*DRAFT*

**SPEAKING NOTES**

**FOR**

**HIS EXCELLENCY WAMKELE MENE**

**SECRETARY-GENERAL, AfCFTA SECRETARIAT**

**STATEMENT**

**AFRICA PROSPERITY DIALOGUES 2024**

**BUSINESS AND POLICY LEADERS DIALOGUES**

**Theme: “Delivering Prosperity in Africa: Produce. Add Value. Trade.”**

**Peduase Presidential Lodge, Aburi Hills, Ghana**

**Thursday, 25 January 2024**

* **H.E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana,**
* **Executuve SeHonourable Ministers here present,**
* **Executive Chairman of APN**
* **Njack Kane, Acting CEO, APN Secretariat,**
* **Excellencies,**
* **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:**

1. I extend my warmest greetings on this auspicious occasion of the 2nd Business and Policy Leaders Dialogues of the Africa Prosperity Dialogues 2024.
2. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the people and Government of Ghana for graciously hosting this significant event.
3. A special note of appreciation is due to H.E., President Akufo-Addo, the entire Government of the Republic of Ghana and the Africa Prosperity Network (APN) for co-organizing the annual Africa Prosperity Dialogues with the AfCFTA Secretariat.
4. Today, we are privileged to have a diverse assembly of business leaders from across our continent. Your involvement is crucial as we engage in much-needed conversations aimed at fostering sustainable development through the realization of Agenda 2063 and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
5. Your contributions go beyond the confines of your respective fields of expertise. As leaders and visionaries, your influence is key to fostering strong public-private partnerships, which are essential to achieving our shared goals.
6. This gathering, therefore, presents us with a unique opportunity to hear from private sector leaders on how to further mobilize the sector towards the effective implementation of the AfCFTA and hear ideas and recommendations on various topics ranging from innovative business practices to unlocking the potential of our continent in food and agribusiness, and in harnessing the value of Africa’s natural resources.
7. As we proceed, let us keep in mind the overarching theme of this year's dialogues: “Delivering Prosperity in Africa: Produce. Add Value. Trade.” This theme captures our collective aspiration of a prosperous Africa, achieved through enhanced production, value addition, and trade within the continent.
8. Towards this end, it is crucial that we deepen the one Africa market and prioritize products "Made in Africa." This approach is not just about reducing our dependence on imports from other countries; it is about actively engaging in producing and exporting goods that generate employment within Africa. This strategy will not only create local jobs but also ensure that Africa becomes competitive in the global economy of the 21st century.
9. The establishment of the AfCFTA represents a significant turning point in Africa's economic trajectory. Its successful implementation will not only unlock more value within the continent but will also actualize the broader vision of African development.
10. I am pleased to report that the agreement's implementation has advanced significantly, including the conclusion of the two outstanding protocols on digital trade and women and youth in trade, set to be adopted at the upcoming AU Summit.
11. Additionally, the agreement on rules of origin for a significant portion of tariff lines (92.3%), which account for a major share of intra-African trade (95.5%), lays a solid foundation for the AfCFTA. It is my strong belief that the outstanding negotiations on the rules of origin would be completed this year to pave way for increased trading in AfCFTA certified products across the entire continent.
12. Significant strides have been made in facilitating trade under the AfCFTA, including the development of robust trading documents, equipped with enhanced security features to ensure authenticity and trust in our trading processes.
13. Moreover, we have introduced innovative tools that are instrumental in this transformation. The AfCFTA e-Tariff Book, for instance, is a pivotal resource providing easy access to tariff concession schedules and rules of origin. This tool simplifies complex trade regulations, making them more accessible to traders across the continent. In addition, the Online Non-Tariff Trade Barriers notification mechanism represents a significant step forward. It offers a platform where traders can report and address trade obstacles, ensuring a smoother trade experience for businesses of all sizes, including those operating in informal sectors.
14. A noteworthy advancement in our quest to enhance intra-African trade is the introduction of the AfCFTA hub and the SMART AfCFTA, currently under development. These platforms aim to establish a trusted business directory, facilitating connections and collaborations among African businesses, streamline trade processes, enhance compliance, and provide real-time data and insights.
15. These efforts collectively represent a leap forward in our mission to create a seamless and prosperous trading environment across Africa. They underscore our commitment to leveraging technology and innovation to drive economic growth and integration.
16. The Guided Trade Initiative (GTI), now involving 31 State Parties, is producing success stories that demonstrate the benefits of this new economic path, particularly for Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs). and small-scale farmers. These developments not only lay a foundation for further progress and reforms but also highlight the transformative potential of the AfCFTA for the benefit of all member states and their citizens.
17. The growing trend of cooperation among the public, private, and small business sectors is crucial for supporting local businesses, creating sustainable employment, and facilitating trade of locally sourced and produced goods across borders in various regional economic communities (RECs).
18. Let us continue this path of economic transformation with commitment and collaboration, for the prosperity of Africa.
19. Indeed, let us use the AfCFTA as a development instrument, as its provisions extend beyond trade in goods and services to include investments, intellectual property, competition policy, digital trade and women and youth in trade. It also provides a dispute settlement framework to deal with any disputes that may arise in the course of trading among the member states, particularly disputes arising from the instance or occurrence of unfair competition and dumping.
20. As Secretariat, we are committed to helping our member states to maximize the benefits from the Agreement and to help coordinate with the Partners to ensure that the AfCFTA truly works for the people, leaving no African behind.
21. In closing, I urge us all to use this APD platform to sustain and amplify the momentum of implementing the AfCFTA and to further drive Africa’s economic resurgence. The deliberations and decisions we make during these dialogues are crucial to shaping our economic future and thus the destiny of the 1.4 billion Africans.
22. On this note, I wish us all very fruitful and constructive Dialogues.

Thank you.