire to advance their livelihoods; if we continue to cultivate ignorance about the opportunities and potential laden within our lands; and if we continue to make it impossible for Africans to invest in their own economies; the vision for an integrated and prosperous Africa will be delayed. Exporting resources within the continent, whether it is human talent, financial, or technical, should be paramount and this can only be possible if we stop seeing fellow Africans as “opponents,” taking what is “ours” and start seeing ourselves as the helping hand we need to succeed and as part of an African Economic Community driven by the ideals of Pan-Africanism to achieve the Aspirations of Agenda 2063.

The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) is another Agenda 2063 continental initiative that must be accelerated. Trade needs the supporting infrastructure of interconnected and adequate transport (road, rail, air and waterways), energy provision and information and communication technology that must be present for industries to develop and thrive. It is therefore important to ensure the investment in, and speedy implementation of regional infrastructure initiatives that create the conducive environment for business to invest and thrive by reducing the overall costs of operation, improving access to information and reducing the time taken to conduct business.

The Agenda 2063 initiative of Silencing the Guns is an imperative. Without peace and security there can be no trade. Enough said! However, the achievement of this initiative on peace requires that we dig even further and address the underlying causes of conflict including the inadequate allocation and sharing of natural resources; the low or lack of investment in the social goods and services that form the foundation of human well being including access to adequate and quality health, education and training etc

Education and training are paramount for the success of the AfCFTA in the near and long term. In the near term the knowledge imparted should aim at driving a better understanding of the opportunities in the AfCFTA as they exist today; in the long term, our education system needs to adjust to train for the emerging industries that will grow and thrive within the AfCFTA regime and an integrated African Economic Community. Our education systems have been criticised for rote learning and teaching about those who “discovered” our lands, rivers and mountains and the precious minerals they “discovered” and since exploited for the benefit of non-African countries. Perhaps it time we started teaching our children about natural resources we find in our continent and their importance for social and economic development and industrialisation, so that they better understand the economic value of what we have and can then seek training and aspire for careers that allow them to be the future innovators, entrepreneurs and industrialists. For example, oil producing countries in Africa should be churning out the most knowledgeable individuals that can work in the entire value chain of the oil and energy sector. The same applies to any economic sector. If we have to import the talent into our countries to work in any industry built on our natural resources, it should be from one African state to another! Innovation and entrepreneurship comes from knowledge about opportunities that exist in your environment. As stated above, knowledge transfer will thrive in an environment of Free Movement of Persons.

Finally, as we endeavour to grow the AfCFTA we must pay great attention and ensure inclusion of the African Diaspora. Whereas a lot of attention is rightly given to financial inflows from the diaspora, they should also be seen as the invisible arm of African trade that can reach global audiences by creating trade linkages between entrepreneurs on the continent and those in the various regions of the world. The inclusion of the African Diaspora in African business fora as well as other platforms that encourage exchange of ideas as well as opens up real opportunities for commerce must be prioritised as part of developing trade in goods and services. Furthermore, incentives to invest in African enterprise should be provided to support the African Diaspora’s involvement with the AfCFTA.

What is the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is one of the Flagship Projects of Africa's development framework, Agenda 2063. The AfCFTA was approved by the 18th ordinary Session of Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2012 which adopted the decision to establish an African Continental Free Trade Area and the Action Plan for Boosting intra-African trade as key initiatives whose implementation would promote socio-economic growth and development. The AfCFTA aims at accelerating intra-African trade and boosting Africa's trading position in the global market by strengthening Africa's common voice and policy space in global trade negotiations.

The Agreement establishing the AfCFTA was signed on 21st March in Kigali, Rwanda. The AfCFTA entered into force on 30th May 2019 and the Operational Instruments governing trade under the AfCFTA regime were launched in Niamey, Niger in July 2019. Trading under the AfCFTA regime commenced on 1st January 2021. 54 of the 55 AU Member States have signed the Agreement and as at end February 2023, 46 countries have ratified and deposited their instruments of ratification of the Agreement with the African Union Commission thus becoming State Parties to the Agreement.

The coordination and implementation of the AfCFTA is undertaken by the AfCFTA Secretariat which is based in Accra, Ghana.

The objectives of the AfCFTA are to:

- Create a single market for goods, services, facilitated by movement of persons in order to deepen the economic integration of the African continent and in accordance with the Pan African Vision of "An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa" enshrined in Agenda 2063;
- Create a liberalised market for goods and services through successive rounds of negotiations;
- Contribute to the movement of capital and natural resources and facilitate investments building on the initiatives and developments being undertaken by the State Parties and RECs;
- Lay the foundation for the establishment of a Continental Customs Union at a later stage;

- Promote and attain sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality and structural transformation of the State Parties;
- Enhance the competitiveness of the economies of State Parties within the continent and the global market;
- Promote industrial development through diversification and regional value chain development, agricultural development and food security;
- Resolve the challenges of multiple and overlapping memberships and expedite the regional and continental integration processes

Beyond the policy transformation and reforms, the AfCFTA seeks to ensure inclusivity of women and youth, development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and the overall industrialisation of the Continent.

Key to the success of the AfCFTA is the elimination of the various barriers to trade that have historically prevented African countries from trading with each other resulting in an over reliance of goods and services imported into the continent and the resulting lack of investment and development in local service industries, manufacturing and subsequent growth of centres of expertise and regional value chains in the economic sectors that would lead to the industrialisation required to create employment and improve the socio-economic wellbeing of millions of people on the continent. From extreme poverty and another 68 million people from moderate poverty. The successful implementation of the AfCFTA will lead to the creation of more decent jobs, improved welfare and better quality of life for all citizenry, and sustainable development and is expected to increase Africa's income by \$450 billion by 2035.

Protocols to Establishing the AfCFTA Include:

- Protocol on Trade in Goods
- Protocol on Trade in Services
- Protocol on Rules & Procedure on the Settlement of disputes
- Protocol on Investment.
- Protocol on Intellectual Property Rights
- Protocol on Competition Policy
- Protocol on Digital Trade

- Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade

Learn more about the Protocols from <https://au-afcfta.org/trade-areas/>

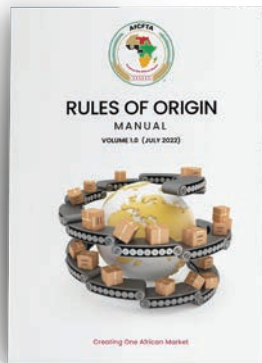
The Operational Instruments of the AfCFTA


1. The Rules of Origin: A regime governing the conditions under which a product or service can be traded duty free across the region

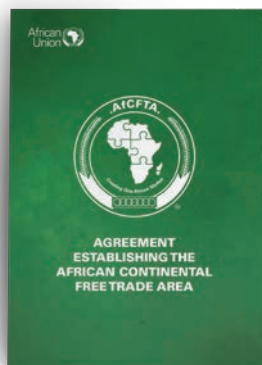
Under AfCFTA, state parties are expected to grant tariff preferences to goods that meet certain origin criteria. The purpose of these rules is to ensure that goods entering a particular country from another member state within the AfCFTA have actually been made or produced with sufficient local content to qualify for preferential tariff treatment. Without such rules, it would be difficult for state parties to protect their local production and competitive domestic industries against competition from non-AfCFTA countries

The AfCFTA Rules of Origin Manual has been developed as a guide to the operationalisation of Annex 2 on Rules of Origin of the AfCFTA and provides detailed information and guidance on how to determine the origin status of goods traded between State Parties within the AfCFTA; the application of rules used to determine this origin status, as well as procedures for administering these rules and any institutional framework that is necessary for implementation.

2. The Tariff concessions: It has been agreed that there should be 90% tariff liberalisation over a 10-year period with a 5-year transition for non-Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and 10 years for Least Developed Countries. For an additional 7% of “sensitive



The AfCFTA Rules of Origin Manual provides detailed information for determining the origin status of goods traded within the AfCFTA including the application and administration of rules used to determine origin status, and any institutional framework that is necessary for implementation. Scan to Download. 



Scan to Download the Agreement Establishing the AfCFTA 

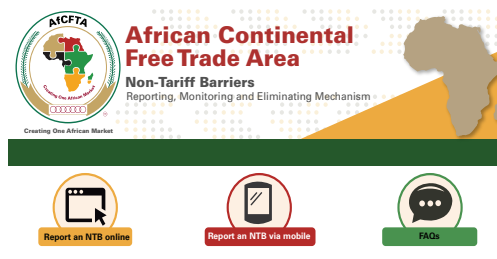



products” that must be liberalised tariffs will be eliminated within 10 years for non-LDCs and 13 years for LDCs. A final 3% of ‘Excluded’ products are to retain their tariffs to allow flexibilities for State Parties with particular sensitivities, but will be subject to review every five years. The Tariff concessions will be supported by the AfCFTA Trade in Goods online portal where Member States will upload their tariff offers covering 90% of the tariff lines.

The AfCFTA Online Negotiation Tool will

- Facilitate the negotiations on tariff liberalisation between State Parties, Customs Unions or Regional Groupings under the AfCFTA;
- Provide tools to ensure the technical quality of the offers made;
- Increase transparency while safeguarding confidentiality; and
- Provide tools for users/negotiating groups to interact.

3. The Continental Online Tool/Mechanism for monitoring, reporting and elimination of Non-tariff Barriers (NTBs):



 Visit <https://tradebarriers.com> to learn more

The Continental tool monitors NTBs with a view to ensuring they are eliminated and provides an online platform for traders to report on any challenges they face as they move goods and services across borders.

4. The Pan-African Payments and Settlement System (PAPSS):

Is a centralised payment and settlement infrastructure for intra-African trade and commerce payments. This platform is a collaboration with the African Export-Import Bank, (Afreximbank) aims to facilitate payments as well as formalise some of



Scan to learn more about the Pan African Payment & Settlement System (PAPSS)



Scan to learn more about the about the African Trade Observatory




the unrecorded trade due to prevalence of informal cross-border trade in Africa. As of January 2023, the PAPSS network consists of 8 central banks, 10 strategic partners 50 commercial banks and four national switches. It will expand into the five regions of Africa before the end of 2023. All Central banks are to sign up by the end of 2024 and all commercial banks by the end of 2025. Visit <https://papss.com> to learn more

5. The African Trade Observatory:

A trade information portal that will address hindrances to trade in Africa due to lack of information about opportunities, trade statistics as well as information


Automatic data transfer system

Collects, processes and analyses automatically sourced from Member States and other sources



Monitor module

This tool, accessible to African policymakers, tracks the implementation of the AfCFTA and evaluates its impact through real-time indicators



Business intelligence dashboard

The Compare and Explore Modules offer African businesses timely and reliable information tracking intra-regional trade flows, highlighting opportunities for export growth within the region, and the relevant market requirements



Trade analysis unit

Establishes a network of African trade experts with recognized skills in data analysis to support AUC Members policy decisions.



The ATO Dashboard

COMPARE

African entrepreneurs can compare markets for their products to identify promising opportunities.

EXPLORE

Businesses can dig deeper to find detailed trade and market access information for an identified opportunity.

MONITOR

African policymakers can track the state of intra-African integration over time.

Compare trade and other market access information across countries, products or markets

Markets Products Exporters

Choose an exporter

Choose a product

START

[See an example to get started](#) →

Find detailed trade and market access related information for a country product-market combination

Choose an exporter

Choose a market

Choose a product

START

[See an example to get started](#) →

Monitor state of intra-African integration over time and track advanced trade indicators

START

[See a preview of the Monitor module](#)

about exporters and importers in countries. The African Trade Observatory (ATO) serves as a repository of trade information and allows state parties and stakeholders to monitor, in real time, the pace of trade and economic integration in Africa. Following the start of trading under the AfCFTA in January 2021, the ATO has become even more crucial as it provides updated and reliable data to inform business and policy decisions and to monitor the implementation process of the AfCFTA agreement and its impact. By providing real-time and reliable data, the ATO equips African businesses with trade intelligence on trends, opportunities, and market access conditions. Furthermore, the ATO Monitor module, empowers government agencies and policymakers in monitoring the AfCFTA implementation process and evaluating its impact on their economies.

The AfCFTA Secretariat has launched several key initiatives that are aimed at ensuring successful trade under the AfCFTA regime

AfCFTA E-Tariff Book

The AfCFTA e-Tariff Book is part of the Digitalisation and Trade Facilitation journey of the AfCFTA Secretariat. To ensure that tariff concession schedules are easily accessible to Trade and Customs Authorities, to allow them to make use of the benefits under the AfCFTA agreement and to enhance knowledge and capacities in the use of tariffs, the HS, commodity classification and organisation of tariff-related work within Customs administrations and other relevant stakeholders. These tariff concessions have been offered by the customs unions and once agreed they will then be nationalised and traders will be able to trade under these concessions.


The AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative

The AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative seeks to facilitate commercially meaningful trade among interested state parties that have met the minimum requirements for trade, under the AfCFTA Agreement. The initiative supports the matchmaking of businesses and products for export and import between these interested State Parties in coordination with their national

The AfCFTA e-tariff book... An invaluable resource that ensures that tariff concession schedules are accessible to Trade & Customs Authorities to facilitate trade within the African Continental Free Trade Area



e-Tariff Book

Scan to learn more to learn more about the AfCFTA 



AfCFTA implementation committees.

The specific objectives of the AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative are: to allow commercially meaningful trading under the AfCFTA; to test the operational, institutional, legal and trade policy environment under the AfCFTA; and to send an important positive message to the African economic operators about the implementation of the AfCFTA trading regime on the continent .

The Initiative will prompt state parties to start issuing AfCFTA trading documents including certificates of origin, importer as well as exporter declaration forms and ensure that their customs laws and systems are aligned to the AfCFTA requirements as well as test the readiness of private sector to participate in trade under the AfCFTA regime.

To date eight countries representing the five regions of the continent - Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Tanzania and Tunisia have participated in the AfCFTA's Guided Trade Initiative.

The AfCFTA Adjustment Fund

The purpose of the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund is to facilitate and provide support through financing, technical assistance, grants and compensation funding to AfCFTA State Parties and private entities and persons, including women, youth and micro, small and medium enterprises so as to adapt to, and effectively participate in, the new trading environment established under the AfCFTA Agreement.

The AfCFTA Adjustment Fund will enable State Parties to continue implementing their trade commitments which will in-turn lead to increased in intra-African trade thereby creating more opportunities for intra-African trade financing and implementing a number of Bank interventions and products relating to industrialisation and export development, project

financing, advisory and trade intelligence.

The AfCFTA Adjustment Fund consists of a Base Fund, a General Fund and a Credit Fund.

- The Base Fund will receive contributions of State Parties, grants and technical assistance and other contributions and will be used to address tariff revenue loss and support State Parties to implement the various Protocols and Annexes under the AfCFTA. The Base Fund will be set up and run by the AfCFTA Secretariat with support from Afreximbank. On 9 March 2022, Afreximbank and the AfCFTA Secretariat signed the Fund Management Agreement for the Base Fund, which governs how the grants and other contributions under the Base Fund will be mobilised and disbursed.
- The General Fund will mobilise and disburse concessional funds to eligible projects/transactions in accordance with the terms and conditions under the fund structure.
- The Credit Fund will mobilise and disburse commercial funding to eligible projects/transactions in accordance with the terms and conditions under the fund structure.

The functions of the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund include: Receiving financial contributions from State Parties and development partners towards creating, maintaining and growing the Base Fund; Creating funds that may from time to time be considered necessary in fulfilment of its purpose. Serve as a vehicle for mobilising, and where necessary, implementing grants, technical assistance funding, concessional and commercial financing aimed at addressing the purpose of the Adjustment Fund; Develop and operate a compensation facility aimed at mitigating the short-term fiscal impact of tariff revenue losses of State Parties arising from the implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement; Provide direct financing to State Parties to fund sectoral initiatives as necessary to enhance competitiveness of the established trading environment; Facilitate the funding of commercial projects for State Parties which increase their productive capacity for trade. Support initiatives and projects meant to upgrade and diversify the productive capacity of State Parties including upgrading the skills of their labour/work force and to enable them to capture a higher market share for a larger variety of products; Provide technical assistance to enable State Parties to build their capacity to trade; Assist in developing financing and technical assistance initiatives and programmes to improve the technical and productive capacities of private entities to participate in intra-African trade; Provide fund

management services; Carry out banking operations, and Carry out any other activities and provide other services which are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the purpose of the Adjustment Fund.

The resources required for the Adjustment Fund over the next 5-10 years are estimated at US\$10 billion. Afreximbank has already committed \$1 billion towards the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund.

The AfCFTA Automotive Fund

Following extensive consultations between the AfCFTA Secretariat, Afreximbank and the African Association of Automotive Manufacturers (AAAM), a comprehensive strategy was developed for automotive manufacturing in Africa. The strategy reflects the ambition under Agenda 2063 for Africa to become a producer not just a consumer of goods and services.

The strategy for automotive manufacturing therefore reflects the AfCFTA objectives that aims to promote investment that seeks to encourage and grow local content development in various commercial sectors. The strategy points to an immediate need to finalise the Rules of Origin (ROO) and the establishment of the Task Force that could fast-track the development of a major advanced automotive value chain in Africa

Afreximbank has committed a US\$ 1Billion facility to support this objective and funding is available for any investment that seeks to pursue local content development in the automotive value chain. The Automotive Fund will also be used to ensure access to consumer finance as part of the creation of demand and associated insurance products. A comprehensive strategy has since been developed for automotive manufacturing in Africa.. The finalisation of the ROO for the auto sector is essential, as it would facilitate strategies in developing regional and continental value chains. It would assist in developing national programmes and allow for greater cooperation and trade between those members who have adopted national programmes and wish to develop trade in vehicles and components under the AfCFTA.

The AfCFTA Private Sector Strategy

The AfCFTA private sector strategy aims to deliver impact and economic recovery in the post-pandemic world by engaging with stakeholders from across the private and public sector, and from across all corners of the continent to ensure an inclusive approach to implementing the AfCFTA. For the continent to reduce its vulnerability to external shocks and improve trade and economic performance, the AfCFTA, regional value chains are being developed, under the AfCFTA Private

Sector Engagement Strategy, to offer African countries an opportunity to use regional advantages to boost competitiveness, diversify product supply, and export products with higher value-addition. The strategy focuses on four initial priority sectors or value chains, namely agro-processing, automotive, pharmaceuticals, and transportation and logistics, based on the potential for import substitution and existing production capabilities on the continent.

AFCFTA IMPLEMENTATION - INTERLINKING DRIVERS OF TRADE.

The implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement is by necessity, a complex and highly collaborative undertaking, drawing on the expertise and experience of all. For the AfCFTA to be a successful and to increase the attractiveness of the African market for trade and investment, it must be complemented by similar progress of other Agenda 2063 Flagship projects, such as the African Passport and Free Movement of Persons; the African Continental Financial Institutions; The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP);

the African Commodities Strategy; The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), the Single African Air Transport Market; the Integrated High Speed Train Network; Implementation of the Grand Inga Dam Project; the African Economic Platform for policy dialogue; Silencing the Guns; Pan-African E-University Pan-African Virtual University.

The AfCFTA will thus advance the progress of the other critical economic sectors through the various interlinkages.

Trade Facilitation and Infrastructure.

Trade facilitation measures address major challenges such as increased trade costs arising from Non-Tariff Barriers; inadequate, inefficient transportation and weak logistics infrastructure; cumbersome regulatory procedures; lengthy customs processes; and incoherent documentation, thereby placing Africa's private sector at a competitively disadvantaged position. Africa must accelerate work on improving the supply-side

constraints such as the lack of transport and logistics infrastructure, information and communications technology (ICT), and energy infrastructure by aggressively implementing the African Union's Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) to ensure a successful and sustainable industrialisation agenda and



thus a successful AfCFTA.

Trade and Climate Resilient Agricultural Development.

There is need to mainstream climate change issues, including land degradation, into the AfCFTA implementation by advancing climate resilient development through several pathways including, renewable energy and transformative green industrialization; agriculture, food and nutrition security and climate change adaptation; strengthening development finance institutions; multilateral planning and; contributing to a compact on a global green new deal that advances Africa's interests on climate resilient development. Policy innovations to unlock climate finance for resilient Food Systems in Africa are critical. The African Risk Capacity (ARC), a Specialized Agency of the African Union, plays a key role in capacitating African governments to better plan, prepare and respond to effects of extreme weather events and natural disasters and build a more resilient Africa that is adaptable to climate change towards building resilience in Africa which has positive ripple effects on the Agricultural sector and economic growth by unlocking critical climate and DRR finance.

Enhanced Education systems

The importance of skills development, employability and opportunity driven entrepreneurship in helping Africa realise its continental trade objectives cannot

be overemphasised. Although Africa

continues to experience a youth bulge, there is a mismatch between existing education and training and the skills needs of enterprises. Critically important is the need to foster

not only the skills needed by enterprises today but

also the skills of the future. To strengthen African businesses' competitiveness in the context of the AfCFTA, the priority is to invest in human

capital to equip Africans with the skills needed to engage in

skill-intensive manufacturing industries as well as the emergent technology driven industries that will drive the 4th industrial revolution. The investment in an education system that encourages entrepreneurship, innovation and

technology is key for the long-term success of the AfCFTA market.

Enhanced Health Security.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and the preceding 2014 Ebola Disease Outbreak have demonstrated that trade within Member States of the African Union and between Africa and the rest of the world can be significantly affected by public health emergencies. The lessons learned demonstrate the urgent need for Africa to invest in the health sector especially the public health sector, including, developing a robust pharmaceutical manufacturing and distribution industry for the continent which will boost trade in products and services required for the health industry. This requires establishing and maintaining the trade and health nexus in the continent. The implementation of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa along with the establishment of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and the Africa Medicines Authority (AMA) are all golden opportunities to mainstream health into AfCFTA

Trade and Peace and Security

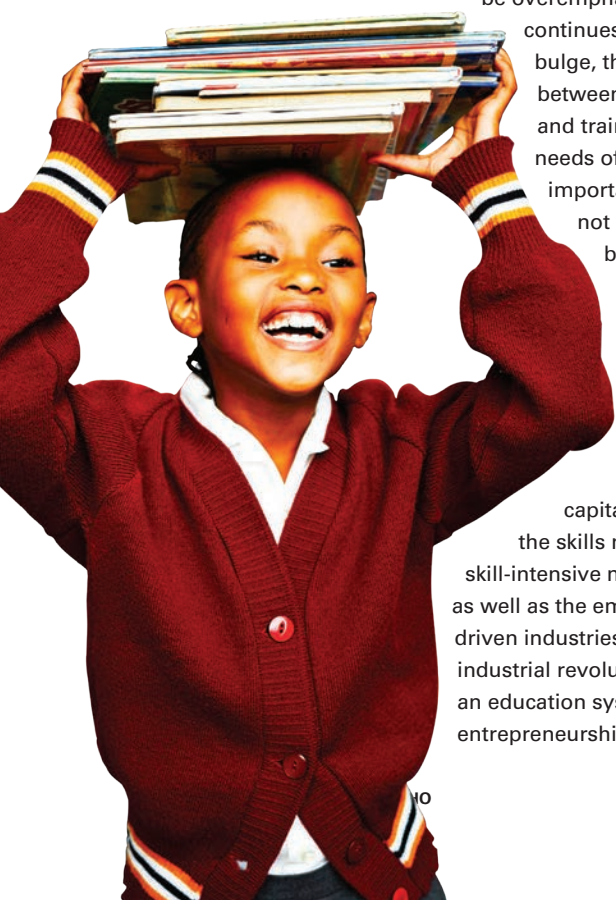
Peace and security are essential preconditions for sustainable economic growth and development, including trade. A stable and secure environment is necessary for businesses to operate, for investors to make long-term commitments, and for workers to be able to produce goods and services. On the other hand, trade itself can also contribute to peace and security by promoting interdependence and fostering economic and social connections between countries. This can lead to a reduction in tensions and the likelihood of conflict.

A stable and secure environment is necessary for businesses to operate, and long term investments and commitments



Harmonisation of standards and regulations.

Effective collaboration is also required for harmonised standards and regulations. This is to be achieved through standards development, mutual recognition, harmonisation that fosters increased rate of diversification, industrialisation and transformation of Africa's economy and boosts the continent's ability to supply its import needs from its own resources. It is also aimed to integrate systems so as to benefit from an increasingly connected global marketplace. This



will include promotion, identification of the African Standardisation priorities activities through the development, harmonisation and implementation of standards for identified products and services; the promotion and coordination of technically competent African Quality Infrastructure bodies and related legislations to enhance the competitiveness of products of African origin and African MSMEs to facilitate the intra-African Trade.

The AfCFTA is a gamechanger for the African continent and the year 2023 presents yet another opportunity to strengthen partnerships, mobilise resources, undertake outreach activities and promote the utilisation of the AfCFTA by economic operators through unceasing engagement that will sustain the high momentum around the AfCFTA.

Beyond the continent, the Theme of the Year 2023 is expected to strengthen the role of the African Diaspora, People of African Descent and create a meaningful link between the implementation of the AfCFTA and the Decade of African Roots and Diaspora (2021-2032) by driving initiatives aimed at bringing together, projects, events and other initiatives to strengthen the role of these group in advancing Africa's economic integration and development through the implementation of the AfCFTA.

Learn more about the African Continental Free Trade Area by visiting <https://au-afcfta.org>



African Integration Day ■ ■ ■

Celebrates the AfCFTA and its achievement as a powerful tool for economic integration that will shape Africa's future, by increasing trade and investment and creating job opportunities for millions of Africans.



**Scan to Learn
more about the
AfCFTA**

Q&A:

H.E. WAMKELE MENE

Secretary General,
AfCFTA Secretariat

What is the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and what potential does it hold for Africa?

The AfCFTA is a free trade area that comprises the Member States of the African Union (AU). 54 of the 55 Member states of the AU have signed the Treaty establishing the AfCFTA and we are working closely with the remaining Member State towards ensuring all Member States are signatories to the AfCFTA Agreement.

To date 46 countries have deposited their instruments of ratification. The most recent countries to ratify the AfCFTA Agreement are the Union of the Comoros and the Republic of Mozambique. It is important to note that for the countries that have not yet ratified, the Agreement it is not because they have a political opposition to the AfCFTA or because they have a different view. They just have to go through the required domestic process of consultations to enable the private sector and civil society to better understand the AfCFTA, so that the governments can ratify the Agreement.

We are building a market of 1.3 billion people with a combined GDP of US\$ 3.4 Trillion and by the year 2035, the combined GDP of the AfCFTA market, is estimated to be close to US\$ 7 Trillion. That means that there are opportunities for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and young entrepreneurs to export across regions of the African continent, and to



take advantage of this vast market.

However, if we do not have an integrated single market, we will not be able to achieve the positive projections that many around the world have made about the potential of the AfCFTA. For example, the World Bank has projected that by the year 2035, the AfCFTA has the potential to lift 100 million Africans out of poverty, to contribute over US\$ 450 Billion dollars to Africa's GDP, and to boost intra-Africa trade by over 80%.

This positive projection and the potential for SMEs and young entrepreneurs will not become a reality if we do not accelerate implementation of the AfCFTA. But, as stated earlier, I am very pleased that we now have 46 countries who are in implementation mode of the AfCFTA.



Who are the intended beneficiaries of the AfCFTA? There is a misconception that it is just for Government and big business.

It is important to address the issue of who exactly benefits from the AfCFTA and how. The AfCFTA is not for governments. It is negotiated by governments, but it is for the private sector and in particular, it is for SMEs and young entrepreneurs.


It is important to note that 450 million jobs are created in the SME sector in Africa. This SME sector in Africa is one of largest and multi forces driver of Africa's economic activity, and so, it is absolutely critical that as we implement the AfCFTA, we do so in a way in which SMEs and young entrepreneurs will benefit.

What is the AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative?

The AfCFTA Secretariat is undertaking practical steps to ensure the realisation of actual trading activity is underway within Africa's free trade area. One of the game changing projects launched in 2022 was the introduction of the AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative.

This Initiative is intended to assist countries who have ratified the AfCFTA and more so to assist SMEs to better understand the rules and procedures of the AfCFTA and know how to effectively participate and conduct business under the trading preferences of the AfCFTA. The Project was piloted in several countries representing the 5 regions of the African Union - Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Tanzania and Tunisia with 7 countries conducting trade under the Guided Trade Initiative in 2022.

For example, when I speak about SME participation in the AfCFTA, last year under the Guided Trade Initiative, there were smallholder tea farmers from Kenya who exported tea to Ghana. We worked with both the governments of Kenya and Ghana as well as with the exporters themselves, i.e., the farmers, to build the capacity required for them to understand how they can trade across regions of the continent, and more importantly, how they can effectively make use of the benefits offered to them under the AfCFTA trade regime thus making it possible for them and their counterparts in the selected pilot countries to become pioneers in trade within the

 **H.E. Mahamadou Issoufou, Former President of the Republic of Niger and Champion of the AfCFTA addressing the opening of the AfCFTA Business Forum held in April 2023**

AfCFTA.

To further demonstrate the benefits of the AfCFTA, exporters from Ghana exported ceramic tiles to Cameroon. The importer received a 20% duty reduction. That means that that importer or company is now able to apply a pricing that has benefitted from a 20% duty reduction and thus be more competitive in the ceramic tiles market. It means that they can compete against tiles that are manufactured in other parts of the world. Indeed, this is a demonstration of the benefits of the preferential treatment we provide to one another within the AfCFTA market and how using the Guided Trade Initiative showcases the benefits of the AfCFTA.

We are cognisant of the challenges that have been faced by businesses in conducting trade on the continent and that is why we launched the AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative. It is not easy for individuals or even business to understand how to export from one country or region, to another part of the African continent. We are proactively addressing these challenges by working very closely with governments and the exporters, to make sure that they understand the rules of the AfCFTA; the customs procedures and the transit procedures.

It is very important for the exporter to understand all of these practical elements, so they can see the benefits of the AfCFTA and undertake confidently to conduct business .

Our intention is to expand the scope of the AfCFTA Guided Trade initiative as well as other practical solutions around knowledge sharing and capacity building as we seek to Accelerate

the Implementation of the AfCFTA in line with the African Union theme for 2023.

How is the issue of currency convertibility and ease of cross border payments a key factor in trade facilitation being addressed?

One of the biggest challenges the African continent faces is the cost of currency convertibility, which contributes to a higher cost of trade. For example, if you are in Ghana and you want to trade with somebody in Kenya, you have to first convert the Ghanaian Cedi into a third currency, usually the US dollar. Your counterpart in Kenya receives the dollar and then they have to convert the dollar into the Kenyan Shilling. This cost of converting currency is estimated to be about US\$ 5 Billion annually.

Africa has 42 currencies. It means that our capacity and ability to boost intra-Africa trade is significantly constrained by the cost of trade. That is why we have partnered with Afreximbank to introduce the Pan African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS), which is a digital system to facilitate trade and one of the Operational Instruments of the AfCFTA Agreement. Through the Pan African Payment and Settlement System, one will be able to trade in local currency.

Using the example above of the trader in Ghana and Kenya, the trader in Ghana using the PAPSS, will be able to trade in local currency, in Ghanaian Cedi. The counterpart in Kenya will

AfCFTA
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FORUM 2023**

16-19 APRIL 2023

CapeTown International Convention Centre
Cape Town, South Africa



receive the payment in the local currency in Kenyan Shilling. This will reduce the cost of trade. It will ensure the affordability of trade, and more importantly, it will benefit SMEs and young entrepreneurs who are not able to afford the exorbitant amounts that are required to change currencies, or convert local currencies into the dollar to enable trade to happen.

The Pan African Payment and Settlement System is therefore one of our biggest deliverables within the framework of the AfCFTA, and I am very proud that we are working closely with Afreximbank which is an African Financial Institution to make sure that more and more African countries and central and commercial banks are part of the Pan African Payment and Settlement System, so that we can make trade affordable, accessible, and also so that we can boost the productive capacity and competitiveness of the SMEs in Africa.

The AfCFTA Protocol on Competition Policy

Provides a continental regime that will enhance competition policy to promote trade, support industrialisation, innovation and diversification; improve market efficiency and economic growth and ensure that gains from trade liberalisation are not negated or undermined by anti-competitive practice.



Scan to learn more about AfCFTA Protocol on Competition

Creating One African Market



How the Economic Development Trade Tourism Industry and Minerals Department of the African Union Commission (ETTIM) is contributing to the accelerated implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement and Protocols

H.E. ALBERT M. MUCHANGA

Commissioner
for Economic
Development, Trade,
Tourism, Industry &
Minerals (ETTIM)

The Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and its Protocols (AfCFTA Agreement) is currently Africa's biggest structural transformation programme. Through its focus on developing intra-African trade, it gives impetus to generating higher value and growth from sectors like the creative economy, transport and logistics, innovations, industrialization, and agriculture, among several others. From this, it is clear it has huge potential to generate opportunities for decent livelihoods and prosperity for the African people. Against this background, its full and effective implementation is of utmost importance.

ETTIM will contribute its part to ensure accelerated and effective implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement. The starting point is to give life to the Purpose, Vision,



Values, Mission, Principles of the African Union and the Aspirations of the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063. These, presented in Box 1 below, define the strategic direction of the AU, our continental body in addition to being sources of energy to power the growth of the AfCFTA as an active trading hub.

What can be discerned from Box 1 are elements of complementarity, collaboration, alignment, and, among others, result focus, all which are key to ensuring programme and

Purpose, Vision, Values, Mission, Principles, and Aspirations of the African Union

1. Purpose

- Defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Member States;
- Accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent;
- Promote and defend African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its peoples; and,
- Encourage international cooperation.

2. Vision

An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena.

3. Values

- Respect for diversity and teamwork;
- Think Africa above all;
- Transparency and accountability;
- Integrity and Impartiality;
- Efficiency and professionalism; and,
- Information and knowledge sharing.

4. Mission of the African Union Commission

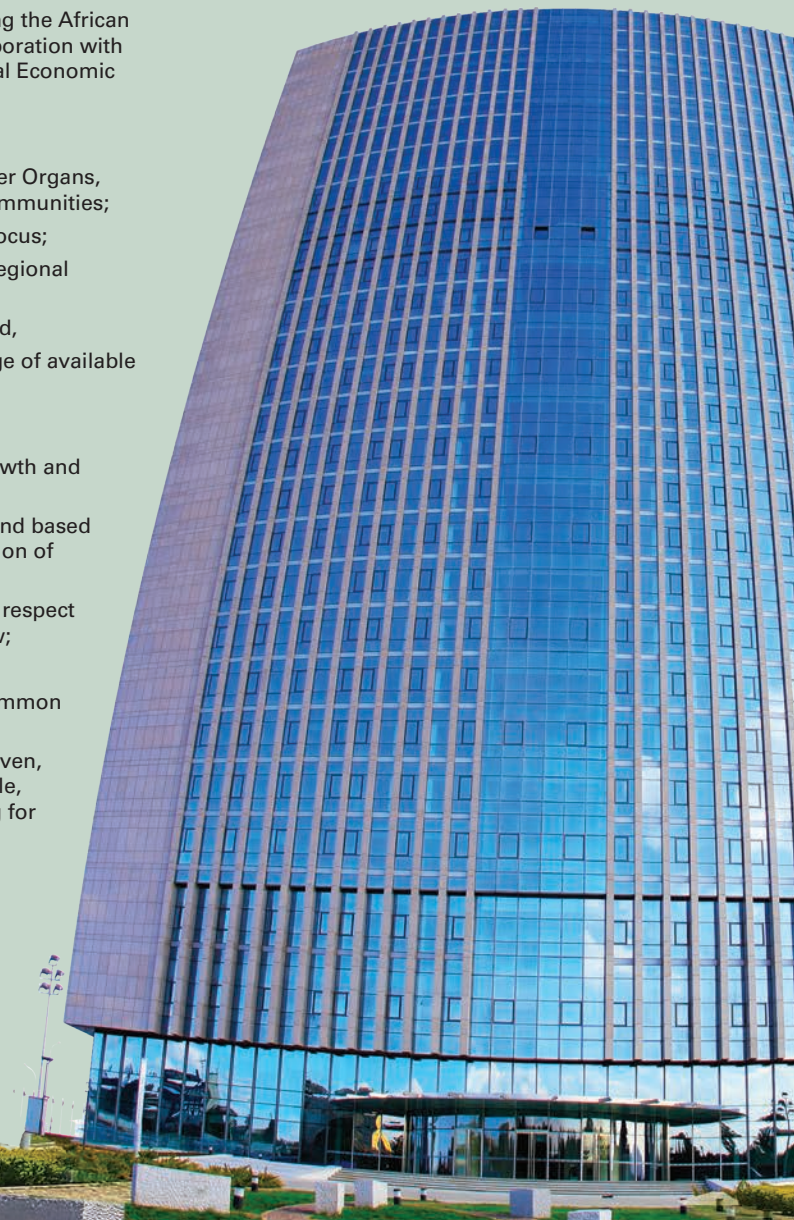
An efficient and value-adding institution driving the African integration and development process in collaboration with the African Union Member States, the Regional Economic Communities and African citizens.

5. Principles

- Subsidiarity and complementarity with other Organs, Member States and Regional Economic Communities;
- Results orientation, feasibility and impact focus;
- Close coordination and cooperation with Regional Economic Communities;
- Coherence of policies and programmes; and,
- A networking approach that takes advantage of available resources through other players.

6. Aspirations of African Union Agenda 2063

- A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development;
- An integrated continent; politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance;
- An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law;
- A peaceful and secure Africa;
- An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics;
- An Africa whose development is people driven, relying on the potential of the African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children; and,
- Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner.



organizational development across the AU system.

It is these elements which made it possible for the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) of the AU Commission to facilitate negotiations and ratification of the AfCFTA Agreement. DTI was also the interim AfCFTA secretariat before a permanent secretariat was established and started operating in Accra, Ghana.

Beyond this, ETTIM is also contributing in several ways to the development of the AfCFTA market. The starting point is to leverage it as a key component of Africa's productive transformation through the development of regional and continental value chains as the supply base. The chains are aimed at generating commercial opportunities for manufacturing, agro-processing as well as production of intermediate goods. Productive transformation will in turn generate specialization and increased intra-African trade in both final and intermediate goods, thereby removing the race to the bottom and un-competitiveness.

This will deepen market resilience by developing regional and continental supply chains as safeguards from unexpected global supply disruptions in future. Resilience is vital to sustaining Africa's poverty reduction efforts and consequently, our social and economic progress. We have, in this connection, released the first **Made by Africa** report which identified 94 value chains and prioritized the development of pharmaceutical, clothing, automotive and baby food value chains. We are also on a mapping exercise of previous studies of regional and continental value chain development.

A key component of the Action Plan for the Accelerated Industrial Development of Africa (AIDA) is the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). An SME strategy has been developed and is being implemented. At the Niamey Summit on Industrialization and Economic Diversification held on

25th November 2022, we teamed up with pan-African financial institutions to address both the skill deficits of this group of entrepreneurs as well as their lack of access to finance. US\$2 million will be disbursed by the pan-African financial institutions to promote skills development among micro, small and medium scale entrepreneurs. This training will also contribute to the on-going efforts of formalizing Africa's large and growing informal sector. Furthermore, the pan-African financial institutions committed to make available over a period of one year, US\$1 billion as credit guarantees to micro, small and medium scale entrepreneurs to

enable them borrow from their respective national banks. If the trial run is successful, more and larger guarantees could be rolled out in future.

Africa is a young continent with a medium age of nineteen years. Self-employment and the capacity to generate decent jobs becomes very important in this context. We are hence coming up with a pan-African model legislation on start-ups which is also aimed at harmonizing legislation

For Africa's industrialization to consolidate, upgrade and accelerate, we are also contributing to protecting the AfCFTA market from trade deflection or transshipments by engaging our trading partners to avoid introducing such practices into the AfCFTA market through bilateral trade and investment initiatives. Trade deflection, if allowed to play out, can both undermine industrialization and defragmentation of the African economies in addition to reducing the capacity of the AfCFTA market to operate more effectively and develop.

on start-ups across

Africa. The results could in future be transformed into a protocol on start-ups as part of the legal instruments of the AfCFTA. The current AfCFTA draft protocol on investment was started in the then Department of Economic Affairs as the Pan-African Investment Code.

Still on the issue of finance, it should be pointed out that the ETTIM played a cardinal role to establish buy-in from the African Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the Pan African Payments and Settlement System (PAPSS) which is facilitating intra-African trade payments and settlements in local currencies with net settlements in foreign currency. PAPSS will overtime reduce demand for foreign currency in intra-African trade, in addition to reducing remittance costs. The system has also generated competition which will prompt other financial services companies to increase investments across Africa.

Following closely behind this is the development of macro-economic policy harmonization across Africa. We are in this respect working to establish the African Monetary Institute, fore-runner to the African Central Bank. One of the core tasks of the Institute will be to facilitate timely and full reporting by all African Union Member States on their implementation of the macro-economic convergence criteria adopted by the Assembly of the African Union Heads of State and Government in 2022. Policy harmonization will take us closer to a single African market.

For Africa's industrialization to consolidate, upgrade and accelerate, we are also contributing to protecting the AfCFTA market from trade deflection or transshipments by engaging our trading partners to avoid introducing such practices into the AfCFTA market through bilateral trade and investment initiatives. Trade deflection, if allowed to play out, can both undermine industrialization and defragmentation of the African economies in addition to reducing the capacity of the AfCFTA market to operate more effectively and develop.

Industrial skills development is equally important. We are in this connection collaborating with the African Capacity Building Foundation to commission a feasibility study on the development of a Pan African Manufacturing Institute with campuses in the regions of Africa. The institute will greatly contribute to training factory workers, supervisors and managers involved in manufacturing and agro-processing as well as contribute to research and development, all of which are vital to innovation, productivity, competitiveness. In addition, it will open up possibilities for increased investments in industrial design. This is indispensable for Africa to embark on product differentiation and become more competitive in her industrialization process by developing uniquely African brands. Furthermore, we are working with the African Business Council to set up training schools for African women involved in adding value to precious stones.

Scan to learn more about the work of the AU in promoting Economic Development, Trade, Industry and Regional Integration



We are also working on the development of quality infrastructure. We started with the adoption of the African Quality Policy by the Ministers responsible for Industry which was endorsed by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. The next stage is to develop the **Made in Africa** standard which will make firms that qualify to use it become more competitive and, in the process, assist them to build brands and increased market share. The standard will also contribute to removing technical barriers to intra-African trade.

We foresee the carbon border tax, pioneered by the European Union, gaining prominence in international trade. In this respect, we are developing a programme on decarbonizing African industry. The Democratic Republic of Congo and The Republic of Zambia have pioneered this with the electric car battery project. Africa's abundant strategic and green minerals will be exploited to make decarbonization the anchor to the continent's green industrialization.

It is often said what gets measured gets done. Flowing from this, it is important that we develop statistics on intra-African trade flows. In this connection, we have proposed to the AfCFTA Secretariat that we create a window on intra-African trade information and statistics in the African Trade Observatory. The Observatory will also have windows on Africa's trade with the rest of the world, industrialization and investment.



« The African Integration Report

... provides an update on the status Africa's regional integration process; the key achievements of the various Regional Economic Communities and the opportunities that will foster increased integration



Africa is also positioning herself to compete effectively in the digital future. ETTIM and the AfCFTA secretariat are in this connection working with the Ae Trade Group, a social enterprise, in the development of the Sokoukou e-commerce platform. We have complemented this with a project financed by the African Development Bank (AfDB) to lay foundations for the creation of a digital African single market.

Positioning Africa to progressively reduce heavy reliance on external debts and aid as sources of development finance are equally important elements of accelerating implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement. We are in this connection developing a programme on export diversification and development beyond intra-African trade. This programme will complement Africa's production and export of commodities with exports of manufactured and agro-processed goods as well as services, including carbon trading. Equally important is inclusive growth and sustainable development. A study is underway on this issue. The programme to emerge out of the study will be among the flagship programmes of the next ten-year implementation of the African Union Agenda 2063 to run from 2023 to 2033.

The lessons learnt from facilitating intra-African trade will be better captured by the AfCFTA secretariat by commissioning an annual report on intra-African trade covering, among others, special themes, directions of trade across Africa as well as their commodity composition, volumes and financial values. We will, in this connection share our experience with the AfCFTA secretariat in the publication of our annual **Africa's Development Dynamics** report.

Mobilizing the African private sector to develop shipping, railways, road connections as well as inter-country energy linkages around and across Africa is critical to the effective implementation of

the AfCFTA Agreement. In addition, wholesalers and retailers across Africa are being encouraged to invest in warehousing and distribution centres which are critical to ensuring constant supplies of goods in intra-African trade. Members of the private sector are also being mobilized to make use of the annual Investment Forum sponsored by the AfDB and the Intra-African Trade Fair, sponsored by African Export Import Bank (Afreximbank) to expand their operations through increased investments and sales. In addition, work is at advanced stages in rolling out, in collaboration with the African Stock Exchanges Association, a Pan African Stock Exchange.

The tagline of the AfCFTA is: '**Creating One African Market**'. From this, we are commissioning a readiness assessment towards an African customs union/ common market. The results of the assessment will provide benchmarks for deeper continental economic integration, and consequently, contribute to accelerated implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement.

By way of concluding, let me say that when it comes to strategy formulation and implementation across the world, the trend is that a majority of organizations fail to effectively implement the strategies they formulate. However, the AfCFTA Agreement can avoid a similar fate if we all work in sync to generate new momentum that leads us to leverage Africa's domestic demand. Our 2019 **Africa's Development Dynamics** report shows that domestic demand is the most important driver of the continent's growth performance. It accounted for 69% of annual growth between 2002 and 2018. This demand is now shifting towards more processed goods and is growing 1.5 times faster than the global average. The publication goes on to show that demand for many other products such as motor vehicles, manufactures of metals and industrial machinery is also expanding faster than the global average. From this, it is clear that we have a huge lever to generate internally driven inclusive sustainable development across our continent by making the AfCFTA work and deliver to the expectations of ordinary people who want dignity by being liberated from poverty through decent jobs and better living standards.



« **Made by Africa**

Creating Value through Integration



The AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services . . .

aims to create a single liberalised market for trade in services by enhancing competitiveness of services through economies of scale, reduced business costs, enhanced continental market access, improved allocation of resources including the development of trade-related infrastructure amongst others



Scan to Learn more about the AfCFTA



AFREXIMBANK: Championing Africa's Development through the AfCFTA Implementation

PROF. BENEDICT O. ORAMAH

President and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Africa Export-Import Bank (AFREXIMBANK)



In 2023, we will celebrate 60 years since the founding of Africa's pan-African organization The Organization of African

Unity and its successor the African Union. Afreximbank congratulates the member states of the African Union for the vision and courage that enabled the transition from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU). I wish to congratulate the African Union Commission, under the leadership of H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Chairperson of the Commission, AU Commissioners, Heads of Departments and AU Organs, and indeed all members of staff and leaders of the African Union, past and present, for the tremendous progress achieved in driving the African agenda, dating back not just 20 years but as far as 1963 when our leaders established the Organization of Africa Unity.

Indeed, it was those foundations of 1963 when the very first Summit of Independent African Heads of State was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to consider the challenges facing our continent and proffer strategic resolutions to secure our collective future, that an agenda for the economic emancipation of Africa was drafted. An agenda, that I dare say foretold the need and relevance of an African Export-Import Bank. The resolutions and decisions adopted at that first meeting of the OAU reflected some of the earliest thinking and priorities of African leaders with regards to the continent's economic development and integration.

For instance, some of the resolutions made over 60 years ago are today, directly relatable to the flagship initiatives being championed by Afreximbank in partnership with the AU. At their inaugural meeting in 1963, and in consultation with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) at that time, African Heads of States set up a preparatory economic committee to investigate among other issues; the means for developing trade among African countries by the organization and participation in African trade fairs and exhibitions, the granting of transport and transit facilities, the establishment of an African Payments and Clearing Union, and the possibility of establishing a free trade area between the various African countries.



🗳️ **H.E. Abdel Fattah el-Sissi - President of the Arab Republic of Egypt (Right) and Chairperson of the African Union and Dr. Benedict Okey Oramah - Chairperson of Afreximbank (Left) launching the operational phase of the African Continental Free Trade Area at the African Union 2019 July Summit in Niamey, Niger**

That historic meeting of African leaders in 1963 also recognized the need for increased economic integration through trade as a means to developing the continent. This vision of economic integration has received continuous support by the bank and we are pleased that step – by – step, Afreximbank has through a strong and productive partnership with the AU, worked to implement Africa’s Development Framework, Agenda 2063 and key flagship programmes such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). In partnership with the AU and its AfCFTA Secretariat, Afreximbank is at the forefront and playing its part to ensure

Africa delivers on the Agenda 2063 aspirations for regional and economic integration by promoting trade and investment in the continent.

The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) represents a culmination of the efforts of our leaders past and present and the promise of a better, more prosperous, and sustainable future for Africa. Jointly, we launched the biennial Intra African Trade Fair (IATF) which has now been held in Egypt in 2018 and Durban, South Africa in 2021, attracting an aggregate of over 40,000 visitors, over \$72 billion in trade and investment deals and more than 2,600 exhibitors. The next edition will hold in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire in November 2023. We have jointly launched the commercial operations of the Pan African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) to enable intra African trade to be paid for in African

currencies and have underpinned the settlement with a facility of up to \$3 billion. We have also launched the African Collaborative Transit Guarantee Scheme, to ease the movement of goods across African borders. Afreximbank has provided technical and financial support through the administration of over US\$10million in Grants and Technical Assistance to the AfCFTA Secretariat and the establishment of the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund with a commitment of US\$1billion in financing to ease the impact of commencing trade activities under the AfCFTA for African economies and an additional US\$ 10 million in grants to support the compensation fund. In addition, the Bank will provide multi-year Grants to support the AfCFTA negotiations, build capacity and support the functions of the AfCFTA Secretariat, sponsor AfCFTA engagements, and advocacy and research activities, grant support to facilitate AU programmes including harmonization of standards to advance the implementation of the AfCFTA.

The declaration of 2023 as the **African Union Year of Acceleration of the Implementation of the AfCFTA** and the opportunity it presents for the continent will reinforce the work that the Bank is currently undertaking to facilitate implementation of the AfCFTA and renew commitment by all stakeholders of the importance of ensuring Africa can enhance trade with itself and with the world and achieve the Agenda 2063 aspiration of Africa as a major player in the global arena

The fact that initiatives proposed and considered by African leaders in 1963, are now being driven and implemented by the continent, demonstrates Afreximbank’s unique strength in moving beyond



IATF2018 Panel Discussion: Promoting Africa’s Infrastructure Connectivity

political aspiration to action, and further strengthens the case for advancing the Bank’s relationship with the AU to work towards actualizing our common development goals under Agenda 2063.

In addition to the initiatives aimed at promoting the AfCFTA, the Bank has partnered with the AU on several critical initiatives that are central to Africa’s sustainability and development, such as the procurement and deployment of COVID 19 vaccines under the Africa Vaccine Acquisition Task Team platform, to secure access to COVID-19 vaccines at a time when Africa was excluded from global vaccine supply chains. The Bank’s Pandemic Trade Impact Mitigation Facility (PATIMFA) was also structured to ease the pressure on African Union Member States caused by the disruption of global supply chains and the consequent global economic contraction during the lockdown period. This facility was made accessible to all African Member States to help cushion the economic and health impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic with over US\$8billion disbursed from 2020 to 2021. The commodity price surge caused by the Ukraine crisis presented additional challenges to AU Member States and the Bank responded by launching its Ukraine Crisis Adjustment Trade Financing Programme for Africa (UKAFPA) to support the continuity of necessary trade and economic activities, with over US\$4 billion was disbursed in 2022. Afreximbank also collaborated with UNECA in launching the Africa Trade Exchange

(ATEX) that is today serving as a platform for pooled procurement of food and fertilizers by AU member states.

