

# COMESA NEWS

COMESA Court Moves to Digital Justice System



# Editorial

Looking through the content of this edition, one cannot help but get his spirits buoyed by many stories of optimism. Not that



it's all a rosy in regional integration. No. Formidable challenges stand in the way of integration. Think, for example, about the free movement of people in the region; we are far still from there. Visa restrictions are still applied in some Member States, not just to travelers and in particular business people from

our region but even for COMESA staff going to implement programmes that benefit the citizenry. But, we just choose to be optimists and hope that this positive energy rubs on all efforts to carry towards our dream of a united and economically prosperous region. In any case, our success stories are myriad compared to the few that draws us back. Look at the digital integration programme; its working pretty well. The Court of Justice has ditched papers for the mouse and keyboard. Judges and lawyers have, from this year, the opportunity to conduct business from the comfort of their office thanks to the introduction of a digital (online) tool known as CaseLines. No more bent shoulders ferrying tones of files to court. Another digital tool set to be unveiled is the 50 Million Africa Women Speak platform. The platform seeks to address the unique challenges women in general and women entrepreneurs in particular face in accessing financial and non-financial services. We also have a story on how digitization will cut down corruption risks. You see, corruption is perhaps the biggest barrier to regional trade but is less spoken about. To deal with it, a COMESA Regional Model Code on Anti-Corruption Compliance is in the works. This will help enterprises in the region improve their business environment. You will also read, in this edition, about the huge outlay of financial resources that continue to be provided, by development partners. These are used to support the programmes that COMESA is implementing in Member States to lift the standards of the people, and here, the EU remains our foremost benefactor.

*Mwangi G*

#### Disclaimer

The COMESA News is published by the Corporate Communications Unit of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa – COMESA. Articles and photos in this publication may be freely reproduced but with acknowledgement of the source. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the policy of COMESA.

# CONTENTS

- 3 A Regional Code on Anti-Corruption Compliance is Coming
- 5 AfDB Extends Funding to the Tripartite Capacity Building Programme
- 6 Launch of the 50m Women Speak Digital Platform Draws Near
- 8 Seven COMESA States have Harmonized their Seed Regulations
- 11 COMESA, EU Signs €10m Facility to Support the Private Sector
- 14 COMESA Seeks to Raise its Global Share of Seed Trade Value to 5%
- 17 Livestock Trade Mapping Kicks-off
- 19 Digitization of Trade Facilitation Tools will Reduce Corruption Risks
- 26 Need for Coordination of RECs- AU Activities in Regional Integration Programmes
- 29 Steps to Maintain Exports to US Market
- 30 Digital Yellow Card Clocks 2,500 Users Daily

#### EDITORIAL TEAM

##### EDITOR:

Mwangi Gakunga

##### REVISE EDITOR:

Edward Ssekalo

##### CONTRIBUTORS:

Muzinge Nampito-Chibomba  
Daniel Banda

##### ARTWORK/LAYOUT:

Philip Siphon Kambafwile

##### PHOTOGRAPHY

Daniel Banda,  
Mwangi Gakunga  
Muzinge Nampito-Chibomba



# COMESA Court Moves to Digital Justice System

The Court of Justice of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) is implementing a paperless digital courtroom after signing up with CaseLines - the world's leading global provider of digital evidence management. This is in line with the current COMESA theme: *'Towards digital economic integration'*.

CaseLines is a critical tool that helps nations meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 16 by transforming the quality and efficiency of justice, thus aiding improvements in the rule of Law.

CaseLines software eliminates the need for paper in court by introducing an entirely digital platform with tools which allow the creation and presentation of a fully digital bundle including multi-

media evidence; collaboration tools for enhanced pre-trial preparation and secure role validated videoconferencing for virtual hearings.

Covering 21 Member States, the supra-national COMESA Court, based in Khartoum, Sudan, sits with twelve judges, each from different Member States with seven Judges in the First Instance Division and five in the Appellate Division. Today, lawyers bring cases to the Court from all the Member States, incurring considerable time and cost to file applications and send paper copies of evidence to the Court. CaseLines provides a digital solution to this challenge, helping to increase the efficiency and security surrounding legal proceedings.

.....

“We are honoured that the COMESA Court of Justice has chosen CaseLines to transform the trial process across the member states, making life simpler and less costly for lawyers and litigants and enabling judges to properly prepare for cases, whilst facilitating a far more efficient and reliable system”





File photo: COMESA Court of Justice Registrar, Ms Nyambura. Mbatia addressing Lawyers seminar in Uganda, May 2019

“In line with the UN’s SDG 16, one of the objectives of the COMESA Court is to eliminate financial and practical barriers to justice. By adopting CaseLines, the Court will become more efficient and processes such as physical filing will become obsolete. This will make a huge difference for our Judges and for litigants dealing with the Court and will bring us closer to achieving access to justice for all citizens of the COMESA Region,” Registrar at the CCJ Nyambura Mbatia said.

