

AfCFTA under the spotlight at ISO assembly

Support for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement formed part of discussions at the 42nd General Assembly of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), currently underway in Cape Town.



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“It is expected that with the reduced barriers to trade, the growth in intra-Africa trade, of an estimated \$2 trillion, will be traded internally within the next year,” said the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS).

The AfCFTA was officially launched into its implementation phase at a Special AU Summit in Niamey, Niger, in July after 54 African countries signed the agreement and 27 countries ratified it. The AfCFTA will be implemented in 2020.

South Africa is hosting the weeklong gathering of several African National Standards Bodies (NSBs).

Speaking on the first day of the gathering, SABS acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Garth Strachan, said standards bodies across the region should develop common systems and standards that sustainably support social, economic, trade and industrial integration.

“For South Africa, the benefits of enhanced access to regional markets could significantly boost our economy, ignite industrialisation and foster regional harmony. The opportunities for capacity building, job creation, sharing of resources and technologies could be the elixir for our economic challenges,” said Strachan on Monday.

The African continent is currently the second-largest export destination for South Africa with South African exports to the continent in 2017 sat at 26.2%. The country imported 9.9% worth of goods from the rest of the continent.

Meanwhile, the African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO), which is tasked with developing tools for standards development and regional harmonisation, said the development of these standards must serve the needs of its members.

“The harmonisation of technical regulations, standards, conformity assessment procedures, enforcement protocols and a dispute settlement process need to support the African free trade agreement.

“African standards bodies have an important role to play in developing their nations to become active and inclusive members of this new regional market, through the promotion of standards to ensure that maximum benefits can be derived,” said the organisation’s secretary general Hermogène Nsengimana.

Held at the Cape Town International Convention Centre, the ISO assembly will include on Friday.

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