

## COMESA Finalises Revision of SPS Regulations, Strategy and Implementation Plans



*Dr Mohamed Kadah addressing delegates at the SPS workshop*

COMESA has finalized the revision of its Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) regulations, strategy, and implementation plans. This initiative aims to strengthen SPS capacities across Member States by eliminating inconsistencies that have hindered regional trade in food and agricultural products. SPS measures are regulatory tools designed to protect human, animal, and plant life from risks such as additives, contaminants, toxins, or disease-causing organisms. By recognizing the SPS measures of exporting Member States, the revision will streamline cross-border trade, reducing the need for repeated testing and certification, ultimately lowering business costs.

The review process took place from September 2-6 in Nairobi, Kenya, in a workshop attended by experts from COMESA Member States. Organized

in collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC), the workshop focused on key areas such as harmonizing SPS measures, establishing equivalence in standards, risk assessment, and ensuring transparency in the implementation process.

The finalized regulations, strategy, and implementation plans will be submitted for approval by COMESA's Policy Organs later this year. In addition to the regulatory revisions, Member States also completed the SPS strategy. This strategy emphasizes building capacities in both public and private sectors, enhancing regional leadership, coordination, and collaboration on SPS issues.

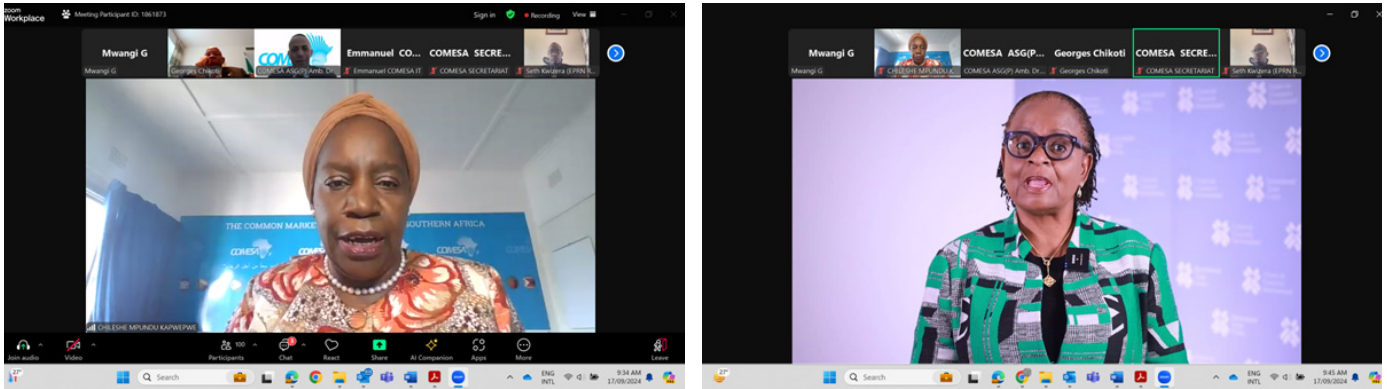
The strategy also focuses on developing human,

institutional, and infrastructural capabilities to establish harmonized, science-based SPS systems. Implementing these regulations will foster a favorable business environment, contributing to COMESA's regional integration and economic development goals.

During the opening session, COMESA Assistant Secretary General, Ambassador Dr. Mohamed Kadah, encouraged Member States to ensure the revised regulations are robust, clear, and in line with international standards, unlocking the region's trade potential.

"Our common aim here is to eliminate the differences in SPS measures that exist among Member States, and which have continued to constrain regional trade in food and agricultural

*to page 3*



COMESA Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe (L) and Ms. Dorothy Tembo, Deputy Executive Director ITC addressing the virtual annual research forum

## Push for Greater Value Addition, Green Investments and Tourism

The 11th COMESA Annual Research Forum was held virtually on 17 – 19 September 2024, bringing together policymakers, academics, think tanks, and the private sector from COMESA Member States and beyond to discuss emerging issues in regional integration.

