

The Secretary-General, Mr Sindiso Ngwenya, has said COMESA recognizes the important role that infrastructure, transport and communications play in promoting socio-economic development and interconnectivity among Member States. He added that the stated objective of the common market in Chapter III of Article 3(a) of the COMESA Treaty of attaining sustainable growth and development of the Member States by promoting a more balanced and harmonious development of its production and marketing structures can only be achieved on the basis of a seamless infrastructure network that is supported by robust, regional regulatory policies.

“COMESA has over the years made remarkable progress in implementing its internal market programme through the trade liberalization programme which has seen trade within the FTA grow from US \$3.2 billion in 2000 to US \$18.8 in 2011,” he said adding that during the same period, intra-COMESA investments have grown significantly.

Speaking during the official opening of the Sixth Meeting of Ministers of Infrastructure, Transport, and ICT at Intercontinental Hotel in Lusaka, Zambia on 19 October 2012, Mr Ngwenya said that COMESA continues to be the leader in trade facilitation instruments like the COMESA Yellow Card; COMESA Carrier License for road freight operators; the COMESA CARNET (Regional Customs Bond Guarantee System); the COMESA Harmonized Axle Load and Gross Vehicle Mass Limits; and the COMESA Customs Declaration Document.

“In addition to these programmes, we have established semi autonomous and autonomous institutions, such as the PTA Bank, African Trade Insurance Agency, PTA Re Insurance Company, COMESA Infrastructure Fund; the East African

Power Pool; COMESA Clearing House; the COMESA Monetary Institute; COMESA Regional Investment Agency and the COMESA Federation of Women in Business. I have mentioned these institutions because from time to time the stakeholders present here today are beneficiaries of the services provided by these institutions,” he said. He also informed the gathering that the COMESA Virtual Trade Facilitation System and the COMESA Electronic market Exchange Systems, which was launched in Addis Ababa on 22 September 2012 for the Djibouti-Addis Ababa-Khartoum-Juba Corridors, is now operational on a pilot basis.

“I should hasten to inform the meeting that the implementation of the COMESA Virtual Trade Facilitation System will not require new legislation in Member States because its implementation is part of the COMESA Treaty that has been ratified by all Member States.

The COMESA Treaty is unique in that the negotiators provided detailed policies and regulations for the implementation of COMESA Treaty undertakings,” he said. Mr Ngwenya said that through the implementation of the COMESA CVTFS system the region shall have a real time metric for measuring the efficiency of transit and come up with home grown indicators of the cost of doing business.

“The implementation of the CVFTS will also bridge the ‘last mile’ in the transport and supply logistics chain in that it will now be possible to tell the exact location of cargo when in transit in the COMESA region, which up now has not been possible. Paradoxically, one can locate the movement of a container from China to Djibouti, but not between the Port of Djibouti and Galafi border Post with Ethiopia”, Mr Ngwenya concluded.