

COMESA NEWS

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COMESA, World Bank LAUNCH \$5 Billion ENERGY Programme

- Thermal Power Dominates in COMESA Region at 76%
- EU, COMESA Sign new Programme, SWITCH to Circular Economy
- Implementation of COMESA Trade Remedies Regulations Begins
- First-Ever COMESA Week Celebrated in Madagascar

Editorial

New Energy Project, a Game-Changer



Access to clean, affordable energy is universally recognized as essential for development, whether in Africa or beyond. In the COMESA region, many communities remain without reliable energy, leaving homes and localities in a constant struggle for power. While governments have worked on various initiatives to expand energy access, progress has been slow and insufficient. The

demand for energy continues to rise, but access to modern, sustainable energy remains alarmingly low in much of COMESA and across Africa.

Recognizing the need for collaboration, regional governments have initiated joint energy programs, pooling resources to reach more people. The recent launch of the USD 5 billion "Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation" (ASCENT) initiative by COMESA and the World Bank is a significant step forward which should be commended and supported by all as we strive to provide reliable, sustainable and clean energy to millions of our people.

In particular we expect that women's lives will be transformed, while also driving regional integration, boosting trade, attracting investment, and enabling greater digital transformation – all of which are core to our region. Over the next seven years, we hope to see a profound impact on households and communities. As a resource-rich developing region, COMESA needs this kind of forward-thinking approach to ensure a brighter, more sustainable future.

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COMESA INSTITUTIONS

COMESA Clearing House
COMESA Monetary Institute
Trade and Development Bank
African Trade & Investment Development Insurance
COMESA Competition Commission
PTA Reinsurance Company
COMESA Regional Investment Agency
Africa Leather and Leather Products Institute
COMESA Federation of Women in Business

Specialized Agencies

Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa
COMESA Business Council
Regional Association of Energy Regulators in Eastern and Southern Africa
East African Power Pool

Judicial Arm

COMESA Court of Justice

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Delegates at the capacity building workshop for National Focal Points

Enhancing Capacity for Implementing NTB Regulations

COMESA Secretariat has successfully completed the first phase of its intervention to enhance the efficiency of national focal points (NFPs) that deal with non-tariff barriers (NTBs). These NFPs play a crucial role in implementing national NTB elimination programs in COMESA Member States.

Selected from the Ministries responsible for trade matters within the region, the focal points oversee the identification and resolution of NTBs through national NTBs monitoring committees (NMCs).

The first targeted capacity building workshop for the NFP members was conducted on 17-19 April 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya. They were drawn from Member States that are actively engaged in intra-COMESA trade and

have reported significant numbers of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) through the online tripartite non-tariff barriers reporting, monitoring, and elimination mechanism.

They included the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritius, Madagascar, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

At the workshop, the participants identified challenges and developed short-term action plans to address them. They include facilitating National Monitoring Committees (NMCs) to establish and implement time-bound work programs aimed at resolving all operational non-tariff barriers (NTBs). These recommendations will be presented to the COMESA Policy Organs.

Since 2014, COMESA Member States have adopted strategies aimed at the full implementation of the regulations, albeit at a slow pace. With support from the EDF- 11 programme that provided for technical and funding support, the Member States have now achieved key milestones in implementing the regulations for elimination of NTBs.

These include development of guidelines for the implementation of the regulations, establishment of NTBs structures and tools for reporting, monitoring and eliminating NTBs, undertaking capacity building activities at national and regional level, as well as developing user friendly tools for use by the small-scale traders, women

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Delegates at the Consultative Workshop held in Lusaka

Consultative Workshop on Development of an Information Management System for RAERESA

An Information Management System (IMS) for the energy sector in Eastern and Southern Africa is being developed with regional experts meeting in Lusaka, Zambia, from 5 to 6 June 2024 to review progress.

The IMS aims to bridge the current information gap in the energy sector and establish a robust information and database management system. This system will facilitate the synchronization and harmonization of energy data collection, storage, retrieval, and dissemination among the Member States of the Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA).

Upon its launch, the IMS will be hosted at the COMESA Secretariat. This centralized information and database system will allow member countries to directly input and retrieve information according to pre-defined templates. It will also enhance the capacity of regulators, participating utilities, and other relevant stakeholders within RAERESA/COMESA to upload, manage, update, and retrieve information.

This initiative is part of the African Development Bank (AfDB) funded USD\$1.5 million project on Regional Harmonization of Regulatory Frameworks and Tools for Improved Electricity Regulation in the COMESA region. The project aims to promote cross-border power trading by advancing intra-regional harmonization of electricity regulations across the 12 COMESA Member States. These are Burundi, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, and Uganda, with the addition of South Sudan.

The consultative workshop in Lusaka was attended by 29 regional energy stakeholders from the participating countries. They reviewed the draft system specifications compiled by the consulting firm before the IMS can be fully developed and launched. The delegates also considered and approved the interim IMS system architecture and specifications developed by the consulting firm.

Participants included energy ICT experts from the 12 Member States, the Eastern African Power Pool (EAPP), the Energy Regulators Association of East Africa

(EREA), and the COMESA Secretariat. RAERESA is the energy regulatory arm of COMESA.

During the opening of the workshop, RAERESA Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Mohamedain Seif Elnasr, emphasized the importance of the review in shaping the consultant's report and preparing for the eventual launch of the IMS.

"I urge you to use this opportunity to share experiences and best practices," he said. "Integration is a process, and regulation in the energy sector is new for most of our Member States, but we will get there."

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Lufunda Muzeya, Risk Manager at the Energy Regulation Board of Zambia. Zambia is the current Chair of the Portfolio Committee on Capacity, Information Exchange, Energy Statistics & Database of RAERESA.

The Regional Harmonization of Regulatory Frameworks and Tools for Improved Electricity Regulation in COMESA project is jointly implemented with the EREA, based in Arusha, Tanzania.



Symbolic launch of the Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation (ASCENT) programme by World Director of Regional Integration Africa, Middle East and North Africa H.E Ms. Boutheina Guermazi (2nd right) and SG Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe (2nd left) alongside Honourable Peter Kapala (middle), Minister of Energy of Zambia.

COMESA, World Bank Launch USD 5bn Energy Programme

COMESA and the World Bank have launched a USD 5 billion energy programme dubbed the Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation (ASCENT). The programme is aimed at accelerating energy access efforts in the Eastern and Southern African region, with a target delivery of new electricity connections for 100 million people.

The program development objective, to which participating countries and regional institutions will contribute, is to increase access to sustainable and clean energy in Eastern and Southern African countries. Access to energy includes on-grid and off-grid (DRE) electricity solutions and clean cooking.

COMESA Secretary General, Ms Chileshe Kapwepwe and World Bank Director of

Regional Integration Africa, Middle East and North Africa H.E Ms. Boutheina Guermazi launched the programme in Lusaka, Zambia on 4 June 2024 in the presence of the Zambia Minister of Energy, Hon Peter Kapala,

The main beneficiaries of the ASCENT program include women, in the Eastern and Southern Africa (AFE) region who will gain access to a sustainable supply of electricity and clean cooking, along with the associated benefits that accrue from having energy access.

ASCENT is conceived as a comprehensive accelerator of energy access efforts in the AFE region, aiming at the delivery of new electricity connections for 100 million people through both grid- and Distributed Renewable Energy (DRE)-based

solutions. ASCENT will leverage the proposed International Development Association (IDA) envelope of US\$5 billion to signal the World Bank's commitment to achieving SDG7 in the Eastern and Southern Africa region and mobilize an additional USD10 billion from development partners, governments, national utilities, private-sector and commercial funders, carbon markets, climate and other impact-oriented financiers, and philanthropic and other partners.

The Multiphase Programmatic Approach (MPA) is IDA financed and anticipates that up to 20 countries in the Eastern and Southern Africa (AFE) region will participate in ASCENT. IDA-eligible countries can be financed from the US\$5 billion ASCENT envelope. In

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and the youths to report NTBs.

COMESA Secretariat has supported regional and bilateral engagements among Member States to identify new NTBs and resolve the outstanding ones. However, success in institutional and capacity building has not translated into significant increase in identification and resolution of NTBs. The pace of reporting NTBs by COMESA Member States remains slow.

COMESA Senior Trade Office, Ms Alice

Enhancing Capacity for NTBs...

Twizeye, highlighted some of the factors contributing to the slow pace. They include weak NTBs national structures and underutilization of capacities as Member States are yet to designate permanent desks for NTBs.

It is against this background that more robust interventions are being explored to achieve implementation of the objectives of the regulations

with focus on resolving all operational NTBs and identifying solutions to the longstanding ones of a policy nature.

The capacity building intervention is expected to turn around the trajectory and redirecting national NTBs institutions to focus on undertaking activities that lead to increased identification and resolution of intra COMESA NTBs.

Thermal Power Dominates in COMESA Region at 76%



Delegates attending the 13th Annual General Meeting of the RAERESA

Thermal power dominates power generation in the COMESA region, accounting for more than 76 percent with hydro energy at 24 percent. This is out of the total installed power generation capacity estimated at 100,000 megawatts.

This was part of the updates presented at the 13th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA) that took place in Cairo, Egypt on 15 – 16 May 2024.

The overall share of renewable energy has increased from 1 per cent to 6 per cent in the last eight years mainly due to policy and regulatory reforms undertaken in the Member States.

Notwithstanding the improvements, the regional energy infrastructure is critically inadequate due to insufficient investment in the energy sector, unreliability, and inefficiency of existing energy infrastructure, as elaborated by COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of programmes, Dr Mohamed Kadah, when he addressed the meeting.

“.....

The energy challenges the region is facing should equally be seen as opportunities for additional power generation on a regional scale and building regional power interconnectors to facilitate trade in power from surplus to deficit countries,” Dr Mohamed Kadah.

Continued to page 5

Thermal Power Dominates...

To tackle these challenges, Dr. Kadah urged energy sector stakeholders—governments, multilateral and bilateral development and financial institutions, private sector entities, and academia—to collaborate in financing the energy infrastructure deficit in the COMESA region.

Dr. Kadah highlighted persistent market design issues that hinder the development and efficient operation of the energy sector. These issues include non-cost reflective tariffs and the need to enhance the capacities of regulatory agencies to respond to current challenges. He emphasized the importance of opening the market to private sector participation, especially in renewable energy.

“The energy challenges the region is facing should equally be seen as opportunities for additional power generation on a regional scale and building regional power interconnectors to facilitate trade in power from surplus to deficit countries,” Dr Kadah said.

Dr. Kadah stressed the importance of prioritizing the development of regional energy infrastructure necessary to achieve economies of scale, citing the Zambia-Tanzania-Kenya power interconnector which is under implementation in the region. This project will interconnect the Southern African Power Pool with the Eastern African Power Pool and the realize the Cape to Cairo electricity corridor.

Executive Chairman of the Egyptian Electric Utility and Consumer Protection Regulatory Agency, (EgyptERA), Eng. Dr. Mohamed Musa Omran said effective regulation is a key enabler of an improved business environment for private sector.

“Countries that managed to transition to better equilibria for their electricity sector, are characterized by better regulatory frameworks (including adequate tariff setting, enforcement of penalties,

and appropriate energy dispatching rules), lower generation costs, lower theft ratios government subsidies, and investment levels that are large enough to guarantee an electricity supply that is commensurate with peak electricity demand,” Dr Omran emphasized.

Alternate Chairperson of the RAERESA, Dr. John Mutua, who is the Director, Technical Regulation at the Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority (EPRA), Kenya stressed the need for harmonized regulatory framework to stimulate investments in power production and transmission especially in solar, wind, geothermal, bioenergy, of which COMESA has expansive potential.

He said, “It has been established that in some countries, the vertically integrated power utilities are carrying out power generation, transmission, distribution, and retail supply functions, while in some countries, the generation, transmission and distribution functions have been unbundled but are still under government control.”

Currently, COMESA is implementing the Regional Harmonization of Regulatory Frameworks and Tools for Improved Electricity Regulation project funded through a \$1.5 million grant from the African Development Bank.

Delegates from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Seychelles, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Djibouti, Tunisia, and Libya participated in the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The primary agenda of the meeting was to receive progress reports from the RAERESA Portfolio Committees, which include Harmonization of Legal and Regulatory Frameworks, Renewable Energy, Environment and Energy Efficiency, as well as Capacity Building, Information Exchange, Energy Statistics, and Database Management.

\$5b Energy programme launched...

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addition, IBRD countries with energy access deficits (Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Namibia, and South Africa) may participate in the Program through IBRD borrowing, and to access climate finance, carbon financing platforms and the private-sector dialogue.

In her remarks, World Bank Director of Regional Integration Africa, Middle East and North Africa H.E Ms. Boutheina Guerhazi said “ensuring access to reliable and affordable energy for all is a key element of the World Bank Regional Integration Strategy for Africa. It is essential to strengthen regional integration, giving boost to trade in goods and services, allowing digital transformation, attracting investments, and allowing faster flow of knowledge and innovations.”

Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe in her remarks observed that financial resources are essential, but they are not sufficient on their own.

“We need a holistic approach to the energy challenge that includes support to policy and legal reforms, technical assistance, capacity building and outreach activities, among others. I am glad to note that all these aspects are embedded in the design of the ASCENT Project,” she noted.

Minister Kapala emphasized the importance of creative financial instruments and frameworks in mobilizing required resources for sustainable energy.

“Financial instruments such as blended finance play a vital role in de-risking projects and attracting private funds,” he said. Various delegations from the targeted countries attended the launch.



The FTA is expected to enhance movement of goods across the region

Malawi Ratifies the Tripartite Free Trade Agreement

Malawi ratified the Tripartite Free Trade Agreement in April 2024, bringing the total number of States that have done so to 12. Now, only two are remaining to reach the requisite threshold of 14 to enable the Agreement to enter into force.

The ratification instrument, signed by Malawi's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Nancy Tembo was delivered to the office of the Secretary General of COMESA on 23 April 2024.

The Tripartite FTA is an inter-regional co-operation and integration arrangement amongst countries of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

By June 2024, 22 Member States had signed the TFTA Agreement, and 12 ratified it. They included Egypt, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Eswatini,

Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi.

The Tripartite FTA was launched in June 2015 in Egypt to enhance integration among the Tripartite Member/Partner States for their mutual benefit and to pursue the development of common programmes which will enable all parties to utilise the available resources effectively.

In addition, it is intended to harmonise trade and investment regimes and in particular to establish a Free Trade Area amongst COMESA, EAC and SADC; enhance inter-REC economic cooperation.

It is also intended to harmonise infrastructure programmes focusing on developing joint inter-regional infrastructure, and co-operation on transport and communications and financing of regional infrastructure projects.

The implementation of the TFTA will facilitate the movement of businesspersons in the tripartite region and enable the development of joint programmes that enhance cooperation and strengthen coordination in industrial and competition policies, financial and payment systems, development of capital markets and commodity exchanges.

These objectives are anchored on three pillars namely, market integration, industrial development and infrastructure development.

The pace of ratification of the TFTA has however been slow the latest move by Malawi is expected to inspire the remaining States to do the same.



