



**2023**



# **Report on the SME Conference and Training on: “Breaking Business Barriers for AfCFTA Acceleration”**



**Organizers:**



THE AFRICAN CAPACITY  
BUILDING FOUNDATION | FONDATION POUR LE RENFORCEMENT  
DES CAPACITÉS EN AFRIQUE



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 **CRIA**  
CENTRE FOR REGIONAL  
INTEGRATION IN AFRICA

  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The organizers of the RIIF SME Conference and Training on “Breaking Business Barriers for AfCFTA Acceleration” recognize the African Union for declaring 2023 the year to accelerate the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Placing the private sector—micro, small and medium size enterprises—squarely at the heart of the strategy motivated stakeholders of regional integration and continental trade to raise awareness, build capacity and promote essential networking activities towards achieving AfCFTA implementation goals. With regard to this collaborative event, Afreximbank is commended for sponsoring the 2023 RIIF SME Conference and Training event; the AfCFTA Secretariat is appreciated for endorsing the program; Ghana National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry are applauded for mobilizing their members; Stanford Seed Transformation Network (SSTN) Ghana Chapter is lauded for contributions made in ideation sessions; guest speakers and facilitators are highly respected for their expertise and contributions to building knowledge; SME participants are appreciated for sharing their invaluable experiences and commitment to engaging in intra-African trade; and Mr. Peter Fiamor and Ms. Abigail Sackitey are recognized as consultants to this conference report. The type of collaboration it took to convene the 2023 RIIF SME Conference and Training on Breaking Business Barriers for AfCFTA Acceleration is ultimately an example of contributions required for successful implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Centre for Regional Integration in Africa (CRIA), in partnership with the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) and the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), organized a two-day Regional Integration Issues Forum (RIIF) in Accra, Ghana from 27 to 28 September 2023. With Afreximbank support and endorsement from the AfCFTA Secretariat, the 2023 RIIF SME Conference and Training on Intra-African Trade was convened with the goal of contributing to the African Union's program of action to accelerate AfCFTA implementation.

Under the theme “Breaking Business Barriers for AfCFTA acceleration,” the SME Conference was designed to address the challenge of limited private sector engagement in continental trade, as a function of lack of awareness of the AfCFTA and lack of capacity to access cross-border markets. The challenges are further compounded by, among other issues:

- a) Lack of strategic capacity;
- b) Limited private sector participation in industrialization processes and value chains;
- c) Inadequate research and development and exchange of information;
- d) Inability to access other markets;
- e) Inadequate trade policies and regulatory frameworks;
- f) Limited movement of goods, services, capital, people, and ideas; and
- g) Inability to harness the power of innovation and technology to grow businesses.

This backdrop and context provided the rationale for a conference cum training program that promotes knowledge and capacity building, as well as inclusivity and engagement of youth- and women-led SMEs who constitute the backbone of Africa's private sector.

The specific objectives of the 2-day event were, therefore, to:

- a) Raise awareness of the AfCFTA strategy for private sector engagement;
- b) Deepen capacity of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) to understand how to leverage opportunities offered by the AfCFTA; and
- c) Prepare African SME leaders to expand their businesses through regional value chains.

The tone of the SME Conference was aptly set by Mr. Silver Ojakol, the AfCFTA Chief of Staff, who delivered the Keynote Address on behalf of His Excellency, Mr. Wamkele Mene, Secretary General of the AfCFTA Secretariat. Mr. Ojakol outlined the benefits of AfCFTA and the critical role SMEs can play in promoting industrial development and diversification of value-added goods and services through regional value chains. The Chief of Staff focused on the centrality of the AfCFTA Rule of Origin principle, which ensures a significant concentration of local and/or regional content of “made in AfCFTA” goods and services for boosting intra-African trade. To overcome trade barriers and increase SME access to African markets, he advised taking advantage of important tools, initiatives and platforms (e.g. e-Tariff Book, Rules of Origin Manual, Pan-African Payment Settlement System, etc.) within the AfCFTA to

address real and potential challenges.

The SME Conference and Training on intra-African trade offered interactive plenary and breakout sessions with experience sharing from SMEs on topics such as:

- a) Understanding the AfCFTA private sector strategy;
- b) Financing for SMEs with emphasis on women- and youth-led financial programs;
- c) Harnessing the Power of Innovation and Technology to Overcome Business Barriers to Intra-African Trade;
- d) Developing Regional Value Chains to boost competitiveness; and
- e) Understanding Regulatory Frameworks and Policies to Enable Business Growth and Expansion in a Single African Market.

The practical component of the two-day event was marked by experience-sharing, site visits to 6 sector companies in Accra, Ghana, and training sessions on the AfCFTA. In the site visit debriefings, participants expressed appreciation for the exposure to various approaches taken by SMEs to scale up their businesses for engaging in intra-African trade. The training sessions contributed to deepening participants' knowledge around the AfCFTA Rules of Origin and Certification; and addressing structural challenges for women- and youth-led SMEs through inclusive AfCFTA protocols, programs and initiatives for boosting intra-African trade. Participants were also entreated to a session on evaluating regional markets and developing go-to-cross-border market (GTM) strategies.

The hybrid event was marked by the convergence of 141 participants at the conference venue, with others joining in virtually. Participants included policy makers, diplomats, youth- and women-led SMEs, development practitioners, academicians, think tanks, the press, among others. The 2023 RIIF successfully raised awareness of the AfCFTA, exposed participants to invaluable strategies for growing businesses and accessing cross-border markets, and facilitated deep learning and cross-sectoral experience sharing. Key information and suggestions for accelerating AfCFTA implementation included:

- a) Investing in trade intermediaries, as a cost-effective strategy to bridge knowledge gaps for breaking into new markets;
- b) Developing strategic partnerships among SMEs to achieve economies of scale;
- c) Harmonizing rules and regulations across African countries; d) Effectively communicating with SMEs to create a coherent continental trading framework;
- e) Taking advantage of financial opportunities offered to SMEs by the banking sector; and
- f) Understanding the significance of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in creating awareness and helping SMEs overcome various barriers to intra-African trade.

The SME Conference and Training on Intra-African Trade also impressed upon the fundamental need for basic knowledge-gathering about cross-border markets to ensure that businesses respond to the unique demands of consumers in the recipient market. Participants also acknowledge the necessity for consistency in product standards and quality, which in turn builds trust among partners and customers, especially in cross-border markets. SME participants were encouraged to actively engage in networking, establishing partnerships, seeking mentorship from experienced business role models, and developing well-defined growth plan and go-to-market strategies. Discussions ensued regarding the importance of streamlining processes for the movement of goods and services, supported by a coordinated logistics infrastructure and a pan-African e-commerce system to enhance the smooth flow of “made in AfCFTA” goods and services across borders within Africa.

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## PART I: SME CONFERENCE ON INTRA-AFRICAN TRADE





## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Intra-African trade is woefully low at 17%, as compared to other regions. Intra-continental trade is 69% in Europe, 59% in Asia and 49% in North America. A persisting challenge facing African economic integration and development is the culture of slow carrying capacity, intensified by a lack of inclusivity and limited engagement of the bulk of the continent's private sector, namely micro, small and medium scale enterprises (MSMEs), many of them led by youth and women.

Key among the reasons for limited private sector engagement in intra-African trade is lack of awareness of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and various regional economic communities (RECs). This challenge is further compounded by: a) lack of strategic capacity; b) limited private sector participation in industrialization processes and value chains; c) inadequate research and development and exchange of information; d) inability to access other markets; e) inadequate trade policies and regulatory frameworks; and f) limited movement of goods, services, capital, people, and ideas.

The AfCFTA Agreement was adopted and signed by 54 member states of the African Union on 18 March 2018, in Kigali. It entered into force on 30 May 2019 for the 24 countries that had deposited their instruments of ratification. As of December 2023, the AfCFTA has 47 state parties. While the official start of trading under the AfCFTA framework was to commence on 1 January 2021, nothing transpired until 7 October 2022 when the Accra-based AfCFTA Secretariat launched the AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative to pilot the operationalization of trade between 8 countries under the AfCFTA Agreement. To further promote an enabling environment, the African Union (AU) declared 2023 the year for accelerating AfCFTA implementation.

The overall objective of the Agreement is to establish a single African market for 1.3b people in a US\$3.4 trillion economic bloc. The AfCFTA is expected to:

- a) provide an enabling environment for private sector development and competitiveness;
- b) offer businesses new opportunities to scale up; c) create jobs;
- d) boost intra-African trade by 52% by 2025;
- e) diversify and grow national economies through inclusive markets; and f) promote sustainable continental development.

As contribution to AfCFTA objectives, the Centre for Regional Integration in Africa (CRIA) and the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), in collaboration with the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), organized the 2023 Regional Integration Issues Forum (RIIF) as a conference and training event for African SMEs, under the theme: "Breaking Business Barriers for AfCFTA Acceleration".

With an understanding that well-informed and capacitated African private sector producers and service providers are critical for the operationalization of the AfCFTA Agreement, the 2-day event was planned with the objectives to:

- a) Raise awareness of the AfCFTA strategy for private sector engagement;
- b) Deepen capacity of SMEs to understand how to leverage opportunities offered by the AfCFTA; and
- c) Prepare African SME leaders to expand their businesses through networking and regional value chains.

The 2023 RIIF SME Conference and Training on Intra-African Trade explored strategies and concrete actions to overcome trade barriers and increase African market access for SMEs. The first day began with an Opening Ceremony and proceeded with deliberations on various aspects of SME access to African markets through the AfCFTA framework. Day two was designed as a training workshop for 60 selected SME and stakeholder participants in the AfCFTA priority sectors of trade in goods and trade in services.

## 2.0 OPENING CEREMONY



The 2-day SME Conference and Training on Intra-African Trade was guided by United Nations award-winning journalist and advocate for AfCFTA, **Samuel Agyemang** who served as the event's M.C. As an experienced moderator, Samuel masterfully steered proceedings to ensure that all voices and perspectives were heard, while expertly highlighting key points and conclusions of various sessions. The first order of business was to welcome distinguished guests and participants, as well as to introduce the esteemed Chairman of the event.



## 2.1 CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman's opening remarks were delivered by **Nana (Dr.) Owusu-Afari**, Nkosuohene of the Worawora Traditional Area, Chairman of the Afariwaa Group of Companies, past President of the Association of Ghana Industries, (AGI), and Board Member of the Centre for Regional Integration in Africa. The Chairman warmly welcomed participants to the SME Conference and Training on Intra-African Trade, Trade, while effectively outlining CRIA's

mandate, which is to respond to the knowledge-building and capacity needs of African integration initiatives in Africa.

Nana emphasized the importance of the conference, noting that it comes at an opportune time, in the context of the AU 2023 declaration to Accelerate the AfCFTA. He underscored the significance of the continent's SMEs, highlighting their substantial contribution to 80% of the labor force in most African countries. Despite this, he noted their marginalized status and limited capacity for meaningful GDP contribution. Nana stated that additional challenges facing SMEs include limited capacity of and understanding by governments regarding policy frameworks to promote the growth and expansion of African businesses. He cited Kenya's industrialization initiative to mainstream Jua Kali, which began as an informal metalworks sector for making spare automotive parts purchased by locals who could not afford imported spare parts. Reference to Jua Kali connotes modernizing informal sectors with potential to expand value-added production of goods and services of SMEs.

The Chairman called for proactive governmental policies, particularly the removal of artificial national boundaries, to facilitate the free flow of goods and services for Intra-African trade. He also advocated the need to address the competitive overlap between some public sector roles and private businesses.

He stressed the need to eliminate barriers to SME development caused by such competition.

Expressing hope in AfCFTA, Nana Dr. Owusu-Afari urged African countries to fully embrace its principles. He anticipated that the Conference would lay a robust foundation for sharing ideas, fostering growth, and transforming Intra-African trade through acceleration of the AfCFTA. Nana Dr. Owusu-Afari's opening remarks set an optimistic and proactive tone for the Conference. His call for policy reforms, training initiatives, and a commitment to AfCFTA principles aligned with the overarching goal of breaking business barriers.

## 2.2 REMARKS BY CONFERENCE PARTNERS

The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), Centre for Regional Integration in Africa (CRIA), and GIMPA provided brief remarks that demonstrated their collective commitment to AfCFTA goals and to underline the values of working collaboratively to fast-track implementation of the AfCFTA.

**Mr. Mamadou Biteye**, Executive Secretary of ACBF provided partner remarks delivered by



Mr. Ian Mashingaidze, Interim Director of Programs and Impact, ACBF West and Central Africa Regional Office. The Executive Secretary expressed gratitude to the partners for working together to make the conference possible. He said that the theme of the Conference resonated with AU Agenda 2063 and that realizing the full potential of the AfCFTA and the opportunities it presents for the people of Africa requires concerted effort to fully harness the opportunities. Mr. Biteye urged stakeholders to address the barriers not only head-on but in a coordinated manner. He was happy the conference sought to discuss issues to break the barriers focusing on SMEs. He said the ACBF recognized that without the necessary capacity, SMEs will continue to face challenges and therefore a reason it has placed emphasis on trade as one of four key impact areas of ACBF Strategic Plan 2023-2027, the other areas being climate change and energy for productive use; agribusiness and food sovereignty; and economic and social governance. This, in his estimation, was essential to aid African governments to provide, implement and monitor good trade policies.

