

PRESSE RELEASE No XXX

African Union Ministers hold Informal Consultations on the matter of Reservations made on CFTA Modalities on the Liberalization of Trade in Goods


New York – 21 September 2017: At the backdrop of the 72nd United Nations General Assembly, on 21st September 2017 in the Conference Room of the African Union Permanent Mission in New York (USA), AU Ministers of Trade and Industry from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe held Informal Consultations on the matter of reservations made on the CFTA Modalities on liberalization of Trade in Goods. The meeting was chaired by **H.E. Dr. Okechukwu E. Enelamah**, Minister for Trade and Industry of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chairman of the African

Union Ministers responsible for Trade. **H.E. Ambassador Albert M. Muchanga**, Commissioner for Trade and Industry took part in the meeting. Chairman of the meeting also invited **Ambassador Chiedu Osakwe**, who currently chairs the CFTA Negotiating Forum, to provide technical inputs into the discussion.

The consultative meeting was convened in line with the AU Assembly Decision that mandated the CFTA Champion to engage with the concerned countries in order to find an amicable solution to the reservations made on the level of ambition for tariff liberalisation in the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA).

At the 28th Ordinary Session of the African Union Heads of State and Government, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2017, the Summit mandated **H.E. Mahamadou Issoufou**, President of the Republic of Niger to champion the process for the conclusion of Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) Negotiations no later than the end of this year.

At the 29th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government, that took place on July 3rd and 4th 2017, H.E. President Mahamadou Issoufou reported on the progress made in the CFTA negotiations. The President informed the Assembly that AU Ministers of Trade had approved the modalities for the CFTA tariff liberalization and trade in services negotiations. Ministers had agreed on an ambitious target of 90% for tariff liberalization. The President also reported that seven AU Member States registered reservations on the level of ambition of 90%; and, had proposed 85% in view of their economic circumstances.

The AU Assembly noted the Report on the status of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) negotiations submitted by H.E. President Issoufou and reaffirmed the Commitment to conclude the negotiations of the Continental Free Trade Area by December 2017. The Heads of State and Government approved the modalities for trade in services negotiations

as well as modalities for tariff negotiations with a level of ambition of 90% in line with the adopted Modalities.

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