

**COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND
SOUTHERN AFRICA**



**STATEMENT BY
HER EXCELLENCY MS CHILESHE MPUNDU KAPWEPWE
COMESA SECRETARY GENERAL ON THE OFFICIAL
OPENING OF THE SEVENTH EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL
OF MINISTERS MEETING**

Your Honour Madam Inonge Wina, Vice President of the Republic of Zambia,

Your Excellency Madame Lantsoa Rakotomalala, Chairperson of the Council of Ministers, Honourable Members of the Bureau of the Council of Ministers,

Honourable Ministers,

Your Excellencies, High Commissioners, Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives to COMESA

Your Excellencies, High Commissioners, Ambassadors and Special Representatives to COMESA

Your Excellencies, High Commissioners and Ambassadors accredited Members to the Republic of Zambia,

Assistant Secretaries General,

Heads of COMESA Institutions,

Distinguished Delegates,

Distinguished Members of the Print and Electronic Media

Colleagues,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

At the very outset, I would like to welcome, Her Honour Madam Inonge Wina, the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia to the COMESA Secretariat and to thank her for finding time from her busy schedules to be with us to grace this Opening Ceremony of the 7th Extraordinary Meeting of the COMESA Council of Ministers. This is a clear testimony Madam Vice President of Your personal commitment and that of Your Government to the Regional Integration Agenda of COMESA. I appreciate this warm and cordial gesture of encouragement and support.

May I kindly request Your Honour to convey my deepest gratitude and thanks to His Excellency, Mr Edgar Chagwa Lungu, the President of the Republic of Zambia, his Government and to the People of Zambia for hosting this important meeting in Lusaka, Zambia. The warm welcome that has been extended to our distinguished guests is greatly appreciated.

I also extend a warm welcome to all the Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, High Commissioners, Ambassadors, delegates and invited guests to the 7th Extraordinary Meeting of the Council of Ministers. It goes without saying that we really value your attendance and participation in the work of COMESA

**Your Honour, the Vice President
Honourable Ministers,**

This Extraordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers has been convened to address certain audit and financial issues which could not be concluded during the last meeting of the Council of Ministers held in November 2018 in Lusaka, Zambia. The expeditious and constructive conclusions of these issues will facilitate the Secretariat in its mission to provide better services to the Member States.

This year marks twenty-five years of existence of COMESA since its establishment in 1994 and 37 years since the Preferential Trade Area was formed in 1982. All these years, the COMESA Secretariat has strived to improve its procedures and processes on a continuous basis to comply with international norms, standards and practices. This has enabled the Secretariat to be the first Regional Economic Community in

Africa to have passed the 4 and 7 Pillars Assessment of the EUROPEAN UNION in 2005 and 2015 respectively. This assessment has enabled the Secretariat to use its own Rules and Procedures in the management of the EU resources instead of the EDF procedures. As we continue to mobilise extra budgetary resources to fund the 2016-2020 Medium Term Strategic Plan and for years beyond, it is important that we further strengthen our Secretariat which is required to embark upon the 9 Pillars Assessment soon to continue benefitting from resources from the European Union.

**Your Honour, the Vice President,
Honourable Ministers,**

The COMESA Secretariat is one of the few RECs which, between 2005 and 2017, received disbursement of approximately USD 299 million from the European Union, USAID, ADB, World Bank, DFID and others to support COMESA programmes. The European Union alone disbursed around USD 277 million to assist in the implementation of Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM), Regional Integration Support Programme (RISP), Climate Change Initiative, African Peace and Security Architecture Programme (APSA), and Maritime Security (MASE) among others.

Under the RISM Programme, out of the total amount of USD 140 million approved by the European Union, funds amounting to approximately USD104.2m has been disbursed to Member States. The balance is being disbursed under the 8th Call, starting from the beginning of this year Resources from RISM have greatly assisted Member States to implement the COMESA Regional Integration Agenda. Under this

programme, various Member States are implementing projects supporting value chains in cotton, leather and edible oils.

Furthermore, from 2018 to date a number of contracts has been signed under the 11th EDF; the COMESA trade facilitation programmes (EUR 53 million) focusing on border management, Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), the small scale cross border (EUR 15 million) to facilitate the small scale cross border traders, and the Private Sector participation and global value chains (EUR 10 million) aimed at enhancing the value chain programmes. We are planning to sign the Capacity Building Programme (EUR 7 Million) aimed at strengthening the Secretariat before the end of this year.

