

JOINT THIRD WORLD NETWORK-MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

CONSULTATIVE SEMINAR

ON AFRICA'S CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (CFTA)

ON 22nd FEBRUARY 2018

CONCEPT NOTE

I. Introduction

This is a one-day Seminar on Africa's Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) jointly organised by Third World Network-Africa (TWN-Africa) and the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI). Scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2018, the Seminar seeks to i) update stakeholders on the status of the CFTA Negotiations so far on both process and content ii) Agree on follow up mechanism with the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI) with the aim to shaping and influencing Ghana's position on the CFTA.

It will bring together stakeholders from the private sector, leaders of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Trade and Industry, civil society organisations, Trade Unions, Academia, women groups, youth groups and the media to deliberate on the CFTA which is under negotiation.

II. Background

The 25<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Union Summit launched the CFTA negotiations in Johannesburg, South Africa, in June 2015 as an initiative for African countries to fast-forward the economic integration on the continent by addressing the fundamental structural limitations of member states that make them perform sub-optimally at global levels and advance the integration of the continent. Since then negotiations have commenced.

Many official meetings have taken place since the launch in Johannesburg, both as technical working groups and negotiating forums. The negotiation forums, for instance, bring all member states to negotiate. The 8<sup>th</sup> Negotiating Forum on the CFTA took place in Abuja from the 20<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> November 2017 where three key outputs were achieved i) a Framework Agreement on the CFTA ii) Protocols on Goods and iii) Protocols on Services and with a built-in agenda. These outputs were adopted by African Ministers of Trade during their meeting that took place in Niger on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2017. Apart from these areas-goods and services- the CFTA envisages second phase negotiations in areas such as investment, competition policy and intellectual property.

Consequently, the Heads of State have scheduled an Extra-Ordinary Summit on 21<sup>st</sup> March, this year in Kigali, Rwanda, to consider and sign the Framework Agreement on the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA). The decision to meet, consider and sign the agreement was taken by the political leaders at the 30<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Summit which ended on 29 January 2018 in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

Despite all these key decisions reached on the CFTA and the possibility of launching second phase negotiations, many critical stakeholders have scanty/no idea of the CFTA and its implication on the various sectors of the Ghanaian economy and the citizens in general. Even those who have issues at the national level are unable to input due to seemingly lack of formal mechanisms for doing so.

It is against this background that TWN-Africa and the Ministry of Trade and Industry, which has been the focal formal public Institution leading in the CFTA negotiations, are holding this seminar to update stakeholders on the CFTA and fashion out a national mechanism aimed at enriching Ghana's position.

III. Objectives of the Seminar

1. update stakeholders on the status of the CFTA Negotiations so far on both the process and content
2. Agree on follow up mechanism with the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI) with the aim to shaping and influencing Ghana's position on the CFTA.

IV. Participation

- i. Chairman and Ranking members of Parliamentary Select Committee on Trade and Industry
- ii. Private Enterprise Foundation
- iii. Association of Ghanaian Industries
- iv. Pharmaceuticals Associations of Ghana
- v. Bank of Ghana
- vi. Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority
- vii. Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC)
- viii. Ghana Trade and Livelihoods Coalition
- ix. ISSER
- x. Action Aid
- xi. Oxfam
- xii. NETRIGHT
- xiii. Poultry Farmers Association
- xiv. Centre for Regional Integration in Africa
- xv. Department of Economics
- xvi. Legon Centre for International Affairs
- xvii. Youth Groups

V. Venue and Date

The seminar will be held at Coconut Grove Regency Hotel on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018