

The flags of the Member States of COMESA were flying high at this year's Seychelles International Carnival, an annual event that brings together countries from all over Africa and the world to showcase their identity and cultural heritage in the spirit of promoting trade and tourism linkages at a regional and international level. This was in response to an invitation from the Government of Seychelles, which requested COMESA to participate and raise awareness of the institution's key role in promoting the tourism and trade sectors in the region.

In August 2012, policy makers and industry stakeholders of the tourism sector met in the First COMESA Sustainable Tourism Public Private Dialogue, in Nairobi, Kenya, and adopted the COMESA Sustainable tourism policy framework. This framework is a guideline that provides key common agendas that will enhance competitiveness and visibility for COMESA's tourism sector. At the August event the tourism industry formed a regional private sector working group under the COMESA Business Council, to carry out core programmes focused on addressing the constraints they face as businesses, and also increase cross border linkages with other tourism partners, in the spirit of promoting regional tourism.

"This is the first time that a Regional Economic Community has flown the flags of its Member States at such a key international event in Africa. We are honored that COMESA has participated in this prestigious annual event in Seychelles," said Mr Alain St. Ange, Seychelles Minister of Tourism and Culture.

He added that COMESA had set a good example of how RECs can actively participate in Member States' agendas in the spirit of regional integration.

During the three day event held 08-11 February 2013, the COMESA Business Council also met with the business community in Seychelles. The Seychelles Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) hosted a one-day seminar that brought together over 30 companies who were sensitized by the CBC on the business opportunities in the region. The CBC expressed their appreciation towards the goodwill of the Secretary-General of the SCCI, Ms Germaine Michaud, for hosting this key platform of sensitization to their membership.

In her presentation, the CBC Coordinator, Ms Sandra Uwera, talked about the trade and investment trends in the region, highlighting the various progresses made by COMESA in improving the business environment and making it more competitive for regional and foreign

investment opportunities. With regards to increasing intra-regional trade, she highlighted the various instruments that have been put in place to support trade facilitation, statistical data and analysis systems for industrial benefit as well as the continued efforts to eliminate non tariff barriers. The CBC also informed the participants of the presence of various financial institutions such as the PTA Bank, and the Re-Insurance company that support trade financing and guarantee facilities for SMEs and industry.

The COMESA delegation comprised of Mr Walter Talma, the Country Officer of Seychelles at the Secretariat; the Tourism Ambassador for Seychelles in Zambia, Mr Jamil Butt and the CBC Secretariat.