



The African Continental Free Trade Agreement and the future of Regional Economic Communities

Vusi Gumedde, University of Mpumalanga

Abstract

The ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) came on the backdrop of other Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) being in place among Regional Economic Communities (RECs). It is therefore important to examine the potential success, or failure, of the AfCFTA particularly in the context of the RECs. Key informant interviews were conducted in order to obtain insights from various role players in the RECs, the African Union (AU) and UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), as well as literature review to uncover the work which has been done concerning RECs. It is critical to analyse how the AfCFTA would interface with the Tripartite FTA, the FTAs of the RECs, customs unions and monetary communities that already exist. The free trade agreements that subregions and or countries in Africa enter into are also a threat to the AfCFTA because all efforts of African countries should be focusing on boosting intra-African trade in order to ensure that the AfCFTA succeeds. It does not seem feasible to readily 'absorb' the RECs into the AfCFTA, largely because many RECs have significantly deepened integration. An ideal AfCFTA implementation modality should ensure a mutually reinforcing relationship between the AfCFTA, TFTA and FTAs of the RECs. Using results from fieldwork, paper emphasises that it is important that the question of the future of RECs is addressed so there is sufficient clarity about how would the implementation of the AfCFTA unfold as far as the role of RECs is concerned.

Key words: Free Trade; Regional Economic Communities; African Continental Free Trade Agreement; Tripartite Free Trade Agreement; Economic Partnership Agreements; Intra-African Trade

Introduction

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement came into force ahead of the Tripartite Free Trade Agreement (TFTA). It was in October 2008 when the discussions about the TFTA started and in June 2015 it was officially launched. The AfCFTA finds in existence Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Customs Unions and Monetary Communities in Africa. RECs were envisaged in the early years of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to be building blocks for the African Economic Community (AEC). The 1980 Lagos Plan of Action positioned the AEC as a long-term goal. The 1991 Abuja Treaty made the AEC aspiration a legal requirement, while the 2000 Constitutive Act of the African Union, the 2012 Boosting Intra-African Trade Action Plan and other initiatives make it a reference point. Agenda 2063 forms a basis for the promulgation of the AfCFTA.

The paper examines the relationships among the various free trade arrangements in Africa, particularly the interface between the AfCFTA and the FTAs of the RECs and other relevant issues such as the Tripartite FTA (TFTA), customs unions and monetary communities. The paper is an attempt to highlight key issues that need to be considered as far as the future of RECs is concerned. The overarching finding is that RECs are of major importance and that the ideal implementation modality pertaining to the AfCFTA has to cater for a mutually reinforcing relationship between the AfCFTA, TFTA and FTAs of the RECs. It does not seem feasible to readily 'absorb' the RECs into the AfCFTA because many RECs have significantly deepened integration, including many institutions and processes that have been put in place over a long period of time. This reality would most likely be compounded when the TFTA comes into force. The TFTA, though not yet in force, has many instruments that have been negotiated that will make it more easily implementable when it comes to force. The central argument of the paper is that it is not clear how would the AfCFTA practically interface with FTAs of the RECs as well as existing customs unions and monetary

authorities. Although the AfCFTA presents options and principles, it is important that these issues are analysed. More importantly, the future of the RECs should be clarified or at least problematised.

The paper starts by presenting the methodological approach used pertaining to fieldwork. Then a discussion of the integration efforts in Africa historically and chronologically is done as a part of setting the context. An analysis of the AfCFTA, the FTAs of the RECs and the idea of a Continental Customs Union and the African Economic Community follows. Then I reflect on progress of the various RECs regarding integration, also presenting the possible options for the AfCFTA interface with existing FTAs and implications thereof. A recap of the integration architecture in Africa is then undertaken, including an examination of the progress against the timeline and milestones given in the Abuja Treaty. Before concluding, the role of the AfCFTA pertaining to integration in Africa is examined along with various implications.

Methodological approach

Key informant interviews were undertaken with relevant officials in the selected RECs: Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), East African Community (EAC) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Both literature review (including document analysis) and interviews inform the findings and arguments of this paper, including the scenarios for the envisaged relationship between the AfCFTA and other FTAs in Africa. The ideal scenario would be for there not be a need to choose one or the other between coexistence or absorption, but rather for both elements of coexistence and absorption to be pursued. There is need to find a balance that allows for a mutually reinforcing implementation approach.

Over and above that, it is important to consider what could be the roles of RECs and the role of the TFTA in the implementation of the AfCFTA. Should RECs mainly deal coordination; could the RECs and or the TFTA act as customs authorities; could the secretariats of the RECs and TFTA function as sub-secretariats of the AfCFTA Secretariat? These issues are critical because the AfCFTA would still take some time before full Implementation. It is therefore not a straightforward process of the AfCFTA absorbing RECs into the AfCFTA or converging the FTAs of RECs into the AfCFTA. Further complications are likely to arise from the TFTA coming into force. The TFTA was envisaged to be a step towards the African

Economic Community (AEC). It is also said to have informed the AfCFTA negotiations. In other words, the AfCFTA benefitted from many lessons of the TFTA.

The paper is informed by a qualitative methodological approach. As indicated above, it draws from interviews conducted with officials in the three RECs (i.e. SADC, EAC and COMESA) as well as interviews with relevant officials in the African Union (AU) and in the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). Different questionnaires were used for different respondents: there was a questionnaire for officials dealing with technical issues (e.g. customs and or trade) and for senior/strategic/political type officials (e.g. Directors-General) there was a questionnaire dealing with political/strategic issues. The study deliberately limited itself to AU, UNECA and RECs officials mainly to test the hypothesis whether RECs and the TFTA can be absorbed into and or co-exist with the AfCFTA. The TFTA includes SADC, EAC and COMESA – these are the RECs whose officials were interviewed. The negotiations for the TFTA were launched in 2011 and culminated in the 2015 signing of the TFTA agreement on trade in goods. As indicated in Gumede (2020), although over 20 countries signed the agreement, only four (Egypt, Kenya, South Africa and Uganda) have ratified it. For the TFTA to come into force, 14 ratifications are needed.

