

ENHANCING INTRA- REGIONAL TRADE IN WEST AFRICA



Liberalization: A solution to global meltdown?

1.0. Introduction

This piece is the first of the analytical and sensitization series developed by the National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS) with the support of GIZ¹-Pro-Poor Growth and Promotion of Employment in Nigeria Programme (SEDIN) aimed at educating and informing business operators – especially those of micro, small and medium enterprises - and private sector practitioners, but also policy makers including enforcement officials in Nigeria, nay, ECOWAS on various policies, regulations and regimes governing cross border trade and regional integration; as well as make recommendations for the different stakeholders on what steps to take in order to accelerate effective regional trade integration and maximise its positive effects on broad-based poverty reduction in West Africa.

1.1. Why the ECOWAS VANGUARD?

The critical justification for the collaboration is underscored by the general observation that the majority of cross border traders are ignorant of the provisions of these regional trade instruments and frameworks.

Of a truth, many of the policies and protocols are written and kept to lie in the shelves of ECOWAS and government offices. At other times, they are often left in the hands of government officials such as the Customs and Immigration who use them and interpret at their own whims and caprices to the detriment of the poor, ignorant and unsuspecting traders. A section of the cross border operators (importers and exporters) have also constantly alluded to the fact that given that many of the protocols and policies are written in 'legalistic languages', that are difficult to understand by vulnerable and illiterate constituencies that transact businesses along the borders, they are made automatically face more difficulty in knowing the rules, knowing their rights and more so, defending such rights. Hence, there is an increase in corrupt practices, arbitrariness among uniformed officials, harassments, intimidations, unnecessary delays in clearance and movement of goods and services, etc.

Many of the protocols and policies that could help promote regional integration are formulated at and

¹GIZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

remain at the regional level, particularly within the confines of the Authority of Heads of States and Governments and the ECOWAS Commission officials. There are barely any conscious efforts to sensitise community Citizens or even the implementing national officers on the purport and provisions of these protocols and policies. NANTS and SEDIN in this project believe that policies no matter how beautifully couched can never bring about a change unless they are first understood by all implementing Agents and its intended beneficiaries. Such instruments cannot be effective unless they are well implemented, but sensitisation/education is definitely the starting point.

1.2. The Outlined Sequence

For this edition, the ECOWAS Vanguard attempts to agree that despite the existence of sufficiency of policies within the ECOWAS region to help achieve integration objectives, inadequate knowledge of the protocols and policies themselves especially among ECOWAS citizens and business operators in particular, apart from poor implementation/enforcement among member countries have been attributed to the failure of integration and trade objectives. It therefore tries to discuss and examine existing challenges to intra-trade and regional integration and articulate possible ways towards its enhancement. It equally tries to capture and demystify various policies of trade integration and their usage.

The next (second) edition would discuss the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme – ETLS as a specific regional trade instrument vis-à-vis its Genesis, Conditions set for business operators, Appraisal and Outlook. It goes further to x-ray the coverage in terms of classification of items thereunder, concessions and implementation challenges.

The third edition is targeted at the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) with regard to its structure, process and issues, challenges and implications, benefits, classification in terms of HS Codes and clearing of goods, etc.

The fourth edition shall review the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement with specific attention on its legal basis, the rights and obligations provided therein particularly on Entry, Residence, Establishment, as well as the status of implementation and its challenges to businesses operators. Further editions are planned in a serial and specific looking manner.

2.0. Background to ECOWAS Integration

With the dismantling of trade barriers and the expansion in the volume of trade, policies that remove non-tariff barriers and expedite the movement of goods and services across borders have emerged at the forefront of the trade agenda. Since the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round which laid the groundwork for the progressive liberalization of barriers to trade, trade facilitation has been seen as a buzz-word in the World Trade Organization (WTO) system.

