



Ministers of Justice and Attorneys General meeting in Lusaka, Zambia

Slow Domestication of COMESA Legal Instruments Concerning

Ministers and AGs urged to support speeding-up the process

The slow pace of signing and ratifying COMESA's legal instruments has hindered progress in advancing the region's integration agenda. This delay prevents Member States from realizing the full benefits embedded in these instruments, which remain ineffective until ratified.

Addressing the 27th Meeting of COMESA Ministers of Justice and Attorneys General in Lusaka on 21 November 2024, Zambia's Minister of Justice, Hon. Princess Kasune, highlighted this issue. She noted that COMESA has adopted numerous legal instruments and protocols over the years, but many remain undomesticated at the national level.

A key example is the COMESA Protocol on Free Movement, which has been open

for signatures and ratifications for over 20 years without significant progress. "I would like to personally call upon all COMESA Member States to ensure that legal instruments and decisions requiring domestication or ratification at the national level are prioritized and fully implemented," Minister Kasune urged.

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COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe echoed similar concerns, emphasizing the need for swift action to overcome delays in the domestication process. She announced that legal experts from the COMESA Secretariat would conduct country visits to identify and address challenges faced by Member States.

"Immediately after the conclusion of this meeting, the Legal and Corporate Affairs Division will engage Member States through country visits to promote the domestication of COMESA's legal instruments," she stated.

The Secretary General also called on Ministers and Attorneys General to support the Secretariat's efforts and provide guidance on accelerating the

Steps Towards Establishing the First Continental Cloud Ecosystem in Africa



Uganda Minister of State for ICT Hon. Joyce Nabbosa Ssebugawo (4th right seated) with delegates participating at the high-level meeting on Africa Cloud Ecosystem project.

The first phase of the Africa Cloud Ecosystem (ACE) project, a groundbreaking initiative to create a reliable network of standard data centres across the African continent, has successfully concluded.

Funded by the African Development Bank (AfDB) through the NEPAD-IPPF Special Fund, the project aims to provide affordable, reliable, and secure cloud services to critical sectors such as education, healthcare, government, agriculture, and the broader economy.

As part of the first phase, a comprehensive pre-investment study was conducted, analysing the market potential in 11 selected COMESA Member States. The selection criteria included ICT capabilities and each country's potential contribution to the project. The countries evaluated were the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

To disseminate the study's findings, a two-day high-level meeting was conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, on 2 - 3 December 2024. This event reviewed and validated the pre-investment study report and determined the host country for the ACE headquarters.

The meeting had participation from Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, and ICT experts representing the 11 nations.

Speaking at the opening session, Dr. Mohamed Kadah, COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of programs, emphasized the transformative potential of the ACE project. He described it as a cornerstone for developing a robust Africa-wide cloud ecosystem.

"We must harness all efforts to bridge the digital divide, catch up with the rest of the world, and ensure the well-being and prosperity of our people in this era of the 4th Industrial Revolution," Dr. Kadah stated.

The project seeks to address critical challenges, including inadequate ICT infrastructure, high costs of cloud hosting services, latency issues from accessing cloud services outside the continent, and the lack of power supply required to sustain local data centres.

AfDB Task Manager Mr. Omar Elmi Samatar highlighted the strategic importance of local data processing, noting that Africa currently accounts for just 1% of the global data market.

"Without localizing data, we cannot talk

about data sovereignty," he said.

The pre-investment study, conducted by CERFODES, a leading Africa-based, African-led, international consulting firm, involved field visits to national data centres and the collection of vital information to evaluate the project's feasibility. With the conclusion of this phase in December 2024, the ACE project now prepares for its second phase.

The upcoming phase will focus on implementing the structures recommended in the study across identified member states. This includes establishing operational frameworks, recruiting necessary staff, and adopting relevant legal instruments. These steps will lay the groundwork for the operationalization of the Africa Cloud Ecosystem, pending further funding mobilized by the African Development Bank.

The ACE project represents a significant leap towards modernizing Africa's ICT landscape, ensuring the continent can actively participate in and benefit from the global digital economy.



Slow domestication of legal instruments ..



Justice Lombe Chibesakunda

implementation of these instruments. The meeting agenda included the review and approval of legal instruments for key COMESA institutions such as the COMESA Court of Justice, the COMESA Competition Commission, and the COMESA Regional Investment Agency.