Fieldwork for the AU and UNECA was mainly focused on strategic and process issues (e.g. negotiations, implementation of existing FTAs, the Abuja Treaty and the Lagos Plan of Action, envisaged modalities for implementing the AfCFTA etc). For the RECs, the main questions in the questionnaires focused on the views of the various officials in the RECs regarding the functioning of the RECs, the TFTA, relationships between RECs and the AU, the envisaged interface between RECs and the AfCFTA, options for the RECs in the context of the AfCFTA, and the overall process of regional integration in the RECs and in Africa as a whole. The identification of those interviewed was influenced by the main questions that the paper is dealing with, as discussed earlier. Letters requesting for interviews were sent to the each Executive Secretary of the RECs that were selected for fieldwork and they indicated who would be appropriate for interviewing. In terms of gender, as such, only two females were interviewed.

Integration in Africa

African regionalism and regionalisation efforts have been pursued for a long time. There is significant literature pertaining to regional integration in Africa. Bach (2016) argues that

there is a difference between regionalism and regionalisation; that regionalism can take place without regionalisation. As Bach (2016, 5) explains “it is today generally established that regionalism refers to cognitive and/or state-centric projects, while regionalisation points to processes and/or de facto outcomes.” For Bach regionalism involve “the ideas or ideologies, programmes, policies and goals that seek to transform an identified social space into a regional project” (p5) while “regionalisation relates to the build up of interactions that are not necessarily associated with an explicitly asserted or acknowledged regionalist project. Regionalisation is a more encompassing notion than regionalism since it takes into account processes and configurations within which states are frequently not the key players” (p6).

With regards to African regionalism, Legrenzi (2015, 11) sees it as “an expression of increased and deepened regional cooperation and integration among African states”. Regional integration, broadly, is viewed as “a process by which a group of nation states voluntarily and in various degrees” have access “to each other’s markets and establish mechanisms and techniques that minimize conflicts and maximize internal and external economic, political, social and cultural benefits of their interaction” (Haarlov 1997, 15).

As other articles show in this volume, theories of regionalism deal with, among other conceptual issues, development integration, market integration and regional cooperation. Development integration has become a preferred approach to regional integration because market integration has not advanced socio-economic development. According to Börzel and van Hüllen (2015) development integration requires more state intervention than market integration. According to Mkandawire (2014), developmental integration can be viewed as efforts aimed at replicating the developmental state template at a regional level.

Gumede (2019), based on the critique of the various regional integration efforts or models, argues for a pan-African developmental regional integration. As Gumede (2020, 32) puts it, “at the core of the proposed pan-African developmental regional integration is people-to-people relations and an acknowledgement of the role that indigenous languages can play in the pursuit of the political federation.” The pan-African developmental regional integration can assist in addressing the many challenges that face Africa when it comes to regional integration. Among the challenges, as Bach (2016, 8) indicates, is that “today, regional ‘integration’ still relates in Africa, to the continuation (and re-legitimisation) of colonial

arrangements (the CFA monetary zone and the Southern African Customs Unions) that have been pursued beyond independence.”

There are also continuous attempts to further entrench the colonial arrangements that Bach refers to. One of such attempts is the Economic Partnerships Agreements (EPAs) of the EU. The EPAs are presented as opportunity for Africa or African countries or subregions in Africa. Countries and some subregions in Africa are entering in EPAs with the EU in hope that they will get duty-free access to the European markets. As Woolfrey and Bilal (2017, 5) say, EPAs are meant “to promote sustainable development and poverty reduction, including through supporting regional integration processes in Africa, promoting the gradual integration of African economies into global markets and enhancing African countries’ ability to leverage trade opportunities for economic growth.” However, even if EPAs might contribute towards strengthening the competitiveness of some African value chains, EPAs would result to less competitive African value chain actors being driven out of the market, or even prevent the development of nascent domestic and regional value chains not yet ready for exposure to international (EU) competition (Foster-McGregor, Kaulich and Stehrer. 2015). According to Stevens, Irfan, Massa and Kennan (2015), EPAs would affect African actors by altering the economic environments in which they operate and also limit the ability of African governments to use industrial policy to promote domestic production.

It is therefore important that African countries or Africa as a whole focus on increasing intra-Africa trade within Africa. Even China needs to be handled with circumspect. As one interviewee indicated, “China is cunning. It has been going to one on one Africa leaders [that they] all attend China-Africa Summit but they never attend AU Summits in full.” It is not surprising that the various AU Summits of Heads of States and Governments have cautioned against bilateral trade agreements outside Africa. Besides the EPA there is the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA Act) of the United States of America which will lapse in 2025. Like the EPAs, AGOA has a potential to affect the successful implementation of the AfCFTA. As argued in Gumede (2020, 30), “the United States of America is most likely to negotiate with individual countries, which would have a negative impact on the AfCFTA because it diverts attention from ensuring that African countries can fully trade with one another.”

Arguably, the contemporary approach to continental integration has found expression in the establishment of the AfCFTA. Some, see Nwafor (2019) for instance, make reference to the AfCFTA as a direct response to the frustration caused by the failures of the Abuja Treaty to deliver meaningful continental integration both in substance and in the given timeframes. Others, for instance Fasan (2020) opine that the AfCFTA is an outcome of the inability of most RECs to progress fast enough. This view is similar to views that imply that the TFTA was a result of concerns that RECs were not progressing fast enough. These views are debatable.

First, the timeline in the Abuja Treaty is not far off: the period given for the African Economic Community is about 34 years and as at year 2020 there have been many important processes pursued towards an African Economic Community (AUC 2019). Second, the different RECs have progressed in different places in deepening integration. There are RECs that seem to be ahead of the milestones given in the Abuja Treaty against the timeline that was agreed upon. Part of the challenge relates to the proliferation of RECs outside what the Abuja Treaty defined as a 'region'. Third, the TFTA could have been a sound basis for the creation of a continental customs union. It might very well be that the AfCFTA, as important as it is, is an outcome a political process that has not taken stock of existing FTAs and especially the TFTA.

