



# **YOUTH IN TRADE CHARTER**

**A Framework of Rights,  
Obligations and Accountability for  
Meaningful Participation of Youth  
in Intra-African Trade**

**Tuesday, 01 SEPTEMBER 2026**

**Zero Draft**





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## PREAMBLE

We, young people engaged in trade and the trade associations, chambers of commerce, business councils, cooperatives and other representative organisations that adopt this Charter,

**Recognising** the important role of young people in advancing intra-African trade, economic integration and inclusive socioeconomic development;

**Recalling** the commitments of African Union Member States under the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), especially the Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade;

**Recognising** that existing commitments must translate into practical and meaningful benefits for young traders, including access to information, participation in trade-policy processes, protection from harassment and unfair treatment, and access to appropriate trade opportunities and mechanisms for redress;

**Recognising** that young women, young persons with disabilities and other groups of young traders may experience distinct or intersecting barriers, and that gender equality and inclusion must therefore be integrated across all aspects of this Charter;

**Affirming** that this Charter complements, and does not replace, the AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade by providing youth traders and their representative organisations with a practical framework to understand, monitor and advocate for the implementation of relevant commitments;

**Affirming** that this Charter belongs to the youth traders and representative organisations that adopt it;

**HEREBY ADOPT THIS YOUTH IN TRADE CHARTER.**

## 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Charter is to strengthen the ability of youth traders and their representative organisations to know, exercise, monitor and advocate for trade-related rights and commitments, while promoting accountability for an enabling, safe, transparent and inclusive trading environment.

Through this Charter, youth in trade organisations commit to using evidence and collective advocacy to deepen meaningful youth participation in intra-African trade and contribute to inclusive socioeconomic development.



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## 2. OBJECTIVES

The Charter has two objectives:

### 2.1 Strengthen accountability

To enable youth in trade organisations to monitor relevant commitments, document barriers and gaps, engage responsible institutions and advocate for effective implementation.

### 2.2 Empower youth traders to meaningfully participate in Intra-African Trade

To enable young traders to understand applicable trade-related rights, obligations, procedures, opportunities and mechanisms for reporting and redressing the challenges, in order to meaningfully participate in Intra-African Trade.

## 3. KEY DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this Charter:

**“Youth in Trade”** means young man, woman, young persons with disabilities and other groups of young traders engaged in or seeking to engage in trade, including cross-border trade, within the scope of applicable African continental, regional and national frameworks.

**“Youth in Trade Organisation”** means a trade association, chamber, business council, cooperative, network or other representative body that organises or represents youth engaged in trade.

**“Adopting Organisation”** means a Youth in Trade Organisation that formally adopts this Charter.

**“Duty-bearer”** means a public authority, institution or other actor with an applicable legal, policy or institutional responsibility relevant to the commitments addressed by this Charter.

**“Advocacy Priority”** means a documented issue that materially affects youth traders but is not expressly or sufficiently addressed by an existing applicable commitment and which adopting organisations may therefore pursue through collective advocacy.

**“Grievance”** means a complaint concerning conduct, treatment, exclusion, harassment, administrative practice, information failure or other action or omission affecting a youth trader’s participation in trade.

## 4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Implementation of this Charter shall be guided by:

**Dignity and protection:** Youth traders shall be treated with dignity and protected from harassment, intimidation, violence and abuse.

**Equality and inclusion:** Youth traders shall enjoy equal access to applicable rights, information and opportunities without discrimination. Gender shall be addressed as an intersectional consideration throughout implementation.

**Transparency and accountability:** Trade-related procedures, information and responsibilities should be sufficiently transparent to enable youth traders to monitor and question implementation.

**Meaningful participation:** Youth participation in trade-policy and implementation processes should be timely, informed, representative and capable of influencing decisions.



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## 5. RIGHTS, OBLIGATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

The Charter focuses on four areas.

### 5.1 Protection, Fair Treatment and Redress

Youth traders should be able to trade without harassment, intimidation, violence or discriminatory treatment.

Relevant institutions should provide or facilitate accessible mechanisms for reporting and addressing harassment and other serious violations.

Youth in trade organisations shall:

- a) provide or facilitate access to appropriate reporting and referral channels;
- b) document recurring cases and systemic concerns; and
- c) advocate for effective grievance and redress mechanisms.

### 5.2 Trade Information, Facilitation and Non-Tariff Barriers

Youth traders should have access to accurate and understandable information on applicable:

- a) trade procedures and requirements;
- b) tariffs and rules of origin;
- c) customs and border procedures;
- d) simplified trade regimes and its equivalents;
- e) standards and other compliance requirements; and
- f) non-tariff barrier reporting mechanisms.

Youth in trade organisations shall support access to relevant information and document persistent barriers affecting youth traders.

Where non-tariff barriers are identified, organisations and traders should use available national, REC, continental or other operational mechanisms or instruments to report, track and advocate for their resolution.

### 5.3 Meaningful Participation and Representation

Youth traders and their representative organisations should have meaningful opportunities to participate in relevant:

- a) trade-policy consultations;
- b) AfCFTA implementation processes;
- c) REC trade-policy processes; and
- d) other decision-making processes affecting youth participation in trade.

