

**DECLARATION ON THE LAUNCH OF THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (CFTA)
Doc. Assembly/AU/11(XXV)
Decision No: Assembly/AU/Decl.3(XXV)**

We, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, meeting at the 26th Ordinary Session of our Assembly in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 14 to 15 June 2015;

Recalling our Assembly Decision (Assembly/AU/Dec.394 (XVIII)) adopted in January 2012 Summit on the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area to be operationalized by an indicative date of 2017;

Also Recalling our Assembly Decision (Assembly/AU/11(XXIV)) of January 2015 reaffirming our commitment to launch the CFTA Negotiations in June 2015.

Reaffirming our commitment to increase intra-African trade through the establishment of a CFTA that will foster economic growth, equitable development, and support integration through trade liberalization, industrialization and infrastructure development towards the full implementation of the Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community;

Emphasizing the importance of building the CFTA on existing regional free trade areas in order to broaden and deepen continental integration;

Reiterating that the establishment of a functional CFTA that integrates African economies is a fundamental milestone in the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda will play a major role in fostering the structural transformation of the Continent;

Reiterating the importance of implementing the Action Plan on Boosting Intra African Trade (BIAT) prioritising work on industrialisation, infrastructure development and free movement of people to ensure maximisation of benefits of establishing the CFTA;

Noting the importance of relevant flanking policies and reforms at the continental, regional and national levels to maximise the benefits of establishing the continental free trade area;

Recognizing the need for technical assistance in order to facilitate the effective participation of all Member States in the entire process leading to the establishment of the CFTA;

Aware of the importance of constructive participation of the private sector, parliamentarians and other relevant stakeholders in the CFTA Negotiations through appropriate mechanisms;

Taking Note of the Report the AU Ministers of Trade Meeting that was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 14-15 May 2015;

Now therefore,

1. **LAUNCH** negotiations for the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area aimed at integrating Africa's markets in line with the objectives and principles enunciated in the Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community;
2. **URGE** all Regional Economic Communities and Member States to participate effectively in the CFTA negotiations;
3. **CALL UPON** the Commission, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, African Development Bank, African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) and other development partners to provide analytical support, technical assistance and to carry out a comprehensive capacity building program targeted at Member States and RECS in order to strengthen their capacity to effectively engage in the negotiations;
4. **COMMEND** the Commission and the Continental Task Force on the CFTA for the work done in preparation for the launch of the CFTA negotiations.