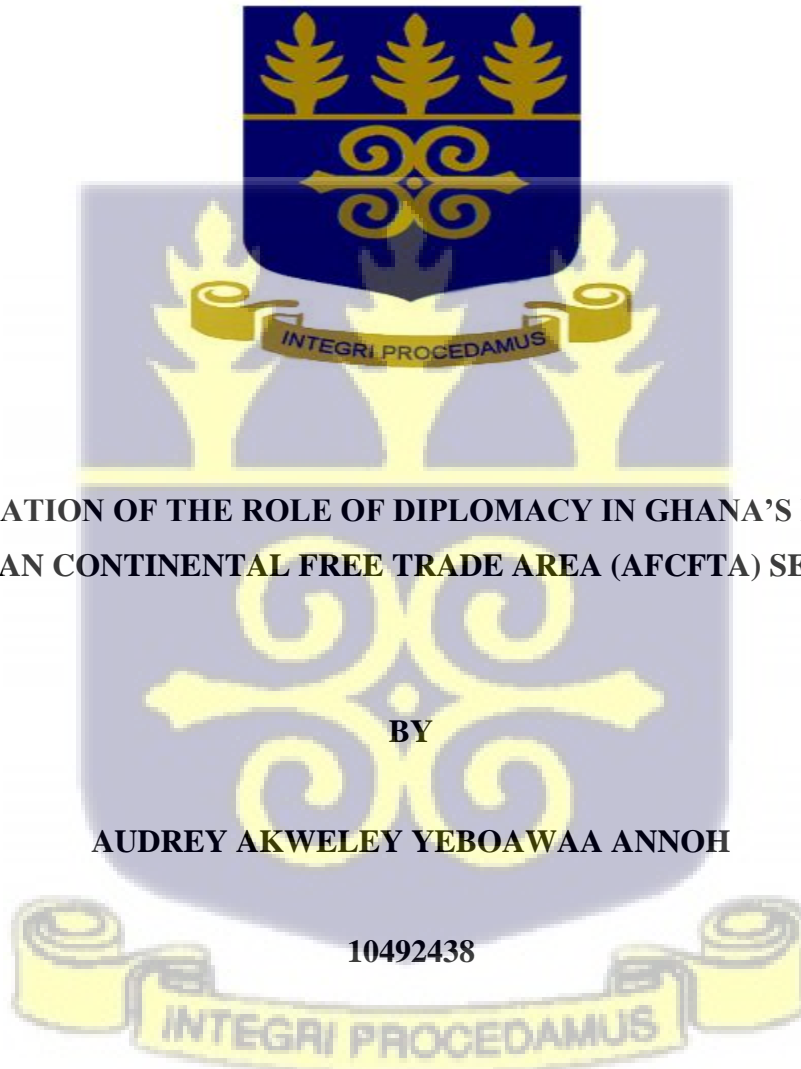


UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

LEGON CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND DIPLOMACY (LECIAD)

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA - LEGON



**AN EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE OF DIPLOMACY IN GHANA'S BID TO HOST
THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (AFCFTA) SECRETARIAT**

BY

AUDREY AKWELEY YEBOAWAA ANNOH

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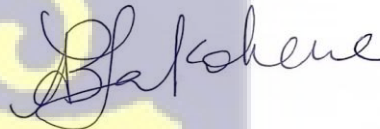
**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE LEGON CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS AND DIPLOMACY (LECIAD), UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

NOVEMBER 2022

LEGON

DECLARATION

I, **AUDREY AKWELEY YEBOAWAA ANNOH**, do hereby declare that this dissertation is the end product of my own research under the supervision of Dr. Afua Boatemaa Yakohene of the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD), at the University of Ghana towards the award of a Master of Arts (M.A.) in International Affairs, and that, to the best of my knowledge, it neither contains materials previously published by another person nor materials which have been accepted for the award of any other degree by this or any other university except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Almighty God and my family for their support, care and encouragement throughout this journey.



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I would like to acknowledge the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration for sponsoring me in the pursuit of this programme; my supervisor, Dr. Afua Boatemaa Yakohene, for her patient guidance; and all my interviewees for their time and knowledge spared me.

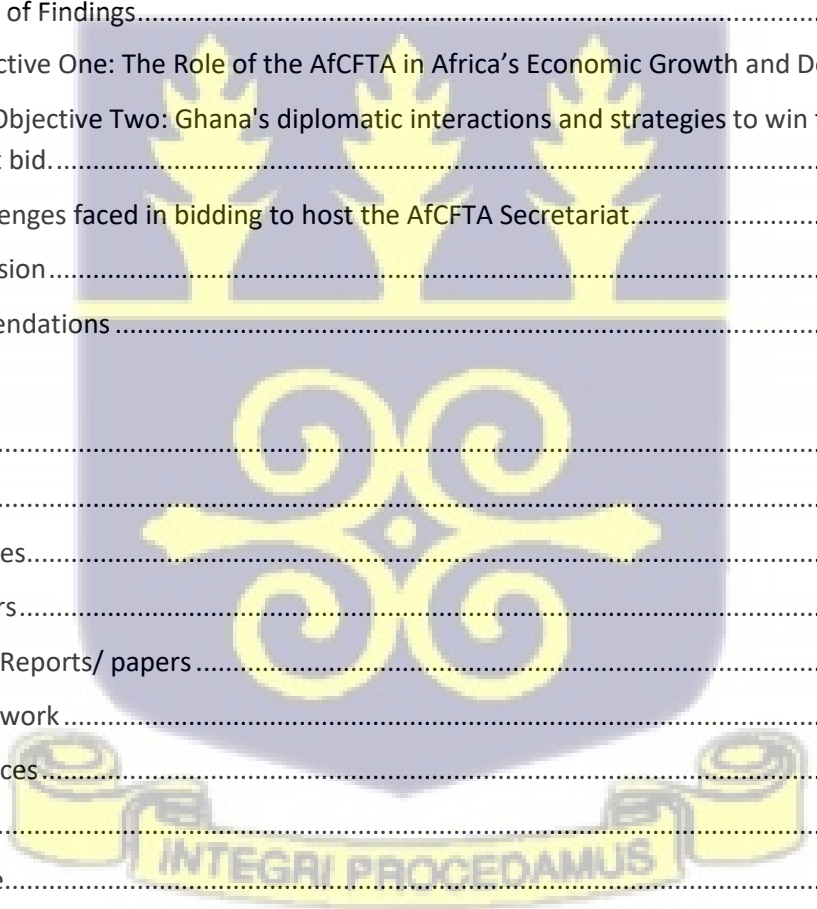


TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	viii
ABSTRACT	x
CHAPTER ONE	1
1.0 Background to the Research Problem	1
1.1 Statement of Problem	5
1.2 Research Questions	7
1.3 Objectives of the Study	7
1.4 Scope of the Study	8
1.5 Rationale of the Study	9
1.6 Thesis Statement	9
1.7 Theoretical Framework	9
1.7.7 Neo-functionalism Theory of Regional Integration	9
1.8 Literature Review	14
1.8.8 Regional Integration and Free Trade Area to Economic Growth and Development	14
1.8.9 Diplomacy in Regional and Continental Integrations Projects	17
1.8.10 Factors Influencing the Location of International Organisations	20
1.9 Research Methodology	22
1.9.9 Research Design	22
1.9.10 Research Approach	23
1.9.11 Sources of Data	23
1.9.12 Sample Method	24
1.9.13 Sample Population	24
1.9.14 Data Collection Instruments	25
1.9.15 Method of Data Analysis	25
1.9.16 Validity and Reliability	26
1.10 Ethical Principles	26

1.11 Arrangement of Chapters	27
CHAPTER TWO	28
THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AGREEMENT.....	28
2.0 Introduction	28
2.1 The Background of the Establishment of the AfCFTA.....	28
Figure 2.1: The Continental Integration Agenda of the African Union	29
Figure 2.2: The Regional Integration Blocs within the African Continent.....	31
2.2 The Objectives and Rationale of the AfCFTA Programme	34
2.3 The Key Features of the AfCFTA Programme.....	36
2.4 The Governance and Institution Structure for the AfCFTA Implementation.....	38
2.5 The Promise of the AfCFTA Programme	39
2.6 Challenges of the AfCFTA Implementation.....	42
2.7 Conclusion.....	44
CHAPTER THREE	46
DIPLOMACY AND GHANA’S EXPERIENCE IN BIDDING FOR THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE	
AREA SECRETARIAT	46
3.0 Introduction	46
3.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents.....	46
Table 1.0: Demographic Analyses.....	47
3.2 The Relevance of the AfCFTA to Africa’s Economic Growth and Development	48
3.2.2 Creation of a single African market for inter and intra-regional trade.....	49
3.2.3 Creation of employment opportunities.....	52
3.3 Diplomatic Interactions and Strategies Employed by Ghana to Win the Bid to Host the AfCFTA	
Secretariat.....	54
3.3.3 Submission of a formal bid.....	57
3.3.4 Lobbying and campaigning	60
3.3.5 Providing options for structures to host the Secretariat	63
3.4 Challenges Faced in Bidding to Host the AfCFTA Secretariat	64
3.4.4 Financial and logistics issues.....	64
3.4.5 Language barrier	66

3.4.6 Preserving Ghana’s diplomatic image.....	67
3.4.7 Inadequate training/briefing for members of Ghana’s ad hoc committees.....	67
3.4.8 Conclusion.....	68
CHAPTER FOUR	69
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	69
4.0 Introduction	69
4.1 Summary of Findings.....	69
4.1.1 Objective One: The Role of the AfCFTA in Africa’s Economic Growth and Development.....	70
4.1.2. Objective Two: Ghana's diplomatic interactions and strategies to win the AfCFTA Secretariat bid.....	70
4.1.3 Challenges faced in bidding to host the AfCFTA Secretariat.....	71
4.2 Conclusion.....	72
4.3 Recommendations.....	74
BIBLIOGRAPHY	78
A. Books	78
B. Journal Articles.....	80
C. Book Chapters.....	84
D. Documents/ Reports/ papers	84
E. Unpublished work	87
F. Internet Sources.....	87
APPENDIX I.....	88
Interview Guide.....	88

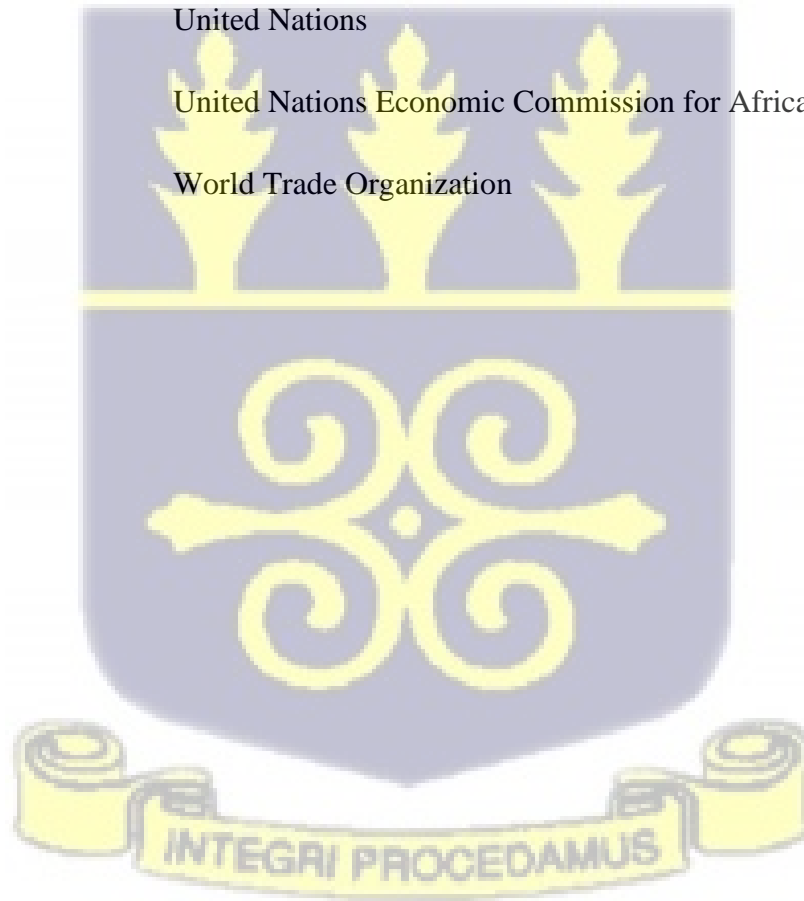


LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEC	African Economic Community
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
CEN – SAD	Community of Sahel-Saharan States
COMESA	Common Market for Easter and Southern Africa
EAC	East African Community
EaEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EFTA	European Free Trade Area
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GS	Ghana Secretariat
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
MFA&RI	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration
MOTI	Minister of Trade and Industry
NAFTA	North America Free Trade Agreement



OAU	Organization of African Unity
REC	Regional Economic Communities
SACU	Southern Africa Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
UN	United Nations
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
WTO	World Trade Organization



ABSTRACT

While the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agenda has attracted much research attention, the role of diplomacy in selecting Ghana to host the Secretariat after beating six other countries is empirically unknown. This research assessed the role of diplomacy in Ghana's bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat. To achieve this, it employed the neo-functionalism theory of regional integration and used thematic data analysis to analyse in-depth interview data collected from six key informants to achieve the purpose of the study. The study found that the AfCFTA can broadly enhance economic growth and development in the continent by creating a single African market for inter and intra-regional trade, and creating employment opportunities, given that trade among African countries is currently low. Second, Ghana's decision to participate in the bid was motivated by the expected diplomatic and socio-economic gains of serving as the Secretariat's host. Third, Ghana's success in the bid was significantly influenced by diplomacy. The country adopted a three-prong diplomatic strategy comprising submitting a formal bid, lobbying and campaigning, and providing options for structures to host the Secretariat. Fourth, despite its success, the country's efforts faced several obstacles, including financial and logistical challenges, language barriers, threats to its diplomatic image, and inadequate training for members of the ad hoc Missions sent out. Consequently, the study recommends that countries create and carefully nurture diplomatic alliances for future diplomatic projects. Secondly, they must adequately articulate the reasons for bidding for any international project. Thirdly, they should set aside funds for such future endeavours, offer adequate diplomatic training for ad hoc diplomats, and employ the services of experienced translators where language differences exist. Also, countries should endeavour to deliver on promises that get them endorsed by their peers, as failure to deliver can dent their diplomatic image.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Research Problem

The high rate of globalisation and the growing need for interdependence drive the integration of economic systems and different regions (Kenyaggia, 2016; Onditi, 2020). Economic integration refers to an agreement among other countries to eliminate barriers that impede trade and commerce to decrease trading costs while improving general welfare (Snorrason, 2012). Regional integration is defined by Hass (1958), a vital proponent of the regional integration theory, as “the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states” (p.16).

