

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa COMESA is conducting sensitization workshops with the stakeholders in the various COMESA Member States to inform and educate them on the COMESA Virtual Trade Facilitation system and the COMESA Electronic Market Exchange System.

The workshop held in Kenya had participants drawn from the Kenya Transporters association, African Truckers Online, Kenya International Freight and warehousing Association – KIFWA, Federation of East African Freight Forwarders Association –FEAFFA and other private sector organizations from Nairobi and Mombasa. The project is aimed at coordinating trade activities in terms of information exchange, cargo tracking and monitoring movements of goods in order to insure trade efficiency and ultimately promote competitiveness and consolidate regional integration.

The CVTFS will support related stakeholders in the countries to be more efficient by introducing a coordinated programme of action featuring mutual cooperation and key investments in regional transport infrastructure and trade facilitation.

Speaking when he officially opened the sensitization workshop at Mombasa Beach Hotel, in Kenya on 4th December 2012, COMESA Secretary-General Sindiso Ngwenya said the implementation of the Systems will help the region to leap frog technologically by adopting the CVTFS and the CEMES which when fully implemented will substantially reduce transaction costs (the cost of doing business) and make the individual economies competitive.

The Secretary-General said the first phase of the programme will benefit Government agencies because the implementation of the CVTS will bring about transparency and good governance in the monitoring and management of transit trade and in the means of transport, in that the CVTS provides visibility of both the cargo and truck in real time.

He further said the second phase will see the roll out of the functionalities which are under development like basic fleet management , which will include but not limited to speeding, dangerous driving , designation by truck owners and operators of lay overs for drivers, Over load Control, installation of navigation systems to enhance road safety, control of fuel consumption ,International Standard Organization(ISO) Certification standard for night driving and a system that can report to the truck operators/ owners of GSM jamming.

Ngwenya said time is up for businessmen and women to do business that is not competitive as this contributes to the depletion of the living standards of the people in the COMESA region.

Ngwenya also show-cased the CMESA Transit Plate that will be stuck on every truck moving under the COMESA Virtual Trade facilitation System along the corridors. “This Transit plate will be an identity for all the COMESA Carrier trucks so that when you reach the boarder, you don’t have to have any problems with customs provided that you have all the correct documentations”, He said.

The Secretary-General said that 2013 is a year of implementation saying there has been too much paper work and talk in the past and it’s now time to implement the proposals that are on paper.

He said that most of the project implementation will done through the Micro, Small and medium Scale entrepreneurs (MSMEs) because they are the back born of the economic development in the region accounting for 60 percent of GDP.

“Dear participants, with the advent of new technologies, there is no need for us to be using old systems that will make doing business expensive, therefore these COMESA initiated systems are intended to firstly make you goods and vehicles safe from point of origin up to destination”, Ngwenya said.

He added; “As for the Electronic Market Exchange system, it will bring all the stakeholders registered with COMESA on the one platform that will allow you to see who does what, where, when, and how.”

Ngwenya said the Electronic Market Exchange System is an online system that will provide detailed information on the goods available, where to find them and the costing related to the good and services.

The participants were also given a real time presentation of the CVTFS by the project consultant who showed the architecture of the system which has the following components i.e., Data exchange module which integrates with the revenue collection bodies, the second one was the Risk Management system, the third being the Transit bond and finally the tracking system.

The next workshop will be held in Kampala, Uganda.