Participation should be timely, informed, representative and meaningful.

Youth in trade organisations shall monitor participation gaps and advocate for implementation of relevant commitments under the AfCFTA and REC frameworks.



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#### **5.4 Fair Access to Trade Opportunities**

Youth traders should have equitable access to information concerning relevant:

- a) financial services and support mechanisms;
- b) trade and market opportunities;
- c) business-to-business engagements;
- d) value-chain opportunities;
- e) productive-capacity support; and
- f) digital trade opportunities.

This Charter does not guarantee credit, grants, markets or training. Its focus is on equitable access to information, participation and opportunities provided for under applicable frameworks and programmes.

Youth in trade organisations shall document exclusionary barriers and advocate for effective implementation of relevant commitments.

#### **5.5 Obligations**

##### **Youth Traders**

Youth traders should understand and comply with applicable trade requirements, use available reporting mechanisms and contribute evidence and feedback to their representative organisations.

##### **Youth in Trade Organisations**

Adopting organisations shall:

1. represent the interests of youth traders;
2. disseminate relevant information;
3. document systemic barriers;
4. facilitate reporting and referral;
5. promote meaningful participation; and
6. advocate for implementation of applicable commitments.

##### **Public Authorities, RECs and Continental Institutions**

Relevant institutions remain responsible for fulfilling obligations assigned to them under applicable laws, policies and agreements.

This Charter does not transfer those obligations to youth organisations. It provides a framework through which youth traders and their organisations can monitor implementation and advocate for accountability.



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## 6. ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

### 6.1. The basis and relationship with the AfCFTA Protocol

This Charter complements and seeks to operationalise the AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade.

The Protocol establishes commitments concerning, among other matters:

1. participation in trade-policy and implementation processes (Article 8);
2. elimination and monitoring of non-tariff barriers (Article 6);
3. access to finance (Article 10);
4. productive capacity (Article 11);
5. trade information (Article 12);
6. formalisation;
7. protection against harassment (Article 16); and
8. digital trade (Article 17).

The Charter does not reproduce the Protocol. It translates selected commitments into a practical framework through which youth traders and their representative organisations can understand, monitor, document and advocate for implementation.

Where existing frameworks contain gaps, those gaps may be pursued as Advocacy Priorities.

### 6.2. Advocacy Priorities

Where an issue materially affects youth traders but is not adequately addressed by existing continental, regional or national frameworks, it may be identified as an Advocacy Priority under this charter.

Initial areas may include:

- a) transparent and affordable foreign-exchange arrangements for small-scale cross-border traders;
- b) accessible and simplified cross-border trade regimes;
- c) adequate trade and suitable border infrastructure;
- d) business incubation and enterprise support; and
- e) other evidence-based barriers identified by youth traders.

Advocacy Priorities shall not be presented as existing legal rights unless supported by an applicable legal or policy instrument.

## 7. ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM

Youth in trade organisations shall use a simple accountability pathway:

**IDENTIFY → DOCUMENT → REFER → TRACK → ADVOCATE → REPORT**

### Identify

A trader or organisation identifies a barrier, violation, exclusion or implementation gap.

### Document

Available evidence is collected responsibly and confidentially.



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### **Refer**

The matter is submitted to the appropriate national government and business support organisations, RECs, AfCFTA Secretariat or other competent mechanism.

### **Track**

The organisation monitors whether a response is received and whether effective action follows.

### **Advocate**

Systemic or unresolved issues are elevated through appropriate advocacy channels.

### **Report**

Aggregate findings may be used in periodic accountability and advocacy reporting.

## **8. OWNERSHIP AND ADOPTION**

This Charter belongs to the youth traders and representative organisations that adopt it.

It is a voluntary instrument and does not create or replace legal obligations unless such obligations independently arise under applicable law, treaty, policy or institutional mandate.

Any eligible youth in a trade organisation may adopt the Charter through its authorised governance process.

## **9. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

Adopting organisations should periodically assess:

1. whether youth traders can access relevant trade information;
2. whether reported barriers and grievances are being addressed;
3. whether youth participation in relevant policy processes is meaningful;
4. whether youth traders have equitable access to relevant trade opportunities; and
5. whether identified Advocacy Priorities are receiving appropriate attention.

The Charter should be reviewed at least every two years, or earlier where significant changes in relevant continental, regional or national frameworks require revision.



## ADOPTION DECLARATION

We.....

representing.....,  
hereby adopt the Youth in Trade Charter as a voluntary framework for strengthening the rights  
awareness, participation and accountability of youth in trade.

We commit to:

- i. uphold the principles of dignity, equality, inclusion and meaningful participation;
- ii. support youth traders to understand applicable trade-related rights and obligations;
- iii. document and responsibly report barriers affecting youth participation in trade;
- iv. facilitate appropriate reporting and referral;
- v. promote meaningful youth participation in trade-policy processes; and
- vi. advocate for implementation of existing commitments and evidence-based reforms where gaps remain.

Organisation:.....

Country:.....

Authorised Representative: .....

Position:.....

Signature:.....

Date:.....