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WAMKELE MENE

“OUR AMBITION
NOW IS TO SEE
COMMERCIAL
MEANINGFUL TRADING
TAKING PLACE”



AFCFTA
SPECIAL EDITION

JACQUELINE TIENTCHEU

HOW I OBTAINED CAMEROON'S FIRST EVER AFCFTA CERTIFICATE OF ORIGIN

In Cameroon, one of the first eight African countries to implement the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), GIC AFATEX International is the first company to obtain a AfCFTA-stamped certificate of origin for Cameroonian exports. In this edition of AfCFTA News Magazine, its founder shares her experience.

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NO TO VISA FEES, YES TO AFCFTA!

EDITORIAL

Experts are unanimous on this fact: for better success of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), it is necessary to put in place mechanisms and an environment that facilitates the movement of goods and people between African states. Visa entry fees are one such mechanism that needs to be reviewed. Policymakers should work to ensure that visa fees between African countries are eliminated or reduced.

Currently, in Africa, only three African countries have completely abolished entry visa fees for all Africans who wish to visit their country. These are Benin, Gambia, and Seychelles. They are to be congratulated, as they did not wait for the operationalization of the AfCFTA to abolish these fees. Benin did so in 2018, Gambia in 2020, and Seychelles in 2016.

In 2022, for 27 percent of intra-African travel, African citizens did not need a visa. The same is true for obtaining a visa on arrival, as facilitating visa requirements also counts. The numbers are still declining.

According to the Africa Visa Openness Report 2022, a joint report by the AfDB and the African Union Commission, 42 African countries offer visa-free travel to nationals of at least five other African countries and 48 out of 54 countries - the vast majority of African countries - now offer visa-free travel to nationals of at least one other African country.

In terms of granting visas on arrival, 29 countries-more than half of the continent-now offer visas on arrival to nationals of at least one other African country; 24 countries offer visas on arrival to nationals of five or more countries; and 14 countries offer visas on arrival to nationals of 35 or more African countries.

In contrast, 32 countries still require nationals of at least half the countries on the continent to obtain a visa before traveling. This contradicts the ambitions of the AfCFTA. Reducing this number will allow more Africans to travel without a visa, with an e-visa, or with a visa on arrival. This will facilitate the development of intra-African trade.

CAMEROON!!!

Unfortunately, many African countries, especially those in Central Africa, make it even more difficult for Africans to obtain entry visas.

Cameroon, for example, which is one of the eight African countries that have been experimenting with the AfCFTA since 2022, has increased its visa fees, including for Africans. Since January 1, 2023, and in accordance with the new provisions of the Finance Law 2023, the normal visa which was 82,000 CFA francs has increased to 100,000 CFA francs. This represents an increase of 18 000 CFA francs. The express visa has increased to 150,000 CFA francs.

It is true that the length of stay has increased from three months to six months for this amount, so it is beneficial for those who go for a long stay. But many people, especially those who want to go there for a stay of less than three months, find this amount high. Only Africans from the six member countries of the CEMAC zone benefit from an exemption. A privilege that can be extended to all African countries to accelerate and benefit from the opportunities of the AfCFTA.

Central African countries should follow the example of West African countries, which in 2022 had eight countries in the top 20 most open countries for granting visas to Africans (Visa Openness Index 2022). Of these eight countries, seven are in the top 10, led by Benin. Benin should serve as an example in terms of granting visas to Africans for better success of the AfCFTA. Let's abolish visa fees, let's speed up our exchanges!

By Beaugas Orain DJOYUM



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TWEET OF THE MONTH



Gilberto DF Antonio @gildfantonio · Dec 19, 2022

...

To benefit from of the single [#African #market](#) created by the [#AfCFTA](#), [#SMEs](#) could combine their [#knowledge #financial](#) resources & contacts within an [#export](#) consortium. It'd improve their export potential & reduce the costs & risks involved in exporting

unido.org/sites/default/...