COMESA, Malawi Sign Euro 900,000 Sub-Delegation Agreement

Funds to be used for construction of the Mchinji Cross-Border Market

COMESA Secretariat, and the Government of Malawi, signed a Euro 900,000 sub-delegation agreement on May 23, 2024, for the construction a cross-border market in Mchinji District, 20km from the Mchinji / Mwami One Stop Border Post.

The traders' market which is located in Mchinji District in Malawi, is funded by the European Union, under the 11 European Development Fund (EDF), Small Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative (SSCBTI). The SSCBTI supports the provision of gender sensitive basic infrastructure for use by small scale cross border traders.

The infrastructure to be constructed will include a market shelter, breastfeeding shelter, warehouse, shops, office block and public ablution block for the market. The provision of this market infrastructure is expected to boost formal small-scale cross-border trade flows between Malawi and Zambia. This will lead to higher revenue collection for governments, increased security and higher income for the small-scale cross-

border traders.

The availability of border market infrastructure will increase the connection between traders and customers and lead to reduced losses, especially in perishable stock, according to an assessment carried out by consulting firm, IMANI Development in May 2017. The assessment was conducted at the following border posts; Kasumbalesa (DRC and Zambia), Chirundu (Zambia and Zimbabwe), Nakonde/Tunduma (Zambia and Tanzania), Mwami/Mchinji (Zambia and Malawi) and Moyale (Ethiopia and Kenya).

The assessment identified basic workspace infrastructure at the border as a major requirement of small-scale traders.

Minister of Trade and Industry, Hon. Sosten Gwengwe and COMESA Secretary General, Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe signed the agreement in a virtual event.

In his remarks, Minister Gwengwe, applauded the Secretariat and the European Union for the support that has been given to the Government of Malawi. He promised to ensure that through this support, a well-designed structure will be built, through the selection of an appropriate construction firm to ensure that the market meets the needs of traders in Mchinji.

In her remarks, Ms. Kapwepwe noted: "The modalities of implementation of the sub-delegated activities provides an opportunity for Malawi to maximize the benefits of small-scale cross border trade with Zambia and other members of COMESA. This development comes at an opportune time for Malawi and will complement the increased trade expected at Mwami-Mchinji One Stop Border Post."

The parties to this agreement look forward to close collaboration of all stakeholders and ensure the swift implementation and completion of the project.



Cost-Based Models for Aviation Regulators to be Developed

On 3 – 5 June 2024, COMESA hosted a validation workshop on the development of cost-based models to sustain revenues for regulatory bodies in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO) region.

Held in Mahe, Seychelles, the forum marked a crucial step towards enhancing independent and transparent aviation oversight in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards. The ICAO mandates contracting States to ensure the availability of services that facilitate international air navigation, requiring that safety, security, and economic regulators are independent of the organizations they regulate. This separation is aimed at eliminating any potential conflict of interest, ensuring all service issues remain outside regulatory control.

In many states, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) had traditionally acted as both the Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP) and the regulator, which led to

conflicts of interest and undermined confidence in the system.

The need to separate ANSPs from regulatory functions was well-established in ICAO guidance materials. Greater financial and operational autonomy for ANSPs encouraged a business approach to service delivery, leading to improved quality and efficiency. ICAO recommended clear separation of authority and responsibility between State regulatory authorities and ANSPs, or the creation of commercial entities outside the CAA to manage service provision functions.

The primary objective of the workshop was to validate the developed cost-based models for sustaining revenues for civil aviation bodies in the region. The models would help identify viable revenue sources, ensuring that regulatory bodies were financially stable and capable of operating independently and effectively. This initiative was crucial for maintaining confidence in the aviation system

and ensuring effective oversight of all services.

Nicholas Ndema, Aviation Expert at COMESA, opened the workshop by highlighting its significance. He stated, “This workshop aims to develop appropriate cost-based models to sustain revenues for regulatory bodies in the region, ensuring independence and transparency in aviation oversight. This is crucial for maintaining confidence in the aviation system and ensuring effective oversight of all services.”

In his keynote address, Wilfred FockTave, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Seychelles Civil Aviation Authority, underscored the importance of transparent financial management. He remarked, “The development of a cost-based model will entail looking at the scope of regulatory services, ensuring recovery of operating costs, and providing transparency to stakeholders. This will help maintain a high standard of safety and security while promoting

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sustainable development in the aviation sector.”

The workshop addressed the challenges faced by regulatory bodies in the EA-SA-IO region, particularly the reluctance to separate regulatory functions from service provision due to financial stability concerns. By presenting cost-based models, the workshop aimed to provide workable solutions for identifying sustainable revenue sources for regulatory operations.

Nine states in the region had fully separated regulatory functions from service provision, while the remaining twenty states still performed dual or triple roles, combining regulator, ANSP, and airport operator functions. The workshop’s discussions focused on learning from existing models, understanding the challenges and successes, and developing suitable models that align with global best practices.

The Validation Workshop represented a significant step forward in fostering regional integration and improving the aviation sector across COMESA member states. By strengthening the regulatory and institutional capacity of civil aviation institutions, COMESA aimed to ensure effective and independent oversight, thereby enhancing the overall safety, security, and efficiency of the aviation industry.

This initiative by COMESA underscored its commitment to promoting sustainable development and economic growth across its member states through enhanced regional integration and improved aviation sector governance.



Amb. Dr Mohamed Kadah (L) signing the Agreement with Acting Director for Africa, DG International Partnerships, Mr Christian Stausboll in Brussels, Belgium

EU, COMESA Sign new Programme, SWITCH to Circular Economy

On the margins of the World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF, 2024) that took place in Brussels, Belgium, on 15-18 April 2024, the European Union and COMESA signed an agreement that paves the way for implementing a joint programme dubbed SWITCH to Circular Economy in East and Southern Africa.

Prior to the signing, the 40 million euros programme was officially introduced by the European Union Commissioner for International Partnerships, Ms Jutta Urpilainen. Commissioner Urpilainen said the programme aims to foster a transition to circular economy in East and Southern Africa, support policy making and improve access to finance in the plastics, textiles and electronics sectors.

The SWITCH to Circular Economy in East and Southern Africa Programme is expected to foster skills development and job creation in SMEs in the region. It also includes several other key areas, including promoting sustainable consumption and production practices, sustainable business models and eco-friendly technologies; enhancing policy frameworks and regulatory environments to incentivize green investments and innovation; and strengthening the capacity of government institutions, private sector actors and civil society organizations to mainstream

sustainability into their activities.

The transition to circular economies is a main pillar of the newly introduced European Green Deal, which is a concerted strategy for a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and competitive economy. As a traditional development partner of COMESA, the EU will extend support to ensure long-term sustainable development in East and Southern Africa (ESA), including tackling issues such as natural-resource management, economic diversification and establishing circular economic systems that maximise resource consumption and minimise waste.

The agreement was signed by COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes, Amb. Dr Mohamed Kadah and Acting Director for Africa, DG International Partnerships, Mr Christian Stausboll, during a courtesy call at the DG INTPA offices.

This is a preliminary step that will be followed by extensive consultations to hammer out the details of the programme and launch it officially under the leadership of the COMESA Secretary General, Ms Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe and the Head of the European Union Delegation to Zambia and COMESA, Ambassador Karoline Stasiak.



Implementation of COMESA Trade Remedies Regulations Begins

COMESA has begun the comprehensive implementation of its Trade Remedies Regulations. This is aimed at recommending measures to prevent potential losses that its Member States might incur due to unfair trading practices and unforeseen surges in imports during business transactions.

The regulations were adopted way back in 2000, but their application has largely been concentrated in the enforcement of the Safeguard Measures. Specifically, the regulations together with the COMESA Treaty have been useful in the management and application of the Kenya Sugar Safeguard measures. These have effectively been applied to protect the country's sugar sector.

The full implementation of the regulations follows the inaugural (virtual) meeting of the Trade Remedies Committee, on 24 -25 April 2024. This committee was established as directed by the COMESA Council of Ministers during its 44th meeting in November last year, to ensure wider coverage of remedies.

The operationalization of the Committee

signifies the beginning of the implementation of the trade remedies regulations. It is expected to promote fairness and stimulate intra-regional trade within the COMESA free trade area (FTA), which currently consists of 16 participating Member States. Dr. Mohamed Kadah, COMESA's Assistant Secretary-General in charge of programs, noted; "Trade liberalization alone cannot deliver anticipated benefits to all Member States equally. There are bound to be winners and losers in the trading arena."

In a statement delivered by the Director of Trade, Dr Christopher Onyango, Dr Kadah cited the lack of effective product diversification and existence of non-tariff barriers in the region as some of the key challenges to intra-regional trade, hence the relevance of the COMESA trade remedy regulations.

Apart from the safeguard mechanisms, the trade remedy regulations cover anti-dumping, subsidies and countervailing measures, dispute settlement and other related areas.

"Many if not all these issues are likely to

arise time and again and affect Member States participation in the COMESA region," said Dr Kadah.

He called on the Committee to ensure that implementation of the FTA regime and more specifically the COMESA Treaty and the COMESA remedy regulations are well-coordinated and implemented across the region in a way that does not disadvantage any Member State or sectors.

The implementation of Kenya sugar safeguard measures provided valuable and practical experiences in COMESA and the region in encouraging fair intra-regional trade while protecting vulnerable industries from adverse effects of trade liberalization.

The Committee's two-day meeting discussed its draft rules of procedure and terms of reference. Additionally, the Kenya report on the status of implementation of sugar safeguard measures was reviewed. The report on the allocation of sugar quotas for the year 2024 was also presented.

Region Moving Closer to a Harmonized Energy Regulatory Regime

Energy experts met in Cairo, Egypt for a two-day consultative workshop on regional harmonization of regulatory frameworks and tools for improved electricity regulation in the COMESA region.

The meeting, on 13 - 14 May 2024 reviewed a study report of the energy market, institutional structure, and tariff frameworks in 13 regional states, focusing on their current and future energy mix, technical and operational performance along with the tariff determination mechanisms.

Twelve COMESA Member States are covered in the study including Burundi, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, and Uganda and additionally, South Sudan.

This activity is part of ongoing project funded by the African Development Bank to ultimately, enhance the sustainability of the electricity sector of the region through effective, uniform, transparent and enforceable regulatory frameworks that set out clear principles, rules, processes, and standards for the COMESA region.

Despite being endowed with significant energy resources, the COMESA countries face enormous challenges in increasing energy access to its ever-increasing population and building a robust physical energy infrastructure. The average electricity access rate in the COMESA region is slightly above 50 percent.

Many countries in the region continue to face an energy crisis and are plagued



RAERESA Chief Executive Officer Dr Mohamedain Seif Elnasr addresses energy experts at the regional consultative workshop in Egypt.

by challenges that include, absence of robust regulatory frameworks, underperforming utilities, lack of funding for new infrastructure, overreliance on coal and hydropower, lack of cost-reflective tariffs and heavy and unsustainable reliance on biomass energy (traditional fuels such as wood fuels, charcoal, animal waste) etc.

The slow pace of power sector development hampers overall economic growth and leads to an unsustainable energy system.

Addressing the energy crisis calls for harmonized policy and regulatory frameworks to strengthen operational and financial efficiency of power utilities and create an enabling environment for attracting private sector investment.

This will enable the cost-effective expansion of generation and transmission infrastructure that will facilitate regional energy trade and increase electricity access.

Speaking at the workshop, the Chief Executive Officer of the COMESA Regional Association of Energy Regulators in Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA) Dr Mohamedain Seif Elnasr said, the experts' inputs were critical before the final validation of the report. Validation of the report will pave the way for its presentation to the Ministers responsible for energy for adoption and eventual implementation.

COMESA - RAERESA is the Implementing Agency of the Project assisted by the Energy Regulators Association of East Africa (EREA) of the East African Community (EAC).

Once fully implemented, this project is expected to promote regional cooperation in energy development, reduce the cost of doing business, increase cross-border energy trade and enhance COMESA's competitiveness in regional and extra-regional markets.



Burundi, DR Congo to Establish Joint Border Committees

Small-scale cross-border traders between Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo have agreed on terms of reference (TORs) that will pave the way for the establishment of Joint Border Committees. These committees will assist in making trade faster, safer, and cheaper across the border.

With support from the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation and Integration Project (GLTFIP) financed by the World Bank, the COMESA convened a three-day technical meeting from 26 to 28 March 2024 in Burundi to assist the two Member States in setting up JBCs along their common borders.

The implementation of the JBCs is in line with the Bilateral Trade Agreement between Burundi and the DRC signed in April 2022.

GLTFIP Coordinator Mr. Adrien Ndayisaba said the two countries negotiated and agreed on the TORs for establishing, managing, and governing JBCs, including their sustainability beyond the project life. During the Bujumbura meeting, the delegates also developed a joint roadmap for the implementation of the JBCs, which are a practical way of implementing the

Coordinated Border Management (CBM) concept.

Currently, tradable commodities, particularly agricultural products, face various regulations, leading to multiple inspections and other controls by border agencies. The meeting noted that the uncoordinated application of these regulations and controls often frustrates the seamless flow of trade across borders, making small-scale cross-border trade costly and risky.

"With JBCs, SSCBT in the Great Lakes region will never be the same. JBCs will be a strong pillar for the implementation of the Simplified Trade Regime between the two countries, which is scheduled to be launched in the second quarter of the year," Mr. Ndayisaba said.

Besides creating a platform for dealing with Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), the JBCs provide alternatives for grievance redress mechanisms for cases of abuse and harassment of women and youth in trade, including gender-based violence. Furthermore, JBCs foster social integration, and the resultant cooperation makes small-scale cross-border trade safer, cheaper, and faster.

Representatives from Burundi and the DRC, drawn from Ministries in charge of Trade, Finance, Agriculture, and Health, border agencies, Central Statistics Offices, and Cross-border Traders' Associations, attended the meeting.

Policy Harmonisation on Trade in Fertilisers and Soil Health Products



Dr Mohamed Kadah

On 7 May 2024, the COMESA Secretariat participated in the Special Summit of the African Union on Fertilizer and Soil Health held in Nairobi, Kenya. Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe addressed the attendees, highlighting the concerning decline of soil health in many parts of Africa. She emphasized that this decline poses a threat to the resilience of agricultural systems and sustainable food production.

Ms Kapwepwe noted that compromised soil health inhibits the soil's ability to respond to yield-enhancing inputs such as fertilizers and improved crop varieties. This situation increases the vulnerability of smallholder farmers and rural communities to external shocks.

"African governments need to enact

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Upgrading the Tunduma/Nakonde One Stop Border Post

A team from COMESA Secretariat and the Ministry of Industry and Trade in Tanzania conducted a three-day supervision mission at Tunduma One Stop Border Post (OSBP) in Tanzania on 14 – 17 May 2024. Its objective was to follow up on implementation of activities for upgrading the Nakonde/Tunduma OSBP. The project is funded by the European Union, under the 11 EDF Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP) and Small-Scale Cross Border Trade Initiatives (SSCBTI).

