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News Worth Knowing

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Nigeria has confirmed that it [will sign the African Continental Free Trade Area](#) (AfCFTA) agreement at a regional summit in Niger on July 7. It's taken more than a year to come around to the idea of joining the initiative, which is being touted as the solution to Africa's long-standing problem of limited integration.

Having Africa's biggest economy on board will likely boost optimism about the agreement's success chances - it came into force on May 30 after notching up the minimum required 22 ratifications.

While Nigeria's decision to sign carries symbolic value, it changes little.

The test for the AfCFTA - which hopes to do nothing less than unify Africa's 54 countries into a 1.2bn people market - is implementation. This will require more than its primary objective of removing 90% of tariffs on goods.

With or without Nigeria trade facilitation needs to be improved, infrastructure must be developed, and human capital needs more investment if there is to be a meaningful impact on regional trade levels of around 17%.

Each of these constitutes a major policy and development challenge in its own right, with much of the continent struggling to make progress on each point.

Until there is evidence of meaningful progress on such issues the AfCFTA should be met with scepticism, not optimism.

Today's picks

From the continent

Rwanda and Uganda are being sued by three civil society groups representing communities across their shared border over the closure of a busy crossing since late February. The border spat has heightened tensions between the countries, while disrupting

trade. **More:** [Business Day](#)

Sudan's military and opposition groups resumed direct talks on Wednesday to resolve a deadlock around a transition period following the ousting of longtime president Omar al-Bashir in April. Talks have broken down amid disagreement about who will lead the transition, and violence against protesters. **More:** [Al Jazeera](#)

The Daily Stat

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The amount Boeing has said it is committing to help families affected by the crash of two 737 MAX planes in Indonesia and Ethiopia. **More:** [Africanews](#)

The Global Perspective

State-owned Saudi Arabian Military Industries has signed a collaboration agreement with South Africa's paramount group to help the development of the Kingdom's arms industry. Details of the agreement, the first with a South African firm, have not been released. **More:** [Saudi Gazette](#)

U.S. chocolate maker Mars Inc. has expressed support for a new \$2,600 floor price for Cocoa set by Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, the world's biggest producers. The move is part of efforts to improve collaboration between the two, aimed at countering price volatility. **More:** [Reuters](#)
