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**COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN
AND SOUTHERN AFRICA**

**TWENTY THIRD SUMMIT OF THE COMESA AUTHORITY OF
HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

Bujumbura, Burundi
31 October 2024

**FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE
TWENTY THIRD SUMMIT OF THE
COMESA AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

**Theme: “Accelerating Regional Integration through the Development of Regional Value
Chains in Climate Resilient Agriculture, Mining and Tourism”**

THE TWENTY THIRD SUMMIT OF THE AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA was hosted in Bujumbura, Burundi on 31st October 2024, under the theme: **“Accelerating Regional Integration through the Development of Regional Value Chains in Climate Resilient Agriculture, Mining and Tourism”**.

IN ATTENDANCE

The Summit was attended by the following Heads of State and Government, and Plenipotentiaries:

His Excellency Mr Évariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi and Chairperson of the COMESA Authority

His Excellency Dr William Samoei Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya and Vice Chairperson of the COMESA Authority

His Excellency Mr Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia and Rapporteur of the COMESA Authority

His Excellency Mr Felix Antoine Tshisekedi, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo

His Excellency Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Republic of Madagascar

His Excellency Mr Taye Atske-Selassie, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Her Excellency Major (Rtd) Jessica Rose Epel Alupo, Vice President of the Republic of Uganda

His Excellency Aboubakar Said Anli, Prime Minister of the Union of the Comoros

His Excellency the Right Honourable Russel M. Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Eswatini

His Excellency Abdoukader Kamil Mohamed, Prime Minister of the Republic of Djibouti

His Excellency Salah Ahmed Jama, Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia

The following Member States were also represented:

His Excellency Eng. Hassan El Khatib, Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Honourable Sosten Gwengwe, MP, Minister of Trade and Industry of the Republic of Malawi

Honourable Prudence Sebahizi, Minister of Trade and Industry of the Republic of Rwanda

His Excellency Hussein Awad Ali, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Sudan

Honourable Mr Mohamed Ali Nafti, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians abroad of the Republic of Tunisia

His Excellency Beyene Russom Habtai, Ambassador of the State of Eritrea to the Republic of Kenya and Republic of Zambia

His Excellency Mr Dharmraj Busgeeth, Ambassador of the Republic of Mauritius to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

His Excellency Mr Claude Morel, Ambassador of the Republic of Seychelles to the Republic of South Africa and Permanent Representative to COMESA

Her Excellency Mrs Charity Charamba, Ambassador of the Republic of Zimbabwe to Zambia and Permanent Representative to COMESA

H.E. M. S.E. Elbashir A. S Elamini, Charge d'Affaires, Embassy of Libya to Burundi

In addition, Hon. Selemani JAFO, MP, Minister of Trade and Industry of the United Republic of Tanzania attended the Summit, Representing Her Excellency the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, as an observer.

PARTNERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Various development partners and organizations also attended the Summit: African Union Commission (AUC), African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), African Development Bank (AfDB), European Union (EU), World Bank, African Export-Import Bank (AFREXIM Bank), International Trade Centre (ITC) and Africa CDC.

OPENING OF THE SUMMIT

His Excellency Evariste Ndayishimiye delivered his statement of welcome to all Heads of State and Government, and invited guests to the Twenty-Third Summit.

His Excellency Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia and outgoing Chairperson of the COMESA Authority called the Summit to order and delivered his

keynote address. He launched the COMESA 2023 annual report and announced the new Bureau of the Authority.

ELECTED, by acclamation, the Bureau of the Twenty-Third Summit of the Authority composed of His Excellency Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi, as Chairperson of COMESA Authority, His Excellency Dr. William Samoei Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya, as Vice Chairperson and His Excellency Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia, as Rapporteur.

His Excellency Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic Burundi **THANKED** the Authority for the honour bestowed upon him to serve as the Chairperson of the Authority and reiterated his commitment to advancing COMESA's integration agenda together with the members of the Bureau and Member States.