The mission reviewed the progress, discussed pending activities and challenges taking note that its implementation period expires on 30 December 2024. The meeting also developed an implementation plan and agreed on strategies to fast track the remaining implementation of project activities within the timelines of the Trade Facilitation Programme.

In 2021, COMESA signed a Euros 2.7million

sub delegation agreement with the Government of Tanzania for the upgrading of Nakonde/Tunduma border facility between Zambia and Tanzania. The border clears nearly 70% of the cargo from the port of Dar es Salaam, with about 500 trucks crossing the border daily.

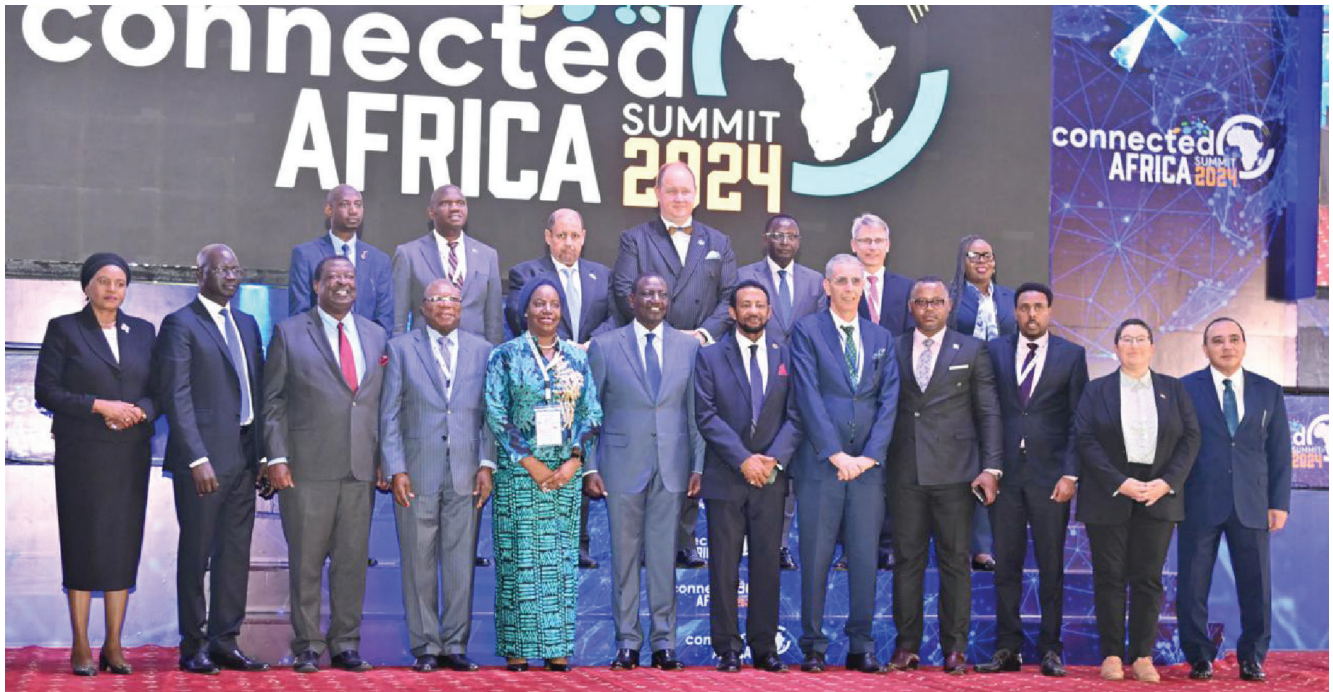
So far, seven projects have been funded and implemented including the installation of Smart Gates system, installation of Mini Lab equipment and construction of warehouse and verification shade. Supply and commissioning of 150kw solar has been done as well as the supply and the installation of CCTV and access controls, ICT equipment and construction of Majengo small scale trader market.

The contractors handed over the report of the CCTV installation to COMESA Secretariat, signifying successful completion of the project. The CCTV project was worth 145,000 euros.

The upgrading of the Tunduma OSBP will enhance the smooth running of the facility, reduce the waiting time that truckers and traders spend at the border. To ensure seamless trade facilitation, through COMESA, similar support has been provided to the Nakonde border on the Zambian side under the respective EDF programmes.

Tunduma/Nakonde are among the six borders in COMESA which are being upgraded through the 11 EDF Trade Facilitation Project and Small-Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative.

COMESA team comprised EDF Project Manager, Mshuka Kamwela, CBT Expert Tasara Muzorori, EDF Programme Officer, Mwiinga Mwiinga and PR Assistant, Phil Kambafwile.



Kenya's President Dr William Ruto (front row 6th from left) COMESA SG, Chileshe Kapwepwe (front row 5th from left) and other dignitaries at the Connected Africa Summit

COMESA at the Africa Connect Summit 2024

The 2024 edition of the Connect Africa Summit was conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, 22 – 24 April 2024, with a resounding call to position Africa as an essential hub of technological innovation. COMESA was a key player in this forum with the Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe among thought leaders' voices including presidents that addressed the Summit.

Themed "Shaping the Future of a Connected Africa: Unlocking Growth Beyond Connectivity" the Summit was dedicated to fostering extensive collaboration and driving investment towards realizing Africa's Digital Agenda 2063 and Vision 2030.

It emphasized the pivotal role of the digital economy in propelling economic growth and development. Besides, it served as a platform for African leaders, investors, and businesses to converge, exploring the immense opportunities offered by the digital economy while tackling pertinent barriers and challenges affecting our economies.

In a panel discussion featuring voices

from African leaders, the Secretary General highlighted COMESA's commitment to leveraging new digital technologies to facilitate seamless trade within the region.

"This commitment is evident through the introduction of various digital initiatives such as the Electronic Certificate of Origin (ECO) system, set to be launched soon, the Cloud Africa Ecosystem, and the implementation of no-stop-border-posts through Smart Border concepts across various borders in the region," she said.

As the largest regional economic community in Africa, Ms. Kapwepwe stressed that COMESA recognizes the critical importance of adopting diverse digital platforms that bolster trade connectivity among various traders in the region.

"We are far apart but digitalization of trade shall help us link with different people from different parts of the continent to trade seamlessly and build our economies," she added.

She called upon governments across Africa to integrate digitalization into their national development agendas and educational curricula. This, she emphasized, is the most effective strategy for propelling progress in the digital realm.

Kenya's President, Dr. William Ruto, who opened the Summit, decried the low levels of digital technology accessibility across Africa, with a mere five percent penetration rate for the entire continent.

He emphasized the profound implications of this disparity for Africa's aspirations in terms of connectivity and economic advancement through the digital economy. He called for higher digital inclusion which he said will intensify job creation and will help deal with the challenge of poverty.

Over 700 delegates attended the Summit including COMESA Directors, Ms Lanka Dorby (ICT) and Dr Bernard Dzawanda (Infrastructure).



Policy Harmonization on Trade...

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enabling policy, legal and regulatory frameworks to guide, support and incentivize the sustainable use of fertilizers and other soil resources," she said in her statement delivered by Dr Mohamed Kadah, Assistant Secretary General in charge of Programmes.

She added that regulatory provisions for sustainable soil management should address all possible uses of fertilizers and other soil health products and their impacts on the soil and the wider ecosystem, while ensuring consistency and streamlined processes across all concerned governmental agencies.

"In this regard, specific attention should be given to quality assurance, packaging and labeling to deal with the challenges of counterfeit and low-quality products on the market," she added.

Ms. Kapwepwe also called for strengthening of the private sector's involvement in driving business around soil fertility improvement for food and nutrition security and economic growth on the continent. She proposed appropriate schemes such as tax incentives to motivate the private sector, including small and medium-size enterprises to invest in fertilizer production and other soil health



African governments need to enact enabling policy, legal and regulatory frameworks to guide, support and incentivize the sustainable use of fertilizers and other soil resources,"

improvement products and services.

Some of COMESA's interventions to drive agricultural transformation and to improve food security in the region include supporting and promoting regional agricultural value chains through initiatives such as the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP).

COMESA is also promoting regional seed trade through harmonisation of seed regulations to trigger seed trade across the region and enhance farmers access to quality seeds for increased productivity. This program is being implemented by the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA), which is a specialized agency of COMESA.

Strengthening agri-food data systems through the development of a digital Regional Food Balance Sheet is another flagship initiative under implementation in partnership with the African Green

Revolution Alliance (AGRA) and several other development partners. This is a platform to provide real-time and forward-looking data to inform evidence-based food security and trade policies as well as business and investment decisions that can spur regional trade and investment in agri-food systems.

The Secretary General further informed the forum about COMESA's program on fertilizer policy and regulatory harmonization in partnership with the African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership. This program is aimed at harmonizing fertilizer policies and financing mechanisms and promoting regional fertilizer trade.

Notwithstanding, the progress made on many regional and continental fronts, she stressed that much more needs to be done, especially on harmonization of policies and regulations as a prerequisite to enhancing regional investment and trade in fertilizers and soil health products and services.



Stakeholders in sanitary and phytosanitary matters meeting in Nairobi, Kenya.

Steps Towards Harmonized Agricultural Policies and Regulations

Stakeholders in sanitary and phytosanitary matters from the COMESA regional held a nine-day workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, on 22 April 2024. Its objective was to revise the COMESA sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regulations, SPS Strategy, and to develop implementation plans for the food safety, plant health, and animal health technical working groups (TWGs).

This initiative aligns with the COMESA Treaty, which requires Member States to cooperate in promoting agricultural exports in the region by coordinating and harmonizing agricultural policies and regulations.

COMESA SPS regulations were developed in 2009, with a focus on the harmonization of SPS policies and measures to facilitate trade in the region and beyond. However, these regulations have been facing difficulties in terms of implementation due to several factors, including lack of technical capacity.

Moreover, with the passage of time, several developments have taken place, such as the African Continental frameworks on trade and SPS. New challenges have also emerged hence the need to revise these tools to reflect the new developments and address new challenges.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of Programmes, Dr Mohamed Kadah, who opened the forum, highlighted the lack of capacity in risk assessment/analysis within the COMESA region. He stressed the need for establishment of a COMESA risk assessment/analysis centre to address this issue, as recommended by the COMESA SPS subcommittee.

He also emphasized the need to revise COMESA SPS regulations to incorporate new developments, tackle emerging challenges, and align with continental SPS frameworks and strategies, including the AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Goods.

Dr Kadah urged Member States to ensure that interventions in the Strategy are comprehensive and inclusive of the wider COMESA region. He also challenged SPS experts to address packaging and labelling in the regulations for a harmonized approach within the region.

Among the participants were representatives of SPS authorities of COMESA Member States, agriculture and livestock experts, the African Union Commission, the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, and the World Organisation for Animal Health – Eastern Africa Sub-Region.

Representatives from the Inter-Africa Phytosanitary Council (IAPSC) Coordinator, and senior government officials attended.

The workshop was organized by the COMESA Division of Industry and Agriculture.



Delegates at the first-ever COMESA Institutions Awareness Forum

Inaugural COMESA Institutions Forum Conducted in Mauritius

The first joint awareness Forum for the 12 COMESA institutions, was conducted in Port Louis, Mauritius on 15 – 16 April 2024, attended by over 120 local and international delegates.

The forum, conducted under the theme “Economic Integration for a Thriving COMESA Anchored on Green Investment, Value Addition, and Tourism,” aimed to enhance the visibility of the COMESA institutions and enable them to showcase their key programs and products. The event also aimed to demonstrate how Member States, such as Mauritius, can derive the highest benefits from their membership.

It was organised by COMESA Secretariat in collaboration with the Government of Mauritius and financially supported by the Trade and Development Bank (TDB), which is one of the 12 COMESA institutions.

The Forum followed a Council of Ministers’ Decision made in November 2023 that COMESA Institutions should organize awareness workshops in Member States to sensitize stakeholders

about their activities and the opportunities available in the COMESA Region.

Opening the forum, Attorney General and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration, and International Trade for Mauritius Hon. Maneesh Gobin appreciated his country’s membership to COMESA. He said this has greatly contributed to the diversification and consolidation of the small economy for the benefit of the people.

“We need partners like COMESA and its institutions to venture into new, high growth potential sectors such as the blue economy, the digital economy, renewable energy, life sciences and property development among others,” Hon. Gobin said.

He noted that Mauritius has over the years moved from a monoculture economy based on sugar production to a successfully diversified economy with key sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and services. The country is now classified in the upper-middle income category with a Gross

Domestic Product of USD 13bn and per capita GDP of over USD 11, 000.

He called for further diversification of the economy taking into consideration the Free Trade Agreements which are important as they open markets and lead to trade reforms and trade facilitation adding, “We need to have a more visible presence in Africa, make our membership in COMESA and the African Union really count.”

Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe described the Forum as an opportunity for the public, private sector, and the ordinary people to learn more on why the COMESA institutions were established and how they benefit the people.

She cited key programmes and products that some of the institutions are implementing for the benefit of Mauritius and other Member States, including the USD\$415 million Regional Infrastructure Finance Facility (RIFF) under COMESA. This programme has a USD\$400 million credit facility for infrastructure projects covering renewable energy, ICT and

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The Capacity Building workshop of officials based at Kipushi border

Strengthening Capacities of Small-Scale Cross Border Trades at DRC-Zambia Border

Over 60 small-scale cross border traders, border management and other government officials from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia at the Kipushi border post participated in a five-day capacity building forum to establish formalised networks at the entry point.

The forum, held on May 13 – 17 2024, is part of COMESA's commitment towards enhancing peace and cross border trade in the Great Lakes region and beyond. It was organised by the COMESA Secretariat through the Trading for Peace Project being implemented by the Governance Peace and Security (GPS) Unit.

Following a recent policy directive by COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the GPS programme convened a joint DRC-Zambia workshop at the Kipushi border to establish a formalised structure of a joint border committee to facilitate cross-border engagement and cooperation.

Key discussions centered on the understanding and implementation of the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime programme, the Charter on the Minimum Standards for the Treatment of Small-Scale Cross-Border Traders, improved ways of conducting conflict prevention,

analysis and resolution. The delegates also discussed the challenges faced by small-scale cross-border traders when conducting cross-border trade at Kipushi.

Speaking on behalf of COMESA Secretariat, Conflict Early Warning Expert in the GPS programme Mr Raymond Kitevu appreciated the Ministers of Foreign Affairs for their guidance and the development partners such as the EU-APSA IV Support Programme for the continued support to the peace building efforts in the region.

"As COMESA, we are here to support peace building efforts and initiatives because without peace there cannot be any trade to talk about. Our thanks go to the cooperating partners who also believe in this resolve," Mr Kitevu said.

Following the training, a Joint Border Committee was established and a plan for the way forward developed. This includes the need for the Secretariat to continue conducting capacity building initiatives and efforts be expedited to operationalise the Committee.

The delegates also noted that the Governments of DRC and Zambia have finalised bilateral talks on implementing the STR and the Agreement is awaiting signing by Ministers responsible for

Trade from the two countries.

