

09 September 2021

## Focus: **The AfCFTA Secretary General in Côte d'Ivoire**

No. 1

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## **A Word from the Minister**

Souleymane DIARRASSOUBA

MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

The Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area creates an opportunity to advance towards economic integration at the continental level and increase intra-African trade. Indeed, the trade between African countries remains very low, currently estimated at around 16%, according to statistics from the African Development Bank.

Thanks to the commitment of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Alassane OUATTARA, Champion of the Agenda 2063, Côte d'Ivoire has constantly stepped up its initiatives to fully play its role in the success of this continental project. The establishment of the AfCFTA National Committee perfectly illustrates this.

Under the enlightened leadership of the Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Patrick Achi, the AfCFTA-NC is responsible for monitoring and implementing the AfCFTA in Côte d'Ivoire, with the aim of promoting the opportunities offered by the agreement that Ivorians will be able to benefit from.

A powerful catalyst for foreign direct investment, the AfCFTA will help in fostering the development of skills among local actors, strengthening the competitiveness of African economies, and accelerating the structural transformation of our economy through industrialisation. The AfCFTA is a beacon of hope!

Souleymane DIARRASSOUBA

## EDITORIAL

Fofana Fatoumata

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

**"It was a dream they had long cherished, now brought to life thanks to their unwavering belief at every step of the way."**

It was on 21 March 2018 in Kigali that 44 countries took a leap of faith and participated in the launch of a free trade area that would allow Africa to increase the volumes of trade between its countries.

Fourteen months later, on 30 May 2019, the Agreement entered into force following the deposit of the 22nd instrument of ratification, marking a milestone reached with contributions from Sierra Leone and the Sahrawi Republic. Today, this African economic integration project continues to grow, with 54 signatory countries and 37 ratifications. Thought up by our founding fathers, advocates of a united and strong Africa, each day and each action taken leads us that much closer to the fulfilment of this pan-African vision. The vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa under Agenda 2063.

We could also talk about actions and look at those being taken by the Ivorian government to affirm its commitment to the implementation of this single market. Côte d'Ivoire was one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Agreement, setting up a committee and drawing up a national strategy.

Created on 30 May 2018, the AfCFTA National Committee (AfCFTA-NC) is in charge of the successful implementation of the AfCFTA in Côte d'Ivoire through the promotion of the Agreement and the involvement of all

stakeholders. It is also committed to promoting the "Made in Côte d'Ivoire" brand through outreach and communication.

As an important actor in the realisation of this integration project, the AfCFTA-NC is providing the Ivorian economic sector with information and training tools to enable it to take advantage of the opportunities offered. One of these tools is its One Market Newsletter, which was designed to provide information and promote the Agreement. With its five sections, it will provide readers with detailed and timely updates on the implementation of the Agreement.

**Focus** – This section of the newsletter will spotlight the most significant news stories.

**Value Added** – In this part, we will address the opportunities and challenges associated to the Agreement, specific to each stakeholder.

**Agenda** – In this section, we will highlight the committee's monthly activities.

**Panorama** – This will be the opportunity to present an overview of all national and continental news relating to the AfCFTA.

**Ori'djidji** – This section will be promoting national champions and products made in Côte d'Ivoire.

Indeed, there is no better invitation than the one extended to us by the AfCFTA: to turn Africa into "One Market."

So let's make the most of it!

Fatoumata FOFANA

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## Focus

### AfCFTA Secretary General in Côte d'Ivoire

CGECI, 27 July 2021 / Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 July 2021 / Executive Secretariat of the AfCFTA-NC, 27 July 2021

As part of a series of visits across Africa to share his vision for the AfCFTA and highlight the progress achieved by the General Secretariat, H.E. Mr. Wamkele Mene conducted an official visit to Côte d'Ivoire from 26 to 29 July 2021.

The visit included a number of meetings. On the first day, he was warmly welcomed to Côte d'Ivoire's economic capital by Mrs. Kandia Camara, Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration, and the Diaspora.

H.E. Mr. Wamkele Mene was then received for an audience at the Presidential Palace by the

President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, H.E., Mr. Alassane Ouattara.

Discussions focused on the need to speed up the implementation of this single African market, in order to boost intra-African trade and make it a catalyst for transformation and prosperity for the entire continent.

H.E. Wamkele Mene then visited the Ministry of Trade and Industry to engage in discussions with Minister Souleymane Diarrassouba.

On this occasion, he recalled the important role played by the Ivorian private sector in the implementation of the AfCFTA.

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## Focus

### AfCFTA Secretary General in Côte d'Ivoire

On Tuesday 27 July 2021, the Secretary General had a working session with the AfCFTA National Committee at its headquarters in the 2 Plateaux Vallons neighborhood of Abidjan. This major actor in the implementation of the AfCFTA had nothing but praise for the AfCFTA-NC for the actions it has taken to implement the Agreement at the national level.