To start with, the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) was adopted in April 1980 as a step to further African integration efforts. This was the first step towards increased integration on the African continent. It set an ambitious target of achieving the African Common Market by year 2000 (Onwuka 1985), but this target has not been achieved. The main objective was to promote development among African states as well as between them, using an incremental and progressive integration strategy. The ultimate objective was to be achieved through the establishment of the common market in the form of an African Economic Community (AEC). The LPA had adduced evidence to show that the continent of Africa is the most brutalised by poverty and ignorance and yet is one of the wealthiest in natural resources (Mazrui 1980). A number of scholars and evidence from current trends show that the scenario has not changed and, in some cases, things have gotten worse (Lebert 2015; Arieff 2015; and Kauffman 2012).

The failure to properly implement the LPA did not stop economic and political integration efforts on the African continent. Flowing from this, the African Heads of States decided to give another try at integration and revived the 1980 LPA through the adoption of the (Abuja) Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community.

The Abuja Treaty came into force in 1994 with the aim of forming an African Economic Community (AEC) over a period of 34 years (Erasmus 2015). At the time, this was hailed as a step in the right direction towards economic emancipation of Africa (Thompson 1993). A six-stage integration process was put in place with the RECs as building blocks. The various RECs in the different geographic areas of the continent play a critical role in the integration process although many RECs have not progressed well.

The key provisions of Article 4 of the Abuja Treaty are largely mirrored in the AfCFTA. It is hoped that in both the AEC and the AfCFTA, the integration agenda should be more than a trading arrangement or a mechanism for promoting cooperation in production based on creation of a common market. The idea is also to integrate national markets and cooperation in production. The signatories to both agreements undertook to cooperate with each other in certain functional areas, for example social, political and economic matters. The central feature to this common agenda is the improvement of the lives of African citizens.

However, the AfCFTA is not as comprehensive as the AEC. The Abuja Treaty, as indicated in Article 4, goes far beyond trade. This is viewed by the majority of officials interviewed as a limitation of the AfCFTA. An official at the EAC REC, when asked about the AfCFTA, said:

Some aspects [of the AfCFTA] are okay but the nitty gritty details are limited for reaching full potential of the Abuja Treaty. Negotiations lost the vision of founding fathers of the Abuja Treaty.

Among the reasons why there has been a delay in achieving the aspirations of the Abuja Treaty is that there has not been sufficient political will and or commitment by leaders in Africa to ensuring that the objectives of the Abuja Treaty are accomplished. Linked to this is that there has not been sufficient funding necessary to make the aspirations of the Abuja Treaty a reality. The similar constraints can limit the success of the AfCFTA. An official at the COMESA REC, when asked about potential challenges for the implementation of the AfCFTA, said:

There is lack of ownership (e.g, lack of funds and finances). The entire process of AfCFTA is funded by the Western world causing lack of ownership.

Article 28 regarding strengthening RECs in Chapter IV of the Treaty establishing the AEC (OAU 1991)¹ specifies that:

- 1. During the first stage, Member States undertake to strengthen the existing regional economic communities and to establish new communities where they do not exist in order to ensure the gradual establishment of the Community.*
- 2. Member States shall take all necessary measures aimed at progressively promoting increasingly closer cooperation among communities, particularly through coordination and harmonisation of their activities in all fields or sectors in order to ensure the realisation of the objectives of the Community.*

Given this, the institutional arrangements to be put in place must be those that will ensure the realisation of the objectives of the AEC. In this regard, focus should be on the future while learning from the past. Therefore, the roles of the AU, the RECs and Member States with respect to the FTAs, TFTA, and the AfCFTA must be tailored towards the objectives of the AEC. The FTAs of RECs, TFTA and AfCFTA should serve as lessons to the AEC. In addition, more thinking and planning should be going to how a continental customs union can be made reality. Regarding the AfCFTA drawing lessons from past experiences, during the interview an AU official made a point that:

The AfCFTA has a lot to learn from COMESA because COMESA has a many institutions which can help as the building blocks for AfCFTA. For example, how COMESA have integrated with other RECs by working closely with other RECs to form partnerships and linkages.

This view (i.e. that the AfCFTA should draw lessons from past experiences) is widespread. In the interviews conducted in the RECs the same view was expressed. The majority of those interviewed argued that the AfCFTA should specifically draw lessons from the TFTA. That said, during an interview a UNECA official said that “the TFTA should be discontinued...otherwise we will have an FTA within an FTA.”

Coming to intra-Africa trade, the Boosting Intra-Africa Trade (BIAT) agenda came at the appropriate and timely occasion given the challenges African countries were facing in increasing intra-Africa trade. There was need to come up with strategies to improve the situation. The realisation that trade plays an important role in economic growth of nations

¹ Organisation of African Unity (OAU): June 3rd, 1991, Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, Abuja, Nigeria.

cannot be underestimated. Examples from the continent and beyond show that trade is able to lift people from poverty to prosperity. BIAT attempted to correct this because on the continent of Africa and to a greater extent trade has not served as a potent instrument for the achievement of rapid and sustainable economic growth and development due mainly to three interrelated basic features: size, structure, and direction. At around 3%, the share of Africa in global trade is insignificant (see Gumede 2019).

The high external orientation and relatively low level of intra-regional trade is another characteristic of Africa's trade, which has had some adverse implications for its impact on economic growth and development. Intra-African trade is reported to be much lower compared with intra-regional trade in North America, Europe and ASEAN. Even if allowance is made for Africa's unrecorded informal cross-border trade, the total level of intra-African trade is not likely to be more than 20%, which is still lower than that of other major regions of the world. One explanation for low levels of intra-regional trade and low inter-Africa trade is that African countries and some of the regions in Africa trade more with the outside world. This was confirmed by some of the interviewees.

The fact that African countries do not trade much with each other has meant that they have been unable to fully harness the synergies and complementarities of their economies. The countries have not taken full advantage of the economies of scale and other benefits (such as income and employment generation) that regional integration would have provided. There are cases where products and services could have been sourced competitively from other African countries but were procured from outside the continent. The different Protocols of the AfCFTA are aiming to address this situation.

Boosting intra-African trade and deepening regional market integration constitutes a necessary response to the challenges facing Africa in the multilateral trading system and the global economy. The role of African countries as individuals and as a bloc remain marginalised in the WTO. At the same time the multilateral system of the WTO remains paralysed by the lack of progress on the Doha Round of trade negotiations. The boosting of intra-African trade and the deepening of Africa's market integration, by fostering competition among African countries, will assist in enhancing their capacity and prepare them to compete more effectively on the global market.