In the WTO, trade facilitation has been defined as the “simplification and harmonization of international trade procedures” – trade procedures qualified as “activities, practices and formalities involved in collecting, presenting, communicating and processing data required for the movement of goods in international trade”. The WTO also describes trade facilitation as relating to a “wide range of activities such as import and export procedures (e.g. customs or licensing procedures), transport formalities, etc.”

Trade with regards to a regional bloc is the initiative taken by regional governments in a given region to

liberalize and facilitate intra-regional trade, by establishing either free trade areas or custom unions. Regional trade has been gaining increasing importance in the international economy. It accounts for 55% of total global trade. Regional trade agreements (RTAs) total number increased by 8 times comparing to the 80s total number.

The stumbling in multilateral negotiations, as well as their ramification and complexity, led to more promotion of regional trade day after day. RTAs offer several advantages to the member countries, considering various dimensions of RTAs. They also contribute in developing the region, and they increase the activity of their countries in the multilateral trade system. RTAs are part of developmental plans for most developed and developing countries.

There is a link between RTAs and preferential trade agreements and it will be important to state that the RTAs of West African States came into being considering the Socio-economic similarities in the region as compared to the agreement signed at the WTO with other developed economies.

3.0. ECOWAS Trade Liberalization

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established in May, 1975 as a regional institutional framework for the coordination and promotion of economic cooperation and sustainable development in West Africa. ECOWAS had strongly recognized the development and expansion of the regional market as the corner piece of its comprehensive development strategy. As clearly demonstrated in the preamble of chapter 2 Article 3 of its Revised Treaty, ECOWAS sought to achieve economic integration through liberalization of trade between its member states, removal of all impediments to free mobility of factors of production, as well as

harmonization of national economic and fiscal policies of member states.

Under its regional free trade agreement (FTA) agenda, a regional trade liberalization programme known as ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) was put in place. The objectives of the scheme are:

- i. Establishment of a Customs Union among all member states aimed at the total elimination of Customs duties and taxes of equivalent effect,
- ii. Removal of non-tariff barriers, and
- iii. Establishment of a Common Customs External Tariff (CET) to protect goods produced in Member States.



Customs Union - booster of regional economy

The above objectives of ETLS are expected to be achieved through the removal of tariffs and non-tariff barrier to trade among ECOWAS member states. This would lead to free circulation of unprocessed goods, manufactured goods and handicraft products of ECOWAS origin among economic actors in the community. To guide against trade deflection from outside the community, the certificate of origin specified additional conditions for them to enjoy free movement among member states also.

The success of any integration scheme like ETLS be it a free trade area, a customs unions, a common/single markets, a monetary union or even political union, depends on how it enhances competition and efficiency within the integrated area, through increased specialization, and generally ensures better allocation of scarce resources into the most productive areas. In terms of trade, based on the assumptions of perfect competition in markets, the classical economic theories insist that the disappearance of tariffs and non-tariff barriers (i.e. complicated customs procedures or somewhat difficult standards etc.), between member states ensures increased smooth flow of trade within the integrating area, thereby increasing the gains in overall national welfare.

As better allocation of resources is attained in the ETLS, product prices in the entire ECOWAS region are expected to decrease in favour of consumers. Thus, the welfare benefits occur if the aggregate gains by consumers far outweigh the losses encountered by both the producers in relation to marginal cost and benefits and the government in terms of loss of revenue.



Trade creation leads to creation of jobs

In addition, the ETLS is also expected to lead to 'trade creation' within ECOWAS member states, as each of them redirect their trade and increasingly trade more between themselves than with non-members e.g. when one member state's exports

replace goods of inefficient producers within another member country. However, ETLS would also lead to 'trade diversion' since domestic consumers in the region would have to buy goods manufactured within the community at higher prices, as against cheaper similar goods from outside the union at the initial take off of the project until regional enterprises start to enjoy economies of scale.