After visiting the headquarters of the AfCFTA-NC, H.E. Mr. Wamkele Mene had a meeting with the African Ambassadors group and then with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Côte d'Ivoire.

He was then received by Jean Marie Ackah, President of the General Confederation of Enterprises of Côte d'Ivoire (CGECI) at the organisation's headquarters where he also had discussions with business leaders and professional groups. As a reminder, the CGECI, the Ivorian employers' association, brings together 3,500 companies that account for 80% of the Ivorian government's tax revenues and more than 400,000 jobs, almost half of the country's formal employment. During the discussions, the Ivorian private sector raised the challenges linked to the implementation of the AfCFTA and the expectations of Ivorian companies, while expressing the commitment of the private sector to support the project. The AfCFTA Secretary General reminded the opportunities offered by this vast single market and

congratulated Côte d'Ivoire on its leadership in implementing the Agreement.

However, much remains to be done before the AfCFTA can be fully implemented.

On his last working day, he visited the General Directorate of Customs. It was also an important meeting for him, as the introduction of efficient customs procedures for imports and exports is essential to the success of the African economic integration project. The Director General of Customs, Gen. Da Pierre, reassured the AfCFTA delegation of the full commitment of the Ivorian Customs authority to allow for the success of this pan-African project.

To end his official visit, the Ministry of Trade and Industry organised a farewell dinner in honour of the AfCFTA Secretary General and his delegation. The dinner was held in a friendly and pan-African positive atmosphere, with Minister Souleymane Diarrassouba presenting a gift to his guest.

H.E. Wamkele Mene reiterated his thanks to the government of Côte d'Ivoire for organising his visit and for its efforts to promote the AfCFTA. He also invited Côte d'Ivoire to present its progress in implementing the Agreement at the next meeting of the Council of Trade Ministers, so that it can serve as an example.

Group of African Ambassadors on 27/07/21 - General Directorate of Customs on 28/07/21

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## Added Value

### A Situational Analysis with H.E. Wamkele MENE

H.E. Wamkele Mene.  
AfCFTA Secretary General

For this first edition of the One Market Newsletter, we decided to focus Mr. Wamkele MENE, the AfCFTA Secretary General, who plays a pivotal role in driving this project for African economic integration.

#### **1- The AfCFTA aims to promote African trade, as the level of intra-African trade is very low at 16%. In your opinion, what are the causes?**

The main causes are tariff barriers. As long as tariffs remain very high, it will be difficult to increase trade, for example, between East and West Africa. There are also insufficient or inadequate infrastructures to allow African countries to trade with each other. We should also note that African economies are based on inherited colonial models. This has a real impact on intra-African trade.

African States tend to trade more with European countries than with their own neighbours. In other words, there has been a preference for sending our products to Europe rather than to other African countries. We need to start adding value to our products on the continent, and we need to start selling them on the African continent.

African countries really need to change the economic model that has been used for over 60 years. We need to transform our economies. We need to strengthen trade between ourselves.

#### **2- According to many in the Ivorian private sector, there are a number of challenges linked to the implementation of the AfCFTA. How would you respond to their concerns?**

High tariff barriers, non-tariff barriers, fiscality, rules of origin and currencies were all at the heart of the discussions. Indeed, non-tariff barriers are a factor that has limited trade in the region. This is why an online platform has been set up to allow for reports to be made on these non-tariff barriers so that they can then be eliminated. When carrying out a transaction with actors from another country, economic operators noticing the existence of non-tariff barriers will be able to report them using the platform and it will be up to the AfCFTA to intervene and ensure that the problem gets resolved.

Concerning the rules of origin, this is still up to the AfCFTA to deal with, because we want the goods traded on the continent to benefit from the advantages of the Free Trade Area. The single currency is one of the African Union's priorities. The AfCFTA and Afreximbank therefore have a project to introduce an online payment system that will solve the problem of different currencies in African countries, where it is necessary to use another currency, in particular the US dollar. This platform will make it possible to pay and receive money in a local currency. The pilot phase has already been launched in a number of countries, including Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Guinea Conakry. And the list will be completed by the end of the year.

#### **3- What are your expectations for the Ivorian government?**

In terms of expectations, we want this to benefit both the AfCFTA and Côte d'Ivoire. As far as our expectations for exports, we would like Côte d'Ivoire to work more closely with the AfCFTA on transit rules and the establishment of an agreement for action plans.

