In April 2012, the scope of the Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM) was extended after a careful and consultative process between COMESA’s Aid for Trade Unit and the Regional Cooperation Section of the European Union (EU) Delegation in Zambia, under the leadership and oversight of the Secretary General of COMESA and the Head of the EU Delegation. RISM is a programme under the 9th European Development Fund (EDF) and was finalized through a Contribution Agreement (CA) signed between the EU Delegation in Lusaka and COMESA in November 2007. It aims to assist countries from Eastern and Southern Africa and Indian Ocean (ESA-IO) to continue with the process of economic liberalization by making available resources that help to address some of the short term transition costs at country level that may hinder the progress of liberalization.

In 2002, the COMESA Fund protocol was adopted which includes a special facility referred to as the COMESA Adjustment Facility (CAF) for the provision of adjustment support. In accordance with the principles of Aid Effectiveness, RISM has been embedded into the COMESA Adjustment Facility (CAF) both in terms of objectives and in terms of delivery of the support and resources.

The revised scope of RISM was extended through a Rider which is an addendum to the CA of 2007 which established RISM. The new focus now includes support to COMESA and EAC countries based on progress with honoring their regional integration commitments. In addition, it also offers revenue loss support. The Rider was formally approved and endorsed by Ambassador Gilles Hervio, the Head of the EU in Zambia, on 5th April 2012 and by the Secretary General of COMESA, Mr. Sindiso Ngwenya on 12th April 2012.

The support provided through the RISM rider is expected to act as an incentive and contribute to increased implementation of regional commitments and programmes at national level through increased access to resources by Member States. However, RISM is not expected to finance the totality of these transposition costs, but rather to contribute to them with the logic of providing an incentive to those countries that show progress in honouring commitments. The total funding available under the RISM rider is Euro 78,000,000 and within this budget line, 5,000,000 EUR are ring-fenced for potential revenue loss compensation. Implementation of the RISM rider is expected to end by 22nd December, 2014.

The expected result of the Rider is a clear contribution to the effective transposition and implementation of regional policies, regulations and programmes at the national level, ultimately supporting the achievement of region-wide impacts. In turn, improved implementation of regional commitments is expected to contribute to the provision of a conducive environment for trade, investments and increased productivity among the Member States of the region.

Going forward, in its continued effort to assist Member States with resources to help them honor their commitments, COMESA has submitted the RISM II Project Identification Fiche (PIF), which, when endorsed will provide for new funding under the 10th EDF. For continuity and sustainability, RISM II programme will continue the logic of 9th EDF RISM I and RISM I Rider and build on the gains of these programmes.