



AFRICA TRADE INSIGHT

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IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial	1
Lead Story	3
Thematic updates	6
Regional highlights	14
Inside ECA	17
Upcoming Events	19

EDITORIAL:

The AfCFTA Continues to Inspire: Focus on the AU Theme of the Year – “Acceleration of AfCFTA Implementation”

By Melaku Desta,
Coordinator of the
African Trade Policy
Centre (ATPC)



Dear Readers,

We are delighted to present the second edition of *Africa Trade Insight*, the ATPC Newsletter. Launched in February 2023, the quarterly newsletter aims to serve as a conduit for a two-way flow of information, ideas and insights between the Centre and the trade policy community in Africa and beyond.

In the very month when *Africa Trade Insight* was launched, African leaders adopted three important protocols to the AfCFTA Agreement – on competition policy, intellectual property, and investment –

which, together, take the AfCFTA further into the realm of domestic regulation. If anyone thought the AfCFTA was an ordinary free trade area, here is the answer. The AfCFTA is a lot more complex and more ambitious than the typical FTA that we see all around us.

As the AfCFTA policy organs keep making great strides on the negotiating table and beyond, ATPC is also busy on the ground spreading the word on the AfCFTA, publishing simplified guides on the AfCFTA, analyzing the implications of the AfCFTA for Africa's trade, climate, and carbon market, helping our Member States develop their national AfCFTA implementation strategies, and a lot more.

In this issue of *Africa Trade Insight*, our lead story focuses on the outcomes of the AU Summit in February 2023 which adopted "Acceleration of AfCFTA Implementation" as the Theme of the Year 2023. The three new protocols adopted by the Summit are covered at some depth in our thematic updates section.

Andrew Mold, of the ECA Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa, then discusses what he calls "the import of imports" and their catalyzing role for AfCFTA implementation, reminding us that the current focus on increasing intra-African exports needs to be matched by a focus on increasing intra-African imports.

Simon Mevel then introduces our ongoing work on digital trade in Africa, where ATPC is close to covering the whole continent collecting data on digital trade regulations and restrictions, building national datasets, writing national profiles, and helping Member States prepare themselves better for continental and global negotiations on digital trade governance.

Nahom Teklewold then reports an important event that ATPC supported during this quarter – the *Africa Regional Round of the John H. Jackson Moot Court Competition*, which took place in Accra, Ghana, from 8 to 11 March 2023.

Nadia Hasham then introduces work ECA/ATPC is leading together with Euromonitor International on *Pathways to Women's Economic Empowerment: A Sectoral Analysis*. Studies under this workstream aim to identify pathways to gender-inclusive economic development in Africa through in-depth examination of women's economic empowerment in thirteen countries.

The Trade & Regional Integration Updates section highlights major news items over the preceding three months. We discuss about COMESA training more than 100 SMEs on the 1st African Trade Portal, EAC intensifying regional integration, ECCAS Conference of Ministers in charge of Gender and the Advancement of Women, ECOWAS adopting key regional trade instruments & reaffirming commitment to multilateral trading system as well as SADC Council of Ministers discussing programmes, policies and interventions to consolidate regional integration and development.

This issue wraps up with a new rubric called Inside ECA, wherein we highlight the ECA Conference of Ministers 2023, the ATPC Third Steering Committee Meeting and the Informal Cross-Border Trade (ICBT) as a key to monitoring intra-African trade.

On conclusion, I call on readers of *Africa Trade Insight* to share comments and feedback by email at eca-atpc@un.org. We take your feedback seriously.

LEAD STORY:



“Acceleration of AfCFTA Implementation” – the AU Theme of the Year 2023

By Akere-Maimo Joseph, Knowledge Management & Communications Specialist, ATPC

The 36th session of the Africa Union (AU) Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 18-19 February 2023 adopted “Acceleration of AfCFTA Implementation” as the Theme of the Year 2023. In so deciding, the Assembly sent a powerful message to all Africans, individually and in groups, to work together to bring the AfCFTA promise to reality.

