

COMESA NEWS



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Steps Towards a
Cloud Ecosystem
for **Africa**



Editorial

Time to Wrap up Tripartite Ratifications



It is yet another round for COMESA to steer the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement, that brings together the three regional economic communities, including the East African Community and the Southern Africa Development Community. In July this year, Secretary General of COMESA took over the chair from her EAC counterpart, in a side event conducted on the margins of the African Union Mid-Year Summit taking place in Lusaka, Zambia. Thereafter, the tripartite team updated the Summit on what the TFTA has achieved since it was launched in June 2015. A loud applause received the report demonstrating that the TFTA has done well in achieving the set goals which are anchored on its pillars: market integration, infrastructure development, and industrial development. Among the key accomplishments, which the drivers of the TFTA are proud of is the implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The AfCFTA rode on the shoulders of the TFTA and has since galloped away into the future. The TFTA is almost there but is being held back by lack of three – just three ratifications to add to the current 11 to reach the 14 required to enable it to enter into force. Virtually all the other boxes have been ticked, but this one has remained a constant drawback. It was under COMESA leadership that the TFTA was launched. Hence, we have immense optimism now that our regional bloc will deliver this critical milestone by bringing on board three more countries to ratify the agreement thus setting off its implementation and reaping the benefits envisaged therefrom.

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COMESA INSTITUTIONS

COMESA Clearing House
COMESA Monetary Institute
Trade and Development Bank
African Trade Insurance Agency
COMESA Competition Commission
PTA Reinsurance Company
COMESA Regional Investment Agency
Africa Leather and Leather Products Institute
COMESA Federation of Women in Business

Specialized Agencies

Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa
COMESA Business Council
Regional Association of Energy Regulators in Eastern and Southern Africa
East African Power Pool

Judicial Arm

COMESA Court of Justice

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AfDB, COMESA Sign US\$550,000 Grant to Conduct Study on Developing Africa Cloud Ecosystem

The African Development Bank and COMESA signed a Letter of Agreement for a US\$550,000 NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility grant to support a feasibility study for setting up an Africa Cloud Ecosystem (ACE) project.

The agreement was signed by the AfDB Zambia, Country Manager, Dr. Raubil Durowoju and COMESA Assistant Secretary General, Dr Kipyego Cheluget on behalf of Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe, at the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka, on 13 July 2022.

The grant will support the first phase, Market Analysis (Pre-investment study). This entails the assessment of the market for the ACE project and examine the bankability of the project including testing of the concept in the COMESA region.

“The Africa Cloud Ecosystem project will be a first of its kind, laying the foundation to facilitate the African continent to undertake this shift in the key sectors of economy, education, government, agriculture and health through the

provision of a reliable ecosystem of datacentres,” Dr Durowoju said.

He described the project as a pioneer of big data in Africa and a marketplace for governments to request for information from all industries such as public transportation management, retail, transaction data among others.

The study was targeted to take 12 months and was to be originated as a continental program focusing on COMESA Member States as a pilot. Appreciating the AfDB-NEPAD-IPPF for the support, Ms Kapwepwe said the project was a priority for COMESA owing to its potential to reduce the cost of doing business and enhance competitiveness by fostering regional connectivity and deepening continental integration:

“Most African countries are still constrained for lack of critical ICT infrastructure including low broadband penetration of about 10 percent and small leveraged power capacity along with high cost of hosting services,” she said.

Noting that most of African data storages are hosted outside the continent, Ms Kapwepwe said the ACE project will lay the foundation in the provision of a premium facility mainly powered with efficient and clean energy that is affordable, secured, reliable, fast cloud hosting system for Africa.

The ACE project is also expected to facilitate regional integration by taking full advantage of technologies and setting up the foundations of a duty free, quota-free area which goes beyond the data-only aspects. Its development is also expected to increase the sustainability and viability of information and provide a pivotal way of transitioning Africa’s community into a digital economic community.

Besides significantly lowering the cost for hosting services, identified as a main reason for African business to host their services overseas, the project will also remove barriers faced by African enterprises by promoting intra-regional trade and boost innovation.

COMESA, Texas Agrilife Research Sign Pact to Address Key Impediments to Regional Trade



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For us engaging in an MoU with COMESA will enhance the capacities of all the countries within the region and also help Texas A&M Agrilife in multiple ways for global food security and food safety, which are really important for us,” Dr Lamb.

COMESA and Texas A&M Agrilife Research, USA are now collaborating in risk management of mycotoxin involving aflatoxins and fumonisins for trade commodities and staples. This is a key pillar in enabling mutual recognition of certificates of analysis amongst trading countries. This follows the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe and Texas A&M Agrilife Research Director Dr. Cliff Lamb in a virtual event, on 27 June 2022.

Implementation of the MoU activities kicked off in July 2022, with the first Proficiency Testing (PT) Rounds conducted. The collaboration will support the technical activities under the COMESA/Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa project on ‘Enhancing Regional



Dr Cliff Lamb

Agricultural Commodity Trade in COMESA’.

The key areas of cooperation relate to Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) to trade such as the SPS and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBTs) estimated to account for 70 percent of the NTBs within the COMESA Region. Among these are unaffordable and cumbersome conformity assessment systems, laboratory testing, certification schemes, inspection, market surveillance and sampling.

Aflatoxins and fumonisins are naturally occurring toxins and comprise key Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) issues of trade concern in the COMESA region.

Through the COMESA-Agrilife collaboration, the application of



regulatory science will help minimize these barriers and build capacity to measure and manage aflatoxin and fumonisin risk.

Further, there exists limited laboratory testing capacity in the COMESA region and competent and skilled laboratory technical staff in both the public sector and in small-and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) to accurately measure and manage mycotoxins. To process a transaction, traders in COMESA Member States go through cumbersome procedures in obtaining sanitary and Phyto-sanitary measures documents, quality certificates and other documents.

Speaking during the signing ceremony, Secretary General cited the above impediments as having contributed to the low intra-regional trade in COMESA and affecting the region's competitiveness in agriculture products in the domestic, regional and international markets.

"The areas of cooperation outlined in the MoU document are very critical, pertinent, and timely as they seek to address key challenges that COMESA Member States continue to face especially on the low levels of trade at regional, continental and global levels," she said.

In his remarks, Dr Lamb described the partnership as a tremendous opportunity to facilitate economic growth in the region, which COMESA oversees, that will benefit the population and the agriculturists of Texas.

"For us engaging in an MoU with COMESA will enhance the capacities of all the countries within the region and also help Texas A&M Agrilife in multiple ways for global food security and food safety, which are really important for us," said Dr Lamb.

Specific areas of cooperation enunciated in the MoU include a co-regulation driven regulatory regime for trade in aflatoxin and fumonisin safe staples (maize, soya bean, sorghum and groundnuts) and the Aflatoxin Proficiency Testing and Control in Africa programme (APTECA). Elements within APTECA include capacity building through a competency framework for regulators, conformity assessment through proficiency testing (PT) rounds and technical training sessions.

AgriLife is uniquely positioned to provide this technical support through the Office of the Texas State Chemist (OTSC), which provides regulatory oversight for the Texas feed and fertilizer industry. The unique relationship of a regulatory agency housed within AgriLife Research is the academic component of systematizing knowledge and practices that can be extended globally, according to Dr. Tim Herrman, Professor, State Chemist and Director of OTSC, who also participated in the signing ceremony.

Under the pact, there will also be virtual training courses in regulatory science in food systems, laboratory quality management systems, and risk-based approaches to regulation, which will be done in collaboration with the COMESA Virtual University.

The collaboration initiative started in 2015 when the COMESA Secretariat facilitated the participation of 12 regulatory testing laboratories from six Member States; Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe in the APTECA programme, which was run by Texas A&M Agrilife Research. At least 16 Member States are targeted to participate in the new Rounds of the APTECA PT Scheme.

Capacity Boost for Member Countries to Eliminate Trade Barriers

Five Member States of COMESA have received capacity building to support their institutional frameworks for eliminating Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) on common goods, in compliance with the requisite COMESA Regulations. The regulations define the roles and responsibilities of the NTBs institutions to deliver on the intended objective to eliminate barriers across COMESA region and increase intra-COMESA trade.

Madagascar and Egypt are the latest Member State to receive training to support the development of a National Strategy for Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs). Similar trainings have been conducted in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi.

The trainings follow an earlier decision by the COMESA Council of Ministers to the COMESA Secretariat to provide technical support to Member States to implement national NTBs elimination programmes. COMESA Regulations for the Elimination of NTBs provide legally constituted tools for reporting, monitoring and addressing NTBs, the institutional arrangements to manage the NTBs elimination process as well as procedures followed to tackle situations that create NTBs.

To ensure sustainability of national programmes, Member States are continuously exploring effective tools to implement the regulations. This

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Madagascar focal persons, NMC members and COMESA trade experts during at the training workshop in Antananarivo

Capacity Boost for Member Countries...

necessitates them to provide and where possible, outsource a wide range of necessary resources that include technical and funding support.

Pursuant to this objective, COMESA Secretariat secured funding under the European Union Fund Program to improve monitoring and resolution of NTBs. This funding covers support to institutionalize National Monitoring Committees (NMCs), development of national strategies and implementation plan for the elimination of NTBs and building capacity for NMCs and National Focal Points (NFPs) to resolve NTBs. The support is given to Member States upon request or needs assessment.

Madagascar is among those that requested for support to hold a stakeholder workshop to develop their national strategy for elimination of NTBs. It is also one of the Member

States that have fully constituted their NMC and notified COMESA Secretariat, which is a requirement of the National Trade Facilitation Committee under the World Trade Organization / Free Trade Area. Such arrangement is intended to ensure sustainability and consistency in reporting for policy decision making and implementation.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Industrialization, Commerce and Consumption, trade experts from the COMESA Secretariat conducted the workshop on 25 – 29 July 2022. Thirty delegates including NFPs and NMC members representing key national stakeholders in public, private sector and civil society institutions and regulatory authorities responsible for policy and legal framework governing trade and trade-related matters attended.

In Egypt, similar a workshop was

conducted on 1- 5 August 2022 attended by 35 participants representing key national stakeholders. COMESA Secretariat and the Ministry of Trade and Industry facilitated the event. The main objective was to draft Egypt's National Strategy for the Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers and its Implementation plan and enhance capacity for NMC to resolve NTBs.

Egypt is among the Member States found suitable to receive support to undertake a stakeholder workshop to develop their national strategy for elimination of NTBs. This is based on her trade potential with COMESA free trade area Member States. More importantly, Egypt has fully constituted its NMC a framework institution, which is instrumental to develop its National Strategy for elimination of NTBs.



COMESA staff installing ICT equipment in a Member State

Steps Towards Establishing an Electronic Single Window

The Electronic Single Window System (eSW) is one of the key trade and transport facilitation instruments prioritized by most of the COMESA Member States to improve the ease of doing business environment and to enhance intra-regional trade in region.

In 2017, the COMESA Council of Ministers decided that Member States should adopt a harmonized and standard data connectivity platform in the form of electronic single windows (eSWS) among government agencies and private stakeholders aimed at improving the intra-regional trade and investment environment at national and regional levels.

