



Creating One African Market

# **African Continental Free Trade Area** <<

## **Non-Tariff Barriers**

Reporting, Monitoring and  
Eliminating Mechanism



# **System Manual for Public Users**

September 2019

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) – Creating One African Market

The AfCFTA Agreement was signed on 21 March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda, and it came into force on 30 May 2019. With a population of 1.2 billion, the AfCFTA creates USD 1,3 trillion single continental market for goods and services that is intended to boost intra-Africa trade, economic growth, industrial development, and improve the livelihoods of citizens of the Member States.

To achieve the aforementioned goals and other development objectives, the AfCFTA through its various protocols, addresses issues relating to trade facilitation, movement of business and people, as well as tariff liberalisation. The AfCFTA has successfully negotiated reduction of tariffs to facilitate smooth movement of goods across borders

Today the elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) remains critical to enhance growth in intra-Africa trade. The Agreement provides legal foundation for the elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) and other trade obstacles.

The AfCFTA Agreement creates efficiency in managing and elimination of NTBs for the benefit of:

- facilitate movement of goods across borders,
- smooth transit by transport operators,
- promote cross-border trade by women, youths, exporters, importers thereby increase intra-African trade, and
- improve the livelihoods of all citizens.

Addressing NTBs is provided for in Annex 5 of the AfCFTA Agreement's Protocol on Trade in Goods and is critical for the effective implementation of the Agreement.

## 1.2 What are Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) and how to Eliminate them?

The proliferation and persistence of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) contribute to high costs of doing business and low levels of intra-Africa trade. NTBs comprise of a wide array of obstacles that results from prohibitions, conditions or specific market requirements that make importation or exportation of products difficult and/or costly. NTBs also include unjustified and/or improper application of Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) such as sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and other technical barriers to trade (TBT). AfCFTA negotiators recognized this bottleneck and set out ambitious targets and mechanisms for integration in the AfCFTA.

*Annex 5 of the Protocol on Trade in Goods* establishes a **reporting, monitoring and elimination mechanism** where public and private sector stakeholders can file a complaint on a specific trade obstacle they have encountered during the process of moving goods and services across borders. The complaint is then transmitted to the government of the responsible trading partner to consider/ address to the complaint. If both parties agree on a solution, the complaint is resolved.

## 1.3 How does the AfCFTA Online NTBs Reporting, Monitoring and Elimination Mechanism works?

The AfCFTA online NTBs reporting, monitoring and eliminating mechanism is available online at [www.tradebarriers.africa](http://www.tradebarriers.africa). This real- time web-based NTBs mechanism aims to enhance transparency in identifying and monitoring NTBs, easy follow-up and reduce the amount of time taken by governments to resolve reported and identified NTBs.

The NTBs online mechanism contains the following technical features to enable accurate reporting, effective monitoring and sustainable elimination of identified NTBs in the AfCFTA.

### **1) Reporting NTBs**

Complaints shall be made possible by registered public through the website or SMS (Short/Text Message Service) any time after a specific trade obstacle has been encountered by the complainant. A National Focal Point (reporting country) can submit a complaint on behalf of a complainant.

### **2) Monitoring and Processing NTBs**

The online mechanism allows real-time processing and sharing of information/documents by National Focal Points and the AfCFTA NTBs Coordination Unit. The online mechanism continuously notifies assigned National Focal Points, complainants and the AfCFTA NTBs Coordination Unit of any new comments, changes or updates made to the complaint.

