



SIDE EVENT

Digital trade in Africa: implications for inclusion and industrialization

Background

The digital revolution is transforming the way business is carried out, production and trade, and presents a significant opportunity for the African continent to industrialize and catch up with the rest of the world. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is rapidly evolving and changing the traditional labour-intensive path to industrialization. At the same time, digital trade can be a tool to boost intra-African trade, which is more diversified and industrialized than the continent's trade with the rest of the world. It is expected to be supported by the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement and related efforts to spur continental cooperation on issues related to the digital economy. While the digital economy is prevalent across the continent, there is a substantial digital divide between African countries and the rest of the world. This presents a number of challenges for the African continent that must be addressed in a way that is consistent with inclusion, transparency, people-centred governance and the attainment of human rights. The side event entails a discussion on how the digital transformation of Africa can be used as a tool for inclusive industrialization through trade, drawing on the collaborative work of ECA with the African Export-Import Bank, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Friedrich-Friedrich-Ebert in producing the *2019 African*

Trade Report. The report is based on the theme “Digital transformation for intra-regional trade and industrialization in Africa” and is published by the African Export-Import Bank.

Critical questions for discussion

1. How is the digital economy changing the traditional path to industrialization?
2. What actions are required by African policymakers and businesses for African countries to harness industrialization opportunities in the digital age?
3. How can digital technologies support intra-African trade and diversification and, in turn, contribute to more predictable and sustainable tax revenues?
4. What are the main opportunities and challenges associated with digital trade for African countries?
5. How can digital trade be used as a tool in the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals?
6. How can the AfCFTA serve as a building block for cooperation on the digital economy with the aim of supporting human rights-consistent development?

Target audience

- Officials of the Ministries of Finance, Economic Planning and Industry
- Civil society
- Women and youth groups
- Private sector
- Development Partners and International Organizations

For further information, please contact

Lily Sommer
Trade Policy Expert, African Trade Policy Centre
Economic Commission for Africa
Email: sommerl@un.org

Venue, date and time

- Orangerie Room, Palmerie Golf Palace, Marrakech, Morocco
- 23 March 2019, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.