4.0. ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme in the Regional Integration Agenda

Trade liberalization in the context of rising regionalism all the more emphasizes the importance of trade facilitation as small countries and region compete in the global market for trade in goods and services as well as investment. ECOWAS was established on May 28, 1975 by the sixteen member states of West Africa (now remaining fifteen as Mauritania withdrew), as a practical approach in tackling the economic dilemma of the sub-region that is devastatingly entangled in excruciating poverty, underdevelopment and foreign dependency.

The signing of the ECOWAS Treaty was indeed a kind of radical response to the plague of poverty and underdevelopment bedevilling West Africa, and as a result, practically provided the much desired framework for the realization of rapid and sustainable socio-political and economic development throughout the sub-region, and has till date the following member states: Republic of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and the Republic of Togo.

4.1. The ECOWAS Treaty Objectives

ECOWAS Treaty was mandated to:

- a) eliminate between member states customs duties and other charges of equivalent effect on imports and exports;
- b) eliminate quantitative and administrative restrictions on trade among members;
- c) establish a common external tariff structure and commercial policy towards non-member countries;
- d) eliminate obstacles restricting the free movement of persons, services and capital between member states;
- e) harmonize agricultural policies and promote common projects in the member states notably in the field of marketing, research and agro industrial enterprises;
- f) implement schemes for the joint development of transport, communication, energy and other infrastructural facilities as well as the evolution of a common policy in these fields;

- i) establish a fund for cooperation, compensation and development; and
- j) embark on other activities in the interest of the member states within the community

From the above provisions of ECOWAS Treaty, the founding fathers of the region envisaged the various dimensions of economic integration ranging from Free Trade Areas, Customs Unions, Common Markets, and Economic Union.

4.1.1. A Free Trade Area (FTA)

This is the form of economic integration in which all barriers are removed on trade among members, but each nation retains its own barriers to trade with non-members. In an FTA, there is a need for Rules of Origin (RoO) to confine free trade privileges to products of participating countries. The examples are the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), formed in 1960 by the United Kingdom, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland (with Finland joining as an associate member in 1961); and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) formed by the United States, Canada, and Mexico in 1993 ; and the ETLS of ECOWAS.

4.1.2. A Customs Union

A Customs Union allows no tariffs or other barriers on trade among members (as in an FTA), and in addition, it harmonizes trade policies such as the setting of CET rates toward the rest of the world. The CET accepted is usually the lowest pre-union tariff, and so does not need rules of origin. While the CET can be administered, harmonizing non-tariff barriers under a customs union is a difficult task. The most famous example is the European Union (EU), formed by the Treaty of Rome (1957) as the European Economic Community (EEC)² by West



Harmonizing trade policy improves regional integration

- g) harmonize economic and industrial policies of member states and eliminate disparities in the level of development of member states;
- h) harmonize monetary policies of member states;

²The European Community became the European Union when the Maastricht Treaty on European Union took effect in November 1993

Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Another example is the Zollverein, or customs union, established in 1834 by a large number of sovereign German states, which proved significant in Bismarck's unification of Germany in 1870. ECOWAS member states had accepted 5-band CET (0%, 5%, 10%, 20%, and 35%) since over a year ago to be used in concluding EPAs negotiation.

4.1.3. A Common Market



Is this a border?

It goes beyond a customs union by also allowing the free movement of labour and capital among member nations. A common market has no invisible trade restriction and there is harmonization of trading standards and practices. The EU achieved the status of a common market at the beginning of 1993. ECOWAS has started the implementation of its common market agenda with the Heads of State and Government of the region with the adoption of the 3 Supplementary Acts on Investments in December 2008, and the releasing of its Common Investment Market (CIM) Vision, and the engagement of national consultants of all member states in the harmonization of the national investment laws of member states into a common investment code (CIC).

