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Programme Highlights

Issue #4

Introduction

Following the second year of One Trade Africa's (OTA) journey, we are pleased to share the 4th issue of our newsletter, which highlights activities from March 2023 to December 2023.

Preparing for the AfCFTA: Empowering SMEs at the AfCFTA Business Forum

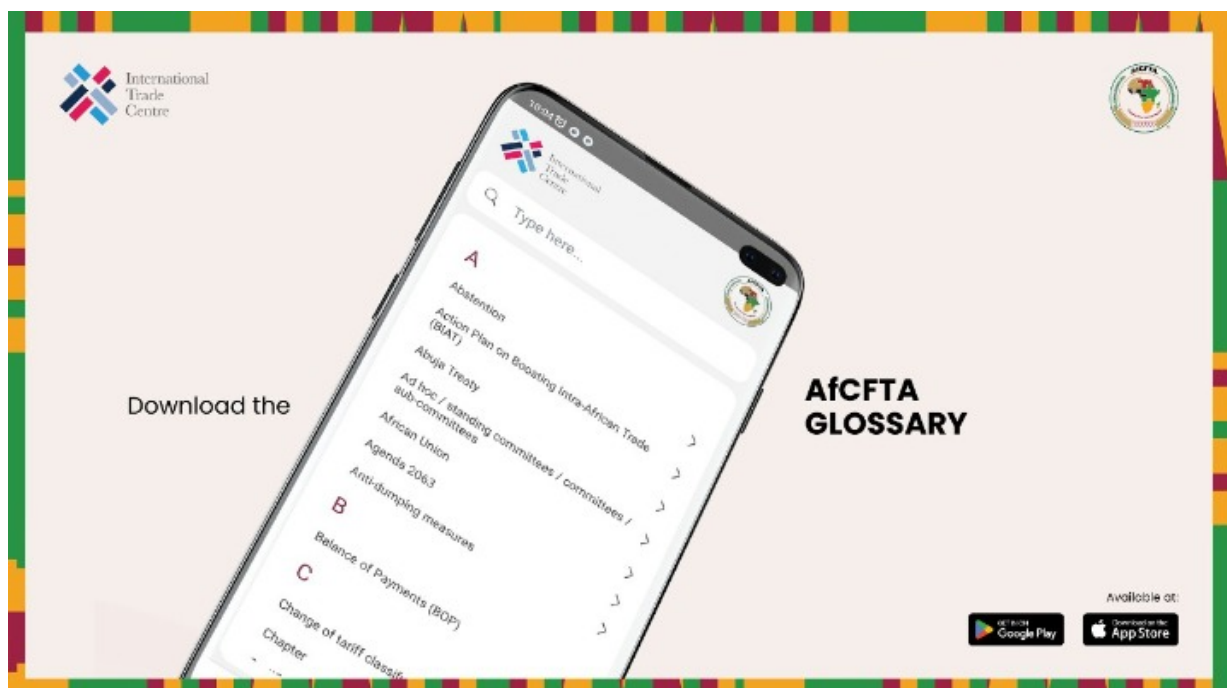


African enterprises are gearing up to expand their business engagements across the continent through the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). About 45 women and youth-owned businesses from 17 different African countries participated in a three-day **masterclass series** organized by ITC in collaboration with the AfCFTA Secretariat, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the Organization of Women in International Trade (OWIT), and the Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP). The masterclass equipped these entrepreneurs with the necessary skills, information, and networks to tap into the market of 1.3 billion people and take advantage of the opportunities presented by the AfCFTA and make them export and investment ready.



Head of ITC SME Trade Academy, Shaun Lake: “ITC's corporate programme One Trade Africa is fully committed to empowering, enhancing and enabling African MSMEs, women and youth entrepreneurs to capitalize on the AfCFTA. The Agreement will not yield the desired effects without targeted and tailored trainings for Africa's business community. By incorporating the modules from the How to Export with the AfCFTA training programme into the Masterclass Series, we are providing African businesses with the knowledge and skills necessary to advance intra-African trade.”

Moreover, the AfCFTA Glossary [app](#), a collaborative effort between the AfCFTA Secretariat and ITC, has been launched. This app unpacks the legal, commercial, and customs terms of the agreement through simple definitions accompanied by practical examples. Both the glossary and app are accessible to the public online.