Justice Lombe Chibesakunda, Judge-President of the COMESA Court of Justice, highlighted the Court's achievements during her address. Over the past decade, the Court has developed and revised several legal instruments to enhance its operational efficiency. These include: Rules of Procedure, Arbitration Rules, Financial Rules and Procedures, Procurement Procedure Manual (2022) and Resource Mobilization and Communication Strategies.

"As the tenure of the current Judges concludes in June 2025, this is the last meeting I will attend as Judge-President. I am proud that, with your support, the Court has achieved significant milestones," Justice Chibesakunda remarked.

The meeting underscored the urgent need for Member States to take ownership of COMESA's integration agenda by speeding up the domestication and ratification of legal instruments. Ministers and Attorneys General were encouraged to champion these efforts within their respective countries to unlock the full potential of regional integration.



Left: IOM Regional Director for Southern Africa Mr Frantz Samuel Celestin confers with SG Chileshe Kapwepwe after presenting his Letter of Credence as Special Representative to COMESA.

IOM, COMESA Collaboration has advanced integration

Collaboration between the international Organization for Migration and COMESA has advanced the implementation of regional integration in general and small-scale trade in particular in the COMESA Agenda on Migration.

Through the collaboration, COMESA has been able to develop a trade facilitation training programme tailored for small scale cross border trade. Additionally, IOM has supported the COMESA Migration Dialogue, which is convened every two years to discuss current global migration trends to enhance the COMESA Migration Agenda.

More recently, IOM provided resources for the first joint meeting of COMESA ministers responsible for immigration and labour; actualising the multi-agency approach to the implementation of the Migration Agenda.

These were part of the reflections that featured during the presentation of credentials by the IOM's Regional Director for Southern Africa Mr Frantz Samuel Celestin to COMESA Secretary General (SG), Chileshe Kapwepwe on 18 November 2024. The SG appreciated the IOM expertise, specifically in labour and skills mobility, which she noted would continue to enrich COMESA's efforts towards achieving an improved mobility of citizens in the region.

"With the implementation of the

COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement, there is going to be an increased movement of skilled and semi-skilled labour, along with factors of production, in the Tripartite region," she noted.

COMESA and IOM also signed a new Memorandum of Understanding in April 2023 to strengthen their cooperative working relationship in different areas of common interest covering border management in the context of regional integration, integrating migration and mobility into the trade agenda, migrant protection within supply chains, recruitment and value chains.

Mr Celestin reiterated the IOM's commitment to addressing migration challenges in the region adding that saving and protecting lives is a core objective of the organisation. He urged COMESA to address effects of climate change as they have an adverse effect on migration.

"IOM aims to offer displaced individuals pathways to rebuild their lives, reducing their dependency on aid while helping them envision a future beyond displacement," he said.

He called for collective efforts to reshape the narrative around migration, highlighting its potential to foster innovation and resilience across borders.



Participants at the 3rd Intergenerational Dialogue in Kampala Uganda

Enhancing Youth Participation in Peacebuilding and Governance

More than 150 Youths from the Eastern African region and beyond recently engaged in impactful conversations with policy makers, academicians and civil society organisations during the 3rd Intergenerational Dialogue held in Kampala, Uganda.

The three-day event from 12 – 14 November 2024 marked a significant milestone in the ongoing effort to enhance youth participation in key sectors of society that directly affect their well-being.

With the theme: ‘From Learning to Leading: Education as a Catalyst for the Advancement of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda’ the participants discussions brought out causes of young people being left out and proposals were made on how this situation could be improved.

The theme was in recognition of this year 2024 being designated as the Year of Education in Africa and appreciating the unique opportunity for the African Union and COMESA to galvanise Member States, youths and partners towards achieving education targets for youth and to rethink educational models and skills development necessary for addressing youth-oriented peace and security issues.

Speaking when he officially opened the

Dialogue, Rt. Hon. Ruhakana Rugunda, former Prime Minister of Uganda and member of the COMESA Committee of Elders, inspired the young attendees to be catalysts for the change they wish to see.

“I am happy to see that as COMESA marks its 30 years anniversary this year, it has continued to build capacity for the young people who make up over 70 percent of its over 600m people,” Hon. Rugunda said. He described the Dialogue as mutually beneficial for both the young and older generation while urging them to avoid vices that promote division and strife in the Member States.

He encouraged the youth to use the latest technologies such as AI to gain more knowledge and develop solutions in value addition in order to move Africa from exporting raw materials, deepen intra-Africa trade and re-negotiation better terms of trade with the developed world.

COMESA’s Conflict Early Warning Expert Mr Raymond Kitevu reiterated the organisation’s commitment to create a platform for the youth, policy makers and civil society organisations to interact more often and address matters that affect young people.

