



Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2022

Virtual Side Event jointly organized by UNDP, UNECA and UNCTAD

Towards enhanced partnerships to support an inclusive AfCFTA

28 February 2022

9 - 10'30 AM, Kigali Time (GMT +2) / 10 – 11'30 AM Addis Ababa/ 7 – 8'30 GMT

Concept note

1. Context

Fragmentation of African markets and barriers to trade have reduced the scope for businesses operating within the continent to trade with regional markets. In recognition of the opportunities an integrated market can bring to both consumers and producers on the continent, the AU member States established the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) under which trading commenced on the 1st January 2021. By unlocking Africa's trade and industrialization potential, the free trade area is expected to provide citizens with much needed jobs and income that strengthen resilience of national and regional economies and contribute to inclusive development, in line with the AU Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Also, post-COVID-19 recovery and structural transformation in African economies cannot be fully achieved without integrated markets.

The implementation of the AfCFTA presents a great opportunity for African countries to deepen regional integration, foster intra-African trade and achieve SDG 17 - *Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development* -, especially its targets 10, 11 and 12, related to the promotion of a universal trading system, increased exports of developing countries, and removal of trade barriers. The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting supply chain disruptions also suggest that Africa needs to produce and trade more of what it consumes: the AfCFTA has all ingredients to contribute to this. AfCFTA contributes to various SDGs, including employment creation and industrialization (SDG 8 and 9), creation of business opportunities for women and youth (SDG 4 and 5), poverty alleviation (SDG 1), and environmental sustainability (SDG 14 and 15). Among others.

The AfCFTA and SDGs nexus positions UN institutions as key partners to the negotiations and implementation. UNECA and UNCTAD among others have provided technical support to the AfCFTA negotiations while deploying efforts to support policy making towards an effective implementation. UNDP's interventions are realized through direct support to inclusive trade integration Agenda through collaboration with the AfCFTA Secretariat and actions focusing on small-scale businesses (mainly women- and youth- led businesses), including those operating at the borderlands. Interventions of the International Trade Centre have aimed to unlocking the potential of MSMEs to access AfCFTA markets while UN Women continue its support to the economic empowerment of women. Some of these interventions are being provided under the integrated framework, that is the UN Opportunities / Issue



Based Coalition (OIBC 2 which aims to *Ensuring effective and efficient macroeconomic management and accelerated inclusive, economic transformation and diversification*).

Against this backdrop, and considering the multidimensional features of the AfCFTA, there is a need to ensure continuing integrated support of UN and non-UN Agencies to the Africa's behind the border Agenda

This side event is therefore organised to discuss how synergies can be maintained across UN and non-UN Agencies as they scale up partnerships (SDG17) to support an inclusive AfCFTA that ensures economic opportunities and resources accessible to all, especially women. Key outcomes of the discussions will contribute to inform the deliberations of the ARFSD and set the pathways for more collaborative interventions between UN Agencies under the OIBC – 2, which has identified the AfCFTA as a core thematic focus.

2. Objectives:

- Discuss optimization of approaches of UN and non-UN institutions to the AfCFTA process and how to build more synergies towards achieving an inclusive AfCFTA that benefits women and youth
- Learn best practices from beneficiaries and identify ways to scale up interventions in a coordinated manner
- Identify common areas on institutional support to the realization of an inclusive AfCFTA that leaves no one behind.

3. Organizational arrangement

3.1 Format and panelists

The side event will be fully virtual with interpretation available in both English and French. The panel will consist of keynote speakers and discussants from UN and non-UN institutions, the AfCFTA Secretariat, member states and the private sector.

3.2 Participants

The meeting will gather representatives from UN and Non-UN agencies, Government representatives, the private sector, civil society and multilateral organizations involved in the AfCFTA.

4. Contact

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