

ATPC NEWS

Africa Trade Policy Centre

The quarterly newsletter of the African Trade Policy Centre

Editorial

The first three months of 2009 were a busy period for the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC). The Centre was involved in several activities across its of service lines, including undertaking research, providing training, organizing workshops, creating partnerships and building consensus on trade-related issues.

This special edition of ATPC News includes a comprehensive report of a continental workshop on a Trade Facilitation and Aid for Trade organized by ATPC in Addis Ababa, as well as an article dedicated to the launching of the Pan-African Alliance on E-Commerce. It also reports on another workshop on Trade Facilitation organized for the Eastern and Southern Africa sub-regions and a study tour of the port of Walvis Bay in Namibia. Also included are an expert meeting on mainstreaming gender in trade policy organized by UNCTAD in Geneva, and the Fifth Session of the African Union (AU) Conference of Ministers of Trade recently held in Addis Ababa. Other articles in this edition of ATPC News cover the 16th Regional Course on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda held from 25 January to 12 February 2009 in Cairo, and a visit to ATPC of the Commissioner for Trade, Customs and Free Movement of Persons and Goods of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

ATPC is committed to continuously strengthening its capacity to deliver high quality service to its stakeholders. One way of doing this is by providing refresher courses, including on project management, to ATPC staff and indeed also to other ECA colleagues involved in implementing the Centre's activities. In that regard, The Canada International Development Agency (CIDA) organized a training workshop on Results Based Management (RBM) for ATPC staff from 24-26 March 2006. Highlights of that event are included in this edition of ATPC News.

Editor: Ambassador Peter G. Robleh

Workshop on Trade Facilitation and Aid for Trade Highlights Successes, Stresses Continued Work



Considerable improvements have been witnessed in various aspects of trade facilitation over the past few years, the head of ECA's Trade, Finance and Economic Division said.

Mr. Mahamat Abdoulayi made these comments during the Trade Facilitation and Aid for Trade workshop held at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 12-13 March 2009 un-

der the theme "Sustaining Trade Facilitation Gains through Effective Aid for Trade Strategies".

The workshop was organised by ATPC in collaboration with the ICT & Science and Technology, and the NEPAD and Regional Integration Divisions of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

In his opening remarks, Mr. Abdoulayi, noted that the theme of the workshop was quite relevant and timely as the event came at a time when discussions on the enormous scale and complexity of trade facilitation challenges overshadowed success stories across Africa. He dwelt on some achievements including customs reforms, introduction of Single Windows, and the creation of transport corridor management organisations, all of which have contributed to reduction in delays in the movement of goods in a number of African countries.

The Pan-African Alliance on E-Commerce was launched as part of the workshop. The objectives of the workshop were to share experiences and assess progress in the implementation of regional and national

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trade facilitation programmes and projects; identify ongoing donor support and funding gaps in regional and national trade facilitation programmes and projects as well as priority areas for consideration under the Aid for Trade Initiative (AFT). The workshop was also aimed at identifying elements for national and regional AFT strategies and contributing in articulating an African common position on the implementation of AFT.



More than 70 participants representing African ministries of trade and transport, customs authorities, chambers of commerce, ports and road authorities, transit agents, transport operators, shippers councils, Regional Economic Community (REC) Secretariats, academia and the private sector attended the event.

The workshop also benefited from the participation of the following regional organizations: the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Central Corridor, Walvis Bay Corridor Group, Southern Africa Railways Association, Ports Management Association for Eastern and Southern Africa (PMAESA), Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD), the European Center for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), and Crown Agents (an international development company).

During his speech, Mr. Mahamat stressed that sustaining the progress that has been made was a daunting challenge for Africa. He pointed out that transport costs remained relatively high with several contributing factors including poor infrastructure, numerous checkpoints in some corridors, and inefficient transport services. He added that missing links still existed in regional transport corridors including the trans-African Highways network and that railways were relatively old and needed extensive rehabilitation. He called on participants to reflect on ways to build on Trade Facilitation achievements on the continent.