Speaking on the occasion of the declaration of the theme by the AU Assembly, AfCFTA Secretary-General Wamkele Mene described the AfCFTA as a powerful tool to tackle major African challenges such as public health emergencies and food insecurity.

The same Summit also adopted the three

Phase II protocols to the AfCFTA Agreement – on competition policy, intellectual property rights, and investment – thereby ensuring the AfCFTA is much more ambitious than a typical free trade area agreement. While welcoming the consolidation of the legal framework for the AfCFTA, the Secretary-General also highlighted the need to build on the theme of the year to create “commercially meaningful new market access across the AfCFTA market”.

To this end, the Secretary-General also reported on recent progress made in launching the Guided Trade Initiative, the establishment of an AfCFTA Adjustment Fund, the launch of the Pan-African Payments & Settlement System, and the creation of a fully functional Secretariat that has a 50/50 gender parity.

For more on this story, click here:

<https://au.int/en/theme/2023/acceleration-of-afcfta-implementation#:~:text=Theme%20of%20The%20Year,2023%3A%20%E2%80%9CAcceleration%20of%20Afcfta%20Implementation%E2%80%9D>





How to Catalyse AfCFTA Implementation: The Import of Imports...

By Andrew Mold, Chief, Regional Integration and AfCFTA Cluster, ECA Office for Eastern Africa

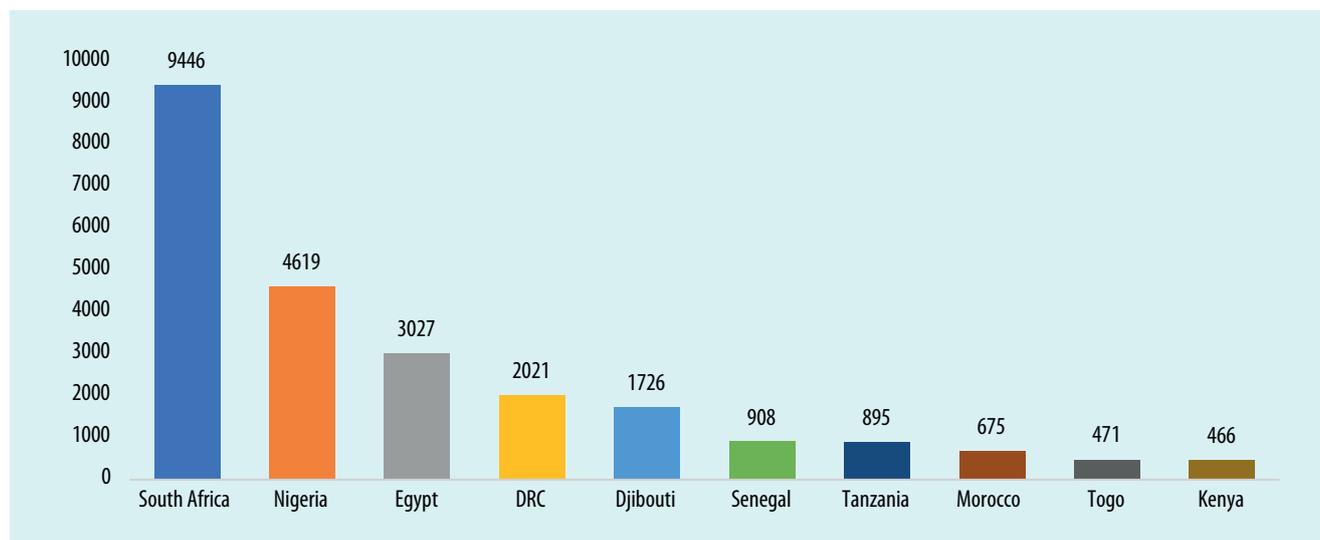
On the 1st of January 2021, the AfCFTA moved into its implementation stage. Yet if you scour monthly trade data on intra-African trade there is not yet much evidence of an upsurge in the amount of goods being traded under the new AfCFTA rules. The [Guided Trade Initiative](#) exposed some of the agreements’ teething problems – including a lack of familiarisation with the new AfCFTA documentation and knowledge of the precise tariff schedules among customs officials.

