

African Continental Free Trade Area
Creating One African Market



The AfCFTA: A NEW ERA OF TRADE



ACCELERATION OF
AfCFTA
IMPLEMENTATION



TABLE OF CONTENT

02 FOREWORD

08 QUICK FACTS

09 THE GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF
THE AfCFTA

10 THE SCOPE OF THE AfCFTA
AGREEMENT

12 ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE AfCFTA

14 ROADMAP OF THE AfCFTA

16 IMPORTANT MILESTONES IN THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AfCFTA



FOREWARD

Dear Readers,

I am honored and delighted to welcome you to this much awaited AfCFTA knowledge booklet, dedicated to exploring the theme of the year: Acceleration of the Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (the AfCFTA). As we delve into the pages of this publication, we embark on a journey that celebrates the achievements, potential, and transformative power of the AfCFTA in shaping the future of our beloved continent.

The AfCFTA has emerged as a beacon of hope and progress for Africa, ushering in a new era of economic integration, collaboration, and shared prosperity. It represents a visionary initiative that transcends borders, connecting nations and unlocking vast opportunities for trade, investment, and growth. As we reflect on the achievements thus far, we stand in awe of the immense strides we have made together.

Since its launch, the AfCFTA has witnessed remarkable milestones, demonstrating the commitment and dedication of African countries to unite and build a stronger collective future. The ratification by a significant number of African Union member states showcases the unwavering determination to overcome barriers and establish a seamless trade environment that encourages innovation, fosters entrepreneurship, and unlocks new avenues for job creation, thus, addressing the urgent need to provide opportunities for our vibrant youth population.

The economic integration of our continent is not merely an abstract concept, it is a tangible vision with profound implications for the hearts and mind of every African citizen. It is an opportunity to break the shackles of fragmentation, overcome historical divisions and rise as a



united force on the global stage. It is an invitation to chart a new path of self- reliance, self- determination, and self- sufficiency.

Through the AfCFTA, we aim to diversify our economies, promote regional value chains, encourage the export of our homegrown products, ultimately reducing our reliance on external markets. By embracing the spirit of intra- Africa trade, we can stimulate industrialisation, bolster agricultural productivity and improved standards of living for our people.

As we navigate the path ahead, we are acutely aware of the challenges that lie in our path. The road to full implementation requires us to address issues of infrastructure, logistics, regulatory frameworks, and trade facilitation. It demands our collective efforts, resolute commitment, and creative solutions. We must harness the power of innovation, digitisation, and technology to overcome these obstacles and create an environment that empowers businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises, to thrive in the global marketplace.

In this special edition around the AU theme of the year, I encourage you to read and equip yourself with knowledge on the AfCFTA including its instruments and protocols that have been developed to enable a conducive environment for intra- Africa trade. We hope that as you read, engage, and envision this transformative power of the AfCFTA, you and all of us as a collective, seize this historic opportunity, laid down by our Forebears to shape a brighter future for our Continent- a future where collaboration triumphs over competition, where innovation thrives and where every African can fulfill their dreams and aspirations.

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together”
– African Proverb



Grace Khoza

Principal Communications Advisor,
AfCFTA Secretariat



FOREWORD

The operationalisation of the AfCFTA on 1st January 2021, was a milestone in Africa's economic integration agenda.

It marked the start of Africa's collective journey as an economic community.

The progress of the AfCFTA is of interest to a broad audience, both within the continent and beyond.



I am therefore pleased to present this knowledge booklet of the AfCFTA Secretariat, which focuses on the objectives, latest key economic indicators relevant to the continent, and milestones achieved since establishment of the AfCFTA.

This issue also features a factsheet on the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund, as well as other partner initiatives for the effective implementation of the Agreement.

I hope this issue of "A New Era of Trade in Africa" knowledge booklet will contribute to our outreach and communication efforts on the AfCFTA and the significant strides made so far.

H.E. Wamkele Mene

Secretary-General, AfCFTA Secretariat



Achievements of H.E. Mahamadou Issoufou,

Former President of the Republic of Niger, since beginning of tenure as Champion of the AfCFTA

H.E. Mahamadou Issoufou, the then sitting President of the Republic of Niger, was mandated in January 2017, by the 28th Assembly of Heads of States and Governments of the African Union Assembly/AU/Dec.623(XXVIII), to champion the process of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA).

The purpose of an African Union Champion is to lead initiatives in line with the achievement of goals set by the organisation. As the AU aims to achieve “The Africa We Want” mandate, a role such as a Champion is critical to mobilise support and foster participation.