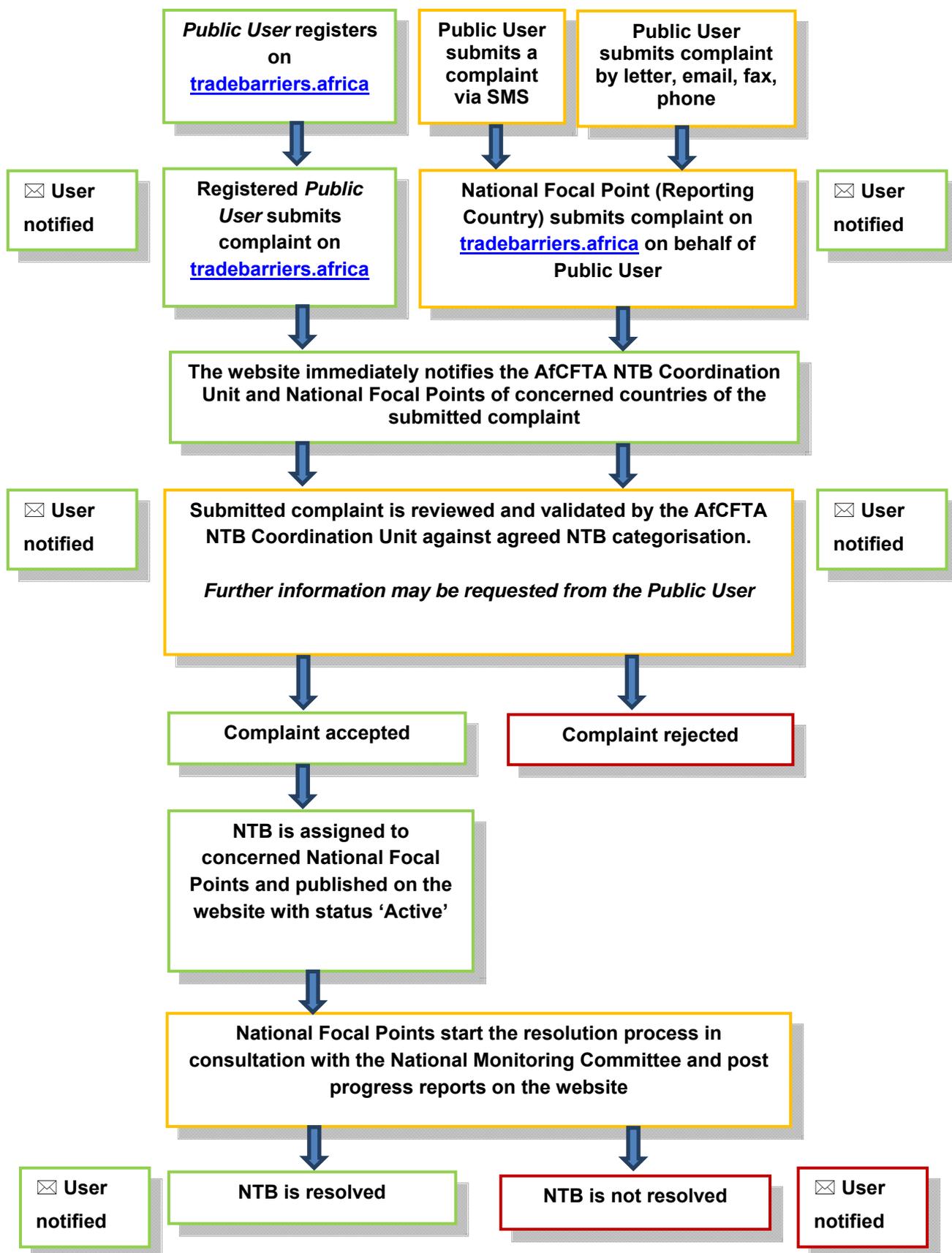
### **3) Resolving and Eliminating NTBs**

Submitted complaints are reviewed and validated by the AfCFTA NTBs Coordination Unit against the AfCFTA NTB categorization. If complaints are accepted as NTBs, the NTBs will be assigned to concerned National Focal Points who will initiate the resolution process with the National Monitoring Committee.

Unresolved complaints will be escalated to the Sub-Committee on NTBs and the Committee on Trade in Goods by the AfCFTA NTBs Coordination Unit.

**The process of Reporting, Monitoring and Processing, Resolving and Eliminating NTB's is illustrated below.**

## NON-TARIFF BARRIERS REPORTING, SUBMISSION, MONITORING AND RESOLUTION PROCESS



## 2 PUBLIC USER ACCESS

The general public can register as users on the AfCFTA NTBs Online Mechanism website at [www.tradebarriers.africa](http://www.tradebarriers.africa) in order to submit and track the process of resolution of reported trade barriers. Public Users can also send complaints through SMS (Short Message Service) for State Parties where the SMS reporting mechanism has been established.

