

10th

Session of
the Committee
on Regional
Cooperation and
Integration
(CRCI10)

Expert Group Meeting GETTING THE FUTURE AFRICA-UK TRADE PARTNERSHIP RIGHT

Tuesday, 31 October 2017

Caucus Room 10, 14-16 hrs
United Nations Conference Centre
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

For more information, kindly visit our website:
<https://www.uneca.org/crci10>



Background

The UK's decision to exit the European Union (EU) has significant implications for Britain's trade policy relationship with Africa. While Africa may not be a top priority for the UK trade policy post-Brexit, the strong historical links and today's meaningful trade relationship between many African nations and the UK suggest that Africa should not be overlooked by the British government. In addition, now is the moment to establish the foundations of a strong and mutually beneficial long-term relationship.

Urgent action is required to provide continuity in the trade relationship between Africa and the UK. An immediate priority is to ensure at a minimum that existing market access is retained for all African countries following Brexit. While maintaining continuity and avoiding uncertainty is crucial, there should be an attempt to replace existing EU Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with an improved framework that addresses the divisions created by the EPA process and its various limitations. The UK's new trade policy offers an unprecedented opportunity to introduce a more comprehensive framework that is more effective in supporting Africa's integration, industrialization and development agendas. There is a real risk of missing this opportunity if urgent action is taken.

Objectives

The objective of the session will be to advance understanding of the opportunities and challenges Brexit presents for African countries. In

doing so, policy options for effectively leveraging Brexit to support the achievement of Africa's development and trade objectives, at the same time as delivering win-win solutions that can also facilitate the interests of the UK, will be highlighted. The session will discuss how to get the future Africa-UK trade partnership right and will aim to answer five important questions:

1. What is the value of existing preferential access for African countries into the UK?
2. What lessons can be learned from the existing EU Economic Partnership Agreements?
3. What characteristics should a new UK Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) scheme have?
4. What are the expected implications of Brexit for African firms' costs of complying with quality standards and integrating into global value chains?
5. How can the future Africa-UK trade relationship be aligned with Africa's regional integration, industrialisation and development agendas?

Panelists

ECA, Overseas Development Institute and African and British trade experts.

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