

Executive Workshop

The African Continental Free Trade Area: challenges and opportunities

8 - 9 November 2022

Online + Cappella - Villa Schifanoia, Via Boccaccio 121 - Florence

Scientific organisers:

Bernard Hoekman | European University Institute

Stefano Inama | UNCTAD

* All times indicated in the programme are CET *

Introduction

UNCTAD and the Global Governance Programme at the European University Institute (EUI) have developed a research and capacity-building programme to assist policy makers and the private sector on specific operationally-important international economic law and policy areas. This programme has been instrumental in supporting the WTO LDC group to the Nairobi Decision on preferential rules of origin for LDCs, holding a series of high-level round tables on rules of origin, and most recently, exploring new approaches to trade facilitation for West African countries.

Most recently, many LDCs and developing countries have entered mega-regional free trade areas such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Regional Economic Partnership Agreements (RCEP). There are wide expectations of economic prosperity arising from these mega-regional agreements that cover several disciplines encompassing trade in services, goods, and investment in E-Commerce and digital services. Yet the effective implementation of such agreements and the depth of effective trade liberalisation will largely determine their success.

As the first implementation steps of AfCFTA have proven challenging for governments and firms, UNCTAD and the Global Governance Programme are organising a roundtable of experts on AfCFTA implementation to discuss the ongoing developments and updates. The aim of the workshop is to provide the necessary room for reflection and identification of possible approaches to facilitate AfCFTA implementation, including tailored research and capacity-building programmes and the identification of best practices that may be used to address the outstanding negotiating issues.

Programme

8 November

- 09.00 - 09.10 *Welcome*
Paul Akiwumi | Director, Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programs, UNCTAD
Erik Jones | Director, Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute
- 09.10 - 09.30 *Integration, trade & sustainable development: AfCFTA in light of global trends*
Bernard Hoekman | European University Institute
- 09.30 - 10.00 *The status of implementation of AfCFTA*
Gilberto Antonio | AfCFTA Secretariat
- 10.00 - 10.30 *Tariff liberalization: State of play and prospects*
Serafino Marchese | UNCTAD
Mozghan Raesian | Consultant
- 10.30 - 11.00 *Coffee break*
- 11.00 - 12.00 *Foreign Direct Investment and SEZs*
Marco Sanfilippo | University of Torino
- 12.00 - 13.00 *Transit and trade facilitation: some practical experiences from West Africa*
Christel Annequin | World Bank Trade Facilitation in West Africa programme
Regina Ledesma | UNCTAD West Africa project, Facilitation of Transit, Transport, & Trade
- 13.00 - 14.00 *Lunch*
- 14.00 - 15.00 *An assessment of AfCFTA rules of origin*
Stefano Inama | UNCTAD
Ahmed Bennis | African Association of Free Trade Zone

Discussant:
Faizel Ismail | Capetown University
- 15.00 - 15.45 *AfCFTA and European companies*
Sonali Chowdhry | European University Institute
- 15.45 - 16.00 *Coffee break*
- 16.00 - 16.30 *Servicification and public procurement: micro data-based analysis*
Rohit Ticku | European University Institute
- 16.30 - 17.00 *E-commerce and digital trade regulation in Africa*
Martina Ferracane | European University Institute

Discussant:
Richard Newfarmer | International Growth Centre

9 November

- 09.00 - 10.00 *Political economy challenges*
Bruce Byiers | European Centre for Development Policy Management
- 10.00 - 11.00 *Implementation challenges of AfCFTA*
Karidio Mahamadou | AU Liaison to AfCFTA
- 11.00 - 11.30 *Coffee break*
- 11.30 - 13.30 *Roundtable discussion: research and capacity building to support AfCFTA implementation*
San Bilal | European Centre for Development Policy Management
Faizel Ismail | University of Cape Town
Dominique Njinkeu | Consultant
Vera Songwe | Brookings Institution; former Executive Secretary UNECA (TBC)
- All participants
- 13.30 - 14.30 *Farewell lunch*