

Report

Strengthening of Egypt's National Implementation Committee to facilitate AfCFTA implementation

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AFTS	Agreements and Foreign Trade Sector
AU	African Union
CEPII	Centre d'études prospectives et d'informations internationales
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CoM	Council of Ministers
CoO	Certificate of Origin
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECS	Egyptian Commercial Service
EDA	Export Development Authority
EOS	Egyptian Organization for Standards and Quality
FAQs	frequently asked questions
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
GAFTA	Greater Arab Free Trade Area
GAFI	General Authority for Investment and Free Zones
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
GOEIC	General Organization For Export and Import Control
GTI	Guided Trade Initiative
KPI	key performance indicator
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MSME	micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
MSMEDA	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency
NAC	National Action Committee on AfCFTA (Nigeria)
NCO	National AfCFTA Coordination Office (Ghana)

NCW	National Council for Women
NFP	National Focal Point
NIC	National Implementation Committee
NMC	National Monitoring Committee
NTB	non-tariff barrier
NTFC	National Trade Facilitation Committee
RCA	revealed comparative advantage
RoP	rules of procedures
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SIS	State Information Service
SITA	Supporting Trade & Investment in Africa
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
SPS	sanitary and phytosanitary
STO	Senior Trade Official
TBT	technical barriers to trade
ToR	terms of reference
TWG	technical working group
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WITS	World Integrated Trade Solution
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive summary

Egypt enters the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) with strong institutional assets and clear economic potential. However, opportunities to enhance the translation of formal commitments into fully embedded national implementation remain. While Egypt has been an early and active participant in continental processes – most notably through its past engagement in the Guided Trade Initiative (GTI) and its strong performance in issuing AfCFTA Certificates of Origin (CoOs) – its trade with African markets remains modest, geographically concentrated and limited to a narrow range of products. The AfCFTA therefore presents both an opportunity and a test: an opportunity to diversify exports and deepen regional value chains and a test of whether national coordination arrangements can translate continental commitments into practical outcomes for firms.

This report assesses Egypt's readiness to implement the AfCFTA through the lens of its National Implementation Committee (NIC), the body designated to coordinate domestic implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement. The central finding is that Egypt does not face a problem of institutional absence. The NIC exists, has a solid legal basis under Ministerial Decree No. 39 of 2021 and is supported by strong technical capacity within the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade. Instead, the challenge lies in institutional activation and consolidation. Coordination is taking place in practice but is occurring largely through bilateral, ad hoc arrangements led by the Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade's Agreements and Foreign Trade Sector (AFTS), rather than through a regularly convened, structured NIC operating as a collective platform.

The analysis of Egypt's trade patterns reinforces why effective implementation matters. Despite steady export growth over the past decade, non-African markets continue to absorb close to 90% of Egypt's exports. Within Africa, exports are concentrated in nearby North African partners and in a limited set of products. Evidence from revealed comparative advantage analysis suggests African markets offer distinct opportunities in sectors such as plastics and rubber, textiles and clothing, and parts of agro-processing – sectors that are employment-intensive and relevant for industrial upgrading. Realising these gains, however, depends on reducing trade costs, resolving non-tariff barriers and providing firms with predictable, accessible information on how to use AfCFTA preferences.

The assessment of the NIC in Egypt highlights several important strengths. Egypt has demonstrated operational readiness to trade

under the AfCFTA, including through early participation in the GTI and its high volume of CoOs issued. Institutional cooperation across government is generally strong, with the AFTS playing an effective coordinating role in negotiations, implementation follow-up and engagement with the AfCFTA Secretariat. The NIC's broad and inclusive membership – covering core ministries, regulators, standards bodies and private sector associations – provides a sound foundation for whole-of-government coordination. High-level chairpersonship by the minister of investment and foreign trade also signals sustained political commitment.

At the same time, the report identifies structural and operational gaps that limit the NIC's effectiveness as a delivery mechanism. The Committee has convened only once formally since its establishment, and it operates without a detailed terms of reference or rules of procedure that clarify internal governance, decision-making and reporting arrangements. There are no standing technical working groups to handle complex implementation issues on a sustained basis, and no dedicated secretariat staff assigned full-time to NIC coordination. Monitoring and evaluation arrangements are largely absent, making it difficult to track progress, identify bottlenecks or hold institutions accountable for follow-through.

From the perspective of the private sector, AfCFTA implementation remains uneven in practice. Awareness of the Agreement is improving but utilisation of preferences is still limited. Firms report uncertainty over which markets are effectively trading under AfCFTA terms, how to verify eligibility and how to navigate rules of origin and procedures. The absence of a single, authoritative information portal and a dedicated exporter-facing support function reinforces this uncertainty and dampens uptake.

The report concludes that strengthening the NIC is less about creating new institutions than about making existing ones work more systematically. To this end, it proposes a focused set of recommendations organised around four core pillars.

First, the NIC's operational mandate should be formalised through adopted terms of reference that clearly position it as an implementation oversight and coordination body and establish thematic technical working groups. Second, a small but dedicated coordination capacity should be put in place within the ministry to ensure continuity of functions and activities, follow-up and institutional memory. Third, private sector engagement should be further institutionalised through more structured and formal mechanisms in the NIC and supported by practical communication tools, including a centralised AfCFTA information portal. Fourth, a light-touch but credible performance framework should be introduced to track both institutional functioning and implementation outcomes.

Anchoring these reforms in predictable domestic resourcing, while selectively leveraging development partnerships, would allow Egypt

to move from intermittent coordination to sustained implementation. If implemented, these measures could strengthen the NIC's ability to translate AfCFTA commitments into concrete trade outcomes, support export diversification and position Egypt to make fuller use of the continental market as AfCFTA implementation deepens.

1 Introduction

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is the most ambitious trade and economic integration project undertaken on the continent since the establishment of the African Union (AU). It brings together 54 African countries into a single market for goods and services, with provisions covering trade liberalisation, investment, competition policy, intellectual property rights and, increasingly, digital trade. At its core, the AfCFTA seeks to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers, simplify customs procedures and create more predictable rules for cross-border commerce. The Agreement entered into force in 2019 and officially commenced trading in 2021, marking a shift from negotiation to implementation.

Beyond market access, the AfCFTA is explicitly framed as a development instrument. It is intended to support structural transformation by encouraging industrialisation, regional value chain development and productivity growth. By expanding the effective size of domestic markets, the Agreement aims to make it commercially viable for firms to invest, scale up production and move into higher value-added activities.

Crucially, the AfCFTA is not a single, static Agreement but an evolving framework. While tariff liberalisation under trade in goods and commitments on services form its foundation, subsequent phases address issues such as investment, competition, intellectual property and e-commerce. The success of the AfCFTA therefore depends less on the text of the Agreement itself and more on how effectively it is implemented at the national level. Its success therefore rests heavily on how well countries organise domestically, align regulations and work with the private sector. For participating countries, the AfCFTA represents both an opportunity and a test: the opportunity to reshape trade patterns in favour of the continent and the test of whether national institutions can translate a continental vision into tangible economic outcomes.

The breadth of the AfCFTA agenda – spanning trade in goods and services, investment, competition and emerging areas such as digital trade, as well as implementation instruments such as the AfCFTA adjustment fund and the e-tariff book – demands a coordination mechanism capable of aligning policies across ministries, agencies and stakeholders.

Recognising this, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, at its 31st Ordinary Session in Nouakchott in July

2018, called on member states to establish National Implementation Committees (NICs) as the primary vehicles for domestic coordination. NICs are intended to bridge the gap between continental commitments and national action, ensuring obligations undertaken at the AfCFTA level are understood, prioritised and acted upon within existing policy and institutional frameworks.

In this context, Egypt's NIC plays a central role in organising the country's response to the AfCFTA. The NIC provides a structured forum through which implementation responsibilities are coordinated across government, follow-up is maintained on decisions taken at the continental level and trade-related policies are aligned with AfCFTA requirements. Equally important, it offers a channel for engagement with the private sector and other stakeholders, helping ensure implementation is informed by commercial realities.

By anchoring AfCFTA implementation within a single coordinating mechanism, the NIC helps reduce fragmentation, clarify institutional roles and support a more coherent and predictable approach to policy execution. In practice, this makes the NIC a critical link between the Agreement's strategic ambitions and their translation into operational outcomes on the ground.

This study is designed to help strengthen the effectiveness of Egypt's NIC as the country's central coordination mechanism for AfCFTA implementation. In practical terms, it asks a straightforward question: what needs to change – structurally and operationally – for the NIC to move from a formal coordination platform to a fully functioning, effective body that can drive follow-through across government and support delivery with the private sector?

The primary objective is therefore to assess how the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade can reinforce the NIC so it can perform its role more effectively in implementing the AfCFTA Agreement, with particular attention to operationalisation, sustainable resourcing and inclusive participation – especially from private sector actors.

Building on this, the study has seven linked objectives:

- 1 Evaluate Egypt's NIC institutional structure and current practice – reviewing the NIC's form, functions and mandate to identify strengths, gaps and points where roles or processes are unclear.
- 2 Clarify and strengthen the NIC's mandate – proposing refinements that formalise authority, align responsibilities with national priorities and support continuity over time.
- 3 Strengthen the performance framework – designing practical monitoring, evaluation and accountability arrangements so that decisions translate into tracked actions, not just meeting notes.
- 4 Improve private sector engagement in a structured way – recommending mechanisms that broaden awareness of the NIC

and make participation easier and more representative (including across different types of firms), rather than reliant on ad hoc invitations.

- 5 Draw lessons from comparative country experience – using insights from other African NICs (including Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Rwanda) to inform what is realistic and workable in Egypt's setting.
- 6 Support more effective implementation of the AfCFTA – producing evidence-based recommendations that strengthen the NIC's capacity across negotiation-related follow-up, implementation oversight and sustained delivery.
- 7 Provide practical guidance to policy and institutional stakeholders – generating clear direction for key ministries, NIC members and relevant public bodies to reinforce coordination and political commitment around implementation priorities.

Taken together, these objectives frame the study as both a diagnosis and a set of workable improvements – identifying what is currently limiting NIC effectiveness and setting out concrete steps that can help ensure the NIC is easier to run, better resourced and more useful to the institutions and businesses that need it to work.

Accordingly, Sections 2 and 3 of the report analyse Egypt's trade patterns, the opportunities and challenges the AfCFTA presents and the current policy, legal and institutional arrangements underpinning implementation, with a detailed assessment of the NIC's mandate, structure and operations. Section 4 draws on continental guidance and comparative experience from other African countries to identify good practices in the design and functioning of NICs. Building on this analysis, Section 5 assesses the performance of Egypt's NIC, highlighting key strengths, gaps and institutional constraints. Section 6 sets out practical options and forward-looking measures to strengthen the NIC's role as a central coordination mechanism for AfCFTA implementation. The study concludes by summarising key findings and presenting recommendations aimed at enhancing the coherence, effectiveness and delivery of Egypt's AfCFTA commitments.

