

**Signing ceremony of the Financing Agreement for the Regional
Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme**

18th February 2019 - Lusaka

Opening remarks by H.E. Alessandro Mariani

Ambassador of the European Union to Zambia & COMESA

H.E. Ms Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, COMESA Secretary General,

*The COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes,
Ambassador Kipyego Cheluget*

*The COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Finance &
Administration Dr Dev Haman –*

Ambassadors from EU Member States

COMESA colleagues, colleagues from the EU Delegation

Colleagues from the media

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

I am delighted to participate this morning in the signing ceremony of the Finance Agreement for the 10 million Euro "**RECAMP**" Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme. This is the 3rd programme that the European Union is signing under the 11th European Development Fund with COMESA in the last 12 months, following the signature of the other two very important programmes on Trade Facilitation and Small Scale Cross Border Trade that are currently being implemented.

Secretary General, ladies and gentlemen,

The European Union has committed EUR 10 Million for this programme with the aim to improve competitiveness and market access of SMEs and private sector in a selected number of value chains in the COMESA region. The specificity of this programme is that it will entail a much greater role of the private sector in its implementation, alongside with some COMESA specialised institutions COMESA Business Council, Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa, COMESA Regional Investment Authority, African Leather and Leather Products Institution and the Federation of National Association of Women in Business.

In recent years, value chain development has become a key element of inclusive economic growth and export strategies in many countries of the region. This programme will contribute to increased inter-

dependence amongst countries and people by enhancing production networks and, down the line, improving access to affordable products for citizens of the region.

There is no better example than the European Union to showcase the importance of global or regional value chains development and how this can trigger economic development. In the European Union there are companies which have their production and supply chains spread over 10 countries accumulating best practices and synergies. This remarkable achievement has been possible also thanks to the support that the EU has provided by ensuring that its policies (from trade to competition, from research to energy and education) are consistent and facilitate a modern industrialisation. The European Union has very clear that Industry needs a stable and predictable business and legal environment, less red tape and access to internal and global markets to spur its economy. This is achievable in the COMESA region as well.

Secretary General, ladies and gentlemen,

The three value chains that will be targeted under this project, **horticulture, leather & leather product and agro processing** were carefully selected in close consultation with COMESA and its Member States. We believe that these present the biggest opportunities for participation of women and youth-led small and medium enterprises through development of strong partnerships with large corporations in

the upstream of the value chains. The targeted value chains have also high demand both in the region and international markets.

Through this programme, support will be targeted to address critical issues such as provision of business information, facilitating market linkages, harmonising regional industrial policies and creating a conducive business environment to attract the much needed investment for the region. Crucial to the success of this programme will be the inclusion of women and the youth who account for the large proportion of SMEs as well as the labour force.

Secretary General, ladies and gentlemen,

Two out of the three selected value chains are related to agriculture reflecting the importance of this sector in COMESA countries. And this regional programme is going complement other EU funded programs at national level, including here in Zambia where the EU is investing 100 Million EUR to promote agricultural transformation and agribusiness development.

We all know that agriculture matters to COMESA and its Member States and matters to the European Union as well.

And indeed I would like to take this opportunity to bring to your attention that the European Union has put forward a great candidate for the position of Director General of the FAO. The European Union's candidate, of French nationality, is Ms Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle and

we trust that she will be the first woman to lead the FAO as you, Ms Kapwepwe, are the first woman to lead COMESA. It is our sincere hope that you will easily recognise the importance and value of this candidature and provide your support to her candidature amongst the COMESA Member States.

In conclusion, COMESA and its Member States have the aspiration to offer prosperity to their citizens and this can be achieved also through programmes such as the one that we are launching today. I wish COMESA all the best in this endeavour.

Thank you; Zikomo Kwambiri