

BUSINESS ACTION FOR IMPROVING CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATION IN AFRICA (BAFICAA)

BAFICAA is an international coalition of businesses committed to identifying, promoting and supporting effective measures to improve customs administration and enhance trade facilitation in Africa.

The Origins of BAFICAA

- Business Action for Africa for Improving Customs Administrations in Africa (BAFICAA) traces its origins to the launch of the Commission for Africa by Tony Blair in early 2004.
- The aim of the Commission for Africa was to “take a fresh look at Africa’s past and present and the international community’s role in its development path”.
- Businesses with interests in Africa came together to form Business Action for Africa primarily to provide business inputs into the process of consultation that lead up to the publication of The Commission for Africa Report ¹ on the 11th of March 2005.
- BAFICAA initially emerged out of this consultation process as the sub-group on customs.

Why is BAFICAA Different?

- Does not have a formal organisational structure and instead works on a “light-touch” basis.
- Does not aim to create a new institution and aims to complement, not duplicate the work already underway within Africa.
- BAFICAA does not have “members”. It has interested companies which band together to identify solutions rather than just problems with customs administrations
- BAFICAA is not a pressure group. The group is committed to finding ways in which the *private sector* can make a positive and proactive contribution to improvements in customs administrations in Africa.
- BAFICAA is in essence a networking tool that allows businesses that agree with the BAFICAA guiding principles to come together.

BAFICAA Guiding Principles

The “members” of BAFICAA “sign up” to a few guiding principles that include but are not limited to:

¹ The report recognises the need for increasing Africa’s **capacity to trade**. In particular, the report highlights the **importance of trade facilitation**, including: customs reform; removal of regulatory barriers, especially in transport; improved governance; air and sea transport reform.

- The private sector must be the driver of change;
- The private sector does not accept customs related bottlenecks as “the cost of doing business”;
- The private sector has an active and not passive role to play in customs improvements;
- The private sector is ready to make practical contributions (not necessarily financial) to any improvements.

BAFICAA Goals

- **Building Dialogue and Trust:** To encourage a cooperative dialogue between business and governments based on a relationship of trust
- **Make Real Improvements:** To make real improvements in customs environments that would benefit the economy as a whole and not narrow business interests
- **Practical Proposals:** To devise and implement joint, practical and real-world proposals that can help Africa improve customs procedures and help facilitate trade in a sustainable manner
- **Change Perceptions:** To help governments realise that the private sector can be an active partner in improving the customs environment
- **Working in Partnership:** To work with governments and donors in partnership to identify where the private sector can contribute to new and existing trade facilitation and customs reform programmes.

How BAFICAA Aims to Achieve its Goals

- As a first step BAFICAA has produced a report that attempts to get an accurate up-to-date picture of business perceptions of customs administrations in Africa.
- With the assistance of PricewaterhouseCoopers, we have decided to focus on the three countries in the East Africa Community as the initial “pilot” region.
- A series of workshops will test the feasibility of the recommendations with a view to the creation of a taskforce to take them forward.
- On the basis of this experience we would hope to deliver some definable and measurable projects which we could then roll out as “best practice” more widely in other regions.
- We would aim to do this in partnership with host governments and international donors through the newly launched Investment Climate Facility.