



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

AD HOC MEETING OF EXPERTS

MALABO

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

26 SEPTEMBER 2019

« Impact of the African Continental Free Trade Area on
countries of Central Africa: Assessment based on a
computable general equilibrium model »

CONCEPT NOTE



Ad Hoc Meeting of Experts

African Continental Free Trade Area and Central Africa: Intensifying harmonization with the Economic Community of Central African States and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community –

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1. Background and justification

1. The Sub-Regional Office for Central Africa (SRO-CA) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is organizing the thirty-fifth session of its Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) from 23 to 27 September 2019 in Malabo, Republic of Equatorial Guinea.
2. The ICE is the statutory organ of the Sub-Regional Office for Central Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (SRO-CA/ECA). It was established as a strategic platform to promote dialogue and strengthen cooperation among high-level experts with the common goal of speeding up inclusive economic growth and sustainable development in the Sub-Region. The ICE is held annually to discuss key social and economic issues pertaining to the economic and social transformation of the Sub-Region and to make holistic recommendations for addressing them. The meeting also serves as a platform for discussing the state of regional integration in Central Africa and adopting coherent strategies to fast-track the process, especially against the backdrop of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
3. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was launched during the 10th Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) held in Kigali (Rwanda) on 21 March 2018. Currently, 52 Member States of the African Union have signed up to the agreement establishing the AfCFTA and 22 Member States have ratified it thus paving the way for the inevitable implementation of the agreement.
4. The AfCFTA marks the establishment of a common market of more than one billion two hundred million people and has generated hope among the African people. While the agreement is expected to accelerate intra-African trade, which is among the lowest worldwide and stimulate investments and production, sceptics argue that the agreement has a fundamental flaw that lies in the geographical impossibility of establishing common trade rules that apply across the very vast and heterogeneous African continent. So far, few studies have assessed economic the impact of the AfCFTA, but none of them has focused specifically on countries of Central Africa where intra-community trade stands at 1.7 per cent¹ and thus the lowest in Africa and in the world. During the

¹ ECA, 2018

2019 session of the ICE, ECA will organize an Ad-Hoc meeting of Experts on the theme “impact of the African Continental Free Trade Area on countries of Central Africa: Assessment based on a computable general equilibrium model”. The objective of the session is to carry out an ex-ante assessment of the impact of implementation of the AfCFTA on Central African countries.

2. Objective of the meeting

5. This ad-hoc meeting of experts aims to spark discussion on the impact of the AfCFTA on the Central African economies, make recommendations towards smooth implementation of the agreement and highlight solutions for mitigating any possible negative impacts the region. The meeting will also provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on innovative approaches aimed at defining national strategies on the AfCFTA.

3. Expected outcomes

6. The meeting is expected to come up with the following outcomes:
- Participants contribute to the multi-sectoral model developed for countries of Central Africa by suggesting improvements to make the tool better suited to the specificities of countries.
 - The outcomes of the modelling are relevant for designing a regional AfCFTA implementation strategy.
 - Participants make recommendations to ensure harmonious implementation of the AfCFTA.
 - Recommendations are made to mitigate the possible negative impacts arising from implementation of the AfCFTA agreement.

4. Format of the meeting

7. The half day meeting will build on a presentation on the study conducted by the Sub-Regional Office of the ECA for Central Africa on the impact of the AfCFTA on countries of Central Africa. The presentation will be followed by plenary discussions on the theme of the meeting and the related sub-themes.

The sub-themes to be discussed include:

- The issues and challenges related to the implementation of the AfCFTA;
- The economic impact of the AfCFTA on Central African countries;
- The mitigation measures for eventual negative impacts of the AfCFTA;
- The guidelines for designing national AfCFTA strategies;
- An approach for smooth implementation of the AfCFTA in Central Africa.

5. Date and venue of the meeting

8. The meeting will be held in the framework of the thirty-fifth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts organized by the Sub-Regional Office for Central Africa (SRO-CA) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on the 26th September 2019 in Malabo, Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

6. Participants

9. Participants will include a broad range of high-level stakeholders, including Government officials and representatives of major regional bodies (AUC, CEMAC, ECCAS), the private sector, bilateral and multilateral development organizations (AfDB, World Bank, etc.), entities of the United Nations system, the civil society and the Academia.

7. Additional Information

10. The meeting is organized by the Sub-Regional Office for Central Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

Focal points for the activity are the following:

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