

**Post Tana Virtual Multi-Stakeholders Forum**  
**The Role of Multilateralism in the Effective Implementation of the AfCFTA**  
**17 June 2021**  
**Concept Note**

The 2020 Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa was held on the theme “The AfCFTA: Revitalizing Pan-Africanism for Sustainable Peace and Development in Africa”. The discussions during the Forum underscored the need for a continuous dialogue on how the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area. The Institute for Peace and Security Studies in partnership with the German Cooperation organizes a high-level dialogue on the theme “The Role of Multilateralism<sup>1</sup> in the Effective Implementation of the AfCFTA”.

Africa as a continent has employed multilateralism to tackle the development, political and security challenges the continent faces and remains a champion of shared institutions. Despite lofty promises, however, in recent years multilateral fora have had little success in addressing transnational disasters and threats as countries follow increasingly narrow nationalist paths. As the AfCFTA came into effect in May 2019, the need for collective responsibility in enabling the successful implementation the agreement has been brought to the fore. The COVID-19 crisis, exposing gaps and weaknesses at both the global and continental levels, presents a unique opportunity for Africa to reimagine a new multilateralism that is predicated on empowering peoples and member states while enhancing social and economic equities to deliver prosperity for all. The conditions for successful implementation will be wide-ranging, however, it is already evident that this will primarily require strong political will to move the trade relationship forward. A shared political mindset is needed that promotes continental economic integration—one that prioritizes shared economic gains at the expense of historical rivalries or relative economic gains. Besides the state level, farsighted political leadership is needed from the RECs who play an essential role in promoting development and integration in Africa.

Further, the AfCFTA as a regional trade agreement rests upon the rules of the multilateral trading system of the WTO. A challenge for African leaders and the member states of the WTO will be to harness the push from the AfCFTA and to allow Africa to gain a solid benefit from both regional and global economic integration. The new Director-General of the WTO — Director-General Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala — is a strong advocate of regional and multilateral integration and has already indicated that she is committed to recover the ground lost to development on the continent during the pandemic. It must remain a major objective for Africa to strengthen its voice in the multilateral trading system.

### **General objective**

The general objective of is to provide a platform for candid deliberations about the importance of multilateral cooperation as a success condition for the implementation of the AfCFTA.

### **Specific Objectives**

- To analyse and discuss the importance of multilateral rhetoric and action on the nation-state and RECs level for the implementation of the AfCFTA.
- To analyse what role the WTO will play under its new leadership and identify ways how Africa can obtain a strong voice in the global multilateral trading system.
- Practical and operable ways to harnessing collective responsibility and commitment of WTO under its new leadership in enabling the successful implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert O. Keohane defines multilateralism as ‘the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states, through ad hoc arrangements or by means of institutions.’ Multilateralism: An Agenda for Research, International Journal, Vol. XIV, No. 4. Autumn 1990, p. 732.