



PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AfCFTA SECRETARIAT AND REPUBLIC OF DJIBOUTI TO HOST REGIONAL
CONFERENCE ON SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES**

Djibouti City, Djibouti – 18 April 2025 The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat, in collaboration with the Republic of Djibouti, will host a Regional Conference on Special Economic Zones (SEZs) from 21 to 22 April 2025 at the Ayla Grand Hotel in Djibouti City.

Held under the Patronage of His Excellency Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti, the Conference will bring together representatives from AfCFTA State Parties, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), SEZ authorities, financial institutions, and the private sector to explore the role of SEZs in accelerating industrialisation, trade facilitation and economic cooperation under the AfCFTA.

The event comes at a pivotal moment in the implementation of the AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Goods. Article 9 of Annex II on Rules of Origin enables goods produced within SEZs to qualify as "originating goods," provided they meet specific criteria. In February 2023, the AfCFTA Council of Ministers of Trade adopted Ministerial Regulation 1/2023, allowing goods from African SEZs to be traded preferentially while ensuring that provisions on Trade Remedies, Competition Policy, and Infant Industry Protection apply to safeguard domestic markets.

The Conference will also highlight Djibouti's strategic role as a Red Sea logistics hub and showcase its SEZ initiatives as a model for regional economic transformation. The two-day programme will include high-level panel discussions, a site visit to Djibouti's SEZ, and dialogues on investment, infrastructure, and regulatory frameworks.

Key themes include:

- SEZs and the AfCFTA: From Regulation to Implementation
- Innovation, Skills Development, and Value Chain Resilience
- Infrastructure and Trade Corridors for Regional Integration
- Financing SEZs: Opportunities for Investment

This strategic gathering is expected to shape regional approaches to SEZ governance and reinforce Africa's collective trade ambitions.



About AfCFTA

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is one of the flagship projects of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and entered into force on 30 May 2019, with trading under the Agreement commencing on 1 January 2021. It is a high-ambition trade agreement aimed at bringing together all 55 African Union (AU) Member States, covering a market of more than 1.3 billion people. With a comprehensive scope, the AfCFTA addresses key areas of Africa's economy, including trade in goods and services, digital trade, investment protection, intellectual property rights, and competition policy among other areas. By eliminating barriers to trade within the continent, the AfCFTA seeks to significantly boost intra-African trade, particularly in value-added production and services sectors. According to estimates, the Agreement has the potential to increase intra-African trade by 52.3% through tariff liberalization and trade facilitation measures. For more information, please visit: <https://au-afcfta.org>

For more information, please contact:

Ms. Grace Khoza, Principal Communications Advisor | African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat | E-mail: Grace.Khoza@au-afcfta.org | Accra, Ghana

Ms. Yafika Chitanda, Communication Officer | African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat | E-mail: Yafika.chitanda@au-afcfta.org | Accra, Ghana

****ENDS****