Mainstreaming of intra-African trade in national trade and development strategies	<p>Adequate allocation in member states' budgets to enable implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African and regional trade policies are mainstreamed in the National trade and development strategies
---	---

The Action Plan for Boosting Intra-Africa Trade specifically aims at deepening African market integration and significantly increasing the volume of trade that African countries undertake among themselves. To effectively achieve this aim, the plan is divided into seven clusters namely, Trade Facilitation, Trade Policy, Productive capacities, Trade related Infrastructure, Trade Finance, Trade Information and Factor Market integration. Implementing of the actions in each cluster is expected to significantly contribute to Boosting Intra African Trade (African Union 2015).

Table 1 is the summary of the key areas for implementation in relation to Boosting Intra-Africa Trade as identified by the AU:

- *Mainstreaming of intra-African trade in national trade and development strategies;*
- *Enhancement of the role of the organized private sector, informal private sector and women in trade policy formulation;*
- *Boosting intra-African trade in food products;*
- *Undertaking commitments to liberalize trade-related service sectors (Transport, professional, financial and ICT);*
- *Committing to harmonize rules of origin and simplifying trade regimes; as well as promoting “Buy in Africa” and “Made in Africa”.*

Enhancement of the role of the organized private sector, informal private sector and women in trade policy formulation	Regular formal platforms for organized private sector, informal private sector and woman business and civil society for trade policy dialogue with Government, are established
Boost intra-African trade in food products	Tariffs, non-tariff measures and quantitative restrictions on intra-African trade in food products are removed
Undertake commitments to liberalize trade-related service sectors: Transport, professional, financial and ICT	Unilateral liberalization in services is undertaken by member states <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitments made in RECs or between RECs • Regulatory frameworks are put in place
Commit to harmonize rules of origin and simplify trade regimes	Rules of origin and trade regimes are harmonized at the REC level and Tripartite level
Promoting “Buy in Africa” and “Made in Africa”	Increased trade in goods among member states

Table 1: Boosting Intra-Africa Trade

With regards to the TFTA, the signing of the TFTA on 10 June 2015 was said to be one of the most advanced developments in deepening trade in Africa. The TFTA plans to liberalise 100% of tariff lines (Luke and Mabuza 2015). The TFTA has however not come into force and it has been overtaken by the AfCFTA. At the point of signing, the TFTA Member States represented 48% of the membership of the African Union, 51% of continental GDP and a combined population of 632 million (*COMESA, EAC, and SADC 2015*). Recent estimates indicate that TFTA members represent 53% of the AU membership because additional

countries (i.e. South Sudan, Tunisia and Somalia) have joined – this pushes up the continental GDP contribution of TFTA members to 60% and the total population is now above 800 million.

The specific objectives of the TFTA are to:

- a) progressively eliminate tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade in goods;*
- b) liberalise trade in services;*
- c) cooperate on customs matters and implementation of trade facilitation measures;*
- d) establish and promote cooperation in all trade-related areas among Tripartite Member/Partner States; and*
- e) establish and maintain an institutional framework for implementation and administration of the Tripartite Free Trade Area (COMESA 2015).*

Box 1 gives a summary of the areas covered by the TFTA.

Box 1: Selected TFTA Parts

Part III of the TFTA elaborates on the areas to be covered under the *Liberalisation of trade in goods*. This includes:

- Elimination of import duties
- Non-tariff-barriers
- Elimination of quantitative restrictions
- Rules of origin

Part IV deals with *Customs Cooperation and Trade Facilitation* and covers the following:

- Customs Cooperation
- Trade Facilitation
- Transit

Part V deals with *Trade Remedies*, with a focus on:

- Transitional Arrangements
- Anti-dumping and Countervailing Measures
- Safeguard Measures
- Preferential Safeguards
- Cooperation on Trade Remedies

Part VI deals with *Trade-related areas*, with a focus on:

- Technical Barriers to Trade
- Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
- Special Economic Zones
- Infant industries
- Balance of Payments

Part VII is on *Other areas of cooperation*

- Cooperation in Trade Policies and Negotiations
- Cooperation in Research and Statistics

Source: Adapted from COMESA, EAC, and SADC (2015)

The expectation has been that the TFTA would be operational by 2020, which is highly likely. As indicated earlier, more countries are joining and the number of countries ratifying the agreement is increasing. The interviews confirmed that more countries would be ratifying and that the important instruments and protocols are ready for the implementation of the TFTA. An official at COMESA REC, during the interview, indicated that:

Whereas AfCFTA is only about trade, the TFTA has three pillars which makes it easy for the traders to move goods. Therefore, the TFTA can't be done away with or replaced by AfCFTA which just looks at trade and customs. The AfCFTA does not have the instruments to implement some of its policies. AfCFTA only has ratification but no instruments.

There is consensus that the TFTA provides good lessons for the AfCFTA. Actually, all those who were interviewed indicated that the AfCFTA used the TFTA as a template and approach – on average, 3 officials were interviewed in the 3 RECs and 4 key informant interviews in the AU and 6 key informant interviews in UNECA. For instance, the Tripartite Non-Tariff Barrier Mechanism has resolved over 500 registered complaints in the Tripartite region and it is cited as a good example of a mechanism that can be adopted by the AfCFTA (UNECA 2018). It is reported that traders prefer tariffs than non-tariff barriers due to their predictability nature.

In practice, the synergy can be applied through adapting what is agreed at continental level then applying it at regional level through the Tripartite arrangement. These modalities can be used for the Phase II AfCFTA negotiations on competition, intellectual property and investment. The three RECs making up the Tripartite FTA can be instrumental in pulling resources together for the negotiations, provide technical inputs where necessary, lobbying at the political level, and lubricating what can be challenging negotiations.

Lastly, complementarity will aid the implementation process and ensure that the Secretariats and institutions of the TFTA, the AfCFTA and the RECs are aligned to work closely. Over the medium term, consolidating the trading regimes in Africa could involve harmonising what has proven to work well in one context (e.g. Tripartite Non-Tariff Barrier Mechanism and the Rules of Origin). Once areas of complementarities are recognised, especially between the AfCFTA and the TFTA, other partners can provide technical assistance in terms of advisory services, training and capacity building.