ITC Executive Director's East Africa Mission forges New Partnerships to Boost Trade and Empower Small Businesses



In May, ITC Executive Director, Pamela Coke-Hamilton, led a mission in East Africa deepening key partnerships to strengthen trade, empower MSMEs on the continent, and promote the regional integration process.

During her visit to Addis Ababa, Coke-Hamilton met with H.E Ambassador Albert Muchanga of the **African Union Commission** (AUC) to sign a renewed memorandum of understanding (MoU). The agreement responds to changes in the global economy and the ongoing regional integration process in Africa underpinned by the AfCFTA. It reaffirms the dedication, shared vision and joint efforts of the African Union and the lead UN agency on small business development. Together, ITC and AUC will empower small businesses and promote inclusive trade in the region. By integrating MSMEs into the regional economy and sharing trade information through the African Trade Observatory (ATO), they aim to facilitate economic growth and opportunities. This partnership emphasizes the development of key continental value chains, the economic empowerment of women and young entrepreneurs, and the enhancement of the ATO to support business expansion.



In Nairobi Coke-Hamilton signed a MoU with the **African Organisation for Standardisation** (ARSO). The agreement renews a working commitment between the two organizations for the next five years and seeks to propel the establishment of a "**Made in Africa**" label, promote regional standards, and align national quality policies with the Africa Quality Policy. By enhancing the competitiveness of African enterprises and strengthening regional value chains, this partnership aims to unlock the potential of 'Made in Africa' goods and services.

ITC Executive Director, Pamela Coke-Hamilton: "Our joint efforts will help drive the establishment of a Made in Africa label, to further promote intra-African trade, economic growth and development".





Business Support Organizations Boost Efforts for African Integration and the AfCFTA



Regional and continental business support organizations are positioned to play a significant role in driving the success of the AfCFTA, according to a **webinar** hosted by ITC and the AfCFTA Secretariat. The webinar provided updates on the negotiations and implementation of the free trade bloc and presented the findings of a joint exercise to **map business support organizations** across the region. The session allowed these organizations to express their priorities and

explore ways to enhance their services considering the AfCFTA. This collaborative effort reflects a commitment to making free trade beneficial for Africa's private sector.

During the webinar, the AfCFTA Secretariat introduced the **Guided Trade Initiative**, which aims to support businesses in conducting meaningful commercial trade within the bloc. The initiative has already been joined by eight countries, with more expected to participate in 2024. The session also highlighted the **AfCFTA Private Sector Engagement Strategy**, which established a dedicated business platform and hosted the first AfCFTA Business Forum in April 2023.

ITC emphasized the importance of **successful business support organizations**, presenting the REACT model that emphasizes readiness, expertise, agility, connectivity, and trust. The organizations were encouraged to actively engage with the private sector, improve regional connectivity, and disseminate information and services to businesses. Only 25% of African small firms are currently aware of the free trade agreement, highlighting the crucial need for engagement with businesses. Representatives were also encouraged to complete a **mapping survey** which will contribute to a comprehensive assessment of business support organizations in Africa.

11th AU Multistakeholders' Experts Retreat: Advancing Africa's Industrialization and Economic Diversification



The One Trade Africa programme attended the 11th AU Multistakeholders' Experts Retreat, held in Djibouti from the 15 to 19 May, 2023. The retreat aimed to validate the AU Action Plan for the implementation of the outcomes of the 17th Extraordinary AU Summit on Industrialization and Economic Diversification.

During this event, ITC had the opportunity to meet with high-level partners to further expand its collaborations in supporting the regional integration process. Additionally, ITC delivered three high-level presentations on topical issues such as regional value chains, interventions to support industrialization at various levels, and cooperation with the African Union Commission on its SME strategy and the **Enterprise Africa Network**. The presentations were well-received by the AUC and stakeholders, who expressed gratitude for ITC's Trade-Related Technical Assistance in advancing Africa's industrialization process.

ITC Executive Director, Pamela Coke Hamilton: “Through this platform, African business will be able to assess and connect to favourable continental value chains, including information on suppliers with potential to deliver key inputs and promising market opportunities”.



The stakeholders endorsed the Action Plan, with agreed adjustments to specific actions. The final updated Action Plan, along with the budget and monitoring and evaluation framework, will be shared by the Secretariat following the retreat. ITC will provide guidance and inputs on the actions they are leading or contributing to, ensuring effective implementation of the plan.

