

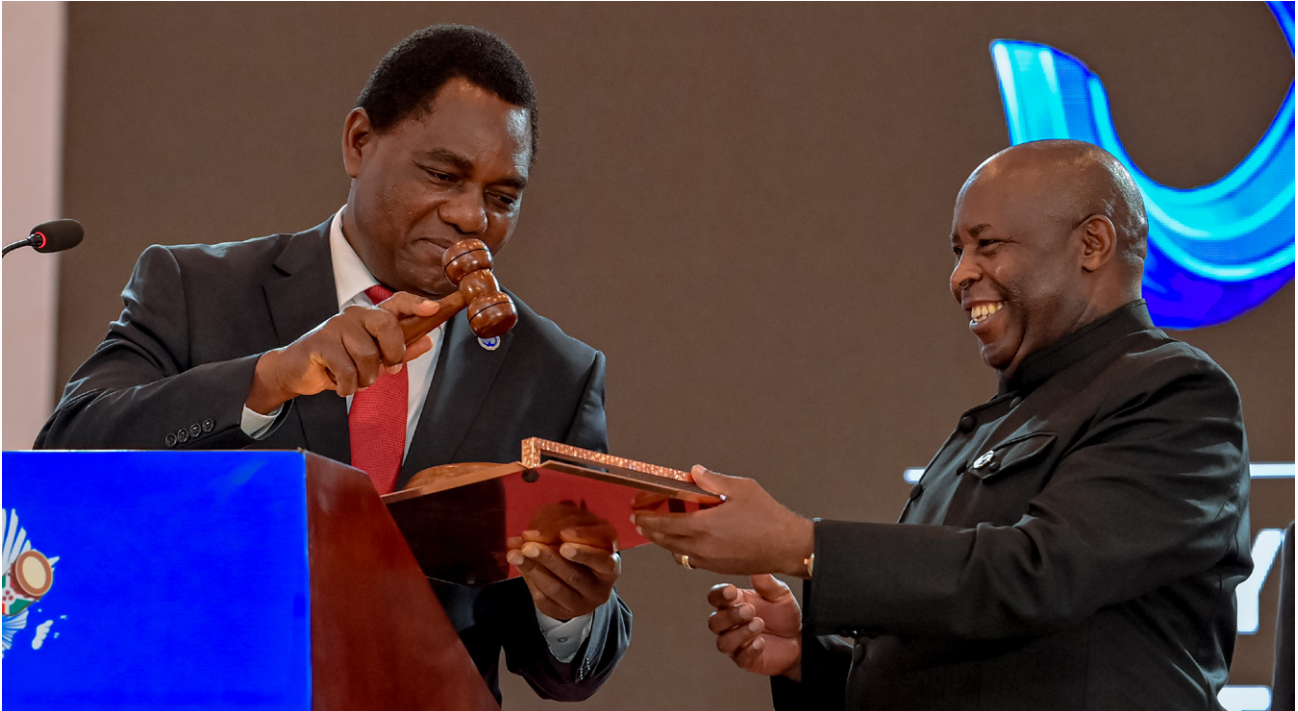


30 YEARS OF COMESA IMPACT

The 23rd COMESA Summit

Bulletin

October 2024



President Evariste Ndayishimiye (R) receives instruments of power from President Hakainde Hichilema

COMESA Heads of State Convene in Burundi for 23rd Summit

COMESA Heads of State and Governments conducted their 23rd Summit in Bujumbura, Burundi on 31 October 2024, where President Evariste Ndayishimiye took over as Chair of the regional bloc.

Zambia's President Hakainde Hichilema handed over COMESA's instruments of power to President Ndayimishiye who will preside of the 21 regional trade bloc for the next one year while President William Ruto of Kenya took the Vice Chair. This ushered a new Bureau comprising Burundi as Chair, Kenya as Vice Chair and Zambia as the Rapporteur.

The Summit was themed '**Accelerating**

Regional Integration, through the development of regional value chains in climate resilient agriculture, mining and tourism".

During the one-day event, the Heads of State and representatives received the State of Integration Report from COMESA's Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe. Her report highlighted key developments recorded in the past one year since the last Summit.

Among them are facilitating intra-regional trade such as customs border management, simplified clearance procedures and digitization of trading instruments.