Public users **can**:

- submit online complaints via the website;
- submit complaints via an SMS;
- upload supporting documents;
- receive email updates on the status of their complaints;
- receive SMS updates on the status of their SMS complaints;
- edit their own user profiles on the website; and
- view all active and resolved complaints on the website.

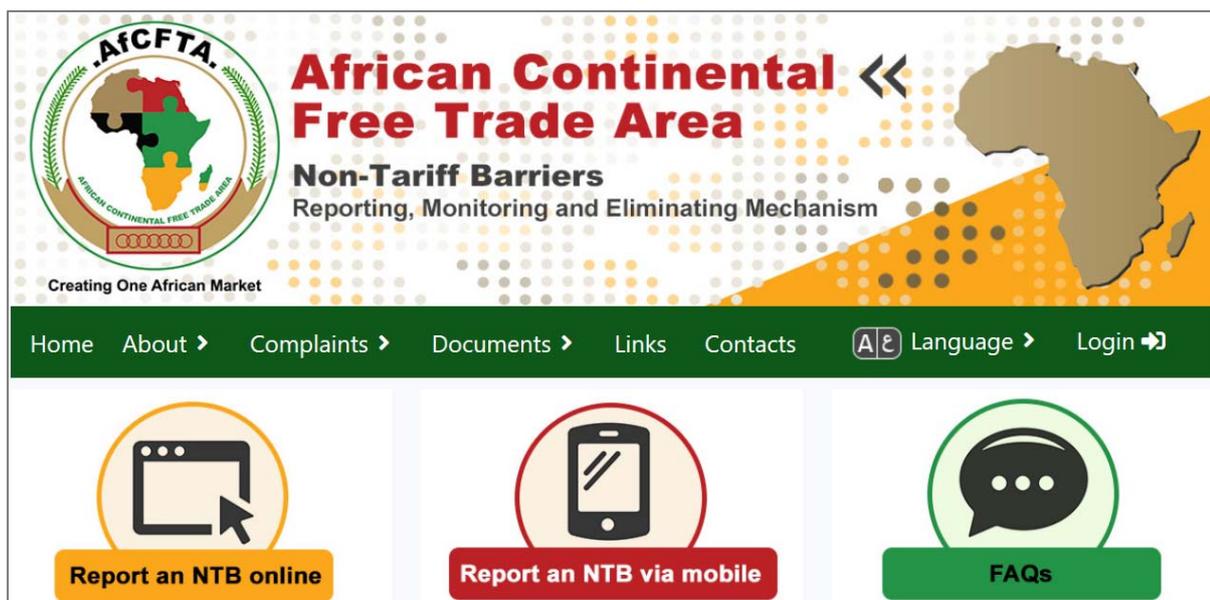
Public users **cannot**:

- edit complaints that they have already submitted.

### 2.1 How to Access the AfCFTA NTBs Online Mechanism

To access the AfCFTA NTBs Online Mechanism website, enter the following URL into the address bar of your browser: <http://tradebarriers.africa>

The home page displays as follows:



## 2.2 How to Register a New User Account

Users must be registered in order to log on to the system to perform any functions relating to submission and tracking of complaints.

### To register an account, follow these steps:

1. Open the website in a browser.
2. Click on the “Login” button (located at the FAR RIGHT of the green menu bar):



3. Click on the “Register” button in the *Register an account* block on the right.

The image shows a user interface with two main sections. The left section is titled 'Login as a registered user' and contains two input fields: 'Email address\*' with an envelope icon and 'Password' with a key icon. Below these fields are two buttons: a yellow 'Reset your password' button and a blue 'Login' button. The right section is titled 'Register an account' and contains a message: 'To submit a trade barrier complaint, you must log in as a registered user. If you do not have an account yet, click on the "Register" button below.' Below this message is a link: 'After you have completed your registration, if you do not receive an activation email within 30 minutes, please check your spam mail folder, or alternatively: [Resend your activation link](#)'. At the bottom of the right section is a green 'Register' button, which is circled in red. A red arrow points from the 'Register' button back to the 'Login' button in the left section.

