Deloitte.

Africa Trade Insights

Trade • Strategy • Growth •

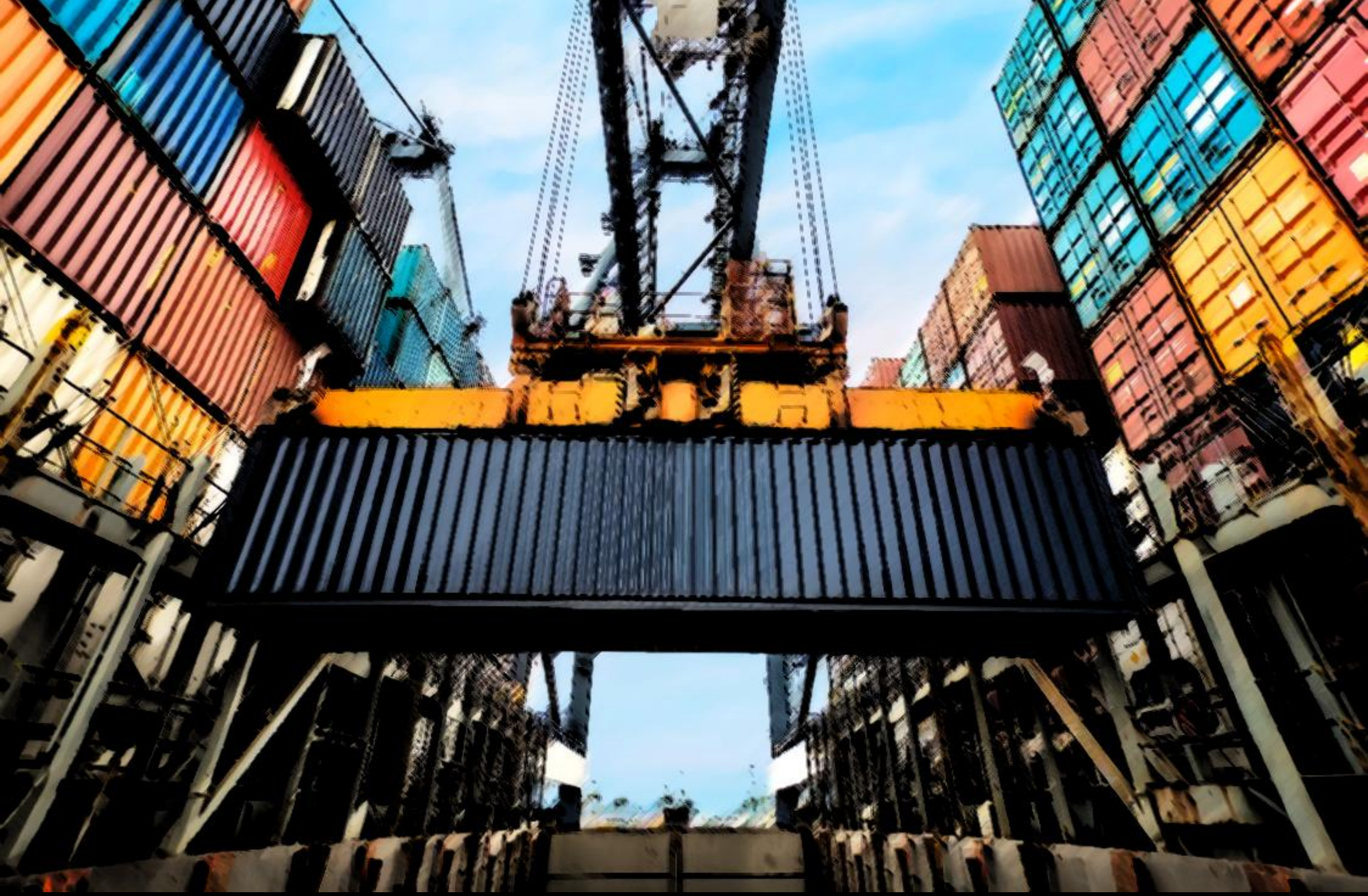
Edition 1 | July 2026

Welcome to the Deloitte Africa Trade Insights, where we explore the key developments shaping Africa's trade and economic integration landscape.

As implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement accelerates, attention is shifting from negotiations to the practical actions needed to unlock the benefits of a single African market. These developments will shape how businesses trade, invest, and grow across the continent.

In this edition, we share insights from Biashara Afrika 2026, highlighting three key signals for African businesses: the shift from negotiation to implementation, the growing importance of trade facilitation, and the private sector's role in driving continental integration.

Discover what these developments mean for your business and how to position for opportunities in Africa's evolving trade landscape.



Introduction

The third edition of Biashara Afrika, a private sector-led conference convened by the Secretariat of the AfCFTA, was held in Lomé, Togo, from 18-20 May 2026.

Biashara Afrika 2026 (the conference) brought together policymakers, business leaders, development institutions, and trade specialists from across the continent under the theme "Powering Africa's Economic Transformation through the AfCFTA."