The forum, themed “Fostering Economic Integration and Inclusivity in COMESA through Value Addition, Green Investments, and Tourism,” is part of ongoing capacity-building initiatives aimed at strengthening economic and trade policy research and analysis to bolster integration and trade within the COMESA region and across Africa.

It serves as a platform to bridge the gap between academia, the private sector, and policymakers in the formulation of economic integration and regional trade policies.

In her opening address, COMESA Secretary-General Chileshe Kapwepwe hailed the event as a key milestone, coinciding with the 30th anniversary of COMESA.

“The use of scientific research and evidence has become crucial for sound policy formulation,

significantly reducing the rate of policy failures,” Kapwepwe stated. “This forum helps us stay connected with current policy challenges while drawing upon new knowledge and insights from scholars, researchers, academics, and policymakers.”

Keynote speaker Ms. Dorothy Tembo, Deputy Executive Director of the International Trade Centre, emphasized the need for accurate and timely data for exporters, policymakers, and small businesses.

“The greatest hurdle standing in the way of greater integration, through value addition, green investment and tourism – and the benefit this can bring to COMESA small business – is the lack of timely, comprehensive data on trade and market trends, analysis and export requires,” she noted.

Mr. Georges Chikoti, Secretary-General of the Organisation of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States (OACPS), highlighted the significance of research and development in value addition. He pointed out that 70% of the organization's member states rely on commodities for 60% of their revenues.

Over the course of the three-day forum, eight full research papers were presented, addressing topics such as green investment, climate finance, value chain development, tourism, and the inclusion of women and youth in regional economic integration.

The forum recommended the need for the COMESA Secretariat, universities and cooperating partners, in particular the ITC to strengthen mechanisms to enable increased data access for enhanced research and policy analysis.

In addition to COMESA Member States, universities, and COMESA institutions, this year's forum also features participation from key partners, including the OACPS, African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), Afreximbank, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), African Development Bank Group, AfCFTA Secretariat, World Bank Group, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency (NPCA), the European Commission Delegation to Zambia, and the International Trade Centre.



# Spotlight on Consumer Rights....

➡ continued from page 1

products," he said. "In turn, this will reduce the cost of doing business through the recognition of exporting Member States SPS measures by the importing Member States, thereby eliminating repeated testing and certification."

Noting that the region lacks capacity in risk assessment/analysis, making it difficult for Member States to establish risk-based SPS measures, he called for the establishment of a risk assessment/analysis centre. This will support Member States to implement risk-based SPS measures and build their capacity to do so and also ensure that the region is able to address the risks whether they are global in nature or unique to the region.

Dr. Janet Edeme, Head of the Rural Development Division at the AUC, represented by Senior SPS Advisor Mr. Mwape Chiluba, highlighted that the revised regulations will enhance the implementation of science-based SPS systems, promoting food security and safer trade.

.....  
"Our common aim here is to eliminate the differences in SPS measures that exist among Member States, and which have continued to constrain regional trade in food and agricultural products,"  
**Ambassador Dr. Mohamed Kadah,**



File Photo: Officials representing partner organisations during the 1st IRSK Annual Conference in 2023

## COMESA and Partners to Host Second Edition of IRSK Annual Conference

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in collaboration with the International Relations Society of Kenya (IRSK), the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) and the African Centre for the Study of the United States (ACSUS) based at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa will host the Second Annual IRSK Conference. The conference will take place on 20 – 22 November 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya.

Themed "Fostering Integration and Cooperation in the COMESA Region through International Relations and Diplomacy, this second edition of the IRSK Annual Conference represents an exciting convergence of theory and practice in international relations and diplomacy and seeks to make a meaningful contribution to the promotion of peace, stability, and prosperity in the COMESA region.

The conference will bring together key stakeholders, including government officials, diplomats, policymakers, scholars, business leaders, media, and civil society from the COMESA region and beyond. It will feature a blend of insightful keynotes, roundtable discussions, research presentations, book

launches, workshops, and networking events all designed to foster collaboration and facilitate knowledge sharing among participants."

With close to 200 participants from over 30 countries expected to attend, the IRSK Annual Conference is poised to be a landmark event for stakeholders within the COMESA region. The participants will include a mix of seasoned experts and emerging voices in international relations and diplomacy, providing a rich tapestry of perspectives and experiences.