Launched in 2007, the Trading for Peace Project is being implemented in the Great Lakes region covering the DRC and its eastern neighbours Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia. It is currently being funded by the EU-APSA programme.

Meanwhile, a four-member team from the World Bank conducted a supervision mission at the COMESA Secretariat on 27-29 May 2024 on the implementation of the implementation of the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation and Integration Programme (GLTFIP). The GLTFIP is a six-year, World Bank-funded project implemented by the governments of Burundi and the DR Congo, as well as COMESA.

Led by Task Team Leader Dr Magueye Dia, the team discussed with the COMESA officials, the progress of the project, the challenges faced so far and the way forward.

It is part of the wider World Bank Great Lakes Initiative, which aims to assist countries in the Great Lakes Region to reduce poverty and promote common prosperity by targeting some of the most vulnerable groups in the border regions of the DR Congo and neighbouring countries.

Inaugural COMESA Institutions Forum...

Transport and USD\$15 million for technical assistance.

Under the renewable energy project, Mauritius intends to reduce carbon emissions by 30%, phase out the use of coal to produce energy and to produce 35% of its electricity needs from renewable sources by 2030.

TDB President and Group Chairman, Mr Tadesse Admassu encouraged the participants to take advantage of the presence of the different heads of COMESA institutions to get informed about their operations. He added that the institutions are meant to help the Member States, and the region develop and hence the need to interact with stakeholders for the benefit of both parties.

In attendance were the following Chief Executive Officers: Mr Manuel Moses, Africa Trade and Investment Development Insurance Agency; Mr Teddy Soobramanien, COMESA Business Council; Ms Jedidah Ndebele, COMESA Clearing House; Dr Lucas Njoroge, COMESA Monetary Institute; Dr. Mohamedain Seif Elnasr, Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa; Mr Nicholas Mudungwe, Africa Leather and Leather Products Institute; Mr Chikakula Miti, COMESA Federation of Women in Business and Dr John Mukuka, Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Other representatives were Mr Boniface Makongo, Director of Competition, COMESA Competition Commission, Mr Ronald Kasapatu representing ZEP-RE, and Mr Mahmoud Mahgoub from the COMESA Regional Investment Agency.



Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe (L) admires one of the leather products produced at the incubation Centre in Kampala

COMESA Leads Efforts to Transform Uganda's Leather Sector

Uganda's leather sector is poised for significant growth as COMESA pledges to support the industry with modern equipment, leading to more efficient production of high-quality leather and leather products.

In early May, Secretary General, Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe visited a leather incubation centre in Kampala, established with the support of the Africa Leather and Leather Products Institute (ALLPI) at the Management Training and Advisory Centre. This leather incubation centre is a hub of innovation and skill development, playing a crucial role in nurturing local talent and promoting sustainable practices within the leather industry.

Kapwepwe's visit highlighted COMESA's commitment to revitalizing and expanding Uganda's leather sector, emphasizing its vast potential. She underscored the importance of such centres in transforming raw materials into high-quality finished products, thereby significantly enhancing the value of Uganda's leather exports.

"Uganda has a huge number of cattle, and the hides and skins from these animals should not go to waste. Instead, we should use them to boost the leather sector by adding value to these raw materials from places like this," she stated.

COMESA's initiatives aim to provide technical support, market access, and financial resources to leather producers, ensuring their competitiveness on the international stage. A critical challenge for Uganda's leather industry has been the lack of modern technology and training.

The SG promised to engage ALLPI to build capacity and assess equipment needs at the centre.

These initiatives are designed to equip local artisans and entrepreneurs with the skills needed to produce world-class leather goods using state-of-the-art equipment. Similar facilities have been established in Malawi and Sudan.

The visit presented an opportunity to showcase success stories from the incubation centre, with several local entrepreneurs sharing their experiences and demonstrating how COMESA's support has enabled them to innovate and grow their businesses.

ALLPI is one of COMESA's specialized institutions.

Integration Programmes Good for the Region – Uganda Veep

The Vice President of Uganda H.E. Jessica Alupo has commended COMESA Secretariat for its efforts in ensuring that regional integration programmes are being implemented across the 21-member bloc. Madam Alupo says the commitment by the Secretariat has contributed to the region benefiting from the various programmes that are being implemented to deepen trade and development.

She was speaking at her office in Kampala, Uganda when she met a COMESA delegation led by Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe on 8 May 2024.

“Your team is doing a commendable job to ensure that most programmes that have been earmarked for implementation are being done. We in Uganda are witnesses to this,” Madam Alupo said. She expressed gratitude towards COMESA for its support to the Ugandan government, particularly in enhancing trade within and across borders.

She highlighted the significant benefits, especially for women and youths, resulting from COMESA’s interventions in promoting seamless trade flows and value addition and enhancing market access, such as the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP) funded by the EU.

Regarding challenges posed by climate change, Vice President Alupo emphasized the need for assistance in building climate-resilient infrastructure, including bridges, to facilitate trade movements, especially on major trade corridors. She also underscored the importance of implementing projects for clean energy production in rural areas to enhance economic activities in those areas that will result in value addition and economic development.



Uganda Vice President H.E. Jessica Alupo (R) receives COMESA Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe

“We therefore need you to come and assist in building climate resilient bridges which can withstand all weather patterns. We also need you to come and implement projects that shall produce for our rural people clean energy through use of technology because we see a lot of potential for value addition in these rural areas,” she added.

In turn, Kapwepwe briefed Vice President Alupo on major regional integration programs and projects in Uganda, highlighting COMESA’s appreciation for Uganda’s membership and longstanding contributions to various initiatives. She reiterated COMESA’s commitment to supporting Uganda’s efforts to promote regional trade, particularly in value-adding sectors.

She emphasized the importance of regional value chains in sectors such as leather, textiles, agriculture, and logistics and the potential to create jobs and reduce post-harvest losses that will result from the Regional Food Balance Sheet (RFBS) programme being implemented

by COMESA.

She cited examples of how surplus commodities in one country could benefit others within the region, an outcome expected to arise from implementation of the digital RFBS initiative to be piloted in six COMESA member states.

“For example, if Uganda has a surplus of Maize because they have good rain patterns, other countries with poor harvest can get the maize from here hence avoiding post-harvest losses on one part and assuring food security on the part of other countries,” Ms Kapwepwe stressed.

During her tour of duty, Kapwepwe also paid a courtesy call on Uganda’s Minister of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development, Hon. Matia Kasaija, and visited a Leather Incubation Centre set up with support by the Africa Leather and Leather Products Institute (ALLPI) at the Management Training and Advisory Centre in Kampala.

Delegates at the COMWARN SVA Consultation Workshop in Rwanda

COMWARN Yields Dividends to More Member States

The National Multi-Stakeholder Consultation on the COMESA Conflict Early Warning System (COMWARN) Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessments (SVRAs) held in Burundi highlighted the significant benefits derived by Member States since the program's inception about 15 years ago.

Conducted from 4 - 8 March 2024, the gathering delved into comprehensive discussions on the anticipated structural vulnerability and resilience drivers in Burundi. Participants explored various options for enhancing resilience across eight thematic areas identified by COMWARN SVRAs: economy, education, environment, governance, health, military, security, and social issues.

Organized by the Governance, Peace, and Security (GPS) programme at the COMESA Secretariat, the event received commendation for its inclusive engagement from stakeholders in Burundi. The meeting underscored how the COMWARN program aligns with

the vision set forth by the policy organs of COMESA in establishing a regional Conflict Early Warning System, which has yielded tangible results over the years.

Dr. Oita Etyang, Head of GPS, acknowledged the commitment of Member States since the COMESA Secretariat was entrusted in 2009, to develop an early warning system. He highlighted the pivotal role played by technical experts from both government and non-government sectors in ensuring the robustness of the COMWARN SVRA methodology and its outcomes.

The consultation in Burundi saw the participation of five Permanent Secretaries and twenty-five Directors from various ministries and agencies, alongside civil society organizations and other stakeholders.

Uganda initiated the series of National Multi-Stakeholder Consultations on COMWARN SVRAs in 2017, followed by Zambia, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Kenya,

Mauritius, Seychelles, and Malawi in subsequent years.

Out of the nine SVRA consultations conducted thus far, Zambia, Malawi, and Kenya have volunteered to undergo the AU Country Structural Vulnerability Resilience Assessment (AU CVSRA) and the AU Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategy (AU CSVMS).

This move, guided by the COMESA Policy Organs, aims to enhance synergies and prevent duplication of efforts.

These developments underscore the growing recognition and utilization of COMWARN across Member States, indicating a collective commitment to regional peace and security.

Promoting Women in Aviation: Eswatini Hosts Pioneering Workshop on Gender Equality in Aviation



Students of Mbuluzi High School in Eswatini with COMESA and Eswatini Civil Aviation officials, during sensitization forum on careers in aviation.

The aviation sector, known for its high technical demands and significant economic impact, has historically seen lower participation rates of women, especially in technical and leadership roles.

As part of a broader initiative to tackle these disparities and foster an inclusive environment that supports the careers of women in this dynamic field, COMESA is leading an initiative to sensitive girls on the range of careers available in aviation.

On 10 – 12 April 2024, the Kingdom of Eswatini, in collaboration with COMESA, hosted a three-day workshop in Sibane, Eswatini aimed at promoting gender equality and expanding career opportunities for women in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO) region's aviation sector.

This event was part of the European Union-funded programme on Support to Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) implemented by COMESA and partner Regional Economic Communities namely the East African Community, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, The Indian Ocean Commission and the Southern African Development Community. Government officials, industry leaders, and stakeholders from across the aviation industry attended.

The event focused on several key areas, including the need to transform the sector's corporate culture to be more inclusive and appealing to female talent. Discussions and training sessions highlighted the necessity of adapting workplace policies that support the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women in aviation.

"The African continent boasts of over 52% female population but has less than 5% in the aviation sector. There is therefore "ample room" for all to ensure that the imbalance in supply and demand is filled in the coming years," the Eswatini Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade Director, Ms. Lungile Portia Dlamini said when she addressed the participants.

Senior Gender Mainstreaming Officer at COMESA Secretariat, MsTsigde Tadele Biyazen said "the aviation sector needs to transform its masculine corporate culture and identity so as to attract, promote and retain female talent."

She added that relevant opportunities needed to be created at state, regional and international level for more women to pursue a career in the aviation sector and, similarly, to advance their career on an equal footing with their male counterparts.

One of the main themes of the workshop was the importance of education, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, which are crucial for careers in aviation. The event emphasized the need for policies that not only promote gender equality but also actively support women's education and career advancement in the aviation sector.

The workshop ended with school awareness visitations to Mbuluzi and Ka-Schiele High Schools led by the Eswatini Civil Aviation Authority and professional women in aviation to highlight and inspire the learners on what aviation fields to choose.

The commitment displayed at the workshop reflected a growing recognition of the importance of diversity and gender equality in driving the aviation industry forward. As the sector continues to expand, fostering an inclusive environment will be key to harnessing the full potential of the workforce.

The ongoing collaboration between COMESA, the Eswatini Government, and other stakeholders is expected to pave the way for more inclusive and equitable growth in aviation across Eastern and Southern Africa.



COMESA States Advance Efforts in Combating Terrorism and Financial Crimes

Most countries in the COMESA region have continued to advance their Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorist Finance (AML/CFT) jurisdictions with support from COMESA, the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG) and other regional partners. This was revealed during the 47th ESAAMLG Task Force of Senior Officials Working Group meeting held from 5 – 12 April 2024 in Huila, Angola.

In particular, COMESA's support was reflected in the reporting during the plenary session as having made a positive impact on the AMF/CFT programme.

"We would like to acknowledge and appreciate the support provided by COMESA in organising a regional training on Financial Investigations and Asset recovery held last year. The training exposed our officers to new strategies that transformed their work. You can see by the results" Director General of the Zimbabwe Financial Intelligence Unit Mr Oliver Chiperesa said.

Some of the support mentioned included the July 2023 omnibus trainings of Law

Enforcement Agencies on Financial Investigations and Asset Recovery that were conducted in Zimbabwe, Uganda and Ethiopia. These trainings benefited police criminal investigations units, revenue authorities, immigration, national prosecution authorities, attorney general's office and the wildlife and parks authorities among others.

In addition, COMESA supported Financial Intelligence Units in Eswatini, Kenya and Rwanda towards their assessment processes in line with joining the Ergmont Group of FIUs to benefit from a global network of immigration sharing through the Egmont platform and training

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"We would like to acknowledge and appreciate the support provided by COMESA in organising a regional training on Financial Investigations and Asset recovery held last year. The training exposed our officers to new strategies that transformed their work. You can see by the results" Mr Oliver Chiperesa

opportunities to meet emerging global AML/CFT trends. COMESA was thrilled to learn that countries such as Kenya was admitted to the Ergmont Group of FIUs in late 2023 and this can be associated with the COMESA support. Furthermore, upon request by Seychelles, COMESA offered its support through the development of AML/CFT Guidelines for Seychelles reporting entities to cover gaps that had been created with the enactment of a new AML/CFT law in 2021.

This decision is supported by the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs who in 2023 re-emphasized the importance of strengthening AML/CFT regimes and urged COMESA to mobilise extra-budgetary resources to ensure existing gaps in support to Member States are covered.

For 2024, COMESA is planning to hold regional training for judges and national prosecutors on prosecution, adjudication and asset recovery as well as a regional training of FIUs on strategic and operational effectiveness and financial intelligence.

Role of Data Science in Analyzing Financial Stability for Central Banks

The use of Data Science tools will benefit COMESA Central banks in extracting value from various data sets to improve their data handling, modelling, forecasting and interpretation particularly in assessing vulnerabilities to financial stability and their evolution over time.

Data science techniques can also support other tasks that are relevant from a financial stability perspective, including, for example, payment systems analysis, consumer risk analysis, and financial inclusion and anti-money laundering monitoring.

COMESA Monetary Institute is therefore building the capacity of analysts in the regional apex banks on the applications of Data Science for Analysis of Financial Stability.

The latest such capacity building workshop was conducted in Nairobi, Kenya on 27th – 31st May 2024 where delegates from 12 COMESA member countries' Central Banks participated. They were from Burundi, DR Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Libya, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Director Dr. Lucas Njoroge, the CMI Director said the broad objective of the training was to introduce to the regional central banks' analysts to the applications of data science for typical analytical challenges such as data handling, modelling, and interpretation.

Participants also shared knowledge and experiences on each country's experiences on the milestones in the applications of data science in analyzing financial stability. Among the participants was the Executive Secretary of the COMESA Clearing House (CCH).



Banks' Staff Trained on Monetary Policy Formulation

In an effort to bolster expertise in monetary policy formulation and implementation within the context of an Inflation Targeting (IT) regime, the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) conducted an intensive training session for representatives of Central banks from 11 Member States.

The workshop, held from 22nd - 27th of April 2024 in Mombasa, Kenya, aligned with the 2024 Work Plan for CMI. It sought to address the evolving landscape of monetary policy frameworks, with a particular focus on the merits and intricacies of IT.