The conference, which featured discussions on trade facilitation, enterprise development, infrastructure, financing, and regional integration had the overarching message: Africa's priority is no longer negotiating the AfCFTA agreement but implementing it.

This shift is significant as the success of the AfCFTA will ultimately be determined not by the agreement signed but by the ease and extent to which businesses can move goods, services, capital, and people across the continent.

Beyond the discussions at the conference, Biashara Afrika 2026 provided valuable insights into the direction of Africa's trade and economic integration agenda. Three key signals emerged.

Three key signals

1. The conversation has shifted from negotiation to implementation

For several years, events like the Biashara either focused on getting the commitment of African governments through the ratification of the AfCFTA agreement or negotiating the operational instruments such as tariff schedules and rules of origin, required to facilitate effective implementation of the AfCFTA agreement. However, Biashara Afrika 2026 demonstrated a growing consensus that the continent must now focus on practical implementation.

This sentiment was echoed by several speakers, including Nigeria's Minister of Industry, Trade, and Investment, who highlighted the need to address the practical obstacles that continue to hinder intra-African trade. The message is clear: market access commitments alone will not deliver economic integration. Implementation requires functioning institutions, effective border procedures, coordinated regulations, and active participation from businesses.

For African businesses, this marks an important transition. The question is no longer whether opportunities will emerge under the AfCFTA agreement, but how businesses can position themselves to leverage them. Businesses that begin developing regional market strategies, strengthening compliance capabilities, and understanding cross-border requirements would be better placed to benefit as implementation accelerates

2. Trade facilitation is becoming the new frontier of African integration

One of the most important discussions at Biashara Afrika 2026 centered on the barriers that continue to restrict the movement of goods, services, and people across Africa.

The experience shared regarding travel challenges faced by the conference delegates served as a practical reminder that integration extends beyond trade agreements.

In response, the Togolese government announced visa-free entry for African passport holders for up to 30 days, a development that reflects the growing recognition that mobility is a critical enabler of trade.

Beyond mobility, discussions also highlighted the need for physical and digital infrastructure capable of supporting a truly integrated continental market.

Taken together, these developments point towards a broader trend: trade facilitation is becoming just as important as trade liberalisation.

For businesses, this means that future competitiveness would depend not only on market access but also on access to efficient trade corridors, logistics networks, digital trade systems, customs modernisation initiatives, and transport infrastructure.

As Africa continues to invest in connectivity, businesses should pay close attention to developments that improve the movement of products and people across borders.

Three key signals cont...

3. The private sector would be the driver of continental integration

Perhaps the strongest theme emerging from the conference is the central role of the private sector in delivering the AfCFTA's objectives.

From discussions on enterprise financing and market creation to the renewed partnership between the AfCFTA Secretariat and the International Trade Centre, the conference consistently reinforced the need to place businesses at the centre of implementation efforts.

This reflects an important reality: governments in Africa can create the framework for integration, but businesses ultimately generate the trade that makes the framework work.

The next phase of the AfCFTA implementation is therefore likely to be shaped by businesses that invest in regional expansion, build cross-border partnerships, develop regional value chains, and identify opportunities for value addition within Africa.

This presents a significant opportunity for African businesses. Rather than viewing the AfCFTA agreement solely as a mechanism for exporting products to neighbouring countries, businesses may increasingly need to think about how they can participate in regional manufacturing ecosystems, strengthen supply chains, and capture greater value within Africa's production landscape.