The objective of this conference is to explore possible solutions to the multifaceted challenges and competing priorities that the region faces by facilitating discussions and outcomes that are truly holistic and inclusive.

From the 1st Joint conference held in 2023, the 30 papers presented were published by COMESA in a special edition while other papers will be published in the African Journal on Conflict Resolution by ACCORD.

The conference's outcomes shall be converted into actionable strategies and policies that will help pave the way for a more integrated and prosperous COMESA region.



Ambassador Dr. Kadah (2nd from right )with fellow panelists during a high-level panel discussion during the I4C Conference in Berlin, German.

## New Opportunities Emerge in Energy Access amidst Challenges in eastern and Southern Africa

The Eastern and Southern Africa region is grappling with a significant energy crisis, as approximately 365 million people lack access to electricity, accounting for more than half of the global total of 675 million. This energy deficiency not only hinders socio-economic development but also deepens the digital divide, particularly in an era marked by rapid advancements in artificial intelligence and big data.

In spite of these challenges, new opportunities are emerging. The "Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation" (ASCENT) initiative, a partnership between the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the World Bank, aims to transform energy access by introducing 100 million new electricity connections across over 20 countries by 2030.

A vital aspect of this initiative is the Regional Energy Access Acceleration Platform, which seeks to leverage climate market potential through innovative digital monitoring and reporting systems.

Speaking when he addressed delegates during a High-Level Panel discussion in Berlin Germany on 10th September 2024, COMESA's Assistant

Secretary General in Charge of Programmes (ASGP), Amb. Dr. Mohamed Kadah emphasized on the financial barriers that hinder carbon project development in the region.

"The upfront costs can range from \$200,000 to \$1 million, making it difficult for small and medium-sized projects to secure the necessary funding," he said.

High level panelists from different sectors and different perspectives discussed their experience, plans and opportunities to leverage carbon markets to accelerate needed sectoral transitions and transformations to be aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement and countries' NDCs, while also helping achieve economic and social development objectives.

They included Mr Axel van Trotsenburg, Senior Managing Director at the World Bank, H.E. Christopher Coye, Minister of State, Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment Netherlands, Ms Damilola Ogunbiyi Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Mr Thomas Birr Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer from E.ON SE. an international energy company and Dr. Kadah.

The COMESA ASGP called for enhanced access to financial resources, highlighting the critical need for support systems that enable these projects to thrive including the private sector.

He highlighted the importance of establishing robust methodologies, institutions and regulations to facilitate the successful development of carbon projects adding that there was a need for effective registries for carbon credit measurement and verification.

Dr Kadah stated that while the challenges of energy access and sustainable development in Eastern and Southern Africa are formidable, initiatives like ASCENT present a promising pathway toward innovation and structural transformation.

The theme of the panel discussion was *"Unlocking Potential: Carbon Markets as a Catalyst for low Carbon Transition and Sectoral Transformation"*.



Energy Experts during their meeting in Addis Ababa

## Energy Experts Urge Enhanced Electricity Regulations in COMESA

Energy experts and stakeholders from the COMESA region are advocating for harmonised policies and regulations to govern the sector which in turn would grow the industry and lead to increased access to the much-needed electricity for millions of Africans.

To realise this, the experts met in Addis Ababa Ethiopia from 18 – 20 September to validate some parts of the framework and initial reports for harmonized electricity tariffs and cost assessments for the COMESA region. This initiative, supported by the African Development Bank (AfDB) and COMESA since its approval in 2022, aims to strengthen the sustainability of the electricity sector in Eastern and Southern Africa through improved regulatory frameworks.

Dubbed the “Regional Harmonization of Regulatory Frameworks and Tools for Improved Electricity Regulation in COMESA,” this \$1.5 million initiative seeks to establish effective, transparent, and enforceable regulations to stimulate cross-border electricity trade and enhance energy access across the region. At the workshop’s opening on September 18, 2024, Mrs. Seharla Abdulahi, Director General of

the Petroleum and Energy Regulatory Authority of Ethiopia (PEA), emphasized the need for harmonized regulations to unlock regional energy trade and enhance energy security. She highlighted the alarming gap between energy supply and demand in the region, noting that 365 million people lack electricity access, while 558 million do not have access to clean cooking facilities.