Speaking during the opening session, Director of CMI, Dr. Lucas Njoroge, highlighted the increasing global preference for IT as a monetary policy framework, even among nations with nascent financial markets and institutions.

He underscored the potential for IT to fortify financial institutions and foster market development, dispelling the notion that robust financial infrastructure is a prerequisite for its adoption. "Among the key advantages of IT are its ability to mitigate inflation variability, address time

inconsistency issues, stabilize output, and anchor inflationary expectations in the face of macroeconomic shocks," outlined by Dr. Njoroge.

He noted the ongoing transition of several COMESA member countries towards adopting IT, a trend catalyzed by rapid financial innovations and market integration.

Throughout the training, participants delved into the nuances of IT compared to alternative monetary policy frameworks, such as monetary targeting. They also gained insights into forecasting methodologies, policy analysis systems, and strategies for managing shocks within an IT framework.

A pivotal aspect of the workshop was the exchange of experiences among participants regarding their respective countries' journeys towards implementing IT. Delegates from Burundi, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Kenya, Madagascar, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe shared valuable insights, enriching the collective understanding of IT's practical implications across diverse economic contexts.



HE. Gen. Fred Mwesigye (L) presents his Letter of Credence to the COMESA SG, Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe

Uganda has Enough Stocks to Support Drought Hit States in Southern Africa, says Permanent Rep to COMESA

Drought hit COMESA Member States in southern African region can benefit from Uganda's bumper harvest, says Gen. Fred Mwesigye, the country's newly Permanent Representative to COMESA.

Gen. Mwesigye (Rtd), who is Uganda's High Commissioner to Zambia was speaking at the COMESA Headquarters in Lusaka, on 4 April 2024, when he presented his letter of credence to COMESA Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe. He noted the devastating effects of climate change in the Southern part of the continent and stated that Uganda had a surplus of maize and other crops available to assist COMESA Member States affected by the drought.

"We have recorded a bumper harvest in maize, and we are ready to supply maize to Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe to help cushion the deficit caused by the drought," he added.

During the brief accreditation ceremony, Gen. Mwesigye (Rtd) expressed Uganda's support for COMESA and emphasized the country's commitment to intensified cooperation with the regional bloc to fulfill the aims and objectives of the COMESA Treaty.

SG Kapwepwe commended the government of Uganda for its commitment and dedication to the ideals of COMESA. She highlighted Uganda's active participation in regional integration programs and noted that Uganda, as a founding member of COMESA, has continued to benefit from its membership.

Uganda is one of the Member States with the highest ratio of intra-COMESA trade as percentage of Global COMESA trade by Member States. It recorded a positive growth in 2021 intra-COMESA total export values, from US\$608 million in 2020 to US\$755.3 million in 2021. Additionally, Uganda has benefited from the COMESA Adjustment Facility, with a total approved allocation of 5.59 million Euros since 2014.

"The Fund has been used for the construction of border markets and border export zones. Furthermore, a budget of 2.76 million euros under the Regional Integration Implementation Project phase II has supported the construction of the border export zones in Uganda," Kapwepwe said.

Under the agriculture and industry

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

A \$740,000 grant fund for Climate-Smart Agriculture was also provided in five districts in eastern Uganda. The project successfully piloted the integration of Climate-Smart Agriculture into agricultural production systems and demonstrated a two to 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," the SG stated.

Several other programs are being implemented in Uganda, including the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP), the 50 million African Women Speak Programme, and the Peace and Security Programme.

COMESA, EAC Project to Accelerate Horticulture Sector in Ethiopia



COMESA – EAC Horticulture Accelerator (CEHA) Project staff meeting with Ethiopian government officials in Addis Ababa

Research has shown that Ethiopia's horticulture sector is growing rapidly and is an important element in the country's efforts to diversify exports and contribute directly to poverty reduction. To ensure the continued growth of the sector through increased exports, income employment, and food security, the Ethiopian Ministry for Agriculture and Horticulture Development Sector, is collaborating with the COMESA – East African Community Horticulture Accelerator (CEHA) Project in enhancing growth of the Horticulture Sector in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Ethiopia's Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, the Ethiopian Agriculture Authority, and the Ethiopia Horticulture Producers and Exporters Association are also involved in the project.

The CEHA program was created in 2022 through public and private sector partners to better coordinate policy, value chain development programs, financing, research, and development. The project aims to accelerate the growth of the fruit and vegetable subsector of the COMESA and EAC regions. The priority value chains over the short term are avocado, onion, and Irish potato in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

The programme is set to be launched in

July this year. A pre-launch engagement mission to enhance horticulture development in the region, spearheaded by the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) Chief Executive Officer, Dr John Mukuka, was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in February this year 2024.

This meeting identified the key challenges affecting the horticulture landscape, including; post-entry quarantine for seed movement and the need for capacity building and support in regulatory systems. Potential opportunities were discussed and centred on leveraging European Union-funded projects and CEHA platforms, emphasizing the need for stakeholder coordination and infrastructure development.

The Ethiopian delegation led by the Ethiopian State Minister for Agriculture and Horticulture Development, Hon. Dr Meles Yemen, underscored the importance of the horticulture sector as a key driver of employment and poverty reduction.

He remarked that the agricultural system faced challenges due to its tropical nature and diverse production, with an emphasis on the need for policy harmonization, support for local seed

production, stakeholder coordination, and infrastructure development. The avocado initiative was highlighted as a significant export opportunity endorsed by the Ethiopian Prime Minister, requiring logistics support and infrastructure development.

The meeting reflected a shared dedication to develop the horticulture sector and provided a valuable opportunity for CEHA to engage with Ethiopian horticulture stakeholders and identify areas for collaboration and support.

Key meeting recommendations highlighted the need for policy harmonization, support for local seed production, stakeholder coordination, infrastructure development, and capacity building.

The partnerships underlined the need for accelerating commercial integration of East African horticultural value chains into national, regional, and international markets to promote the growth of horticultural markets.

The next critical actions and steps will involve further discussions on research, seed certification, and collaboration with regional bodies such as IGAD and COMESA.



Officials from the EU Delegation with staff from COMESA Secretariat

COMESA, EU Dialogue on Enhancing Partnership

COMESA Secretariat held a dialogue meeting with representatives of the European Union to discuss the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework expected to cover a period of 3 - 7 years from 2025. The Framework provides an opportunity for COMESA as a Regional Economic Community (REC) to access funding, capacity building and technical assistance to advance regional integration, promote sustainable development and address common challenges in collaboration with the European Union.

The one-day meeting held at COMESA Headquarters on 10 April 2024 was attended by staff from the COMESA Secretariat and from the EU delegation to Zambia and COMESA, with visiting representatives, George Dura and Camille Bing from Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTP), which is a part of the European Commission in Brussels.

Following new developments and realities, the European Union has come up with a new framework called the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument

(NDICI), replacing the European Development Fund (EDF), as the primary financial instrument for enhancing regional integration and cooperation for sustainable economic development of the region.

Mr Matthias Reusing team leader of the European Green deal, Rural Development, Trade Sector at the EU Delegation to Zambia and COMESA led the EU team while COMESA was led by the Assistant Secretary General Administration and Finance Dr Dev Haman.

Dr Haman described the dialogue as a testament of the shared commitment to fostering sustainable growth, inclusivity and prosperity across sub-Saharan Africa.

He commended the EU for having a long history of providing financial and technical support to COMESA and Africa as a whole and increasing its current budget for the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework to address development priorities and emerging challenges and opportunities.

"...addressing our regional issues,

requires a collaborative, multi-faceted strategy that transcend borders. And these collaborative approaches need to be done consultatively at all levels," he added. "It involves forging partnerships, leveraging expertise and aligning resources to achieve impactful, lasting outcomes together."

Mr Reusing said the EU is determined to continue providing technical and financial support to the COMESA to ensure that regional integration is deepened for economic development and sustainable growth.

The meeting discussed the regional Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), which falls under the NDICI. By leveraging on these new developments from the EU, RECs can enhance their capacity to drive regional development agendas to fully achieve their strategic objectives.

COMESA Supports Zambia's Launch of the Green Growth Strategy



Minister Hon. Eng. Collins Nzovu (middle) COMESA Assistant Secretary General, Dr Dev Haman (left), EU Ambassador to Zambia and Special Representative to COMESA Ms. Karolina Stasiak (2nd left) and other guests at the launch of the Zambia Green Growth Strategy.

The Government of Zambia, in collaboration with COMESA and various development partners, launched the National Green Growth Strategy (GGS) in April this year. This strategy aims to drive the country towards sustainable development, prioritizing environmental sustainability, economic growth, and social inclusiveness.

The Zambia Green Growth Strategy (ZGGS) is a comprehensive framework designed to integrate green growth principles into the national development agenda. It focuses on key sectors such as agriculture, energy, and water management, with the goal of enhancing resource efficiency, promoting sustainable infrastructure, and fostering resilience against climate change.

Officially launched in Lusaka on Wednesday, April 24, 2024, by Minister of Green Economy and Environment Hon. Eng. Collins Nzovu, the ZGGS is anchored on four pillars, namely resilient and climate compatible growth, enhanced resource efficiency, enhanced natural capital and improved inclusivity.

Minister Nzovu said the Government has resolved to transition the country to a green economy, because the economic growth attained so far towards the

vision of becoming a prosperous middle-income nation by the year 2030, has come at a great cost to the environment, ecosystems and natural resources.

"Economic growth has also not been inclusive as total poverty remains persistently high and income inequality is equally high compared to the vision 2030 target," the Minister said.

In this regard, the Strategy has been formulated to promote development pathways that lead to Zambia's transition to a low-carbon, resource efficient, resilient and socially inclusive economy by 2030.

The implementation of the ZGGS is also expected to accelerate the attainment the commitments made in Zambia's Nationally Determined Contribution, (NDC), a climate action plan to cut emissions and adapt to climate impacts. Additionally, execution of the interventions in the ZGGS will present Zambia with additional opportunities for creation of green jobs.

On its part, COMESA is fully committed to supporting Member States in their transition to green growth, said the COMESA Assistant Secretary General, Dr Dev Haman in his address to the

gathering.

"We are proud to be part of this transformative initiative in Zambia, which serves as a model for regional collaboration on environmental sustainability," he said and congratulated Zambia for the successful launch.

The launch of the strategy has been made possible through the support of COMESA with funding from the NDC partnership and a coalition of international donors and organizations committed to sustainable development and climate resilience in Africa.

Present at the event were representatives of the Global Green Growth Institute, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the Nationally Determined Contribution Partnership, the European Union Delegation to Zambia.

Others were the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Focus Climate Security and the CGIAR Climate Resilience Initiative and the International Labour Organisation. These provided technical, material, and financial support rendered during the development of the strategy.



Kenyan Women and Youth in Business Sensitized about COMESA

One hundred and forty Kenyan women and youth in business got sensitized about the various COMESA trade instruments at a dialogue forum held in Nairobi in April. COMESA Secretariat and Kenya's State Department for Gender organized the Multistakeholder Capacity Building Dialogue on 3 April 2024 aimed at sensitising women and youth in business about COMESA tools and initiatives which are available for facilitating trade, and ultimately equip women and youth to enhance their participation in regional trade.

Ms Grace Wasike, the Director for Social Economic Empowerment in the State Department for Gender, representing the Principal Secretary, opened the dialogue. She lauded the European Union for its support to the dialogue initiative and highlighted the significant role COMESA is playing in boosting cross border trade through tools such as the Simplified Trade Regime (STR).

"Cross-border trade constitutes a significant component of trade in the region especially by women who

constitute a big percentage of small-scale traders importing and exporting goods worth USD2,000 or less, which are on the Common List of eligible products negotiated and agreed on," she noted. "As a region we have to ensure that regional integration translates into positive opportunities for all citizens," Ms Wasike added.

Ms Tsige Biyazen, Senior Gender Mainstreaming Officer, thanked the Kenyan Government for its partnership in organizing the dialogue.

She explained that the concept of the multistakeholder dialogues is directly linked to COMESA's 2021-2025 Mid-Term Strategic Plan which builds on a commitment to regional integration based on four interdependent pillars namely; Trade and Market Integration, Physical Integration, Production Integration and Gender and Social Integration.

"COMESA recognizes the need for public awareness and continuous engagement with key stakeholders as critical

components of an inclusive regional integration agenda. It bears significance reminding ourselves that women and youth are not only two of COMESA's key stakeholders groups, they are the largest in terms of population across the region," Ms Biyazen said.

The dialogue participants were taken through the various COMESA initiatives, specifically the tools for facilitating trade. They were also sensitized about the COMESA initiatives supported by the European Union through EDF-11, the COMESA gender frameworks as well as the women in business digital platform. Participants had an opportunity to pose questions through an interactive session. The event in Nairobi, Kenya followed similar dialogue forums held in Mauritius and DR Congo. Similar events are planned in more Member States this year.

COMESA Court's Initiative to Bridge Administrative Gaps



Members of the COMESA Legislative Drafting Sub-Committee, staff of the COMESA Secretariat and the Court meeting in Kenya.

Legal experts from the region met in Kenya to review three key legal documents of the COMESA Court of Justice. These include the draft Staff Rules, the draft Executive Management Staff Rules, and a proposal to amend Article 20 of the COMESA Treaty.

The presentation of these draft legal instruments took place during the 25th COMESA Legislative Drafting Sub-Committee meeting in Thika town, Kenya, held from 20 – 29 to April 2024. This Sub - Committee comprises legal experts from Egypt, Djibouti, Kenya, Malawi, and Mauritius.

The Registrar of the Court, Hon. Nyambura Mbatia, informed the meeting that the revision of the Court's Staff Rules aimed to address some gaps in the current rules, such as the lack of clear performance appraisal and disciplinary procedures, and to align the rules with modern legislative drafting best practices.

Furthermore, she highlighted Article 20 of the Treaty, which stipulates the

composition of the Court, regarding the terms and conditions of the judges. The Court is composed of twelve judges appointed by the COMESA Authority of Heads of State, with seven serving in the First Instance Division and five in the Appellate Division.

The proposed amendment stems from the decision made at the 25th Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Justice and Attorneys General, held in Lusaka, Zambia, on 3 November 2022. This decision directed that Article 20 of the COMESA Treaty be amended in accordance with Article 17(4) of the Treaty and be submitted to the Legal Drafting Sub-Committee for legal review.

The Sub-Committee meeting is chaired by Mr. Isaac Chiundira of Malawi, with Kenya is serving as the Vice-Chair and Egypt as the Rapporteur. Mr. Chiundira welcomed the delegates and staff members from the Court and the COMESA Secretariat to the meeting, emphasizing the importance of the task.

Regional Horticulture Programme Launched in Rwanda and Kenya

A regional program to boost the horticulture industry in five countries in eastern and southern Africa has been launched in Kenya and Rwanda. The COMESA, East African Community (EAC) Horticulture Accelerator (CEHA) Programme aims to accelerate the growth of the fruit and vegetable sub-sector in these regions.