She also highlighted progress on the regional food balance sheet which, she said has expanded. The region is also expected to benefit from a newly launched programme of connecting a 100 million people to clean energy over the next seven years.

Heads of State and Government and Plenipotentiaries in attendance addressed the Summit including the host President Ndayishimiye, President Ruto, President Hichilema, President Felix Antoine Tshisekedi, (DR Congo) and President Andry Nirina Rajoelina, (Madagascar).



President Evariste Ndayishimiye addressing the Summit

Free Visas to Burundi for COMESA Citizens

In a deliberate move to promote the free movement of persons, labour and services, the new chair of COMESA, President Evariste Ndayishimiye of Burundi has announced that his government will

grant free visa entries to COMESA member states citizens on short-term visits to the country.

The move contributes to the

implementation of COMESA protocol on gradual elimination / waiver of visa requirements. The move will support the promotion of service sectors in fostering production, employment generation and foreign direct investment.

The announcement was warmly received by other Heads of State in attendance and delegates as a positive move towards actualisation of COMESA's key Protocol on the Free Movements of people.

Experts have long called for Member States to sign and implement the Protocol on Free Movement as it will help enhance trade and development in the region. The issue of visa requirements involving the application process and the fees have been cited as a barrier to deepening levels of intra-COMESA trade and development.

In their Communique, the Heads of State 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.

Members of the COMESA Committee of Elders Sworn-in



Five members of the COMESA Committee of the Elders were sworn in on Thursday 31st October 2024 during the 23rd COMESA Heads of State and Governments Summit in Bujumbura, Burundi.

The Elders took the Oath before the Chairperson of the COMESA Authority H.E. Evariste Ndayishimiye, witnessed by other Heads of States and leaders.

The five Elders are part of six that were appointed by the 22nd Summit that was held in

COMESA Committee of elders swearing in ceremony



Regional Security in focus as Foreign Affairs Ministers Meet



Ministers of foreign affairs and COMESA Secretariat executive management.

Ministers of foreign affairs of COMESA Member States conducted their one-day meeting in Bujumbura, Tuesday, 29 October 2024 with peace and security issues in focus.

Setting the tone of the meeting, Zambia's Minister of Defence, Hon. Ambrose Lufuma, said despite achievements recorded in the status of peace, security and stability during the past one, the region still faces some peace and security challenges.

Africa region was identified as having serious ramifications on agriculture, power and water supply, which has had a spillover effect on the economy.

This meeting preceded the 23rd COMESA Heads of State and Governments Summit held on 31st October 2024.

COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe highlighted key interventions in place including the enhancement of early warning capabilities, addressing the root causes of conflicts, supporting conflict prevention and management, countering violent extremism and terrorism, combating money laundering and financing of terrorism, contributing to post-conflict reconstruction and development.

The in-coming Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs Hon Albert Shingiro of Burundi pledged his government's commitment to enhancing peace, security and stability in the region.

He said the country will work will all Member States during Burundis' tenure to advance ideals of regional integration with peace being vital for any trade and development to occur.

..Elders Sworn-in..

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Lusaka in June 2023.

They included Amb. Shemsudin Ahmed Roble from Ethiopia, Amb. Dr. John Otachi Kakonge from Kenya, Rt. Hon. Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda from Uganda, Amb. Patrice Eugene Cure from Mauritius and Amb. Marie-Pierre Emilienne Lloyd from Seychelles.

In their swearing in, the Elders affirmed their commitment to impartially perform their duties in line with the Treaty, the Rules of Procedure for the COMESA Committee of Elders and Mediation Guidelines and all other laws of the COMESA.

The COMESA Committee of Elders was established by the COMESA Authority during its 11th Summit, which was held in Djibouti in November 2006. The Elders serve as mediators for deployment by the office of the Secretary General for preventive and peace-making assignments.

Hon Lufuma who was, representing the outgoing chair of the Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Mulambe Haimbe, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Zambia, cited increased number of countries that have conducted national multistakeholder consultations on the COMESA Structural Vulnerability Assessment which has risen to ten. The number of countries that have volunteered for the Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment has increased to three and peaceful elections have been held in Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Egypt, DR Congo, Comoros, Rwanda and Tunisia.