His role entailed ensuring progress in the establishment of the AfCFTA by concluding negotiations and report on measures taken to achieve the aforementioned. Subsequently, H.E. would be tasked to champion the implementation process and regularly report to the Assembly on progress made regarding the AfCFTA.

Under the leadership of H.E. Issoufou Champion of the AfCFTA, on 21 March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda, 44 Member States signed the Agreement establishing liberalisation of trade in goods and services, as well as settlement of disputes.

Furthermore, the AfCFTA Agreement entered into force on 30 May 2019 after the ratification of 24 Member States, of which 22 ratifications was the minimum requirement. The above, made the AfCFTA Agreement, the fastest negotiated Agreement in the History of the African Union.

On 7 July 2019, the AfCFTA was officially launched during the 12th Extraordinary Summit of the African Union, marking the operationalisation of the Agreement.

In recognition of his pivotal role and exemplary leadership in the establishment of the AfCFTA and its implementation as the Champion, on 16th July 2021, the AfCFTA Secretariat, the African Union, UNECA and Afreximbank unveiled a statue in honour of H.E. Mahamadou Issoufou in Accra, Ghana.

A black and white halftone portrait of Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana, looking slightly to the right. The background of the entire page features a geometric pattern of triangles in shades of gray and red.

H.E. KWAME NKRUMAH

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA

AT THE ORGANIZATION OF
AFRICAN UNITY (O.A.U) SUMMIT
MAY, 1963

““““

Unite we must. Without necessarily sacrificing our sovereignties, big or small, we can here and now forge a political union based on Defense, Foreign Affairs and Diplomacy, and a Common Citizenship, an African Currency, an African Monetary Zone and an African Central Bank. We must unite in order to achieve the full liberation of our continent.



ACCELERATION OF
AfCFTA
IMPLEMENTATION





AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA QUICK FACTS



54

AU MEMBER STATES HAVE
SIGNED THE AfCFTA
AGREEMENT AS OF NOVEMBER 2023



47

STATE PARTIES AS OF
NOVEMBER 2023



30

MILLION

PEOPLE WILL POTENTIALLY BE
LIFTED OUT OF EXTREME POVERTY



450

BILLION DOLLARS

INCOME BOOST IN AFRICA
BY 2035: **A 7% GAIN**



THE GENERAL 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 persons and facilitate investments building on the initiatives and developments in 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; and
-  Resolve the challenges of multiple and overlapping memberships and expedite the regional and continental integration processes.

THE SCOPE OF THE AfCFTA AGREEMENT

The AfCFTA Agreement covers the protocols and their annexes. The Implementation of the Agreement comprises:

PHASE I



TRADE IN
GOODS



TRADE IN
SERVICES



DISPUTE
SETTLEMENT
MECHANISM

PHASE II



INVESTMENT



INTELLECTUAL
PROPERTY
RIGHTS



COMPETITION
POLICY



DIGITAL TRADE



WOMEN AND
YOUTH IN TRADE

A black and white halftone portrait of H.E. Thomas Sankara, the former President of Burkina Faso. He is wearing a military-style cap and a patterned jacket. The background of the entire page features a geometric pattern of overlapping triangles in various shades of gray.

H.E. THOMAS SANKARA

PRESIDENT OF BURKINA FASO



Let's make the African market, the market of Africans. Produce in Africa, transform in Africa and consume in Africa. Let's produce what we need and let's consume what we produce instead of importing.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE AfCFTA



Commissioning and operationalisation of the AfCFTA Secretariat;



Launch of trade under the AfCFTA;



Launch of the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) in collaboration with the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank);



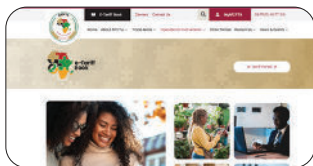
Signing of the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund Management Agreement with Afreximbank;



Launch of the new AfCFTA Website: <https://au-afcfta.org>



ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE AfCFTA



Launch of the AfCFTA e-Tariff Book on the AfCFTA official website



Launch of the AfCFTA Rules of Origin manual



Launch of the AfCFTA Initiative on Guided Trade



The first face to face AfCFTA Business Forum held in Cape Town, South Africa from the 16 - 18 April 2023



Reaching 47 State Parties as of November 2023, following the 47th deposit of the instrument of ratification by the Republic of Mozambique



ROADMAP OF THE AfCFTA

● January 2012 – Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The 18th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of States and Government adopted the Decision on « Fast tracking the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) for Boosting Intra-African Trade »

● June 2015 – Johannesburg, South Africa

The 25th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of States and Government launched the negotiations for the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

● March 2018 – Kigali, Rwanda

At the 10th Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of States and Government, 44 of the 55 African Union Member States signed the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA);

● 30 May 2019 – Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Entry into force of the AfCFTA Agreement, after the 22nd deposit of instrument of ratification by the Saharawi Republic on 29 April 2019.