At Afreximbank, we understand that achieving **The Africa We Want** is the collective responsibility of all Africans. That is why the Bank continues to support the African Union, its agencies, and the African agenda through our partnership with the AU.

Congratulations once again, to our esteemed partners at the AU and we look forward to celebrating the success of our collaborative efforts and to reshaping the African narrative into one that we can all be truly proud to be part of.

Happy 60th Anniversary!

Learn more about the Intra African Trade Fair visit <https://www.intrafricantradefair.com/en>

Find out more about how Afreximbank is championing the AfCFTA and Africa’s development by visiting <https://www.afreximbank.com>



ACCELERATION OF
AfCFTA
IMPLEMENTATION

The AfCFTA Protocol on Rules & Procedure on the Settlement of Disputes...

Provides for the administration of the Dispute Settlement Mechanism and aims to ensure that the dispute settlement process is transparent, accountable, fair, predictable and consistent with the provisions of the AfCFTA Agreement.



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A Flagship Project of
Agenda 2063 The Africa
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Connecting Payments, Accelerating Africa's Trade



The PAPSS (Pan-African Payment and Settlement System) is one of the essential pillars for the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). It was developed by the African Export-Import Bank (AfreximBank) and was endorsed by the Heads of State of the African Union at the Twelfth Extraordinary Summit of the African Union held on July 7, 2019, in Niamey, Niger Republic, as one of the Operational Instruments of the AfCFTA Agreement

PAPSS is an infrastructure for Africa's economic and financial integration. It is a centralised payment and settlement infrastructure intended to facilitate intra-African trade and commerce and is designed to effect instant cross-border payments in local currencies.. PAPSS works in collaboration with Africa's central banks to provide a payment and settlement service to which commercial banks and licensed payment service providers across the region can connect as 'Participants'.

Previously, African companies and their local banks used correspondent banks – often outside of Africa – to settle payments between two African currencies in a third, external currency, usually dollars or Euros. The previous system also created foreign exchange and liquidity requirements for individual African Central Banks. PAPSS is therefore expected to reduce costs, and accelerate the settlement and payment of trade transactions; enable the efficient flow of money securely across African borders, thus minimising risk and contributing to financial integration across the regions. Considered by many to be a game changer for intra-African trade, PAPSS aspires to save businesses across the continent USD 5 billion in transactions costs each year.

After a successful pilot phase with the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) Central Banks, the system was officially launched in January 2022 in Accra, Ghana by Afreximbank, the African Union, and the AfCFTA Secretariat. During this phase, all six Central Banks became live on the system and have been sending through live transactions.

The 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU, directed the AfCFTA Secretariat and Afreximbank in consultation with Member States and Governors of the Central Banks to deploy the System to cover the entire continent and finalize the regulatory frameworks. PAPSS was adopted by a number of different financial institutions in 2022, shortly after its debut to the public. The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, the Banque Centrale de Djibouti, and the Bank of Zambia all became members of the system, which allowed it to expand its presence throughout Southern and Eastern Africa. PAPSS is also collaborating with the Association of African Central Banks (AACB), which is a collection of regulators, to provide assistance to the system in the process of refining its regulatory and supervision framework. Commercial banks in the WAMZ area, which is where

the system is currently active, have begun to join the network because of the huge prospects made available by PAPSS. As a result, there are now a total of 50 commercial banks on the PAPSS network following the joining of 38 commercial banks in 2022. To date, PAPSS has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with over ten strategic partners, including the WAMI Institute, BUNA, the COMESA Clearing House and Smart Africa, to support the implementation of PAPSS in Africa. Additionally, PAPSS has signed up a total of seven switches, including the national switches of Nigeria and Ghana, NIBSS and GhIPSS respectively which are now live and transacting.

To fulfil its mission as a Pan-African Payment Market Infrastructure, PAPSS must ensure the utmost levels of confidence with its many stakeholders. Hence, PAPSS was certified against ISO27001 & ISO27701 standards, and against SWIFT's Customer Security Program, after undergoing three certification audits performed by competent entities in the fields of Information security and data privacy management. PAPSS stakeholders may rest assured that their data is safe and secure because of the system's strict adherence to international security standards.

PAPSS is presently actively working to expand throughout Africa and fulfil its full potential. The PAPSS is expanding its geographic footprint by extending its network to support the integration of other ecosystems across Africa including remittance companies, stock exchanges, card schemes etc.

African Central Banks oversee the governance and daily operation of the PAPSS, which is headquartered in Cairo, Egypt. PAPSS is only an exchange for legal tender, not digital assets like cryptocurrencies or Central Bank Digital Currencies.

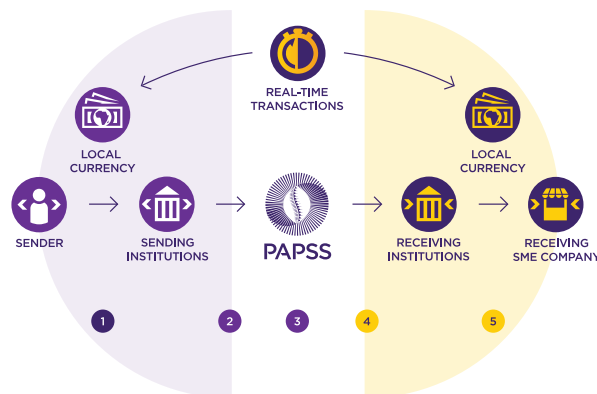
How PAPSS works

PAPSS operates by connecting the real time gross settlement (RTGS) systems of individual African Central Banks. On a daily basis, PAPSS settles the balance of all of the transactions among individual African currencies, netting them out prior to midnight. Central Banks then resolve the remaining difference.

PAPSS functions by supporting 3 processes: Instant payments, Pre-funding and net settlement

(i) PAPSS Instant Payments:

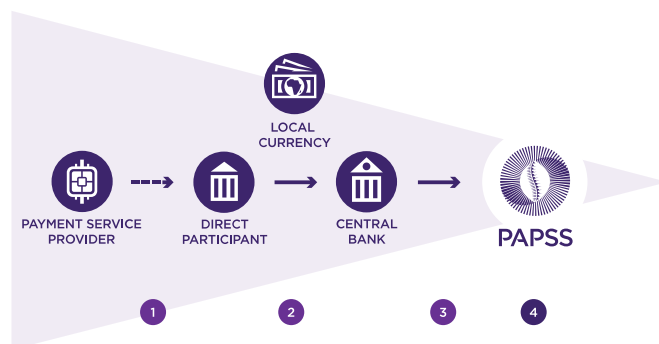
The PAPSS facilitates transactions without the inconvenience of converting local currencies into hard currencies, which often entails funds leaving the continent to intermediary banks who then return the funds bank to beneficiary banks thereby adding additional days to transactions. The PAPSS also performs compliance, legal and sanctions checks instantly within the system resulting in near-instant payments processes within 120 seconds.



1. An originator issues a payment instruction in their local currency to their bank or payment service provider.
2. The payment instruction is sent to PAPSS.
3. PAPSS carries out all necessary validation checks on the payment instruction.
4. The payment instruction is forwarded to the beneficiary's bank or payment service provider.
5. The beneficiary's bank clears the funds to the beneficiary in their local currency.

(ii) PAPSS Pre-funding:

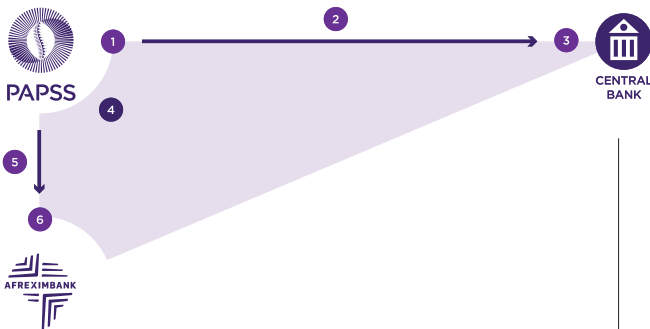
The speed of the real-time payment process requires the PAPSS to guarantee that funds are available to complete the originator's transaction before effecting the movement of debits and credits between participants' accounts. Participants must, therefore, agree to a pre-funding arrangement.



1. Direct Participant issues credit instruction to settlement account in RTGS (central bank)
2. RTGS credits pre-funded account of Direct Participant and notifies PAPSS
3. PAPSS credits Direct Participant's clearing account
4. Indirect Participants leverage Sponsorship Agreements to issue funding instructions via Direct Participants

(iii) PAPSS Net Settlement:

PAPSS needs to ensure prompt settlement within 24 hours. Net settlement across all participating central banks occurs at the same time – 11.00 UTC – each day.



1. At end of day (UTC 11.00am) PAPSS determines the net position in local currencies for all participating central banks
2. PAPSS send credit or debit settlement instruction to Central Bank RTGS (depending on net position)
3. Central Bank RTGS debits or credits between PAPSS pre-funded account and Central Bank Suspense Account and confirms settlement to PAPSS
4. PAPSS Mirrors Central bank instruction to conclude local currency settlement
5. PAPSS issues equivalent hard currency settlement instruction (based on the net position) to Afreximbank
6. Afreximbank debits / credits the Central Banks's hard currency settlement account held in Afreximbank and confirms to PAPSS

PAPSS is indeed a gamechanger in the Africa trade landscape as it provides an alternative to current high-cost and lengthy correspondent banking relationships to facilitate trade and other economic activities among African countries through a simple, low-cost risk-controlled payment clearing and settlement system. It also serves as an avenue of expanding financial inclusion to cover the informal sector while monitoring funds transfers, thus reducing money laundering, which costs the continent several billions of dollars annually.

In the first phase of PAPSS' implementation, the Central Banks are connecting to leading local banks.. In a second phase of PAPSS' development, locally licensed

fintech companies may gain access to PAPSS, allowing them to process trade-related transactions for intra-African trade, including on mobile platforms.

As of January 2023, the PAPSS network consists of 8 central banks, 10 strategic partners 50 commercial banks and four national switches. It will expand into the five regions of Africa before the end of 2023. All Central banks are to sign up by the end of 2024 and all commercial banks by the end of 2025.

All the African Central Banks and the private sector financial service providers are invited to join PAPSS to gain access to trades with tens of thousands of end-users and bring about the intended multiplier effect to the benefit of the continent



Scan to learn more about the Pan African Payment System (PAPSS)



Scan to learn more about the work of Afreximbank



Scan to learn more about the PAPSS, an Operational Instrument of the AfCFTA



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3. Debt collection (accounts-receivable management, amicable collection, legal collection, debt buy-back, asset management, property administration, factoring, etc)
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As part of the promotion of financial inclusion and banking in Africa, AFRIK CRÉANCES is organising the third edition of the International Forum on Digital Intermediation and Innovation, ‘FONI 2024’ at the Hôtel 2 février, Lomé, Togo from 16 to 17 May 2024 on the theme ‘Intermediation and SME-SMI financing for financial, digital and social inclusion in Africa’, under the patronage of His Excellency Mr. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe, President of the Togolese Republic.



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Accelerating AfCFTA Implementation: Why access to information is critical

The progress thus far and the vital role innovative methods of deepening private sector engagement will play

By: **Martha Wambui Muiru**, Founder, Not an Afterthought Newsletter (<https://notanafterthought.substack.com/>) A newsletter that explores why Africa is not an afterthought with a particular emphasis on the role technology will play in fuelling economic growth that will make Africa not an afterthought.

Data shows that micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) make up 90% of all the businesses in Africa and employ more than 50% of the workforce. The widespread presence of SMEs means they dominate the trading landscape. Currently, much of that trade is between Africa and the rest of the world.

The Africa Continental Free Trade Area agreement (AfCFTA) intends to change this by boosting intra-African trade from a paltry 13% to a more robust 25% by 2040. It is a noble goal, but to succeed, African businesses, especially MSMEs, must refocus on African markets and start trading under AfCFTA.

A survey of over 800 African CEOs by the Pan-African Private Sector Trade and Investment Committee (PAFTRAC) indicated that the private sector is optimistic and ready to adopt AfCFTA. However, industry leaders were

...The lack of freely available information makes implementing the agreement more difficult. Even when specific regulations surrounding AfCFTA are made more readily accessible, the information must be kept up to date...

discouraged by the lack of adequate information.

The AfCFTA Secretariat is aware of this shortfall and has already taken some steps to develop solutions.

The Progress Thus Far Regarding Access to Information

The AfCFTA Secretariat partnered with the MasterCard Foundation to launch a private sector engagement strategy. The strategy will focus on four priority sectors with the potential for quick wins—automotive,



pharmaceuticals, agro-processing, transport and logistics.

The AfCFTA Secretariat also plans to develop a thorough understanding of the agreement among the business community. Cynthia Gnassingbe-Essoum, a senior advisor to the AfCFTA Secretariat, confirmed that they would focus on targeted support, SME education and skill development.

The AU, on its part, partnered with the International Trade Council (ITC) and the Africa Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) Academy to develop a course on “How to Export with AfCFTA.” The course is free and open to all Africans.

The AU has also developed resources and published policy

documents that offer a ton of information about trading under the agreement. They include a Study on the Opportunities in the AfCFTA for Women in the Informal and Cross-Border Trade, AfCFTA Questions and Answers, and Training Modules on Rules of Origin.

International organisations have not been left behind. As part of implementing AfCFTA, the International Trade Center (ITC) is setting up an Africa Trade Observatory (ATO) to help propagate trade information.

The ATO will focus on four primary areas.

- Training the national government staff on how to maintain quality trade data
- Equipping businesspeople and policymakers with the skills needed to analyse and use trade data
- Creating an online portal that offers trade information
- Monitoring market access, competitiveness, regional integration, use of trade preferences and border procedures.

Individual countries are also doing their part. Kenya, for instance, has started organising local, national and regional trade events and exhibition shows to facilitate market access.

Through the office of the SMEs' registrar, the Kenya government is also undertaking a formalisation process that will make it easier to access SMEs for interventions such as grants and skill development.

In a nutshell, the relevant stakeholders are doing their best to get the information out so that SMEs can equip themselves and start trading.

That, unfortunately, is not enough. There is one more step: getting SMEs to engage with the information.

The Necessity of Encouraging SMEs to Engage with Available Information

Although the RECs and AU are people-centred, most Africans still think nationally and not regionally or continentally.

As such, they will not go out of their way to seek information about regional or continental projects. Most of the time, they do not even know about them. So, while the Afreximbank bank has an excellent course on AfCFTA, chances are high that many Africans do not know about it.

The lack of regional or continental engagement is why RECs struggle with getting their citizens to take advantage of favourable regional policies. The current chairman of the East African Community, President Evariste Ndayishimiye, noted this when he said that each partner state needed to add sensitization sessions in their action plans.

To avoid a situation where the AfCFTA fails to kick off because of a lack of engagement, the stakeholders must develop innovative ways of meeting SMEs halfway or even all the way.

Here is an overview of two methods worth considering.

Partnering with Organisations That Have Close Ties to The Community

While in Arusha for a women's conference organised by Divine Ministries one of the speakers—Dr. Jacky spoke about 'investing in agriculture.' She mainly explored the different avocado value chains.

The information was valuable, well-delivered, and packaged in a manner that was so easy to understand that it inspired me to invest in avocados. Many people who attended the conference noted the same. That right there is the importance of delivering information using platforms that feel accessible—it makes or pushes people to take action.

Chances are high that information on avocado value chains is available somewhere. However, because it hasn't been packaged in an accessible manner, many people still believe that avocado only has one value chain—exporting the fruit. Similarly, African countries, the RECs, the AfCFTA Secretariat and various stakeholders must partner with organisations that have close ties with the community to help package information in an accessible manner. It is not enough to develop platforms or information hubs and hope SMEs will go out of their way to engage. Sure, some will, but the majority will not, and AfCFTA needs a large number of African businesses to engage and trade under the agreement to achieve all its goals. Another thing, organisations with ties to the community understand the kind of speakers the business community in that region will respond to.

An AfCFTA Extension Officers Program

Extension officers are typically found in the agricultural sector. They are intermediaries between farmers and research. The officers create an enabling environment for farmers by ensuring they have the appropriate information to make decisions that will



yield the best results.

Whether continentally, regionally or nationally, AfCFTA can do something similar. The AfCFTA extension officers will be the intermediaries between MSMEs and research. They will update business owners with the latest information, including policies, rules, regulations, market opportunities, value addition, and trade facilitation. Where needed, the officers will walk with the business owner from production to export, at least for the first time, until the business owner gets the hang of things.

Precedence has already proven that extension officers can have a massive impact. Between 2009 and 2011, maize production in Kenya skyrocketed from an all-time low of 191.000 thousand tonnes to 405.000 thousand tonnes due to a revitalisation of the extension officers' program. The country maintained that high production until 2013, when it started falling again.



In an interview with a now retired agricultural officer, he noted that maize production fell after 2013 because devolution kicked in and the agricultural extension officers shifted from the national to county government. The county governments could not facilitate a smooth transition, which saw a lot of extension officers retiring with no one left to fill the gap. It shows how big of an impact the officers had that production fell as soon as they stopped operating optimally.

Something else that lends credence to how beneficial extension officers can be is how hectic understanding trade matters can sometimes be.

In a Facebook group, Kenya Cottage Industries, Arise, someone asked, "Kenyans, you have been given a duty-free market to the UK, and you cannot export. Why?" Someone responded that understanding the process was too difficult.

Most MSMEs are willing to expand their trade portfolio. After all, more trade means more money. However, difficulty understanding the protocols, rules, and everything in between can make business owners shy away.

An extension officer is the perfect middle person to hold the hands of business owners.

These two possible solutions are not enough, but they are a good starting point for deepening private-sector engagement.

« Cheese production at the Borj Lella cheese factory, in Beja, Tunisia Image © Simona Granati - Corbis/Corbis via Getty Images

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The AfCFTA Protocol on Investment . . .

Is a continent-wide governance tool for promoting, facilitating and protecting investments that foster sustainable development and create a level playing field for African investors by addressing areas such as Investment Promotion, Facilitation & Protection, Dispute Settlement, Investor Obligations, Environmental, labour, and consumer protection; Technology Transfer; Tax obligations; Outward Foreign Direct Investment.



Scan to Learn more about the AfCFTA

Free Movement of People in Africa & Gender Equality as effective means of Accelerating the Implementation of the AfCFTA

By: **Jean Amia** (Phd, International Relations), Principal Protocol Officer, AfCFTA Secretariat

With the end of apartheid and the attainment of political independence for the continent achieved through the Organization of African Unity, and in order to prioritize inclusive social and economic development, continental and regional integration and to realize the Pan-African vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, led by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force on the international scene¹, African Heads of State decided to accelerate integration through the creation of an African Continental Free Trade Area². Addressing the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government at the launch of the operational phase of the AfCFTA in Niamey on July 7, 2019, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, delightfully said: “A dream, an old dream is becoming a reality. Envisaged at the OAU Inaugural Summit in May 1963, the African Continental Free Trade Area that we are launching today is one of the most emblematic projects of the African Agenda. The Founding Fathers must certainly be proud. Kwame Nkrumah, Jamal Abdel Nasser, Haile Selassie, Hamani Diori and others must be saying: at long last! Allow me therefore to express to you Excellencies, Heads of State and Government, our sincere thanks for your support and personal commitment which have made this laudable achievement possible”.

The operationalization of the AfCFTA saw the election of its first Secretary General at

the 33rd Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly in February 2020 in Addis Ababa, for a four-year term³. During his swearing-in ceremony on March 19, 2020 at the African Union Headquarters, H.E. Mr. Wamkele Mene, Secretary General of AfCFTA noted that: “For at least the first half of the decade, seven of the world’s 10 fastest growing economies were in Africa, according to the International Monetary Fund’s World Economic Outlook database of October 2019” and that: “Through AfCFTA,

People at the Katuna border crossing between Uganda and Rwanda, which had been closed since 2019, after its reopening in Kigali, Rwanda on January 31, 2022 Image © Cyril Ndegeya/ Anadolu Agency via Getty Images



¹ Flagship Projects of Agenda 2063: <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/flagship-projects>

² Article 2 of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area

³ <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20200418/newly-sworn-afcfta-secretary-general-wamkele-mene-undertakes-serve>

we have the opportunity to reconfigure our supply chains, reduce dependence on others and accelerate the creation of regional value chains that will boost intra-African trade⁴. Two years after this speech, on Friday, October 7, 2022, the AfCFTA Secretariat officially launched a “Guided Trade Initiative” allowing seven countries on the continent to trade at preferential tariffs on pharmaceuticals, rubber, pasta, tea, coffee, steel and timber.

The AfCFTA is a geopolitical element. It is the expression of the unitary commercial dynamics of the African Union to allow the integration of African States in the world economy through geo-economic regionalization. It is therefore no coincidence that the theme of the year 2023 of the African Union is “Acceleration of the implementation of the AfCFTA” According to political scientists Michèle Rioux and Daniel Drache, “Power forms part of economic, social and cultural relations which become more effective strategic and diplomatic means. Intra-African trade designed to strengthen Africa’s commercial position on the world market is therefore part of this geostrategic logic of the search for power. Economic regionalization is therefore positioned as an alternative to the decline of global governance. In terms of trade integration, the performance of SADC, EAC, ECOWAS and COMESA should be commended, with scores above 0.6 according to the criteria of the multidimensional index of African

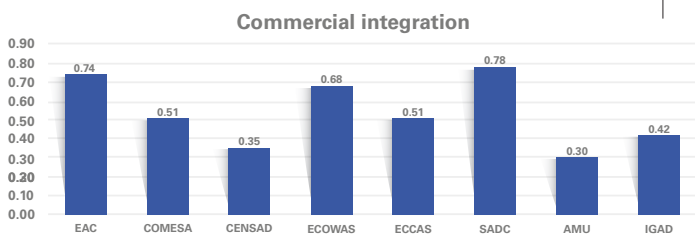


Figure 1: Comparative analysis of trade integration between the RECs

regional integration.

The Multidimensional Index of African Regional Integration (MIRA) developed by the AU Commission and the RECs in collaboration with national statistical agencies and African central banks assesses the integration efforts of the RECs in relation to the goals and priorities of Agenda 2063, the Abuja Treaty and the regional treaties of the Regional Economic Communities. IMIRA is composed of eight dimensions:

free movement of people, social, trade, infrastructure, financial, monetary, environmental, political and institutional integration. In order to meet the African Economic Community criterion, RECs should achieve an average score of 0.67 on a scale of 0 to 1, but so far some RECs have only achieved a score of 0.56, which is below the expectations set out in the timetables based on the Abuja Treaty objectives. All eight dimensions of the multidimensional index of African regional integration need to be addressed concurrently, and priority efforts must continue to be made to enable people to move to study, participate in cultural events, and trade in Africa. The free movement of people on the African continent is therefore a fundamental requirement for the acceleration of the implementation of the AfCFTA.

The chart below illustrates the progress made by the RECs on the free movement of people on the continent.

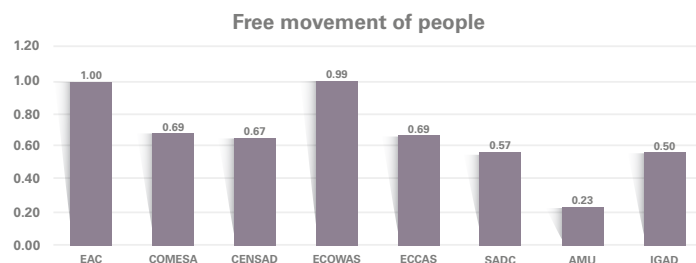


Figure 2: Comparative analysis of the RECs on the free movement of persons, *Source: African Union 2020 Commission (2020 Integration Report, p.30)*

One of the objectives of AfCFTA as contained in Article 3 of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area is the creation of a single market for goods and services, facilitated by the movement of people, in order to deepen the economic integration of the African continent in line with the Pan-African vision of “a prosperous and peaceful Africa” enshrined in Agenda 2063. While it is true that the AfCFTA Agreement has already been signed by fifty-four (54) AU Member States and that forty-four (44) of them have already ratified it, making this the fastest ratification in the history of the African Union, it is nonetheless true that the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community on the Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and the Right of Establishment has only recorded 32 signatures, 4 ratifications and 4 deposits of instruments. This Protocol provides for the abolition

⁴ <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20200418/newly-sworn-afcfta-secretary-general-wamkele-mene-undertakes-serve-africa>

⁵ Africa Integration Report 2020, p.33

⁶ Africa Integration Report 2020, p.26

of visas, the right of residence, the right to do business and professional establishments. This is a good opportunity to urge the signatory States to speed up the procedures for ratifying and depositing this treaty in order to accelerate the Implementation of AfCFTA. Africans cannot trade among Africans if they cannot move freely on the African continent.

The launch of the **African Passport** and the adoption of the **Protocol on the Free Movement of People and Goods** in July 2016 are designed to remove restrictions on the ability of Africans to travel, work and live on their own continent. Unfortunately, this passport is not accepted by some African countries. The Africa Visa Openness Index (5th edition, 2020) developed by the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank however notes progress in facilitating the movement of African citizens, investment and business activities within the continent. Dr. Khaled F. Dr. Khaled F. Sherif, Vice President, Regional Development, Regional Integration and Service Delivery Department of the African Development Bank notes that “the fact that governments have continued this initiative despite the global pandemic reveals the value placed on liberalizing visa regimes and revitalizing key sectors of their economies to maintain the right investment climate. The 2020 index shows that a record 54 percent of the continent is now accessible to African visitors who either no longer need a visa to travel or can obtain one on arrival. This is a significant increase of 9% over the level of the last five years... The overall picture of the opening up of visa regimes is positive and is reflected in the latest African Regional Integration Index Report, whose results show that freedom of movement is the most important factor in Africa’s economic integration”⁷.

Since men and women are commercial actors in both the formal and informal sectors, they should be equitably supported by the States. A study conducted by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) on the opportunities offered to women by AfCFTA highlights that informal cross-border trade historically rooted in African communities and predating the borders of colonial and post-colonial states across the continent accounts for a significant share of intra-African trade. In addition to providing income and employment for vulnerable people, particularly women, this type of trade strengthens solidarity, peace, stability, and

integration among border communities. Unfortunately, it remains isolated from

national trade policies, plans and development budgets. As a result, women, who constitute the majority of informal cross-border traders, are excluded from the resources available to formal trade actors. There is therefore a need to consider formalizing this informal sector. While providing access to markets and credit facilities for women, there is a need for women traders to be trained and educated on AfCFTA, regional trade benefits so that they can trade smarter and receive better returns. “Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a prerequisite for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and good governance. Member States of the African Union must create equal access to education; to factors of production; to trade facilities. The fight against poverty and the promotion of women’s economic empowerment require Member States to ensure parity in education at secondary and tertiary levels and achieve higher retention rates for girls; increase women’s literacy levels through adult education; as well as the contribution of women scientists and information and communication technologies. The economic transformation of the continent through industrialization stipulated in Article 3 of the compiled annexes on the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area will only be possible if women, who make up the bulk of Africa’s population, are taken into account. “Women represent about 70% of the agricultural workforce in Africa. The demand for food in Africa is growing at 10 times the rate of production and to cover this high demand, Africa spends about US\$45 billion a year on food imports and this figure could rise to US\$110 billion by 2025”¹². Industrialization supports productivity through new techniques and technologies, creates jobs, enhances the skills of the workforce, promotes the formal economy, improves the overall economy and contributes to social stability. If Africa is to accelerate the implementation of AfCFTA, it must take women into account.

⁷ African Union Commission and AfDB 2020 Report on Visa Openness

⁸ A study on the opportunities in the AfCFTA for women in the Informal and Cross-Border Trade, P 6.

⁹ Kofi Annan, Former Secretary General, United Nations

¹⁰ African Union Strategy on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (Gewe) 2018-2028. www.au.int

¹¹ Rapport D’examen Final De Décennie De La Femme Africaine Sur L’approche Locale De L’égalité Des Sexes Et De L’autonomisation Des Femmes 2010-2020’ P. 27 41992-doc-AWD_report_French_f.pdf (au.int)

AfCFTA & Informal Cross Border Trading: Opportunities for Women in Africa

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The informal sector is considered to be a significant contributor of the African economy and the labour market, as it plays a huge role in production, employment and income generation. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines the informal sector as “all remunerative work (i.e. both self-employment and wage employment) that is not registered, regulated or protected by existing legal or regulatory frameworks, as well as non-remunerative work undertaken in an income-producing enterprise. According to the ILO, 85.8% of Africa’s employed population are in the informal sector. The informal sector constitutes a significant portion of the economy in African countries. The establishment of the AfCFTA has the potential to be a game changer for the continent at all levels. It is envisaged as a catalyst for economic growth and an initiative that will benefit entrepreneurs, including medium-to-small businesses. By facilitating the movement of goods and services among African countries, the AfCFTA will create opportunities to accelerate intra-Africa trade, grow local businesses, create jobs, and increase infrastructure development on the continent, in addition to boosting informal cross-border trade. Empowering African women within the context of the AfCFTA and making AfCFTA a reality is meant to address issues faced by women in informal cross border trading. Business opportunities created by an enlarged market and the creation of a conducive policy and legal environment are crucial conditions for the economic empowerment of women as informal cross border traders still suffer from invisibility, stigmatisation, violence, harassment, poor working conditions, and a lack of recognition for their economic contribution (UN Women, 2010)

Informal Cross Border Trading in Africa

In most parts of Africa, at least two in three people regarded as informal cross-border traders (ICBT) are women. ICBT is literally one of the most important sources of employment and livelihood for the poor, especially for low-income and low-skilled women, in border districts. Several researches have shown that women participate in ICBT for income purposes, food security, employment, the need to eradicate poverty; however they face lack of trade facilitation, inadequate border infrastructure, sexual and physical harassment, limited access to finance and market information, corruption and insecurity, and low knowledge, education and business management skills (Afrika and Ajumbo 2012). ICBT provides a steady source of livelihood especially for women and youth, as well as employment opportunities and, over time, serves as business incubators, especially as some informal players graduate to the formal sector (African Union Commission 2018). Various studies estimate that ICBT contributes about 40% of the economic Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Africa (APRM 2022) which means their contribution is significant for African states and should not be ignored. Despite such contributions to the economic development of Africa, the regional



trade agreements, national trade policies, development plans and budgets continue to isolate and marginalise the sector.

The African Union Commission (2018) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (2022) categorise ICBT in three forms namely: **(i)** that which is completely unregistered and entirely outside the formal economy **(ii)** where registered firms and traders partially evade trade regulations by resorting to illegal practices (e.g. under declarations and under invoicing) and **(iii)** where registered and unregistered firms and traders completely evade trade regulations (use of unchartered routes and other forms of smuggling). This explains why the sector is referred to as unofficial, underground, hidden, invisible, shadow, parallel, second, unregulated, unrecorded, black, moonlighting, unmeasured and unobserved economy (Ackello-Ogotu 1997; Macamo 1998; OECD 2009). Although not directly addressed under the AfCFTA, women ICBTs are expected to benefit directly and indirectly through several provisions in the agreement which recognizes gender equality and the informal sector. The AfCFTA agreement's commitment to women's inclusion in the continental free trade area manifests in the agreement's Preamble which recognises the role of gender equality in economic development, cooperation, and international trade. Paragraph 7 of the AfCFTA agreement preamble shows that 'all member states recognise the importance of gender equality for the development of international trade and economic cooperation.' Furthermore, Article 3(e) of the agreement stipulates that 'the general objectives of the AfCFTA are to: promote and attain sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality and structural transformation of the State Parties.' In addition, Article 27 (2) (d) of the Protocol on Trade in Services, mandates State Parties to 'improve the export capacity of both formal and informal service suppliers, with particular attention to micro, small and medium size; women and youth service suppliers.'

Opportunities

The recent study by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) has identified some opportunities for Women ICBTs under the AfCFTA which includes: the free movement of people and goods; a unitary tax regime that will ease the movement of goods and reduce the costs of trade as pertains to customs and import duties, and finally that the AfCFTA presents a continent-wide opportunity to engage ICBT in a manner that promotes the empowerment of women traders in ICBT (2022). The elimination of tariffs by ninety percent under the AfCFTA will allow informal traders

to utilise formal trading channels, which offer more protection, safety and security for women. The AfCFTA will simplify customs and clearing procedure as well as reduce import duties that will facilitate trade for small-scale traders especially women (AfCFTA Secretariat)

These potential benefits cannot be realised automatically for this vital demographic dividend. The AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth will be incomplete if it does not address the plight of the women ICBTs. In fact, the ongoing negotiation and consultative processes must ensure that these marginalised people are included to air their voices and expectations. The Protocol must also mandate the governments to recognize the ICBT and put in place supportive government policies and regulations in relation to this sector as well as to facilitate the provision of financial assistance to ICBTs and access to credit. According to the AfCFTA Secretariat (2022) the Protocol is expected to address the specific constraints and barriers women face when trading on the continent and will create an environment that allows women to utilise the AfCFTA by accessing wider markets, improving their competitiveness, and participating in regional value chains. The major aim of the protocol is "to broaden inclusiveness in the operation of the AfCFTA through interventions that support young Africans, women, and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as well as integrating informal cross-border traders into the formal economy by implementing the simplified trade regime" (AfCFTA Secretariat 2022). Erasmus and Hartzenberg (2022) add that, "the protocol can address very practical trade-related issues and persistent challenges in the context of informal and formal trade in Africa, in addition to providing answers to the challenges faced by women traders in many

However, the main problem with the Protocol on Women and Youth is that it generalises the problems faced by youth and women yet the groups face different problems which are either gendered or age-related. Thus, the straight-jacketed approach that was taken by the Secretariat may lead to the further marginalisation of gender-specific problems faced by women ICBTs.



countries and regions on the continent.” However, the main problem with the Protocol on Women and Youth is that it generalises the problems faced by youth and women yet the groups face different problems which are either gendered or age-related. Thus, the straight-jacketed approach that was taken by the Secretariat may lead to the further marginalisation of gender-specific problems faced by women ICBTs.

Besides that, the AfCFTA Pilot Phase or Guided Trade Initiative has already commenced yet, the Protocol negotiations are yet to be concluded, leaving a huge gap for the women ICBTs to catch up since they are already left out. The AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade negotiations must be enhanced and concluded in order for marginalised groups to fully benefit and get directly involved in trading under AfCFTA. According to UN Women (2021) “prosperity and growth can only be accomplished if the AfCFTA agreement is fair and inclusive but because of pre-existing inequalities in African economies, the agreement’s benefits will not be distributed equally along gender lines. For instance, women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses are likely to miss out on the opportunities brought by trade integration because they are mostly small, informal, and have low productivity. “

In order to address these issues and to ensure that women ICBTs are included, governments, development partners, RECs, women organisations, CSOs and trade Support Institutions must: adopt simplified trading regime; capacitate and train women ICBTs on trade facilitation issues; embark on AfCFTA awareness campaigns targeting women ICBTs; adopt the fourth industrial revolution technologies at the borders to deal with border delays, reduce corruption and improve their security; closure of gender digital divide; provide financial support for women ICBTs as well as ensuring that easy access of travelling documentation and business registration procedures. The closure of the digital gap is vital because the AfCFTA has already introduced the e-tariff book, e-rules of origin, AfCFTA application, the Pan African Payment Settlement System (PAPSS) and is currently negotiating on the

protocol on Digital Trade and e-commerce which means understanding of technologies will be vital for women ICBTs under the AfCFTA.

With the advent of the AfCFTA, the movement of goods will be made easier through the elimination of tariffs and non-tariff barriers that have often been identified as significant challenges to ICBT. States are working progressively towards the elimination of tariffs for intra-Africa trade. Women will also be able to move freely, the AfCFTA will present the opportunity of free movement of people. Opening up the continent will facilitate access to a larger market for women involved in ICBT once visa restrictions across the African continent are removed. The opportunity for women informal traders to move freely across borders broadens the diversity of goods to be traded as well as the markets that will be accessible to ICBT. (APRM Report, 2022)

The COVID 19 pandemic exposed the inadequacy of the formal sector to generate sufficient revenue for governments and for improving the continent’s tax-to-GDP ratio. In order to harness the full potential of the informal sector, it is essential that policies are implemented to provide a better and protective platform for women traders. With the AfCFTA, governments can boost trade in the informal sector by implementing fair and transparent policies that will benefit operators of the sector, while also addressing the numerous challenges of the economy to ease its formalisation. By facilitating the movement of goods and services among African countries, the AfCFTA will create opportunities to accelerate intra-Africa trade, grow local businesses, create jobs, and increase infrastructure development on the continent, in addition to boosting informal cross-border trade. It is important that ICBT associations be involved in the policy-making processes on trade within states and to ensure gender issues are addressed.

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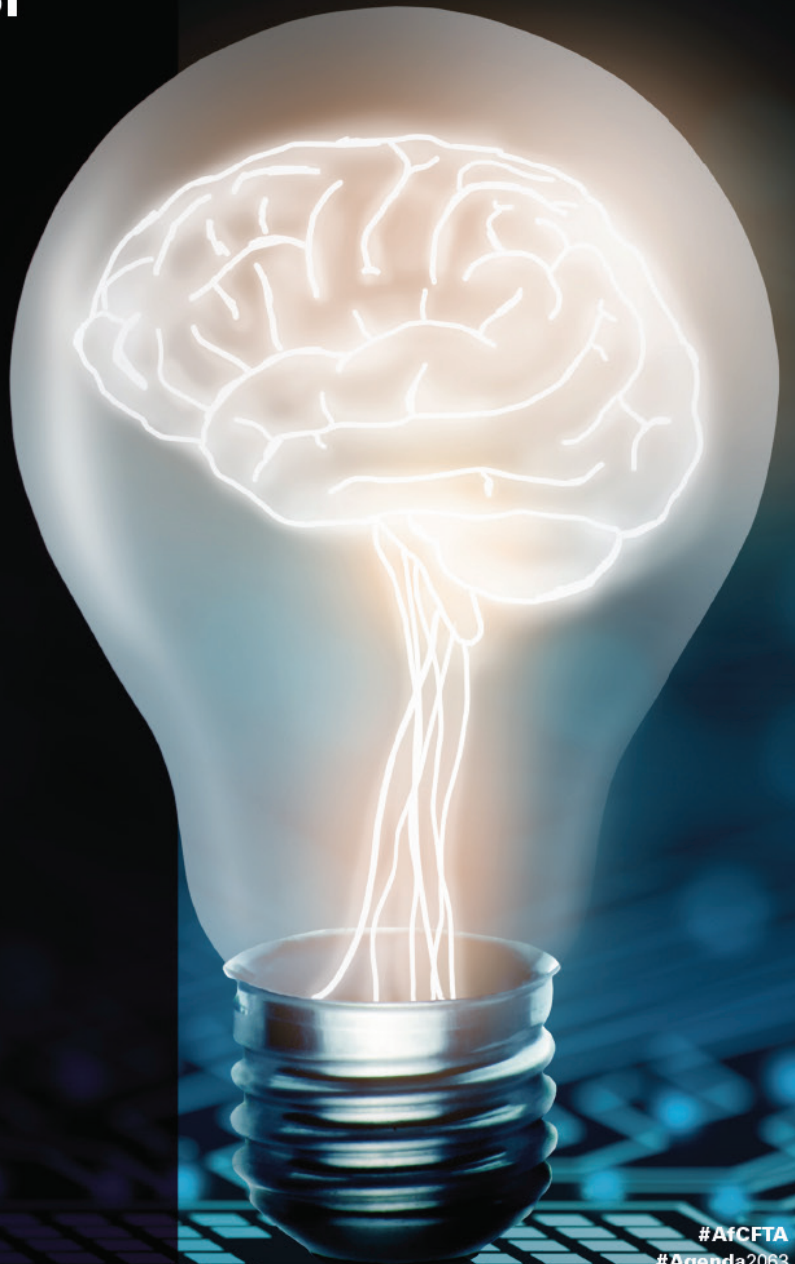
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The AfCFTA Protocol on Intellectual Property Rights . . .

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Landry Meya,
CEO of Akata RDC

AKATA RDC is a Congolese-owned company with a share ratio of 60% Congolese and 40% South African. Created in 2018 to support the mining sector of the DRC, its aim is to build a competitive business and establish a leading position in the mining industry of the DRC through products and services that are relevant, effective and customised to exceed customers' expectations.

FIELD OF EXPERTISE

AKATA RDC offers professional, cost-effective and efficient mining solutions in the fields of mechanised mining and associated value-added services in the DRC and beyond. Its services include the provision of skilled personnel, machine, plant and spares equipment,

and a diverse range of associated design capabilities. Its value proposition to clients is the proactive formulation of total quality solutions, underpinned by the guarantee of extensive knowledge, research, vast experience and professionalism.

AKATA RDC further enhances its products and services through supportive partnerships with a wide variety of stakeholders.

In addition to mining, AKATA also specialises in engineering, manufacturing and energy.

VISION FOR THE REGION Regional expansion

AKATA is striving to become the general mining contractor in the DRC and expand its business into the



AKATA RDC prides itself on being a solution facilitator, excelling in equipment, parts, expertise and competitive pricing

rest of the continent. It aims to become a key player with expertise and innovative engineering solutions.

DRC expansion

For a long time, there has been a shortage of qualified and credible local companies in the DRC to support the activities in the field of mining. With the requirement of the regulation authority for subcontracting companies, which encourages all companies on Congolese soil to work with locally based Congolese companies, AKATA has seen an opportunity in the market. Its experience, knowledge and expertise in mining gives a clear advantage in doing what it does best – support the mining industry with innovative engineering solutions and supply of spares and equipment. AKATA RDC endeavours to reduce human capital while capitalising on sustainable projects.

To support the supply chain in the mining sector in parts, equipment and services, AKATA RDC has managed to secure formal distributorship with a good number of key original equipment manufacturers, mainly in South Africa, China, the US and a few European countries. It has meticulously selected its suppliers to enable it to provide the best transit times.

In so doing, it ensures AKATA RDC clients can sustain the flow of their productivity with minimal to no interruption. With the administration office in Kolwezi (DRC), it provides customers with top-quality service by being near their operations.

COMPLIANCE WITH ARSP

Under Law No 17/001 of 8 February 2017, the DRC government revised the law regulating subcontractors in the private sector on its territory, under the supervision of the L'Autorité de Régulation de la

Sous-Traitance dans le secteur Privé (ARSP). August 2020 saw the presidency pushing this body in terms of tight controls on companies operating in the DRC, ensuring that everyone abides with Congolese law in terms of respecting what has been established to secure Congolese best interests.

As previously indicated, AKATA RDC is a 60% Congolese-owned company and 40% is owned by AKATA Holdings South Africa. The company is committed to being compliant to this body and it is currently registered, allowing it to operate legally on Congolese territory. Among the main challenges in the mining sector are local entity prices not being competitive, and a lack of capacity and expertise from local entities. In response, AKATA RDC is positioning itself as a solutions provider in terms of parts, equipment, expertise and pricing through its service offering.

MISSION AND VALUES

AKATA RDC values integrity in both personal and professional relationships. Imagination and innovation, meanwhile, drive its actions. Respect, loyalty and integrity and protection of the environment are the cornerstones of the AKATA RDC business. ■



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Four years ago in March 2018 when 44 African Union heads of States and Government signed the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the Protocol on Trade in Services was also signed into law along with two other Protocols on Trade in Goods and Dispute Settlement.¹ Since then the AfCFTA Agreement and its 3 Protocols have entered into force (May 2019),² and the signatories to the Agreement currently stand at 54 (out of 55 countries) with 44 State Parties³ to the Agreement. The 13th Extraordinary Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Johannesburg in December 2020 decided that the start of trading under the AfCFTA Agreement would commence as from 1 January 2021.⁴

Africa's Single Services Market Taking Shape through the AfCFTA Protocol on Trade Services

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The significance of the AfCFTA should not be underestimated.⁵ This is not merely a trade agreement to sustain cross-border transactions in goods and services. It is a broad economic blueprint for Africa's socio-economic transformation, involving other supporting measures such as competition policy, investment, intellectual property rights, digital trade, and specific legal instruments for women and youth in trade. The fact that services trade was specifically included from the onset of the negotiations on the AfCFTA speaks to the recognition by Africa's leadership of the significance of the shifting tectonic plates of global and



¹ Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36437-treaty-consolidated_text_on_cfta_-_en.pdf

² Thirty days after the 22nd instrument of ratification was deposited.

³ State Parties are signatories that have ratified the AfCFTA Agreement

⁴ Thirteenth extraordinary session on the AfCFTA: The Assembly of the Union adopts decision on the start of trading | African Union (au.int)

⁵ The World Bank has estimated that the AfCFTA could potentially lift 30 million Africans out of extreme poverty and increase the income of the continent by US\$ 470 billion. See The African Continental Free Trade Area: Economic and Distributional Effects, World Bank, 2020, available at The African Continental Free Trade Area (worldbank.org)

continental business operations,⁶ and the fact that services trade, with its attendant relationship to digitization, can be viewed as the new frontier for achieving the goals set out by the founders of Africa's economic independence and its imperative for growth and transformation.⁷ In this way, Africa effectively rejected the notion of a mechanical adherence to linear integration and the relegation of services trade to a later stage in regional integration.

Africa's Services Trade Performance

The services sector drives economic transformation in the form of communications, logistics, construction, energy and financing, and also provides jobs in tourism, transport, healthcare and education. Services industries enhance the performance of downstream economic activities and are essential promoting growth and reducing poverty. Services complement manufacturing, and will be critical enablers of increasing production of value – added goods in African economies. Unlocking intra – African trade in services will enable the development of regional and continental value chains, to then lead directly to a significant increase in Africa's economic output, that also increases levels of employment and skills transfer across the continent. Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs)⁸ have made varied progress in regional services trade in line with the pan-African vision of promoting the free movement of goods, people, capital and services.⁹ RECs such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) are salient examples.¹⁰

Services trade is thriving in Africa, with average contributions of around 55% of GDP, 75% of FDI and 22% of total trade.¹¹ Travel accounts for the largest share of services exports in every sub-region except West Africa where other services - mainly banking, insurance and business services - play a more prominent role. In 2019, services accounted for 65% of value added to global GDP and 49% of value added to Africa's GDP,¹² indicating that there is tremendous potential for future growth and improvement in many

services sectors, both at continental level and between Africa and the rest of the world. Yet services trade liberalization remains a challenge for many African countries. And, despite the fact that Africa's services sector has been growing faster than the world average, and it provides about one third of formal employment, the continent remains a marginal player in value added global services trade. Moreover, although services exports from African countries are increasing¹³, the continent's role in global services trade is peripheral, compared to Latin America and South-East Asia,¹⁴ and intra-African trade in services is also low. Moreover, the social and economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have undermined the envisaged progress in developing services trade in Africa. Growth contracted to -34% in 2020 as a direct consequence of the pandemic.¹⁵

The AfCFTA Blueprint on Trade in Services

The AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services (the "Protocol on TiS") was designed to change Africa's dismal performance in services trade: the legal instrument represents an important services trade vision and a strategic framework for further negotiation to deepen regional integration in Africa. Its aim is the progressive liberalization of trade in services, allowing companies across the continent to easily operate across borders. It differentiates itself from the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) by taking a hybrid approach to liberalization, with State Parties obliged to make commitments in all service sectors through Schedules of Specific Commitments on the one hand, and broad regulatory frameworks for cooperation on the other.¹⁶ Moreover, the principle of reciprocity was embedded in the Protocol on TiS, to nuance the most favoured nation treatment obligation.¹⁷ All this appears to suggest that there would be divergence from standard approaches to methods of negotiation and implementation, in order for Africa to forge its own path – neither linear, nor previously trodden, but crafting innovative methods that ideally fit the continent's own economic trajectory.

⁶ Beatrice Chaytor, The AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services: the Making of an African Services Market, UNDP Futures Report, 2020.

⁷ Africa's Services Trade Liberalisation & Integration under the AfCFTA, Assessing Regional Integration in Africa (ARIA), Volume X, UNECA, 2021.⁸ There are eight regional economic communities recognised by the African Union. See <https://archive.uneca.org/oria/pages/regional-economic-communities>

⁹ Enshrined in the wider AU agenda set out in Agenda 2063 and the African Economic Community.

¹⁰ ARIA X, Chapter 1, The Status of Regional Integration in Africa, pp. 40-41.

¹¹ United Nations conference on Trade and Development (2019), UNCTADStat Data Platform available at <https://unctadstat.unctad.org>

¹² ARIA X, p. 16.

¹³ Between 2005 and 2019, African services exports grew twice as fast as merchandise exports. ARIA X, Chapter 2 The Status of Services Trade and Services Trade Policies in Africa, pp. 60-61.

¹⁴ Africa's contribution to global services trade has consistently lagged around 2% of global trade. See Services Exports for Growth and Development: Case Studies from Africa, African Union Commission, December 2015; and UNCTADStat <https://unctadstat.unctad.org>.

¹⁵ Beatrice Chaytor and Ify Ogo, Recovery from the Economic Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Africa: What Role for Trade? Tralac newsletter, Issue 18, April 2020 available at <file.html> (tralac.org)

¹⁶ AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services, Articles 18 - 22.

At the 31st Ordinary Session in July 2018, the African Union Summit adopted five (5) priority services sectors (Business; Communication; Financial; Transport, and Tourism and Travel), as the subjects of the first round of liberalization under the AfCFTA.¹⁸ The choice of these sectors was strategic: first, communication, financial and transport services are backbone services to many economic activities, with business services (particularly professional services) substantially contributing to services delivery through the movement of persons; second, most African countries have liberalized tourism in some form either in the GATS or in their RECs, making it the most liberalized of the services sectors and presenting “low hanging fruit” in terms of the potential socio-economic impact on micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs), women and youth.¹⁹

Indeed, services trade in Africa has an important gender dimension: more women are employed in the services sector than in agriculture or manufacturing, but this tends to be at the lower end of the value chain or in informal capacities. Also women tend to be heads of a large number of MSMEs which account for 80%

of African business, yet they do not enjoy the same access as men to the full spectrum of services jobs and occupations.²⁰ Through liberalization and regulatory reform, trade in services could address constraints, eliminate or mitigate barriers and ultimately, move women up the value chain into more sophisticated manufacturing processes or service delivery, providing greater opportunities for their participation in economic activities and gender empowerment.

Africa desperately needs to create a post-pandemic pro-growth recovery in its services market that creates resilience against future shocks.²¹ And the current cost of living crisis that has compounded the post-Covid-19 pain, adds to the sense of urgent action required on the part of AfCFTA State Parties. The International Monetary Fund’s October 2022 report reveals a continent facing multiple shocks, as food and energy prices soar, public debt and inflation are at levels not seen in decades.²² These challenges call for increasing Africa’s productive capacities, as well as the backward and forward linkages between services and primary or secondary sectors, thereby delivering on its industrialization agenda and regional value chain development, and mapping out a comprehensive development strategy through services industry strengthening.