FIGURE OF THE MONTH

98

This is the number of validated African products already in circulation under the AfCFTA preferential trade regime. According to Senegalese President Macky Sall, this is an important step towards increasing intra-African trade, which currently accounts for less than 17% of the continent's foreign trade.

THEY SAID IT...

WE ARE LIVING IN A HISTORIC MOMENT



Let's be ambitious, we can afford it. Let's invest in education, especially in Mathematics like the Indian Institutes of Technology, without forgetting the humanities.

We are living in a historical moment. The train of digital transition is docked in front of us, let's not miss it, let's take it with determination. It is

the condition of our industrialization that will give meaning to the AfCFTA.

Mohamed BAZOUM, President of the Republic of Niger, during the AU summit on the AfCFTA on 25 November 2022 in Niamey, Niger

CAMEROON IS AMONG THE FIRST SEVEN COUNTRIES

The operationalization of the AfCFTA is a significant step forward in strengthening inter-African trade. It could, in the long run, contribute to increasing Africa's share of international trade, through a substantial increase in the volume of trade with its foreign partners.

Cameroon is pleased to be among the first seven countries on the continent that are already experimenting with the export of certain products under the mechanisms provided for in the AfCFTA.

Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, addressing members of the diplomatic corps accredited to Cameroon on January 6, 2023, in Yaoundé.





Niamey, Niger. 25 November 2022. 17th AU Extraordinary Summit and African Union Extraordinary Session on the African Continental Free Trade Area.



Washington, DC. USA. December 13, 2022. US - Africa Leaders Summit. Signing of an MOU with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's U.S.-Africa Business Center to promote trade and create better business environments in Africa and the United States.



Niamey, Niger. November 25, 2022. AFCFTA. Launch of the Private Sector Mapping Reports on the sidelines of the AU Extraordinary Summit on Industrialisation and Economic Diversification.

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WAMKELE MENE

“AFCFTA: AFRICAN AMBASSADORS HAVE A SIGNIFICANT ROLE TO PLAY”

ACCORDING TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE AFCFTA SECRETARIAT, AFRICAN AMBASSADORS CAN ACT ESPECIALLY THROUGH PURSUING AN ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY STRATEGY THAT COMPLIMENTS THE AFCFTA’S DEVELOPMENTAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES.



On 30.03.22, Mission in the UK. HE Wamkele MENE met with the Diaspora Business Leaders.

“Excellencies, I now turn to my final theme: how African Ambassadors can support the implementation and monitoring processes of the AfCFTA.

Today, with the AfCFTA, Africa has an opportunity to achieve its long-standing goal of economic diversification, through industrialisation, to further raise the standard of living of its people and reduce poverty.

It is an opportunity to create more jobs, and more economic opportunities for Africans. The AfCFTA is, therefore, about the 1.3 billion Africans and their livelihoods.

ROLE OF AFRICAN AMBASSADORS

Towards the achievements of our integration goals, African Ambassadors have a significant role to play, especially through pursuing an economic diplomacy strategy that compliments the AfCFTA’s developmental policies and strategies. This can be achieved, for example, by:

- Pursuing market access for ‘made in Africa’ products,
- Engaging in the promotion and attraction of investment to the continent,
- Promoting tourism, and
- Enhancing the image of the continent.

African Ambassadors can also help to strengthen the links between Africa and the African Diaspora everywhere in order to pool intellectual and financial resources for the transformation and inclusive development of the continent.

OUR AMBITION NOW IS...

Excellencies, to conclude, this year we expect the disruptions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic to resolve and economic and trading activities normalize.

Our ambition now is to see commercially meaningful trading taking place, across the length and breadth of our continent, in 12 “Made in Africa” products, to create

jobs and economic opportunities for Africans, especially women and the youth.

As Secretariat, we are determined to implement the Agreement in such a manner that it will help African countries establish new cross-border value chains, encourage foreign investment and better insulate the continent's economies from future global shocks.