● July 2019 – Niamey, Niger

The 12th Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of States and Government launched the operational phase of the AfCFTA. Start of trading under the AfCFTA Agreement began on 1st January 2021.



ROADMAP OF THE AfCFTA

10 February 2020 – Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

H.E. Wamkele Mene was elected first Secretary-General of the AfCFTA on 10th February 2020, at the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

19 March 2020 – Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

H.E. Wamkele Mene is sworn-in on 19 March 2020 as first Secretary-General of the AfCFTA at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

17 August 2020 – Accra, Ghana

The Official handover and Commissioning of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat Building.

1 January 2021 – Johannesburg, South Africa

Start of Trading under AfCFTA. 13th Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly on the AfCFTA

7 October 2022 – Accra, Ghana

Launch of the Guided Trade Initiative. First commercially meaningful trade under the AfCFTA agreement

IMPORTANT MILESTONES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AfCFTA

Finalisation of Phase II Protocols

The Phase II Protocols on Investment, Competition and Intellectual Property Rights have been concluded and were approved by the 36th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union.

PHASE II PROTOCOLS



INVESTMENT



INTELLECTUAL
PROPERTY
RIGHTS



COMPETITION
POLICY



DIGITAL TRADE



WOMEN AND
YOUTH IN TRADE

Guided Trade Initiative (GTI)

The AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative is a gateway to encourage continued trade under the AfCFTA, resulting in increased opportunities for SMEs, Youth and Women in trade and ultimately establishing sustainable and inclusive economic development. The guided trade initiative will serve as a platform for the participating State Parties to identify and share best practices, success stories and lessons learned in implementing the AfCFTA. In addition, the guided trade initiative will facilitate the monitoring of AfCFTA implementation and support the development of capacity-building programs. Ultimately, the guided trade initiative will contribute to the establishment of a more sustainable and inclusive economic development model for Africa.

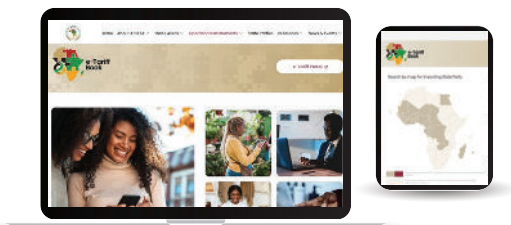


Among the 42 countries that have been technically verified (as of November 2023), the participants for the first guided trade were Ghana, Egypt, Kenya, Rwanda, Cameroon, Tanzania and Mauritius, representing all 5 regions of the continent. The Guided Trade Initiative is extending to cover trade in services moving forward; to propel African economies as an enabler of both trade in goods and services trade in a liberalised market in a specific services sector of the economy.



The AfCFTA e-Tariff book

The AfCFTA e-Tariff Book is part of the Digitalisation and Trade Facilitation journey of the AfCFTA Secretariat. It is a web-based electronic Tariff Book containing updated Schedules of Tariff Concessions, available for consultation from the AfCFTA website, aiming to facilitate the publication of information on rates of duty applied by AfCFTA State Parties under their Schedules of Tariff Concessions, enhance knowledge and capacities in the area of the use of tariffs, the Harmonised System (HS), commodity classification and organisation of tariff-related work within Customs administrations and other relevant stakeholders.





The Rules of Origin manual

The AfCFTA Rules of Origin Manual covers the provisions governing the determination of the origin status of Goods under the Agreement establishing the AfCFTA, the administration procedures of the rules of origin and organisational requirements for implementing the rules of origin. It has been completed and has been published in 4 different languages: English, Arabic, French and Portuguese.



The AfCFTA Adjustment Fund

The AfCFTA Secretariat and Afreximbank were mandated by the African Union (AU) Summit of Heads of State and Government and the AfCFTA Council of Ministers responsible for Trade to establish the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund to support AfCFTA State Parties to adjust to the new liberalised and integrated trading environment established under the AfCFTA Agreement.

It was established to support both the public and private sectors to address short term disruptions from implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement, while enabling the private sector to develop capabilities to produce value added goods and services that can be traded competitively within the continent and catalyse the emergence of regional value chains.

