



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The AfCFTA, Mastercard Foundation and TradeMark Africa Collaborate on a Four-Year Fisheries Program to Empower Women and Youth in Africa

United Republic of Tanzania, Zanzibar, 25 June 2024: The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat, in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation and TradeMark Africa, has announced a four-year fisheries program to be implemented across seven countries to enable over 240,000 work opportunities and boost trade in fish and fish products by about \$100 million by 2028. The “Women and Youth Economic Empowerment in Fisheries” program will enhance the participation of women and youth in fisheries in line with the adopted AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade. This announcement was made during the 14th Meeting of the Council of Ministers responsible for Trade in Zanzibar.

The program is designed to address structural challenges women and youth face when participating in the fisheries value chain. It will offer training, facilitate access to markets and finance, catalyze supply chain linkages, create digital solutions, simplify trade regimes, enhance compliance to standards and enable streamlined cross-border market access.

The program is a culmination of work between the AfCFTA Secretariat and the Mastercard Foundation. This work started with the development of the AfCFTA private sector strategy, where priority value chains were identified to boost intra-Africa trade and production. TradeMark Africa will implement the program to benefit Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Zambia, Nigeria and selected Island states.

Africa’s fisheries sector plays a major role in food security and the economic well-being for millions of households, with the [World Bank noting](#) that the industry employs at least 12 million people. The majority of these are said to be women involved in processing, marketing, and post-harvest processes.

While the AfCFTA presents a unified preferential market opportunity, women and youth may not automatically benefit from such prospects if they are not adequately supported.

H.E. Wamkele Mene underscored: “The AfCFTA presents huge opportunities, while fostering entrepreneurship and job creation in a market of 1.4 billion people. The AfCFTA’s Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade has been developed to foster inclusive economic development by eliminating barriers to trade for women and young people in Africa. We are glad the program aligns with our vision of bringing this marginalised group along on this journey to increase intra-Africa trade in “Creating One African Market” to ensure prosperity for all Africans. We encourage the potential beneficiaries to take advantage of this program.”

TMA Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Ms Allen Sophia Asimwe, remarked: “The start of this program is an important step forward in our support for inclusive trade, economic empowerment, and sustainable jobs creation for women and youth in Africa’s fisheries sector. Addressing the structural barriers which are unique to women and young people in the fish value chain is a critical necessity that aims to enhance the participation and competitiveness of program participants in the sector. With this collaborative effort, the sector will be better positioned as a pathway for economic growth, food security, and poverty alleviation in Africa.”



Mr. Daniel Hailu, Executive Director of Pan-African Programs at the Mastercard Foundation, stated: “This program has the potential to catalyse dignified and fulfilling work opportunities for young men and women, foster intra-African trade, and contribute to economic growth and poverty alleviation. Together, we are laying the foundation for a more equitable and sustainable future for all.”

Ends

About the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is one of the flagship projects of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and entered into force on 30 May 2019. It is a high ambition trade agreement, which aims to bring together all 55 Member States of the African Union, covering a market of more than 1.4 billion people, with a comprehensive scope that includes critical areas of Africa’s economy, such as digital trade and investment protection, amongst other areas. By eliminating barriers to trade in Africa, the objective of the AfCFTA is to significantly boost intra-Africa trade, particularly trade in value-added production and trade across all services sectors of Africa’s economy, at a potential of 52.3 percent.

About TradeMark Africa

TradeMark Africa (TMA), formerly TradeMark East Africa, is a leading African Aid-for-Trade organisation that was established in 2010, with the aim to grow intra-African trade and increase Africa’s share in global trade, while helping make trade more pro-poor and more environmentally sustainable.

TMA operates on a not-for-profit basis and is funded by: Belgium, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Ireland, the Mastercard Foundation, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. TMA works closely with regional and continental inter-governmental organisations, national Governments, the private sector, and civil society.

Since its inception, TMA has delivered substantial gains for trade and regional economic integration in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, including a reduction of 16.5% in cargo transit times on the Northern Corridor from Mombasa to Bujumbura, and a reduction of an average of 70% in the time taken to cross selected one stop border posts. TMA officially launched its continental-wide shift and rebrand in West Africa in January 2023, with Ghana being the first country of operations in the region.

In 2022, TMA set up a catalytic finance company – Trade Catalyst Africa – that will pilot commercially viable projects for creating trade infrastructure (both physical and digital) as well as increasing access to Trade Finance for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Both TCA’s and TMA's headquarters are in Nairobi, Kenya. Offices are in: EAC Secretariat - Arusha, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Rwanda, Somaliland, Tanzania, and Uganda, with operations in Mozambique, South Sudan and Zambia. For more information, please visit www.trademarkafrica.com

About the Mastercard Foundation



The Mastercard Foundation is a registered Canadian charity and one of the largest foundations in the world. It works with visionary organizations to advance education and financial inclusion to enable young people in Africa and Indigenous youth in Canada to access dignified and fulfilling work. Established in 2006 through the generosity of Mastercard when it became a public company, the Foundation is an independent organization separate from the company, with offices in Toronto, Kigali, Accra, Nairobi, Kampala, Lagos, Dakar, and Addis Ababa. Its policies, operations, and program decisions are determined by the Foundation's Board of Directors and leadership.