

Business at the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Secretariat which closed abruptly on 9th December 2011 after experiencing a fire that destroyed goods worth millions of dollars has returned to normal. The Secretariat opened on Monday 16th January 2012 after a four week break.

The break allowed for renovations to be done to the areas that were extensively damaged during the fire.

COMESA Secretary General Mr. Sindiso Ngwenya addressed the members of staff on Monday and urged them to resume work with renewed vigour and energy as the Secretariat continues to drive the COMESA region into deeper levels of regional integration.

The Secretary General said that it is important for all members of staff at the secretariat to work hand in hand and forget the past and the miseries that the fire could have caused.

He said that the fire that gutted the offices in December should be used to renew the workers' commitment towards the integration agenda for the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and other regional bodies for the betterment of the people in Africa.

And some of the members of staff talked to by e-COMESA crew said that they are ready to work diligently despite the setback caused by the fire. They said that the fire that damaged the COMESA secretariat will not deter them from delivering results and they promised to put in more effort in executing the COMESA agenda.

Currently the affected divisions are operating from the main conference hall at the secretariat with the situation slowly getting back to normal.

The most affected divisions are, IT division, the Administration Division, Investment Promotion and Private Sector Development (IPPSD), Internal Audit and CAADP.

COMESA is a regional economic bloc with nineteen members States drawn from Eastern and Southern Africa.

In 2012, the COMESA Customs Union is expected to be fully operational. As COMESA looks beyond 2012 and the Customs Union, the preparation for the establishment of the Common Market scheduled for 2015 is already underway.

The Programmes related to the Common Market are ongoing and doing well, particularly the liberalization of trade in services programmes, under which the infrastructural services have been earmarked for immediate action.

The infrastructure programmes have assisted to consolidate the regional market by linking up markets where goods, services, people and investments can move freely.