

Secretary-General Sindiso Ngwenya has urged the transportation industry in Burundi to reduce the cost of transporting a 40-foot container from Mombasa Port by 40% initially with an overall objective of reducing it further by 60%. He proposed that transporting a truck of goods on the said route should reduce from US \$5,000 to US \$3,200. He said this during the third COMESA Virtual Trade Facilitation System (CVTFS) and COMESA Electronic Market Exchange system – (CEMES) sensitization workshop held at the Royal Place Hotel in Bujumbura, Burundi.

He pointed out that congestion at ports greatly contributes to the increase in transport costs but this should be a thing of the past because there is now a good and effective transport management system at Mombasa Port in Kenya and all containers have been cleared.

Mr Ngwenya revealed that because of the COMESA Virtual Trade Facilitation System (CVTFS), Mombasa Port has scored many successes regarding decongesting the port and this has resulted in it being earmarked by many companies for trans-shipping of goods from various parts of the world.

“Currently there are many non-tariff barriers to trade in the tripartite (EAC, COMESA, SADC) region that have caused the regional groupings to rely on international markets. Once this system is implemented there will be few problems that the transporters will face in the movement of goods. Things like fuel siphoning will stop, and the cost of transporting goods will go down,” he said.

He added: “Trucks will be installed with sensors that will tell you that the fuel tank has been opened and fuel is being removed, that way you will save on the thefts of fuel.”

Ngwenya bemoaned the high cost of doing business in the East African region and urged the Burundi business community to quickly adopt the COMESA initiative, as this will remove the many barriers to trade.