Further, the Council directed that Member States, and the Secretariat to work with development partners to develop a regional single window strategy and draw up activities to implement the strategy. Subsequently, a Technical Working Group of Customs experts was set up to establish the eSW System in all COMESA Member States.

On 18 – 21 July 2022 in Addis Ababa,

Ethiopia the TWG conducted its first meeting to review various reports that have been prepared towards the development of the eSW system. Among them were Situational Assessment Study Report on Implementation of the eSW, the Draft Legal Framework and the Draft Strategy for Development and Implementation of the eSW.

Customs and Single window experts from Burundi, Djibouti, DR Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Tunisia and Zambia attended the meeting.

Ethiopia's State Minister for Trade Integration and Export Promotion H.E. Kassahun Gofe addressed the delegates. He noted that more than half of the Member States were already implementing the electronic single window while the remaining ones were at different planning phases.

"Ethiopia is one of the Member States that successfully developed and implemented a national electronic single window system for trade facilitation,"

he said adding that the project brings together 16 Ethiopian government regulatory agencies, thus enabling traders to process all documentation relating to import, transit and export through a single electronic submission.

The development of eSW system is one of the instruments under the COMESA Digital Free Trade Area Action Plan. It includes developing and implementing the system at national and regional levels. In this regard, the project activities have been incorporated as part of the Result Area 3 of the COMESA Trade Facilitation Programme funded under the 11th European Development Fund.

The meeting identified political will and high-level leadership direction and financial support together with cooperation of stakeholders as some of the key factors for the eSW system to succeed.

Representatives from the African Union Commission and facilitators from International Trade Centre and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development participated.



Douglas Mwangi of Kenya, displays his innovation; a health bracelet

Six Innovations Presented at COMESA Research Forum

Six innovations were showcased at the 9th COMESA Research Forum held in Cairo, Egypt from 12 – 15 September 2022. The innovations were considered for the COMESA Innovation Awards, which are aimed at recognizing and celebrating individuals and institutions that use science, technology and innovation to advance the regional integration agenda.

Among them were cooking gas innovation derived from plastic waste, a vacuum packaging machine for animal feeds and a health monitoring bracelet. Other innovations presented were on the optimization of aquaculture production performance as a food production system, provision of healthcare remotely by means of telecommunications technology (telehealth) and a solution to immuno-compromised health conditions.

Presenting his Mega Gas Alternative Energy innovation, Mr. Peter Mwangi Njeri of Kenya said this was targeted at low-income families through clean and affordable cooking energy converted from plastic waste into fuel.

“Our product is 50 percent cheaper compared to Liquefied Petroleum Gas, cleaner compared to fossil fuels such as

charcoal and firewood. Our gas also has a higher calorific value compared to LPG gas in the market,” he said.

He added that by converting plastic waste into clean cooking gas, the innovation mitigates environmental degradation by preventing plastic waste from getting into the natural environment. His company was recycling about 70 tons of plastic waste every month and planned to scale up to 250 tons a month.

“This means that, unlike other solutions that repurpose plastics and only extend their lifecycle, we reuse plastics in a way that has the potential of eliminating them entirely,” Mr Njeri said.

Mr. Douglas Mwangi of Kenya, the developer of the health bracelet told the forum that his device helps to connect the user to medical specialists and can call the nearest ambulances at only \$1 a month. About 400 devices were in use in Kenya and connected to 54 ambulance providers with a scale-up target of linkage to 650 hospitals.

Presenting her Vacuum Silage Packaging Machine concept, Ms. Patience Mueni a 4th year environmental scientist student

at Kenyatta University in Kenya, said the uniqueness of her concept was in the localization of mechanization processes to package and preserve silage by small holder farmers. The machine was intended to eliminate the traditional poor packaging methods while ensuring quality packaging for longer fodder preservation periods.

The COMESA Research Forum provides an avenue for the innovators to network and commercialize their innovations. After the review, the successful innovators will be recognized and awarded during the next Summit of COMESA Heads of State and Government to support them in promoting their innovations/products. COMESA received eight innovation concepts following a call for innovations early this year. These were reviewed in collaboration with the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD).

Out of these, three innovation concepts met the prerequisite criteria and were selected for showcasing during the 9th Annual Research Forum. The other three innovations: on aquaculture and health were received from AUDA-NEPAD.



COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe (L) takes over the Chair of the Tripartite Task Force from her EAC counterpart Dr Peter Mathuki

Tripartite Framework win Accolades at the AU Mid-Year Summit

The Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement that brings together COMESA, East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Tripartite Free Trade Area was hailed as a good model for regional integration at the African Union Mid-Year Summit held in Zambia in July 2022.

This followed a presentation to the Summit on the success of the Tripartite FTA, which was made by the Secretary General of the EAC Dr Peter Mathuki on behalf of his COMESA and SADC counterparts.

Among the key highlights was TFTA's tariff liberalization coverage which is now at 100 percent. It takes into account the general, specific and security exemptions provided for under the existing regional economic communities (REC)/ Regional and Multilateral agreements. Further, over 90 percent of the TFTA list of Rules of Origin have been agreed upon and what remains are the textiles and automobiles, and there is an established mechanism for managing the transition.

The Tripartite is based on a developmental integration approach based on three pillars namely: Market Integration, Infrastructure Development, and Industrial Development. It is acclaimed for its well-established, tested and successful modalities for the negotiation processes with clear structures, rules and guidelines. The

African Continental Free Trade Area, (AfCFTA) negotiations, for instance, drew a lot of lessons from the Tripartite process in terms of the modalities and instruments for negotiating trade in goods, including the principles, texts, annexes, and general architecture.

The Tripartite FTA also provides a Framework for addressing multiplicity of memberships to various RECs, which is a challenge in regional integration. For instance, the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU) and EAC Customs Unions have exchanged tariff offers that average 90 percent of their tariff books to be liberalized immediately. Most Tripartite Member/Partner States have carried over the level of tariff liberalization in their respective RECs to the Tripartite.

The Tripartite FTA has a fully functional online Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) reporting, monitoring and NTBs resolving system ready for integration into the AfCFTA framework.

Under its Infrastructure Development Pillar, several transit and transport facilitation instruments have been developed and are already operational within the Tripartite Region, while under the Industrial Pillar, plans are underway for the development of Tripartite Agro-processing value chain and establishment of Trade Logistics Hubs. This is intended

to remove fragmentation by promoting regionally integrated industries and supply chains.

Reacting to the Tripartite report the President of the D R Congo H.E Felix Tshisekedi said:

“Everything should be done to sensitize those countries within the three blocks, that have not ratified it to do so.” The Tripartite FTA was signed in 2015 and comprises 29 countries: representing 53 percent of the African Union Membership; more than 60 percent of the Africa Continental GDP (\$1.88 Trillion; 2019); and a combined population of 800 million.

To date, 22 of the 29 Tripartite Member States have signed the TFTA Agreement. It will come into force once ratified by 14 Member States. Thus far, 11 countries have ratified (Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, South Africa, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe). Three ratifications are needed to enter into force.

Meanwhile, COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe took over the chair of the Tripartite Task Force on 16 July 2022. She undertook to lead ratification missions to select countries in the region to ensure the threshold was attained before the end of this year.

The European Union (EU), in August this year, granted a no-cost extension to the Small-Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative (SSCBTI) programme by 31 Months. The Project will now end in December 2024 from the initial deadline of May 2022.

Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance Dr Dev Haman revealed this in Lusaka during the opening of the third Meeting of the Project Steering Committee for the SSCBTI on 8 August 2022.

By then, the programme was under implementation for four years and had made good progress with tangible successes in working to formalize small-scale cross border trade flows in the COMESA-EAC-SADC tripartite region. The extension will allow for implementation of the remaining activities.

“We had challenges owing to the delays in the recruitment of project staff at the beginning of the programme, coupled with the COVID pandemic which limited physical interactions at Member States level for two years,” said Dr Haman. “This programme requires on-the-ground interactions and thus was heavily affected.”

Small-Scale cross border trade in the COMESA region accounts for 30 or 40 percent of the total informal trade. In addition, majority of the traders are women. This trade provides incomes and a livelihood to many people as they move essential products from areas of surplus to areas of deficit.

The meeting reiterated the importance of small-scale cross border trade whose volumes sometimes exceed official



Small-Scale Cross-Border Trade Initiative Extended by 31 Months

customs-recorded trade across entire categories of goods particularly in agriculture.

Hence, the SSCBTI works towards formalizing small-scale cross border trade in turn addressing existing challenges such as high transaction costs arising from delays at the border, poor infrastructure at borders, high taxes and high transport costs. The traders also face bribery, corruption and harassment. Having data disaggregated by gender is also important as it would assist the region to fully understand small scale informal trade.

Speaking at the same event, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Zambia Mr Arnaud Bouchard commended COMESA Secretariat for introducing various trade facilitation instruments to enhance intra-regional trade. He also commended the signing of Sub-delegation Agreements with

Member States and called on all other countries that are yet to sign to do so.

“This programme is important to the COMESA region and instrumental towards achieving the African Continental Free Trade Area. We therefore need to demonstrate that small scale cross border trade works,” said Mr Bouchard.

The SSCBTI Steering Committee serves as an important conduit for sharing progress on the implementation of the cross-border initiatives taking place in the COMESA region. They also ensure overall policy and strategic guidance and coordination to guarantee a more effective and efficient deliverable of the programme.

The COMESA Cross Border Trade Initiative is funded by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).

Six-Point Shared Vision for Youth Agenda in Regional Peace and Security



Youth at the ministerial youth conference conducted in Harare, Zimbabwe

The first-ever High-Level Youth Ministerial Conference targeting Regional Economic Communities, Regional Mechanisms, relevant Ministries in the Southern Africa Region and National Youth Councils in the region took place in Harare, on 25 -28 July 2022.

It brought together youth leaders from the youth councils, the AU Youth Envoy, African Youth Ambassador for Peace for Southern Africa (AYAP), COMESA Youth ambassadors, and community youth leaders from countries in the East, Horn, and Southern Africa. Fourteen countries in the southern Africa region were represented.

The key outcome of the conference was a six-point shared vision for the youth agenda presented to Ministers in charge of youth affairs in the southern African region. It focused on strengthening the continental, regional and national frameworks for youth inclusion in

decision-making relating to peace and security.

Zimbabwe President H.E. Emmerson Mnangagwa, represented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Hon. Frederick Shava opened the ministerial session. The thrust of the conference was on the role of governments, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) in promoting the youth, peace, and security agenda in the southern Africa region.

In their outcome statement the youth called for strengthening of the following: the implementation of AU continental framework on youth peace and security; engagement with decision-makers; National Youth Councils and youth organizations, research and development; technological advancement and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda monitoring and

evaluation.

“We call for urgent action by governments to address the challenges through the establishment and strengthening early warning and response systems at national, regional, and continental levels,” said the youth in the statement presented by the Chairperson of the COMESA Youth Advisory Panel, Ms. Angel Mbutia.