Regional and economic integration is touted as a means for fostering continent-wide peace and improving prosperity for citizens (Baldwin, 2008; Ihua, Ike-Muonso, Taiwo & Mba-Kalu, 2018; Afesorgbor & Bergeijk, 2014) by facilitating trade among countries (Ndonga, Laryea & Chaponda, 2020; Baier et al., 2008), industrialisation, and sustainable socio-economic development (Ndonga et al., 2020; Ihua et al., 2018). Due to these potential benefits, the idea of regional integration has attracted and continues to gain significant momentum globally, resulting in the emergence of several integration agreements (Rotaru, 2018) and the proliferation of free trade areas. A free trade area is a trade or market space comprising the territories of a collection of states who have agreed to remove all tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade to increase trading activities among them. It can encompass a single nation or may be composed of several countries forming customs, economic, or monetary unions (Mloyi, 2021).

For instance, the European Union (EU) is a peaceful integration of members who were mortal enemies for several years (Baldwin, 2008). It created the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), which brings together the 27 Member States of the European Union, Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland, and removed some barriers to investment, production and trade between member states. Following the success of the EU's economic integration, several economic integration agreements were formed, including the Eurasian Economic Union (EaEU), the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Southern Common Market (Mercosur), and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), among others (Dragneva & Hartwell, 2021; Rotaru, 2018; Sergi, 2018).

Africa is no exception to the global trend of regional and economic integration (Hartzenberg, 2011; Kenyaggia, 2016; Leshoele, 2020); however, it must be noted that regional integration in Africa is dated back almost a century. African countries have always embraced the idea of regional integration arrangements as one of the key measures for facilitating their development after gaining political independence around the 1960s (Hartzenberg, 2011; Kenyaggia, 2016; Leshoele, 2020). As a result, several regional integration blocs have been formed in Africa (Afesorgbor & Bergeijk, 2014; Apiko, Woolfrey & Byiers, 2020). The main regional integration blocs within the African continent, which are also recognised by the African Union (AU), include the: Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); East African Community (EAC); Common Market for Easter and Southern Africa (COMESA); Southern African Development Community (SADC); Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Arab Maghreb Union (AMU); and Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN – SAD) (Adetula, Bereketeab, Laakso & Levin, 2020).

It may be worth noting that some countries have membership in different regional integration blocs, creating a problem of overlapping membership (Afesorgbor & Bergeijk, 2014; Apiko et al., 2020). It was not too clear when these different regional blocs, which are at various integration phases, would be able to remove all trade barriers to facilitate the creation of the African economic community (AEC) as stipulated in the Abuja Treaty roadmaps to be able to achieve the AU's integration agenda (Apiko et al., 2020; Ihua et al., 2018). On this premise, African leaders agreed to set up the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in 2012 at the 18th ordinary session of the AU to achieve their aim of having AEC, as the Abuja Treaty entreated, to facilitate trade among countries on the continent (Ihua et al., 2018; Oloruntoba & Tsowou, 2019). The Abuja Treaty, which was signed in 1991 in Abuja, Nigeria, was aimed at establishing the AEC, which set the vision, mission and broader framework to achieve the African Union's integration plan.

Formal negotiations started in June 2015 (Parshotam, 2018) and were formalised and signed on March 21, 2018, by AU leaders in Rwanda (Asiedu, 2018; Parshotam, 2018). The agreement is a legal instrument that established the AfCFTA, the Protocol on Trade in Goods and Trade in Services, and the Protocol on Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes (Parshotam, 2018). With the creation of the AfCFTA, the AU is now at the third of its six stages towards the realisation of the Abuja Treaty.

The AfCFTA agreement is believed to be a game-changer regarding regional economic integration, industrialisation and sustainable development in Africa (Apiko et al., 2020; Asiedu, 2018; Ihua et al., 2018; Ndonga et al., 2020). Thus, the inauguration of AfCFTA on 1 January 2021 did not only mark a symbolic milestone in the long journey towards the realisation of continent-wide integration in Africa (Charles, 2021; Mutahi & Mudibo, 2021; Tröster and

Janechová, 2021) but also served as a demonstration of the commitment to facilitate the achievement of Agenda 2063 of the AU as well as the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN) (Gathii J et al., 2017).

Following the signing of the agreement, the AfCFTA Secretariat was established and is being hosted by Ghana. The AfCFTA Secretariat is an AU institution that oversees the implementation of the AfCFTA framework by coordinating and implementing country-led initiatives to improve trade facilitation on the continent (Nyinevi, 2021). The Ghanaian bid for the AfCFTA Secretariat was submitted on July 10, 2018, by the Ghana Secretariat (GS) through its acting Minister of Trade and Industry (MOTI). The decision by Ghana to participate in the bid was motivated by several reasons: It was first, to showcase its status as an African leader, which it knew would be attractive to several countries in the AU Member States who had never joined or were not part of some key African institutions. The second was the need to demonstrate Ghana's capability to deliver on major projects under its leadership. Thirdly, the country saw an opportunity to enhance its profile as a continental player and to build domestic capacity. Fourthly, it had some ambitious plans for training staff for other AU institutions that are supposed to be set up in Ghana. Finally, it wanted to establish a new function to guide the continental effort in favour of an FTA.

At the 12th Extraordinary Summit of AU, held in Niamey, Niger, from 6th – 7th July 2019, Ghana was selected to host the AfCFTA Secretariat. To win the bid, Ghana had to compete with six (6) other AU Member States, namely Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar and Senegal, who had all presented their bids to host the Secretariat (Nyinevi, 2021; Sarkodie, 2019; Tröster & Janechová, 2021). Considering the competitiveness of the bidding, many were of the view that diplomacy might have played a crucial role in Ghana's success in winning the bid to host the

AfCFTA Secretariat against other giant Member States. Diplomacy is defined as the use of dialogue and peaceful negotiations to influence choices and attitudes in the international arena (Berridge, 2002; Cooper, Heine & Thakur, 2013).

Negotiation and persuasion are predominant diplomatic tools for influencing foreign policy groups. Some states can deploy diplomacy to outsmart their colleagues by engaging in canny deal-making style using tricky and skillful approaches to their talks (McKelvey, 2022) to alter choices and preferences of colleagues within a particular foreign policy group. Others use political manipulations – “attempt by one or more individuals to structure a group choice situation in a manner that maximizes the chances of a favorable outcome or minimizes the chances of an unfavorable one”. For example, they may use partial and skewed data to make their policy options appear superior to that of their competitors and make other policy options look bad (Maoz, 1990, p.77).

Based on this background, this research is an effort to examine the role diplomacy played in the success chalked by Ghana in the bid to host the Secretariat, apart from the other structural factors that resulted in this achievement. The study contributes to the existing literature by comparing, in some ways, the diplomatic efforts of Ghana with that of other countries and the extent of support Ghana received from its partners via diplomacy. The study is, therefore, unique in that it offers an insight into some of the 'behind-the-scenes' diplomatic dynamics that influenced Ghana's success in its bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat.

1.1 Statement of Problem

The AfCFTA agenda of the AU has attracted much attention from researchers (e.g. Charles, 2021; Ihua et al., 2018; Leshoele, 2020; Mloyi, 2021; Ndonga et al., 2020; Oloruntoba &

Tsowou, 2019; Tinta, Sarpong, Ouedraogo, Al Hassan, Mensah-Bonsu & Onumah, 2018; Wapmuk, 2021). For example, some researchers have examined how the AFCFTA can promote the agenda for integration, investment, and trade in Africa (Leshoele, 2020; Mloyi, 2021; Oloruntoba & Tsowou, 2019; Tinta et al., 2018; Wapmuk, 2021). Other researchers have also assessed the implications of the implementation of the AFCFTA agreement on the economy of individual member states of the AU, focusing on Nigeria (e.g. Ihua et al., 2018); Côte d'Ivoire (Charles, 2021) and least developed economies like Malawi (Ndonga et al., 2020). Relatedly, the literature on diplomacy has mainly focused on national development (Asafo-Adjei, 2019) and trade relations and facilitation (Asante, 2019). However, there is limited research on diplomacy's role in the AU's AFCFTA agenda. Consequently, this is an essential gap in the existing international relations and diplomacy literature regarding the AFCFTA agenda.

Moreover, Ghana's success in hosting the AfCFTA Secretariat was a crucial step for the country. The Ghanaian government found itself in a challenging situation when seeking to ensure its participation in AfCFTA because many other countries were vying for the same position. As a result, these countries were unwilling to give up all their power and influence within AfCFTA. However, Ghana eventually emerged winner of the bid, and it seems that the country's success in the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat might have been due to the efficacy of the country's diplomatic strategies. The lobbying process to win the bid may have been characterised by a lot of diplomatic interactions with the other AU Member States and International Organizations but the diplomatic strategies and interactions employed to make this a reality has not been empirically highlighted to offer lessons for future biddings for projects and programmes in international and diplomatic circles.

This is important because it is the first Pan-African Organization or organ to be hosted by Ghana despite her rich historical legacy in fronting for a united and integrated Africa since her independence (see Mutubwa, 2019; Nyinevi, 2021). Unfortunately, research examining the role of diplomacy in Ghana's bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat is either non-existent or very difficult to find. As a result, the diplomatic processes that underpinned the determination of the location of its secretariat in Ghana are empirically unknown.

This research, therefore, seeks to fill these gaps in the existing literature on the topic by critically examining the diplomatic interactions and strategies that Ghana engaged in to win the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat, as well as their associated challenges.

1.2 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the tenets and relevance of the AfCFTA to Africa's economic growth and development?
2. What diplomatic interactions and strategies did Ghana use to win the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat?
3. What were the challenges faced in the bidding process and lessons learnt on how Ghana can best prepare for future international biddings?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To assess the tenets and relevance of the AfCFTA to Africa's economic growth and development.

2. To examine the diplomatic interactions and strategies that Ghana used to win the bid for the AfCFTA Secretariat.
3. To investigate the challenges faced and lessons learnt on how Ghana can best prepare for future international biddings.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the AfCFTA, a trade bloc that aims to facilitate the free movement of goods and services between its member countries. The AfCFTA Secretariat is tasked with overseeing the agreement. It discusses the tenets and relevance of the AfCFTA to Africa's economic growth and development.

This research uses Ghana as its case study and discusses how diplomacy played a pivotal role in securing the deal from July 2018 to July 2019. It also assesses the significance and implications of Ghana being the host State for the Secretariat. It further considers the opportunities for Ghana concerning this new role. The period of investigation for this research is 2018 to 2021 because these periods covered when the agreement was signed (i.e., March 21, 2018), when Ghana placed the bid for AfCFTA Secretariat (i.e., July 10, 2018) and was selected (i.e., from 6th – 7th July 2019), and finally, when the Secretariat was inaugurated (i.e., 1 January 2021). This helps to appropriately capture when Ghana began her lobbying for hosting the AfCFTA Secretariat.

Ghana was able to set itself apart from other bidders through diplomacy strategy and successfully projecting its image as an economically strong trading nation with a history of stability and as an essential regional pillar with influence within various regional economic communities on the continent.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

This research, which seeks to highlight the role that diplomacy played in Ghana's efforts to win the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat, is expected to spell out the activities which led to Ghana's success in the bidding process, some challenges faced along the way as well as lessons which were learnt in the process. It also aims to identify weaknesses that could be worked on in the country's future endeavours along similar lines. The findings are expected to influence international relations practices and policies significantly.

As noted earlier, there is limited research on the role of diplomacy in the AfCFTA agenda regarding Ghana's winning of the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat. Consequently, this research will be an essential reference material for future studies on diplomacy and the AfCFTA programme.

1.6 Thesis Statement

The AfCFTA will promote socio-economic development in Africa, and Ghana's diplomacy may have played a significant role in its success by being selected as the host for AfCFTA Secretariat.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

1.7.7 Neo-functionalism Theory of Regional Integration

The theoretical framework of this study is the neo-functionalism theory of regional integration (Hass, 1964). It is one of the leading theories that international relations scholars use for framing issues of regional integration and diplomacy (Oloruntoba, 2019; Onditi, 2020; Schimmelfennig, 2018). Regional integration refers to the agreements between two or more states at either the level of sub-regional, regional, or supra-regional to address common interests like facilitating trade and investment, the development of social and economic infrastructure, as well as the

promotion of peace and security (Darby, 2009; Hampe, 2018; Onditi, 2020). Similarly, Fioramonti (2014) described it as the specific process of “supranationalisation of authority in a given policy field, which requires some degree of shared sovereignty”, while regionalism as a theory, can be defined as a multi-level process, where social and cultural processes can precede, replace or strengthen economic integration” (p. 5-6). Earlier, Hass (1958) who is a key the proponent of the regional integration theory, viewed regional integration as “the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states” (p.16). Thus, the concept means merging two or more independent regions at any level (sub-regional to supra-regional) to create shared sovereignty to pursue common economic and social transformation interests.

The early theories of regionalism were developed in the context of the post-Second World War international order. During this period, regionalism was promoted to ensure global peace, security and stability (Schulz et al., 2004). The regional integration theory discusses regional integration from different perspectives, including neorealism, functionalism, and neo-functionalism (Schulz et al., 2004). The neorealism aspect of the regional integration theory is preoccupied with power and how it shapes the behaviours of the state (Schulz et al., 2004). Building on the realist school of thought in international relations, neorealist integration theory describes the relations between states and regions in the context of power relations and how alliances can provide the opportunity for balancing the differences in power among different states or regional groupings (Oloruntoba, 2019; Schulz et al., 2004). Thus, this theoretical perspective's main goal is maintaining security among states with competing interests. As a result, it advocates for the need to build regional alliances (i.e. creation of regional blocs) to

maintain peace and security at regional and international levels (Oloruntoba, 2019; Schulz et al., 2004).

The functionalism and neo-functionalism perspectives of Regional Integration Theory also agreed with the Neorealism proponents that the developments of inter-regional co-operations are necessary to address issues of peace and security. However, beyond peace and security, they recognise that the formation of regional (economic) institutions will promote progress in trade and economic growth. They added that the existence of more interactions among different countries and regions has the potential to avert potential wars and hostilities (Mitrany, 1976; Oloruntoba, 2019). It, therefore, encourages democratic countries or regions that have functional economies to form a supranational authority by integrating their economies and regions for a common interest (Hans & Soldato, 1994).