The Executive Secretary also recognized the importance of institution building capacity and enhancing the skills and knowledge of entrepreneurs, SMEs and other business sectors. He noted that the forum is a collective response to ensure capacity building remains at the forefront of strengthening individuals, institutions and economies to realize the full potential of the AfCFTA.

He concluded by calling on all to reaffirm the commitment to regional integration and realization of the AfCFTA. He said that together, the partners can overcome the barriers, unlock the potential of the AfCFTA and pave the way for a united, transformed and sustainable African continent.



**Prof. Lehlohonolo Tlou**, Executive Director of the Centre for Regional Integration (CRIA), began her remarks by recognizing the esteemed Chairperson, special guests, distinguished speakers, and the highly-regarded SME participants. Prof. Tlou said her role would be to briefly introduce the Regional Integration Issues Forum (RIIF) as the Centre's flagship program, which was established in 2017 in partnership with ACBF. The RIIF, she explained, is convened to raise awareness of regional integration and continental trade, as key development

strategies for African development. Prof. Tlou added that the RIIF also sought to strengthen stakeholder capacities and advocacy for policies and strategies in support of African integration and continental trade processes. CRIA's Executive Director stated that the success of the Centre and the RIIF, depends heavily on collaborative action. For this reason, she thanked ACBF and



GIMPA for their partnership; Afreximbank for its sponsorship; and the AfCFTA Secretariat for its endorsement of the 2023 RIIF SME Conference and Training on Intra-African Trade. Prof. Tlou also acknowledged the Ghana Entrepreneurs Agency (GEA), Ghana Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GNCCI), Federation of West Africa Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FEWACCI) based in Nigeria, and the Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PACCI) based in Ethiopia, for their collective support in mobilizing their SME members.

With reference to the theme of the Conference, Prof. Tlou posed the following question:

*“After 6 decades of establishing regional economic communities (e.g. AMU, CENSAD, COMESA, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC), how is it possible that intra-African trade remains woefully low at between 16% and 17% vis-à-vis other continents?”* She pointed out that intra-continental trade stands at 69% in Europe; 59% in Asia; and 49% in North America. Invoking the memory of the late great Prof. Ali Mazrui, she pointed to the fact that Africa trades more with the rest of the world than within its own markets, which means that the continent *“produces what it does not consume and consumes what it does not produce.”* She inferred that the inability to produce for internal demand and the extreme vulnerability to global value chains in times of crisis, such as the global COVID 19 pandemic, exposes stark contradictions that make life extremely unaffordable for African people. For this reason, she applauded the AfCFTA strategy to increase the engagement of SMEs, the backbone of Africa's private sector and the key to the continent's industrial transformation.

Despite the myriad of challenges to SME engagement in regional integration and continental trade, Prof. Tlou said key among the solutions is capacity building, which is at the core of CRIA's mandate, as envisioned by the Centre's founding Executive Director, the late great Prof. SKB Asante. Therefore, the 2023 RIIF SME Conference innovatively incorporated a training component on intra- African trade to raise awareness and build confidence of participants to engage through collaborative choices, voices and actions in support of promoting regional value chains for the production of AfCFTA certified goods and services.

**Professor Samuel Kwaku Bonsu**, the Rector of the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), referred to statistics and forecasts, such as those from the World Bank and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), to emphasize the potential impact of AfCFTA on Africa's trade and economy. The World Bank estimates that the AfCFTA will increase intra-African trade by 52.3%, intra-African exports by more than 81% and Africa's income by \$450 billion by 2035.





On the other hand, UNECA estimates Africa's economic output will reach \$29 trillion by 2050 within the context of the AfCFTA. He painted a vivid picture of the brighter future that AfCFTA could bring. Professor Bonsu quoted Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president, who advocated for African unity and the coming together of the people to facilitate regional transformation:

*It is said, of course, that we have no capital, no industrial skill, no communications, and no internal markets, and that we cannot even agree among ourselves how best to utilise our resources for our own social needs. Yet all stock exchanges in the world are preoccupied with Africa's gold, diamonds, uranium, platinum, copper and iron ore. Our capital flows out in streams to irrigate the whole system of Western economy. Fifty-two per cent of the gold in Fort Knox at this moment, where the USA stores its bullion, is believed to have originated from our shores.*

*The resources are there. It is for us to marshal them in the active service of our people. Unless we do this by our concerted efforts, within the framework of our combined planning, we shall not progress at the tempo demanded by today's events and the mood of our people. The symptoms of our troubles will grow, and the troubles themselves become chronic. It will then be too late for pan-African unity to secure for us stability and tranquillity in our labours for a continent of social justice and material well-being. Even for other continents lacking the resources of Africa, this is the age that sees the end of human want. For us, ...All we need to do is to develop with our united strength the enormous resources of our continent.*

This historical reference added depth to his remarks, highlighting the long-standing aspiration for a united African continent. Prof. Bonsu underscored the significance of Africa's young population (420 million) and how the future of these young people is intertwined with the success of AfCFTA. He emphasized the importance of SMEs and their critical role in African economies, highlighting their contributions to employment and GDP. He drew attention to the low percentage of intra-African trade and suggests that limited knowledge about the opportunities under AfCFTA is a significant barrier.

He emphasized the readiness of GIMPA and CRIA to continue working in partnerships with SMEs and development institutions, like Stanford Seed Transformation Network (SSTN) and ACBF, respectively. Prof. stated that these organizations have expressed commitment to building the capacity of businesses, especially SMEs, creating general awareness of the AfCFTA and facilitating SME access to the continental market as significant initiatives through partnerships. Professor Bonsu's reference to the farmer and the need for a fair return for labor and a higher standard of living underscored the practical impact of AfCFTA on everyday lives. He concluded on an optimistic note, with a modest, yet impactful, goal of creating new trade pairings and fostering African unity through economic collaboration. He inspired participants to take practical steps toward realizing the potential of AfCFTA for the continent's prosperity.

## 2.3 REMARKS BY PRIVATE SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES

**Mr. Kebour Ghenna**, Executive Director of the Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who joined online from Ethiopia, added a crucial dimension to the private sector perspective. Identifying SMEs as the driving force for the success of AfCFTA, he encouraged SMEs to focus on what they do best: innovation, value addition, business literacy, and breaking digital barriers for AfCFTA benefits. Mr. Ghenna urged African governments to streamline regulations and address bureaucratic delays for businesses to thrive.



**Mr. Carl Richards**, President of the Ghana chapter of the Stanford Seed Transformation Network (SSTN) expressed appreciation for the African Union's work on the AfCFTA and the numerous organizations dedicated to assisting SMEs in the implementation process. He specifically thanked GIMPA, CRIA, ACBF, and the AfCFTA Secretariat for their collaboration in organizing and inviting participants to the Conference.



While emphasizing the pivotal role SMEs play in African development, job creation, and innovation, he also highlighted the need for transformative initiatives and seizing AfCFTA opportunities. Mr. Richards underscored the need for education on AfCFTA's works and the translation of knowledge into practical use. He encouraged the private sector to take a proactive role in understanding and benefiting

from AfCFTA. Although Mr. Richards acknowledged the hurdles and challenges facing AfCFTA, such as technical barriers, standards, regulations, and a lack of awareness among African businesses, he challenged the private sector to take up the responsibility in making AfCFTA a reality. He advocated for unity and collaboration among SMEs to overcome these challenges and unlock the potential of AfCFTA.

Mr. Richards acknowledged AfCFTA's implementation as an iterative process and the role the Conference can play in preparing SMEs for that journey. He concluded with a call to action, emphasizing the immense potential of AfCFTA and the role of SMEs in realizing it. According to him, the AfCFTA inspires determination, collaboration, and a relentless commitment to African prosperity.

## 2.4 KEYNOTE ADDRESS



### ***Overcoming Barriers and Increasing African Market Access for SMEs***

The Keynote Address of **H.E Wamkele Mene**, Secretary General of the AfCFTA, was delivered to the RIIF 2023 SME Conference by **Mr. Silver Ojakol**, Chief of Staff, AfCFTA Secretariat. The speech highlighted the importance of trade as a powerful driver of development. This was supported by statistics indicating the potential economic benefits of increased trade in Africa. Statistics show that a 1 percentage increase in trade on the continent could generate revenues of about USD 70 billion, which is higher than the aid fund (sub-Saharan Africa received about USD 58 billion in 2021). Mr. Ojakol emphasized the political will and commitment of African Heads of State and Government, to the fast pace of establishing and implementing the AfCFTA, and the interest it garnered from the private sector. He noted that “the AfCFTA Agreement is the first trade agreement in the world to have entered into force within a year of its signature and to have registered the highest rate of ratifications.”

The speech provided concrete data on how AfCFTA is expected to benefit Africa, including poverty reduction, income growth, and wage increases. The Chief of Staff said it underlines the massive market it creates. Concretely, the AfCFTA creates a market of 1.3 billion people with a 3.4 trillion combined gross domestic product (GDP). According to the World Bank, the AfCFTA is expected to lift 30 million Africans out of extreme poverty; boost the incomes of nearly 68 million who live on less than \$5.50 a day; boost Africa's income by \$450 billion by 2035 (a gain of 7 percent) while adding \$76 billion to the income of the rest of the world; boost wages for both skilled and unskilled workers - 10.3 percent for unskilled workers, and 9.8 percent for skilled workers; and spur 10.5 percent wage gains for women compared to 9.9 percent for men.





The AfCFTA Chief of Staff underscored the goal of promoting industrial development, diversification, and regional value chains, acknowledging the role of SMEs, especially in agriculture and food security. He acknowledged that although all African businesses may not have the capacity and financial muscle to produce goods and/or supply services for a market of 1.3 billion consumers, they can be key players in a

specific value chain. The speech pointed out AfCFTA's inclusive trading regime by addressing the specific challenges women and youth are facing to improve their standards of life and that of their families. It is for this reason that the Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade was included within the scope of the AfCFTA Agreement. AfCFTA seeks to protect and nurture African innovation and creativity and to level the playing field to enable small businesses to compete with more established and larger ones.

Mr. Ojakol touched on the importance of the Rules of Origin under AfCFTA in promoting 'made in AfCFTA' products and services, emphasizing value addition and diversification. The Chief of Staff stated that value must be added to the goods and services traded for a business to take advantage of the market opportunities presented by the AfCFTA. The AfCFTA promotes value addition or diversification by enabling the sourcing of inputs including intermediate ones within the continent at a much cheaper price, which in turn, reduces the production cost and ultimately the cost of the final product.

The speech highlighted the challenges faced by SMEs, including the lack of access to information about trade agreements and market opportunities, increased transaction costs due to lack of access to information on trade procedures and processes and non-tariff barriers, limited access to adequate financial products and services to scale up and to diversify production or the supply of services, and limited capacity to comply with international standards. While acknowledging these challenges, the Secretary General also listed important tools, initiatives and platforms developed within the framework of AfCFTA to address challenges, including the e-Tariff Book, Rules of Origin Manual, The Pan African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS); The African Trade Gateway, a suite of 5 digital platforms (MANSA, PAPSS, TRADAR Club, ATEX and ATG); The Guided Trade Initiative (GTI);

and Partnership with Commercial banks such as UBA and Equity Bank to provide Trade Finance for SMEs. Similarly, Initiatives such as the AfCFTA Youth Symposium, the AfCFTA Conference on Women in Trade, the AfCFTA Business Forum and the Intra-African Trade Fair (IATF) have been established to promote stakeholder engagement and showcase products and services by African business.



Emphasizing the enormous potential for networking and expanding market participation, the Mr. Ojakol encouraged African businesses to participate in continental trade fairs. In this regard, His Excellency drew attention to the Intra-African Trade Fair to be held from 9 to 15 November 2023 in Cairo, Egypt. He concluded by underscoring the mutual importance of SMEs to AfCFTA and the need for SMEs to seize the opportunities presented by the Agreement to contribute meaningfully to accelerating the continent's economic





### 3.0 PLENARY SESSION I

#### 3.1 DEVELOPING REGIONAL VALUE CHAINS: UNDERSTANDING THE AfCFTA STRATEGY FOR PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT TO BOOST COMPETITIVENESS.



L-R: Dr. Diawara, Mr. Tanoh, Mr. Kottoh

The discussion on developing regional value chains: understanding the AfCFTA Strategy for private sector engagement to boost competitiveness was moderated by **Dr. Barassou Diawara**, Knowledge Management Expert, ACBF.

The session reflected the AfCFTA agenda to promote trade as a powerful driver of development and means of industrial development, diversification, and regional value chains, through inclusive intra-African trade. Specific strategies are the inclusion of Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade within the scope of the AfCFTA Agreement, to protect and nurture African innovation and creativity and the levelling of the playing field to enable small businesses to compete with more established and larger ones.

Mr. Gyekye Tanoh, Lecturer, Executive M.A. in Regional Integration and African Development (EMRIAD), CRIA, and Mr. Michael Kottoh, Managing Partner, KONFIDANTS, and Head of Research, Afrochampions served as panelists and provided insights that enriched discussion and provided practical strategies for SMEs to develop regional value chains.