They stressed the need for mainstreaming youth into national peace infrastructures, advancing the use of various technological platforms for YPS, encouraging the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and the prioritization of civic and peace education for the youth which may be embedded in national education curriculum.

Ministers and their representatives from Botswana, Comoros, D R Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius,

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Border crossing at Kasumbalesa between Zambia and DR Congo

Curriculum on Human Mobility and Trade Facilitation Rolled Out

The implementation of the COMESA Human Mobility and Trade Facilitation Training Curriculum is underway whose objective is to build capacity of migration, health, trade and customs government authorities. The Curriculum was developed by COMESA and International Organization for Migration (IOM) supported under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF), COMESA Small Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative,

The training programme was designed to contribute to an improved understanding of the linkage between migration and trade amongst stakeholders, enhance appreciation of small-scale cross border trade and the role of different migration and trade authorities in facilitating small scale cross border trade. This will assist in the reduction of trade restrictions, corruption, bribery, harassment, and immigration challenges faced by small scale cross border traders, especially women and the youth.

On 15 - 19 August 2022 a five-day training was conducted in Livingstone, Zambia for Zambian government officials, agencies and Cross Border

Traders Association (CBTA) in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the Southern African Development Community. Participants were drawn from Immigration, Customs, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Health, trade, gender, office in the Presidency and Zambia Revenue Authority.

According to a report by the COMESA Director, of Legal and Corporate Affairs Mr. Gabriel Masuku, five training modules were delivered during the training. They included Small Scale Cross Border Trade in Africa and in the COMESA Region, the COMESA Policy Framework on Free Movement of Persons and the Nexus of Migration and Cross Border Trade. Others were on Migration Health, Population Mobility and Cross Border Trade; and Migration, Trade and Gender - Harassment, Corruption and Bribery.

The first module underscored the widespread nature and importance of small-scale cross border trade in the economies of the COMESA region and highlighted the challenges small scale cross border traders face while trading. The second focused on existing

COMESA policies that facilitate human mobility. It addressed provisions of the COMESA Treaty on Free Movement of Persons, the COMESA Protocol on Gradual Relaxation and Eventual Elimination of Visas (the Visa Protocol) and the COMESA Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Labour, Services, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment (the Free Movement Protocol) and highlighted challenges faced in its ratification and implementation.

The third module examined the inherent interrelationship between cross border trade (CBT) and human mobility across international borders and emphasized the importance of facilitating the movement of persons in the conveyance of goods and services across borders. Module four demonstrated the value of integrating policy, practice and procedures in health, population mobility and trade, using the COVID-19 global pandemic as a case study.

The final module covered the ways in which corruption, bribery and harassment, especially that of women, affects small scale trade flows.



Information and Communication Technologies experts attending the Validation Workshop for Stakeholder Mapping, Baseline Survey Study and E-Commerce Study in Malawi

Regional ICT Programme Hosts Validation Workshop on Latest Studies

About 54 experts in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) from 29 Member States from four regional economic communities convened in Lilongwe, Malawi for two back-to-back workshops to validate findings from a recent stakeholder mapping, baseline survey and e-Commerce study.

The 5 – 10 September meetings considered and validated the reports of the two studies undertaken under the Enhancement of Governance and Enabling Environment in the ICT Sector (EGEE-ICT) programme. The studies were conducted by two firms engaged by COMESA: The MA Consulting Group for the Stakeholder Mapping and Baseline Survey Study and DT Global for the E-Commerce Study.

MA Consulting Group was to carry out a stakeholder mapping analysis, develop a project stakeholder engagement plan, assess institutional capacity skills and gaps and identify institutional strengthening needs for programme success. The draft report takes stock of the status of ICT development at both national and regional levels covering supply, demand and affordability of

ICT infrastructure and services, policy, regulatory environment and a mapping and analysis of ICT stakeholders.

DT Global, was engaged to conduct an in-depth review of the policy and regulatory frameworks on e-Commerce and related policy, regulatory and administrative practices and processes of Member States in the EA-SA-IO region.

The delegates are drawn from Member/ Partners States of COMESA, East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

The four-year EGEE-ICT programme is being implemented by COMESA in collaboration with the other four RECs. It is funded by European Union under the 11th European Development Fund through an eight million Euros Contribution Agreement signed between COMESA and the EU.

The programme supports the development and implementation of harmonized regional ICT policy and

regulatory frameworks for enhanced competition and improved access to cost effective and secure ICT services.

Speaking at the opening of the validation workshop, Malawi's Permanent Secretary for e-government in the Ministry of Information and Digitalization Mr Francis Bisika said the survey holds immense potential for the development of the individual countries and the region at large.

"We will engage with the consultants and among ourselves, to consider the findings and analyse the study, propose improvements thereon, note the success and challenges and finally make recommendations aimed at promoting ICT development at national and regional level," Mr Bisika said.

He added that the Malawi government is putting in place strategies to increase internet penetration that is currently at just over 43.1 percent of the population. He cited the high cost of internet capacity as one factor causing the low usage.

Director of Infrastructure at COMESA Secretariat Mr Baptiste Mutabazi said

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Participants to the RCTG National consultative meeting in Lusaka, Zambia

Stakeholders Consult on Implementing the Regional Customs Guarantee Scheme in Zambia

A national consultative meeting on the implementation of the COMESA Regional Customs Transit Guarantee (RCTG) Scheme was conducted with key stakeholders in Zambia on 25 August 2022. The one-day session updated the stakeholders on the status of implementation and operations of the RCTG in the region and discussed issues and concerns raised about the Scheme in Zambia.

The RCTG is a customs transit regime designed to facilitate the movement of goods under customs seals in the COMESA region and to provide the required customs security and guarantee in the transit countries.

In the North-South Corridor countries to which Zambia belongs, customs transit bonds are raised in each country of transit which is cumbersome, time consuming and costly. Nationally executed bonds have reportedly tied up huge sums of money belonging to importers, clearing and forwarding agents and transporters.

The combined effect of road transit fees and expenses that arise from the execution of nationally executed bonds also raises the cost of transportation.

Experts hold that these costs could be reduced or minimized by implementing the RCTG.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General Amb. Kipyego Cheluget who opened the meeting stressed the importance of having a common Customs Transit Bond Guarantee for Zambia and the region at large.

“We have spent years discussing issues and concerns in implementation of the RCTG. The ten-year experience in the North and Central Corridor countries should give you comfort that SMEs are also beneficiaries of this scheme,” he said and called on importers, exporters, transporters, Clearing and Forwarding Agencies (CFA) to embrace the RCTG as it offers assured security for goods in transit.

He appealed for thorough discussion of the issues and concerns and objectively come up with a win-win proposal on how the RCTG Bond should be issued in the North-South Corridor countries.

For the past 10 years, the COMESA RCTG has been operational in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania and expanding, with Ethiopia and Djibouti

expected to commence operations next month. During this period, customs administrators have embraced digitization and are sharing data on their operations and adopting one declaration for transit covering several countries.

As a centrally located land linked country, Zambia is well placed to leverage on its geographical position by offering triangular transit routes and could become a transport and logistics hub for Southern and Central Africa. This is hence in addition to facilitating goods to move faster, the RCTG is expected to improve the region’s competitiveness through reduced transportation and transit costs.

Presently, there are nearly 1,000 Clearing and Forwarding Agents participating in the COMESA RCTG operations, 80 percent of these are Small and Medium Enterprises. In 2021, the CFAs had issued over 344,000 transit Carnets for transit goods in the Northern and Central Corridors.

The outcome of the Zambia stakeholders’ meeting will be presented for discussion at the regional RCTG stakeholders’ workshop to be held in Malawi next month.

Regional ICT Programme hosts validation workshop...

Continued from page 11

stakeholder validation of an output of any development activity or study is a critical element of socio-economic development process.

“At COMESA, it is a requirement that any study has to be subjected to a stakeholder validation,” he said.

The Stakeholder Mapping and Baseline Survey identified bottlenecks hampering

the uptake of e-commerce in the region and proposed a regional work program which will guide and facilitate the development and adoption of a regional e-commerce framework. The established baseline of key indicators will constitute the basis for measuring the performance and impact of the programme and other ICT development initiatives in the region.

Six-Point Shared Vision ...

Continued from page 9

Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe attended the conference.

In his statement, President Mnangagwa appreciated the conference objectives noting that they put young people at the centre of peace and security in the region.

“It is their rightful place. Through this conference, Africa and our region in particular affirms and commits to the role that our youth must play now in key and most pressing issues of our times,” The president noted that most of the countries in the Southern African region have been relatively peaceful and stable, with infrequent armed insurgencies, and some forms of protracted conflict.

“These conflicts have negatively impacted the lives of people, especially our young people who make up more than 60 percent of the Southern Africa population,” said the President. “It is now time that our collective voices become loud; indeed, if anything, louder than the guns across our motherland Africa. Let our voices silence the guns.”

Responding to the issues raised by the youth, the Ministers and their representatives from the 14 southern African countries outlined their governments’ initiatives and undertook to promote youth inclusion and empowerment.

The conference was jointly organized by the African Union and COMESA in partnership with the African Centre for Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), Save the Children Horn of Africa Youth Network, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the Southern Africa Partnership for Prevention of Conflict (SAPPC).



Former Ethiopian Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn meeting COMESA SG Chileshe Kapwepwe

COMESA Supports AGRA's bid to be an AU Agency

Former Prime Minister of Ethiopia, H.E Hailemariam Desalegn, who is now the Board Chair of the Alliance for Green Revolution for Africa met with COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe, on July 16 in Lusaka, Zambia. Their talks focused on AGRA's bid to become an agency of the African Union.

COMESA pledged to support and advocate for AGRA given the strong collaboration between the two organizations, with many

joint programmes on enhancing food security, the latest being the development of a Regional Food Balance Sheet. They also discussed further areas of collaboration, especially on establishing agricultural value chains to ensure both small and bigger economies mutually benefit. They noted that the region and continent now have the opportunity to scale up food production given the current disruption on food supplies.

Coming Soon: COMESA Financial Stability Report



Working group of experts and CMI staff

The COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) commenced preparatory work towards the production of a Financial Stability Report (FSR) for the COMESA region in June this year. The first working group of experts meeting took place in Nairobi, Kenya on 22 – 24 June 2022 with participants from the Central Banks of DR Congo, Egypt, Mauritius, Sudan and Zambia.

The FSR will contain reviews of the developments in the financial sector in the COMESA region to identify key risks, vulnerabilities and challenges facing the financial systems of member countries and provide policy recommendations to mitigate such risks and strengthen stability.

The decision to produce the FSR came from the COMESA Committee of

Governors of Central Banks during their 25th meeting in March this year.

The report will also highlight the link between macroeconomic stability and financial stability in the region. This will go a long way in enhancing the implementation of the COMESA Financial System Development and Stability Plan.

During the three days meeting, the experts interrogated the 2021 data on FSR which was submitted by member Central Banks. They deliberated and agreed on the structure and content of the FSR and distributed the assignments among themselves. They also agreed on the timelines within which the 2021 FSR for the COMESA region will be prepared.

