

3rd AfricaDev Session of the Africa Development Club on the opportunities of the African Continental Free Trade Area

Casablanca, Tuesday, 19 July 2022 - , the Africa Development Club of the Attijariwafa bank group held the third edition of the AfricaDev Sessions online on the theme «Exploiting the opportunities of the African Continental Free Trade Area» (AfCFTA).

AfricaDev Sessions is a series of programs and debates for African businesses and decision-makers addressing current issues, reflections and economic considerations.

For this debate, **Ms. Mouna KADIRI**, Director of the Africa Development Club of the Attijariwafa bank group, welcomed prominent guests: **Ms. Cynthia E. GNASSINGBE-ESSONAM**, Senior Advisor for the engagement of the private sector with the Secretary of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA); **Mr. Mossadeck BALLY**, Founder and President of the Azalai Group and **Mr. Daouda COULIBALY**, General Manager of Attijari West Africa of the Attijariwafa bank group.

This exchange was an opportunity for guests interested in expanding within the continent, to stay abreast of the implementation of the FTAA and the various support mechanisms within Attijariwafa bank and across the continent.

Ms. Cynthia E. GNASSINGBE-ESSONAM, stated that «the agreement of the African continental free trade area is signed by 54 countries, 43 of which have deposited their instruments of ratification. The implemented agreement could significantly increase the income of the countries».

Ms. Gnassingbe highlighted the provisions of the FTAA for promising sectors in Goods & Services, Financial Services, Telecommunications, Construction, Distribution, Automotive, Agribusiness, Transport, Health Industry with pillars related to digital trade, intellectual property, among others.

«A manual of rules of origin in which more than 5000 products will be outlined detailing their process, handling and pricing within the framework of this free trade area will soon be available to companies,» added **Ms. Gnassingbe**.

Mr. Mossadeck BALLY, Founder and President of Azalai Hotels Group, a pioneer in the pan-African hotel industry, added: «It is true that the health and social crisis related to the covid-19 and the conflict between Russia and Ukraine have exposed our weaknesses in several areas. This situation led the Azalai Group to focus on local business by developing the MICE*: Meeting International Conference Event and helped us discover a local business potential that we were not sufficiently developing.

Today, there is a new vision of tourism and the potential of this sector in Africa is African. We must develop intra-African tourism, we Africans must explore our continent, we must travel, we must go on vacation and do business on our continent. The opportunity that the FTAA offers us to trade with each other will greatly expand these opportunities.

Ms. Mouna KADIRI has also added that «the constraint creates the means. We are discovering unsuspected resources in our country that must be developed and deployed and it took crises to reveal them.

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For **Mr. Daouda COULIBALY**, the good news is in the continuity, the Attijariwafa bank group believes in Africa, in its development potential and its future. The group has launched a strategic plan «Ambition 2025» in which there is a real desire to strengthen its presence, its financing and its support to African companies by relying on three important levers:

- (i) Personal and tailor-made support according to the needs of the client and the country.
- (ii) Support in financial advisory services
- (iii) Support in training and in the client-supplier ecosystem. Within the framework of the Africa Development Club, a much more complete range of services is offered.

This 3rd AfricaDev Session has unpacked one of the flagship projects of the African Union's Agenda 2063, with great ambitions such as stimulating intra-African trade through the creation of a single continental market.

Watch the entire conference online:

<https://youtu.be/9pp9BS2pxxg>

AfCFTA* : African Continental Free Trade Area

MICE* : Meeting International Conference Event

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