

**Concept Note: National Forum on the Development of Ethiopia's National
AfCFTA Implementation Strategy
Saturday June 29, 2024
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

1. Background

The Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a flagship project of the African Union's Agenda 2063, was adopted on March 21, 2018, in Kigali, Rwanda. This Agreement aims to unite 55 African Union member states, representing over 1.4 billion people and a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of close to \$3 trillion. The AfCFTA Agreement provides a comprehensive legal framework for economic integration that includes protocols on Trade in Goods, Trade in Services, Dispute Settlement, Investment, Intellectual Property Rights, Competition Policy, Digital Trade, and Women and Youth in Trade.

The primary objective of the AfCFTA is to create an integrated African market that facilitates the free movement of goods and services across the continent's internal borders. The Agreement also aims to enhance Africa's trading capacity on the global stage. To date, 54 of the 55 AU Member States have signed the Agreement, while 47 of them have ratified it, showing their strong political and legal commitment to the initiative.

Ethiopia ratified the AfCFTA Agreement in March 2019 and deposited its instrument of ratification on April 10, 2019, becoming a founding State Party to the Agreement. As part of its efforts to expedite the AfCFTA's implementation, Ethiopia has begun the process of developing its National Implementation Strategy. This strategy will outline priority actions and strategies for the short, medium, and long term, complemented by a monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress. Through this strategy, Ethiopia will identify the priority sectors in which Ethiopia may have competitive advantage for production and trade within the AfCFTA framework. The strategy will also chart future directions for sectors and industries that hold special promise to integrate the Ethiopian economy into regional and global value chains. Finally, the strategy will support Ethiopia's efforts to implement the AfCFTA Agreement inclusively and sustainably, paying special attention to gender and youth issues as well as those of the environment. Ultimately, the project aims to enhance Ethiopia's readiness to leverage opportunities arising

from the AfCFTA, ensuring inclusivity, gender sensitivity, and environmental sustainability throughout the implementation process.

To facilitate this, the Ethiopian Government, through the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration (MoTRI), has requested technical support from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), via the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC), to develop the AfCFTA Implementation Strategy. Following a favorable response to the request, ECA has engaged the Ethiopian Policy Studies Institute (PSI) to assist the Government in the development of the Strategy.

Against this background and as part of the development of the Strategy, PSI has produced an Inception Report detailing the processes, steps, and milestones involved in the development of the national AfCFTA implementation strategy as per the 2019 “Guidelines for Developing African Continental Free Trade Area National Strategies.” The Inception Report includes the objectives of the Strategy, the approaches and methodology by which it will be developed, a mapping of the stakeholders to be considered and consulted in the development process, a detailed roadmap for its preparation, and an annotated outline of what the final Strategy will look like.

Accordingly, the PSI, in collaboration with MOTRI and with ECA support, is organizing a one-day National Forum on “the Development of Ethiopia’s National AfCFTA Implementation Strategy”. The Forum aims to engage relevant stakeholders in the process of developing the AfCFTA National Strategy and accompanying action plans. The Forum will take place on June 29, 2024, in Skylight Hotel, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Specific Objectives of the Forum

The Forum will have the following objectives:

- To sensitize stakeholders on the AfCFTA in terms of its opportunities and implications for all relevant stakeholders.
- To discuss the roles to be played by each of the relevant stakeholders for the effective implementation of the AfCFTA in Ethiopia with the help of its National Implementation Strategy, and
- To collect stakeholder feedback and input to inform the development of the AfCFTA Strategy.

2. Expected Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the Forum, the development of the AfCFTA national strategy is expected to benefit from:

- Enhanced awareness and understanding of the AfCFTA, fostering informed participation and collaboration.
- Clearer appreciation among different stakeholder on their roles and responsibilities, thereby enhancing the opportunities for coordinated and more effective strategy implementation, and
- Greater inclusivity, ensuring representation of diverse perspectives informing the formulation of the AfCFTA Strategy.

4. Key Deliverables/Outputs:

- Comprehensive stakeholder engagement report detailing insights, recommendations, and action points derived from the Forum discussions.
- Action plans outlining specific tasks, timelines, and responsible parties for executing the development of the AfCFTA Strategy, thereby contributing to more efficient implementation and monitoring of the strategy downstream.

5. Participants

The participants in the National Forum will encompass a diverse range of stakeholders, reflecting the comprehensive nature of this initiative. These will include but not limited to government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society groups, private sector representatives, industry associations, women associations, youth associations, academic institutions, and the media (see Annex 1).

6. Draft Programme

Time	Saturday June 29,2024	Speakers
08:30-09:00	Participants Registration	
09:00-09:30	Opening Remarks	MoTRI UNECA PSI
09:30-10:00	Presentation on the role of national AfCFTA Strategies and the process of their development	UNECA
10:00-10:30	Q&A	all
10:30-11:00	Group photo/Coffee break	all
11:00-12:00	Presentation of the Inception Report to develop the Ethiopian AfCFTA Implementation Strategy	PSI



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12:00-13:00	Q&A; Feedback	all
13:00-14:00	Lunch Break	all
14:00-16:00	Group work to collect input to inform the development of the AfCFTA Strategy.	all
16:00-16:30	Summary of the Inputs	PSI
16:30-17:00	Closing remarks	MoTRI UNECA