2 The AfCFTA: opportunities, challenges and implementation dynamics in Egypt

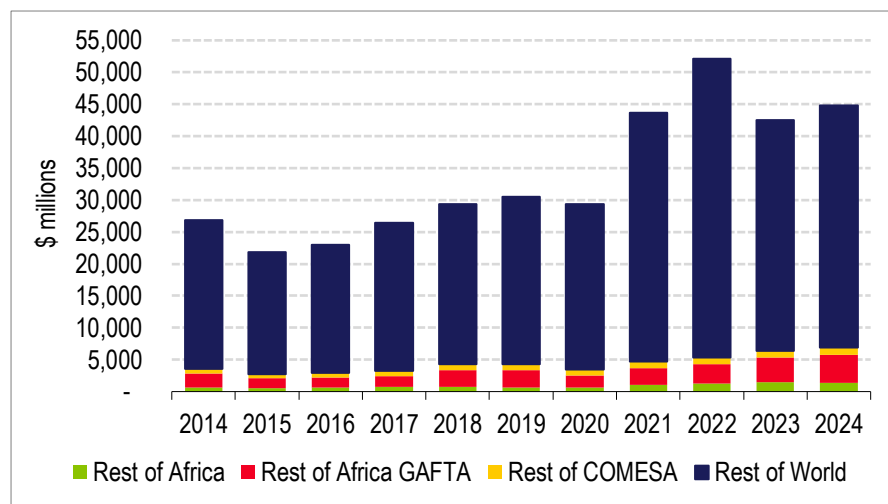
This section discusses Egypt's trends in trade and investment (2.1) and gaps in trade performance (2.2), identifies opportunities with respect to the AfCFTA (2.3), reviews Egypt's implementation status very briefly (2.4) and analyses the current framework for international trade relations (2.5).

2.1 Egypt's trends in trade and investment: Africa vs the rest of the world

Egypt has established itself as one of Africa's leading export and industrial hubs, supported in part by its strategic geographic position as a conduit for market access between Europe, the Middle East and the African continent. This positioning has been reinforced by the country's participation in key regional trade arrangements. Membership of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) provides preferential access to markets in this region, while participation in the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) facilitates trade with North African partners, including Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia.

Despite these advantages, Egypt's trade patterns over the past decade point to a persistent imbalance between its engagement with African markets and its much deeper integration with partners outside the continent. Overall merchandise exports expanded at a compound annual growth rate of around 5%, increasing from approximately \$26.8 billion in 2014 to \$44.8 billion in 2024 (see Figure 1). Growth in exports to African destinations that are non-members of COMESA and GAFTA was even stronger, recording a compound annual growth rate of about 8%, with export values rising from \$625 million to \$1.3 billion over the same period.

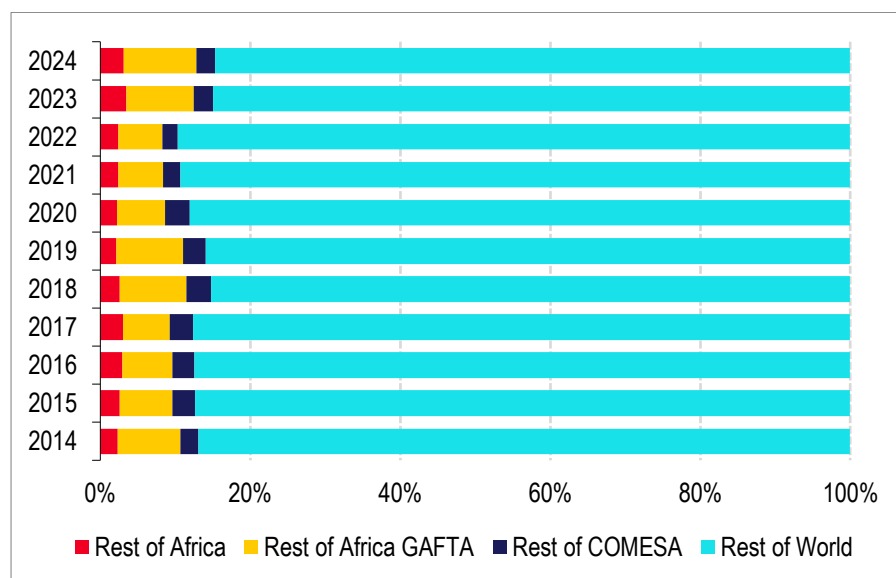
Figure 1 Trend in Egypt's total merchandise exports categorised by destination (in US\$ millions)



Source: Own elaborations using data from WITS, World Bank (similar for subsequent figures unless otherwise stated)

Notes: Rest of Africa refers to African countries that are non-members of COMESA and GAFTA; Rest of Africa (GAFTA) covers African GAFTA members that are non-COMESA members; Rest of COMESA refers to COMESA countries excluding Egypt; and Rest of World is all countries not in the categories listed above (similar for subsequent figures unless otherwise stated).

Figure 2 Trend in market share for Egypt's merchandise exports



In terms of market distribution, non-African markets continue to dominate Egypt's export profile. On average over the period under review, COMESA markets absorbed around 3% of Egypt's exports, whereas Africa-only GAFTA partners accounted for approximately 8%. Other African markets together represented a further 3% of total exports. This stands in stark contrast to Egypt's deep and entrenched trade relationships with non-African markets such as Europe, the

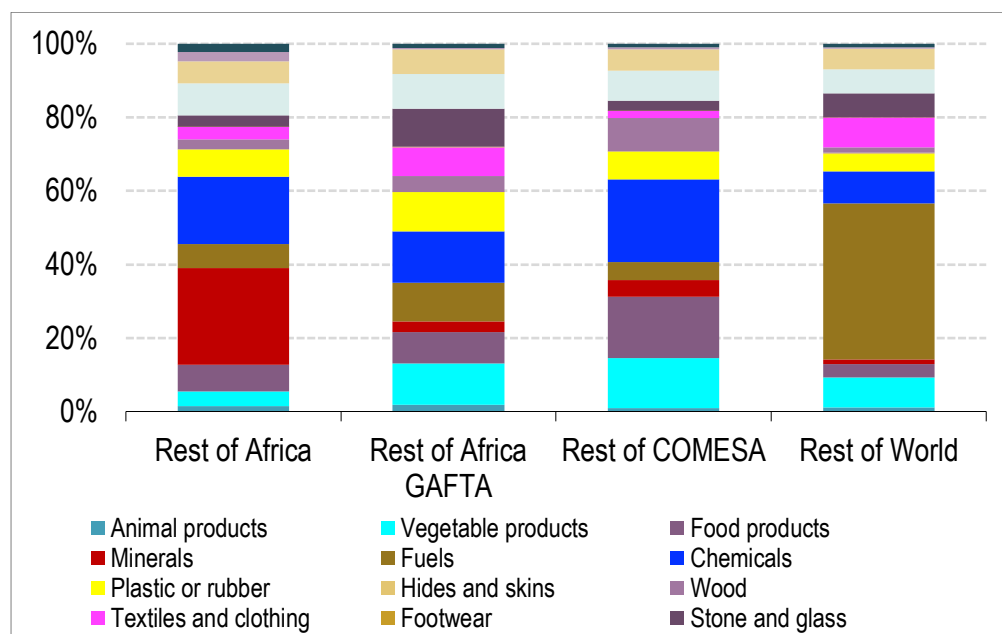
Middle East and Asia, which continue to account for the overwhelming bulk of Egypt's exports, averaging 87%. This reflects long-standing commercial ties, established logistics corridors and familiar regulatory landscapes (see Figure 2).

This pattern highlights a clear disconnect between Egypt's regional integration commitments and the actual direction of its trade flows. This underscores the need for a more deliberate and coordinated approach to expanding the country's trade across African markets.

2.2 Identified gaps in trade performance

Despite Egypt's strong export base and strategic position within Africa, its trade engagement with the continent remains uneven and constrained by several structural gaps. One of the most evident is the geographical concentration of trade flows. Egypt's exports to Africa are largely confined to neighbouring North African countries, reflecting historical ties and established trade agreements such as GAFTA. In contrast, engagement with markets in West, Central and Southern Africa remains limited, despite their economic potential. Distance-related logistics, regulatory differences and limited market familiarity continue to raise the cost and complexity of accessing these markets.

Figure 3 Egypt's average (2019–2023) product export share categorised by destination



Sectoral concentration further characterises Egypt's exports to African countries that are non-members of COMESA and GAFTA – that is, the rest of Africa. Exports to the rest of Africa are dominated by a narrow range of products, particularly minerals (26%) and chemicals (18%), which together account for a substantial share of intra-African exports (see Figure 3). This contrasts with Egypt's exports to the rest of the world, in which fuels (11%) dominate flows,

underscoring the different roles Egypt plays across markets and the limited overlap between its African and global trade profiles.

Regional groupings such as COMESA and GAFTA display a relatively more diversified export structure, with stronger representation of chemicals, food products, plastics and agricultural goods. This suggests regional integration can support diversification where market access conditions, familiarity and regulatory alignment are more favourable. However, these patterns have yet to translate into Egypt's broader and sustained expansion of manufacturing-led exports across the African continent.

Manufactured products, including machinery, metals, stone and glass, and textiles, feature consistently across destination markets but remain modest in scale. Their relatively similar shares across African and non-African destinations indicate that Egypt has not yet fully leveraged regional markets to deepen manufacturing exports or integrate more firmly into regional value chains. Trade in higher value-added segments, such as transport equipment, remains particularly limited within Africa.

2.3 The AfCFTA as a transformative opportunity for Egypt

The gaps in Egypt's trade with Africa – its narrow profile and geographic concentration – highlight significant untapped potential. The AfCFTA presents an opportunity to address these gaps by building on areas where Egyptian products already demonstrate relative competitiveness. Evidence from Egypt's revealed comparative advantage (RCA) helps in identifying where this potential is greatest and how the AfCFTA can catalyse export upgrading.