ITC remains committed to supporting the African Union's efforts in industrialization and economic diversification, and we look forward to further collaboration in realizing our shared vision for a prosperous and sustainable Africa.

ITC Promotes African Businesses at the AU MSME Day Commemoration



The United Nations General Assembly designated 27 June as MSME Day to acknowledge the significance of Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs). The event's theme was centred on "MSMEs Benefiting from the AfCFTA Marketplace" and aimed to raise public awareness about the positive contributions of small businesses to sustainable development and the global economy.

During the event held in Addis Ababa, ITC made significant contributions by the NTF V programme presenting comparative research on Start-Up Acts in Africa and OTA Programme Manager, Lily Sommer participating in a panel discussion on the role of MSMEs in boosting intra-African trade.

A notable highlight was the **"Expert Group Meeting for Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in Charge of SMEs"** jointly convened by ITC and AU, which facilitated coordination among Directors at MDAs responsible for SMEs to align national policy frameworks and action plans with the AU SME Strategy.

The commemoration served as a precursor to the 2nd AU MSME Annual Forum in Addis Ababa, held from 4-8 September 2023.



The ITC How to Export with AfCFTA Training Programme Empowers MSMEs for Export Success



The ITC **How to Export with the AfCFTA training programme**, provided by the SME Trade Academy, has made remarkable progress. Its impact includes over 8,000 MSMEs across 52 countries registered on the online platform, and entrepreneurs have eagerly tapped into the opportunity to pursue cross-border

trade in Africa. The programme continues to achieve an impressive average course rating of 9/10 from participants.

In collaboration with Business Support Organizations (BSOs), ITC has conducted four-day national workshops in over 10 countries, including Tunisia, Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Côte d'Ivoire.

A remarkable accomplishment showcases the lasting impact of the training programme in Tunisia, Egypt, and South Africa. Following the initial national Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop, a **sustainable impact model** was showcased. Tunisia for instance organized seven follow-up national workshops facilitated by the trained trainers. This successful implementation, in collaboration with the reputable Business Support Organization Centre de Promotion des Exportations (CEPEX), highlights the dedication and new expertise of Tunisian trainers in supporting local MSMEs, fostering long-term sustainability, and enhancing export readiness under the AfCFTA.

Furthermore, selected MSMEs, particularly those owned by women and youth, had the exclusive opportunity to participate in a **masterclass on export readiness** at the Intra-African Trade Fair 2023 in Cairo, building on the foundation set by the How to Export with AfCFTA programme.

Forging Partnerships for Economic Transformation: ITC Joins OECD PTPR in Togo



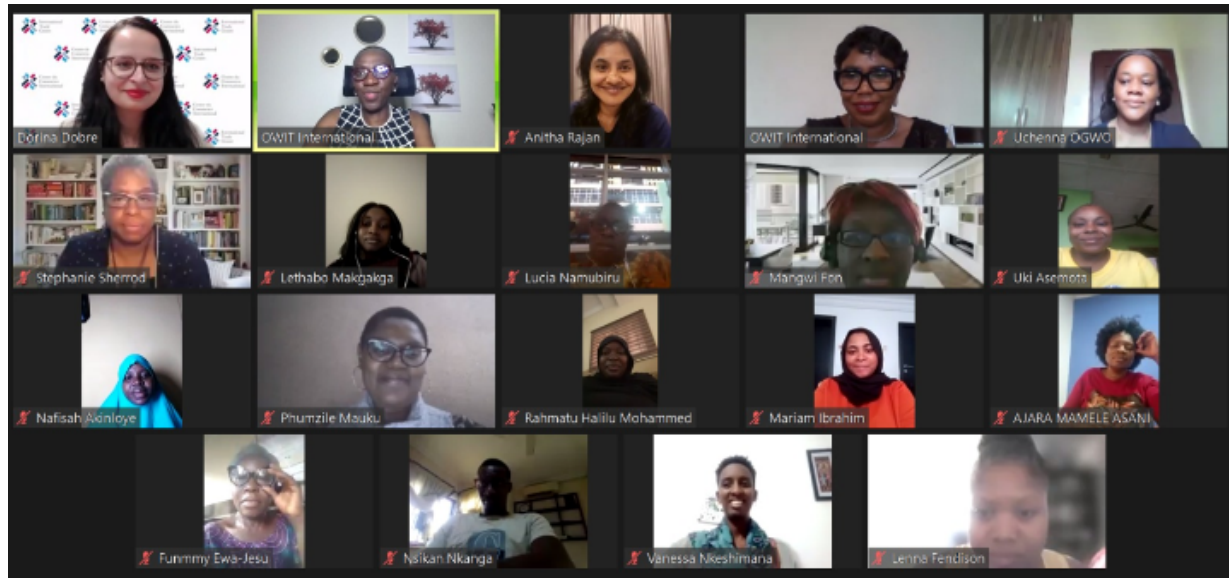
In a significant development, ITC has joined hands with the OECD Development Centre in the **Product Transformation Policy Review Process (PTPR)** initiated at the request of the Government of Togo. This collaborative effort, also involving the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), seeks to facilitate **economic transformation** in Togo. ITC participation as a partner in Togo's PTPR opens the door for contributions such as an analysis of Togo's export potential within the AfCFTA framework and learning from the ITC Netherlands Trust Fund V agri-tech programme. Furthermore, the ITC existing initiatives, including the ATO and the How to Export with the AfCFTA Training Programme serve as potential complementary tools aligned with Togo's developmental goals.