To effectively explain the development of regionalism, the Neo-Functionalists have introduced the idea of supra-nationality, which means that state sovereignty should be pooled together in forming a political union. According to Neo Functionalism theorists, regional integrations occur through the processes of the spillover effect. This implies that countries and regions will initially integrate in limited functional or economic areas, after which there will be an increased urge to create additional rounds of integration in related areas with the aim of enjoying the full benefits of integration (Hass, 1964; 2004; Pentland, 1973).

Functional spillover and political spillover are the two main processes by which integration occurs (Pentland, 1973). Recently, cultivated spillover has been proposed (Niemann & Schmitter, 2009). Functional spillover is when an initial economic integration results in the development of further economic cooperation in other related economic sectors. This is usually

possible when different economic sectors are related, and the regions or countries' economies are highly interdependent. The success in economic integration will further have a spillover effect in other policy areas, and subsequently motivate the Member States to become more integrated through the creation of regional institutions (Pentland, 1973). The political spillover is the notion that integration has the potential to bring about a change in the expectations, political activities, and loyalty of national and international elites regarding international centres. Political spillovers usually lead to the formation of supranational governance models, for example, the EU (Haas, 1964; 2004; Pentland, 1973), the AFCFTA of AU, among others. Finally, the cultivated spillover implies the creation of supranational institutions to promote or facilitate both the political and functional spillover effects of integration (Niemann & Schmitter, 2009).

The Neo-Functionalism theory of integration embraces the involvement of multiple stakeholders in the process of successful regional integration, and further suggests that 'statesmen' could provide the political will to facilitate integration (Haas, 2004). It emphasises "complex interdependence among states and their shared interests in dealing with the problems that arise from it by setting up international institutions" (Borzal, 2016, p.45). Thus, the Member States of a given regional trade bloc may be better positioned to benefit significantly by providing opportunities for different and multiple stakeholders, including non-state actors, to actively participate in the formation of regional trade agreements (Freud & Ornelas, 2010; Rotaru, 2018). The theory again argues for the need to create market access among regionalising states by gradually removing trade barriers, leading to the construction of a political union or institutions (Draper, 2013; Gibbs, 2009; Rotaru, 2018) including the development of infrastructure and regional value chains (Gibbs, 2009).

Despite the value of the theory in understanding the processes, nature and importance of regional integration, it is not without criticism. The leading opponents of the theory came from a group of scholars who ascribed to the realist theory of international relations (see Dijkzeul & Fauser, 2020; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006). Realists argued that states are strong and impermeable actors, who gain and maximise power to pursue national interests (Dijkzeul & Fauser, 2020). Because they concentrated on state actors, realists criticised the neo-functionalism theory for placing a significant premium on non-state actors (Dijkzeul & Fauser, 2020; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006). They have asserted that even though the neo-functionalism theorists advocate for the participation of multiple stakeholders, including non-state actors in the processes of integrations, deep-seated tensions between state machinery and non-state actors do exist (Soderbaum & Shaw, 2003), thereby exposing the deficiencies in theories of regional integration (Onditi, 2020).

For others, the increased level of overlapping membership of integrated regions, that is, countries with membership in different regional trading blocs, have made them posit that regional integration theories are a 'spent force' (Onditi, 2020). They further argue that regional integration undermines national sovereignty and can create economic and cultural losers, which may, in turn, even cause disintegration (Schimmelfennig, 2018). They further argued that the benefits of integrations tend to be drifted away from the ordinary people within a country or region to business magnates and the elite political class (Onditi, 2020).

The Realist school of international relations scholars maintained their criticism of the neo-functionalism theory by raising issues with its spillover logic or assumption. In their view, there was no "automaticity in processes of integration. Indeed, it was stated that they made the decisions to integrate, and their decisions were not based solely on a calculation of their interest. Also, they argued that member states have coherent, unified negotiating positions and [are] able

to resist efforts from organised interests” at both local and regional or international levels (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006, p.98).

Notwithstanding the above criticisms, the neo-functionalism theory of integration remains a critical theoretical framework for understanding integrations in the circles of diplomacy and international relations (Oloruntoba, 2019), and thus, very relevant as the theoretical foundation for this present study. The theory can help to explore the tenets and relevance of Africa’s continental integration to trade, economic growth and development. Apart from this, it is essential to recognise that at the heart of the development of regional integration is the issue of diplomacy (e.g. Afesorbor, 2019). Diplomacy is about using dialogue and peaceful negotiations instead of resorting to force, war and violence (Berridge, 2002; Cooper, Heine & Thakur, 2013).

As indicated earlier, the neo-functionalism integration theory involves active participation and peaceful interactions among state and non-state stakeholders or actors (Borzel, 2016; Haas, 2004; Rotaru, 2018). Through diplomacy, countries can reach a consensus to create regional or continent-wide integrations with supranational institutions to oversee their coordination and implementation. Diplomacy is also required in deciding on the modalities for removing trade barriers within the integration agreement, among other critical decisions, including selecting the administrative headquarters of the groups’ supranational institution (in this case, the AFCFTA secretariat).

1.8 Literature Review

1.8.8 Regional Integration and Free Trade Area to Economic Growth and Development

Regional or continental integrations and the creation of free trade areas are regarded as essential avenues for accelerating sustainable economic growth and development (see Darby, 2009;

Hampe, 2018; Onditi, 2020). A free trade area is a term used by the World Trade Organization (WTO) to refer to a group of countries or territories that have signed a trade agreement, establishing reciprocal most-favoured-nation treatment and reducing most trade barriers among member countries. It is a trade or market space comprising the territories of a collection of States who have agreed to remove all tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade to increase trading activities among them (Mloyi, 2021). A free trade area can encompass a single nation or may be composed of several countries forming a custom, economic or monetary union. A customs union may be regional or bilateral. A free trade area does not necessarily have to include all customs union members on the same terms (Mloyi, 2021).

An example of a free trade area is the European Free Trade Area which brings together the 27 Member States of the European Union, Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland. The European Free Trade Area was created to gradually reduce the barriers that have historically divided Europe into several economic sub-units. The objective is for all the participating countries to adopt standard rules on the free movement of goods, services, capital and people within the European Single Market ("acquis communautaire"), ending discrimination against foreign goods and services, ending restrictions on competition among the Member States and ending exchange control restrictions on cross-border capital movements for companies (Baldwin, 2008; Dragneva & Hartwell, 2021; Rotaru, 2018; Sergi, 2018).

As indicated earlier, free trade areas are important because they remove barriers to investment, production and trade between the Member States. This leads to a trade flow from countries with lower production costs to those with higher production costs. It also encourages countries with low standards of living and economic strength to increase their standards as they compete for

access to markets through free trade areas (see Baldwin, 2008; Dragneva & Hartwell, 2021; Rotaru, 2018; Sergi, 2018; Ndonga et al., 2020; Baier et al., 2008; Mloyi, 2021).

Some other benefits of a free trade area include the mutual recognition of goods and services, cooperation, creation of free-trade area institutions, creation of free-trade area rules and the creation of free-trade area arrangement mechanisms for dispute settlement between members (see Baldwin, 2008; Dragneva & Hartwell, 2021; Rotaru, 2018; Sergi, 2018; Ndonga et al., 2020; Baier et al., 2008; Mloyi, 2021).

The African Continent's primary focus is geared toward the achievement of Agenda 2063, which is a "blueprint" or guideline to reaching the following goals for the entire African region:

- Improved standards of living,
- Transformed, inclusive and sustained economies,
- Increased levels of regional and continental integration,
- A population of empowered women and youth and a society where children are protected and cared for,
- The creation of peaceful societies demonstrates good democratic values, practice good governance principles, and preserves and enhances Africa's cultural identity.

The AfCFTA is an initiative born out of Agenda 2063. The AfCFTA is a step in the right direction in the achievement of Agenda 2063 because the possible outcomes and benefits of the agreement cater for at least three of the key transformational effects of the programme listed above; namely, the ultimate attainment of significantly improved standards of living, producing transformed, inclusive and sustained economies and reaching increased levels of regional and

continental integration. The commencement of trade under the AfCFTA arrangement demonstrates the commitment to facilitate the achievement of Agenda 2063 of the AU and the UN's realisation of the SDGs of the UN (Gathii J et al., 2017).

This is because the intention behind the AU's AfCFTA is to remove trade barriers, boost intra-regional trade and create a consolidated market of 1.2 billion people from the fragmented markets of the 55 Member States of the AU and a gross domestic product (GDP) of about \$2.5 trillion, thereby presenting opportunities for trading enterprises, consumers and businesses across Africa and to assist in sustainable development efforts in the region (Mutahi & Mudibo, 2021). Relatedly, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) estimated that tariffs removal on goods within the AfCFTA framework alone would increase trade by 40–50% among African countries between 2020 and 2040, and the industrial sectors in the continent are expected to reap more benefits (ECA, 2018).

Similarly, the World Bank (2020) projected that the operationalisation of the AfCFTA could improve intra-African trade volume by 81 % by 2035, and total African exports would also go up by 29%. Likewise, wages are likely to increase by 10%, with unskilled workers and women having the opportunity to earn more from implementing the AfCFTA (Apiko, Woolfrey and Byiers, 2020). Subsequently, this would reduce poverty and improve overall socio-economic conditions for Africans (UNECA, 2019).

1.8.9 Diplomacy in Regional and Continental Integrations Projects

Diplomacy is crucial in regional integration and continental free trade area projects. Diplomacy is defined as “a government's process of communication with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as

its national goals and policies” (Tuch, 1990, 3). In the view of Frederick (1993, p.229), diplomacy describes “activities, directed abroad in the fields of information, education, and culture, whose objective is to influence a foreign government, by influencing its citizens.”

For realists, which is an international relations school of thought that supports a challenging power perspective, diplomacy is a force that can be employed to advance national interest (Kissinger, 1995; Langer, 1951), but idealists, with their support for soft power perspective, view diplomacy as an instrument with the potential to resolve conflicts and produce a less violent world order while at the same time being able to achieve national interests (Diamond & McDonald, 1996; McRae & Hubbart, 2001). Primarily, diplomatic efforts aim to promote the national interest by deploying non-violent means by shaping foreign policies (Cooper, Heine & Thakur, 2013; Marks & Freeman, 2019) and achieving sustained national goodwill in the community of nations (Javaid, 2019).

Generally, there are two broad classes of diplomacy. The first class involves permanent office-holders and well-established international relations institutions like a global network of resident ambassadors, ambassadors at large, and Foreign Service officers, among others. The second class involves using individuals known as ad hoc diplomats to accomplish a given task temporarily (Scoville, 2019). The term ad hoc comes from the Latin word for “on this day”, which can be translated to mean "in this time".

Ad hoc diplomacy works because there are no clear rules of interaction or negotiation, but each situation is handled on a case-by-case basis depending on the participants involved. It is most effective when the parties involved share common goals or interests or may benefit each other in one or more ways. Thus, ad hoc diplomacy is a diplomatic method that does not require specific

rules of engagement. International relations are often conducted through formal treaties, agreements, and other forms of structured negotiation. In contrast, ad hoc diplomacy is more spontaneous, with interactions being more flexible and less structured than those of more conventional diplomacy (Ishmael, 2012; Sandström, 1960; Scoville, 2019).

In many areas of interaction, ad hoc diplomacy is more effective than regular diplomatic negotiations. For the purposes of this discussion, ad hoc diplomacy will be used to describe any method of interaction that does not conform strictly to more conventional methods. Historically, there have been many examples of ad hoc diplomacy; for instance, during World Wars I and II, both the Allied and Axis powers had informal understandings with one another to move their countries along a more direct path than that of formal diplomatic negotiations between the two parties would have allowed (Karns, 1987; Sandström, 1960; Scoville, 2019).

The idea is to create a relationship in which a "win" for one party will not necessarily result in a "loss" for the other party. This makes it more likely that the interaction will be mutually beneficial. For this relationship to be formed, both parties must have a common understanding of what is being discussed and what they aim to achieve through the interaction. This can be accomplished through informal discussions beforehand or by presenting the purpose of the interaction directly when it is initiated. In essence, ad hoc diplomacy involves establishing this win-win scenario before discussing any specific topics or issues.

Some believe that ad hoc diplomacy can make negotiations easier and more productive. While one party may be able to use it as a tactic, the other side will still likely perceive it as a threat and respond accordingly. Diplomatic activity is initiated through either formal or informal contacts between governments and/or other actors within international relations. Through these contacts,

diplomatic dialogue is brought to bear on specific issues or challenges, such as those in international business, technological development, cultural exchange, etc. Diplomatic activity occurs through various methods such as conferences between governments and diplomatic representatives and various other means.

From the above, the tenets that form the basis of diplomacy are negotiation, collaboration, constant communication, the propagation of national interests and peaceful methods of achieving national interests. The afore-mentioned factors could all have been employed by Ghana in the quest to win the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat. Ghana appeared to have tactfully managed its relationship with the other AU Member States and International Organizations during the bidding process, considering the dominant challenges Ghana faced in securing the resources required to support its bid. More than anything else, it shows how diplomatic strategies can benefit or hinder a country's credibility when it makes a bid for international projects or organisations. It is, therefore, essential to explore how Ghana employed the two broad classes of diplomacy to win the bid to serve as the headquarters for the AfCFTA Secretariat.

1.8.10 Factors Influencing the Location of International Organisations

The location decisions of international organisations are usually determined by a range of factors including geopolitics, endowment of resources for smooth operations, historical leadership, and expanding sphere of diplomatic influence, among others. For instance, Mires (2013) examined the factors that influenced the selection of New York City among other competing cities as the headquarters of the United Nations. The findings indicated the location of the United Nations' head office was mostly influenced by practical and political considerations such as donations of land for the office by the Rockefeller family).

Similarly, Dairon and Badache (2021) examined the factors that influenced the citing of international organisations offices in Geneva. They used interview data from 50 stakeholders and employees of international organisations. They found that geographical and temporal proximity, quality of leadership and resources played key roles in the decision of international organisations to site their offices in Geneva. They argued that these factors can make it easy for these organisations to run their operations smoothly and engage in cross-organizational work with other stakeholders. Prior to this, Meyer (2013) asserted that actions of key actors and political considerations contributed to the location decision of international organisations in Geneva. Besides, Groen (2016) conducted a comparative case study of the factors that led to the adoption of Geneva, Vienna, and The Hague as headquarters of key international organisations. The findings revealed that the deployment of strong lobbying strategies and policy networks particularly play vital roles in the location decisions or siting of international organisations.