NEED FOR CONCERTED EFFORTS FROM ALL

Clearly, significant progress has been made in the AfCFTA negotiations and its implementation, notwithstanding the challenging circumstances, exacerbated by the impact of the Covid19 pandemic. But of course, much remains to be done.

There is need for concerted efforts from all stakeholders across the board to further advance implementation of the agreement. It is as part of these efforts that we are gathered here today.

We all have one goal in mind: the successful implementation of Africa's continental integration. We need to tap into our respective strengths and jointly enlarge the pie of the African market, invigorate all formats of continental cooperation and make the AfCFTA more inclusive, balanced and beneficial for all.

This is Africa's opportunity to grow our economies and to use our considerable collective resources to uplift our people and improve their condition.

As Secretariat, we are ready to work and partner with you. I am confident that the discussions at this briefing session will lead to specific road map for action and provide clarity on our engagement. Thank you! »

Excerpts of speaking notes for His Excellency WAMKELE MENE secretary-general of AfCFTA secretariat at London, UK 28 March 2022. Speaking to the group of African ambassadors/High commissioners in the UK.



ACCRA, GHANA

AFRICA PROSPERITY DIALOGUES

AFRICAN HEADS OF STATE AND BUSINESSMEN WILL ATTEND THE FIRST SERIES OF AFRICA PROSPERITY DIALOGUES.

President Akufo-Addo has invited fellow heads of state from across the continent to the first edition of the Africa Prosperity Dialogues. The event is organized by the Africa Prosperity Network (APN).

Among those expected to attend are personalities from countries such as Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, and South Africa. The theme of the conference, dubbed the Kwahu Summit, is "AfCFTA: From Ambition to Action - Delivering Prosperity through Continental Trade."

According to Dr. Eugene Owusu, Executive Director and Coordinator of the Kwahu Summit Secretariat and Special Advisor to the President on Sustainable Development Goals, the dialogue will be conducted in two parts as follows: Jan. 26-27, the business and political leaders' dialogue will be held at the Safari Valley Resort in Adukrom in the Akuapem Hills; Jan. 28, the presidential and business leaders' summit at the Peduase Presidential Lodge.

"The Business and Policy Leaders' Dialogue will bring together business executives, trade associations, ministers of state, heads of Regional Economic Communities under the AU, technocrats, women, young entrepreneurs and thought leaders to define practical 'quick wins' to move the AfCFTA initiative from ambition to action," says Dr. Owusu.



JACQUELINE TIENTCHEU

HERE'S HOW I GOT CAMEROON'S FIRST EVER AFCFTA CERTIFICATE OF ORIGIN

IN CAMEROON, ONE OF THE FIRST EIGHT AFRICAN COUNTRIES TO IMPLEMENT THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (AFCFTA), GIC AFATEX INTERNATIONAL IS THE FIRST COMPANY TO OBTAIN A STAMPED AFCFTA CERTIFICATE OF ORIGIN. THIS WAS IN JULY 2022. THIS ALLOWED THE COMPANY HEADED BY JACQUELINE TIENTCHEU TO EXPORT ITS PRODUCTS TO GHANA. AFCFTA NEWS MET THE FOUNDER OF GIC AFATEX INTERNATIONAL TO SHARE HER EXPERIENCE. INTERVIEW.

AfCFTA News: You are now the first Cameroonian entrepreneur to export her products under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). How did you hear about the AfCFTA?

Jacqueline Tientcheu: I am Jacqueline Tientcheu, CEO of GIC AFATEX International, the first Cameroonian company to export its products under the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Since 2020, I have had the privilege of working with the National Shippers' Council of Cameroon which is a stakeholder in the AfCFTA.

At the genesis of AfCFTA, the Council made us aware. We were already somewhat aware of the AfCFTA's guided trade initiative. With the Ministry of Trade as well, we had already participated in the preparatory meetings for the launch of the AfCFTA. That's how we were informed.

AfCFTA News: In Cameroon, how does one obtain an AfCFTA certificate of origin and what procedures did you follow to obtain the first AfCFTA certificate of origin in Cameroon?

