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To whom it may concern

The Assessing Regional Integration in Africa (ARIA) report is a flagship joint-publication of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank, and the African Union Commission. The ninth edition of this report is additionally co-published with UNCTAD. It is on the topic of the next steps for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and involves research into the topics of the upcoming AfCFTA Phase II negotiations on competition policy, intellectual property rights and investment, as well as an assessment of issues emanating from the Phase I negotiations and the case for whether e-commerce should be treated as an additional Phase II negotiating topic.

A series of Experts Group Meetings (EGM) were held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 16 to 27th July to bring experts together for refining the conceptual approaches and initiating work on the ARIA IX report.

The ARIA IX research led-towards an experts' group meeting in Addis Ababa, from 12 to 15th November, to begin work on draft protocols for the AfCFTA Phase II issues. These draft protocols would serve as an input into, and the basis of, the AfCFTA Phase II negotiations that will commence in early 2019.

Draft chapters of the ARIA report were then assessed at a subsequent EGM in Addis Ababa, on November 16, 17 and 19th.

Issues of competition policy overlap closely with consumer protection. For this reason, CUTS were invited to each of the above meetings. Mr Pradeep Mehta represented CUTS in these meetings, and in this capacity provided highly valuable inputs that changed both the content of the ARIA report and the draft AfCFTA protocols. The meetings were able to benefit from the breadth of experience Pradeep brought from an international context. In particular, both the report and the protocols now take into due account scope for consumer protection issues.

David Luke


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