

The COMESA Innovation Council will be launched on Monday, 08 April 2013, in Kampala, Uganda at the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology Headquarters.

His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the President of the Republic of Uganda and the Chairperson of the COMESA Authority, will launch the Council, comprising of eight eminent persons from the Member States.

The COMESA Committee of Ministers of Science and Technology recommended the creation of an Innovation Council made up of eminent experts to advise on science and technology; and at their 2012 Summit in Kampala, COMESA Heads of State approved the creation of the expert advisory body. The creation of the Innovation Council represents a landmark move in Africa's institutional history because it is the first major political recognition of the critical role that technological innovation can play in enhancing Africa's global competitiveness.

According to Prof. Juma Calestous, Professor at the Harvard Kennedy School, it is critical that the advisory council is made up of African experts; a break from the past when such advisory functions would normally be performed by consultants or experts from international agencies. The timing of the creation of the council is particularly strategic given Africa's potential for transforming itself and the world market through emerging technologies.

For example, Africa used mobile phones to create a radically new way of transferring money, thereby restructuring the banking sector. Mobile technology is on the verge of transforming other traditional industries including education and health. In education, Africa can leapfrog into digital books and mobile learning to become a leading source of new educational businesses and industries. In healthcare, mobile technology will transform the very idea of a hospital. Much of healthcare will shift to homes that will in future be redesigned to function as extensions of hospitals. Similarly, new businesses and industries will grow out of it.

The Members of the Innovation Council are: Dr Dhanjay Jhurry (Mauritius), Dr Jonathan M. Tambatamba (Zambia), Prof. Aggrey Ambali (Malawi), Prof. Lydia Makhubu (Swaziland), Prof. Marie Claire Yandju (DRC), Prof. Meoli Kashorda (Kenya), Prof. Silas Lwakabamba (Rwanda), and Prof. Venasius Baryamureeba (Uganda).