**PRESS RELEASE**

**Regional ICT Programme Holds Validation Workshop for Stakeholder Mapping and Baseline Survey Study and E-Commerce Study**

***Lilongwe, Sunday, September 04, 2022:*** Experts in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) from Twenty-Nine Member States belonging to COMESA, East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) will meet for two back-to-back workshops in Lilongwe, Malawi from 5 – 10 September 2022.

COMESA and the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund, signed a Contribution Agreement worth eight million Euros for implementation of the programme on Enhancement of Governance and Enabling Environment in the ICT Sector (EGEE-ICT). The EGEE-ICT is a four (4) year programme implemented by COMESA in collaboration with Partner Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of SADC, EAC, IGAD, and IOC.

The EGEE-ICT programme aims to support 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. The beneficiaries are the 29 Member States in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO) region.

The experts meeting in Malawi will consider and validate the reports of two studies that have been undertaken under the EGEE-ICT programme. COMESA engaged two firms to carry out the studies as follows: MA Consulting Group for the Stakeholder Mapping and Baseline Survey Study and DT Global for the E-Commerce Study.

MA Consulting Group was expected 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.

DT Global, on its part, was 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 study is to identify bottlenecks hampering the uptake of e-commerce in the region and to propose a regional work program which will guide and facilitate the development and adoption of a regional e-commerce framework.

The Stakeholder Mapping and Baseline Survey Study workshop will be held from 5-7 September 2022 while the E-Commerce Study workshop will be held from 8-10 September 2022.

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