At this juncture, this is understandable, for several reasons. Firstly, [regional agreements take time to implement](#) – the EU took 11 years to establish its customs union, and a further 25 years until it established its own ‘single market’. Secondly, tariff elimination

is gradual, and the process will not be completed until 2034. Thirdly, there is a general consensus that removing – or, at the very least significantly reducing, Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) are a more important impediment to intra-African trade than tariffs. So, it will take some time for these barriers to be removed and their impact felt.

There is another less-commented dimension to the practical implementation of the agreement. Much of the emphasis has thus far been on promoting intra-African exports. But simply expressed, it is impossible to increase intra-African trade without increasing imports – for every dollar worth of intra-African exports, there must be a corresponding increase in imports. Here a

Figure 1: Positive Intra-African Trade Balances, in millions USD (average 2019-2021)



Source: Calculated from UNCTADStat (2023)

compelling case could be made that countries with large positive trade balances (with their continental partners) should make special efforts to increase their openness to imports from other African countries (Figure 1).

The good news is that it is much easier to remove import barriers than promote exports. Some countries are making efforts to identify new markets on the African continent for their export products. This is a positive development, but as any trade economist will tell you, boosting exports takes time and may require technological upgrades, enhancing quality standards, and adapting products to customer needs. It might also require broader measures in terms of mobilizing domestic and foreign capital, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, developing human capital and skills, building physical and digital infrastructure. None of these can be undertaken quickly.

By contrast, tariffs can be removed at the stroke of a customs officer's pen. The non-tariff barriers are going to prove more

intractable – but by leveraging the tools put in place, such as the [Continental Non-Tariff Barrier Mechanism](#), governments can respond quickly once NTBs have been identified. Granted, the widespread use of the tool has yet to materialize since meaningful trade under the AfCFTA is only just starting. As of [January 2023](#), only a handful of claims, six to be exact, had been registered. Yet it is expected that as preferential trade flows under the terms of the AfCFTA increase, so will the usage of the tool.

To sum up, if the objective is to accelerate the implementation of this path-making agreement, there first needs to be an unrelenting focus on removing the impediments to greater intra-African imports. By being more open to continental imports, [regional value-chains](#) will inevitably emerge, not by government diktat or through bold industrialisation plans, but through the private sector taking advantage of the new opportunities that emerge.



THEMATIC UPDATES



Africa's digital trade regulatory landscape

By Simon Mevel, Economic Affairs Officer, ATPC

The Covid-19 crisis has accelerated digitalization around the world, and particularly in Africa. According to a joint survey by ECA and International Economics Consulting (IEC) - administered in April 2021 - about Covid-19's impact on African businesses, 65% of responding companies operating within Africa indicated that they had accelerated their digital transition due to the crisis.¹ And Africa's digital potential is large. It is, in fact, the fastest growing region for mobile money² with over half of all registered active accounts located on the continent and two-thirds of the total value of worldwide mobile transactions made in it in 2021.³ Moreover, this potential is recognized at the highest levels with, for example, the 2020 African Union (AU) Summit of Heads of State and Government adopting a Digital Transformation Strategy and with digital trade being placed at the heart of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement via the inclusion of a dedicated Protocol on Digital Trade.

