

**COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN
AND SOUTHERN AFRICA**



OPENNING REMARKS

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**DURING THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING - PRE-INVESTMENT STUDY FOR
THE FIRST PHASE
OF THE AFRICA CLOUD ECOSYSTEM (ACE) PROJECT**

**NAIROBI, KENYA
2 – 3 DECEMBER 2024**

Theme: "Accelerating Regional Integration through the Development of Regional Value Chains in Climate Resilient Agriculture, Mining and Tourism"

Honourable Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Delegations, Africa Development Bank Task Manager and Distinguished Delegates from Member States;

Colleagues from the COMESA Secretariat.

Ladies And Gentlemen,

Good morning!

On behalf of the Secretary General of COMESA, and indeed on my own behalf, it is my pleasure to welcome you to this meeting, the **High-Level Meeting on the Pre-Investment Study of the Africa Cloud Ecosystem Project (ACE)**.

At the outset, I would like to thank the government and people of Kenya for hosting this meeting in beautiful Nairobi, the team of the COMESA Secretariat for their efforts all through the short lifespan of the project, leading up to the organization of this important meeting, the African Development Bank which has generously funded this project through the NEPAD-IPPF Special Fund and the consultancy firm - **CERFODES**, which has aptly undertaken the needed pre-investment study.

Distinguished Delegates,

We are gathered here today to validate the report prepared by the consultants on the **Pre-Investment Study of the Africa Cloud Ecosystem Project (ACE)**, carried out in 11 selected COMESA member states. These member states were selected based on their ICT capabilities and potential of contribution to the project. They are DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In the run up to this meeting, the COMESA ICT team and the consultants visited the mentioned 11 member states, held project initiation meetings with various stakeholders to introduce the project, undertook field visits to national data centres and collected necessary information for the study, which marks the first phase of the ACE Project.

During the course of this exercise, various factors were considered in evaluating the capabilities of member states as will be presented in the report.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In practical terms, the ACE Project, which is the first of its kind in Africa, is set to revolutionize the technological landscape of the continent by laying down the groundwork for a robust Africa-wide Cloud Ecosystem. Driven by a vision of facilitating a paradigm shift in digitizing critical sectors such as education, healthcare, economic activities, government services, and agriculture, the ACE Project aims to establish a reliable ecosystem of standard data centres across the continent.

As the first phase of the project comes to an end in December 2024, the second phase is expected to commence once the African Development Bank mobilises the necessary funding.

The focus of the second phase will be on establishing the recommended structures of the Pre-Investment Study in identified member states. It will also involve the recruitment of necessary staff and the adoption of necessary legal instruments before commencing the operations of the Africa Cloud Ecosystem.

Distinguished Delegates,

We count on the continued support of the African Development Bank and member states to advance this important project and achieve its end objectives. And it is our humble viewpoint that we need to harness all efforts to close the digital gap, catch up with the rest of the world and ensure the well-being and prosperity of our peoples in this age of the 4th industrial revolution.

From our side, and on behalf of COMESA Secretariat, I wish to re-affirm the commitment of the leadership and the team of the Secretariat to advance this important project and other ICT initiatives with a view to achieving the COMESA's regional integration agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I conclude, I would like to once more express our gratitude to the African Development Bank for supporting the ACE Project as well as other projects in COMESA. In fact, the Bank is one of COMESA's biggest development partners and we have developed a tradition of working closely together to advance common continental objectives.

Finally, I wish you fruitful deliberations and thank you.