The second PTPR fact-finding mission has been completed in December, where the delegation met a Government with a clear vision and understanding of the goals and challenges. The PTPR report will provide actionable recommendations to advance the implementation of the national roadmap 2025 to transform the economy and achieve shared prosperity.

This partnership not only has the potential to catalyse Togo's transformation, but it also offers opportunities for collaboration in other PTPRs across Africa and beyond. Furthermore, it paves the way for ITC's involvement in the Advisory Board of the OECD Initiative for Policy Dialogue on Global Value Chains (GVCs), Product Transformation and Development. Moreover, there is scope and interest from both parties to work together to better integrate SME-related issues into the

dialogues of future plenary meetings, marking a unified effort towards inclusive economic growth and sustainable development in the country.

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs: Trade Intelligence Labs



In 2023, the **International Trade Intelligence Learning Labs** were launched to provide women entrepreneurs with valuable trade insights, including specialized AfCFTA sessions on Market Intelligence. The collaboration between the Organization of Women in International Trade (OWIT) and ITC's OTA programme facilitated six dynamic Learning Labs and a closing session.

Empowering women, the initiative brought together ITC's SME Trade Academy, Trade and Market Intelligence, and SheTrades to enhance businesses and expand trade horizons. The Learning Lab received outstanding feedback, with participants commending the clarity and practical scenarios of ITC courses. Key takeaways encompass mastering the How to export with AfCFTA programme, utilizing ITC's tools, and gaining knowledge on identifying high-potential export markets.

Empowering Africa's Youth in Trade: AfCFTA Youth Symposium Paves the Way



In July 2023, the inaugural **AfCFTA Youth Symposium** brought together African youth in Lusaka, Zambia, organized by the AfCFTA Secretariat. Themed "Igniting the Future for Youth in Trade," the event actively engaged young business owners in shaping Africa's future by aligning with the aspirations of the African market.

At the symposium, the Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa (YALDA), and the Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) International, partnered with ITC to conduct "The Imperative of Youth in Trade" workshop, equipping over 50 youth entrepreneurs with essential skills for intra-African trade. Participants delved into ITC's How to Export with AfCFTA online training programme and the AfCFTA Glossary, addressing practicalities such as complying with origin rules for accessing AfCFTA preferences. Discussions, including "TechConneXt: Empowering Tech Startups in the AfCFTA," provided insights on tapping into African market opportunities.

Secretary-General of the AfCFTA Secretariat, H.E. Wamkele Mene: "We acknowledge that the youth are at the heart of trade on the continent, hence, their importance to the AfCFTA cannot be overstated. It was therefore critical to provide a platform of engagement for the exchange of ideas on innovation, entrepreneurship, and achieving structural transformation that creates an enabling environment for inclusive trading under the AfCFTA regime".



