COMESA developed the Aid for Trade Strategy on the background of the adoption of the Aid for Trade (AfT) Initiative at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which was announced at the Hong Kong WTO Ministerial Meeting in December 2005. The overall objective of the Aid for Trade Strategy is to contribute to the impact, efficiency and effectiveness of COMESA Member States’ trade reforms and regional integration initiatives so that they can fully benefit from regional and international trade opportunities to reduce poverty and to achieve their MDG development objectives. The strategy was developed following the decision of the COMESA EAC SADC Tripartite Summit of September 2008. The strategy was formally adopted at the COMESA Council meeting of June 2009.

The strategy has two distinct, but coherent specific objectives which are:

- Coherent packages of inter-related investments in trade related infrastructures; trade development and trade facilitation instruments; and trade regulatory measures which allow the private sector of the COMESA Member States to reduce the regional costs of doing business with and within the COMESA region and
- COMESA Member States have access to mechanisms to address trade and integration related adjustments, including social costs.

**What is Aid for Trade?**

Aid for trade refers to development assistance that is seen as promoting international trade and a number of international initiatives to promote trade-related development assistance. Therefore, aid for trade comprises aid that finances trade-related technical assistance, trade-related infrastructure, and aid to develop productive capacity.

**Why Aid for Trade?**

Trade is an important engine of growth but it was realized that market access alone would not be sufficient to bring about the benefits of trade to developing countries as these countries face many internal constraints.

**Aid for Trade Categories**

Following the initiative an Aid for Trade Task force set up under the WTO came up with the following AfT categories:

- Trade policy and regulations
- Trade development
- Trade-related infrastructure
COMESA and the Aid for Trade Strategy

Written by Dick Elleray

- Building productive capacity
- Trade-related adjustments