**Mr. Tanoh** stressed the significance of combining discussions on trade and production integration. In essence, he emphasized that trade integration and developing regional value

chains can only be effectively achieved through the integration of production processes. To enhance SME competitiveness in regional value chains, he underscored the importance of expanding and strengthening production interconnectedness, where for example, an SME's final produce could serve as an input for another in the regional value chain. He highlighted the importance of strategic growth and support for the agriculture and industry ecosystem, with SMEs driving industrialization.



**Mr. Kottoh** provided some practical suggestions to help SMEs scale up and take advantage of regional value chains. Recognizing the challenges faced by small businesses in sourcing raw materials, finding buyers, and navigating the AfCFTA compliance processes, he suggested investing in trade intermediaries and trade aggregators. These intermediaries could help bridge the gap, encourage more companies in this space, and ultimately assist producers in connecting with buyers. He also emphasized the development of strategic partnerships among SMEs to achieve

economies of scale, and avoidance of a fragmented approach.

Mr. Kottoh stressed that simply creating large continental markets within AfCFTA won't be effective if Africa, as a continent, is not industrialized. Industrialization is the cornerstone, and without it, the full potential of these markets cannot be realized. He emphasized the need to assist SMEs in scaling up. To truly leverage market opportunities, small and medium-sized enterprises need help in growing. Achieving economies of scale is crucial for their success.

Mr. Kottoh, emphasized the importance of building strategic alliances and joint ownership structures as one of the strategies to compete effectively and also take advantage of regional value chains. He recommended an experimental phase before implementing the AfCFTA rules of origin protocol across board. This would allow for accelerated compliance and the flexibility to adapt to real-world challenges.

Session participants made recommendations, including utilizing economic/commercial counselors from foreign missions for data collection and market intelligence. They encouraged African governments to invest in regional transport and logistics, such as establishing an operational African Shipping Line to facilitate trade. Some participants noted a mismatch between AfCFTA Secretariat initiatives and tools and African governments' commitment to the AfCFTA. There was a clarion call for getting AfCFTA basics right, through political and business action. Ultimately, participants advocated for a collaborative effort between governments and the private sector to ensure the success of AfCFTA.



## 4.0 BREAKOUT SESSIONS

There were 4 breakout sessions which allowed for a more focused and in-depth exploration of specific topics related to the broader theme of **"Breaking Business Barriers for AfCFTA Acceleration."** The specific topics discussed were:

- Financing for SMEs: Overcoming Financial Barriers to Growth;
- Harnessing the Power of Innovation and Technology to Overcome Business Barriers to Intra-African Trade;
- Understanding Regulatory Framework Policies to Enable Business Growth and Expansion in a Single African Market; and
- Breaking Business Barriers for AfCFTA Acceleration.

These sessions allowed participants to work together to find practical ways to address specific topics in the context of the conference broader theme; encouraged more active participation from attendees who may have a deeper interest in specific topics; and gathered input from participants with diverse backgrounds, expertise, and experiences, all of which enriched discussions, informed conference's conclusions, recommendations, and future directions.

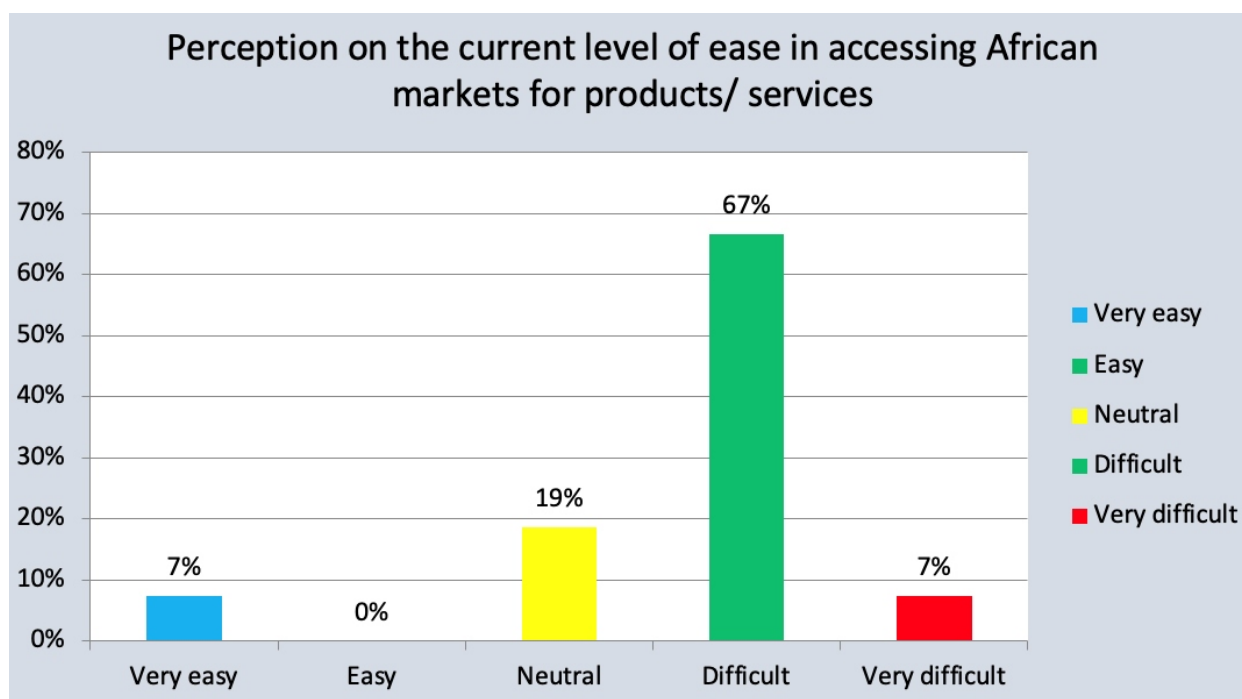


## 4.1 FINANCING FOR SMES: OVERCOMING FINANCIAL BARRIERS TO GROWTH



L-R: Mr. Nyame-Baafi; Madam Abakah; and Madam Amanquah

A major challenge faced by African SMEs and highlighted during the Conference is the limited access to adequate financial products and services to scale up and diversify production or the supply of services, in order to access cross-border markets. This session allowed SMEs to explore the various options available from financial institutions to overcome the financial barriers to growth. It was moderated by **Mr. Anthony Nyame-Baafi**, a Lecturer in CRIA's Executive Master of Arts in Regional Integration and African Development (EMRIAD) program. It also featured two panelists from key financial institutions, **Madam Audrey Abakah**, ABSA's Head of SMEs, Agency Banking and Partnerships; and **Mrs. Charlotte Amanquah**, Ecobank's Regional Head AWA, Commercial Banking. Both banks, among other financial institutions, have developed programs to support increased SME access to African cross-border markets.



2023 RIIF SME pre-conference survey regarding perceptions on access to financing and to markets (See Appendix II)

Madam Abakah offered valuable insights from the perspectives of ABSA. ABSA is a prominent bank operating across 12 different countries in Africa, and among the top three banks in Ghana. Despite ongoing banking reforms and the debt exchange program, ABSA maintains strong financials, demonstrating its commitment to the market. It is proactive in the market and actively supports SMEs in scaling their businesses. ABSA has rolled out a number of financing mechanisms to help SMEs fostering growth and development. These include impact financing and strategic partnerships. It employs impact financing strategies to encourage the right strategic partnerships. Through this initiative, ABSA has partnered with the Mastercard Foundation to support 5,000 SMEs over three years, with a financial commitment of \$40 million. This initiative has been particularly beneficial to women-led businesses, young entrepreneurs aged 18-35, and agri-businesses.

ABSA offers financial solutions through its FINTEC program, providing loans at an affordable interest rate of 10% per annum. SMEs can access up to \$1 million through this program. A key challenge addressed by the FINTEC program is the traditional requirement for collateral. ABSA's approach is to base its judgment on cash flow rather than strict collateral, making financial accessibility more attainable for SMEs. It has streamlined and automated its loan application processes by allowing for a faster and more efficient assessment by SMEs.

Other financing tools available to SMEs include enterprise financing that supports Direct Micro Enterprises (DMEs) by facilitating connections with larger anchor companies for financing. This



approach empowers SMEs with the potential to access substantial funds for growth. Finally, ABSA through its Commercial Asset Financing, extends commercial asset financing up to 80%, providing quick access to capital based on a business's cash flow and with repayment within ten days.

Mrs. Charlotte Amanquah, focused on Ecobank's practical approach to assisting SMEs overcoming financial challenges to trade. Ecobank's leverages its presence across 35 African countries by providing solutions designed to make SMEs versatile. Through the Ellevate program, Ecobank in partnering with global schools, is providing education and capacity building to women entrepreneurs on bookkeeping and preparing them to be effective managers of loans.

In addition to financial support, Ecobank provides non-financial benefits to SMEs. This assistance extends to two million dollars for direct SMEs, with a focus on addressing barriers and enhancing capacity. Importantly, these loans are collateral-free, making it easier for SMEs to access funds. Ecobank works closely with the AfCFTA secretariat, leveraging its role as a single market trade hub online, to help SMEs expand the reach of its products. This platform serves as an information repository, providing insight into what AfCFTA offers and how Ecobank facilitates payments.



SMEs can create profiles and showcase their products, including details about who they are selling to. This platform plays a critical role in matchmaking SMEs with potential buyers, enabling smoother trade and payments between businesses, even in different African countries. Participants proposed innovative measures such as financial corporates allocating a percentage of annual profits specifically for SME

financing. Additionally, there was an endorsement of special grants, particularly for SMEs in critical industries like agriculture processing and manufacturing, which are AfCFTA priority sectors. Participants welcomed the concept of a trade hub, acknowledging its potential to facilitate SME growth. Commendation was extended to banks for providing free services that support the growth and success of women and youth-led businesses. A major concern was the tendency for banks to favor lending to commerce-focused SMEs vis-à-vis those involved in projects with substantial capital expenditures. The latter is perceived as riskier, highlighting a potential hurdle for certain types of SMEs.



To further enhance the financial landscape for SMEs and promote economic growth, the following recommendations were proposed:

- Encourage financial institutions to replicate impactful programs like ABSA's and Ecobank's, fostering partnerships and collaboration for targeted SME support.
- Advocate for more inclusive financial models, like ABSA's dedicated FINTEC support, to address collateral challenges and extend financial assistance to a broader spectrum of SMEs.
- Promote the establishment of industry-specific support mechanisms, such as grants, to address the unique needs of SMEs in vital sectors like agriculture processing and manufacturing.
- Conduct awareness and education campaigns to bridge the knowledge gap, ensuring that SMEs are well-informed about available financial support and collaboration opportunities.
- Advocate for government and regulatory support to incentivize financial institutions to engage in impactful SME financing initiatives, contributing to overall economic development.



These insights from the discussion provided a foundation for crafting strategies that foster a more supportive financial environment for SMEs, ultimately contributing to their sustained growth and success within the African business landscape. Expansion through innovation and technology was the subject of the next breakout session.



## 4.2 HARNESSING THE POWER OF INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY TO OVERCOME BUSINESS BARRIERS TO INTRA-AFRICA TRADE



L-R: Mr. Akpeloo, Dr. Ampomah, Madam Twumasi, and Ms. Gyasi

SMEs in Africa face various challenges when harnessing the power of innovation and technology in intra-African trade. Some of the key challenges include: limited access to technology, low levels of digital literacy among SME owners and their employees, infrastructure gaps, high cost in acquiring and implementing technology, complex regulatory environments, data security and privacy concerns among others. To overcome these challenges, this session, moderated by **Madam Felicia Twumasi**, CEO of Homefoods Limited, delved into the critical role of innovation and technology in overcoming business barriers to intra-Africa trade. The panel, comprising of Dr. Raphael Ampomah, CEO of Sky Fusions, **Ms. Priscilla Serwaa Gyasi**, Project Manager of Africa Startup Journeys, and **Mr. Tsonam Akpeloo**, CEO of Suku Technologies Limited, explored the significance of technological advancements for African businesses.

Dr. Ampomah's contribution to the panel discussion focused on two key points. He emphasized that there is a knowledge deficit regarding the potential of technology in the African context and highlighted the need for increased awareness and understanding of how technology can be harnessed to benefit businesses, particularly in the context of intra-African trade. Dr. Amponsah called on African governments to play a vital role in creating the enabling environments for technological innovation. He suggested that government policies, regulations, and infrastructure development should be geared towards supporting and promoting technological advancements in business.

Mr. Akpeloo's contributions to the panel discussion focused on several key points. He emphasized the critical role of logistics and efficient payment systems in the success of business scale up and sustainability under AfCFTA. He underscored the importance of streamlined processes for the movement of goods and the facilitation of financial transactions.

Mr. Akpeloo pointed out the need for a continental logistics organization, highlighting the importance of coordinated logistics infrastructure to support the smooth flow of goods across borders within Africa. He advocated for the establishment of a pan-African e-commerce system. This would enable businesses to leverage digital platforms for trading across the continent, opening up broader market opportunities and addressing e-commerce challenges. Given concerns about internet fraud and cybersecurity issues, Mr. Akpeloo highlighted the importance of educating businesses and individuals on safe and ethical digital practices for fostering innovation. He cited an example of the Kadodo Africa project which was set up to enable African businesses optimize the opportunities created by the AfCFTA. The Kadodo Africa project is an online directory offering a comprehensive repository of authenticated businesses in Africa and thus assuring an atmosphere of trust in doing business within Africa.