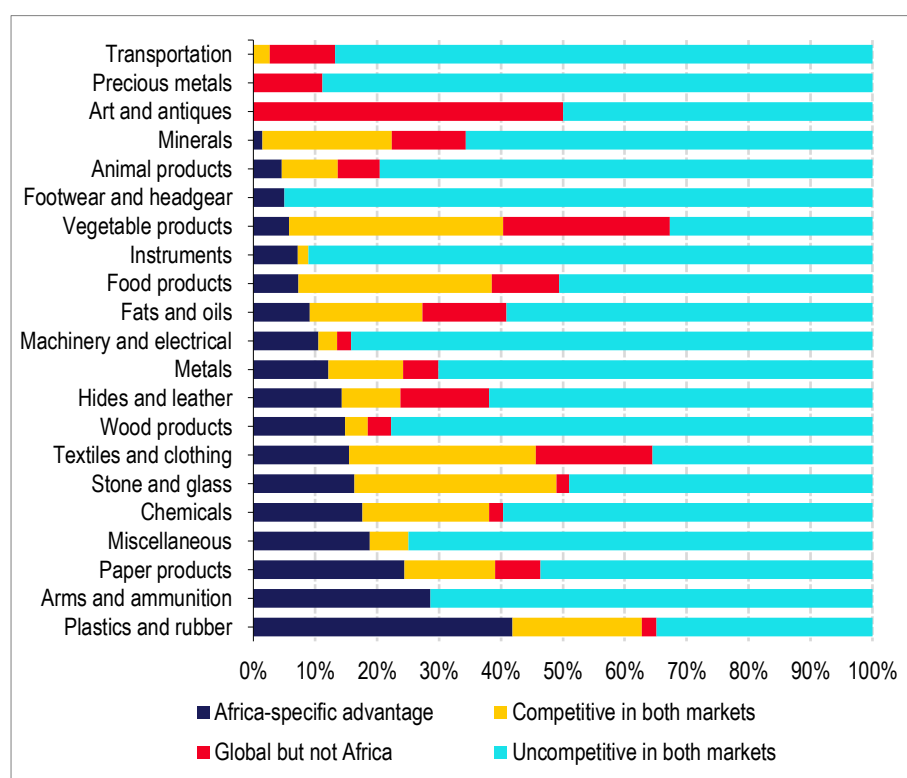
The RCA analysis here compares two reference points: Egypt's performance within African markets, RCA Africa; and its performance on the global stage, RCA global. Products are categorised based on whether they are competitive in:

- Africa only: products with an RCA in African markets but not in global markets (Africa RCA ≥ 1 ; global RCA < 1)
- both markets: products with an RCA in both African and global markets (Africa RCA ≥ 1 ; global RCA ≥ 1)
- globally only: products with an RCA globally but not within African markets (Africa RCA < 1 ; global RCA ≥ 1), or
- in neither: products without an RCA in either African or global markets (Africa RCA < 1 ; global RCA < 1).

This approach reveals the breadth of potential, not just the current value of trade. Average RCAs from the period 2018–2023 are used in order to attenuate the effects of fluctuations induced by cyclical or unexpected shocks to exports.

As Figure 4 shows, African markets offer distinct and, in several key sectors, particularly favourable opportunities for Egyptian exporters. Manufacturing and agro-processing sectors show a notable share of products competitive specifically in Africa. Plastics and rubber is the clearest example: around 42% of products are competitive only in Africa, with another 21% competitive in both markets. This suggests regional proximity and demand are uniquely conducive for this sector. Paper products demonstrates a similar, though less pronounced, pattern.

Figure 4 Sectoral distribution of Egypt's comparative advantage in African and global markets



Source: Own elaborations using data from BACI CEPII¹

Notes: The RCA index measures Egypt's export competitiveness in a product relative to a reference market. RCA Africa compares Egypt's export share of a product to its share in total intra-African exports. RCA global compares the same to its share in total world exports. An RCA value above 1 indicates a comparative advantage.

The textiles and clothing sector is also particularly relevant. With about 15% of products competitive exclusively in Africa and 30% competitive in both markets, nearly half the sector exhibits an African comparative advantage. For this sector vital to employment and industrial development, the AfCFTA could be instrumental in achieving the scale needed for learning and upgrading.

¹ See www.cepii.fr/CEPII/en/bdd_modele/bdd_modele_item.asp?id=37

In other sectors, African competitiveness complements global competitiveness rather than substituting for it. In chemicals and food products, a much larger share of products are competitive in both markets as compared to those competitive only globally. This indicates that African markets are part of a core export strategy, not a secondary market.

This potential is not uniform, however. The persistent gap between Egypt's higher global RCA and its lower African RCA across many products confirms that its overall export strengths remain more pronounced globally. Furthermore, capital- and standards-intensive sectors like machinery and transport equipment are dominated by products uncompetitive in any market. For these products, regional integration alone is insufficient; deeper structural reforms and technological investment can be crucial.

Table 1 Export participation and firm performance in Egypt and comparator countries

	Egypt non-exporting firms	Exporting firms					
		Egypt	Kenya	Mauritius	Morocco	South Africa	Tunisia
Sales per worker (2009 US\$)	23,162	76,762	67,035	83,826	16,621	50,808	27,769
Value added per worker (2009 US\$)	11,060	25,338	43,106	19,041	11,953	46,455	14,635
Total factor productivity	2.1	2.3	2.1	2.1	1.9	3.1	2.4

Source: Own elaborations using World Bank Enterprise Surveys

Notes: Value added per worker is computed by deducting the cost of intermediate products from total output (converted to US\$ and to 2009 prices to account for inflation) divided by the total number of full-time permanent workers; sales per worker is total sales (converted to US\$ and to 2009 prices to account for inflation) divided by the total number of full-time permanent workers; and productivity is estimated as the residual from regressing total output on capital and number of workers, controlling for sector, country, income and time (year) effects.

Firm-level evidence adds weight to the argument that the AfCFTA can play an important role in Egypt's structural transformation (see Table 1). Analysis of data from the World Bank Enterprise Surveys points to a marked and consistent gap between firms that export and those that do not. In Egypt, exporting firms record far higher sales per worker (\$76,762) and value added per worker (\$25,338) than do non-exporters, whose corresponding figures are \$23,162 and \$11,060. This suggests participation in export markets is closely associated with stronger productivity (as evidenced by the superior total factor productivity for exporting firms) and greater value creation.

Egyptian exporters also perform well when compared with firms in peer economies such as Kenya, Morocco and Tunisia, indicating that the country already has a core group of firms with the capability to compete beyond the domestic market. By widening market access

and reducing trade costs across Africa, the AfCFTA can help more firms take advantage of these opportunities, while allowing existing exporters to expand and deepen their regional presence. Over time, this process can shift economic activity towards more productive, higher value-added firms and sectors, enabling trade integration to contribute meaningfully to productivity growth, industrial upgrading and structural change in the Egyptian economy.

Overall, the evidence suggests the AfCFTA's impact should be targeted, not universal. Its success in transforming Egypt's trade will depend on a focused, National AfCFTA Implementation Strategy. The NIC therefore has a critical role: to prioritise sectors with demonstrable African potential. By coordinating policies, engaging the private sector in these specific areas and aligning trade and industrial strategies, the NIC can ensure the AfCFTA moves from a framework of market access to a driver of concrete export diversification and upgrading.

2.4 Egypt's current implementation status

Egypt has positioned itself as an active and committed participant in the AfCFTA process, undertaking several concrete steps to move from agreement to action. At the institutional level, the government has established its NIC, chaired by the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade, to coordinate the domestic effort. Demonstrating a practical commitment to testing the new trading environment, Egypt was among the first countries to participate in the AfCFTA's Guided Trade Initiative (GTI), a pilot programme designed to trial the Agreement's operational procedures with a limited set of goods.

These strategic actions are supported by parallel national reforms aimed at improving the underlying trade ecosystem. The ongoing rollout of the Nafeza national single window platform and the Advanced Cargo Information system represents a significant push to digitalise and streamline customs clearance, directly addressing longstanding trade facilitation gaps. Looking beyond ports and paperwork, Egypt has also signalled a long-term vision for continental connectivity through infrastructure projects like the planned Cairo–Cape Town highway.

Collectively, these measures indicate that Egypt is building the foundational systems needed to transition from a passive signatory to an active beneficiary of the continental market.

2.5 Current setup of Egypt's framework for international trade relations

Egypt's approach to international trade has evolved over time into a layered institutional framework, shaped by decades of varied engagement with external partners. The launch of the AfCFTA demands a decisive pivot – a reorientation of this entire structure to enhance the focus on Africa. Spearheading this shift is the NIC, a

body designed to coordinate AfCFTA policy across a landscape of government mandates, from trade and investment to industry, finance and digitalisation.

Beneath this layer operates Egypt's entrenched trade administration, improved through longstanding regional and bilateral ties.

Memberships in economic communities like COMESA, alongside deep integration within the Arab world through GAFTA, have long directed policy and foreign trade and investment priorities. Here, the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade acts as the central hub, working alongside other relevant entities.

Then there is the less visible but critical backbone of market access: Egypt's national quality infrastructure. The institutions handling standardisation, accreditation and metrology ultimately decide whether Egyptian products meet the rules of foreign markets.

While relatively developed, this system has historically catered more to the needs of Egypt's traditional partners rather than African ones, especially those not in COMESA or GAFTA. The real task ahead, therefore, isn't just activation – it is integration and recalibration. The work will be about aligning these established institutions around a coherent African agenda and ensuring they work in concert rather than in silos.

3 Current status of the Egyptian NIC

This section provides a detailed overview of the Egyptian NIC's mandate, terms of reference (ToR), institutional structure, operational modalities and key activities, with a particular focus on the role of its Secretariat in driving day-to-day coordination. It also examines Egypt's approach to addressing non-tariff barriers (NTBs) under the AfCFTA framework.

Section 3.2 covers the mandate and ToR of the NIC and outlines its core responsibilities, including supporting the formulation of national trade negotiation positions, facilitating implementation, advising the government on policy reforms necessary for the proper execution of AfCFTA commitments and developing strategies for AfCFTA implementation.

Section 3.3 covers the institutional structure of the NIC, including its membership, operations and functions. It describes the coordination mechanisms across ministries and agencies, the role of the NIC Secretariat and the NIC's responsibilities in monitoring, reporting and evaluating AfCFTA-related policies.

Section 3.4 explains procedures and institutional arrangements for identifying, reporting, resolving and monitoring NTBs, including collaboration with the AfCFTA Secretariat and relevant regional and continental structures.

Section 3.5 outlines key activities and initiatives of the NIC, including formulating national negotiation positions, participating in the GTI, raising awareness and engaging the private sector, building internal capacity for effective AfCFTA implementation, coordinating stakeholders for AfCFTA institutional meetings and leveraging regional initiatives to strengthen the NIC. Emphasis is placed on inclusiveness, stakeholder collaboration and alignment with AfCFTA monitoring and review processes.

Section 3.6 highlights key achievements of the NIC and identifies remaining institutional and operational gaps.