Free Trade Arrangements in Africa

As indicated earlier, RECs are understood as important institutions that would ensure that the AEC becomes reality. It is however important to highlight that the notion of a ‘region’ is not viewed the same by everyone or by those in the AU structures. The Abuja Treaty implied, by its definition of a region, that five RECs were envisaged. However, there are currently eight RECs:

- the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD),
- the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA),
- the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS),
- the East African Community (EAC),
- the Southern African Development Community (SADC),
- the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD),
- the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCA) and
- the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA).

The understanding that RECs are critical for the achievement of the objectives of the Abuja Treaty is widespread in the Secretariats of the RECs. As one interviewee explains,

RECs are the building blocks for the AfCFTA. Most of the trade in Africa takes place between neighboring countries and the right bodies to help with that are RECs. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. The RECs look at multiple factors of the economy.

In addition to the TFTA, there are also the following customs unions or monetary communities in Africa:

- Southern African Customs Union (SACU),
- West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU),
- the Coopération Financière en Afrique Centrale, West African CFA franc and
- the Central African CFA franc.

It is important to highlight that none of the monetary unions is conterminous with any of the 8 RECs – each customs union is a distinct island of integration within or adjacent to a REC. There are however RECs that have advanced to a customs union phase and some have advanced even further. For instance, the EAC has started a process of a political federation of the countries that are part of the EAC.

Over and above the question of whether there are more RECs than the Abuja Treaty envisaged, as far as the definition of a region is concerned, there is also a challenge that many countries belong to more than one REC. A phenomenon commonly called multiple membership. The issue of multiple memberships was highlighted as a challenge during fieldwork. During the fieldwork, the REC officials raised the issue of multiple membership, especially for SADC, as having been one of the reasons the REC failed to advance to the Customs Union (CU) level as was expected by 2010 (AUC 2019).

There are also instances where a country belongs to many RECs and it is not party to the FTA of any of the RECs it belongs to and there are countries that are part of a REC but have not ratified the FTA (e.g. Angola and DRC in SADC). Some of those interviews were of the view that the AfCFTA would resolve the challenge of multiple memberships, because all countries in Africa would belong to the continental free trade area. This would probably be the case once there is a continental customs union. For now, and for the medium term, the challenge of multiple membership would remain because RECs remain in place. Some of the interviewees indicated that the character of RECs could change when the implementation of the AfCFTA starts. For instance, an official from COMESA indicated, during the interview that:

RECs can serve as federations offices and not completely be done away with. Roles and treaties can be changed to support this. Meaning RECs can continue existing but with some revision.

Indeed, the success of the AfCFTA is dependent on a number of factors. For instance, for RECs that have significantly advanced it would be inappropriate or not feasible for the AfCFTA to “absorb” those RECs. The AfCFTA itself – drawing inspiration from the Abuja Treaty – views RECs as critical for the end goal of the AEC. The agreement also indicates that when RECs have significantly deepened integration, RECs would lead. The case for RECs was made in all the interviews. An EAC official, for instance, indicated during the interview that “RECs have major role as pillars of integration... the Abuja Treaty views RECs as pillars of integration.”

When it comes to the performance of RECs, as indicated above, one of the longstanding barriers to effective implementation of RECs programmes has been the overlapping membership of Member States. The problem of multiple membership is affecting the potentials of trade agreements within and between the three RECs. Such overlapping membership is considered as one of the main factors that inhibited the full potential of their ability to stimulate intra-regional trade. This may be because the member states end up spread thin politically, financially, technologically and in terms of human resources allocation (AUC 2019).

Another challenge is that the RECs are at different stages of integration in a way that may hinder the implementation of the AfCFTA. The one good example that has been used to show how the different stages of integration can negatively impact the AfCFTA is in relation to the Rules of Origin in the context of the TFTA.

In the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) study conducted in 2016 (UNECA 2016) on challenges hampering regional and national investments in Africa, member states that participated in the study listed the following as some of the barriers to regional integration:

- High risk perception of Africa;
- High transaction costs: there is also the problem of high transportation cost and inadequate infrastructure that limited the potential gains of this agreement. This is besides the inefficient administrative procedures at border crossing, and other costs incurred within domestic policy and regulatory environments that are considered as the most important constraint to intra-Africa trade;
- Inadequate infrastructure;
- Tariff/Nontariff barriers: The existence of trade barriers, especially non-tariff barriers, as a consequence of inadequate implementation of agreed commitments within the

three RECs. This could undermine the gain that could be delivered from existing and future intraregional trade areas. Beside those barriers there are also the restrictive rules of origin which are applied in each REC that hinder cross border trade; and

- Restrictions on the free movement of people and capital.

These challenges are still present as confirmed by the interviews conducted during fieldwork. In addition, those interviewed also highlighted the specific challenges that RECs themselves also face: limited capacities in some instances and not enough financing in other instances. The challenge of finance or financial and human capital resources is also relevant for the AfCFTA: how would the implementation of the AfCFTA be financed?

Given that the AfCFTA is taking precedence, it might very well be that the RECs could play a more facilitative role, rather than a political role once the AfCFTA is in full implementation. In the long run, as the level of continental integration deepens, the trade-related functions of RECs can be consolidated at the continental level, in line with the eighteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union decision for “consolidation of the Tripartite and other regional FTAs into a Continental Free Trade Area” (AUC 2019).

In addition to the roles that the RECs can perform (e.g. monitoring and reporting on implementation, regional data collection and dissemination etc),

- State Parties that are members of other RECs that have attained among themselves higher levels of regional integration than under AfCFTA will maintain such higher levels among themselves.
- RECs are to contribute to the institutional structure of AfCFTA through coordinating implementation at the regional level and, in an advisory capacity, through their respective seats on AfCFTA Committee of Senior Trade Officials.
- RECs that have achieved the level of integration necessary to form customs unions will submit common market access offers for trade in goods.

Another way of assessing the extent to which RECs have prioritised and are making progress regarding regional integration and trade related matters is through the analysis of their regional development programmes. All the RECs have indeed prioritised issues of trade and investments in the programmes. Table 2 indicates that.

