

COMESA and USAID, East Africa, have agreed to continue the existing partnership in the various sectors to enhance regional integration.

Secretary-General, Mr Sindiso Ngwenya also appreciated the continued support and cordial working relationship that exist between the two institutions.

“I thank the US Government for the support it has continued to render to our region in the areas of trade, agriculture and peace and security, which has so far shown positive signs of achievement. The prevailing conflicts in the DRC; and the conflicts in Somalia are high on the COMESA agenda and we are trying very hard to bring the conflicting parties to the negotiation table so that peace can continue to prevail,” Mr Ngwenya said. The Secretary-General was speaking at the Secretariat offices when the US Ambassador to Zambia and Special Representative to COMESA, Mr Mark Storella introduced the New USAID East Africa Mission Director, Dr Jeffery Ashley, to him.

Mr Ngwenya said COMESA has also sent senior citizens from various COMESA states to help solve the problems that the affected Member States are facing.

“In trying to deal with the listed conflicts, stakeholders such as the delegation of Senior Citizens of the African Union are dealing with the issues. The Committee of Senior Citizens was in DRC dealing with the prevailing issues there,” he said.

The Secretary-General also highlighted some of the current COMESA investments undertaken in the region, citing the US \$0.5 billion PTA Bank deal with commercial banks; and the country mobilization projects such as the Ethiopian Water Dam Project. He added that there are various diversification programmes taking place in Zambia and the new COMESA virtual system are among the major development projects the institution has embarked on in order to boost trade in the region.

The new USAID East Africa Mission Director, Dr Jeffery Ashley, said USAID will continue to support COMESA programmes. He cited the signing of a five-year assistance agreement which was signed on 30 September 2012 and extends up to 2017.

“It is important for the assisted programmes to achieve tangible, foreseeable results, which are measurable; and I know there is need for continued support in the existing areas of trade and agriculture. We shall continue to support that,” he concluded.