“It is imperative that we transform this narrative,” Mrs. Abdulahi stated in a message delivered by Mr. Bahru Olijra Debel, PEA’s Director of Electricity Sector Regulation. “By leveraging our collective expertise and political will, we can accelerate electrification, attract investment, and create a sustainable energy future for all.”

Dr. Mohamedain Seif Elnasr, CEO of the Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA), spoke on behalf of the implementing agency, noting that the validation of key project deliverables will advance progress on policies’ harmonization. He stressed COMESA’s commitment to developing regional energy infrastructure, highlighting the importance of a supportive regulatory

environment in attracting private investment and fostering competition.

Dr. Elnasr also referenced other collaborative programs between COMESA and the World Bank aimed at increasing energy access for 100 million people and promoting renewable energy deployment. These include the Regional Infrastructure Finance Facility and the newly launched Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Transformation in Eastern and Southern Africa Multi-Phase Programmatic Approach (ASCENT MPA).

Mr. James Wahogo, Secretary General of the East African Power Pool, praised RAERESA for securing AfDB support and effectively coordinating project activities. “We all need to build on this momentum while addressing the ongoing barriers to deeper integration of our regional power systems,” he remarked.

# COMESA-EAC Horticulture Accelerator Programme Launched in Tanzania



ACTESA Chief Executive Officer, Dr John Mukuka, with the Tanzania Horticulture Association (TAHA) Executive Director, Jacqueline Mkindi exchanging MoU's following the official launch of the CEHA National Chapter, Arusha, Tanzania.

The COMESA-EAC Horticulture Accelerator (CEHA) is positioned to accelerate intra- regional trade through effective coordination of value chain development programs, facilitate access to finance, enable research and development of the Horticulture Industry as the programme is launched in the 5th country Tanzania.

CEHA will achieve this through leveraging comparative advantage, facilitating infrastructure development, access to markets and technology for maximum impact in the eastern and southern Africa region.

This was disclosed at a colorful event where the CEHA National Chapter for Tanzania hosted by the Tanzania Horticultural Association (TAHA) was unveiled in Arusha, Tanzania on 12th September 2024.

Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) Chief Executive Officer, Dr John Mukuka, highlighted that CEHA is crucial to coordinating private sector-led investments into production, processing clusters, and facilitating policy and standard improvements to stimulate trade in market access.

Dr Mukuka reiterated CEHA's commitment to unlocking new pathways to economic empowerment and gender equality for women, farmers, and young people in the vegetable industry in COMESA and EAC.

"We recognize the critical role of women in the horticulture value chain and we will facilitate the modernization of the sector across the region by

ensuring the enhancement of women and young people's access to resources, knowledge and market opportunities" he stated.

TAHA Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Jacqueline Mkindi, underscored the importance of regional partnerships in fostering the Horticulture agenda of supporting horticulture export strategies and fostering exchange programs among member countries towards building a critical mass of players in the horticulture sector.

She called for the prioritisation of cross-cutting issues and development of a smart resource mobilization strategy to tackle some of the challenges being faced.

"Tanzania is strong at facilitating compliance with market standards, Uganda is good at Organic Certification, Ethiopia and Kenya are great at logistics. So let us see how we can build a basket of such strengths and create a mechanism to allow the private sector to get access and benefit from that basket as one region instead of operating in silos," she noted.

GIZ Deputy programme Manager, Mr. Max Middeke stressed the relevance of the Horticulture sector in contributing to the agricultural Gross Domestic Product, enhancing food security and employment creation.

He re-echoed the need to strengthen the regional horticulture sector through CEHA and strategic initiatives that enhance regional competitiveness, drive inclusive growth, and improve livelihoods in East and Southern Africa.

Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa Country Director for Tanzania, Vianey Rweyendela, underlined the importance of the CEHA programme in contributing to inclusive growth of the Horticulture sector and intra- regional trade.

