



OFFICIAL GAZETTE

of the

**COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN
AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (COMESA)**

Volume 17 No. 16

20 November 2012

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE COMESA
INNOVATION COUNCIL AND INNOVATION AWARDS**

Introduction

1. Exponential growth in scientific and technical knowledge provides unique opportunities for Africa to solve its critical challenges related to meeting basic needs, participating in the growing economy, addressing ecological and climate change problems and improving governance. African leaders have in recent years been placing increasing emphasis on the role of science, technology and innovation. Decisions taken (8th African Union Summit, 2007; 28th Meeting of the COMESA Council of Ministers, 2010) represent a clear expression of political will and interest in introducing specific reforms and actions to endorse the role of science and technology in regional development.

2. COMESA Member States recognize the importance of science and technology in socio-economic and cultural development and have agreed to cooperate in various fields as stated in the decision of the 2010 COMESA Summit on Science and Technology Development. The need for concrete projects that will deliver tangible results for the region is the greatest priority, while mainstreaming science and technology in all COMESA programmes and adopting a cost effective approach that does not financially overburden the Member States were also emphasized as equally important. Concrete proposals include the establishment of common science and technology parks, the establishment of an ICT Training and Skill Development Fund, the elaboration of a common curriculum for COMESA in ICT and the establishment of data bases of individuals that can assist in the implementation of science and technology initiatives

Enabling Decision:

3. The first meeting of COMESA Ministers responsible for science, technology and innovation was held on 28 June 2012. During the meeting, the Ministers recognized the critical urgency of putting in place mechanisms for harnessing and mobilizing existing knowledge from around the world, and of doing this in a structured manner that benefits all COMESA Member States. The experts underscored that there is need for adequate absorptive capacity in the Member States that can be deployed to put the knowledge to immediate practical use. In this regard, the Ministers decided to establish a COMESA Innovation Council.

4. The Innovation Council should be made up of eminent personalities drawn from academia, business and government that can use their stature, experience, knowledge, and their repertoire of contacts. The Innovation Council should have, as its primary responsibility, the task of providing advice to Member States relating to existing and new knowledge and innovations, and best ways of applying the knowledge and innovations in the Member States. The Council will be responsible, in addition, for choosing winners of the COMESA Innovation Award, which should be given annually. Procedures for the awards will be modeled along those for the Queen Elizabeth Price for Engineering (worth £1 million). The Ministers noted that this prize will mean that the UK will increasingly be a repository of outstanding engineering ideas accumulated through the search for winners of the prize. This will open up new opportunities for cooperation on knowledge-sharing with COMESA Member States.

5. The Innovation Council will operate under the auspices of and be convened by the Secretary-General, but it will be available to any Member State that may wish to seek its assistance.

Terms of Reference for the Innovation Council

- (a) Assist the Secretary-General in ensuring that scientific and technological aspects of development are integrated in the functioning of COMESA;
- (b) The Innovation Council shall serve as an advisory council to the committee on Science Technology and Innovation, Members States and the regional centers of excellence;
- (c) Contribute to the development of a COMESA Innovation Roadmap and advise on strategies for its implementation;
- (d) The Council shall promote STI collaboration with International and regional Institutions such NEPAD, AUC African Ministers Conference on Science and Technology (AMCOST)
- (e) The council shall oversee the design and launch of annual innovation forum to provide platform for sharing innovation experience in the region.
- (f) Identify issues for which science, technology and innovation advice to the Secretary-General is needed;
- (g) Determine the procedures needed for proving the said advice, which may range from ad hoc assessments to working groups on specific issues of relevance to COMESA;
- (h) Oversee the preparation and submission of advisory reports, regular briefings and statements;
- (i) Liaise with other functional departments of COMESA and other organs on matters related to science, technology and innovation;
- (j) Determine areas where COMESA needs the appointment of science, technology and innovation fellows to work in Secretary-General's Office on specific tasks;
- (k) Oversee the design and launch of the COMESA Innovation Award aimed at recognizing and celebrating individuals or organizations that have used science, technology and innovation to make outstanding contributions to the regional integration and development agenda;
- (l) Advise COMESA on the design and publication of an annual COMESA Innovation Report;
- (m) Undertake any other functions as determined by the Secretary-General;

Composition of the Innovation Council

6. The 10-person Council shall be made up of eminent personalities drawn from government, academia, business and civil society appointed for three years renewable once in their personal capacities and their participation in the innovation council shall be on a non-remunerative basis.

Meetings and Funding of the Innovation Council

- (a) The council shall meet at least once a year in person with the other meetings being conducted electronically.
- (b) The Secretary-General shall convene the meetings of the Innovation Council and the Council shall nominate a chairperson from among themselves.
- (c) The secretariat shall provide funding for the innovation council operations

Terms of Reference for the COMESA Annual Innovation Awards

7. The aim of the COMESA Innovation Awards, worth US \$1,000,000, is to recognize and celebrate individuals and institutions that have used STI in practical applications to further the COMESA regional integration and development agenda. The proposed Award categories will include: entrepreneurship, women, and young innovators.
8. The prize shall be awarded annually on the occasion of the COMESA Summit and presented to the winner or winners by the Chairperson of the COMESA Authority.

9. There will be an open nomination process but individuals or institutions will not be allowed to nominate themselves. The eligibility will be restricted to the COMESA region.

10. The criteria for nomination shall be:

- a) What has the person or institution done that has made significant contributions to regional development and integration?
- b) In what way has the innovation been of benefit to COMESA/ Member States?
- c) Creativity of the innovator will among others be assessed on the:
 - i. Novelty of the idea
 - ii. Job creation and poverty alleviation
 - iii. Positive impact on human development
- d) Contribution to the development of the green economy in the region

11. The terms of reference shall be reviewed from time to time to respond to the emerging needs of the region.

12. The COMESA Secretary-General with the advice of the Innovation Council will establish a 10-person judging panel. The name of the winner will be submitted to the COMESA Council of Ministers who will recommend the successful nominees to the Summit of the Heads of State and Governments.