Unfortunately, only 40% of the African population had access to Internet in 2022 (both fixed and mobile networks combined), which can be largely explained by infrastructure and affordability issues. This is well below the World's Internet penetration rate at 66%. Moreover, Internet access in Africa is very uneven across living area (64% and 23% of individuals living in urban and rural areas, respectively, have access to Internet), gender (34% and 46% of females and males, respectively, have access to Internet), and country (with shares of the population having access to Internet ranging from about 2% in Somalia to nearly 90% in Morocco).⁴

In addition, and beyond much-needed infrastructure, digital trade regulation plays a key role in creating a conducive environment for African trade. Evidence suggests that restrictive regulatory measures limit Africa's exports and imports of both Information and Communication Technology (ICT) goods and digital-based services.⁵ Empirical analysis

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- 1 See https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/uploaded-documents/ATPC/reactions-and-outlook-to-covid-19/COVID-19_Africa-Impact-Survey_March2021_Final_English_Release_22042021.pdf.
 - 2 UNCTAD. Digital Economy Report 2021. Cross-border data flows and development: For whom the data flow", <https://doi.org/978-92-1-113022-5>.
 - 3 GSMA. *State of the Industry Report on Mobile Money – 2022*, [gsma.com](https://www.gsma.com/mobilemoney).
 - 4 According to the International Communication Union (ITU). See: <https://datahub.itu.int/data/?i=11624&e=1>
 - 5 ECA study on "Digital trade's regulatory environment: Opportunities for regulatory harmonisation in Africa" (forthcoming).

by ECA⁶ (forthcoming) confirms that the regulatory environment correlates with Africa's digital trade flows, as restrictions applied by African countries are found to be negatively correlated with digital trade.

It is in this context that ECA, through its African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC), launched in December 2020 an initiative on digital trade regulatory integration in Africa. ATPC is training national experts on digital trade data collection and compilation as well as building national datasets on both digital services trade restrictions and digital trade integration. To date, 41 countries have been covered through three successive phases and a fourth phase is planned for the remaining member States.

The information collected can enhance understanding of Africa's digital trade regulatory landscape and assess the readiness of African countries to effectively engage in digital trade moving forward. Preliminary findings indicate a wide range

of digital trade performance across African countries with some degree of harmonization required across the continent.

On average, key specific regulatory interventions identified to facilitate digital trade in Africa include: reducing intra-African tariffs on ICT goods; establishing a framework for intermediary liability protection; facilitating competition in the telecom sector to draw capital/innovation in Africa's digital trade; improving management of content access; signing and enforcing international IPR agreements, attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to develop digital goods and services; limiting restrictions on participation in public procurement on ICT goods and services as well as implementing and enforcing enhanced framework for data privacy and protection.

For further insights, please check:

<https://repository.uneca.org/handle/10855/49526>

and our online platform: <https://dtri.uneca.org/>



⁶ Ibid. Analysis conducted through gravity modelling.

Deepening the AfCFTA: Adoption of New Protocols on Investment, Intellectual Property Rights & Competition Policy



By Koffi Aseye Makafui Elitcha (Economic Affairs Officer), Mie Vedel Joergensen (Associate Trade Expert) & Nahom Teklewold (Trade Expert)

Africa is championing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) at a time when protectionism and nationalism have been on the rise globally. The AfCFTA is already the world's largest free trade area by the number of participating countries, aiming to establish a single market on a continent of 1.4 billion people and a combined GDP of close to US\$ 3 trillion. On 19 February 2023, the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted three new protocols to the AfCFTA Agreement – on Investment, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Competition Policy. The significance of these protocols in deepening continental market integration cannot be overemphasized.

The Protocol on Investment

The objectives of the Investment Protocol include promoting intra-African investment flows by establishing a balanced, predictable and transparent continental legal and institutional framework for investment complete with appropriate mechanisms for the prevention, management and settlement of investment disputes. A successful Investment Protocol will: (i) add free moveworkers, capital to the current AfCFTA portfolio that

contains elements of free movement of goods and services across Africa; (ii) allow African businesses to exploit investment opportunities beyond national boundaries; (iii) take investment decisions on the certainty that they can sell their products and services in a market of over 1.4 billion people; (iv) enhance Africa's capacity to produce goods and services necessary to trade across borders under preferential AfCFTA terms; and (v) enhance the capacity of the AfCFTA to make a difference in the lives of Africans as business owners, workers and consumers.

