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## **REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE PREPARATION OF LISTS OF CENTRAL AFRICA'S SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS FOR THE LIBERALIZATION OF TRADE IN SERVICES IN THE AfCFTA FIVE PRIORITY SECTORS**

**DOUALA, CAMEROON  
3 to 5 DECEMBER 2019**

### **CONCEPT NOTE**

#### **I. BACKGROUND**

On 21 March 2018, as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Conference of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) held in Kigali, Rwanda, 44 (forty-four) African countries signed the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Since then, 10 (ten) other AU Member States have signed the Agreement. AfCFTA is considered a key step towards the establishment of an African Common Market (ACM) and then an African Economic Community (AEC) - the ultimate goal of the 1991 Abuja Treaty. AfCFTA and the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade (BIAT), adopted in January 2012, are considered as pillars of the AU Agenda 2063. The major challenge of this ambitious market is to expand intra-African trade by removing barriers to trade in goods and services, facilitating investment, and free movement of persons across the continent.

The AfCFTA Agreement, which came into force on 30 May 2019, is structured around a Framework Agreement and 3 (three) Protocols, including the Protocol on Trade in Services. The latter comprises 5 (five) Annexes which are an integral part thereof and relate to: the lists of specific commitments; exemption from the World Trade Organization (WTO) most favoured nation treatment (MFNT); air transport; Transitional Work Programme for the Implementation of AfCFTA; the list of priority sectors and the framework document on regulatory cooperation.

In view of their significance for economic growth and development, as well as intra-regional trade in services, the AU Member States first chose to include into BIAT 4 (four) priority services sectors to be the first step towards service integration in Africa. These include financial services, transport, telecommunications/ICT and professional services. Because of its economic importance for AU members, tourism was later added to the four sectors to form the package of services to be liberalized in the first phase of AfCFTA negotiations on trade in services.

Market access negotiations for trade in services under AfCFTA's Protocol on Trade in Services should therefore focus on regulatory disciplines and governance for the continent to achieve tangible results. To this end, the effective participation of the Central African region in this process of continental integration implies that Member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) take ownership of the issues, methodologies



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and tools needed to prepare regional lists of specific commitments in the five priority service sectors of AfCFTA that are convergent and in complementarity with a coherent regulatory framework.

## **II. RATIONALE**

The imminent start of African continental integration of services by July 2020 is a strong reminder of the conclusions of the last AU Summit in Niamey on the launching of the Agreement establishing AfCFTA. This prospect is likely to materialize, on the basis of the AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services, the commitment of AU Member States to begin liberalization of trade in services at continental level through a process of specific commitments backed by harmonious regulatory frameworks in the five priority sectors.

However, owing to the methodological and technical requirements inherent in the preparation of such lists, the ECCAS Secretariat General is supposed to accompany and support its Member States in this exercise, in order to allow them at the end of this regional workshop, to come up with convergent regional lists of specific commitments in the five priority sectors of AfCFTA, consistent with the relevant regulatory frameworks.

## **III. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

The main objective of this regional workshop is to technically support and back ECCAS Member States in preparing convergent regional lists of specific commitments, consistent with the related regulatory frameworks, in the five priority services sectors. Such lists are expected to be submitted to the AU in early 2020.

More specifically, the idea is to:

- 1- Promote Member States' appropriation of negotiation techniques and tools for trade in services within the framework of AfCFTA;
- 2- Support ECCAS Member States in defining convergent positions that underpin the establishment of a services free trade area in Africa;
- 3- Build capacity and technically support ECCAS Member States in preparing lists of specific commitments that are consistent with the relevant regulatory frameworks.

Regarding outcomes:

- 1- Member States appropriate the negotiations techniques and tools on trade in services under AfCFTA;
- 2- The Secretariat General of ECCAS technically supports its Member States in preparing convergent positions that underpin the establishment of a services free trade area in Central Africa;
- 3- The Secretariat General of ECCAS builds capacities and technically supports its States in preparing lists of specific commitments consistent with the relevant regulatory frameworks.



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#### IV. METHODOLOGY

The Workshop will take place over 3 (three) days, in the form of plenary sessions and parallel sessions in French with interpretation into English, Portuguese and Spanish to enable active participation of non-French speaking delegates.

Discussions will be facilitated by expertise from the ECCAS Department of Macro Economic Policy, Trade and Industry (DPMCI), in a participatory approach. Accordingly, experts from the services of ECCAS Member States will have the opportunity to present and display national priority centres of interest. Emphasis will be on prioritizing the formulation of convergent positions on the expected regional outcomes.

Throughout the Workshop, discussions will centre on the following:

- ✓ Diagnosis of the liberalization of services at regional and national levels;
- ✓ Methodological approach in preparing convergent lists;
- ✓ Methodological approach in developing coherent regulatory frameworks;
- ✓ Negotiation techniques in the formulation of offers and requests;
- ✓ Central African centres of interest for regional and continental integration of services.

#### V. PARTICIPANTS

Under the chairmanship of the Assistant Secretary-General of ECCAS in charge of the Department of Physical, Economic and Monetary Integration (SGA-DIPEM), the Workshop will bring together 22 (twenty-two) participants:

- ✓ National experts from the services of the eleven ECCAS Member States;
- ✓ The ECCAS facilitation team;
- ✓ The representative of CEMAC;
- ✓ Representatives of sectoral services.

The following will also be invited to take part:

- ✓ European Union Delegation in Cameroon;
- ✓ The Sub-regional Office for Central Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

#### VI. DATE AND VENUE

The Regional Workshop on the Preparation of Lists of Central Africa's Specific Commitments for Trade in Services in the AfCFTA Five Priority Sectors will be organized from **3 to 5 December 2019, in Douala, Cameroon.**



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## VII. FINANCING

The organization of the Forum and the management of sponsored participants will receive financial support from the European Union through the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, through the African Centre for Trade Policy.

## VIII. CONTACTS

For purposes of monitoring the preparation of this Workshop, DPMCI-DIPEM-CEEAC can be contacted through: Mr Désiré Loumou, Expert-Consultant in services trade and investments by email: [loudesire@yahoo.fr](mailto:loudesire@yahoo.fr), or by phone: +24102841894.