<u>The Fair Trade International Symposium 2026 (“FTIS”) – University of Cologne, Germany</u>

Panel Proposal submitted by:

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1. <u>Thematic Stream</u>: Dynamics in International Trade and in Fair Trade Supply Chains

2. <u>Proposed Panel Topic</u>: *The AfCFTA as a Regulatory Bloc: Navigating EU Due Diligence Laws for African Fair Trade Supply Chains*

3. <u>Short Description</u>: This panel explores whether the African Continental Free Trade Agreement’s (“**AfCFTA**”) legal framework can shield African fair trade producers from the “compliance burdens” of the CSDDD and EUDR, or if it will create new risks of “market exclusion” and “green protectionism” for small-scale producers.

4. <u>Abstract</u>: The FTIS theme highlights the “unpredictable dynamics” of “sustainability-oriented trade regulations” and their complex “impact on producers in the Global South”. This panel directly confronts this tension by examining the critical legal and policy intersection of two major forces: the rise of the AfCFTA and the proliferation of external due diligence laws from the Global North, such as the EU’s Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (“**CSDDD**”) and Deforestation Regulation (“**EUDR**”).

   While well-intentioned, these regulations pose challenges to producers, often leaving the costs and hurdles for compliance to small-scale producers. This creates a significant risk of “market exclusion”. Our panel asks: Can the AfCFTA's legal protocols (e.g., on Rules of Origin and trade facilitation) serve as a unified regulatory shield? Or will they inadvertently create a competing layer of bureaucracy, “further pressuring the most marginalized group”?

   Bringing together scholars and practitioners, this session will analyze: (1) the legal pathways for harmonizing AfCFTA standards with EU compliance demands; (2) the potential for the AfCFTA bloc to legally challenge perceived “green protectionism”; and (3) how “new and old power dynamics in value chains” are shaped by competing supranational legal frameworks. This discussion is vital for understanding the future governance of fair and sustainable supply chains.

5. <u>Keywords</u>: #AfCFTA, #EU Due Diligence (EUDR/CSDDD), #Green Protectionism, Supply Chain Law, #Fair Trade Governance, #Market Access, #Global South Agency.

6. About Panel Members

   Dennis Agelebe: Dr. Agelebe is a respected and experienced instructor and professor, having taught at Berlin International University of Applied Sciences, Germany, and Jindal Global University, India. He holds a Doctor of Laws (Dr.iur) in Environment and International Trade Law from the University of Cologne, Germany, and a Master of Laws (LL.M.) from Charles University in Prague, the Czech Republic.

   Dr. Agelebe is an Associate Member of the Global South Studies Center at the University of Cologne. Since 2021, he has served as a senior research fellow at the Environmental Law Centre, University of Cologne, and was an adjunct lecturer for the International Master of Environmental Science Program until the winter term of 2024. His specialized research in Environment and International Trade Law provides the deep theoretical expertise needed to analyze the legal compatibility between the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and external sustainability mandates like the EUDR.

   His direct work experience includes leading a United Nations Development Fund-funded project in Berlin, where he helped the policy consulting firm SD Strategies undertake a study on derisking investment in renewable energy. This practical experience directly addresses the conference's interest in investment flows and the sustainability dimensions of supply chains. Dr. Agelebe continues this focus through his ongoing Cologne International Forum-funded fellowship and his just-concluded Queen Elizabeth II Fellowship at the University of Ottawa, studying the digitalization of the integration of renewable energy, which is critical to modern, traceable supply chain systems.

   As an avid scholar, Dr. Agelebe has secured competitive research grants from the European Union, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and the University of Cologne. His research articles have been published in several leading international journals, ensuring the panel's discussion is grounded in cutting-edge academic findings.

   Janet Momoh: Janet is an associate lawyer at Osuji & Smith Lawyers, Calgary, Canada. She is admitted to the bars of Alberta (Canada), Sierra Leone, and England & Wales. She holds an LL.B (Hons) from Kingston University London, a PGDip in Bar Professional Training Course from the University of Law, UK, and a Bachelor of Arts in Human Rights from the University of Winnipeg, Canada. Her academic foundation in Human Rights is particularly relevant to supply chain law, as it provides a critical lens for analyzing the efficacy of regulations like the EU's CSDDD (Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive).

   Janet served as State Counsel in Sierra Leone, where she advised the government on commercial and international law matters and represented the government in court and other fora, including complex constitutional and public law cases. Her extensive international trade and investment experience includes negotiating high-stakes contracts and agreements on behalf of the Sierra Leonean government with major institutions like the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Union.

Specifically, she guided government institutions on regulatory compliance and international obligations, an experience that provides direct, invaluable insight into the challenges of implementing global trade and investment rules at the national level. Her work on complex public law and commercial matters is particularly relevant to supply chain regulation, demonstrating expertise in the domestic legal frameworks that underpin international fair trade and investment agreements. Janet's background offers a unique perspective on the intersection of North-South legal instruments (EU/World Bank) and African sovereign interests in the context of emerging trade blocs like the AfCFTA.

Solomon Ezike: Solomon is an associate lawyer in the Corporate and Commercial Group at Dentons Canada LLP and a doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa, Canada. He holds an LL.M. in International Investment, Trade, and Finance Law from American University Washington College of Law and an LL.B. from the University of Calabar., Nigeria

At Dentons, Solomon's practice spans a broad range of corporate, commercial, and regulatory matters, including project finance, mergers and acquisitions, and international investment and trade law. He advises clients on structuring, negotiating, and closing complex transactions and projects. This direct corporate and transactional expertise is vital for analyzing the practical compliance and supply chain structuring challenges posed by the EU Due Diligence laws and the AfCFTA's economic protocols.

Solomon's background in public service includes serving as a consulting counsel with the World Bank in Washington, D.C., where he provided strategic, risk-based advice on resource mobilization and innovative finance mechanisms, an experience highly relevant to derisking sustainable investment in African supply chains. He also worked as a Senior Policy Analyst and Manager of Legislative Planning with the Ministry of Affordability and Utilities of the Government of Alberta. Furthermore, his experience with international arbitration and resolution of cross-border investment and trade disputes provides the necessary legal perspective on how Fair Trade contracts and AfCFTA investment protocols can be enforced. He has acted in high-stakes arbitration cases and worked with binational panels established under the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement at both the Canadian and US Trade Agreement Secretariats.

He is completing his doctoral studies at the University of Ottawa, focusing on the crucial role of international investment law in the context of climate change and energy transition in developing economies. This specialized research provides the academic foundation to discuss the future of sustainable investment and governance within the AfCFTA framework.