The Federation of National Association of Women in Business (FEMCOM) has launched the Sudanese Business Women Secretariat as the FEMCOM National Chapter. This is intended to champion the improvement of economic conditions of women in COMESA Member States.

The Sudanese National Chapter will work closely with FEMCOM Secretariat to facilitate and create an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs to thrive within Sudan and in COMESA region.

The Minister of Trade of Sudan Hon. Elsadig Mohamed appreciated the efforts made by COMESA in empowering women and enabling them to contribute to socio and economic transformation and sustainable growth.

“It goes without saying that it is impossible to implement effective programmes for rural transformation without involvement of women entrepreneurs,” Hon Mohamed said in a statement presented by the COMESA Desk Officer Mr Mohammed Ali at the launch of the national Chapter and rebranding of its offices in Khartoum.

The Minister said that in 2012 Sudan’s total exports to the COMESA region was valued at US$ 481.9 Million representing a share of 6.4% of total COMESA intra-regional exports. Imports were valued at US$796.1 Million representing 9.7% of total intra-COMESA imports. This excluded the informal trade across the borders that currently goes largely.

“These figures indicate that there is still an opportunity for Sudan to explore the huge COMESA market which has a consumer population of 490 million of which more than 50% are women. We must utilize this potential,” he added.

Hon. Mohamed said there was need to address some socio-economic, structural and legal constraints that affect the growth of business.

“Going forward, I urge the leadership of Sudanese Business Women to work closely with Ministry of Trade, other Government Ministries, private sector on some of these challenges,” he said.

FEMCOM Chief Executive Officer Mrs. Katherine Ichoya said the Chapter will ensure that women in Sudan are encouraged to setup their own businesses. This will ultimately promote the existing businesses through facilitation of training, lending facilities, market research and investment opportunities.

Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce and Secretary General of the Sudanese Businessmen and Employers Federation, Mr Samir Abamed Gasim described the launch as a big day for Sudanese women who are very active and have a big share of contribution to the economy.

“This office is very important for the service improvement and upgrading of the women through training and value addition to their business,” he said.

The rebranded office will also help in the promotion and expansion of existing enterprises through facilitation of training, providing lending facilities, market research and investment opportunities.
President Faure meets COMESA SG in Seychelles

President of Seychelles H.E. Danny Faure held talks with Secretary General Mr. Sindiso Ngwenya when the latter paid a courtesy call on him at State House in Seychelles, Tuesday August 29, 2017. The SG was in the country to attend the 33rd Annual General Meeting of the Trade and Development Bank (TDB).

President Faure welcomed Mr. Ngwenya to Seychelles and expressed his appreciation to him for having taken the time to brief him in person on the various ongoing COMESA programmes that exist for Seychelles.

During the meeting, Mr. Ngwenya highlighted COMESA programmes such as capacity building, veterinary services, trade facilitation, and maritime security. He also spoke about the new programmes being developed such as digital trade facilitation, which minimize transaction costs using innovative technology.

Mr. Ngwenya also briefed the President on the preparations for the upcoming COMESA Summit and thanked him for his leadership in support of the various COMESA programmes being implemented in Seychelles (Courtesy State House, Seychelles).

New technology platforms key to boosting tourism – Kagame

The 41st Annual World Tourism Conference opened in Kigali, Rwanda today with a call from President Paul Kagame for African countries to take advantage of new technologies particularly innovative digital platforms to develop the tourism sector.

Speaking when he officially opened the conference, President Kagame said African countries should be ready to partner with technology companies and work regionally to take the tourism industry to greater heights. He added that a lot can be achieved if key decisions are implemented to facilitate cooperation and investment in the tourism sector.

The President cited the East African region as one that has made good progress in collaborating as one bloc and taking tangible steps to increase tourism levels.

