
**Welcome Address by H.E. Wamkele MENE, Secretary-General of
the AfCFTA Secretariat,
at the Welcome Ceremony in honour of H.E. Samia Suluhu
Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania**

Africa Trade House, AfCFTA Secretariat

25th May, 2022

- **Your Excellency, Samia Suluhu Hassan**, President of the United Republic of Tanzania;
- **Honourable Ministers – both from Ghana and the United Republic of Tanzania;**
- **Vice Presidents** of the African Development Bank (AfDB)
- **Excellencies of the African Diplomatic Corps;**
- **Senior Officials;**
- **Chief Executive Officers/Managing Directors** here present;
- **Chief of Staff and Colleagues** at the AfCFTA Secretariat;
- **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good Afternoon, everyone.

1. It is my great honour and pleasure to welcome Her Excellency, President Hassan and the distinguished delegation from the United Republic of Tanzania, on the occasion of her first official visit to the AfCFTA Secretariat.



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2. Your Excellency, we are deeply humbled by your visit, which follows similar visit last Monday, by His Excellency Felipe Jacinto NYUSI, President of the Republic of Mozambique.
3. We are pleased that you could find time out of your very busy schedule, in connection with the AfDB Annual Meetings holding in Accra – Ghana, to pay us this visit.
4. And it is a great honour to host you today as we celebrate Africa Day across the continent.
5. As you know, the celebration of Africa Day is an affirmation of our love for our continent and our pledge to ensure that Africa succeeds in all her endeavours.
6. To mark the occasion, permit me Your Excellency to share a quote by the founding president of the United Republic of Tanzania's, the late Julius Nyerere:

“Unity will not make us rich, but it can make it difficult for Africa and African peoples to be disregarded and humiliated. And it will, therefore, increase the effectiveness of the decisions we make and try to implement for our development”.

7. Your Excellency, we have also had the privilege, in our very short history, to host a number of Heads of State
 - a. His Excellency President Nana Addo Dankwa AKUFO-ADDO – 4th President of the 4th Republic of Ghana and Chairperson of the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government;
 - b. His Excellency João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço – President of the Republic of Angola;
 - c. His Excellency Felix Tshisekedi Tshilombo – President of Democratic Republic of Congo and the immediate Chairperson of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union;

- d. His Excellency President Faure GNASSINGBE – President of the Togolaise Republic;
 - e. His Excellency President Mohamed BAZOUM – President of the Republic of Niger;
 - f. His Excellency President Christian KABORE – then President of Burkina Faso; and
 - g. His Excellency President Issoufou MAHAMADOU – Former President of the Republic of Niger and Champion and Leader of the AfCFTA;
8. Your Excellency, your visit is, therefore, another manifestation of the very strong importance attached to the AfCFTA at the highest level of leadership on the continent and to the establishment of an African Economic Community, in line with the vision and aspiration of our founding fathers.
 9. Your Excellency, it is gratifying to note that under the leadership of your government, the United Republic of Tanzania has proven to be one of Africa's inspiring growth and turnaround stories.
 10. The new government has pointed to the right direction with regard to policies, which ensured that Tanzania's economy was one of few economies, to avoid a recession during the pandemic, which points to its resilience.
 11. And we welcome your accomplishments during this past year, at the helm of affairs as President of the United Republic of Tanzania, in particular the work you have done to empower women leaders in Tanzania as well as your efforts in support of human rights.
 12. Your Excellency, January 17th this year was a milestone date for Tanzania as it became the 40th country in Africa to deposit its instrument of ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and thus a State Party, with full rights and obligations under the Agreement.

