

## Call for Registration

# The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

## *WHERE DO WE STAND?*

### How Can Parliaments and other Non-State Actors Contribute ?



Coming soon

**REGISTER NOW**

Beginning of the training : 28<sup>th</sup> June 2022

Application Deadline : 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2022

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMkce-gpj4qGdlddL7zj0vp9tq3HSSQ6F8J>





## Programme Rationale

The African Continental Free Area (AfCFTA) was officially launched at the 12th Extraordinary Summit of the African Union in Niamey, Niger on July 7, 2019. To date, 54 African states have signed the AfCFTA Agreement and 41 have ratified it. Thirty member states also signed the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment at the Niamey Summit, signalling a highly symbolic, formal initiative to ease restrictions on the movement of people across African borders.

So far, only Phase I negotiations on Trade in Goods, Trade in Services, and Dispute Settlement have been concluded. Phase II negotiations – on investment, competition policy, intellectual property rights, and e-commerce – are currently under way, delayed by COVID-19. Nevertheless, the start of trading under the Trade Protocol on January 1, 2021 in the midst of the pandemic is no trivial achievement. It marks a major milestone in operationalizing the AfCFTA Agreement and in advancing towards the ultimate goal of an African Economic Community, as envisaged by the Abuja Treaty of 1991.

Bringing together 54 countries, more than 1.2 billion people and a GDP in excess of US\$2.5 trillion, the AfCFTA can be a potent force in addressing Africa's persistent marginalization in the global economy and in making Africa's voice better heard across major platforms. At the continental level, it can help overcome the numerous challenges to regional integration and substantially increase intra-African trade and investment. By leveraging trade as an engine of growth, the AfCFTA can boost opportunities for industrial diversification, generating jobs for men and women, including Africa's teeming youths, thus contributing towards the development goals enshrined in the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Africa's ability to capture the benefits of the AfCFTA will depend on member states' commitment to liberalization schedules and other provisions of the AfCFTA Agreement; their capacity to design and implement national strategies and mitigation policies; and their continued interest in the remaining negotiations. At a fundamental level, making the AfCFTA work for Africa requires that the implementing countries fully own up to the Agreement. Ownership goes beyond policymakers; it encompasses the business community, Parliamentarians, Civil Society organisation, labour groups and, indeed, ordinary men and women.

It is with this in mind that the present three-days online course is designed. It is aimed at building momentum for, and political ownership of, the AfCFTA by informing Parliamentarians, other non-state actors about where we are, on the potential and opportunities of development that the Agreement holds, and what it would take to benefit most from it.

## Objectives

At the end of this course, participants/learners should be able to:

- 1: Appreciate the role that regional integration and the AfCFTA, in particular, could play in Africa's economic development;
- 2: Assess what has been achieved so far, and what remains to be done;
- 3: Understand the key provisions of the AfCFTA Agreement and its Protocols;

- 4: Appreciate the likely impacts of the AfCFTA on their respective country, and across the continent;
- 5: Influence measures that their government can take, as part of a national AfCFTA strategy, to leverage the opportunities arising from the AfCFTA, and mitigate any short-term costs;
- 6: To Define and to plan how they could support the implementation of the AfCFTA.

## Course Content

The webinar will cover the following topics:

- Regional integration in Africa: Overview
- AfCFTA: Where do we stand today?
- AfCFTA: Next steps
- Impacts of the AfCFTA
- The Role of Parliamentarians and other Stakeholders
- Best Practices

## Approach

The course will be delivered as a webinar over 3 days, with each session lasting 2 hours. The PowerPoint presentation may be complemented with a course manual, specially designed for this purpose, including additional resources such as bibliographies, web links and optional readings. Learners will also be able to self-assess their understanding through optional quizzes.

## Target Audience

The course targets three groups of participants/learners: Parliamentarians, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other experts.

Parliamentarians who are called upon to ratify the Agreement are likely to do so expeditiously if they comprehend the Agreement and are convinced about its long-term benefits. Parliamentarians will also play a key role in making the AfCFTA work, not just for their own country but for Africa as a whole – in a spirit of solidarity and Pan-Africanism that is at the very heart of the Agreement. Indeed, implementation is where the real challenges lie. Member-countries will be confronted with their institutional weaknesses; economic losses may arise in some sectors as cheaper imports flow in; firms with potential to export more to the region may come up against financial or capacity constraints; and the political will to forge ahead may wane under the weight of rising criticism and demands for protection or relief by affected firms. All this requires that Parliamentarians, as decision-makers and executioners of the Agreement, defend the Agreement – not for its own sake but because they believe in its promise.

CSOs have become increasingly important in delivering development outcomes. The implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement has implications for cross-border traders, many of which women; for vulnerable groups, including SMEs and import-competing businesses; and, ultimately, for poverty reduction and attainment of the SDGs. There are a number of CSOs operating in each of these areas, many at the grass-roots levels and close to constituents who may be impacted by the Agreement. Although CSOs have not been much involved in the complex AfCFTA negotiations, they could play a key role in the implementation of the Agreement. Effective engagement with CSOs can also help strengthen ownership of the Agreement, improve governance and accountability with respect to its implementation, and help in mobilizing funding to assist vulnerable groups. Indeed, implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement presents a great opportunity for governments to review, renew and deepen their engagement with CSOs.

Finally, experts and professionals working in the private sector and in the areas of business consulting and trade need to understand the provisions of the Agreement so that they can effectively assist their clients or organizations. The AfCFTA could create business opportunities for new firms and growth opportunities for existing ones as trade barriers fall. This course will provide experts information about, and an initial understanding of, the AfCFTA Agreement in the hope that they can build on it. Participants in this course are not seen as final beneficiaries but as ambassadors and agents of change who can share their knowledge with peers and other stakeholders, and, together, work to make continental integration work for Africa.

## Acceptance to the Course

Applicants to the course are expected to have, as a minimum, a bachelor's degree preferably where courses related to trade. In addition, two years of work experience will be required. Women candidates are also strongly encouraged to apply.

Until the registration deadline, participants are accepted to the course on a rolling basis and subject to availability of slots.

Applications must be completed exclusively on IDEP online application platform at <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMkce-gpj4qGdlddL7zj0vp9tq3HSSQ6F8J>

## Certificate of Completion

A Certificate of Completion will be issued by IDEP to all participants who successfully complete the course-related self-assessments presented for each module.

## Technical Requirements

Access to internet is an essential condition for participation. The following specifications, as a minimum in terms of hardware and software, are required to take this e-Learning course, please consult your Network Administrator or Systems person to ensure that you have the following:

- Platform: Windows 95, 98, 2000, NT, ME, XP or superior; Mac OS 9 or Mac OS X; Linux
- Hardware: 64 MB of RAM, 1 GB of free disk space
- Software:
  - Adobe Acrobat Reader
  - Adobe Flash Player
  - Microsoft Office (Windows or Mac) or Open Office
  - Browser: Internet Explorer 7 or higher or Firefox 36 or higher
- Modem: 56 K
- Note that JavaScript, Cookies and Pop-ups must be enabled

## Contact Information

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***N.B: IDEP strongly encourages and supports the participation of suitably qualified female officials in its capacity development and training programme.***