4. The Registration form will open
5. Complete the Registration form, and click on “Register”.

**i** Please register by completing the form below. Your personal details will not be published on the site and will only be used to request additional information and communicate progress about your submitted complaint.

The system will send you an email containing a link which you can use to activate your account within 30 minutes of registering your account.

If you do not receive the activation email within 30 minutes, check your spam mail.

Register

**Email address\***

**Password\***

**Re-enter your password\***

**First name\***

**Last name\***

What language do you wish to receive emails in?



6. An email containing your **activation link** will be sent to your email address.
7. Click on the link in the email to activate your account.
8. Once your account has been activated, you can log into the website to submit a complaint.

**NOTE:**

- Fields marked with an asterisk (\*) are mandatory
- Users must activate their accounts by clicking on the activation link sent to their email address when registering (please check your Spam folder).
- Users will not be able to log into the website unless their account has been activated.

## 2.3 How to Log in if you have Already Registered

### To login after you have registered, follow these steps:

1. Open the website in a browser.
2. Click on the “**Login**” button (located at the FAR RIGHT of the green menu bar):
3. Fill in your email address and password in the **Login as a registered user** form on the left. And then click the “**Login**” button.
4. You are now logged in.

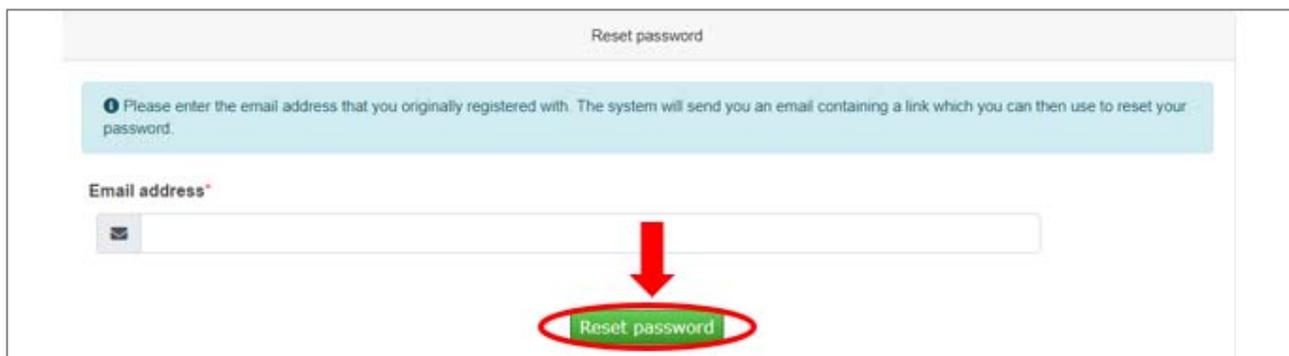
The screenshot shows two side-by-side panels. The left panel, titled "Login as a registered user", contains an "Email address\*" field with an envelope icon, a "Password" field with a key icon, a yellow "Reset your password" button, and a blue "Login" button. A red arrow points down to the "Login" button, which is also circled in red. The right panel, titled "Register an account", contains text: "To submit a trade barrier complaint, you must log in as a registered user. If you do not have an account yet, click on the 'Register' button below." and "After you have completed your registration, if you do not receive an activation email within 30 minutes, please check your spam mail folder, or alternatively: [Resend your activation link](#)". A green "Register" button is at the bottom of this panel.

### If you forgot your password, follow these steps:

1. If you have forgotten your password, follow the steps above and click on the “**Reset your password**” button left of the “**Login**” button

This screenshot is identical to the one above, but with a red arrow pointing to the yellow "Reset your password" button in the "Login as a registered user" form, which is also circled in red. The "Login" button is no longer circled.

2. The **Reset password** form will open:



3. Enter your email address, and click on “**Reset password**”.
4. The system will email a password reset link. Click on the link in the email to reset your password.
5. The link opens a form where you can create a new password. Enter your new password in both fields, and then click “**Change password**”.
6. You will now be able to login using your new password.