In another study, Reynaud and Vauday (2009) empirically analysed the determinants of the location and distribution of offices of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). They collected data on 107 IMF's emerging and developing economies from 1990 -2003 and used econometric tools to analyse the data. They argued that the location of IMF facilities is not only influenced by economic needs of borrowers, but significantly determined by geopolitical considerations. They conceptualized and operationalized geopolitics as comprising of endowment of energy-related land resources, nuclear energy capabilities, military power (i.e., domestic and regional military capability of a country), and pure geographic features of a nation such as country size, and level of infrastructural development.

While these findings provide important ideas about the kind of factors that influence the location of international organisation, there are no such studies on the siting of the AfCFTA. This research therefore can provide data and findings to bridge this gap.

1.9 Research Methodology

1.9.9 Research design

Research may adopt either the quantitative design or qualitative research design or both (that is, mixed research) to achieve their research objective (Armstrong, 2009; Malina, Norreklit & Selto, 2011; Patton, 2002). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001), quantitative research seeks “explanations and predictions that will generate to other persons and places. The intent is to establish, confirm, or validate relationships and to develop generalisations that contribute to the theory” (p. 102).

On the other hand, qualitative research is defined as research that seeks to develop an understanding of a particular issue by generating rich information using research using a smaller number of people or samples (Myers, 2009; Patton, 2002). This study used a qualitative design. Hence, this study will use qualitative research to examine the role of diplomacy in Ghana’s bid to host the AfCFTA secretariat. This enabled the researcher to provide an in-depth analysis of the relevance of the AfCFTA to Africa’s economic growth and development, the diplomatic interactions and strategies that Ghana used to win the bid for the AfCFTA Secretariat, as well as the challenges faced and lessons learnt on how Ghana can best prepare for future international biddings.

1.9.10 Research Approach

The two primary research approaches are the deductive and inductive reasoning. While deductive reasoning is concerned with moving from a general theory to specific examples, inductive reasoning is concerned with moving from a particular model or case study to a general idea (O'Leary, 2007). The inductive research approach used in this research is by drawing general conclusions about the contributions of the AFCFTA's operationalisation to socio-economic development in the continent and the contributing roles of diplomacy to Ghana's success in the bid to host the AFCFTA Secretariat.

1.9.11 Sources of Data

Research data may be collected from either primary or secondary sources or both. Primary data is first-hand data collected by the researcher to achieve a particular research objective(s) (Salkind, 2010), while secondary data is data that was organised by someone else but reused for performing a different research question by a different or another person (Johnston, 2017; Smith, 2008). In the views of Rubin and Babbie (2008), secondary research is “a form of research in which the data collected and processed in one study are reanalysed in a subsequent study” (p. 408). This study collected primary data from key informants through in-depth interviews. Interview guides, particularly semi-structured interview, which is one of the widely used data collection methods for qualitative research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006; Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016).

It is useful because it is flexible and enables reciprocity between the interviewers and interviewees (Galletta 2012). It also allows the researcher to improvise follow-up questions in the light of responses provided by the interviewees (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Polit & Beck, 2010). Secondary data were collected from journal articles, newspaper reports, and other online sources,

including the legal instrument that established the AfCFTA, the Protocol on Trade in Goods and Trade in Services, and the Protocol on Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes.

1.9.12 Sample Method

The study used the purposive sampling method to select the research respondents. In the views of Boateng (2014, p.135), “respondents in samples or units of analyses are purposively selected because they are ‘information rich’ and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest”. The criteria for the inclusion of participants in the study include either their direct experience by way of representing the Ghanaian government on the AfCFTA Secretariat project or having expert knowledge regarding the AfCFTA framework and the diplomatic processes for such ad hoc projects in the circles of international relations and foreign policy.

1.9.13 Sample Population

A research population is a group about which a researcher seeks to conclude (Babbie, 2008). This study targeted Ghana’s ad hoc diplomacy team members that bid for the AfCFTA Secretariat project. In particular, the Economic, Trade and Investment; and the Africa Regional Integration Bureaux of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFA&RI), which spearheaded operations at the time of the lobbying to win the bid to host the Secretariat, will be sampled.

Similarly, the Office of Ambassador D. K. Osei, a retired career diplomat and the President of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), Ghana, was interviewed. Other persons of interest were also be interviewed to obtain additional data and independent views to adequately capture necessary perspectives on the topic and effectively achieve the study’s objectives. The study

sampled 15 respondents to collect data for analysis. Using 15 respondents is consistent with the norms of qualitative sampling (see Patton, 2002).

1.9.14 Data Collection Instruments

The primary data were gathered using a semi-structured interview guide to interview diplomatic and non-diplomatic officials directly or indirectly involved in the lobbying process toward winning the bid to host the AfCFTA. The semi-structured interview guide was self-developed from the literature on AfCFTA, regional or continental integration, and diplomacy.

It was structured into four main parts. Part 1 collected the demographic and institutional affiliations of the respondents. Part 2 collected data on the relevance of the AfCFTA to Africa's economic growth and development. Part 3 collected data on Ghana's diplomatic interactions and strategies to win the AfCFTA Secretariat bid. And Part 4 collected data on challenges faced and lessons learnt on how Ghana can best prepare for future international biddings. Sample questions are: "Explain the potential contributions of AfCFTA to Africa's economic growth and development; What accounts for Ghana's decision to bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat?; Describe the processes followed in bidding to host the AfCFTA Secretariat; Spell out the specific diplomatic interactions, activities and strategies that Ghana employed during the bidding process; What were the challenges faced by Ghana in the bidding process?"

1.9.15 Method of Data Analysis

The study employed thematic data analysis to analyse the data on the role of diplomacy in Ghana's bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic data analysis is concerned with processing qualitative data systematically using codes and themes based on the patterns and relationships emerging from the data. The researcher

familiarised with the data and generated initial codes. He then searched for themes, reviewed themes; defined and named themes, and produced the empirical findings (Braun & Clark, 2006). This qualitative analytical method is useful because it gives the freedom and high flexibility to analyse and generate rich and detailed insights from complex data accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017).

1.9.16 Validity and Reliability

Validity is defined as the integrity and use of the methods to produce accurate results. However, reliability is concerned with ensuring greater consistency within the analytical methods and procedures adopted to conduct the research (Long & Johnson, 2000). Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Noble and Smith (2015) identified several methods that can be adopted to ensure validity and reliability in qualitative research such as Meticulous record keeping, Data triangulation, and verbatim responses from the respondents. In line with the input of these scholars, validity was further ensured by inviting the Project Supervisor and other experts to assess the appropriateness of the research instrument. Also, a verbatim report of the respondents' responses was used to support the empirical findings. Moreover, the use of semi-structured interview allowed for a meticulous keeping of adequate record of the data. This ensured transparency and consistency in the analyses. Furthermore, the data was triangulated as perspectives of various stakeholders were sought.

1.10 Ethical Principles

It is essential to recognise that the study followed the necessary ethical protocols, including informed consent, voluntary participation and anonymity of the research participants. They would be duly informed that the data to be collected was to aid the achievement of an academic

purpose. Their consent was sought before they participate in the study. Similarly, permission to record the interviews was obtained. Pseudonyms were used (in instances, where respondents indicated they did not want to be identified) when analysing their responses to protect their identity and privacy and to ensure confidentiality (Wiles, 2013).

1.11 Arrangement of Chapters

Chapter One contains the introduction of the research. It discusses the background to the research problem, statement of the research problem, research questions and objectives of the study, scope of the study, the rationale of the study, theoretical framework, literature review, research methodology, and arrangement of chapters.

Chapter Two discusses the AfCFTA framework and its secretariat. It presents the background of AfCFTA in the context of AU's Agenda 2063, including its continental integration agenda, objectives of AfCFTA, the promise or expected benefits of AfCFTA, and the challenges to AfCFTA implementations' success.

Chapter Three presents the empirical results and discussions on the role of the AfCFTA in socio-economic growth in Africa, the diplomatic interactions and strategies that Ghana used to win the bid for the AfCFTA Secretariat, the challenges faced, and lessons learnt on how Ghana can best prepare for future international biddings.

Chapter Four discusses the findings of the research, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the AfCFTA programme. It presents the background of the AfCFTA in the context of AU's Agenda 2063 including its continental integration agenda; objectives and rationale of the AfCFTA; the institutional governance arrangement for the AfCFTA implementation, the promise or expected benefits of AfCFTA; and the challenges to the success of its implementation.

2.1 The Background of the Establishment of the AfCFTA

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) which was formed in 1963 and later transformed into the African Union (AU), is considered as the first major effort by the leaders of nations in Africa to promote continental cooperation and integration. Following this, several regional blocks were created between 1963 and 1980 to establish free trade areas or regional blocks as part of the steps towards continental economic integration (Farahat 2016). The commitment of the leaders of the continent has subsequently led to the development of several declarations and legislative frameworks, including the Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa (1980-2000), and the Abuja Treaty, in furtherance of the continental integration agenda.

African Heads of State and Government signed a treaty known as the Abuja Treaty in 1991 in Abuja, Nigeria. The treaty was aimed at establishing the African Economic Community (AEC), which set the vision, mission and the broader framework to be able to achieve the African Union's integration agenda (Leshoele, 2019; Soininen, 2014). The treaty which became

operational in 1994, proposes a six-stage integration plan over 34 years. That is to say that, the African Union intended to achieve the AEC through six phases by the end of 2028 (Leshoele, 2019; Ihua et al., 2018).

The phases emphasize the need to strengthen sectoral cooperation and formation of regional trading blocs by way of establishing regional free trade areas (stages 1-3), followed by the setting up of a continental customs union (stage 4) and a common market (stage 5), and finally, to establish a monetary and economic union (stage 6) (Ihua et al., 2018; Soininen, 2014). The six-stage process of the African Union’s programme for achieving continental integration is shown in Figure 2.1 below and explained next.

Figure 2.1: The Continental Integration Agenda of the African Union



Source: Soininen (2014)

The first phase as shown in Figure 2.1 is concerned with creating new Regional Economic Communities (REC) as well as strengthening the existing ones. The idea behind this is that the integration agenda will be realized, beginning at the regional level through regional economic communities which would then make it possible to form the African Economic Community. The main objective was to strengthen intra-regional relations, improve economic governance and increase intra-regional trade (Leshoele, 2019; Ihua et al., 2018). It was hoped that by the end of this first stage, the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU), a regional customs organization, would have been created. Also, a Common Market of Southern Africa (COMESA) and East African Community (EAC) would be established. The agreement establishing these tripartite regional blocks were concluded and signed in 2015 (Leshoele, 2019).

Currently, the main regional integration blocs within the African continent which are recognized by the African Union (AU) include the: Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); East African Community (EAC); Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); Southern African Development Community (SADC); Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Arab Maghreb Union (AMU); and Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN – SAD) (Adetula, Bereketeab, Laakso & Levin, 2020). The individual members of each of the above regional blocs are illustrated in Figure 2.2 (Adetula et al., 2020; Ihua et al., 2018).

Figure 2.2: The Regional Integration Blocs within the African Continent



Source: Adetula et al. (2020)

The second phase aims to create a free trade area for the Member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), as well as a Common Monetary Area. In this stage, tariffs and quotas would be removed on 90% of non-sensitive goods. All trade arrangements in the region would be based on the Cotonou Agreement which provides for regional preferences concerning trade in services and agricultural products, as well as a system of national treatment for all goods produced by a Member State or a company from that state (Ihua et al., 2018; Leshoele, 2019).

The third phase was aimed at creating a full economic union with an African Common Market and an African Monetary Union. The fourth phase would lead to the creation of a single currency and finally the creation of an African central bank. The fifth phase will include the creation of a complete free trade area in goods, services, capital and labour. The sixth phase will realize the progressive elimination of all remaining barriers to the free movement of people within the African Continental Free Trade Area by using the African passport and visa system. The African Union is also working towards an African Economic Community to be established by 2025. It is hoped that this will create a single "African State" or "The United States of Africa" (Ihua et al., 2018; Leshoele, 2019; Soinen, 2014).

In light of the above, it is evident that the African Union is currently at the third phase, with the creation of the AfCFTA. African leaders formally began the negotiation processes to establish the AfCFTA in June 2015 (Ihua et al., 2021; Parshotam, 2018). The Agreement establishing the AfCFTA was adopted and signed on 21st March 2018 by AU leaders in Rwanda (Asiedu, 2018; Parshotam, 2018). The Agreement is a legal instrument that established the AfCFTA, the

Protocol on Trade in Goods and Trade in Services, and the Protocol on Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes (Parshotam, 2018). The AfCFTA is currently the biggest trade agreement in Africa and represents the most ambitious expression of the dream of Pan-African leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, W.E.B. Du Bois, George Padmore, Leopold Senghor, among others since the late 1950s (Trade Law Centre 2019).

The operational phase of the AfCFTA was launched in Niamey, the capital of Niger on 7th July 2019 by a summit of Heads of State and Government of the AU (AU, 2019). It involves the institution of the five instruments for governing the operations of AfCFTA including rules of origin; the online negotiating forum; the monitoring and elimination of non-tariff barriers; a digital payments system; and the African Trade Observatory (Apiko et al., 2020; AU, 2019). Consequently, it has created the world's largest continental free trade area and a single market for goods and services for 1.2 billion people, estimated to grow to 2.5 billion by 2050 (Adebola, 2020). The agreement has so far received massive endorsement from members of the African Union. Forty-four (44) member states signed it immediately after it was finalized at the 10th Extraordinary Session of the African Union Assembly in Rwanda in March 2018 (African Union, 2018), and the number increased to 53 by 2019 (Trade Law Centre 2019).

This, therefore, marks a symbolic milestone on the long journey towards the realization of continent-wide integration in Africa (Charles, 2021; Mutahi & Mudibo, 2021; Tröster & Janechová, 2021). After the signing of the agreement, the AfCFTA Secretariat was established, and bids opened for member countries to express interest in serving as its host (Nyinevi, 2021). Ghana's bid for the AfCFTA Secretariat was submitted on July 10, 2018, by the Ghana Secretariat (GS) through its acting Minister of Trade and Industry (MOTI). At the 12th Extraordinary Summit of AU which was held in Niamey, Niger from 6th – 7th July 2019,

Ghana won the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat, out of six (6) other AU Member States, namely Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar and Senegal who had also placed bids to host the Secretariat (Nyinevi, 2021; Sarkodie, 2019; Tröster & Janechová, 2021). The African Union Commission, on 17th August 2020, inaugurated the AfCFTA secretariat in Accra, Ghana, and trading under the agreement became operational on 1st January 2021 (Charles, 2021; Mutahi & Mudibo, 2021; Tröster and Janechová, 2021).