Key recommendations from the meeting included the following:

- i) Studies on malpractices along transport corridors should, among other things, identify the number of checkpoints per country and assess why some countries perform poorly in that regard;
- ii) Corridor management institutions should develop a mechanism for sharing of experiences, especially on measures used in improving performance and attracting donor support;
- iii) The African Working Group on Aid for Trade (AFT) should work more closely with the RECs and countries to ensure coherence of AFT strategies and Action Plans with other initiatives such as the Almaty Programme of Action as well as with the decisions and recommendations of the African Union Summit of 2009 and the Conference of African Ministers of Industry on the subject of industrialisation of Africa;
- iv) A database of AFT projects should be developed in order to help in monitoring AFT at country and regional levels;

ATPC Plays Pivotal Role in Launch of Pan-African Alliance on E-Commerce

ECA hosted the launching of the Pan African Alliance on E-Commerce on 13 March 2009. The event was part of the workshop on Trade Facilitation and Aid for Trade organised by ATPC from 12-13 March 2009. The launching ceremony was presided over by Mr. Urbain Zadi, Director of the Office of Strategic Planning and Programme Management, on behalf of Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, UN Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary of ECA.



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In his opening remarks, Mr. Zadi noted that the launching of the Pan-African Alliance on E-Commerce was a milestone in the development of electronic trade in Africa and that it reflected the determination of African countries to work together in promoting international trade through the use of ICT. ATPC's support to the creation of the Alliance included the preparation of its operational modalities and by-laws.

Mr. Ibrahima Diagne of Senegal was elected as Chair of the Executive Committee of the Alliance. Others elected into the Executive Committee included Mr. Isidore Bihiya of Cameroon, Mr. Tahirou Diarrasouba of Cote d'Ivoire, and Mohammed Benayad of Morocco as First, Second and Third Vice-Chairs respectively.

The idea to create an African Alliance for E-Commerce was first discussed during the International Conference on Single Windows in Dakar from 5-7 November 2008, at which ECA and ATPC actively participated. The establishment of the Alliance is aimed at intensifying cooperation and initiating common projects of interest to African countries and sub-regions.



The importance of efficient information flows to facilitating international trade cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, this has become a major factor in the competitiveness of firms and agencies involved in cross-border activities. On a daily basis, international traders have to prepare and submit increasing amounts of information to various government authorities, with each authority often having its own specific systems and paper documents. These extensive information requirements constitute a significant obstacle to business and hinder the development of international trade. With increasing globalization, facilitating smooth flow of information has become a key requirement of governments

and businesses. Efficient information systems and procedures can increase the speed of moving goods significantly, reduce costs, improve business efficiency and enhance overall economic performance of countries.

Workshop on Trade Facilitation Calls for Corridor Management Champions.

Corridor management institutions need champions to help them survive and to tout their cause, a workshop on trade facilitation concluded.

The African Trade Policy Centre and the NEPAD and Regional Integration Division (NRID) of ECA organised the workshop on Trade Facilitation from 24-26 February 2009 in Walvis Bay, Namibia. Participant, representing Southern and Eastern African countries and organisations, visited the port of Walvis Bay as part of the workshop.



The workshop underscored the important role of the media in sensitising the public on trade facilitation issues including the work of corridor institutions and other stakeholders. It also noted that the media could play a key role in promoting regional integration in general, especially in ensuring that governments meet their commitments.

Participants expressed concerns about high transport costs in Africa and identified several contributing factors including poor infrastructure, numerous check-points, delays at borders, and inefficient transport services. They agreed that existing infrastructure at most African borders were quite old and underscored the need for improvements to ensure that they cope with increasing traffic.

Participants dispelled concerns that the proliferation of corridor management institutions could be a problem and that there could also be ongoing duplication

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of trade facilitation efforts by different RECs and between RECs and corridor management institutions. In that regard, they stressed the existence of close collaboration between the RECs and corridor management institutions and pointed out that these institutions are actually implementing the objectives of the RECs to facilitate trade and promote regional integration. Regarding cooperation between RECs, participants noted that the essence of the tripartite agreement between EAC, SADC and COMESA was the harmonization of policy instruments and activities of the three RECs including in the area of trade facilitation.

The workshop stressed that sustainability remained a challenge to corridor management institutions. Overall, it was noted that corridor management institutions needed champions to ensure their survival. For instance, the Port Authority and the Government of Namibia were the champions for the Walvis Bay Corridor Group (WBCG). Funding for the WBCG comes from these champions as well as from donors.