### To log out, follow these steps:

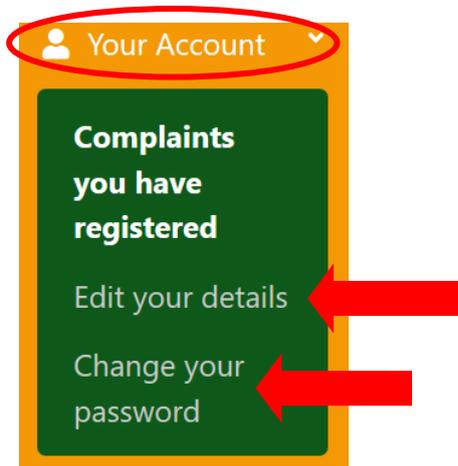
1. Once logged in, the login button and form is no longer visible, and a “**Logout**” button appears at the TOP RIGHT of the screen
2. Click “**Logout**” to end your session:



## 2.4 How to Edit your User Profile

To edit your profile or change your password, follow these steps:

1. Log into the website, using your email address and password.
2. Click on the **Your account** menu link at the TOP LEFT of the screen:



3. To Edit your profile information, click on **Edit your details**, make changes and click the **“Edit your profile”** button to save your changes.
4. To Change your password, click on **Change your password**, provide your old and new passwords and click the **“Change your password”** button to save your changes.

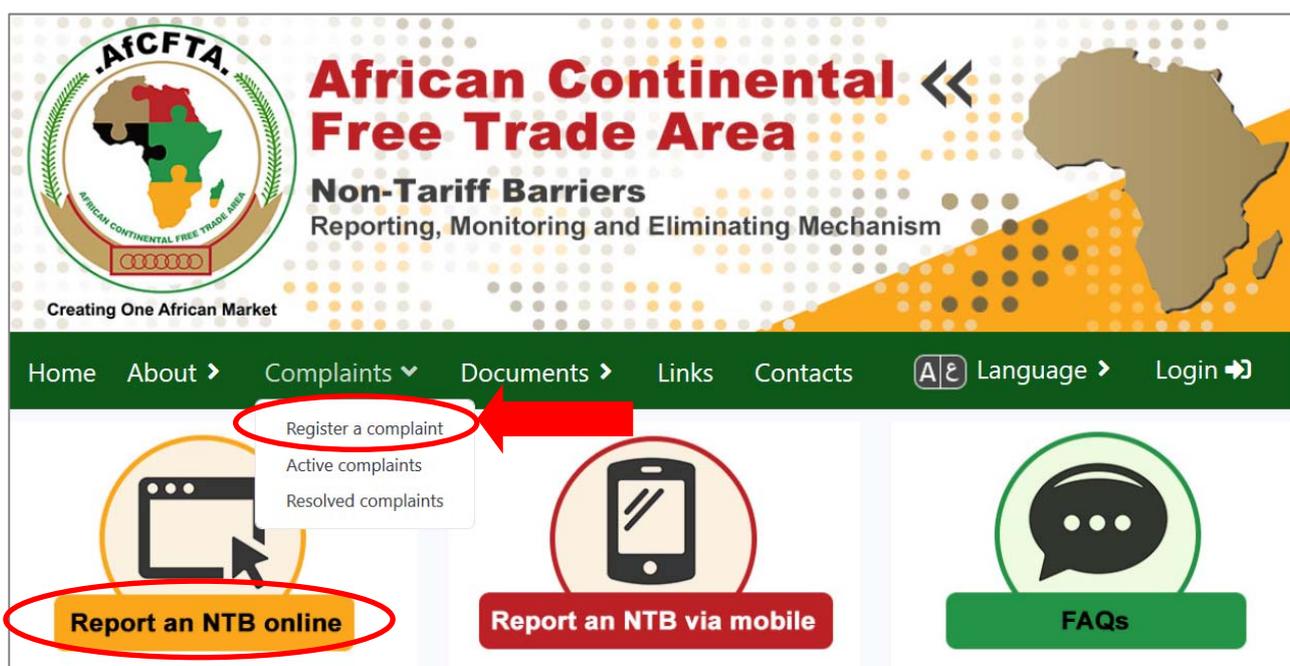
### 3 SUBMITTING AND TRACKING COMPLAINTS

All registered users can submit and track complaints via the AfCFTA NTBs Online Mechanism website. Unique reference numbers are assigned to complaints by the system automatically, on submission.