2.2 The Objectives and Rationale of the AfCFTA Programme

Articles 3 and 4 of the AfCFTA agreement outlined the general and specific aims for establishing the AfCFTA. Article 3 states the general objectives of the AfCFTA as follows:

- (a) Create a single market for goods, services, facilitated by movement of persons in order to deepen the economic integration of the African continent and in accordance with the Pan African Vision of “An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa” enshrined in Agenda 2063;
- (b) Create a liberalised market for goods and services through successive rounds of negotiations;
- (c) Contribute to the movement of capital and natural persons and facilitate investments building on the initiatives and developments in the State Parties and RECs;
- (d) Lay the foundation for the establishment of a Continental Customs Union at a later stage;
- (e) Promote and attain sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality and structural transformation of the State Parties;
- (f) Enhance the competitiveness of the economies of State Parties within the continent and the global market;

(g) Promote industrial development through diversification and regional value chain development, agricultural development and food security; and

(h) Resolve the challenges of multiple and overlapping memberships and expedite the regional and continental integration processes”.

Article 4 states that “For purposes of fulfilling and realising the objectives set out in Article 3, State Parties shall:

(a) Progressively eliminate tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade in goods;

(b) Progressively liberalise trade in services;

(c) Cooperate on investment, intellectual property rights and competition policy;

(d) Cooperate on all trade-related areas;

(e) Cooperate on customs matters and the implementation of trade facilitation measures;

(f) Establish a mechanism for the settlement of disputes concerning their rights and obligations; and

(g) Establish and maintain an institutional framework for the implementation and administration of the AfCFTA”.



According to Article 3, the AfCFTA agreement generally aims to ensure the creation of a single African market, in line with the African Union’s Agenda 2063 which seeks to make Africa an integrated, prosperous and peaceful continent. It also seeks to promote the free movement of capital and persons across different regional trading blocs to facilitate development (African Union Commission, 2018; Mutubwa, 2019; Nyinevi, 2021).

The agreement seeks to promote the free movement of capital and persons across different regional trading blocs to facilitate development, as well as to lay the foundation for establishing a continental customs union in the near future while making African economies more competitive in the larger global market (African Union Commission, 2018; Tröster & Janechová, 2021). It again intends to build the capacity of African countries to achieve socio-economic development in a manner that is sustainable and inclusive, including the promotion of equality in the areas of gender issues and structural transformation (African Union Commission, 2018; Nyinevi, 2021).

To achieve these broad aims, Article 4 of the agreement specifically requires member states to remove both tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade in goods and to liberalize the trade in services in progressively further requires cooperation among member states with regards to investment, intellectual property rights, competition policy; and in all other issues that are related to trade, customs matters and trade facilitation measures (African Union Commission, 2018; Nyinevi, 2021; Tröster & Janechová, 2021).

2.3 The Key Features of the AfCFTA Programme

The AfCFTA agreement is characterized by two main features. The first feature is contained in *Phase 1* relates to protocols on trades in goods and services; and protocol on settlement of disputes. It is concerned with the reduction and elimination of trade barriers, promotion of trade facilitation, protection of infant industries, regulation and standard of goods and services, certification and licensing requirements that are mutually recognized and respected, exceptions for security-related services, and the development of technical capacity (African Union Commission, 2018; Luke 2019).

Phase 1 of the agreement further establishes mechanisms and protocols for resolving any dispute that may arise from the operationalization of the AfCFTA programme (African Union Commission, 2018; Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2021). The mechanism includes the establishment of *ad hoc* dispute settlement panels, an appellate body and alternative dispute settlement options. Specifically, it provides that *ad hoc* Dispute Settlement Panels should be established as the first point of call for addressing any trade disputes. However, if the *ad hoc* Dispute Settlement Panels is unable to help address the matter satisfactorily, any of the affected parties may contest the decision by filing an appeal to the Appellate Body (African Union Commission, 2018).

The Appellate Body is a standing body that is composed of seven legal experts. The mandate of this body is to facilitate satisfactory resolution of disputes among the member states at the second instance. Apart from this, the protocols on settlement of disputes provide for and encourage the use of arbitration, conciliation and mediation as alternative means for addressing disagreement and misunderstanding that may emerge from the implementation of the agreement among member states (African Union Commission, 2018; Nyinevi, 2021).

The second major feature of the AfCFTA programme is outlined in *Phase 2* of the agreement. This is characterized by issues of negotiations regarding issues like policies for competition, intellectual property rights, investment, as well as e-commerce (Luke 2019; TRALAC 2020). This feature of the programmes encourages and requires member states to adjust their respective national policies so that common rules and policy frameworks can be created for the realization of the African single market to facilitate economic integration, inclusive development, among other objectives (Luke 2019).

2.4 The Governance and Institution Structure for the AfCFTA Implementation

The agreement establishing the AfCFTA provides five key institutional structures that should guide how the AfCFTA is implemented, administrated, monitored and assessed. According to Article 9 of the agreement, the governance institutions of the AfCFTA include (African Union Commission, 2018): the General Assembly; Council of Ministers; Committee of Senior Trade Officials; and the AfCFTA Secretariat.

The Assembly is the highest decision-making organ of the African Union. Its mandates are to provide strategic directions for the AfCFTA programme, as well as by consensus, adopt interpretations that are offered by the Council of Ministers on any provision of the agreement (African Union Commission, 2018).

The Council of Ministers comprises Ministers of trade or other ministers, authorities, or officials that are appropriately designated by member states as their representatives on the Council. The Council's mandate, among other things, relates to making decisions that are consistent with the provisions of the agreement, ensuring that the agreement is appropriately implemented and enforced, and promoting the best interest of members under the agreement. Others include facilitating the harmonization of relevant policies that can advance the course of the implementation of the agreement, considering reports and activities of the AfCFTA Secretariat so appropriate measures can be taken (African Union Commission, 2018).

The Committee of Senior Trade Officials is composed of permanent or principal secretaries or other officials that are nominated by individual member states to represent their interests. The main responsibilities of this institution relate to the implementation of Council of Ministers' directions directed at them and designing action plans and other interventions to facilitate the

agreement's implementation. Others include establishing committees or other working groups when it is necessary, as well as requesting that a technical committee be set up to look into any issue of interest to the agreement (African Union Commission, 2018).

Finally, the AfCFTA Secretariat is an African Union institution mandated with responsibilities to oversee the implementation of the AfCFTA framework by coordinating and implementing country-led initiatives aimed at improving trade facilitation on the continent (African Union Commission, 2018; Nyinevi, 2021).

2.5 The Promise of the AfCFTA Programme

The implementation of the AfCFTA is expected to generate several benefits for the individual member states and the continent as a whole. In particular, the implementation of the agreement is expected to promote trade and industrialization via the removal of barriers and tariff regimes. This is because intra-African trade is hindered by several barriers including protectionist measures. For instance, it has been projected that the protection rate of member countries is averagely 8.7% (Mevel and Karingi 2012). Similarly, only about one-third of the countries in Africa have imposed or faced tariffs considered to be relatively lower than the overall average continental tariffs (Mevel & Karingi 2012).

Moreover, tariffs removal has been estimated to promote about 40 – 50% increase in trade among member states between 2020 and 2040. This may have a knock-on effect on the level of industrialization in the continent because tariff removal is a potential avenue for private sector operators to enjoy the benefits of economies of scale (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa [ECA], 2018). The World Bank (2020) also estimated that AfCFTA implementation can

boost trade among African countries by 81 % by 2035, as well as enhance the total volume of African exports by 29 % (World Bank, 2020).

Besides, it is projected that Africa may become a \$2.5 trillion market for household consumptions, as well as a \$4.2 trillion market in respect of business-to-business consumption by 2030 (Signe, 2018), and facilitate the expected continental integration to positively contribute to economic development and reduction in the rates of poverty in the continent (ECA, 2019). This is consistent with the assertion by Chauvin et al. (2016) that the potential impact of the removal of tariffs and non-tariff barriers will enhance intra-African trade and create significant welfare benefits. According to them, it is possible for the implementation of the AfCFTA to improve the welfare of Africans by 2.64% by 2027 ending (Chauvin et al., 2016). Hence, many stakeholders expect that the operationalization of the AfCFTA agreement will stimulate a significant reduction in tariffs and non-tariff barriers (Apiko et al., 2020) as envisaged in its objectives for the creation of a single African market (African Union Commission, 2018).

Also, the AfCFTA programme is expected to improve productivity, enhance job creation, social inclusion and welfare as its operationalization could generate a virtuous circle of significant market opportunities (Apiko et al., 2020; Oloruntoba & Tsowou, 2019). Implementing the AfCFTA could “increase wages by 10 %, with larger gains for unskilled workers and women” (Apiko et al., 2020, p.3). It has similarly been projected that the operationalization of the AfCFTA programme can extricate about 30 million and 68 million people from extreme poverty and moderate poverty respectively, by the end of 2035 (Muchanga, 2020).

In addition, the AfCFTA programme is likely to stimulate the structural transformation of economies within the continent (Apiko et al., 2020). Through the “eventual elimination of tariffs

and non-tariff barriers, the AfCFTA addresses directly the technical and structural barriers that have so far fragmented trade and investment relations between African economies” (Oloruntoba & Tsowou, 2019, p.237).

The foregoing is consistent with findings of recent empirical studies seeking to assess the potential benefits of the AfCFTA implementation on selected individual countries (e.g. Charles, 2021; Ihua et al., 2018; Mloyi, 2021). For example, Mloyi (2021) examined the potential role of the AfCFTA on trade and investments in Africa. The study was carried out using the qualitative method and expert interview data from the various regions of the continent. Their results indicated that the AfCFTA will positively enhance economic growth and trade liberalization via the creation of the free trade area, and its associated elimination of tariffs and non-tariff barriers.

In Nigeria, Ihua et al. (2018) examined the extent to which the implementation of the AfCFTA would affect the Nigerian economy. They used interview data from business owners, business leaders, policy experts, labour union leaders, as well as survey data from 512 companies for the analyses. The empirical evidence revealed that more than half (69%) of the sampled businesses were of the view that the AfCFTA operationalization would be of a significant benefit to the Nigerian economy. These benefits which the country stands to gain include an improved business environment, business expansion, and development of local enterprises and industries.

In a related study, Charles (2021) assessed the potential effect of AfCFTA on the economy of Côte d’Ivoire. Analyzing the export data of 45 countries in Africa from 2001 to 2016, the researcher found that if the AfCFTA was implemented, it would boost the export performance of Côte d’Ivoire significantly. This is because the agreement would provide an opportunity for the country to export to a minimum of 25 countries within the continent.

From the above, the expected benefits from the implementation of the AfCFTA could be enormous. It promises to deliver free mobility of goods, services, and labour to facilitate the socio-economic development of the continent for the benefit of African citizens, businesses, and its global competitiveness.

2.6 Challenges of the AfCFTA Implementation

Despite the expected benefits of the implementation of the AfCFTA, there are potential challenges that may hamper its success. Challenges of harmonization and standardization across the various regions can potentially impede the creation of regional value chains (Parshotam, 2018). In a study, Ndomondo-Sigonda, Miot, Naidoo, Masota, Ng'andu, Ngum & Kaale (2021) examined the state of harmonization of the regulations for medical products in East Africa. Their findings revealed that efforts to harmonize regulations for medical products within the region was being hampered by “limited access to public information about the process; limited information flow from regulators to industry during the joint assessment process; and a significant lag time between a joint assessment” (p.11). In a similar vein, there are issues concerning free mobility of labour due to the high prevailing rates of domestic unemployment and visa restrictions (Ikhuoria, 2022; Mitchell, 2021), Parshotam, (2018). Recent reports show that most Africans still require visas to be able to travel to about 46% of other countries within the continent. This imposes significant impediment on the free movement of labour (Ikhuoria, 2022; Mitchell, 2021).

Likewise, the prevalence of poor infrastructure and transportation systems is likely to impede the free flow of goods and services (Apiko et al., 2020; Parshotam, 2018). This is important since infrastructure deficits negatively affect industrialization and investment (Ahouassou 2017).

Relatedly, Ihua et al. (2018) establishes that the implementation of the AfCFTA can harm local economies by promoting the influx of sub-standard goods and discouraging the development of local businesses. It can also lead to the loss of revenues since they do not have the required infrastructure to enable some member states to harness the gains of the programme.

Another related problem is the lack of availability of reliable energy for trade promotion and job creation. This creates an unfavourable business climate in several countries in Africa. According to the World Bank's 2020 Ease of Doing Business report, economies in Sub-Saharan Africa are not generally competitive due to several challenges ranging from poor institutional structures and human capital capacity, limited capacity to implement policies to industrialize their economies, and among others (World Bank, 2020).

More so, in the views of Ndonga, Laryea and Chaponda (2020), the poor export structure of African countries in terms of diversification and heavy dependence on primary commodities can hinder the ability of the continent to fully unlock the potential of the AfCFTA. Again, Ndonga et al. (2020) conceptually examined the impacts of the AfCFTA on Malawi, which is categorized as a Least Developed Country. It was found that Malawi was likely to lose significant revenues from the operationalization of the agreement through the elimination of tariffs and trade barriers as it cannot compete favourably with bigger economies. Thus, countries with smaller capacities may suffer more losses while the few big regional players may reap massive benefits under the agreement. Thus, least developed countries and economies with smaller capacities for industrialization stand to be adversely affected.

It is essential to ensure that the trade liberalization and economic integration agenda do not harm such economies or countries as they participate in the AfCFTA (Ismail, 2016; Luke & MacLeod,

2017; Ndonga et al., 2020). This could involve deferring their (least developing countries) tariff reductions under the AfCFTA agreement, as well as diversifying their imports. It will equally be important for these economies to increase their technological capacity while finding new ways to enhance tax revenue mobilization to be able to harness the expected benefits from the programme (Ndonga et al., 2020).

Furthermore, poor governance is an important threat to the successful implementation of the agreement. The leaders of many countries in Africa have largely failed to deliver good governance that would improve the lives of their citizens. Although elections have become very prevalent, their credibility is often questioned. Due to this, there are frequent contestations for power and control in some countries within the continent. Thus, the agreement's successful implementation is likely to be a challenge, if good governance and principles of democracy are not prioritized and adequately entrenched across various regions and countries in Africa (Wapmuk, 2021).

2.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter discussed the AfCFTA programme in the context of AU's Agenda 2063 including its continental integration agenda and the objectives and rationale of the AfCFTA Agreement. It also examined the institutional governance arrangement for the AfCFTA implementation, the promise or expected benefits of Agreement, as well as the challenges that can impede its successful implementation.