At the end of the Dialogue, an Outcome

Document was developed to solidify partnerships and align with existing education, peace and security strategies and plans.

Other Speakers included Dr Shako Kijala who represented the partners, Ms Angel Mbutia Chairperson of the COMESA Youth Advisory Panel (COMYAP) and Mr Jacob Eyeru from the National Youth Council of Uganda.

To close the Dialogue, Uganda’s Minister of State for Youth and Children Affairs Hon. Dr Balaam Barugahara addressed the participants and called for quality education that equips youths with necessary skills in governance, technology, entrepreneurship and conflict resolutions as essential to sustainable peace in the region.

He added that inclusive education is key to lasting peace and Uganda is committed to addressing all inequalities that affect youth and women.

The 3rd IGD was hosted by COMESA in partnership with Save the Children, International IDEA, the Horn of Africa Youth Network, the Institute of Security Studies, the Africa Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes and the Country Structural Vulnerability Assessment and Resilience programme.



Joint Eswatini - Zambia investment promotion delegation visiting COMESA Secretariat

Eswatini & Zambia Investment Promotion Agencies Visit COMESA Secretariat

A delegation from the Eswatini Investment Promotion Authority (EIPA) and the Zambia Development Agency (ZDA) visited the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka on November 14, 2024, to explore opportunities for collaboration in advancing their mandates. The delegation met with the Assistant Secretary General for Programmes, Ambassador Dr. Mohamed Kadah.

The EIPA delegation was led by Board Chairperson Theo Hlophe, while ZDA was represented by its Director of Corporate Strategy, Mr. Innocent Melu.

The visit, initiated by EIPA, aimed to gain a deeper understanding of COMESA's programmes and explore potential support mechanisms. It also aligned with EIPA's vision to position itself as a leading and impactful Investment Promotion Agency (IPA). Welcoming the delegations, Dr. Kadah emphasized that investment promotion is a core mandate of COMESA, as the regional bloc strives to deliver tangible benefits to its Member States.

EIPA CEO Mr. Sibani Mngomezulu outlined key challenges faced by IPAs, including inadequate resources and high staff turnover, which demand continuous capacity building.

He also highlighted EIPA's strategic priorities, such as developing agricultural value chains, implementing a digital strategy, and enhancing staff capacity.

Both COMESA and the visiting IPAs agreed to collaborate on initiatives to boost investments across the region. Among the proposed areas of cooperation were

organizing an investment roadshow focused on the beef industry and supporting the implementation of the COMESA Investment Agreement.

This partnership underscores a shared commitment to fostering economic growth and development within the COMESA region.



COMESA Diary		
Date	Activity	Venue
9 - 11 Dec	EGEE-ICT Validation Workshop	Victoria Falls Zimbabwe



File/COMESA Court of Justice participating in a public outreach initiative at the Nairobi International Trade Fair

New Bench for the COMESA Court of Justice

The COMESA Court of Justice is set to have a new bench of 12 judges with effect from June 2025. The incoming judges were nominated by member States following a call for nominations for candidates issued earlier this year. Subsequently, the COMESA Ministers of Justice and Attorneys General, seating as an Electoral College during their 27th meeting in Lusaka, Zambia on 21 November 2024 conducted an election of judges.

The meeting elected the following to the Appellate Division of the Court: Justice Marvin Mwanamwambwa (Zambia) as Judge President-elect, Justice Onephore Baroreraho (Burundi), Justice Monica Mugenyi (Uganda), Justice Masauko Msungama (Malawi) and Justice Ms Salohy Randrianarisoa (Madagascar).

The Meeting also elected the following to the First Instance Division: Justice Aggrey Muchelule (Kenya) - Principal Judge-elect, Justice Dr. Ahmed Mohamed (Egypt), Justice Mazwendoda

Mavuso (Eswatini), Justice Ah Foon Chui Yew Cheong (Mauritius), Justice Samia Cecile Bella Andre (Seychelles), Justice Ibrahim Osman Briema Hamid (Sudan) and Justice Lavender Makoni (Zimbabwe).

The names of the Judges elect will be

submitted to the COMESA Authority of Heads of State and Government for appointment and subsequent swearing-in. The current bench led by Justice Lombe Chibesakunda, was appointed in March 2015 and took office on 6 June 2015. Its tenure will come to an end on 5 June 2025.



