



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa



COVID-19
RESPONSE

FACILITATING CROSS-BORDER TRADE THROUGH A COORDINATED AFRICAN RESPONSE TO COVID-19





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Key action areas

<p>Fast track the implementation of regional COVID-19 guidelines to achieve results on the ground</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Regional economic communities should establish committees to coordinate the implementation of guidelines and facilitate the resolution of operational issues at borders during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic» Border authorities should be encouraged to develop and display simple visual step-by-step guides on COVID-19 border regulations for truck drivers and cross-border traders» Efforts should be made to gradually widen the scope of guidelines to facilitate the movement of all (not just essential) goods and services across borders, to generate business and to help kick-start economic recoveries
<p>Provide support to the African Union in its efforts to develop a common COVID-19 protocol on trade and transport, to ensure coordination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Support should be provided to the African Union to develop a common protocol. Given the overlap in membership of regional economic communities and shared trade facilitation goals of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) negotiations, a common protocol is important» The proposed protocol would be able to build upon existing regional economic community guidelines and the best-practice COVID-19 border regulations and interventions outlined in the present report» A common African Union COVID-19 test certificate for truck drivers and crew members is required to facilitate a harmonized approach across the continent to certifying COVID-19 test results
<p>Ensure that African economies and regional integration are not undermined by COVID-19 and that the momentum and ambition of the AfCFTA negotiations are maintained</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» A rapid and ambitious implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area will hasten economic recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, while protecting Africa against future adverse global shocks» African countries should start to implement some elements of the Agreement, including the non-tariff barrier mechanism and annexes on trade facilitation and customs cooperation, which have already been completed» These annexes should be implemented in a manner that is cognizant of the risks of unregulated movements of pathogens and hazardous goods

Ensure that existing trade facilitation tools are utilized and tailored to respond to COVID-19-related border disruptions

- » Implementation of existing trade facilitation tools should be rolled out across the continent and tailored to respond to COVID-19 border challenges
- » This should include “one-stop border posts”, the African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa’s Development (AUDA-NEPAD) traffic light system and regional transit guarantee schemes
- » COVID-19 cross-border innovations and solutions should be maintained in the future to overcome Africa’s long-standing trade facilitation challenges

Deploy digital solutions to combat the spread of COVID-19 along trade corridors

- » Electronic cargo tracking systems can help to significantly reduce the spread of COVID-19; the numbers in use should be increased and they should be made accessible across Africa
- » The use of mobile banking and payment systems should be encouraged to facilitate a reduction in risky cash-based payments, and cross-border trade should be supported through mobile lending solutions
- » The upcoming AfCFTA negotiations on e-commerce should be utilized to fast-track digitalization of procedures and systems so that Africa’s exporters are less at risk of losing access to markets in future crises

Include informal traders in Africa’s border management responses to COVID-19

- » Governments should take steps to reopen informal cross-border trade at official border crossings, which already have in place the necessary COVID-19 sanitary, testing and quarantine facilities
- » Authorities not ready to partially reopen official border crossings to informal traders on foot should facilitate the aggregation, transportation and clearance of small-scale traders’ goods, and extend social relief to informal traders through cross-border trade associations
- » Simplified trade regimes should be fully implemented to gradually incorporate informal traders into the official trading system, and strengthen their position in the face of future pandemics

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