AfCFTA State Parties will have to factor services into a different kind of industrial policy, and work with MSMEs to facilitate their competitiveness and productivity, drawing on economies of scale that the AfCFTA enables, and focusing not just on poverty reduction but on growing and sustaining the middle classes.²³ Governments will have to rethink their education and institution building strategies to ensure that the service sectors that have the capacity to act as productivity escalators will have the requisite high levels of skill sets for modern tradeable services, including those that are being revealed as the subset of digital trade in services.²⁴ The foundation for such strategies have already been laid in the form of specific



« **Ethiopian men working in the Dire Dawa train station workshop, Dire Dawa Region, Dire Dawa, Ethiopia** Image © Eric Lafforgue/Art in All of Us/Corbis via Getty Images

¹⁷ See Article 4, Protocol on Trade in Services; and Beatrice Chaytor, The AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services: The Making of An African Services Market in UNDP, 2020. Making the AfCFTA Work for Women and Youth , p. 31.

¹⁸ Assembly/AU/Dec.690-712 (XXXI) found at 36130-assembly_au_dec_690_-_712_xxxi_e.pdf

¹⁹ Beatrice Chaytor, Creating a Single African Market on Trade in Services: Negotiating the Schedules of Specific Commitments under the Protocol on Trade in Services, Tralac Newsletter, Issue 14, October 2019, available at tralac Newsletter | October 2019 (mailchi.mp)2020. Making the AfCFTA Work for Women and Youth , p. 31.

²⁰ See Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs in the Context of the African Continental Free Trade Area, UN Women, June 2019.

²¹ Beatrice Chaytor and Ify Ogo, (2020).

²² Regional Economic Outlook for Sub-Saharan Africa, October 2022 (imf.org)

²³ Dani Rodrik, Africa After Covid-19: De-Globalisation and Recalibrating Nations’ Growth Prospects, Contemporary Issues in African Trade and Trade Finance, Vol 6, No. 1, December 2020.

²⁴ For example, design, software, engineering, fintech, etc.

commitments, sectoral disciplines and regulatory cooperation frameworks currently being negotiated under the auspices of the Committee on Trade in Services (CTIS) established by the AfCFTA Council of Ministers responsible for trade.²⁵ In accordance with the Guidelines for Services Negotiations under the AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services (AfCFTA Negotiating Guidelines),²⁶ the negotiations on the schedules are conducted through a request/offer process using a positive list approach and obliging those State Parties that are WTO members to make commitments that are additional to those made under the GATS (so called GATS-plus); while those that are non-WTO members must make commitments additional to those under their autonomous liberalization regimes.²⁷ The result of the work of the CTIS and its various Sub-Committees over the past two years is the conclusion of draft Schedules of Specific Commitments in the five priority sectors of 21 out of the 44 State Parties. This deepens the level of market opening on trade in the five priority sectors in these countries and provides the genesis of the single services market under the AfCFTA. Meanwhile work continues on the development of regulatory frameworks in the five priority service sectors.

Guided Trade Initiative (with Services)

When African countries signaled in their use of principles such as variable geometry their understanding of the fact that they are at different levels of socio-economic development, they provide themselves with the space to experiment, innovate and redesign in terms of implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement. All this to show that in Africa's trade agenda, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Thus in the attempt to fast track the start of commercially meaningful trade under the AfCFTA, the Guided Trade Initiative (GTI) has been established, to enable those countries that are better prepared to begin to trade with each other.²⁸ Eight State Parties are participating in the GTI,²⁹ whose aims include **(i)** to allow commercially meaningful trading under the AfCFTA; **(ii)** to test the operational, institutional, legal and trade policy environment under the AfCFTA; and **(iii)** to send an important positive message to African economic operators. At least 96 products (goods) will be traded under the GTI, which will be reviewed annually to expand the participating countries and available

products. Shipments under the GTI have already commenced, with tea exports from Kenya to Ghana being the first among these.³⁰ The Council of Ministers has also mandated the AfCFTA Secretariat to expand the GTI to include trade in services, bringing all the backbone services sectors in the first services round into play.³¹ The potential for services trade under the GTI is huge, and will feature services sectors in their role as an enabler for trade in goods (transport, finance) as well as trading in services in its own right (tourism and travel). In this regard, the adopted schedules of specific commitments are a good starting point, providing the necessary legal basis for the start of guided trade in services, which can then be sustained through compliant laws and policies at the national level to support such trade.

The significance of the AfCFTA extends to Africa's socio-economic transformation and it should not be underestimated. The specific commitments, regulatory disciplines and cooperation frameworks under the AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services provide a deepening of the available services markets in AfCFTA State Parties. This gives a solid foundation for African businesses (including SMEs headed by women and youth) to take advantage of the free trade area. With the Guided Trade Initiative encompassing trade in services, AfCFTA State Parties now have the necessary self-designed tools to implement the Protocol. To provide additional information for African businesses, they could also publish AfCFTA services guidebooks that could highlight opportunities in the services sector. They will have to develop policies that support the linkages between different parts of their economies, build solid private and public sector institutions to buttress these policy frameworks, and build the capacity of their private sectors to trade under the AfCFTA, relying on sustained flow of information, benchmarking and experience sharing in the process. The single African services market is gradually being formed – through step by step implementation of the Protocol on Trade in Services.

²⁵ Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, Article 11; Protocol on Trade in Services, Article 26 (1).

²⁶ Adopted by the 32nd Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government, Key Decisions of the 32nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (January 2019) | African Union (au.int)

²⁷ AfCFTA Negotiating Guidelines, paragraphs 23 and 24.

²⁸ The AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative - AfCFTA (au-afcfta.org)

²⁹ Cameroun, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Tunisia.³⁰ AfCFTA's Guided Trade Initiative takes off, set to ease and boost intra-African trade | Africa Renewal (un.org)

³¹ Report of the 10th Meeting of the Council of Ministers, 7 October 2022, on file with the author.

In Article 3 of the AfCFTA agreement, the objective of an “integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, as envisaged in the African Union’s Agenda 2063” is stated. This includes the promotion of e-commerce and digital payments, which will “increase intra-regional trade”, as well as “improve access to the African continental market for external actors” and thus establish a truly “digital economy” on the continent.

AfCFTA: A Catalyzer for Gender Equality in Tech & Social Innovation in Sub-Saharan Africa

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The digital sector has the potential to become one of the largest creators of jobs and innovation in the world (NU CEPAL, 2021). Indeed, since the emergence of COVID-19, this sector has continued to evolve and innovate in:

- The provision of technical and consulting services
- The valorization of engineering, research, and development projects

- The design and development of solutions that enable the operation of all IT tools

However, according to a study conducted by Venture Capital for Africa in 2016, only 9% of start-ups – innovative companies with

high growth potential and speculative future value – in Africa are led by women for a market of over 700 million internet and mobile users.

Similarly, up to 52% of women still feel that technology is a male industry and 32% still consider



gender bias to be a major barrier in the recruitment process (World Economic Forum, 2017). Gender equality in technology still has a lot to be achieved. Bridging the gender gap through digital and entrepreneurship education in this way is essential to reap the benefits of the digital revolution in sub-Saharan Africa, where only 30% of professionals are engaged in the tech industry (UNDP, 2019).

The objective of this paper is to map the strategies for improving the digital ecosystem and digital skills for women's economic empowerment in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). This paper is structured into two main sections. Section 1 presents the factors explaining gender inequalities in the technology sector in SSA. Section 2 highlights the opportunities for women to access tech jobs in SSA.

1. Factors explaining Gender Inequalities in the Tech Sector in Sub-Saharan Africa

According to Lee et al (2019) and Tam et al (2020), girls and boys have similar levels of interest and competence in digital technologies, fewer girls develop this interest as part of their studies or careers in ICT (). Unfortunately, women entrepreneurs in the tech sector in SSA face multiple challenges that greatly impede scalability and sometimes sustainability.

Globally, there are two main factors driving the gender gap in the specific area of ICT sector in sub-Saharan Africa: Low access for girls and women to quality education on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields and low access to financing for women-led startups. Indeed, education can influence women's motivation to start a business, while financing

would give them the means to seize opportunities and improve their productivity (ECA, 2019).

Low Access of Girls and Women to Quality Education in STEM Fields

According to UNESCO (2015), women are grossly under-represented in ICT careers. Only 30% of them are involved in scientific research in SSA, compared to 48.5% in Southeast Europe, 44.4% in the Caribbean, and 44.3% in Central Asia and Latin America. The main reason accounting for this is that very few of them have access to STEM studies during their secondary education and, therefore, do not easily enter the technological and digital professions. In Nigeria, for example – which is the most populous country in Africa (World Bank, 2021) – only 3% to 7% of girls in higher education actually take STEM-related courses when they get there. Specifically, 3% of girls in higher education are enrolled in ICT, compared to 8% of boys.

Similarly, 7% of girls enroll in engineering and construction courses, compared to 22% of boys enrolled in the same fields of study (UNESCO, 2015). Therefore, promoting quality education for girls in STEM fields will significantly contribute to reducing gender inequalities in the tech sector in SSA. This can be achieved by:

- Bringing STEM role models into the classroom
- Disrupting stereotypes such as, "Girls should get married instead of going to school," or, "STEM courses are just for boys."
- Stimulating STEM teachers' awareness of gender issues to foster the development of girls' skills and character traits, and to

serve as role models

- Encouraging interest in STEM early on in education
- Ensuring equal access to basic education
- Improving STEM teacher training

Low Access to Finance of Women-Led Startups

Women represent 50.1% of the total population in SSA (World Bank, 2021). However, 74% of their jobs are in the non-structural sector (UN, 2016).¹ While it is true that SSA has the highest rate of women entrepreneurs in the world, which is estimated at 27%, it should be noted that they are still facing many difficulties in obtaining funds to develop their businesses compared to men.

Although there are more women entrepreneurs in SSA than in other regions, only 9% of start-ups are led by women and those receive less than 2% of global funding (Africa Renewal, 2018). This limited access to credit severely hampers their ability to create and develop small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups, specifically in the tech sector. Generally, the limited access to credit for women is due to lack of assets and unclear property rights that can be used as collateral.

There are other reasons for women's low access to finance. These include:

- Limited access to information
- Lack of equal employment opportunities between men and women, seeing as most women only have ¾ of the rights of men (World Bank, 2018)
- Lack of legal protection against harassment of women in the workplace, school, and in public (World Bank, 2018)

¹ ONU Femmes. Le progrès des femmes dans le monde 2015-2016. Chapitre 2, p. 71.

- Poorer access to quality health care services (Habib, 2021)²
- Lack of political representation, with women remaining largely under-represented in government settings (Yoon, 2004)³
- Discrimination due to the fact that most women are involved in unpaid domestic work, like housework

In order to overcome this challenge faced by women-led startups in SSA, it is necessary that they receive support from specialized support structures, like trainings, mentorships, networking,

Aisha R Pandor, the co-founder of SweepSouth talks to her staff at the office in Central Cape Town, South Africa. Many women are queuing to go through training and to work for the booming company, which has operations around South Africa, and want to expand to other African countries

Image © Per-Anders Pettersson/Getty Images



can include mentoring on the business aspects of their services, on legal and financial aspects, and more. These support structures can also help investors identify the best projects by putting them in touch with the most promising incubated entrepreneurs who have already proved themselves.

2. Opportunities of the AfCFTA in improving Women’s Access in Tech in Sub-Saharan Africa

The AfCFTA represents a real economic opportunity for African countries and for private digital operators. According to the



and access to technology and finances. The role of a business support structure here would be to develop privileged relationships between the startup in question and financial institutions capable of taking on a certain amount of financing – investment funds, crowdfunding⁴ and banks, to name a few. And, above all, to prepare the entrepreneurs to be ready to invest by providing them with dedicated coaching and mentoring services. This

African Union (2020), improving women’s access to tech in sub-Saharan Africa is expected to contribute significantly to the fight against poverty, insecurity and exclusion of women in the sub-region. Given the population of women in SSA and their entrepreneurial skills, improving their access to tech jobs will significantly contribute to:

² Habib M, Adegnika AA, Honkpehedji J, Klug SJ, Lobmaier S, Vogg K, Bustinduy AL, Ulrich A, Reinhard-Rupp J, Esen M, Prazeres da Costa C. (2021), “The challenges for women’s health in sub-Saharan Africa: Lessons learned from an integrative multistakeholder workshop in Gabon”. *Journal of Global Health*. 2021 Sep 4; 11:02002. Doi: 10.7189/jogh.11.02002. PMID: 34552713; PMCID: PMC8442509

³ Yoon, M. Y. (2004). Explaining Women’s Legislative Representation in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 29(3), 447–468. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3598562>

⁴ Exchange of funds between individuals outside of institutional financial channels to finance a project via an online platform.

Increasing Women Economic Opportunities in All Sectors of Activities

Women make up 60% to 80% of the agricultural labor force in SSA, and more than 80% of these jobs are vulnerable (World Bank, 2019). From 2021 to 2030, the number of women and girls living in extreme poverty in this region is expected to increase from 249 million to 283 million (UN Women, 2020). By 2030, 71% of women and girls living in extreme poverty will reside in Sub-Saharan Africa (Wietzke, 2020). Despite the role and influence of women, they continue to receive much less support than men. Increasing economic opportunities for women in all sectors will help take advantage of the ongoing digital revolution (Chardin, 2014).

Fostering Women's Leadership in Entrepreneurship and Innovation

The high number of women engaged in agricultural activities in sub-Saharan Africa is partly explained by the fact that they are predominantly lower skilled and/or lower paid than men. According to a report published by the UNDP (2016),⁵ these gender inequalities cost sub-Saharan Africa about \$95 billion each year. They concern in particular girls' access to quality education; women's access to credit, information, quality health care, employment opportunities (salary levels, access to management positions, social protection).

Given the number of women in this region, promoting and facilitating their access to technology and digital technology would quickly contribute to reducing existing and persistent gender inequalities between men and women. Such an option will help foster women's leadership in entrepreneurship and



Two unidentified Female students share knowledge on a laptop at the African Leadership Academy (ALA) in the school grounds in Honeydew, west of Johannesburg, South Africa. Image © Per-Anders Pettersson/Getty Images

innovation while strengthening their economic empowerment.

Creating Social and/or Environmental Impacts

In a favorable societal and economic environment that promotes women's economic rights, digital technology appears to be a formidable accelerator of the feminization of entrepreneurship. By giving women-led businesses the means to be competitive, facilitating women's access to technology and digital technology will stimulate female entrepreneurship and create better conditions for competitive entrepreneurship. With the support of support structures, women-led businesses will then be able to offer solutions that can bring about change in society by creating businesses to solve a specific social or environmental problem. However, the support of women social entrepreneurs and the structuring of an ecosystem favorable to their development are more necessary than ever. It is, therefore, necessary to support the establishment of administrative, legal, and fiscal frameworks favorable to innovation and social entrepreneurship and to advocate for better access for women entrepreneurs to quality education and digital financing. This will

necessarily contribute to the rapid achievement of higher and higher levels of growth in the economies of SSA.

According to World Bank projections, more than half of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa will be under the age of 25 by 2050. Given its rich diversity and its human and natural resources, the region has considerable assets to generate inclusive growth and end poverty (World Bank, 2021). Among these assets, digitalization is an excellent way to boost growth entrepreneurship and social innovation.

With women making up half of the region's population, it is therefore imperative to promote and strengthen their access to STEM studies, employability and entrepreneurship in the technology and digital sector. In addition, innovative financing methods should be developed for start-ups created and/or run by women in SSA. By adopting reforms to promote more inclusive digital entrepreneurship, SSA countries can ensure greater economic empowerment of women, which would naturally lead to the creation of more, decent, and sustainable, jobs through social innovation and entrepreneurship.

⁵ PNUD, Les disparités entre les genres coûtent à l'Afrique subsaharienne 95 milliards de dollars par an, 2016. Disponible sur : <http://bit.ly/356kTPK>

PRECIOUS ASSETS

UCLG Africa recognises women and youth as the real wealth of Africa

Africa is rich, so rich. A big part of its wealth lies in women and youth. Women account for more than 50% of Africa's combined population, and 60% of the entire continent is aged below 25. In other words, no progress, democracy, development or fighting climate change can be achieved without women and young people. The continent can change only when these two key stakeholders are recognised and empowered as driving forces for change at local, national and continental levels. Gender- and youth-inclusive policies and projects are essential for the sustainable future of Africa.

Aware of this reality, United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa) created two networks that bring together the leaders who are closest to the population: the Network of Local Elected Women (REFELA) and the Young Local Elected Officials Network (YELO).

Since its creation in 2011, REFELA has grown remarkably and currently has 31 national chapters with local female officials from all over Africa. It is the only one of its kind in the world. REFELA launched three successful initiatives, namely a campaign

for African cities without children in street situations; a campaign for African cities with zero tolerance of violence against women and girls; and a campaign for the economic empowerment of women in African cities. In fact, REFELA is so unique and alive that the UCLG sections from Asia and Latin America have asked for assistance to set up REFELA-like networks on those continents.

'Empowering women is empowering the whole African society,' says Rohey Malick Lowe, mayor of Gambia's capital, Banjul, and current President of REFELA. YELO was created in 2018 during the Africities Summit in Marrakech. Its board and presidency were officially formed in October 2022, in Tangier – the same city where REFELA was founded. 'We consider women and young people in local governments game-changers for this continent, and we bet on them,' said Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary General of UCLG Africa, on the day of the YELO constitutive assembly.

Just like REFELA, YELO is set to grow as its members are committed to support each other and defend the interests of the current and future generations.



REFELA representatives (from right), Maria Helena Langa, VP Southern Africa, Mandlakazi Mayor (Mozambique); Fatna El Khiei, VP North Africa, Arbaoua Mayor (Morocco); Christine Akimpaye, former VP East Africa; Milka Moras Ngare, President of the Women caucus of the REFELA-Kenya Council of Governors - UCLG World Congress – Daejeon, South Korea, 11 October 2022



First row from the left, Erragheb Hormatollah, YELO President, Dakhla Mayor (Morocco); George Mwanza, VP Southern Africa, Chipata Mayor (Zambia); Youssef Chirri, member, Tarmigte Mayor (Morocco). Second row from the right, Harouna Camara, member, Dinguiraye Mayor (Senegal) – Constitutive Assembly, Tangier, Morocco, 31 October 2022

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The importance of institutional quality on the volume of Bilateral & Intra-African Trade in Sub-Saharan Africa

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One of the main concerns of African countries and their Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in their regional integration efforts has been to increase the volume of intra-community trade. In these economies, the trade sector was characterized by restrictions in trade regimes due to high trade barriers that played a significant role in stalling intra-community trade. It then became necessary to implement reform policies at both the national and sub-regional levels aimed at eliminating these barriers. Thus, new community ambitions were quickly adopted and above all concretized by the implementation of vast economic reform programs based essentially on unilateral liberalization of key sectors.

In the trade sector in particular, these reforms consisted of a gradual relaxation of the protectionist tendencies that had prevailed since the 1960s (Avom and Gbetkom, 2005). Such reforms were intended to create conditions favorable to the development of community trade in order to promote better access of economies to the world market (Jebuni, 1998). However, several years of implementation of these reforms have not always corresponded to a trade revival for the countries of the Sub-Saharan zone (Guillomont, 1996). Indeed, the stylized facts on trade still reveal a trade intensity that remains rather timid among the Member States of the region. For example, data compiled by UNCTAD (2019), show that in 2016 the share of intra-African trade averaged 15%, which is clearly too low, especially compared to that of developing countries in Asia (23.3%), North America (40%) or the European Union (61.7%).

This problem is particularly acute in the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), which still have greater disparities despite the actions that have been implemented to remove technical barriers to trade.



Indeed, between 1995 and 2015, trade represented only 9.33% within ECOWAS; 14.20% for SADC and 1.31% for intra-EAC trade. Thus, intra-regional trade performance is still unsatisfactory compared to that of other regional trading blocs of the world market where such trade represents more than half of the total trade (UNCTAD, 2013). However, the intensification of intra-regional trade is an important lever for unlocking the economic potential of the regional market, where such trade accounts for more than half of African countries. According to the ECA (2013), it helps strengthen value chains and facilitates the transfer of technology and knowledge through spillover effects. This allows countries to their expand markets, benefit from economies of scale, increase their competitive strength in the global economy and reduce their dependence on traditional trading partners (Kothoni et al, 2019). In this regard, the low volume of bilateral intra-regional trade in SSA should therefore draw attention to the



efforts and means that still need to be invested in order to boost trade in this region. For a long time, tariff barriers and high trade costs were the main obstacles (Anderson and Wincoop, 2004; Hummels and Schauer, 2013). But in recent years due to the widespread reduction of tariffs, regional trade volume is further constrained by other non-tariff trade costs (Freund and Rocha, 2011). With regard to the latter, the economic literature indicates that the quality of institutions is one of the major obstacles currently holding back bilateral trade intensity. In this respect, Decker and Lim (2009) state that the emergence of better quality institutions would therefore be a means of increasing trade in the same way as the reduction of traditional barriers.

Regarding the relationship between institutions and bilateral trade, the main findings from the existing literature show that good institutions contribute to increased bilateral trade by reducing transaction costs and market-distorting risks (North, 1991; Anderson and Marcouiller, 2002; Levchenko, 2007; Duc et al, 2008; Meon and Sekkat, 2008; Hansen et al, 2011). More broadly, they reduce the uncertainty inherent in human relationships (North, 1990). For these authors, the degree of institutional development is an important variable that increases the strength of the incentive system. However, the uncertainty

» **African workers of the MIM cashew processing company are sorting cashew nuts on a conveyor belt in Mim, Ghana**
Image © Thomas Imo/Photothek via Getty Images

associated with poor quality institutions encourages the creation of a market for non-productive activities such as rent-seeking and therefore generates high transaction costs that contribute greatly to the reduction in the volume of bilateral trade between trading countries (Anderson and Marcouiller, 2002). These types of institutions represent a cost factor for domestic exporters and thus contribute to the reduction of their international competitiveness, which has a negative impact on export flows. Anderson and Marcouiller (2002) and Levchenko (2004), point out that this situation is due to the fact that the low quality of institutions increases the cost and risks of transactions that quantitatively affect bilateral exports more than barriers such as tariffs, quotas and natural barriers such as the distance between trading partners.

Yet, in the case of RECs, the institutional environment for promoting bilateral trade remains poor. The majority of RECs still show low scores on indicators of institutional quality. For example, the average index of institutional quality calculated on the basis of Kaufmann's governance indicators (2013) shows that in 2017, the overall institutional quality index was estimated at 0.39 for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); -0.35 for the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); -0.018 for the Common

Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); and -0.32 for the Southern African Development Community (SADC). These stylized facts suggest that there is a problem of institutional effectiveness because in most of these RECs the indicator remains below the average of zero on the scale from (-2.5) for poor quality institutions to (+2.5) for good quality domestic institutions. However, since the work of North (1990), it has been increasingly recognized that the quality of institutions largely determines the economic performance of countries. In this respect, it is of paramount importance to examine the effects of institutional quality on the volume of bilateral intra-regional trade in Sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, this research proposes to analyze the effects of the quality of national institutions on the volume of bilateral intra-area trade in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The scope of analysis of this paper is limited to four (04) RECs, namely the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). This choice was motivated by the availability of data and also by the fact that in these RECs, little empirical work has been done specifically on the link between institutional quality and bilateral trade. Thus, we seek to understand whether institutional quality in the RECs is a factor that hinders their bilateral trade performance in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Methodological Approach to the relationship between institutional quality and bilateral trade volume.

In this paper, we use the gravity model, which is one of the most stable and robust empirical relationships generally used in the economics literature to predict bilateral trade volume (Mucchielli and Mayer, 2005). Since the estimation of the gravity model faces several econometric problems such as the presence of zero bilateral trade, the heteroscedasticity problem of errors and the endogeneity of some variables, the estimation methods used must help minimize most of these problems. Santos Silva and Tenreyro (2011) propose for this purpose the use of the Pseudo Poisson Maximum Likelihood (PPML) estimator that can cope with these problems. This method is robust to heteroscedasticity and proves suitable when the proportion of zero trade is high (Martinez-Zarzoso, 2013). Therefore, in this research we also favor the use of this method.

Results & Discussion

The main results of our estimations highlight the negative effect of poor institutional quality in both the

exporting and importing countries on bilateral trade in RECs. Indeed, the estimated coefficients on the quality of the exporting country's institutions are negative and significant in the different regional economic communities studied in this article. It can be seen that a decrease of one standard deviation from the average in the quality of national institutions of the exporting country results in a reduction in the level of its bilateral exports of around 1.08% in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This value is 0.64% in the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); 0.19% in COMESA and 0.57% in SADC. These negative effects can be explained by the fact that in these different RECs, the poor quality of national institutions in exporting countries reduces the quality of products. This in turn makes it more difficult to import from these countries. According to Agbodji (2007), such a result could also be explained by exporters' loss of confidence in the rules of society so that they are willing to pay additional costs for the settlement of their transactions, often outside official channels.

Similarly, the estimated coefficient on institutional quality in the importing country is negative and significantly different from zero. In fact, the results show that an increase in the level of institutional quality results in a decline in the importing country's exports of around 0.51% in ECOWAS, 0.20% in ECCAS, 0.45% in COMESA and finally 0.12% in SADC. Thus, this situation reflects the fact that exports are also sensitive to the institutional quality of the importing country.

These results confirm the prediction of the theoretical model of Aidt and Gassbner (2010), who pointed out that low institutional quality is a barrier to bilateral trade. They are also consistent with the studies of DE Sousa and Disdier (2004) who show that despite the difference in the risks involved, the importer and exporter attach the same importance to institutional quality. For them, the shortcomings in the application of contracts lead to an increase in the risks likely to affect the importer and the exporter because the contracts and their mechanisms must be guaranteed upstream by the quality of the institutions. The same is true of Anderson and Marcouiller (2002), who have shown, taking the case of Latin America, that bilateral trade is handicapped both by the high level of formal trade barriers and by the poor quality of institutions. Hence the need to promote and strengthen the quality of institutions in the various RECs in order to reduce the obstacles that contribute by their nature to negatively affecting their internal bilateral trade.

This article demystifies the continent-wide online payment system.¹ Formally launched by the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) on 7 July 2019 in Niger, the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) aims to make it easier for individuals and businesses to buy goods and services in local currencies through online transactions. As the Ukraine War unfolds, the sanctions imposed earlier this year by Western countries and their allies on Russia have highlighted the make-or-break importance of international payment systems, especially the Society for World Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT), for the health and survival of national economies.

L aunched during the 12th Extraordinary Heads of State Summit of the African Union (AU) in Niamey, Niger, the PAPSS seeks to assist the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).² In fact, it is one of the five key instruments that the AU deployed to operationalize the AfCFTA.³

The idea behind the PAPSS is to ease and increase commerce among individuals and businesses within the AfCFTA by domesticating payments for goods and services. In so doing, the PAPSS will reduce exchange rate risks and costs, as experts estimate that the PAPSS will help AU member states save about 5 billion US dollars in payment transaction costs every year.⁵ A joint initiative of Afreximbank, the AfCFTA Secretariat, and the AU, the PAPSS performs three core roles: instant payment, pre-funding, and net settlement. Afreximbank manages and operates the PAPSS.

However, the law and the technology behind the PAPSS remain a mystery. Most people paid rapt attention to the advent of the PAPSS, but until now no one looked into the law behind this digital payment system, nor has anyone examined how the system will interact with the electronic transactions laws and payment-and-settlement systems of AU member states. Yet this

Demystifying the law & the technology behind the Pan-African Pay System

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knowledge can prevent major disputes from arising a few months or years down the road. Today, cross-border payments in Africa require a third currency, usually a hard currency such as the United States (US) dollar or the Euro, which takes time, increases transaction costs, and poses risks that parties will disagree over exchange rates. Moreover, the payment system of each country falls under the sovereignty of individual countries.

While the PAPSS clearly constitutes a payment system, much less clarity exists concerning the technology that the Afreximbank will use and the legal framework that underlies the PAPSS. This poses a major problem as should the technology be hacked, the PAPSS will not achieve its very noble and legitimate purposes of increasing intra-African trade. Under that hypothetical scenario, traders would not rely on the technology, leaving in place the existing system that depends on third-party currencies to mediate cross-border trade in Africa, with all the costs and inconvenience that such system entails.

Ergo this article seeks to shed light on the technology and the law behind the PAPSS, highlighting along the way the strengths and weaknesses of such technology and law. The article argues that, above all, Afreximbank

¹ This is but a working draft – please do not cite or quote.

² See Trade Law Centre (TRALAC), Status of AfCFTA Ratification, <https://www.tralac.org/resources/infographic/13795-status-of-afcfta-ratification.html> [Hereinafter AfCFTA Ratification].

³ See African Union (AU), Operational Phase of the African Continental Free Trade Area Launched, <https://au.int/en/articles/operational-phase-african-continental-free-trade-area-launched>. The four other instruments comprise the African Trade Observatory (ATO), the rules of origin, the tariff concessions, and the online monitoring mechanism.

⁴ Sanne Wass, Africa's Continent-Wide Payment and Settlement System Launched, GLOBAL TRADE REVIEW, Jul. 9th, 2019, <https://www.gtreview.com/news/africa/africas-continent-wide-payment-and-settlement-system-launched/>.

⁵ See Zainab Usman and Alexander Csanadi, Latest Milestone for the African Continental Free Trade Area; Sanne Wass, Africa's Continent-Wide Payment and Settlement System Launched, GLOBAL TRADE REVIEW, Jul. 9th, 2019, <https://www.gtreview.com/news/africa/africas-continent-wide-payment-and-settlement-system-launched/>.



and the AU should enact and publish a law to circumscribe the operations of the PAPSS because the lack of legal framework exposes the PAPSS to horn locking and litigation.

Payment systems and online technologies

In the 21st century, payment systems cannot do without digital technologies. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become ubiquitous in payment systems. Likewise, Afreximbank counts on innovating finances and on digital technologies to address exchange and liquidity constraints, and to boost cross-border trade.⁶

Payments: its definition, systems, and laws

Payment systems have historically lain at the heart of banking.⁷ But, though the two intersect, they do not amount to one and the same thing. ‘Banking’ refers to the intermediation between savers and borrowers. It links borrowers and savers. By contrast, ‘payment’ does not entail the intermediation between savers and borrowers; rather it involves moving money from one person to another.

Trade experts, Afreximbank and the managers of the PAPSS should make sure that they do not mistake payment for banking, or vice versa, if they wish to avoid being dragged in disputes or questions that have nothing to do with the scope of their activities. These risks of confusion increase further in countries such as South Africa where only banks offer payment services or instruments.⁸ For instance, an instant money function on a phone does not technically amount to ‘banking’; it merely constitutes a payment. On the other

hand, if the phone’s owner deposits cash or money with a deposit-taking institution and transact with the deposited money online through his phone, his transaction would qualify as ‘banking’, and not merely as payment.

A ‘payment system’ refers to the infrastructure set up to transfer monetary value between parties discharging obligations they owe to each other. The system comprises institutions, instruments, rules, procedures, and technical means.

Payment systems involve three types of activities usually: paying, clearing, and settling. Likewise, the PAPSS constitutes a centralized market-infrastructure that enables AfCFTA member states to clear and settle intra-African commerce payments.

Almost invariably, the payment and settlement functions of commerce are heavily regulated by law. This holds true for municipal law as much as it does for international trade. Payment systems law denotes:⁹

the evolving body of law that governs the relations of persons making a payment of money (“payors”), persons receiving money payments (“payees”) and persons facilitating those transactions (“payment services providers”).

Presumably, each and every AU member state has its own laws on payment and settlement. In 2010, about 70% of the 139 countries surveyed by the World Bank affirmed that their laws cover settlement finality, netting, and electronic payment processing.¹⁰

⁶ Hippolyte Fofack, *Africa’s Quest for a Bigger Role in Global Markets*, INTERNATIONAL TRADE FORUM 32, 34 (2019).

⁷ WORLD BANK, *PAYMENT SYSTEMS WORLDWIDE: A SNAPSHOT: OUTCOMES OF THE GLOBAL PAYMENT SYSTEMS SURVEY 2010* xv (2011).

⁸ See Andrey Shamraev, *Legal and Regulatory Framework of the Payment and e-Money Services in the BRICS Countries*, 6 BRICS LAW JOURNAL 60, 61-62 (2019).

⁹ Bradley Crawford, *The Future of Payment Law*, 50 CANADIAN BUSINESS LAW JOURNAL 1 (2011).

¹⁰ WORLD BANK, *supra* note 7, at vi.

Technology of payment systems

One hundred years ago, most people paid for goods and services in cash.¹¹ Merchants financed their businesses and settled their accounts with bills of exchange.¹² Today, people buy goods and services through electronic means, and much less with cash, not to mention the nearly defunct cheque. While digital technologies have exponentially increased the efficiency of payment systems, they have also increased the risk and incidence of cybercrimes, including identity theft, fraudulent payments, and other crimes committed through the medium of digital technologies.

The vast majority of countries (i.e., 116 out of 139 countries) apply a secure and world-class real-time gross settlement (RTGS) system that allows them to significantly reduce systemic risk, when compared to former systems for processing large-value payments, such as cheque systems.¹³ For retail payments, automated clearinghouses (ACHs) facilitate commercial and person-to-person payments, and as such they tremendously impact the overall efficiency of a country's payment system.¹⁴ From a regional perspective, including Sub-Saharan Africa, states tend to use cheque systems alongside RTGS systems as well.¹⁵

The technologies most often deployed in financing trade centralize payments. Currently, the entire financial system depends on centralized trusted intermediaries,¹⁶ such as central securities depositories (CSDs) for securities, SWIFT for global money transfers, and CLS Bank for foreign-exchange transactions.¹⁷

While Afreximbank presents the PAPSS as a "centralized"¹⁸ payment infrastructure, centralized systems remain vulnerable to cybercrimes. In repeated instances, cybercriminals have hacked the computers of

large financial institutions.¹⁹

Reacting to these cybercrimes against the hubs of finance, a few scholars have suggested that traders utilize blockchain to ease and finance cross-border trade.²⁰ Blockchain serves as a distributed ledger (or database) for recording information relating to transactions.²¹ This technology underpins Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies. Those who propose Blockchain to finance cross-border trade insist that finance institutions can use them in several industries, such as payment and settlement, securities issuance, clearing and settlement, derivatives, trade repositories, and credit bureaus.²²

Still, blockchain poses a major engineering problem. Even where blockchain technology can apply to a financial industry feasibly, it will encounter barriers that are legal, regulatory, institutional, and commercial.²³ And it may take years before policymakers can remove those barriers.²⁴ Furthermore, blockchain remains "immature", and experts cannot confidently predict whether it will succeed when applied outside of its only proven domain of cryptocurrencies.²⁵

These concerns become even more pressing when the technologies employed to facilitate online payments cover a territory as vast as an entire continent. Like Afreximbank President Benedict Oramah enthused, the idea of the PAPSS consists in making cross-border payments not only easier and cheaper, but safer as well.²⁶ For that reason, Afreximbank and the AU acted wisely when they decided to make the PAPSS a centralized payment infrastructure. Nonetheless, they still have not revealed the technology that powers the PAPSS.

¹¹ Olesya P. Kazachenok & Anna V. Lavrentyeva, *New Digital Payment Facilities: An Analysis of Institutional and Legal Regulation*, in *UBIQUITOUS COMPUTING AND THE INTERNET OF THINGS: PREREQUISITES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ICT 333* (Elena G. Popkova ed., 2019); Crawford, *supra* note 9, at 2.

¹² Crawford, *supra* note 9, at 2.

¹³ WORLD BANK, *supra* note 2, at vi-vii.

¹⁴ *Id.* at ix.

¹⁵ *Id.* at vii.

¹⁶ Jayanth Rama Varma, *Blockchain in Finance*, 44 *THE JOURNAL FOR DECISION MAKERS* 1, 1 (2019).

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ See Head, *Pan African Payment & Settlement System (PAPSS) – Cairo, Egypt*, <https://www.afreximbank.com/careers/vacancies/international-job/head-pan-african-payment-settlement-system-papss-cairo-egypt/> (last visited Aug. 4, 2020).

¹⁹ Varma, *supra* note 16, at 1.

²⁰ See, e.g., Shuchih Ernest Chang et al., *Exploring Blockchain Technology in International Trade: Business Process Re-Engineering for Letter of Credit*, 119 *INDUSTRIAL MANAGEMENT AND DATA SYSTEMS* 1712, 1713 (2019); Varma, *supra* note 16, at 1.

²¹ Chang et al., *supra* note 20, at 1713.

²² See, e.g., Varma, *supra* note 16, at 2.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.* at 9.

²⁶ Marleny Arnoldi, *Afreximbank Commits to Extensive African Continental Free Trade Area Support* (Polity, July 9, 2019), <https://www.polity.org.za/article/afreximbank-commits-to-extensive-african-continental-free-trade-area-support-2019-07-09> (quoting Afreximbank President Oramah).

The law and the rules that should govern the PAPSS

The launch of the PAPSS has been made with fanfare and with understandable optimism and enthusiasm. However, few people know the legal framework governing the PAPSS. Worse still, a possibility exists that the PAPSS may operate in the absence of any such framework, which could lead to a host of far-reaching negative consequences for merchantry within the African continent.

In any event, the PAPSS has not yet published a law to regulate it. And this absence of clear legal frameworks confronts the pan-African body with its biggest loophole. The very first Principle of the Principles for Financial Market Infrastructures (PFMI) lays down that payment infrastructure like the PAPSS must possess “a well-founded, clear, transparent” “legal basis for each material aspect of its activities in all jurisdictions”.²⁷ Principle 1 considers that such legal basis must display “a high degree of certainty” in all relevant jurisdictions.²⁸

The dearth of legal framework lays bare huge gaps in the institutionalization of the PAPSS. To make matters worse, even when a law governs electronic commerce and payment systems such as the PAPSS, it tends to lack flexibility, which also give rise to gaps.²⁹

One serious defect concerns the rules that distribute losses among parties if fraud in e-commerce occurs. This question has become a matter of controversy.³⁰ Who should bear the losses in those cases? Either trading party, the financial institution, the central bank,³¹ the payment systems management body, Afreximbank (i.e., the PAPSS), or a combination of the above? Parties may also bump heads with one another over the extent of such liability when it attaches to either or both parties.³²

Payment systems come short in the sense that some aspects of those systems evolve outside any legal framework. As Crawford observed, no coherent body of law avails the state to govern the relations of persons using the new payment methods in the way that the law of negotiable instruments regulated bills, cheques,

and promissory notes for several hundred years; and in the way that the law of money still governs cash.³³

The law is a powerful tool that makes transactions and promises credible and safe. Inversely, the unavailability of a legal framework creates a situation where actors in business cannot commit credibly or transact safely. Hence, the necessity to have a legal framework and, in the absence of any framework, the necessity to build one. In fact, an efficient payment system cannot dispense with a sound and appropriate legal framework.³⁴ Above all else, therefore, Afreximbank and the AU should craft and publish a law on the PAPSS.

The article advanced the thesis that, first and foremost, Afreximbank and the AU should enact a law to circumscribe the operations of the PAPSS because the lack of legal framework exposes the PAPSS to clashes and litigation that may set it back or bankrupt it. If effectively implemented, the PAPSS will release the continent from heavily relying – as it very often does – on hard currencies in intra-Africa trade payments. Afreximbank President Oramah pointed out that, as the continent renews its efforts to jolt its members into developing industries and value chains to boost trade and investments within the region, it must address “the economic costs of effecting so many payments in scarce foreign exchange”.³⁵

After having tried countless and fruitless development models and suffered the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic and the food crisis induced by the Russia-Ukraine War, Africa cannot afford to fail. For Africa, this may be her last chance to survive and thrive in this globalized world. Deeper intra-African trade within the AfCFTA can improve the lives of people in Africa and help in forging a collective African identity, while fulfilling the dreams of the fathers of pan-Africanism. And, by domesticating cross-border commerce payments, the PAPSS can effectively contribute to the construction and consolidation of an African economic commonwealth.

²⁷ BANK FOR INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENTS, PRINCIPLES FOR FINANCIAL MARKET INFRASTRUCTURES (2012).

²⁸ *Id.* at 21.

²⁹ See Kazachenok & Lavrentyeva, *supra* note 11, at 333.

³⁰ See Emmanuel Nimbe Olowokere, A Comparative Analysis of Civil Liability in Electronic Payment Systems Under the U.S. and Nigerian Laws, 82 JOURNAL OF LAW, POLICY AND GLOBALIZATION 60 (2019).

³¹ If the law tasks the central bank with managing the country's payment system.

³² For example, under the law in Nigeria, where fraud in e-commerce happens, the consumer has unlimited liability. See Olowokere, *supra* note 30, at 60.

³³ Crawford, *supra* note 9, at 4.

³⁴ WORLD BANK, *supra* note 7, at 1.

³⁵ As quoted by Regina Jane Jere, Afreximbank \$1 Billion Adjustment Facility for AfCFTA, NEW AFRICAN, Jul. 15, 2019, <https://newafricanmagazine.com/19145/> (quoting Afreximbank President Benedict Oramah).

The AfCFTA Protocol on Digital Trade . . .

Will aim to promote trade by advocating the use of technology as a means to boost e-commerce as well as broadening access of African businesses to the digital economy through digital financial inclusion.



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Implementation of the Agreement establishing the AfCFTA in Cameroon

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African states struggle to lift millions of Africans out of extreme poverty and boost their incomes through economic growth. At the same time, these countries are facing some of the worst impacts of climate change, global warming, rising sea level, floods, and desertification threatening their very existence. Having regard to the Aspirations of Agenda 2063 and conscious of the need to create an expanded and secure market for their goods and services, Member States of the African Union signed the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), on March 21, 2018. The AfCFTA entered into force on 30 May 2019, after the 24th instrument of ratification was deposited with the African Union Commission.

The general objectives of the AfCFTA are to, among others:

1. Create a single market for goods and services, facilitated by the movement of persons in order to deepen the economic integration of the African continent and following the Pan African Vision of “An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa” enshrined in Agenda 2063;
2. Create a liberalized market for goods and services through successive rounds of negotiations;
3. Promote and attain sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality and structural transformation of the State Parties;

4. Enhance the competitiveness of the economies of State Parties within the continent and the global market;
5. Promote industrial development through diversification and regional value chain development, agricultural development and food security; and
6. Resolve the challenges of multiple and overlapping memberships and expedite the regional and continental integration processes.

To accomplish the objectives delineated above, State Parties have agreed to:

1. Progressively eliminate tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade

- in goods and liberalise trade in services;
2. Cooperate on all trade-related areas, including investment, intellectual property rights, competition policy, and customs matters;
3. Establish a dispute settlement mechanism concerning their rights; and an institutional framework for implementing and administering the AfCFTA.

With regards to principles, the AfCFTA shall be governed by Most-Favoured-Nation Treatment, National Treatment, reciprocity, transparency and disclosure of information, preservation of the acquis, substantial liberalisation, consensus in decision-making, and variable geometry principles.¹ The AfCFTA is regarded as the vehicle through which the African Union anticipates to achieving sustainable economic development.² It is a project currently being implemented throughout the African continent, and brings together the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Arab Maghreb Union and the Sahelo Saharan States Community.³

In concrete terms, the AfCFTA generally aims to: create a single market for goods and services facilitated by the movement of people in order; deepen the economic integration of the African continent and in line with the pan-African vision of an “integrated, prosperous and

¹ African Continental Free Trade Area: Advancing Pan-African Integration, Some Considerations, Article 5

² UNCTAD, African Continental Free Trade Area: Advancing Pan-African Integration, Some Considerations (Geneva: United Nations 2016), p. 1.

³ Government of Cameroon, NDS30: National Development Strategy 2020-2030: For structural transformation and inclusive development Government of Cameroon, 2022) 60

peaceful Africa” as set out in Agenda 2063; create a liberalized market for goods and services; contribute to the movement of capital and natural persons and facilitate investment by building on initiatives and developments in States Parties and RECs; lay the foundations for the creation of a continental customs union at a later stage; promote and achieve inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development, gender equality and structural transformation of States Parties; strengthen the competitiveness of the States Parties’ economies at continental and global levels; promote industrial development; and resolve the challenges of membership in a multitude of overlapping organizations, and accelerate regional and continental integration processes. ⁴

According to Berahab and Dadush, the AfCFTA was created to help curb the growing “winds of protectionism, promote “the welfare of the world’s poorest and least integrated continent” by liberalizing goods and service trade, facilitating investment, and addressing issues such as intellectual property rights and dispute settlement.” ⁵ To the World Bank, implementing AfCFTA will usher in deep reforms necessary to cut red tape and simplify customs procedures. This can, accordingly, shape the African economy and “lift an additional 30 million people from extreme poverty (1.5 percent of the continent’s population) and 68 million people from moderate poverty.” ⁶ Moreover, “real income gains from full implementation of AfCFTA could increase by 7 percent by 2035, or nearly US\$450 billion (in 2014 prices and market exchange rates).” ⁷ But, achieving the full potential of the AfCFTA hinges on implementing meaningful policy reforms and trade facilitation measures.

This research catalogs evidence-based information on the progress made or innovative initiatives that are being undertaken to promote trade in Cameroon based on the AfCFTA. The research will focus on incisive publications on Cameroon’s strategy for leveraging the AfCFTA. In line with the overall objective of Cameroon’s National Development Strategy (“NDS30,” which seeks to transform Cameroon into an emerging economy by 2035), the government of Cameroon ratified the AfCFTA. Cameroon became the 33rd State Party to the AfCFTA, after depositing its instrument of ratification

on 1st December 2020. ⁸ Like many other African countries, Cameroon commits to eliminating 90 percent of tariff lines (non-sensitive products) over five years. This is to say that the government of Cameroon has pledged to eliminate tariffs on 90% of Cameroonian goods destined for other African markets between 2020-2025. ⁹

In partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Cameroon developed a national AfCFTA implementation strategy. The process began with a national information and sensitisation seminar jointly organised by UNECA on 16-17 April 2019 in Yaoundé. This seminar was followed by a consultation session with public and private sector stakeholders on the 12 November 2019, to examine the draft AfCFTA implementation strategy and to seek inputs towards the final validation session that was held on 28-29 November 2019. Among the key recommendations that were arrived at during the consultation process was creating a national implementation committee. ¹⁰

Consequently, the Prime Ministerial Order No 039/PM of 29 March 2021, providing for the creation, organisation and functioning of the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) was promulgated in 2021. The implementation committee, which is placed under the Minister of Trade, is charged with the follow-up and evaluation of the implementation of the AfCFTA. The implementation strategy examines Cameroon’s existing trade agreements while noting a number of concerns:

- (1) a very low level of information dissemination and sensitisations on trade agreements that binds the country;



⁴ Ibid, 61.

⁵ Rim Berahab and Uri Dadush, “Will the African Free Trade Agreement Succeed?” OCP Policy Center, Policy Brief: 18/10, April 2018, p. 1.

⁶ World Bank, the African Continental Free Trade Area: Economic and Distributional Effects (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 2020) 5.

⁷ Ibid, 3.

⁸ Cameroon: Making the most of the AfCFTA through a national implementation strategy - tralac trade law centre

⁹ AfCFTA, The African Continental Free Trade Area. file.html (tralac.org)

¹⁰ Cameroon: Making the most of the AfCFTA through a national implementation strategy - tralac trade law centre

- (2) the limited representation of private sector, especially women in trade negotiations processes representation,
- (3) challenges related to Non-Tariff Barriers and Trade Facilitation, factors of production, business environment, trade support infrastructure, Information and Communication Technology. The strategy calls on the government to design targeted approaches to address these challenges by bringing them into line with Cameroon's overall development vision. ¹¹

The government of Cameroon has committed to ensuring implementation of the national strategy on the AfCFTA and expanding the economic integration of Africa. To this end, the government promises to support regional initiatives for limiting intermediate controls on the transport of goods in transit at conventional checkpoints, the migration of the customs information system, and simplifying administrative formalities and procedures for cross-border trade.



The government also pledge to reforming the system of incentives for business development by removing obstacles to a competitive business environment. ¹² To help operationalize the customs provisions in the AfCFTA, Cameroon and other CEMAC countries has joined with the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon to develop a common tariff system. ¹³

In its National Development Strategy 2030, the government of Cameroon plans to deepen the economic integration of the African continent and in line with the pan African vision of an "integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa" as set out in Agenda 2063, Government will ensure implementation of the national strategy for the African Continental Free Trade Area. The government of Cameroon identified Nigeria as the first target to regain markets in the continent. But while trade procedures remain extremely nontransparent between both countries, it is believed that AfCFTA will reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers, boosting the trade relationship between Cameroon and Nigeria. It will have mutually beneficial employment, welfare and labor market effects via increased trade between both countries. ¹⁵

Seven (Cameroon, Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, Mauritius, Egypt, and Tanzania) of the 44 countries that have ratified the AfCFTA have already started preferential trade on products for which rules of origin have been decided. According to Business in Cameroon, Cameroon made its first shipment (consisting of dried safou, dried pineapple, and ginger tea) under the preferential rate of the AfCFTA to Ghana and it was made possible after the customs issued the first AfCFTA certificate of origin for its products to Ghana on 6 October, 2022. ¹⁶ The World Bank estimates Cameroon's income gains due to AfCFTA in 2035 at 8%,¹⁷ with the biggest expected gains from implementing this initiative expected in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Nigeria, and Tanzania with a decline in trade costs of 10 percentage points." ¹⁸

« A worker harvests Penja white pepper, a geographically indicated product of Africa, grown in the volcanic soil of the Penja valley at an agricultural field in Littoral region, Cameroon Image © Saabi Jeakespier/Anadolu Agency via Getty Image

¹¹ Cameroon: Making the most of the AfCFTA through a national implementation strategy - tralac trade law centre ¹² African Continental Free Trade Area: Advancing Pan-African Integration, Some Considerations, Article 5

¹² International Monetary Fund, "Cameroon" IMF Country Report No. 22/268, August 2022. Accessed file:///C:/Users/ssama/Downloads/1CMREA2022003.pdf CAMEROON

¹³ World Customs Organization (wcoomd.org)

¹⁴ Government of Cameroon, NDS30: National Development Strategy 2020-2030: For structural transformation and inclusive development Government of Cameroon, (2022) 60

¹⁵ The African Continental Free Trade Area: Benefits and Challenges. Nkafu Debates - Nkafu Policy Institute

DRIVING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The C-BRTA is shifting boundaries to improve trade on the continent

At the heart of the Cross-Border Road Transport Agency (C-BRTA) is a proud history of providing dedicated service to the cross-border road transport industry in the form of licensing commercial vehicles to convey passengers, goods and services across the borders of South Africa. The C-BRTA has remained the driving force behind the cross-border business for 25 years. Established by the Cross-Border Road Transport Act, Act 4 of 1998, the C-BRTA executes its mandate through co-operative and co-ordinated provision of advice, regulation, facilitation and law enforcement in respect of cross-border road transport.

This is underpinned by the agency's wholehearted belief in its objective of spearheading social and economic development within the SADC region through facilitating unimpeded flow of cross-border goods, passengers and services.

The current year is special for the C-BRTA as it marks the agency's 25th anniversary. This milestone, on the one hand, provides an opportunity for the agency to look back and take stock of the challenges it encountered and the successes it registered throughout the years. On the other hand, it provides the C-BRTA family an opportunity to look to the future with the intention of reshaping the C-BRTA into a leading regulator on the continent and a force to be reckoned with in the cross-border road transport space.