He advised that AfCFTA should approach negotiations with global tech giants like Amazon and Google with caution. This caution is motivated by concerns that these companies may have the potential to disrupt the objectives of AfCFTA, in view of their technological advancement which offers them a competitive advantage and possible capture of the African market, if not thoroughly examined or negotiated.

Ms. Gyasi focused on the practical use of social media platforms. She highlighted the significance of digital marketing and the utilization of widely accessible social media tools to enhance the visibility and reach of SMEs in the context of intra-African trade. Ms. Gyasi encouraged SMEs to leverage various social media platforms such as WhatsApp Business, and Instagram, to increase their digital/online presence and engagement to significantly impact business growth and overcoming trade barriers. These platforms, she said, can serve as powerful tools for SMEs to market their products and services.





During the discussion, participants emphasized the need for businesses to innovate. The session underscored the imperative of technological innovation for business sustainability in the context of AfCFTA and advocated for collaborative efforts to harness the power of innovation and technology effectively. Session participants advocated for collaborative efforts between governments and AfCFTA to create an enabling environment for technological advancements. Other recommendations were to:

- Encourage businesses to prioritize and invest in innovation for sustained relevance;
- Implement educational programs to address digital skills gaps and mitigate internet fraud challenges;
- Support the establishment of a continental logistics organization and a pan-African e-commerce system for seamless intra-Africa trade;
- Exercise caution and strategic negotiations with global tech giants to ensure their involvement aligns with AfCFTA objectives;
- Prioritize initiatives aimed at enhancing knowledge about the power and potential of technology in the African context; and
- Encourage SMEs to capitalize on social media platforms for effective marketing and business

#### 4.3 UNDERSTANDING REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS AND POLICIES TO ENABLE BUSINESS GROWTH AND EXPERIENCE IN A SINGLE AFRICAN MARKET

Understanding regulatory frameworks and policies is crucial for SMEs to navigate the complexities of the AfCFTA. Some key concerns in this area include harmonization of regulations, rules of origin, customs and tariffs, compliance and certification to mention but a few. Addressing these concerns and creating an enabling regulatory environment is essential for the success of AfCFTA and for SMEs to fully benefit from the opportunities it offers. This session provided a platform to discuss and address this crucial topic of understanding regulatory frameworks and policies within the context of the AfCFTA. It was facilitated by **Mr. Ian Mashingaidze**, Interim Director of Programs, ACBF. The panel included **Mr. David Ofosu-Dorte**, Founder and Snr. Partner, AB and David Africa;



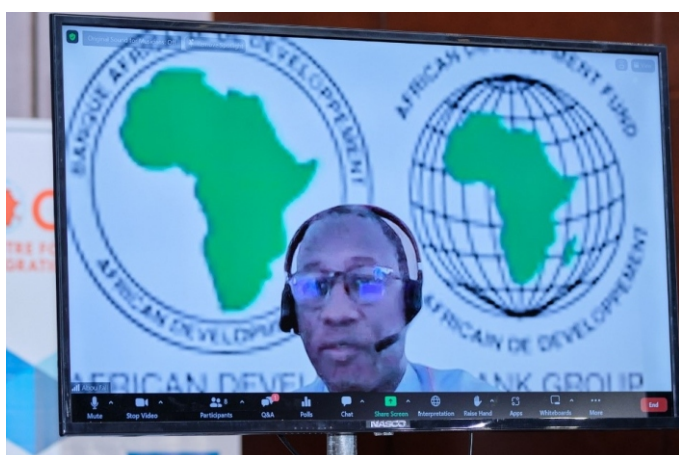
**Mr. Charles Arthur Ntiri**, Head of Export, Ghana National Chamber of Commerce, and Industries; **Mr. Gyekye Tanoh**, lecturer at CRIA, and **Mr. Abou Fall**, Principal Trade Policy Officer, African Development Bank in la Cote d'Ivoire.

Overall, the panelists emphasized the need for a regulatory framework tailored to the unique African context, rather than directly adopting frameworks from international organizations

like the World Trade Organization. This tailored framework would address the specific needs and challenges of African businesses. The panel stressed the importance of harmonizing rules and regulations across African countries to create a coherent trading framework. The panel emphasized effective communication of the rules and regulations between AfCFTA and SMEs. Bridging of this communication gap is deemed vital to ensuring that SMEs are informed and can fully participate in the single African market.



Mr. Abou Fall, joining virtually from Côte d'Ivoire, enumerated the contributions of the African Development Bank (AfDB) to AfCFTA, including trade finance support for SMEs through commercial banks. According to Mr. Fall, AfDB's Principal Trade Policy Officer in the Industrial & Trade Development Department, support to SMEs has been key to allowing SMEs to overcome financial barriers to intra-African trade.



Participants agreed on the importance of aggregating products, piloting projects collectively, and finding a unified voice for action. This collective approach was seen as critical for the success of AfCFTA. The panelists expressed optimism that lessons learned from experiences, nurtured partnerships, and collaborations could be integrated. There was a shared commitment to working together,

sharing ideas, finding solutions, and advancing the AfCFTA agenda. There was also a unanimous call for harmonization and coherence of rules, with emphasis on the need for political will to implement these effectively. Lack of harmonization was recognized as creating an incoherent trading framework. An identified challenge was the disconnect in communication between AfCFTA and SMEs. Correcting this communication gap was highlighted as a matter of great importance. Participants encouraged businesses to navigate the existing regulatory diversity by complying with rules and regulations in both the country of origin and the destination country. This approach ensures that businesses can access the benefits of AfCFTA while awaiting a more harmonized framework.



The session provided valuable insights and offered the following recommendations for enhancing regulatory frameworks and policies to promote business growth within the framework of AfCFTA:

- Advocate for the development of a unique regulatory framework tailored to the diverse economic landscape of Africa.
- Encourage businesses to comply with regulations in both the country of origin and destination until a single regulatory framework is established.
- Stress the importance of political will for effective implementation and advocate for the harmonization and coherence of rules.

Urge governments to actively participate and create stable environments for the success of AfCFTA.

- Prioritize efforts to bridge the communication gap between AfCFTA and SMEs for improved collaboration.
- Emphasize the need for SMEs to aggregate products, pilot projects collectively, and present a unified voice for collective action.



## 4.4 BREAKING BUSINESS BARRIERS FOR AfCFTA ACCELERATION

The breakout session focused on the Conference theme “Breaking Business Barriers for AfCFTA Acceleration” which is also aligned with the AU's commitment to accelerating AfCFTA Implementation in the year 2023. The session was aimed at responding to the slow pace of Intra-African trade. It was moderated by **Mr. Carl Richards**, Executive Chairman of African Concrete Products Limited, who rehashed some of the existing challenges to AfCFTA implementation – infrastructure deficits, customs and border issues, access to finance, lack of awareness, regulatory harmonization.



**Dr. Grace Amey Obeng**, shared valuable insights during the discussion, drawing from her extensive experience in the cosmetics industry. She highlighted how her manufacturing business initially relied on direct imports of cosmetics but required a change in business strategy after encountering increasing freight cost and taxes which impacted on the profitability of her business. Recognizing the changing business landscape, she leveraged her background in science to shift toward local manufacturing. By producing cosmetics locally, she has not only adapted to the changing economic conditions but also contributed to job creation in her country.

Dr. Amey Obeng shared her experience of breaking cultural and psychological barriers when expanding her business to Uganda. She mentioned that while establishing a business with legal support, she encountered cultural shock and intense competition. These experiences emphasized the importance of understanding and navigating local business environments. She emphasized the psychological barriers that SMEs may face when venturing into new markets. The issue of trust was highlighted as a key challenge. Building trust among partners and customers, especially across borders, is crucial for successful intra-Africa trade. Dr. Amey Obeng stressed the significance of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in creating awareness and helping SMEs overcome various barriers to intra-Africa trade. Education and skills development are essential for businesses to thrive in the evolving trade landscape.

Participants acknowledged the lack of a common language in Africa as a major barrier. SMEs received practical advice to overcome business prejudices, focusing on building a robust business reputation and trust. Emphasis was placed on SMEs forming strong relationships with professional organizations to enhance their representation, providing them with a collective voice in policy discussions. The session underscored the significance of basic knowledge gathering about consumer bases and ensuring consistency in product standards and quality as effective strategies for breaking barriers. SMEs were advised to actively engage in networking,



seek mentorship from experienced business role models, and have a well-defined growth plan in place. The panel discussion illuminated critical aspects of breaking business barriers for AfCFTA acceleration. They presented actionable recommendations and strategies to overcome barriers and accelerate the success of AfCFTA include:



- Advocate for the inclusion of language integration policies within AfCFTA to overcome communication barriers;
- Encourage initiatives and policies aimed at building trust among businesses and stakeholders involved in AfCFTA;
- Provide support mechanisms for the formation and growth of cooperatives, recognizing their potential in overcoming barriers for SMEs;
- Facilitate collaboration between SMEs and professional organizations, ensuring effective representation and collective participation in policy discussions;
- Establish platforms for knowledge sharing among SMEs, fostering a culture of information exchange and mutual learning; and
- Promote networking events and mentorship programs to enhance the growth and resilience of SMEs participating in AfCFTA.



## 5.0 CONFERENCE CLOSING REMARKS

In her closing remarks, Prof. Bertha Osei-Hwedie of GIMPA and Lecturer of CRIA's Executive M.A. in Regional Integration and African Development (EMRIAD) program emphasized the urgency for Africa to accelerate the pace of continental free trade. Advocating for an openness to learning from mistakes, she highlighted the resilience of Africans in overcoming challenges and valued AfCFTA as a platform for empowering marginalized groups, particularly women and youth, in economic development.

**Prof. Osei-Hwedie** envisions the African regional market as a crucial training ground for entrepreneurs before venturing into the global market. She underscored the threat of political instability and governance issues to regional trade, emphasizing the critical role of strong governance for entrepreneurial operations. Prof. Osei-Hwedie identified the lack of access to information as a significant challenge, urging SMEs to collaborate, share ideas, and find collective solutions to advance the continental trade agenda.



## 6.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Conference, with participants drawn from private sector, policy makers, youth representatives, and diplomatic corps, successfully raised awareness of AfCFTA, equipped participants with valuable insights, and facilitated deep learning and experience sharing. It underscored the pivotal role of inclusivity in the success of the AfCFTA.

The conference stressed the necessity of fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders, particularly forming coalitions that blend SMEs, policy makers, and financial institutions. This collaborative approach is envisaged as a powerful driver for AfCFTA, wherein a concerted effort is needed to overcome challenges and capitalize on the opportunities presented by the trade agreement.

A consensus emerged on the importance of exercising patience and perseverance in addressing the multifaceted challenges associated with AfCFTA implementation. Acknowledging that transformative changes take time, participants emphasized the need for a gradual, well-considered approach. While there exists a shared intention to leverage AfCFTA for transformative economic outcomes, participants emphasized the imperative of translating intentions into

concrete actions. They agreed that mere aspirations are insufficient; and what is needed is decisive political action to surmount barriers and ensure the successful realization of AfCFTA's potential. In addition, conference participants offered the following recommendations for accelerating AfCFTA implementation:

- i. Enhanced Collaboration:** Encourage robust collaboration mechanisms between governments and the private sector, fostering shared responsibility for the successful implementation of AfCFTA.
- ii. Financial Support Mechanisms:** Advocate for financial institutions to continually innovate and develop targeted financial support mechanisms, particularly dedicated support tailored for SMEs operating below a specified threshold.
- iii. Language Integration:** Explore and promote the integration of a common language within sub-regional blocs to streamline and enhance communication, ultimately facilitating smoother trade interactions among member countries.
- iv. Policy Reforms:** Call for proactive policy reforms aimed at eliminating artificial national boundaries, thereby fostering the unimpeded flow of goods and services for Intra-African trade. This involves addressing regulatory bottlenecks and bureaucratic hurdles.
- v. Capacity Building:** Emphasize the imperative of targeted technical vocational education for SMEs to bolster their preparedness and enhance their operational efficiency, contributing to their overall success in the business landscape.
- vi. Innovation and Value Addition:** Highlight the critical role of innovation, value addition, and the elimination of digital barriers as key strategies for SMEs to fully realize and leverage the benefits presented by AfCFTA.
- vii. Addressing Non-Tariff Barriers:** Urge African governments to streamline regulations, ensuring an environment conducive to thriving businesses by actively addressing non-tariff barriers. This includes simplifying compliance processes and reducing bureaucratic complexities.
- viii. Learning and Educational Exchanges:** Promote ongoing educational initiatives, such as the RIIF, to continually raise awareness, inform decision-making among experts and policymakers, and foster a culture of dialogue, awareness, and collaboration.
- ix. Trade Interconnectedness and Production Integration:** Reinforce the interconnectedness of trade and production integration, emphasizing the importance of regional value chains. Provide SMEs with practical strategies to leverage AfCFTA opportunities, encouraging their active participation in the integrated trade landscape.
- x. Overcoming Financing Barriers:** Implement comprehensive financial literacy programs to empower SMEs with effective financial management skills. Facilitate strong partnerships between SMEs and financial institutions for tailored financial products. Promote awareness and utilization of alternative financing options and offer training programs focused on enhancing financial management skills among SME owners and staff.