CEHA initially focuses on three priority value chains: avocado, onion, and Irish potatoes. These specific value chains face agronomic, logistical, and regulatory challenges that are common to many other fruit and vegetable crops. Rwanda is the second country to launch the CEHA programme, following Kenya.

The programme is being implemented through the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA ACTESA), a specialized arm of the 21-member COMESA bloc. The CEHA program, created in 2022 through a collaboration of public and private sector partners, aims to better coordinate policy, value chain development programs, financing, and research and development. In the short term, the



L-R: Ms Eliya Mumba from COMESA Secretariat, NPCK Chairman Prof. John Nderitu, Ms Catherine Kithinji from Kenya's State Department, COMESA ASGP Amb. Mohamed Kadah and ACTESA CEO Dr John Mukuka

priority value chains are avocado, onion, and Irish potato in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

At the launch of the CEHA Rwanda National Chapter in Kigali on May 23, 2024, ACTESA Chief Executive Officer Dr. John Mukuka announced that the program will facilitate the modernization of regional horticulture value chains across East Africa. This will be achieved by leveraging Rwanda's comparative advantages, infrastructure, and technology.

The priority crops, selected in 2022 through surveys, were based on production capacity, impact potential, market growth, value chain competitiveness, alignment with government priorities, and the degree of development partner investment.

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"In Kenya alone, avocado and Irish potato have the potential to create more than 430,000 additional jobs," Dr. John Mukuka

In Kenya, the programme was unveiled on 10 May 2024 with the launch of the CEHA National Chapter in an event hosted by the National Potato Council of Kenya (NPCK). COMESA's Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Amb. Dr. Mohamed Kadah presided over the event.

The CEHA initiative, targets key value chains such as avocado, onion and potatoes, which have been identified for their high economic impact and job creation potential.

Dr. Mukuka said the three target crops could generate an additional USD 230 million per year for around 450,000 smallholder farmers across Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

"In Kenya alone, avocado and Irish potato have the potential to create more than 430,000 additional jobs," Dr. Mukuka noted in his speech.

At the national levels, the CEHA program will establish strategic horticultural production and processing clusters with agribusiness incubators throughout

five targeted countries, based on their unique comparative and competitive advantages.

CEHA will also strengthen supply chains within these clusters through farmer organizations and digitalization, using processors and/or farmer organizations as entry points to provide financing, technical assistance, and mutually beneficial contracts with farmers, in collaboration with input suppliers.

ACTESA aims to transform the regional horticultural industry, currently valued at USD4 billion, with the goal of doubling or tripling this value within the next 10 years. CEHA will provide opportunities, especially for landowners with access to less than one hectare of land. High-value fruits and vegetables are considered by agriculture experts to be consistently more profitable than cereals and other common staple crops. Moreover, the demand for these products is increasing in both domestic and export markets.

COMESA Toasts Zambia for Launching the Blue Economy Strategy

COMESA commended the Zambian Government for launching the National Blue Economy Strategy and pledged to continue providing technical expertise to assist in its implementation. Speaking during the official launch of the Strategy in Lusaka on 9 May 2024, Assistant Secretary General Dr Dev Haman said the concept of the Blue Economy has been embraced by COMESA Member States as a mechanism to realize sustainable economic development.

The challenge at hand is, however, the limited information on blue economy sustainable planning and development as much of the focus has been primarily on land-based economic development.

“We are very happy to associate ourselves with this significant event which provides strategic direction and effective utilization of the aquatic resources for transformative and sustainable blue economic growth in Zambia,” Dr Haman said. He added that the strategy will guide the nation in advancing knowledge on biotechnology, environmental sustainability, ecosystem services, growth of inland water transport industry, management of fishing industry and better use of underwater mineral resources.

He informed the gathering that Zambia has been earmarked as a high aquaculture potential country and this strategy together with a number of national, regional and international frameworks will foster growth of the sector to full potential.

On its part, COMESA with support of

the African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources has been able to formulate the Regional Blue Economy Strategy which spans a vast domain with 21 Member States comprising nine coastal countries, eight land linked countries and four Ocean States. The COMESA Blue Economy Strategy (2022 to 2032) designates the Blue Economy as covering aquatic and marine areas, including oceans, seas, coastlines, lakes, rivers, and groundwater.

It emphasizes the importance of balancing between sustainable economic development and environmental protection, anchoring this to SDG 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The regional bloc has adopted a clear definition of the blue economy that encompasses a range of several productive sectors such as fisheries and aquaculture, tourism, energy, transport, ports and shipping, underwater extractive industries, environment, research and innovation, marine biotechnology and bioprospecting.

To support sustainable blue growth and development within Zambia and its neighbors, COMESA has undertaken a number of initiatives which include construction of a mini- lab at Luangwa boarder point which serves Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique as a means of improving the quality, safety and value of fish products processed and traded at this boarder point. The Secretariat has also conducted capacity building in risk-based regulation to the public authorities and in self-regulation to fish traders.

This initiative has been rolled out to two other boarder points, Chirundu and Mwami/Mchinji. Additionally, COMESA is in the process of making available modern fish smoking technology at Luangwa which is a prototype successfully implemented in the East and West Africa to increase the shelf life, value and quality of products processed and traded. This technology is specifically targeting women since they are the key players in this value chain node.

To COMESA, this initiative stands out as a gender mainstreaming enterprise that should largely be considered.

Zambia’s Minister of Water Development and Sanitation Hon. Mike Mposha who officially launched the Strategy said its development required a lot of effort, resources, time and most importantly good coordination among all the stakeholders.

“This will support private investment in the development of the Blue Economy sector and it will guide the nation in advancing knowledge on biotechnology, environmental sustainability, ecosystem services, growth of inland water transport industry, management of fishing industry and better use of underwater mineral resources,” said Hon. Mposha.

The Minister also congratulated COMESA on its 30th anniversary which will be commemorated later this year.



IOC Secretary General H.E. Prof. Velayoudom Marimoutou (L) and Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe signing the MoU in Port Louis Mauritius. Standing (R) The Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon. Maneesh Gobin and the President and Chairman of the Trade and Development Mr Admassu Tadesse

COMESA, IOC Signs Pact to Entrench Collaboration

COMESA and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) have signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen their partnership that initially started in 1999. The revamped MoU is intended to deepen the existing collaboration which the two regional economic communities deem highly successful.

It covers among other areas, governance, peace, security and regional stability, regional trade and an inclusive economy, sustainable development through support and protection of people by preserving natural resources (land and sea) and maritime safety. Other areas are development of the ocean industry and the blue economy, as well as joint programmes to mitigate the effects of climate change, promotion of health, capacity-building and promotion of mobility and employability among young people.

The signing ceremony was conducted, Monday 15 April 2024, in Port Louis, Mauritius, with COMESA Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe and IOC Secretary General Prof. Velayoudom

Marimoutou signing for their respective organizations.

Ms Kapwepwe said the areas of cooperation outlined in the MoU are very pertinent and timely as they seek to address the key challenges that COMESA and IOC Member States continue to face in economic and trade operations.

"I am very confident that this MoU will further help to promote the interest of our common Member States and will assist them to emerge as poles of economic growth, trade and investment," Ms Kapwepwe said.

Prof. Marimoutou said both organisations are unwavering in their commitment to enhance regional governance and stability as outlined in the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals commonly known as Agenda 2030.

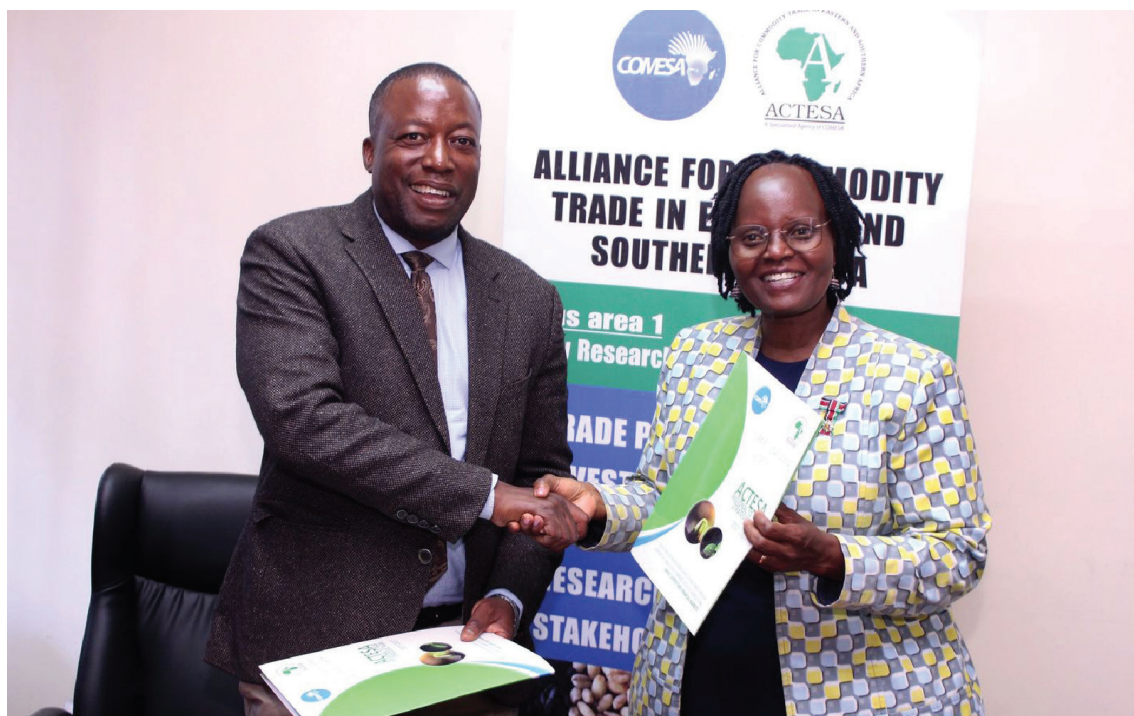
While COMESA as a regional block is also spearheading the African Union's Agenda for the deepening of regional integration, Prof. Marimoutou said the IOC is poised for the promotion of regional integration

at the same time defending the cause of the small island States of the region and those of the African continent.

"As we embark on this journey, let us remember the importance of unity, collaboration and shared purpose," he stressed. "Together, we can overcome challenges, seize opportunities and build a brighter future for generations to come."

The signing ceremony was witnessed by the Attorney General and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade of Mauritius, Hon Maneesh Gobin on the sidelines of the COMESA Institutions Awareness Forum at Hennessy Park Hotel.

Established in 1982, the IOC currently has five Member States namely the Union of Comoros, the Reunion Island, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles. It is the only regional organisation in Africa that is exclusively made up of islands and it promotes the specificities of its Member States on continental and international scenes



COMESA-ACTESA Chief Executive Officer Dr John Mukuka with ISAAA AfriCenter Director Dr Margaret Karembu after signing the MoU in Lusaka

ACTESA and ISAAA AfriCenter Sign MoU

The Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA AfriCenter) to implement the COMESA Biotechnology Implementation Plan (COMBIP).

The MoU signed in Lusaka on 5 June 2024 outlines several areas where ISAAA AfriCenter and COMESA-ACTESA will work together which includes rolling out a communications strategy on agricultural biotechnology and biosafety to raise awareness and address misinformation through facilitating appropriate stakeholder engagement platforms.

They will also build capacity of media practitioners to objectively and accurately communicate biotechnology and biosafety to the general public.

Other areas include supporting sharing of biosafety regulatory experiences among COMESA Member States by creating a

one-stop source of biotech approvals and regulatory systems. Speaking at the signing ceremony, COMESA-ACTESA Chief Executive Officer Dr John Mukuka said the institution is looking forward to the collaborative effort that the MoU brings as the two parties are ready to work together and implement the activities.

"We are happy about this collaboration because we believe that increased awareness and understanding of agricultural biotechnology and biosafety in the COMESA region is needed and a more informed public discourse is long overdue," Dr Mukuka added.

ISAAA AfriCenter Director Dr Margaret Karembu described the MoU as a significant step towards achieving the goals of COMBIP, which has taken more than ten years to be developed.

"Working together with COMESA-ACTESA, we will contribute a more productive and sustainable agricultural sector by harnessing proven scientific

tools," she said.

Through the MoU, the two institutions will identify opportunities for experiential learning about new and emerging breeding innovations for ensuring agricultural competitiveness in the region. It is also expected that strategic linkages will be formulated between the private sector and research institutions to promote investment in agricultural biotechnology development. COMBIP was developed after the endorsement of the COMESA Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy by the Council of Ministers in 2014.

COMESA-ACTESA, is a specialised agency of COMESA which works to address staple food production and boost regional agricultural trade while ISAAA AfriCenter is a non-profit organisation that empowers stakeholders with knowledge on safe use of biotechnology for agricultural advancement.



Malawi Rice SMEs Broker New Export Opportunities at the 64th Zimbabwe International Trade Fair

The COMESA Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP) through the Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) funded the participation of the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Malawi and the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the rice value chain to the 64th Zimbabwe International Trade Fairs (ZITF) from 23rd to 27th April 2024.

ZITF brought together more than 500 business exhibitors from regional and international States. The trade mission explored trade and investment opportunities between the SMEs and relevant businesses from across the world.

The delegation comprising five mall

and export ready Small and Medium Enterprises engaged in rice value chain businesses and representatives from the Ministry and Malawi Investment and Trade Center were part of the mission to support trade negotiations. Rice is one of the high performing export value chains in Malawi with great potential to redefine the country's export growth due to unique aromatic varieties that are on high demand on the global market.

The RECAMP, which is funded by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund aims to enhance competitiveness and market access of SMEs in COMESA Member States by championing development of Value Chains in agro-processing and agro-inputs in particular quality seeds, Horticulture and Leather and Leather products. This funding was provided as part of RECAMP's initiative to promote business linkages to the participating SMEs within the broader private sector engagement under the programme's Technical Assistance Facility initiative.

The trade mission included an exhibition which allowed the participating SMEs to showcase their products to potential wholesale customers and distributors and evaluate entry into new markets and exploit new trade opportunities.

The also help Business to Business (B2B)

dialogues which allowed the participants to engage into experience sharing and learning from their peers. The participants benefitted from discussions and meetings that created new business opportunities and networks.

Specific market access, opportunities and joint venture business were discussed. A B2B engagement was conducted between Malawi SMEs and United Refineries Limited, an agro processor based in Harare, Zimbabwe who showed their interest in off-taking up to 3,000 metric tonnes of Malawian rice monthly utilizing their own logistical chain.

During the engagements, Ms Rose Kadewere, a senior official in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, said "This mission has been inspiring for our SMEs who have managed to showcase their products to international markets, link with new markets and networked with other businesses from the region. COMESA's continued support has been instrumental towards these outcomes".

Further negotiations to reinforce the supply deals made during the trade mission were also held and this would impact positively on the intra and inter COMESA trade.

COMESA and Save the Children Join Forces to Advance Children's Rights in Conflict Zones



Stakeholders' on children affected by conflicts meeting in Eswatini

COMESA has partnered with Save the Children to conduct a comprehensive sensitization program in a proactive move towards addressing the plight of children affected by armed conflict (CAAC) in the COMESA region. This initiative is aimed at empowering Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) to champion the CAAC agenda effectively.