To understand the nature of the C-BRTA business, it's important to have an appreciation and background of the industry and related protocols that laid the foundation for this important sector and co-operation with other member states in the region. South



Lwazi Mboyi | CEO



Africa became a signatory to the SADC Protocol on Transport, Communications and Meteorology in 1996, with the objective of harmonising transport policies, standards and practices. As a result of this protocol, South Africa entered into bilateral and multilateral road transport agreements with other countries in the region to enable the movement of passengers and goods in the region. Subsequently, the South African government established the C-BRTA to monitor the implementation of these road transport agreements with a view to improve the unimpeded flow by road of freight and passengers in the region, to liberalise market access progressively in respect of cross-border freight road transport, and to reduce operational constraints for the cross-border road transport industry.

In addition, the agency is expected to empower the cross-border road transport industry to maximise business opportunities. To this end, the C-BRTA executes this mandate and is expected to assist the Department of Transport in the implementation of road transport agreements together with SADC counterparts to ensure the cross-border road transport operators ply their trade in an efficient manner.

Since its establishment in 1998, the agency has championed and led various initiatives to address many of the operational constraints through consultative structures and networks such as the Joint Route Management Groups, joint committees, inter-border and other relevant platforms. It is through these structures that the agency provides a platform for interaction between South Africa and neighbouring

countries to discuss issues of interest in as far as the cross-border road transport industry is concerned. The agency has, over the past 25 years, worked consistently to profile the role of the cross-border road transport industry. This task included working with various stakeholders in South Africa and across the continent to demonstrate the critical role that transportation, with specific reference to cross-border operations, plays in enabling trade and ultimately driving economic development.

Looking back, the C-BRTA comes from an era whereby the issuing of cross-border road transport permits was done manually, which was taxing and cumbersome. In recent times the agency moved from this manual permit administration and introduced an electronic permit administration platform called Cross-Easy Permit Application System. With this system, the agency saved operators' time and money by affording them the convenience of applying for permits from the comfort of their offices anytime. This is one of the great innovations we are proud of as an agency. Furthermore, the agency has strengthened relations with various authorities on the continent, with the objective of ensuring harmonisation in the region. For instance, to address the issue of lack of harmonisation in the region, the agency championed and led the process of establishing the Cross Border Road Transport Regulators' Forum (CBRT-RF).

The CBRT-RF was officially established by the SADC ministers of transport, communication and meteorology to serve as a body that will improve the cross-border road transport systems in the region by harmonising policies and reduce transportation costs, delays and transit times as well as eliminate regulatory fragmentation in the region. This was driven by the need to ensure efficiencies in the cross-border road transport industry through the elimination of challenges that hamper trade between and among countries in the region.

These challenges included weakness in the regulatory framework between countries; failure by the region to fully implement the regulatory framework; failure by regulatory authorities to harmonise regulatory practices and requirements, standards and procedures; incorrect implementation of the road transport agreements and unclear cross-border road transport legislation; and the lack of common understanding of the provisions of the SADC Protocol on Transport, Communications and Meteorology and agreements.

The efforts of the forum are directed toward responding to the need to resolve regulatory fragmentation and related problems as well as the multiplicity of challenges, constraints and impediments facing cross-border road transport operators in SADC and the Tripartite. The work of the forum is continuous and member states are working hard to realise its objectives. In addition, this work ties in with various transport and trade initiatives that are geared toward the economic upliftment of the continent. The work of the forum certainly complements the African Continental Free Trade Area objectives as well as other regional and continental initiatives.

In recent times, the C-BRTA has successfully lobbied for the commercialisation of Kosi Bay border post with effect 1 April 2022 and a 24-hour operating regime at the Lebombo border post. Both border posts link South Africa with Mozambique.

The agency is mandated to improve the safety, security, reliability, quality and efficiency of services. To achieve this objective, the agency has opted to transition from quantity to quality regulation. In this case, quality regulation means establishing procedures for registering and grading operators, granting permits, monitoring licensed operators' conduct and rewarding compliant operators. To this effect, quality regulation is one of the major priorities of the C-BRTA, so all

the systems the agency has developed are geared toward supporting the quality regulation ideal, and this will contribute broadly to the region.

The C-BRTA has also deployed smart law enforcement tools along South African corridors that help it to conduct law enforcement efficiently and this complements what it is trying to achieve with the quality regulation model. These are just some of the initiatives the agency is championing, forming the basis for the overall service the C-BRTA renders to the cross-border road transport operators and the entire industry.

'As the C-BRTA, we take pride in rendering services to cross-border road transport operators and the industry at large. This service goes a long way because it licenses the operators to ply their trade, which is to transport passengers and goods across the borders,' says C-BRTA CEO Lwazi Mboyi.

'This is not an easy space to navigate, but working hand in hand with the operators and other members states in the region, we have enabled trade in the region. With this work, we are confidently assuring South Africans and Africans in general that we will continue to strive for efficiencies in the cross-border road transport sector to ensure that Africans, in their countries of origin, enjoy products and services from other countries. This is what trade is about, and the cross-border road transport industry carries the hopes of millions of Africans in as far as trade is concerned. Our work in general inspires Africans to look forward to enjoying goods and services from other countries and we, working jointly with our stakeholders, will improve the levels of trade on the continent.'

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In the history of the development of the AfCFTA, several critiques inundated the analysis realm on the legal stand of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). This article aims to explore the legal imperatives of regional integration in Africa to contribute to the ongoing debate on the legal qualities of Africa's regional integration and the accommodation of the AfCFTA in the 55 African member states, considering the regional legal measures which are essential for the smooth and uniform adherence to and implementation of a continental Arrangement.

Institutional Framework for Regional Integration in Africa: Will the AfCFTA enjoy supremacy over conflicting laws of the regional agreements?

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The AfCFTA has emerged as a powerful force integrating combining Africans, after various attempts to build the base of the continent's economic well-being. Considering the multifaceted impediments to African integration, it is worth underlining the narration of Regionalism in Africa as realized in the 1960s, when the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) leaders resorted to and established a perfect correspondence between the people of the different zones in Africa through the regime known today as Regional Integration Law as stipulated in the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community of 2013.

On that background, the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action for the Development of Africa and the 1991 Abuja Treaty proposed the creation of RECs as the basis for wider African integration. Each with

its own role and structure, the RECs aim to facilitate regional economic integration between members of the region and through the wider African Economic Community (AEC Treaty, 2013). The eight RECs as recognized by the African Union are the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), AU (2022).

For the purposes of analytical clarity, the AfCFTA is the most recent addition to the agreements concluded by members of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) mentioned above. According to its treaty, the RECs



are the building blocks of the Agreement. The agreement however will operate amid the oldest functioning customs union in the world, such as the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) as well as other jurisdictions with regional vocations, such as the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) of 1994. Besides all the above, the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Laws in Africa (OHADA) of 1993 designates the adherence of all African states to the unification of their different legislations to favor the revival

of their economies. Finally, Africa witnessed the creation of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) in 1994, CEMAC (2022). It is equally notable that, the AfCFTA is complemented by other continental initiatives, including the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons (Right of Entry, the Right to Residence and Right to Establishment), and the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM). Against that background, is a central issue in the relationship between the RECs and the AfCFTA legal systems,

the conflict of jurisdictions and laws remains doubtful to many. Since all the above-mentioned groups exist in terms of their own legal instruments, which together constitute a comprehensive network of legal rules created by their treaties, protocols, annexes, and appendices.

It is therefore crucial to examine developments in the RECs Free Trade Agreements in terms of approval and implementation with what can be expected under the AfCFTA regulation. Hence the question, ***will the AfCFTA enjoy supremacy over conflicting laws of the existing original agreements?***

Institutional mandate to govern the AfCFTA treaty

What can be understood about Africa Regional integration and especially with the AfCFTA is largely based on data-based investigations. Referencing the Decisions of the AU as well as other documented pronouncements and actions by the African Union, it is clearly stated that, the AfCFTA will not replace Africa's existing Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Empirically, the AfCFTA Article 5, declared that the best practices are in the RECs, State Parties, and International Conventions binding the African Union.

It is also pertinent to be aware of previous studies that have explored the relationships between the AfCFTA and continental trade agreement such as that of Amanda Bisong (2021), who concluded the coexistence of continental and regional frameworks as parallel processes. This is also supported by the phenomenon of international regime complexity as defined by Karen & Meunier (2009) as a reduction in the clarity of legal obligations by introducing



overlapping sets of legal rules and jurisdictions governing an issue. Regime complexes are marked by the existence of several legal agreements that are created and maintained in distinct fora with the participation of different sets of actors. Against the background of the proliferation of regional trade agreements, this is a prominent issue even in the AfCFTA era.

One more interesting understanding of this concern is the general role of member states in a Single Market. The African Union constitutive act of 2001 as well signifies that; there will be a shared responsibility between the African Union and the member states. It is therefore safe to say that the legal framework that the direct and immediate application of the AfCFTA implies that nationals of AU member states can rely on the provisions of the Treaty texts in question in action-filled in their AfCFTA national strategic plans.

The Issue of Conflict of Laws and Jurisdiction

Perhaps, one of the greatest mysteries about Africa's economic integration is the legal status of the RECs within the AU and the coming into the trade of the AfCFTA. The starting point to unraveling this ambiguity is therefore the idea of legal personality. As such, all the RECS are endowed with legal personality in their founding treaties (see to this effect (Article 186(1) of the COMESA Treaty; article 138(1) of the EAC Treaty, and Article 88(1) of the ECOWAS Treaty). Although the Africa Economic Community Treaty does not expressly say so, the legal personality of the Africa Economic

integration can be inferred from Article 98(2), which provides that, in this capacity, a legal representative of the continent. Although the Constitutive Act of the African Union is silent on the legal personality of the AU. This may, however, be explained by the fact that, under the General Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the Organization of African Unity, the OAU (now AU) possesses a juridical personality.

Considering all the evidence of these provisions, it is wise to conclude that, the legal separateness of the RECS, AfCFTA, and AU is established in international law. Accordingly, the legal status of one within the other should be defined by an agreement to which both are parties, or, at least, in some definite and binding agreement. As regards the AfCFTA and the AU, the AfCFTA Treaty is very clear that the agreement is an integral part of the AU (Article 91(1) of the Africa Economic Community Treaty). The Constitutive Act further requires that its provisions take precedence over and supersede any inconsistency or contrary. If one envisions the AU as a political and umbrella organization championing the course of African unity - social, cultural, political, and economic then the AfCFTA is that part of the AU solely devoted to the issue of economic integration. In other words, The AfCFTA is the economic leg of the AU. Hence, political commitment to the AfCFTA is welcome and will be an important contributor to the AU Agenda 2063.

Dispute Settlement Under the AfCFTA

The issue of disputes that may arise among states or private investors is a key consideration under the AfCFTA regime. For the past African amalgamation, this phenomenon surprisingly repeats the same pattern. Under the OAU, Africans established a continental Court but only on Human and Peoples' Rights. On matters relating to the interpretation, enforcement, and validity of EAC laws, to date, there is an absence between national courts and the African court of justice. It is logical that this will pose a challenge to the uniform application of the AfCFTA and its effectiveness, however it is worth stating that, the AfCFTA goals of free movement of persons, capital, and services, the rights of establishment, taxation, transport, and communication which are envisaged in the agreement treaty are intrinsically bound to national legal systems as stipulated in Article 3(1). In conclusion, as the negotiations of dispute resolutions under the AfCFTA are yet to be concluded, it is a great desire that the viewpoint of member states with regard to the resolution of international and regional trade disputes and make a tangible contribution to better trade governance in Africa.

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The AfCFTA Protocol on Women & Youth in Trade . . .

Will aim to broaden inclusiveness through interventions that address constraints and barriers women and youth face when trading on the continent and support young Africans, women, and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to access wider markets, improve their competitiveness and participation in regional value chains including integrating informal cross-border traders into the formal economy



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African Trade and the Construction of a United Identity

By: **Adham Shebl and Seif Hendy**, Researchers at the BUC Centre for Global Affairs, Badr University, Cairo.
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Regional Trade and the Opportunity for Africa

A global tendency has developed over the last half century regarding regional trade blocs. With organisations like the European Union, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations all becoming major forces in the global political economy, it has become clear that much is to be gained from the integration of states within regional frameworks that facilitate their cooperation. Creating liberalised markets, accelerating technological spillover, and allowing for the free movement of labour, these organisations have allowed their members to circumvent the physical boundaries of statehood and create mutually beneficial conditions. Most crucially, however, these groups have cultivated a real sense of shared identity that began economically with the ability to enter into negotiations internationally as a unified bloc, but has gradually translated culturally to foster peaceful relations in areas that have previously been plagued by conflict. This is what this analysis intends to explore but from an African perspective. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is an opportunity, not just to boost growth, but to raise Africa's global standing. This can only be done through African unity.

The AfCFTA can entrench the bonds that can bring all African countries closer, beginning first with regional linkage and expanding continentally. Through the construction of collective bargaining power, a larger integrated African market, and an expanded network of knowledge sharing, the AfCFTA can create a sense of unity that stretches across each individual culture. This analysis proposes three ways through which these elements can be developed: the standardisation of tariff rates and removal of trade barriers, the forming of a single pool for natural resources that can allow Africa to obtain positive terms of trade vis-a-vis the global north, and the creation of vocational training centres that will bring together people from multiple countries.

African Identity - Challenges and Opportunities

In 1987 Thomas Sankara ended his speech at the Organization of African summit by stating, ***"We must accept to live as African – that is the only way to live free and dignified."*** During the speech, Thomas Sankara discussed the importance of unlocking Africa's immense potentialities for economic and human development. Still, he pointed out the importance of living as Africans. This section will look into the need for the cultivation of a unified African identity and how it is intertwined with economic development

policies such as AfCFTA. There are seven aspirations that Agenda 2063 seeks to deliver by the year 2063. Three of the seven aspirations deal with the concept of a unified Africa in terms of culture, economy, and impact on the global stage.

It is beyond the scope of the paper to fully delve into the concept of "What is Identity?". Therefore, it is crucial to remember that in the modern period, the concept of identity has been inseparably linked with the notion of sovereign states. Nation-building during the 20th century has been about building a feeling of a singular identity based on collective interests that overcome differences. However, in the age of globalization, the concepts of states and sovereignty are being challenged. New actors such as the European Union, African Union (AU), and the United Nations seek to work in a deterritorialised manner uncoupled from borders, geographical or political. The emergence of supranational entities raises questions regarding the transformation from national identity to regional identity (Solcum and Van Langenhove, 2005). Political institutions define, control, and regulate individual entities, whether citizens within nation-states or nation-states within a supranational organization. In essence, institutions offer the prisms by which the subjects can view themselves and the world





(Bevir, 1999). Hence, the AfCFTA in particular and the AU in general are some of the institutions available when building and solidifying an African identity (Our aspirations for the Africa we want, 2022).

The notion of Pan-Africanism and the resulting ideas of African identity that emerge from it indicate a uniqueness to African history. The African continent has a long history of intracontinental and transcontinental migration and diasporas. Migration in the continent had pre-modern, colonial, and post-colonial forms. This shared history, primarily the period of colonialisation can facilitate the creation of a regional identity that is more readily relatable to the minds of the continent's people. Recently, intracontinental migration involved people moving from inland regions to major and coastal cities. These centres were the most developed areas during the colonial period. This movement was facilitated by the establishment of regional organizations such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Organizations such as COMESA helped the process through regional infrastructure, visa waivers, and tariff-free exportation and importation of goods (Bangura, 2019). This

history of transnational migration is a double-edged sword regarding the issue of more significant African interaction. The historical precedence of the free movement of people and goods on regional levels within Africa lends itself to the further expansion of more extensive African integration. However, when the current form of migration is structured upon colonial migration, it could lead to resentment and a lack of harmony among those left behind. The movement from low-resource regions to more prosperous areas, results in a labor shortage in the source of migration. Additionally, it may lend itself to hostilities in the destination of migration. This lack of harmony can also occur with the movement of capital. When capital and people are allowed free movement, it can result in a siphoning of what little wealth is available from the less industrialised countries to the more industrialised ones. Such a development usually leaves behind unskilled laborers in the less industrialised country; this tends to solidify an antagonism that takes on the form of identity hatred between individuals of both countries (Chiang et al., 2018).

The presence of colonial vestiges of migration and

economic integration in the post-independence period highlights the liminality of Africa's identity and the greater Unified Africa project. Its past no longer grips Africa's identity and project, but the future has not yet taken a definitive shape (Kalua, 2009). The process of shaping this future will require purposive action that will need to balance the inherent contradictions of the moment. At times, specific economic development goals may need to be reconsidered to allow for the development of a greater African identity and vice-versa. There can be no solid and unified African identity without the economic integration of Africa. Still, economic integration without considering the creation and fostering of an African identity will be much more complex and nearly impossible to realise fully. The relationship between a unified identity and a unified market is symbiotic. The AfCFTA can serve this process through deliberate action to work on both issues in tandem.

Potentialities of AfCFTA Implementation

There are a variety of ways in which this strengthening of African unity can be facilitated by the AfCFTA. The common experiences of colonization and post-colonization that effectively every African country has faced continues to shape the political national consciousness of the continent. It is important to draw on this by institutionalising the mechanisms that will allow Africans to realize this shared experience. Nothing could have a more profound effect on this than the strengthening of economic ties, which would create commonalities in the way that Africans navigate their everyday lives. This begins with

the standardisation of all trade regulations within the continent. This is already explicitly stated in Points A and B of Article 3 of The Agreement Establishing The African Continental Free Trade Area. (AfCFTA, 2018, p. 4) Removing trade barriers and creating a fully liberalised commodity market is the main objective of the Free Trade Area, with a customs union being the strategised end point of this foundation. However, it is important to note that despite such integration in the European Union, an envisioned European identity has not fully materialised and hostility to the project remains simmering in several hotspots. (Fligstein et al., 2012) Though the rigidity of ethno-nationalist sentiments is a clear obstacle to this process, it is not the only one. From an economic perspective, this skepticism towards European integration has come primarily from the uneven development that has been taking place throughout the continent. Both the creation of an industrial centre where technological innovation is clustered and the formation of a financially dependent periphery have led to animosities developing in both poles. (Cutrini, 2019) Africa can only avoid these asymmetries through the equitable allotment

of finances, resources, and information. Existing African Economic communities have already struggled with these imbalances with COMESA being a prominent example in which five countries made up 75.1% of all intra-organisation exports in 2015, while the remaining 14 countries made up the rest. (Seetanah et al., 2019) However, the existence of these regional organisations should be a foundation for an enlarged market, though substantial change needs to take place on a quantitative level regarding the amount of trade performed between member states (which still pales in relation to other continental organisations) and on a qualitative level in terms of the kind of trade that is conducted.

An African economic community should also not just seek to increase intra-continent trade benefits, but also cultivate a stronger global standing vis-a-vis the global north, on which a great deal of dependence remains tethering Africa to stagnation. Africa cannot compete in the technological and the manufacturing sectors as of right now (though it is paramount for a path towards to be constructed) but it can penetrate vital crevices of supply chains in these sectors.

Natural resources remain Africa's lifeblood. Other than the Gulf Cooperation Council, no part of the world is more economically dependent on natural resources, with almost a quarter of its wealth being made up of natural capital. (Izvorski, 2018) Moreover, with 200 million hectares, Africa holds almost half the world's uncultivated lands. (Diop, 2016) Yet still the continent lags well behind other regions in terms of aggregate natural wealth. In order to maximise benefits from its resource-rich environment, Africa needs to emulate the GCC and oil producers who have managed to turn this abundance into wealth. A collective pool of natural resources would allow Africa to enter the global market as a single force with considerable negotiating strength and the obtainment of positive terms of trade. An equitable distribution of the revenues would then be the engine for even development within the continent.

One final proposal that ought to be considered are regional vocational training centres that can capitalise on the AfCFTA's aspirations to facilitate the flow of labour. Phase 2 of the AfCFTA intends to incorporate intellectual property as a topic of negotiation and vocational training centres

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should be on the agenda as a way of expediting the transfers of information and technology region wide. (AfCFTA, 2018, p.6) Such centres have been implemented in other parts of the world and have been shown to allow for more comprehensive knowledge sharing, provide greater access to educational and industrial technologies, and expand cooperative capacities. (Shaidullina et al., 2015) More significantly for the purpose of this analysis, it allows for the creation of deeper integrative relations where African labourers from all over the continent can work together and develop a unified consciousness. But even on a global scale, these cooperative educational and productive hubs could allow for the synchronisation of policies that may face a backlash from the global north. A quarter of a century ago, Africa was suffering drastically as a result of the restrictions on intellectual property imposed by the TRIPS agreement, preventing the local production of affordable HIV medication. It was only after South Africa went against that regime and broke the dam that Africa was offered some solace in the midst of that crisis. (Hanefeld, 2002) New crises will emerge, both as a result of disease and the environment, and Africa will need a unified productive policy to efficiently combat these threats. Industrial and educational hubs can allow for the foundations of such a notion to be put in place, and for the construction of a future in which a united Africa can conquer the future.

AfCFTA: Huge Potential & Serious Challenges

By: **Dr. Samar H. Albagoury**, Economic Associate Professor, faculty of African post Graduate Studies, Cairo University, Head of center of Nile Basin Studies, Cairo University

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a milestone in the history of the African continent and its path to achieving African unity. The African Free Trade Agreement entered into force on May 30, 2019, and the signal to start trade was launched in January 2021. This agreement establishes the creation of the largest trade market in the world bringing together the countries of the entire African continent (with the exception of Eritrea, which has not yet signed) comprising about 1.2 billion people on the continent. The agreement aims to exploit the potential and promising market of the African continent, remove trade barriers and enhance trade between the countries of the continent. The signatories to this agreement are obligated to remove duties from 90% of goods, as the agreement will gradually eliminate the customs on the African intra trade to achieve the African continental economic unity at the end.

Although the agreement could be seen as a great step toward economic integration and the great potential for achieving economic sustainability in African countries, there are still many constraints that could hinder these efforts especially in the light of the uncertainty covering the world economy.

The Economic Potential of the AfCFTA:

The African free trade area is the largest in the world in terms of number of member countries since the formation of the World Trade Organization. This area covers a market of 1.2 billion people and GDP in 2019 (before the covid-19 crisis) reached nearly \$2.6 trillion in all member states of the African Union. This agreement provides an opportunity to support African countries process to achieve sustainable development, and enhance intra-regional trade between its member countries. It is also an opportunity to diversify the structure of African trade away from traditional primary commodities, such as oil and minerals, towards a more balanced and sustainable export structure. African countries that have a relatively advanced industrial sector will be able to take advantage of the opportunities available to market their goods in this large African market. Other countries can also benefit from being attached to regional value chains by supplying industrialized countries with production items and inputs. For example, import of the car seat leather by South African automobile exporters from Botswana and fabrics from Lesotho under the Southern African customs union's preferential trading agreement. Agricultural countries could also benefit from meeting the demand of Africa's growing food market with products that will benefit from the improvements in customs clearance time and logistics that

are accompanied with establishment of the AfCFTA that will reduce transit times for the perishable products.

The World Bank had estimated the economic benefits of full implementation of the AfCFTA, in terms of its positive effects on macroeconomic indicators of African countries on one hand, as well as the distributional effects of this agreement. The World Bank report titled: "The African Continental Free Trade Agreement: Economic and Distributional Effects", stated that if the agreement is full activated by 2035, it will result in an increase in national income of about 7%, or approximately US\$ 450 billion. These gains would derive mainly from the improvement in intra trade volume associated with the full removal of trade tariff and non-tariff restrictions.

These expected economic benefits of full implementation of the AfCFTA agreement are not the same in all African Countries, but rather vary from one country to another according to a set of economic factors. The most important factor is the economic structure of those countries and its elasticity or flexibility to adopt to the opportunities offered by this agreement. For example, the activation of the agreement is expected to increase the national income in Cote d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe in 2035 by 14%, while this percentage is only about 2% in countries like Madagascar, Malawi, and Mozambique.

It is also expected that the full activation of the agreement by 2035 will boost the African trade, whether intra or external. The establishment of AfCFTA is expected to increase the total volume of African exports by about 29%. The intra African trade is expected to increase by 81% by 2035, while the exports abroad will increase by nearly 19%. This increase in exports varies from country to country by both volume and commodity structure. For example, it is expected that Egypt, Cameroon, Ghana, Morocco and Tunisia will achieve a significant increase in exports, especially industrial exports by 62% as a total and 110% for their exports to other African countries.

In the same context, activating AfCFTA could push production and productivity in African countries to higher levels, by stimulating the process of effective redistribution and allocation of resource among different economic sectors in a way that leads to an increase in the volume of African production by about US\$212 billion especially in the industrial and service sectors.

On the other hand, activating the agreement, as any other trade agreement, may cause losses in

government revenues as a result of customs removal. However, the situation for Africa is different, the volume of customs revenue associated with intra trade is already low, not exceeding on average, 10% of the total customs revenues. This decrease is also expected to be offset by the increase in the African exports. So, in the end, the customs revenue is actually expected to increase by 3% by 2035.

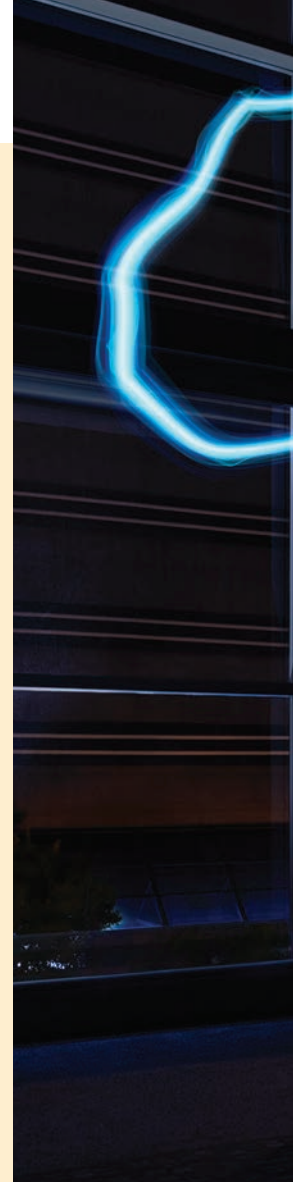
As for the distributive effects of the AfCFTA, it is expected that the full implementation of the agreement will lead to a reduction in poverty rates in Africa, as it will reduce the number of people under extreme poverty line by 30 million and by 68 million for the poverty line by 2035. So, it will reduce Africa poverty rate from 34.7% according to 2015 statistics to about 10.9%.

The AfCFTA will also create more jobs, increase wage levels and reduce gender gap. It is expected that employment rates will increase especially in manufacturing sector, as well as agricultural sector. the agreement will also help to increase wages by 10% above its level without the agreement.

Challenges facing the AfCFTA:

Despite the potential of the AfCFTA in realising the dream of African integration, there are many challenges or obstacles that prevent reaching this potential. Perhaps the contemplator of the current intra-African trade situation in the light of the existing trade agreements of current Regional Economic Communities (RECs), will notice that the volume of intra-African trade compared to the continent external trade is very low. it also very tiny compared to other economic communities such as the European Union in which intra trade represents about 69% of total region trade.

The weakness of intra-African trade can be attributed to a number of factors, the most important of which are: the similarity of African countries economic structures, which makes the distribution of benefits or economic gains for such agreements in the interest of limited group of countries with diverse and flexible economic structure. For other countries, low gains will make them not motivated to involve in such agreements. There are other factors that may hinder the integration process as, the existence of preconditions in the agreement such as rule of origin; high rates of commercial and non-commercial risks; high cost of insurance on exported products, especially in the absence of the regional or cross boarder insurance activities; the scarcity of basic information on African markets; the failure to activate clearance systems and mechanisms, and dealing with other issues related to financial transfers. In fact, the





which Africa lacks. These structural financial and debt problems in African countries were exacerbated by the covid-19 pandemic and the current global economic environment. The International Monetary Fund report on the potential of intra-African trade concludes that the non-tariff barriers that pose challenges are high, especially compared to those in current existing economic blocks.

In fact, these challenges, despite the existence of real intentions to achieve economic integration, still exists in Africa and have not been full dealt with. A report on the African countries readiness for implementation issued by the Afrochampions Foundation, states that the average rate of African countries Commitment towards the AfCFTA agreement was only 44.84%, while the Implementation Readiness Level index was about 49.15%. Although the performance of African countries varied in total, it is noted that the three largest African economies, Egypt (52.7%), South Africa (58.6%), and Nigeria (43.6) are not among the top ten countries, although Egypt and South Africa are among the largest beneficiaries of the activation of this agreement.

In Conclusion, the AfCFTA is undoubtedly an important step on the road to achieving the dream of African economic unity, and an imperative to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth an integral part of the efforts of the African continent to achieve the aspiration of its ambitious Agenda 2063. However, on the path towards full economic integration and the activation of the free trade area, there are still many economic and non-economic challenges that African countries must face and deal with in a serious way so that this Africa vision can be realized and it is not limited within the framework of incomplete initiatives or agreements.

issue of intra-trade is not limited to the presence of customs restrictions that need trade agreement to be removed, but rather in the presence of non-tariff restrictions and obstacles and weak infrastructures that require huge financial investment,

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FAGACE

FUTURE FOCUSED

The African Guarantee and Economic Cooperation Fund specialises in the promotion of public and private investments to empower member states, as its Managing Director Dr Ngueto Tiraina Yambaye explains



Dr Ngueto Tiraina Yambaye,
Managing Director of FAGACE

DR Ngueto Tiraina Yambaye is the seventh Managing Director of the African Guarantee and Economic Cooperation Fund (FAGACE), in office since 1 July 2020. An economist specialised in international finance and public policy, he has been Minister of Economy, Planning and Development of Chad, and executive director of the International Monetary Fund for African countries. He is also a university researcher and senior fellow at FERDI in France (Université de Clermont Auvergne). Since

Yambaye's appointment as head of FAGACE, he has given the institution the benefit of his rich experience to bear on the challenges of accelerating the financing of Africa's development.

Q: Forty-six years on, what can you tell us about the main developments in the history of FAGACE?

A: First of all, I would like to thank you for this platform offered to our institution, FAGACE, and for the support that your magazine brings to the economic development of Africa. Indeed, created on February 10, 1977, in Kigali, Rwanda, during a conference of Heads of State and Government of OCAM (formerly Organisation Commune Africaine Malgache et Mauricienne), FAGACE is a pioneer financial guarantee institutions in Africa.

It should be noted that the idea of creating a guarantee fund capable of meeting the needs of states stems from the need to strengthen the ties of cooperation and solidarity between members of the organisation, to promote the harmonious growth of their economies, and to offer maximum security to foreign and domestic capital wishing to invest in Africa. OCAM was dissolved in 1985 in Lomé, Togo, and the board of directors decided to change the name of the OCAM Guarantee Fund to African Guarantee and Economic Cooperation Fund (FAGACE).

At the time, an initial endowment of CFA5 billion was allocated to the institution by the founding fathers, to enable it to achieve the objectives assigned to it – namely to guarantee productive loans issued or contracted by states, or their public or semi-public bodies and private companies having their registered office and main field of activity in one or more member state and intended to finance economically or financially profitable industrial, agricultural, commercial or infrastructure projects; granting interest-rate subsidies and extended credit periods for loans granted in member states for economic operations whose profitability could not be guaranteed under the terms of the loans; and to finance specific projects using loans and subsidies.



With headquarters in Benin, FAGACE has regional offices in Cameroon and Rwanda, with a branch in Senegal under way

Since then, FAGACE has evolved rapidly. With guarantees as its core business, the institution began its first operations in 1981 with the granting of its guarantee to two public-sector projects. From 1985 onwards, the fund became involved in promoting the private sector, stepping up its interventions in favour of private promoters. This enabled it to inject substantial financial resources into the economies of member countries.

Over the years, several reforms have been introduced into the life of the institution and have enabled it to evolve positively while adapting to its rapidly changing environment, on the one hand; and to strengthen its capacity for intervention, its credibility and the quality of its signature in the international financial arena, on the other. Among these reforms, it should be noted that at, at the institutional level, are successive increases in capital, which has been expanded from CFA5 billion in 1977 to CFA350 billion since 2014. It is open to states and development financial institutions. Since 2023, the authorised share capital of FAGACE has risen to CFA500 billion.

Also, for greater proximity to the markets, in 2007 we opened a regional representation office for CEMAC in Douala, Cameroon, and another in Kigali for Rwanda in 2015, in addition to the head office based in Cotonou, Benin. FAGACE's regional office for West Africa is currently being opened in Dakar, Senegal.

Q: What are FAGACE's activities?

A: FAGACE is an African financial institution specialised in promoting public and private investments in Africa. It works for the economic and social development of its member states by facilitating access to financing for local businesses and entrepreneurial projects, mainly through risk-sharing mechanisms.

FAGACE's target beneficiaries include all develop-

ment stakeholders – viable private or mixed enterprises in all sectors of activity, national and international financial institutions, and regional bodies promoting the economic integration of member states. To date, the fund's areas of intervention cover CEMAC, UEMOA, Rwanda and Mauritania, with possible gradual expansion across the entire African continent.

Q: Your institution is a key player in promoting public and private investment. What is your vision for the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan?

A: Through the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, our vision is to make FAGACE a modern institution that fully contributes to Africa's financial integration. Indeed, the fund has begun a new era of transformations marked by the implementation of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, called the New Momentum. This plan will enable FAGACE to play a more decisive role in accelerating strong, sustainable and inclusive growth in Africa, by helping to realise the potential of promising and emerging economic sectors.

In this respect, the main areas of development concern the modernisation of the fund; strengthening the effectiveness of its governance; increasing its interventions; resource mobilisation; and the intensification and development of a close partnership with all financial institutions, to promote access to investment credit for as many people as possible. As a result, FAGACE is being transformed to be closer to market developments, and is in line with the African Union's Vision 2063 to support the process of opening up markets and industrialising the continent.

Q: Two years after implementing the plan, what is the impact of the reforms?

A: The reforms implemented as part of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan have had a considerable impact on the



A TOOL TO BOOST SME FINANCING







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FAGACE is an African financial entity that boosts investments in Africa, both public and private

institution, leading to significant transformations in line with market trends. In fact, these measures have made the following possible:

- New and fruitful cooperation with partner financial institutions. FAGACE has signed numerous collaboration agreements with the development banks and commercial banks in its member states. Portfolio guarantee lines for SMEs/SMIs and individual guarantees for the financing of structuring projects have thus been approved, signed and put in place
- A strengthened governance model. In line with the best international standards in terms of governance, and with the aim of improving the protection of the interests of shareholder states in complete independence, FAGACE has strengthened its governance model with the recruitment of independent directors and the establishment of an independent evaluation office

made up of representatives of the central banks of the monetary zones covered by the institution

- An organisation focused on risk management. FAGACE has set up a new organisation focused on risk analysis and management, an essential tool for the sustainable management of a guarantee fund
- Operational excellence in line with the most demanding prudential standards, supported by a modern, high-performance information system. FAGACE has drawn up a new operational risk map and implemented a new provisioning system
- An efficient operating model reflected in financial statements that comply with international standards, to enhance the readability and comparability of financial information at international level
- A credible institution. For the year 2022, Moody's subsidiary GCR has confirmed a financial rating of AA- for the long term and W-2 for the short term, with a stable outlook; and an A+ honour roll rating, in accordance with the AADFI's Normes dispositif prudentiel et système d'évaluation for the year 2022
- Strong, controlled operational and financial growth
- Resource mobilisation. One of the orientations of the strategic plan is to boost the resource mobilisation process with a view to strengthening the financial capacities of the fund, its partners and its member states
- The creation of the FAGACE Institute. The institute is a training centre and think tank for coaching and capacity building in relation to financial and social partners. It is responsible for training, studies, research and technical assistance to promoters and technical support to member states. It provides fora for reflection on major economic, monetary and financial issues, and on the main challenges facing businesses in the fund's area of intervention.

Q: Why choose FAGACE as a guarantor in the financing scheme for member states?

A: In view of the above, there is no doubt that FAGACE is the right strategic institution to support member states in implementing their economic development strategies, for four reasons.

Firstly, the fund has significant guarantee capacity to support ambitious corporate development strategies requiring substantial financial resources and long-term financing. It also boasts a solid track record and cutting-edge business expertise, as well as a strong network of national and international financial and technical partners. In addition, the fund enjoys total independence and is anchored at the highest level of the member states, enabling it to adopt strong guidelines accompanying the development programs of the member states;. Finally, FAGACE's ambitions and the transformations it has undertaken confirm its central

role as a force for concrete solutions to the development and growth of the economies of its member states.

Q: What is FAGACE's role today as a development institution serving Africa?

A: As a guarantor, FAGACE positions itself as a gas pedal of business development and a tool for financing the economies of its member states. These countries face a number of obstacles, among which access to financing is the most important. The costs associated with financing are exorbitant, combined with the need for substantial guarantees.

An effective public credit guarantee mechanism, such as FAGACE, is the key solution to the financing challenge, which is the focal point of national programmes to promote economic development. With the financing received, economies emerge, structure themselves, realise their development ambitions and, ultimately, create more added value and jobs.

Emphasis is also placed on guaranteeing specific financing lines adapted to each sector in order to facilitate the mobilisation of adequate resources to finance the economy.

In this regard, the fund has developed a specific approach aligned with the economic and financial development objectives of member states, with significant socio-economic spin-offs broken down into four main points, namely support for national development programmes by backing structuring projects; the development and improvement of access to credit for businesses, particularly SMEs, which has led to the promotion of entrepreneurship and the financing of numerous projects guaranteed by the fund; mentoring and skill enhancement by the FAGACE institute; and mobilising private capital to finance the economy.

The FAGACE guarantee also enables member states to achieve their social development and poverty-reduction objectives, by directing the guarantee policy towards priority sectors and industries, SMEs and structuring projects.

In all, more than CFA3 000 billion (approximately US\$5 million) have been mobilised for the benefit of member states, particularly in strategic economic sectors such as industry, agro-industry, energy, telecoms, transport, public works and so forth. Most of the financing mobilised benefited SMEs, which play a central role in economic development and social progress in member countries.

Q: Under your leadership, the FAGACE Institute recently published a book entitled 'Guarantee Funds at the Heart of Financing Africa's Future'. What are the main reasons behind this publication?

A: Indeed, in December 2022, on the occasion of its 45th anniversary, FAGACE published its first collective work. There were three main reasons for producing this book under the heading of guarantees as a strengthened solution to increase financing in Africa.

Firstly, the guarantee business is not yet taught in schools and has no regulatory body as such in African countries. This explains why there is such a lack of information on guarantee activities in Africa, despite the existence of renowned guarantee funds.

Secondly, this book was written to mark the 45th anniversary of FAGACE, a guarantee institution serving the economies of its member states. FAGACE aims at popularising the credit and loan guarantee business, with a view to sharing its expertise as one of the pioneers of the guarantee sector in Africa. Lastly, it is also a way of paying tribute to FAGACE's founding fathers, who had the brilliant idea of pooling their efforts to accelerate the financing of their economies.

Q: Your final word?

A: In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm FAGACE's commitment to strengthening its central role in supporting member states facing major financing challenges to develop and modernise their economies. In this context, the fund is ready to support member states in the implementation of their development strategies, both for structuring projects and for SMEs, thanks to its capacity to grant substantial guarantees and its cutting-edge business expertise with a solid network of financial and technical partners.

Finally, I think it is important to point out that, in keeping with its African vocation, FAGACE's expansion is continuing. To this end, the strengthening of its financial structure, with capital raised to CFA500 billion, opens the door to new African states as well as multilateral and private institutions entering the capital in order to develop further synergies between our economies for more global and sustainable growth, in line with the new economic order under way at both regional and continental levels for the operationalisation of the African Continental Free Trade Area. ■



FAGACE
FONDS AFRICAIN DE GARANTIE ET
DE COOPÉRATION ÉCONOMIQUE
UNE INSTITUTION FINANCIÈRE AU SERVICE
DU DÉVELOPPEMENT EN AFRIQUE

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The AFCFTA Rules of Origin

Is a regime governing the conditions under which a product or service can be labelled "Made in Africa" and subsequently traded duty free across the region



Scan to Learn more about the AFCFTA



The successful implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will lead to the creation of more decent jobs, improved welfare and better quality of life for all citizenry, and boost the sustainable development of large, small and medium Enterprises on the Continent.

Strengthening Institutions to stem economic & Cyber Crimes as Online Commerce advances under the AfCFTA

Africa is keen on harnessing digital technologies and innovation to ensure Africa's ownership of modern tools of digital management and to elevate Africa's position as a producer, discounting the constant notion that Africa is only a consumer in the global economy. Innovations and digitalisation are breaking the digital divide, stimulating job creation and contributing to addressing poverty, reducing inequality, facilitating the delivery of goods and services, and contributing to the achievement of Agenda 2063. Digital trade will therefore form an integral part of the transactions critical to boosting intra-African trade. The AfCFTA Protocol on Digital Trade will provide binding and enforceable provisions

on the digital economy further accelerating intra-African trade and integration...

The African Union has developed several policies and frameworks to support the growing digital sector on the continent that includes among others, the **African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection**; and the **Digital Transformation Strategy (DTS) for Africa 2020-2030**, whose implementation along with the operationalisation of the AfCFTA, are expected to unlock the enormous opportunities for more interconnected and interoperable markets as well as defining the conducive environments for tech start-ups and e-commerce to thrive. Relatedly, the **African Union Data Policy**

Framework supports a consolidated data environment and harmonised digital data governance systems to enable the free and secure flow of data across the continent while safeguarding human rights, upholding security and ensuring equitable access and sharing of benefits.

To accelerate innovation and the goals for industrialisation envisaged for Africa's digital economy to support AfCFTA, the DTS lays emphasis on the need for the continent to harmonise policies, legislation and regulations and establish and improve digital networks and services with a view to strengthening intra-African trade, investment and capital flows and the socio-economic integration of the continent.



Integrated and inclusive digital society and economy in Africa that improves the quality of life of Africa's citizens, strengthen the existing economic sector, enable its diversification and development, and ensure continental ownership with Africa as a producer and not only a consumer in the global economy.

Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa 2020-2030

Indeed, technology, through smart phones, computers and other gadgets have revolutionized the way traders and consumers interact. It is increasingly convenient to advertise, sell, distribute and pay for goods and services, within and across borders. E-commerce is proof that trade enjoys seamless borders. For Africa to harness the exponential



Proceeds of Corruption means assets of any kind corporeal or incorporeal, movable or immovable, tangible or intangible and any document or legal instrument evidencing title to or interests in such assets acquired as a result of an act of corruption.

African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption

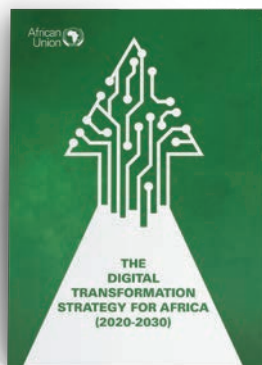
potential of digitally enabled socio-economic development, functional institutions, effective policies, and awareness will be needed to detect, prevent, manage and stem the associated vulnerabilities of cyber risks and economic crimes.

As the digital markets expands, the African Union Advisory Board Against Corruption (AUABC) is enhancing its role in advocating for, and supporting governments and stakeholders to set up measures and mechanisms that seal the gaps in digital economic crimes and corruption. **The African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption**, offers practical recommendations and credible response to stem corruption in all spheres of life for sound political, social, economic and cultural stability. The Convention acts as a guiding framework for the work of the AUABC and calls on all member states to;

- Strengthen the development of mechanisms required to prevent, detect, punish and eradicate corruption and related offences in the public and private sectors.
- Facilitate cooperation among the



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Scan to Download Digital Transformation Strategy (DTS) for Africa 2020-2030



State Parties to ensure the effectiveness of measures and actions to prevent, detect, punish and eradicate corruption and related offences in Africa.

- Coordinate and harmonise policies and legislation between State Parties for the purposes of prevention, detection, punishment and eradication of corruption on the continent.
- Promote socio-economic development by removing obstacles to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights.
- Establish the necessary conditions to foster transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs.

The existence of cybercrimes calls for refocused efforts, adoption of legal, institutional and practical measures to sustainably stem graft in the industry. Legislation must be fully supported with strong enforcement. **The Report of the High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows** from Africa equally makes recommendations on sealing leakages through Illicit Financial Flows. In addition as trade within the AfCFTA regime takes off, regulatory authorities within member states will need to strengthen anti-money laundering laws as well as the capacity of oversight institutions to better deal with trade-based money laundering including strengthening customs and receipts systems so that they are shielded from corrupt practices.

Addressing crime and corruption in e-commerce.

Cybercrimes are increasingly becoming sophisticated which demands that effective policies and institutions are ready and capacitated to detect, prevent, manage and deal with the crimes assertively. Organised crime targeting e-commerce has seen an increase in cybercrimes in various forms that include hacking; malware attacks; blackmail; online scams; intellectual property rights violations such as the sale of counterfeit trademarked products; identity theft; human trafficking for exploitative labour; and economic espionage. The growth and adoption of mobile money platforms in Africa calls for enhanced measures to



Cybersecurity has not yet been sufficiently appreciated or acknowledged in the continent and often times other priorities will take precedence over it. This lack of preparedness is allowing cybercriminals to use Africa as a safe haven to operate illegally with impunity. Many leading experts are increasingly worried that the next global conflict will be conducted via cyber. Let us work collaboratively to prevent this undesirable outcome.

Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, African Union Commissioner, Infrastructure and Energy.

protect data and avert fraudulent transactions. Furthermore, Cryptocurrency has also opened new avenues in the dark web for illegal digital trade and payments.

Challenges remain in investigating and prosecuting cybercriminals due to the different legal systems within the continent; different national cybercrime laws; different procedures by the multiple agencies in rules of evidence and criminal procedure.

With adequate investment, functional and efficient institutional as well as human resource capacity, the AUABC is certain that preventing and combatting corruption in the digital economy can be sustained. Strengthening synergies in law enforcement and prosecution efforts, human capacities, investments in enhanced technical solutions, and awareness campaigns, will give the continent the needed gravitas to seal the loops in crimes and corruption in the e-commerce sector.

Several efforts must be implemented to counter cybercrimes, these include cooperation between governments

and the private sector to:

1. Detect, report, and take down sites engaging in cyber organised crime.
2. Ensure continuous training on cybersecurity for law enforcement and prosecution and judicial authorities to keep up with and counter the fast evolving nature of cybercrimes.
3. Enhance cooperation in knowledge sharing and data on crimes at the national, regional, continental and international levels given the transnational nature of cybercrime.
4. Impose severe penalties for cybercrimes.
5. Invest in enhanced technological solutions and software to detect, prevent and manage criminal activities.
6. Engage in rigorous campaigns to educate the public on measures to protect themselves from cybercrime.
7. Strengthen cooperation between the government and ICT industry service providers, financial institutions, e-commerce traders and other sectors, for synergies in prevention, threat assessments, formulation of policies and

strategies.

8. Establish a reliable 24/7 point of contact within the specialised cybercrime unit of legal enforcement for ease of reporting and communication.
9. Enhance judicial services to speedily conclude cases allowing for recovery and repatriation of assets.
10. Harmonise cybercrime prevention, reporting and legislation systems for better research and analysis of the crimes.

In dealing with corruption, there is no one-size-fits-all formula and countries apply appropriate measures guided by the existing legislation, level of ICT, and the pervasiveness of criminal activity. However, for the African continent to move progressively to combat corruption on the continent, the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption lays the foundation that allows the continent to speak with one voice.



Scan to Download the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption



WAPP

AMPED UP

ECOWAS is ensuring a competitive electricity market across West Africa by promoting regional integration as a preferred path to economic and social development



Siengui Ki, WAPP
Secretary General

West Africa is rich in energy resources capable of meeting the region's electricity needs. However, these resources are unevenly distributed, and the region experiences an imbalanced supply/demand ratio, as well as high electricity costs that are not helpful for the development of its industrial structure. In 1999, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) created a specialised institution, the West African Power Pool (WAPP), to help nations overcome this situation.

This was the beginning of a more co-ordinated, focused and sustained effort to make regional electricity integration a preferred path to economic and

social development for member countries. Officially established in 2006 in Cotonou, Benin, WAPP aims to integrate the region's national electricity systems into a unified regional electricity market, with a view to ensuring, in the medium and long term, a sustainable supply of stable and reliable electricity at competitive costs to the citizens of ECOWAS member states.

WAPP's mission is to promote and develop electricity production and transmission infrastructure, and to co-ordinate exchanges between ECOWAS member countries.

Thanks to stakeholder conviction in the ideals of regional electricity integration and confidence in the institution's ability to make it a reality, WAPP's membership has grown from 13 in 2006 to 39 today, including national corporations and independent power producers across the region. To achieve its mission, WAPP and its members work tirelessly to develop and implement a periodically updated regional infrastructure programme covering energy transmission and generation.

With regard to transmission, it should be noted that before 2006 only a few interconnections existed between the power grids of certain neighbouring countries within the framework of bilateral co-operation. To date, the many efforts made have enabled it to virtually complete the electrical interconnection of the 14 continental ECOWAS countries. The interconnection of the Cape Verde network, the only one currently isolated from other networks due to its geographical position, is planned for the future.

To achieve this feat, numerous integration projects totalling thousands of kilometres of high-voltage power lines have been built in recent years with the support of development partners. These include the two flagship projects added to the electrical interconnection of the continental ECOWAS countries. These are the Côte d'Ivoire–Liberia–Sierra Leone–Guinea interconnection and the interconnection of the countries of the Gambia River Development Organisation, namely Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal.



WAPP's membership has surged from 13 to 39 – including national corporations and IPPs – since 2006

In addition to the primary objective of electrically interconnecting all ECOWAS countries, one of the major objectives is to reinforce the regional network by setting up alternative links to increase the stability and reliability of the system and boost energy exchanges between countries. To this end, projects totalling 5 345 km of line are currently under way, and those in preparation add up in excess of than 11 000 km.

Moreover, WAPP's ambitions go beyond the complete integration of the power grids of ECOWAS countries. Indeed, with the aim of increasing access to more competitive energy for its members and initiating inter-regional electricity integration, it plans to join its network to that of North Africa, already linked to the European grid, and that of Central Africa, to reach the Inga hydroelectric dam in the DRC, with an estimated production capacity of more than 40 GW.

With regard to power generation, several projects have also been finalised or are under way, with the aim of covering electricity demand and increasing the share of renewable energies in the region's energy mix, which in the medium term will reduce marginal costs for the region as a whole, as well as carbon emissions. Between 2018 and 2022, around 1 000 MW of additional generation capacity was installed at regional level, in addition to national-scale generation units in individual countries.

Projects under implementation and in the pipeline total around 4 300 MW and 2 600 MW respectively. These projects include the deployment of solar and wind power, with a share of more than 20% of production capacity planned between 2018 and 2033.

In parallel with infrastructure development, WAPP is committed to the establishment and operationalisation of a regional electricity market.

In line with its roadmap, the ECOWAS regional electricity market is being rolled out progressively in three phases. Following the launch of the first phase in June 2018 to formalise existing bilateral electricity trading contracts between neighbouring countries, the second phase, which will introduce competitiveness

into regional electricity trading through the day-ahead market, is scheduled for launch in late 2023. Later, when the conditions are right, the third phase will reinforce competitiveness, with the introduction of the spot market and ancillary services.

To this end, an Information and Co-ordination Centre for the interconnected network is currently being finalised in Calavi, Benin. Its commissioning is scheduled for before the end of 2023. In addition, every effort is being made to ensure synchronous operation of the interconnected network, so as to maximise trading opportunities, and to put in place the regulatory instruments needed to govern the market.