3.1 Mandate and terms of reference

Egypt's AfCFTA NIC was formally established by Ministerial Decree No. 39 of 2021 issued by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (currently designated as the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade). This

step aligned with commitments adopted at the AU Summit in July 2018, at which Heads of State and Government agreed that each AfCFTA State Party would establish a national AfCFTA implementation committee to oversee domestic implementation of the Agreement. These would ensure the meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders and support the formulation of national strategies related to AfCFTA implementation and the Boosting Intra-African Trade initiative (Assembly of the AU, 2018).²

The NIC's legal mandate, as defined by the 2021 decree, encompasses coordinating national implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement and related ministerial directives, as well as ensuring the application of associated programmes, initiatives and mechanisms. Its core responsibilities include:

- overseeing Egypt's compliance with AfCFTA obligations and monitoring execution of the AfCFTA
- supporting implementation of the Continental Customs Union, including tariff liberalisation and the removal of NTBs and
- following up on decisions issued by the AfCFTA Council of Ministers (CoM).

The NIC also plays a central role in ensuring effective interagency coordination on AfCFTA matters across government entities and in liaising with the AfCFTA Secretariat.

In addition, the NIC is mandated to prepare, coordinate and follow up on all engagements conducted under the AfCFTA framework. This includes consolidating national input for AfCFTA institutional meetings, such those of the AfCFTA CoM, Senior Trade Officials (STOs) and various technical committees. The NIC is further tasked with raising awareness in the private sector on AfCFTA-related opportunities and developments, and with ensuring Egypt's participation in AfCFTA negotiations and deliberations reflects a coherent and unified national position.

According to Ministerial Decree No. 39 of 2021, the NIC is empowered to:

- prepare periodic reports on Egypt's progress in implementing the AfCFTA Agreement
- organise national workshops and awareness sessions – often in coordination with the AfCFTA Secretariat – to strengthen understanding of the Agreement and its benefits
- provide substantive updates to the Secretariat during official meetings and

² Para. 11. (Heads of State 'further commit to establish National Committees on AfCFTA to ensure meaningful participation of all stakeholders...')

- maintain continuous communication with both the AfCFTA Secretariat and the AU Commission on all implementation and follow-up matters.

In essence, the NIC serves as the official platform for aligning Egyptian government stakeholders on AfCFTA implementation, policy positions and obligations. Through this role, it operationalises Article 4(g) of the AfCFTA Agreement, which calls for ‘coordination at the national level to establish and maintain an institutional framework for the implementation and administration of the AfCFTA.’

Egypt’s AfCFTA NIC was formally established through the ministerial decree, which defines its mandate, composition and overarching responsibilities. A standalone or detailed ToR has not yet been developed or formally adopted. In its current form, then, the NIC operates based on the broad provisions of the ministerial decree only. There is no operational document that articulates internal governance modalities such as Secretariat responsibilities, decision-making procedures, reporting mechanisms or structure of meetings. This status reflects a foundational but still evolving institutional setup that would benefit from a formalised ToR to enhance procedural clarity and functional coordination.

While the NIC has been established formally with a clear legal mandate, it has not yet convened as a fully active or collective body. Following Egypt’s early ratification of the AfCFTA Agreement in April 2019 – prior to the operational phase launched in 2021 – coordination of AfCFTA-related matters was conducted through bilateral engagements between the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade and relevant entities, building on practices established during the negotiation period. After the NIC’s establishment, the ministry continued to raise awareness in the private sector, coordinate national positions for AfCFTA institutional meetings and manage implementation phases by engaging stakeholders through targeted technical meetings and consultations with implementing agencies. Nonetheless, the NIC’s legal mandate remains intact, positioning it as the nationally designated mechanism to oversee and coordinate AfCFTA implementation in Egypt, backed by high-level political authority.

3.2 Institutional structure, membership, operations and functions

An effective institutional framework is essential for ensuring coherent national engagement with the AfCFTA and for translating continental commitments into coordinated action at the domestic level. Within this context, Egypt’s AfCFTA NIC plays a central role in structuring coordination across government and stakeholder groups. This section examines the NIC’s institutional structure, its membership composition and operational modalities, providing an integrated view of how the Committee facilitates national coordination on AfCFTA commitments.

3.2.1 Structure and membership

The Egyptian AfCFTA NIC is chaired by the minister of investment and foreign trade, reflecting high-level political support. The minister's chairpersonship is intended to provide weight and authority to the NIC's decisions and ensure alignment with broader trade and investment priorities. The NIC's Secretariat function is performed by the Ministry's Agreements and Foreign Trade Sector (AFTS), which handles day-to-day coordination, administrative tasks and inter-agency follow-up on AfCFTA-related matters. AFTS also acts as Egypt's designated National Focal Point (NFP) to the AfCFTA Secretariat, working in coordination with other designated focal points, as outlined in the official delegation credentials submitted under the AfCFTA process.³ The NIC Secretariat's internal composition is determined by the head of AFTS.

Membership of the NIC, as established by Ministerial Decree No. 39/2021, is broad-based, drawing on approximately 24 entities to include both government stakeholders and representatives of the private sector. This inclusive structure ensures wide representation of stakeholders critical to the implementation of Egypt's AfCFTA obligations. Within the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade, six key departments or agencies are represented: AFTS, the General Organization for Export and Import Control (GOEIC), the Egyptian Commercial Service (ECS), the Egyptian Organization for Standards and Quality (EOS), the Export Development Authority (EDA) and the General Authority for Investment and Free Zones (GAFI). These entities serve as the ministry's key technical bodies directly involved in trade policy formulation and implementation.

In addition, the NIC includes representatives from several core government ministries, including the Ministries of Finance; Planning; Economic Development and International Cooperation; Foreign Affairs; Agriculture and Land Reclamation; Transport; Health and Population; Communications and Information Technology; and Electricity and Renewable Energy. It also incorporates specialised regulatory and technical agencies such as the Egyptian Drug Authority, the Egyptian Competition Authority, the Financial Regulatory Authority, the Central Bank of Egypt and the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics.

Recognising the pivotal contribution of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and women to Egypt's trade and economic development, the NIC includes representation from the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (MSMEDA), and the National Council for Women (NCW) to integrate

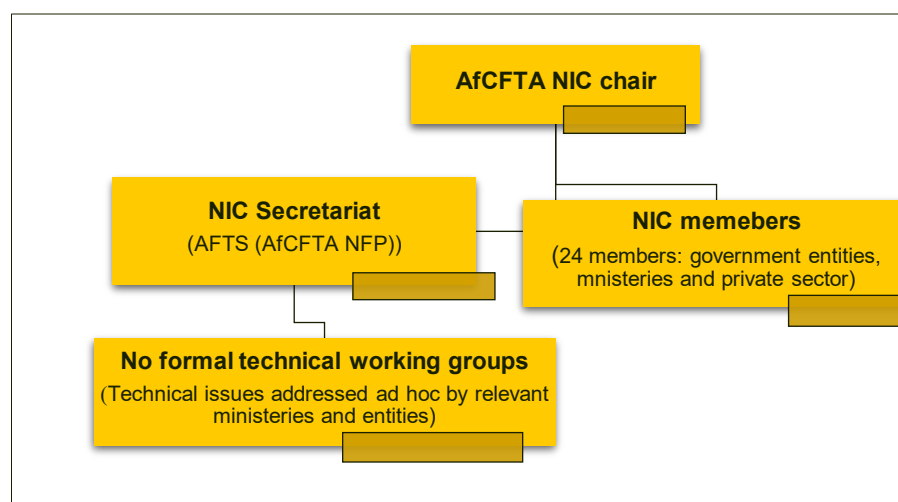
³ The AfCFTA Secretariat Guidance Note on Participation in Negotiations requests that each State Party submit formal delegation credentials identifying the chief negotiator and two alternates for the duration of the negotiations.

their perspectives into national AfCFTA decision-making and implementation processes.

On the private sector side, the NIC ensures inclusive engagement through major umbrella business associations – namely, the Federation of Egyptian Industries, the Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce and the Egyptian Businessmen’s Association. Other relevant entities may also be invited to participate on an ad hoc basis depending on the thematic focus or specific agenda item under discussion.

This membership structure aligns with the AfCFTA’s emphasis on stakeholder inclusion and multisectoral coordination, mirroring the approaches of other State Parties. Figure 5 provides a schematic representation of Egypt’s AfCFTA NIC, highlighting its institutional structure, stakeholder composition and coordination mechanisms.

Figure 5 Schematic organisational structure of Egypt’s AfCFTA NIC



Source: N Gage Consulting

Egypt’s AfCFTA implementation is currently coordinated through a single-layer NIC structure. Technical issues are addressed by designated experts within the relevant line ministries, regulatory agencies or public authorities, as needed, rather than through standing subsidiary functions or technical working groups (TWGs). This approach is shaped by the institutional landscape and resource realities of the ministry’s AFTS.

Some countries have adopted a more institutionalised, multi-tiered NIC model. This model typically includes a high-level committee for policy oversight, a steering body for strategic and technical coordination, a dedicated office for daily implementation and several TWGs aligned with key thematic areas. These structures provide platforms for targeted technical dialogue and cross-stakeholder engagement, enhancing institutional continuity and strategic depth.

Currently, Egypt's NIC operates without a dedicated coordination office or technical implementation unit, such as the National AfCFTA Coordination Office (NCO) in Ghana. The NIC Secretariat (AFTS) carries out the coordination functions effectively. However, establishing a permanent institutional entity could further strengthen continuity, support consistent staffing and facilitate coordination with development partners. Emerging best practices indicate that NICs benefit from a clear internal architecture, comprising a steering committee, a dedicated secretariat and TWGs to manage the institutional complexity of AfCFTA implementation efficiently (Ghana Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2022; Ghana NCO, 2023).

3.2.2 Operations and meetings

According to Decree No. 39/2021, the AfCFTA NIC is mandated to convene at least twice annually, or as required, with meeting minutes submitted to the minister. Decision-making is intended to occur through plenary sessions that review implementation progress, address policy matters and endorse Egypt's national positions for the Agreement negotiations. Following the conclusion of negotiations, the adoption of the legal texts of the Agreement and the commencement of its actual implementation in October 2022, there has been a growing need for the Committee to convene in its full composition and at all representation levels.

In practice, the NIC has not yet convened in full composition, nor held an inaugural meeting to formally communicate its mandate, objectives and functions to members. Only one formal NIC-wide meeting has been held (in July 2025), with approximately half of the members present – primarily to prepare for a bilateral exchange with Tunisia on AfCFTA implementation.

It should be noted, however, that the NIC is fully operational and has been effectively performing all its mandates as stipulated under Article 2 of Decree No. 39/2021, including throughout the various phases of negotiation of the AfCFTA Agreement and its Protocols. During these phases, the Committee convened in a reduced format, in line with the priorities of each negotiation stage and the technical nature of the issues under discussion.

Most coordination has, therefore, occurred outside formal NIC meetings. Day-to-day interactions are conducted through official correspondence, bilateral follow-ups and ad hoc engagements led by the NIC Secretariat (AFTS). These communications typically take place directly with experts and officials across relevant ministries, entities and business associations.

