

The Germany Ambassador to the Republic of Zambia and in-coming special Representative to COMESA has said that regional integration leads to an increase in efficiency, strengthens competitiveness, fosters technical innovation, and thus contributes to the fight against poverty thereby ensuring that higher living standards are maintained by the people.

While presenting his letters of credence to COMESA Secretary-General, Mr Sindiso Ngwenya, on 25 September 2012 at the Secretariat, His Excellency Ambassador Bernd Finke said regional cooperation and integration can make an important contribution to the peace, stability, and democratic consolidation of the region.

He added that COMESA should, therefore, be commended for the role it has played in fostering peace, stability and the promotion of democracy in the region and beyond.

“With 20 Member States and a total population of over 400 million people, COMESA is without a doubt one of the most important among Africa’s 16 regional groupings,” Mr Finke said.

The Germany Ambassador commended COMESA’s programme on election observation stating that it was crucial during the elections in Zambia in 2011, which resulted into a smooth transition of power.

He revealed the plan for COMESA to play an important role in the regional project called “Support for the African Union in the fields of peace and security”, which his government will finance.

“The German Government fully supports the priorities and principles, which COMESA has defined for itself, including the fostering of trade among Member States, the promotion of human rights, the commitment to the rule of law and the principle of good neighborliness,” he said.

He added that Germany provides one fifth of financial support to COMESA through the

European Union and has since pledged to increase bilateral dialogue and co-operation.

“The money seems to be well invested and we appreciate the goals already achieved especially the creation of the COMESA free Trade Area in 2000, the launch of the COMESA Customs Union in 2009 and the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite arrangement that brings together 26 countries – half of the African Union members,” Mr Finke said. Secretary-General, Mr Sindiso Ngwenya, said it is important to support Member States that have just emerged from conflict because it is very difficult to sustain peace and security in such countries if preventive measures are not put in place.

“One cannot over-emphasize the importance of supporting countries emerging from conflict as this mitigates the potential for future conflict,” Mr Ngwenya said.

He added that a lot of efforts are being made towards reaching peace agreements but unfortunately that support and involvement wanes after the agreement is signed, yet available evidence indicates that there is a 50 percent probability of resurgence of violence within the first five years of the resolution of the conflict.

Mr Ngwenya said support targeted to the border areas in support of gainful employment will go a long way in stabilizing post conflict countries and contributing to economic growth and social cohesion.

He further said that COMESA is ready to partner with Germany in the different areas of collaboration including support to the Innovation Fund, Science Technology and Innovation Regional Centers of Excellence and capacity building.

“A ministerial meeting that was held last week in Nairobi, Kenya decided that research, development and innovation in green technology should be up-scaled in the COMESA region and I look forward to exploring the possibilities of obtaining support from your country,” Mr Ngwenya said.

The Secretary-General said COMESA and its Tripartite partners, the EAC and SADC have

embarked on Climate Change programme focusing on climate mitigation and adaption including the promotion of climate resilient agriculture.

He commended the Government of Germany for the support it renders to the COMESA programmes that are aimed at improving the lives of the people in the region.

“I wish to reassure you that my colleagues and I will leave no stone unturned to ensure that co-operation between COMESA and Germany contributes not only to the objectives of COMESA economic integration but also to poverty reduction social justice, economic equity and peace and stability in the region,” Mr Ngwenya said.