Climate Change Experts Give Final Nod to Resilience Plan; Share Best Practices on Adaptation

The COMESA Regional Resilience Implementation Plan and Resource Mobilization Strategy is nearing completion following final review by experts in climate change, resilience, disaster risk reduction and management, drawn from 14 Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Union Commission.

At the same time, country focal points for the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) from these Member States and organizations met and shared best practices in implementing the Paris Agreement on climate change and the pledges their countries made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. NDC is a climate action plan to cut emissions and adapt to climate impacts.

The two meetings ran back-to-back from 12-15 July in Lusaka, Zambia.

The financing for NDC implementation, opportunities and challenges in scaling up was one of the main subjects in focus. This meeting was part of ongoing COMESA support to the Member States to implement their NDC commitments and contribute to the attainment of the Paris Agreement goals.

Zambia's Acting Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment Mr Ephraim Shitima, who addressed the meeting urged the member States to review the implementation status of NDCs and recommend policies to improve it.

"The opportunities for NDC implementation outweigh the challenges, therefore we need to utilize all the available opportunities on finance, technology transfer, capacity building and to achieve the setout targets," he said. →

The meeting further identified the regional priority issues for negotiation at the COP27 UN Climate Conference set for December 2022 in Egypt.

At the meetings, delegates raised common issues of concern which included lack of financing and the need for COMESA to support them in raising funds, building capacity, publicity, political buy-in and hastening the slow implementation of agreed targets.

Representatives from partner RECs namely the East African Community (EAC), the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), the Commonwealth, AUC and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resilience Hub addressed the meetings. The UNDP Resilience Hub through Dr Eric Loubaud provided technical support to the development of the Regional Resilience Framework, the implementation plan and resource mobilization strategy.

Technical Coordinator for Disaster Risk Reduction at the AUC, Mr Gatkuoth Kai said the implementation of climate change frameworks and programmes requires effective coordination and collaboration with the RECs. He added that the AUC had developed overarching programmes and frameworks and ready to share experiences with the regions.

Mr Dismas Mwikila representing the EAC said his organization had developed a regional Climate Finance Mobilization and Access Strategy aimed at addressing technical capacities deficiencies, enhance the enabling environment for green private sector investment and promote innovative financing solutions. IGAD Climate Change Adaptation Officer Dr Geoffrey Sabiiti noted that the impact and risks from climate change have increased threatening livelihoods and accelerating poverty in Africa.

Representatives from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, Seychelles, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe attended the meetings.



Dr Dennis Rangi, Director General of CABI

CABI, COMESA to Revive Collaboration

COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe on 1st September 2022 received a delegation from Centre for Africa and Bioscience International (CABI) led by Director General Dr Dennis Rangi who paid a courtesy call on her in Lusaka.

Among the issues discussed was the need to rekindle past collaboration that covered, among others, sanitary and phytosanitary issues. The CABI delegation highlighted its work in Zambia with the Ministry of Agriculture in the Cassava Sector, where it is leading in creating awareness to farmers and how they can find a solution to the cassava diseases affecting their crops.

Dr Rangi congratulated the Secretary General on her new role as the only African on the CABI board adding that this was a great milestone for the African women. He noted that Africa would be well represented on the board through COMESA, which has 21 Member States.

SG Kapwepwe welcomed the CABI team and the work it was doing. She said her membership in the CABI board will ensure that, through COMESA, Africa's voice is heard. She reiterated the need to collaborate with organisations working on the ground to avoid effort duplications.



Young leaders and COMESA staff attending peace and security training in Alebtong, Uganda

Strengthening the Capacity of National Youth Councils on Peace and Security

Over 70 young leaders from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Somalia and Uganda convened at Alebtong, a rural outpost, 386 kilometres north of Kampala in Uganda for a four-day regional capacity building forum on 27 – 30 September 2022.

It was organized by COMESA through the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) working jointly with Save the Children and the Horn of Africa Initiative. Its objective was to strengthen the participation and capacity of national youth councils, youth-led and youth focused organizations on the youth, peace and security agenda in Africa.

The training served to strengthen the role of youths in implementing the ‘Silencing of the Guns in Africa Initiative’ and the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 2250) of 2015. This is in recognition that young people play an important role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.

The forum was also in response to an earlier Decision by the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs, who urged Member

States to prioritise Strengthening the Capacity of National Youth Councils on Peace and Security building of resilience and adoption of the COMESA Early Warning System Structural Vulnerability Assessment (COMWARN SVA) model. Among other things, the model has identified youth unemployment as a structural factor to conflicts in most COMESA Member States. At the forum, participants were taken through the African Union continental framework on youth, peace and security focusing on the five defined pillars; participation, prevention, protection, partnerships and disengagement and reintegration.

Head of the Governance, Peace and Security Unit at COMESA Secretariat, Ms Elizabeth Mutunga, who led a team of Early Warning Experts at the forum, said the interaction assisted participants to identify and strengthen innovative proposals undertaken by national youth councils in peacebuilding and peace processes at the national and regional level.

“The training will also help strengthen the capacity of the youth councils in

engaging with Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Regional Mechanisms and the private sector in fostering the peace discourse,” she said. Going forward it is expected that youth engagement in peace and security will be strengthened especially the Silencing the Guns agenda and reinforce the capacity of the national youth councils. The partners also plan to establish a regional platform based in Abeltong for networking, information and sharing of lessons.

COMESA in collaboration with partners has since November 2021 organized two High Level Inter-Ministerial Conferences in Nairobi, Kenya and Harare, Zimbabwe whose main objective was to deliberate on how to better support, promote and invest in young peace-builders in the region and their engagement with RECs.

A key recommendation from the engagements is on the need to establish a one stop youth centre and strengthening the capacity of youth led organizations and national youth councils to engage in national and regional peace-building discourse.



Participants at the Annual Research Forum

COMESA Research Forum: **Call for Comprehensive Research on Pharmaceuticals**

There is need to undertake comprehensive research on pharmaceuticals production and trade flows in the COMESA region to determine trade and competitiveness opportunities in the pharmaceutical industry. This was one of the recommendations from the 9th COMESA Annual Research Forum that took place on 12- 15 September in Egypt.

The forum which attracted eminent scholars, researchers, academics, regional and international experts from the public and private sector, stressed the need to strengthen mobilization of resources to promote science, technology and innovation activities. This was intended to build resilience in line with the theme of the forum: **“Enhancing Business Competitiveness and Resilience to Boost Intra-COMESA Trade”**.

Eight research papers based on

emerging topical issues in economics, trade and regional integration at continental and global level were presented for review. They included a study on the trade implications of the cross-border data transfer laws/policies in the COMESA region. Conducted by Mr. Adam Willie from Zimbabwe titled ‘Cross Border Data Exchange under the COMESA Digital Free Trade Area (DFTA): Implications on Intra-Regional Trade’, the study found that 43 percent of Member States do not have national data protection laws. This acts as a barrier to data flow. The study also established that the presence of data protection laws increases intra-COMESA trade.

“There is also heterogeneity in data protection laws in the region, a situation which hurts intra-COMESA trade,” said Mr Willie. “Therefore, harmonization of cross border data flow regulations is critical in boosting intra-COMESA trade.”

Another study presented was on the status of digitalization in the COMESA region which investigated the effect of digitalization on intra-COMESA trade over the 2011 to 2020 period.

The study by Mr. Shingirirai Mashura from University of Seychelles found that digitalization has a positive effect on intra-COMESA. According to the researcher, a 10 percent increase in e-commerce internet usage increases intra-COMESA exports by 0.63 percentage points while imports increase by 0.22 percentage points.

Another study by Mr. Douglas Chikabwi from Zimbabwe focused on the effects that sanitary and phytosanitary standards and technical barriers to trade (TBT) had on intra-COMESA agricultural exports. The study found that annually, the COMESA region is estimated to lose USD 74.4 million from trading of agriculture raw materials alone because of SPS and TBT policy measures.

A related study was presented by Mr. Stein Masunda of Zimbabwe on the

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Regional Central Banks' Supervisors Trained on how to Deal with Challenges in Banking Supervision



Regional Central Banks Supervisors attending training in Egypt

The COMESA Monetary Institute in collaboration with the Central Bank of Egypt has trained bank supervisors from Central Banks of Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Eswatini, Malawi, Mauritius, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, Libya, Tunisia and Zimbabwe on how to deal with Challenges Facing Central banks in Banking Supervision.

The training was conducted in Cairo, Egypt on 25 – 29 September 2022 with 37 participants. The training is part of the CMI Work plan for 2022 aimed at enhancing the capabilities of the officials in identifying new trends in risk management and supervision on risk management frameworks and systems, and onsite supervision developments and challenges.

The delegates also firmed their skills in Anti- Money Laundering and Combating Financing of Terrorism fundamentals and challenges, and preparation and building of recovery plans, early intervention framework and dealing with weak banks and bank resolution. It also provides an opportunity for networking and experience-sharing on challenges facing bank supervision and how they are dealing with them in their various jurisdictions.

Addressing the delegates, Dr. Naglaa Nozahie, Governor's Advisor for Africa Affairs, Central Bank of Egypt said there is need for the Banking Supervisors to achieve the right balance between micro- and macro-prudential objective of system-wide resilience in evaluating and promoting the safety and soundness of the financial institutions they supervise, as well as safeguarding the stability of the financial system.

On his part, Dr. Lucas Njoroge, the CMI Director, stressed the need for the supervisors to adequately manage macro and micro risks to have early warning systems and early intervention strategies to avoid banking crises. This entails embracing technology in order to keep up with the digital transformation that the industry is experiencing.

Therefore, he noted, that supervisors have plenty of challenges which they should deal with in order to safeguard their banking sectors and financial stability hence the importance of such training.

COMESA Research Forum:..

effects of Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) on Agricultural Trade Performance in COMESA. He found that on one hand, Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures are export-enhancing whilst TBT measures negatively affect intra-COMESA agricultural export volumes.

Other research papers presented were on Logistics Performance and Intra-COMESA Exports, by James Ochieng from the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA); the Impact of Shocks on Intra-COMESA Trade: Case of Kenyan Exports to the Region, by Mr. Rodgers Wanyonyi from Moi University, Kenya; Industrial Clusters, Competitiveness and Intra-COMESA Trade by Kenneth Mahuni from University of Mauritius and The Paradox of Foreign Capital Inflows and State Fragility in COMESA by Dr. Abel E. Ezeoha of Nigeria.

The forum underlined the need for strengthening collaboration between the academia, researchers and policy makers and ensure relevance of research outputs to enhance uptake of policy recommendations. It called for widening of the scope of participation of various disciplines.

Speaking at the closing of the forum, the COMESA Director of Trade and Customs, Dr Christopher Onyango called on researchers and academicians in the region to take advantage of the annual COMESA Research Forum to make their contribution to the regional integration agenda.

The forum was attended by close to 100 delegates from 19 Member States. Egyptian Assistant Minister for Economic Affairs Mr Ibrahim Seginy who opened the forum urged the use of research and engagement of various stakeholders – the academia, private sector and policy makers in government.



