

Information Brief on the CFTA

Third World Network-Africa

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Ghanaian Stakeholders Agree on Ad hoc Committee to Address Concerns on Africa's Continental Free Trade Area

Various stakeholders in Ghana have raised concerns with the quality of the processes, the content and the speed of negotiations of proposed Africa's Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and agreed on a seven-member Ad hoc Committee, to contribute to improving the process defects as well as the content in relation to addressing Ghana's developmental challenges.

The Ad hoc Committee comprises the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI), Ghana Trades Union Congress, Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC), Centre for Regional Integration in Africa (CRIA), Private Enterprise Foundation (PEF); that is the umbrella body of private sector players in Ghana, Third World Network-Africa (TWN-Africa) and the Institute of Financial and Economic Journalists (IFEJ), Ghana.

The national consultative seminar, jointly organised by Third World Network-Africa (TWN-Africa) and The Ministry of Trade and Industry, took place on 22nd February 2018 in Accra, Ghana. It brought together a range of stakeholders such as Ghana's Parliamentary Select Committee on Trade and Industry, Ghana National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, members of the Ghana National Poultry Farmers Association, Private Enterprise Foundation, Ghana Shippers Authority, Trades Unions, Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority, youth groups, academia, women groups, other non-governmental organisations and the media to deliberate on the proposed trade pact.

It was an intervention aimed at kick-starting a broader conversation on the AfCFTA and the reality confronting the Ghanaian economy. It also sought to update stakeholders on the state of the Negotiations and agree on follow-up mechanisms with the Ministry of Trade and Industry aimed at enriching Ghana's position on the AfCFTA.

The AfCFTA is scheduled for consideration and signing by African political leaders at an Extra-Ordinary Heads of State Summit in Kigali, Rwanda on 21st March 2018 following consensus among Member States on a Framework Agreement as well as Protocol on Trade in Goods and Protocol on Trade in Services.

One of the main concerns stakeholders raised was the lack of information on the proposed trade pact at the national level even to the point of the negotiations where the Heads of State are expected to meet, consider and sign off the Agreement. Also, the continuous marginalization of key stakeholders, who will be instrumental in crystallising the eventual AfCFTA, was raised. These, concerns, according to the stakeholders, are compounded by the rushed nature of the timeline that would not ensure proper and quality consultation. They also indicated that an improved and participatory process adds its own autonomous legitimacy to the whole trade pact.

Commenting on the process, Mr. Ken Quartey, a former Chairperson of the Ghana National Poultry Farmers Associations, said 'the timing and constraining nature of the schedule of the negotiations would not allow quality and proper consultation at the national level'.

Professor S.K.B Asante of the Centre for Regional Integration in Africa and an academic, making comments on the AfCFTA and Africa's Integration, underscored the need for capacity building of stakeholders on regional integration issues. He also underscored the imperatives of addressing Africa's productive capacity deficit and the building of trade infrastructure, without which the AfCFTA would not be transformational. According to him market integration/tariffs harmonisation alone without productive abilities and right trade infrastructure would not be beneficial to Ghana and the continent as a whole.

Professor Asante's point was corroborated by other stakeholders who reiterated the imperative of prioritising the issues of domestic productivity in Ghana and in most African countries in the AfCFTA discussions especially by addressing the real sector concerns of domestic producers as well as interconnections between sectors.

The Team from the Ministry of Trade and Industry was led by Ghana's Chief Trade Negotiator, Mr Anthony Nyame Baafi.