

**COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND
SOUTHERN AFRICA**



**STATEMENT BY
HER EXCELLENCY CHILESHE MPUNDU KAPWEPWE
SECRETARY GENERAL - COMESA
DURING THE PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS**

By

His Excellency Col. Fred Mwesigye (Rtd),
High Commissioner of the Republic of Uganda to the Republic of Zambia and
Now formally Accredited Permanent Representative to COMESA

**Thursday, 4th April 2024
COMESA SECRETARIAT, LUSAKA, ZAMBIA**

Your Excellency, Col. Fred Mwesigye (Rtd), High Commissioner of the Republic of Uganda to the Republic of Zambia and now formally Accredited Permanent Representative to COMESA

**My colleague, the Assistant Secretary General Administration and Finance
Colleagues from the High Commission of Uganda**

Directors, Heads of Units and Staff from COMESA Secretariat,

Members of the media present,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my pleasure to welcome you, Your Excellency to Zambia and particularly to the COMESA Secretariat. May I first and foremost congratulate you on your appointment as the Permanent Representative of Uganda to COMESA and wish you well in your new role.

Your Excellency,

For those accredited to COMESA, our Secretariat interacts closely with all our member States' embassies, whether they are based in Lusaka, Zambia or outside Zambia. Uganda is one of the founding members of COMESA and has remained an active participant in our regional integration programmes and has therefore continued to reap the benefits of this membership. In this respect, COMESA has provided significant support to the development of member States including Uganda in various sectors, and I will now proceed like to highlight some key areas of collaboration:

Under the Trade programme

Uganda is one of the Member States with the highest ratio of intra-COMESA trade as percentage of Global COMESA trade by member States:

Uganda is one of the COMESA member States that recorded positive growth in their 2021 intra-COMESA total export values, from US\$ 608 million in 2020 to US\$ 755.3 million in 2021.

Uganda has been benefitting under the COMESA Adjustment Facility a total approved allocation of 5.59m Euros since 2014. The Fund has been used for construction of the border markets and border exports zones,

Further, a budget of 2.76m Euros under the Regional integration Implementation Project phase II has also supported the construction of the Border Export Zones in Uganda.

COMESA has also provided support to Uganda for the operationalization of the National Electronic Single Windows for facilitation of trade and logistics.

Under the Agriculture and Industry Sector,

Through the Digital Regional Food Balance Sheet initiative, COMESA provided support to six countries including Uganda to strengthen systems for agri-food data and information generation and dissemination in the region.

The Digital Regional Food Balance Sheet platform leverages digital technology and provides data on food production, imports and exports, consumption, stocks, and food balance for major regional food commodities. This data informs policy and business decisions on agricultural production, food security, trade, and investment. The initiative is being implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Uganda National Bureau of Statistics and the private sector which play a key role in provision of data for the digital platform.

COMESA also provided support on capacity building on food and nutrition security programming for the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries to enhance the realization of the CAADP Malabo Declaration on food and nutrition security targets.

COMESA provided a grant fund of 740,000 USD for Climate Smart Agriculture in five districts in eastern Uganda. The project successfully piloted integration of Climate Smart Agriculture into agricultural production systems and demonstrated two, three-fold yield increase for maize and beans. It transformed 24 community groups into 15 producer cooperatives, promoted produce bulking and storage for profitable marketing and initiated mechanization of Climate Smart Agriculture to reduce costs and labour input.

COMESA is implementing the Global Markets Programme of the Global Food Safety Initiative. So far, 20 enterprises from Uganda are being supported to achieve certification against the Global Food Safety Initiative bench-marked schemes.

COMESA has been implementing the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP) which aims to improve capacity and competitiveness of Small and Medium Enterprise agribusinesses in Uganda. The Uganda project was launched in 2022 and is designed to facilitate and sustain SMEs' market access through conformity with international sanitary and phytosanitary requirements of the fresh fruit and vegetable production chains. To date a total of 95 Government technical staff including agriculture inspectors and extension officers, and 10 lead farmers have been trained in various aspects of good agriculture practices.

Your Excellency

Under Gender and Social Affairs,

I am happy to inform you that Uganda is participating in gender mainstreaming and women economic empowerment initiatives. Uganda has a window on the 50 Million African Women-Speak Digital Platform that enables women SMEs to access business information, capacity building and other business-related services. To date, over 35,000 users in Uganda have utilized the platform. The Initiative is implemented by COMESA, EAC and ECOWAS and covers 38 African countries.

In addition, COMESA through the Culture project funded a study to review Uganda's legal and policy framework for Cultural and Creative Industries in the country. Two representatives from Uganda participated in the training workshop on the UNESCO Culture 2030 Indicator.

Uganda has not yet signed the COMESA Social Charter which aims to promote closer cooperation among COMESA Member States in the social and cultural fields. To support the implementation of the Charter, the threshold is eleven Member States to sign which has not yet been attained. Therefore, we count on your support to advance the signature and ratification of Uganda.

On youth, in 2021 the COMESA Youth Advisory Panel was established, and 11 members were elected by representatives of National Youth Councils from member States. A representative from Uganda was among those elected.

Under Peace and Security,

Uganda has been a key player in the advancement of the Youth Peace and Security agenda through its National Youth Council. COMESA provided support on the establishment of a One-Stop Youth Centre in Apala town of Alebtong district, which was launched in December 2023. This initiative aims to capacitate

the youth at the community levels in conflict analysis and prevention, information gathering and use of communication and technology tools.

Uganda is one of the member States that has made progress in complying with the Financial Action Task Force standards which resulted in the removal of Uganda from the Financial Action Task Force Grey list on 23rd February 2024.

COMESA has continued with efforts to build the capacities of national stakeholders on the mediation of natural resource conflicts including water, pasture, and forestry amongst others. In February 2024, COMESA conducted a training in Soroti Town for mediation of Natural Resource Based conflicts targeted at the local level mediators drawn from the Karamoja cluster-side of Uganda. The training benefitted 38 peace builders from the nine districts.

Under the infrastructure programme:

Uganda is the first country to convert its driver's licensing categories to conform to the regionally harmonized Tripartite Transit and Transport Facilitation Programme standards. The programme addresses cross-border transport and trade challenges such as high transport costs and delays. This is done through the implementation of harmonized road transport policies, laws, regulations, systems and standards that affect drivers, loads, vehicles and road infrastructure in the countries of the eastern Africa and southern Africa region.

Your Excellency,

These are just snapshots of the many benefits that Uganda has accrued from the country's membership of COMESA. As you may be aware, this year marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of COMESA as the successor to the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) and we will be celebrating the impact that our organization has had on our region. The Treaty establishing COMESA was

signed on November 1993 in Kampala, Uganda and therefore Uganda has every reason to actively join us in celebrating this milestone.

You Excellency, congratulations once again as I now accept your letters of credence and assure you of our support in your new role. I hereby accredit you as the Permanent Representative of Uganda to COMESA.

Thank you for your kind attention.