He **RECOGNISED** and **EXPRESSED** gratitude to His Excellency Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia, for the leadership of Zambia as Chairperson of the Authority since June 2023, adding that he looks forward to continued support.

The Heads of State and Government of Madagascar, Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia made their maiden statements. The President of the Republic of Kenya also made his statement.

The following made statements on behalf of their Heads of State and Government: Vice President of Uganda, Prime Minister of Eswatini, Prime Minister of Djibouti, Prime Minister of Comoros and Assistant Prime Minister of Somalia.

The chairperson of the Africa Union Commission also addressed the Summit reiterating the need for the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Member States and development partners to work closely together for the realization of Agenda 2063.

In addition, the following organizations made statements: UNECA, AFDB, and AfCFTA.

AFTER THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE SUMMIT,

THE AUTHORITY:

ADOPTED the Report of the Secretary General on the State of Integration in COMESA;

TOOK NOTE of the COMESA Business Forum Declaration;

NOTED the Report of the Forty-Fourth Meeting of the COMESA Council of Ministers;

CONSIDERED AND ADOPTED the Report of the Nineteenth Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs;

A. TRADE LIBERALIZATION

NOTED that membership in the COMESA Free Trade Area (FTA) remains at 16 and **URGED** Non-FTA Member States to take necessary steps to expeditiously join the FTA;

NOTED that despite the increase of intra-COMESA exports by 40% from US\$ 10 billion in 2020 to US\$ 14 billion in 2023, the figures remained low compared to trade with the rest of the world;

CALLED UPON Member States to take necessary steps to address Non-Tariff Barriers and other barriers to intra-COMESA trade;

ENCOURAGED the Secretariat to continue the digitization of various trade instruments including the Electronic Certificate of Origin, Electronic Cargo Tracking System, Online Non-Tariff Barriers System, National Single Windows and other digital Trade Facilitation instruments to increase the efficiency and reduce the costs of trade;

NOTED the progress being made in implementing the *Simplified Trade Regime* to provide livelihoods to local communities, enhance intra-COMESA trade, encourage the formalisation of small-scale trade and empower Women and Youth;

RECOGNIZED the support provided by development and cooperating partners, including the European Union, World Bank, African Development Bank, World Customs Organization and UNCTAD, among others, and **URGED** them to enhance their support to COMESA's regional integration agenda;

URGED Member States to support the roll out of the COMESA digital retail payment platform being championed by COMESA for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to reduce the costs of cross-border transactions; and

CALLED UPON the Secretariat and Member States to examine all possible avenues of support to tourism investment and development and **CALLED UPON** Member States to develop frameworks that encourage joint management of shared tourism resources and to develop a strategy for marketing the COMESA region as a single tourist destination to avoid negative competitive practices.

B. COMESA-EAC-SADC TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT

WELCOMED the entry into force of the Tripartite FTA on 25th July 2024 after meeting the threshold of 14 ratifications, **CONGRATULATED** Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe for ratifying the agreement and **ENCOURAGED** other COMESA Member States to ratify it; and

UNDERSCORED the critical role of the Tripartite FTA Agreement in resolving the challenges of multiple memberships in the three concerned RECs and in championing and expediting continental integration.

C. PROMOTION OF MOVEMENT OF PERSONS, LABOUR AND SERVICES

WARMLY WELCOMED the announcement by H.E. Evariste NDAYISHIMIYE, President of the Republic of Burundi and Chair of COMESA Authority, for a short-term free entry visa to COMESA member states citizens, As part of implementation of COMESA protocol on gradual elimination / waiver of visa requirements;

RECOGNIZED the importance of service sectors in fostering production, employment generation and foreign direct investment and **URGED** Member States to liberalize various service sectors in order to boost trade, regional integration and socio-economic development in the region; and

URGED Member States to facilitate the movement of persons, labour and services across the region including visa requirements and to pursue mutual recognition of qualifications in order to foster intra-regional labour mobility.

D. INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

APPRECIATED the financial and technical support provided by development partners to Member States and the COMESA Secretariat to develop Energy, Information and Communication Technology and Transport infrastructure, including the World Bank's projects on Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Transformation (ASCENT) and Inclusive Digitalization in Eastern and Southern Africa (IDEA);

NOTED the efforts of the Secretariat to support the liberalization of air transport and the development other modes of transport including railway as well as Information and Communication Technology infrastructure to ease the challenge of connectivity in the region and the continent, with support from the European Union and other development partners; and

URGED COMESA Member States to promote regional flight connectivity and railway networks to reduce the cost of travel to encourage trade and regional and domestic tourism.

E. AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

NOTED the progress made in the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and **URGED** Member States to adopt innovative technologies that enhance productivity, food security, value addition and green investments and further **ENCOURAGED** the efforts of the Secretariat to promote competitiveness and diversification through the Regional Food Balance Sheet Project, (supported by Africa Green Revolution Alliance (AGRA)) and the Regional Enterprise

Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme, (supported by the European Union);

ENCOURAGED Member States and the private sector to work together to build the capacity of local mining companies including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) involved in value addition activities and processing minerals and **URGED** Member States to provide incentives for companies that wish to establish production facilities in the mining sector within the Region;

CALLED UPON the Member States and the Secretariat to implement the COMESA Industrial Strategy, including the development of its high-priority sectors of Agro-processing, Energy, Textile and Garments, Leather and Leather Products, Mineral Beneficiation, Pharmaceuticals, Chemicals and Agro-Chemicals, Light Engineering and the Blue Economy; and

NOTED the progress being made in the implementation of the Pharmaceutical Sector Development Project in the region, with support from the AfDB.

F. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

NOTED WITH CONCERN the adverse effects of climate change-induced droughts, floods and cyclones as well as the potential of these hazards to adversely affect peace and conflict dynamics in the region;

EXPRESSED deep sympathy towards the victims of the floods and cyclones in the eastern parts of Africa and the long spells of drought in the southern parts of our continent;

URGED Member States to strengthen and enforce environmental and social standards such as proper waste management and reduced carbon emissions, ensure responsible mining practices and promote sustainable value chains;

NOTED WITH APPRECIATION the European Union's support through the "SWITCH to Circular Economy in East and Southern Africa" programme, thereby fostering a transition from a linear to a circular economy, while promoting sustainable business models and investments and creating jobs;

ENCOURAGED the private sector to support regional climate actions and green growth ambitions and to benefit Africa's enormous and untapped natural resources for inclusive and sustainable growth; and

CALLED UPON Member States, as appropriate, to undertake needed regulatory reforms and provide incentives for enhancing climate-resilient and green growth investments.

G. GENDER AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

NOTED the progress achieved in the implementation of initiatives to empower women and youth across the region and **URGED** for their inclusion in the implementation of all programmes and activities in the Common Market.

H. GLOBAL PANDEMICS

NOTED the reported outbreak of monkey pox (M-pox) and called upon Member States to strength their measures aimed at combating the spread of the virus; and

ENCOURAGED Member States and the Secretariat, as well as other organizations including Africa-CDC, the Global Fund, WHO and others to collaborate in containing the spread of the disease and to strengthen the region's health system.

I. DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

CONGRATULATED their Excellencies on their re-elections as President:

His Excellency Emmerson Mnangagwa President of the Republic of Zimbabwe;

His Excellency Andry Rajoelina President of the Republic of Madagascar;

His Excellency Abdel Fattah El-Sisi President of the Arab Republic of Egypt;

His Excellency Felix Tshisekedi President of the Democratic Republic of Congo;

His Excellency Azali Assoumani President of the Union of Comoros; and

His Excellency Paul Kagame President of the Republic of Rwanda.

CONGRATULATED His Excellency Mr Taye Atske-Selassie on his election as President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

CONGRATULATED the Kingdom of Eswatini for holding successful and peaceful general elections.

ENDORSED the candidature of Dr. Samuel M. Maimbo to be supported by COMESA for the position of President of the African Development Bank.

