



Conference

First Years of Functioning of the African Continental Free Trade Area: Challenges and Prospects

Tuesday, May 20th & Wednesday, May 21st, 2025

Event Brief

First Years of Functioning of the African Continental Free Trade Area: Challenges and Prospects

ABSTRACT | AGENDA | PARTICIPANTS' AFFILIATIONS

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.

Agenda

Venue: B-B1-01

Arrival of participants on Campus- 19 th May, 2025	
15:00-19:00 Participants will be picked up from different airports and accompanied to the UM6P Rabat Campus, where they will check in at the on-campus hotel for the duration of their stay.	
Day 1 of the conference- 20 th May 2025	
09:30 – 09:40 Brief welcoming address Mr. Sâ Benjamin Traoré <i>FGSES-UM6P</i>	
09:40 – 09:55 Opening Remarks Mr. Karim El Aynaoui <i>Executive Vice-President of Mohammed VI Polytechnic University and Dean of its Humanities, Economics and Social Sciences Cluster, FGSES, UM6P</i>	
09:55 – 10:00 Presenting a One-year Journey Ms. Ibtissame Bourhnane <i>FGSES-UM6P</i>	
10:00 – 10:30 Keynote Speech “AfCFTA in times of global turbulence: Africa’s trade strategy in a shifting order” Mr. Olabisi D. Akinkugbe <i>Dalhousie University - Schulich School of Law</i>	
10:40 – 11.40 Opening Panel: AfCFTA in a Fragmented Global Order Moderator: Ms. Khadija Alaoui (FGSES, UM6P)	
Speakers 01 - 10:40 - 10:50 (10min) Mr. Mounir Zaouaq <i>Ministère de l'Investissement, de la Convergence et de l'Evaluation des Politiques Publiques</i>	
Speakers 02 - 10:50 – 11:00 (10min) Mr. Mohammed Benjelloun <i>Agence Marocaine de Développement des Investissements et des Exportations (AMDIE)</i>	
Speakers 03 - 11:00 - 11:10 (10min) Ms. Saloi EL Yamani <i>Policy Center for the New South (PCNS)</i>	
Speakers 04 - 11:10 - 11:20 (10min) Mr. Olabisi D. Akinkugbe <i>Dalhousie University - Schulich School of Law</i>	
11.20- 11.40 (20min) QA Session	
11:45 – 12:00 Coffee Break	
12:00 – 13:30 Panel 1: AfCFTA – Conceptual Design Moderator: Ms. Ibtissame Bourhnane (FGSES, UM6P)	
Presentation (1) - 12:00 - 12:15 (15min) Mr. Paliguewinde Martin Sawadogo <i>Université Laval</i>	« Regards critiques sur les fondements idéologiques de la ZLECAf »
Presentation (2) - 12:15 - 12:30 (15min) Mr. Guillaume Gérout <i>University of Helsinki</i>	«Achieving coherence: reinterpreting the acquis principle within the AFCFTA framework »
Presentation (3) - 12:30 - 12:45 (15min) Mr. Oumar Kourouma <i>Faculty of Law, Economics, and Social Sciences (FSJES)</i>	« La zone de libre-échange continentale africaine comme cadre de construction de la pax economica africaine à l'épreuve des juristragies »
12:45 - 13:15 (30min) / Panel Discussion - QA Session	
13:15 – 15:00 Lunch Break- Student Center 1	