Although the NIC has not convened regularly, its core functions are effectively carried out by the NIC Secretariat, which is housed within AFTS. Acting simultaneously as Egypt's NFP to the AfCFTA Secretariat and the operational arm of the NIC, AFTS leads the coordination of Egypt's positions during all negotiation phases,

covering technical areas such as, but not limited to, rules of origin, tariff concessions, trade in services and dispute settlement. It also coordinates with implementation bodies to ensure smooth execution of commitments and supports private sector engagement through awareness-raising with the Federation of Egyptian Industries, export councils and other business groups. Ministerial reshuffles and institutional changes during certain periods have been key factors affecting the regular convening of the NIC in its full composition. In this context, AFTS prioritised ensuring continuity of the NIC's work and the effective discharge of its mandates by convening in a reduced format whenever necessary.

In addition, AFTS plays a broader strategic role through efforts to expand Egypt's presence in African markets and by ensuring AfCFTA opportunities are integrated into national development priorities, including the National Export Development Strategy (which targets \$145 billion in exports by 2030) and the Egypt's Engagement within Africa Strategy. When specialised issues arise – such as those related to customs procedures, technical standards or sector-specific regulations – it refers these to the relevant ministry or agency for technical input, consolidates feedback and communicates the agreed national position back through the NIC Secretariat.

While Decree No. 39/2021 defines NIC membership, non-member institutions can occasionally be invited to participate on an ad hoc basis when discussions require crosscutting or highly specialised expertise. Such participation is coordinated by the NIC Secretariat and determined by the thematic focus under consideration. This flexibility allows the NIC to adapt to evolving implementation needs.

As mentioned above, the NIC operates as a single-layer body chaired by the minister of investment and foreign trade, without subsidiary committees or standing TWGs. Additionally, the NIC has not yet established a formal monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to track implementation milestones. Emerging continental practices indicate that many NICs use structured M&E tools to monitor progress, document achievements, inform national leadership and coordinate with development partners. Subsequent sections of this report explore the potential role and design of such a framework for Egypt.

Despite the limited frequency of formal convening, the NIC has remained functional owing to its Secretariat's sustained coordination efforts across ministries and stakeholders. While the current arrangements offer flexibility and responsiveness, they also reveal opportunities to strengthen predictability, institutional continuity and structured stakeholder engagement. These considerations underpin the performance assessment and proposed reforms presented in the following sections.

3.3 Framework and mechanisms for handling NTBs

NTBs remain one of the most persistent obstacles to deepening intra-African trade, making effective national and continental mechanisms for addressing them central to the success of the AfCFTA. This section examines how NTBs are addressed under the AfCFTA and the institutional mechanisms established at both continental and national levels to monitor, report and resolve them. It outlines the AfCFTA's formal framework for handling NTBs. It also assesses Egypt's current approach to NTB management within the AfCFTA framework, highlighting how AFTS leverages its existing institutional structures to fulfil AfCFTA obligations.

3.3.1 Addressing NTBs within the AfCFTA

NTBs are regulatory measures other than tariffs that countries use to restrict the import or export of goods across their borders. They include quotas, import licensing, pre-shipment inspections, rules of origin, custom delayers, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, and technical barriers to trade (TBT). NTBs are often implemented to protect consumers and ensure product standards but they can significantly impact international trade by increasing the cost and complexity of importing and exporting goods (UNCTAD, n.d.).

Given the significant hindrance NTBs pose to intra-African trade, they are a major focus of the AfCFTA Agreement, and concerted efforts have been made to address them. These have included the creation of an online mechanism for monitoring, reporting and eliminating NTBs,⁴ as well as the provisions of Annex 5 of the Protocol on Trade in Goods, which establishes a dedicated mechanism for reporting, monitoring and eliminating NTBs across the AfCFTA (AU, 2018).

This mechanism operates at multiple levels. At the continental level, an AfCFTA Sub-Committee on NTBs (under the AfCFTA institutional structure) oversees implementation of Annex 5, and an NTB Coordination Unit at the AfCFTA Secretariat in Accra manages the process. At the national level, each State Party is required to establish a National Monitoring Committee (NMC) on NTBs, typically a domestic committee including public and private stakeholders, as well as to designate NFPs within government who will interface with the AfCFTA NTB online reporting system and coordinate resolution of reported barriers.⁵ In essence, when a trader or company reports an NTB through the AfCFTA's online portal, the complaint is automatically routed to the concerned countries' NFPs, who are mandated to investigate and resolve it through the NMC or relevant authorities, within prescribed deadlines. This institutional design builds on existing regional mechanisms (such as the COMESA–East African Community (EAC)–Southern African Development

⁴ <https://tradebarriers.africa/>

⁵ Articles 8 and 9 of Annex 5.

Community (SADC) Tripartite NTB system)⁶ and legally binds governments to address NTB complaints in a timely manner.⁷

3.3.2 Egypt's approach to NTBs within the AfCFTA

AFTS is actively coordinating with all relevant ministries and agencies to address NTBs and maximise the benefits of the AfCFTA Agreement. Egypt has not created a standalone committee solely for AfCFTA NTB purposes, but nor has the NIC created a separate subcommittee dedicated solely to NTBs. Instead, AFTS has utilised the existing NTB NMC and focal point system that had already been developed for the COMESA Tripartite NTB mechanism.

AFTS chairs this NMC under the COMESA Tripartite mechanism, handling complaints reported in the online system and coordinating with other ministries (transport, agriculture, finance, etc.) to address them. This same institutional setup has now been extended to cover AfCFTA NTBs during the implementation phase. In practice, the Tripartite NMC also performs the functions of the AfCFTA NTB NMC, as no ministerial decree has yet been issued to formally establish such an AfCFTA-specific NTB NMC. Consequently, the existing NMC addresses NTB cases arising under both COMESA and the AfCFTA.

During the AfCFTA negotiation phase (prior to 2021), AFTS, as Egypt's AfCFTA NFP, referred NTB-related negotiation matters to the relevant units within the ministry. The primary body handling these matters was the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC), operating under the Central Department of World Trade Organization (WTO) Affairs. The NTFC coordinated across entities to formulate Egypt's position on Annex 5. As AfCFTA trade volumes increase, there may be a need to formalise a subcommittee within the AfCFTA NIC to ensure systematic monitoring of NTBs and implementation of Annex 5 obligations. In the interim period, Egypt continues to utilise the AfCFTA online mechanism for monitoring, reporting and eliminating NTBs. Complaints involving Egypt as the complaining party are handled through the focal points of the relevant member states, who in turn consult the relevant ministry or agency to resolve the issue. Similarly, when Egypt is the responding party, Egypt's NTB focal point, AFTS, coordinates with the relevant entity to address the barrier. This approach has worked effectively in the COMESA context – Egypt's NTB focal point has resolved numerous cases in recent years – and is now being applied to the AfCFTA.

In summary, Egypt's NTB mechanism for the AfCFTA is essentially an extension of its existing COMESA Tripartite NTB institutional setup. This pragmatic approach avoids duplication of committees and makes use of officials experienced in NTB resolution. It fulfils AfCFTA

⁶ <https://www.tradebarriers.org/>

⁷ Annex 5 Article 5 (on binding commitments and timelines for NTB resolution).

requirements by having designated focal points and a committee structure, albeit not yet under the direct umbrella of the NIC.

3.4 Key activities and initiatives of the NIC

Although Egypt's AfCFTA NIC has not yet convened as a full committee, its Secretariat – AFTS – has actively carried out a wide range of activities to support Egypt's engagement with the AfCFTA. These efforts have covered both external and internal dimensions across the negotiation and implementation phases to ensure Egypt meets its obligations under the AfCFTA. This section highlights the key activities undertaken by the NIC Secretariat.

3.4.1 Formulating national negotiation positions

Throughout the AfCFTA negotiation phases, the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade, through AFTS, led the coordination of Egypt's negotiation positions on technical matters. It is important to note that the NIC was fully operational during these phases. During the various stages of negotiation on the Agreement and its Protocols, the NIC convened in a reduced format, in line with the priorities of each stage and the technical nature of the issues under negotiation.

Prior to the formal establishment of the NIC in 2021, this coordination occurred informally through ad hoc consultations and working groups with relevant ministries, regulatory bodies and private sector stakeholders. After the NIC's creation, these consultative processes were gradually integrated into its framework, even though the NIC did not convene frequently as a full committee. Ministerial reshuffles and institutional changes during certain periods affected the regular convening of the NIC in its full composition. Accordingly, AFTS was keen to ensure continuity of the Committee's work and the effective implementation of its mandates by convening it in a reduced format, as necessary.

In practice, AFTS continued to lead technical coordination by leveraging the same network of stakeholder institutions, which effectively constituted the NIC's constituency. Notably, there were no formal TWGs; instead, AFTS referred technical matters to the competent authorities for input. In this context, the NIC's assigned tasks were effectively implemented through reliance on ad hoc consultations, working groups and existing institutional structures, whether within the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade or across the relevant ministries and entities represented in the NIC and responsible for implementing the objectives of the Agreement. These inputs were consolidated by AFTS, which serves as Egypt's NFP to the AfCFTA Secretariat and, as a core member of the national negotiation team, represented Egypt in higher-level institutional forums such as the STO and CoM meetings. This structured yet flexible approach enabled Egypt to submit key commitments on time and build interagency consensus on sensitive negotiation issues.

In addition to coordinating Egypt's national positions, the NIC Secretariat played a pivotal role in advancing technical matters at the continental level. Notably, during Egypt's chairpersonship of the 17th meeting of the African Trade Ministers Council – hosted in Cairo in September 2025 and chaired by H.E. Engineer Hassan Al-Khatib, Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade – together with the subsequent virtual Ministerial Council meeting held in October 2025, the Ministers adopted the previously pending rules of origin. The pending rules of origin adopted include those for the readymade clothing and automotive sectors, along with a roadmap for their implementation after a transition period. Additionally, eight annexes to the Intellectual Property Protocol were adopted in preparation for submission to the upcoming AU Summit. These outcomes reflect both Egypt's leadership and the effectiveness of its interagency coordination in shaping key AfCFTA commitments (SIS, 2023).

3.4.2 Participation in the Guided Trade Initiative

Egypt was one of seven pioneer countries that participated in the AfCFTA GTI launched on 7 October 2022 by the AfCFTA Secretariat (AfCFTA Secretariat, 2024).⁸ The GTI was a pilot programme to jumpstart trade under AfCFTA preferences among countries that were ready to test the operational procedures and demonstrate early benefits. Egypt's involvement in the GTI required coordination between multiple actors. The NIC (via its Secretariat) played a coordinating role domestically: identifying which products and companies could participate in pilot shipments, ensuring necessary legal instruments (tariff reductions, customs instructions) were in place and communicating with the AfCFTA Secretariat's GTI coordination unit.