#### 3.1 How to Submit a Complaint via the Web

To submit a complaint using the website, follow these steps:

1. Log into the website, using your email address and password.
2. Go to the **Complaints** tab in the main menu and then click on **Register a complaint** from the dropdown menu, or simply hit **Report an NTB online** in the middle of the screen:



3. Complete the form on the page that opens by providing as much detail as possible about the complaint. Instructions on how to upload supporting documents are provided in the next section. Once all the information is complete, click the **“Submit your complaint”** button.

## Reporting country

Country or region\*

 -- Select a country or region -- 

## Details of occurrence

 Please provide details of the trade barrier that you have encountered when trading in the AfCFTA.

### Location of the Non-Tariff Barrier

Country or region (Imposing country or region)\*

 Select the country or region in which you have experienced the trade barrier.

 -- Select a country or region -- 

 First select the type of location where the complaint occurred. You will then be able to select the exact location, or type in a description of the location.

- Airport
- Border post
- Seaport
- Government institution
- Non-government institution
- Road block
- Weighbridge
- Other

2

Please specify location.\*

 No items available 

### Description of the Non-Tariff Barrier

**Date of occurrence\***

**Type of Non-Tariff Barrier\***

**Detailed description of trade barrier or incident\***

### Details of affected product

**Product/s tariff code**

*Note that you can either select the relevant code from the "HS code categories" list below, or you can type a code or product name.*

**HS code categories**

01 - 05: Animal & Animal Products
06 - 15: Vegetable Products
16 - 24: Foodstuffs
25 - 27: Mineral Products
28 - 38: Chemicals & Allied Industries
39 - 40: Plastics / Rubbers
41 - 43: Raw Hides, Skins, Leather, & Furs
44 - 49: Wood & Wood Products
50 - 63: Textiles
64 - 67: Footwear / Headgear
68 - 71: Stone / Glass
72 - 83: Metals
84 - 85: Machinery / Electrical
86 - 89: Transportation
90 - 97: Miscellaneous
98 - 99: Service

**Description of product/s\***

**Product value**

Currency

-- Select a currency --

Consignment value (affected by NTB)

Annual trade value (affected by NTB)

**NOTE:**

- You will be prompted to review your profile details and to make changes if necessary.
- All fields marked with an asterisk (\*) must be completed.

## 3.2 How to Upload Supporting Documentation

Users can upload supporting documentation (text and image files) as part of the registration of a complaint. This is highly recommended to facilitate the resolution of the issue.

### To upload a file, follow these steps:

1. Click on “**Choose file**”, then locate the file on your computer
2. Select the file, and click on “**Open**”
3. Provide a description of the file
4. To add additional files, click on “**Add another file**” and repeat the process
5. Files added incorrectly to the form can be removed by clicking “**Remove file**”
6. Files are uploaded and saved when the “**Submit your complaint**” button is clicked.

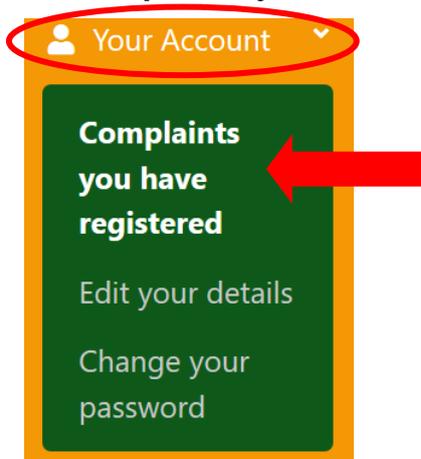
The screenshot shows a web form titled "Supporting documentation". At the top, there is a dark grey header with the title. Below the header is a light blue information box with an information icon and the text: "Please upload any documentation you have which may be relevant to this complaint. If there is no relevant documentation you may leave the fields blank." The form contains a "File" input field with a "Choose File" button and the text "No file chosen". Below this is a "File description" text area. At the bottom left, there is a blue "Add another file" button. At the bottom center, there is a green "Submit your complaint" button. Red circles and arrows highlight the "Choose File" button, the "Add another file" button, and the "Submit your complaint" button.