## PART II: SME TRAINING ON INTRA-AFRICAN TRADE





## 1.0 WELCOME REMARKS



On Day 2 of the SME Conference and Training on intra-African trade, **Mr. Edem Messa-Gavo**, M&E Expert, ACBF, welcomed participants to the training workshop. He informed the meeting that a pre-Conference survey had been designed and conducted to meet the objectives of the event and to track the expectations of participants. From a pool of 60 pre-registered training participants, a majority (i.e. 53%) belonged to the secondary business sector,

entails manufacturing, construction and food processing. In terms of leadership of their respective businesses, 44% were women-led and 50% were youth-led SMEs. Mr. Messa-Gavo said the pre-conference survey of registered participants aimed at eliciting a baseline understanding of expectations and capacity needs of participants and to determine the extent of support required. A total of 32 out of 60 registered training participants provided responses to questions covering four thematic areas: business profile, awareness of the benefits and challenges of AfCFTA, involvement in cross-border trade, and access to finance. A summary of the responses is presented graphically in Appendix II of this report.

Participants were informed that the training sessions were designed to deepen SME knowledge of the AfCFTA and facilitated by experts from the AfCFTA and KPMG-Ghana. After the welcome, briefings on SME company site visits were shared before the training sessions commenced.

## 2.0 SME COMPANY SITE VISITS

The training workshop offered practical exposure to doing business across borders in the AfCFTA. and to provide an avenue for exchange of experiences/ideas as well as facilitate building of strategic relationships which lead to increased access to cross border intra-African trade. participants embarked on experiential visits to 6 SMEs.

Company site visits were arranged and sought to enable participants networking opportunities and to explore possibilities for developing and strengthening regional value chains. The experience sharing by host companies and participants ultimately:

- a) Provided participants with invaluable insights into challenges that can be managed; and
- b) Deepened participants' perspectives on practical ways to leverage the AfCFTA to grow business and effectively engage in cross-border trade.

## 2.1 SME GROUP SITE VISIT DEBRIEFINGS

Conference and Training participants were grouped into 6 sets of 10 individuals who visited Ghanaian SMEs in sectors that cut across Fashion, Cosmetics, Manufacturing, and Industrial and Agro processing. The companies included Bullock Industries, Nkulenu Industries, Tiwajo Industries, Fashions Wadata Ent., Amanex Company Ltd, and Kasapreko Company Ltd.

In their debriefings, participants expressed optimism of succeeding in their respective sectors, noting that the companies they visited faced similar challenges and braved through to success with some identifying and pursuing their niche, while others were compelled to change or add value to products and/or ways of doing business. The adjustments transpired over time, as a necessity to remain relevant and sustainable.



A summary of the lessons shared by participants after the site tours, included the following:

- Exporting under the AfCFTA is a reality and is possible:
- Partnerships and collaborations are a necessity:
- Standardization is essential:
- Maintaining competitiveness and adaptation in view of cultural diversity should not be underestimated:
- Sustainability through innovation, diversification and re-use of waste leads to sustainability and
- Risk management, including adopting on-shore production to mitigate exchange rate differences, is of strategic importance.

### 3.0 TRAINING SESSIONS

The training sessions were designed to equip participants with practical knowledge for purposeful engagement in the AfCFTA. After the industrial site visits to six companies involved in regional cross-border trade, the training sessions were led by highly proficient facilitators; namely Mr. Didier Bonyeme Bokomba, Head of Division, Rules of Origin, AfCFTA Secretariat; Ms. Florence Mulenga Sinyangwe, Gender and Trade Expert, AfCFTA Secretariat; as well as Mr. Jonathan Lutterodt, Partner, KPMG.

The facilitators covered diverse topics to guide SME participants through an understanding of engagement in the AfCFTA. Topics included the AfCFTA rules of origin and certification, gender and youth imbalances in intra-African trade, and market readiness of businesses for the AfCFTA. The training afforded participants pragmatic exposure to how leveraging opportunities through the AfCFTA could derive maximum benefits for business growth and expansion to cross-border trade.

### 3.1 TRADING IN GOODS AND SERVICES, AFCFTA RULES OF ORIGIN, AND CERTIFICATION

**Mr. Bonyeme Bokomba** provided in-depth insights into AfCFTA's rules of origin and certification processes. He identified two kinds of rules- general rules and specific rules. Noting that there are variations between trade agreements which can be complex, considering factors such as the percentage of local content, transformation criteria, and specific manufacturing processes, Mr. Bonyeme Bokomba advised that adhering to these rules is essential for



businesses to benefit from preferential trade agreements and avoid additional tariffs. Mr. Bonyeme Bokomba emphasized the technical nature of the procedures, prompting a recommendation for participants to seek assistance from brokers or clearing agents during the certification process. In their debriefings, participants expressed optimism of succeeding in their respective sectors, noting that the companies they visited faced similar challenges and braved through to success with some identifying and pursuing their niche, while others were compelled to change or add value to products and/or ways of doing business. The adjustments transpired over time, as a necessity to remain relevant and sustainable.

Mr. Bokomba explained the criteria for ascertaining the origin of goods in international trade, as follows:

#### ***Wholly Obtained Criterion:***

- Applies to products manufactured exclusively with domestic materials (local content).

#### ***Substantial Transformation Criterion:***

- Relevant when a product is made with imported materials.
- Substantial transformation is achieved through:
  - Change in tariff heading (CTH) or change in sub-heading (CTSH).
  - Ad valorem criteria (Value added criterion or Value of Non-originating material).
  - Specific processes.

A summary of the rules and various criterion is presented in **APPENDIX V**.

Participants noted challenges in completing forms due to scattered information on the Harmonised System (HS) Classification criteria. The HS Classification is universally used to define goods being exported or imported or products and services that have entered the global market. Mr. Bonyeme suggested consulting the World Customs Organization Classification for detailed nomenclature. It was further suggested that gaps in understanding the process could be perceived as business opportunities, encouraging participants to explore them strategically.



## 3.2 PROMOTING GENDER AND YOUTH RESPONSIVE INTRA-AFRICAN TRADE



The session was facilitated by **Ms. Florence Mulenga Sinyangwe**. She focused on the significance of inclusivity in intra-Africa trade, particularly in terms of gender and youth involvement. Ms. Sinyangwe emphasized the African Union's recognition of the increasing youth population as an important factor in accelerated growth and development and the UN Women study finding that approximately 70% of cross border traders were women.

The AfCFTA Secretariat's Gender and Trade Expert highlighted some of the challenges facing women and youth in trade.

These include:

- Gender disparities in accessing resources (land, credit, input) and opportunities;
- Lack of adequate access to finance and business networks - major constraint for entrepreneurship, especially in terms of SME formation;
- Complex legal framework, regulatory barriers, high taxes;
- Vulnerability to shocks evidenced during the Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown;
- Cultural and social norms as constraints to seeking employment and engaging in national and cross-border markets; and
- Skills mismatch with the demands of African businesses.

To address the gender disparities, the AU Assembly at its 13th Extraordinary Session, held in December 2020, made a commitment to “broaden the scope of the AfCFTA through interventions that support young Africans, women, and small and medium Enterprises”. Ms. Sinyangwe stated that AfCFTA has prioritized the inclusion and empowerment of young women and men as partners in the implementation of the agreement through:

**Youth Symposium** – strengthens participation, advocacy, skill, and knowledge sharing and partnership with young entrepreneurs and traders;

**Conference on Women** - provides the opportunity to take stock of progress in implementing policies and programs that enhance the capacity of women to trade,

Business to Business engagement and create linkages;

**Intra-African Trade Fair** – prioritise the participation of women and young entrepreneurs and manufacturers to link with investors, conclude business deals, exhibit products and services, expand networks; and

**Business Forum** – women and youth to network, investment opportunities, connecting SMEs with AfCFTA value chains.



For the successful implementation of AfCFTA Agreement, Ms. Sinyangwe recommended:

- Creating a conducive environment for women and young entrepreneurs to expand market access;
- Expanding customer base for women, young women, and men to increase revenue base which, in turn, will promote sustainability of businesses;
- Creating value addition for women entrepreneurs who can source inputs within the continent at a cheaper price;
- Increasing competitiveness, integration into regional value chains; and
- Diversifying business opportunities, increasing investment and collaboration, skills upgrading, and knowledge exchange among women SMEs.

Responding to the question of a gap in the AfCFTA agreement relating to services, she clarified misconceptions about AfCFTA's stance on services, noting that services negotiation depends on countries' commitments. Various services, including tourism, transport, communication, and accounting are actively under negotiation. An overview of AfCFTA protocols and the crucial role they play in promoting inclusivity, especially for women and youth in trade, was also presented.

### 3.3 EVALUATING REGIONAL MARKETS AND PREPARING A GO-TO MARKET STRATEGY

In his presentation, **Mr. Jonathan Lutterodt**, emphasized the significance of adaptability and strategic planning to navigate the complexities of the business environment within AfCFTA. Mr. Lutterodt highlighted the imperative of staying competitive amid environmental changes, categorizing strategies into two key areas:



#### INTERNAL DRIVEN STRATEGIES

**Standardization:** Advocating for internal-driven strategies, emphasizing the importance of standardization to maintain consistent product quality. This includes establishing systems to ensure outputs adhere to defined standards, promoting reliability in product delivery.

**Waste Reduction and Reuse:** Encouraging businesses to implement practices that minimize waste and capitalize on reuse, aligning with sustain-ability goals.

**Risk Management:** Addressing the critical need for risk management, particularly understanding the payment practices of suppliers. Discussed strategies to mitigate exchange rate risks by considering onshore production in local currency (cedis) and denominating transactions in cedi.

**Institutionalizing Practices:** Emphasizing the importance of institutionalizing these practices to ensure the sustainability of businesses. Noted that a lack of institutional capacity often hinders the growth of SMEs, and establishing robust systems is vital for multi-generational success.

#### EXTERNAL COMPETITIVENESS

**Customer Knowledge:** Understanding customers and their needs for effective market penetration.

**Customer Knowledge:** Understanding customers and their needs for effective market penetration.

**Cross-Border Trade Tools:** Leveraging tools that facilitate cross-border trade, essential for navigating diverse markets under AfCFTA.

**African Diaspora Engagement:** Tapping into the African diaspora as a market and partner resource.

**Product Differentiation and Niche Creation:** Innovatively differentiating and creating niches to stand out in the market.



Observing that his presentation complements the site visit debriefings by conference training participants, Mr. Lutterodt appreciated the manner in which practical insights from the visits reinforced his presentation. He was optimistic that participants had been equipped with valuable knowledge essential for AfCFTA engagement. To optimize the benefits of this training, he proposed the following knowledge building and skills upgrading recommendations, which relate to both the objectives of the AfCFTA and the overall objective of the Conference:

### 3.4 TRAINING RECOMMENDATIONS:

**Continued Assistance Mechanisms:** Establish ongoing support mechanisms for participants, especially in navigating the technicalities of AfCFTA rules of origin and certification.

**Information Centralization:** Advocate for a centralized information resource or guide specifically addressing HS Classification criteria to streamline the certification process.

**Gender and Youth Inclusion Programs:** Encourage the development of programs that actively promote gender and youth inclusion in intra-Africa trade, aligning with AfCFTA's commitment to inclusivity.

**Regular Training Updates:** Implement a system for regular updates and refresher training to keep participants abreast of evolving AfCFTA protocols and processes.

**Business Innovation Encouragement:** Foster an environment that encourages businesses to perceive gaps in understanding as opportunities for innovation and strategic exploration.

**Capacity Building:** Implement capacity-building programs to assist businesses in adopting internal-driven strategies, emphasizing standardization and sustainable practices.

**Risk Management Support:** Provide support mechanisms for businesses to navigate risk management effectively, including guidance on understanding supplier payment practices and managing exchange rate risks.

**Institutionalization Initiatives:** Encourage initiatives that focus on institutionalizing best practices within businesses to enhance their long-term sustainability.

## 4.0 TRAINING WORKSHOP CLOSING REMARKS



Delivering the closing remarks, **Dr. Barassou Diawara**, Senior Knowledge Management Expert at ACBF, weighed in on the significance of addressing challenges to intra-African trade and commended the AfCFTA Secretariat for its initiatives to accelerate implementation of the Agreement. While observing that the pace for implementation had been slow, he underscored the progressive movement and the fact that it is a process not an event.

Dr. Diawara viewed the organization of the conference as beneficial and underscored the critical focus on women and youth. He stated that women and youth have not traditionally been a priority, despite the fact that women constitute at least 50% and the youth comprise two-thirds of the continent's population. He said women and youth have integral contributions to make and deserve a chance to partake in the continent's development efforts. He further stated that mobilizing women will drive trade in Africa and make it the engine of development.

