

AFRICAN UNION

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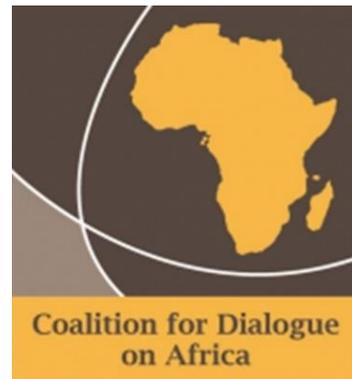
CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AFRICAN BUSINESS COUNCIL (ABC)

31 August 2020
03:00pm EAT

OUTCOME DOCUMENT



Creating One African Market



CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

On 27 November 2019, a Consultative Meeting for the Establishment of the African Business Council (ABC) took place at African Union Commission (AUC), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting was held on the margins of the '*Policy Dialogue of African Business Associations on Implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area*' which was organized with the understanding that the success and operations of the AfCFTA depend on the active engagement of the private sector. Accordingly, the consultative meeting was meant to trigger the process towards the establishment of the African Business Council, as an Apex Continental Body representing the voices of the Pan-African Private Sector Associations, as envisaged by the African Union Boosting Intra-Africa Trade (BIAT) Action Plan. The proposed architecture of the AfCFTA provides for the establishment of an African Business Council, as a necessary continental platform for aggregating and articulating the views of the private sector in the continental policy formulation processes. The Business Council shall play an advisory role in the continental policy formulation processes and will communicate its views and positions through the African Union Commission.

It was agreed at that meeting that the Africa Business Council will provide a platform for the private sector to interface with the African Policy Makers. It was further agreed that continued consultation as well as the creation of a Technical Working Group which would be responsible for formulating the constitution and legal framework of the ABC among other goals. In this regard, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) of the AUC and the Coalition for Dialogue on Africa (CoDA) planned a follow up consultative meeting to be held in Nairobi, Kenya in April, 2020.

As a result of the global CoVID-19 Pandemic, the scheduled Nairobi Consultative meeting on the African Business Council could not take place as planned. Accordingly, a virtual consultative meeting for the establishment of the African Business Council was held in lieu of the planned meeting. The virtual consultation served as a follow-up to the decisions made in November 2019 on the Policy Dialogue with African Business Associations. The specific objectives of the virtual consultative meeting included the consideration of a constitution and framework towards institutionalizing the ABC, as well as the formation of the aforementioned Working Group.

Participants were welcomed to the Virtual Consultative meeting by H.E. Albert Muchanga, Commissioner for Trade & Industry, AUC (Co-Chair). In his remarks, he stressed that in the spirit of creating a continent which is anchored on broad based prosperity for all Africans. The involvement of the private sector and its resources is crucial to driving investment and trade in Africa. It is against this background that the Commission has always worked to strengthen its partnership with the African Private Sector. It was also with the same objective of strengthening this partnership that the establishment of the African Business Council was included as a key objective in Agenda 2063. In this respect, the initiative to create the ABC must be driven by the private sector and not the AU in order to ensure its ownership of the process. Furthermore, the ABC will operate as a standalone initiative which is fully funded and managed by the private sector. He concluded with a call for all participants to focus on successfully establishing the Council in a timely manner in order to officially launch it on the margins of the upcoming 2020 Africa Industrialization Week, which is currently planned for November, 2020.

In his statement, H.E. Abdoulie Janneh, the Alternative Chairperson of the Board of Directors, CoDA and Former Executive Secretary, UNECA (Co-Chair) highlighted the importance of the ABC in successfully implementing the AfCFTA. He added that this and subsequent meetings which will lead to the proper establishment of the African Business Council must have the full commitment and involvement of the private sector. The African Business Council therefore will operate as a vital pillar in implementing the AfCFTA, given its role as a continental platform for articulating the views of the private sector in these processes, as well as gaining its unique perspective during the formulation of relevant policies. The African Business Council must therefore ensure it remains the foremost advocate to Africa's private sector for the enormous potential of the AfCFTA, as well as help guide the partnerships with African governments in trade facilitation where necessary. Finally, he called for openness to learning from the best practices of similarly established entities as we work to formulate a Council which works effectively for the AfCFTA and the Continent as a whole.

Following several deliberations on topics on the establishment of the Technical Working Group on the ABC, Interim Secretariat/Arrangements, and the finalization of a framework for the Establishment of the ABC, several conclusions were made. Some of the key recommendations arising from the deliberations are summarized below.

Key Recommendations

We, the Members of the Pan-African Private Sector Associations, the African Union Commission, and the Coalition for Dialogue on Africa, at our consultative meeting held on 31 August 2020, on establishing the African Business Council made the following recommendations:

1. Reiterated the importance and priority of having an apex African Business Council, as a key pillar towards the implementation of the AfCFTA and any other regional and continental programmes and projects;
2. Considered the Draft Texts establishing the African Business Council, and suggested these texts be acutely tailored to the African private sector and reviewed for possible adoption before the next African Industrialization Week;
3. Finalize the establishment of an interim Technical Working Group composed of Pan-African Private Sector to oversee the establishment of the African Business Council, through the facilitation and coordination of the AUC and CoDA;
4. The Technical Working Group should be composed of a mix of both Continental and Regional level private sector associations. The combination of perspectives will be instrumental to developing a holistic process that works for all

stakeholders. Membership in the group should also reflect diversity, sector, regional representation, and gender.

5. Proposed members for review and eventual addition to the Technical Working Group include: EABC, CBC, SADC BC, FEWACCI, ECCAS BC, ARAB MAGREB, CEN-SAD, IGAD, ECOWAS BUSINESS COUNCIL, AUDA-NEPAD PACCI, PAFTRAC, PAMA, Afro Champions, NEPAD Business Foundation, EACCIA, African Alliance for Women Empowerment, Africa E Trade Group, AfCFTA Secretariat.
6. Lessons from similarly established initiatives in other continents can also be drawn for the benefit of this process.
7. The role of the Diaspora and Diaspora Business Association in ABC should be made clear within the framework. They play a critical role in Investment and trade in Africa and also can play a role of ambassadors internationally;
8. The draft foundational documents (Constitution & Framework) shared with participants should be used as a basis for establishing the ABC.
9. Requests the Technical Working Group to come up with a communication plan, targeted towards the Member States, Pan-African Business Associations, Diplomatic Community, and the global community on the existence of the African Business Council. This will help in setting the stage for a coordinated policy advocacy and lobbying, as well as any future continent to continent private sector led activities;
10. Further requests the Technical Working Group to Draft a Calendar of Activities for the ABC.
11. Directs the Technical Working Group to explore modalities for the hosting of the ABC Secretariat, as well as budgetary issues and resource mobilization;
12. Further directs the Technical Working Group to identify possible modalities for registrations of all members of the ABC as soon as possible; and
13. Instructs the AUC and CoDA to circulate the Draft Report of this meeting within 30 days;