As a result of the progress made, energy exchanges between countries have risen from 4 500 GWh in 2015 to 6 500 GWh in 2021, and are set to exceed 12 000 GWh in 2025, with strong growth in subsequent years as a regional electricity market for ECOWAS countries becomes operational.

In short, the successful electricity interconnection of 14 of the 15 ECOWAS countries, the synchronisation of the grid, the increase in energy supply and the establishment of the Information and Co-ordination Centre are undoubtedly decisive milestones on the road to the second phase of the regional electricity market. The forthcoming launch of competitive electricity trading will enable countries not only to rely on power generation units on their own territories, but also to obtain supplies from across the region at competitive costs. ■



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The AfCFTA: Lever for enhancing trade and doing business in Africa

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a notable initiative to promote free trade.

When the African Union (AU) Member states signed the Abuja Treaty in 1991, the long-term objective of an African Economic Community was envisioned, and the first real measures toward economic integration of the African continent were made. The AfCFTA became effective in 2019 and commenced operation on January 1, 2021. Depending on Member state characteristics, the AfCFTA expects its signatories to remove intra-African trade obstacles within a period of 5 to 15 years. It aspires to further integrate African economies which have had limited trading with other African countries.

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The AfCFTA is a lever toward enhancing trade and doing business in Africa because it establishes and has tremendous effects on domestic manufacturing as this would result in more “Made in Africa products” in line with the rules of origin under the free trade agreement. Only with sufficient, high-quality infrastructure will the AfCFTA’s primary goal of boosting intra-African trade be accomplished. Closing the rural infrastructure gap where majority of production takes place in Africa will reduce transport cost and facilitate trade as well as enhance the way of doing business in Africa. Another vital aspect to accelerating the AfCFTA implementation is through inclusive participation of women and youth in trade, who constitute a large portion of small micro medium enterprises and the highest population in Africa respectively.

Women and Youth in Trade

In Africa, women play a large role in trading. They transport commodities across borders, produce items, particularly food, for export, and own and run businesses that are involved in trade.¹ Women led businesses in Africa make up to 58% of informal employment. The fact that women constitute the largest number



of informal cross-border traders in Africa means that their goods are of low value and often do not meet the standards of the regional markets. However, women traders frequently experience certain limitations that impair their economic activity. At the border, women traders who labor in the informal economy frequently experience harassment and poor sanitary environment. Given the time needed for domestic responsibilities, women are more negatively impacted by lengthy trade procedures and documentation requirements.

Frances Ademoa, an art gallery owner, stands in her showroom with local art on June 13, 2008 in central Accra, Ghana. Mrs. Ademoa hopes to increase her domestic and export business by working with Herman Chinery-Hesse, a local software entrepreneur, who is pioneering to bringing e-commerce to remote corners of the continent.

¹ Ideas for Development (2021), Female Entrepreneurship, key ingredient for Africa’s growth. Female entrepreneurship, key ingredient for Africa’s growth (ideas4development.org)

The AfCFTA is however a game changer in the way of doing business for women and youth led enterprises. Although it does not contain a protocol on women and youth, it does have provisions that cater for this group. Article 3(e) of the AfCFTA main Agreement and Article 27(2)(d) of the Protocol on Trade in Services specifically mandate State parties to promote gender equality and “improve the export capacity of both formal and informal service suppliers, with particular attention to micro, small and medium-sized; women and youth service suppliers.” Additionally, the AfCFTA Secretariat is working to have the Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade ready for negotiations and development. The Protocol is anticipated to address the unique limitations and barriers that women traders encounter in the continent. It will foster an environment where women may take advantage of the AfCFTA by opening new markets, enhancing their competitiveness, and taking part in local value chains. With the implementation of the AfCFTA protocol of women and youth more diverse goods and services will be received in the market, regional value chains in the sectors of food production, clothing, information technology and construction will grow because of the AfCFTA rules of origin schedules that favor made in Africa goods and the strategy on a simplified trade regime. In this way, the diversity of African produce and the level of doing business in Africa will be enhanced through regional economic integration and an inclusive trading ground.

The development of jobs is a key component of the AfCFTA’s strategy for addressing the issue of

young and female unemployment in Africa. Youth unemployment in Africa accounts for 60% of all unemployment on the continent², and young women are more affected by unemployment than young men. Therefore, the effective implementation of this single market, which permits the free movement of products and services, gives young people and women the chance to fully realize their potential and pursue their careers wherever on the continent.

The AfCFTA Conference on Women and Youth in Trade, convened by the Tanzanian government from 12 to 14 September 2022, in Dar-Es-Salam, under the theme “Women and Youth: The Engine of AfCFTA Trade in Africa” is a commendable effort in the inclusion of women and youth in trade. This is a great milestone in inclusive participation in regional trade in Africa because women and youth are essential drivers of intra-African trade. Most importantly, young Africans are at the forefront of technical development, they are creating the most up-to-date software to support e-commerce, among other things. If we they are not included in these significant facets of our society, it we will be making a grave error.

Food Security

Article 3 (g) of the AfCFTA Preamble speaks to the issue of food security in that it seeks to “promote industrial development through diversification and regional value chain development, agricultural development and food security”. The AfCFTA is set to address food security issues in the continent by stimulating intra-trade among African countries thereby ensuring agricultural surplus and

reduction in the importation of goods, and this commitment is set out in Article 3 (g). With the private sector acting as a driver for sustainable agricultural expansion, the AfCFTA provides presents opportunities to drive continental agribusiness growth.

A significant portion of Africa’s economy accounting for ³ 15% of the continent’s annual GDP, is the agricultural sector. However, it is ironic that food insecurity is a major issue on a continent like Africa, where agriculture is a key economic activity. The horn of Africa is one of the regions that have been severely hit by poverty and food shortage due to famine and war, and this has left many people malnourished. Hence forth, one of the priority areas of the African Union Agenda 2063 is health and nutrition and productivity and production. For these to be achieved there is need for a concerted effort by member states, the private sector and citizens to engage in intensive production sectors that will develop agricultural value chains within the region.

African countries import majority of manufactured goods and services, and the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine presented an economic shock to many African States due restrictions in trade. Therefore, the AfCFTA is vital at this point for Africa to reposition herself in food production and industrialization, to become self-sufficient. ⁴ Following the elimination of fair tariffs on goods under the AfCFTA, intra-African trade in agriculture and food products could expand by 20% to 30%, therefore, political leaders need to give the highest priority

² Africa Renewal (2017), Africa’s jobless youth cast shadow over economic growth. Accessible at: Africa’s jobless youth cast a shadow over economic growth | Africa Renewal (un.org)

³ A. Simola et al. (2022), Economic Integration and Food Security: the case of the AfCFTA. Global Food Security 35, Elsevier B.V.

⁴ UNECA (2021), AfCFTA to boost intra-African trade in agricultural and food products and enhance continental food security. Accessible at: AfCFTA to boost intra-African trade in agricultural and food products and enhance continental food security | United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (uneca.org)

to measures lowering taxes, no tariffs, and limited restrictions if Africa is to address its food system problems. By doing this, the private sector will be able to guarantee that there is consistently enough food to meet demand and that people have employment that pay enough money to afford food.

It is essential to accelerate the food system's rapid transition as the continent struggles with issues related to food security, this is where the AfCFTA offers the continent and its economic regions an intriguing opportunity. The AfCFTA will remove obstacles that prevent agricultural products from being transported from areas where they are in excess to those where they are most needed. It will also cut food prices, which will disproportionately benefit the continent's poorest citizens. This will significantly contribute to the eradication of hunger and food insecurity across the continent and improve the trade of agricultural products at a lower cost.

Infrastructure Development

Only with sufficient, high-quality infrastructure will the AfCFTA's primary goal of boosting intra-African trade be realized. Infrastructure development in Africa will support the adoption of hygienic practices, the provision of health services, remote working and learning, and the continuation of economic activity under less disruptive conditions. An increase in intra-African trade can revitalize the continent, and this is a historic first step in that direction. However, products and services do not move independently in Africa due to high transport and freight charges. The cost of transportation is 63% higher in Africa than in the diaspora⁵. Inadequate infrastructure, institutional problems, high fuel prices, and landlocked countries are just a few of the many issues that make transport costs in Africa significantly higher than in any other part of the world.

Moreover, deficits in infrastructure and disjointed supply networks impede the trade facilitation. For decades, regional trade and economic integration have been severely impeded by Africa's vast infrastructural



gap, especially in the transportation sector, as well as supply chain fragmentation. The implementation of the AfCFTA will lead to the creation of regional manufacturing supply chain clusters needed for sustainable economic development. Therefore, investments in high-quality infrastructure is necessary to make the AfCFTA a reality and regional economic communities (RECs) as the building blocs of the AfCFTA have contributed significantly to regional infrastructure development through projects such as the One-Stop Border Post (OSBP) facilities which are vital for trade facilitation.

In 2012, African heads of state and government endorsed the Programme for Infrastructure Development (PIDA) as a long-term plan for closing Africa's infrastructure gap. The successful implementation of ⁶ PIDA creates transnational transportation corridors, telecommunications networks, improves regional energy supply, and develops a functional trans-boundary water management, all of which create a conducive environment for trade and doing business, they are further essential for a sustainable and socially inclusive economic growth. It also makes it easier for African nations to cooperate, bringing to life the idea of an integrated and united Africa.

Major and planned investments in connectivity and infrastructure are

MOMBASA-KIGALI RAILWAY; A 2,935-kilometre stretch of railway is due to link Kenya's Mombasa with Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda and South Sudan, boosting trade and providing previously land-locked countries with an important economic corridor..

Image © Eric Lafforgue/Art in All of Us/Corbis via Getty Images

⁵ AfDB (2013), Africa Economic and Financial Brief. Accessible at: Market Brief - Africa Economic Financial Brief 15-19 April 2013 (afdb.org)

⁶ PIDA (2021), Infrastructure and Industrialization remain key pillars of the AfCFTA. Accessible at: Infrastructure and Industrialization remain key pillars of AfCFTA | Virtual PIDA Information Centre (au-pida.org)

required to address the massive issue of infrastructure shortages and supply chain fragmentation. Easy intra-Africa navigation, or an unhindered flow of people, products, and services both within and beyond national boundaries, is necessary for the AfCFTA to function. Cross-border payment platforms, telecommunications networks and internet access are ingredients needed to ensure the success of the AfCFTA geared towards improving the business environment and intra-trade.⁷ The implementation of the Agenda 2063 flagship projects is further essential to improving trade and doing business in Africa. For instance, the one of the flagship projects; integrated high speed train network, seek to connect all African capitals and commercial centers, and the establishment of a Single Africans Air Transport Market (SAATM) will further ensure intra-regional connectivity between the capital cities in Africa and create a single unified air transport market in Africa as a boost to the continent's economic growth agenda.

In essence, while the AfCFTA is already a reality, building a strong infrastructure is essential for it to be operationalized and successful. To harmonize and coordinate activities, Member States need to be connected both physically and digitally through hard infrastructure and through soft infrastructure. Market connectivity, data access, and industrialization are the main pillars in the success of intra-trade and doing business in Africa. In addition to infrastructure, the capacitation of women and youth led enterprises and the private sector about trade related matters, particularly, rules of origin, non-tariff barriers and customs procedure. The most important thing is for all citizens to take an initiative towards implementation of the agreement by engaging more on trade related aspects of socio-economic development. In ensuring successful implementation of the AfCFTA in Africa, peace and security cannot be over emphasized. Investors are drawn to places where there is peace and security because without peace the process of doing business would be hampered.



THE GRAND INGA DAM; The Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa vowed on October 16, 2015 to step up work on a massive new hydroelectric dam on the Congo River that could provide power to the entire continent. The Inga 3 Basse Chute project near Matadi would divert Congo River waters into a 12-kilometre (7.5-mile) channel and then pass them through a 100-metre-high (330-foot) hydropower dam in the Bundi Valley before releasing the water back into the river. The intake would be above the existing Inga 1 and Inga 2 dams, and the outflow downstream from both *Image © MARC JOURDIER/AFP via Getty Images*



THE NORTH-SOUTH AFRICA CORRIDOR; The corridor project includes power generation and port development projects, as well as a network of over 8,500 kilometres of road and roughly 600 kilometres of rail.



BENGUELA RAILWAY; In 2014, work was completed on the longest, fastest railway in Africa and links Angolan ports to the country's inland cities, as well as to the DRC and Zambia. It includes 67 stations and supports rail speeds of up to 90 kilometres per hour.

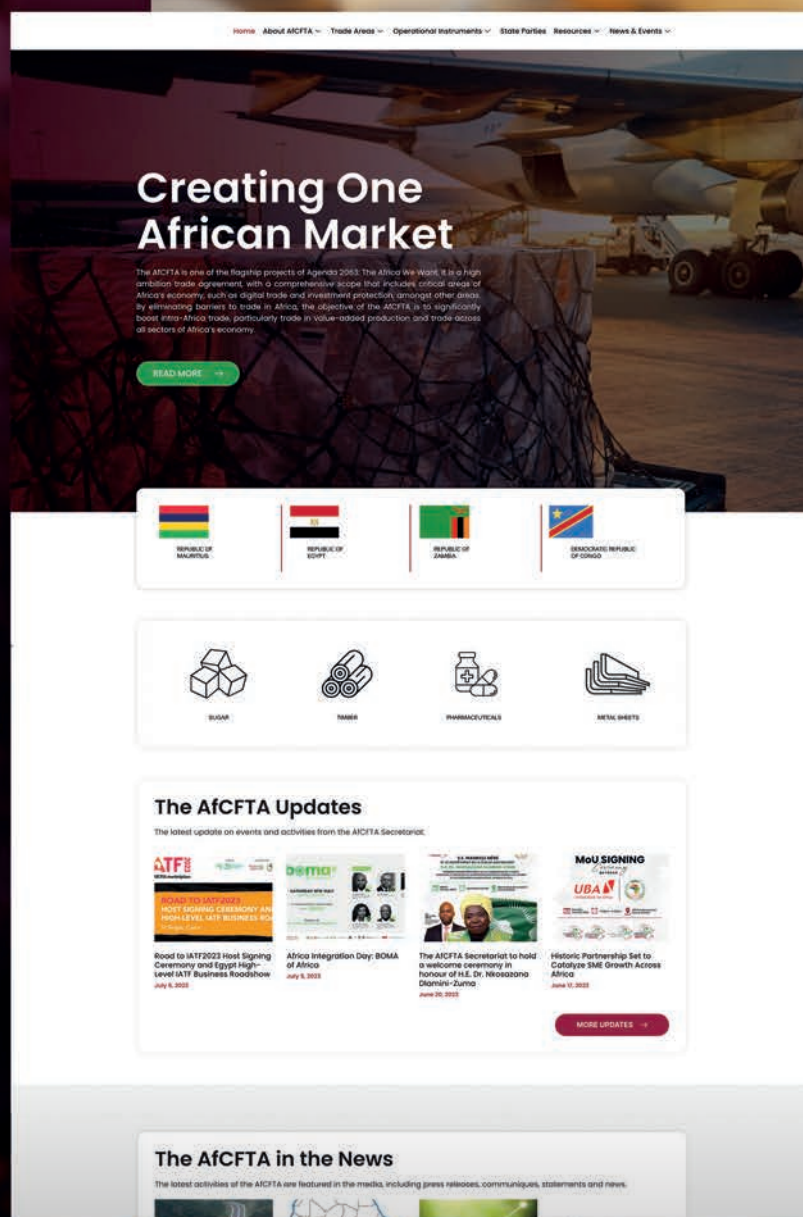
⁷ African Union Commission (2015), Agenda 2063. <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>

The AfCFTA Schedule of Tariff Concessions

Aims to progressively eliminate tariffs on 90% of goods produced on the continent and is supported by use of the AfCFTA Online Negotiation Tool that aims to facilitate and accelerate harmonisation of data needed to support tariff negotiations based on countries' priorities.



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IMPLEMENTING THE AFCFTA:

The role of regional Integration in developing regional value chains & upgrading Africa's participation in global value chains

By: **Sarvesh Lutchmun**, LLB, BSc, MBA, Protocol Assistant, Cabinet of the Chairperson, African Union Commission

The emergence of Regional Value Chains (RVCs) in Africa is certainly not a new phenomenon. A good case in point would be the 2009 Annual Economic Report on Africa prepared by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Union (AU) that focused on developing the African agriculture sector through RVCs. The document elaborated strategies for promoting RVCs and enhancing structural transformation of the continent's agriculture sector through organized efforts to develop value chains that are regionally integrated. If agriculture is no longer the cynosure of the continent with the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, RVCs as well as Africa's participation in Global Value Chains (GVCs) remain relevant in boosting Africa's trade and economic prospects, especially in the advent of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Foster-McGregor et al (2015) observed that African countries participate to a large extent in GVCs and that the African continent, as a whole, is "heavily involved" in GVCs. Conde et al (2015) suggests that the continent's participation in GVCs is driven by Southern and North Africa, which altogether constitute 78 percent of Africa's total value chain trade. West Africa accounts for 14 percent, East Africa for 5 percent, while Central Africa accounts for merely 3 percent.

Studies have also shown that the continent has a stronger forward participation in GVCs, implying that Africa's participation in GVCs is in upstream production, with African countries providing inputs to other countries, especially to "headquarter economies" such as Japan and the United States, and to "factory economies" such as China, India and Eastern European countries. However, climbing the ladder within GVCs through backward integration has proven to be very problematic for African RVCs.

SADC is, in all likelihood, the most aggressive – and probably the most successful – regional bloc in Africa when it comes to developing and promoting regional value chains. Fruitful RVCs have been molded over the years including the maize value chain since the early

2000s with the active participation of at least eight SADC countries. Another good example is the range of RVCs in apparel which has been existent for decades in the region, evidently attributable to South Africa's dominance as the regional powerhouse. In recent years, SADC has made significant progress in developing new value chains in three specific sectors, namely agro-processing, mineral beneficiation, and pharmaceuticals.

Under the Costed Action Plan of SADC's Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap 2015-2063 (SISR), USD 14.8 million has been earmarked for RVCs development including the profiling and identification of potential RVCs in SADC. The plan was also to implement at least some 30 RVC strategies in the priority areas for specific products and services, and the development of 10 RVCs by 2020. Even if there is little evidence to suggest whether these targets have been met, progress is ongoing with the development of some key leather, medical and pharmaceutical products RVC projects, which augurs well for the region.

In West Africa, ECOWAS came with the EU-funded West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP) to backstop selected value chains at the national and regional levels. While ECOWAS remains dependent

on the economic successes of oil, gas and mineral resources, common value chains which have been identified under WACOMP include cassava; textile and garment; mango; ICT; onion; pineapple; and hides, skins and leather. Recent initiatives suggest that WACOMP is focusing on coordinating targeted actions along the textile and garments value chain. It has also been highlighted that inadequate investment in West Africa and external competition is leading to a decline of a previously effervescent textile and garment industry in ECOWAS.

On its side, ECCAS has constantly been at the lower end of the spectrum in terms of regional economic and trade integration, largely put down to its peace and security issues. Over the past six years, intra-ECCAS trade has accounted for merely an average of 3%. Nevertheless, some regional efforts were undertaken and one of the major initiatives in ECCAS was the creation of a wood and sawdust RVC with 5 countries of the Congo Basin. Mineral Resources RVCs were also being envisaged but there is no clear indication on their realization as well as on the involvement of ECCAS in strategizing RVCs and GVCs in the region.

While some investigations have been carried out to explain why and how Africa has been lagging behind in RVCs development and GVCs backward-integration, it has been difficult to point out the missing link between regional integration and Africa's upgrading in GVCs. There is also no evidence to signpost the promotion of cross-RECs value chains which possibly could be

more robust in interacting with GVCs through backward integration. Further studies in this field need to be commissioned, especially to determine where African countries are integrated in GVCs, how can Africa upgrade its GVCs interaction and the plausibility of cross-regional value chains.

African RVCs can meaningfully accelerate the implementation of the AfCFTA and more emphasis should be placed on regional economic and trade strategies of RECs which operate in the political economy of Africa's regional "spaghetti bowl". Continental processes have traditionally been slow in Africa and regional integration represents an easier way to move forward. Much process can be achieved on a regional or sub-regional basis rather than at the continental level in the short and medium terms.

Apart from regional determinations, the AfCFTA is poised as the critical troubleshooter mandated to tackle the practical issues related to the development of RVCs including challenges to cross border trade, weak competitiveness and barriers to investment, and assist in enhancing the business environment of the continent to boost the backward interaction of African RVCs within GVCs. Using regional integration as a catalyst, the continental trade pact should seek to reinforce collaboration with African RECs to accelerate progress, achieve a greater impact and expand Africa's participation in the global economy.

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ECREEE PROMOTES SUSTAINABLE ENERGY IN WEST AFRICA

The ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE), is a specialised agency of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), mandated to promote sustainable energy development in the ECOWAS region.

Based in Praia, Cabo Verde, ECREEE co-ordinates the efforts of various stakeholders, working with the governments to harmonise and implement policies, build capacity and mobilise resources to drive investment in energy transition projects.

This year marks the 13th anniversary of ECREEE, since inauguration on the 6th of July 2010. In the last decade, ECREEE has played a major role in the development of the region's energy sector, placing renewable energy and energy efficiency at the forefront of policy agendas within the member states.

Moreover, ECREEE has become a reference for other sub-regional economic communities, supporting the establishment of the Global Network of Regional Sustainable Energy Centres (GN-SEC).

In collaboration with partners, ECREEE led the development and adoption of regional policies that will drive investment in the region. These include the Renewable



Francis Sempore, executive director of ECREEE

Energy Policy, Energy Efficiency Policy, Bioenergy Policy, Gender Mainstreaming Policy and, the latest, the Green Hydrogen Policy, which was adopted on 7 July 2023, with support from WASCAL (West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use) and BMBF (the

Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany). Subsequently, ECREEE launched the development of the green hydrogen regional strategy, and action plans.

ECREEE develops a strategic plan every five years that drives the centre's actions and intervention in the region. The current plan from 2023 to 2027, which aligns with the ECOWAS vision 2050 and the 4x4 Strategic Objectives, seeks mainly to improve collaboration with local, regional and international stakeholders, to advance sustainable energy development towards meeting the energy needs of the member states.

ECREEE is currently creating synergies with the African Energy Commission, which plays a pivotal role in driving the continent's transition towards a green future.

Each year, ECREEE organises one of Africa's biggest sustainable energy events – the ECOWAS Sustainable Energy Forum (ESEF), a 'go-to' rendezvous for energy stakeholders in the region, bringing together over 300 stakeholders annually, including ministers, heads of institutions and renowned developmental organisations, international partners, financial institutions and the private sector.

For more information about ECREEE, visit us at www.ecreee.org or contact us via email at info@ecreee.org.



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Trading into peace in Africa with the AfCFTA

By: **Teniola Tayo**, Policy Advisor - trade, security and development, Masters Development Management, London School of Economics (LSE), teniola.tayo@gmail.com

Nigeria and several other African countries are facing multiple threats to the security of the lives and livelihoods of their citizens. On one hand, these threats will pose significant challenges to the implementation of the AfCFTA. However, successful implementation of the AfCFTA can help address some of the underlying issues that drive insecurity. In order for this to happen, innovative thinking and adaptability mechanisms need to be employed in the implementation of the free trade area.

Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement was launched on January 1, 2021. The agreement intends to gradually and eventually eliminate 97% of the tariff lines on goods and services produced and traded within Africa. It also seeks to identify and eliminate non-tariff barriers to intra-African trade, all towards the aim of growing the level and volume of trade among African

About the Author

Teniola T. Tayo is a Policy Advisor with a focus on trade, security and development issues in Nigeria and Africa. Her research interests cover trade policy, industrial policy, investment promotion, inequality, and stabilisation. Practically speaking, she works on regional integration issues in Africa as well as on the economic dimensions of conflict situations such as the Boko Haram crisis. She has previously worked as a consultant with the Institute for Security Studies, Supply Chain Africa, United Nations Development Programme, West African think tank, Nextier Advisory and the Inter-American Development Bank. She has also worked as a senior legislative aide with the Nigerian Senate and a consultant with the Office of the Vice President. She has a Masters degree in Development Management from the London School of Economics (LSE) and a first degree from the University of Ghana. She is a Chevening Scholar, and has completed fellowships with the European University Institute's School of Transnational Governance and with the London School of Economics' Programme for African Leadership. She is based in Abuja.

countries. Creating a single African market is expected to incentivise local and foreign investment in the local production of more complex goods and services, therefore contributing to Africa's industrialisation drive. This is also expected to create jobs and broader African prosperity.

(More than) A few stumbling blocks...

Although trading under the AfCFTA commenced almost two years ago, no commercially-significant trade has been recorded within its framework. The major reason for this is the fact that key negotiations¹ around the Rules of Origin provisions are still ongoing, as well as the submission of tariff offers. However, the AfCFTA Secretariat has launched an Initiative for Guided Trade with eight member countries as a sort of pilot phase of the AfCFTA.

On the other hand, even if the negotiations were to conclude, there are several non-tariff related issues that will affect the ability of some countries to properly embark on trade under the AfCFTA. One of these is the growing insecurity in many African countries, with major threats that have transcended national borders to regional ones. These threats include violent extremism, piracy, xenophobia, secessionist violence, community conflicts, abductions, robberies and other forms of local and transborder crime. According to the IMF, conflict-related deaths in Africa have grown² from a yearly average of 2,200 in 2010 to 14,000 since 2014.

A Study³ has found that conflict has a significant effect on trade, with exports declining between 26% in the first year of hostilities to 58% ten years after they started. The World Bank estimates that up

¹ <https://businessday.ng/business-economy/article/delays-protectionist-policies-stall-afcfta-one-year-after/>

² <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/REO/SSA/Issues/2019/04/01/sreo0419>

³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S016407042100001X>



to 12 African countries are currently facing medium to high intensity conflict situations.

Producing, selling and fighting

The realities of ongoing and new conflicts in Africa presents a real risk to production, productivity and trade growth. On the surface, the simple existence of conflict implies an opportunity cost for the resources that will be used to attempt to resolve them. The war against violent extremism in West and Central Africa is one example, as national military budgets have expanded to facilitate counter-measures, taking away resources from other development projects.

Aside from the diversion of resources, violent conflicts also threaten other trade facilitation needs such as transportation. Although many AfCFTA member countries are land-locked, sea transport is often the quicker and cheaper⁴ option for moving a large volume of goods from one country to another. This is challenged⁵ by piracy on the continent, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea. Overland transport also faces problems in areas like the Lake Chad Basin region, where the activities of Boko Haram insurgents disrupt⁷ cross-border transportation.

It can also be argued that trade facilitation is a second order issue. For goods and services to qualify for tariff liberation under the AfCFTA, there is a minimum percentage of local production (in the form of raw materials and value addition) that needs to occur within the continent. This means that local manufacturing of goods in Africa has to increase from its statutory comparatively low levels. This need for production and productivity growth is also challenged by insecurity.

Factories in Nigeria have been targeted by violent actors, including an attack⁸ on a cement factory in 2014. Supply chains are also disrupted in sectors like Agribusiness, as the threat of violence prevents farmers from cultivating their farms and providing the much-needed input. In West Africa and the Sahel, violent actors have gone a step further by co-opting economic activity and means of production such as farm lands and fishing grounds. Violent actors destroy⁹ public infrastructure such as power lines, thereby stifling productivity and increasing the cost of production. Conflict also forces people to abandon their homes and flee to safer regions. This results in a shortage of

Securing

Peace:

Soldiers serving with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) play football with a young Somali boy in the central Somali town of Buur-Hakba

⁴ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/harmonized-list-of-fragile-situations>

⁵ <https://www.maritime-executive.com/editorials/comparing-maritime-versus-railway-transportation-costs>

⁶ <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/afcfta-prosperity-requires-more-african-seafarers-ships-and-ports#por>

⁷ <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/maiduguris-economic-revival-could-be-a-lifeline-for-lake-chad-basin>

⁸ <https://www.france24.com/en/20141204-boko-haram-attack-french-lafarge-firm-nigeria>

⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/dark-nigerias-maiduguri-struggles-recover-without-power-2021-11-22/>



📌 An assortment of medical supplies donated by Djiboutian and Ethiopian soldiers serving under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to Hiran Regional Hospital in the HirShabelle State of Somalia to benefit the local community

labour and contributes to economic stagnation.

Other threats such as secessionist or xenophobic violence harm integration efforts. Countries facing significant internal domestic issues tend to put a hold on external relations.

“Capital is a cowardly bird”

It goes without saying that insecurity creates an un conducive environment for tradable sectors to thrive. The African continent is in dire need of local and foreign capital to grow its industries. However, capital goes to where it feels safe and avoids contexts with poor security and relative instability. This is a fundamental issue for the AfCFTA. An inability to convince investors to take a bet on African countries due to growing insecurity can lead to a situation where even full implementation of the AfCFTA will not significantly grow intra-African trade. This will be due to a failure to increase African production to commensurate levels.

Trading out of conflict

The protracted nature of many African conflicts means it may not be feasible to wait for peace before attempting to grow trade. This is true, especially when it is considered that the popular military response to conflicts is often inadequate for bringing about sustained peace. There are underlying issues driving the emergence and sustenance of these conflicts, and some of the issues relate to socio-economic deprivation

and underdevelopment. Viewed from this lens, it can be argued that trade growth may have a role to play in ending conflicts.

Considering that one of its aims is to increase the incomes of local populations through livelihood opportunities, which may make them less vulnerable to advances by violent actors. A study¹⁰ by the World Bank found a strong opportunity cost effect in the decision to engage in conflict relative to export expansion. Growing export revenues have been observed to lead to less conflict especially in areas where private sector employment is significant. It is important to note that this may apply more to advanced goods, and not raw materials such as crude oil. Export expansion and subsequent increase in economic activities and incomes makes individuals less likely to join violent groups. Diminishing the recruitment pool of violent actors limits their geographical and time-based operational scopes. It also makes military efforts more effective, as the violent actors cannot continuously replenish their ranks with arrested or killed members.

Increased economic activity in tradable sectors as well as general company and personal income growth can translate to higher revenue for governments. When properly deployed, this can be used to improve public services and strengthen security actors. These are key requirements for ending conflicts.

Projects like the AfCFTA can help bring sustainable peace to Africa. The question then is, how possible might it be to successfully implement the AfCFTA under the current conflict situation in parts of Africa?

How to trade out of conflict while in conflict

There are some policy options that are being put forward that may help African countries navigate a project like the AfCFTA amidst ongoing conflict. One of these is the creation of Secure Economic and Trade Zones (SETZ). Special economic zones are usually created in countries to provide infrastructure and other services that may be lacking directly to businesses. In this case, the absence of security in the wider community may require the targeted provision of security to these SETZs. This can be one way to assure investors that their operations will be safe. The expectation is that highly secure SETZs may lead to a spill-over effect that will gradually widen the coverage of stability in the area. In the same vein, high traffic

¹⁰ <https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Trade/Trading%20Away%20from%20Conflict.pdf>



SPF officers undertake training on Sexual, Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection to protect women and children The Gender Officer of the Police component of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) Superintendent of Police (SP) Besta Sini, conducts a training session on Sexual, Gender Based Violence and Child Protection in Mogadishu, Somalia

transport routes can be targeted for heightened security surveillance to monitor the movement of goods and people.

Investment guarantees can be provided to foreign investors by donor governments that are seeking to help countries tackle conflict. Recognising that long-term solutions to conflict situations will require socio-economic development should incentivise international actors to encourage and back the entry of foreign investors that can provide good jobs.

Investor targeting also needs to be strategic. There is increased focus on social impact investing, and it may be easier to convince these categories of investors of the need to invest in fragile zones. Local investors with familial ties to conflict-affected areas may also be more amenable to working in these areas. National and local governments need to apply more innovative approaches in the narratives they create around their regions. It is important that security issues are not glossed over, but are clearly outlined in investment pitches alongside feasible policy responses.

There is a possibility to better use and leverage available resources to secure lives, livelihoods, transportation and businesses in conflict-affected areas. Improving the response time to security incidents can eventually deter future attacks. One way response times can be improved will be to carefully map out available security resources in the form of police stations, military bases and other security outposts in relation to

key sites such as large farms, markets and factories. This clear definition of areas of jurisdiction can help residents be better informed of actions to take in the event of attacks. Security agents also need to put clear protocols in place that will aid their response to violent incidents.

The increasingly regional nature of violence in Africa requires supra-national collaboration. This puts the responsibility on regional entities such as the Economic Community for West African States and the East African Community for bringing their member states together to identify and address these challenges. The

African Union also has a role to play, considering it has a lot more experience in conflict situations across the continent that can be shared with countries or regional entities. Donor governments can support these processes with their resources as well as global

It is also important to maintain a nuanced view of African conflicts, and avoid generalisations. There are more African countries in a state of peace, than there are in a state of conflict. Even in places where conflict exists, there are often in more rural locations that are not usually trade or production focal points.

expertise on these issues.

Locating trade and industrial hubs in more stable areas allows the spillover of dividends such as job creation and economic prosperity to other areas in ways that can help address the underlying drivers of conflict. All actors in the trade and development space in Africa need to come to a consensus that certain objectives have to be achieved, then innovate and iterate around the continent's challenges.

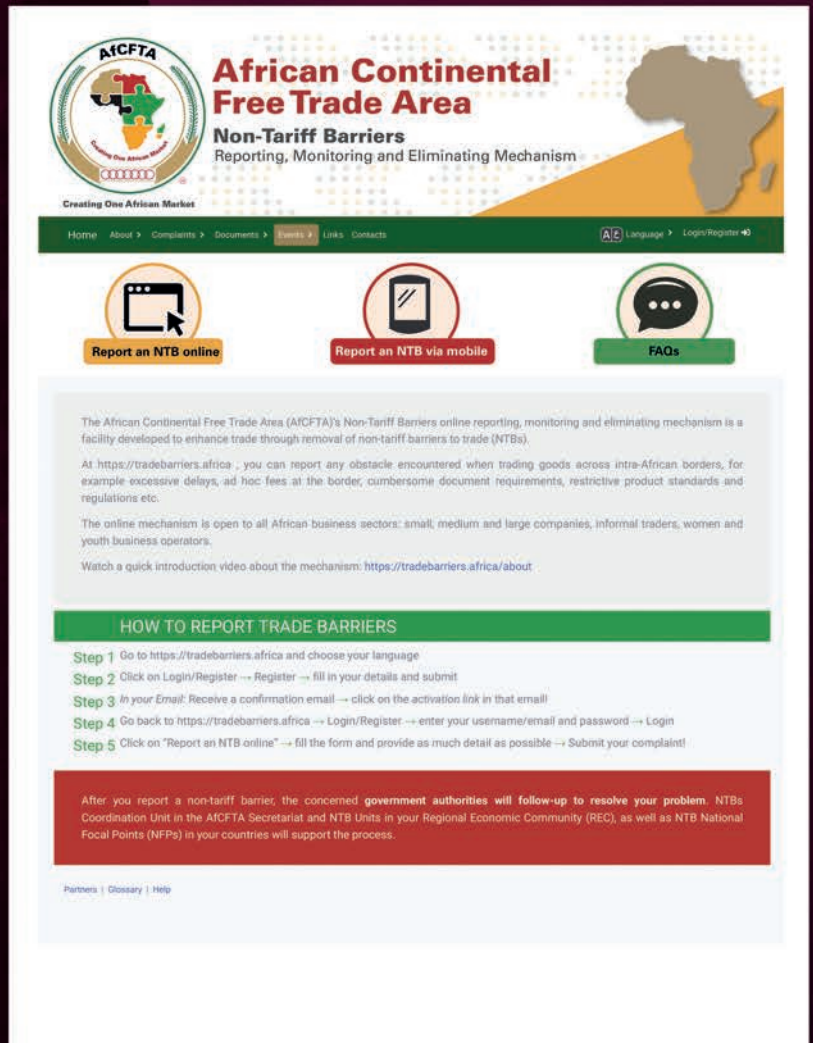
Local AfCFTA implementing agencies such as the National Action Committee in Nigeria will continue to play their part by sensitising private sector actors on ways to leverage on the AfCFTA for business success. All of this, while working with other security and development actors to find ways to continue the march towards industrialisation even within the context of ongoing conflict.

The AfCFTA Online Mechanism for Reporting, Monitoring & Eliminating Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) . . .

Aims to progressively eliminate existing NTBs, monitor progress, and curb emergence of new NTBs as well as improve efficiency in identification and resolution of NTBs in the AfCFTA trading environment.



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The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)'s Non-Tariff Barriers online reporting, monitoring and eliminating mechanism is a facility developed to enhance trade through removal of non-tariff barriers to trade (NTBs).

At <https://tradebarriers.africa> you can report any obstacle encountered when trading goods across intra-African borders, for example excessive delays, ad hoc fees at the border, cumbersome document requirements, restrictive product standards and regulations etc.

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Watch a quick introduction video about the mechanism: <https://tradebarriers.africa/about>

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After you report a non-tariff barrier, the concerned government authorities will follow-up to resolve your problem. NTBs Coordination Unit in the AfCFTA Secretariat and NTB Units in your Regional Economic Community (REC), as well as NTB National Focal Points (NFPs) in your countries will support the process.

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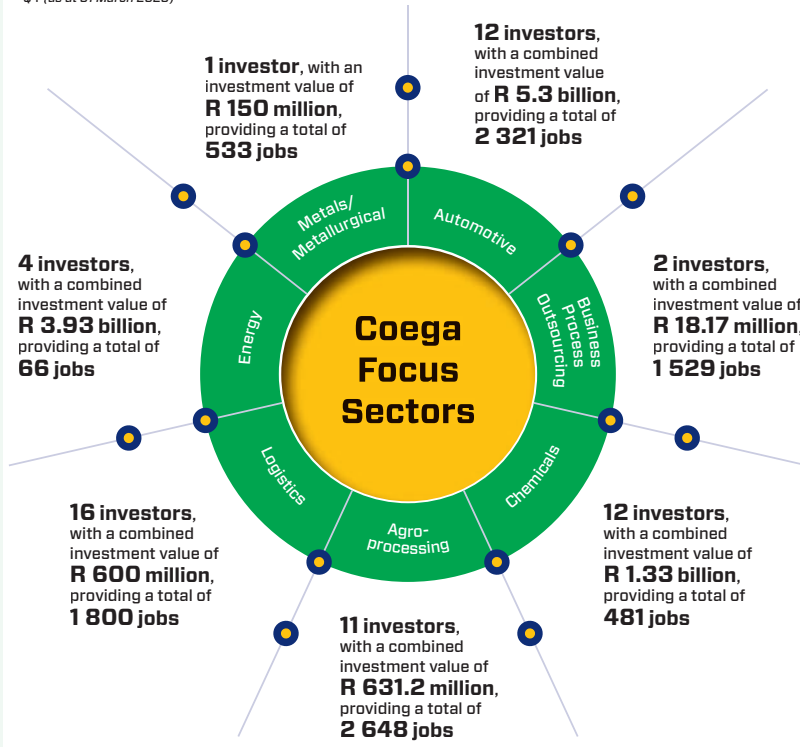
In line with its vision of being a leading catalyst for the championing of socio-economic development, as a beacon of hope, and an African story of good progress, Coega continues to strive towards meeting its socio-economic objectives, focusing on business diversification.

In addition to the success of the 9003-hectare Coega Special Economic Zone focus sectors, as indicated, the growth of its non-SEZ services has contributed to the sustainability of the organisation. With a portfolio in excess of R 5,88bn, and increasing annually, Coega's products and services include, amongst others, infrastructure development, project management and consulting; Coega Technologies and Consulting, providing information and communication technology solutions; Coega Human Capital Solutions; Coega Travel Agency services, recently launched to the public to provide a diverse basket of quality corporate and leisure travel services for domestic and international travelers; a 4-star boutique Bluewater Bay Sunrise Hotel; and Coega Africa Programme (CAP), providing infrastructure development and consulting services in Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Senegal, and Nigeria - providing Technical Advisory and Co-Development Partnership (Gulu Integrated Agro-Industrial Park).

Some of Coega's infrastructure projects include the refurbishment, construction and maintenance of schools, hospitals, early childhood centres, roads, and libraries, to name a few. Through its projects, Coega has created 15 222 jobs and trained 3 932 people, this year. In addition, Coega spent R 763,2m on SMMEs, achieving 47,93% on total SMME spend on infrastructure projects.

Coega Special Economic Zone (SEZ) currently has **58 operational investors**, with a total investment value of **R 11.96 billion**, providing a total of **9 378 cumulative jobs**

Q4 (as at 31 March 2023)



View the Coega Infrastructure Brochure



View the Coega Investors & Customers Guide



Together with its partners and stakeholders, Coega will continue to explore ways to bridge the commercial opportunity gap between South Africa and the rest of Africa. Organisations seeking to form new partnerships with Coega can engage via the details as provided below.

To form partnerships, or to locate your business at Coega or learn more about investment opportunities, email: invest@coega.co.za

Follow Coega for updates on investment opportunities, project news, and more:

Facebook: [CoegaDevCorp](#)

X: [@CoegaDevCorp](#)

LinkedIn: [Coega Development Corporation](#)

Instagram: [Coega Development Corporation](#)

YouTube: [CoegaDevCorp](#)

Coega's capacity building and social programmes include, amongst others, the flagship Maths and Science Programme, which provides a second chance to matriculants who did not pass Physical Science and Mathematics (Coega's Class of 2022 achieved 100% pass rate). Coega's Global Scholars Programme saw students being sponsored to study Master's degrees in Germany, last year, and more will be enrolled this year, 2023. Other trades provided by the Coega Skills Development Centre include short courses, learnerships, traditional apprenticeships and national occupational certificates in electrical, painting, decorating, paving, brick-laying and plastering, joinery, fitting and turning, tiling, plumbing, and carpentry.

Coega's high-performance ethos is grounded in its commitment to sustainable development, the protection of its people and the planet, and the delivery of infrastructure solutions that support a just social and economic transition to a low-carbon, resource efficient, and climate resilient future. The foundational culture of Coega's approach, backed by its core values, is innovation and continuous improvement.

As the only SEZ with multiple international awards of excellence in South Africa, Coega is ready to partner with the African continent to provide its expertise in infrastructure development and project management. Furthermore, Coega advances the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to improve the continent's economic integration in line with the Agenda 2063's Pan-African vision of "an industrialised, stable, and peaceful Africa."

Coega has 23 years expertise and capabilities in infrastructure development, engineering, procurement, project management, construction and facilities management, and industrial parks development.

To learn more about Coega's investors, visit our exhibition at the dtic pavilion



to engage with a leading SEZ and gateway to African markets.



▪ right PLACE ▪ right TIME ▪ right CHOICE

ISO 9001:2015 ▪ ISO 14001:2015 ▪ ISO 45001:2018
ISO 20000-1:2018 ▪ ISO 27001:2013

www.coega.co.za



The AfCFTA Pan African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS)

is a centralised digital payment and settlement infrastructure that works in collaboration with African Central Banks to facilitate the efficient conduct of cross border trade and commerce by enabling companies to clear and settle intra-African trade transactions for goods and services in their local currencies.




Scan to Learn more about PAPSS



Transforming how payments are made across borders in Africa

PAPSS – the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System – is a cross-border, financial market infrastructure enabling payment transactions across Africa.



<p>Pan-African payments</p> <p>Leading-edge technology connecting African banks, payment service providers and other financial market intermediaries enabling instant and secure payments between African countries</p>	<p>Instant payments</p> <p>Instant payments made by originators to beneficiaries in their local currencies, no matter where they are in Africa</p>	<p>Simplified payments</p> <p>Simplifying the historical complexities and costs of making payments across African borders, providing operational efficiencies that open up vast economic opportunities for all stakeholders.</p>
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How PAPSS works

PAPSS ensures instant or near-instant transfers of funds between originators in one African country and beneficiaries in another.



The Russian-Ukraine War: An Opportunity to Accelerate AfCFTA & Strengthen Food Security on the African Continent

By: **Steve Tametong**, Ph.D. Senior Analyst, Deputy Director, Governance and Democracy Division. Nkafu Policy Institute, Denis & Lenora Foretia Foundation stametong@foretiafoundation.org

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On February 24, 2022, the world witnessed the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The outbreak of this conflict has had significant consequences for humanity. Economically, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has highlighted the drawbacks of globalization, understood as a process of interconnection and interdependence of world economies. The inflationary shock and the food crisis resulting from the inoperability of the channels for importing certain essential commodities from Russia and Ukraine have demonstrated the fragility of the economies.

With regard to African countries in particular, the prices of several basic foodstuffs (wheat, flour, rice, corn, bread, vegetable oil, etc.) have risen sharply. Indeed, most African countries are almost dependent on imports of products and cereals from the two

belligerent countries. These imports correspond to 35 billion US dollars of imports each year (1). This seems incongruous considering the extent of arable land on the African continent. The low production and especially processing capacity increases the dependence of African economies on imports of these basic commodities.

The outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict raises questions about the economic resilience of African states, i.e., their “capacity to maintain production close to their potential despite a shock” (2). Above all, it provides an opportunity to analyze the economic and commercial potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in the process of building the resilience of African economies and food security on the continent.

Indeed, AfCFTA was officially launched in January 2021

A worker from the Senegalese Agricultural Research Institute is seen at work in a wheat field in Sangalkam, near Dakar, Senegal has been harvesting its first fields of wheat for large-scale production that would break with its total dependence on imports. Supply difficulties, the rise in grain prices and inflation caused by the war in Ukraine and the food crisis have stimulated the Senegalese self-sufficiency effort »

with the main objective of “creating a single market for goods and services facilitated by the movement of people in order to deepen the economic integration of the African continent...” (3). This policy brief is structured around the idea that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, given its socio-economic consequences on the African continent, offers an opportunity for African countries to work towards strengthening AfCFTA and the continent’s food security. It argues that AfCFTA is a true pole of competitiveness and inter-African trade that can counteract the shocks and uncertainties of global trade dynamics. Before analyzing AfCFTA as a production and export hub for African products, it is important to evaluate the socio-economic consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the African economies and the food autonomy of the continent.

Socio-economic consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the African economies and the food autonomy of the continent

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has confirmed the extraversion and increased dependence of African economies on imports. As a matter of fact, Russia and Ukraine are major players in world agricultural and food trade (4). According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), these countries accounted for approximately 40% and 29% of the total supply of fertilizer and wheat respectively in 2019 (5). Ukraine alone provides 6% of world grain exports, 10% of vegetable oil and oilseed exports, and 10% of world wheat exports. The percentage is even higher for sunflower oil, which accounts for 50% of world exports. Russia provides 5% of world cereal imports and 24% of wheat (6). In Africa, the five largest importers of Russian and Ukrainian wheat in 2021 are: Egypt (13 million tons), Algeria (7.7 million), Nigeria (5.5 million), Morocco (4.5 million) and Sudan (2.75 million) (7). Other countries such as Djibouti, Senegal, Cameroon, Togo and Mauritania import about 900,000 tons of wheat, or more than 50% of wheat imports (8).

Wheat shortages have led to an increase in the price of bread and other products made from wheat flour on the African continent. For example, the price of bread has risen from 250 CFA francs to 300 CFA francs in Mali (9) and in Cameroon, the price of a 200g loaf has risen from 125 CFA francs to 150 CFA francs.



The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has also increased tensions over vegetable oils. Russia and Ukraine being the main producers and exporters of oilseeds, the conflict between them has led to massive orders that have made supply fall short of demand. The main consequence has been a surge in international oilseed prices. In Cameroon, in particular, prices have soared from 1150 CFA francs per liter to 1800 CFA francs on the markets (10).

At the macroeconomic level, this crisis has accentuated the trade deficit of African countries (11). It also had an impact on the budget laws of some countries, which were compelled to adopt collective budgets in order to modify the provisions of the initial budget law during the year. Such is the case, for example, in Cameroon. During a press briefing, the Minister of Communication stated that “the collective budget decided by the Head of State within the framework of the ordinance of June 2, 2022 increased the amount of State subsidies for petroleum products from 120 to 480 billion CFA francs. This presidential decision made it possible to maintain the price of hydrocarbons, especially fuel” (12).

On the social level, the economic upheaval caused by the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has led to social demands in most countries on the African continent due to soaring prices and high living costs, as evidenced by popular mobilizations and denunciations against the high cost of living in Morocco, and strikes by Ukrainian road transporters following the rise in the price of hydrocarbons (13).

The negative consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict provide an opportunity for African countries to build a stronger AfCFTA so as to make it a real production hub and protect African economies against external shocks.

AfCFTA as a production hub and a bulwark against food insecurity and shocks to international dynamics

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has demonstrated the need to increase production capacity and local supply

chains in African countries. Admittedly, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) has set up a platform to mitigate the economic consequences of the Ukrainian crisis in Africa, namely the Africa Trade Exchange (ATEX), whose aim is to ensure “the joint procurement of bulk commodities and guarantee African countries access to scarce supplies in a transparent and equitable manner” (14). While this initiative aims to reduce the risks of food and agricultural shortages, it does not solve the risks of inflation, which remain largely dependent on the international market. Moreover, this digital trade platform certainly promotes grouped orders, but certainly does not take into account the specificities related to the demand of certain African economies. In other words, not all African countries have the same priorities in terms of importing agricultural products.

Thus, instead of implementing these ad hoc initiatives, AfCFTA is seen as the framework par excellence for strengthening African economies and a real bulwark against food insecurity on the continent. African countries and the African Union (AU) stand to gain by investing in AfCFTA in order to promote the emergence of a single African market that is competitive and resilient to external shocks. Food and energy shortages and inflations have generated enthusiasm in Africa for the production of flour and other local products, for which AfCFTA should be the main driving force. Local solutions are all the more urgent as they help to ward off the spectre of hunger in African societies.

However, before ensuring the circulation of goods, it is essential to guarantee their production upstream. To this end, two paths are possible. First, the AU can take stock of the potential of African states capable of serving as major production hubs within the AfCFTA and, second, support the actions of governments and producers according to their geographical and environmental specificities.

With regard to the first idea, it appears, for example, that there are large wheat-producing countries in Africa that could meet African demand if production were increased. In fact, in a world ranking on the production of this commodity, Egypt, Ethiopia, Algeria, Morocco and South Africa are ranked 17th, 24th, 32nd, 38th and 41st respectively, with production ranging from 9,658,000 tons in 2020 to 2,109,100 tons (15). These are significant quantities that can supply African states with very low wheat production, such as Malawi (697 tons) and Cameroon (437 tons) (16). However, these production quantities deserve to be increased.

With respect to the second idea, African states must prioritize agribusiness over subsistence agriculture. This transformational strategy will be based on the empowerment of producers through the modernization of work methods that will optimize economic results. This will make it possible to resolve the problem of gender equality in access to productive resources (17) and even youth unemployment. Cameroon, for example, suffers the costs of inflation on certain products such as corn, wheat and sorghum, even though these commodities are the staple foods for its population. In 2020, the country produced 2.3 million tons of corn and corn products estimated at 2.8 million tons (17). This shortfall was made up by imports estimated at 150 billion CFA francs (18). These funds invested in imports can be redirected to support and increase local maize production. In this way, Cameroon would enter AfCFTA with a potential maize production for a large and diversified African market.

