

**United Nations Economic
Commission for Africa**



African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC)

CONCEPT NOTE

**Workshop on Trade Facilitation and Aid for Trade: Sustaining Trade
Facilitation Gains Through Effective Aid for Trade Strategies**

Addis Ababa, 12-13 March 2009

I. Background

Heads of State and Governments, in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, stated their commitment to efforts designed to ensure that developing countries, especially the least developed countries, participate fully in the world trading system in order to meet their economic development needs. They equally stated their commitment to supporting and promoting increased aid to build productive and trade capacities of developing countries. Indeed, new frontiers for technical cooperation are opening as African countries and RECs Secretariats seek to build their capacities to develop sound trade policies. Key among these emerging issues is the Aid for Trade Initiative launched at the Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference. The Aid for Trade Initiative was launched with the purpose of helping developing countries, the least developed in particular, to build their supply-side capacity and infrastructure needed to take advantage of trade liberalization and enhance their participation in the world trading system. In this regard, African countries and RECs are called upon to prepare Aid for Trade Action plans that would become the basis for designing bankable projects whose implementation would build trading capacity.

With the view to coordinating and providing leadership in the implementation of AFT activities in Africa, a Working Group comprising of representatives of AfDB, ECA and the WTO has been established with the following immediate tasks:

- Identify bankable regional and national projects in the priority areas of infrastructure, trade facilitation and standards (SPS) related issues;
- Coordinate with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and individual countries to agree on which among the identified bankable projects are ready for support, including their implementation time frame;
- Establish an African AFT network, comprising of AfDB, ECA, WTO, major donors, representatives of beneficiary governments and RECs;
- Contribute to the review of and development of monitoring and evaluation indicators for the implementation and effectiveness of the AFT.

In order to avoid duplication of efforts, in the AFT process, especially in the Trade Facilitation component, it is important to take existing initiatives into account while assessing the needs of African countries. Such initiatives have provided a wealth of knowledge on Africa's trade facilitation needs and in some cases implemented activities that have resulted in modest improvement in trade facilitation on the continent. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the Almaty Programme of Action for landlocked and least developed countries that has trade facilitation as one of its priority areas and has identified specific actions to be undertaken; the Sub-Saharan African Transport Policy Programme established by ECA and the World Bank in 1987 with trade and transport facilitation as one of its areas of focus; trade and transport facilitation programmes of Regional Economic Communities (RECs); regional transit corridor initiatives, and the

NEPAD Infrastructure Programme-which includes trade facilitation as an important component.

A new trade facilitation initiative worth encouraging is the project to establish the Pan-African Alliance on E-Commerce, introduced during the International Conference on Single Windows in Dakar from 5-7 November 2008, in which ECA and ATPC participated Actively. The establishment of the African Alliance on E-Commerce is aimed at intensifying cooperation and initiating common projects of interest to African countries and sub-regions.

While the importance of ensuring that the ongoing trade facilitation and AFT needs assessments are comprehensive, all-inclusive and avoid duplication of effort cannot be overemphasised, it is even more important to develop a clear implementation strategy for the resultant action plans. Having a clear picture of projects that have already been implemented, ongoing projects, and the donors involved as well as those projects that have not secured funding is essential for effective resource mobilization.

In light of the above, the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is organizing a workshop on Trade Facilitation and AFT from 12-13 March 2009. The Pan-African Alliance on E-Commerce will be launched as part of the workshop.

II. Objectives

The objectives of the workshop are as follows:

1. Share experiences and assess progress in the implementation of regional and national trade facilitation programmes and projects;
2. 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);
3. Identify ongoing donor support, implementation gaps and priorities of other supply-side constraints to global trade, including economic infrastructure and productive capacities;
4. Identify elements for national and regional AFT strategies and contribute in articulating an African common position on the implementation of AFT; and
5. Launching of the Pan-African Alliance on E-Commerce.

III. Expected Outputs

1. Update of progress in regional and national trade facilitation programmes and activities;

2. Ongoing donor support, funding gaps and priority areas in trade facilitation, economic infrastructure development and productive capacities identified;
3. Elements for national and regional AFT strategies and an African common position articulated; and
4. Pan-African Alliance of E-Commerce launched.

IV. Format of Workshop

The first day of the workshop will be devoted to trade facilitation issues and elements of other supply side constraints such as economic infrastructure and productive capacities. The second day will focus on issues related to the implementation of AFT and the launching of the Pan African E-Commerce Alliance. In that regard, the statutes and by-laws of the Alliance that are being prepared with the support of the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) will be reviewed and adopted.

IV. Participation

Representatives from Ministries of trade and transport, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), customs authorities, port authorities, chambers of commerce, transit agents, transport operators, international organisations, donor community and the private sector will attend the workshop.

V. Language

The workshop will be conducted in English and French.

VI. Date & Venue

The workshop will be held from 12-13 March 2009 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa.

VII. Follow-up and Contacts

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