The Adjustment Fund management agreement was signed between Afreximbank and the AfCFTA Secretariat was signed on 9 February 2022.



The Adjustment Fund is composed of a Base Fund, a General Fund and a Credit Fund. The **Base Fund** will consist of contributions from State Parties, grants and technical assistance funds to address tariff revenue losses as tariffs are progressively eliminated.



It will also support countries to implement various provisions of the AfCFTA Agreement, its Protocols and Annexes. The **General Fund** will mobilise concessional funding, while the **Credit Fund** will mobilise commercial funding to support both the public and private sectors, enabling them to adjust and take advantage of the opportunities created by the AfCFTA. The General Fund will support African countries and the private sector to effectively participate in the new trading environment established under the AfCFTA.

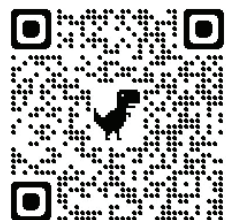
A host country Agreement for the Fund was signed with Rwanda for the hosting of the entity that will operationalise the Fund on the 10th of March 2023. Thus far, there has been approval and commitment by the Board of the Bank of \$1billion to support the funding of the initiative and a \$10million grant funding that will facilitate the establishment and operationalisation of the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund.

On 29th September 2023, the inaugural board meeting of the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund Corporation was held in Kigali. The board members deliberated on key issues that will serve as a foundation for the successful operationalisation of the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund. Amongst these, included the appointment of the Fund for Export Development in Africa (FEDA), the impact investment platform of African Export-Import Bank, as the Fund Manager for the Adjustment Fund.

Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS)

PAPSS is a centralised Financial Market Infrastructure enabling the efficient and secure flow of money across African borders. The platform minimises risk and contributes to financial integration across the regions. PAPSS is an African Union infrastructure developed in collaboration with the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) to complement trading under the AfCFTA.

PAPSS works in collaboration with central banks in the continent to provide a payment and settlement service to which commercial banks, payment service providers and fintech organisations across the continent can connect as participants.



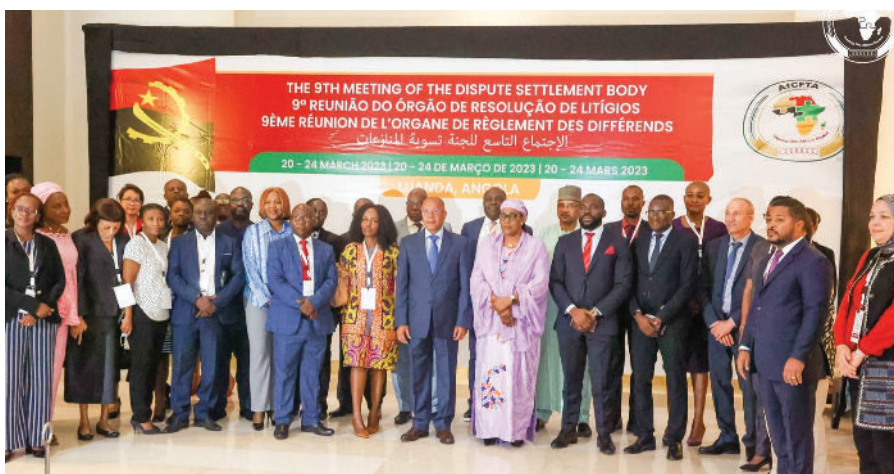


As of March 2023, the PAPSS network consists of 9 central banks, 60 commercial banks and 4 six switches. It will expand into the five regions of Africa before the end of 2023. All Central banks are to sign up by the end of 2024 and all commercial banks by the end of 2025.

On 27th October 2023, PAPSS marked history with all eleven Central Banks in the Caribbean region (CARICOM), unanimously adopting it as the preferred system for processing the settlement of intra-regional trade transactions.

Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM)

State Parties of the AfCFTA will be able to settle disputes related to trade thanks to the DSM. As part of the Protocol on Rules of procedure, the AfCFTA Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) has been established and the first members of the Appellate Body were sworn in on 24 March 2023. The latter are representatives of the State Parties whose role is to maintain surveillance of implementation of rulings and recommendations of the Panels and Appellate Body, and to authorise the suspension of concessions and other obligations under the AfCFTA Agreement.





AfCFTA Hub

A fragmented trading environment in Africa, characterized by complex compliance requirements, poor logistic links, and non-tariff barriers, hinders SMEs, female entrepreneurs, and innovators from accessing market opportunities under the AfCFTA.