### 3.3 How to Track your Complaint

Users can track the status of their complaints using the AfCFTA NTBs Online Mechanism website.

#### To track your complaint, follow these steps:

1. Log into the website, using your email address and password.
2. Go to the **Your account** menu at the TOP LEFT of the screen and then click on **Complaints you have registered**:



3. A list of all the **complaints you have submitted** will be displayed
4. Click the blue **"View"** button on the right to see details of a specific complaint

A screenshot of the 'Your complaints' page. The page title is 'Your complaints'. Below the title, it says 'Showing items 1 to 1 of 1'. There is a search bar with the text 'Search list of complaints' and two buttons: 'Go' and 'Clear all'. Below the search bar is a table with the following columns: 'Complaint number', 'NTB Type', 'Date of incident', 'Location', 'Reporting country or region', 'Status', and 'Actions'. The table contains one row with the following data: 'AfcFTA-000-012', '3.1. Technical regulations, and standards including packaging, labelling and marking requirements', '2019-12-01', 'Zimbabwe: Beitbridge', 'South Africa', 'New (not reviewed)', and a blue 'View' button. A red arrow points to the 'View' button. Below the table, there is a section labeled 'Complaint:' with the text 'TEST COMPLAINT'. A red box highlights the 'View' button with the text 'Click here to view details of this complaint'.

5. To search for specific complaints, use any of the following search criteria:

Enter search terms in the **General Search** field **OR**

- a. Sort the "Complaint number" and "Date of incident" columns by clicking on the **column headers** **OR**

- b. **Filter** the remaining columns (NTB Type, Location, Reporting country and Status) by clicking on the filter icon and selecting specific conditions:

**a. General Search:**  
Searches all complaint based on search terms provided

Your complaints

Showing items 1 to 1 of 1

Search list of complaints

Complaint number	NTB Type	Date of incident	Location	Reporting country or region	Status	Actions
AfCFTA-000-012	3.1. Technical regulations, and standards including packaging, labelling and marking requirements	2019-12-01	Zimbabwe: Beitbridge	South Africa	New (not reviewed)	<input type="button" value="View"/>

**b. Sort:**  
Click on the column headers to sort listed complaints.

E.g. Clicking on the 'Date of incident' header will sort the complaints according to date in *ascending* order. Clicking the header again will sort the dates in *descending* order.

Your complaints

Showing items 1 to 1 of 1

Search list of complaints

Complaint number	NTB Type	Date of incident	Location	Reporting country or region	Status	Actions
AfCFTA-000-012	3.1. Technical regulations, and standards including packaging, labelling and marking requirements	2019-12-01				

Complaint: TEST COMPLAINT

Search within list

- New
- Complaint registered with REC
- Escalated to AfCFTA
- In process
- Resolved
- Non-actionable

2. Select the conditions you want to search for. E.g. selecting "Resolved" will search for listed complaints that has been resolved.

3. Click on "Apply Search"

### 3.4 How to Send a Complaint via SMS/Text message

#### STEP 1: Getting the SMS number

To send a complaint to the system via an SMS or text message, the user must first know the specific country's SMS number they want to send the complaint to.

Each country's SMS number is available on the AfCFTA NTBs Online Mechanism website and it may include country specific Coordinating Ministries, Cross Border Traders and other Associations:

[https://tradebarriers.africa/sms\\_details](https://tradebarriers.africa/sms_details)

Select the country from the dropdown and the appropriate number will appear below:

The image shows a screenshot of the AfCFTA website. The header features the AfCFTA logo and the text "African Continental Free Trade Area" and "Non-Tariff Barriers Reporting, Monitoring and Eliminating Mechanism". Below the header is a navigation menu with "Home", "About", "Complaints", "Documents", "Links", and "Contacts". There are also "Language" and "Login" options. Below the navigation menu are three main buttons: "Report an NTB online", "Report an NTB via mobile" (circled in red), and "FAQs". Below these buttons is a section titled "Select a country to get specific SMS information". On the left, there is a dropdown menu with "Kenya" selected. On the right, there is a light blue box with the text "Kenya" and "SMS Number: +XX XXX XXX XXXX". Red arrows point from the dropdown menu to the "Kenya" box and from the "SMS Number" text to the dropdown menu.