Table 2: Trade and Investment Priorities in the RECs

CEN-SAD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating the free movement of individuals, capital and meeting the interest of member states citizens. • Freedom of residence, work, ownership and economic activity. • Freedom of the movement of national goods, merchandise and services. • Encouragement of foreign trade through drawing up and implementing an investment policy for member states. • Enhancement and improvement of land, air and sea transportation and telecommunications among member states through the implementation of joint projects. • Consent of the community member states to give the citizens of member states the same rights and privileges provided for in the constitution of each member state.
COMESA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen Market Integration • Attract Increased Investments • Strengthen the Blue / Ocean Economy • Harness the Benefits of Strategic Partnerships • Strengthen Development of Economic Infrastructure (Energy, Transport and ICTs) • Industrialization
ECCAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The elimination between Member States of customs duties and any other charges having an equivalent effect levied on imports and exports; • The abolition between Member States of quantitative restrictions and other trade barriers; • The establishment and maintenance of an external common customs tariff; • The establishment of a trade policy vis-à-vis third States; • The progressive abolition between Member States of obstacles to the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital and to the right of establishment; • The harmonization of national policies in order to promote Community activities, particularly in industry, transport and communications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, trade, currency and finance, human resources, tourism, education, culture, science and technology;
ECOWAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure • ICT • Trade • Telecommunications
EAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidation of the Single Customs Territory (SCT); • Infrastructure development in the region; • Enhancing free movement of all factors of production across the Partner States; • Enhancement of regional industrial development; • Improvement of agricultural productivity and value addition
IGAD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Cooperation, Integration and Social Development
SADC	<p>Priority A: Sustainable industrial development, trade integration and financial cooperation</p> <p>Priority B: Improved and integrated regional infrastructure</p>
UMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the ties of brotherhood which link the member States and their peoples to one another; • Achieving progress and prosperity of their societies and defending their rights; • Contributing to the preservation of peace based on justice and equity; • Pursuing a common policy in different domains; and • Working gradually towards achieving free movement of persons and transfer of services, goods and capital among them.

Source: Compiled from various sources

Taking SADC and the EAC, for instance. With regards to SADC, it has a demonstrated commitment to trade integration and financial cooperation within and amongst its member states. With regards to the EAC's integration priorities, they are very much geared towards speeding up regional integration through trade (UNECA 2017). It is therefore unsurprising that the region ranks first in the dimension of productive integration Regional Integration Index.

However, the key challenge to implementation has been the funding and technical capacity to support regional projects, especially those that are multi-country. Another challenge is that the RECs strategies programmes and projects are short-term in nature, spanning at most 5 years, yet the regional integration and trade agenda, especially in the context of the AfCFTA and Agenda 2063, is a long-term objective.

In the main, ECOWAS and EAC are the two best performing RECs. As UNECA (2019) shows, ECOWAS ranks highest on free movement of people and financial and macro-economic integration while EAC ranks highest on trade integration productive integration. The rest of the RECs' performances are mixed. Interviews confirmed that.

One observation that is critical for the AfCFTA is that it seems that RECs that do not have many members advance better. The AfCFTA would have effectively all African countries and the question arises whether it would progress. The TFTA with about half of African countries has not advanced much, not yet even in force. There are also issues of political will or political commitment. Some of those interviewed characterised this issue as a challenge of countries surrendering sovereignty. This has been observed in the context of RECs and some guesstimate that it would be even more pronounced in the context of the AfCFTA.

The following have been identified as key challenges and constraints to the effective implementation of the TFTA:

- poor infrastructure,
- high transaction costs and low levels of industrialisation.

Infrastructure is indeed a challenge across Africa, as well as the challenge of industrialisation. It was therefore not surprising that many of those interviewed emphasised these issues as well as the related issue of value chains. It would therefore be critical that industrialisation

and the development of value chains are prioritised, so are transportation costs and infrastructure related challenges (AUC 2019).

As indicated earlier, there are various possible options for the interface between the RECs FTAs, the TFTA and the AfCFTA that emerged during the interviews with the Secretariats of RECs. The options are highlighted as an indication that there are different views about the possible interface between the RECs FTAs, the TFTA and the AfCFTA.

With regards to the option of reducing the roles of RECs to coordination, the idea could be that the Secretariats of RECs are trimmed down and the focus of capacities in the RECs gets dedicated to coordination of the countries that belonged to the REC at the point of the AfCFTA taking over the RECs. In other words, Secretariats of RECs would service member countries and interface with the AfCFTA Secretariat. Regarding RECs becoming Customs Authorities, this could be that RECs are allowed or assisted in first becoming customs unions or that the customs unions that are part or linked to the RECs (even though not continuously) are expanded to include REC member countries then play a role of customs authorities. The two options (i.e. reducing roles of RECs to coordination and RECs becoming Customs Authorities) are effectively options for the absorption of RECs by the AfCFTA Secretariat. The absorption option can also entail RECs becoming regional sub-secretaries of the AfCFTA Secretariat. In the final analysis though, the overwhelming view is that RECs are too important to be tempered with.

Interviews with the Secretariats of the RECs indicated that there is going to be resistance from RECs to trimming down the sizes and responsibilities. Firstly, some of those interviewed indicated that this will result in job losses. Secondly, in some cases the composition of RECs Secretariats is a well negotiated formula by the member states. It is almost a secondment or quota allocation. Who will remain and who will go? Proportional representation will be hard to realise.

The idea for RECs to become Customs Union will be hampered by multiple memberships. Customs Union status cannot be achieved when some member states still belong to different RECs at the same time. An EAC official, during the interviews, suggested that “RECs should readjust to ensure the treatment they accord to business and citizens is lesser than what AfCFTA offers. Existing RECs can be a starting point for interconnectivity.”

The option involving the TFTA requires more reflection. Fieldwork confirmed that the TFTA played a big role in the negotiations and establishment of the AfCFTA. Some of those interviewed however indicated that the experience of RECs helped in the processes for the AfCFTA, having also helped in the TFTA process. Some argue that the question of whether a free trade agreement (i.e. TFTA in this case) should be allowed to exist in another free trade agreement (i.e. AfCFTA) does not arise although there is a view that the TFTA should be subsumed into the AfCFTA. One interviewee argued that a “Free Trade Agreement within a Free Trade Agreement is possible depending on space if AfCFTA embraced Abuja Treaty.”

