

## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

# AU and TradeMark East Africa forge partnership to boost intra-African trade and realise ambitions for the continental free trade area

**Addis Ababa, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019:** The African Union, a continental body consisting of the 55 member states and TradeMark East Africa (TMEA), one of the largest aid-for-trade organisations worldwide, have today signed a partnership to boost implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in selected Southern and Eastern Africa countries. The agreement was signed by Amb. Albert Muchanga, Commissioner for Trade and Industry, AU and Amb. Erastus Mwencha, TMEA Board Chair and Frank Matsaert, CEO, TMEA.

TMEA's operations across eight countries, working with government, private sector and civil society to address high trade costs in Eastern Africa and support export growth, is well-positioned to support the African Union on its vision for an Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.

The partnership prioritises areas of common interest to both organisations including:

- Collaborate on the development of an Action Plan for the implementation of the Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) for selected countries in Southern and Eastern Africa.
- Complement each other's efforts in supporting the implementation of the Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), specifically the Boosting Intra-Africa Trade (BIAT) initiative which focuses on seven clusters - trade policy, trade facilitation, productive capacity, trade related infrastructure, trade finance, trade information, and factor market integration as drivers for expanding intra-African Trade and agree a workplan for the implementation.
- Encourage in a joint manner the inclusion of the voice of the Private Sector in the negotiations and the implementation of the AfCFTA.
- Increasing export growth and diversification.
- Develop and monitor of trade/transport corridors to improve the flow of goods, services, people and information between countries and regions, including One Stop Border Posts (OSBPs).
- Collaboration in areas of transport infrastructure and operations, trade facilitation, trade logistics, ICT for trade, integration of regional trade networks and support to regional value chains of goods and services.
- Collaborate on investments and industrial development.

The Commissioner for Trade and Industry at the African Union, Amb. Albert Muchanga said, "AU is indeed excited to work with TMEA, renowned organisation that has implemented successful trade facilitation programmes in East Africa. We want to complement our efforts in implementing the ambitious boosting intra African trade programme, leverage TMEAs experience and ensure similar

*trade facilitation initiatives are implemented to boost trade and prosperity for the people in this region.”*

TMEA Board Chair Amb. Erastus Mwencha said, *“This partnership with the African Union is an important milestone and embodies our vision for a prosperous Eastern Africa. TMEA can help fast-track implementation of the AfCFTA by supporting the African Union (AU) programme for Boosting Intra-African Trade (BIAT). By implementing quick win measures to ‘thin’ borders and reduce the cost and time to trade along key corridors, TMEA will help keep momentum going for this ambitious initiative to be realised, while countries are involved in the longer-term exercise of negotiating trade and tariff regimes.”*

TradeMark (Trade and Markets) East Africa is an aid-for-trade organisation that was established in 2010, with the aim of growing prosperity in East Africa through increased trade. TMEA operates on a not-for-profit basis and is funded by the development agencies of the following countries: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, European Union, Finland, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom and United States of America.

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## Notes for Editors

For more information please contact

### Patient Atcho

Communications Officer, AU

[at Chop@Africa-union.org](mailto:at Chop@Africa-union.org)

### Nelson Karanja

Communications Director, TradeMark East Africa

[Nelson.karanja@trademarkea.com](mailto:Nelson.karanja@trademarkea.com)

## About TradeMark East Africa

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The first phase of TMEA (2010-2018) delivered exceptional results which contributed to substantial gains in East Africa's trade and regional integration in terms of reduced cargo transit times, improved border efficiency, and reduced barriers to trade.

We are now in the second phase (2018 - 2023) where we will focus on:

1. Reducing barriers to trade; and 2. Improving business competitiveness.

We believe this will deliver large-scale impact in job creation, poverty reduction and enhanced economic welfare.

TMEA has its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, with successful operations and offices in EAC (Arusha), Burundi (Bujumbura), Tanzania (Dar es Salaam), Democratic Republic of Congo (Bukavu), Ethiopia and the Horn (Addis-Ababa & Hargeisa), South Sudan (Juba), Uganda (Kampala) and Rwanda (Kigali).

To find out more, please visit our website [www.trademarkea.com](http://www.trademarkea.com)

## About Africa Union:

The African Union (AU) was officially launched in July 2002 in Durban, South Africa, following a decision in September 1999 by its predecessor, the OAU to create a new continental organisation to build on its work. The decision to re-launch Africa's pan-African organisation was the outcome of a consensus by African leaders that in order to realise Africa's potential, there was a need to refocus attention from the fight for decolonisation and ridding the continent of apartheid, which had been the focus of the OAU, towards increased cooperation and integration of African states to drive Africa's growth and economic development.

The AU is guided by its vision of ***"An Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena."***

For more information, please visit the African Union website at [www.au.int](http://www.au.int)