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COMESA and Harvard Kennedy School to Launch Innovation Leadership Training Programme

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA - The John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) have signed an agreement to co-operate on providing leadership training on innovation for economic development.

“The aim of the leadership training is to expand the capacity of COMESA to plan, design and implement activities in the field of science, technology and innovation,” said COMESA Secretary-General, Mr Sindiso Ngwenya, while signing the agreement at the Secretariat, on 12 April 2012.

“The executive programme will focus on science parks and industrial clusters. This will help the region to build the capacity needed to expand its participation in regional and international trade,” Ngwenya said.

“The programme will help to bring to the region unique expertise on the role of innovation eco-systems in economic growth and global competitiveness,” said Calestous Juma, professor of the practice of international development and focus chair of the Innovation for Economic Development (IFED) executive programme at Harvard Kennedy School (HKS).

“The graduates of the program will join a global network of HKS/IFED alumni. Since its inception in 2002, HKS/IFED has over 500 alumni around the world, four of whom are cabinet ministers in Costa Rica, Jamaica, Malaysia and Tanzania,” Juma said.

According to Ngwenya, COMESA’s vision is to “be a fully integrated, internationally competitive regional economic community with high standards of living for all people, ready to merge into an African Economic Community.”

“Our mission is to achieve sustainable, economic and social progress among our 20 Member States through increased co-operation and integration in trade, customs and monetary affairs, transport, communication and information, technology, industry and energy, gender, agriculture, environment and natural resources.”

Juma commended COMESA for “providing clear leadership in putting science, technology and innovation at the centre of its economic integration efforts.”

COMESA is Africa’s largest trading block with 19 Member States and a total GDP of US \$441 billion.

The Harvard Kennedy School maintains an abiding commitment to advancing the public interest by training skilled, enlightened leaders and solving public problems through world-class scholarship and active engagement with practitioners and decision makers. The school offers the depth, reflection, insight, and excellence of ideas and teaching that can shape future leaders, affect public policies, and make an impact on people and their daily lives.

The training programme, to be held on June 25-26 2012 in Lusaka, Zambia, will train an initial 38 participants drawn from ministries responsible for science, technology, innovation and trade from all Member States.