

## ONE TRADE AFRICA

# HARARE DECLARATION

## Trade Beyond COVID-19: Demystifying the AfCFTA for women-led MSMEs in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa

### Preamble:

We, the Private sector representatives in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa, have gathered for the **“Trade Beyond Covid19: Demystifying the AfCFTA for women-led MSMEs in Zimbabwe / Southern Africa”** hybrid forum in Harare, Zimbabwe, on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021. The forum, organised by the International Trade Centre (ITC) as part of the “ONE TRADE AFRICA” programme, sets our harmonised vision for accelerating intra-African trade through the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).

It seeks to ensure that the Agreement directly benefits micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), particularly women and youth-owned businesses, as a commitment to realising the African Union 2063 Agenda. We thank the Government and people of the Republic of Zimbabwe, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, OWIT Zimbabwe and ITC for their support in hosting this important event.

### Integrating Southern African businesses to the AfCFTA

1. We affirm our commitment to the Agreement establishing the AfCFTA entered into force on 30 May 2019, aimed at creating a single market for goods, services, facilitated by movement of persons in order to deepen the economic integration of the African continent. In accordance with the Pan African Vision of “An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa” enshrined in Agenda 2063, we place great recognition in the momentous agreement having come into force on 1 January 2021.
2. We acknowledge efforts made by our policymakers to develop policies that apply to the AfCFTA and in this regard call for the establishment and harmonisation of inclusive legislation to support youth and women-led enterprises across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region.

3. We appeal to our Zimbabwean and Southern Africa policymakers to consider the private sector's input as they seek to align both national and regional trade strategies while taking into account global best practices, common trends and opportunities, as required for the successful implementation of the AfCFTA.
4. We further express the need for our regional Governments to design and implement accelerated digital transformation programmes (e-commerce and green technology systems) to help MSMEs take advantage of new digital capabilities and solutions that provide better ways of doing business and access to global markets, particularly in light of the economic slowdown resulting from COVID-19.
5. Recognising the importance of coordinated interventions and multi-stakeholder partnerships at national, regional and continental levels, we call on international and regional organisations, in particular the African Union, RECs, UN agencies, such as ITC, UNCTAD, UNECA, regional development banks as well as bilateral and multilateral partners, to offer and facilitate long term technical assistance, advisory services and training to women and youth-led enterprises. These interventions should provide awareness of the opportunities offered by the AfCFTA to develop and improve relevant complementary measures in support of efforts to take advantage of the Agreement.
6. We urge our trade promotion institutions/ agencies in Southern Africa to facilitate the setting up of platforms and avenues that will showcase the creativity of young creative minds behind Africa's trending MSMEs, who are developing innovative solutions for Africa's economic development, particularly in light of the AfCFTA.
7. We call upon our regional Governments to offer MSME "rebooting" facilities (grants and low-interest credit facilities) to youth and women-led enterprises or those in the informal sector that are in financial distress due to COVID-19.
8. We call upon our Governments and Private Sector representatives in the region to offer enhanced cross-border payment mechanisms to women and youth-led enterprises in Southern Africa, to promote financial inclusion thereby reducing the gap between those with access to the banking opportunities and those without.
9. We call upon regulators and representatives of the private sector in the region to facilitate the adoption and development of a digital seamless interlinked one-stop border processes that facilitate the online tracking and expedite the clearance of goods in transit to enhance inter-regional trade in Southern Africa.
10. We adopt this Declaration and Call for Action and agree to refer it to the AfCFTA Secretariat for consideration.