



OPENING REMARKS

BY

**COMESA SECRETARY GENERAL
CHILESHE MPUNDU KAPWEPWE**

AT

**EU/COMESA STRATEGIC DIALOGUE MEETING AND
SIGNING CEREMONY OF THE FINANCING AGREEMENT
FOR SWITCH TO CIRCULAR ECONOMY PROGRAMME**

COMESA SECRETARIAT

16 AUGUST 2024

**Your Excellency Head of the European Union Delegation to Zambia
and EU Representative to COMESA, Ambassador Karoline Stasiak,**

**Excellencies Ambassadors of the European Union Member States
Accredited to COMESA,**

**Excellencies COMESA Assistant Secretary Generals for
Programmes and Administration and Finance,**

EU and COMESA Staff

Members of the Press,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the COMESA Secretariat and to address you at this first-of-its-kind EU/COMESA Strategic Dialogue meeting.

Let me begin by expressing great appreciation to the European Union who have over the years stood by us and consistently supported various development initiatives in our region. Indeed, the EU remains COMESA's main cooperating and trading partner, and the COMESA-EU partnership holds significant potential for driving positive change and achieving our shared objectives. From our side in COMESA, we are committed to working closely with our EU counterparts to deepen this partnership and ensure its continued success. For this purpose, we see dialogue as an essential factor, and this Strategic Dialogue provides an opportunity to review the progress and effectiveness of ongoing EU programmes within

the COMESA region, explore potential areas for future cooperation and new programme development, align our strategic goals and ensure that upcoming initiatives are well-coordinated and mutually beneficial.

Furthermore, today, on the margins of the Strategic Dialogue, we will have the privilege of signing the Financing Agreement for the SWITCH to Circular Economy Programme with funding of EUR40 Million. This programme aims to support Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) countries in their transition from a linear to a circular economy by creating an enabling environment for investment in circular business models and improving access to the necessary skills and finance. It is a promising tool to tackle the climate crisis, promote economic diversification, reduce waste, preserve resources and create new business and decent employment opportunities.

Excellencies,

In COMESA, we have increasingly been engaging in initiatives related to the circular economy, aligning with EU and global sustainability goals and regional development strategies. COMESA's approach to the circular economy focuses on promoting sustainable development practices that minimize waste, enhance resource efficiency and encourage the recycling and reuse of materials across various sectors.

The commitment of our Member States, along with the needed development support, provide a solid foundation for us to further advance circularity practices in the region. We therefore look forward to being part of this EU supported initiative in the interest of the well-being of our region and the world at large.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, today's discussions hold high potential to drive meaningful change and contribute to the realization of our shared goals. Your presence here is a testament to your commitment to join hands with COMESA to realize those goals. I welcome you all once again and look forward to a constructive and fruitful Strategic Dialogue.

Thank you for your attention.