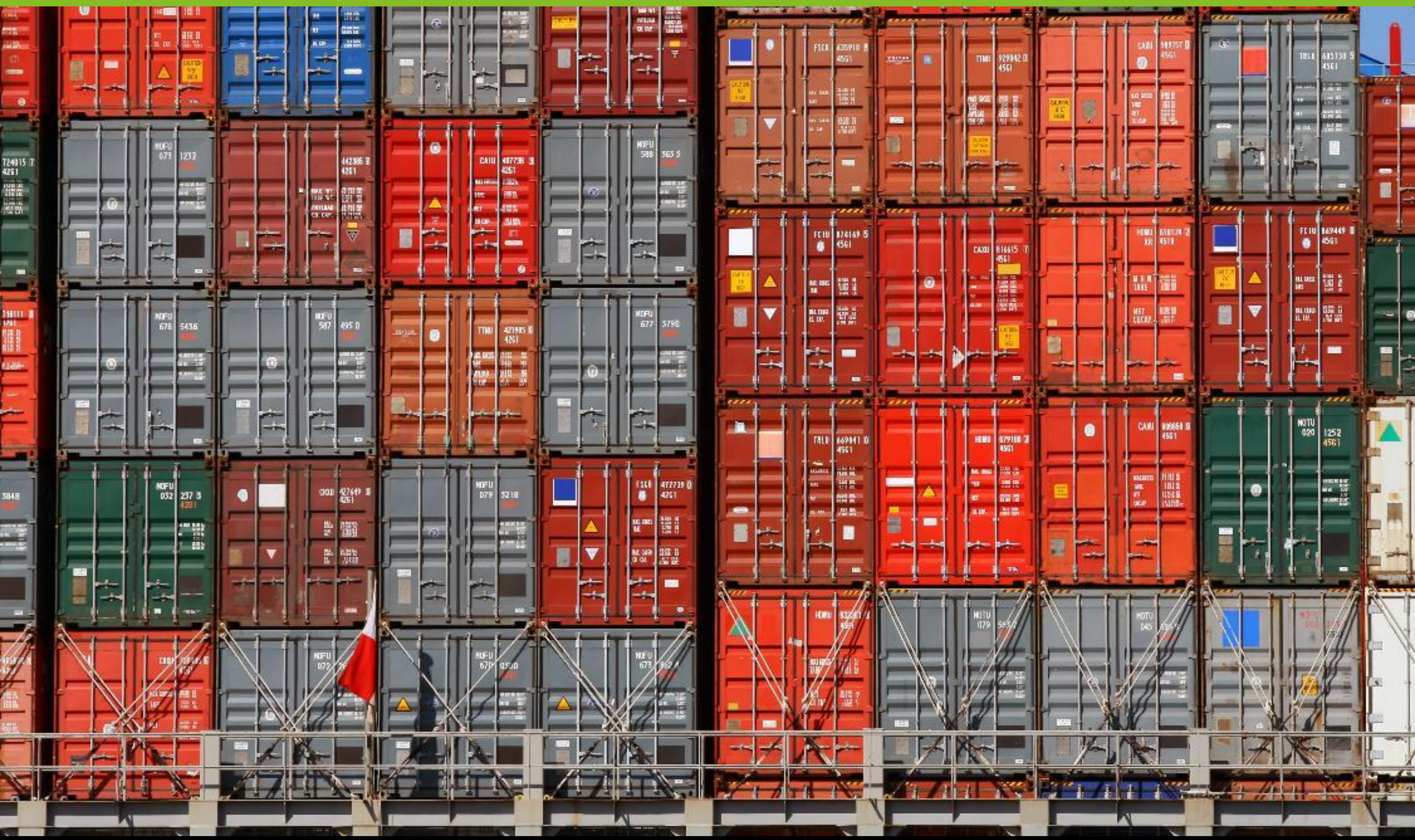
What does this all mean for African businesses?

The discussions at Biashara Afrika 2026 point to three strategic priorities for businesses operating across Africa:

1. Think beyond national markets: As implementation progresses, businesses should increasingly evaluate opportunities through a regional lens and identify how they can leverage the growing integration of African markets.

2. Prioritise trade readiness: Market access opportunities are only valuable if businesses are prepared to utilise them. Understanding customs requirements, regulatory obligations, rules of origin, and market entry conditions will remain essential.

3. Position for value addition: The AfCFTA’s long-term objective extends beyond increasing trade volumes. It seeks to support industrialisation, enterprise development, and economic transformation across the continent. Businesses that invest in processing, manufacturing, and regional value chains would be better positioned to capture emerging opportunities.



Conclusion

Biashara Afrika 2026 reinforced the message that Africa's trade ambitions extend far beyond reducing tariffs and signing agreements. The continent is increasingly focused on creating the conditions necessary for trade to drive industrialisation, investment, competitiveness, and economic transformation.

The next chapter of the AfCFTA implementation will not be written by negotiators alone. It will be shaped by businesses that invest in regional growth, governments that remove trade barriers, and institutions that strengthen the infrastructure connecting African markets.

The question is whether African businesses are preparing for an Africa in which competitiveness will be determined not simply by access to markets but by the ability to participate in the value chains, trade corridors, and economic networks that will define the continent's future.

Contacts

Olebogeng Ramatlhodi
Partner | Africa Indirect Tax Leader
+27 1 15 17 4899
oramatlhodi@deloitte.co.za

Chijioke Odo
Partner | West Africa Indirect Tax Leader
+234 1 904 2100
codo@deloitte.com.ng

Lilian Kubebea
Partner | East Africa Indirect Tax Leader
+254 719 039 113
lkubebea@deloitte.co.ke

Jean Bernardini
Partner | Head of Africa Desk
+33 1 40 88 7538
jbernardini@avocats.Deloitte.fr

Editorial Team

Tsholofelo Dihutso
Africa Tax & Legal Strategy Lead
tdihutso@deloitte.co.za

Taiwo Coker
Manager: Global Trade Advisory
tacoker@deloitte.com.ng

Fresh Ibitoye
Consultant: Global Trade Advisory
fibitoye@deloitte.com.ng

Olamide Lapite
Associate: Global Trade Advisory
olapite@deloitte.com.ng

Deloitte.

MAKING AN IMPACT THAT MATTERS since 1845