CMI Rolls out a Training Programme on Testing Fiscal Stress

One of the key roles of a government is to develop the national budget as a guide towards achieving specific development and social objectives. This includes determining the resource envelope namely; domestic revenue (tax and non-tax revenue), donor grants, and the borrowing needs for funding the identified priorities.

Quite often, fiscal outturns differ substantially from the budget forecasts, owing to factors outside the government's control such as deviations of economic growth from expectations, terms of trade shocks, natural disasters, calls on government guarantees, among others. This poses challenges to the attainment of the government's intended objectives.

Specifically, the occurrence of fiscal risks, defined as the deviation of fiscal outturns from initial forecast, leads to additional government obligations, revenue losses, larger public debts, and occasionally, refinancing difficulties and crises. Moreover, unexpected spending pressures or revenue losses often require disruptive adhoc adjustments during the fiscal year.

This challenge prevails among COMESA countries hence, addressing fiscal risks is a key element of the COMESA Multilateral Macroeconomic Surveillance Framework. Pursuant to this effort, the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) has developed a training programme on how to deal with fiscal risks.

On 27 June - 1 July 2022, CMI organized Fiscal Stress Testing training that brought together 35 delegates from 12 Central Banks and Ministries of Finance from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The training was aimed at providing a deeper understanding of how to deal with fiscal risks.

Fiscal stress test examines how the public finances would respond to fiscal risks. A comprehensive disclosure and analysis of fiscal risks can help governments to ensure that fiscal policy settings can respond to a range of potential future economic and fiscal shocks; those specific risks are actively monitored and managed; and that abrupt and disruptive changes in policy are avoided when risks materialize. Fiscal

stress test is therefore, an important activity that all countries are required to perform for prudent public finance management, in order to understand how public finances would respond to significant economic and/or financial shocks.

Addressing the delegates, Director of the CMI, Mr. Ibrahim Zeidy, underscored the importance of conducting fiscal stress tests in COMESA member countries.

"Countries need a more complete understanding of the potential threats to their fiscal position, in form of fiscal risk test that can help policy makers simulate the effects of shocks to their forecasts and their implications for government solvency, liquidity and financial needs," he said.

The training was expected to enhance the implementation of the COMESA multilateral fiscal surveillance framework and skills to identify specific fiscal risks and design stress test scenarios for fiscal stress test.



ACTESA Chief Executive Officer Dr. John Mukuka (middle) with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation consultants on COMHOP.

Regional Horticultural Observatory Programme Developed

The Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) has developed the COMESA Horticultural Observatory Programme which will be used to engage multi-stakeholders in the horticultural industry on how to sustainably increase exports, value addition and retention of the industry.

ACTESA is the agricultural arm of COMESA, and worked closely with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) through international development consultant Rogers MacJohn to finalise the COMESA Horticulture Observatory Programme.

Mr MacJohn's consultancy prioritised supply and sourcing networks, private sector partners, commodities and investments while assisting the BMGF to establish an ACTESA coordination mechanism to move the regional horticultural industry forward.

"The focus currently is on three priority commodities namely Avocado in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania, Onion

in Tanzania and Uganda and Irish potatoes in Kenya," said ACTESA Chief Executive Officer Dr John Mukuka.

He added that these crops were selected based on alignment with national priorities, market attractiveness, regional and international potential exports, production capacity and potential impact on the market.

These priority commodity assessments will also help ACTESA identify cross-cutting issues more broadly in the horticulture sector.



The focus currently is on three priority commodities namely Avocado in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania, Onion in Tanzania and Uganda and Irish potatoes in Kenya," Dr John Mukuka

COMESA University Programme: Quality Assurance Mission

A team of COMESA Secretariat experts conducted a quality control mission on the Masters degree in Regional Integration programme being taught at the Kenyatta University in Kenya. This was the second such mission since the programme was introduced in 2020 in Kenyatta University and the University of Mauritius, which are the only ones offering the course for now. Twenty other universities in the COMESA region are expected to join in due course.

The assessment was conducted on 22-26 August 2022 and focused on the implementation of the Programme, identifying existing challenges and areas of improvement including quality in teaching, learning experience and level of student engagement. The team was led by the Director of Trade and Customs Dr Christopher Onyango.

The Master's degree Programme is conducted virtually through a collaboration involving 22 universities in COMESA. It seeks to provide a sound conceptual, policy and practical training on regional integration, as well as extending access to research opportunities and higher education on regional integration in the COMESA region.

It is mainly targeted at working professionals in the areas of trade and regional integration, students intending to work as trade officers, trade policy analyst, advisers, researchers, trade attaches; private sector trade practitioners; media practitioners specialising in business, gender, climate and trade.

Kenyatta University enrolled its first cohort of 10 students in 2020 and has completed the trimester coursework. It is now in the process of undertaking their research projects. The second cohort enrolled in mid-2021 and was expected to commence the third semester in September 2022. The University was also in the process of admitting the third cohort to start in September 2022.

The Masters programme is being implemented with financial support from

the European Union (EU) through the project on Enhancing COMESA Capacity in Trade Policy Analysis and Research and Training for Deeper Regional Integration and Participation in the Global Economy (TRADECOM II).

To ensure quality of the Programme and its implementation, COMESA Secretariat started undertaking quality control missions in July this year, beginning at the University of Mauritius. The missions involve holding consultations with different stakeholders including the University management, students, government ministries and other government agencies.

During the Kenyatta University mission, the COMESA team met among others the Acting Vice Chancellor Prof. Wacheke Wanjohi, who appreciated the fact that the programme was jointly developed by the University and COMESA, thus laying the foundation for its sustainability.

In a meeting with the 1st and 2nd cohort students, concern was raised on the scarcity of materials on regional integration and the weak link between certain economic theories and concepts and practical application in certain modules.

“There is need for student exchange programmes with other universities especially on the elective courses,” said the students while appreciating the programme as building their capacities in various areas. They expressed the need for a pool of resource persons from the collaborating universities.

Among the challenges identified was the need to balance the enrollments into the programme of both fresh graduates and professionals in the public service to meet the capacity building objective of the programme.

One of the recommendations from the consultations with stakeholders was to review the Masters programme after the current cycle in line with Kenya Commission of University Education requirements. Further, COMESA in collaboration with the two Universities to consider establishing a joint facility for delivering elective courses across the collaborating universities and to establish a pool of experts for delivery of such courses.



Over 40 Students Enroll for COMESA Masters Degree in Regional Integration Program

Forty-Seven students are currently enrolled for the COMESA Masters Degree in Regional Integration (MRI) Programme, being offered at the Kenyatta University in Kenya and the University of Mauritius.

Out of these, 39 students received COMESA scholarships supported by the European Union (EU) and the Organisation of Africa, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS). The scholarships were delivered through the project on 'Enhancing COMESA's Capacity in Trade Policy Analysis, Research and Training for deeper Regional Integration and Participation in the Global Economy'.

A COMESA Secretariat team led by Director of Trade and Customs, Dr Chris Onyango was at the University of Mauritius, on 25 – 28 July 2022, on the first Quality Assurance interactive mission. The objective was to appreciate the quality in teaching and learning experience including the level of student engagement in the teaching and learning processes, support to students and complaints resolution mechanisms being offered

The MRI programme seeks to provide a sound basis for conceptual, policy and practical training in various aspects of regional integration and it covers diverse disciplines including economics, law,

political economy, international trade and finance among others.

In Mauritius, the team was taken through procedures for monitoring the progression of students, including meeting coursework requirements, student attendance and guidance to students in research work. They also discussed with stakeholders on strategies for programme visibility, programme credibility while ensuring students retention rates.

In addition, the Mission went through the University's Quality Assurance systems with a view of generating insights for the development of a framework for a regional quality assurance mechanism for the virtual master's degree programme.

The MRI was borne of recognition of the strong nexus between higher education participation, regional integration and developmental outcomes. In 2016, the Summit of the COMESA Heads of State endorsed the decision to establish a COMESA Virtual University.

Since then, COMESA has been working with 22 universities that were approved to participate in the programme.



Trucks at Kazungula Border

Trade Facilitation Programme Records Notable Progress

COMESA Member States, through the European Union-backed Trade Facilitation Programme have revised and adopted regulations for the elimination of non-tariff barriers (NTBs), a move expected to enhance intra-regional trade. The programme has also supported the development of national elimination strategies for NTBs in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Madagascar and Egypt.

The programme has equally supported Member States to implement selected measures under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, development of the Regional Trade Information Portal and adoption of its standardized guidelines.

Regarding improvement of border management operations, the programme facilitated the signing of Sub-delegation Agreements with six Member States and implementation of activities at the various border posts is gathering pace. Capacity building

activities in the areas of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) has been conducted and the procurement of the much-needed measurement equipment for national metrology institutes has been done.

The programme has also supported meetings for negotiations and capacity building for Trade-in-Services covering both the skills required for negotiations

and the collection and analysis of Trade-in-Services statistics for Member States.

This was revealed during the third Project Steering Committee for the COMESA Trade Facilitation Programme held in Lusaka, Zambia, August 11-12, 2022. The TFP is funded by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).

Ethiopia's State Minister for Trade Integration and Export Promotion Hon. Kassahun Gofe called for strategies to fast-track implementation of the programme. He also appealed for more financial support on programmes that will support the integration agenda for the region.

“In addition, I expect to hear from the Secretariat and our partners on the possibilities of increasing more financial and technical support to Member States to implement and sustain the trade facilitation instruments in line with national, regional and international standards,”

Hon. Gofe

“In addition, I expect to hear from the Secretariat and our partners on the possibilities of increasing more financial and technical support to Member States to implement and sustain the trade facilitation instruments in line

with national, regional and international standards,” Hon. Gofe stated.

Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Zambia and COMESA, Arnaud Borchard pointed out that the Trade Facilitation Programme aims to facilitate trade mainly by addressing barriers to trade such as non-tariff barriers, Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures, technical standards as well as border inefficiencies.

He emphasized the importance of trade facilitation to deepen the regional integration in COMESA, the largest Regional Economic Community on the African continent. “The continuous commitment of the EU in supporting the African continent can be proven by the new “continental” Multi-Annual Programme in addition to the ongoing Trade Facilitation Programme,” Mr. Borchard pointed out.

Speaking at the same event, Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance Dr Dev Haman thanked the EU for giving a no-cost extension to the programmes at COMESA adding that this will allow the Secretariat and partners to fully implement the projects.

“The extension will provide additional time for activities at Member State level to continue especially those related to provision of infrastructure at border posts and procurement of works and supplies that have longer delivery and implementation timelines,” Dr Haman said.

Dr Haman further stated that the interventions being covered under the five result areas of the TFP are key to the attainment of the COMESA goals of addressing obstacles constraining the growth of intra-regional trade, which has remained stuck at around 10 percent.



Kenya Elections: AU- COMESA Election Observers' Preliminary Statement

For the first time, the African Union and COMESA mounted a joint Election Observation Mission (EOM), during the General Elections in Kenya on 9 August 2022. The collaboration brought together 93 short term observers who covered 38 out of 47 counties and witnessed the voting process in 504 polling stations. Of these, 59 percent were in urban areas and 41 percent in rural areas.