## Agenda

### National Roadshow to Promote Ownership of the Agreement

23 June 2021, the AfCFTA-NC meets employers / 14 July 2021, the AfCFTA-NC meets the Ministry of Communication

Continuing its mission to promote, coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Agreement, the AfCFTA National Committee is organising an information and awareness-raising roadshow on the AfCFTA for public and private actors. The aim of the roadshow, which began on 23 June, is to raise awareness on the issues, opportunities and challenges presented by the Agreement for Côte d'Ivoire, and to encourage all stakeholders to take ownership of the Agreement.

With 25 workshops lasting two to three hours each, spread over the next six months, this roadshow will see the participation of 18 public sector organisations, 7 groupings of private sector players and members of the AfCFTA-NC.

### Capacity Building and National Consultations on Trade in Services

18 August 2021, Executive Secretariat of the AfCFTA-NC - 03 August 2021 CGECI

These workshops will take place as follows.

Phase 1: Capacity-building workshop for AfCFTA-NC team members at its headquarters, from Wednesday 18 to Friday 20 August 2021.

Phase 2: Training for negotiating team members and national consultations on the five (5) priority sectors in trade in services,

- 23 to 24 August at the CGECI conference room;
- 25 to 26 August at the UNETEL conference room;
- 27 and 30 August in the conference room of the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure;
- 31 August and 01 September in the conference room of the Transport Fluidity Observatory (OFT);
- 02 to 03 September at the APBEF-CI conference room.

Phase 3: Capacity-building workshop on formulating requests in the context of trade in services on 06 and 07 September 2021 at the CGECI conference room.

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## Panorama

### **Champion Issoufou Mahamadou Honoured by the African Union and AfCFTA**

Accra-Ghana: Bust unveiling ceremony on 16/07/21

The former president of Niger, H.E. Issoufou Mahamadou, was honoured at a ceremony attended by a host of VIPs, with the unveiling of a bust sculpture in his likeness created by Zimbabwean artist Tafadzwa Tandi. The event was held on 16 July at the headquarters of the AfCFTA General Secretariat in Accra. Côte d'Ivoire was represented by the Minister of Trade and Industry, Mr. Souleymane Diarrassouba, on behalf of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Alassane Ouattara. Champion of Agenda 2063.

Accra-Ghana: The bust sculpture in honour of H.E. Issoufou Mahamadou

This distinction was awarded to the former head of state for the colossal amount of work done to ensure the effective start of AfCFTA on 01 January 2021, despite the difficulties caused by Covid-19 global health crisis. In his speech, the former President dedicated this distinction to the people of Niger and to generations of pan-Africanists, before calling on the continent's decision-makers to work towards effective implementation of the Agreement in view of accelerating intra-African trade and boosting economic growth.

The AfCFTA Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Wamkele Mene, congratulated the honouree of the day, saying: "His Excellency Mr. Issoufou Mahamadou, has gone to great lengths to lead and oversee the establishment and implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area". Mr. Mene said the statue would serve as a reminder for both present and future Africans.

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## Panorama

### Meeting Public and Private Administrations

As part of the roadshow to promote ownership of the Agreement by the public and private sectors, several structures have already welcomed the National Committee. Here is a summary of these meetings, with all the details you might have missed!

30 June 2021. The AfCFTA-NC received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**CGECI:** Wednesday 23 June 2021 at 9 a.m.

The roadshow began with members of the General Confederation of Enterprises of Côte d'Ivoire (CGECI) at its headquarters in Plateau. The situational analysis and the various mechanisms put in place for the private sector to take advantage of this agreement were on the agenda.

In attendance were Stéphane Aka-Anghui, Executive Director of CGECI, Kaladji Fadiga, Director General of Foreign Trade, and Fatoumata Fofana, Executive Secretary of the National Committee.

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Integration and the Diaspora:** Wednesday 30 June 2021 at 9am.

It was then the turn of the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for African Integration and the Diaspora, Daouda Diabaté, representing the Minister of State Kandia Camara, to receive the members of the AfCFTA-NC. In the presence of Ivorian diplomats, he reiterated his ministry's commitment to the implementation of the agreement creating a single African market. He also recalled that the African economic integration offered by the AfCFTA is in line

with the desire of the President, H.E. Alassane Ouattara, Champion of Agenda 2063, to promote the vision of a unified Africa by 2063.

**Ministry of Justice and Human Rights:** Tuesday 29 June 2021 at 9am

The Director of Cabinet of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, Mr. Kouassi Bernard, received the AfCFTA National Committee in the presence of several senior officials. The meeting provided an opportunity to recall the opportunities offered by the AfCFTA and to invite the Ministry to become more involved in the agreement and in the setting-up of the dispute settlement body.