Specifically, it shows that the main aim of the AfCFTA project is to create a single African market to promote the free movement of capital and persons across different regional trading blocs to facilitate development, and to lay the foundation for establishing a continental customs

union in the near future while making African economies more competitive in the larger global market. The implementation of the AfCFTA is therefore expected to generate several benefits for the individual member states and the continent as a whole, including in trade and industrialization via the removal of barriers and tariff regimes, and economic growth and development. However, there are potential challenges that may hamper the success of the AfCFTA project. These include harmonization and standardization challenges, the prevalence of poor infrastructure and transportation systems, poor governance, and low availability of reliable energy for trade promotion and job creation.



CHAPTER THREE

DIPLOMACY AND GHANA'S EXPERIENCE IN BIDDING FOR THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA SECRETARIAT

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the role of diplomacy in Ghana's experience of bidding for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat. It covers the demographic analysis of the research participants, the empirical results and discussions on the role of the AfCFTA in the socio-economic growth of Africa, the diplomatic interactions and strategies that Ghana used to win the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat; and the challenges faced, and lessons learnt on how Ghana can best prepare for future international biddings.

3.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 3.1 shows the demographic profile of the research participants. Out of the 15 respondents initially targeted, six (6) were responsive. Using six respondents is permissible or consistent with the norms of qualitative sampling (see Patton, 2002). As shown in Table 3.1, five of the six respondents were recruited from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of Ghana. The other was a retired career diplomat who doubled as the President of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), Ghana. The respondents' age ranged from 28 to 78 years, and four of the six respondents were female.

The respondents had a minimum of 3 years of work experience and a maximum of 46 years of work experience. They held roles at senior levels within the Ministry (from Assistant Director to

Deputy Director). These individuals played varied roles in Ghana’s bidding process, and their demographic details demonstrated clearly that they were qualified to provide the needed insights into the Ghanaian experience regarding the expected benefits of the AfCFTA, the role of diplomacy in Ghana’s success in the bid to host the Secretariat for the AfCFTA and challenges that may have confronted the bidding activities.

Table 1.0: Demographic Analyses

No.	Sex	Age	Education	Position	Work Experience	Institution
1.	Male	37	Master’s Degree	Deputy Director	12 years	MFARI
2.	Female	30	Master’s Degree	Assistant Director	3 years	MFARI
3.	Female	28	Master’s Degree	Assistant Director	5 years	MFARI
4.	Male	78	Master’s Degree	President	46 years	CFR, Ghana
5.	Female	26	Master’s Degree	Assistant Director	4 years	MFARI
6.	Female	43	Master’s Degree	Deputy Director	15 years	MFARI

Note: MFARI = Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration

Source: Interview Data (2022)

As noted, the study employed thematic data analysis to analyse the data on the role of diplomacy in Ghana's bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat. It involved generating codes and using themes based on the patterns and relationships emerging from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). The analyses were presented in three main themes:

- 1) The relevance of the AfCFTA to Africa's economic growth and development;
- 2) The diplomatic interactions and strategies employed by Ghana to win the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat; and
- 3) The challenges faced in the bidding process.

These themes are discussed in detail below.

3.2 The Relevance of the AfCFTA to Africa's Economic Growth and Development

The idea of regional integration has gained significant global interest, especially in African countries, resulting in several integration agreements (Rotaru, 2018) and the proliferation of free trade areas. Indeed, several regional integration blocs have been formed in Africa (Afesorgbor & Bergeijk, 2014; Apiko, Woolfrey & Byiers, 2020). This is because regional integration arrangements are essential for facilitating development (Hartzenberg, 2011; Kenyaggia, 2016; Leshoele, 2020). Consequently, African leaders agreed to set up the AfCFTA in 2012 to achieve their aim of having the African Economic Community (AEC), as the Abuja Treaty envisaged, to facilitate trade among countries on the continent (Ihua et al., 2018; Oloruntoba & Tsowou, 2019).

This study used interview data from Ghanaian international relations professionals and experts to ascertain whether they share common views on the promise of the AfCFTA concerning economic growth and development in Africa. The responses of the study's respondents showed

that the AfCFTA could play a crucial role in the economic growth and development of the continent through two broad means or mechanisms:

- The creation of a single African market for inter and intra-regional trade, and
- The creation of employment opportunities

3.2.2 Creation of a single African market for inter and intra-regional trade

Trade among African countries is generally low due to various issues impeding trade. These impediments include trade and non-trade barriers (Apiko et al., 2020). An estimate by Brookings Institute indicated that while intra-African trade stood at just 14%, regional trade in Asia was at 59%, and 69% among members of the European Union, implying that trade among members of the AU was considerably low in relation to that of other continents (Sarkodie, 2019). As a result, members of the AU have resolved to take steps to create a common market for member countries through the operationalisation of the AfCFTA programme. The respondents in this study agreed that the operationalisation of the AfCFTA has created a single market for African countries to engage in inter and intra-regional trade, which is critical in facilitating the continent's socio-economic development. They added that the programme also created the world's most extensive continental trade area to improve commerce and economic growth through the eventual elimination of tariff-related and non-tariff barriers. This is because several barriers including protectionist measures, hinder intra-African trade.

According to the President of the Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, *“the creation of a single customs union, creating a sizeable African market and trade facilitation are all towards fulfilling the ultimate goal of an integrated Africa, as established from the creation of the OAU. With the creation of the world's largest single market after the formation of the WTO, the AfCFTA will*

contribute to Africa's growth and development by improving trade and commerce and intra-African trade” (President, Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, 2022).

This was reiterated by a male Deputy Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, who stated that:

The decision to implement the AfCFTA is a bold step toward reaching the goal of economic integration in Africa. The AfCFTA will create the world's most significant trade space after the WTO, with over 1.3 billion people and 2.6 trillion dollars in GDP. With the projections made based on removing tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade, there will be a 50% boost in intra-regional trade. Because the tenets underpinning the AfCFTA include the elimination or reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade, the establishment of a Continental Customs Union, the promotion of industrialisation, and resolving the issues that arise from the spaghetti bowl effect, the fulfilment of these conditions will ensure that the ultimate purpose of regional integration is fulfilled. (Deputy Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022).

Likewise, a female Assistant Director noted that *“there is a large market of over 1.3 billion people and a combined GDP of over \$2.6 trillion. This increase in GDP would be directly proportional to the size of the Member States' combined economies and improve the Continent's overall fiscal condition” (Assistant Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022).*

Most of the above statistical figures and assertions are primarily supported by existing literature (Adebola, 2020; Ighobor, 2020; Mutahi & Mudibo, 2021); the AfCFTA has created the world's largest continental free trade area and a single market for goods and services with 1.2 billion people from the fragmented markets of the 55 Member States of the AU, a combined GDP of US\$2.5 trillion (Mutahi & Mudibo, 2021; Sarkodie, 2019) or \$3 trillion (Ighobor, 2020). This

is because the AU's AfCFTA intends to remove trade barriers, boost intra-regional trade and create a consolidated market, thereby presenting opportunities for trading enterprises, consumers and businesses across Africa and assisting in sustainable development efforts in the region (Mutahi & Mudibo, 2021).

The World Bank (2020) also estimated that the AfCFTA's implementation could boost trade among African countries by 81% by 2035 and enhance the total volume of African exports by 29% (World Bank, 2020). The findings are consistent with prior empirical studies of Charles, 2021; Ihua et al., 2018; Mloyi, 2021, which have established that the AfCFTA implementation will positively enhance economic growth and trade liberalisation via the creation of the free trade area, and its associated elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers. The AfCFTA agreement is therefore believed to be a game-changer in terms of regional economic integration, industrialisation and sustainable development in Africa (Apiko et al., 2020; Asiedu, 2018; Ihua et al., 2018; Ndonga et al., 2020).

This supports the neo-functionalism theory of regional integration (Hass, 1964; Oloruntoba, 2019; Onditi, 2020; Schimmelfennig, 2018), which touts regional and economic integration as a means for fostering continent-wide peace and improving prosperity for citizens (Baldwin, 2008; Ihua, Ike-Muonso, Taiwo & Mba-Kalu, 2018; Afesorgbor & Bergeijk, 2014) by facilitating trade among countries (Ndonga, Laryea & Chaponda, 2020; Baier et al., 2008), industrialisation, and sustainable socio-economic development (Ndonga et al., 2020; Ihua et al., 2018).

3.2.3 Creation of employment opportunities

Another key avenue through which implementing the AfCFTA will promote socio-economic development in Africa is its impact on job creation and employment opportunities. Most of the respondents sampled believed that the programme would create more jobs and provide avenues for unemployed Africans to find sustainable employment. For instance, one of the respondents stated that *“the Agreement will see the creation of more employment opportunities for Africans”* (Deputy Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration).

Similarly, another respondent stated that *“the implementation of the AfCFTA could bring about a significant increase in employment opportunities”* (Assistant Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022). Likewise, the President of the Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, agreed and noted that implementing the AfCFTA *“will provide jobs for Africans and attract foreign investments”* (President, Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, 2022).

These findings support earlier empirical findings (Charles, 2021; Ihua et al., 2018; Mloyi, 2021) and assertions by some scholars (Apiko et al., 2020; Olorunfoba & Tsowou, 2019) that the AfCFTA programme is expected to enhance job creation, social inclusion and welfare as its operationalisation could generate a virtuous circle of significant market opportunities. This means that unemployment which continues to be a growing concern in several countries in Africa (Amani, 2017; Awad, 2019), can be addressed through the promotion of labour mobility across borders and the development of local enterprises and industries (Charles, 2021; Ihua et al., 2018; Mloyi, 2021). Because the programme aims to make African economies more prosperous and self-sufficient through industrialisation and other means, free flow of capital and inputs, businesses will be able to create more employment opportunities for Africans to be gainfully

employed for better social welfare. When unemployment reduces, societal welfare in Africa will be improved because people can now earn a living.

This is consistent with the assertion by some researchers, such as Chauvin et al. (2016) and Muchanga (2020), that removing non-trade barriers as part of implementing the AfCFTA programme will enhance intra-African trade and create significant welfare benefits. Likewise, a study by Labour Research Services (2022) agreed that the AfCFTA provides opportunities for manufacturers in Ghana to build increased manufacturing capacity to create jobs for Ghanaians but noted that it could also erode employment opportunities for the locals due to the removal of restrictions on labour mobility and the fact that established companies may kill small and local businesses. In their study, Ndonga et al. (2020) argued that Malawi, a Least Developed Country, was likely to lose significant revenues from the operationalisation of the agreement through the elimination of tariffs and trade barriers as it may not be able to compete favourably with more significant economies. This means that least developed countries and economies with smaller capacities for industrialisation stand to be adversely affected.

However, full implementation of the programme can *“ensure that there is fairness among all Member States because while the AfCFTA is a relatively new initiative, it would make use of the progress that has already been made on the continent concerning other smaller RECs”* (Assistant Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022). This is possible because the principles underpinning the AfCFTA programme include the Most-Favoured-Nation Treatment, the programme’s focus being driven by the AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) serving as the building blocks for the programme and reciprocity (AU, 2018). This ensures that the trade liberalisation and economic integration agenda do not harm such economies or countries as they participate in the AfCFTA (Ismail, 2016; Luke & MacLeod,

2017; Ndonga et al., 2020). This could involve deferring their (least developing countries) tariff reductions under the AfCFTA agreement. Other measures such individual countries could take may include diversifying their imports, increasing their technological capacity, and finding new ways to enhance tax revenue mobilisation to harness the expected benefits from the programme (Ndonga et al., 2020).

The preceding findings are in line with the proposition of the neo-functionalism theory of integration (Hass, 1964; Oloruntoba, 2019; Onditi, 2020; Schimmelfennig, 2018) because the theory suggests that the formation of regional (economic) institutions will promote progress in trade and economic growth (Mitrany, 1976; Oloruntoba, 2019). The theory again argues for the need to create market access among regionalising states by gradually removing trade barriers (Draper, 2013; Gibbs, 2009; Rotaru, 2018). A joint continental market will have a significant functional spillover in other related economic sectors like job creation, industrialisation, economic empowerment and societal welfare (Niemann & Schmitter, 2009; Pentland, 1973).

3.3 Diplomatic Interactions and Strategies Employed by Ghana to Win the Bid to Host the AfCFTA Secretariat

The AfCFTA Secretariat is an AU institution that oversees the implementation of the AfCFTA framework by coordinating and implementing country-led initiatives to improve trade facilitation on the continent (Nyinevi, 2021). Ghana won the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat after facing stiff competition from six (6) other AU Member States (Sarkodie, 2019; Tröster & Janechová, 2021). Considering the competitiveness of the bidding, many were of the view that diplomacy might have played a crucial role in Ghana's success in winning the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat against other giant Member States. This study sought the views of key informants

about whether or not the election of Ghana as the AfCFTA Secretariat host was influenced by diplomacy. The respondents' responses provided empirical confirmation for the view that the success of Ghana in the bidding process was significantly influenced by diplomacy. It could even be said that diplomacy was "Ghana's saving grace".

According to the President of the Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, *"I would even say that without the diplomatic engagements, Ghana would probably not have won the bid. We stood out amidst all the other vibrant states bidding to host the Secretariat because of our diplomatic efforts. The unconventional diplomacy that came into play was definitely Ghana's saving grace"* (President, Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, 2022).

A male Deputy Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration also agreed that *"diplomacy played an essential role in Ghana's winning the Secretariat bid, if not the most crucial. This is because all the other countries that had put in their bids would have been able to provide the physical and financial requirements Ghana provided; however, the diplomatic interactions and relationships that were leveraged made the difference. Ghana probably would not have won the bid without diplomacy's role in bidding"* (Deputy Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022).

Likewise, a female Assistant Director noted that *"without the involvement of diplomacy, particularly the efforts of the Addis Ababa and other Missions in the region, Ghana would probably not have gone past the first stages of the bidding process. The Missions were the primary facilitators and coordinators of all Ghana's engagements with the other Member States during the lobbying process"* (Assistant Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022). Another respondent stated that *"one can say that the diplomatic efforts were*

the only things that made a difference between Ghana and the other bidding states to put Ghana in the position to win the bid to host the Secretariat” (Assistant Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022).

This result provided support to the view that diplomacy is an instrument to produce a less violent world order while at the same time being able to achieve national interests (Diamond & McDonald, 1996; McRae & Hubbart, 2001) through the deployment of non-violent means to shaping foreign policies (Cooper, Heine & Thakur, 2013; Marks & Freeman, 2019) and achieve sustained national goodwill in the community of nations (Javaid, 2019). This suggests that Ghana leveraged her long-standing friendly relations with AU members and the expectation that the country would reciprocate their gestures in the future to secure their support. This could mean that Ghana’s use of ad hoc diplomats to accomplish this temporary task in the international arena (see Scoville, 2019) could have emphasised negotiation, collaboration, constant communication, the propagation of national interests and the use of peaceful methods in achieving national interests.