## STEP 2: Sending an SMS

1. Type the details of your complaint in a new **SMS/text message** on your mobile phone

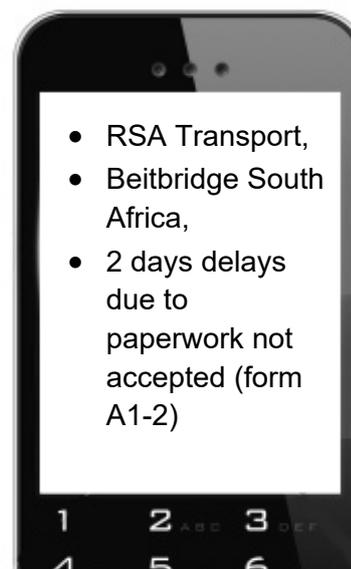
2. Provide the following information in your message (not providing these fields may result in your complaint being rejected):

- Detailed **location** of the incident
- Your **company's name** or **Name of Trader**
- The name of a **contact person** at your company
- **Email address** of a contact person



3. Traders will be required to answer the following questions:

- Who you are – (Name of Trader)
- Where you are – (Place/Location)
- What is the problem? (Explain the problem in detail)



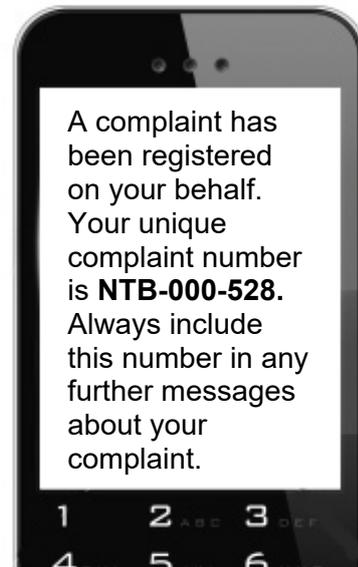
4. **Send your message to the relevant country's SMS number**

5. The system will send back a message confirming that your complaint was received and remind you to provide all the required information to register your complaint

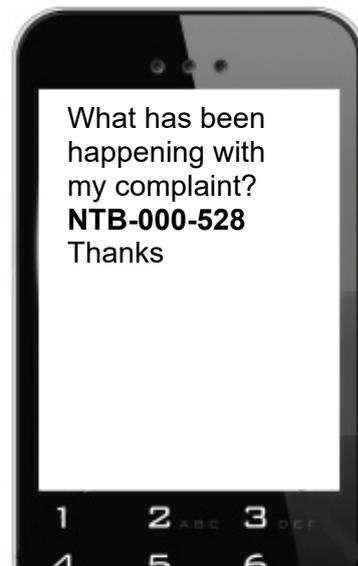
6. An assigned country Focal Point will be notified of your message.

7. They will send you follow-up questions if necessary to find out more about your complaint.

8. **Answer their questions by simply replying to their messages and pressing 'Send'.**
9. Once they have enough information, they will **submit an NTB complaint on your behalf.**
10. The system will automatically send you a message with your **complaint's NTB number** as shown on the right:



11. When sending any more messages about this complaint, always add your **complaint number** to it, as shown on the right:



## 4 SUPPORT

Please do not hesitate to contact the AfCFTA NTBs Coordination Unit / Focal Points if you need any assistance in using the website at [support@tradebarriers.africa](mailto:support@tradebarriers.africa).

To access the help page, click on the “**Help**” button (located at the bottom left of each page).

### Assistance / Help

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need any assistance in using this website.

E-mail: [support@tradebarriers.africa](mailto:support@tradebarriers.africa)

 Download the user manual for this site here:

-  English manual
-  French manual
-  Arabic manual
-  Portuguese manual

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