**Ministry of Communication, Media and Francophonie:** Wednesday 14 July 2021 at 3pm

During the month of July, Mr. Jean Martial Adou, Director of Cabinet, representing the Minister of Communication, Media and Francophonie, Mr. Amadou Coulibaly received the team sent by the Minister of Trade. During their discussions, they asked the hosting ministry to help the AfCFTA-NC spread the word about this pan-African project among the people of Côte d'Ivoire. The Ministry of Communication did not hesitate in pledging its support in promoting the AfCFTA, a matter of public interest.

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## Panorama

### New Headquarter for the National Committee

Executive Secretariat of the AfCFTA-NC, Cocody, 2 Plateaux-Vallons

In the presence of distinguished guests, Souleymane Diarrassouba, Minister of Trade and Industry, inaugurated the headquarters of the African Continental Free Trade Area National Committee (AfCFTA-NC) on Thursday 29 April 2021 in the Cocody commune of Abidjan, marking an important step in the implementation of the AfCFTA.

The Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which officially came into force on 30 May 2019, creates an opportunity to boost intra-African trade and promote African economic integration.

At the 31<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Session of the Summit of Heads of State of the African Union, each State party to the agreement undertook to draw up a strategy for the AfCFTA at the national level and to set up a National Committee to monitor and implement this strategy. This inauguration is therefore in line with the effective fulfilment of the commitments made and reaffirms Côte d'Ivoire's total involvement in the process of implementing this single market.

This is an important aspect that the Minister did not fail to underline, recalling the major actions taken by the Government, in particular the ratification of the agreement and the submitting of its tariff offers to the African Union. He also noted that Côte d'Ivoire is the only country to have a dedicated headquarters for its AfCFTA National Committee.

The inauguration of this headquarters will enable the National Committee to work in better conditions, and to facilitate the coordination and pooling of efforts of all trade stakeholders in order to be more competitive on a continental level, assured Mr. Souleymane Diarrassouba. He urged all players in the public and private sectors, and in civil society, to get involved in order to take advantage of the opportunities offered by this agreement.

29 April 2021, Inauguration of the AfCFTA-NC headquarters

As a privileged partner of the National Committee, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Côte d'Ivoire, through its President Touré Faman, welcomed the opening of this operational site. He also thanked the State for its support and reiterated the Chamber's commitment to accompanying the AfCFTA-NC throughout the process of implementing the Agreement.

Fatoumata Fofana, Executive Secretary of the AfCFTA-NC, expressed her gratitude to all the stakeholders and to all the technical and financial partners of Côte d'Ivoire, who are contributing to the realisation of this great pan-African vision.

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## Ori'DJIDJI

### A Second Life for Plastic Waste

Camara Zanga in his workshop (archive photo) / Use of paving stones

An entrepreneur of six years, Zanga Camara was the winner of the Alassane Ouattara Prize for Young Entrepreneurs in 2017.

Having had a passion for plastics processing since childhood, he started out as a supplier of plastic waste to factories. His familiarity with plastic, combined with his growing appetite for innovation, motivated Mr. Camara to think about how he could take this passion further. So, he came up with the idea of breathing new life into these neglected materials by giving them a new use in the everyday lives of the people of Côte d'Ivoire. To set up this large-scale project, he knew he could rely on his business partner Stéphane Adouko, and the prize money they had won together. He ended up transitioning from crafting plastic medals as a child to producing ecological and sustainable paving stones, and this is how “Ivoire Pavé” was born in 2018.

Located in the Yopougon area, “Ivoire Pavé” collects end-of-life plastic and transforms it into paving stones or bollards according to demand, with a choice of colours. In a context of sustainable development, plastics are still used as much as ever in our daily lives, in agriculture, clothing and construction. Although they are thrown away very quickly,

their decomposition process is very slow, as in the case of the plastic bag, which only decomposes after 400 years.

Recycling plastics is one of the best ways of reducing the harmful effects of plastic on our environment. “Ivoire Pavé” is much more than a processing plant, it's an effective solution.

Yet there are many challenges that Mr. Camara has to overcome on a day-to-day basis, not least the public's lack of knowledge about his product, the search for suitable premises for his business and his export plans. With a potential market of 1.3 billion people, the AfCFTA agreement is a breath of fresh air for him, as he hopes to export his know-how and introduce his product to Africa, and particularly to the rest of the region.

An entrepreneur with passion and determination, he believes in his dreams. He hopes to professionalise his business and make it internationally competitive, so as to take full advantage of the AfCFTA. This is also the wish of any other young Ivorian entrepreneurs just like him, which are the pillars of the Ivorian economy of tomorrow.

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**MINISTRY OF TRADE AND  
INDUSTRY**

**AFRICAN CONTINENTAL  
FREE TRADE AREA  
NATIONAL COMMITTEE**

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