The AfCFTA Hub, launched on 29th August 2022, serves as a one-stop platform for regulators, traders, customs authorities, logistics, and retail operators to collaborate and work together. It aims to eliminate obstacles to cross-border trade, investment, and institutional integration, while accelerating the continent towards the desired Africa using AfCFTA as the engine of transformation.

Impact:

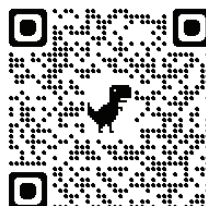
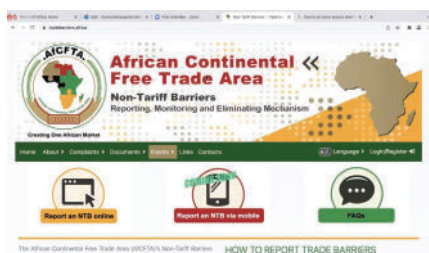
The platform has experienced significant growth and success since its inception, witnessing a remarkable 150% month-on-month increase in signups. Coverage spans 26 industry segments, with ongoing efforts for further expansion. Empowerment of women is a priority, as demonstrated by 55% female beneficiaries. Moreover, support for SMEs is evident, with these businesses accounting for 90% of beneficiaries. The platform's representation extends across 39 African countries, showcasing the continental reach of the initiative. High engagement has also been observed, with participating retail nodes experiencing an average footfall traffic of 150,000 per month. Maintaining this momentum remains a priority, as the focus continues on driving growth, inclusivity, and innovation



NTB Online Reporting Mechanism

African businesses face non-tariff barriers (NTBs) when trading goods across intra-African borders, including excessive delays, ad hoc fees, cumbersome document requirements, and restrictive product standards and regulations. These NTBs hinder trade and limit economic growth within the continent.

The AfCFTA's Non-Tariff Barriers online reporting, monitoring, and eliminating mechanism is a facility designed to enhance trade by removing NTBs. Accessible to businesses of all sizes, informal traders, women, and youth operators, the platform allows users to report obstacles encountered during cross-border trade. By addressing the reported issues, concerned government authorities, the AfCFTA Secretariat, Regional Economic Community (REC) units, and National Focal Points (NFPs) work collaboratively to resolve the problems, fostering a more conducive trade environment in Africa.



On AfCFTA Regional Value Chains:

Among the many objectives of the AfCFTA Agreement, one of them is the promotion of industrial development through diversification and regional value chain development, agricultural development and food security.

Notable progress in the implementation of the four key value chains identified under the AfCFTA Private Sector strategy has been made, based on their potential to increase intra-African trade, production and inclusivity, namely: Agriculture and Agro-processing, Automotive, Pharmaceuticals and Transport and logistics.



*Agriculture and
Agro-processing*



Automotive



Pharmaceuticals



*Transport and
Logistics*

The strategy details key interventions per value chain and their implementation is coordinated with different partners, including development finance institutions, industry associations, agencies of the African Union, among others.

Investment

In line with Article 7 of the AfCFTA Agreement, the Protocol on Investment was adopted by the 36th Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union on 19 February 2023. The objectives of the protocol include among other things, the promotion, facilitation, protection and retention of investments that foster sustainable development on the continent. It also aims at the establishment of reform-oriented legal and institutional framework for investments as well as enhancing intra-African investment flows.

The Protocol is anchored on 4 main pillars: investment promotion, investment protection, investment facilitation and sustainable development, all of which have Africa-focused innovative elements to accelerate the attraction, retention and expansion of the right quality of sustainable investments for Africa's economic development.

With the Protocol on Investment now established, the AfCFTA Secretariat is ready to support African governments in its implementation to translate the expectations of the Protocol from policy declarations to actual economic gains and enhanced investment experience for investors on the continent. Once fully in force, it will set a new standard for investment agreements in Africa and beyond, enabling a promising step towards making Africa a more attractive destination for investment.



H.E. ALHAJI ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA

PRIME MINISTER OF THE FEDERATION OF NIGERIA

AT THE ORGANIZATION OF
AFRICAN UNITY (O.A.U) SUMMIT
MAY, 1963

““”

I think we will arrive at a very successful establishment of an African Common Market, because I think it is good for the trade of Africa. For example, the inter-State trade in Africa is 10 per cent, and 90 per cent is done with countries outside Africa. There is no reason why we should not increase the inter-State trade on this Continent.



AfCFTA Secretariat
<https://au-afcfta.org>