



**Government of Rwanda**  
**Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning**



 Economic Commission for Africa  
Commission économique pour l'Afrique  
1958 - 2018

**22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts  
Sub-regional Office for Eastern Africa (SRO-EA)**

**Implementing the African  
Continental Free Trade Area in Eastern Africa:  
From Vision to Action**

**Concept Note for the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting:  
Trade Facilitation and Manufacturing – How to leverage  
New Opportunities in Intra-African Trade**

**21 – 22 November 2018**

**Kigali Convention Centre**

**Rwanda**

## I. Background

While Africa has increased its aggregate trade volume, the share of intra-Africa trade remains stagnant. In 2016, intra-African exports made up 18 percent of total exports, compared to 59 and 69 percent for intra-Asia and intra-Europe exports, respectively. Increasing intra-African trade is vital for the achievement of the sustainable development goals and most importantly the development of robust economies that can create jobs and wealth for the continent. We have seen the push at the continental level to create a single African market and remove the trade barriers that have severely limited intra African trade.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is the first flagship project of the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063 and a key initiative in the industrialisation and economic development of Africa. It is an ambitious endeavour spanning 55 member states across a diverse continent. The AfCFTA is expected to generate significant economic opportunities..Empirical analyses of the AfCFTA identify such gains: Mevel and Karingi, 2012 estimate that intra-African trade will increase by 52.3 percent (US\$34.6 billion), compared to a baseline scenario without an AfCFTA, by 2022; Chauvin et al. (2016) estimate positive long-run impacts, with the AfCFTA boosting Africa's welfare by 2.6 percent by 2027 .

In order to achieve the above goals and the vision articulated in AfCFTA, African countries will have to make a concerted effort in addressing both the tariff and non-tariff barriers that have and continue to hinder trade, investment and growth. The AfCFTA and other WTO related reforms will deliver the tariff changes sought however the more difficult are the Non-Tariff Barriers(NTBs) which require a more concerted and focused approach to harmonised approach to eliminating NTBs. Progress has been made both at the global level and within various RTAs on the African continent. For example, the coming into force of the 2017 WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement provided a framework for global efforts to reduce the cost of international trade by simplifying or harmonising the rules and procedures for exporting and importing. To support these efforts, the WTO and the developed countries recognise that many developing countries will need support in undertaking the reforms and as such have provided financial support in the form of Aid for Trade programmes.

In Eastern Africa and mainly in the EAC, there has been a concerted effort since 2009 to tackle NTBs. The establishment of Trademark East Africa tasked with coordinating the removal of NTBs and the harmonisation of trade policy, standards and regulations is one such effort. This and other trade facilitation initiatives have delivered some significant results – increasing the volume of trade, reducing transit times and simplifying customs

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processes and procedures. Nevertheless, more still need to be done to tackle NTBs in other areas – air transport, inland water transport, opening up transport markets to competition etc.

## II. Objectives of the AEGM

Given the importance of regional integration for industrialization in the region, it is important to tackle Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) and analyse how trade facilitation can boost trade and manufacturing in the region. Against this background, participants will be invited to provide inputs to the discussion and to review the following questions;

- a) What is the scale of trade facilitation in the Eastern Africa region?
- b) What is the economic impact of trade facilitation on trade and manufacturing?
- c) What are the challenges in implementing trade facilitation in the region?

## III. Provisional Programme

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018**

### **Presentations:**

- Mukwaya Rodgers, Economic Affairs Officer, ECA
- Patience Mutesi, Trade Mark East Africa
- Kato Kimbugwe, Trade Facilitation Expert

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2018**

### **Presentations:**

- Robert Opirah, Director General MINICOM Rwanda
- Peter Mathuki, Ag. Executive Director, East African Business Council

## IV. Participation

The AEGM will gather experts – economists, econometricians and policymakers - from Eastern African countries, as well as representatives of the private sector, civil society organizations, and other relevant institutions. For further information and clarification, please contact Mr. Mukwaya Rodgers, [mukwayar@un.org](mailto:mukwayar@un.org)

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## Bibliography

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