



25 November 2019

(19-8019)

Page: 1/1

**General Council  
9-11 December 2019**

Original: English

## **REQUEST FOR OBSERVER STATUS BY THE AFRICAN UNION**

### **COMMUNICATION FROM BENIN ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP**

The following communication, dated 22 November 2019, addressed to the Chair of the General Council and the Director-General of the World Trade Organization, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Benin on behalf of the African Group.

---

**Letter from H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chair of the African Union Commission, addressed to H.E. Ms. Sunanta Kangvalkulkij, Chair of the General Council and Mr. Roberto Azevêdo, WTO Director-General, on 17 November 2019**

I wish to request Your Excellency to allow the African Union to have an observer status in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The African Union is Africa's inter-governmental Organization with the ultimate objective to accelerate the political and social-economic integration of the Continent. As you may be aware, the African Union operationalized the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) at the 12<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Niamey, Niger, on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2019. Once fully implemented, this historical continental flagship project of the AU's development Agenda 2063, would make the Continent the world's largest single market with 1.5 billion people and a combined GDP of \$2.5 trillion.

In recognition of the determinant role that trade plays for economic growth and sustainable development in today's globalized economy, the African Union attaches great importance to the enhancement of trade performance of its Member States of which 44 are Members of the World Trade Organization. Nine African countries are currently candidates to the WTO, including 6 LDC's.

Africa remains committed to the rules-based multilateral trading system in which WTO serves as the principal global organ of governance. To ensure that Africa is effectively integrated and represented into this international trading system and that its interests and concerns are adequately taken into account, the AU has been given the mandate by its Member States as per its policy organs, to coordinate and harmonize the position of African countries and regions, with a view to speak with one voice in international trade negotiations and fora.

I have no doubt that the granting of observer status to the AU and its participation in the activities of the WTO and its technical sub-committees will facilitate the formulation of common African policies and enhance the equitable participation of the member States of the WTO to contribute to a rules-based multilateral international trading system. Above all, this will greatly reinforce the growing strategic partnership between the African Union and the WTO.

While looking forward to your response on this request, please accept Your Excellency the assurance of my highest consideration.

Addis Ababa, 17 November 2019

---