ATPC Participates at UNCTAD Expert Meeting on Mainstreaming Gender in Trade Policy

Trade policy makers need to pay greater attention to the potential impact liberalisation will have on gender, a meeting on Gender in Trade Policy concluded.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) organized the expert meeting on mainstreaming gender in trade policy from 10-11 March 2009, with financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Commonwealth Secretariat. The Secretary-General of the UNCTAD, Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, delivered the opening statement at the meeting. He stressed that the impact of trade policy on gender equality was a relatively new research topic, and that awareness of the linkages involved was only beginning to emerge.

Also speaking at the meeting, Ambassador Rosalyn Hazelle, the Permanent Secretary for International Trade, Industry, Commerce and Consumer Affairs of St. Kitts and Nevis, pointed out that gender inequality continued to exacerbate the impact of poverty and that trade growth had not served as a catalyst for alleviating poverty, especially among women. She stressed that many developing countries lacked adequate gen-

der-disaggregated data and added that mainstreaming gender in trade policy was a multi-stakeholder issue, involving not just trade ministries and women's organisations, but also national bureaus of statistics and other relevant agencies.

The meeting discussed the impact of trade policies on gender. Presentations were made on cases where trade liberalization had been associated with rising employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for women, as well as cases where trade liberalization had exacerbated existing gender inequalities and worsened women's economic and social status.

The meeting provided a forum where different stakeholders including members of the United Nations Task Force on Gender and Trade exchanged experiences and presented the main findings of their relevant work. It also provided an opportunity for participants to discuss relevant strategies to make trade policies more responsive to gender considerations. Within that context, specific policies and instruments were analyzed and their possible implementation at the national, regional and/ or multilateral levels discussed.

Furthermore, the meeting presented a platform for member countries to agree on possible activities that UNCTAD, in cooperation with the United Nations Task Force on Gender and Trade and other relevant stakeholders, could be requested to implement in order to further promote and advocate gender mainstreaming in trade policy.

ATPC Involved in Training of African Officials on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda



Improving the skills and understanding of African economic experts was the aim of a course organised

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tions Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The 16th Regional Course on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda was organised from 25 January to 12 February in Cairo, Egypt, (UNCTAD). Twenty-six participants from 20 African countries attended the course. The participants had a broad range of professional background and included representatives of ministries of trade and industry, ministries of external relations and regional integration, ministries of economic development, university lecturers and researchers from development institutes, banks, and trade boards.

The Trade, Finance and Economic Development Division (TFED) and the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) of the ECA collaborated with UNCTAD in the delivery of the course.



ECA contributed to the course by providing training on two modules: Trade Logistics, Transport and Trade Facilitation; and International Trade and Development. Other modules of the course included: Trade, Financial Systems, Microeconomic policies and Development in a Globalizing Economy; Foreign Direct Investment and Enterprise Development; The Knowledge Economy – Key Policy Issues; and Simulation Exercise on Trade in Tourism Services.

The presentations in the Trade Logistics, Transport and Trade Facilitation Module introduced participants to key issues in trade logistics and in transport and trade facilitation, with emphasis on Africa. Presentations covered several topics including global transport networks and transport infrastructure and services, and the use of information technologies in trade transactions. Special emphasis was placed on trade facilitation

measures presently being negotiated at the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The objective of the International Trade and Development Module was to provide participants with insights of several GATT and WTO agreements, particularly from the developmental perspective; the importance of the multilateral trading system; the rights and obligations of WTO members; the Doha work programme (DWP); and the development interface of multilateralism and regionalism.

At the end of the course, participants acknowledged that they had a better grasp of the relevance of trade and transport facilitation and the importance of information technologies in trade transactions at both national and international levels. They also indicated that they had a better understanding of issues related to multilateral trade negotiations.

EPAs and Aid for Trade Dominate Fifth Session of Conference of African Ministers of Trade Held in Addis Ababa

The Fifth Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Conference of Ministers of Trade was convened from 19 to 20 March 2009 at the Headquarters of the AU Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting was addressed by Elisabeth Tankeu, AU Commissioner for Trade and Industry and formally opened by Girma Birru, Minister of Trade and Industry of Ethiopia. Mandisi Mpahlwa, Minister of Trade and Industry of the Republic of South Africa chaired the meeting. A meeting of Senior Officials convened from 16 to 18 March 2009 preceded the ministerial meeting.