In this regard, a workshop was held from 22 - 25 April 2024 in Mbabane, Eswatini, which underscored the urgent need for collaborative efforts in safeguarding the rights of children caught in conflict zones.

Participants deliberated on various strategies, including the establishment of a regional platform for NHRIs aimed at fostering shared learning and exchanging best practices. Integral to this initiative is the integration and dissemination of the CAAC Agenda at both national and regional levels within the Southern Africa region.

During the workshop, attendees reached several key agreements. They

resolved to develop memorandums of understanding (MoUs) between CSOs and NHRIs focusing on CAAC, co-develop child-specific indicators for early warning systems, and collaborate on data collection, analysis, and reporting. These measures are designed to enhance regional research on CAAC, capacity-building efforts for NHRIs and CSOs, and the implementation of the COMESA CAAC Strategy.

Head of the Governance Peace and Security programme at COMESA, Dr. Oita Etyang emphasized the pivotal role played by NHRI and CSOs in advancing the CAAC agenda.

He stressed the grim realities faced by children in conflict-ridden areas the urgency for collective intervention citing ongoing conflicts in the COMESA region, particularly in Sudan, Eastern DR Congo, and Libya, as alarming examples which should necessitate immediate action.

In response to these challenges, COMESA has developed a comprehensive regional CAAC strategy alongside Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Guidance Note and

Standard Operating Procedures) on Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration of Children Formerly Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups.

"These frameworks are expected to guide Member States in effectively addressing the needs of children affected by armed conflict," Dr Etyang added.

The workshop also served as a platform to exchange experiences and discuss the challenges and opportunities in holding states accountable for protecting children's rights in conflict situations. With nearly 34,000 people forcibly displaced every day globally due to conflict or persecution, the imperative for concerted action to safeguard the rights of children affected by armed conflict cannot be overstated.

Through these collaborative efforts between COMESA, Save the Children, CSOs, and NHRIs, Dr Etyang said there is a renewed commitment to ensuring that the voices of these vulnerable children are heard and their rights protected, even in the most challenging circumstances.



Financial Intelligence Units on strategic and operational effectiveness and financial intelligence held in Kenya 13 – 17 May 2024

Empowering States to Fight Financial Crime and Terrorism

More than 30 officers from Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) in seven COMESA Member States completed a one-week training in Nairobi, Kenya, focused on strategic and operational effectiveness in financial intelligence. Held on 13 - 17 May 2024, the training was part of the COMESA Secretariat's efforts to combat Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) and disrupt criminal networks in the region.

The training was organized in response to Member States' requests to enhance the capabilities of their FIU officials. The goal is to enhance their ability to conduct effective inspections of reporting entities, monitor financial transactions, and detect predicate offenses.

"This is a common demand across our Member States, so we grouped the countries together to deliver the training. This ensures broad benefits and provides a platform for sharing experiences," said Dr. Oita Etyang, Head of the COMESA Governance, Peace, and Security programme.

Participants from Eritrea, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Zambia were trained in strategic and operational analysis and financial intelligence. The training highlighted the region's progress in complying with Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards, including the supervision of reporting entities and the detection and reporting of suspicious transactions.

During the training, delegates exchanged experiences on enhancing information sharing and technical cooperation, especially considering the transnational nature of money laundering and terrorist financing.

A similar training session is planned for later this year, targeting officials from Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

In addition to building the capacity of FIUs, the COMESA Secretariat has supported Law Enforcement Agencies

(LEAs) with training sessions in 2022 and 2023. These sessions focused on investigating, detecting, and prosecuting financial crimes, including IFFs and money laundering, to recover illicit wealth. Further support has been provided to strengthen anti-money laundering laws in accordance with global FATF standards.

These initiatives are supported under the fourth African Union African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA IV) Program, funded by the European Union. Participants at the Regional training for

"This is a common demand across our Member States, so we grouped the countries together to deliver the training. This ensures broad benefits and provides a platform for sharing experiences,"
Dr. Oita Etyang



Zimbabwe Initiates Comprehensive Audits on Energy, Water, and Hydrofluorocarbon

The Government of Zimbabwe, with support from the COMESA Secretariat and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), has launched a comprehensive energy, water, and hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) audits project.

This initiative aims to facilitate energy efficiency measures and the use of renewable energy sources.

Launched on May 21, 2024, in Harare, the project seeks to expand the implementation of energy, water, and HFC audits across private companies and public sector institutions in Zimbabwe. The initiative is designed to promote sustainability and environmental stewardship.

“Our industry, commercial, and domestic consumers face a deficit of energy and water resources to meet their demands. The prevailing power deficit is leading to unmet demand.” Mr. Washington Zhakata

The project will conduct comprehensive audits of energy, water, and HFC usage within various sectors, identifying opportunities for significant improvements in efficiency and sustainability.

According to Mr. Washington Zhakata, Director of Climate Change Management in the Ministry of Environment, Climate, and Wildlife, these audits will enhance energy efficiency in both private and public sectors, promote the adoption of renewable energy sources, reduce carbon emissions, and lessen environmental impact. Additionally, the project aims to improve water conservation practices and minimize the use of HFCs, which are potent greenhouse gases.

“This project also aims to upscale the rollout of detailed energy, water, and HFC use-efficiency audits,” said Mr. Zhakata. “Our industry, commercial, and domestic consumers face a deficit of energy and water resources to meet their demands. The prevailing power deficit is leading to unmet demand.”

The launch provided an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss the project’s

goals, strategies, and expected outcomes.

COMESA Climate Change Programme Manager Ms. Edith Tibahwa thanked the Government of Zimbabwe for nominating the COMESA Secretariat as their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC-P) through UNOPS for the funding provided. She assured the attendees of COMESA’s commitment to successfully implementing the project.

Additionally, she expressed optimism that the grant will assist in providing critical data to inform the implementation of the country’s long-term low-emission development strategy and its revised NDCs to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Zimbabwe is a party to this framework, as well as to the Paris Agreement and the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer.



The COMESA and Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation team signing MoU in Lusaka

COMESA Signs MoU with Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

In May this year, COMESA Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVVR) aimed at cooperation in promoting and fostering sustainable peace, truth, reconciliation, stability and transnational justice in the COMESA region. The two will cooperate with Member States in violence prevention, reconciliation and transitional justice.

The MoU also provides for capacity building for African Union Member States, the COMESA Committee of Elders, Civil Society Organisations, Community Based Organisations, youth and women. Election observers will also be trained in transnational justice, mental health, psychosocial support services and management of elections in conflict-induced countries.

Speaking during the brief ceremony held at the COMESA headquarters in Lusaka on 6 May 2024, Dr Dev

Haman, Assistant Secretary General in charge of administration and finance acknowledged the need for extensive collaboration in order to achieve sustainable peace and security on the continent. He emphasised the need for both COMESA and the CSVVR to pinpoint specific activities to focus on extensively, rather than attempting to work on a larger number of activities at once. This he said would help achieve results efficiently, effectively and at a faster rate.

He also emphasized the need to work on identifying the root causes of violence and for regional bodies to partner in effectively addressing violence and resolving conflicts at the grassroots level in a timely manner.

CSVVR Executive Director Annah Moyo-Kupeta expressed gratitude to COMESA for its positive response to the signing of the MOU and for its willingness to partner in areas of common interest.

She emphasised the importance of strengthening collaboration to achieve a greater impact across the continent in a bid to achieve the "ideal" state of affairs, peaceful, violence and conflict-free societies. "As CSVVR, we have an active, growing engagement with regional bodies, such as COMESA and the African Union Economic Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) as a technical partner to ensure enhanced synergy and resources such as expertise and funds for the undertaking of violence prevention activities across the continent.

The MoU also allows for supporting election management bodies in the region, support to the COMESA inter-parliamentary forum, mainstreaming gender and youth participation in democracy, governance and development initiatives among many other areas.



COMESA Director of Agriculture and Industry, Ms. Providence Mavubi (L) and World Organisation for Animal Health Director General, Dr Monique Eloit signing MoU on collaboration in tackling animal diseases.

COMESA, WOAHA sign MoU on Animal Diseases

COMESA and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate and harmonise the control of Transboundary Animal Diseases and to ensure resilience to disease-related risks and shocks. The MoU will also allow for the design and implementation of epidemiological surveillance, disease reporting and animal health information systems.

Other areas will include support for existing WOAHA reference laboratories and collaborating centres in the COMESA region. They will work together to develop regional guidelines for trade in animals and animal products with WOAHA supporting COMESA Member States on the implementation of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) Annex 7 of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement Protocol on Trade in Goods.

The MoU was signed in Paris, France on 29 May 2024 by WOAHA Director General Dr Monique Eloit and COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, who was represented by the Director of Agriculture and Industry, Mrs Providence Mavubi.

The MoU was signed during the 91st general session and celebration of the

100th year of the establishment of the World Organization for Animal Health. It is based on the need for mutual cooperation in areas of common interest in pursuing their respective mandates and strategic objectives of contribution towards economic prosperity, health and wellbeing of human, animal and the environment.

At the signing, Dr Eloit noted that the increasing level of trade in animal and animal products, movement of people and goods and the complexity of diseases highlighted the importance of inter-regional cooperation in the area of Sanitary and phytosanitary.

“Having an MoU signed will facilitate better collaboration, coordination, knowledge-sharing and expertise around control and eradication of Transboundary Animal Diseases in the region” said Dr. Eloit.

In her remarks, Ms. Mavubi hailed the agreement adding that the areas of cooperation outlined in the MoU are very pertinent, critical and timely as they seek to address the key challenges that COMESA Member States continue to face. This is especially on the SPS and certification of products of animal origin that are being traded among

COMESA Member States and across the world. “The renewal of the partnership through signing of this MoU with WOAHA will ensure further commitment in strengthening and deepening mutually beneficial cooperation in the area of SPS for the benefit of the COMESA citizens,” she added.

Pursuant to the MoU, WOAHA has committed to provide services around higher education, research and knowledge sharing in the area of aquatic and terrestrial animal health and zoonotic diseases. COMESA will also leverage WOAHA’s expertise on animal health and production to strengthen veterinary services, laboratory diagnostic capacities and vaccine and pharmaceutical production.

WOAHA will also provide Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) evaluation and advisory services on veterinary legislation, animal health regulations including supporting animal health policy and strategy development at regional and Member States level. As part of the MoU, COMESA will promote PVS and engagement with the policy makers and private sector, for better veterinary and public health services through COMESA technical and Ministerial Forums.



Delegates at the COMWARN SVA Consultation Workshop in Rwanda

COMWARN Structural Vulnerability Assessments Embraced by Member States

Half of COMESA countries have successfully conducted the Regional Early Warning Structural Vulnerability Assessments which help nations in understanding both their resilience and vulnerabilities to peace and prosperity in the context of the COMWARN early warning model. This understanding has helped countries to commence the development of mitigation strategies to enhance their resilience.

Rwanda became the 10th COMESA Member States to hold a National Multi-Stakeholder Consultation on the COMWARN Structural Vulnerability Assessment (SVA) methodology in line with the guidance provided by the COMESA Policy Organs.

The Rwanda consultations were held in Kigali from 3 - 7 June 2024 during which broad-based forecasted structural vulnerability and resilience drivers were discussed in greater depth and options for building resilience explored. The unique forecasted drivers for Rwanda were drawn from the eight thematic areas for COMWARN SVAs namely

Economy, Education, Environment, Governance, Health, Military, Security and Social.

Speaking at the opening of the workshop, Head of the Governance, Peace and Security (GPS) programme at COMESA Secretariat Dr Oita Etyang commended the Government of Rwanda for its commitment to the COMWARN process and encouraged other countries that are yet to hold the consultations to do so.

“It is encouraging that Member States have embraced the COMWARN and this is a positive stride in strengthening resilience for countries in the region as part of the broader objectives of enhancing both country-specific and regional peace and prosperity,” Dr Etyang said.

At the end of the consultation, the report of the Technical Workshop was presented to the Policy Makers meeting and handed over to the government of Rwanda.

Other COMESA states that have held successful COMWARN Assessments

include Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Kenya, Mauritius, Seychelles, Malawi, and Burundi. Out of the ten SVA consultations, three Member States Zambia, Malawi and Kenya have volunteered to undergo the AU Country Structural Vulnerability Resilience Assessment (AU CVSRA) and the AU Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategy (AU CSVMS) based on the guidance by the COMESA Policy Organs to enhance synergies and avoid duplication.

The collaboration with the AU compliments the COMWARN SVA consultations by providing opportunities for countries to further conduct grassroots consultations in line with the AU CVSRA and the AU CSVMS processes to identify vulnerabilities and develop mitigations strategies.

The COMWARN SVA model has been commended by stakeholders as a home-grown solution that seeks to provide “African Solutions to African Problems”.



Empowering Central Bank Staff with Macro-prudential Policy Framework Skills

Over 40 delegates from 10 Central Banks in COMESA member countries have been trained on developing Macroprudential Policy frameworks (MaP). The training was intended to enhance the understanding of systemic risk, its main drivers and policies designed to mitigate it.

Conducted on 10 – 14 June 2024, the training focused on practical aspects, including governance of MaP agencies, data and infrastructure requirements for systemic risk monitoring, and experiences with MaP policies, highlighting the importance of coordinating micro- and MaP activities.

Dr Lucas Njoroge, Director of the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) said the training imparted knowledge and tools necessary to design and implement effective macroprudential policies in their respective countries.

“Since the 2007-2009 global financial crisis, systemic risk analysis has gained prominence in many jurisdictions

including in the COMESA region, especially by highlighting the limitations of micro-prudential regulation in ensuring the robustness of the entire financial system,” he stressed.

He added that the global financial crisis led to a significant shift towards macroprudential policies, instruments designed for systemic risk mitigation. He observed that the underlying theory of financial stability suggests that significant disruptions in credit and other essential financial services can adversely impact stable economic growth, further emphasizing the importance of MaP policies.

Participants from Burundi, Congo DR, Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia and Zimbabwe also shared knowledge and experiences on each country’s experiences on the milestones in the development and application of macroprudential policy frameworks. The COMESA Clearing House (CCH) also attended the training.



National Gender Sensitisation Workshop for Comoros

Comoros is the latest beneficiary of a COMESA-led National Gender Sensitisation for stakeholders on various policy frameworks covering the COMESA Treaty, Social Charter, the Gender Policy, the Gender Policy Implementation Plan and on the Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines.

This activity was meant to strengthen implementation of these policies at the Member State level through gender mainstreaming and women empowerment. The sensitization workshop conducted on May 30 was attended by representatives from the public, private and civil society. It provided an opportunity for the stakeholders to understand the COMESA documents and discuss the extent to which they are implementing gender mainstreaming and women empowerment initiatives as well as regional and international gender instruments.

Speaking at the workshop, Director of Gender and Social Affairs at COMESA Secretariat Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde

said similar activities had been conducted in other Member States over the years.