Dr. Diawara said the market is for Africans and called on SMEs to leverage on the opportunity presented by the AfCFTA. Noting that non-tariff barriers and political instability constitute critical factors of concern, the ACBF Knowledge Management Expert said it is imperative for governments to provide policy frameworks that break business barriers for intra-African trade. He appealed to the AfCFTA to encourage governments to collaborate with stakeholders in creating a continental environment in which entrepreneurs thrive. In addition, Dr. Diawara restated the need for strengthening communication links and networks between the AfCFTA and SMEs to ensure that the latter are informed about how they may engage in and benefit from the African Continental Free Trade Area.

In view of the successes of the European Union (EU) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Dr. Diawara was optimistic that the objectives of the 2023 RIIF SME Conference and Training on Breaking Business Barriers for AfCFTA Acceleration would be meaningful contributions to the success of the AfCFTA. He agreed with recommendations made by Conference participants for a way forward that requires multisectoral networking, partnerships and collaborations. Dr. Diawara concluded by underscoring the imperative for the AfCFTA Secretariat and SMEs to work together to share ideas, find solutions and boost intra-African Trade.

# APPENDIX I: CONFERENCE PROGRAM

## DAY 1: MORNING 27 SEPTEMBER 2023

8:30-9:00 Registration

### 9:00-10:00 OPENING CEREMONY

Welcome by MC

**Samuel Agyemang**, Journalist, Single African Market (S.A.M) Channel on traditional and social media formats

Opening Remarks by Chairperson

**Nana (Dr.) Owusu-Afari**, Chairman, Afariwaa Group of Companies & past President, Assoc of Ghana Industries

Partner Remarks

**Mr. Mamadou Biteye**, Executive Secretary, African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF)

**Prof. Lehlohonolo Tlou**, Executive Director, Centre for Regional Integration in Africa (CRIA)

**Prof. Samuel Bonsu**, Rector, Ghana Institute of Management and Public Affairs (GIMPA)

Private Sector Remarks

**Mr. Kebour Ghenna**, Executive Director, Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PACCI, Ethiopia)

**Mr. Carl Richards**, President, Stanford Seed Transformation Network (SSTN-Ghana)

Keynote Address

*Overcoming Trade Barriers and Increasing African Market Access for SMEs*

**H.E. Wamkele Mene**, Secretary General, AfCFTA

10:00-10:25 Group Photo/Cocoa Break

### 10:30-11:45 PLENARY I

Sponsor Virtual Remarks:

**Prof. Benedict Oramah**, President & Chairman of Board of Directors, Afreximbank

*Developing Regional Value Chains: Understanding the AfCFTA Strategy for Private Sector Engagement to Boost Competitiveness*

**Moderator: Mr. Gyekye Tanoh**, Lecturer, Executive M.A. in Regional Integration and African Development (EMRIAD), CRIA

Panel:

**Mr. Themba Khumalo**- Principal Advisor RVC, AfCFTA Secretariat

**Mr. Michael Kottoh**, Managing Partner, KONFIDANTS; and Head of Research AfroChampions

Experience sharing by SMEs

**Questions/Answers & Contributions from the floor**

### 12:00 – 1:25 BREAKOUT SESSIONS I (Rooms A & B)

(A) *Financing for SMEs: Overcoming Financial Barriers to Growth*



**Moderator: Mr. Anthony Nyame-Baafi**, Lecturer, Executive M.A. in Regional Integration and African Development (EMRIAD), CRIA

Panel:

**Ms. Audrey Abakah**, Head of SMEs, Agency Banking and Partnership, ABSA

**Mrs. Charlotte Amanquah**, Regional Head AWA, Commercial Banking, Ecobank

**Mr. Gabriel Siaw Owusu**, Head of Business Banking (SME), Société Générale

Experience sharing by SMEs

**Questions/Answers & Contributions from the floor**

***(B): Harnessing the Power of Innovation and Technology to Overcome Business Barriers to Intra-African Trade***

**Moderator: Mad. Felicia Twumasi**, CEO, Homefoods Ltd

Panel:

**Mr. Romeo Bugyei**, CEO, IT Consortuim Ltd

**Mr. Joshua Chibueze**, Co-Founder & CMO, PiggyVest, (Nigeria)

Experience sharing by SMEs

**Questions/Answers & Contributions from the floor**

**1:30-2:25 Lunch**

**2:30 – 3:25 BREAKOUT SESSIONS II (Rooms A & B)**

***(A) Understanding Regulatory Frameworks and Policies to Enable Business Growth and Expansion in a Single African Market***

**Moderator: Mr. Ian Mashingaidze**, Interim Director of Programs, West and Central Africa Regional Office, ACBF

Panel:

**Mr. David Ofosu-Dorte**, Founder & Sr Partner, AB & David Africa (a panAfrican business law firm)

**Mr. Abou Fall**, Principal Trade Policy Officer in the Industrial & Trade Development Department (AfDB, Côte d'Ivoire)

**Mr. Gyekye Tanoh**, Lecturer, Executive M.A. in Regional Integration and African Development (EMRIAD), CRIA

**Mr. Charles Arthur Ntiri**, Head of Export, Ghana National Chamber of Commerce and Industries (GNCCI)

**Questions/Answers & Contributions from the floor**

***(B) Breaking Business Barriers for AfCFTA Acceleration***

**Moderator: Mr. Carl Richards**, Executive Chairman, African Concrete Products Ltd.

**Dr. Grace Amey Obeng**, CEO, FC Group

**Dr. Adu Sarkodie**, CEO CDH Holdings

Experience sharing by SMEs

**Questions/Answers & Contributions from the floor**

**3:30 – 4:00 PLENARY II**

**Recap of the Day: Messages from Plenaries and Breakout Sessions**

5 mins each from the Breakout Sessions

5 minutes from Plenary Moderator

5 minutes from MC

4:00-4:10 **CLOSING OF CONFERENCE**

**Vote of Thanks**

**Mr. Nyame-Baafi**, Lecturer, Executive M.A. in Regional Integration and African Development (EMRIAD), CRIA

**Closing Remarks**

**Prof. Bertha Osei-Hwedie**, Professor, School of Public Service and Governance, GIMPA; and Lecturer, Executive M.A. in Regional Integration and African Development (EMRIAD), CRIA

**4:15 – 5:00 Cocoa Break & Networking**

**DAY 2: MORNING**

**28 SEPTEMBER 2023**

*(FOR PRE-SELECTED PARTICIPANTS ONLY)*

**SME TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR INTRA-AFRICAN TRADE**

**8:00-8:30 Registration and Cocoa**

**8:30-12:30 SITE VISITS TO 6 SECTOR COMPANIES**

Preparing for Regional Value Chain Readiness of SMEs

**12:30-1:15 Lunch**

**1:15-1:30 TRAINING SESSION WELCOME**

**Prof. Lehlohonolo Tlou**, Executive Director, CRIA

**1:30-2:30 *Trading in Goods and Services: AfCFTA Rules of Origin and Certification***

Facilitator: **Mr. Didier Bonyeme Bokomba**, Head of Division, Rules of Origin, AfCFTA Secretariat

**2:30-2:45 Transacting Business Through the Pan-African Payment Settlement System (PAPSS) & WORKAP Program**

Virtual/Video Presentation—**Mr. Mike Ogbalu III**, CEO, Pan-African Payment Settlement System (PAPSS) Afreximban

**2:45-3:15 *Promoting Gender and Youth Responsive Intra-African Trade***

Facilitator: **Ms. Florence Mulenga Sinyangwe**, Gender and Trade Expert, AfCFTA Secretariat

**3:20-4:05 *Evaluating the Regional Markets & Preparing a Go-To-Market (GTM) Strategy***

Facilitator: **Mr. Jonathan Lutterodt**, Partner, KPMG

**4:10-4:40 GROUP SITE VISIT DEBRIEFINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING SECTOR REGIONAL VALUE CHAINS**

Moderator: **Prof. Kenneth Ofori-Boateng**, Sr. Lecturer, School of Business, GIMPA

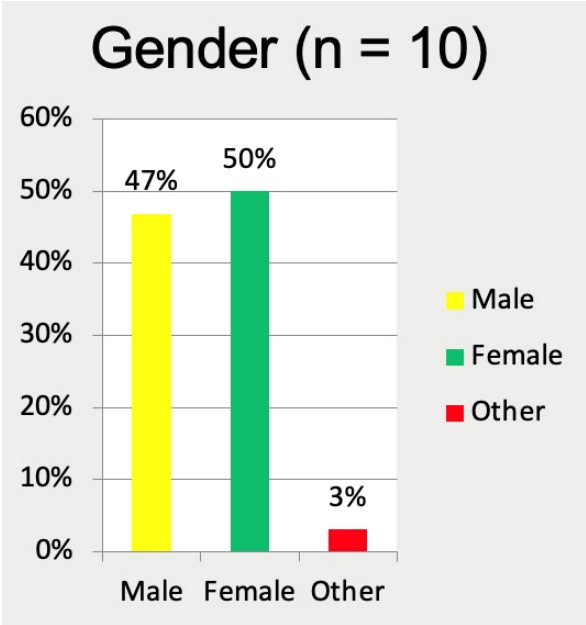
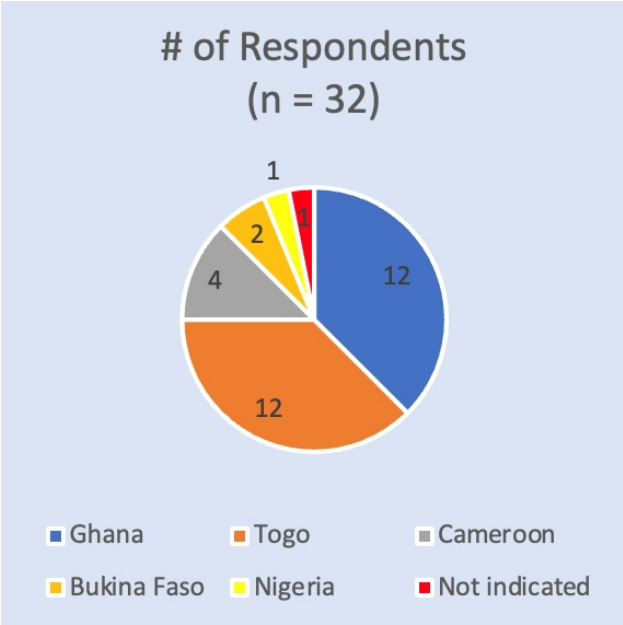
**4:40-4:45 CLOSING OF TRAINING**

