



**African Union BIAT Workshop
On Trade Finance And Trade
Information In Africa**



***Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
13-15 September, 2017***

CONCEPT NOTE

Introduction

The Commission of the African Union in partnership with the United States Agency for international Development (USAID) envisages holding a Workshop on Trade Finance and Trade Information in Africa in line with the African Union Action Plan for Boosting Intra African Trade Program and the USAID- African Union Partnership Program.

In January 2012, the African Union Heads of State and Government, during their 18th Ordinary Session of their Summit adopted a Decision on Boosting Intra Africa Trade (BIAT) and fast tracking the Establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) (Assembly/AU/Dec.394 XVIII). Among other things, the Decision was aimed at promoting Africa's Regional Integration agenda as well as making trade serve more effectively as an instrument for the attainment of Africa's rapid and sustainable socio-economic development. Within this decision, they also adopted an Action Plan for Boosting intra African trade (BIAT) and resolved to implement a CFTA by an indicative date of 2017. The Action Plan on the other hand is aimed at deepening Africa's market integration and significantly increasing the volume of trade that African countries undertake amongst themselves.

Upon the adoption of African Union Agenda 2063, in 2013, the Heads of State and Government also resolved to develop a Ten-Year Implementation Plan that was subsequently adopted by the AU Summit held in June 2015. The CFTA is one of the projects to be implemented in the first 10 year plan of Agenda 2063. Member States and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are responsible for the on-the-ground implementation of these initiatives, with support from various partners through a number of different initiatives. The AUC, mainly through the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), plays a number of key roles in promoting implementation of the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade (BIAT)¹ and the CFTA. These include the key leadership functions of agenda setting, thought leadership, convening, knowledge management, and monitoring and reporting.

Under the USAID African Union Partnership program (AUP), a stocktaking of BIAT on behalf of DTI was undertaken in late 2014. The aim was to inform strategic planning and dialogue among key constituents and development partners, with a focus on opportunities to advance BIAT implementation within actors' limited resources and mandates. It was found that the RECs and other key constituents have a strong demand for AUC leadership on a range of specific priority topics for the African trade agenda, and would like the AUC to engage them in implementation of agreements and principles, data and information flows, and communication and collaboration. Following these observations, the DTI and

USAID propose to expand their current knowledge sharing systems and exchange through a dedicated three-day Workshop of the African Union Commission, RECs, select business councils, and partners on the Trade Finance and Trade Information, which are two of the seven Clusters of the BIAT Action Plan²

Trade Finance and Trade Information in Africa

Trade Finance and trade information are two crucial aspects in boosting intra African trade. Issues related to the financing of commercial transactions and access to and sharing of information are essential for the trade intensification in Africa. In this regard, the BIAT Action Plan envisages developing and strengthening African financial institutions and mechanisms to promote intra-African trade and investment, and also filling trade information gaps so as to create more trade opportunities for the African business community.

The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have various programs aimed at addressing both Trade Information and Trade Finance. However, the implementation of the same varies from REC to REC. For instance, in Trade Finance, ECOWAS and COMESA have trade and Investment Banks serving their respective regions, while other RECs are yet to have similar institutions. In regards to trade Information, five of the eight AU recognized RECs, (COMESA, EAC, ECOWAS, SADC and IGAD) have already set up platforms which collates and disseminate semi-annually or monthly trade information from the Member States. In addition, COMESA and ECOWAS also have Community Information Centers (CICs) which enable exchange of information and data.

In addition to the RECs, various other pan African institutions have taken a lead in providing services related to trade finance and trade Information. In this regard, The African development bank and the Afreximbank have strong portfolios dealing with these aspects. To compliment these institutions, some development partners such as USAID through its Trade Hubs also have important ongoing programs especially under trade information in relation to the Africa Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Objective of the Workshop

This Workshop therefore will provide a Forum for exchange of information on Boosting intra African Trade and specifically on Trade Information and Trade Finance. It will offer an opportunity to develop recommendations as well as best practices on Trade Information and Trade Finance for consideration by African Union Policy Organs. The Workshop will also aim to provide networking opportunities as well as expand and strengthen knowledge exchange among practitioners. The outcomes of the Workshop will

² Other Clusters of the Action Plan are as follows: - Trade Policy, Trade Facilitation, Productive capacities, Factor Market Integration and Trade related Infrastructure.

also inform other initiatives such as the establishment of an African Trade Observatory envisaged under the CFTA, which is being supported by USAID.

Participation

The following is the expected participation at the Workshop: -Representatives from RECs Secretariats, African Union Commission, the Bureau of the AU Specialized Technical Committees on Trade, Industry and Minerals, USAID, the Pan African Chambers of Commerce and Industry, African Development Bank, World Bank, Afreximbank, UNECA, Regional Business Councils and targeted businesses involved in intra-African trade. In light of unique challenges facing women and youth in business with respect to Trade Finance and Trade Information, women and young entrepreneurs will also participate in the Workshop.

Venue and dates

The Workshop will take place in Dar Es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania from 13 to 15 September, 2017

Information

The following people can be contacted for further information relating to this Workshop:

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