



Aide-Memoire

1. Background and Rationale

In 2015 Africa made a significant leap towards integration with the launch of negotiations for a Continental Free Trade Area (FTA) at the African Union Summit held in June 2015 in South Africa. This step was taken in application of the decision made in January 2012, at the 18th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government, to initiate negotiations for a Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in 2015, aiming to finalize the draft agreement by 2017.

Agenda 2063 recognizes the CFTA as an important milestone towards the ultimate goal of creating an African common market of almost 1 billion consumers, and the establishment of an African Economic Community as stipulated by the Abuja Treaty and the Constitutive Act of the African Union. The CFTA is also a strategic basis for Africa's effective integration into the global economy.

Several studies have stressed CFTA's expected dynamic impact and benefits on growth and trade between African countries: stimulating industrialization, production, competitiveness and infrastructure connectivity. According to ECA estimates (ARIA V, 2012) making the CFTA a reality and additional facilitation measures for cross border trade could more than double the share of intra-African trade over the next decade, with the industry having the lion's share in terms of growth.

Considerable gains should by then be realized in some parts of Africa while significant progress is expected in other places. In Eastern Africa, for example, negotiations for the tripartite EAC-COMESA-SADC led to its actual launch in May 2015. It is hoped that other RECs (ECOWAS, CEN-SAD, ECCAS and UMA) will conduct parallel negotiations to create another trade area that will help make convergence easier. This new area would then be only a step towards continental agreements. Indeed, the BIAT/CFTA initiative proposes a new structure which includes a Trade Observatory and ABCs (African Business Council) and has already resulted in the setting up of principles and of an institutional framework for negotiations. The Regional Economic Communities has held a number of consultative meetings as part of this initiative in 2014 and sizeable progress has resulted from them in North Africa.

Indeed, two regional workshops on the BIAT/CFTA initiative were held in Rabat (4 July 2014) and Casablanca (28-29 July 2014). While the first workshop aimed mainly to define and adopt an efficient approach to the development of a sub-regional Action Plan/BIAT by consensus, the second led to the adoption of an actual sub-Regional action plan/BIAT, incorporating all the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) medium-term priorities pertaining to the development and facilitation of intra-Maghreb and intra-African trade. Following these two workshops, UMA has established a Maghreb working group in charge of implementing the BIAT action plan. Another working group was also set up to prepare the region for CFTA negotiations.

In this framework, the ECA Office for North Africa will organize the 10th Edition of the North Africa Development Forum. This Forum is meant to highlight efforts made to accelerate trade, not only among North African countries, but also and especially between North Africa and the rest of the Continent. The Forum aims to mobilize a wide range of stakeholders (academics, negotiators, economic operators, Ministry of commerce officials, media...) about the challenges related to intra-African trade and the institutional measures to face them.

The launch of negotiations is an opportunity to inform each of these stakeholders and encourage them to mobilize their networks for an active and informed participation in negotiations at various levels.

2. Objectives of the forum

The main objective of this Forum is to contribute to the improvement and deepening of trade between North Africa and the rest of the continent. It also aims to facilitate the sharing of views and experiences among a wide range of stakeholders on the challenges of trade integration in North Africa in the context of CFTAs.

The forum will gather regional stakeholders with a view to strengthen their knowledge about agreements, the impact of agreement on trade in North Africa and on trade between North Africa and the rest of the continent.

More specifically, the planned activities are designed to:

- Sensitize the North African private sector on the continental free-trade area and the role they are expected to play in the negotiations;
- Raise policy makers' and regional media's awareness on the needs and expectations of both citizens and the private sector, as well as their potential;
- Sensitize the media on the continental free trade zone, negotiation processes, and the role they are expected to play in terms of the support they can provide and raising public awareness;
- Contribute to the speeding up of negotiations in order to finalize the UMA Free Trade Agreement and the preparation of negotiations with the rest of the Continent;
- Provide the various players with resources produced by universities, to support their decisions and actions in the overall context of multilateral agreement and especially regional and continental free trade agreements.

3. Expected results

By the end of the Forum:

- The private sector will be well aware of the stakes of negotiations and the possible CFTA implications on trade between North Africa and the rest of the continent.
- The media, as a vehicle of change, will be sufficiently sensitized on the negotiations and the expected effects of the CFTA on trade in North Africa and on the populations.
- Academics will effectively support the process of negotiating UMA's free-trade agreements and the continental free trade agreement, as producers of knowledge and providers of decision making support.

4. Organization of the Forum

The Forum has three main components:

4.1. Component 1: Training workshop for the media on the continental integration process and North Africa's position

Details: a one-day training session, to be held at the beginning of the Forum in order for participating journalists to be able to cover later activities.