4.1.4. An Economic Union

Economic Union goes still further by harmonizing or even unifying the monetary and fiscal policies of

member states. This is the most advanced type of economic integration. Features of an Economic Union includes the fact that goods and services, and capital can move freely; competition policy and other measures aimed at strengthening market mechanisms; common policies for structural change and regional development; and macroeconomic policy coordination, including binding for budgetary policies.



How free are the borders?

While the commonest historical example of an economic union was the Benelux, created by the economic union of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, formed after World War II (and now part of the EU), a typical example of a current complete economic and monetary union is the United States of America today. ECOWAS is working towards this deepest dimension of integration through several initiatives and convergence policies.

The ECOWAS Treaty is thus among the most ambitious ones. In theory, the implementation of (a) and (b) above is known as a free trade area; (c) is nothing but a customs union; (d) is a common market; (e) to (g) is an economic union; and (h) and (i) monetary integration.

5.0. Coverage of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS)

The ECOWAS trade liberalization scheme involves three groups of products:

5.1. Unprocessed Goods and Traditional Handicrafts

Unprocessed products are livestock, fish, plant or mineral products that have not undergone any industrial transformation. Traditional handicrafts are articles made by hand with or without the help of tools, instruments or devices that are activated directly by the crafts man. These product groups are granted the following advantages:

- i. Total exemption from import duties and taxes,
- ii. Free movement without any quantitative restriction, and
- iii. Non-payment of compensation for loss of revenue as a result of their importation.

5.1.1. ETLS Product Qualifications

In order to benefit from the advantages listed above, unprocessed products as well as handicrafts of member states must satisfy the following conditions:

- i. Must originate in Member States of the Community,
- ii. Must appear on the list of products annexed to the decisions liberalizing trade in these products;
- iii. Must be subjected to the Customs formalities as necessary in the importing country.

5.2. Industrial Products



A common art market.

Industrial goods are manufactured products originating from ECOWAS Community.

- i. Member states shall not impose new duties and taxes on equivalent or increase existing ones.
- ii. The rates of these duties and taxes which serve as the starting point for the elimination of tariffs are listed in ECOWAS Customs Tariff for each Member State.
- iii. There shall be no creation of non tariff barriers and those in existence shall not be increased.
- iv. Tariff reduction commenced on 1st January, 1990.
- v. Progressive reduction over a period of fifteen (15) years, starting from 1 January, 1990 and total elimination of Customs duties and taxes of equivalent effect on imports of industrial products originating from Member States.
- vi. Total elimination, as from January 1, 1990 of non-tariff and other administrative trade barriers on industrial products approved under the trade liberalization scheme (quantitative restrictions, prohibition, quotas, etc)

To benefit from the scheme, each product must satisfy the conditions of acceptance for goods originating within the Community and must have obtained the requisite approval for inclusion in the ETLS

5.3. Rules of Origin

To be able to be considered goods originating from an ECOWAS member state and henceforth to benefit from preferential treatment under the ETLS, goods must:

- i. Be produced from materials of Community origin whose value is equal to or higher than 40% of the total cost of raw materials employed in their production of whose

- quantity is equal higher than 60% of the total cost of all raw materials employed
- ii. Be produced from materials of foreign or indeterminate origin whose CIF value does not exceed 60% of the total cost of materials employed or whose quantity is equal to or more than 40% of all raw materials employed in its manufacture;
- iii. Have received in the process of production a value added of at least 35% of the ex-factory price before tax; and
- iv. Be manufactured by enterprises in which
- v. Community nationals hold an equity share of at least 25%.

5.4. Compensation for Loss of Revenue

Losses in revenue incurred by Member States as a result of the liberalization of Intra-Community trade in approved industrial goods is compensated for according to procedure adopted by the Community decision making authorities. An estimated compensation budget is adopted each year. It is calculated on the basis of the volume of approved industrial goods and the level of reduction in tariffs. A Member State's contribution to the compensation budget is calculated on the basis of its share in the value of total intra-Community exports of originating manufactured products.