In addition, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Madagascar, Nigeria, CAR, Ghana, Tanzania and Mozambique could increase the production of tubers used to make local flour. These countries are leaders in the production of cocoyam, macabo, cassava and yam (19). The Russian-Ukrainian crisis has shown that it is possible to make bread from tuber flours (cassava, yam, etc.). But the price of the finished product remains very high for the middle classes.

Beyond production and marketing, it is important to accelerate the construction of mobility infrastructure, free movement and the dismantling of tariff barriers, which are advantages offered by AfCFTA. These initiatives will boost trade between countries and reduce the cost of consumer products. This will also help reduce poverty on the continent, increase the purchasing power of the population, strengthen the potential of private enterprises, and accelerate the economic growth of African States (20).

The Russian-Ukrainian crisis offers African countries, through AfCFTA, the opportunity to build an internal model for the production and distribution of food and agricultural commodities in order to ward off the spectre of famine on the continent. Such a dynamic contributes to freeing African economies from economic and social shocks linked to international dynamics. To this end, it is essential to speed up the implementation of AfCFTA, thereby making it a real engine of production and trade between African countries.



SACIDS FOUNDATION FOR ONE HEALTH (SACIDS)

An African One Health Institution set by African scientists to develop Africa's capacity for prompt detection, identification and risk management of infectious diseases (including anti-microbial resistance) in people and animals

GENESIS OF SACIDS AND ITS CORE BUSINESS

The SACIDS Foundation for One Health (SACIDS) was founded as a One Health virtual centre in January 2008, by universities and national research institutions that deal with infectious diseases of humans and animals within the SADC region of Africa. Sokoine University of Agriculture was peer-elected to host SACIDS. The founder institutions in Tanzania include the Tanzania National Institute for Medical Research and the Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, as well as the South African National Institute for Communicable Diseases.

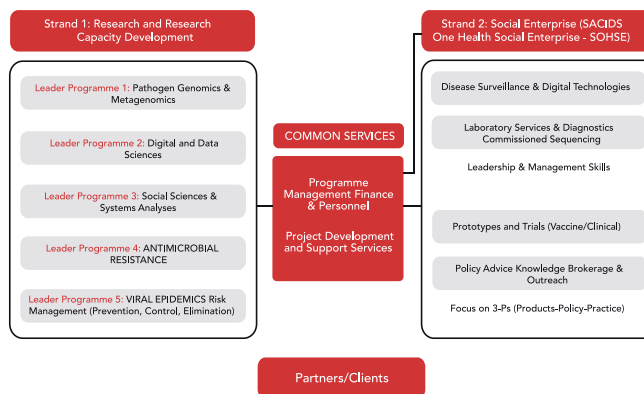
Other founding members are in Tanzania - Catholic University of Health and Allied Sciences; in the Democratic Republic of Congo - University of Kinshasa (Faculty of Medicine), the National Institute for Biomedical Research and the Central Veterinary Laboratory; in Zambia - the University of Zambia (Colleges of Veterinary Medicine and Public Health); in Mozambique - the National Institute of Health and the Eduardo Mondlane University (Faculties of Veterinary Medicine/Public Health); in South Africa - the ARC Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute and the universities of Pretoria (Faculty of Veterinary Science) and Stellenbosch (Medical School). The external Smart Partner founder institutions were the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the Royal Veterinary College, UK.

The original mission of SACIDS was to improve Africa's capacity to detect, identify and monitor infectious diseases of humans and animals and their interactions, within the African ecosystems, in order to better manage the risk posed by them.

With the transformation of SACIDS into an institute status, designated by the World Bank as an Africa Centre of Excellence for Infectious Diseases of Humans and Animals in Eastern and Southern Africa, and taking into account experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic as well as increasing necessity to provide expertise and services to national and regional/Africa continental organisations, the programme of SACIDS is evolving into two streams: (i) SACIDS One Health Research and Research Capacity Development; and (ii) SACIDS One Health Social Enterprise to focus on Outreach and Service Provision (i.e. 3-Ps: Products, Policy and Practices).

Both strands are driven by the SACIDS vision of a sub-Saharan African society protected from devastating infectious diseases affecting the health of humans, animals (i.e. both terrestrial and aquatic), and ecosystems, thereby promoting livelihoods, socio-economic development including market access and the environment.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: SACIDS Foundation for One Health (SACIDS) 2023-8



SACIDS ONE HEALTH RESEARCH AND AFRICA RESEARCH CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Central to this stream is the SACIDS Africa Centre of Excellence for Infectious Diseases, whose primary goal is to develop Africa's capacity for innovations and research that will transform Africa. Therefore, SACIDS will be recognised and respected as having unique world-class expertise, facilities and collaborations for vital One Health research, capacity-building and translation to impact in communities within Southern African countries.

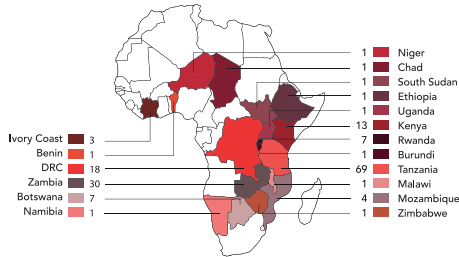
Accordingly, the mission for this SACIDS Research and Research Capacity Development is to undertake cutting-edge, trans-disciplinary and multi-sectoral research that is impact-orientated, prioritised and system-based. This will be undertaken in Southern, Central and East Africa, and - where appropriate - delivered through strategic partnerships with academia, research institutes and international organisations.

The SACIDS research and training is implemented through three core competencies, hypothesis-based and discovery-oriented research programmes on: (i) Digital and Data Sciences; (ii) Genomics and Metagenomics; and (iii) Social Sciences and Systems Analyses. All three core competency approaches target discovery of solutions for addressing infectious disease epidemics and anti-microbial resistance (AMR).

The programme for developing research excellence starts with Research MSc, PhD, Postdoctoral fellowships, Research Leaders and Research Chairs. For example, one of the SACIDS lead scientists has been awarded the Oliver R. Tambo Africa Research Chair in Genomics for Viral Epidemics.

Up to 2023, the Research and Research Capacity development programme has resulted in the following human resource direct

outputs as of June 2023, which include 22 post-docs; 63 PhDs; 122 MSc/MPhil/MRes; 200 short courses trainees and 440 scientific journal publications. The postgraduate students in the SACIDS Programme are derived from West, Central, Southern and East Africa, i.e. practically from the whole Africa continent (anglophones, francophones and lusophones).



THE SACIDS ONE HEALTH SOCIAL ENTERPRISE (SOHSE)

The SOHSE is being set up to enable SACIDS develop its role in the 3-Ps (Products, Policy, Practices) in a dedicated set-up to be able to provide expertise services in a structured and professional structure of a not-for-profit social enterprise to enable SACIDS to accelerate the outcomes from its own research and other sources in providing the 3-Ps. The SACIDS One Health Social Enterprise (SOHSE) will be a not-for-profit spin-off/branch of SACIDS at Sokoine University of Agriculture, that: (i) pursues partnerships and funding opportunities for the SACIDS Foundation to become involved in research, teaching and provision of expertise for the 3-Ps; (ii) provides consultancy services to industry, society and national, regional and global authorities in the risk management of infectious diseases; and (iii) provides expertise or develops products alone or in collaboration with industry to advance the risk management of infectious diseases and advance the health of people, animals (domestic and wild, terrestrial and aquatic), environment and food systems.

SOHSE will undertake such other work derived from either the funding of SACIDS research or other sources, or contracted/commissioned by national, regional, African continental (e.g. Africa CDC, AU-IBAR) or international organisations or donor/development agencies, or private enterprises/industry.

SACIDS PREPARING FOR FUTURE EPIDEMICS: Community Level Syndromic & Genomic Surveillance Fit-for-Purpose Technologies

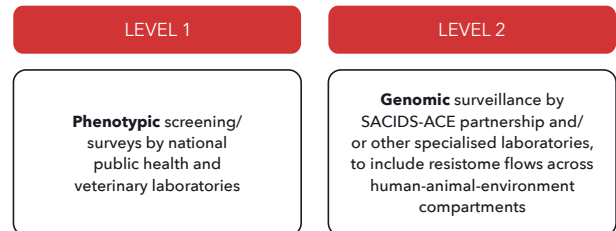


Core to the SACIDS SOHSE will be the programme that SACIDS research scientists and IT engineers have developed in the digital, technology-driven strategies for event-based and syndromic surveillance and genomic surveillance (AfyaData; <http://afyadata.sacids.org>). Both strategies stem from the SACIDS research focus on developing fit-for-purpose and affordable systems for pathogen detection and identification at source: geographically at community level and African ecosystems. This has now evolved into developing digital platforms to support National One Health Early Warning for Infectious Disease Epidemics and other Natural Disasters.

SACIDS PROGRAMME FOR ANTI-MICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR)

The SACIDS inter-institutional research group on One Health Anti-microbial Resistance (AMR) includes training, research and the provision of technical expertise in collaboration with several partners: Africa CDC (on policy issues), and the Fleming Fund, Ending Pandemics and American Society for Microbiology, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM).

SACIDS advocates a 2-Level One Health approach to Anti-microbial resistance surveillance



The following are examples of our SACIDS AMR programme support to national and international authorities.

Since 2019, SACIDS collaborated with the Africa CDC to implement its framework on anti-microbial resistance among African Union member states, through advocating for policies and regulations to enable long-term prevention and control of AMR and civil society engagement. Between 2019 and 2021, it collaborated with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in conducting policy analysis studies of AMR in Tanzania; framing the drivers of AMR and analysing policy actors and human and animal health practitioners' perception of anti-microbial use (AMU) and AMR in Tanzania. In partnership with Ending Pandemics and through the Fleming Fund, it has undertaken mapping and gap analysis of AMR and surveillance systems in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia, and - through a Fleming Country Grant - strengthened One Health AMR and AMU surveillance in humans and in food-producing animals through building laboratory capacities in national and zonal medical and veterinary facilities in Tanzania. Through a Fleming Regional Grant, it participated in developing common protocols for a One Health approach to surveillance, and in testing a protocol for community-acquired urinary tract infections in Tanzania.

AU MEDIA FELLOWSHIP LAUNCHED

15 AU Media Fellows selected to advance Africa's Agenda 2063 through story telling.

To ensure Africa is at the forefront of defining its own narrative and promoting the continents' development framework Agenda 2063 to African and global audiences the African Union (AU) Information and Communication Directorate (ICD) launched the African Union Media Fellowship. The Fellowship is designed to provide a unique platform for African journalists and content producers to enhance their capacity to reframe the African narrative and promote developmental journalism using new and emerging technologies. The Fellowship is one of the activities being undertaken by the AU in line with the decision of the 2nd African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and Information Communication Technologies (STC-CICT) 2017, at which the Ministers resolved to, promote engagement with African journalists and recognise the important role and contributions of journalists towards the achievement of Agenda 2063.

Following the call for the AU Media Fellowship in April 2022, which attracted over 800 applications from across Africa and the diaspora; 15 Fellows were selected as the first cohort of AU Media Fellows and were chosen based on criteria of innovation and the ability of their pitches to challenge harmful stereotypical narratives and shape new and balanced discourse about the continent and delivering on the objectives of the programme namely:



African journalists and content creators have a key role to play in defining Africa's narrative and how we want Africans and the world to view the continent. The AU Media Fellowship is an investment in the human capital of African journalists and storytellers to further develop their skills and help them maximise their potential to contribute to the continent's development. This Fellowship is a platform for promoting Africa's Agenda 2063 and telling a balanced story about the realities of Africa's development and the opportunities for promoting socio-economic solutions that are defined and driven by Africans and benefit Africans in the digital age

**Ms. Leslie Richer, African Union
Director for Information and Communication**

- Fostering better cooperation by African journalists and media houses and creating a network of journalists and media houses to share best practices on the future of journalism on the continent and to champion and promote engagement and contribution of African citizens on the continent and in the diaspora in Africa's development as underscored in Africa's Agenda 2063 and
- Building capacity around innovative and transformative tools in journalism and media as relates to ICT and the use of digital media to promote balanced narratives about Africa as underscored in the AU's Digital Transformation Strategy through training and capacity building of journalists and/or content creators, to leverage creativity and innovation within the continent

The ICD partnered with GIZ (German Agency for International Cooperation) to implement the 2022 AU Media Fellowship programme within the framework of the AU-German Government initiative, the "Citizen Engagement and

<p>“</p> <p>I want to learn how to improve my craft in aspects of writing, applying for grants and increase my network.</p> <p>OSEI KWAME Voiceover artist & Filmmaker</p> <p>Ghana</p>		<p>“</p> <p>I want to upgrade my skills as a journalist and network with colleagues from around the continent.</p> <p>CECILIA MAUNDU Broadcast Journalist & User Experience Expert</p> <p>Kenya</p>		<p>“</p> <p>I believe this fellowship will help me tell more authentic, African stories.</p> <p>JOHNSON KANAMUGIRE Multi-Platform Journalist</p> <p>Rwanda</p>	
<p>“</p> <p>I'm looking forward to learn new forms of storytelling.</p> <p>NILA YASMIN FAISAL Journalist & Producer</p> <p>Uganda</p>		<p>“</p> <p>This fellowship will help me improve my video storytelling techniques.</p> <p>SALLY NYAKANVANGA Reporter & Journalist</p> <p>Zimbabwe</p>		<p>“</p> <p>As an environmental journalist I am looking for the best use of modern technology to make my stories more interactive.</p> <p>AMIRA SAYED Journalist</p> <p>Egypt</p>	
<p>“</p> <p>I am a science journalist and hope to refine my skills in my area of work.</p> <p>RIVONALA RAZAFISION Science Journalist</p> <p>Madagascar</p>		<p>“</p> <p>I am very happy to benefit from this program which will allow me to strengthen my skills in my field.</p> <p>AISSATOU FOFANA Journalist and Blogger</p> <p>Cote D'Ivoire</p>		<p>“</p> <p>I will be able to connect with my colleagues and to learn a lot from them and they will learn a lot from me, and create content that is good for our society.</p> <p>ESTHER NAMUHISA Broadcast Journalist</p> <p>Tanzania</p>	
<p>“</p> <p>I hope the fellowship can help me find ways to write stories better and the means to go find the stories and African solutions to our challenges.</p> <p>CARIEN DU PLESSIS Journalist & Author</p> <p>South Africa</p>		<p>“</p> <p>I want to meet enough people and make enough connections so I can have access to funds to help amplify African stories.</p> <p>AREFF SAMIR Comedian, Radio Producer and Podcaster</p> <p>South Africa</p>		<p>“</p> <p>I hope to increase my media skills and network with my African peers.</p> <p>YASSER MACHAT Content Creator</p> <p>Tunisia</p>	

INCREASING FINANCING RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPMENT

What is securitisation?

Securitisation involves transferring a portfolio of receivables (often bank receivables) to a special purpose vehicle (SPV), which issues securities backed by these receivables to investors; hence the term 'securitisation'. On a macro-economic scale, securitisation improves access to financing for all players, and contributes to the development and deepening of financial markets. Securitisation offers an alternative to bank loans and bond financing, increasing banks' capacity to continue financing the economy by freeing up resources. It stimulates the development of financial markets thanks to increased volumes of securities and greater liquidity for potential investors (institutional and international).

Recently, BOAD Titrisation carried out a historic securitisation operation, successfully mobilising CFA150 billion. This innovative approach provides improved access to finance for various economic actors, thereby strengthening the developing financial markets and stimulating economic growth in the region. This step marks not only a major achievement for BOAD Titrisation, but also a turning point in the evolution of the region's financial markets, thereby enhancing access to finance and economic growth.

BOAD TITRISATION

BOAD Titrisation was created in 2011 with the primary mission of driving the development of securitisation in WAEMU out a historic securitisation operation, successfully mobilising CFA150 billion. This innovative approach provides improved access to finance for various economic actors, thereby strengthening the development of financial markets and stimulating economic growth in the region. This step not only marks a major achievement for BOAD Titrisation, but also a turning point in the evolution of the region's financial markets, thus strengthening access to financing and economic growth.

TEN YEARS OF ORGANISATION



Creation of "BOAD Titrisation" in 2011



Management of receivables securitisation mutual funds (FCTC)



A limited company with capital of 500 million CFA francs, BOAD is the main shareholder (99.99%).



- First company to obtain accreditation of the AMF UMOA as a company of FCTC management
- 4 operations performed
- First operation with tranching in 2023
- 440 billion in assets under management, i.e. 30% of the total volume of securities issued in WAEMU



Sokhna M'BAYE, new Managing Director of BOAD TITRISATION

- Ten years' experience in banking, finance and financial markets
- She has also worked for Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Natixis, Citigroup and Morgan Stanley
- A graduate of the École Normale Supérieure de Cachan, the École de Mines de Paris, the Universities of Paris VII and Paris VI and holder of a Harvard Certificate.

Innovative Data Use for Africa’s Development (DataCipation)”.

The AU Media Fellowship included working sessions and engagement with senior AU officials at various AU Organs including the Deputy Chairperson, AUC Commissioners and Director General of the AUC as well as Africa CDC at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and with AU organs based in Southern Africa including the African Peer Review Mechanism, the Pan African Parliament, African Union Development Agency – Nepad, the African Risk Capacity (ARC), and Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC).

During their tours in Africa and Europe the AU Media Fellows were hosted by senior officials from government, public and private institutions. During their African tour they were hosted by the Office of the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, GIZ Office to the African Union where they met the visiting State Minister for Germany Ms. Katja Keul, and Franz Weizsaecker Head of Data Cipation Programme GIZ office to the AU; the Office of the Director General of South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), Managing Director of Multichoice Africa Group, CEO of Brand South Africa, Wits School of Journalism which hosted the 3rd series of the AU Media Roundtable and they attended a Media Lab Retreat in Cape Town hosted by the Founder and Editor in Chief of the Continental (the widest distributed weekly publication in Africa using only social media messaging platforms); the United States Ambassador to the African Union as well as the Regional Directors of the US-Africa Media Hub in South Africa. In their European tour the Fellows participated in a two-week training programme at the Deutsche Welle Academy attended the Global Media Forum(GMF) in Bonn Germany where they had the opportunity to be the first ever largest representation of African journalists from the continent at the GMF and exchange views with media professionals, decision-makers and influencers in politics, education, culture, civil society, among others from across the world; were hosted



Digital technologies advance rapidly, and with them the emergence of news, creation of knowledge and public discourse. In order to make use of the opportunities provided by digital transformation, we need to ensure timely access to information on public-interest issues for citizens. Only informed citizens will participate in democratic decision-making. Information is a powerful instrument, and digital technologies function as amplifiers.

Mr. Franz von Weizsaecker, Head of Programme, Citizens Engagement and Innovative Data Use for Africa’s Development (DataCipation) project, GIZ



“

I hope this fellowship will allow me to tell the history of our continent in a new way.

SADOU ALIZE MOUKTAR
Audiovisual Journalist

Niger



“

This will allow me to improve my skills in content creation, especially on social networks.

SEVERIN ALEGA MIBELE
Journalist, Reporter and Producer

Cameroon



“

I am excited to learn how to better use digital tools that will be used to reinvent journalism in Africa.

JEANINE FANKAM
Journalist

Cameroon

by The German Parliament in Berlin Germany (Bundestag) where they had an Exchange with Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Culture and Media, Katrin Budde, MP as well as attended the Open house for the President of Germany, Mr. Peter Limbourg Director General of Deutsche Welle (DW) and Claus Stäcker Head of Programs for Africa (DW).



AU Media Fellows hosted by South African Broadcasting and Brand South Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa.



AU Media Fellows at Wits Centre for Journalism, South Africa and Die Welt, German Bundestag, Berlin, Germany



Happy Birthday UNISA - Halala

ADVERTORIAL



This year marks the 150th anniversary of the University of South Africa (Unisa). One hundred and fifty years of existence is no mean feat. Throughout 15 decades, Unisa has set the tone on the continent and globally as one of the premier exponents of the tried-and-tested comprehensive open distance and eLearning model.

Unisa is a national treasure with a global reach in that it is the only higher education institution to carry the name of the country. It is the people's university in every sense of the word.

Throughout its history, Unisa has responded to the developments brought about by changing times, the needs of a developing country and society at large, and an ever-evolving higher education environment. This was achieved through ongoing and dynamic transitioning.

Unisa has gone through various phases and transitions and made a difference in the lives of many people across the world.

Its journey has been one of continuous growth and transformation, aimed at shaping tomorrow through education.

Today Unisa is widely recognised as a leading comprehensive open distance and eLearning university.

The university has more than 370 000 students from about 130 countries and is the largest university in South Africa and on the African continent, and one of the world's mega-universities. With offices across South Africa and an office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Unisa has an extensive geographical footprint and global reach. On average Unisa produces more than 20% of the sector's graduates.

It is by no accident that each year Unisa attracts over a million applications. It is an indication of the trust that the public (both at home and abroad) puts in Unisa to shape their future.

On the research front, Unisa has approximately 235 researchers with coveted National Research Foundation ratings. Others have been involved in groundbreaking research such as the African BioGenome Project (AfricaBP) as well as new solutions to tackle multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis. In addition, the university has featured favourably in international awards, including the Zairi International Award for Research Impact.

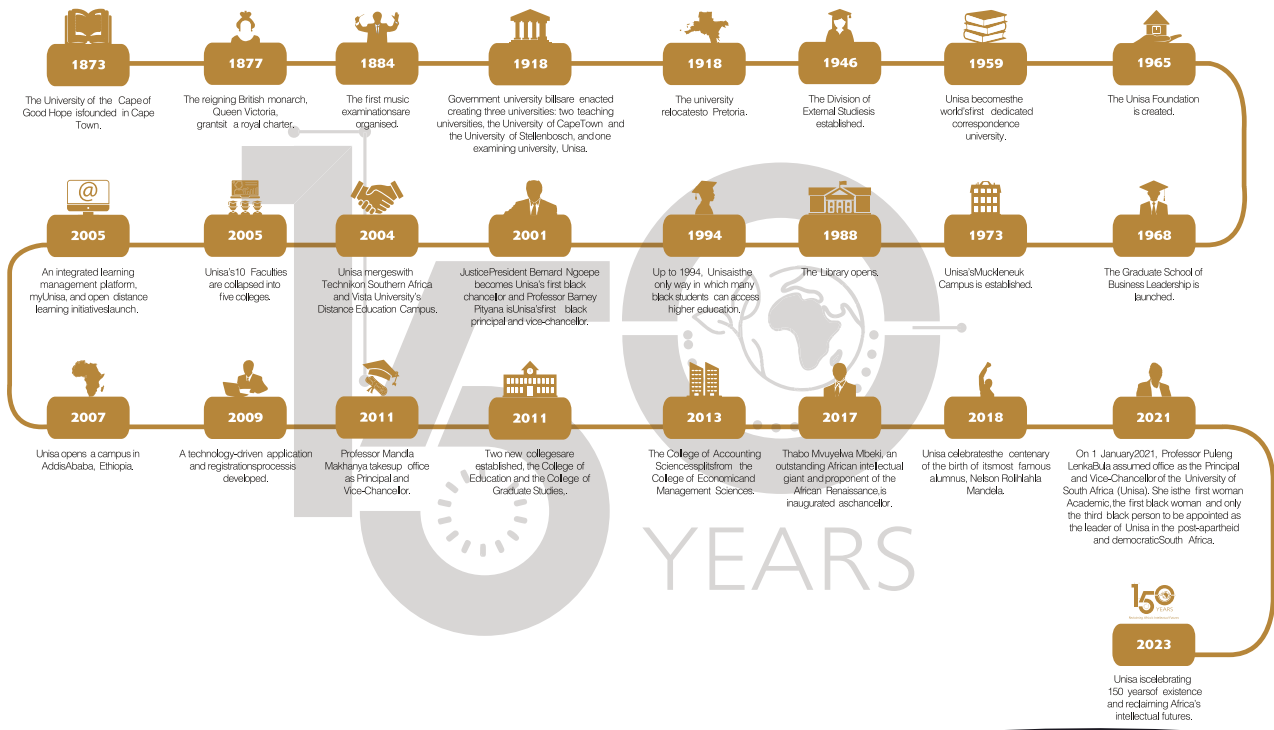
Unisa has shaped the futures of ordinary people and those of leaders of various

sectors. The likes of Nelson Mandela, ZK Matthews, Langa Libalele Dube, Desmond Tutu, Ahmed Kathrada, Robert Sobukwe, Yvonne Chaka Chaka and many more have all studied at Unisa.

It is one of the few universities that boast an alumni body of more than 1 million members. Unisa is proud of the contributions it has made in society, especially in South Africa and on the African continent.

Unisa will grow from strength to strength as it continues to reclaim Africa's intellectual future.

Read more about Unisa facts and figures here:
www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/About/Facts-&-figures



Define tomorrow.



AU Media Fellows at Africa Risk Capacity, Pan African Parliament, African Peer Review Mechanism, AUDA-NEPAD, South Africa.



AU Media Fellows at Africa Union Commission, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Multichoice Head Office, Johannesburg, South Africa

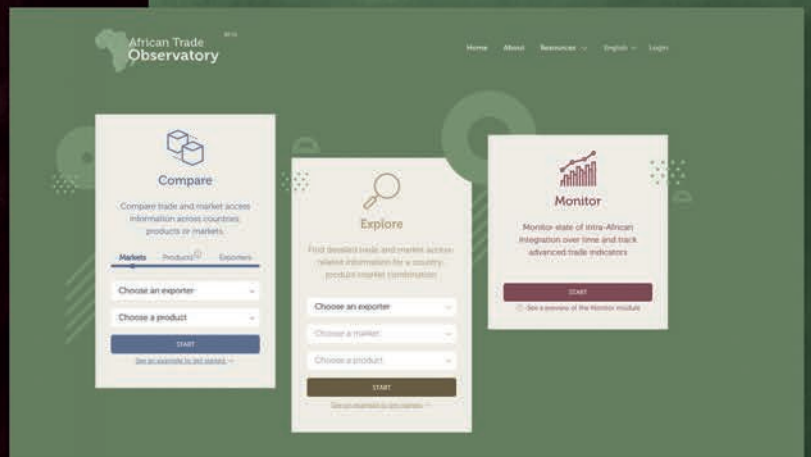


The African Trade Observatory

is a portal that aims to facilitate trade and regional integration by addressing hindrances to trade in Africa due to lack of information about opportunities, trade statistics as well as information about exporters and importers in member states by providing real time data and information.



Scan to Learn more about the Africa Trade Observatory




Fostering trade integration in Africa through trade intelligence

Official intra-African trade remains low and Africa trades more with the rest of the World than with itself. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of information on market opportunities and market access conditions. The African Trade Observatory, one of the five operational instruments of the AfCFTA, serves as a repository of trade information and allows to monitor, in real time, the pace of trade and economic integration in Africa.

[READ MORE](#)

Quick facts on the AfCFTA

	54 AU Member States have signed the agreement	44 Have deposited their instrument of ratification
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Trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is now a reality. As of November 2022, 44 out of the 54 State Parties (82%) have

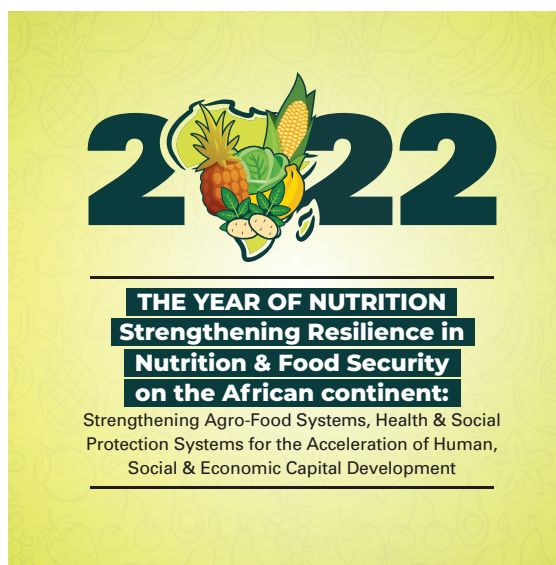
Implementation of the 2022 AU Theme of the Year

Food insecurity and malnutrition rates in Africa are still unacceptably high, with 60 per cent of its population (799 million people) affected by moderate or severe food insecurity – the highest level globally – and one-third of the world’s undernourished (282 million people) living in the Continent . African people face incredible challenges that are intersecting, inequitable and impossible to ignore. The COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, supply chain disruptions, inflation, debt crises and food price spikes all contribute to a growing malnutrition crisis that falls most heavily on those who can least afford it.

African Union Member States have significantly addressed food security and nutrition challenges in the last few decades. However, without urgent action, the lives, well-being, and prosperity of millions of Africans, including future generations, are at risk and high-level political leadership is needed to spearhead an effective response to this crisis. All relevant stakeholders across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus need to join forces, under strong government leadership, for multi-sectoral, data-driven, and coordinated actions to respond to immediate needs in times of crisis. This includes ensuring reliable, sustainable, and equitable forms of financing – focusing on increased allocations of domestic resources to nutrition, complemented by a long-term funding approach by the international community. Only through this can the AU and its Member States translate commitments into results and accelerate progress on nutrition across the Continent – leaving no one behind.

The African Union (AU) Theme of the Year for 2022 ‘Strengthening Resilience in Nutrition and Food Security on The African Continent: Strengthening Agro-Food Systems, Health and Social Protection Systems for the Acceleration of Human, Social and Economic Capital Development’ was launched during the 35th African Union Assembly held from 6th to 7th February 2022.

The AU Theme of the year for 2022 aimed at building commitment to accelerate actions towards nutrition and food security at the global, continental and national levels. recognizing that Africa has only three years left to achieve the Malabo targets (10% and 5% Stunting and underweight) and less than a decade to attain sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2). The theme



of the year further aimed at promoting solid political momentum on nutrition across the African Continent and at the highest level of decision-making.

With increased commitments to prioritize nutrition in policies and strategies, translating these commitments and policies into action continues to be challenging as public resources are continuously being shifted to other competing priorities, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Cost of Hunger in Africa Study Series , investments in nutrition are vital for social, economic and human capital development. Therefore, increasing commitment and strengthening accountability for nutrition is critical to address gaps in action and ensure that commitments translate to impact.

The AU Theme of the Year 2022 plan was implemented against 4 priority areas, namely:

- (i) Data management and information systems, knowledge generation and dissemination to inform decision making;
- (ii) Advocacy for increased nutrition commitment and investment;
- (iii) Partnerships and mutual accountability for nutrition; and
- (iv) Enhancing institutional capacity and enabling environment for nutrition, for intensified action and delivery of results and impact.

These plans contributed significantly to increased commitments towards addressing nutrition and food security challenges; and in increased efforts being made in the areas of food and nutrition security, governance and coordination mechanisms for Food Security and Nutrition (FSN), food systems for nutrition, nutrition policies and programs, and nutrition education and information for behavioural change among others.

Some of the key activities that took place as per the Priority areas are given below.

Data management and information systems, knowledge generation and dissemination to inform decision making;

- Launch of Reports: African Union Continental Nutrition Report, Cost of Hunger Continental Report, Mid-Term Review Report of the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy (2016-2025) Africa Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition, 3rd Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Biennial Review Report on “Accelerating CAADP Implementation for a Resilient African Food System
- Events on thematic areas: open session of the Peace and Security Council on food security and conflict in Africa was held to share data and information on the link between conflict and nutrition; Africa’s indigenous foods, their diversity and their nutritional value; Building the resilience of African girls through quality nutrition and education; Early childhood Development and nutrition; scaling up breast feeding through multisectoral approaches, investment and systemic changes; halting the rise

Over 65 million children receive school meals across Africa in a year

Learn more about The Home-Grown School Feeding Programme an initiative of the African Union’s Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA)



in obesity to combat the growing burden of Non-Communicable Diseases;

- Compendium on African Staples and indigenous foods developed in partnership with the FAO and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa. The compendium is a comprehensive collection of about 100 forgotten food crops of Africa and contains credible information and data on botanical classification, agroecological suitability, agronomic requirements, traditional and medicinal use.

Advocacy for increased nutrition commitment and investment;

- Commemoration of key AU days aligned with the Theme including The Africa Day for School Feeding on 1st of March, Africa Day Celebration of Africa’s indigenous foods on 25 May 2022. Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Development on 30 October 2022
- High level advocacy including African Leaders for Nutrition (ALN) Initiative which continued its activities advocating financial and policy commitments on Nutrition to deliver socio-economic and health returns as well as human capital development; holding of the CAADP Partnership Platform meeting; High- Level event on Investing in the prevention of all forms of malnutrition in humanitarian contexts, 25 May 2022; High-Level event Hosted by AU Nutrition Champion on Addressing food security and nutrition challenges in the Humanitarian Space in Africa on 26 May 2022. African Leaders for Nutrition call to action to the



**Farmers are the First
& Largest Scientists
& Entrepreneurs
Community of
the World**

Venkat Gandhi

global community – political leaders, policymakers during the COP27 to Prioritize Climate-Adaptation of Food Systems, November 2022; High-level dialogue on Food Security and Nutrition, Health, Education, and Social Protection in December 2022

- Development of the Continental Advocacy and Communication Strategy for Nutrition

Partnerships and mutual accountability for nutrition

- An MoU was signed by the AU Commission and Nutrition International to advance nutrition advocacy on the Continent in April 2022
- The 13th Africa Task Force for Food and Nutrition Development was hosted by the Republic of Botswana in September 2022
- In recognition of the important role of the private sector in improving nutrition through direct/specific and nutrition-sensitive investments, development of guidelines for private sector investment in Better Nutrition as a framework for private-sector engagements for improved nutrition.
- Media Engagement including a roundtable with African Union Media Fellows, which discussed the role of media in advancing public policy initiatives as a medium between policymakers and other key stakeholders in increasing investments and food security

Enhancing institutional capacity and enabling environment for nutrition, for intensified action and delivery of results and impact.

- The African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) launched the Home Grown School Feeding Guidelines (HGFSF) to support AU Member States in establishing or reviewing HGFSF programmes.

The guidelines further aim to create linkages with smallholder farmers and other school food value chain stakeholders, while addressing the nutrition component more adequately

- The African Union Commission, WHO and WFP disseminated an Action Framework for developing and implementing public food procurement and service policies. The Action Framework aims to strengthen, implement, assess compliance, and evaluate the effectiveness of healthy public food procurement and service policies to ensure access to safe and healthy diets in the institutions. The framework further sets nutrition criteria for food served and sold in public settings, to increase the availability of healthy food
- Member States experts from national statistics offices, health and nutrition received training on Africa Health Statistics and Continental Nutrition Accountability Scorecard (CNAS) to enhance the capacity on Health state indicators, including CNAS and data use.
- The Pan African Parliamentarians adopted the Model Law on Food Security and Nutrition in Africa; the model law inspires countries seeking to develop national legislation on the right to adequate food, food security, and nutrition (FSN).



**AFRICA HAS 60% OF THE
WORLD'S ARABLE LAND**

yet....

**Africa spends more than
US\$40 billion annually on
food imports creating
more jobs and business
outside than inside the
continent**

**We must invest in Agriculture
in Africa to achieve economic
growth for Africans**



ARMSCOR – A STRATEGIC PARTNER OF CHOICE FOR DEFENCE AND SECURITY SOLUTIONS

South Africa's defence industry is recognised as being among the most technologically advanced in the world. At the forefront is Armscor – the Armaments Corporation of South Africa SOC Limited, the acquisition agency for the South African Department of Defence (DOD), and other state organs and entities. The organisation manages the strategic capabilities of the DOD, producing research and vanguard technological solutions through its facilities and capabilities functions.

AB LOGISTICS

AB Logistics (AB Log) is a specialist logistics service provider; a shipping and travel company that provides clearing and freight forwarding plus travel management services to Armscor, the DOD, the defence industry and commercial clients locally and globally.

ALKANTPAN TEST RANGE

The Alkantpan Test Range is an all-purpose ballistic test range for all kinds of weaponry ranging in caliber from 5.56mm to 155mm to large calibre weapons and ammunition.

DEFENCE DECISION SUPPORT INSTITUTE

The Defence Decision Support Institute (DDSI) offers a range of services in military defence support, including policy and weapon systems analysis; war conflict studies; defence capability analysis; and engineering support.

ERGONOMICS TECHNOLOGIES

Ergonomics Technologies (Ergotech) is Armscor's leading research institute, providing military defence and commercial ergonomics research, the design and development of human-machine systems and evaluation of environmental stressors.

FLUID AND MECHANICAL ENGINEERING GROUP

The Fluid and Mechanical Engineering

Group (Flamengro) provides integrated computational mechanics modelling and simulation support on the design, development and operations of the DOD and broader engineering and software sector

GEROTEK TEST FACILITIES

The Gerotek Test Facilities is an internationally accredited multidisciplinary facility offering ISO 17025-accredited testing and evaluation of defence-related and commercial vehicles and products.

HAZMAT PROTECTIVE SYSTEMS

Hazmat Protective Systems (Hazmat) is a major manufacturer and supplier of purpose-designed quality respiratory and filtering products to the commercial and defence industries.

INSTITUTE FOR MARITIME TECHNOLOGY

The Institute of Maritime Technology (IMT) is an ISO 9001-accredited centre of excellence providing science-based technological and engineering support to the South African Navy and other members of the maritime community.

PROTECHNIK LABORATORIES

Protechnik Laboratories is a multi-disciplinary scientific laboratory focused on high-end research and development work in chemical and biological defence solutions.



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MAKING THE DIFFERENCE

Banque Nationale pour le développement économique (BNDE) contributes to the creation and development of Senegalese businesses



BNDE is an all-purpose bank, positioning itself across the full range of banking activities (retail banking, investment banking, Islamic finance, specialised products, asset management, and so on.) and all market segments (SMEs, large corporates, institutional clients with support for major projects, the diaspora and microfinance institutions). It is an innovative bank that will adopt a work and progress culture centred on innovation in all aspects of its business. To achieve this, it will put in place an optimised, agile and responsive internal organisation, focused on customers and providing them with the best possible quality of service.

BNDE is an accessible bank, which must focus on increasing the accessibility of its products and services through the development of new, more innovative distribution channels and simplified procedures.

BNDE is a leading provider of financial services to SMEs. In addition to offering financing solutions, it is committed to providing all its customers with tailor-made support, while guaranteeing them access to competent and available teams, for optimum service quality.

BNDE is a major player in Senegal's economic development, and will play an essential role in implementing the Plan Sénégal Émergent (PSE), by mobilising resources and financing major projects with a high impact on economic growth.

BNDE began operations on 27 January 2014 with a strong ambition to support and finance Senegalese SMEs and SMI, and to ensure the sustainability of their activities. The bank has succeeded in creating a constructive and inclusive dynamic for the development of Senegalese businesses, with a territorial network of more than 43 branches and partner sales outlets. All this has been possible thanks to the commitment of 240 employees who have worked tirelessly to help BNDE reach this level.

OUR MISSION

To contribute to the creation and development of Senegalese companies, by offering them diversified and adapted products and services, with a particular focus on SMEs.

OUR VISION

To be a universal, innovative and accessible bank, as well as a leader in financial services for SMEs and a major player in Senegal's economic development.

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Drought in African Sustainable Agri-Food Systems: Slow Process with a severe impact

Droughts are not new to Africa and date back to earliest records. Drought cycles have been battering the African continent for thousands of years. However, over time, indications are that the frequencies have become shorter, severe, and widely spread.

The cumulative impact of drought in the Sahel resulted in the deaths of thousands of people and affected livelihoods and ecosystems. This region still remains the most vulnerable area, and desertification adversely affects the well-being of a high percentage of the population. The severe droughts and protracted famine of the early 1970s in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa triggered concern, leading to the creation of the African Union's Semi-Arid Food Grain Research and Development (AU-SAFGRAD).

To effectively undertake its work AU-SAFGRAD understands that the most effective way to manage drought is to change peoples' understanding and mentality and to develop in them a general commitment to reverse the spread.

At the Earth Summit in Rio, 1992, desertification, along with climate change and the loss of biodiversity, were identified as the greatest challenges to sustainable development. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was established thereafter in 1994 as a legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. Since the adoption



By: **Dr. Ahmed Elmekass**, Coordinator, African Union Semi-Arid Food Grain Research and Development (AU-SAFGRAD)

of the Convention, was focusing on combating desertification and reversing land degradation. It was only during the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties in Windhoek, Namibia, in 2013 that the importance of addressing drought as an issue was ignited. This led to a regional conference on drought in Africa whose output was the Windhoek Declaration. The impetus gained at the Windhoek Conference led to the successful mainstreaming of drought into the 2018-2030 UNCCD' Strategic Framework in COP13 in Ordos, China, 2017. Moreover, At COP14 in India, in 2019 Parties considered a need for a stronger political commitment and advocacy as well as a more effective policy framework on drought. In COP15 The African Group of Negotiators made a strong appeal to all Parties to the Convention, to stand up as one and engage in a process leading to a legally binding instrument on drought.

Intervention of the AU-SAFGRAD

The African Union (AU) through a number of resolutions and decisions made by the Heads of State and Government have always put issues of drought and agricultural development at the forefront of its development agenda. Key among these is the Agenda 2063 Continental Initiative, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), Malabo Declaration 2014 "where the Excellences Heads of State and Government committed themselves toward an "accelerated agricultural



GREAT GREEN WALL

growth and transformation for shared prosperity and improved livelihoods". CAADP embodies Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063 which envisions "A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development;" and specifically the Goals on Modern agriculture for increased proactivity and production; and Environmentally sustainable climate and resilient economies and communities.

The AU-SAFGRAD as one of the specialised, technical offices of the AU, in its strategic plans focuses on building livelihood resilience of small holders in the dry lands of Africa (people that are most vulnerable to the effects of drought); and has designed programmes on drought

The Great Green Wall of the Sahara and Sahel aims to combat desertification by implementing actions to end or reverse land degradation, loss of biodiversity in African drylands and to ensure that ecosystems are resilient to climate change..



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preparedness and management as it affects the sustainable agri-food systems.

In collaboration with National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) and International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs), AU-SAFGRAD played a key role in facilitating the release of several (maize, sorghum and cowpea) food grains cultivars currently cultivated by farmers in the semi-arid regions of Africa. These improved crop varieties are drought tolerant, early maturing, resistant to major pests and diseases and are high yielding. AU-SAFGRAD has set a functional network that brings together all the actors (farmer organisations, and research and extension agencies) to identify

the main challenges and opportunities of sustainable agriculture systems in Africa and to agree on the different ways of collaboration. In addition, capacity building and training of research scientists on issues of the impact of desertification and climate change on agriculture and food security in Africa and modern irrigation schemes is one of the main programmes of AU-SAFGRAD with training conducted for young African professionals from 46 Member States in the last few years.

The office has developed several continental frameworks, reports and guidelines that have been endorsed by the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) of Ministers in charge of Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment and the Executive Council of the African Union. These include, The Framework of Irrigation and Agricultural Water Management in Africa; Guidelines to Secure Pastoralism and Prevent conflict in Africa; and the Report on Boosting Investment in Agriculture in Africa. AU-SAFGRAD also has contributed to strengthening the capacity of the Regional Economic Communities(RECs) by facilitating them in developing their strategic plans on irrigation and agricultural water management, as well as in prioritising their agricultural commodities value chains. In collaboration with UNCCD, AU-SAFGRAD provides a platform for the African National Focal Points and the African National Scientific Correspondence to discuss the main challenges and opportunities of combating desertification and having a strong Common African Position for UNCCD-COPs. The office organises high level policy dialogue sessions in the areas of nexus among which sustainable agri-food systems, desertification, land degradation, drought, security and development with participation of African Heads of State and Government, Ministers and experts. The outcomes of these dialogue feed the decisions of African policy makers. In addition, the office is building the knowledge base on drought and sustainable agri-food systems through production/dissemination



A Senegalese ranger displaying a black-wood sapling (*Acacia senegalensis* baby tree), in Widou Thiengoly in the Liguere Departmenta, Senegalese rangers have planted blackwood or *Balanites aegyptiaca* trees, all spaced eight metres apart. The tallest ones, planted in 2005, have grown to be about knee-high. This project consists in planting trees over a distance of 7,000 km from Dakar to Djibouti to constitute a 5 km wide green strip across the desert to stop any further progress of desertification process.

of reports, articles and periodicals (700 titles are available online through AUC resource repositories <http://library.au.int> and <http://archive.au.int>).

In conclusion, it must be borne in mind that drought preparedness and management are a collective responsibility. As stated above, though the causes are cumulative and often unobserved, the effects are severe and devastating. All hands must be on deck to stop this great scourge that seeks to consume entire populations and the continent. Our actions and inactions will decide our fate and destiny. Policy and decision makers at all levels, scientists, farmers, herders, development planners, women and youths must all be involved. They must be able to appreciate and link their actions and activities, in their micro environment, to the long-term consequence in the global environment. Policies that encourage conservation and sustainable use of natural resources must be implemented and aggressively enforced at all levels. As individuals, families and groups we must start to seriously and positively contribute towards being strong partners in the preservation of our environment and the development of our countries. We cannot await inputs from external experts to plan for us neither should we place everything onto policy makers without our own real contribution. We must not have drought in our mentality but rather endeavour to be positive members in our communities, contributing to the development process and achieving Africa's Agenda 2063.

Developing Ethical & Entrepreneurial Leaders for Africa

African Leadership University (ALU) is a pioneering higher education institution, dedicated to building the next generation of ethical and entrepreneurial leaders equipped with the required skillset, knowledge and network to be the changemakers Africa so desperately needs.

www.alueducation.com



Learn more about
our impact so far



At African Leadership University's School of Wildlife Conservation, our mission is to help young people become the ethical, environmentally aware leaders that Africa needs. But our continent's precious wildlife inheritance – and the economic health that flows from it – are in serious danger.

As home to nearly one-fifth of the world's forests, and the most diverse megafauna of any continent, Africa's natural environment is a blessing. But almost 3 million ha of rainforest are being lost every year, and research suggests that Protected Conservation Areas are now failing to protect species in more than 80% of areas.

Around 60% of Africa's people depend on wildlife for their livelihoods. Wildlife tourism accounts for 80% of visits to sub-Saharan Africa and is estimated to generate \$29 billion annually. Africa's fisheries and aquaculture sectors directly contribute \$24 billion.

As we face another extinction crisis, we cannot continue promoting economic growth at the expense of nature. For this reason, African Leadership University (ALU) is exploring new ways to use conservation as a catalyst for economic development.

That is why, in partnership with the Rwanda Development Board, ALU hosted the Business of Conservation Conference on 29th to 31st August in Kigali, which convened hundreds of conservationists, investors, policy-makers and technologists from around the world to help unlock the potential of Africa's wildlife economy.

Training a new generation of leaders to take the continent forward to a sustainable future is also vital. At ALU's School of Wildlife Conservation, young Africans are equipped with experience and knowledge in cutting-edge approaches to conservation. Last year, 161 students undertook internships



TO PROTECT ITS NATURAL INHERITANCE, AFRICA MUST GROW ITS WILDLIFE ECONOMY – BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

with organisations partnered with ALU in areas ranging from environmental monitoring to advocacy.

Respecting the critical role of wildlife in African livelihoods will have profound economic benefits. According to the development agency Financial Sector Deepening Africa, every dollar invested in Senegal's and Tanzania's marine protected areas generates more than \$5,000.

Putting conservation first will also create novel employment opportunities, and empower local communities to preserve the natural wealth in their vicinity. This is a strategy that has already achieved results.

For example, at the Maasai Mara national game reserve in Narok, Kenya, 450,000-plus acres of habitat are protected through 15 conservancies, helping to safeguard the great

Serengeti-Mara wildebeest migration. Three thousand households are now earning a total of more than \$4 million annually from the associated tourism.

As we look ahead, we desperately need to prioritise conservation issues that threaten not only current livelihoods, but the future of our continent. Africa's youth population is teeming with potential – ready to make significant contributions to ecological development. For the benefit of Africa's wildlife and future generations, we need to act now – before it is too late.

Richard Vigne is Executive Director of the African Leadership University's School of Wildlife Conservation.

For more information on ALU, visit www.alueducation.com

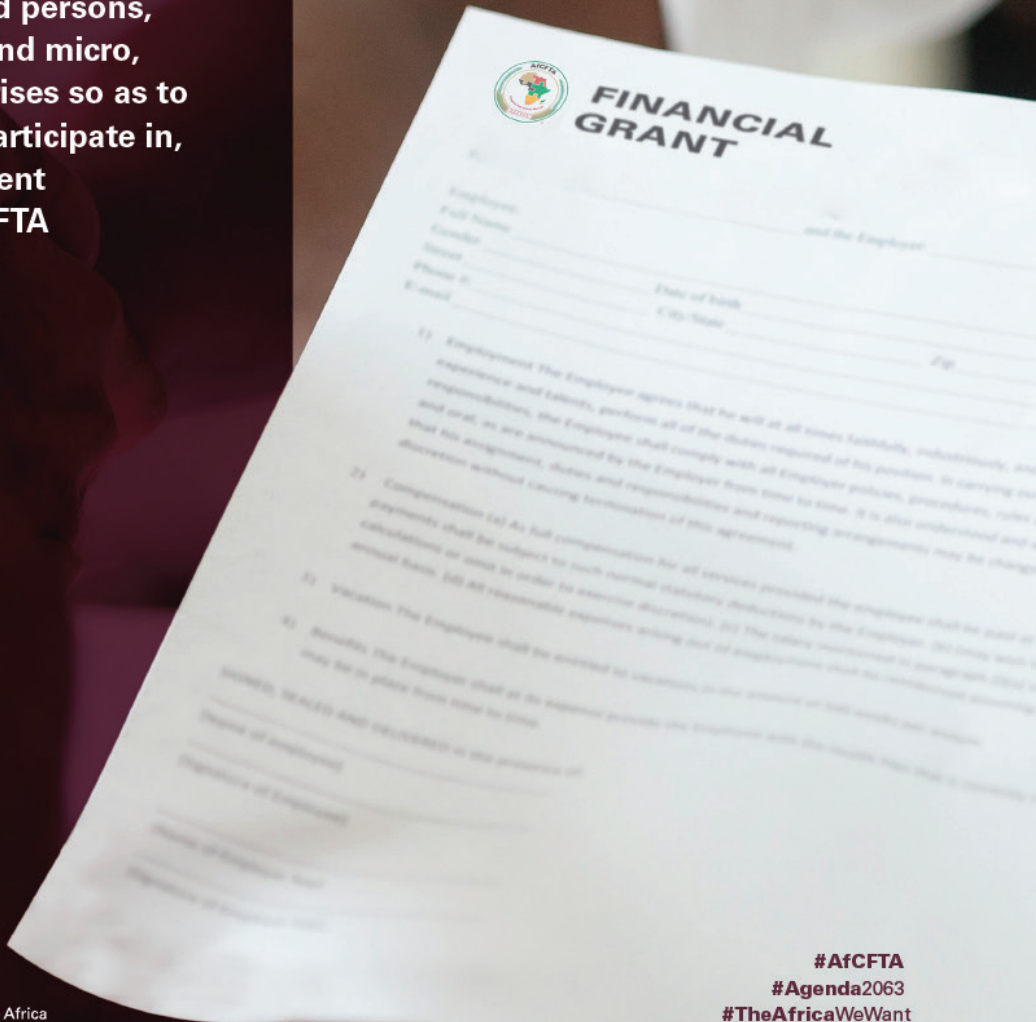
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The AFCFTA Adjustment Fund...

