

IOE/AfCFTA HIGH LEVEL DIGITAL CONFERENCE ON FOSTERING INTRA-AFRICA TRADE

Date: Wednesday, 24 february 2021

Time: 14:00- 15:30 (CET TIME)

Location: Zoom

1. Background

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a free trade area which, as of 2018, includes 28 countries. It was created by the African Continental Free Trade Agreement among 54 of the 55 African Union nations. This free-trade area is the largest in the world in terms of the number of participating countries since the formation of the World Trade Organization.

Having a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of business persons and investments through the African Continental Free Trade Area, is a targeted policy that will attract investments to job-rich areas and accelerate the establishment of a conducive environment for enterprise creation and development, as well as harmonized regional integration across the Continent.

In Africa, the private sector accounts for four-fifths of total production, two-thirds of total investments, and three-fourths of total credit to the economy and employs 90 % of the employed working age population. Inclusive economic growth has the power to transform societies, boost prosperity, and enable citizens to thrive. As the global economy is in turmoil due to the COVID-19 pandemic, creation of the vast AfCFTA regional market is a major opportunity to help African countries diversify their exports, accelerate growth, and attract foreign direct investment.

The IOE is the largest private sector network in the world, encompassing more than 50 million companies in 147 countries. For almost 100 years, in social and employment policy debates taking place in the ILO, to which the IOE is the sole representative of business, and across the UN, G20 and other emerging forums. The IOE is recognised for its unique expertise, advocacy, and influence as a powerful and balanced voice for business at the international level. SDG 17 'Partnerships for Goals' needs to be strengthened at all levels and determined collaboration between the private and public sectors needs to be promoted and enhanced.

It is within this context, that the IOE is undertaking efforts to bring together various stakeholders from the business world, key policymakers, and experts at the international

level. The sharing of best practices, policy guidance and recommendations will help to enable a conducive business environment, including for trade in Africa.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this digital Conference are to:

1. Raise awareness on the benefits of the AfCFTA for African economies
2. Engage IOE's network of employer organizations and business networks in promoting the AfCFTA.
3. Discuss strategies and good practices to effectively implement the AfCFTA at the national level.
4. Advocate for an efficient implementation of the AfCFTA across the African continent.
5. Discuss the Impact of Covid-19 and post-pandemic medium to long-term actions and strategies to foster intra-trade in Africa.

3. Who is the target audience?

Companies, Employer and Business Federations, Policy Makers, NGO's, and Government Officials.

4. Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes of this digital Conference are:

1. IOE's network of employer organizations and business networks and other stakeholders are made aware of the benefits of the AfCFTA.
2. Strategies and best experiences shared with a view of mainstreaming them in the short-term policy responses, to facilitate the implementation of the AfCFTA at the national levels.
3. Post Covid-19 actions, related to intra-trade in Africa- are identified and the mechanisms that need to be put in place.

AGENDA

Moderator: Mr. Amadou Sako, IOE External Advisor for Africa

14:00-14:05	Opening remarks by the Chair, Roberto Suarez, IOE Secretary General (5 mins)
14:05-14:10	Opening remarks by Mrs. Jacqueline Mugo, Secretary General of Business Africa (5 mins) <i>Business Africa and Employers organization in Africa</i>
14:10 – 14:15	Opening remarks: Dr. Francis Mangeni, Head of Trade Promotions AfCFTA (10 mins) <i>The AfCFTA and its operationalisation</i>
14:15 – 15:15	<p>Interactive remarks by:</p> <p>Ms. Cynthia Samuel – Olonjuwon, ILO Regional Director for Africa and Assistant Director General, ILO- International Labour Organization (8 mins) <i>With high youth unemployment in Africa, the AfCFTA can create jobs, but these must be decent and sustainable. What role can the ILO and its Constituents play in the implementation of an AfCFTA that takes into account social protection?</i></p> <p>Mr. Olivier Buyoya, Regional Lead - Sub-Saharan Africa - Trade & Commodity Finance at IFC - International Finance Corporation (8 mins) <i>According to a recent World Bank report (July 27, 2020), the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) represents a major opportunity for countries to boost growth, reduce poverty, and broaden economic inclusion. The successful implementation of AfCFTA would help cushion the negative effects of COVID-19 on economic growth by supporting regional trade and value chains through the reduction of trade costs. What does this new framework mean for The World Bank in Africa?</i></p> <p>Mr. Paulo Gomes, Co-founder of New Capital African Partners, President of the Executive Committee of the AfroChampions Initiative, Former Executive Director of the World Bank (8 mins) <i>The Afrochampions initiative: What is it and how is it promoting the African Continental Free Trade Area? How can the AfCFTA foster the emergence of “Afrochampions”?</i></p> <p>Ms. Aissatou Diallo, Senior Portfolio Manager for West Africa and Indian Ocean Regions & AfCFTA Focal Point, Office for Africa, Division of Country Programmes, ITC- International Trading Center (8 mins) <i>Given its mandate of empowering micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), the International Trade Centre (ITC) has an important role to play in ensuring that establishing a single market directly benefits MSMEs, in particular women- and youth-owned businesses. What does the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) mean for SMEs’ owners?</i></p>

	Mr. Mohamed Ndao, Founder and Managing Director, Okapi Supply Trading Advisory (8 mins) <i>The energy sector: a sector with specific challenges related to the AfCFTA</i>
15:15-15:25	Q & A session
15:25-15:30	Concluding remarks by the Chair Roberto Suarez, IOE Secretary General (5 mins)