6.0. The EU-ECOWAS Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

The Economic Partnership Agreement is a new trade agreement being negotiated between the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries on one hand and the European Union on the other hand. The reciprocal EPA is a major instrument for economic and trade cooperation which when completely negotiated seeks to replace the

preferential trade agreements being enjoyed by the ACP.

The primary focus of the EPAs is the establishment of a Free Trade Area (FTA) and the abolishment of tariff and non-tariff measures between the EU and ACP parties. They are anticipated to be 'compatible' with the requirements of the World Trade Organization (WTO), specifically Article 24 of the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) which provides for the "elimination of tariff barriers on essentially all trade within a reasonable time".

The 15 member countries of West Africa are negotiating the EPA under ECOWAS as an umbrella. The EPA requires significant liberalisation steps from West African countries that would go well beyond WTO commitments (where countries like Nigeria have reserved a very high degree of policy space); while other countries depend more on the trade preferences to the EU (to be preserved by the EPA) than others.

This scenario of different trade interests within ECOWAS has perhaps contributed to the reasons why it is difficult for ECOWAS to come up with a common position. It is also noteworthy that an EPA depends on the existence of a full-fledged customs union which, unfortunately is not yet in place in ECOWAS and has similarly contributed to the difficulty in finalising the West African-EU EPA. However, the EPA process has helped in activating in West Africa the need for regional harmonization of policies that facilitate trade and integration in line with the tenets and objectives of the formation of ECOWAS.

Indeed, the fact that trade instruments such as the Common External Tariff (CET) is being negotiated and harmonized within the region, the fact that Rules of Origin (RoO) is being reviewed in line with its implications for third party traders are all clear indications of the role of the EPA on West Africa's trade environment. However, the level of liberalization envisaged with the EPA stares in the face of the hitherto weak private sector of West

Africa especially in consideration of the level of attendant competition that liberalization may bring. To mitigate this fear, the capacity building envisaged by Article 3.37 of the Cotonou Agreement aimed at strengthening the private sector is therefore key.

7.0. Conclusion

The ETLS programme was hinged on the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade within the region towards the establishment of a customs union with a CET for all the member states. Its successful completion was envisaged to open up the door to greater economic gains for the member states of the community in-terms of increased expansion in trade due to free mobility of factors of production, increased capital flows and direct investment due to attractiveness of the large integrated market, and balanced industrialization due to greater specialization and economies of scale.

With the establishment of the ETLS, the expectation especially from the private sector is that constraints in supply chain and trade logistics such as: the lack of a harmonised transport system, frequent reloading of goods, port and border congestion, excessive documentation requirements, and burdensome cross-border procedures will soon be a thing of the past. Easier movement of goods and services across borders of Member States of ECOWAS would reduce costs for businesses and thus increase predictability and transparency of business operations in the region.

It must be understood that economic integration programmes are usually long-term in nature, the gains of which are regionally distributed along some national measures which in the short time do not reflect the immediate national aspirations of member states that could result in immediate improvement in national welfare. With this understanding the problems in the implementation of the ETLS will soon become a history. Consequently, our regional and national bodies must command harmonised authority in terms of adequate decision-making and enforcement

powers of member states. As long as the decision-making powers completely reside with the national governments of member states, commitment to implementation of regional programmes will remain at the mercy of national governments of member states as and when it suit them.

The full implications of economic integration demand enormous sacrifices in terms of adjustments required at national levels to achieve meaningful regional economic integration. These necessary adjustments comprise elimination of tariff barriers to trade in terms of import and export duties upon which the economies of most member states basically depend. This is an objective which the EU-ECOWAS EPA can help West Africa achieve, if designed and negotiated properly.

In conclusion, against the realization that economic integration enlivens the private sector, and that it is the private sector that is the ultimate beneficiary or brunt bearer of trade and integration policies, it is therefore very important that these operators must be made to be part and parcel of the policy processes in West Africa. Policy makers must create the space for constant interaction with businesses particularly the MSMEs, given that these constitute and pilot more than 70% of transactions across the ECOWAS borders.