“.....
This comprehensive engagement demonstrated the two organisations' determination and commitment to supporting Kenya's effort to entrench a culture of democracy and peace, which are critical prerequisites for sustainable socio-economic development,” President Koroma said.

The joint Mission was led by former President of Sierra Leone, Dr Ernest Bai Koroma deputized by Amb. Marie Pierre Lloyd, a member of the COMESA Committee of Elders. Two days after, on August 11, 2022, President Koroma presented a statement of the preliminary findings of the observers, which noted that though highly competitive, the elections were conducted in a comparatively peaceful environment.

“Overall, the atmosphere was largely peaceful. The election day operations were reasonably well-conducted and orderly, and professional. The polling staff mostly adhered to the polling procedures,” said President Koroma during a joint press conference with former Tanzania President Jakaya Kikwete, leading the East African Community EOM and former Ethiopian President Dr Mulatu Teshome, Mission

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Members of the AU-COMESA joint Elections Observer Mission to Kenya

who led the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Mission.

In its assessment, the EOM described the legal framework governing Kenya's elections adequate for conducting credible and democratic elections.

"The framework enshrines a multi-party-political system, regular elections, an independent election management body, national electoral dispute resolution mechanisms, and codes of conduct for stakeholders, including political parties, the media and civil society," said the Mission's statement.

With regard to the election administration and preparations, the Mission noted that the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) strategically communicated with stakeholders through periodic briefings and the use of social media and engaged political parties and candidates to promote peaceful elections by signing a Peace Pledge by the four presidential candidates.

On the campaign environment, the Mission noted that it was vibrant

and largely peaceful, with messages centred around socio-economic issues rather than on an ethnic basis as was in the past.

The joint AU-COMESA Election Observation Mission was preceded by the deployment of a joint pre-election assessment mission from 14 May to 21 May 2022, an election expert mission from 25 June to 25 July 2022, and a long-term observation mission from 25 July to 20 August 2022.

"This comprehensive engagement demonstrated the two organisations' determination and commitment to supporting Kenya's effort to entrench a culture of democracy and peace, which are critical prerequisites for sustainable socio-economic development," President Koroma said.

The Mission appreciated the role of the Judiciary in Kenya for guaranteeing the right to a fair hearing of aggrieved citizens and parties during the electoral process.

"Most stakeholders consulted expressed confidence in the Judiciary,

as evidenced by the willingness of citizens to approach the courts for adjudication. The Mission notes the establishment of the Judiciary Committee on Elections to adjudicate electoral petitions speedily," noted the Mission leader.

"The Mission notes, however, that last-minute electoral litigations and court decisions necessitated procedural changes, which posed a risk to the smooth implementation of electoral operations, as the IEBC had limited time to communicate and implement the changes."

The Mission urged the people of Kenya to remain peaceful while waiting for the conclusion of the electoral process and the government to continue with efforts to create a conducive environment for peaceful, credible and inclusive elections.

COMESA and the AU have typically maintained high levels of collaboration during election observation missions in Member States, but the Kenya mission was the first fully-fledged joint mission.



COMESA Supports Gender Mainstreaming into the Implementation of Zimbabwe's NDC

At least 30 climate change focal persons from various government ministries and agencies have been trained on Gender Mainstreaming into Zimbabwe's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) implementation. The event was convened by the Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry with support from COMESA Secretariat Climate Change Unit on 24 - 25 August 2022 in Bulawayo.

This move marked the commencement of gender mainstreaming in line with the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Gender Action Plan and other climate-related policies and strategies. The training of trainers enhanced the use of the Gender and Climate Change Training Manual in the implementation of Zimbabwe's NDC.

Director of Community Development in the Ministry of Women Affairs, Mr Tariro Chipepera highlighted the importance of having selected government institutions and the private sector embarking on the training on gender mainstreaming into NDC implementation.

Speaking at the training, Ms Naome Chimbetete a gender expert with the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC), said the engagement came as a fulfilment of the findings on gender analysis which informed the need to consolidate the works of both gender experts and those in the climate change space.

"The workshop was a fulfilment of the key findings on the gender analysis that was conducted, based on issues of capacity building where it was realized that there is lack of combined skills in gender and climate change," she said.

She added that those in climate change had limited capacity, knowledge and appreciation on gender. Those from gender space had also limited capacity and knowledge with regards to climate change.

COMESA Climate Change Officer, Lwembe Mwale said the regional bloc was delighted to support Zimbabwe's gender mainstreaming into NDCs adding. These efforts will also go a long way in feeding into global efforts currently initiated by regional blocs such as SADC, UN agencies, development partners and climate financing institutions.

"It is our hope that the technical and action points that emerged from the engagement will translate into actual implementation on the ground to ensure that the most vulnerable groups are not left behind in the NDC process."



Director, Mrs Nalubita Mwale (R) and COMESA EDF Programme Manager Mshuka Kamwela (L) hands over equipment to ZRA Mwami Border Assistant Commissioner, Jubilee Hamwala (middle)

Malawi-Zambia Border Point gets €170,000 Worth of Equipment

Border agencies at the Mwami border post between Zambia and Malawi in August received equipment and furniture worth 170,000 euros to improve coordinated border services. The items were procured by the Zambia's Border Post Upgrade Project funded under the 11 European Development Fund (EDF) Trade Facilitation Programme coordinated by COMESA.

The Zambia Revenue Authority, which is the lead agency, received the items, on behalf of other border agencies at an event conducted at the border point on 22 August 2022. Director at the Ministry of Trade, Commerce and Industry Zambia, Mrs. Nalubita Mwale, and COMESA EDF Programme Manager, Ms. Mshuka Kamwela presented the items to the Mwami One-Stop-Border-Post (OSBP) Agencies represented by ZRA Mwami Border Assistant Commissioner, Mrs. Jubilee Hamwala.

The Mwami-Mchinji OSBP is earmarked for commissioning this year, hence the provision of the furniture and ICT equipment is timely. The new facility will lessen redundancy as it will

accommodate agencies from both countries under one roof, cutting down on clearance time for people and goods.

Mrs Mwale said more equipment are in the processes of procurement for the Mwami border.

"The project is in the process of finalizing the procurement of servers and other storage facilities, biometric web cameras, driver's license scanners, passport readers, card printers for permits, security Cameras (CCTV) to enable remote visual coverage of the borders, baggage scanners to facilitate clearance for passenger and small-scale cross border traders crossing the border posts," Mrs Mwale said. Other scheduled equipment includes metal detectors, Mini-labs equipment, and diagnostics kits for rapid assessment for sanitary and phytosanitary

The Trade Facilitation Programme support is aimed at increasing intra-regional trade flows of goods, persons and services by reducing the costs and delays of imports at specific border posts through the reduction of Non-Tariff Barriers across the borders,

and improvement of Cross Border Management.

The programme covers activities to be implemented across the tripartite region encompassing COMESA, East African Community and Southern Africa Development Community with specific interventions for targeted border posts. For Zambia, three borders namely Chirundu, Mwami and Nakonde, are covered under this programme.

Ms Kamwela appreciated the harmonious and coordinated working relationship between the Government of Zambia and other implementing agencies, which has enabled the achievement of the set objectives of the programme.

Mrs Hamwala appreciated the European Union for the support adding that the computers will make it easier to interconnect systems and facilitate electronic interactions among border agencies connected to the Zambia Electronic Single Window and using ASYCUDAWorld system.



Enabling Governments to Deal with Monetary Risks

CMI rolls out a training programme on testing fiscal stress

One of the key roles of a government is to develop the national budget as a guide towards achieving specific development and social objectives. This includes determining the resource envelope namely; domestic revenue (tax and non-tax revenue), donor grants, and the borrowing needs for funding the identified priorities.

Quite often, fiscal outturns differ substantially from the budget forecasts, owing to factors outside the government's control such as deviations of economic growth from expectations, terms of trade shocks, natural disasters, calls on government guarantees, among others. This poses challenges to the attainment of the government's intended objectives.

Specifically, the occurrence of fiscal risks, defined as the deviation of fiscal outturns from initial forecast, leads to additional government obligations, revenue losses, larger public debts, and occasionally, refinancing difficulties and crises. Moreover, unexpected spending pressures or revenue losses often require disruptive adhoc adjustments during the fiscal year.

This challenge prevails among COMESA countries hence, addressing fiscal risks is a key element of the COMESA Multilateral Macroeconomic Surveillance Framework. Pursuant to this effort, the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) has developed a training programme on how to deal with fiscal risks.

On 27 June - 1 July 2022, CMI organized Fiscal Stress Testing training that brought together 35 delegates from 12 Central Banks and Ministries of Finance from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The training was aimed at providing a deeper understanding of how to deal with fiscal risks.

Fiscal stress test examines how the public finances would respond to fiscal risks. A comprehensive disclosure and analysis of fiscal risks can help governments to ensure that fiscal policy settings can respond to a range of potential future economic and fiscal shocks; those specific risks are actively monitored and managed; and that abrupt and disruptive changes in policy are avoided when risks materialize. Fiscal

stress test is therefore, an important activity that all countries are required to perform for prudent public finance management, in order to understand how public finances would respond to significant economic and/or financial shocks.

Addressing the delegates, Director of the CMI, Mr. Ibrahim Zeidy, underscored the importance of conducting fiscal stress tests in COMESA member countries.

"Countries need a more complete understanding of the potential threats to their fiscal position, in form of fiscal risk test that can help policy makers simulate the effects of shocks to their forecasts and their implications for government solvency, liquidity and financial needs," he said.

The training was expected to enhance the implementation of the COMESA multilateral fiscal surveillance framework and skills to identify specific fiscal risks and design stress test scenarios for fiscal stress test.



COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe with His Excellency Paul Kagame at State House in Kigali, Rwanda

Rwanda Reaffirms its Support of COMESA

Rwanda has reaffirmed its support of regional integration programmes being implemented by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). His Excellency Paul Kagame said his government believes that integrating African countries is a sure way of attaining economic prosperity and development.

He said this at State House in Kigali on August 2 when he met Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe who was leading a COMESA delegation on a three-day working visit to the country.

The President commended COMESA for making positive advancements in enhancing intra-regional trade by developing various trade facilitation instruments that are being used by the people.

In highlighting the importance of regional programmes, President Kagame reiterated his government's willingness to host the next Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) Summit. The last Tripartite FTA Summit was held in June 2015, in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt when the TFTA was launched.

"The Tripartite is an important milestone to harmonize trade and investment policies and therefore complement and accelerate the continental integration. COMESA and Tripartite RECs (EAC and SADC) should strengthen mobilization to get additional signatures and ratifications prior to the Summit," President Kagame added.

Secretary General Kapwepwe expressed appreciation to Rwanda for its continued support to COMESA and thanked the Head of State for personally participating in the 21st COMESA Summit and advancing some regional programmes such as the free movement of persons.