Based on the above, this study then sought from the respondents the specific diplomatic interactions and strategies employed by Ghana to win the bid. The results revealed that Ghana’s diplomatic interactions and strategy in the bidding processes could be broadly categorised into three. The three-prong diplomatic interactions and strategy are:

- The submission of a formal bid
- Lobbying and campaigning
- Providing options for structures to host the Secretariat

3.3.3 Submission of a formal bid

The AfCFTA agreement was signed at the 10th Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly in Rwanda in March, 2018 (African Union, 2018). Consequently, bids opened for member countries to express interest in serving as hosts (Nyinevi, 2021). The Ghanaian bid for the AfCFTA Secretariat was submitted on July 10, 2018, by the Ghana Secretariat (GS) through its acting Minister of Trade and Industry (MOTI). Before the submission of the bid, a team of experts was put together to oversee the bidding processes. The team subsequently developed a position paper outlining their main argument in support of the bid to host the Secretariat and also submitted fiscal entailment to the Parliament of Ghana for approval. This was necessary to secure support from Ghanaians for the bid and to seek permission from the legislature to release the needed resources to fund the bidding processes and related activities like campaigning and lobbying.

The President of the Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, summed up Ghana's bidding process as *“following the signing of the AfCFTA Agreement, there was the need for a Secretariat or office for the proper setting-up of the programme. The AU opened the avenue for Member States to place their bids. The Candidatures Unit of the MFARI was created to handle Ghana's bid to host the Secretariat. Ghana submitted its bid and immediately started implementing strategies for campaigning* (President, Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, 2022).

Likewise, a female Deputy Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration outlined the process as follows: *“submission of official bidding letters from the Government to the AUC (African Union Commission), the presentation of a position paper on Ghana's intention to host the AfCFTA Secretariat was prepared... This bid also resulted in the establishment of the Candidatures Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration to represent and*

promote the country's interests in international organisations” (Deputy Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022).

The question, however, is what would be Ghana's motivation for serving as the Secretariat's host? Accordingly, the key informants were asked what they considered the motivation behind Ghana's bid to host the Secretariat. The analyses of their responses indicated that the decision to bid to host the Secretariat was motivated by the expected considerable socio-economic and diplomatic gains from hosting the AfCFTA Secretariat. In particular, the socio-economic benefits encouraging Ghana's move included tourism development, raising revenue from international activities like conferences, capacity development, the opportunity to earn foreign exchange through Foreign Direct Investments to strengthen the value of the Ghana Cedi, employment opportunities, among others.

As expressed by one of the respondents, *“Ghana will reap the associated benefits of being at the centre of the market. Some indirect benefits the country will derive from hosting the AfCFTA Secretariat include financial resources generated through conferences being held in Ghana and the foreign exchange and money from tourism. The country will derive similar benefits that Ethiopia derives from hosting the AU. It will also open up opportunities for regional integration training for Ghanaians and make Ghana a major player in Africa” (President, Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, 2022).*

Another respondent concurred and stated that *“hosting the Secretariat will help attract foreign investments, promote the trading of Ghanaian goods, and boost economic activities in Ghana. Other benefits will include employment opportunities for Ghanaians, Foreign Direct*

Investments, being the preferred investment destination, and improved living standards for Ghanaians” (Deputy Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022).

This suggests that Ghana plans to use the Secretariat as an opportunity to attract foreign investments, promote the trading of Ghanaian goods, boost economic activities in the country, serve as the trade gateway for Africa and create job opportunities for Ghanaians. This is consistent with Sarkodie’s (2019) assertion that Ghana hopes to use the Secretariat as a conduit to boost the services sector (for example, the tourism sector) and create employment opportunities for Ghanaians because the Secretariat will recruit a range of skilled workers in the country including staff with finance and economic backgrounds, translators, administrators and technicians. While GIZ (2021) asserted Ghana would benefit from socio-economic transformation by serving as the host of the Secretariat, it cautioned that the country would only benefit if private sector operators in the country take advantage of the agreement by developing the capacity to expand production in the industrial and the agricultural sectors of the economy.

Furthermore, the diplomatic achievement motivated Ghana to bid for the Secretariat. This is because Ghana had not reaped many benefits from its efforts toward developing the continent over the years. Despite its role in establishing the AU, the country did not host any of the Union’s major organs and therefore wanted to use this opportunity to become one of the countries to host permanent offices of the AU. This was evident in the President of the Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana’s expression that *“despite being a major player in advancing Africa’s interest, as well as the liberation of other African states, Ghana had never hosted any major African Union Secretariat. Ghana temporarily hosted the Organization of African Trade Unit, but that was minor and short-lived”* (President, Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana).

This was reinforced by a Deputy Director who stated that “... *one of the main arguments was that despite Ghana’s role in matters concerning the continent, the country did not host any significant AU organ....*” (Deputy Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022). This is important for the country’s diplomatic influence at the continental level as it is the first Pan-African Organization or organ to be hosted by Ghana, a feat that somewhat rewards Ghana’s rich historical legacy in fronting for a united and integrated Africa since its independence (see Mutubwa, 2019; Nyinevi, 2021).

3.3.4 Lobbying and campaigning

Lobbying and campaigning were key components of Ghana’s diplomatic interactions and strategies that made it possible for the country to win the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat. This strategy involved deploying several strategic activities to win the hearts and minds of the AU members, including even the competing member countries (i.e., Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar and Senegal) to support the country’s bid. Specifically, Ghana’s lobbying and campaigning strategies included the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee; the formation of a mission of eminent Ghanaians - an ad hoc committee comprising former presidents (late Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings and Former President John Agyekum Kufuor), internationally renowned and influential Ghanaian religious leaders such as Archbishop Duncan-Williams of the Action Chapel International, retired diplomats, Ghanaians with international influence; use of Ghana’s diplomatic Missions; leveraging existing relationships and networks within the AU membership, and creating and distributing brochures and souvenirs. These committees and missions were sent to member countries to campaign, negotiate, convince and lobby for support for Ghana’s bid to host the Secretariat. Their hard work eventually paid off as Ghana won the bid.

As explained by one of the key informants or respondents:

An ad hoc Committee comprising Ghanaian diplomats, Ministers of state, retired diplomats, Ghanaians with international influence such as Archbishop Duncan-Williams, former Presidents, particularly the late Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings and Ex-President John Agyekum Kufuor, was put together to strategise on how to go about the lobbying process. The Committee was divided into groups headed by a Minister of State. These groups dispersed across the Continent to convince targeted Member States with whom some of the group members had good relationships to lobby for Ghana. The President of the Republic, H.E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, also called Heads of State who were hesitant to throw their weight behind Ghana for one reason or another. It is worth noting that the other vying States were not left out of the lobbying process. (President, Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, 2022).

Similarly, an Assistant Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration stated that:

Missions were sent out to other AU Member States to campaign and lobby for Ghana. Negotiations were made with some other countries, including those who had also placed bids. Some key individuals from Ghana used their relationships with relevant officials in other AU Member States to convince them to support Ghana in its bid to host the Secretariat. Ghana's Trade Ministry also engaged other Trade ministries across the continent to support Ghana. Ghana's Diplomatic Missions across the Continent also campaigned and lobbied for Ghana. The President of the Republic officially informed his colleagues about Ghana's bid and requested their support. (Assistant Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022).

A Deputy Director confirmed this while outlining Ghana's diplomatic strategies and interactions in respect of lobbying and campaigning in the following words; *"campaigning for the support of other Member States..., the creation of an inter-ministerial committee to deliberate on the activities to be undertaken as well as dispatching to other countries to lobby. A Mission*

comprising some former heads of State, Ministers, active and retired Diplomats and other vital individuals was sent across the continent to lobby the other AU Member States to support Ghana. Brochures and souvenirs were also prepared and distributed as part of the campaign strategies. Ghana leveraged its relationships as well as its place in some organisations and the contribution, support and assistance it had given the other Member States in past times to push its campaign and ultimate success in the bid to host the secretariat” (Deputy Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022).

This result can be explained through the lenses of the neo-functionalism theory of integration (Borzal, 2016; Haas, 2004; Rotaru, 2018), which maintains that active participation and peaceful interactions among different state and non-state stakeholders or actors (Borzal, 2016; Haas, 2004; Rotaru, 2018) is vital in achieving regional or continental integration, thereby placing significant value on diplomacy (Berridge, 2002; Cooper, Heine & Thakur, 2013). This implies that Ghana’s use of dialogue and negotiations using various ad hoc negotiation groups and campaign teams was beneficial in convincing and influencing the choices (Berridge, 2002; Cooper, Heine & Thakur, 2013) of AU member states to support the country’s bid to host the Secretariat of the AfCFTA.

It is possible that this theoretical exposition could have further influenced how Ghana has designed and executed its diplomatic strategies and interactions of lobbying and campaigning. Ghana’s use of different teams, eminent statesmen and women, varied stakeholders, among others, to interact, lobby and negotiate with AU members to support the agenda of the country to become the host of the AfCFTA Secretariat is mainly in tandem with the viewpoint of the Neo-Functionalism theory of integration (Hass, 1964; Oloruntoba, 2019; Onditi, 2020; Schimmelfennig, 2018). This is because the neo-functionalism theory of integration embraces

the involvement of multiple stakeholders in successful regional integration and further suggests that ‘statesmen’ could provide the political will to facilitate integration (Haas, 2004). It emphasizes “complex interdependence among states and their shared interests in dealing with the problems that arise from it by setting up international institutions” (Borzel, 2016, p.45).

3.3.5 Providing options for structures to host the Secretariat

The last of the three diplomatic strategies and interactions employed by Ghana to win the bid to host the Secretariat of the AfCFTA was a pledge and demonstration of capability to provide fundamental landed properties, including a permanent office complex to support the effective administration of the affairs of the programme, and an official residence of the AfCFTA Secretary-General. In the respondents’ views, *“as part of the requirements for hosting the Secretariat, Ghana offered potential structures for hosting the Secretariat”* (President, Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, 2022).

Another respondent reiterated this by noting that *“as part of requirements in the bidding process, Ghana offered office spaces that would be suitable to host the Secretariat”* (Assistant Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022). This played a crucial role in Ghana’s bidding diplomatic strategies and interactions. Ghana fulfilled this promise after it was elected to host the Secretariat. On 17th August 2020, Ghana commissioned and handed over a fully furnished building to the African Union to be used as the Permanent Secretariat of the AfCFTA and a furnished residential accommodation that serves as the official residence of the AfCFTA Secretary-General (Mensah-Yawson, 2020).

After winning the bid, the Government of Ghana made available the \$10 million that was pledged to facilitate the activities of the AfCFTA Secretariat (Sarkodie, 2019). There has also been recruitment at various levels to support the work of the Secretariat. It is worth noting that the recruitment considered members of other member states.

3.4 Challenges Faced in Bidding to Host the AfCFTA Secretariat

The study sought to ascertain whether Ghana faced any problems in its quest to host the AfCFTA Secretariat. To answer this question, the respondents were asked what the challenges faced by Ghana in the bidding process were. Their responses revealed that Ghana's challenges in bidding for and hosting the AfCFTA Secretariat included financial and logistical issues, language barriers, the challenge of preserving Ghana's diplomatic image, and inadequate training/briefing for some members of Ghana's ad hoc missions.

3.4.4 Financial and logistics issues

There was a consensus among the respondents that the bidding process was financially and logistically demanding. Ghana incurred some financial costs for bidding and serving as the AfCFTA Secretariat's host. The country faced financial constraints when deploying the various campaign teams and missions to member countries to convince them to support the country's agenda. Ghana incurred high costs on logistics, accommodation, transportation and the welfare of the members of the country's lobbying and campaigning teams as they went around various countries to win support for Ghana. According to one of the respondents, *"the whole process of lobbying was quite expensive, especially regarding the cost of transportation, hotel accommodation and the works. The Committee may have slightly underestimated the cost incurred in this regard* (President, Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, 2022).

This was reiterated by another respondent who maintained that *“one challenge of bidding to host the secretariat was financial constraints because a lot of funds were required to undertake campaigns and travel across the continent to meet with other governments as part of the lobbying strategy. Furthermore, accessibility to some of the countries that Ghana’s delegations had to visit was challenging* (Deputy Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022).

There were also costs related to the offer of the Secretariat structure as part of the campaign and lobby strategy. An amount of \$10 million was donated to the Secretariat, apart from diplomatic privileges and immunities granted to member states. As noted by one of the respondents, *“the country’s cost of hosting the AfCFTA included the accommodation for the Secretariat, residences for some key officials of the Secretariat and diplomatic privileges and immunities, which sometimes have financial implications (tax exemption, etc.)* (Deputy Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022).

Another respondent similarly noted that *“the direct cost so far is an amount of \$10 million donated to the Secretariat by the President, His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo. The African Union will also contribute funds, and some more funds are expected to come in from some other international agencies... the other major direct cost will be operational; that is the cost involved in running the Secretariat and for the space used”* (Assistant Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022). Likewise, other respondents stated that *“the cost of hosting the Secretariat included accommodation and other provisions for the Director-General, the cost of running and maintaining the office space and additional associated costs. It should, however, be noted that the benefits greatly outweigh the cost* (President, Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, 2022).

These views are in tandem with a scholarly analysis that asserted that the \$10 million pledged by Ghana in terms of providing options for structures to set up the secretariat was an essential direct cost of the bidding to the country (Sarkodie, 2019). However, they were of the view that Ghana would gain more in relation to the cost of hosting the Secretariat. Furthermore, Ghana appeared to have tactfully managed its relationship with other AU Member States and International Organizations during the bidding process, considering the dominant challenges Ghana faced in securing the resources required to back its bid.

3.4.5 Language barrier

Ghana's bidding process was hampered by language differences. The missions and teams deployed by Ghana faced significant language barriers in non-English-speaking member countries of the AU. This affected effective communication and interactions with targets in non-English-speaking countries. As expressed by a female respondent, "*... since Ghana is not primarily bilingual, there were challenges in communicating with the Francophone Countries and the other States that did not speak English or French*" (Assistant Director, Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, 2022).

This suggests that the Ghanaian ad hoc diplomats or missions were limited in their ability to adequately explain and translate their ideas effectively in non-English and French-speaking countries. As indicated by Szalay's (1981) intercultural communication theory, it is possible this situation could have increased the threat of misunderstanding during the negotiation and lobby process. This is because the "power relationships between the cultures involved and international etiquette, the explicitness of what is said by the principals, ongoing interpreter briefing and

training are equally important. All participants in the communication process must contribute to making it work” (Bowen & Bowen, 1987, p.39).