The Protocol on IPR

The Protocol on IPR aims to support realization of the AfCFTA's goals by establishing harmonized set of rules and principles on the promotion, protection, and enforcement of intellectual property. It covers a comprehensive array of IPRs including plant variety protection, geographical indications, marks, patents, utility models, industrial designs, undisclosed information, layout designs of integrated circuits, copyrights and related rights, traditional knowledge, traditional cultural expressions, and folklores, as well as genetic resources. It embraces the

notion of preserving the *acquis* at national, regional, and multilateral levels by providing a framework compatible with prior international IP treaties. It also boosts African designers, artists, entrepreneurs, and innovators to reap the profits of their creations, and thus fully unleashing the creative economy on the continent.

The Protocol on Competition Policy

Adopting the Competition Policy Protocol constitutes a great move in the process of continental integration. In the absence of safeguards regulating anti-competitive practices, businesses can abuse their dominant market positions through price fixing cartels, predatory behaviour that eliminates local competition and other market-sharing agreements. Competition is at the heart of making market economies functional. The purpose of the protocol is therefore to eliminate anti-competitive and other restrictive business practices for improved market efficiency and inclusive growth to ensure the gains from trade liberalization are not undermined by anti-competitive practices.

The Competition Protocol will play a key role in promoting healthy competition on the continent, accelerate the lowering of consumer prices, improve business practices, and thereby advance the continent's structural transformation.

In conclusion, the adoption of the three protocols by the AU Assembly is a testament to the political commitment to underpin intra-African trade relations with mutually agreed rules and institutions. AfCFTA State Parties must ensure these protocols are fully implemented through domestic laws, regulations and institutions. Creating coherence and synergy between the new continental norms and institutions, on the one hand, and their equivalents at the regional level on the other will be crucial for the full realization of the potential benefits of the AfCFTA.

For more information, visit our web blog:

<https://www.uneca.org/african-trade-policy-centre/blog-articles>





John H. Jackson Moot Court Competition 2023:

All-female team from Kabarak University, Kenya wins the Africa Regional Round

By Nahom Teklewold, Trade Expert, ATPC

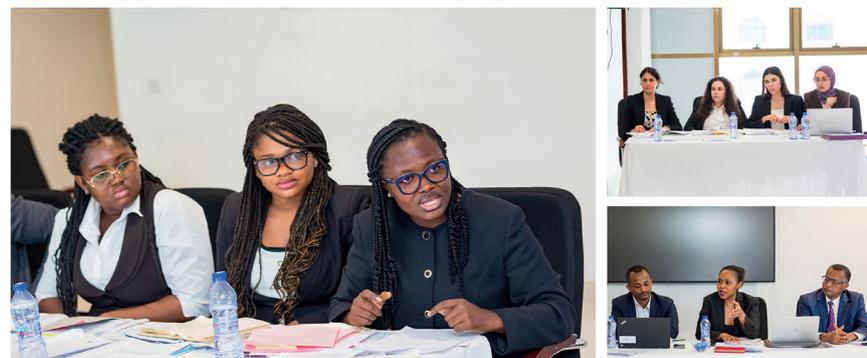
The Africa Regional Round of the John H. Jackson Moot Court competition took place in Accra, Ghana from 8 to 12 March 2023. The University of Professional Studies (UPSA) Law School hosted this year's competition. Over six days, 15 universities from 7 African countries gathered in Accra to showcase their mastery of international trade law. Four teams from Kenya, Ghana and South Africa advanced to the final oral round planned for 13-17 June 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), through the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC), is one of the prominent supporters of the Moot Court competition to

help African law students actively participate in academic discussions. The Moot Court has proven to be a powerful tool for capacity building in developing knowledge of the World Trade Organization (WTO) law and WTO-related studies in Africa. It provides a launchpad for young African lawyers to venture into international trade law and other related fields.