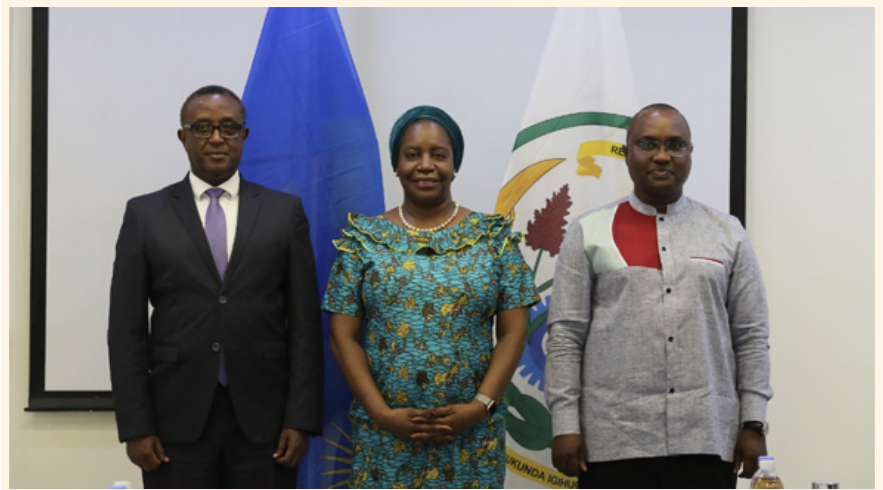
“The Tripartite is an important milestone to harmonize trade and investment policies and therefore complement and accelerate the continental integration. COMESA and Tripartite RECs (EAC and SADC) should strengthen mobilization to get additional signatures and ratifications prior to the Summit,” President Kagame

“We hail Rwanda for playing a leadership role in promoting movement of persons in the region as it is the key to fostering trade and investments,” said Ms Kapwepwe.

In her briefing notes, the SG discussed outcomes from the 21st Heads of State and Governments Summit held in 2021, the COMESA Medium Term Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025, the status of implementation of various programmes and activities on trade liberalisation and customs cooperation, infrastructure development, investment and private sector development. She also talked about agriculture development, gender issues and the digitalization programme among others.

Earlier, the COMESA delegation held meetings with different government ministries including Trade, Home Affairs and International Cooperation. They also met representatives of the Private Sector Federation respectively.

The COMESA delegation was comprised of Director of Trade and Customs Dr Christopher Onyango, Director of Industry and Agriculture Mrs Providence Mavubi, SG’s Executive Support Officer Maluba Sinyambo and Phillip Kambafwile from Corporate Communications.



Minister Jean-Chrysostome Ngabitsinze receiving the SG



President Kagame, COMESA SG and members of their team



RECAMP PTSC meeting in Lusaka

Review of the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme

The second steering committee meeting of the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP) was conducted in Lusaka, Zambia, 17 – 18 August 2022. Its objective was to review progress made in the implementation of the programme in Member States and find ways to attain increased private sector participation in the regional and global value chains.

RECAMP is funded by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) and focuses on challenges that affect value chain actors - both small and large scale that are relevant to regional economic integration as well as efforts to increase intra-regional trade of value added and manufactured products.

Delegates from Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia attended the meeting. Also present were COMESA Institutions namely, African Leather and Leather Products Institute, Regional Investment Area, Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA), COMESA Federation of Women in

Business and the COMESA Business Council.

The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce and Tourism in Djibouti, Mr. Ali Daod Abdou was the Chief Guest. In his statement he noted that COMESA Member States have continued to prioritise the improvement of the investment climate in the region as a cornerstone for growing regional enterprises.

“The integration of markets is vital in addressing matters of competitiveness, improving the business environment in which Small and Medium Enterprises SMEs operate as well as ensuring factors limiting access to markets within the region such as the non-tariff barriers are addressed,” he said.

He said the RECAMP was focusing on such sectors as Agro processing, leather and leather products and horticulture are crucial to the COMESA regional not only promoting trade and value addition, but further providing an opportunity for creating the much-needed jobs for youth.

Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance, Dr Dev

Haman said RECAMP remains one of the COMESA Regional flagship programmes expected to contribute to the deepening of regional economic integration in the region. This would be done by increasing and strengthening private sector participation in regional and global value chains with a focus on agro-processing, horticulture and leather and leather products.

“Performance of this programme remains a priority in catalyzing development of our target value chains to participate with equal footing into the global value chains,” Dr Haman said.

In his remarks, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Zambia and COMESA Mr. Arnaud Borchard emphasized the importance of trade facilitation to deepen the regional integration, which is the core of COMESA's Mandate as the largest REC on the African continent. He underscored the EU's continuous commitment in supporting the African continent as demonstrated by the new continental Multi-Annual Programme in addition to the ongoing Trade Facilitation Programme.



Communications Coordinators and media experts from COMESA Member States with Secretary General and COMESA Secretariat staff during the training workshop in Lusaka

Regional Communication Experts and Media Trained on COMESA Regional Integration Programmes

Thirty-one communication experts from 18 Member States of COMESA participated in a two-day capacity building workshop to enhance awareness of COMESA-led regional integration programmes at the national level. The training, was conducted in Lusaka, Zambia on August 31 - 01 September 2022. It was in line with the 2018 Council of Ministers directive to have a vibrant communications ecosystem characterized by a well-equipped cadre of front-line communications and media experts in all the 21 Member States.

It brought together media practitioners and communications experts based in the Ministries that coordinate COMESA activities, who were appointed as COMESA Communication Coordinators.

COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, said the training was critical in addressing communication gaps in regional integration, while appreciating the indispensable role of communication professionals as key stakeholders in

the realization of the integration agenda.

“It is well known that while many of the policy decisions made by COMESA policy-makers have indeed been implemented, others have been partially implemented, while several are yet to become operational. This means the envisaged and potential benefits are not realized as intended.

She attributed this to various factors with the most pertinent being lack of, or limited awareness.



This is where your role as communication professionals comes in: to ensure that key messages and information about the decisions and commitments made in public interest reach the key stakeholders as the intended beneficiaries.”





not sufficiently aware of the different COMESA programmes and activities. This leads to the public being unable to demand from their governments to deliver on regional integration commitments.

At the training, the participants recommended ways of improving publicity. Among them was to involve the communication coordinators and the media more robustly in activities and events relating to COMESA regional integration programmes in their respective Member States. They noted that currently, they had limited access to such information as they were not fully involved in such activities.

They also undertook to utilize the communication and news platforms and tools they manage such as websites, newspapers, social media to disseminate news and information on regional integration. This they said will increase the visibility on COMESA in Member States given that information will be disseminated in local languages as well.



Facilitators of the training comprised of technical experts from the COMESA Secretariat covering trade and customs, gender and social affairs, infrastructure and logistics, agriculture and industry, peace and security and the European Union Development Fund.

The training was implemented jointly with financial support from the COMESA Secretariat, the European Union (EU) through the Enhancing COMESA Capacity in Trade Policy Analysis and Research and Training for Deeper Regional Integration and Participation in the Global Economy Project (TRADECOM II Project) and the European Development Fund (EDF 11) Institutional Capacity Building Project.



“This is where your role as communication professionals comes in: to ensure that key messages and information about the decisions and commitments made in public interest reach the key stakeholders as the intended beneficiaries.”

She attributed the low awareness

levels to two underlying factors: The responsible agencies in Member States are at times not well informed about the scope and benefits of implementation hence the limited motivation or urgency to act. Secondly, the public, who are the ultimate beneficiaries of regional integration initiatives are



Participants attending the agricultural minimum set of core data Validation workshop in Lusaka, Zambia

COMESA Hosts Agricultural Minimum Set of Core Data Validation Workshop

Despite Africa's potential to remain sustainable and food secure and further improve the rural economy, the lack of reliable data and capacity to disseminate to various end-users has affected the continent's growth. This notwithstanding the various initiatives by COMESA partners such as the Africa Development Bank (AfDB).

At a five-day regional compilation and validation workshop held in the third quarter and organized by COMESA on the Agricultural Minimum Set of Core Data for African Development Fund, the AfDB Country Manager, Zambia, Mr. Agola Oluoch stressed the need for the African continent to expand the data collection techniques to avoid wrong decision-making. The meeting took place in Lusaka, Zambia from 29 August to 2 September 2022.

Mr Oluoch stated that lack of reliable data has threatened the growth of agriculture and the rural economy, being the backbone of most of the countries' economies, contributing at least 40 percent to GDP, over 75 percent to total exports and above 80 percent of employment for most African countries.

"Agriculture and rural sectors remain cardinal to the national economy, making the sector the key to general improved economic performance,

increased incomes and raising of standards of living of households as well as poverty eradication in most of our countries. Hence the need to ensure reliable statistical data for policy formulation and economic development," he said

The failure to disseminate agriculture and rural economy information amid various headwinds prompted the AfDB since 2015 to initiate various strategies including the current Phase V of the Statistical Capacity Building program for (SCB-V), being executed by COMESA using AfDB Grant to develop and maintain the momentum built on past gains.

The SCB-V seeks to among other components; improve the availability and quality of economic statistics, including the measurement of the COVID-19 impact; Improving the quality and availability of Social Statistics and reporting on COVID-19; Data Collection, Management and Dissemination and Strategic Planning, Systems Development, Coordination, and Training.

The initiative envisaged that under SCB-V, all African countries would establish a Minimum Set of Core agricultural Data (MSCD) and accelerate information dissemination

on a regular basis and provide national and international policy makers necessary information that goes across national boundaries.

Addressing the forum, Zambia Statistical Agency Executive Director Mr. Mulenga Musepa noted that COVID 19 and the poor funding to National Statistical Systems (NSS) have generally weakened national capacities to generate data. He urged African Governments to invest in statistics for the agriculture sector to become resilient and contribute effectively to food security and reduce hunger and poverty on the continent.

"It is a well-known fact that the NSS in Africa are weak and poorly funded, this makes it difficult for regional member countries to undertake statistical operations in line with the international best practices for optimal evidence-based policy dialogue," he said.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of programmes Ambassador Kipyego Cheluget applauded the AfDB for introducing the SCB V, a compilation of updated minimum set of data for last year. He said this will ensure the realization of the realignment of the agriculture development in terms of economic development and enhanced living standards, fighting poverty and increasing food security adding that this will form part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are vital to the development of the sector.



President of Mauritius H.E. Prithvirajsing Roopun (R) welcoming the COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe

COMESA SG's Eventful Mission to Mauritius

COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe concluded a four-day mission to Mauritius, in August this year whose objective was to strengthen relations with the Member State, by updating the leadership on the status of implementation of COMESA regional integration programmes.

The President of Mauritius H.E. Prithvirajsing Roopun was the first to host the delegation. He expressed appreciations and support to regional integration programmes being

implemented by COMESA stressing that his government believed in integration of African countries as a sure way of attaining economic prosperity and development.

"We remain committed to COMESA and the regional integration activities under implementation. The disturbances in Ukraine have highlighted the

need to balance multilateralism and globalization with regional economic integration and diversification of sources of food and other essential goods," he said.

The President welcomed the Secretary General and congratulated her on being appointed as the first female COMESA Secretary General following



.....
 We remain committed to COMESA and the regional integration activities under implementation. The disturbances in Ukraine have highlighted the need to balance multilateralism and globalization with regional economic integration and diversification of sources of food and other essential goods," President Roopun



Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Hon Pravind Kumar Jugnauth handing a present to COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe

similar developments in the WTO. He acknowledged the achievements being made under the 50 Million African Women Speak Project and its ongoing activities in Mauritius.