The launch of the CEHA National Chapter of Tanzania, hosted by Tanzania Horticultural Association also witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ACTESA and TAHA, demonstrating their commitment to collaborate and drive the horticulture sector forward. This partnership is expected to facilitate the development of innovative solutions and strategies to overcome challenges and harness opportunities within the horticulture industry.

The launch brought together key high-level players from the horticulture industry, public and private sector stakeholder, government officials, and development partners, all committed towards harnessing the vast potential of the horticulture sector within its region.

Spearheaded by the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA-COMESA), the USD\$4bn CEHA programme seeks to enhance sustainable development in the sector, focusing on potatoes, avocados, and onions as the priority value chains based on their production capacity and economic growth potential.

Tanzania is the 5th target country to launch its National Chapter, following similar launches of National Chapters in Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Ethiopia.



Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Amb. Dr Mohamed Kadah

.....  
**“The amendment of the Regulations should ensure relevance to the current trade related daily challenges faced by COMESA including the never ending NTBs that prevent the increase in intra-COMESA trade,” Dr Mohamed Kadah.**

## Reviewing Current Trade Remedies to Deepen Intra-Regional Trade

The COMESA Committee on Trade Remedies has started reviewing the 2002 Regulations on Trade Remedy Measures which have been in existence for more than 20 years. Trade experts believe that once amended, these remedies can help significantly boost intra-regional trade which has remained at less than 10% on average over the last few years.

The need to align them with new trends in trade development is in line with the decision of the 44th COMESA Council of Ministers Meeting in 2023 that called for the operationalisation of the Committee on Trade Remedies to oversee the application of the Regulations on Trade Remedy Measures.

The main objective of the review is to investigate whether trade remedies are well applied to prevent injury across all sectors of the economy in the COMESA Member States that may be caused by unfair trading practices and unforeseen surges in imports.

The Committee is also expected to report annually and make recommendations to the COMESA Trade and Customs Committee. To activate this process, the second Meeting of

the Trade Remedies Committee was held virtually on 4 and 5 September 2024 and officially opened by the COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Amb. Dr Mohamed Kadah who urged the region to guard against inappropriate application of the remedies that may result in Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs).

He pledged COMESA Secretariat's commitment to provide capacity building to Member States. The aim is to ensure none of the remedy measures are applied in a manner to protect Member State domestic markets, thus disregarding their commitment in the implementation of the COMESA Free Trade Area. "The amendment of the Regulations should ensure relevance to the current trade related daily challenges faced by COMESA including the never ending NTBs that prevent the increase in intra-COMESA trade," said Dr Kadah.

Latest COMESA statistics show that despite much progress realised in the implementation of the COMESA FTA, intra trade has remained low in the last few years, while exports to the European Union, the major export destination, increased by 24% from US\$72bn in 2021 to US\$90bn in 2022.

China has remained COMESA's second largest export destination with a 22% increase recorded US\$20bn in 2021 to us\$24bn in 2022.

The delegates were encouraged to reflect on key points such as why the region trades more with external markets and not within. What is the role of trade remedies in restrictions to trade? To what extent have the trade remedy measures translated into NTBs thereby prohibiting intra-regional trade and what should be the right regulation on trade remedies that respond to the current situation of the COMESA region and contribute to an increase of intra-COMESA trade.

The meeting agreed on the need for a proper revision of the regulations to ensure important aspects of trade are taken into consideration to ensure free movement of goods and services is achieved with fair trade practice across the region.

The meeting also received a report on the Kenya Sugar Safeguard which has been in existence for more than 20 years and ends in 2025.



Representatives from the SMEs, COMESA Secretariat, CBC and Netherlands during their recent mission

## COMESA Launches Horticulture Trade Mission to the European Union

Representatives of 11 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) from Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe undertook a horticulture engagement mission to the European Union on 15 – 22 September 2024.

The mission was meant to increase the competitiveness and market access of the SMEs in horticulture, exploring market opportunities through active participation in value chains and facilitating networking opportunities for COMESA horticulture producers.