Jacqueline Tientcheu: To obtain the AfCFTA certificate of origin, the first condition is to have a 100% Cameroonian product. This is our case because we process dried safflower which is a product of Cameroon. We transformed it in our factories. The processing units belong to Cameroon. Afterward, you go to the shipping agencies. Mainly Customs. When you arrive at Customs, you will follow the circuit created for this purpose. For, there is a protocol dedicated to the AfCFTA.

For example, there are phytosanitary and



accompanying institutions that are on site. All this is to prove that your product is a national product. Then, you fill out various forms and go to the office of the head of Customs. He will issue you the AfCFTA certificate of origin when you complete all the procedures.

AfCFTA News: What products do you export and to which countries do you export them?

Jacqueline Tientcheu: As part of our expedition to the AfCFTA market launch, we offered four products. Dried safflower, safflower powder, dried pineapple, honey caramelized ginger tea. We exported these products to Ghana.

AfCFTA News: How have your products been received in Ghana where they are exported?

Jacqueline Tientcheu: One of the conditions for exporting under AfCFTA is that you must be in partnership with a company in the host country. I had the honor and privilege to work with Mrs. Florence Tomasia Couso, a young and very brave Ghanaian businesswoman founder of Mazia Co. Entreprise. The products are doing well in Ghana and people are asking a lot about dried saffron and its virtues. They especially like lemongrass ginger tea.

AfCFTA News: What are the difficulties you face in exporting?

Jacqueline Tientcheu: In the export process, we were fortunately accompanied and followed closely by the services of the Customs, since it was the launching phase. But it was not without difficulties, because our declarants were not informed about the AfCFTA process and did not know how to proceed. Therefore, we failed in our first attempt.

And since the Customs services were following, they clearly explained the procedures to follow. We followed these procedures, and the second time was the right time. We got a commendation.

AfCFTA News: Do you think Cameroonian products are competitive enough to succeed in intra-African trade?

Jacqueline Tientcheu: Cameroonian products are very popular all over the world. Personally, I think that Cameroonian products are competitive. But Cameroon, like all African countries, needs to be aligned with the AfCFTA's guided trade standards. This is Africa's challenge, and it has only just begun. We are already there, and we are more determined than ever. The proof is that in July 2022 we obtained the first AfCFTA certificate of origin.





AfCFTA News: How Cameroonian government should work to further help Cameroonian companies benefit from AfCFTA opportunities?

Jacqueline Tientcheu: The government of Cameroon, like the 54 countries that have ratified the AfCFTA agreement, has the challenge of supporting the private sector. This is what it does daily. It simply needs to accelerate its support for businesses to seize the opportunities of the AfCFTA and the guided trade initiative. We are proof of this support.

AfCFTA News: What is your advice to Cameroonian companies that want to engage in intra-African trade?

Jacqueline Tientcheu: The advice I give to Cameroonian companies is not to be discouraged. To continue to work. Above all, do not isolate yourself. It is necessary to be in

organized groups such as inter-professional organizations where information circulates. You also need to get closer to the structures in charge of monitoring the AfCFTA's guided trade, such as the National Shippers' Council of Cameroon and the Ministry of Trade.

In all countries, the Ministry of Commerce is the gateway to the AfCFTA. SMEs must approach them to be accompanied and benefit from the opportunities of the AfCFTA. Because it is the future. It is the largest market in the world now. All eyes and all partners are looking at it. We must dare and work. This is the law of business. For every job well done, there is a reward. The turnover increases and we enter big markets.

Interview by Beaugas Orain DJOYUM



Transforming Africa's Trade
African Export-Import Bank
Banque Africaine d'Import-Export

Professor Benedict O. Oramah

President and Chairman
of the Board of Directors

The African Export-Import Bank

Cairo, Egypt
June 2022

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The AfCFTA
could emerge as
a major growth
springboard for
Africa's creative
industries.

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