Will provide support through financing, technical assistance, grants and compensation funding to AfCFTA State Parties, private entities and persons, including women, youth and micro, small and medium enterprises so as to adapt to, and effectively participate in, the new trading environment established under the AfCFTA Agreement



Scan to Learn more about the AfCFTA





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NAIROBI 2023
KENYA

Africa has experienced a widespread decades-long decline in soil quality of farmland since the early 20th century - a phenomenon that continues today and negatively impacts the agricultural production capacity and food security in the continent. In June 2006, the Heads of State and Governments of the African Union endorsed the **Abuja Declaration on Fertilizer for the Africa Green Revolution**, a continental strategy to reverse the worrying trend of poor productivity of the African soils. The Declaration focused on key targets required for agricultural growth, food security, and rural development in Africa, with a focus on the role of fertilizers. It recommended raising the use of fertilizers from 8 kg/ (nutrients)/ha to 50 kg (nutrients) / ha in 10 years and the establishment of an African Fertilizer Financing Mechanism (AFFM) with the objective of improving agricultural productivity by providing financing required to boost fertilizer use in Africa to achieve the target of 50 kg of nutrients per

hectare, as mandated by the Abuja Declaration.

Fifteen years after the Abuja Declaration, Africa's agriculture and food security narrative has evolved significantly. The fertilizer market itself has changed, including the roles that private and public sector actors are playing. Another major change since Abuja, is the increased recognition of the critical role of sustainable soil management. The decline in soil health has hindered the efficiency of fertilizer use and hampered agricultural productivity growth, food security, and environmental sustainability across the continent. As a result, economic growth and well-being—particularly for the rural population, who derive their livelihoods directly from agriculture – in the continent have been hampered. It is, therefore, timely to review the state of Africa's soil health to recalibrate the strategies being deployed for boosting the productivity of soils towards higher and sustainable gains in crop yields as well as economic growth and

A The Summit is expected to take place in the fourth quarter of 2023, in Nairobi, Kenya. For final confirmed dates visit au.int/arbe

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transformation, and overall well-being.

I. Rationale for Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan

Due to decades of continuous soil nutrient mining and the age of the soils, Africa's soils, which are among the oldest, globally, have become the poorest in the world. It is estimated that the continent loses over US\$4 billion worth of soil nutrients each year, severely risking Africa's ability to feed itself. Yet, a broad base of African farmers neither have access to fertilizers nor can they afford inputs needed to add life to their soils to reverse the downward spiral of the degradation of the physical environment.

Over the last 10 years, growth in global consumption of fertilizer has remained below 2% per year; during this period, fertilizer consumption in Africa has consistently maintained an annual growth rate of approximately 8%, and average fertilizer use in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2021 has increased to 18 kg (nutrients) /ha. Several countries have success stories that play a part in this changing narrative. For example, in Nigeria, the private sector has invested over \$4 billion in new ammonia/urea plants since 2006. In Kenya, increased investments in distribution networks have resulted in the halving of the distance that smallholder farmers have to travel to purchase fertilizer from 8.7 km in 1997 to 4.9 km in 2014. Ethiopia abandoned 'blanket' fertilizer recommendations and introduced balanced crop nutrition, while quadrupling fertilizer consumption.

Moreover, AFFM, established at the African Development Bank (AfDB), has made significant progress in supporting the fertilizer value chain in a number of countries by putting in place a comprehensive system that facilitates access to quality fertilizers and good agricultural practices by farmers. With the collaboration of different stakeholders, AFFM's two pilots programs in Tanzania and Nigeria enabled the facilitation of credit guarantees to agro dealers and retailers and helped boost sales of agricultural inputs. To date, the total amount mobilized by AFFM amounts to \$15.3 Million; including contributions from the AfDB, Federal Republic of Nigeria, AGRA and the Federal Republic of Tanzania.

When the first Fertilizer Summit was held, in 2006, most fertilizer markets in Africa were dominated by domestic and international traders with limited incentives to build robust supply channels or provide fertilizers tailored to soil and crop-specific needs. A decade and a half later, there has been a dramatic increase in the utilization of African mineral resources for fertilizer production.

Although the majority of this production is exported out of the continent, this should not necessarily be the case for the future. Long-term investments in fertilizer production plants and blending facilities are creating a paradigm shift with a focus on building sustainable and competitive distribution channels and customer (farmer) profitability, versus quick short-term profits. African governments also have more openness to the notion of private sector-led fertilizer markets, and hence a willingness to create a conducive policy and regulatory environment. Thus, Africa's growth in fertilizer consumption combined with converging interests from the public and private sector creates an opportunity to develop a more holistic roadmap that increasingly addresses sustainability issues, including the critical role of soil health.

Despite these encouraging trends, the average amount of fertilizer applied to crops grown in Africa implies that, by and large, African soils continue to degrade due to unsustainable soil management practices, causing nutrient mining and increased soil degradation, and reducing carbon stocks and resilience to climate change and shocks. When soil organic matter decreases, mineral fertilizers become less efficient, leading to a downward spiral in agricultural productivity, with devastating effects on the productive capacity of the soils and on food and nutrition security on the continent. While many of the building blocks for a solution to the deteriorating soil health in Africa are in place, the overall attention and resources devoted to the course have been fragmented and inadequate. Consequently, the continent-wide decline in soil quality continues unabated - at great cost to Africa and its people, and increasingly at great cost to the World. Reversing this trend has become even more urgent and crucial as global attention has shifted to the potential contribution this could make to raising global levels of carbon sequestration; increasing African soil health is a win-win-win strategy: it will increase African agricultural productivity, gradually off-set large scale food importations and contribute to addressing the global climate crisis.

The challenge, therefore, will be to transition African agriculture from a soil-mining and low-productivity activity towards a highly efficient activity with minimum emissions while avoiding the mistakes of overuse and mismanagement of nutrients made on other continents and achieving this at a pace never seen anywhere else in history. There is a need to move from fertilizer use only to holistic, sustainable management of soils. Therefore, an African Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan is urgently required, with high-impact solutions

and investments over a 10-year horizon to accelerate access to fertilizers and sustainable management of soils, reduce the yield gaps and contribute to sustainable agricultural transformation in the context of a changing climate on the continent.

The 4th ordinary Session of the Specialized technical committee on ARDWE held in December 2021, requested the AU convene an Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Summit in 2023. This request was endorsed by the 40th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council held in February 2022.

II. Objectives of the Summit

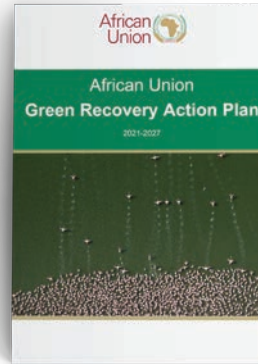
The purpose of the Summit is to bring together all relevant stakeholders to highlight the crucial role of fertilizer and soil health in stimulating sustainable pro-poor productivity growth in African agriculture and to agree on an Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan.

III. Expected Outcomes

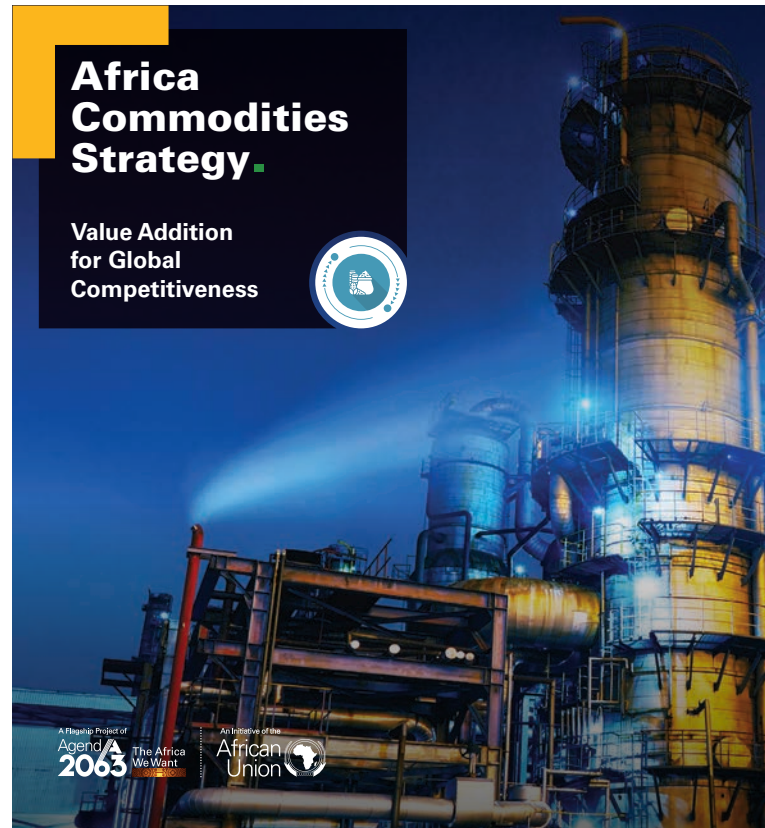
The team of experts from partner organizations will use topical research, literature reviews and background papers as well as lessons gained since the initial fertilizer summit held in 2006, and the latest technical knowledge to develop a 10-year Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan. By large, the expected outcome is one, which is the Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan. This plan will deliver concrete recommendations for steps to be taken by African leaders and stakeholders over the next 10 years. The plan will provide a focus for new policies and investments that will enable farmers to work toward re-building soil health and ultimately increase yield responses and profitability of fertilizers. It is expected that the Action Plan will be endorsed by leading private and public sector partners across all African countries.

IV. Participants

The Conference is expected to bring together the African Heads of State, high-ranking government officials, senior policy makers, private-sector players and civil society organizations. Other participants will include representatives of farmer organizations and development agencies, including NGOs, scholars and scientists, and representatives of leading donor organizations.



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African Writers & Visual Artists Selected to Celebrate 20 Years of the AU

In 2022 The African Union celebrated 20 years since it was launched, heralding new era of multilateral relationships anchored on a collective desire by African countries to promote economic growth and regional integration.

As part of the celebratory activities 10 African writers and visual artists were selected following an Africa-wide call to contribute their creative ideas to the African Union’s 20-year celebrations and to participate in the first of its kind African Union Artists & Writers Residency Programme.

The AU20 Artists & Writers Residency Programme was a recognition that the culture and creative industries (CCIs) has played a pivotal role in promoting Africa’s identity and even more is emerging as a key sector that will drive the future growth of African economies as envisioned in Aspiration 5 of Africa’s development framework Agenda 2063, which envisions “an Africa with a strong cultural

identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics. The inclusion of writers and artists to represent the widely CCIs varied sector in the AU’s celebratory activities, was important as the organisation’s history like elsewhere on the continent can be best celebrated and preserved by those gifted in preserving, celebrating and amplifying the diversity of African culture and heritage through their creative talent and skills.

The call for artistes and writers received close to 1000 submissions in response to the open call for applications under the African Union’s 20th Anniversary theme **AU20 “Our Africa, Our Future”** with 392 applications received for the Writers’ Residency and 602 submissions for the Artists’ Residency.

The AU20 Residency Programme will culminate in a published anthology and an exhibition of their works at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia creating a platform for their work to be seen by African Heads of States and Government as

well as other African and international dignitaries, citizens and visitors who frequent the AU headquarters.

The five writers selected for the residency programme were:



Sukoluhle Nyathi a Zimbabwean creative writer, editor and data analyst.



Nour Kamel an Egyptian poet and editor



Tony Mochama a Kenyan fiction writer and journalist.



TJ Benson a Nigerian award-winning novelist.



Musih Tedji Xaviere a Cameroonian award-winning writer

The five winning writers were hosted by the Library of Africa and the African Diaspora (LOATAD) in Accra, Ghana where they showcased their short stories and poetry to an audience that included Sylvia Arthur, Founder LOATAD, Deputy Residence Representative, UNDP, Reverend Reuben Kwadzofiio, Director, W.E.B Dubois, Mr Fikremarkos Merso, AfCFTA Senior Expert Intellectual Property Rights. Aminata Diop Johnson, Founder of the African Cultural Agency

The five AU20 Artist in Residency



Eza Komla a Togolese multidisciplinary artist whose work explores climate change and upcycling waste into artistic masterpieces.



Ronald Odur an award-winning Ugandan artist uses aluminium printing plates, copper wires and acrylics to create sculptures that express the complexities of social and political interactions in Africa



Natnael Ashebir an Ethiopian visual artist who uses painting, digital art, drawing and photography to explore urbanisation and social structures.



Lerato Motaung a South African fine artist who makes use of the intangible to weave together the familiar and the imagined to create a personal and intuitive evocation of the continent's history.



Senami Donoumassou from Benin, who uses photograms, drawings, and protean installations to explore identity, memory, heritage and history.

The artists were hosted by Loman Art House in Dakar where they showcased their work to an audience of dignitaries and art lovers including Maoulou Diakhaté, Deputy Mayor of the City of Dakar responsible for Culture and Tourism, Loman Pawlitschek, founder of Loman Art House and Nadine Rugwe, Governance and Peacebuilding Advisor at the UNDP Sub-regional Hub for West and Central Africa

The AU20 Residency Programme was supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) who partnered with the African Union to support various initiatives aimed at celebrating the implementation of the mandates and programmes of the African Union during the 20 years of the organisation's operations.



Storytellers and creatives contribute to socio-economic development. They remind of us of our collective history, mirror current realities and inspire the future. We therefore welcome creative voices as part of the AU20 celebrations. By developing creativity, we are also creating sustainable development for Africa

Jide Okeke, Regional Programme Coordinator at UNDP Africa



The AU20 Artists & Writers Residency Programme is an exciting component of the celebration of our organisation's history as it brings to the fore the voices of those that society has charged with preserving, celebrating and amplifying the diversity our African culture and heritage through their creative talent and skills and likewise ensures their inclusion in promoting Aspiration 5 of Africa's development framework Agenda 2063, which envisions "an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics.

Leslie Richer, Director of Information and Communication at the African Union



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Funding connections, enabling collaboration



IDC supports the aspirations of the AfCFTA by enabling and funding inter-continental trade.

As the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) continues to entrench new trade agreements, grow intra-continental collaboration and boost Africa's standing in the global market, the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) is helping to pave the way for African companies to establish a strong presence on the continent and beyond.

With a portfolio of investments in excess of R27 billion across 17 countries and multiple sectors, the IDC demonstrates its confidence in the opportunities and potential for long-term benefits that can be derived for business. Our funding not only catalyses the development of cross-border infrastructure, incentivising economic diversification, but proliferates access to new markets, expands industrial capacity and creates jobs.





THE IDC IS BULLISH ABOUT AFRICA'S GROWTH PROSPECTS

catalysing greater development of cross-border infrastructure, incentivising economic diversification and boosting institutional quality. Regional trade will enable companies to develop economies of scale and create opportunities for cross-border co-operation to develop; for example, integrated value chains and the provision of critical logistical services, resulting in increased investment activity.

Other potential benefits and opportunities that will be derived from the AfCFTA include opening up new markets for South Africa in terms of both trade and investment; improved access to raw materials and intermediate inputs; additional opportunities for in-country value addition, thus elevating the positioning of individual economies in global value chains; expanding industrial capacity and job creation; and, among others, opportunities to develop strong regional value chains.

Improved access to markets across the African continent will result in increased competition and innovation. The AfCFTA has created a free trade area that may eventually develop into a continent-wide customs union and facilitate the movement of capital and people between countries. The AfCFTA is expected to increase intra-African trade in transport services by nearly 50%, according to the latest estimates by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

Among other benefits of the AfCFTA, the continent's wealth of natural and mineral resources can now be utilised to build industrial capacity, diversify productive structures and raise the growth potential of individual economies – creating, in the process, a huge market that will attract foreign investors to locate their production facilities on the continent.

For the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), the AfCFTA symbolises the

emergence of a more assertive continent that no longer mainly exports raw materials and imports finished goods. The bolstering of trade ties between countries will strengthen Africa's industrial base and open up opportunities for the continent to become more self-sufficient.

It is indisputable that increased growth will inevitably lead to new prospects for emerging entrepreneurs and small- and medium-sized enterprises. With policy and other support, such as ecosystem and financial support, this can empower women and boost the potential of the youth – the fastest-growing segment of the African population – to find work and realise entrepreneurial opportunities.

The IDC's confidence in the continent is demonstrated by large investments into Mozambique in the 1990s, an economy that was then considered risky given that the country was emerging from a taxing civil war. In partnership with other foreign investors, the IDC invested in the establishment of Mozal, an aluminium smelter in Maputo's Beluluane Industrial Park. Our investment in this venture rates as one of the biggest flagship projects on the continent. Since commencing operations, Mozal has grown to become the single-largest contributor to Mozambique's GDP.

The IDC's portfolio of investment on the African continent, outside of South Africa's borders, is currently estimated at R27 billion (market cost) across 17 countries, and spans several sectors of economic activity. Over the years, the Corporation has also helped pave the way for several South African companies – drawn from the telecoms, retail, agriculture, manufacturing and mining sectors, among others – to establish a strong presence on the continent.

Our experience of doing business in the rest of the continent is the reason for our optimism regarding the AfCFTA's benefits. We remain steadfast in our belief that now is the time to boost intra-trade, industrialise and create employment opportunities.

– TP Nchocho, CEO of the Industrial Development Corporation



As member states accelerate the implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a trade bloc that brings together 54 member states of the African Union, the discussion around its benefits is becoming more robust.

Among other objectives, the AfCFTA aims to grow intra-continental trade and boost Africa's standing in the global market.

Trade between African countries is not at the levels it could be, and the benefits of trading with the rest of Africa far outweigh the risks. We can rightly justify the significant magnitude of the AfCFTA's counter-cyclical impact in light of the challenging conditions that our economy currently faces.

The AfCFTA offers investors access to an integrated single trade and investment market of more than 1.3 billion people, with a gross domestic product that is estimated to exceed \$3.5 trillion by 2025. Right now, however, there is little evidence to suggest that this potential is being adequately recognised. At present, intra-African trade is very low, estimated at around 15%, compared to 67% in Europe, 61% in Asia and 47% in North America.

By effectively creating an enlarged regional market, this trade bloc could offer long-term economic benefits by

SEASONS OF MIGRATION

Part 1: Perilous Past

The Governor

Once upon a Sunday, I woke up in my castle, Elmina, with her whitewashed walls and blue shuttered windows. She sat pertly, perched on the Gulf of Guinea, like a lady looking impassively into the endless stretch of the Atlantic. Those down below could not see past her pretty facade, fortified with cannons, patrolled by menacing guards. With the fervency of my religion, I took purposeful strides towards the church, pausing for a moment at the door to take a glimpse of hell, through a small but deliberate opening in the floor.

That was where we kept them. Packed in rows like seals with gleaming black skin, their fate sealed into a life of slavery. It was hard to discern their faces but some had eyes wide open, orbs white with terror. Some were shut in melancholy. They were silent, yet their laboured breathing communicated volumes. Collective sighs of anguish and sorrow. A shared legacy of humiliation bequeathed to them, condemned by fate to be exported across the Atlantic. The smell of negroes pervaded my nostrils. Rank and nauseating. I could only describe it as the potent odour of fortitude and perseverance infused with urine and fecal excretions. The foul stench hung in the air like a dark cloud before a brewing storm. I turned away, my swift hand making the sign of the cross. I made my way furtively into church as the ringing bell signalled that the service was about to begin. The rows were filled with lily-white bodies like my own. I averted my gaze, to the pulpit, Ephesians 6 vs 5-8 chalked above.

“Slaves, be obedient to your human masters with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ.”

While I was king of the castle, I accepted the Lord as my master and saviour. That was the world order. The Lord. Then us. Then them.

The sermon dragged on interminably. Sweat dripped down the priest’s forehead, his flowing pastoral robes damp with perspiration. Between verses he dabbed at his face, which was blushed with the heat. The walls of the fort did little to reflect the heat of West Africa. If anything, it felt like the heat was contained below, like the belly of hellfire and damnation he often preached about. I sat in a pool of my own sweat. I hoped the priest would conclude, so I could get a reprieve from the heat; the cool ocean breezes that blew beyond the fort beckoned to me. Then I heard it, the long blast of an approaching ship. I made yet another sign of the cross. They could finally move the human cargo that heaved and harrumphed down below. As the priest gave the final blessing, I was already counting the money in my head.

Him

There was no shame in your nakedness. You were surrounded by it. Cloaked in blood, sweat and tears which pooled around you, coagulating on the ground like congealed oil. In periods of heavy rain, the sea water would seep through the cracks into the dungeon. The saltwater baptising you, a cleansing, from the dirt and grime you were forced to subsist in. It was undignified and degrading, everything was a calculated ploy contrived to break your spirit. To taint your mind and body. Two holes, a metre apart, were burrowed in the ceiling. Small enough to provide ventilation but not the liberation you sought. The shafts of light that filtered through, illuminating your sad faces, heralded the beginning of each new day. The light signalled to you that you

The following full articles as well as extracts from the works of the 5 writers who participated in the AU20 Writers and Artists Residency Programme



By: **Sukoluhle Nyathi**, Zimbabwe. An established writer, editor and data analyst. She has published three novels: *The Polygamist* (2012), *The GoldDiggers* (2018), longlisted for the Barry Ronge Fiction Award and the Dublin Literary Award, and *The Family Affair* (2020). Her fourth, *An Angel’s Demise*, will be published this month by Pan Macmillan. She has also edited a collection of stories on domestic violence. Her submission for the AU Writers’ Residency Programme are short stories which engage with Africa’s economic liberation as a unifying goal for the continent

were still alive, a state you no longer cherished. There was something irresistible and seductive about death. It brought about finality and a peace that you craved. A limp body lay beside you. Drowned in his own vomit. He had passed on in the still of the night. Contaminated by fever and filth. Yet another statistic. For you did not know then that they would count you. You counted. Death had passed you over several times. Circling furtively but avoiding you. You had stopped questioning why destiny kept you alive. You had stopped trying to understand what exactly was the purpose of your preservation. You reasoned that there must surely be something worth living for beyond the oppressive walls that held you captive. In the beginning, Death had frightened you. Moreso when the guards had taken days to come and remove corpses that had started to rot and fester. Now you were unnerved by Death. There was a thin line between being alive and being dead. Between love and hate, oppression and freedom, justice and injustice. You did not belong here, none of you did. You had been minding your own business, hunting in the wilderness, trying to capture a ram. That was when they abducted you. Two men on horseback, with flaming robes. You had struggled, fought even, but that had only spurred them on. Tough. Strong. Resilient. That was what they labelled you. Unbeknown to you. A Joseph, sold into slavery for a few gold coins. The captors had gleaming brown skin like yours. Your own kith and kin. Your brothers, from another tribe, your kinsmen nonetheless. Like Joseph, you were cast into a dry, empty pit, with no water for your scorched soul.

Her

The women's dungeon has been emptied out. You are alone in this enclave of darkness. You envy those that have been huddled off into the ships. And even in their absence, you still feel their lingering presence. Even in their chains, their exit heralds a freedom you cannot envisage. You do not have the words to articulate it. Your embarkation has been curtailed because of this thing growing in your belly. You don't want to acknowledge it, for you will feel nothing but hatred for this encumbrance that encroaches onto your lap.

You resent the seed that the Governor has planted in you. He sowed into you, grunting and groaning like a swine. It has taken root in your belly without your permission. You feel weighed down by the guilt of birthing evil, multiplying this breed of inhuman beings who author your oppression.

In the beginning you had fought. Tried to resist the violation but they threw you into a solitary cell. Starved of food and human contact, you eventually capitulated. You are filled with self-loathing for having surrendered. You held your hands up and yielded to the cruel caprice of being found attractive by a man like the Governor. Even though it has been many weeks since his grubby fingers pawed at you and his penis probed your orifices, his pungent scent pervades you, a nauseating stench. The soldiers did not think to spare you either. As you made your descent down the staircase, they accosted you. Poking and probing at a festering wound. You passed out at one point, hoping Death would rescue you. When you finally came to, it was in the darkness of the damp and dingy cell, drowning in the depths of your despair. You were comforted by the presence of the other women, patting and petting you. They assuaged your sorrow with accounts of their own ordeals at the hands of the captors. They dissected your pain, parcelled and distributed it. That was womanhood; you shared your grief collectively. You sang of your sorrows, your hearts heaving, your bodies hurting. Your nakedness was clothed in trauma, though you did not have the words for it then. Just like the imprint of Bristol, branded on your shoulder, the mark of your sale. It is a scab now, raised and dried. Just like the Governor's assault, the memory is imprinted on your soul. You did not know it then, but you would carry the burden of the strong black woman. From one generation to the next. You cling to hope. It is the only light beyond the darkness of your present circumstances.

"For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your descendents, and my blessings on your offspring. They shall spring up like grass amid waters, like willows by flowing streams." - Isaiah 44 vs 3

Part Two: Precarious Present

The Governor

I first met Emmanuel in 2020 at Nsimalen International Airport. I had just landed in Yaounde for the Francophone Conference and he chauffeured me to the Hilton. It was a five-minute trip but it took almost thirty, as we snaked through the rush hour traffic. Beads of sweat condensed on my forehead in the sweltering heat, hotter than a lover's embrace. My entreaties to Emmanuel to turn on the Air-Con were ignored, as he claimed it would use up too much fuel, which would cut into his meagre Uber earnings.

"I'm at a quarter to parking this car," he said, swerving to avoid a truck that was hurtling in our direction.

He seemed unbothered, even though I was squirming uncomfortably in my seat.

"If you stop driving, how will you earn a living?" I asked out of curiosity.

"I'm going to Europe," he replied, "I want to live the European dream! I am tired of chasing the elusive African dream."

As a Frenchman, I wondered what the European dream was supposed to look like for an African, as many of them were still carrying the burden of *Françafrique*.

"I have saved almost half the money for my visa application," said Emmanuel, who went on to explain that he had begged from relatives, borrowed from benefactors, and was just shy of stealing the rest but his conscience would not permit. His word was bond, the only guarantee that he would pay back the loans, once he landed his first job in Europe. €3,000, that was the price he was paying for his passage. He was hard-working, an honest man trying to make a living, yet all around him it was the corrupt ones that flourished. He often daydreamed, wishing he could bribe his way out of this poverty that had him in a chokehold. How was it that with two degrees he still could not find a job? He hated that the CFA currency was in a freefall, which meant he needed more francs to buy the precious euros.

"Well, thank you for delivering me safely to the hotel," I said as the car drew closer to the front of the Hilton.

"My pleasure," replied Emmanuel.

I felt compelled to tip him, but even as I handed over a 100 euro note it felt somewhat meagre, yet when he thanked me profusely, I was rather embarrassed by the show of appreciation. I watched Emmanuel shove the cash into his pocket like I might change my mind. Or worse still, ask for change.

Emmanuel

Before the year was over you had migrated to France just as you had planned, with a suitcase brimming with so much hope you had to press it down so you could zip it shut. You were ebullient with excitement at what the future held. Your plan was simple enough. At most you would spend two years in

Europe, then return home, armed with enough cash to build your house and start your own business. It has been five years since you left and you still can't afford the flight back. You don't even have enough saved to complete your master's, not to talk of enrolling for a PhD. Armed with that qualification, they said, it would be easier to get a proper job. You held down two jobs to make up for the money you diligently sent back home to your mother. During the day, you sat in the operating line in a canning factory, watching cans of mackerel, tuna and sardines move along the conveyor belt. 'For Export,' read their labels, and you realised you were no different. Here you were, exporting your skilled labour for 17 euros per hour. Four hours a day, five days a week. It added up. 340 euros a week. 1,360 euros a month. Chasing paper, it was all about the hustle. On weekends, you had a stint at a nightclub. Friday night. Saturday night. Cleaning urinals in the unisex toilets. You were immune to it all by now. The putrid smell of shit that choked the air. Even when you sprayed air freshener liberally, it did nothing to dispel it. You still couldn't get used to the nauseating smell of vomit. The patrons did not care when they spilled their guts on the floor. Regurgitating rounds of heady cocktails and potent shots of tequila. On some occasions you could discern their undigested lumps of dinner swimming in the slime. You cleaned it all up at 20 euros an hour. Beyond the human faeces, a lot more shit happened in those toilets. You could write a book on how couples locked themselves in there for bouts of horny exploration. When there was not a long queue forming, you were gracious enough to allow them to orgasm. Then there were the coke addicts, doing lines, chasing after the next high. You were fairly adept at handling all these. It was the crying ladies with smudged makeup that you sought to avoid. You were washing the urinals when a man stumbled in singing Premier Gaou off-key. You recognised the song from your teenage hood when it dominated the airwaves. The notes struck a chord with you, sparking a conversation between you and the stranger. Something heart-warming about meeting someone from home. Even as strangers, the commonality in language had bridged all distance between you. For a few minutes you exchanged easy banter.

"My man, you should join us at our table." He extended the invitation in-between belching and farting as he urinated.

"I am still on my shift," you replied.

"Are you serious? You mean you left home to work

in a toilet? You need to be serious about life, my man!”

“I am trying to make a living,” you said defensively, much louder than you intended.

“No, man, where is your dignity? These Europeans laugh at y’all. They think you’re nothing but little bastards, y’all. Slaving away in Europe like you don’t have your own countries! Be proud, my man.”

His words felt like a slap in the face but he patted your back in a patronising way, as if to try and soften the blow. He handed you a thick wad of euros before exiting, singing at the top of his voice. You shut yourself away in a toilet cubicle and began counting the notes. One hundred euros. Two hundred. At one thousand, you were panting. You stuffed the money in your pocket and raced out into the main section of the nightclub. You forged your way through a throng of dancing bodies and pulsating music. Scanning the crowd for your generous benefactor so you could properly express your gratitude. When you spotted him, he was in the VVIP section, surrounded by an entourage. They were seated around a table crowded with bottles of Dom Perignon chilling in silver ice buckets. Silver platters of food, too. You recognised the oysters and the caviar. The other things your tongue could not quite pronounce. Beautiful buxom blondes in glittery short dresses with plunging necklines sat around the table, puffing on cigarettes and blowing smoke into the air.

You lurched forward towards your benefactor, screaming: “Mon ami! Mon bon ami!”

“Get this (expletive) away from me!” he hissed.

He brushed you off, like dirt. You were taken aback. What happened to the camaraderie in the toilet earlier? Brusque guards grabbed hold of you and shepherded you across the room. You felt the mounting humiliation because everybody’s eyes were on you. Your head remained downcast. You didn’t want your face caught on camera lest you trended across the globe. They threw you out onto the pavement. You landed on a blanket of snow. Ice-cold winds bit your ears. You lay there for a while, prostrate with a combination of shock and humiliation. Finally, you got on your feet and crept back into the club before you risked losing your job. A big part of you wanted to flush the euros down the toilet in disgust, but the voice of reason wouldn’t let you. Ne sois pas fier mon homme. Pride was certainly not going to feed you. The night gave way

to morning. Your shift ended. You showered and changed before catching the subway home. You were scrolling through Instagram when you saw it.

“President’s son harassed in Paris club by hooligan. #imbecile.

The Governor

I met Saru in the immigration queue. She was looking kind of lost after she had checked in her luggage, so I guided her through the process. She seemed grateful for the assistance. I noticed the pages of her passport were clean. She said it was brand new and it would be her first time leaving the country. Her first time on a plane. She had been a child of firsts. The first female in the family to make it to university. Though she had achieved first class degree passes for the first few years of her course in Engineering, her parents could no longer afford to pay for her tuition. She had filled countless application forms for scholarships, none was forthcoming. Her name had sat unmoved on waiting lists. Brilliance was manufactured in great abundance in Zimbabwe. They were brilliant, hard-working people shining everywhere but home.

“I am Neil Governor,” I said by way of introduction.

We shook hands but she quickly withdrew hers from mine. I surmised she must be wary of strangers.

“You have a beautiful country,” I told her, trying to thaw the uneasy silence that ensued.

She nodded, seeming unconvinced by my assertion but not bothered enough to refute it. Having served in an ambassadorial role in Zimbabwe, I had the luxury of travelling through the country often, inhaling its beauty and appraising the calibre of its tourist assets. I had abseiled in Nyanga, bunjee jumped off Victoria Falls and kayaked in Kariba. We hiked the undulating mountainous Chimanimani. We trotted on horseback through the Vumba, with its stunning landscapes and majestic waterfalls. I had gone on a luxury tented safari at the Hwange National Park and lost count of the number of wildlife species that roamed free on the land. I spent time swimming on the precipice at Victoria Falls. Saru admitted to having seen countless pictures but confessed she had never been there, which I found shocking and shameful in the same breath.

“Where are you going?” I asked

“Saudi Arabia,” she replied, “I got a job there. They are paying for my ticket and everything.”

“What kind of job?”

“Au pair. I will be looking after the kids, helping with homework while I study and finish my degree.”

I wished her all the best as we parted at the boarding gates. Just as she had wished her family goodbye some time earlier.

Saru

Your family doesn't own a car, so they hired a mini bus taxi which deposited you outside the imposing Robert Mugabe International Airport. RGM has passed on but he left an indelible imprint on the landscape. He is a tattoo in the minds of those that lived through thirty-seven years of his unfettered rule. You were born into Mugabeism. Your mother often lamented the difficulty of those days. Days of drought and despair. Days of yellow mealie meal and donor-sponsored programmes. Several naughty years later, the difficulty had not eased. That is why you are leaving, to escape. Your family converges around you in prayer. Your mother lays hands on you, intoning that the Lord will be with you wherever you go. You believe it because what else can you believe in? The system has failed you countless times. This is a first for them, since you, Sekai, are the first in the family to travel out of the country. Every other family you know survives on diaspora remittances. Like letters, they are posted to every corner of the world. You also can't wait for that day when your mother wakes up to go to Mukuru to collect the dollars. You want to ease her burden of taking care of your family of ten. You no longer want to be a burden.

You are in awe of the conical control tower with decorative motifs inspired by Great Zimbabwe. You've never been there but you have seen images of it in your history textbooks, and it formed the backdrop to your currency when you still had one. Before inflation ate the currency up like termites. It is your first time flying. You only ever travelled by bus. That was the only time you left your village, Mutoko, to study at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare. Now you are on an Emirates flight, all the way to Dubai.

You connect another flight which transports you to Saudi Arabia. By the time you land in Riyadh, you are jet-lagged and exhausted. You are met with hostility and suspicion at the airport. You are eventually received by a uniformed agent from the Al Faydar Recruitment Agency. There were many others too. Black and hopeful like you. Kenyans. Nigerians.

Somalis. All excited at the prospect of being in the Gulf and earning the coveted greenbacks.

Now, it is years since you arrived. You have not left either, and not for lack of wanting to. Your contract has expired but your employers won't release you. You surrendered your passport to them on arrival. They have not returned the passport; they say you have not earned it. You circle the floor of your tiny room like a caged bird whose wings have been clipped. You have been off sick for two days but you have not been seen by a doctor. Your Madam has given you penicillin for the STD. They don't talk about how you got it. Only how you must get rid of it. You want to take your tablets but not on an empty stomach. You are still waiting for the Madam to bring you a sliver of lamb and a bowl of rice. It's been days.

“Earn your keep,” they tell you, “you owe us.”

You owe them for the flight ticket and the kafala money. \$15,000 is what you need to buy yourself out of your contract, minus living expenses, they add. Your contract stipulates that you would earn \$500 a month, working Monday to Friday, eight hours a day, weekends off. Your contract is bondage.

Nobody talks about how gruelling your day is. That it begins at 5 a.m. and ends at midnight. Sometimes it doesn't end, not when he comes into your room and forces you to do unthinkable things, unspeakable things. A dull pain throbs in your head but the one between your legs is excruciating. You feel like you are on fire. You break out into sweat. You want to go home. You search in the recesses of your mind, fishing for that Bible verse about 'my Father's house' and its many rooms. You wonder if He has prepared a place for you, because you no longer want to be here. You know now that there is no room for you here.

Part Three: Fanciful Future 2063

“For the LORD your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you.”

The Governor

Once upon a time in Africa, flying from Accra to Nigeria cost as much as flying from London to Accra. So, someone told me. I can't fathom how that is even tenable, that a one-hour flight could cost the same as a six-hour one. Seems ridiculous now considering that I commute weekly from Mogadishu to our offices in Abuja. It's a one-hour flight on the new superjet

gulfstreams. I prefer to live in Mogadishu, where my partner and I own a penthouse overlooking the Somali coastline of glimmering white sands and azure blue waters. By far the longest coastline in mainland Africa and the most sought after piece of real estate on the continent. Condominiums and luxury villas dot the whitewashed beaches. It made sense to live here after the last of our children left home. Housing is integrated now. We the wealthier ones who occupy the penthouses on the upper floors subsidise the poor who live on the lower floors. Space is the distinguishing factor when it comes to buying power and affordability. Those who can afford it, get the bigger apartments. Those who can't, get the smaller apartments. When everyone files out of their apartments in the morning, it's hard to distinguish rich from poor. Ghettos of poverty have been eradicated. That housing landscape only bred pockets of disenchantment and crime. This new model fosters inclusivity and aspirations for better living. Property prices have shot through the roof in Africa. Demand is driven by the masses as the standard of living rises and more people become socially mobile, migrating from one class to the next. We are the Alpha Generation, those of us born after 2010.

I am listening to the news transmitted through my ear-pods about the intensifying war in Europe. A stricken continent reeling from the Fifth World War. It started when North Korea invaded Russia, and then Germany joined in to protect European sovereignty. Europe has seen no peace from then on. Of course, Africa decided to sit it out. Like, what business do we have getting involved in Western affairs? We are a different breed from our forefathers. We ignored the desperate calls to support the war, for African soldiers to be enlisted. Our youngest, Jelani, wanted to join. He fashions himself as some sort of a liberal.

"I don't see colour," he said, "peach and brown people need to support each other."

I was tempted to slap the thought out of his head, but assaulting children now carries a jail term. Did he think if the tables were turned Europeans would be willing to fight his battles?

"We need to fight against the destruction of humanity," he insisted.

Europe's population had been on the decline for years, and the wars continued to deplete the rank of eligible men and women who could be drafted into combat. Most of them had left in a bid to escape

conscription.

My partner Morowa breezes into the room, braided hair piled atop her head. Her voluptuous body is draped in Dolce & Ghana, and the Cote d'Ivoire bangles on her wrists clash noisily as she holds her hands up.

"I just received an ecomm from your daughter, Zuri. She is bringing someone home. Something about marriage."

Slouching in my armchair, Morowa's words force me to sit up straight. I am truly shocked that our youngest wants to be betrothed. Few practice monogamy nowadays, and marriage licences are difficult to get. Polygamy and polyandry are the norm. I am in a polygamous marriage, Morowa is my last wife. Her second marriage, after the dissolution of her first.

"I suppose this calls for a celebration!" she says.

She hands me a Homebru, a brand of beer brewed with sorghum and millet packaged in calabashes to preserve that authentic taste. I often tease Morowa that she is unAfrican, because she still prefers to drink champagne. Moët & Sudan is her favourite. Established by the House of Juba in 2043, it is the leading champagne brand on the continent, followed by Veuve Noire and Champagne Uhuru. The Europeans are literally dumping GH Mumm on our doorsteps. Planes are packed on Friday as people fly out to London, Paris and Milan on a Friday and return on a Sunday. It's cheaper to shop overseas now; the exchange rate is in our favour. Africa has one currency now, the African Fedhas. It is issued by the African Central Bank headquartered in Abuja. I am the Governor of the Central Bank. It feels great to preside over a continent that is debt free. Tight fiscal and posterity measures ensured we paid off our debts and freed ourselves from the yoke of economic slavery.

Morowa

You are surprised when your daughter calls to tell you she wants to get married. For one, it's quite difficult to stay married nowadays. Marriage licences are subject to renewal after five years, and even then, renewal is not guaranteed. You would know, you are in your second marriage, which is why you decided to try polygamy. You never saw Zuri as the marrying kind. She has not said much about the man apart from the fact that they met during her internship at NASA. She studied through the Aerospace Academy

in Algeria. She did a double major in Astrophysics and Aerospace Engineering and is now a space cadet in Gabon. You were brimming with pride when Zuri was chosen as one of the space cadets to accompany a space missile launch that blasted off from Ethiopia. They are now running flights to the moon as they begin exploratory forays in that direction, because they believe that in a couple of hundred years, Earth might not be habitable.

"This man better be incredible," your husband says, breaking into your thoughts. "I don't want mediocrity for our daughter."

You laugh, throwing your head back. "In other words, she must be like you?"

Your mind rolls back to the first time you met Kojo at a ski resort in the Drakensburg in the winter of 2050, your little daughter in tow. He was there for a Monetary Policy conference and you were taking a much-needed holiday from your demanding job. You are the CEO of the Katanga Lithium Corporation. The DRC now mines and processes its own lithium and has become the leading producer in the world. Africa no longer exports her raw materials. She is beneficiating her own minerals, and huge factories have sprung up, heralding the second Cyber Revolution with less pollution and exploitation. Job creation has been magic, multiplying like a spell, with more downstream industries. Few people leave the continent to seek employment. They move across the region for new opportunities amidst abundant potentials - whether it's in the textile industry in the West or agricultural plantations in the East. Africans do not require work permit to work in Africa. No bureaucratic barriers to leap over to get jobs in other parts of the continent. Only non-Africans require work permits.

European countries are trying their hardest to lure African travellers with packaged holidays. People are spoiled for choice. Due to Climate Change, it snows in parts of Africa now. Every winter, our mountainous ranges are capped with snow. You go skiing in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe or Lesotho. Though, admittedly, it is now cheaper to go skiing in the Alpine resorts of Switzerland. It's a constant off-season in those Alpine resorts, these days, with stiff competition from African destinations. Youths from Africa and elsewhere go backpacking around the continent on their gap-year before university. They catch the train from Cairo to Cape Town. Cecil John Rhodes would be dancing in his grave if he knew that his vision had finally materialised. There is

also an East-West rail line from Dakar to Mogadishu. Travelling through the continent is undoubtedly easier, whether by air or speed rail. Passports have been replaced by the Afropass, which allows free movement through the continent. Other continents still insist on visas but they are not as tasking. Borders are more for administrative purposes and territorial integrity than anything else.

You're still reflecting on these things when you receive another ecomm from Zuri, and this time her tone is urgent. You must come to the airport at once. Kojo insists he will handle it. You roll your eyes heavenwards but let it slide because he's still trying to be the man. 2063, and you have not been able to dismantle patriarchy. You smile because you have achieved a modicum of equality in some areas. Gender pay gaps are a thing of the past. There are equal opportunities for everyone in the workplace. You even have female Presidents in some African countries. You smile because you are certainly better off compared to your grandmother's generation.

The Governor

The first time I meet Chad, he is detained at the airport. Zuri had called, panicky, saying they were detaining her boyfriend without explanation. None of us envisaged our first meeting would be like this. I walk into the security office and see my daughter, two uniformed officials and some blue-eyed blond chap.

"Where is Chad,?" I ask.

"I am Chad," says the blue-eyed blond, whose long hair is secured in a ponytail.

A wave of confusion passes over me. When I first heard the name Chad, I immediately assumed he was African. So many people name their children Libya, Leonie, Mali and Zambia these days. Previously, you were able to allude to someone's origins simply by their name, but nowadays every other person is called Simba, Lakeisha or Kesi. Swahili is the official language on the continent.

"We are just as confused," says an officer who introduces himself as Ekow.

"We had the suspicion that Chad was using a stolen identity," adds the other officer.

"This is preposterous!" says Zuri with a hiss, coming to the blonde's defence. "Why would he do that?"

Ekow side-eyes her as he produces a sheet with a

long list of Europeans caught trying to enter Africa with false identities. Africa is reeling from a refugee crisis, Ekow explains. South Africa is one of the more popular destinations, with refugees arriving on ships daily assuming Afrikaans names. Mozambique on the east coast is struggling with an influx of Portuguese claiming ancestral visas.

Zuri throws her hands up. “Baba, you need to do something! Use your influence! You are the Governor of the Central Bank of Africa.”

“No no no Binti mzuru,” I reply, “that’s so unAfrican. Why would I use my influence in such a manner? This man should state his case. How did he arrive at the name?”

I turn to face Chad. He is sweating profusely and his complexion is rouged like beetroot. As he speaks, my own internalised prejudices prickle my skin. I am thinking: what does this landless mtu mweupe want with my daughter? I surmise that he might be using her to acquire citizenship.

Chad

You land at Addis Ababa Bole International Airport, grown into the biggest airport terminal hub in Africa. It is your first time in Africa, but you have heard a lot about it. The Dark Continent, they called it, but even as you land, the runway is lit like a casino strip in Las Vegas. The continent is powered by Africa Power Corporation, which is supplied by Cahora Bassa, Katanga, Kariba and the Volta. The grid has been expanded to include solar and wind power. And with the popularisation of electrified cars, the demand for electricity has surged globally.

You flew from Donald Trump International Airport. A five-hour flight that felt like ten, because each hour stretched painfully, compounded by your yearning to be with Zuri. You could not wait to kiss her, your tongue tantalising her from head to toe. It had been six months since you last saw each other. You were kept busy with the visa application process and the medicals. You could not believe the rigorous administration required to get a visa, not to mention the lengthy interviews at the Africa Embassy in Washington. They still gave you a one-month visa, even though you explicitly stated that you were coming to visit your fiancée. They had scrutinised your bank accounts.

“You can’t possibly afford to stay more than one month in Africa.”

“I have 20,000 USD in my account!” you replied in earnest.

You couldn’t believe the officer’s ignorance. Did she not realise that it’s a lot of money? Many times, you almost gave up on the process, preferring Zuri to migrate to the West. It would be easy, you argued.

“Don’t make me choose between Africa and my love for you,” Zuri said, “I will always choose Africa.”

The consular officer smiled dryly. “That’s only 5,000 African fedhas.”

You held your tongue. You had no idea their exchange rate was so strong. 1 AFD to 4 USD.

“I will be staying with my fiancée,” you added quickly, “she’s got me covered.”

The officer smirked as she handed back your passport with a stamped visa. Your heart sank when you saw the 30-Day sticker. It had cost you \$1,000. And your many laments about how they made it difficult for foreigners to visit their continent.

“Africans used to have it just as hard,” the officer said, as if reading your mind. “Try reading African literature. It is well documented.”

You put all that behind you as you reach for your carry-on bag. Then you join the column of passengers as you all disembarked. All planes are now configured as business class. No class distinctions on flights. You make your way through to the airport terminal. You collect your bags first, then proceed to immigration. You walk through electronic scanners that produce an X-ray photo of your being, which you then present to the immigration officer together with your passport barcode. Scanned on the computer, it reels out your entire history. You were born at the Bridgeport hospital in Connecticut in 2040 to Lily Dawes and Marie Governor. In the Third Grade, you got into trouble for corrupting the online examination. Everyone is schooled online now. No private or public schools, just one examining board for different continents. This generation does not know what it means to be bullied on the playground or to be laughed at because your lunch box isn’t fancy enough.

Your shenanigans did not end there. While in college you trended for the role you played in inciting a global protest against the Fourth World War. Later, you took a year off before medical school to sign up for military service and was posted to Germany.

“You seem like a rabble rouser,” says the immigration officer. She tells you to stand aside.

You are about to protest but she insists. You comply but remain frustrated by the delay. You let Zara know you have been held up. Your heart is pounding as you are led to an office on the third floor. The lifts are transparent glass, which is reassuring because you would hate to disappear. In this room you are interrogated by a six-foot official with gleaming skin. His name is Ekow. He asks you to open up your luggage and it is searched thoroughly. They riffle through your things, unearthing handcuffs and other paraphernalia.

“What are these for, sir?”
Ekow barks.

“Sex,” you say candidly.

He eyes you warily and puts the stuff aside as if for further investigation.

“Why are you holding me up?” you ask, exasperated.

“It’s procedural,” he replies, “more so with suspicious looking men.”

You know it’s the colour of your skin, it goes without saying, but you don’t want to go there. You bite on your lip, your skin turning warm with a blush of red. The tables have certainly turned. The balance of power has shifted. They are in charge now.

A CONVERSATION IN BETWEEN



By: **Nour Kamel**, an Egyptian who is an established writer and editor with a long list of credits and the potential to develop into one of Africa’s leading literary lights. Her application for the AU20 residency programme was written in direct response to the theme “Our Africa Our Future”. Her poetry explores the different and differing facets of identity and how Africans intertwine across nation states. Nour wrote several highly expressive, searching poems as her contribution to the AU20 writers’ residency that reflect her talent as a gifted writer and we share 3 of them below stories which engage with Africa’s economic liberation as a unifying goal for the continent

Africa enters finding the Future scrolling through its phone

Africa: Look, we need to have a talk

Future (not looking up from phone): About what?

Africa: About how things are going

Future (still scrolling): They’ll keep going

Africa goes to the Future, gently pushing the phone away.

The Future is giving its full attention to Africa.

Africa: We need certain assurances

Future: From me? That’s not usually how this works...

Africa: We want back what we had, what we’re owed, how long—

Future: This isn’t anything I can do or guarantee for you

Africa: Clear the path and let us walk it for once

Future: I am promise embodied. Clear or otherwise
- you choose the way ahead

The Past enters, pensive, carrying a book.

The Past tries to hand the book to Africa.

Past: You won’t find everything in here, but it’s a start

Africa (angrily): You got us into this mess to begin with! Why didn’t you do anything then? What good are memories to feed the hunger, to stave the flood, to clothe the cold?

Past: They will look to you, and you will need to know what went wrong. Fill its pages with every story

Africa, hesitating, accepts the book of truth from the Past

Future (thoughtfully): I forget too easily where you’ve been...

and the sacrifices it takes to reach me
*The Future exits then returns with the Present, who looks exhausted,
distracted by everything around them, and ready to flee*
Present: I don't hold more than any one moment, I'm sorry
*The Future gathers the Past and the Present together,
then pulls out its phone to take a somber selfie of all three*
Future: Together, we start to hold more
The Future hands the phone to Africa.
Africa: All we ask for, is what was always ours
Past: All I ask is that you remember
Present: To rest, just a moment
Future: And those who can ask, receive
We enter, a chorus all flourish and wreck, proud before them all
Us: We ask...
Pause.
Us: ...that you hear us

What we've said, what we're saying: Africa Cento

When the noise of all the creatures came together,
it became something never heard before, subduing the universe,
by breaking things into bits.

This poem, choked by the harrows of silence,
needs to write, recite, and interpret us to freedom.

Possibilities of triumph or victory are seen as remote,
ridiculous dreams, the grandest plans-sweet to hear, hard to imagine.

The ancestors and god are unhappy, today
let's hope they're on our side.

The jacarandas still deeply purple our pavement,
while countless have sailed so far
into the uncertain distance between past and present
that they seem adrift, scattering off in different directions
with broken sentences as if nothing need make sense.

In a corner of the brain,
that creature with a thousand lights, portals,
hiding places and passageways.....that old beast Desire,
lying dormant somewhere in the body,
lets out a ravenous, cruel howl.

Without air between uswe are breathless,

without the sun rising above.....we are eyeless,
like fire taking fast into ashes the brown grass that keeps it burning.

Look at them leaving in droves, the children of the land, just look at them
last-borns, kuasualas, feted like first-borns, all
leaving a whole life behind to hide in the belly of a ship
to be taken to an unknown wilderness.

The day when you try to go back, to set foot, by chance,
for a sun, a moon, to realize the land has abandoned us.

At the age of love and freedom from care,.....a child is dogged by sadness.

Who pours water from the sky? Sahara-eyes intent for answers,
Passers by take shelter beneath giant banana leaves,
the thin film of water changes to green mirrors. Look,

you are the pregnant pause of peace
that breaks the silence of a winter without flowers,
lost in the throaty breaths of a singer.