The need for their capacity becomes also critical at ensuring that they are equipped to meet up with the demands and challenges of integration and the new global order encapsulated in liberalization. The rationale for the series of ECOWAS Vanguard as earlier stated is anchored on the need to constantly educate the private sector and strengthen it so that businesses can understand their rights and responsibilities and remain resolute in withstanding corrupt activities of officials of government.

In so doing, the benefits shall trickle down to the consumer society while such conducive business environment shall result in increased productivity for the member states and the region as a whole. Indeed, this is why the ECOWAS VANGUARD becomes apt as a tool for poverty reduction.

RECENT PAST KEY TRADE EVENTS/NEWS

The National Association of Nigerian Traders – NANTS in collaboration with the GIZ-“Pro-Poor Growth and Promotion of Employment in Nigeria (SEDIN) Programme organized a private sector dialogue (9th and 10th October 2012) in Abeokuta – Ogun State under the theme “Enhancing Private sector Engagement in Implementing ECOWAS Trade Related Rules and Regulations”. The report can be sourced at www.nants.org.

The Task Force on the Implementation of the Terms of Reference of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol in Nigeria met in Lagos, Nigeria from 5th to 12th November 2012 in continuation of her monitoring exercise on the border routes aimed at reducing road blocks and other non-tariff barriers. For more information, send an email to: [tonylukaelumelu@yahoo.com](mailto:tonymukaelumelu@yahoo.com).

ECOWAS Parliament Joint Committee on Trade, Customs & Free Movement, Legal & Judicial Affairs, Administration, Finance & Budget Control, and Economic Policies held a delocalized meeting in Abidjan - Cote d'Ivoire, from 6th to 10th November 2012 to review and examine the divergences within the context of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations with a view to making proposals for a development-oriented Agreement for West Africa. For more information, send an email to: parliament@parl.ecowas.int.

The Manufacturers Association of Nigeria – MAN held a seminar for Nigerian Private Sector Stakeholders on the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations and its challenges for trade liberalization. The event was held at MAN House, Lagos – Nigeria on the 6th November 2012. For more information, contact: [radegbenro @hotmail.com](mailto:radegbenro@hotmail.com)

The World Trade Organization (WTO) in collaboration with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) organized a seminar in Accra – Ghana (29th to 31st October, 2012) for West and Central African private sector, civil society and media aimed at reflecting on the current and future challenges of the Multilateral Trading System well as and understanding the WTO rules and processes. For further information, click: http://www.wto.org/globalization.org/geneva/documents/2012_11_08%20WTO_PROGRAMME_Oct%202012%20_English.pdf

UPCOMING TRADE RELATED EVENTS

The GIZ-Pro-Poor Growth and Promotion of Employment in Nigeria (SEDIN) Programme will be organizing a private sector stakeholder workshop on the 19th and 20th November 2012 in Minna, Niger State of Nigeria. The event is an extension of the NANTS-GIZ dialogue on “Enhancing Private sector Engagement in Implementing ECOWAS Trade Related Rules and Regulations”.

On 20-21 December, 2012, leaders of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) will meet in Dakar, Senegal to assess progress made in the implementation of integration programmes and designate the definitive host countries for ECOWAS’ nascent parliament and court of justice. For further information, visit: <http://www.ecowas.int/>

As the African Industrialization Day (AID) is being commemorated on the 20th November 2012, the Federal Ministry of Trade & Investment in collaboration with UNIDO shall host African Stakeholders to an Industrialization Forum slated to hold at the Shehu Musa Yar’ Adua Center – Abuja.