Uniting for Progress: ITC and African AUC Partner to Make African Small Business Voice Heard



The **2nd Annual African Union MSME Forum**, held in Addis Ababa from September 4 to 8, marked a pivotal moment as the African Union Commission and the ITC joined forces to amplify the voices of African small businesses. The

event saw over 150 MSMEs from diverse sectors, including agriculture, cosmetics, fintech, and fashion, benefitting from a comprehensive programme encompassing training sessions, a pitching bootcamp and competition, information sessions, and invaluable networking opportunities within the unified African Market.

A notable highlight of the forum was the convergence of nearly 20 directors overseeing MSMEs across the continent. They delved into the World Trade Organization (WTO) **MSME Informal Working Group (IWG)**, a critical entity shaping the multilateral agenda for small businesses in international trade. Presently, only four of the 44 African WTO members actively engage in this Group. Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya took centre stage, sharing their motivations and experiences as two of the four participating countries. The directors collectively brainstormed to identify shared priorities for African MSMEs.

In his welcoming remarks, H.E **Ambassador Albert Muchanga, Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry, and Minerals (ETTIM)**, underscored the contribution of start-ups to economic growth and job creation, while emphasizing the need for governments and stakeholders to support and nurture the start-up ecosystem: “In 2017, 88 WTO Members signed a statement at the WTO's 11th Ministerial Conference declaring their intention to create an Informal Working Group on MSMEs. This Working Group is meant to explore ways in which WTO Members could better support MSMEs' participation in global trade. Only four of the 55 African countries are currently part of the Group. I encourage more African countries to join the WTO Informal Working Group on MSMEs.”





ITC Executive Director, Pamela Coke-Hamilton: "ITC is deeply honoured to work hand in hand with the AUC to connect MSME Directors from Africa to Missions in Geneva to advance African priorities at the WTO. This joint initiative at the multilateral level will help consolidate our cooperation to foster MSME competitiveness at the regional level through the African Trade Observatory and the Enterprise Africa Network".



It is Time for Action: Insights from WTO Public Forum 2023 and AfCFTA's Role in Greening Trade



The **WTO Public Forum 2023**, themed "It is Time for Action," focused on how trade can drive a greener future. In the session, "Small businesses Driving Africa's Green Transition: The AfCFTA as a catalyst for environmentally friendly production, trade and consumption," organized by OTA, panellists explored the AfCFTA's role in promoting environmentally friendly production, trade, and consumption in Africa.



ITC Deputy Executive Director, Dorothy Tembo, highlighted three key messages: sustainable value chains are crucial for UN Sustainable Development Goals, the AfCFTA is an opportunity for sustainable production with small businesses leading, and ITC prioritizes environmental sustainability in supporting small business competitiveness.



The Gambia's Ambassador in Geneva, **H.E Muhammadou M.O. Kah**, emphasized the urgency of addressing the climate crisis through multilateralism "We cannot do this as individuals, we must partner, and we have to make sure that we make it right. Multilateralism is the only hope, it must work."

Peter Nyeko co-founder and CEO of Mandulis Energy expressed optimism about small businesses driving solutions via the AfCFTA, stressing the need for effective AfCFTA awareness. **Colette van der Ven**, Founding Director of TULIP Consulting, saw the AfCFTA as a lever for Africa's green transition, urging governments to implement existing provisions. **Jayasurya Kalakkal** from the UN Environment Programme emphasized cooperation at the trade-environment nexus, with UNEP ready to support.



ITC and Afreximbank Unite at ACTIF 2023: Strengthening Trade Bonds between Africa and the Caribbean



Afreximbank and the Government of Guyana welcomed delegates in Georgetown, Guyana from October 30 – 31, 2023 for the second edition of the **AfriCaribbean Trade and Investment Forum (ACTIF)** under the theme "Creating a Shared Prosperous Future".

Three ITC programmes, ACP Business-Friendly Programme, West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP), and OTA, showcased their work at ACTIF to advance better trade for agri-businesses, particularly in cassava. "ITC takes pride in collaborating with Afreximbank to bolster Africa-Caribbean trade through investment within the ACTIF framework." said **ITC Executive Director Pamela Coke-Hamilton** in a pre-recorded message, underlining the need for transport and logistics investments to realize the trade potential between the two regions. "Since last year's ACTIF, we've already seen big increases in commercial cooperation," she said.