In addition to working with the European Union, we have also signed funding agreements with the USAID, the African Development Bank, and World Bank to fund COMESA programmes. A number of other Partners have also been contacted and they have expressed a great interest and desire to partner with COMESA because of our strong and robust systems and processes.

**Your Honour, the Vice President
Honourable Ministers,**

Currently, most of the times of the Policy Organs are spent on administrative and financial matters rather than on the core programmes of COMESA. This requires a paradigm shift in the way we conduct business at the meetings of the Policy Organs. In order to support COMESA to deliver on its mandate as spelled out in the Treaty and therefore focus more on discussing core programmes and activities.

At the Secretariat level, I am pleased to inform this august gathering that I have already embarked on several reforms to further enhance the operations and governance of the organization. With the assistance of the USAID and European Union, a capacity building programme is being designed to undertake a thorough Business Process Reengineering of the Secretariat. This exercise will enable the Secretariat to revisit all its policies, procedures and processes so as to better deliver on its mandate. Upon completion of this exercise, an automation process will be put in place through an efficient and robust enterprise planning and management system.

Work towards the capacity building of the Secretariat has already begun and we are confident that in the next 12 to 18 months, we shall start harvesting some tangible results.

Your Honour, Vice President

Honourable Ministers,

For the paradigm shift to be successful and efficient, I need the support of the Council of Ministers. Despite this being an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council of Ministers to consider the Report of the Select Committee, I felt that it was important for us to start discussing core issues. This is the reason for including in your agenda, items which deal with the Tripartite Free Trade Area, Continental Free Trade Area, domestication of Council decisions by Member States, and Status of contributions from Member States, among others. Separate reports have been prepared on each one of them for your consideration.

Tripartite Free Trade Area

The Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) takes a developmental approach to regional integration. It provides an opportunity for all the three RECs (COMESA, EAC and SADC) to have a single regime for standards, customs, transit, safeguards, settlement of trade disputes, and for addressing non-tariff barriers. When we ratify and implement it, the TFTA will further enhance economic benefits arising from market expansion. The TFTA will create a huge market covering more than half of Africa as well as provide a solid foundation for the continental integration. Assessments have shown that all countries will benefit from the TFTA, which will generate an additional US dollar 7 billion annually.

Continental Free Trade Area

Regarding the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA), I am pleased to inform the Council of Ministers that it will soon enter into force. This is highly commendable. However, a lot more work is required before the CFTA can begin to function and before trade can happen under this arrangement. All these speak to the need for your steadfast technical support to help in fast tracking the process. The conclusion of the CFTA will mark a pivotal moment for the regional integration across Africa as a whole. It will create bigger, open markets and stimulate trade and investments.

Your Honour, Vice President
Honourable Ministers,

Domestication of the Council Decisions

The report on the Status of Domestication of Council decisions shows that the integration of the markets and economies of member States is being hampered by the slow pace of domestication of Council decisions as result of which programs and projects are not being implemented. The paper on Domestication is suggestive that perhaps member States should in addition to making new decisions and, also focus on the need to clear the backlog of decisions that have been made which require domestication as without execution, the commitments by member States will not result in socio economic integration that benefits people.

Status of Assessed Contributions

A report on the status of assessed contributions will be presented to the Council of Ministers. Suffice to mention that as at now, only one Member State has paid her annual assessed contribution for 2019. I thank Mauritius for having paid her contribution as per Article 166(6) of the COMESA Treaty provisions.

Given this state of affairs, the Secretariat is currently being funded from the Reserve funds as approved by the Council of Ministers in 2018. This is now a grave matter which now needs urgent attention.

**Your Honour, the Vice President,
Honourable Ministers,**

We have made a lot of progress on our regional integration agenda, largely due to the commitment and dedication of our member States. Let us, however, not lose sight of the fact that a lot more remains to be done before we can realise our objective of creating a truly unified economic community and, most importantly, raise living standards, of our large and diverse region. Let us take this opportunity to redouble our joint efforts to make this objective a reality.

I wish you successful deliberations.

It is my singular honour to invite the Guest of Honour to make her Key Note address.