



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF INDUSTRIALISATION, TRADE AND SME DEVELOPMENT

**Statement by Tjekero Tweya - MP, Minister of Industrialisation, Trade and SME
Development, in Parliament, 24 April 2018**

Honourable Speaker

Honourable Members

I rise to provide this August House an update on the negotiations, at the African Union (AU) level, among the AU Member States, for the establishment of an African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

It would be recalled that our Pan-Africanist forefathers aspired for an economically and socially integrated Africa. Therefore today those deep founded aspirations find their expression in the provisions of the 1991 Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community – *commonly referred to as the Abuja Treaty* which seeks to achieve, consolidate and sustain integration at regional and continental levels in all fields of trade; and the broader African integration and development agenda - *Agenda 2063*.

Subsequently, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union took a number of decisions aimed at achieving this noble objective. Notable among those is the Assembly Decision of January 2012 adopting the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade (BIAT) and a Roadmap for the establishment of a Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA); as well as the Assembly Decision of June 2015 effectively launching the negotiations for the establishment of the CFTA. Therefore from the

beginning of 2016 all 55 AU Member States, including Namibia, have been involved in trade negotiations for the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area to be operationalised by an indicative date of 2017.

Honourable Members, I am pleased to inform the House that the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was finally concluded and signed and the AfCFTA eventually launched by the AU Assembly at its Extraordinary Summit held on 21 March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda.

Honourable Members, the key objective of the African Continental Free Trade Area is to boost intra-African trade. The Agreement establishing the AfCFTA is therefore designed to achieve this objective by forging a single continental market; with zero or lower trade tariffs; simplified rules of origin and customs procedures; harmonized regulations for trade in services; and trade remedies available to would be affected private economic players. The AfCFTA Agreement signed on 21 March 2018 in Kigali is a framework Agreement with three of its six integral protocols – namely the Protocol on Trade in Goods, the Protocol on Trade in Services, and the Protocol on Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes that were concluded. The other three protocols on Investment, Competition and Intellectual Property Rights are to come in Phase-2 of the negotiations, which will kick-off by the end of this year. Other important elements of the Agreement such as tariff offers, rules of origin for goods, services sectors to be liberalised and other technical aspects are yet to be concluded before the Agreement can be operationalised. This means, the main Agreement is completed and sealed but its operative instruments are still subjects of the negotiation. The framework Agreement is not self-executing; it sets out the principles, rules, rights and obligations of the Parties.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members,

I should further inform that on 21st March 2018, forty-four (44) countries signed the AfCFTA Agreement in Kigali, while eleven (11) countries including Namibia did not sign. However, Namibia signed the Kigali Declaration together with forty-six (46) other

Member States. Namibia could not sign the AfCFTA Agreement in Kigali because the national process of consultation, legal clearance and approval need to be undertaken first, in line with the requirements of our National Constitution. This is the process my Ministry is currently engaged with. I have reported and consulted Cabinet on this matter. As the lead Ministry in collaboration with our partner O/M/As in the national negotiating team we have scheduled a consultation workshop with national stakeholders for tomorrow here in Windhoek, and Members of the House are hereby invited to attend; and others will also follow. The Agreement will also receive legal scrutiny and clearance. Once all that is finalised; Namibia will sign the Agreement. Thereafter, I will table it to this August House for ratification when all the requirements are met.

In terms of the way forward, it is important to point out that Namibia as a negotiating Party will continue to be part of the engagements among AU Member States on the AfCFTA. The AU Heads of State and Government have endorsed an AfCFTA Work Programme which stretches up to year 2020. My Ministry will periodically provide updates on the outcome of these engagements in execution of that Work Programme.

Finally Hon. Speaker and Honourable Members, allow me to thank my counterparts and their officials/technical experts in the national negotiating team, specifically the Ministries of Finance; Agriculture, Water and Forestry; Fisheries and Marine Resources; Office of the Attorney General, as well as the representatives of the private sector, who provided important input, participated and supported this process to this end. I count on your continued cooperation and support.

I thank you