



Symposium Introduction: Assessing the First Years of Implementation of the AfCFTA: Challenges and Opportunities

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Adopted on 21 March 2018 and entered into force on 30 May 2019, the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA Agreement) represents one of the most ambitious undertakings in Africa's integration history. The Agreement is expected to serve as a critical milestone toward achieving the continent's long-standing aspiration for radical economic transformation and inclusive, sustainable growth.

However, the implementation of the AfCFTA is unfolding in a world of polycrisis : geopolitical tensions, global inequalities, climate emergencies, and a global demand for sustainable trade. Against this backdrop, the AfCFTA must prove capable not only of integrating African economies but also of providing a

resilient and adaptive framework to respond to both global disruptions and domestic challenges.

More than five years after its entry into force, this moment provides a timely opportunity to critically assess the Agreement's early implementation, the challenges encountered, and the lessons that can be drawn to make the AfCFTA more effective. According to Article 28 of the AfCFTA Agreement, a review of the Agreement is envisaged to "ensure effectiveness, achieve deeper integration, and adapt to evolving regional and international developments."

It is within this framework that our broader research project was launched to identify the legal, institutional, and practical challenges that may hinder the AfCFTA's objectives and to propose context-specific, forward-looking solutions. Initially conceived as a continental academic conference followed by a special issue in a scientific journal, the project received about 150 submissions from scholars and practitioners across Africa and beyond. This overwhelming response highlighted both the scholarly interest and the urgent need for inclusive platforms for dialogue.

Unfortunately, due to various budgetary and practical constraints, we were only able to accept about a dozen of proposals. However, to give visibility to a broader range of voices, particularly young African students and researchers and emerging scholars, our team expanded the project to include a Blog Symposium and a book Project in addition to the special issue. The Blog symposium that we are introducing today aims at allowing exceptional and early-career academics and students whose submissions were remarkably promising, to share concise, thought-provoking reflections on the AfCFTA's implementation challenges and opportunities.

The present Blog Symposium is therefore a collective intellectual journey across Africa's diverse regions, from north to south, west to east. It reflects a multiplicity of perspectives, backgrounds, and academic traditions, united by a shared commitment to Africa's economic integration and transformation. This could have not been possible without the assistance, advice and support of Prof Olabisi Akinkugbe and the whole AfronomicsLaw team. We are grateful for this platform which is making an unprecedented contribution in amplifying African voices in the space of international (economic) law.

Blog Contributions

1. The Geopolitics of Neo-Colonial Trade and the Necessity of an Effective AfCFTA, Ibtissame Bourhnane and Reda Adib, UM6P (Morocco)
2. La coexistence entre la Zone de libre-échange continentale africaine et les Communautés économiques régionales africaines, Touré Marie-Queren et Togora Anna Myriam, Institut Universitaire d'Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire)
3. Why is the Free Movement of People Important for a Successful African Free Trade Area? Elmazouni Zineb, UM6P (Morocco)
4. La prise en compte de l'environnement dans l'Accord portant création de la Zone de libre-échange continentale africaine (ZLECAF) Diancoumba Koura Bernadette Elicka, Institut Universitaire d'Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire)
5. L'harmonisation des règles fiscales et douanières au sein de la ZLECAF : entre réalité et difficulté, Dr Tebie Madalinassono Marius, Université de Lomé (Togo)
6. A Critical Analysis of Dispute Resolution under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Regime, Grace Jelimo Kipkulei, University of Pretoria, (South Africa)
7. The Guided Trade Initiative: An Appraisal of AfCFTA National Implementation Vehicles, Faith Chelangat (Kenya)
8. La mise en œuvre de la Zone de libre-échange continentale africaine (ZLECAF) en Côte d'Ivoire, Sara Gbela, Institut Universitaire d'Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire)

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