Also, encouragingly, African Law students are excelling on the global stage like, for example, at the 2019 European Law Students' Association (ELSA) was mainly historical for African students. For the first time, an African team from Strathmore University Law School won the competition's Grand Final, claiming victory over Harvard Law School.

ATPC supported the event by providing financial support, serving as the panelists, and publicizing the competition through social media. During the welcome reception organized by the AfCFTA Secretariat on the sidelines of the Moot Court competition, Melaku Desta, Coordinator of the ATPC, reiterated ECA's commitment to see the



Moot Court competition continue to serve as a platform for students to learn the WTO rules and international economic law. Melaku encouraged the AfCFTA Secretariat to consider hosting a similar Moot Court competition focused on the AfCFTA rules to prepare future generations of African trade lawyers who will litigate the AfCFTA in the dispute settlement system inspired by the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism.

The future of the AfCFTA in general and the effectiveness of its dispute settlement mechanism depend significantly on the skills and knowledge of African trade professionals. The Africa Regional Round allowed law students to better understand the international trade law required to implement the AfCFTA successfully while enhancing Africa's participation in the World Trade Organization. Moot Court competitions are fertile grounds for cultivating the next generation of trade lawyers who plead and defend Member States' commercial interests in front of the Panel and the Appellate Body of the AfCFTA Dispute Settlement mechanism.



Furthermore, during the closing ceremony of the Moot Court competition, ECA launched an information booklet titled "[*AfCFTA: What You Need to Know*](#)", in the presence of Samira Bawumia, the second lady of Ghana, who appreciated the ECA for working to create awareness about the AfCFTA. The information booklet asks highly technical questions about the AfCFTA and attempts to answer them in language that is accurate but also non-technical at the same time. The overall objective of the information booklet is to help enhance awareness about the AfCFTA among the business community and the general public.





Pathways to Women's Economic Empowerment: A Sectoral Analysis

By Nadia Hasham, Trade Policy Expert, ATPC

A consortium of research partners led by Euromonitor International and including the UN Economic Commission for Africa commissioned a series of studies to identify [pathways to gender-inclusive economic development](#) in Sub-Saharan Africa through an in-depth examination of women's economic empowerment in thirteen countries. This research can support ECA in identifying barriers to women's participation in key sectors that are critical for increased intra-African trade and amplifying drivers of women's economic empowerment to ensure women can leverage the benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement.

Existing agreements and initiatives at the level of regional economic communities can address barriers and provide opportunities for the drivers to take hold, such as promoting women in decision-making or access to labour-saving devices. The research assesses these good practices and identifies entry points, along three lines:

1. Structural: For instance, women's access to land rights. This affects not only agricultural productivity but also women's collateral and therefore access to finance. The studies indicate that much progress has been made in the African context legally, yet actual ownership rates are significantly lower than men largely due to the persistence of customary barriers to land usage and/or ownership, with the

resulting question: **are these laws leading to tangible changes?**

2. Normative: One highlighted aspect requiring further exploration includes new value chains where clear gender norms are not entrenched, leaving room for innovation. **How can we identify opportunities in these areas?**

3. Individual: The AfCFTA creates an incentive for formalisation and an opportunity for associations to provide aggregation services, skill development to mitigate risks, and peer to and peer learning between entrepreneurs. **How can we nurture these opportunities?**

One practical application of this research is in the design of national and regional AfCFTA implementation strategies that State Parties are formulating with the support of ECA, where gender considerations are mainstreamed. Since women can move to higher value-added work through participation in regional value chains, ECA's methodology calls for a gender analysis of the productive sectors,



which is limited by the lack of availability of relevant data – a gap that this research can help address, particularly the barriers to women’s participation in critical sectors.

The findings illustrate where women are currently operating economically but also opportunities for increased women’s participation in sectors that would benefit. The action plans of these strategies can apply the findings on the drivers of women’s economic empowerment and the best practices that can address the identified barriers to unlock opportunities.