Photo by Engida Wassie

The main issues discussed at the conference included the status of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) at sub-region level, an EPA template prepared

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by AU in collaboration with ECA/ATPC, the state of implementation of Aid for Trade (AFT) as well as the forthcoming global review of the initiative, the current financial crisis and its impact on trade and development in Africa, and preparations for the Eighth AGOA Forum. Other issues discussed included the experiences of Mexico in Free Trade Agreements, as well as preferential schemes offered by India and China to Least Developed countries (LDCs).

The main recommendation on the EPA template, which was prepared with the support of ATPC, was that it should be regarded as a broad set of guidelines and considered as work in progress aimed at strengthening coherence in Africa's position in the EPA process. Recommendations related to AFT included the following:

- (i) AFT is an integral part of the Doha Round and that the principles that have guided Africa's approach to AFT, particularly that of securing additional resources should be reaffirmed;
- (ii) There is a need for greater collaboration, coherence and coordination at the national and regional levels to ensure effective implementation of AFT;
- (iii) Development partners should deliver, in a timely manner, on their pledges on AFT particularly in this period of global economic crisis;
- (iv) African countries should intensify their preparations and participate in the AFT process to ensure that the modalities for implementing AFT is effectively addressed at the 2nd Global Review; and
- (v) Procedures for accessing Aid for Trade should be simplified.

ECOWAS Commissioner for Trade, Customs and Free Movement of Persons and Goods Visits ATPC

The ECOWAS Commissioner for Trade, Customs and Free Movement of Persons and Goods, Alhaji Mohammed Daramy paid a courtesy call to ATPC on 18 March 2008. Mr. Gbenga Obideyi, Head of International Trade Negotiations Division of ECOWAS and Ms. Raheemat Momodu, ECOWAS Liaison Officer to the African Union accompanied the Commissioner.

Mr. Mahamat Abdoulaye, Officer in Charge of the Trade, Finance and Economic Development Division of ECA and the staff of ATPC met the Commissioner and his entourage.



The ECOWAS delegation was briefed on ATPC's activities and opportunities offered by the Centre in the following service lines: research, information dissemination, consensus building, and training. The delegation was informed of ATPC's commitment to mainstreaming crosscutting issues, notably gender, environment and HIV/AIDs in all its activities. They were also informed that building partnerships was a key strategy used by the Centre in implementing its activities.

The Commissioner highlighted a number of areas where ATPC and ECOWAS could work together, including: aligning commitments in World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations and Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs); appraising the EPAs negotiating process; and developing a regional trade policy for ECOWAS.

The main outcome of the meeting was an agreement for an ATPC team to undertake a programming mission to ECOWAS on 16 and 17 April 2009. The main objective of the mission would be to identify ways of strengthening the trade policy unit of ECOWAS as well as areas where ECOWAS could benefit from ATPC support.

CIDA Organises Training Workshop on Results Based Management for ATPC Staff

ATPC and the Canada International Development Agency (CIDA) jointly organized a training workshop on Results Based Management (RBM) from 24 to 26 March 2009 at the United Nations Conference Cen-

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tre in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. All ATPC staff as well as other ECA staff involved in the implementation of the Centre's activities attended the workshop that was conducted by Philip Cox, a Canada-based consultant. Ms. Therese Poirier represented CIDA the workshop. Topics covered during the training workshop included, elements of the logic model, risk assessment and mitigation measures, tracking progress of projects through performance monitoring plans, and reporting results.



Since its created in 2003, ATPC has been guided by a results-based management approach with its annual work plans designed to ensure that the Centre's activities are directly linked to expected outputs and outcomes. In addition, performance indicators have been developed to assist in continuously monitoring progress towards achieving expected results as well as in evaluating the project.

Information/Upcoming Events

ATPC Programming Mission to ECOWAS. 16-17 April 2009. Abuja, Nigeria

ATPC Gender Inception Meeting, 21-22 April 2009. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ATPC News is produced by staff of the African Trade Policy Centre of the Trade, Finance and Economic Development Division, Economic Commission for Africa.

If you have any comments on the contents of this newsletter, or would like to contribute to discussions, please contact Robert Tama Lisinge, ATPC/TFED, UNECA, P.O.Box 3001, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Tel: +251-11-5443 443; Fax: +251-11-5513038; email: tlisinge@uneca.org