Put differently, the TFTA can become a ‘bedrock’ for the Continental Customs Union. So, more countries should ratify the TFTA and it focuses on becoming a Continental Customs Union of the AfCFTA and ultimately get to the African Economic Community. There were more people among those interviewed who are of the view that the TFTA should not be folded. In fact, there is a view that there is a higher chance of the successful implementation of the TFTA than the AfCFTA because a lot of work has gone into the TFTA while the AfCFTA was largely driven from the top.

There is an observation from the interviews indicating that those who are part of the TFTA (COMESA, EAC and SADC) support the idea of adapting the TFTA model into the AfCFTA. However, those who are not part of the TFTA process are opposing the idea of a TFTA prominence in the AfCFTA. They feel the process of including them to a process that is already advanced puts them in a vulnerable position.

Implications

Among other things, there are three issues that need through analysis – and reflection on the part of decision makers. First, what are the implications of the different options presented above? Second, what are the areas of overlap for the AfCFTA, the TFTA and the FTAs of the RECs? And, third, is it still practical to follow the roadmap given in the Abuja Treaty in establishing customs unions in each of the RECs before building to a continental customs union? Related to these three critical issues is a fundamental question whether the AfCFTA would succeed.

The Abuja Treaty roadmap envisages an AEC with its journey that involves a continental free trade area, building up to a continental customs union. Most RECs, as was hoped for through the Abuja Treaty, are deepening integration and working towards becoming customs unions. This should be encouraged and supported because the experiences of RECs customs unions would give impetus to the continental customs union. On the other hand, however, that has implications for the AfCFTA. If RECs get further embedded or entrenched – for want of a better word – it could be difficult for the AfCFTA to succeed. This is more so if the TFTA gets into force and is successfully implemented, which is highly likely. One way to ensure that the AfCFTA succeeds is that the TFTA focuses on becoming a continental customs union and the AfCFTA graduates to that then an African Economic Community – this would be in line with what the Abuja Treaty had in mind.

Essentially, if RECs continue gaining momentum as they should, the success of the AfCFTA could be compromised. The critical issue has to do with how the FTAs of RECs and the AfCFTA as well as the TFTA could be mutually reinforcing. It is a complex matter because RECs are establishing institutions and various mechanisms that could be difficult to dismantle – not that they should be dismantled. One option would be that the various institutional mechanisms can be escalated to the continental level. For instance, similar institutions of RECs (e.g. competition authorities) can be amalgamated to a continental institution. This however does not address the issue of the TFTA: what would happen to the TFTA when it comes into force and it also establishes its own institutions and processes? In the same consideration, one needs to ask if the TFTA can continue without an institutional framework that has a proper free-standing Secretariat? Once a proper Secretariat is in place to push the agenda of the TFTA, it may become even more complex for AfCFTA.

Part of the issue is that there are overlaps between the AfCFTA, the TFTA and the FTAs of the RECs. The AfCFTA agreement recognizes the overlaps and proposes how ‘clashes’ would be addressed. It would be in the implementation phase that it would be clear whether what is proposed as resolution mechanisms would work. Linked to this issue is the principle of variable geometry. It would be in the implementation phase where it would show whether it would work for the RECs to move at different paces, as countries have done. How will the AfCFTA accommodate that and is it practically possible?

As indicated earlier, the TFTA however presents a conundrum. It would seem that what would be in practice would be another spaghetti bowl scenario: the AfCFTA would proceed to build up to a customs union then an African Economic Community while RECs proceed to customs unions and the TFTA also proceeds to the customs union. To deal with this challenge, the Abuja Treaty roadmap can be revisited. In any case, the timeline given in the Abuja Treaty has not lapsed and it can be adjusted. Put differently, some milestones can be shifted. RECs should have formed customs unions in 2017 for instance. The adjustment of the timeline could be that all RECs form customs unions in 2020 as an example, which is about 3 years late.

Lastly, the role of the private sector and that of civil society is not clearly defined in the AfCFTA. These parties make sure that private citizens are engaged and participate in the law-making process at both national, regional and continental level. In the end, ordinary citizens will need to take full ownership of and participate in the continental free trade area if it is to succeed. Ordinary citizens need to be aware of the exact benefits emanating from the AfCFTA. Will there be any lessons for the AfCFTA on how the RECs have incorporated these key stakeholders in their integration process? Several lessons need to be learnt from the experience of regional parliaments and regional business councils. The private sector needs to be engaged from negotiation stage in order for them to share their practical experiences. The AU Extra-ordinary Summit in Kigali 2018 was preceded by the AfCFTA Business Forum and concrete results were achieved. In the end, the business community pledged its support for the AfCFTA.

Conclusion

As far as the implementation of the AfCFTA, the main areas of tension relate to instances where different RECs may hold or have different positions to those being proposed or implemented at the continental level. One example highlighted is with respect to the TFTA whereby each of the participating RECs (COMESA, ECA and SADC) have a different position on the issue of rules of origin of products. This is going to be of the critical issues for the implementation of the AfCFTA. Another potentially contentious issue relates to a situation where one REC would have signed to bilateral agreements either with another or other RECs, and especially in a case of an external partner such as the EU or China whose positions differ with that of the AfCFTA. This also applies at national levels as some countries continue entering into bilateral trade agreements with other countries outside

Africa. It is also a challenge that some leaders or countries seem to prefer the AfCFTA than the RECs. Ethiopia is an interesting example as it ratified the AfCFTA rather swiftly but it has not ratified the FTA of the REC it belongs to. All these issues and others raise a problematic about the future of RECs, particularly given that RECs are understood to be building blocks for the envisaged AEC.

The paper has attempted to analyse the relationships among the various free trade arrangements in Africa, particularly the possible interface between the AfCFTA and the FTAs of the RECs and other relevant issues such as the TFTA, customs unions and monetary communities. The overarching finding is that RECs are of major importance and that the ideal implementation modality pertaining to the AfCFTA has to cater for a mutually reinforcing relationship between the AfCFTA, TFTA and FTAs of the RECs. It does not seem feasible to readily 'absorb' the RECs into the AfCFTA because many RECs have significantly deepened integration, including many institutions and processes that have been put in place over a long period of time. There needs to be more analysis of the possible options regarding the interface between the AfCFTA and other existing FTAs. It would be important that the question of the future of RECs, a question that is essentially a political one, is addressed so there is sufficient clarity prior to the implementation of the AfCFTA.