The Agreement includes a landmark Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade currently being negotiated, which can solidify commitments and cooperation on addressing risks of increased trade to women and promoting drivers of women’s economic empowerment. To make this effective, we now need to be critical about the effectiveness – and



cost-effectiveness – of interventions. The framework developed and the evidence generated through this research provides a good basis for future policy work and engagement in this area.

For more information, click here:

<https://www.euromonitor.com/corporate-social-responsibility/pathways-to-gender-inclusive-economic-development-in-sub-saharan-africa-a-sectoral-analysis>



REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS:

COMESA: More than 100 Small Businesses Trained on the 1st African Trade Portal

The COMESA Business Council (CBC) organized a training together with the International Trade Centre (ITC) on the [Africa Trade Observatory](#), the first continental portal intended to unlock the continent's trade opportunities. Staff from more than 100 firms and public agencies were effectively trained in Eswatini and Zimbabwe. This portal is one of AfCFTA five operational instruments to drive intra-regional trade of small businesses. It is

an online dashboard that helps businesses identify and compare emerging opportunities across the continent. It provides integrated and reliable trade intelligence on international market performance and opportunities as well as market access conditions.

Source: <https://www.comesa.int/more-than-100-small-businesses-trained-on-the-1st-african-trade-portal/>

EAC keeps up the tempo of regional integration

Speaking during the launch of a flagship report titled 'The State of Migration in the East and Horn of Africa', President of the Republic of Kenya, H.E. William Samoei Ruto, called on the member states of the East African Community (EAC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to remove barriers to the free movement of people, goods and services in order to enhance regional integration in Eastern Africa.

Source: [President Ruto calls for removal of barrier to the movement of people to boost regional integration \(eac.int\)](#)

"I want to promise you that this might be the last time you are looking for a visa to come to Kenya because of two reasons. Number one, because this is home and number two, we support wholeheartedly the AfCFTA. We must remove any impediments to the movement of people around our continent," Ruto told the forum.

Source: [Kenya to scrap visa fees for Africa traders - The East African](#)

ECCAS: Conference of Ministers in charge of Gender and the Advancement of ECCAS Women

The three-day conference began on 25 May 2023 in Libreville, Gabon and focused on building an inclusive society wherein women and men enjoy same rights and contribute to the development of the region and the continent. The First Lady of the Gabonese Republic, Sylvia Bongo Ondimba chaired the opening ceremony of the conference, organized by the Government of the Gabonese Republic and ECCAS in partnership with UN

Women and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), under the theme: *“Building a Common Agenda in Central Africa for the Promotion of Women’s Rights and Their Empowerment”*.

Source: <https://ceeac-eccas.org/en/2023/05/26/opening-of-the-conference-of-ministers-in-charge-of-gender-and-the-advancement-of-women/>

ECOWAS: Adopting key regional trade instruments & reaffirming commitment to multilateral trading system

27-28 April 2023, the ECOWAS organized its 3rd Joint Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers of Trade and Industry (ECOMOTI) in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire to consider, approve and recommend key trade policy instruments. The meeting approved and recommended to the ECOWAS Council of Ministers for adoption, the ECOWAS E-Commerce Strategy and Implementation Plan (2023 – 2027), the ECOWAS Implementation Strategy for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA),

and the Directive of Consumer Protection. It also lauded the ECOWAS Commission for progress made in developing the ECOWAS Common Trade Policy; ECOWAS Trade & Investment Promotion Strategy; and Regional Trade & Transport Facilitation Strategy.

Source: <https://ecowas.int/ecowas-ministers-of-trade-and-industry-adopt-key-regional-trade-instruments-and-reaffirm-their-commitment-to-the-multilateral-trading-system/>

SADC Council of Ministers discuss programmes, policies and interventions to consolidate regional integration and development

18-19 March 2023, the SADC Council of Ministers met 2023 in Kinshasa, the DRC to deliberate on issues aimed at consolidating regional integration, cooperation, and development under the 42nd SADC Summit Theme, *“Promoting industrialization through agro-processing, mineral beneficiation, and regional value chains for inclusive and resilient economic growth”*. The meeting that was officially opened by the PM of the DRC, H.E. Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde Kyenge, responded to urgent need to enhance the

roll out of the SADC industrialization and market integration programmes in the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030. He underscored the need for enhanced peace, stability, and security to create an enabling environment for sustainable investment and economic growth in the SADC region.