ACTIF is one of many vital components of the broader partnership framework under the **joint Memorandum of Understanding between Afreximbank and the ITC** with a strong focus on private sector-driven cooperation. Their collective objective is to support MSMEs in their efforts to engage in and benefit from the transformative potential of intra-African trade. Joint initiatives include the How to Export with the AfCFTA training programme, the support for South Sudan's National Export and Investment Strategy, the forthcoming launch of the first-ever Pan-African fashion designers cooperative, the collaboration at the 3rd edition of the Intra-African Trade Fair (IATF), and more.



Fostering Tomorrow's African Single Market: ITC's Empowerment Initiatives at IATF 2023



In November, One Trade Africa took centre stage at the **third edition of the Intra-African Trade Fair (IATF)** in Cairo, organized by Afreximbank in collaboration with the AU and the AfCFTA Secretariat. The fair served as a pivotal platform for businesses to explore the extensive opportunities presented by the AfCFTA. ITC played a crucial role in amplifying the voices of small businesses by bringing together 24 entrepreneurs from nine countries to showcase their offerings in agriculture, textiles and clothing, and a variety of services.

Through various initiatives including SheTrades, ACP Business-Friendly Programme, West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP) regional and national components, The Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) V, ITC Trade and

Market Intelligence, and OTA, ITC presented itself in its full diversity. ITC's dynamic presence at IATF included an exhibition booth for both corporate and SMEs, high-level panel discussions, and capacity-building sessions. Notable highlights encompassed the opening remarks by ITC's Executive Director, Pamela Coke-Hamilton and the implementation of the two-day AfCFTA Export Readiness Masterclass which benefited a total of 102 businesses. Furthermore, in a significant development, ITC and ITFC signed a Memorandum of Understanding to roll out the How to Export with AfCFTA Training Programme in Benin, Cameroon, Senegal, and Togo. Additionally, ITC-supported businesses profited from different study tours to understand the Egyptian market.

ITC organized and participated in a variety of panel discussions including one with the Africa Business Council and Afreximbank which emphasized advancing continental trade through education. ITC also unveiled a sneak peek at the Pan-African Fashion Alliance, a collaborative effort with Afreximbank aimed at facilitating smoother financing flows for African fashion designers. Side events addressed regulatory frameworks, standards, and the empowerment of the African creative industry.

During her Opening Keynotes at IATF's Diaspora Day, **ITC Executive Director, Pamela Coke-Hamilton** underscored the imperative of strengthening economic ties between Africa and its diaspora. She emphasized, "Africa's diaspora is here, and we're excited to build that economic bridge with the African continent, and to build it right now. We are witnessing more forums like IATF emerge, helping make that bridge possible and connecting the small businesses that are the backbones of these economies." One Trade Africa's active participation at IATF 2023 marked a significant stride toward fostering collaboration and economic growth across the African continent.





Empowering Women in Trade: ITC's Masterclass at the AfCFTA Women in Trade Conference



The AfCFTA Secretariat, the International Trade Centre (ITC) through its One Trade Africa Programme and UNECA organised a masterclass under the theme

"Leveraging opportunities under the AfCFTA", on the margins of the **AfCFTA Women in Trade Conference** held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. ITC's content presented was a lean and adapted version of Modules 1 and 2 of the ITC and Afreximbank's How to Export with the AfCFTA Training Programme. The workshop equipped over 40 women entrepreneurs with knowledge, skills and tools to enable and propel practical trading under the AfCFTA. The participants showed great interest in learning about the AfCFTA and what it means for them as businesswomen.

Secretary-General of the AfCFTA Secretariat, H.E. Wamkele Mene: "We are also engaged in advisory services for Small and Medium Enterprises operated by women and young people, in partnership with International Trade Centre (ITC), to once again, to ensure that this vast market of 1.3 Billion people, is a market that our SMEs can take advantage of. We have no doubts that the critical tools for implementation of the AfCFTA, which are intended to reduce the cost of business and reduce the cost of trade for SMEs."





With support from its partners, ITC through One Trade Africa will maximise the benefits of the regional integration for African businesses especially within the context of the AfCFTA. One Trade Africa will continue to work alongside various partners including: Member States, AUC/ ETTIM, AfCFTA Secretariat, AU-NEPAD, regional economic communities, United Nations agencies (UNECA, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNIDO) and regional banks such as the African Export and Import Bank and the African Development Bank, think-tanks and the civil society.

To learn more about the One Trade Africa Programme visit:

[One Trade Africa](#)



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