Through the GTI, Egypt conducted some of the first tariff-free shipments under AfCFTA rules (e.g. exporting ceramic tiles and importing coffee shipments within the pilot). This exercise provided valuable feedback on the readiness and effectiveness of national systems for AfCFTA trade and highlighted any gaps to be addressed. The success of the GTI phase has positioned Egypt to expand trade within the AfCFTA framework. As of 2023, Egypt has demonstrated strong performance in the implementation of the AfCFTA by recording a steady increase in the issuance of Certificates of Origin (CoOs). By June 2025, a total of 2,852 CoOs had been issued, positioning Egypt among the leading African countries with the highest number of CoOs issued under the AfCFTA framework, according to the AfCFTA Secretariat.

These certificates are issued by GOEIC under the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade, with the food industries sector ranking among the sectors with the highest number of CoOs issued. GOEIC provides the necessary support to private sector companies to

⁸ The countries involved were Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda and Tanzania.

effectively issue CoOs, enabling them to export to AfCFTA member states and fully utilise the agreement.

3.4.3 Awareness-raising and private sector engagement

A core function of Egypt's AfCFTA NIC is to raise awareness of the AfCFTA and engage the private sector in its implementation. Although resource constraints have influenced the establishment of a formal public–private dialogue mechanism, the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade, through the NIC Secretariat (AFTS), has pursued targeted, sector-specific outreach efforts, in response to specific requests from the private sector. AFTS has conducted virtual webinars to familiarise private sector stakeholders with AfCFTA-related opportunities, challenges, key provisions, export potential and access to African markets. In practice, these efforts have primarily taken the form of technically focused virtual workshops and bilateral consultations with export councils and sectoral chambers of commerce. Additionally, in collaboration with the Federation of Egyptian Industries, AFTS organised a workshop in January 2024 that provided a platform to brief Egyptian exporters on the tariff schedules, rules of origin and documentation requirements associated with AfCFTA preferences. Despite these efforts, the broad base and diversity of Egyptian industrial stakeholders mean more continuous and intensive outreach activities are needed to reach a larger number of companies and ensure they remain regularly informed of evolving developments related to the Agreement.

Importantly, the private sector has been involved since the early stages of AfCFTA negotiation, especially during the formulation of Egypt's tariff concessions schedules and services liberalisation offers, when key industry stakeholders were consulted to identify export priorities and sensitive sectors. This tradition of targeted consultations has continued into the implementation phase, with the NIC serving as a bridge between government and business associations, facilitating information exchange and soliciting input when needed. This highlights the importance of complementing existing targeted engagements with broader, more systematic awareness-raising to enhance outreach, inclusiveness and continuity.

3.4.4 Internal awareness and capacity-building for effective AfCFTA implementation

The NIC, through AFTS, has worked to ensure relevant national ministries and agencies are informed of Egypt's AfCFTA commitments and can align their policies accordingly. After the entry into force of the Phase I Protocols – which cover trade in goods, trade in services and dispute settlement – the NIC Secretariat circulated explanatory briefs to entities such as the Customs Authority, GOEIC, EOS and relevant regulatory bodies, outlining Egypt's commitments. These commitments include Provisional Schedules of Tariff Concessions, rules of origin and commitments under Annexes 6 and 7 on TBT and SPS measures, respectively.

3.4.5 Stakeholder coordination for AfCFTA institutional meetings

A key, recurring function of the NIC is to coordinate Egypt's preparations for AfCFTA institutional meetings. The meetings include those of the CoM, the Committee of STOs and various technical committees (on trade in goods, trade in services, investment, etc.). Prior to these meetings, AFTS circulates the agenda and relevant documents – including any draft Protocols under negotiation – to all NIC members and compiles their inputs to shape Egypt's negotiation position. Following the meetings, AFTS disseminates the outcomes to stakeholders, which include government entities and business associations. This continuous cycle of pre-meeting coordination and post-meeting communication is central to the NIC's role as Egypt's national AfCFTA coordinator.

3.4.6 Leveraging regional initiatives for NIC strengthening

Egypt is leveraging regional AfCFTA initiatives and technical guidance to strengthen the NIC's institutional development and operational effectiveness. Egypt actively participates in the AfCFTA NIC Focal Points Meetings organised by the AfCFTA Secretariat. In 2023, Egypt's NIC joined over 40 State Parties in one such meeting to exchange experiences and receive technical guidance. The meeting produced a draft NIC Action Plan and operational guidelines – currently under review by member states, including Egypt – which provide practical recommendations for structuring NIC activities and mandates.

In conclusion, Egypt's AfCFTA NIC serves as the central institutional mechanism for coordinating the country's engagement with the continental free trade agenda. While the NIC itself has not yet convened as a full committee, its Secretariat – AFTS – has actively carried out a wide range of efforts to advance Egypt's AfCFTA obligations. These efforts include facilitating interagency coordination during negotiations, conducting targeted outreach to the private sector and participating in continental initiatives such as the GTI. Through these efforts, the NIC Secretariat has strengthened dialogue between public and private actors, promoted greater coherence in trade policy implementation and enhanced Egypt's visibility and credibility within continental trade processes. Nevertheless, a wide range of opportunities exist to develop the NIC's institutional structure, operational effectiveness and stakeholder engagement mechanisms, which will be addressed in subsequent sections.

4 Best practices on NIC forms and functions

Effective participation in the AfCFTA depends less on formal ratification than it does on sustained national coordination around domestication and implementation. Across the continent, NICs have emerged as the principal mechanism for translating AfCFTA commitments into action. However, experience to date shows the mere existence of an NIC is not sufficient. NICs that are clearly mandated, adequately resourced and embedded within existing institutional ecosystems are far more likely to influence outcomes than those created as standalone or purely symbolic bodies.

Drawing on continental guidance currently being drafted through collaboration between ODI Global and the AfCFTA Secretariat, evidence from ODI Global-led analytical work (see Sebahizi et al., 2023) and the experience of early-operational NICs, this section sets out the core features that have underpinned effective NICs in practice. The first subsection presents best practice forms and functions, arguing that, while institutional forms differ from country to country, a number of institutional functions are crucial for effective implementation (4.1). The rest of the section focuses on some key aspects of these functions, such as a clear mandate (4.2), resources (4.3), the performance framework (4.4), private sector engagement (4.5) and monitoring, evaluation and adaptive learning.

4.1 Best practice NIC forms and functions

In countries where NICs are functioning well, they act as coordination hubs rather than as additional layers of bureaucracy. Their central task is to ensure coherence across ministries, agencies and stakeholders involved in AfCFTA implementation, while avoiding encroachment on the operational mandates of line institutions. This balance has been evident in countries such as Ghana and Rwanda, where NICs focus on alignment, prioritisation and follow-up rather than direct delivery.

The AfCFTA Secretariat's guidance, a guide developed with support from ODI Global, identifies a set of core functions that NICs are expected to perform, ranging from coordinating implementation and monitoring progress to engaging the private sector and serving as the national interface with the Secretariat. In practice, effective NICs tend to concentrate first on a subset of these functions – particularly

coordination, stakeholder engagement and troubleshooting – before expanding their scope as capacity improves.

Institutional forms are country specific. While some countries have created new AfCFTA-specific bodies to signal political commitment (notably Ghana and Nigeria), others have chosen to build on existing coordination platforms, most commonly NTFCs. This second approach has worked best where the NTFC is already active and where its mandate has been formally broadened to cover the wider AfCFTA agenda beyond border procedures, as seen in The Gambia and Rwanda.

Sebahizi et al. (2023) identify 10 crucial functions for AfCFTA NICs (Figure 6):

- 1 support the formulation of country positions in trade negotiations and other aspects of the AfCFTA such as investment (involving coordination across ministries and complementing existing trade and investment negotiation structures)
- 2 facilitate implementation, and advise and lobby government around policy reforms necessary for proper implementation of the AfCFTA commitments and domestication of the AfCFTA legal instruments (through coordination across ministries) in line with existing structures to implement trade and development policy
- 3 develop plans and strategies for AfCFTA implementation
- 4 report on activities and plans and monitor and evaluate the activities of the NIC itself
- 5 monitor and evaluate policies and projects to support AfCFTA implementation and relevant AU-related objectives such as the trade and development aspirations in AU Agenda 2063
- 6 coordinate and where appropriate implement donor activities and capacity-building events in the area of the AfCFTA and development (covering trade and other instruments) in line with existing implementation structures (and not duplicating existing efforts)
- 7 raise awareness and collaborate with all stakeholders (communication)
- 8 enable meaningful collaboration with the private sector (certification, readiness assessments) to ensure effective implementation and economic benefits of the AfCFTA
- 9 ensure inclusiveness (include mainstream vulnerable groups, gender and youth, and climate considerations) in AfCFTA implementation plans
- 10 provide an interface between the AfCFTA Secretariat and countries and facilitate the AfCFTA Policy Review Process and monitoring of AfCFTA implementation in line with existing structures.

Figure 6 Ten essential functions of NICs

Source: Sebahizi et al. (2023)

Appendix 1 compares the roles, responsibilities and functions of the AfCFTA NICs of five African countries with the best practice functions in Figure 6. The review covers The Gambia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda using the draft or agreed ToRs of NICs that emerged during AfCFTA–ODI Global technical assistance and capacity-building events in these countries (during 2024–2025). The table also includes Egypt as a reference.

It is notable that there is a good emphasis in all ToRs on coordinating implementation of the AfCFTA. Coverage of some other elements is patchier. For example, not all ToRs cover private sector development or monitoring to the same extent.⁹ Most have a good focus on coordination of implementation but only a few focus on outstanding negotiation issues. Few explicitly include liaising with the AfCFTA Secretariat, even though the AfCFTA requires there to be focal points. There is attention to inclusion aspects, such as including MSMEs or women’s groups, but not all ToRs have explicit language.