Source: <https://www.sadc.int/latest-news/sadc-council-ministers-discuss-programmes-policies-and-interventions-consolidate>



INSIDE ECA

ECA Conference of Ministers 2023: Member States Urged to Harness AfCFTA for Economic Resilience & Inclusion

From 15 to 21 March 2023, the ECA convened its 55th session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (COM) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Composed of representatives of all ECA Member States, the COM is the primary platform through which the ECA sets its priorities and work programmes. Held under the theme “*Fostering recovery and transformation in Africa to reduce inequalities and vulnerabilities*”, the Conference committed to renew its focus on reducing poverty, inequality and similar factors that increase vulnerability.

After detailed deliberation on the issue, the COM2023 recommended, inter alia, that

African countries need to harmonize policies, laws, standards, and technical specifications across national borders to facilitate the smooth flow of goods and services under the terms of the AfCFTA, ratify all protocols under the Agreement and create a conducive environment for the private sector to take the lead in the building of regional value chains. The COM2023 also urged ECA to strengthen its AfCFTA-anchored pharma initiative, and to continue to provide technical support to its members, RECs, the AUC and the AfCFTA Secretariat to facilitate the smooth implementation of the Agreement.

Find full report here:

[E_ECA_CM_55_6_E.pdf \(uneca.org\)](#)



Third Project Steering Committee Meeting: ATPC Reaffirms its Commitment to Contribute to the AfCFTA Theme of Year

From 3 to 4 May 2023, the ATPC convened its third Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting in Accra, Ghana. The meeting took stock of ATPC's accomplishments in 2022 and reviewed and endorsed activities planned for 2023. The PSC is chaired by the Secretary-General of the AfCFTA Secretariat and co-chaired by the representative of Global Affairs Canada (GAC). The PSC membership is

made up of the ECA, the AfCFTA Secretariat, GAC, the AU Commission, the eight AU-recognized RECs, representatives of the organized African private sector, and trade policy thinktanks. The PSC meeting was preceded by the ATPC Partners' Coordination Meeting, which was held on 2 May 2023.

For full story, click [here](#)



Measuring informal cross-border trade is key to monitoring intra-African trade

Virtually everyone in the trade policy circles in Africa agrees that Informal Cross-Border Trade (ICBT) represents a significant proportion of intra-Africa trade today. However, there is agreement on little else beyond that. The main challenge has been the absence of an agreed methodology on how to measure the scale of ICBT. To address this challenge, the African Union Commission (AUC), with support from the ECA and the Afreximbank, established a Taskforce to guide the development of a harmonized methodology

for ICBT data collection. The methodology that was developed over the past two years was validated by leading experts drawn from National Statistics Offices, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the ECA, the AU Commission, the Afreximbank, cross-border traders associations and academia in a two-day hybrid meeting that was held from 1 to 2 June 2023 in Lusaka, Zambia.

For full story, [click here](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS

#	Event Title	Date	Country	Organised by:
1	43rd Ordinary Session of the Executive Council	13-14 July 2023	Nairobi, Kenya	AUC
2	AfCFTA Youth Symposium	19-21 July 2023	Lusaka, Zambia	AfCFTA Secretariat
3	AfCFTA Conference on Women & Youth in Trade	11-12 September 2023	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	AfCFTA Secretariat
4	Conference on AfCFTA Implementation Strategies: Towards an AfCFTA Implementation Peer Learning Community	3-5 October 2023	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	ECA
5	IATF 2023	21-27 November 2023	Cairo, Egypt	Afreximbank

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