15:00 – 16:15 Panel 2: Implementing AfCFTA- Investment Related Challenges Moderator: Ms. Franziska Sucker (University of the Witwatersrand/GIZ)	
Presentation (4) - 15:00 - 15:15 (15min) Ms. Miracle Okoro <i>Centurion Law Group</i>	<i>« Reimagining investment in Africa: advancing sustainable development through impact investing under the AfCFTA »</i>
Presentation (5) - 15:15 - 15:30 (15min) Mr. Lassané Ouedraogo <i>University of Pretoria</i>	<i>« Appraisal of investors' sustainable development obligations under the AfCFTA investment protocol »</i>
Presentation (6) - 15:30 - 15:45 (15min) Ms. Irene Kariuki <i>University of Nairobi</i>	<i>« Exploring the link between foreign investment and illicit financial flows (IFFs) in Africa under the AfCFTA regime »</i>
15:45 - 16:15 (30min) Panel Discussion - QA Session	
Day 2 of the conference- 21st May 2025	
09:30 – 10:45 Panel 3: Implementing AfCFTA- Special issues related to implementation Moderator: Mr. Olabisi D. Akinkugbe (Dalhousie University - Schulich School of Law)	
Presentation (7) - 09:30 - 09:45 (15min) Mr. Franziska Sucker <i>University of the Witwatersrand/GIZ</i> Mr. Mishael M. Wambua <i>University of the Witwatersrand/GIZ</i>	<i>« Rules of origin and market access for digital products in the AfCFTA digital trade protocol: setting a new precedent with legal loopholes »</i>
Presentation (8) - 09:45 - 10:00 (15min) Mr. Kamo Sende <i>Robert Gordon University</i>	<i>« Labour mobility under AfCFTA: harmonising qualifications and countering xenophobia »</i>
Presentation (9) - 10:00 - 10:15 (15min) Ms Eniola Rebecca Sonuga <i>Optima Advisory</i>	<i>« The AfCFTA and the revolutionary nomads of the 21st century: assessing legal and regulatory frameworks for cross-border trade and mobility »</i>
10:15 - 10:45 (30min) Panel Discussion - QA Session	
10:45 – 11:00 Coffee Break	
11:00 – 12:15 Panel 4: AfCFTA - Institutional and Constitutional Arrangements Moderator: Mr. Rimdolmsom Jonathan Kabré (Institut Universitaire d'Abidjan)	
Presentation (10) - 11:00 - 11:15 (15min) Mr. Robert Yougbaré <i>Université Norbert Zongo</i>	<i>« La ZLECAf et l'agencement institutionnel de l'intégration régionale en Afrique »</i>
Presentation (11) - 11:15 - 11:30 (15min) Mr. Tresor Makunya <i>University of Goma - University of Pretoria</i>	<i>« An African comparative constitutional analysis of the AfCTA »</i>
Presentation (12) - 11:30 - 11:45 (15min) Mr. Ali Kairouani <i>Mohammed V University in Rabat</i>	<i>« Mimétisme et particularisme du système de règlement des différends de la ZLECAf »</i>
11:45 - 12:15 (30min) Panel Discussion - QA Session	
12:15 – 12:30 <i>Wrap-up and closing Remarks</i> Mr. Rimdolmsom Jonathan Kabré <i>Institut Universitaire d'Abidjan</i>	<i>Closing Remarks</i> <i>Recap with photos/videos</i>
12:30 – 14:30 Lunch Break- Student Center 1	
Day 3 of the Conference- 22nd May 2025	
10.00	<i>Departure from Campus Hotel</i>

Participants' Affiliations

Speakers	Affiliation
Olabisi D. Akinkugbe	Dalhousie University
Khadija Alaoui	Faculty of Governance, Economics and Social Sciences- UM6P
Mohammed Benjelloun	Agence Marocaine de Développement des Investissements et des Exportations (AMDIE)
Ibtissame Bourhnane	Faculty of Governance, Economics and Social Sciences- UM6P
Saloi EL Yamani	Policy Center for the New South (PCNS)
Guillaume Gérout	University of Helsinki
Rimdolmsom Jonathan Kabré	Institut Universitaire d'Abidjan
Ali Kairouani	Mohammed V University of Rabat
Irene Kariuki	University of Nairobi
Oumar Kourouma	Faculty of Law, Economics, and Social Sciences Casablanca (FSJES)
Miracle Okoro	Centurion Law Group (CLG)
Lassané Ouedraogo	University of Pretoria
Paliguewinde Martin Sawadogo	Laval University
Kamo Sende	Robert Gordon University Law School
Eniola Rebecca Sonuga	Optima Advisory
Franziska Sucker	University of the Witwatersrand/GIZ Kenya
Mishaël Musili Wambua	University of the Witwatersrand/GIZ Kenya
Robert Yougbaré	Université Norbert Zongo
Mounir Zaouaq	Ministère de l'Investissement, de la Convergence et de l'Évaluation des Politiques Publiques



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