**Dr. Barassou Diawara**, Knowledge Management Expert, ACBF

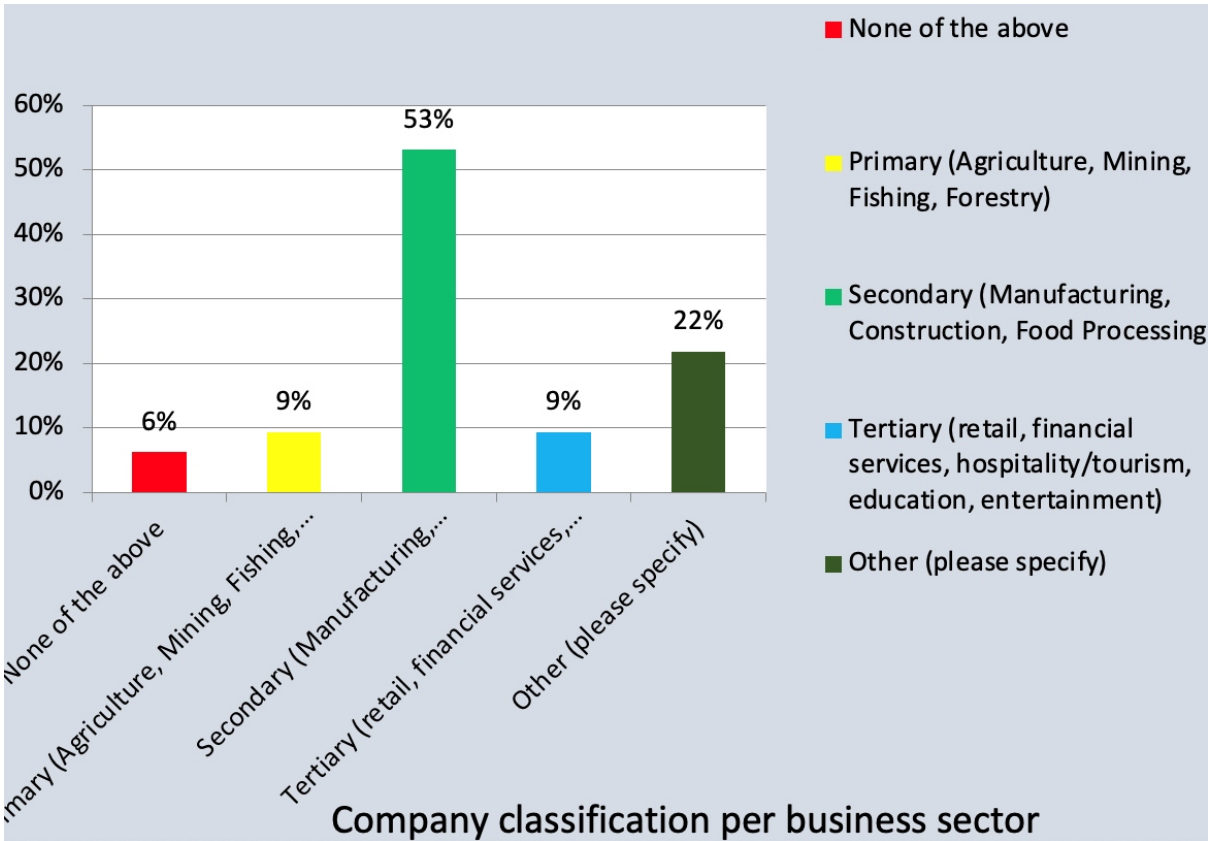
**4:45-5:30 Cocoa Break & Social**

# APPENDIX II: PRE-CONFERENCE SURVEY SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

## 1. RESPONDENTS DATA



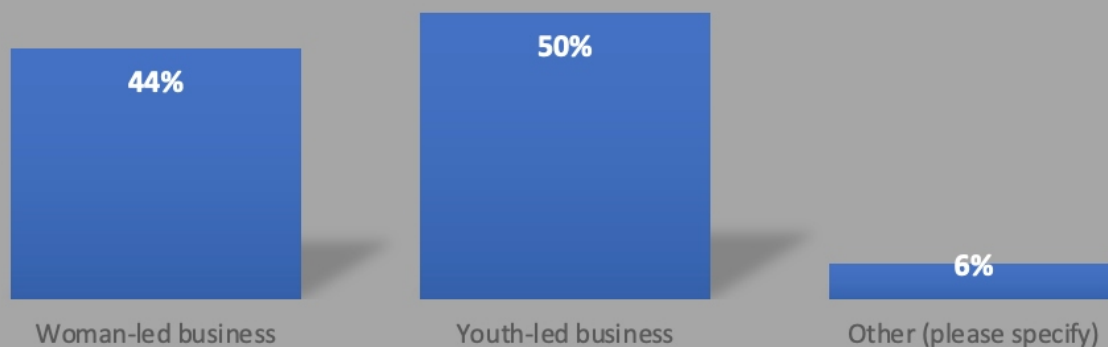
## 2. BUSINESS PROFILE





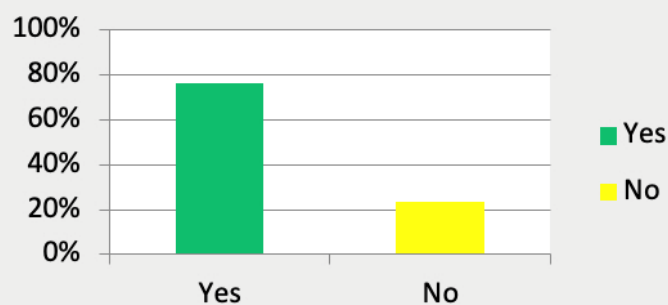
## Business leadership type

■ Responses

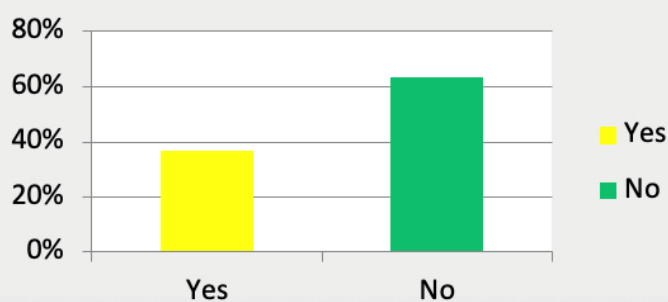


### 3. AWARENESS, BENEFITS & CHALLENGES OF AfCFTA

#### Read about AfCFTA agreement



#### Participation in previous AfCFTA-related events



#### 4. CROSS BORDER TRADE

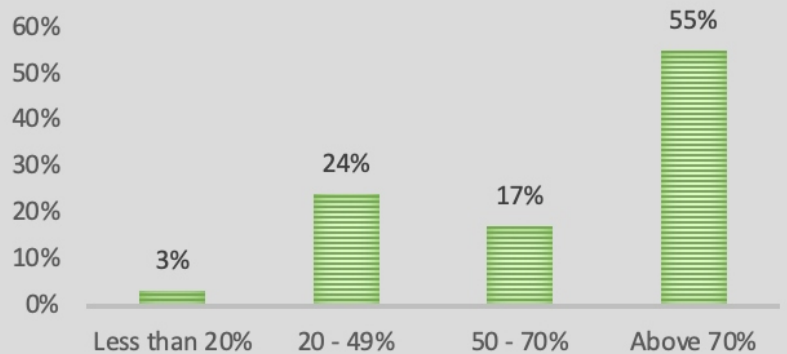
##### Engagement in cross-border trade within Africa

■ Responses



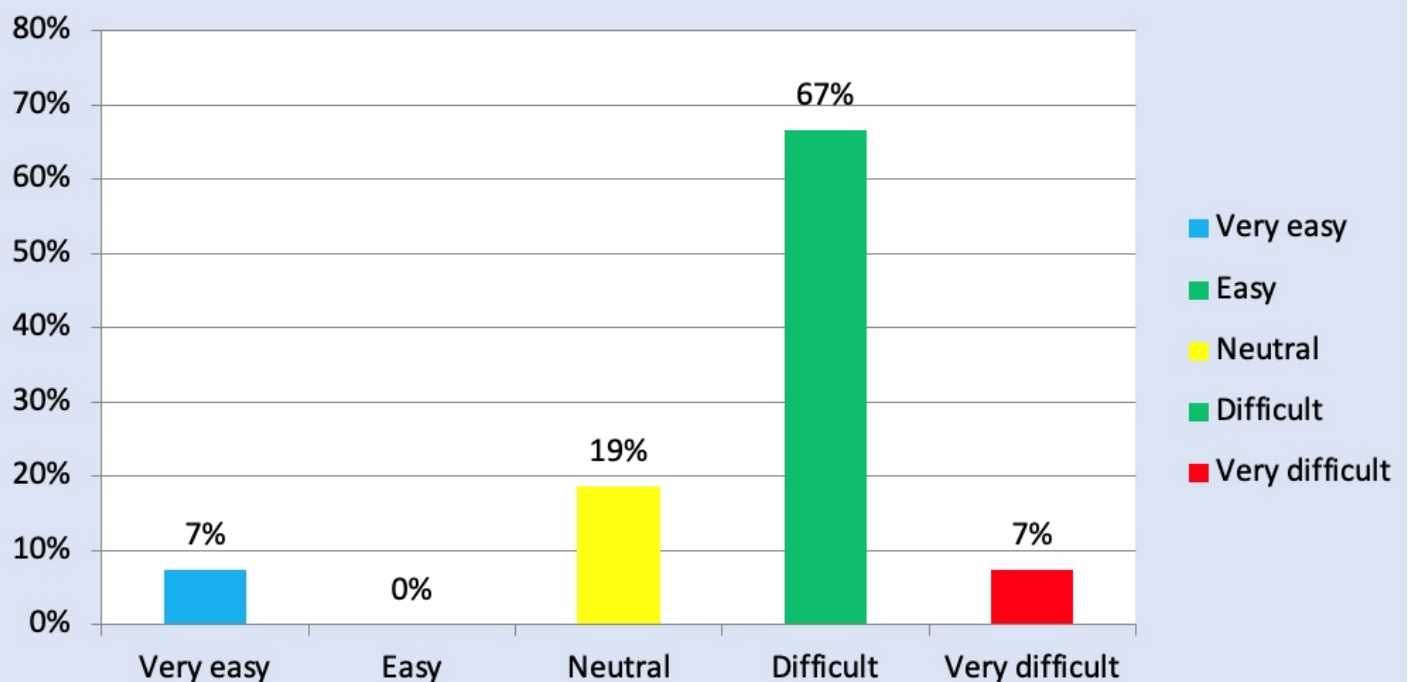
##### % of value of local content incorporated into products/services

■ Responses



#### 5. PERCEPTIONS ON ACCESS TO FINANCING AND TO MARKETS

##### Perception on the current level of ease in accessing African markets for products/ services



## 6. EXPECTATIONS FROM THE CONFERENCE AND TRAINING

Participants in the conference had diverse expectations, reflecting a keen interest in understanding, and capitalizing on the opportunities presented by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Key themes include:

1. **Learning and Experience in SME Issues and Finances:** Participants aim to gain practical experience in handling SME issues and finances, particularly in the context of microcredit.
2. **Understanding AfCFTA Frameworks and Agreements:** The primary goal is to practically understand the frameworks of the AfCFTA and fully comprehend the agreement's implications and opportunities for businesses.
3. **Networking and Business Deals:** Networking is a common thread, with participants seeking to connect with other professionals, establish business deals, and explore potential collaborations across the African continent.
4. **Market Expansion and Access:** Attendees express a strong desire to learn how to identify markets, navigate regulations, and expand their businesses across African countries, leveraging the opportunities presented by AfCFTA.
5. **Capacity Building and Financing:** Expectations include acquiring skills to open # businesses to other countries, understanding means of financing, and obtaining tools to conform to AfCFTA standards.
6. **Exporting and Certification:** Participants anticipate gaining knowledge to begin exporting products and conforming their businesses to AfCFTA standards, aiming for cross-border market success.
7. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Collaboration is emphasized, ranging from finding reliable outlets and market collaboration to working together for the application of free trade in Africa and seeking partnerships for development.
8. **Knowledge Sharing and Training:** The conference is seen as an avenue for sharing knowledge, engaging in debates on policies and regulations, and acquiring new skills in international trade, logistics, compliance, and business management.
9. **Intra-African Cross Border Trade:** Understanding the requirements for gaining access to intra-African cross-border trade is a key expectation.
10. **Understanding AfCFTA and SME Opportunities:** Anticipation includes gaining a better understanding of the AfCFTA and exploring real opportunities for SMEs to compete in various African markets.
11. **Brand Visibility and Market Expansion:** Participants expect to connect with potential partners, investors, and suppliers, enhancing brand visibility and expanding business operations across the continent.



## APPENDIX III: LIST OF SME CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

Name	Surname	Gender	Organization	Type of Org.
Godfred	Beka	Male	Inspired-Legacy Enterprise	Private
Daisy	Cudjoe	Female	AB & David Africa	Private
Esther Aforo	Ofosuhene	Female	AB & David Africa	Private
Mane	Inkumsah Sarpong	Female	AB & David Africa	Private
Michael B Y	Apalbilch	Male	AB & David Africa	Private
David	Ofosu-Dorte	Male	AB & David Africa	Private
Frank	Sedzro	Male	AB & David Africa	Private
Benjamin	Ntow Opere	Male	Abjel Communications	Private
Audrey	Abakah	Female	ABSA	Public
Barassou	Diawara	Male	ACBF	Public
Edem	Messa-Gavo	Male	ACBF	Public
Eric	Nyakpo	Male	ACBF	Public
Ian	Mashingaidze	Male	ACBF	Public
Kossi	Dowaraga	Male	ACBF	Public
Shine	Aidam	Female	ACBF	Public
Tsitsi	Chakonza	Female	ACBF	Public
Al-hassan	Abdul Basit	Male	Access Bank	Public
Priscilla	Mantebea	Female	Access Bank	Public
Godwin	Dzagboazi	Male	ACP	Public
Didier	Bonyeme	Male	AfCFTA Secretariat	Public
Florence Mulenga	Sinyangwe	Female	AfCFTA Secretariat	Public
Silver	Ojakol	Male	AfCFTA Secretariat	Public
Ray	Nkum	Male	AfCFTA Secretariat	Public
Abou	Fall	Male	AfDB (Cote d'Ivoire)	Public
Nana Dr. Owusu	Afari	Male	Afrariwaa Group of Companies	Private
Daniel Amoako	Antwi	Male	Africa Skills Hub Foundation	Private
Esther Sesenam	Amlanu	Female	Alliance Francaise	Private
Michael	Vorsah	Male	Alliance Francaise	Private
Isaac	Agyare	Male	Art and craft ( Textiles)	Private
Ohene	Addo	Male	Asuboa Wood TRT	Private
Matthew	Mani	Male	Axis Pension Trust	Private
Alfred	Akrong	Male	Barbers Hun Gh/Ignite Youth Ghana	Private
Nana	Osei Gyasi	Male	Barbers Hun Gh/Ignite Youth Ghana	Private
Yaw Barimah	AgyapongAddo	Male	Barimah shoes	Private