"Despite this progress and achievements, our region still faces some peace and security challenges," Hon Lufuma said. "The conflict in Sudan is still on going with serious humanitarian crisis. The same is with the situation in Eastern DR Congo and Libya." Climate change also featured prominently in the meeting as a major challenge that the region continues to face. Specifically, the devastating drought facing the southern



Business Community's Forum Conducted in Bujumbura

Over 400 representatives from the private sector, small-scale traders, women entrepreneurs, policymakers, and civil society organizations from across the COMESA region gathered in Bujumbura, Burundi, for the 17th COMESA Business Forum.

This annual event, organized by the COMESA Business Council (CBC) in collaboration with the Government of Burundi and supported by the European Union's 11th Development Fund, served as a key platform for promoting regional economic integration.

The forum, which spanned two days, centered on the theme: "Accelerating Regional Integration through the Development of Regional Value Chains in

Climate-Resilient Agriculture, Mining, and Tourism."

Opening the Forum, Burundi's Prime Minister, H.E. Gervais Ndirakobuca, emphasized the need for unified efforts to strengthen intra-regional trade and drive economic growth. He reaffirmed Burundi's commitment to economic integration by encouraging Member States to actively implement various COMESA initiatives.

COMESA Secretary General, Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, highlighted the importance of addressing trade barriers and fostering regional cooperation. She noted that COMESA has significant potential to expand intra-regional trade, with the opportunity to match or even exceed the achievements of other Regional Economic

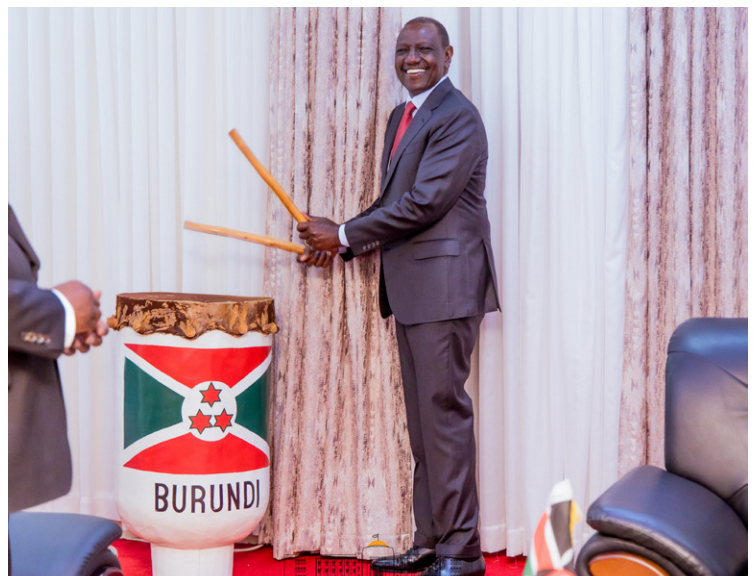
Communities.

CBC President, Mr. James Chimwaza, also addressed the delegates, urging them to propose concrete measures to overcome challenges faced by Member States. He emphasized the importance of climate-resilient agriculture, strengthening mining value chains, and growing the tourism sector as areas for targeted development.

"By fostering collaboration and innovation, we aim to strengthen our regional integration efforts and build a more resilient and prosperous COMESA," he stated.

Kenya to host the next Summit

The 24th COMESA Summit will be held in Kenya in 2025 following the government's offer to host. As per the established COMESA tradition, the 23rd Summit conducted in Burundi appointed Kenya as the Vice Chair in preparation for the chairmanship once the country hosts the Summit in 2025. President William Ruto of Kenya will deputize President Evariste Ndayishimiye for the next one year and succeed him thereafter. The last time Kenya hosted the COMESA Summit was in 2007.



Kenya's President William Ruto at the COMESA Summit in Burundi



L-R: COMESA SG Chileshe Kapwepwe, Presidents HE Evariste Ndayishimiye, HE William Ruto, HE Hakainde Hichilema and journalists, Adel Baulacky, Leonidas Ninteretse, Tryness Mbale and Jacob Ochieng.