It was supported by the COMESA Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP) funded by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF 11). It will enable the SMEs to establish business matchmaking platforms between COMESA producers and Dutch partners and other value chain actors within the EU.

Chief Executive Officer of the COMESA Business Council, Mr. Teddy Soobramanien, who led the delegation, highlighted Dutch market's significance, with the Netherlands accounting for 28% of COMESA's horticulture exports and global imports valued at €10.6 billion.

EDF Programme Manager at COMESA Secretariat Ms Mshuka Kamwela, pointed out

that the EU was COMESA's top export market in 2022, accounting for 44% of exports, up from 41% in 2021, and also served as the leading source of imports for the region.

Ms Kamwela, who accompanied the delegation emphasized the critical role of the RECAMP programme in addressing key challenges, such as limited access to information, business linkages, and regional policies for value chain development.

"This mission aligns with COMESA's ongoing efforts to promote regional integration through trade facilitation, boosting economic growth and cooperation," she said.

Apart from enhancing competitiveness for SMEs in the horticulture sector through exposure to supply chains in the EU and promoting knowledge exchange on best practices in horticulture, the mission is focused on connecting SMEs in the COMESA region with major players in the EU horticulture value chain, such as Fresh Produce Centre and Svensson.

The COMESA enterprises engaged in B2B meetings, with Dutch enterprises within the horticulture value chain, fruit and vegetable cultivation, flower production, logistics, packaging, crop protection, and import processes.

This will strengthen partnerships and identify

business opportunities within the horticulture value chain while enhancing trade, fostering collaboration, and integrating SMEs from the COMESA region into global value chains.

Speaking on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature, Business Expert Mr Arno Rhode expressed their gratitude for the mission, highlighting that it provided invaluable opportunities to create meaningful business linkages, strengthen ties within the global horticulture value chain and opened new opportunities for collaboration within the international horticulture value chain.

Other members in the delegation include the COMESA RECAMP Team Leader and Market Access Expert Mr. Nsangwa Ngwira and Mr. Hopewell Musundire CBC Business Development Officer.

The 10 SMEs represented in the mission were Cooperative Taratra of Madagascar, Quality Farm Foods of Zambia, the Ethiopian Exporters Association, Kwithu Kitchen of Malawi, Lingflora Farm Pvt. Ltd of Zimbabwe, Horticultural Exporters Association of Uganda- Hortexa, Jana Agriculture and Naturesta Investments of Egypt, Nisela Farms of Eswatini, OTF Export Limited of Mauritius and Fresh Produce Limited of Kenya.





## COMESA DAIRY

Date	Activity	Venue
22 – 29 Sep	<b>Nairobi International Trade Fair</b>	Kenya
24 -26 Sep	<b>Validation Workshop for the Draft Study on Policies &amp; Regulations on Authorization, Universal Access, and E-Waste Management</b>	Mbabane, Eswatini
24 – 25 Sep	<b>Validation Workshop for the COMESA Regional Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries &amp; Aquaculture</b>	Uganda
24 – 27 Sep	<b>Validation Workshop of Communication Strategy, Action Plan and Corporate Branding for SPS Programme in Africa</b>	Zambia
30 Sept	<b>COMESA Common Investment Area (CCIA) Validation Workshop</b>	Egypt
01 Oct	<b>Launch of the Community of Practice (CoP) platform</b>	Egypt
01 – 09 Oct	<b>Uganda International Trade Fair</b>	Uganda
11 Oct	<b>COMESA @30 Anniversary Golf Tournament</b>	Zambia
28 -29 Oct	<b>COMESA Business Forum</b>	Burundi
29 Oct	<b>Meeting of COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs</b>	Burundi
31 Oct	<b>The 23 COMESA Summit</b>	Burundi
5 – 7 Nov	<b>The 46th Administration &amp; Budgetary Committee</b>	Lusaka
25 – 26 Nov	<b>The 45th Inter -Governmental Committee Meeting</b>	Lusaka
27 Nov	<b>COMESA @30 Anniversary Gala Dinner</b>	Lusaka
28 Nov	<b>The 45th COMESA Council of Ministers Meeting</b>	Lusaka