Whilst each country will need to decide the institutional form that suits it best, five salient institutional form features also come out:

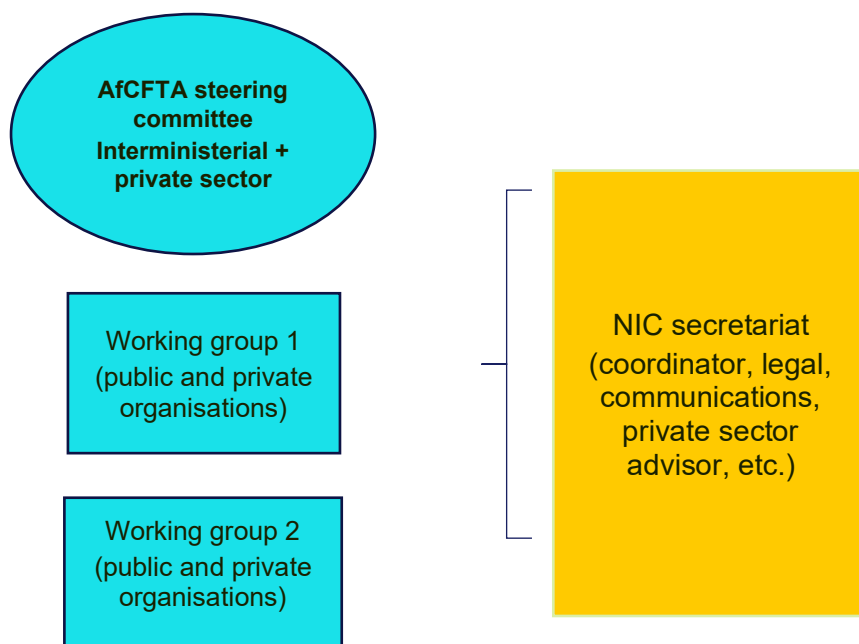
- 1 Three types of bodies emerge as important in all cases:
 - a high-level steering committee (chaired by the minister of trade or a higher-level official and reporting to the president or prime minister)

⁹ Findings from reviewed NICs reveal that formal monitoring plans are still under development in most cases. For example, Ghana and Nigeria are currently designing their monitoring frameworks, and Côte d’Ivoire employs an interim approach, using key performance indicators and performance progress from annual reports (submitted by the NIC and TWGs to the Steering Committee) as a de facto monitoring mechanism. This suggests a need for standardised, structured monitoring systems to ensure consistent tracking of AfCFTA implementation progress.

- a national technical committee and a secretariat and
- TWGs.

All these bodies and groups need legal backing. Figure 7 provides a possible institutional form.

Figure 7 NIC institutional form at country level



Source: Sebahizi et al. (2023)

- 2 The prime minister or president needs to oversee the high-level steering group but does not need to chair the actual group. The minister of trade could also take this role.
- 3 The secretariat needs a senior, active, experienced and well-connected coordinator or lead, who reports to the steering committee and the permanent secretary (or equivalent) for trade (the main focus is on coordination, avoiding duplication of existing efforts). Other people could include a legal advisor, a strategic communications specialist, a stakeholder engagement specialist, programme officers, enterprise support specialists, IT officers, M&E experts and administrators.
- 4 The private sector and other stakeholders should be included at steering committee level and in the TWGs.
- 5 The NIC should engage in visible activities (such as the GTI; the AfCFTA Policy Review Process; developing a monitoring, evaluation and learning framework; and working with AfCFTA Secretariat staff, including the AfCFTA secretary-general, on visits and other communications).

Several factors, some of them country-specific, will inform the organisational structure of a country's NIC. The sustainability and efficacy of the NIC hinge on high-level political commitment,

evidenced by (i) legal mandates formalising the NIC's authority or mandate and (ii) alignment of the NIC's objectives with the priorities of public agencies and the private sector.

4.2 Developing a clear mandate

There needs to be a strong emphasis on mandate clarity, and country experience confirms why. NICs with vague or overly broad mandates tend to drift, particularly once initial negotiation phases conclude. By contrast, NICs whose mandates are clearly anchored in implementation have been better able to sustain relevance. In other cases, the NIC is not performing certain functions because they are not included in the mandate or detailed ToRs do not exist. The mandates need legal backing.

Best practice mandates typically reflect different parts of engagement (see Appendix 1). First, NICs may continue to support ongoing and future negotiations under the AfCFTA, including Phase II Protocols, by coordinating national inputs across ministries. Second, they oversee implementation by aligning domestic policies, regulations and procedures with AfCFTA commitments and by monitoring the operation of tools such as the NTB mechanism. Third, they play a facilitative role in addressing specific constraints, whether related to standards, certification, customs processes or market access.

In Mozambique, for example, revisions to the NIC's mandate explicitly clarified its coordination role while preserving implementation responsibilities within line ministries. This distinction has helped reduce institutional friction while strengthening accountability.

4.3 Resourcing the NIC

A consistent finding across countries is that NICs without dedicated resources struggle to operate beyond periodic meetings. Current best practice therefore emphasises the need for a small but permanent secretariat, which could be referred to as an NCO, to handle day-to-day coordination, documentation and follow-up.

Countries with operational NICs have generally assigned a senior coordinator with sufficient standing to engage across government, supported by a small team. Ghana's NCO represents one of the more developed models, though several other countries operate leaner secretariats embedded within ministries of trade. What matters less than size is clarity of responsibility and continuity.

Financing arrangements vary, but government budget allocations remain the most reliable source of funding. Development partner support, including, notably, from ODI Global and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), has played a complementary role in many cases, particularly for capacity-building and early implementation. Some NICs, such as Ghana's, have also worked

with private sector partners to finance outreach and awareness activities.

4.4 Robust performance framework

Current best practice highlights M&E as a core NIC function, yet this remains unevenly implemented across countries. NICs that rely on informal reporting often struggle to maintain momentum or identify bottlenecks early.

More effective approaches have linked NIC work programmes directly to national AfCFTA strategies and action plans, using a limited set of indicators to track progress. Nigeria, for instance, has developed internal monitoring arrangements to follow implementation milestones, while Rwanda integrates AfCFTA monitoring into broader trade and industrial policy reviews.

Crucially, performance frameworks that focus on outcomes – such as utilisation of preferences, resolution of NTBs or reduced clearance times – have proven more useful than those tracking activities alone. Regular review cycles allow NICs to adjust priorities and sequencing as implementation unfolds.

4.5 Mechanisms for inclusive private sector engagement

Private sector engagement is treated in best practices not as a supporting activity but as a central pillar of implementation. In practice, however, engagement has often been ad hoc, particularly where NICs lack structured consultation mechanisms.

Countries that have made progress have institutionalised engagement through formal representation on committees or TWGs, supplemented by sector-specific consultations. Nigeria's use of business associations during ratification and early implementation illustrates how structured engagement can help surface practical constraints and build buy-in.

Several NICs have also begun to differentiate engagement channels, recognising that MSMEs, women-led enterprises and informal traders face distinct challenges. This aligns with the AfCFTA's broader inclusivity objectives and has helped ground implementation in commercial realities.

4.6 Monitoring, evaluation and adaptive learning

Finally, experience suggests NICs are most effective when treated as evolving coordination mechanisms rather than fixed institutional designs. Periodic reviews of mandates, structures and work plans – recommended in the guide's readiness checklist – have helped some countries adjust to changing implementation needs.

In The Gambia and Mozambique, stocktaking exercises have been used to reassess priorities, refine TWG structures and strengthen

links with the AfCFTA Secretariat. This iterative approach reflects the reality that AfCFTA implementation is a long-term process requiring learning and adaptation.

Taken together, these experiences point to a clear conclusion: effective NICs are defined less by form than by function. Where mandates are clear, resources modest but reliable, performance tracked and stakeholders meaningfully engaged, NICs have proven capable of turning continental commitments into national action.

5 Conclusions and proposed recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

This report has examined Egypt's preparedness to implement the AfCFTA through the lens of its NIC. The analysis shows that Egypt enters the AfCFTA with significant institutional strengths: a strong trade facilitation apparatus, early participation in the GTI, an established system for issuing CoOs and a broadly inclusive NIC mandate anchored in ministerial authority. These foundations reflect sustained political commitment and place Egypt among the more operationally ready State Parties.

At the same time, the study finds structural and operational gaps continue to constrain the NIC's effectiveness as a coordination and delivery mechanism. While coordination functions are being carried out in practice – largely through the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade and its AFTS – these efforts are not yet consolidated within a fully activated, regularly convened NIC. The absence of detailed, operational ToR or rules of procedure, limited dedicated resourcing, irregular plenary meetings and the lack of a National AfCFTA Implementation Strategy weaken institutional coherence and reduce predictability for both public and private stakeholders.

The evidence also points to a disconnect between Egypt's strong technical engagement at the continental level and more limited domestic diffusion of AfCFTA knowledge and support. Private sector awareness is uneven, use of AfCFTA preferences is still narrow and firms lack a clear, centralised point of reference on market access, rules of origin and operational procedures. If these gaps are not addressed, the AfCFTA risks remaining a largely bureaucratic mechanism rather than becoming a driver of export diversification, firm upgrading and deeper integration into African markets.

Overall, the conclusion is clear: Egypt does not face a problem of institutional absence but one of institutional activation, alignment and prioritisation. Strengthening the NIC is therefore less about creating new structures than it is about making existing ones work together more systematically, with clearer mandates and better and dedicated resourcing.

5.2 Recommendations

Building on the assessment, the following recommendations outline a practical pathway to strengthen Egypt's NIC. They are organised around the core pillars: mandate, capacity, engagement and performance, with an emphasis on measures that are realistic within existing institutional arrangements.

1. Formalise and activate the NIC's operational mandate

The NIC's legal foundation should be translated into a clear operational framework that reflects its shift from a negotiation support role to one centred on implementation oversight. This requires the development and formal adoption of a detailed ToR or RoP.

These should explicitly mandate the NIC to oversee the preparation and execution of a National AfCFTA Implementation Strategy, coordinate the domestication of all AfCFTA Protocols – covering goods, services, investment and digital trade – and act as the authoritative national interface for reporting and follow-up with the AfCFTA Secretariat (Appendix 1 shows that this represents a normal requirement and content of ToRs of NICs in other countries). To support delivery, the mandate should establish a tiered structure of TWGs focused on priority themes such as market access, NTBs, services and private sector engagement, allowing sustained technical coordination without overburdening the plenary committee.

2. Invest in dedicated coordination capacity

Effective coordination requires continuity and clear ownership. A small, full-time secretariat or National Coordination Office should therefore be established within the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade to support the NIC.

This unit should be staffed with dedicated personnel, led by a senior coordinator responsible for driving the NIC and TWG agendas, ensuring follow-up on decisions, maintaining institutional memory and acting as the focal point for interagency coordination. The objective is not to create a large new bureaucracy but to ensure AfCFTA coordination is a primary responsibility rather than an additional task absorbed into already stretched roles.

3. Institutionalise structured private sector engagement

To translate AfCFTA commitments into commercial outcomes, private sector engagement must move beyond ad hoc consultations. Representation of the private sector should be formally embedded and institutionalised within the NIC's TWGs. These arrangements should be complemented by a proactive communications approach, including the development of a centralised AfCFTA information portal hosted by the ministry. Such a platform would provide exporters with clear, practical guidance on applicable tariffs, rules of origin, eligible

markets and procedures, helping reduce uncertainty and improve utilisation of AfCFTA preferences.

4. Implement a light-touch but rigorous performance framework

M&E should be integrated into the NIC's routine operations through a simple but effective performance framework. Rather than it being a complex framework, the focus should be on a small number of indicators that capture both institutional effectiveness and implementation outcomes. Performance indicators should be structured at two levels: those to assess the performance of the NIC itself in terms of its functions and activities, and those to evaluate country-wide efforts to implement the AfCFTA.

