

## Rabat Declaration

### “The AfCFTA we want for the African private sector”.

#### “DEVELOP” AFRICA

The Rabat Declaration or Regional Action Plan is the outcome of the webinar organized jointly by the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Secretariat of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and Egypt on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

The Action Plan, addressed to Policy Makers, Trade and Investment Support Institutions (TISIs), private sector and civil society representing the five AMU member countries and Egypt, and to development partners. It focuses on operationalising the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in North Africa to promote better integration within the region and with the rest of Africa while offering new growth opportunities to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), including to those headed by women and youth. This Action Plan calls for:

- Designing trade strategies to operationalise the AfCFTA that are inclusive while considering interests and concerns of all stakeholders, in particular, those of MSMEs, including those managed by women and youth. The strategies should address critical issues such as entrepreneurship development, boosting digital economy, building MSMEs resilience to shocks, strengthening participation in value chains, reduce skills gap for better employability and improving institutional ecosystem.
- Develop strategies focused on digital transformation of North Africa and the African continent, using technology advancement to promote MSMEs, notably African start-ups, and women and youth entrepreneurship
- Elaborating plans to facilitate the implementation of the AfCFTA putting Policy Makers, Support institutions and the Private sector at the heart of the action with the objective to boost intra-African trade and promote intra-African investments.
- Focus on high Value-added activities, supported by all stakeholders through trade capacity building programmes helping all actors to be more competitive, to conform and to connect to African specific markets.
- Expanding continental trade from Africa to Africa using AfCFTA established mechanisms and considering AfCFTA identifying opportunities, identifying its challenges of its implementation, and undertaking related impact studies.
- Linking MSMEs to trade intelligence and market opportunities, including to virtual marketplaces while assisting them to conform to market access conditions, to new distribution channels and to convert market opportunities into trade transactions.
- Opening markets and reducing trade barriers and cumbersome Non-Tariff Measures across African countries, thus improving the business environment, and easing doing business for MSMEs allowing more trade.
- Promoting trade and investments links between Northern Africa and other African regions through enhanced cooperation between Regional Economic Communities, strengthening and expanding trade infrastructure and networks, reinforcing transport and logistics services, promoting use of African youth talents and innovation to benefit the African continent.
- Expand partnerships among peers, through networking, twinning, cooperation agreements with educational centres, academia, innovations centres, technology hubs, trade hubs, economic and exports zones, to facilitate trade in goods and services on a continental African scale.

- Revive the AMU and accelerate road, rail, sea and air connectivity between the countries of North Africa and the with the rest of Africa with the aim to operationalize newly developed trade corridors at the regional level.
- Set up a consultative committee that includes representatives from all six countries to ensure follow up and monitoring of operationalisation of AfCFTA at regional level. The committee will organise yearly consultations on trade development, identified potential and opportunities, constraints and barriers, measures needed to resolve them.