Outgoing Members of the Appellate Division of the COMESA Court of Justice



Delegates at the 3rd Programme Steering Committee (PSC) meeting of the Support to Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD)

Aviation Experts Gather for Key Meeting on SATSD Programme

Aviation experts convened on December 5, in Lusaka for the 3rd Programme Steering Committee (PSC) meeting of the Support to Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) Programme. The meeting, which followed a two-day session of the Technical Working Group (TWG), focused on addressing the progress of the €8 million programme funded by the European Union (EU).

The SATSD programme, which was signed in December 2020, covers 29 member states across COMESA, EAC, IGAD, IOC, and SADC. It is seen as a key initiative in advancing Africa’s Agenda 2063 and achieving the goal of a Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), a flagship project of the African Union (AU) essential for regional integration.

In his opening remarks, COMESA Assistant Secretary General Dr. Mohammed Kadah expressed concern over the slow pace of programme implementation, calling for a reassessment of the strategy to ensure measurable outcomes.

“The pace of programme implementation has been less than desired, and it is now imperative to reassess our strategy to

deliver results. This is especially critical as we need to demonstrate value for money in anticipation of the requested for a no-cost extension,” Dr. Kadah stated via a virtual speech.

The programme, which was originally slated for completion by the end of this month, has faced delays, with only 40% of the budget absorbed so far. Key performance indicators remain at baseline levels, with several planned interventions still pending.

Mr Massimo Bonannini, Head of Infrastructure at the European Union Delegation to Zambia and COMESA, voiced concern over the lack of progress. He emphasized that the programme, which has yet to be fully implemented, is unlikely to meet its targets within the original timeframe.

“The EU is currently evaluating the possibility of extending the programme by two years, as the one-year extension proposed by the project steering committee will not be sufficient to achieve the expected results,” Bonannini explained.

The SATSD programme is a critical

component of Africa’s air transport sector development, aiming to reduce barriers to regional air connectivity and foster economic integration across the continent.

As the EU considers an extension, all eyes are now on the programme’s ability to overcome its current challenges and deliver the outcomes necessary to support Africa’s ambitious transport and economic goals.

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COMESA Hosts Gender Sensitization Workshop in Tunisia

On December 4, the COMESA Secretariat held a gender sensitization workshop in Tunis, Tunisia. The event brought together stakeholders from the public and private sectors, as well as civil society groups, to disseminate COMESA's gender-focused policies and tools.

The workshop aimed to familiarize participants with key instruments, including the COMESA Gender Policy, the Gender Policy Implementation Action Plan, the Gender Planning Guidelines, Checklists, and Indicators, and the COMESA Social Charter.

During the opening session, Mr. Mohamed Dhaoui expressed gratitude to COMESA for organizing the event and highlighted its significance. Similarly, COMESA's Director for Gender, Mrs.

Beatrice Hamusonde, emphasized the importance of ensuring these policies are well-understood and adopted across Member States.

"As the COMESA Secretariat, we are committed to ensuring that these policies are embraced by the citizens of Member States. This workshop's goal is to strengthen the implementation of the COMESA Gender Policy Framework through gender mainstreaming and women empowerment initiatives," Mrs. Hamusonde stated.

The workshop delved into the Gender Planning Guidelines, a critical tool for identifying gender gaps and proposing interventions. The guidelines assist in conceptualizing, designing, and implementing gender-responsive programs and projects across three levels: the COMESA Secretariat, COMESA

institutions, and Member States.

Participants explored ways to analyze specific programs and projects, identify gender issues, propose targeted interventions, and measure results using tailored indicators. The tool also supports situational analyses to address the diverse needs, interests, and concerns of women, men, girls, and boys in different contexts. To date, the COMESA Gender Division has conducted similar workshops in Uganda, Burundi, Mauritius, Seychelles, Djibouti, Sudan, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Zambia, Eswatini, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and now Tunisia. These initiatives have deepened engagement with Member States, especially those previously unfamiliar with COMESA's gender frameworks.

The workshops are supported through the RECAMP initiative under the 11th

Tunisia's Women and Youth Empowered on Regional Trade Opportunities

On December 3, the COMESA Secretariat, in collaboration with the Tunisian government, hosted a multistakeholder dialogue in Tunis to engage women and youth in business. The dialogue aimed to enhance their capacity to participate in regional trade by exposing them to available trade facilitation tools.

The event was opened by Mr. Mohamed Dhaoui, Director for Women Affairs at the Ministry for Women, Family, Children & Seniors. Other notable speakers included Mrs. Leila Belkhiria Jaber, President of the National Chamber of Women in Business; Mrs. Beatrice Hamusonde, COMESA Director for Gender and Social Affairs; and Mr. Lazher Bennour, Director General of Economic and Commercial Cooperation at the Ministry of Trade and Export Development.