13. Please accept our congratulations.
14. Since January 2022, three more countries have deposited their instrument of ratification bringing the number of State Parties to 43. It is our strong expectation that there will be additional ratifications in the course of the year, as we wish to have all the AU Member States become State Parties for the AfCFTA to operate at full capacity to yield maximum benefits.
15. As a State Party, the AfCFTA opens up an opportunity to Tanzania to expand its intra-Africa trade beyond the EAC and SADC to Central, West and North Africa; accessing the wider African market of over 1.3 billion people, to export its goods and services without the worry of tariffs thus bringing about more revenue for much needed development in the country.
16. Indeed, the AfCFTA offers Tanzania new markets for its agricultural products. Access to markets will stimulate production, strengthen the value chain of agricultural products involving smallholder farmers of sunflower, cotton, cloves, spices, fruits and vegetables.
17. In addition, the AfCFTA will help increase productivity and quality of Tanzanian products and services due to increased competition and thus lead to a decrease in commodity prices.
18. Other benefits include strengthening business partnerships while developing industries and entrepreneurs of the Small, Medium Entrepreneurs Group (MSMEs) and access to a variety of products in the country including transfers of technology.
19. Your Excellency, I am pleased to note that the United Republic of Tanzania is taking concrete steps to realise the potentials of the AfCFTA. The Government's US\$3bn manufacturing industry investment plan which will enable the country to trade in the AfCFTA market is a case in point and a step in the right direction.

20. In this regard, and to further strengthen your industrial development and boost intra-African trade, I would like to propose that you consider the opportunities for the development of regional value chains on the continent as identified by the industrial development initiatives of the Secretariat.
21. The first initiative, in partnership with the MasterCard Foundation, is the AfCFTA Private Sector Engagement Plan, which focuses on four initial priority sectors or value chains, namely agro-processing, automotive, pharmaceuticals, and transportation and logistics for quick wins, based on the potential for import substitution and existing production capabilities on the continent.
22. A related initiative, in collaboration with the UNDP and which culminated in the launch of the 2021 AfCFTA Futures Report titled: "Which Value Chains for a Made-in-Africa Revolution", identified 10 value chains, based on the tariff and services offers that have been exchanged among AfCFTA State Parties.
23. The identified value chains are for: automotives; leather and leather products, cocoa; soya; textiles and apparel; pharmaceuticals; vaccine manufacturing; lithium-ion batteries; mobile financial services; and cultural and creative industries.
24. With this, Tanzania investors will be in a better place to make sound decisions on where to invest to seize the AfCFTA opportunities.
25. Your Excellency, I am happy to inform you that the Secretariat is preparing for the start of commercially meaningful trading in goods and services across the continent, under the AfCFTA, as per the directives of the Authorities.
26. We are in the process of publishing the AfCFTA Tariff Book which will include rules of origin and the customs procedures that apply to products. Traders will be able to identify in that tariff book their specific products, know what rules of origin apply to each product and associated tariffs.

27. State Parties, including Tanzania, will also be in a position to gazette these legal instruments at the national level for full-scale implementation of the AfCFTA (Phase I) from a customs point of view.
28. The AfCFTA Phase II negotiations covering Protocols on Women and Youth in Trade, Investment, Competition Policy, Digital Trade, and Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) are at different stages finalisation.
29. It is our expectation that the negotiations for these outstanding protocols would be completed for full implementation of the Agreement this year.
30. The finalisation of all these protocols, especially the phase II protocols, will greatly contribute to deepening economic integration in Africa. With these additional protocols, we are further transforming the continent by removing physical and commercial barriers that have hitherto hindered trade among our countries.
31. Your Excellency, before I end my remarks, let me say that we are aware of concerns regarding the potential loss of fiscal revenue and some near-term disruptions and associated costs of implementing the AfCFTA agreement.
32. In this regard, the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Afreximbank, is in the process of finalising the AfCFTA Adjustment Facility for State Parties to access financial and technical resources to implement the Agreement and mitigate the associated costs.
33. Finally, on the Institutional front, we now have a strong Management Team which I am very proud of, with more women into leadership positions. I am proud that we achieved gender parity in just two years. We have recruited seasoned professionals to fill key positions and we are putting more focus on hiring capable young professionals who can form the backbone of this institution for years to come.



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34. I once again extend a warm welcome to you and wish you and your esteemed delegation great success in your mission to Ghana.

35. I am looking forward very much to working closely with the government and people of the United Republic of Tanzania in the successful implementation of the AfCFTA.

Thank you.