

CONCEPT NOTE



**AFRICA
ECONOMIC
ZONES
ORGANIZATION**

5th ANNUAL MEETING

December 3, 2020

“ The Role of Economic Zones in Supporting the Implementation of the AfCFTA and Regional Integration ”

Institutional partner

TANGER MED 
SPECIAL AGENCY

INTRODUCTION

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) were adopted relatively late in Africa and most African countries did not execute their programs until the late 1990s.

As of today, there are more than 189 operating EZs in the continent and 57 EZs projects have been announced for completion.

Since their inception, SEZs have given a significant boost to FDI flows, created an attractive investment condition and supported job creation: Over the past 5 years, 60M Jobs have been created in Agro-processing, industrial fields, and services.

African Economic Zones are facing an uncertain period as Covid-19 disrupts their activities and hinders their operations due to lockdown restrictions.

A business continuity plan has been implemented in order to support Industrial operations getting products to markets and granting access to raw material.

The global pandemic has put the diversification of the global value chains on center stage involving Economic Zones as a major stakeholder to implement innovative policies.

The new wave of the global supply chain would provide opportunities to expand into new fields of activities and lead to a new stimulus through attracting new investment and improving market demand.

The African Special Economic Zones are entitled to develop new processes for the supply chain supporting the vision of creating one African Market under the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) that stands for making a significant contribution to reducing trade transaction costs and to facilitate cross-border trade.

It also aims to boost intra-Africa trade enhancing Africa's global trade performance and supporting regional and continental value chains contributing to the expansion and diversification of the continent's productive capacity.

The continental agreement forecasts a boost of 50 percent intra-Africa trade and welfare gains close to US \$16 billion. This covers several areas of interest to EZs operators: Duty free treatment of goods, Rules of Origin, Customs Cooperation, Trade Facilitation, Non-Tariff Barriers, legal framework harmonization, compliance with international standards...

Hence, the African Special Economic Zones can seize the opportunity to trigger economic policy reforms accelerate Africa's growth that will create employment and economic diversification while leaving none behind.

ABOUT AFRICA ECONOMIC ZONES ORGANIZATION (AEZO)

Africa Economic Zones Organization (AEZO) is a continental association representing leading public and private institutions in charge of the Development, Management and Promotion of Economic Zones in Africa.

Founded in November 2015 by Tanger Med Group - Morocco, Africa Economic Zones Organization (AEZO) is striving to support African Economic Zones projects and strengthen relationships within its ecosystem.

Africa Economic Zones Organization (AEZO) is guided by its strategic orientations to “foster collective knowledge sharing, provide strategic and technical assistance, connect with international business networks and promote sustainable economic models and practices”. AEZO is comprised today of 80 members representing 44 countries.

ANNUAL MEETING EVENT SUMMARY

ANNUAL MEETING DESCRIPTION

Held annually, the AEZO Annual Meeting is the Flagship event of Africa Economic Zones Organization (AEZO), bringing together governmental representatives, international experts and senior executives to offer broad-based insights on critical issues related to the development of Economic Zones in Africa.

Through the get together initiatives, AEZO provides its members a unique opportunity to develop networking, build strong business alliances and access to key international decisions makers.

EVENT OBJECTIVES

- Developing connections within the Economic Zones ecosystem;
- Bringing together governmental representatives, international experts and senior executives;
- Promoting knowledge sharing;
- Enhancing and sustaining relationships between African Special Economic Zones communities;
- Strengthen the bonds and foster collaboration between AEZO members.

3rd ANNUAL MEETING PREVIOUS EDITION | SEPTEMBER 2018 | ABIDJAN – COTE D’IVOIRE

Economic Zones and Free Zones contribution to sustainable Economic development in Africa



AEZO 3rd Annual meeting was held in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, on 21st September 2018.

The event gathered 100 C-Level Participants, 18 International Experts, 35 Economic Zones representing 30 African Countries.

SPECIAL GUESTS

- Mr Akinwumi Adesina, president of the African Development Bank.
- Mr Souleymane DIARRASSOUBA, Minister of Industry Trade & SMEs Development, Cote d'Ivoire.
- Mr Fouad BRINI, Chairman of Tanger Med Group, Morocco.
- Other deputy ministers, General Secretaries and other CEOs of African authorities.

EVENT PARTNERS

- African Development Bank (AfDB)
- Deloitte
- Asociación de Zonas Francas de Las Américas (AZFA)
- Tanger Med Engineering (TME)
- Willkie Farr & Gallagher
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

4th ANNUAL MEETING PREVIOUS EDITION | NOVEMBER 2019 | AFRICAN UNION HEADQUARTERS

Economic Zones Accelerator for Industrialization in Africa



AEZO 4th Annual Meeting co-organized with the African Union Commission (AUC), took place in conjunction with Africa Industrialization Week.

Over 220 Delegates, 30 International experts, 60 Economic zones, representing 43 African countries attended this event

SPECIAL GUESTS

- H.E. Amb Albert MuChanga, Commissioner for Trade and Industry, African Union Commission.
- H.E. Ms Dagmawit Moges, Minister of Transport – Ethiopia.
- Mr Waziri Maman, Minister of Urban Planning – Niger.
- Other deputy ministers, General Secretaries and other CEOs of African authorities.