Key indicators could include meeting regularity, follow-up on agreed actions, resolution of NTB complaints, utilisation of AfCFTA CoOs and measures of private sector awareness. Responsibility for maintaining a basic M&E dashboard and producing concise periodic (e.g. quarterly) progress notes should sit with the Secretariat or a dedicated M&E-focused TWG. This would allow the NIC to identify bottlenecks early and adjust priorities as implementation evolves.

5. Secure predictable resourcing and leverage partnerships

Sustained effective NIC functionality depends on predictable financing. Core operational costs should be anchored within the national budget, through a dedicated budget line under the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade.

At the same time, targeted engagement with development partners should be pursued to support specific needs – such as capacity-building, awareness campaigns and digital tools – where external support can add value. Any such assistance should be aligned with the NIC's national structure and priorities, reinforcing rather than substituting domestic coordination arrangements.

Taken together, these measures could strengthen the NIC's ability to enhance its activities.

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Appendix 1 Functions of six African NICs

10 best practice functions	Egypt	Rwanda	Tanzania	Uganda	The Gambia	Mozambique
AfCFTA Secretariat and ODI (Sehabizi et al., 2023)	NIC functions and mandate as outlined in Ministerial Decree. 39 of 2021	Proposed functions in draft NIC ToR 2024	Draft ToR of AfCFTA NIC, August 2023	Proposed functions in draft NIC ToR, December 2023; draft AfCFTA implementation strategy	AfCFTA NIC ToR 2024/25	Proposed revision of Decree creating NTFC (2024), Art. 3 and Art. 6
1. Facilitate implementation, and advise and lobby government around policy reforms necessary for proper implementation of AfCFTA commitments	The NIC acts as Egypt's central coordination mechanism for AfCFTA implementation. It oversees compliance with AfCFTA obligations, facilitates trade liberalisation and the removal of NTBs and fosters coordinated stakeholder engagement to translate continental commitments into national policies and actions.	Align Rwanda's trade and economic policies with objectives of AfCFTA. Develop and implement measures to simplify customs procedures, reduce trade barriers and enhance trade facilitation mechanisms to promote seamless trade within AfCFTA.	Oversee and coordinate effective implementation of AfCFTA provisions Develop strategies to reduce or eliminate trade barriers to facilitate movement of goods and services within AfCFTA framework. Work with relevant authorities to streamline trade procedures, documentation and customs processes.	Advise on national trade policy implementation priorities Propose reforms in trade policy regulatory framework in relation to AfCFTA.	Support and advise government to leverage opportunities offered by AfCFTA through projects and programmes. Leverage political will to ensure stakeholder buy-in.	Coordinate and propose necessary actions for implementation of TFA and the establishment of the AfCFTA and other relevant activities to make the process of import, export and transit of goods more efficient, transparent and less costly. Ensure interinstitutional coordination to guarantee implementation.
2. Monitor and evaluate policies and projects to support AfCFTA implementation	The NIC has not yet established a formal M&E framework to systematically track	Establish a robust M&E framework to track progress of implementation process, identify	Establish mechanisms for monitoring implementation of AfCFTA-related	Coordinate follow-up on implementation of decisions at regional and	Monitor compliance in implementation of AfCFTA Agreement.	Monitor and supervise compliance with provisions of TFA and AfCFTA Agreement.

10 best practice functions	Egypt	Rwanda	Tanzania	Uganda	The Gambia	Mozambique
	AfCFTA implementation milestones.	challenges and propose corrective measures.	policies and measures. Regularly evaluate impact of AfCFTA implementation on trade volumes, economic growth and job creation. Adjust strategies based on monitoring results to ensure effective implementation and address emerging challenges.	multilateral levels (in ToR). M&E (in strategy).		Ensure execution of activities necessary to comply with Strategic Plan and CNFC Activity Plan, and implementation and monitoring of AfCFTA National Strategy and its Action Plan, within established deadlines, holding institutions that make up the Committee accountable.
3. Report on activities and plans and monitor and evaluate activities of NIC itself	Although the NIC is mandated to prepare periodic reports on AfCFTA implementation, in practice it has not adopted a structured approach to reporting on its activities or to evaluating its own performance.	Prepare regular reports on progress of implementation process and submit to relevant authorities.	Included only under the eight proposed functions of national steering committee.	Report to NIC on progress of implementation of agreed action plans.	M&E	Provide information to government on process of implementation of TFA and establishment of AfCFTA.
4. Raise awareness (communication)	Despite limited resources, the NIC Secretariat (AFTS at Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade), has conducted targeted, sector-specific outreach. These have mainly consisted of technically focused virtual workshops and bilateral consultations with export councils, chambers of commerce and the Federation of Egyptian Industries, in response to private sector requests.		Assess level of awareness, develop and implement capacity-building programmes, disseminate information about AfCFTA.	Secretariat to disseminate reports, manage communication and undertake M&E of implementation and all AfCFTA-related technical work.	Support AfCFTA communications and AfCFTA national sensitisation campaign.	Disseminate information on WTO FTA and the AfCFTA in liaison with the private sector.

10 best practice functions	Egypt	Rwanda	Tanzania	Uganda	The Gambia	Mozambique
5. Coordinate and, where appropriate, implement donor activities and capacity-building events	The NIC does not currently coordinate or implement donor-funded activities or capacity-building events owing to resource and capacity constraints.	Identify capacity gaps and develop training programmes to enhance skills and knowledge of relevant stakeholders on AfCFTA and its implications. Mobilise internal and external financial resources for implementation of AfCFTA strategy and other related measures/actions.	Included only under eight proposed functions of national steering committee.	NIC to provide guidance for studies and consultations.	Mobilise resources for AfCFTA Strategy implementation.	Monitor implementation of technical and financial assistance and ensure coordination with other activities aimed at trade facilitation and continental free trade.
6. Develop plans and strategies for AfCFTA implementation	The NIC has not developed an official strategy for AfCFTA implementation or for boosting intra-African trade. However, it has played a domestic coordination role by identifying products and companies for participation in pilot shipments and ensuring the necessary legal instruments, including tariff reductions and customs instructions, are in place. AFTS plays a broader strategic role by contributing efforts that expand Egypt's presence in African markets and by ensuring AfCFTA opportunities are integrated into national development priorities, including the		Harmonise policies, regulations and procedures to facilitate trade, eliminate barriers and promote economic growth and development in line with AfCFTA goals. Identify existing trade policies, regulations and laws that need to be aligned with AfCFTA provisions; roadmap for policy harmonisation. Propose necessary amendments to policies and regulations to ensure compliance	Develop actions plans in AfCFTA implementation strategy.	Provide support in sector strategy development and implementation.	

10 best practice functions	Egypt	Rwanda	Tanzania	Uganda	The Gambia	Mozambique
	National Export Development Strategy (which targets \$145 billion in exports by 2030) and the Egypt's Engagement within Africa Strategy.		with AfCFTA requirements.			
7. Enable meaningful collaboration with private sector	The NIC is tasked with raising private sector awareness and organising national workshops and awareness sessions, often in collaboration with the AfCFTA Secretariat. Through AFTS (NIC Secretariat), it also helps the private sector address any challenges encountered in trading under the AfCFTA. Additionally, the NIC serves as the official platform for aligning stakeholders on AfCFTA implementation and policy positions.	Engage with relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector, civil society and academia, to ensure their active participation and contribution to implementation process.	Engage with private sector organisations and associations to understand their needs, challenges and opportunities under AfCFTA. Develop initiatives to encourage private sector participation in cross-border trade, investment and joint ventures. Facilitate creation of networks and platforms that connect Tanzanian businesses with potential partners across the continent.	Membership of NIC committees includes private sector.		No specific task.
8. Ensure inclusiveness	The NIC comprises approximately 24 entities from government stakeholders and business associations representing the private sector, ensuring broad representation in the implementation of Egypt's AfCFTA obligations. It includes key technical bodies within the Ministry	Engage with relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector, civil society and academia, to ensure their active participation and contribution to implementation process.	Included only under eight proposed functions of national steering committee.		Support mainstreaming of gender and youth in trade development.	

10 best practice functions	Egypt	Rwanda	Tanzania	Uganda	The Gambia	Mozambique
	of Investment and Foreign Trade and specialised regulatory agencies. Additionally, the NIC includes representation from MSMEDA and NCW. Private sector engagement is ensured through major umbrella business associations, including the Federation of Egyptian Industries, the Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce and the Egyptian Businessmen's Association. While membership is defined by Decree No. 39/2021, additional institutions may be invited to participate on an ad hoc basis when specialised or crosscutting expertise is required.					
9. Support formulation of country positions in trade negotiations	AFTS, as the NIC Secretariat and NFP, leads the coordination of Egypt's positions across all negotiation phases, covering technical areas including rules of origin, tariff concessions, trade in services and dispute settlement. Prior to formal establishment of the NIC in 2021, this coordination was			Act as a consultative body for developing AfCFTA-related negotiating positions (ToR).	Support preparation and participation of The Gambia AfCFTA negotiating team. Partake in negotiations and deliberations and provide technical advice to government on all	Issue opinions within the framework of the WTO FTA and the AfCFTA.

10 best practice functions	Egypt	Rwanda	Tanzania	Uganda	The Gambia	Mozambique
	conducted through informal, ad hoc consultations with relevant ministries, regulatory bodies and private sector stakeholders. Following establishment of the NIC, these consultative processes were gradually integrated into its framework, even though the NIC did not convene frequently as a full committee. AFTS refers technical matters to the competent authorities for input, consolidates these inputs, and, in its role as Egypt's NFP to the AfCFTA Secretariat and as a core member of the national negotiation team, represents Egypt in high-level institutional forums such as STO and CoM meetings.				AfCFTA-related matters.	
10. Provide interface between AfCFTA Secretariat and country	The NIC serves as the formal interface with the AfCFTA Secretariat and the AU Commission. It is empowered to provide substantive updates during official meetings and to maintain continuous communication on implementation and follow-up matters.				Support preparation and submission of relevant AfCFTA notification requirements.	Maintain contact with the Secretariats of WTO and AfCFTA on matters relating to trade facilitation and continental free trade.

10 best practice functions	Egypt	Rwanda	Tanzania	Uganda	The Gambia	Mozambique
	In this role, Egypt actively participates in the AfCFTA NIC Focal Points Meetings organised by the AfCFTA Secretariat. A core function of the NIC is to coordinate Egypt's preparation for AfCFTA institutional meetings, including the CoM, the Committee of STOs and technical committees. Through the NIC Secretariat (AFTS), agendas and relevant documents, including draft protocols, are circulated to NIC members, inputs are consolidated and national positions are shaped. Following these meetings, AFTS disseminates outcomes to government entities and business associations, ensuring continuous pre-meeting coordination and post-meeting communication.					

Source: AfCFTA Secretariat, ODI Global support on NICs 2023–2025 and this report