As far as we're concerned,....it's the most beautiful song in the world.

Children, listen to the last truth: Keep your hands clean,
thumb counting on each segment of finger, three for each finger, fifteen for a hand,
astaghfirAllah, astaghfirAllah, astaghfirAllah.

Rebel against the gales of history, the geography of loss,
ask lizards to whisper messages from the taps of their harmless heads
when they join us to eat sunlight,
blame not the migratory bird gone for the winter
who forces a tunnel through the wind to get to a moon seen in dreams,
then falls with the night into a labyrinth

of leaves. Being lunar, we run away in the night, crying murder all over

but return through the long darkness, always,
with the world shining joyfully at meeting again.

We are the rustling of the world,
the swaying between here and elsewhere.

We weave the new ropes where the old ones left off
with hem of galabia between teeth, running
until we come to a place we did not know
where hills ignite in the dry night, the dancers' feet
bathe in the fine dust of laterite, to live in a country
where tradition is not a weapon of intimidation.

Raise the unaccustomed chorus of justice.
Horns and koras wave with rich onomatopoeia on forgetful memories.

A closing window, too, must be reopened for the heart to breathe
smelling the faint, brackish odor of hair,

resisting the urge to kiss it.

Our love has been about love,
the sweet earth goodness love of tubers,
about our children
and the seeds they should gather
to plant trees of the future:

dare to stick around for the hard and beautiful harvest.

We used to eat together, reared around calabash and scoop-spoons,
gourd and kous-kous, drinking the respect of our sight clear and confident
drawing doe eye that grazes on grass of grace,

eee, ne mwa lala po wo I slept well, if you slept well
and lo the guiding spirit makes itself known to the most worthy,
when light streaks the sky, hope begins to burn.

A soul, the moya, is gradually made
from the voices of those who have already died:
we exist as the unalterable identity of this life in itself.

We have seen you before, yes, but we don't know where
and it pleases that some things remain beyond, cannot be rendered down.

Remember, O Africa, my only love - I still think of you.
Silence is a landscape, and our ancestors know no borders,
footprints still lead back to the place where you began.

*The above poem adapts 55 lines from 55 African writers, listed here in order of appearance:

Thomas Mofolo, Chaka (Lesotho). **Nuruddin Farah**, Gifts (Somalia). **Onesimo Silveira**, 'A Different Poem', The Penguin Book of Modern African Poetry (Cabo Verde). **Stella Nyanzi**, 'Teach the Nation Poetry' (Uganda). **Ngugi wa Thiong'o**, Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature (Kenya). **Wayetu Moore**, The Dragons, the Giant, the Women (Liberia). **Unity Dow**, Screaming of the Innocent (Botswana). **Jack Mapanje**, 'Seasoned Jacarandas', The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison (Malawi). **Hisham Matar**, The Return (Libya). **Sulaiman Addonia**, Silence Is My Mother Tongue (Eritrea). **Nathacha Appanah**, Waiting For Tomorrow (Mauritius). **Malika Mostadraf**, 'Delusion' (Morocco). **Lamia Makaddem**, 'Love makes woman a man and man a woman' (Tunisia). **Marial Awendit**, 'The Fourth and Fifth Theories' (South Sudan). **NoViolet Bulawayo**, We Need New Names (Zimbabwe). **Sousa Jamba**, 'Brothers', Granta 48: Africa (Angola). **Abdulrazak Gurnah**, Admiring Silence (Tanzania). **Koulsy Lamko**, 'On the Fourth Day' (Chad). **Mariama Ba**, So Long a Letter (Senegal). **Mohammed B. Taleb-Khyar**, 'Imagine the Rain', New Poets of West Africa (Mauritania). **Scholastique Mukasonga**, Our Lady of the Nile (Rwanda). **Rashidah Ismaili**, 'Letters-11', New Poets of West Africa (Benin). **Maaza Mengiste**, Beneath the Lion's Gaze (Ethiopia). **Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel**, By Night the Mountains Burn (Equatorial Guinea). **Étienne Goyémidé**, 'Warriors of the Radiant Sun' (Central African Republic). **Leila Aboulela**, The Translator (Sudan). **Fiston Mwanza Mujila**, Tram 83 (Democratic Republic of Congo). **Nsah Mala**, 'Stone Language or What Stones Call It' (Cameroon). **Alain Mabanckou**, 'When the Rooster Announces the Dawn of Another Day' (Congo Republic). **Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo**, 'The Three Birds' (Madagascar). **Sarah Mkhonza**, 'The Sunday Emergency' (Eswatini). **Amir Mounib**, 'My High-prowed Sailing-boat' (Comoros). **Abdourahman A. Waberi**, 'Desire' (Djibouti). **Kofi Awoonor**, The Promise of Hope (New and Selected Poems 1964-2013) (Ghana). **Nawal El Saadawi**, The Hidden Face of Eve (Egypt). **Antoine Abel**, 'Dances of Yesterday' (Seychelles). **Justine Mintsá**, **Larmes de Cendre**, Women Writers of Gabon: Literature and HerStory (Gabon). **Alda do Espírito Santo**, 'Where are the Men Seized in This Wind of Madness?', The Penguin Book of Modern African Poetry (São Tomé and Príncipe). **Noel Ebony**, 'Untitled', New Poets of West Africa (Côte d'Ivoire). **Ketty Nivyabandi**, 'Of Love' (Burundi). **Aminatta Forna**, 'Haywards Heath', The Granta Book of the African Short Story (Sierra Leone). **Tijan M. Sallah**, 'Love', New Poets of West Africa (Gambia). **Ben Okri**, A Way of Being Free (Nigeria). **Yambo Ouologuem**, 'To my husband', New Poets of West Africa (Mali). **Neshani Andreas**, The Purple Violet of Oshaantu (Namibia). **Camara Laye**, The African Child (Guinea). **Binwell Sinyangwe**, A Cowrie of Hope (Zambia). **Oumarou Watta**, 'Make-up', New Poets of West Africa (Niger). **Mia Couto**, Woman of the Ashes (Mozambique). **Limam Boicha**, 'Existence' (Sahrawi Republic). **Jorge Ampa**, 'Impressions', New Poets of West Africa (Guinea-Bissau). **Henrietta Rose-Innes**, 'Promenade', The Granta Book of the African Short Story (South Africa). **Yves-Emmanuel Dogbe**, 'Remember', New Poets of West Africa (Togo). **Samira Negrouche**, 'Who Is Speaking' (Algeria). **Malidoma Patrice Somé**, 'The Place Where You Were Born' (Burkina Faso).

Dear Africa

It's been a while.
You've seen a lot.
I've been unearthing a way back
through you, Africa.
Lost count of every time you drifted.
Lost count of every time the language
that comes most easily subdues the other,
the one of my mother.
But oh, how we bent it!
How we bend and break and make it our own
and say it falls from our lips whole.
How we've lost dialects, accents, sounds,
whole words we could have trained our ear for.
These borders on other people's whims,
divided and plundered and took
a bounty for museums and culture
unknown to them, we lost
were told to lose our Africanness
but are still defined by it.
a self that never changed
and always does and ever will.
This is the mother wound:
the loss you suffer before birth
being born unbeknownst in a place
you catch your breath and try to keep up
try to reclaim when and where you lost
yourself. Play the game
of what can and can't belong to you
according to arbitrary rules
made by people who never knew
anything about you, or what you went through.
We can play our own game too:
I didn't know I, in this body
this tongue this one specific life,
was allowed to be.
I lost you when you were always me.



By: **Musih Tedji Xaviere**, an emerging Cameroonian award-winning writer with substantial credits in literary journals and magazines. Her debut novel is due to be published in 2024 by Jacaranda in the UK and Catapult in the US. She has won several awards and is represented by Pontas, a top literary agency in Europe. Her submission for the AU20 residency programme is short story futuristic piece that features Africa as a global superpower

THE GREAT UNIFICATION

I 'd always known Baba was a brute. As a child he taught me to aim for the head and make sure the dead don't come back to haunt me. We would stand in a straight line, Rashid and I, on the roving course, bow aimed at a distant scarecrow, and shoot at Baba's orders until our arms hurt. I was good at it; shooting, fighting, spying, taking from people. I was a general in Baba's army before I was even fifteen. Rashid never had a stomach for the violence. He got sick at the very thought of hurting people. And Baba while he bragged about my accomplishments, called Rashid a coward. He said he wished Rashid was the girl, and I, the boy. But he loved Rashid, he said. He loved Rashid so much that when the African soldiers took Rashid, Baba did not put up a fight. I decided I'd had enough of his tyranny when Mami passed from a broken heart. She just couldn't live without her precious boy. "Bring him home," were her last words before she closed her eyes for the final time. The next day, I packed a bag. This would be the last time Baba ever saw me. For my mother, I promised, I would bring Rashid home.

"You have to learn Swahili, you know," Cadet Zara said to me on the first day I joined the African military. She was a stern redhead from South Florida, one of millions who fled the United States for Africa and beyond in 2060, after the gun wars stripped the North American country of the last vestiges of its former glory, turning it into one of the most dangerous places on earth. Europe was going through a similar phase, and the borders of Africa, China, and the UAE's Masdar City were teeming with refugees.

"Swahili has become the most valuable language in the world, next to Mandarin," Zara continued. "Usually, they don't let people into the country who don't speak the language, but you're an exceptional fighter, Cadet Nabila. I saw you on the training grounds earlier." She showed me to my floating bunk bed in the vast barrack room at the Mali border. The barracks, a massive complex built inside a mountain, was overcrowded; about thirty newly recruited cadets occupied the room. The other soldiers, the few I can remember, were Oksana from Ukraine, Monica from Sweden, Bianca from Bogota, and Lena from Melbourne. Some of them were migrants seeking a taste of the African dream, others were outcasts, defectors, exiled, seeking a better life in the country of Africa. Most had been recruited straight off the Ubus from the refugee camps. And Africa, in a shrewd way, saw their misfortunes as an opportunity to enlarge its army. It did not really matter to the soldiers that they were risking their lives; most were just grateful to have a home. At least this was Africa's view, and it may have even been true for many soldiers in the army. Me, I just wanted to get in and get my brother out.

The day I saw Rashid again, it was unexpected. I had only been training for six months when the orders came for my reassignment, as well as Zara and eleven other colleagues. We travelled through sleepy streets the day we left the barracks for the capital - Buea - a city in the region of Cameroon, through unending underpasses with jellyfish lights, through towering cities of metal, and huge tracts of Green Belt that once separated them. Once, we called these cities the Federal Republic of this, the Democratic Republic of that, now we referred to them as the region of Chad, the region of The Gambia, the region of Ethiopia, or the region of Cameroon. And so on, and so forth. We crawled through new settlements built on the Atlantic Ocean, over glass bridges reflecting the water and the sky back at us. Through the see-through roof of our Ubus, we watched drones circling above these cities like angels, people scurrying by on the hardened surface of the water. These cities, beautiful as they appeared, were once stagnant in misgovernance, punching below their weight. And then the Great

Unification happened.

Tensions were high in Buea when we arrived. The night air was frigid and people in neon clothing hung around street corners, eyes glued to their translucent phones. Everything around me felt charged, like the city itself, plugged into Mount Manengouba, feeding from its abundant deposits of cobalt. People all over the world called the city 'The Battery,' one that would power down one day after draining the mountain of cobalt. I watched through street-facing windows as friends and strangers gathered to watch the news on TV. President Nyaluma was meeting with the 48 governors, the G-48, to discuss strategy, in light of China's recent attempt to weasel its way into The Farm in North Africa. In spite of its technological advancements, China was disgruntled that the whole world depended on Africa for food. And while Africa could defend itself, the people were still on edge, especially after what happened to America when it crossed China.

"All this headache because of one man," said someone on my Ubus to his friend, the next day. "But who does he even think he is, this Sultan Ali? Kwani anadhani yeye ni nani?" The friend plunged into a recital of Sultan Ali's misdeeds; a tale known to everyone on the train. Not too long ago, when the call went out for Africa to unite, seven Northern African nations led by a man called Ali Asif declined, and later branched off to form a standalone region called The Farm. For years Ali fought for The Farm to be recognised as an independent region, but Africa saw itself as one. "Our unity is sacrosanct, non-negotiable. Besides, Africa's greatest asset is located in that part of the continent," said the friend. "Ali should know by now we'd rather die than let him mess with The Farm. Can you believe he wants to invite China? China! Hii ni ujinga! President Nyaluma better be ready for war. She better be. Hiyo ndio njia pekee ya kuendelea mbele kwa sasa." These two men were not the only ones outraged by Sultan Ali's actions. All day, I encountered different versions of the same conversation. I avoided crowded places because, while I was sure that no one recognised me in Buea, it still felt like I was being judged for my father's crimes.

I heard Rashid's laugh first. I saw him two weeks after my arrival in Cameroon. I'd been assigned to watch over the Abiodun Family in Buea's most exclusive suburb; Mr Abiodun was a member of parliament, his wife a TV mogul. She was one of many African American returnees to benefit from

Nyaluma's reparations package which included employment and free settlement in any African region of their choosing (although most of them preferred Akon City). My job was to keep their two children out of harm's way. Zara, who had become my closest friend, worked for another prominent family just down the road; we would meet up every day after work for drinks at Bolajies, later returning to the two-bedroom apartment we shared, temporarily, with Zara's boyfriend. He was new to the country and his immigration status was still murky. I was in the front yard as usual, waiting for The Abiodun's to get breakfast over with, so I could escort the kids to school. It was just 9 a.m. and the sun was already blazing in the sky, making me sweat in my camouflage uniform. I fidgeted with my rifle, raising it up and then down to ease the pressure on my shoulders. There were six guards in total patrolling the compound.

I lifted my binoculars for the zillionth time to inspect the perimeter. Large-sized homes, orb-like in shape and constructed of white granite, dotted the valley. Beyond, the city pulsed with life. I undid the top button of my jacket for some respite from the heat. I was mid-stride, about to retrieve my canvas bag on the landing, when I heard the laugh. Rashid's laugh was quite unique, you see. A loud, unexpected cackle, that often startled strangers. It began with a twitch of the lips and almost immediately it ballooned, rippling over his entire face, exploding like fireworks against the night sky. But the laugh was often without heart. He used it as a cover for his pain, and he'd had a lot of it from Baba, growing up. I did not realise how much I'd missed his laugh until I heard it again. And I remember thinking, how is this possible? For months I'd searched for my brother, imagining him in a number of frightful situations; laughter wasn't one of them. In my dreams sometimes I heard his voice as if he was right there. Some nights he climbed into my floating bed at the Mali mountain barracks and lay there with me because even at age twenty-three he was still frightened of the dark. I had always felt responsible for Rashid. Mum's passing, I guess, fanned the flames.

I followed the sound, the unmistakable sound of my brother's laughter, round the back. The property was a massive pile designed such that the back porch led straight to the Atlantic Ocean. Most of the homes in the area were prime real estate lining the oceanfront. There, by the pool's edge, pointing downwards at something obscure, Rashid stood. He spoke to the

water, and I imagined he had company even though I could not discern who at first. A young man of about Rashid's age, abrupt, appeared from nowhere and crept up behind him. He lunged at Rashid, pushing him into the water and I sprang into action. One minute I was on one side of the pool, the furthest away from the two boys, and the next, I was tackling the boy. I don't remember punching him but his nose was oozing blood, and he looked frightened when Rashid pulled me off him.

"Sis, acha! Howa sadeiki. He's my friend" Rashid said to me in a mix of Arabic with Swahili, the latter of which I was getting better at. For a second, he just stood there and stared at me with wide eyes. "How are you here? I thought I'd never see you again." His voice trembled with emotion. Before I could answer he flung himself in my arms, dripping wet. I did not mind. Every worry I had, faded away. The fear that I'd lost him forever, all the horrors I'd imagined his life had turned into. I just held him and cried into his shoulder.

"You look well," I told him much later. Rashid's coffee skin glowed, and he'd let his curly Afro fill out to frame his face. He was still tall and skinny but he'd gained weight. He looked, for lack of a better word, fuller - like a plant at the start of a monsoon. "What happened to you? I thought you were..." I could not finish my sentence. He was right there before me, so I forced myself to focus on that.

"President Nyaluma ordered my release when she realised that using me as a pawn to force Baba to cease his dealings with China wasn't going to work. That's why she had me kidnapped in the first place. A little birdie told me Baba refused to negotiate for my release. He told Nyaluma she could have me, that I didn't matter to him."

Rashid was trying to sound casual about it but I could sense he was hurt.

"And she let us think for months that you were still being held captive. Why?"

"I don't know, Sis. Politics, I guess. Maybe she doesn't want to be seen as weak."

He was silent for a long time after I told him about Mami. Not what I'd expected. The old Rashid would have broken down in tears at the slightest inkling of bad news, especially if it had anything to do with Mami, his best friend. Growing up I'd felt envious of their close bond. Sometimes it felt like Mami only

had eyes for Rashid. I would tag along with them at age twelve to fourteen. Feigning interest at a display of pretty Rosetti blouses in shop windows, or a pair of stilettos at Khan's, or the talk of 'Who Wore it Best' on reality TV shows Mami and Rashid loved to watch. But I still felt left out. Armed and in battle was where I felt at home.

This Rashid seemed dulled, aged, like life had taught him a whole lot in just a few short months. I learned in the days to follow that he'd been taken in by a wealthy family - six properties down the lane - after his release. He knew their son from his party days. Zara and Rashid clicked right away, bonding over their shared penchant for ganging up against me over my non-existent social life. And although he appeared more adult now, I was glad Rashid had not outgrown many of his old habits, one being that he followed me everywhere, pestering me with questions about this and that. It took days to summon the courage to ask him the question that nagged at me.

"Why did you not come back home after Nyaluma set you free? Why did you stay? I know you have issues with Baba, but why did you not at least reach out to me? You and I are close, aren't we, Rashid?"

He turned away, looking down at his hands. "Stop being so dramatic, Sis," he said in a low voice. His decision to stay had nothing to do with me, he assured. After his release, he realised this was what he'd waited for all his life: a chance to live a new life away from Baba's judgement. And I understood him. I understood the desire to break free, but it still hurt to know he had not trusted me with his plans. Rashid had always made space for me in his life. I loved that he looked up to me and it scared me that I might have lost that. He was the closest person to me in the entire world, my one true friend.

"Why do you keep working for Baba anyways?" he asked one day. He was waiting for me in my apartment when I returned from work, as he often did. Sometimes he helped Zara's boyfriend prepare dinner. Other times his friend Alo accompanied him, the one I tackled at the Abiodun residence. Rashid opened up more to me with each visit.

"You know Baba is evil, right?" he said.

"That's a bit harsh, don't you think?" I held out a can of beer to him. We were seated on the balcony, a motley of city lights flickering all around us. Heavy clouds stood against the moon, blocking out its

radiance. It had rained steadily all afternoon and the wet roads below shimmered under the glare of yellow street lights. Zara and her boyfriend were off somewhere in the city. The night air was humid despite the rain, and the beer would only make me hot, but I craved alcohol more than before - my way of dealing with the situation my brother and I found ourselves in. Rashid shook his head to the beer. There was a stark, sad look about the city on this night. It was as if the universe could sense our fears and was mimicking us in sympathy.

Sultan Ali, or Baba to me, had moved beyond threats. He had commenced official talks with China. This meant war. The G-48's worst fears were becoming a reality. They saw no option but to step in to protect African sovereignty. The spike in tensions weighed heavy on the city, making for a cheerless atmosphere all around. Africans knew war, its necessity and ramifications. War once shredded them. War also sewed them back together in the end. It wasn't something they would willingly participate in. But if the counter-offensive against Ali and his allies backfired, everything the G-48 fought for all those years ago could be reversed. But if nothing was done, the result would be the same.

"You and I both know that the only reason Baba is considering a partnership with China at all is because of his debts," Rashid said. "And he's too proud to ask for help from the G-48. He'd rather risk The Farm than ask for help. It's all about malice and pride for him."

"Baba is well within his rights, Rashid. He has a vision and it's not his fault the G-48 refuse to see it."

I wasn't sure I believed the words coming out of my mouth, or why I was trying so hard to convince my brother. I once believed in Baba, or at least I thought I did. Deep down, I always knew my father's true nature. But the little girl in me was prone to finding excuses for his behaviour. He was my hero. As a child I sat on his lap and thought he was the most magnificent man in the world. He made me soup when I was sick and sang to me when I was too scared to fall asleep. Baba was to me what Mami was to Rashid. But after Rashid's kidnap and Baba's refusal to lift a finger, I just couldn't look at him the same way again. Was it a shame that even after all that, I still had this compulsive need to defend him? And since my brother was forcing me to look inwards at the things I would rather not see, I deflected.

"G-48's propaganda machine has blinded you," I said to Rashid.

I had a mind to drag him home against his will. The fear that I might look into the mirror and see Baba staring back at me - that was the only thing that stopped me. Drag my brother back; that was something Baba would do. I wanted Rashid to decide for himself. Of his own free will.

Rashid looked me squarely in the eyes. "Maybe you've been fighting on the wrong side all your life, Nabila. Just saying. Africa merging to become one has been a successful experiment so far. I don't understand why Baba is so adamant, why he's bent on destroying the thing that gives us power."

Anxiety was high in the days that followed. The city buzzed with speculation about whether President Nyaluma would commence hostilities against the enemy or not. Migrants grew frantic, frightened of what a war on the continent would mean for them. Zara's boyfriend voiced his concerns constantly. "This is one of the safest places in the world. We have all come here for refuge, for a better life, something that was impossible in our own countries. I hate to think it could all be destroyed, just like that."

There was panic in the streets, bank runs as civilians braced up for an escalation that could portend an unpredictable future. When Nyaluma tried to restrict the flow of cash, protests erupted across the country. On the street, I heard a man blame the deteriorating situation on the president being a woman, something I hadn't heard a man say in years, since most men in 2064 viewed women as equals. This much chaos, and the war hadn't even started. I hated to think what would happen if Nyaluma actually gave the order to fire.

My evening talks with Rashid became increasingly uncomfortable. Our conversations were restless and irritable, just like the city around us. I was more aware of my proclivity to defend Baba by now, but Rashid was asking a lot of me. He was trying to flip years of programming in just one day, trying to make me feel guilty for Baba's actions such that I'd be forced to do something about the looming chaos. But Rashid did not understand that as a soldier, as Baba's second in command, or used to be, my sense of duty to my commander was hard to break. When I tried to explain this to him, he said I felt that way because I was still shackled to The Farm, to Baba. To Rashid, I was dependent on Baba's approval, on being his favourite. Baba had this hold on me and I was afraid to disappoint him in any way. On several occasions, I thought of returning to The Farm without Rashid. A prodigal daughter, I would apologise to Baba for

leaving in the first place. I would beg for my place back in his army, back in his heart. But I stayed. I stayed because deep down I knew it wouldn't be the right thing to do. My life at The Farm was over.

One evening, Rashid brought over the Letter. He knew I wouldn't read it but he held it out anyway. I should have maintained my resolve. I should have stood by my word that I would never read the Letter, because reading it would mean that I had betrayed my country. It meant treason, and I was guilty enough already. But Rashid knew, he reminded me of my obsession with the Letter as a little girl, the Letter that led to the Great Unification of Africa. History books called it Africa's national treasure, and I remembered that I wasn't allowed to read it as a little girl. It was banned in North Africa, which only fuelled my desire to read it. A boy in my class said his dad owned a copy, and the day he was planning to take me over to his house, the dad died mysteriously. I knew, even at that age, that the death had something to do with being in possession of a copy of the Letter. I put the Letter out of my mind. I never tried to look for it even though artists had found ways over the years to immortalise it in film and literature. Until Rashid. In my bedroom one night, while Zara and Rashid were fast asleep, I bolted the door and took the Letter from where my brother had kept it. It was a simple letter, a plain one, written by a man to his brother in the United Kingdom. It read easy, no abstruse words, no embellished sentences, lines and lines penned in a hurry.

Dear brother, the Letter began.

How far? I hope the snow isn't too hard on those old-man knees of yours. Haha. Cameroon too is getting colder with each year that passes. So many things are changing, Bro. The soil won't even grow cocoyam anymore. Imagine. Cocoyam that used to grow anyhow-anywhere. We will starve soon if we are not careful.

In your last letter you said you miss home, but I'm begging you, don't come back. Stick it out in the UK. Cameroon has become a beast, a ravenous, shameless beast that feasts on us from morning till night. It doesn't stop, this beast. They tell us to go to school, to fill our heads with common sense, but when you use this common sense to correct the government, policemen will start shooting at you. The police are really stupid, Bro. They act like headless chickens. They don't think. They just do. All my friends have fled the country because of the police. You need to see the queue at the American

Embassy. I sold my shop last month to pay for a visa, but America is STINGY with visas o. In fact, this whole visa thing is a scam; they won't even refund your money after they deny you a visa. Tsuip.

Don't come back to be swallowed up by this place, Bro. The white man is bad, but at least he pays you for work you've done. Here they work you like a slave and still refuse to pay you. It's like the government is charging us for oxygen. It's like they are intentionally chasing us out of the country. My friends in Nigeria say it's the same for them. Which kind of continent is this even? You start out hopeful, and they take and take from you until there's only one thought left in your mind: LEAVE. Maybe we should just burn the whole country to the ground and watch it sink to the bottom of the ocean.

I hope to see you again soon, Bro, and I hope it will not be in this doomed place.

Your main man, Afumbom

Timchia read his brother's letter on a wet day in a lecture hall at Oxford University. The words were meant to flatten his hope, to tear down any remnants of expectation, but they did the opposite. In a speech he subsequently gave at one of the many rallies he organised across the continent campaigning for One Africa, he described his sense of shame after reading his brother's letter, for what his home had become. His brother had been optimistic, a dreamer, a patriotic citizen. To learn that Cameroon had stripped him of that love of country, reduced him to utter hopelessness... Timchia was moved to action. He promised to restore his brother's hope. This was around the same time as the 2045 Global Hunger Crisis, which Timchia along with his group of revolutionary scientists helped solve by creating an artificial farm in North Africa, the region now controlled by Sultan Ali. When asked why North Africa, Timchia said there was a unique component in the soil there that could not be found anywhere else in the world. He became concerned though - after Africa emerged as a superpower in 2050 owing to its ability to feed the entire globe - that the continent would not be able to sustain its newfound status. There was just too much division within the continent, he said, a foothold for the enemy. His words incited continent-wide riots. Many lives were lost in Timchia's fight for One Africa, many cities engulfed in flames and turned to ashes as sit-tight leaders clung to power. Timchia was executed three years later, but it was all too late. His bravery had lit a fire that could not be snuffed out. I saw that same

fire burning in my brother. Rashid carried Timchia's flame within him.

The question I dreaded most, came not long after I'd read the letter and still would not admit to Rashid that I'd done so.

"You're next in line to Sultan Ali's empire, Sis. You can help end all this, if you want."

This was at the height of the political storm, with critics starting to accuse Nyaluma of weakness, blaming her for stalling, when she could be taking action against Ali and confronting the China situation head-on. No one, not even her governors, could understand her apparent reticence. And now that I think of it, maybe Rashid's release wasn't that fortuitous after all. Maybe my unchallenged entry into the country and the military wasn't based on skills alone. Maybe the Cameroon assignment barely months after I joined the military, wasn't random. Maybe Nyaluma had a plan all along: turn the brother, then turn the sister, dismantle Ali from within. *That's the thing about female power; it's quiet, it's inconspicuous, it will take you unawares.*

"You could do what Baba wouldn't do. You could spare us all the consequences of war."

I laughed. How ridiculous Rashid sounded to me at that moment. He was a child, I surmised, and understood little of his insinuations. I was to blame too, for encouraging his wild imagination, giving ear to treasonous gossip. Perhaps it was time to do 'a Baba' and take my brother home against his will, remove him from a bad situation before it got worse. But my brother wouldn't let up.

One evening after a dinner of fufu and egusi, he cornered me and said, "Mami would be proud if she saw you on the throne."

Another evening when we had takeout and red wine he said, "You know our people prefer you to Baba, right? I've spoken with so many soldiers and they say they are willing to pick up arms against anyone if you ask them to."

It was endless, Rashid's quest to turn me, to have me see things his way. And because I loved him, I indulged him, like a parent indulges a recalcitrant child, patiently waiting for the day they will grow up and become aware of the world around them. But my mind was made up. I chose not to betray The Farm, my country, my home.

The only way I can explain what happened in the end, the only way I can rationalise my actions in spite of my earlier stance, is that Rashid wore me out. And I like to defend myself and say that I did it for my brother, because I love him, because I would do anything for him. But the truth is, I've been wearing blindfolds my whole life. It was Baba's dream to keep the continent separated, not mine. I don't know when I stopped dreaming for myself, but I've been someone's puppet for a long time. To hoard power is enticing because it's all I have ever known, but I imagine Timchia had doubts too. I want to see this land prosper, and what's a little sacrifice to achieve that? What's a little title in comparison to African unity? What's a little paper to sign? I can just be Nabila, not Sultan Nabila, settled in a small apartment someplace with my cat and a bartender I like. I hope Rashid visits often. I hope Zara trusts me again someday.

The cameras are pointed at me now, the cautious smiles of the G-48 governors widening all around me, in a room full of people I've never met before. Nyaluma is poised for the handshake, the handshake that cements us all together. Beyond the windows the streets are swarming with jubilant crowds waving the green, red and yellow flag that has a raised fist in its middle. It's a symbol of what has happened here today, a united continent like Timchia dreamed of. The sound of the crowd reaches me, encircles me. I am at ease with my decision. Kol bikhayr. I stand and walk with purposeful strides to the centre of the room. I hope Baba, in his resting place somewhere at the bottom of the ocean, isn't too mad that I usurped his throne and gave away his empire. I know Mami is proud of us, for wasn't it she that filled Rashid's head with dreams of One Africa?

THE NAMELESS (Extract)

Suraiya's last transmission plays on repeat in their heads but they don't mind. They haven't seen her in weeks. I am only here because they said we are the children of tomorrow. She stops to blow tiny tufts of hair off the clippers' teeth, then turns his face gently to the right. *I love the hundred and forty students slaughtered in Kano. They are dead and I never met them but I love them.* The clippers whir in the background as Suraiya's voice goes on, clear, soft and unrushed. *I love our sisters in Uniport who marched to protest against an educational system that ensures sexual abuse is not just protected but enforced. I love my brothers in jail, implicated in things they know nothing of. I love them.* I might be long dead by the time you receive this message but- She gets and looks at her work in the mirror on the bamboo wall. He is looking, too, turning from side to side and grinning. Finally, he asks, 'Do you still love me now?'

*

She had been safe in the refuge of a master's degree in Hampshire the last time he asked her this question. Almost a year ago. The youth service corps members shipped to pay the debt of the motherland weren't that many yet, so her status as a good immigrant with a student visa had not yet been seriously challenged. She had no use for a British accent. Suraiya was on TV leading a protest to the Senate. She was minding her own business in a café with her Chinese American roommate, trying to get a cup of coffee. She saw him before he saw her, just when he used his corps card, the green-white-green thing that screamed 'government property on loan,' to pay for his coffee and cake. She ducked her head in shame and turned to her roommate and said, 'Let's leave,' but her eyes were riveted to the large screen above the coffee machine.

'They are using us to pay for their sins!' Suraiya was yelling in front of a nondescript building. 'We didn't borrow the money for their airports and currency printing machines, yet we the young people are being made to pay. Go and see how they are treating those of us shipped to the superpowers, like we are slaves!'

'Let's go, Roseline,' she pleaded with her roommate.

'Wait, aren't you Nigerian?' Roseline's eyes were glued to the screen. 'Forty students were killed in your country last week and university students are protesting. This young woman is leading them; isn't that amazing?'

She sighed and thanked the waiter who served them their coffee just then. She had never seen Roseline this excited.

'Do you know her?' Roseline asked.

No, she didn't know Suraiya. Once upon a time, she thought she did.

'It's a mammoth country, you know? We don't all know each other.'

.....

Suraiya.

Open your eyes, follow my voice.

She opened her eyes and was back in the room with the others. It was just a dream.



By: **T. J. Benson**, a Nigerian award-winning writer who already has a substantial following and influence in African literary circles and has had three books published in the last three years. His debut novel was published by Penguin Randomhouse in 2021. His writings are around concepts of Africanfuturism

Go to the last ceiling tile on your left, climb on someone and lift up gently.

She covered her mouth to keep from screaming.

.....

'Suraiya!' she cried out, running into her arms, because in her arms she could feel alive again.

Suraiya hugged her back and said in her head: We have to go, darling. We don't have much time left. The others got into the trucks behind them, quietly, still in sleep.

'You came for me,' she said to Suraiya, feverish with hunger and disbelief and desperation. 'You came back after all these years.'

'You are all my people.' Suraiya said, helping her into the passenger seat. 'No way I am abandoning my people.'

Her heart sank. She wanted Suraiya to say she came back to her. But she didn't press it. Instead, she asked, 'How are you doing this? It's like my mind is a radio picking up your frequency.'

'Don't you want to know what happened after I dropped out?' Suraiya asked.

'I-' Her cheeks burned. 'I didn't want to pry.'

Suraiya chuckled. 'It's a long story but I'll be brief.'

As she told it, Suraiya dropped out of their school to join The Nameless. They got their name from a drunken senator challenged by a reporter to say something about the victims of a mass abduction from a secondary school.

'The senator said - "What can I say, it's a public school. We are still trying to get the records, you see. They are nameless for now." Can you imagine?'

It made sense to Suraiya that they decided to be nameless in solidarity with every young person who had been trampled on. And they were not alone. Youths from all over Africa were pitching in with new, terrifying solutions. 'It gets exciting,' Suraiya said. 'Researchers have been trying to understand the science of some traditional practices of the past in Ghana, and have gone beyond the use of herbs as alternatives when modern medicine fails,

..... The researchers grew in number and audacity. They discovered many terrible and wonderful things. Many political leaders would demolish and denigrate

non-Abrahamic religious institutions in public but had secret spiritual advisors. The Nameless had attempted initial surveillance, expecting no counteraction, since these governments didn't believe in such things, but were repelled in shock. In fact, the lethargy with which people accepted the anarchy was partly due to spiritualists who practised in secret while on Government payroll. The Nameless decided to stop spying the government's intelligence and develop their own. They would talk to one another, out of reach of all surveillance, and eventually found frequencies higher and lower than could be deciphered with basic human senses. For years and years they anticipated the worst and planned accordingly. The youth service programme was the last straw.

'Suraiya this is-'

'Shhh, I am no longer Suraiya. I am Nameless and you can be too. It's your choice. I am taking you to a crossroads.'

.....Follow me and we will sail back home in safety to join our people to reclaim our country. We will take refuge in the south, the oil-polluted land they abandoned, we will be safe there. If you don't want to go back, that's fine; our Pan-African compatriots will gladly absorb you into their countries under new identities. And if you choose to return to serve in the debt repayment system, no problem. We will leave you here and the police should arrive in twenty minutes. You will forget about me, about all of this...



By: **Tony Mochama**, is a well-established Kenyan writer and journalist who wants to tell a compelling futuristic African short story that cuts across generational and national boundaries on the continent. He has extensive credits and has won several literary awards. He also writes on Africanfuturism and his last book, titled 2063: Last Mile Bet, was published by Oxford University Press. N.B.

REIGN OF THE RED NUGUS

(Extract)

.....

Melotti and Melody (a mere memory of a story)

Agent Abab U Moja pushes past history, and out of the streets, and gets into the courtyard of his Asmara hotel that goes by the strange name of *Napolian*.

The *Napolian* is a four-storey affair of four buildings separated by a square, each with four rooms per floor that go for five US dollars a night, steep for 1975; and each of the buildings has a name – *Apricot*, *Pistachio*, *Pastel* and *Pink*. All resemble rectangular ice-cream cones from the outside, giving Abab the feeling of being in a fairytale - which he is, actually - murder aside. And, come to think of it, *Snow White* and poison, yes, *murder* too!

In the courtyard, pink-eyed pigeons coo from broken pipe perches at the Asmara sunset, shrieking into the avian bit of his shaman voodoo Bokor mind for a few terrifying seconds. 1713 AD. Sugar plantations in Saint Domingue, worked on by hundreds of ndzumbi whose cadavers in the cane fields he has reunited with their soulless nzambi to do his bidding, *cut the cane, cut the cane, cut*.

Agent Abab U Moja snaps back into the present, which is the *Pink Block* with its flamboyant red-blossomed flowers, to the *Apricot Block* with its bougainvillea blanket, to the *Pastel Block* with its purple petals of jacaranda; he just had to be booked in Room 214 in the *Pistachio Block* that distinguishes itself in peeling plaster and a frayed corridor carpet that, at least, leads to the only bar in the entire complex – a wooden affair called *Melody*.

The man who runs the *Melody* bar in *Napolian*, (*Napoleon + Napoli*, he later explains to Abab U Moja, a portmanteau word) is a crazy 35-year-old army dropout called Spook. He has a crew-cut and speaks fast. His glassy blue eyes look cast in stone, and he is permanently stoned. He is also Agent Abab U Moja's contact man for this mission, just like K and Z had been for the mission that Grand-Dad undertook in Russia, back in February of 1923.

Spook *shouting into his ear*, like a man who has been in the army too long. In Spook's case it was just a five-year stretch in Kagnew Base, not too far from here; *1967-1972*, before he got cited, then indicted, one time too many, for gross indiscipline.

.....

"What do I care that your Major was killed by the secessionists?" Meskela, a local village woman with *Afro* like a halo and a dust-bitten leathery beauty, said to Major Mengistu, three days before the events of Monday, 30th November 1970. "That is your political problem with the rebels. Here, we are about the basics, Major dear. The rains were good this year; that's the good news for all of us here. Not the death of your General. I'm sorry for your loss, but truthfully, we do not care. The harvest will be good in December. I'll get to throw a feast for my two older girls and their younger brothers, the twins, for X-mas. *Bas!*"

Mengistu had regarded Meskela with a menacing and kali eye. But his small, very average features were no match for the tall, brown woman's stature,

....Meskela eyed the dark, slender, slight and tense chap in front of her in the light of the church hall, thought that he looked like an X-Ray man in the surrounding white hue, and laughed.

Major Mengistu, misunderstanding her laugh, reciprocated with a broad, hard grin that bared strong, box-like teeth, their startling white the only plus in a thoroughly nondescript appearance.

Meskela, after her little bark of rare laughter had ended, said quietly: "Major, you have misunderstood our small village here. We are one people, the *Bilin*. We all believe in what we believe in! The Muslims go to their mosque on Friday, we go to our church on Sunday, and that's it. From our unity, you could say it is always Saturday here. We don't regard ourselves as Muslim or Christian, just villagers who have to stick and work together in our hardscrabble existence.

And now Major Mengistu understood that this peasant woman – with her hands and feet stencilled with aesthetic henna, and her big loops of cheap brass earrings, and her eyes dark with charcoal mascara, and her big, billowy Afro – had not been laughing at his ignorance of the local norms; she had been laughing at *him*.

.....

Not one given to explosive outbursts although the rage always burned within him, having learnt to control the red demon the way he did his drinking, as well as his words (*halting speech infinitely preferable to the dreaded stutters*), Major Mengistu did not let the hard smile slide from his face. "Very well, Madam... *Meskela*. You know... what the... Americans... like to say. 'Those who... don't... stick together shall... hang... separately!' I hope... you... have made... good choice. For your... community, and... more... personally... you, and... your four children." The Major stood up and saluted the six-foot woman. And just like that, he was... gone.

But not for long.

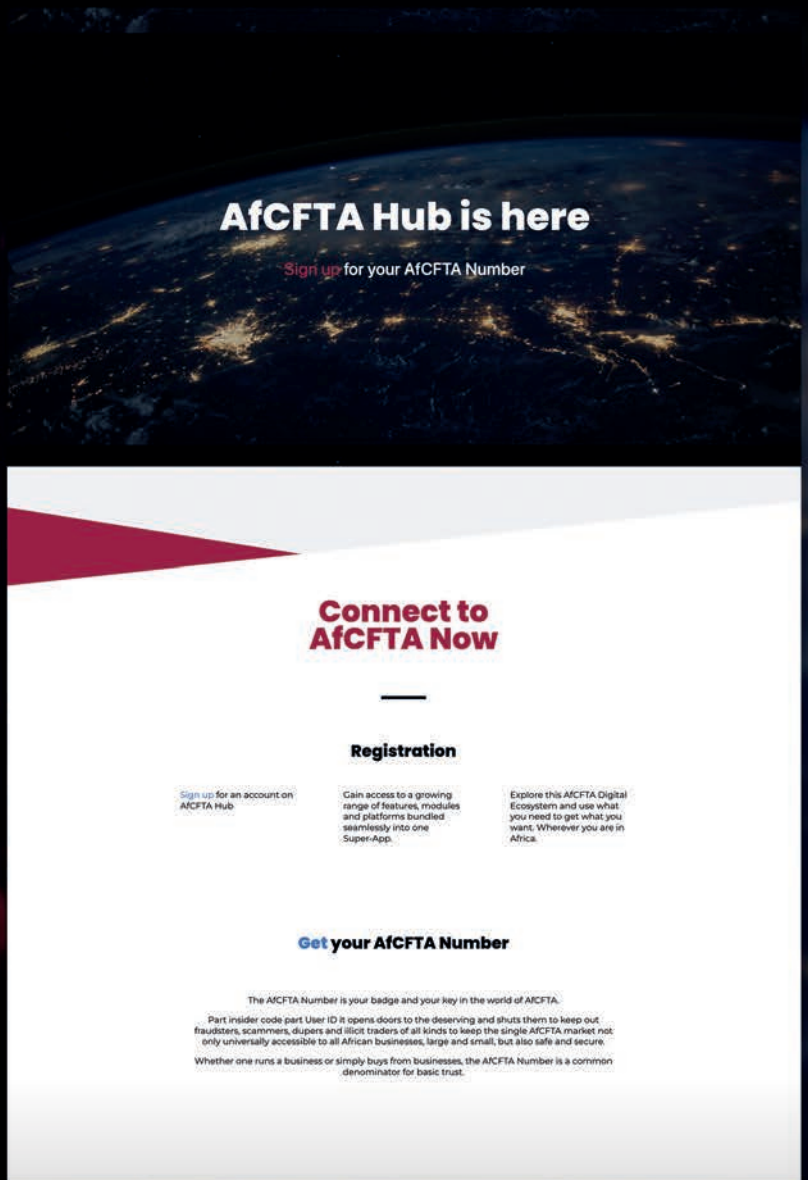
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Agenda 2063 takes centre stage at World Expo held in Dubai, UAE

Six months, 26 weeks and 180 days of telling the African story to the world

The World Expo

World Expos are global events, which offer a journey inside a universal theme through engaging in immersive activities. The first World Expo was held in 1851 in London under the theme 'Industry of all Nations'. The event saw the participation of 25 countries and recorded over 6 million visitors. Over the years a series of World Expos have been organised covering 32 cities in Europe, Asia and America with the last Expo being held in Milan in 2015, with a total of 145 countries participating and over 21 million visitors attending. The Expos are organised around a theme that attempts to improve humankind's knowledge, takes into account human and social aspirations and highlights scientific, technological, economic and social progress.

Africa's Participation at Expo 2020 Dubai

In the 170-year history of World Expos, the Expo 2020 Dubai is the first world expo that was held in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA) region, this is the also the first time the African Union and every African nation have dedicated pavilions at the Dubai edition. The 6 (Six) month long global mega event was held under the theme 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future'

The Expo 2020 Dubai theme was split into three (3) interrelated subthemes:

- **Opportunity:** Unlocking the potential within individuals and communities in order to shape the future, by promoting among others new industries, employment, education, financial capital and good governance
- **Mobility:** Ensuring the promotion of logistical and individual movement, travel and exploration
- **Sustainability:** Promoting natural ecosystems, resources and biodiversity



conservation, green growth, and build sustainable cities and habitats

Each of the 3 sub-themes of Expo 2020 - Mobility, Opportunity and Sustainably – strongly resonate with Africa’s Agenda 2063 and its Aspirations and Flagship projects hence reinforcing the need for Africa to participate in the Expo.

The AU Pavilion

The AU Pavilion at the Expo was under the Sub-Theme ‘Opportunity’ which within the context of Agenda 2063 encompasses all the 3 sub-themes and closely reflects the goals of the AU to position Africa as the continent with the highest investment potential for future growth and socio-economic development and to seek out new regional and global partnerships that will ensure Africa achieves its sustainable and inclusive development aspirations outlined in the continent’s development framework, Agenda 2063

The Primary Objectives for the AU’s participation in Expo 2020 Dubai included:

- Changing the narrative about Africa and re-branding the continent to an international audience
- Improving the visibility of the continent as a secure and endowed place for doing business;
- Improved visibility for African business brands, products and innovations;
- Creating new investment opportunities for African private sector companies and investment linkages to the continent;
- Establishing the visibility for AU as the promoter of Africa’s development, African businesses and global partnerships on the world stage.

Spotlights on Africa events

In addition AU pavilion, the AU participated in a series of events at Expo, dubbed the “Spotlights on Africa” to showcase progress on the continent across the following sectors: Health, Infrastructure and Industrialization, Culture and Art, Youth, ICT, Gender, Peace and Security, Trade and Investment, AfCFTA, Climate Change, Agriculture etc., involving AU officials, private companies, civil society and African artists and celebrities to be held during the six (6) months of Expo 2020 with the aim to ensure greater visibility of Africa at Expo 2020 Dubai. See events:



Spotlights on Africa | Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Resilience:

The event created a platform for discussions on climate change issues; food security and allowed for various stakeholders and African countries who are champions in building green growth capacity and blue economy to showcase their best practices and share African solutions to global challenges;

Spotlights on Africa | Infrastructure Development in Africa:



The event brought together high-level personalities and thought leaders from the continent articulating the African vision for transformational infrastructure and energy development engaging stakeholders on the effective delivery of infrastructure and energy in Africa considering the already existing initiatives and frameworks as well as the investment opportunities in the sectors.



Spotlights on Africa | Climate-Resilient Solutions for Greater Food Security:

The event spotlighted integrated approaches to scale efforts to accelerate shared prosperity in the Sahel for food security, energy development, nutrition, mitigating drought and desertification, and the role of women and youth in restoring degraded lands and rural livelihoods.

Spotlights on Africa | Evaluating and Building Resilient Health in Africa with the Africa CDC:



The event provided a platform for Africa to present lessons learned and best practices for COVID-19 pandemic with a view to make healthcare and communities in Africa more resilient to upcoming pandemics and health emergencies.

Spotlights on Africa | Africa CEO Roundtable Conference:

This Roundtable Conference served as a platform to sensitize International and African private sector actors on the various trade and investment opportunities in Africa. And provided information on how de-risk trade and investment in Africa.

Spotlights on Africa | Africa Day (Honor Day):



This day was set aside to commemorate the African Union (AU) at Expo 2020 Dubai.

Other activities included AU partners with Dignified Storytelling to champion the African narrative. The



H.E. Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union at the celebrations of Africa Honor Day at Expo 2020 on Sunday 27 February 2022, Al Wasl Dome, Dubai, UAE

African Union welcomed the Dignified Storytelling initiative and its goal to bring more transparency, authenticity, balance, equity and respect to storytelling and transform the narratives we tell about the world we live in and its people.

Private Sector Engagement: Africa is Open and Ready for business

The African Union (AU) played a pivotal role facilitating collaboration and strengthening ties between African nations and the global business community. The AU's presence and active participation in at Dubai Expo 2021, provided a platform for African leaders, policymakers, and entrepreneurs to engage in high-level discussions on investment, trade, and economic development.

Through panel discussions, business matchmaking sessions, and investment forums, the AU highlighted Africa's investment potential, showcased its business-friendly policies, and encouraged private sector engagement. The AU's involvement in the

Expo Business Forum and the CEO roundtable served as a catalyst for unlocking business opportunities, fostering intra-African trade, and attracting foreign direct investment to the continent. It underscored the AU's commitment to promoting economic integration, sustainable growth, and inclusive development in Africa.

Through its various programs and initiatives, the Dubai Expo made significant contributions towards realizing Agenda 2063's aspiration 7 and fostering Africa's sustainable economic development.

The AU Pavilion at the Dubai Expo attracted a significant number of visitors, It served as a vibrant platform for promoting Africa's tourism, trade, and investment potentials, while also fostering greater understanding and appreciation of African nations and their aspirations. In partnership with our primary partner Afriexim Bank we welcomed officials from Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), Paramount Pictures, Uber, Canon, NBA Africa, Pfizer, Afro-champions, Master-Card Foundation, Fairfax Africa Fund, Shoreline Energy etc.

We also hosted high-profile government figures which include His Majesty King Letsie III of the Kingdom of Lesotho; the President of Sierra Leon, H.E. Julius Maada Wonie Bio; the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Eswatini, H.E. Cleopas Dlamini; the FIFA Secretary General, Her Excellency Fatma Samba Diouf Samoura, Former President of the Republic of Estonia, H.E. Kersti Kaljulaid, H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa; President of the Republic of South Africa and H.E Khalifa Almarar, the Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of United Arab Emirates to name but a few.

Celebrating Africa

The final and most prominent event of 2022 at the Expo was the African Union Honor day. This celebration saw the world pause to celebrate and acknowledge Africa, the powerhouse of 1.2 billion people.

The Africa Union Honour Day festivities were a grand celebration of African unity, diversity, and progress at the Dubai Expo. The day marked a special occasion to showcase the achievements, culture, and potential of the African continent. The festivities were filled with vibrant displays of traditional music, dance, fashion, and art, captivating visitors and fostering a deeper appreciation for Africa's rich heritage. Dignitaries, delegates, and attendees from around the world gathered to witness the vibrant parade, cultural performances, and engaging discussions on Africa's



Mafikizolo give an electrifying performance during the African Union's Africa Day Concert supported by Paramount Media / MTV base

development agenda. The event provided a platform for African nations to highlight their accomplishments, share success stories, and forge partnerships for future collaborations.

The Africa Union Honour Day festivities were a testament to the continent's commitment to unity, progress, and collaboration, leaving a lasting impression on all who participated.

Media Engagement

The African Union (AU) demonstrated its strong media engagement at the Dubai Expo, ensuring widespread coverage and dissemination of Africa's narrative and achievements.

The AU utilized various media platforms to showcase the continent's cultural diversity, economic potential, and development initiatives. Through press conferences, interviews, and media briefings, AU representatives effectively communicated the AU's vision, policies, and programs to local and international media outlets. The AU also leveraged social media platforms to engage with a broader audience, sharing real-time updates, videos, and photos that captured the vibrant atmosphere of the Expo and highlighted Africa's participation. This robust media engagement by the AU played a vital role in shaping the narrative about Africa, elevating its global visibility, and fostering a more accurate and positive portrayal of the continent's progress and potential.

After a six 6-month productive month of connecting minds and co-creating our collective future, the most incredible show ended on March 31st 2022. The journey that started 182 days ago has welcomed over twenty (25) million visitors worldwide under the theme "connecting mind building the future".

We want to thank our partners who walked with us through our Expo Journey and the 3 Million people who have visited our Pavilion to learn about our history, culture, and investment pathways in the continent.

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MIAKA 60 YA SUA-UA

60 عاماً على منظمة الوحدة الأفريقية-الإتحاد الأفريقي

60 ANS DE L'OUA - UA

60 ANOS DE OUA - UA

60 AÑOS DE LA OUA - UA