



**AfCFTA  
Secretariat**

## **United Nations Commission on the Status of Women Forum 66**

### **The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a catalyst for women's economic empowerment**

**25 March 2022 (17:00 – 18:30 GMT+2)**

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is Africa's most ambitious trade and integration initiative. It is designed to create an inclusive and equal trade environment that enables women to take advantage of opportunities created by the AfCFTA. It further supports Africa's industrialisation agenda by fostering diversification of goods and services traded and integration of small and medium size enterprises (SMEs), including women and youth-led businesses, into regional value chains. This is particularly important given the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as the continent implements its recovery and transformation strategy to ensure resilience to future shocks.

The AfCFTA agenda seeks to specifically support women entrepreneurs to take up new trade and investment opportunities across the continent. However, Africa's women-led businesses face many hurdles including access to information and finance, limited capacity to comply with standards and regulations, and challenges at border posts such as onerous documentation, long queues, lack of childcare and sanitary facilities and sexual harassment, just to cite a few. In addition, most informal cross-border traders are women, a fact which exacerbates these unique challenges.

A dedicated Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade will be included within the ambit of the AfCFTA. In this regard, the panel discussion will focus on the opportunities of the AfCFTA for African women, and ways in which the Women in Trade Chapter of the Protocol will address their specific constraints to ensure their meaningful participation in the AfCFTA market. The panel will also consider how the instrument can support women's economic empowerment, especially through trade and investment opportunities in the context of the AfCFTA. In addition to the Protocol, it is important to discuss the tools and initiatives developed in the context of the AfCFTA such as the AfCFTA Reporting, Monitoring and Eliminating Mechanism and the Pan African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) and the Private Sector Strategy, especially how they support the inclusivity agenda in the Continent.

The expected outcome of the session is to review the trading reality for African women by considering and highlighting the opportunities for women in trade in goods, trade in services

and cross-border investments. The session will also advocate for an AfCFTA simplified trade regime; for measures to make border posts safe and secure; and for improved access to information about opportunities and compliance requirements.

## Agenda

### Opening Remarks

Trudi Hartzenberg, Executive Director, Trade Law Centre (tralac)

Mr. Prudence Sebahizi, Chief Technical Advisor on AfCFTA (responsible for women and trade portfolio)

### Panelists

Ms. Demitta Chinwude Gyang, Head of Customs Cooperation, Trade Facilitation and Transit, AfCFTA Secretariat

Dr. Halima Noor, Senior Expert, Trade in Goods, AfCFTA Secretariat

Ms. Daphine Natacha Lekipaika, Junior Expert, Trade in Services, AfCFTA Secretariat

Ms. Treasure Maphanga, AeTrade Group

Ms. Sipamandla Manglele, Local Village Foods

### Closing Remarks

Ms Kathryn Toure, IDRC Regional Director for East and Southern Africa

### Registration link:

Via: UNCSW Portal: <https://ngocsw66forum.us2.pathable.com/meetings/7iWKhchcfbhxk2ZFJ>

or direct link via tralac: <https://bit.ly/3ufngOJ>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.