3.4.6 Preserving Ghana’s diplomatic image

It further emerged from the interview responses that Ghana faced the challenge of preserving its enviable image in the diplomatic circle after it won the election to host the Secretariat. It was now time for the country to fulfil the promises that elicited support from other member countries, such as the pledge to offer structures and offices to house the activities of the Secretariat. However, the country faced some challenges delivering on this. For example, raising the required funds and changes to the properties posed some threats to the diplomatic image of the country.

According to the President of the Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, *“the main challenge was ensuring that the promises made were fulfilled so that Ghana would not look bad. One such example was the Secretariat office space which had to be changed twice* (President, Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, 2022). This finding is revealing because it shows how diplomatic strategies can benefit or hinder a country’s credibility when it makes a bid for international projects or organisations.

3.4.7 Inadequate training/briefing for members of Ghana’s ad hoc committees

The final challenge was that although Ghana’s lobbying and campaigning team, that is, members of the various ad hoc committees, were well experienced in their respective fields, they could have been better prepared, trained or briefed for this large-scale ad hoc diplomatic project. The study’s respondent noted that *“there was the issue of inadequate briefing or training for the leaders of the delegations that were sent out to lobby for Ghana. The Committee should have*

insisted on thoroughly training the members of the delegations” (President, Council for Foreign Relations, Ghana, 2022).

This means that although Ghana was successful in the bidding process, adequate training and briefing for the team leaders and citizen diplomats could have further increased their effectiveness in their negotiation and engagement with other countries. This is similar to an empirical study in Korea by Lee (2018), which indicated that training for citizen diplomats is crucial in this era of interdependence of nations. Brown, Bergmann, Novotny and Mackey (2018) suggest that such training programmes should equip participants with knowledge and skills in diplomacy, negotiation and cross-cultural competency.

3.4.8 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter presents and discusses the empirical findings. It examined the role of diplomacy in Ghana’s experience of bidding for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat. It highlighted the role of the AfCFTA in the socio-economic growth of Africa, as well as the diplomatic interactions and strategies that Ghana used to win the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat. It further examined the challenges faced in the bidding process as well as lessons that have been learned to guide Ghana in her future involvement in similar international biddings.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises the research findings, conclusions and recommendations of this study, focusing on the role of diplomacy in Ghana's bid to host the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat.

4.1 Summary of Findings

While the AfCFTA agenda of the AU has attracted attention from researchers (e.g. Charles, 2021; Leshoele, 2020; Mloyi, 2021; Ndonga et al., 2020; Wapmuk, 2021), there is limited research on the role of diplomacy in the AU's AfCFTA agenda. Consequently, this is an important gap in the existing international relations and diplomacy literature regarding the AfCFTA agenda. Similarly, research examining the role of diplomacy in Ghana's bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat is either non-existent or very difficult to find. As a result, the diplomatic processes that underpinned the determination of the location of the Secretariat in Ghana are empirically unknown. This research, therefore, sought to fill these gaps in the existing literature on the topic by critically examining the diplomatic interactions and strategies that Ghana engaged in to win the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat, as well as their associated challenges.

To achieve this, this study employed the neo-functionalism theory of regional integration (Hass, 1964) as its theoretical framework. It used the qualitative design and inductive research approach to provide an in-depth analysis of the study's topic. It also used thematic data analysis to analyse primary data collected through in-depth interviews with six key informants who were

purposively selected, complemented with secondary information from journal articles, among others, to achieve the purpose of the study. Below is the summary of the findings of the study:

4.1.1 Objective One: The Role of the AfCFTA in Africa's Economic Growth and Development

The study's first objective was to examine the relevance of the AfCFTA to Africa's economic growth and development. The empirical results showed that the AfCFTA could play a crucial role in the economic growth and development of the continent through the creation of a single African market for improved inter and intra-regional trade; and the creation of employment opportunities. Given that trade among African countries is significantly low, the agreement's creation of a single continental market through the planned elimination of tariff-related and non-tariff barriers would certainly boost inter and intra-regional trade and promote the continent's socio-economic development. Similarly, it could encourage the creation of sustainable jobs due to its focus on industrialisation and the free flow of capital and labour.

4.1.2. Objective Two: Ghana's diplomatic interactions and strategies to win the AfCFTA Secretariat bid.

The second research objective was to assess Ghana's diplomatic interactions and strategies to win the AfCFTA Secretariat bid. The empirical results established that Ghana's success in the bidding process was significantly influenced by diplomacy. It further revealed that the country adopted a three-prong diplomatic interaction and strategy: The first was submitting a formal written bid to host the secretariat. The decision to bid for the Secretariat was motivated by diplomatic achievement and socio-economic benefits such as tourism development, revenue

generation from international activities like conferences, capacity development, opportunity to earn foreign exchange to strengthen the Ghana Cedi, employment opportunities, among others.

The second diplomatic strategy/interaction was lobbying and campaigning. Ghana's lobbying and campaign strategies included the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee; the formation of a mission of eminent Ghanaians - an ad hoc committee comprising former presidents, internationally renowned and influential Ghanaian religious leaders, retired diplomats, Ghanaians with international influence; use of Ghana trade and diplomatic missions to negotiate, convince and lobby AU members; leveraging existing relationships and networks within the AU membership, and creating and distributing brochures and souvenirs. The last of the three diplomatic strategies and interactions employed by Ghana to win the bid to host the Secretariat of the AfCFTA was a pledge and demonstration of capability to provide key landed properties, including a permanent office complex to support the effective administration and affairs of the programme, and official residence for the AfCFTA Secretary-General.

4.1.3 Challenges faced in bidding to host the AfCFTA Secretariat

The third objective of the study was to ascertain whether Ghana faced any problems in its quest to host the AfCFTA Secretariat. The results showed that the country faced financial constraints regarding deploying the various campaign teams and missions to member countries to convince them to support its agenda. Language differences again hampered Ghana's bidding process as it restricted effective communication and interactions with targets in non-English-speaking countries of the AU.

The country also faced the challenge of preserving its diplomatic image after it won the election to host the Secretariat because of the difficulties encountered in securing the initially promised landed properties to host the Secretariat offices. Furthermore, some members of the ad hoc diplomatic teams and missions were not adequately prepared, trained and briefed for this large-scale ad hoc diplomatic project.

4.2 Conclusion

The high rate of globalisation and the growing need for interdependence drive the integration of economic systems and different regions, of which Africa is no exception. Thus, the inauguration of AfCFTA on 1st January, 2021, marked a symbolic milestone in the long journey towards the realisation of a continent-wide integration of Africa. At the 12th Extraordinary Summit of the AU, held in Niamey, Niger, from 6th – 7th July, 2019, Ghana was selected to host the AfCFTA Secretariat. To win the bid, Ghana had to compete with six (6) other AU Member States who presented their bids to host the Secretariat. While several factors could have been responsible for Ghana's successful bid, this study examined the role of diplomacy in the bidding processes focusing mainly on the diplomatic interactions and strategies employed by Ghana as well as challenges it encountered, to offer lessons to guide future ad hoc diplomatic projects. Based on the empirical findings, this study concluded that:

The continent's economic integration is necessary if Africa wants to reach its maximum potential and have a voice on the international platform. The AfCFTA is, therefore, crucial for the economic growth and development of the continent through creating a single African market, creating employment opportunities, industrialisation and self-sufficiency, fairness among all member states and enhancing the global influence of the continent.

Diplomacy was instrumental in Ghana's winning the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat against other giant member states. The country won the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat primarily because of the good diplomatic relations it had nurtured and maintained with other African countries over the years. This means that the country leveraged her long-standing friendly relations with AU members to secure their support for the bid and assure them of the country's readiness to reciprocate their gesture in the near future when they require support.

Ghana's decision to participate in the bid was motivated by two main reasons: Diplomatically, it aimed to showcase its status as an African leader, which it knew would be attractive to several countries in the AU Member States. This is because, although the country has been at the forefront of the continent's integration activities since the creation of the AU, it did not host any of its substantial organisations; hence, it needed to demonstrate its capability to deliver on major AU projects under its leadership to strengthen its profile as a continental player further. Secondly, the country saw an opportunity to harness socio-economic benefits to build domestic capacity and facilitate the growth of its local economy.

To win the bid, the country adopted broad three-prong diplomatic interactions and strategies comprising submitting a formal written bid to host the Secretariat, lobbying and campaigning (involving the deployment of several strategic activities aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the AU members, including the competing member countries to support the country's bid), and providing options for structures to host the Secretariat.

Despite its success, Ghana was faced with several problems in bidding for and hosting the AfCFTA Secretariat. These challenges were mainly from financial and logistical issues, language barriers, difficulties in preserving Ghana's diplomatic image, and inadequate training/

briefing for members of Ghana's ad hoc committees that led its lobbying and campaigning efforts.

The study is unique because it offers an insight into some of the 'behind-the-scenes' diplomatic dynamics that were influential in Ghana's success in its bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat. Given that there is limited research on the role of diplomacy in the AfCFTA agenda regarding Ghana's winning of the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat, this research has provided important reference material for future studies on diplomacy and the AfCFTA programme as well as other regional integration initiatives.

4.3 Recommendations

The following are the study's recommendations and important lessons from Ghana's experience for similar future diplomatic projects or when bidding for such important things in the future:

4.3.3 Creating and maintaining alliances and diplomatic relations

One key lesson from this study's findings is that countries need to value, create and carefully nurture diplomatic alliances and friendly relations in the international community for future diplomatic projects. A country that strategically enhances and keeps alliances with other countries would be in an excellent position to successfully bid for international projects as it could leverage existing relationships with relevant countries. Ghana should, therefore, have a long-term vision to strategically strengthen its existing bilateral and multilateral partnerships or alliances and cultivate new ones that could be leveraged when the need arises within the diplomatic circle and international community.

4.3.4 Articulation of motivations for bids

Another key lesson from this research is that countries must adequately articulate the reasons for bidding for any international project. This is because it would help them secure the support of members of the international community and garner domestic support in terms of resource mobilisation and solidarity, which are critical for success.

4.3.5 Provision of adequate funds

Massive financial resources and logistics are needed to successfully execute international projects of this magnitude. Countries planning to host international offices or aiming to win projects within the global community should adequately prepare financially to enhance their chances of success. The findings particularly call on Ghana and others countries to set funds aside for such future endeavours by making arrangements for funding in their yearly budgets.

4.3.6 Adequate diplomatic training of ad hoc diplomats

It is essential for members of diplomatic delegations who are sent on such diplomatic business to be well trained and adequately briefed to clearly present the country's intentions and interests. Equipping ad hoc diplomats with knowledge and skills in diplomacy, negotiation, cross-cultural competency and the requirements of a particular international project could make them operate effectively and efficiently in the global system to serve the interest of their counties.

4.3.7 Language training and use of experienced translators

This study recommends that countries, including Ghana, should carefully constitute ad diplomatic teams, bearing in mind their international influence and ability to communicate with

targets within a particular country. Experienced translators and translation equipment should be provided to ad diplomatic teams assigned to countries where they are likely to face language challenges.

4.3.8 Delivering on promises made

Countries should endeavour to deliver on promises made that get them endorsed by their peers as failure to deliver can make them lose diplomatic and international credibility. It is important to ensure that an adequate assessment of pledges made with the intention of winning support from the international community is carried out to prevent embarrassment because of the country's inability to fulfil those promises.

4.3.9 Strengthening the Candidatures Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration

The Candidatures Unit was established in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration following Ghana's bidding process for the AfCFTA Secretariat, to spearhead future bids for the country. The Ministry may consider making the Unit a fully established Bureau. Given that it is not yet fully resourced, the study recommends that the necessary steps be taken to build its capacity to lead similar large-scale international projects in the future.

Finally, because this study focused on Ghana's diplomatic strategies and interactions, its findings may be limited. Consequently, future studies should compare and contrast the diplomatic strategies employed by Ghana and her contenders who lost the bid as it may provide valuable avenues for adding on to this study and enhance the understanding of the role of ad hoc

diplomacy in winning critical projects within the global arena or diplomatic circles. This study is limited to the views of key informants of agencies and institutions in Ghana. The views of the AU member states who voted were not sampled. Future studies may therefore seek to extend this study by seeking the views of key informants of AU member states besides Ghana, particularly, those that supported Ghana. This could throw more light on the strengths and weaknesses of the diplomatic strategies and interactions used by Ghana to win the bid. Future studies may also consider expanding the sample size and using the mixed method.



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APPENDIX I

Interview Guide

Title of Research:

An Examination of the Role of Diplomacy in Ghana’s Bid to Host the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat

Dear Sir/Madam,

You are kindly invited to serve as a participant in this study which seeks to examine the role of diplomacy in Ghana’s success in the bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat. The researcher is a final year student pursuing a Master of Art in International Affairs at the Legon Center for International Affairs (LECIAD) of University of Ghana, Legon. The project is purely academic. It is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of M.A. in International Relations. Participation is completely voluntary, and all information provided shall be treated with the strictest of confidentiality.

Section A: Demographic Information

Please kindly complete the following:

- Q1. Your gender is:
- Q2. Your Age is:
- Q3. Your educational qualification is:
- Q4. Position in the organisation:
- Q5. Name of your organisation.....
- Q6. Years of work experience is:
- Q7. Years of working in international relations and diplomacy is:

Section B: Covid-19, Health diplomacy and bilateral relations

Q8. What is your general assessment of the African’s decision to implement AfCFTA Implementations?
.....

Q9. What are the specific tenets that underpin the AfCFTA programme? Why

.....

Q10. Explain the potential contributions of the AfCFTA to Africa's economic growth and development.

.....

Q11. What account for Ghana's decision to bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat?

.....

Q12. What specific benefits does Ghana stand to derive from hosting the AfCFTA Secretariat?

.....

Q13. What will be Ghana's cost of hosting the AfCFTA Secretariat?

.....

Q14. Describe the processes that were followed in bidding to host the AfCFTA Secretariat.

.....

Q15. Spell out in detail the specific diplomatic interactions, activities and strategies that Ghana employed during the bidding process.

.....

Q16. Would you say that the diplomacy played a significant role in Ghana's winning the bidding process? Please explain.

.....

Q17. What were the challenges faced by Ghana in the bidding process?

.....

Q18. What lessons were learnt and how can Ghana best prepare for future international biddings?

.....

Q19. Please provide any further comment on the role of diplomacy in Ghana's success in its bid to host the AfCFTA Secretariat.

.....

Thank you!