References

Abuja Treaty. 1991. Protocol to the treaty establishing the African Economic Community relating to free movement of persons, right of residence and right of establishment. <https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/african-union/1965-protocol-to-the-abuja-treaty-free-movement-of-persons-right-of-residence-and-establishment-adopted-29-january-2018/file.html>. [Accessed: 04 February 2020].

African Union. 2014. Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade. Addis Ababa.

African Union. 2015. Agenda 2062: The Africa we want. https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-01_background_note.pdf. [Accessed: 16 November 2019].

African Union Commission. 2019. African Regional Integration Report: Towards an integrated and prosperous and peaceful Africa. Addis Ababa.

African Union. 2019. External partnerships between the AU and organisations, regions or countries. <https://au.int/en/partnerships>. [Accessed: 06 February 2020].

Arieff, I. 2015. If Africa Is So Rich, Why Is It So Poor? Available Online: <https://www.passblue.com/2015/05/18/if-africa-is-so-rich-why-is-it-so-poor>. [Accessed on 9 November 2019]

Börzel, T. A., and van Hüllen, V., (eds). (2015). *Governance Transfer by Regional Organizations. Patching Together a Global Script*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cannard, J. 2019. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement: Loss of Sovereignty, Lack of Transparency. Available Online: <http://www.cadtm.org/The-African-Continental-Free-Trade-Agreement-Loss-of-Sovereignty-Lack-of>. [Accessed on 3 February 2020].

COMESA, EAC, SADC. 2015. Agreement Establishing a Tripartite Free Trade Area Among the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community. https://www.academia.edu/28121770/THE_COMESA-EAC-SADC_TRIPARTITE_FREE_TRADE_AREA_NEGOTIATIONS. [Accessed on 13 October 2019].

COMESA. 2016. Medium Term Strategic Plan: 2016-2020, In pursuit of Regional Economic Transformation and Development, Zambia, Lusaka.

EAC. 2017. EAC Priorities 2017 – 2021. Available Online: https://www.eac.int/conferenceonwomen/downloads/doc_download/47-overview-of-policies-and-legal-framework-for-promoting-women-in-socioeconomic-development.html [Accessed on 13 November 2019].

Erasmus, G. 2015. How the CFTA could advance the Framework of the Abuja Treaty. Available Online: <https://www.tralac.org/publications/article/8046-how-the-cfta-could-advance-the-framework-of-the-abuja-treaty.html>. [Accessed on 12 October 2019].

Fasan, O. 2020. AfCFTA: Africa is moving too slowly towards economic integration. Available Online: <https://www.theigc.org/blog/afcfta-africa-is-moving-too-slowly-towards-economic-integration/>. [Accessed on 3 February 2020].

Haarløy, J. 1997. *Regional Cooperation and Integration within Industry and Trade in Southern Africa*. Aldershot: Avebury.

Kauffman, D. 2012. Poverty in the Midst of Abundance: Governance Matters for Overcoming the Resource Curse. Available Online: <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/poverty-in-the-midst-of-abundance-governance-matters-for-overcoming-the-resource-curse/>. [Accessed on 14 November 2019].

Lebert, T. 2015. Africa: a continent of wealth, a continent of poverty. Available Online: <https://waronwant.org/media/africa-continent-wealth-continent-poverty>. [Accessed on 13 October 2019].

Legrenzi, M. 2015. *Beyond Regionalism? Regional Cooperation, Regionalism and Regionalization in the Middle East*. Abingdon: Ashgate.

Luke, D., and Z. Mabuza. 2015. The Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement: A milestone for Africa's regional integration process. Available Online: <https://www.ictsd.org/bridges-news/bridges-africa/news/the-tripartite-free-trade-area-agreement-a-milestone-for-africa%E2%80%99s>. [Accessed on 16 November 2019].

Mazrui, A. 1980. *The African Condition: A Political Diagnosis*. London, Heineman Press.

Mkandawire, T., 2014. Keynote Address on the Politics of Regional Integration (Cape Town: Tralac Annual conference 15–16 May). Available online: www.gsdpp.uct.ac.za/images/files/MKANDAWIRE_Regional_Integration_Transcript.pdf [accessed 20 November 2019].

MPRA. 2019. COMESA-EAC-SADC tripartite free trade area: challenges and prospects. MPRA Paper No. 92621. <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/92621>. [Accessed on 17 November 2019].

Nwafor, J. 2019. AfCFTA: Could this be the Time for Africa? Available Online: <https://intpolicydigest.org/2019/08/03/afcfta-could-this-be-the-time-for-africa/>. [Accessed on 19 November 2019].

OAU. 1991. June 3rd, 1991, Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community. Nigeria, Abuja.

SADC. 2012. Continental & Inter-Regional Integration SADC & the African Union. Botswana, Gaborone.

SADC. 2015. Summary of the SADC Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2015-2020. Botswana, Gaborone.

Stevens, C., M. Irfan, I. Massa and J. Kennan. 2015. *The Impact of Free Trade Agreements Between Developed and Developing Countries on Economic Development in Developing Countries: A Rapid Evidence Assessment*. London: ODI.

Thompson, B. 1993. The economic integration efforts in Africa: a milestone-the Abuja Treaty. *African Journal of International and Comparative Law*, L. 743-744.

UNECA. 2016. Investment Policies and Bilateral Investment Treaties in Africa: Implications for Regional Integration. Ethiopia, Addis Ababa.

UNECA. 2019. From regional economic communities to a continental free trade area: Strategic tools to assist negotiators and agricultural policy design in Africa. Ethiopia, Addis Ababa.

UNECA.2019. Assessing regional integration in Africa. Available: <https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/africa/2898-assessing-regional-integration-in-africa-ix-uneqa-auc-afdb-unctad-july-2019/file.html>. [Accessed on 14 October 2019].

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. 2019. Economic Development in Africa Report 2019. https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/aldcafrica2019_en.pdf. [Accessed on 16 November 2019].

United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2015. Investment agreements landscape in Africa. Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration. UN, New York.