	Name	Surname	Gender	Organization	Type of Org.
1	Godfred	Beka	Male	Inspired -Legacy Enterprise	Private
2	Daisy	Cudjoe	Female	AB & David Africa	Private
3	Esther Aforo	Ofosuhene	Female	AB & David Africa	Private
4	Mane	Inkumsah Sarpong	Female	AB & David Africa	Private
5	Michael B Y	Apalbilch	Male	AB & David Africa	Private
6	David	Ofosu-Dorte	Male	AB & David Africa	Private
7	Frank	Sedzro	Male	AB & David Africa	Private
8	Benjamin	Ntow Opere	Male	Abjel Communications	Private
9	Audrey	Abakah	Female	ABSA	Public
10	Barassou	Diawara	Male	ACBF	Public
11	Edem	Messa-Gavo	Male	ACBF	Public
12	Eric	Nyakpo	Male	ACBF	Public
13	Ian	Mashingaidze	Male	ACBF	Public
14	Kossi	Dowaraga	Male	ACBF	Public
15	Shine	Aidam	Female	ACBF	Public
16	Tsitsi	Chakonza	Female	ACBF	Public
17	Al-hassan	Abdul Basit	Male	Access Bank	Public
18	Priscilla	Mantebea	Female	Access Bank	Public
19	Godwin	Dzagboazi	Male	ACP	Public
20	Didier	Bonyeme	Male	AfCFTA Secretariat	Public
21	Florence Mulenga	Sinyangwe	Female	AfCFTA Secretariat	Public
22	Silver	Ojakol	Male	AfCFTA Secretariat	Public
23	Ray	Nkum	Male	AfCFTA Secretariat	Public
24	Abou	Fall	Male	AfDB (Cote d'Ivoire)	Public
25	Nana Dr. Owusu	Afari	Male	Afrariwaa Group of Companies	Private
26	Daniel Amoako	Antwi	Male	Africa Skills Hub Foundation	Private
27	Esther Sesenam	Amlanu	Female	Alliance Francaise	Private
28	Michael	Vorsah	Male	Alliance Francaise	Private
29	Isaac	Agyare	Male	Art and craft ( Textiles)	Private
30	Ohene	Addo	Male	Asuboa Wood TRT	Private
31	Matthew	Mani	Male	Axis Pension Trust	Private
32	Alfred	Akrong	Male	Barbers Hun Gh/Ignite Youth Ghana	Private
33	Nana	Osei Gyasi	Male	Barbers Hun Gh/Ignite Youth Ghana	Private
34	Yaw Barimah	Agyapong-Addo	Male	Barimah shoes	Private

35	Hilda	Amonoo	Female	Beads Accessories	Private
36	Prince	Brentu	Male	Brentu Accounting and Business Advisory	Private
37	Peter	Fiamor	Male	Canadian High Commission	Public
38	Margaret	Amoako	Female	Castsheab Ltd	Private
39	Georgina	Quartey	Female	Celerity Touch Enterprise	Private
40	Mary Aku	Saka	Female	Chartess School of Fashion	Private
41	Rahmatu	Sai Jimah	Female	Chopbox Express	Private
42	Rev Kingsley	Amoah	Male	Civil Society Coalition for African Continental Free Trade Area	Private
43	Anthony	Nyame-Baafi	Male	CRIA	CSO
44	Beatrice	Clerk	Female	CRIA	CSO
45	Gyekye	Tanoh	Male	CRIA	CSO
46	Juliana	Abu	Female	CRIA	CSO
47	Lehlohonolo	Tlou	Female	CRIA	CSO
48	Erica	Zianson	Female	Cymart Investment	Private
49	Firdaus	Yeboah	Male	Cymart Investment	Private
50	Isaac	Dampson	Male	Dans Paradise Farms	Private
51	Catherine Noella	Numbuo	Female	Dans Paradise Farms	Private
52	Aminat Aderayo	Animashaun	Female	De'rayo vocational Limited	Private
53	Kitokoo		Male	DRC High Commission	Public
54	Shika Fredua	Amaning	Female	Eazzy Cuisine	Private
55	Charlotte	Amanquah	Female	Ecobank	Public
56	Justice	Ofori-Elikem	Male	Empretec	Private
57	Edwina	Packson	Female	ESM Distributorship	Private
58	Bezawit	Tolaso	Male	Ethiopian Embassy	Private
59	Frank	Eduful	Male	F. E Master Cares Ventures	Private
60	Grace	Amey	Female	FC Group	Private
61	Robert	Donkor	Male	Fruveg Farms Ltd. Co.	Private
62	Edward Opoku	Adusei	Male	GC LOGISTICS COMPANY LIMITED	Private
63	Adeliade	Korri	Female	GEA	Public
64	Efua	Dede	Female	GEA	Public
65	Jennifer	Johnson	Female	GEA	Public
66	Juliana	Adubofour	Female	GEA	Public
67	Mame Oforiwaa	Siaw-Misa	Female	GEA	Public
68	Stephania	Amponsah	Female	GEA	Public
69	Charles	Arthur Ntiri	Male	Ghana National Chamber of Commerce and Industries (GNCCI)	Private
70	Imran Shams	Kwakye	Male	Ghana National Chamber of Commerce and Industries (GNCCI)	Private
71	Abigail	Sackitey	Female	GIMPA	Public

72	Bertha	Osei-Hwedie	Female	GIMPA	Public
73	Ebenezer	Adaku	Male	GIMPA	Public
74	Emmanuel	Effah	Male	GIMPA	Public
75	Ishallynn Efua	Tamakloe	Female	GIMPA	Public
76	Jamila	Sulley	Female	GIMPA	Public
77	Joyce Boahemaa	Fosu	Female	GIMPA	Public
78	Juliana	Adjei	Female	GIMPA	Public
79	Kenneth	Ofori-Boateng	Male	GIMPA	Public
80	Manacia Sefakor	Asamoah	Female	GIMPA	Public
81	Nana Akosua Afriyie	Ansah	Female	GIMPA	Public
82	Nana Opoku	Osei-Sraha	Male	GIMPA	Public
83	Pamela	Koko	Female	GIMPA	Public
84	Phyllis	Dua-Agyemang	Female	GIMPA	Public
85	Samuel	Bonsu	Male	GIMPA	Public
86	Samuel Agorvor	Attah	Male	GIMPA	Public
87	Solomon	Effah Asare	Male	GIMPA	Public
88	Naomi	Marbell	Female	GIMPA - We Aid Micro Credit Ent.	Public
89	Marigold	Adu	Female	Global Bamboo Products	Private
90	Zenabu	Abubakar	Female	Golden Tower Ltd	Private
91	James	Arthur-Amoah	Male	Grace Farms Ghana	Private
92	Gwen	Akpanaba	Female	Gwensbakery and more	Private
93	Edmond Kofi	Appiah	Male	Herbal	Private
94	Felicia	Twumasi	Female	Homefoods Limited	Private
95	Eric	Boadu	Male	IAG Farms	Private
96	David K	Blankson	Male	Intell Engineering Ltd	Private
97	Emmanuel	Otoo	Male	Intell Engineering Ltd	Private
98	Dr. Esther Amoah	Amoah	Female	International Catering Services/Supplies	Private
99	Razak	Masawudu	Male	Jamraz Enterprise	Private
100	Erasmus Philip	Ahorlu	Male	Jesclan Art and Craft Enterprise	Private
101	Fauzia A	Clottey	Male	KH3 Group	Private
102	Bismark Elorm	Addo	Male	KONFIDANTS	Private
103	Kwame	Boadi	Male	KONFIDANTS	Private
104	Michael	Kottoh	Male	KONFIDANTS/Afrochampions	Private
105	Jonathan	Lutterodt	Male	KPMG	Private
106	Nicholas Kwame	Adjei	Male	Kwanic Investments	Private
107	Charles	Kwening	Male	Kwening	Private
108	Yomko koffi	EFU	Male	LES FEMMES DU COCO	Private
109	Yaa	Binka	Female	M.Y.K.B Ventures	Private
110	Caroline	Forson	Female	Mech Consult	Private
111	Charles	Mensah	Male	Mech Consult	Private



112	Dominic	Ansah	Male	Mido Productions	Private
113	Marian Cudjoe	Miller	Female	Miller and Marian	Private
114	Jacob	Oduro Boateng	Male	Min. of Trade	Private
115	Sarah	Boadi	Female	Min. of Trade	Public
116	MALOU	Tahou Jonathan	Male	MTJ MOTORS	Private
117	Vivian	Nsiah	Female	Multi Harvest	Private
118	Immanuel	Hamunyela		Namibian High Commission in Ghana	Public
119	Kebour	Ghenna	Male	Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PACCI), Ethiopia	CSO
120	Jessy	Lombale-Bare	Male	Phanerosis Global Platform	Private
121	Linda	Maka	Female	Salbix Foods	Private
122	Samuel	Agyemang	Male	Single African Market Multimedia Network	Private
123	Raphael	Amponsah	Male	Skyfusion	Private
124	Eben	Ankrah	Male	SOG	Private
125	Mzwakhe	Lubisi	Male	South African High Commission	Private
126	Daniel Kumi	Anane	Male	Stanford Seed Transformation Network (SSTN)	Private
127	Carl	Richards	Male	Stanford Seed Transformation Network (SSTN)	Private
128	Priscilla Serwaah Gyasi	Gyasi	Female	Start up Germany-Africa	Private
129	Gabriel Nana Kwabena	Oteng Adu	Male	Straps and Buckles	Private
130	Tsonam	Apkepelo	Male	SUKU Technologies Ltd.	Private
131	Gifty Emefa	Tagbor	Female	Top Creativity Industries Limited	Private
132	Yetunde	Sowale	Male	Ur Choice Global World Ltd.	Private
133	Victoria Love	Farning	Female	VicLove Service	Private
134	Anthony	Aubynn	Male		Private
135	Awuku	Akuffo	Male		Private
136	Cecila A	Sabah	Female		Private
137	Emmanuel	Whyte	Male		Private
138	James	Arthur	Male		Private
139	Nana Afriyie	Ansah	Male		Private
140	Odelia	Ofori	Female		Private
141	Rejoice	Yabani	Female		Private

## APPENDIX IV: PARTICIPANTS DISAGGREGATED BY GENDER & TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

### 1. GENDER DISAGGREGATION OF CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

FEMALE - 59  
MALE - 82  
**TOTAL - 141**

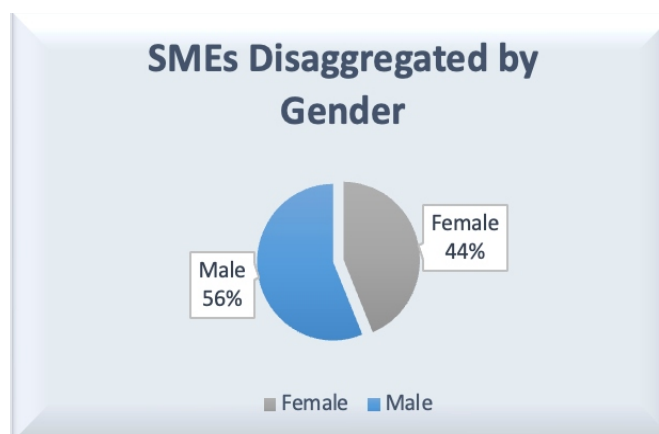
### 2. TYPE OF ORGANIZATIONS

PRIVATE - 90  
PUBLIC - 45  
CSO - 6  
**TOTAL - 141**



### 3. SMEs DISAGGREGATED BY GENDER

FEMALE - 28  
MALE - 36  
**TOTAL - 64**



### 4. DIPLOMATIC CORPS

Canada  
DRC  
Ethiopia  
Namibia  
South Africa  
**TOTAL - 5**

## APPENDIX V: SUMMARY NOTE ON AFCFTA RULES OF ORIGIN

In international trade, the determination of a product's origin plays a pivotal role in the implementation of various trade policy tools. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has established Rules of Origin to regulate and define the economic nationality of goods involved in international trade, ensuring the application of trade policy instruments such as preferential tariffs, antidumping measures, marking policies, and other regulatory measures.

AfCFTA Rules of Origin: According to Article 13 of the Protocol on Trade in Goods, AfCFTA Rules of Origin serve as criteria and conditions to ascertain the origin of goods in international trade. Two primary criteria are employed:

### ***Wholly Obtained Criterion:***

- Applies to products manufactured exclusively with domestic materials (local content).

### ***Substantial Transformation Criterion:***

- Relevant when a product is made with imported materials.
- Substantial transformation is achieved through:
  - Change in tariff heading (CTH) or change in sub-heading (CTSH).
  - Ad valorem criteria (Value added criterion or Value of Non-originating material).
  - Specific processes.

### **Conditions for Determining Origin:**

In addition to Rules of Origin criteria, specific conditions are considered in determining the origin of goods under AfCFTA. Notable conditions include:

- **Cumulation:** The aggregation of production processes involving multiple countries.
- **Tolerance:** Allowance for a certain percentage of non-originating materials in the final product.
- **Absorption:** The inclusion of certain costs in the calculation of the value added to a product.

**Documentation for AfCFTA Preferential Treatment:** Products originating in a State Party under AfCFTA can benefit from preferential treatment upon importation into another State Party. Documentation options include:

1. **Certificate of Origin:** Issued in hard or electronic copy using the form in Appendix I of Annex 2.  
Electronic Certificate of Origin issuance and acceptance align with each State Party's national legislation.
2. **Origin Declaration:** Given by the exporter on an invoice, a delivery note, or any other commercial document describing the products in detail. May be issued by an Approved Exporter or any exporter for consignments below USD 5,000.
3. **Competent Authority:** The Certificate of Origin is issued by the Designated Competent Authority, which holds the authority to certify the origin of a product under AfCFTA.

APPENDIX VI: PICTURE GALLERY





