Media Awarded for Promoting the COMESA Agenda

Four journalists from Burundi, Kenya, Mauritius and Zambia have been recognised and awarded for their contributions to COMESA's regional integration programmes through publishing well researched articles. They are Mr Leonidas Ninteretse of Burundi, Mr Jacob Walter Ochieng from Kenya, Mr Abdel Baulacky of Mauritius and Ms Tryness Tembo from Zambia.

the importance of transport infrastructure, energy infrastructure and Information and communication technologies infrastructure in competition.

Jacob focused on a COMESA initiative to remove barriers to cross border trade to help Kenya and Ethiopia expand business opportunities.

Leonidas's radio programme demonstrated

Abdel's television programme was about COMESA initiatives to develop the regional

transport infrastructure in the aviation and maritime sectors while Tryness wrote on the barriers to regional trade and how the one stop border post as a trade facilitation initiative is helping to address this challenge.

All the winners were presented with a monetary prize of USD\$2,000 each and sponsored to attend the 23rd COMESA Summit in Bujumbura.

COMESA and UNECA Sign MoU



COMESA SG Chileshe Kapwepwe, TDB President Tadesse Admassu and UNECA Executive Secretary Claver Gatete after the signing ceremony at the TDB offices in Bujumbura

On the sidelines of the Summit, COMESA and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a general framework of cooperation in different areas that include industry and agriculture development, policy development and advocacy, capacity building and technical assistance, gender data statistics and research, economic empowerment and women's leadership. Other areas are digital inclusion and technology, sustainable development and climate change, networks and partnerships, statistics and education and health among others.

Speaking in Bujumbura, Burundi during a



“Join the COMESA Free Trade Area” – leaders urge MS

COMESA Heads of State have called on member States that have not joined the COMESA Free Trade Area to take necessary steps to expeditiously join the FTA. They 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. Currently, COMESA FTA members remain at 16.

The leaders encouraged the Secretariat to continue the digitization of various trade instruments such as 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. They also 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 The leaders called on the Secretariat and Member States to examine all possible avenues of support to tourism investment and development and 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.

Adverse Climate Change Affecting Peace and Security

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 has raised concern of COMESA leaders. In their Communique issued at the 23rd Summit, the leaders expressed 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 the continent. They 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. The leaders also 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. Further, they called upon Member States, to undertake needed regulatory reforms and provide incentives for enhancing climate-resilient and green growth investments.

COMESA and UNECA...

brief ceremony, Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe described the occasion as timely. She said the region was at the stage of encouraging the development of the industrial sector to be able to move from exporting raw materials to finished products. She described the MoU as part of the African solution to African challenges.

“I believe we have a shared vision...I believe we all want to see our Member States grow intra-COMESA and Intra-African Trade. We have signed all the frameworks, removed NTBs and created linkages as countries...but if we do not address the productive capacity side of things, we will still remain at low levels of intra-trade,” Ms Kapwepwe pointed out.

She called for capacity building as a way of helping the Member States and described the MoU as a structure which should be used for inclusive action and implementation.

UNECA Executive Director Claver Gatete said his organisation was ready to assist in domestic resource mobilisation to fully support the MoU which is expected to unlock COMESA and Africa's potential. He commended COMESA for recording growth in trade over the years but said more can be done to reach higher levels.

He also urged African financial institutions such as the Trade and Development bank to prioritise investing in African projects and programmes especially now that the African Continental Free Trade Area has taken effect. “We as ECA know where the money is and we are ready to top up on whatever you have and work with COMESA and the partnership through the tripartite is so critical...we need to focus...we are extremely happy that we can partner with you on this journey making sure we can measure the progress as we move forward,” Mr Gatete added.

Both leaders called for the inclusion of women, youths and Small and Medium Entrepreneurs as the region develops and grows its value chains.



Summit Advocates for the Promotion of the Mining Sector

Member States and the private sector in the COMESA region should work together to build the capacity of local mining companies. This include small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) involved in value addition activities and processing minerals. To achieve this, Heads of State called upon Member States to provide incentives for companies that wish to establish production facilities in the mining sector within the region.

Further, the leaders 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 African Development Bank.

Pictorial

More summit pictures: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/comesa/albums/72177720321640738/>

Link to the Summit Communique: <https://www.comesa.int/final-communique-of-the-23rd-comesa-summit-of-heads-of-state-and-government/>

