

***LIBREVILLE, November 8 (Infosplusgabon) - A year-to-date progress report on the Program's primary activities and strategic initiatives was released on Monday by the Arab-Africa Trade Bridges Program (AATB Program), a multi-donor, multi-country, and multi-organizations program that aims to promote and increase trade and investment flows between African and Arab OIC Member Countries.***

With the mandate of driving regional economic integration between African and Arab regions and strengthening SME export development across key sectors, the AATB Program has become an instrumental tool for establishing stronger partnerships between Arab and African countries. The Program facilitates projects of common interest for the pursuit of economic growth opportunities among both region's companies.

So far this year, the AATB Program has seen an acceleration of in-country activities designed to facilitate trade and investment by supporting key sectors and industries.

The Arab Republic of Egypt: The AATB Country Program in Egypt is promoting the movement of trade exchange and joint investments at the regional and global levels between Egypt and the rest of the Arab and African countries. The program is also supporting trade and export in the Arab and African economies, through financing and export credit insurance for Egyptian exports to African markets to increase Egyptian foreign trade and investments in Africa.

The Export Incubator Program (EIP): Additionally, the AATB Program partnered with the Egyptian Exporters Association (Expolink) to organize an export dedicated incubator program for over 60 entrepreneurs and SMEs. The incubator program offered a comprehensive export platform that ranged from incubation services, training and facilitating access to finance and other market linkages.

Republic of Tunisia: In January 2022, the AATB Program and the Republic of Tunisia signed the 2022-2023 Country Program, aimed at developing a cooperation framework to implement a mutually agreed list of interventions on trade and investment. The Program builds capacity

among Tunisian companies to grow foreign trade volumes and supports Tunisian institutions import basic and strategic materials such as gas and grains.

The Financing of Investment and Trade in Africa (FITA 2022): The AATB Program sponsored the FITA conference held in Tunisia on 25-26 May 2022. The conference brought together African and local executives, and decisionmakers including African investors, CEOs, heads of pan-African and international financial institutions, international cooperation entities and trade ministers. FITA focused on strengthening the trading environment and increasing financing techniques to expand intra-African trade and investment.

In the year-to-date, AATB's Harmonization of Pharmaceutical initiative has continued its remarkable progress in synchronizing African standards for pharmaceuticals and medical devices thereby enhancing intra-African trade potential. In partnership with The African Organization for Standardization (ARSO), the harmonization initiative approved 99 standards for adoption and identified 13 new and unique standards for the region to harmonize, resulting in the following:

68 international standards were approved for adoption and 8 unique standards were published under Medicinal devices and equipment;

31 international standards were approved for adoption and 5 unique standards under Pharmaceutical and medicinal products were developed.

Several stakeholder workshops were held throughout 2022 in countries such as Burundi, Congo Brazzaville, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Senegal. These workshop events supported the harmonization of African standards for pharmaceuticals and medical devices to enhance trade and investment within Africa's healthcare industry and boost the manufacture of high-quality homegrown products and services. Other stakeholder meetings were held at major events such as the ARSO General Assembly, which was convened in Cameroon.

The fourth quarter of 2022 is expected to be an intense period with an acceleration of in-country support activities leading up to the 4th AATB Board of Governors Meeting, which will be held Tunisia on December 1, 2022. The Board Meeting will provide further guidance on how the Program continues to make progress in a world that is facing considerable challenges. Equally

important, the Board Meeting will showcase how the Program can play an active role in alleviating the impact of these challenges.

A Roundtable on “Towards accelerated sustainable trade flows between Africa and Arab in the AFCFTA Era” is scheduled to take place in the sideline of the African Union Summit on Industrialization and Economic Diversification, on 20-25 November 2022 in Niamey, Niger.

The objectives of these discussions are, among others, to generate high level dialogue and facilitate important exchange on potential partnerships and alliances in the Pharmaceutical sector, in addition to the importance of standardization in enhancing Trade and Investment in the field.

The Arab Africa Trade Bridges (AATB) Program is leading efforts to organize business matching events between the Arab and African Businesspersons for the strategic sectors in both regions. These sectors are targeted as they were identified as those that have strong potential in increasing trade and investment between Arab and Africa regions.

The organization of the B2Bs will be an opportunity to highlight the huge potential of the Arab and African Markets in the food sector and to establish business relationships between the operators from both regions.

FIN/INFOSPLUSGABON/KLJ/GABON2022