"Tunisia recognizes women as key partners in national development.

Empowering women through financial inclusion and other initiatives remains a priority," Mr. Dhaoui said. He acknowledged persistent challenges and encouraged participants to exchange knowledge on opportunities and obstacles.

Mrs. Leila Belkhiria Jaber underscored the transformative potential of women's entrepreneurship. "Investing in women's businesses creates a ripple effect of positive change that extends beyond individual success stories," she noted.

The dialogue focused on raising awareness of COMESA's objectives and initiatives, including its gender frameworks and the Women in Business Digital Platform. These tools enable Member State citizens to leverage opportunities within the region. The session featured an interactive discussion where participants asked

questions about COMESA. About 100 individuals attended, 80 of whom were women and youth from public and private sector institutions.

Since its inception in 2023, the multistakeholder dialogues have been held in Mauritius, DR Congo, Kenya, and Madagascar. These events serve as key platforms to expose women and youth in business to COMESA's trade facilitation tools, market opportunities, and EU-supported initiatives that benefit women. The dialogues are supported through the Institutional Capacity Building Programme (ICBP) under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).



Domestication of the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonization Regulations in Tunisia

The COMESA Seed Trade Harmonization Regulations, which aim to enhance regional integration and seed trade, came into effect in May 2014. To date, ten COMESA Member States—Burundi, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Malawi, Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe—have successfully domesticated these regulations.

To extend these benefits, the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA), a specialized agency of COMESA, has launched a sensitization program targeting member states yet to adopt the regulations.

As part of this initiative, ACTESA conducted a sensitization workshop in Tunisia from December 5–6, 2024. The workshop focused on raising awareness of COMESA-aligned national seed laws and regulations and was a key step in Tunisia’s phased approach to finalizing the COMESA Seed Harmonization Implementation Plan (COMSHIP). The event brought together diverse seed industry stakeholders to discuss the domestication process and chart a path forward.

In her opening remarks, Ms. Naima Mahfoudhi, General Director of Plant Health under Tunisia’s Ministry of Agriculture, emphasized the importance of seed trade harmonization for boosting regional trade and advancing agricultural transformation. She highlighted the role of harmonized regulations in increasing seed production, improving access for smallholder farmers, and driving inclusive economic growth in the COMESA region. Echoing her sentiments, Mr. Lazhen Benmaul, General Director of Cooperation, Economic, and Trade under Tunisia’s

Ministry of Trade and Export Development, underscored the alignment’s potential to enhance food security and economic resilience.

“Climate change has deeply impacted Tunisia’s agriculture sector, as it has across the region. By harmonizing our national seed regulations with COMESA’s, we have an opportunity to strengthen our competitiveness in the regional agricultural value chain,” he said.

Dr. John Mukuka, ACTESA’s Chief Executive Officer, represented by Agribusiness and Policy Advisor John Chambamakasa, elaborated on the critical role of the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonization Regulations. He noted that only 20% of the 90 million smallholder farmers in the COMESA region currently access quality, improved seeds—a shortfall that contributes to food insecurity for about 130 million people.

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“Climate change has deeply impacted Tunisia’s agriculture sector, as it has across the region. By harmonizing our national seed regulations with COMESA’s, we have an opportunity to strengthen our competitiveness in the regional agricultural value chain,” he said.

“The regional seed market remains fragmented into small, isolated national markets, with each country operating its

own seed policies and regulations. This fragmentation imposes high costs and delays on seed companies, ultimately slowing the delivery of quality seeds to farmers. The COMESA Seed Trade Harmonization Regulations address these challenges by creating a unified regulatory framework,” he explained.

Dr. Mukuka further highlighted COMESA’s commitment to implementing these regulations through initiatives like COMSHIP, which aim to foster seamless integration of national and regional seed markets.

The workshop brought together representatives from Tunisia’s Ministry of Agriculture, National Seed Authorities, Plant Protection Organizations, National Seed Trade Associations (NSTAs), research organizations, seed companies, and NGOs. The event was supported by the COMESA Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP) and funded by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF 11). It marked a significant milestone in ACTESA’s ongoing sensitization efforts, following similar workshops held earlier in Eswatini and Ethiopia in July and August 2024, respectively.

COMSHIP serves as a key mechanism for strengthening seed production, improving reliability, and promoting seed trade. It also aims to enhance the competitiveness of the seed industry in the Southern and Eastern African region, ensuring a robust and sustainable agricultural future for COMESA member states.