

Africa free-trade vision clouded by virus and pace of talks



Kigali, July 3 (RHC)-- An historic deal to smash down tariff barriers within Africa is being braked by the coronavirus pandemic and a thicket of negotiating problems.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was formally launched just over a year ago in a blaze of optimism, based out of Kigali, Rwanda.

The accord aims to phase out all tariffs on commerce on the continent, a goal that backers say could give trade a mega-jolt as only 15 percent of trade by African nations is with continental neighbours.

It was supposed to take operational effect on Wednesday, July 1st, but the timeline has slipped, under the complications caused by the COVID-19 outbreak but also the slow pace of negotiations themselves.

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