# Conference Program Announced: First Years of Functioning of the African Continental Free Trade Area: Challenges and Prospects, May 20-21, Rabat, Morocco

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Economic integration is a strategic pathway for economic growth and prosperity. In Africa, colonial legacies have left structural fragmentation, poor intra-connection, marginalization from global trade and rooted economic inequalities. The launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in 2018 represented a major step to (re)connect African economies. The AfCFTA offers a pathway toward economic unity, emerging from a once fractured African continental market. It extends beyond economic prosperity to social and political transformation.

In this regard, the AfCFTA is not only a path to the realization of key principles outlined in the African Union's Agenda 2063, but also a transformative step towards stepping away from inherited global trade patterns. However, this intra African free trade project is faced with several challenges. These challenges are conceptual, legal and operational. Perhaps, the most formidable of these challenges is ideological and relates the vanishing belief in free trade's virtue amidst the current geopolitical turmoil. This conference aimed to connect scholars and practitioners interested in the topic of intra-African trade and related conceptual and regulatory issues.

The conference comes as a result of several months of reflections on various aspects of the AfCFTA. As part of the "PROGRESS" research project of the AIRESS, the conference aims at assessing the first five years of implementation of the AfCFTA. It will discuss different issues ranging from legal and conceptual design to more specific issues related to implementation.

**Download the** Full Conference Program here.

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