



United Nations
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

AID FOR TRADE: PERSPECTIVES OF REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

**A SIDE EVENT OF UN REGIONAL COMMISSIONS AT UNCTAD XII,
ACCRA, GHANA**

WELCOMING REMARKS

By

**Mr. Abdoulie JANNEH
UN Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the United
Nations Economic Commission for Africa**

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Chairperson,

Mr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary General, UNCTAD

Mr. Bader Al Dafa, USG and Executive Secretary of ESCWA

Mr. Marek Belka, USG and Executive Secretary of UNECE

Honorable Ministers

Colleagues from the UN family

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to start by thanking all of you for making time to attend this side-event organized by the Regional Commissions of the United Nations, with a special focus on Aid for Trade. You will all agree that the initiative has gathered momentum since last year's regional and global reviews. It is now time for all of us to move the initiative to the next level. There is no doubt that there is ample awareness about what Aid for Trade is and what it is not. We now know what its scope is and the objectives it seeks to achieve.

You will however agree that unless we all take our various roles and initiate actions in relation to what was agreed at the global level, including on the Roadmap for 2008, there is danger that we will be waiting for each other to move first for us to act. The donor partners are saying that they made pledges in 2005 and have even started programming the resources towards AFT, but they have not seen concrete AFT plans with specific bankable projects at the national or regional levels. On the other hand, some developing countries could still be waiting to see the resources on the table before they can move to initiate AFT plans. In deed, they are calling for expeditious release of AFT funds and the question is whether they have clear AFT projects.

However, as experience has shown, the two processes (by developing countries and development partners) need to go hand in hand. By this time, developing countries at national and sub-regional level should have prepared or in the process of preparing their AFT plans, based on the priorities that are now well agreed. The development partners on the other hand should clearly show the resources available and start funding

specific programmes and projects where they exist in some of the RECs and are in line with the priority AFT areas.

The objective of this side event is for you to hear the perspectives from the different regions, especially how the Regional Commissions see the implementation of the AFT. Representatives of the Regional Commissions will make short presentations and then we will have an interactive discussion in which you distinguished delegates may wish to share your experience in the implementation of the AFT so far in your countries or regions. I would in particular like us to concentrate on sharing examples on what is exactly being done and try to avoid all those debates that we had during the time of the AFT Task Force. We have moved on as the review meetings showed last year, and we have an agreed Roadmap for 2008, and it is now upon the countries, regional and sub-regional organizations, multilateral and other international organizations, bilateral development partners, private sector organizations among others to state in their interventions what they are doing.

What are some of the examples that could be shared from the different regions in terms of concrete AFT Action Plans? How easy or difficult has it been for countries to design AFT projects? Are the development partners aware of existing AFT Plans and have they been approached for support? Are there any bottlenecks to implementation of the Roadmap for 2008 or do developing countries still expect the international community to lead the process? Do the developing countries realize that they are the ones to prepare their own action plans and do they know whom to turn to in case they require technical support? These are just but a few of some questions that we could try to discuss.

I would now like to hand-over to the Chair and once again, I hope we will have fruitful discussions in the short time we have. Thank you.