



**Statement Delivered by**

**Mrs Treasure Maphanga**

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**African Union Commission**

**At The**

**Meeting of Trade Experts**

**8-10 May 2015, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

Opening Statement for the Meeting of Trade Experts

By Treasure Maphanga  
Director for Trade and Industry  
African Union Commission

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**1. Excellences,**

**2. Distinguished Delegates,**

**3. Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to welcome you all on behalf of **H.E. Commissioner Fatima Haram Acyl, Commissioner responsible for Trade and Industry at the African Union**, to the Meeting of Trade Experts in preparation of the Meeting of African Union Ministers of Trade here in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The objective of our meeting today is to consider all the preparatory issues and to agree on a number of documents

critical for the launch of the CFTA negotiations. These documents include the following;

- i. The Objectives and Guiding Principles for the negotiation of the CFTA negotiations;
- ii. The Terms of Reference for the CFTA –Negotiating Forum;
- iii. The Roadmap and Schedule for the CFTA Negotiations;
- iv. The recommendations from various studies as directed by the 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of Ministers of Trade held in December 2015.

In our consideration of these important documents, we will have the benefit of various studies that the AU Commission has prepared in collaboration with UNECA, UNCTAD,

TRALAC and TAF. These studies provide some useful insights that Members could consider in the preparation of the key documents for the launch of the CFTA negotiations.

Let me take this opportunity to express my special thanks and appreciation to Member States for commitment and goodwill to make progress on the regional integration agenda. It is our belief that your participation in these continental meetings encourages our partners to continue and strengthen their continued support, cooperation and collaboration in promoting the continent's trade and industrial development agenda

It will be recalled that during CAMOT 9, Member States agreed on the Institutional Arrangements for the CFTA negotiations and further directed that technical preparations should be undertaken together with the mobilization of

technical and financial resources to enable the Commission to facilitate the CFTA negotiations which are scheduled to be launched in June 2015.

**Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Although significant preparatory work has been undertaken, the task before us is huge; let us therefore brace ourselves for a week of hard work because we have a packed agenda before us. In the design of the CFTA, let us think of an agreement that works for the Small and Medium Enterprises as well as for established operators. The CFTA should promote the development of regional value chains and be a useful lever in developing productive capacity in the region. Industrialisation and infrastructure

development are imperative for the continent to achieve the goal of boosting intra-Africa trade.

The establishment of the CFTA is a critical part of the First Ten Year implementation Plan of the Agenda 2063 as well as one of the flagship projects. The establishment of the CFTA will significantly accelerate growth of Intra-African trade and allow us to use trade more effectively as an engine of growth and sustainable development and fight against poverty and underdevelopment in the continent. It is our responsibility as trade experts to facilitate a process that will expand trade and investment opportunities for African businesses, farmers, workers and the peoples of

Africa in general and provide win/win outcomes for partnerships with foreign investors.

**Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The CFTA will be built on the progress that has been made in the trade liberalisation programmes of the Various Regional Economic Communities in Africa. It is for this reason that the AUC welcomes the Tripartite Initiative and looks forward to the launch of the COMESA-EAC-SADC Free Trade Area in June this year. We are also pleased with the implementation of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET), which started in January this year. We will all agree that functional regional FTAs provide a strong basis for the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA).

## **Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In preparation of this Meeting, the Commission organised the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Continental Task Force on the CFTA on 10-11 April in Dakar, Senegal at the Experts Level. The Task Force is composed of all the RECs recognised by the AU and the AUC supported by UNECA and AfDB. Some of the documents submitted for your consideration today are outcomes of the Task Force Meetings. Some of the working documents that have been tabled for your consideration are not new. During CAMOT 9, we worked on the Draft Objectives and Negotiating Principles, and this document is still work in progress. As your Commission, we have taken some time to reflect deeply on the implications of some of the proposed negotiating principles. It is our considered view that there is room for value adding adjustments to the existing draft. As your Commission, our



interest is in making sure that we embark on a process that will make us achieve the goal of our leaders, that of establishing a functional FTA that addresses the challenge of overlapping membership and establishes a single FTA in Africa.

**Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As we meet here today to prepare for the launch of the CFTA negotiations, other regions of the world are also seriously engaged in various stages of the free trade negotiations. Africa cannot stand aside and do nothing; we must come together and establish a continental free trade area that is equally ambitious and promotes trade and investment among us. Through the CFTA, we can enhance trade liberalisation and facilitation issues “at the border”, improve the doing business environment “behind

the border” and facilitate harmonisation of policies “across the border”.

**Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As I conclude, I have no doubt that the calibre, experience and expertise of the Experts gathered here today will enable us to put forward good drafts of the Key Launch Documents for consideration by the Senior Officials. Let me conclude by expressing the appreciation of the Commission to you for traveling all the way to Addis Ababa to participate in this important Meeting.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations and I thank you for your kind attention.

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