

Negotiations for a single continental market for goods and services on track

ABUJA, Nigeria - Continental Free Trade Area negotiations are expected to conclude at the end of 2017 with a firm policy in place to benefit all countries in Africa and reduce poverty.



© bowie15 via [123RF](#)

Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) negotiations are moving in the right direction and at the desired pace, with the first phase of the negotiations expected to be concluded by the end of 2017, Coordinator of the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC), David Luke, reported back this past week.

Speaking at the just-ended Aid for Trade Global Review 2017 where the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) hosted a side event to unveil a publication titled: *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective*, Luke said the CFTA negotiating principles emphasise the importance of ensuring that the process is inclusive, consultative and participatory.

“It is expected that the final agreement will include provisions of importance to ensuring a win-win CFTA,” said Luke as he updated participants on the negotiations.

Human rights

“The CFTA cannot be win-win unless it is consistent with the economic justice and human rights values that are embodied in Africa’s Agenda 2063, the global Agenda 2030, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and international human rights treaties African countries have signed up to,” he added.

The CFTA offers the continent an important tool for achieving Africa's poverty reduction objectives contained in the continent's Agenda 2063 and the Global Agenda 2030.

The ECA's Assessing Regional Integration in Africa (ARIA) VIII Report on *Bringing the CFTA About*, demonstrates that the outcomes of the CFTA can be 'win-win', such that all countries across Africa benefit and the interests of vulnerable communities within countries are carefully addressed, said Luke.

“

The CFTA will bring together 54 African countries with a combined population of more than one billion people and a combined gross domestic product of more than US \$3.4 trillion.

”

The CFTA, he added, provides a variety of opportunities that cater to the diversity of African countries, including the resource rich, agricultural-based, or more industrialised.

On the way forward, Luke said the ECA and its partners aim to continue their research on the CFTA, and promote the importance of human rights in the context of Africa's trade.

“We encourage you to share the findings of this report widely to ensure its recommendations have a positive influence on the remainder of the CFTA process, including the second phase of negotiations, and implementation and monitoring phases,” he urged participants.

Broad consultation

Priority policy recommendations that are in the report include the need to ensure broad consultation and participation in the CFTA negotiations and implementation; need to improve collection of disaggregated data; need to explicitly recognise women; fully estimate potential revenue gains and losses; engage in paced, layered and targeted liberalisation; maintaining policy space and ensuring adjustment mechanisms to monitor and evaluate CFTA impacts.

The CFTA will bring together 54 African countries with a combined population of more than one billion people and a combined gross domestic product of more than US \$3.4 trillion.

With the CFTA, African leaders aim to, among other things, create a single continental market for goods and services, free movement of business persons and investments and expand intra-African trade. The CFTA is also expected to enhance competitiveness at the industry and enterprise levels.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>