Participants' profiles: about 2 journalists per country, one French speaking and one Arabic speaking whenever possible. The hosting country may invite four journalists.

Participants should be economic journalists, except for countries where this specialty does not exist. They can be from TV, radio or written press.

Expected results from the training:

- Journalists acquainted with issues related to international trade negotiations and thus better equipped to inform the general public and entrepreneurs on their impact and the potential gains for their respective countries.
- At the end of the training, a network of journalists will be created (use KM platform or any other media to encourage online discussion) to stay in touch, share articles, information, etc. The network can be expanded to UMA experts, facilitators, private sector and trainers.

Indicative content of the workshop:

- Introduction: background information on free trade agreements: history of free trade agreements in general, and in the region in particular.
- Back to basics: what do Free Trade Agreements/Areas entail? What are their objectives? What makes a good Free Trade Agreement/Area? Why an FTA? Can it really help us? How much progress was made so far in the establishment of the Maghreb Free Trade Area?
- The information that matters in a Free Trade Agreement; interacting with the authorities to obtain information; examples of good and bad communication during the negotiation period; and examples of the impact of the press on negotiations and the success of a Free Trade Agreement.

4.2. Component 2: Private Sector Regional Workshop on trade integration challenges in the context of the CFTA

Participants:

Private sector representatives from the seven North African countries. The Forum will build on the organized structures based in the region and in the countries for a high level participation and a good representativeness i.e. participants will include mainly members of the Maghreb Union of Employers (UME), the Center of Young Business Leaders (CJD), the Forum of Heads of Companies (FCE Algeria), the Sudanese and Egyptian Commerce and Industry Chambers.

Themes:

The Forum will tackle, among other, the following proposed themes:

- Continental free trade agreements: background information and history;
- Negotiations for Continental Free Trade Agreements: general framework and sub-regional strategies;
- The tripartite EAC-COMESA-SADC ;
- The BIAT and CFTA processes in North Africa;
- The role of the private sector in negotiations.

4.3. Component 3: Colloquium on "20 years of the WTO, African integration and mega-regional trade agreements"

This Colloquium is organized in partnership with the WTO Chair of Mohamed V University-Rabat, the African Trade Policy Center (ECA- Addis Ababa), and the Laboratory of economy applied to development (LEAD, University of Toulon).

Colloquium themes

- WTO and multilateral trade negotiations: Doha Round stalemate
- WTO and development;
- WTO and dispute settlement;
- Interface between multilateralism and regionalism;
- Multilateralism versus "plurilateralism";
- Impact of liberalization on agriculture;
- Impact of liberalization on territorial activity redistribution;
- Impact of liberalization on services;
- Mega-Regional trade agreements;
- Regional trade agreements in the Mediterranean region and Africa;
- The African continental Free Trade Area;
- Trade facilitation, aid for trade and regional integration.

Format of the Forum

The Forum will be take place in five days and will be organized so as to facilitate discussion and reflection. It will include plenary sessions to discuss major issues, and will be divided into a limited number of parallel sessions on more specific themes. The forum program will be structured as follows:

	DAY 1 27 October 2015	DAY 2 28 October 2015	DAY 3 29 October 2015		DAY 4 30 October 2015	DAY 5 31 October 2015
8:30	Media workshop	Opening of the Forum	Plenary 4 of the Forum	Opening of the symposium	Plenary 2 of the symposium: Round Table of the WTO Chairs	Doctoral school (Symposium)
13:00		Break	Break		Break	
		Plenary 1	Plenary 5 of the Forum		Workshops of the symposium	
Lunch Time						
14:00	Media workshop	Plenary 2	Plenary 6 of the Forum	Plenary 1 symposium and launch of workshop activities	Workshops of the symposium	
16:00						
Break						
16:30	Media workshop	Plenary 3	Workshops of the symposium	Workshops of the symposium	Closing of the symposium	

Interpretation services will be available into French and English for the components 1 and 2 of the Forum.

Animation and contribution

Private sector stakeholders from the seven countries and guests from other parts of Africa will be present.

A number of personalities, representatives and experts, mainly from the UMA, Member States, private sector organizations, financial sector, workers organizations and the media will also take part in this event.

Several international cooperation representatives and experts including from the United Nations System, bilateral and multilateral cooperation organizations such as the AFDB, the IDB, the Arab League and the European Union will also be invited

Partnerships

The ECA Office for North Africa will organize this Forum in collaboration with the African Trade Policy Center, the Arab Maghreb Union, the Maghreb Union of Employers, the WTO Chair at Mohamed V University and the LEAD-University of Toulon.

Date and venue

The *Forum* will take place in Rabat from 27 to 31 October 2015. The component 1 and 2 will be held in Hotel Tour Hassan, Rabat and the Component 3 will be held in the campus of University Mohammed V, Rabat

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