EVENT PARTNERS

- African Union Commission
- African Development Bank (AfDB)
- GIZ
- AfreximBank
- MUFG Bank
- UNCTAD
- UNIDO
- UNECA
- Deloitte
- Burohapold

AEZO 5th ANNUAL MEETING

Responding to the growing interest in SEZs across the continent. The AEZO 5th Annual Meeting will take place on December 3rd, 2020 in conjunction with AfCFTA Business Forum under the theme: "The Role of Economic Zones in supporting the implementation of the AfCFTA and Regional Integration".

The event will be held in a hybrid format, a physical event in Tangier - Morocco for a maximum capacity of 20 attendees rigorously respecting the health measures recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and virtual retransmission giving the opportunity to thousands of participants to follow live the deliberations and interact with C-Level representatives from Economic Zones, Investments and Promotions Agencies and International organizations.

OBJECTIVE OF THE AEZO 5th ANNUAL MEETING

The AEZO 5th Annual Meeting will focus on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), exploring challenges and opportunities for SEZs as well as how it can contribute to the implementation of AfCFTA, generate growth, foster regional integration and enhance Africa intra-trade.

In particular, the 5th Annual Meeting will address the following:

- Provide an overview of the key features of the AfCFTA, an update on the negotiations and preparations for trade to begin.
- Explore the contribution of the SEZs in supporting the implementation of the AfCFTA to achieve the Continent's structural transformation and inclusive sustainable economic development;
- Disseminate and popularize the importance and challenges of regional integration in Africa;
- Address the issues on attracting new investments and defining business value proposition;
- Enhance inclusiveness and inclusivity through promotion of Digitization and best use of the new technologies within the Economic Zones Ecosystem;
- Drive trade facilitation policies and logistic competitiveness strategies to foster Africa intra-trade.
- Develop a new process for the supply chain supporting the vision of creating one African Market under the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.
- COVID-19 provide a push to the adoption of digital logistics solutions to facilitate Africa intra-trade.

FORMAT OF THE 5th ANNUAL MEETING AND MAIN ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The Unique Mixed-format Online Event will include Key Note Speeches, Panel Discussions, Recorded Video Testimonials, Project Live Demonstration, Interviews, Meet the Experts and Q&A sessions.

The 5th Annual Meeting will include a high-level opening followed by three main conferences.

The first panel entitled: **“Implementation of The AfCFTA: Contribution of The Economic Zones, Challenges and Opportunities”** will be organized jointly with the African Union Commission (AUC) and the General Secretariat of the AfCFTA. This session will set the scene by presenting an overview of the scope and structure of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and exploring interlinkages between Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and AfCFTA.

International experts will share their expertise regarding the challenges and opportunities related to the contribution of Economic Zones in supporting the implementation of the AfCFTA. The following questions will guide the first session:

- **What SEZs are they expecting from the AfCFTA implementation and how can these expectations be achieved?**
- **What are major issues that could and should be covered by an AfCFTA in supporting SEZs Development?**
- **How can Economic zones contribute to regional integration under the AfCFTA?**
- **How AfCFTA can boost FDI attractiveness towards Economic Zones and expand Africa’s productive capacity?**

The second panel co-organized with United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) entitled : **« SEZs’ Success Factors to Generate Growth and Encourage Regional Integration”** will consist on a project live demonstrations followed by one to one interview with an international expert from UNCTAD. The projects scoop would address the following:

- **Benchmark displaying best examples of Special Economic Zones (SEZs);**
- **Importance of regional integration in Africa and create a new positive mindset on the Continent;**
- **How does regional cooperation represent an opportunity to face the challenges led by the COVID-19 crisis?**
- **What needs to be done to generate growth and facilitate Africa’s Trade?**
- **How can SEZs managers be best prepared for the changing global context?**
- **Is there any roadmap for African Regional Trade Integration?**

The third panel will gather international experts to discuss the role of **SEZs in Supporting Regional Value Chain Development and Africa Intra-Trade Initiative**. Testimonials from CEOs of African Economic Zones will be shared after the panel session. The Discussions will highlight the following :

- **How can SEZs contribute to the implementation of the AfCFTA and its objectives?**
- **How can SEZs foster cross-border trade and value chain complementarity across the continent?**
- **How can SEZs be a game changer for stimulating intra-African trade?**
- **What should SEZs do to foster African Intra-trade?**

The event will be closed by two (2) of -Meet the Expert- sessions under the themes:

- **Best Practices in Innovation & Digitization**
- **Smart Logistic connecting SEZs**

EVENT ORGANIZER

African Economic Zones Organization (AEZO)

EVENT PARTNERS



TARGET AUDIENCE AND PARTICIPANTS

The 5th Annual Meeting will be attended by:

- Ministers and representatives of the authorities of African States,
- High representatives of the African Union,
- Representatives of international institutions: United Nations, World Bank, AfDB ...
- Managers of African investment promotion agencies, industrial and investment associations, chambers of commerce and industries ...
- Experts from international organizations,
- Members of AEZO and other African economic zones.

VENUE AND DATE

The 5th Annual Meeting will take place on December 3rd, 2020 as per the programme below :

Tuesday, December 3rd, 2020

PHYSICAL EVENT

Tangier - MOROCCO

VIRTUAL EVENT

ZOOM Application

LANGUAGES

-  English
-  French

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