"I am hopeful that these national gender sensitisation workshops will not only strengthen your knowledge of the different gender policies and guidelines but will also increase COMESA's engagement with Member States in terms of adopting a citizen centred approach," she said.

She added that Gender equality is undeniably important in the process of sustainable development and serves as the foundation for effective national development policies and initiatives.

The Gender Commissioner at the Ministry of Health, Social Cohesion, Solidarity and Gender Promotion Mrs Maissara Adam Mondoha reiterated Comoros's commitment to the empowerment of women and its link to sustainable development. She assured the participants that the government would take innovative and realistic measures and actions at the national,

community and regional level in line with the common ambitions enshrined in their national gender documents and the COMESA gender policy.

The COMESA Secretariat developed the range of policy framework documents which have been reviewed, endorsed by Member States through the Intergovernmental Committee and Council of Ministers. As an example, the COMESA Gender Policy provides guidance for mainstreaming gender perspectives in policies, structures, systems, programmes and activities of Member States and the secretariat for attainment of Gender Equality, Women and Youth Empowerment and Social Development.

In addition, the COMESA Gender Planning Guidelines contains suggested gender issues which are points of serious disadvantage based on gender that must be addressed in selected sectors and provides suggested interventions. Capiton: get from original article



Middle: Madagascar's Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Mrs Rasata Rafaravavitaika (2nd left) and Dr Dev Haman (right) launch the COMESA Week and Mini Expo at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs offices in Antananarivo on 24 June 2024

First-Ever COMESA Week Celebrated in Madagascar

The first ever COMESA Week was held in Madagascar from June 24 to June 29, 2024, highlighting COMESA's 30 years of impact. The event featured a variety of publicity and stakeholder engagement forums, including trade fairs and a business conference.

Activities throughout the week included multi-stakeholder dialogues focusing on women and youth, a mini expo for small-scale entrepreneurs in Antananarivo, a national media sensitization forum on regional integration, engagements with students at the University of Antananarivo, and several bilateral meetings between high-level government officials from Madagascar and the COMESA Executive.

COMESA Secretariat organized the event in collaboration with the Government of Madagascar, with financial support from the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund. The event

“It is a great pride for my country and for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that we are inaugurating this important and useful event, which is once again a concrete expression of regional cooperation and integration within COMESA,” Ms. Rasata Rafaravavitaika

also marked the launch of activities to commemorate COMESA's 30th anniversary.

The climax of the week was the 5th COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB) Trade Fair and Business Conference, held on June

28 and 29, 2024. This event brought together national chapters of COMFWB from COMESA Member States and women entrepreneurs from Madagascar and across the region. Various international and local corporations supported these events.

The First Lady of Madagascar, Her Excellency Mialy Rajoelina, graced the opening of the trade fair, while the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Rasata Rafaravavitaika, officially launched the COMESA Week activities.

In her address at the opening ceremony, the Minister expressed pride in Madagascar hosting the first COMESA Week.

“It is a great pride for my country and for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that we are inaugurating this important and useful event, which is once again a concrete expression of regional cooperation and

integration within COMESA," she said.

She added, "Madagascar remains a committed member of COMESA, and we are working to ensure that the country takes full advantage of regional integration by actively participating in the different programmes and activities that will enhance trade and development for our people."

Madagascar benefits from several sectoral programs covering trade facilitation, the pharmaceutical sector, air transport, the environment, competitiveness, market access, energy, agriculture, and statistics. Its annual exports to the COMESA region range between \$50 million to \$100 million.

Under the Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM), funded by the European Union through COMESA, the country received nearly 2.6 million euros in direct funding for technical cooperation, much of which has benefited the private sector by equipping production units and supporting access to the African market.

Dr. Dev Haman, Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance at the COMESA Secretariat, commended Madagascar for hosting the first-ever COMESA Week and kicking off the celebration of 30 years of the regional bloc.

Noting Madagascar's low share of intra-COMESA trade, he outlined various sectors where the country holds immense potential.

"The current intra-COMESA trade is just \$14 billion, but there is potentially over \$100 billion worth of trade that Madagascar and other Member States should take advantage of and trade more," he stressed.

He highlighted agriculture and value addition as areas where the country could optimize production.

Madagascar Media Enlisted in COMESA Communications



Madagascar journalists participating in the COMESA media sensitization forum in Antananarivo

As an agenda-setter for public discourse, the media significantly influences what the public considers important by how topics are communicated, framed, and emphasized. Therefore, to gain public traction on any topic, media engagement is essential.

This understanding led to the decision to invite the local media in Madagascar to a one-day sensitization forum about COMESA. The aim was to educate them on what COMESA is, the benefits and opportunities of being a member, and to encourage them to inform the public through their various platforms.

Journalists from various media organizations, along with communication officers from the public sector, participated in the interactive forum hosted by COMESA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Madagascar, with support from the European Union. This event was part of the COMESA Week activities in Antananarivo, Madagascar, and aimed to raise awareness of COMESA's 30-year impact.

Technical experts from the COMESA Secretariat and the Coordinating Ministry guided the journalists through various programs covering trade, industry, agriculture, gender, and support from development partners, among others.

The role of the COMESA Court of Justice was a key topic that generated significant interest from both journalists and government officials in attendance, highlighting the need for more engagement with key stakeholders.

The COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB) also participated in the forum, helping to raise awareness about its mandate and role in regional integration.

Presenters included Ms. Nyambura Mbatia, Registrar of the Court; Mr. Chikakula Miti, Chief Executive Officer of COMFWB; Mrs. Beatrice Hamusonde, Director of Gender; Ms. Esther Mwimba, Senior Private Sector Development Officer; and Ms. Jane Kibiru, Research Fellow.



Participants at the Multi Stakeholders Meeting in Antananarivo, Madagascar

Women, Youth in Focus in COMESA Publicity Blitz

Women and youth in business in Madagascar were key targets for COMESA Week awareness-raising initiatives, given their critical role in economic development. On June 25, 2024, in Antananarivo, over 100 participants attended a multi-stakeholder dialogue organized by the COMESA Secretariat. The objective was to equip women and youth with the necessary tools to enhance their participation in regional trade.

In total, more than 130 participants from public and private sectors and civil society institutions attended the dialogue. They were introduced to various COMESA trade facilitation tools,

COMESA- European Union initiatives supporting women, COMESA's gender frameworks, and the women in business digital platform.

Opening the dialogue, Mr. Kola Emi-Haulain, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Madagascar, emphasized that while women and youth form the bulk of the continent's population, they face significant hurdles in seeking economic livelihoods.

"Women and young people represent the majority of the African population and constitute the main pool of potential, skills, and resources on the continent. They face challenges linked to access to financing, markets, mentoring, and business opportunities," he said.

He described the multi-stakeholder dialogue forum as a valuable platform for information and knowledge exchanges, assisting in identifying the best

strategies and practices to better involve women and young people in regional programmes and trade.

This point was further stressed by COMESA Assistant Secretary General Dr. Dev Haman, who highlighted that being part of COMESA allows entrepreneurs in Madagascar to access a much bigger market, urging women and youth to take advantage of this opportunity.

Mrs. Anna Cichocka, Charge d'Affaires at the European Union (EU) Delegation to Madagascar, noted that the event demonstrated the strong relations between the EU and COMESA.

"An efficient COMESA is impossible without women and youth," she stated. She highlighted the various initiatives the EU supports, focusing on women, such as the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Market Programme (RECAMP).



The 5th COMFWB Trade Fair was a success and attended by various stakeholders including VIPs, government officials, regional and international partners, the media and entrepreneurs

Regional Businesswomen Gather in Madagascar for COMFWB Trade Fair

A splendor of pink marked the COMESA Federation of Women in Business Trade Fair and Conference as local and international female entrepreneurs from 20 COMESA Member States gathered in Antananarivo, Madagascar, on 28 and 29 June 2024.

The Fair themed “Enhancing Participation of Women Entrepreneurs in the COMESA Regional Markets under the AfCFTA anchored on Green Investment, Value Addition, and Tourism” was the 5th since it was launched in 2020.

Previously, the Fair was conducted in Malawi, Zambia, Uganda, and Egypt. It serves as an important platform to promote trade among COMESA Member States, with a special focus on the role of women entrepreneurs in the advancement of intra-regional trade.

The First Lady of Madagascar, Her Excellency Mrs. Mialy Rajoelina opened the trade fair and business conference.

In her statement, Mrs. Rajoelina called on regional governments to invest extensively in empowering women, highlighting their resilience in driving economic emancipation and reducing

poverty.

She stated, “I have seen the determination of women in Madagascar and the COMESA region to better the lives of not only their families but the communities at large. I strongly believe that women are the key to ending poverty and bringing about sustainable development for our region and beyond. We cannot afford to leave them out.”

Dr. Dev Haman, Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance at COMESA Secretariat encouraged traders in Madagascar and beyond to seriously consider the COMESA market, which offers a large market of more than 600 million people. He emphasized the importance of addressing the challenges faced by women to ensure they thrive in various sectors. “By having such events, we are building bridges with all stakeholders, including women, governments, COMESA institutions, partners, and key players,” he added.

Ms. Maureen Sumbwe, the COMFWB Board Chairperson, called for governments to facilitate the free movement of people. She expressed regret over the current difficulties,

citing long flight connections, lack of flexible routes, visa requirements, and inadequate facilities for women travelers.

“It is regrettable that moving from one COMESA country to another has remained a thorn in the flesh,” she noted.

Other speakers at the fair and conference included the Minister of Industrialisation, Trade, and Consumption, Hon. Edgar Razafindravahy; Mr. Issa Sanogo, the United Nations Coordinator in Madagascar; COMFWB Madagascar Chairperson Ms. Fanja Razakaboana; and COMFWB Chief Executive Officer Mr. Chikakula Miti. They all stressed the need to fully empower women in business with the right resources and skills and to open access to markets to promote intra-regional trade.

COMFWB, a COMESA institution dedicated to enhancing the role of women in the business sector, has its head office in Lilongwe, Malawi.

The 5th COMFWB Trade Fair was a success and attended by various stakeholders including VIPs, government officials, regional and international partners, the media and entrepreneurs

Bilateral Meetings - COMESA & Madagascar Govt Officials

COMESA Assistant Secretary General Dr Dev Haman held a bilateral meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Madagascar H.E. Mrs Rasata Rafaravavitafika. The Minister expressed gratitude to the COMESA Secretariat for selecting Madagascar to host the first COMESA Week and to launch the celebration of COMESA's 30th Anniversary. She emphasized that

the event sends a powerful message demonstrating that COMESA is a tangible, accessible market, not just a dream.

She reiterated the importance of COMESA's support for artisans and small entrepreneurs from Island countries like Madagascar, suggesting the initiation of pilot projects this year to provide

tailored support for Malagasy artisans to access various markets. On his part, Dr Haman highlighted that the COMESA Secretariat and its institutions are already aiding artisans in market access. He mentioned the annual "Fashion Show" event organized by African Leather and Leather Products Institute, which assists entrepreneurs and artisans in finding regional and continental markets.

Meeting with the Minister of Trade and Industrialization

Dr Haman held a bilateral meeting with Madagascar's Minister of Trade and Industrialization H.E. Mr. Edgar Razafindravahy who emphasized that industrialization is a key pillar for his country's development. He revealed that Madagascar has adopted various instruments aligned with international standards, including new laws and regulations. Over the past two years, Madagascar has established 75 small industrial units managed by young people and women.

The Assistant Secretary General underscored the importance of cooperative societies, particularly in the production of fruits, vegetables, and other goods. He encouraged Madagascar to exchange and learn from the experiences of other COMESA countries, such as Zambia, which produces beer from cassava.



From Left: Ms Jeromine Fanjanirina, COMESA, Mr Rabenirina Jean Jacques Acting President of National Assembly, COMESA Assistant Secretary General Administration and Finance Dr Dev Haman, Mr Mamy Rabenirina, Quaestor in charge of governance and transparency and Mr Randriamahafanjary Calvin.

Meeting with National Assembly

Another bilateral meeting was held with the Acting President of the National Assembly HE Mr Jean Jacques Rabenirina. The two leaders discussed various issues including the fact that Madagascar is a founding member of COMESA and has continued to implement key programmes.

Dr Haman emphasized that COMESA has developed numerous instruments, with the Assembly playing a crucial role in adopting and ratifying them. He expressed gratitude to the Acting President for the instruments already signed and ratified but encouraged Madagascar to adopt the remaining unsigned and unratified instruments.



L-R: Ms. Nakitto Florence CEHA Uganda chapter chairperson, Mr. Fred Zake, Executive Director of Hortifresh, Dr. John Mukuka, Chief Executive Officer of COMESA-ACTESA, Mr. Steven Byantware, MAAIF Director for Crop Resources

Regional Horticultural Project to Boost Growth in Uganda

On 21 June 2024, the Uganda chapter of the COMESA – East African Community Horticultural Accelerator (CEHA) launched in Kampala in an event that brought together representatives from the private sector, the government, and various partners, signaling a major advancement in the growth of the horticulture industry in the country and region.

Established in 2022, CEHA is a collaborative initiative created by public and private sector partners to better coordinate policy, value chain development programs, financing, and Research and Development (R&D) in the horticulture industry.

The primary aim of CEHA is to accelerate the growth of the Fruit and Vegetable (F&V) sub-sector across the COMESA and EAC regions, which includes Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. Chapters launched this far are Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, while Ethiopia and Tanzania are lined up for launching.

Hortifresh, the Uganda CEHA Secretariat, serves as the apex association for exporters of fresh fruits and vegetables in Uganda. At the launch event, Mr. Fred Zake, Executive Director of Hortifresh, praised the initiative for uniting

Uganda's private sector fresh fruit and vegetable exporters and producers under a common goal. He emphasized the importance of collective effort in achieving the accelerator's objectives.

Paul Mwambu, Commissioner for Crop Inspection and Certification at the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) in Uganda, highlighted the broader economic impact of supporting the horticulture sector.

"Backing up horticulture will lead to economic transformation through an increase in food and nutrition," he stated, underscoring the sector's potential to drive substantial economic and social benefits.

Mr. Steven Byantware, MAAIF Director for Crop Resources, noted the commendable efforts of the Horticulture Accelerator in boosting the growth of Uganda's Fruit and Vegetable sub-sectors. He emphasized that such initiatives are critical for the sustainable development of the agricultural sector.


The CEHA Uganda Chapter's mission is to enhance coordination in policy formulation, value chain development programs, financing, and R&D within the horticulture industry. This initiative

aims to expedite the growth of the F&V sub-sector, contributing to the economic prosperity of the COMESA and EAC regions.

Dr. John Mukuka, Chief Executive Officer of COMESA-ACTESA, expressed optimism for the future of the horticultural industry in the region.

"The COMESA Secretariat through ACTESA is looking forward to the transformation of the horticultural industry in our region, currently valued at USD 4 billion, to double or triple in the next 10 years. CEHA will provide many opportunities for the COMESA and EAC Regions, especially for landowners with access to less than one hectare of land," he remarked.

The launch event also included the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ACTESA and Hortifresh, cementing 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.

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