



**Statement**

**By**

**H E. Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe**

**COMESA Secretary General**

**at**

**the Signing Ceremony of the Agreement for the  
Hosting of the 23<sup>rd</sup> COMESA Summit of Heads of State  
and Government**

**13 August 2024**

**Bujumbura**

**BURUNDI**



**Ambassador Albert SHINGIRO, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation**

**Madame Marie Chantal Nijimbere. Minister of Commerce, Transport, Industry and Tourism**

**Dr. Dev Haman, Assistant Secretary General (Administration and Finance), COMESA**

**Members of the National Organizing Committee**

**Senior Government Officials and COMESA Secretariat Staff**

**Members of the Press**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**Good morning and welcome to the Signing Ceremony.**

Honourable Ministers, at the very outset, I would like to convey my most sincere and heartfelt thanks, through you, to His Excellency Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi, his government, and the people of the Republic of Burundi for graciously accepting to host the 23<sup>rd</sup> COMESA Summit of Heads of State and Government, scheduled to take place on 31 October, 2024 in the beautiful city of Bujumbura .

May I also take this opportunity, Honourable Ministers, to thank both of you, the members of the National Organizing Committee and staff at the Ministry of Commerce, Transport, Industry and Tourism and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation for facilitating all the preparatory administrative and technical work for the 23<sup>rd</sup> Summit of Heads of State and Government which we all believe will be a resounding success. This ceremony of signing the Host Agreement, marks an important milestone in the ongoing work that is being carried out by the National Organizing

Committee and the COMESA Secretariat in the organization of the 23<sup>rd</sup> COMESA Summit of Heads of State and Government.

This is a momentous occasion in which the Government of the Republic of Burundi and the COMESA Secretariat will officially conclude the hosting agreement that will facilitate the hosting of the Summit on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024.

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Summit of Heads of State and Government which was held on 8 June 2023 endorsed the offer made by the Government of the Republic of Burundi to host the 23<sup>rd</sup> COMESA Summit in 2024. The COMESA Treaty provides for the Authority of Heads of State and Government to meet once every year to assess the progress made by COMESA, address emerging challenges, and set new priorities. It also fosters dialogue and cooperation among member states, enabling us to develop cohesive strategies and policies that drive our collective growth. Both the incoming and outgoing Chairpersons have sent out invitation letters to all the COMESA Heads of State and Government to attend the Summit. Together with the Government of the Republic of Burundi, we look forward to receiving them in your beautiful city of Bujumbura.

**Honourable Ministers, Distinguished ladies and Gentlemen, and Members of the Press.**

In hosting the 23<sup>rd</sup> COMESA Summit, the Government of the Republic of Burundi is not only assisting the Secretariat to comply with one of its treaty provisions but is also contributing towards the deepening of the Regional

Integration Agenda of COMESA for sustainable development and economic growth. The Summit will be held under the theme: "***Accelerating Regional Integration through the Development of Regional Value Chains in Climate Resilient Agriculture, Mining, and Tourism***," and it encapsulates our shared vision for a prosperous and sustainable future. The theme has been jointly developed by the Government of Burundi and the COMESA Secretariat. This theme acknowledges the need to tackle many of the challenges that are being faced by our continent, especially with regard to issues on climate resilient agriculture , regional value addition to move away from the export of raw materials and the need to create additional wealth and jobs, especially in support of the growing sectors such as mining and tourism .

As per its Treaty, the COMESA Summit is held after the meetings of Policy Organs that include the Intergovernmental Committee, and the Council of Ministers, and the meeting of the Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. COMESA held the Intergovernmental Committee and the Council of Ministers meetings on 21 to 22 and 23 November 2023 respectively . The meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs will be held on the 29 October, 2024 and it will consider reports on peace, security and governance in the COMESA region from the meeting of officials which is scheduled for 25 and 26 October, 2024

The Summit is expected to consider reports on several subjects including the following:

- State of integration in terms of fulfillment of the COMESA Mid Term Strategic Plan for the period 2021-2025.

- Ministers of Foreign Affairs Report on Peace and security in the COMESA region.
- Council of Ministers Report.
- Business Forum Declaration
- Priority Issues on COMESA Programmes and Activities
- Annual Report for the year 2023

**Honourable Ministers, Distinguished ladies and Gentlemen, and Members of the Press.**

During the forthcoming Summit, the Government of the Republic of Burundi will take over from the Republic of Zambia as the Chairperson of the COMESA Authority. As chairperson of COMESA Authority, His Excellency Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of Burundi, will not only chair the Summit but will also lead the organization during his tenure and represent the COMESA on all continental and international fora. Likewise, the Ministers from the Government of the Republic of Burundi equally assume the role of chairs at sectoral ministerial meetings including the Council of Ministers. And at the Intergovernmental Committee and technical committee levels, the Government of the Republic of Burundi will also provide the necessary leadership.

Hosting a COMESA Summit usually comes with tremendous benefits to the host country. It is our expectations that Burundi can reap some of these benefits that include the following:

- a. Uplifting of Burundi's socio-economic development through, improved cross border Investment and enhanced regional cooperation and integration.
- b. Positioning the country as an investment destination and attracting potential investors in agriculture, mining and tourism.
- c. Business entities engage with potential partners during the Summit meetings through side events and exhibitions. As such, this will result in increased trade and investments for the country in the long run.
- d. Positioning the country as a tourism destination in support of job and wealth creation, increase in foreign exchange revenues in order to fully exploit the country's huge tourism potential.

On 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2024 prior to the holding of the Summit, the Government of the Republic of Burundi shall also host the COMESA Business Forum, a high-level dialogue hosted under the theme of the Summit. The Business Forum will focus on engaging public and private stakeholders on solutions that will propel and support transformation of the COMESA region into competitive and sustainable growing economies for the expansion of regional and global trade and investment.

This high-level dialogue will be led by Ministerial Round Table, where they shall discuss with private sector stakeholders on the measures to accelerate the economic growth of COMESA Member States , focusing value addition in

agriculture , mining and tourism. The recommendations of the Business Forum will form part of the COMESA Business Forum Declaration to be presented to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Summit of COMESA Heads of State and Government.

Members of the Press have a critical role to play in sensitising the public at large so that they are fully informed for people in Burundi to rally their support behind the government to make this Summit successful. I wish to invite all parties to play their part in ensuring that we have a successful series of meetings during the first week of October, 2024 in Bujumbura. I also urge my colleagues at the COMESA Secretariat, and officials of the Government of the Republic of Burundi to continue with their strong and fruitful collaboration to ensure we have a successful Summit.

**I thank you all for your attention!**