“We in the East African Community have tried to make free movement possible and it is already a reality by introducing a single tourism visa, passport free travel within this region and visa on arrival,” the President Kagame said. “We however need more cooperation in the continent to increase the number of visitors to facilitate trade and investment.”

The Head of State also appealed to African governments to open their skies for more international airlines.

Meanwhile, the COMESA Business Council (CBC) will this week launch a regional tourism and wildlife heritage handbook to promote COMESA as a single tourist and wildlife destination. The handbook will be launched during the conference.

The handbook, which will be the first of its kind for the region, will help raise awareness on sustainable tourism and wildlife conservation in the bloc.

The publications it titled ‘The COMESA Tourism and Wildlife Heritage Handbook’ with the theme “Single Market – Countless destinations” and features all the 19 COMESA countries showcasing the different tourism and wildlife products in the region.

This initiative is also meant to promote cross border linkages and partnerships between various stakeholders in the tourism industry in COMESA, it will be used to advocate for responsible business practices towards environmental sustainability with regards to tourism in the region.

Speaking ahead of the conference, CBC Chief Executive Officer Ms. Sandra Uwera said: “This handbook provides tourists coming to COMESA a way to make their adventures more exciting, a taste of what to look for when they visit the COMESA region.”

The handbook is part of the COMESA Sustainable Tourism Development Strategic Framework which has been recognized by Member States as a model to develop national tourism action plans to boost competitiveness of the sector.

The 41st World Tourism Conference was attended by Ministers of Tourism from some African countries, the Secretary General of UNCTAD Dr Mukhisa Kituyi and Corporate Council of Africa Chief Executive Officer Ms Florizelle Liser. The Chair of the COMESA Business Council Dr Amany Asfour led the COMESA team to the Conference.
‘Treat All Policy’ hailed in dealing with HIV/AIDS

Following the announcement by the Government of Zambia to adopt the Treat All Policy in dealing with HIV/AIDS, COMESA Director of Gender and Social Affairs Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde has hailed the move saying it will ensure no one is left behind in accessing treatment, care and support.

The Treat All Policy provides for the integration of HIV and AIDS services in routine health service delivery systems such as primary health care and other health services. It entails routine testing for HIV for everyone who seeks medical attention in both the private and government hospitals.

Speaking in her office in Lusaka, Mrs Hamusonde said: “Citizens of the region should take the introduction of mandatory testing for HIV as an opportunity that will enable them enjoy good health and well being.”

This is consistent with COMESA Regional HIV and AIDS Policy which provides for a regional vehicle to guide Member States in their national responses to HIV and AIDS. The policy aims at enabling the region to achieve the 2030 targets which include: ending discrimination in all spheres; universal access to treatment to end AIDS and AIDS-related deaths; prevention of new HIV infections among all groups through HIV combination prevention.

Mrs Hamusonde said: “To achieve these targets, the COMESA HIV and AIDS Policy calls upon Member States to adopt the Treat All Policy so that No One is Left Behind in accessing HIV Treatment, care and support.”

The COMESA HIV and AIDS Policy is inspired by Article 110 of its Treaty that commits Member States to “…control of pandemics or epidemics, communicable and vector borne diseases that might endanger the health and welfare of citizens of the Common Market”. The Policy is backed by the African Union, Catalytic Framework to End AIDS, TB, and Eliminate Malaria in Africa by 2030; Global Sustainable Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

In 2013, there were an estimated 24.7 million people living with HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa, nearly 71 per cent of the global total. Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe (all members of COMESA), Nigeria and South Africa accounted for 81 per cent of all people living with HIV in the region, according to the AU.

AU Programme honours Secretary General

The Program Coordinator for Reinforcement of Veterinary Governance in Africa (VET-GOV) Dr. Joseph Mamo hands over an award to the Secretary General Sindiso Ngwenya on 23th August 2017 at the Secretariat. The award was given by African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources in recognition of his contribution towards the Veterinary Governance Programmes implementation in the COMESA Region and in Africa.