The Joint Conference of African Ministers in charge of Agriculture and Trade with Trade and Development Experts shall be holding in Addis Ababa (26th to 30th November 2012) under the auspices of the African Union Commission. For more information, contact Mekonnen Tadesse Mekonnen at MekonnenTM@africa-union.org

UPCOMING TRADE RELATED EVENTS

West Africa’s new common external tariff and the individual WTO commitments of ECOWAS member states

The 16-strong Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has decided to establish a common external tariff, which is currently being finalised. The tariff, set at 35 per cent at most, will modify the rights and obligations ECOWAS member countries. This may create a contradiction between the WTO commitments of individual countries and the requirements of the regional trade integration project essential for West Africa’s economic development. National, regional and multilateral policies are not necessarily coherent or complementary. ECOWAS is likely to be able to continue its regional integration while keeping its new external tariff. Access the full article on: www.ictsd.org/...

The National Approval Committee on the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) met on 22nd to 24th October 2012 in Ougadougou to review the ETLS Application form and the mandate of the National Approval Committee. For more information, send an email to: oghayei@yahoo.com.

EU publishes revised preferential import scheme for developing countries:
On 31 October the European Commission issued a revised regulation on the GSP for developing countries most in need that will take effect from 1 January 2014, thus giving time to economic operators to adapt to the revised regime. The revised regulation has been endorsed by the Council and the European Parliament and it contains the specific tariff preferences granted under the GSP in the form of reduced or zero tariff rates as well as the final criteria, which constitute the condition in order to benefit from the scheme. Read the full article on: www.trade.ec.europa.eu/...

VACANCIES AT ECOWAS COMMISSION

About 52 key positions are up for grabs at the ECOWAS Commission. Interested Applicants should visit the ECOWAS website – www.ecowas.int
Applications may be transmitted by email to: applications@ecowas.int OR forwarded by express mail to: **The Directorate of Human Resources; ECOWAS Commission; 101, Yakubu Gowon Crescent, Asokoro Abuja, NIGERIA.**

The deadline for submission of applications is extended to 21st November 2012.

BORDERLESS ALLIANCE, the USAID West Africa Trade Hub's project to reduce the high costs of transport, bribery, delays, high taxes and inefficient procedures in West African trade now has a new Managing Director. His name is Justin Bayili

Expanding trade for inclusive growth: African continent's future prosperity will be built on trade:
Key challenges and opportunities for effective expansion of trade for inclusive development were discussed in depth in a plenary session of the seventh African Economic Conference on Thursday, November 1 in Kigali, Rwanda. Presentations examined the influence of trade shares in the global and African economy, and how they can better contribute to boosting employment and driving growth. Please find more on: www.afdb.org/...

Africa can help feed Africa: Removing barriers to regional trade in food staples
This World Bank report argues that Africa's farmers can potentially grow enough food to feed the continent and avert future food crises if countries remove cross-border restrictions on the food trade within the region. Please access the paper on: www.worldbank.org/...

NANTS analyses the 2013 Nigeria's National budget for Trade & Investment Ministry as well the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. This can be sourced at www.nants.org

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ECOWAS Vanguard is published by the National Association of Nigerian Traders as a policy advocacy tool to sensitize and bring about the desired change in the current attitude to regional Integration in the ECOWAS sub region be raising awareness, stimulating discussions and debate on the multiple issues that relate to the Regional integration process.

Views and comments are welcome and should be directed to:

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ABOUT NANTS

The National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS) is the umbrella organization of traders in raw materials, industrial and finished goods (locally made and imported) in Nigeria. However, to encourage the interlink between market access and production of goods, NANTS' membership has recently been expanded to include local manufacturers of consumer goods, local raw materials providers as well as local farmers' networks. Women constitute about 65% of NANTS membership.

The vision of NANTS is to *"advance trade beyond buying and selling to a vehicle for social justice, human rights, sustainable development and poverty reduction"*.

The mission of NANTS is *"promoting trade and economic advancement, uniting and championing the rights of and cause of the Entrepreneur through strategic programmes and policy interventions."*



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