NOTED the nominees from Djibouti, Kenya, Madagascar and Mauritius for the position of Chairperson of the African Union Commission and **EXPRESSED** appreciation for their credentials.

J. PEACE, SECURITY AND STABILITY

UNDERScoreD the importance of peace, security and stability as prerequisites for socio-economic development and viable regional integration;

COMMENDED the Government of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia for commencing a national dialogue process and **URGEd** the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission to make all efforts towards ensuring that all key stakeholders are engaged in the process to build national consensus on fundamental national issues;

URGEd the President of the Presidential Council, Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Head of the High State Council in Libya to finalise the roadmap towards holding simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections and forming a unity government, while ensuring consensus among all key political players;

FURTHER STRONGLY CONDEMNED all attacks by Al-Shabaab and **EMPHASISED** the importance of support to counter-terrorism activities in Somalia;

COMMENDED the troop contributing countries to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), namely Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda for the sacrifices they continue to make for the promotion of peace, security, stability, and reconciliation in Somalia and **APPRECIATED** the UN Security Council for extending the mandate of ATMIS till the end of 2024;

WELCOMED the **AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué No. 1225 on replacing** ATMIS with an African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), with an expanded mandate that includes stabilization and state-building components, **WELCOMED** the offers made by Egypt and Djibouti to contribute to AUSSOM and **ENCOURAGED** other Member States, in a position to do so, to contribute to the new mission;

CONDEMNED all acts of violence and hostilities in the Sudan and **URGEd** the parties to immediately and unconditionally establish a permanent ceasefire and prioritize dialogue as a way of finding a lasting solution to the conflict;

CALLED for an immediate cessation of hostilities by all the negative forces in Eastern DRC and the restoration of all territory captured by armed groups and **UNDERScoreD** the importance of dialogue among the concerned Member States to resolve the underlying issues.

WITNESSED the swearing-in of five members of the COMESA Committee of Elders for a four-year term;

K. COMESA HEADQUARTERS

NOTED the resource mobilization efforts made by the Secretariat during the period.

COMMENDED His Excellency Hakainde Hichilema for providing leadership in the construction of the COMESA Headquarters.

L. SUPPORT FROM COMESA MEMBER STATES, ORGANS, INSTITUTIONS AND SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

NOTED WITH APPRECIATION the contributions made by Member States, Organs, Institutions and Specialized Agencies to realise the objectives of COMESA's regional integration agenda.

M. 2023 COMESA MEDIA AWARDS

AWARDED the 2023 COMESA Media Prizes to the following:

Abdel Baulacky from Mauritius, Ninteretse Leonidas from Burundi, Tryness Tembo from Zambia and Jacob Walter Ochieng from Kenya.

N. THE OUTSTANDING REAL LEATHER, STAY DIFFERENT AFRICA DESIGNER AWARDS

AWARDED an outstanding Real Leather, Stay Different Africa Designer prize to Ruth Girmay Tesfaye from Ethiopia.

O. VENUE OF NEXT SUMMIT

The 24th Summit of the Authority of the Heads of State and Government will be held in the Republic of Kenya.

P. CLOSING OF THE SUMMIT

The Authority **ADOPTED** its Final Communiqué as read by the Secretary General of the Common Market.

Q. VOTE OF THANKS

The Vote of Thanks was **GIVEN** by the Vice Chairperson of the COMESA Authority, His Excellency Dr. William Samoei Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya.

R. CLOSING STATEMENT

The Chairperson of the COMESA Authority, His Excellency Évariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi, thanked his fellow Heads of State and

Government for their attendance and participation in the Summit. He invited them to work together to effectively contribute to COMESA's regional integration agenda and the fulfilment of the aspirations of its peoples. He wished the Heads of State and Government and their esteemed delegations safe travel back to their respective countries and closed the Twenty-Third Summit.

DONE at Bujumbura, Burundi, this Thirty-first Day of October 2024, in the English, French and Arabic languages, all texts being equally authentic.