The 50MAWS platform project is jointly implemented by COMESA, the East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It enables women in 38 countries in the three regional blocs to find information on how to run businesses, where to access financial services, how to create business opportunities online and where to access training resources, among others.

The President also acknowledged the innovations that COVID-19 had brought about for the use of digital applications which gave Africa a quantum leap in this area. He stressed the importance of education citing the need to equip the youth for their future role and the need for local research and development and innovation.

Secretary General expressed appreciation to Mauritius for its continued support to COMESA. She noted with appreciation that Mauritius always paid her COMESA contributions on time and actively participated in COMESA activities evidenced by the virtual participation of the Prime Minister in the 2021 Summit hosted by Egypt.

“Member States had endured a challenging two years under COVID-19 lockdowns hence it is important to engage with Member States, particularly Coordinating Ministries, on emerging issues” she said.

She briefed the President on the on-going COMESA programmes including the Eco-Fish that focuses on improved aquaculture farming methods and capacity building, interventions focusing on renewable energy under



Above: Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon. Alan Ganoo with COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe
Below: 38th Session of the Trade Development Bank Annual Meetings after the unveiling of the plaque

the USD 425m Regional Infrastructure Financing project and Trade in Services negotiations among others

A series of meetings was held with among others, the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Hon Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Minister of Finance Hon. Renganaden Padayachy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade Hon. Alan Ganoo, Indian Ocean Commission Director Mr. Dev Phokeer and the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

While in Mauritius the Secretary General also participated in the 38th Session of the Trade Development Bank Annual Meetings and the launch of its Principal Office in Mauritius and meeting of the Committee of Governors of Central Banks.

The COMESA delegation was comprised of Dr. Dev Haman, Assistant Secretary General and Mr. Charles Chaitezvi, Trade Facilitation Programme Team Leader.

“Member States had endured a challenging two years under COVID-19 lockdowns hence it is important to engage with Member States, particularly Coordinating Ministries, on emerging issues” Chileshe Kapwepwe.



Small Scale Cross Border Traders at Kasumbalesa Border Post

COMESA to Build Walkway for Small Scale Cross Border Traders at Kasumbalesa

Plans are underway by the COMESA Secretariat to build a walkway for the small-scale cross border traders between Zambia and D R Congo at the Kasumbalesa border. The walkway will facilitate smooth passage of the traders in a more organized manner, avoiding the use of illegal routes.

This was one of the issues discussed during an assessment mission and stakeholders' meeting, conducted on 29 August 2022 at the border. The routes in the walkway will be demarcated to facilitate movement of transporters and traders while ensuring that it passes through border agency control points.

The assessment mission was led by COMESA Director of Trade and Customs, Dr Christopher Onyango comprising of Government officials from the Coordinating Ministries of DR Congo and Zambia, the European Union, Immigration officials and the International Organization for Migration. Its purpose was to observe on the ground the activities financed by the European Union under the Cross Border

Trade Initiative programme. It was also intended familiarize the EU delegation on the activities being implemented under the European Development Fund 11 (EDF 11) funding.

The Mission provided a holistic first-hand information to the EU and other key stakeholders on operations at the border financed by the programme and appreciation of the achievements, constraints and challenges that exist at the border.

Stakeholders in Kasumbalesa were requested to do further work on the designs and costing of the walkway and make the necessary submission to the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry of Zambia for further processing with the Ministry of Infrastructure and the COMESA Secretariat.

A new border market will also be built at Kasumbalesa to facilitate organized trade flow by the cross-border traders. The two projects will be supported with funding from the European Union

funding under the (EDF 11) envelope. Once constructed the market will provide shelter for the traders. It will have all the necessary facilities including bathrooms, toilets and sleepers to accommodate traders who travel from other parts of the region.

The COMESA Small Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative is funded by the European Union under the EDF 11 and aims to facilitate trade by small scale cross border traders. The total budget for the programme is Euro 15 million. The programme comprises five result areas all aimed at addressing the constraints faced by small scale cross border traders. It has five key interventions being implemented at the Kasumbalesa border including: supporting Trade Information Desk Officers, supporting enumerators collecting small scale cross border trade data; piloting the Green Pass, and preliminary work on development of a border market at the DR Congo side.



Delegates at the national consultations on COMWARN in Mauritius

Process of Establishing Early Warning Response Structures in Mauritius Begins

National consultations on the COMESA Early Warning System (COMWARN) Structural Vulnerability Assessments Methodology (SVAs) were conducted in Mauritius on 6 July 2022, involving government and key stakeholders. The three days consultations held in Port Louis aimed at developing an early warning system based on structural data. These reports provide Member States with the projected structural drivers of the COMESA Peace and Prosperity Index (CPPI).

The forum built the capacity of all the relevant national stakeholders on COMWARN, providing them with the opportunity to interact with the COMWARN SVA model and enhanced ownership.

Stakeholders were taken through the COMWARN SVA model to understand how indicator profiles are created, analysed and how the regional and country specific CPPI forecasts are made. Further, they learnt how to interpret the CPPI forecasted drivers, and this was expected to enhance demand for such forecasts leading to greater ownership at national level.

Speaking at the opening of the meeting,

the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade Mr. Alan Ganoo said regional peace and security are vital for a successful regional integration.

“Our government is committed to working closely with COMESA and the African Union to explore the structural vulnerability structures that are inherent to our country as a small Island developing State and ensure the successful use of the COMWARN SVA methodology,” he said.

He added that the maintenance of regional peace and security are prerequisites to sustainable socio-economic development.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of Programmes, Ambassador Kipyego Cheluget urged the participants to fully engage and understand the SVAs and the important role they play in fostering peace in the region.

“These consultations will serve as an opportunity to continuously validate the SVA methodology, the CPPI forecasts for targeted Member States as well as develop possible response structures

and feedback mechanisms for the SVAs,” said Amb. Cheluget.

The forum which was organized by COMESA Secretariat through the Governance, Peace and Security Unit, provided both COMESA and the African Union the opportunity to commence the process of establishing early response structures in Mauritius.

Going forward, the participants were expected to collectively and jointly develop appropriate structures that would prompt the establishment of national and regional early response mechanisms. Through the participation of civil society and private sector organizations, the interaction increased the chances for future implementation of SVAs at the grass-root level.

.....

Our government is committed to working closely with COMESA and the African Union to explore the structural vulnerability structures that are inherent to our country as a small Island developing State and ensure the successful use of the COMWARN SVA methodology,” Minister Ganoo



Secretary General in Djibouti's Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare Mrs Anissa Hassan Badon

Gender Statistics Training for Djibouti

COMESA through the Gender and Social Affairs Division and the Statistics Unit conducted a five-day national capacity building workshop on gender statistics for regional integration for selected government ministries in Djibouti. The training focused on statisticians and gender focal point persons from the Ministries of Trade and Commerce, Infrastructure, Labour, Gender Equality, Education and the national statistics office that are involved in gender statistics and data users.

Speaking at the opening of the training, Secretary General in the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare Mrs

.....

You can count on the COMESA Secretariat for support and collaboration to ensure that the understanding and knowledge of gender statistics is strengthened among the key officers in Djibouti,"
Mr Chizebuka.

Anissa Hassan Badon highlighted the importance of the workshop which was conducted as Djibouti was undertaking its third national population census. She noted the need to ensure that national policies align with the regional and continental instruments ensuring availability of gender disaggregated data through gender sensitive data collection tools and data analysis mechanisms.

In addition, the workshop was informed that the need for gender statistics has increased over the years owing to the demands of national policies and international conventions that promote gender equality and the importance of establishing a system that produces gender sensitive evidence sustainably.

Trade Statistician at COMESA Secretariat Mr Wilson Chizebuka stated the need for countries to have gender statistics available at the national level because this data plays a crucial role in gender mainstreaming in development and helps governments formulate policies for poverty reduction.

The data could also help governments

prioritize certain policies and programs that could help reduce poverty and bring development among its people.

"You can count on the COMESA Secretariat for support and collaboration to ensure that the understanding and knowledge of gender statistics is strengthened among the key officers in Djibouti," Mr Chizebuka said.

Among other issues, the training workshop aimed to assist the country have a draft proposal on the minimum set of gender indicators available, complete the gender assessment questionnaire which will assist in identifying statistics and capacity gaps for Djibouti.

COMESA Secretariat is expected to undertake an end of term evaluation of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) 2018 – 2022 for Djibouti. The Gender Statistics Assessments done at the training are critical input and is seen as a way of engendering the next NSDS for the country.



Technicians checking the maintenance of the solar panels

Substandard Solar Equipment a Source of Low Usage

The availability of poor-quality solar equipment and products which are out competing Quality Verified (QV) solar equipment and products is leading to lack of reliability and a general mistrust of these products by consumers in the COMESA region.

This has in turn reduced the rate at which both on grid and off grid solar technologies are being adopted, leading to a slowdown in the rate at which modern, reliable, and sustainable energy is being accessed in the region.

Speaking during a stakeholders' consultation workshop on the formulation of COMESA Model Solar Standards, Common Tariff Framework for Solar Products and review of the COMESA Model Energy Policy in Kigali, Rwanda 19 – 23 September 2022, Assistant Secretary General in charge of Programmes Amb. Kipyego Cheluget stated that most of the solar equipment does not last long to warrant the cost associated with the purchase of the same.

The workshop was spearheaded by the World Bank-funded Regional Infrastructure Finance Facility (RIFF)

project. RIFF which is co-implemented by COMESA and the Trade and Development Bank (TDB).

Amb. Cheluget further said the Renewable Energy Off Grid Market Needs Assessment has confirmed the findings of the Open Capital Report of 2020 that stringent tariffs and duty regimes in the COMESA/TDB Member States are some of the barriers for promoting off grid solar.

He added that the tariffs and duties for off grid solar (OGS) products, ranging from 15 percent-35 percent, increase company costs and consumer prices, and tax policies are generally not uniformly enforced.

"To overcome the challenges of poor quality products, stringent tariffs and duty regimes are being developed, which with successful domestication by Member States will improve the quality of solar products allowed into the region and will also ease doing business across borders due to a predictable duty regime," Amb. Cheluget added.

Speaking at the same event, Permanent

Secretary in Rwanda's Ministry of Infrastructure Mr Fidele Abimana called on Member States to start manufacturing solar equipment locally in order to reduce the cost for the local consumers.

He said the COMESA region has enough skills and raw materials to manufacture complete solar equipment.

"Why can't we start manufacturing this equipment locally as a region. We have skilled manpower in the region to develop manufacturing plants so we can bring the cost of the solar equipment down and ensure that we maintain a standard that is acceptable by all," Mr Abimana added.

The RIFF Project is a USD 425 million project covering the COMESA and TDB regions. The project aims to promote economic transformation and regional integration in eastern and southern Africa by extending long-term development capital to catalyze private sector investment into infrastructure.



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