CaseLines will allow lawyers to file applications and evidence in a secure environment from their own offices, saving costs of copying and transporting paper files, and at the same time cutting the risk of losing or misplacing files. The system supports efficient pre-trial preparation, especially for lawyers supporting clients in different countries. Judges of the COMESA Court of Justice will now be able to work efficiently from their home offices, improving preparation, cutting unnecessary travel and speeding the process of preparing judgment after a hearing.

“In line with the UN’s SDG 16, one of the objectives of the COMESA Court is to eliminate financial and practical barriers to justice. By adopting CaseLines, the Court will become more efficient and processes such as physical filing will become obsolete. This will make a huge difference for our Judges and for litigants dealing with the Court and will bring us closer to achieving access to justice for all citizens of the COMESA Region,” Registrar at the COMESA Court

of Justice Nyambura Mbatia said.

“We are honoured that the COMESA Court of Justice has chosen CaseLines to transform the trial process across the member states, making life simpler and less costly for lawyers and litigants and enabling judges to properly prepare for cases, whilst facilitating a far more efficient and reliable system,” Paul Sachs, CTO and Founder of CaseLines, said.

Mr. Sachs added: “CaseLines offers far greater efficiency and transparency to the process of justice – and an effective and functional legal system is not just good news for those who deal with courts, but for African society and businesses too. CaseLines is a vital tool that helps nations meet the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 16, supporting improvements in the Rule of Law by revolutionizing the speed and quality in delivery of justice across Africa.”

CaseLines is already delivering paperless hearings for lawyers and

courts around the world, including the UK and the UAE. It provides a secure and easy-to-use cloud-based service to collaboratively produce, present and review high quality professional trial bundles. The platform continues to make the delivery of justice even more efficient, revolutionizing the way the justice system operates by bringing it firmly into the digital age.



Paul Sachs, CTO and Founder of CaseLines

# A Regional Code on Anti-Corruption Compliance is Coming

Initiative is part of the activities under  
the COMESA Business Council Integrity Project



COMESA will soon develop a Regional Model Code on Anti-Corruption Compliance to help enterprises in the region improve their business environment. The initiative is part of the activities under the COMESA Business Council (CBC) Integrity Project which is being implemented in partnership with the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE).

The initiative is intended to build the capacity of the private sector to stem corruption and enhance its participation in transparency and reform initiatives thereby achieve a good and enabling business environment.

The regional code will provide a guide for anticorruption compliance amongst enterprises in the COMESA region and will be available for their use and

adoption.

The World Economic Forum estimates that corruption increases the cost of doing business by up to 10% on average. Countries that score badly on the World Bank's Doing Business Indicators also score poorly on the Corruption Perceptions Index. This suggests that highly corrupt countries also have difficulty attracting business.

Research by the International Monetary Fund has further shown that investment in corrupt countries is almost 5% less than in those that are relatively corruption-free. The African Union also estimates that Africa loses up to US\$ 15 Billion dollars a year due to corruption. Cognizant of the high cost of corruption on the regional economies and its adverse effect on the growth of

enterprises, CBC has rolled out an anti-corruption training programme across COMESA Member States under the business integrity project. So far, trainings have been conducted in Ethiopia, Rwanda and Mauritius with Zambia next in line on 27 – 28 February 2019.

The trainings are specifically targeted at compliance professionals including management, procurement, finance and sales personnel. The aim is to equip them with knowledge to set up anti-corruption compliance systems within their enterprises.

The skills will also enable them to investigate and articulate the need for corruption prevention measures within their business, appreciate and understand the methods for mapping

## COMESA to Intensify Lobbying States to Sign Aviation Commitment

COMESA will this year intensify advocacy activities in 15 of its 21 Member States to ensure they sign the Solemn Commitment to Implement the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM). So far only six COMESA countries comprising Egypt, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Kenya, Rwanda and Zimbabwe have signed the commitment.

On 28 – 29 January 2019, Africa aviation industry stakeholders met in Dakar, Senegal, and agreed to finalize and execute the SAATM Implementation Road Map in 2019. They also agreed on the need for early completion of the 55-country study on SAATM socio-economic benefits to Africa.

The Single African Air Transport Market was launched by the African Union Heads of State and Government in January 2018. Shortly after, a prioritized joint action plan for 2018-2019 was developed by aviation industry stakeholders to operationalize the SAATM.

“One of the key activities in the prioritized action plan was the signing and implementation of the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs),” said Mr. Bernard Dzawanda, COMESA Senior Transport Economist who attended the Dakar meeting on the implementation of the Prioritized Action Plan for Operationalization of the Single African

Air Transport Market 2018 – 2019.

COMESA signed the memorandum on the establishment of SAATM with AFCAC in 2018. It is currently the lead REC on the formulation and implementation of an eight million euros Eastern and Southern African aviation programme to be funded under 11th European Development Fund (EDF 11).

One of the three result areas of the four-year programme is to facilitate and support the operationalization of the single African air transport market.

“COMESA will intensify lobbying for the implementation of SAATM at its statutory meetings which involve directors of civil aviation, joint technical committee and ministers of infrastructure meetings from its Member States,” said Mr. Dzawanda.

The Dakar meeting provided a platform for aviation industry stakeholders to report on concrete actions taken towards implementation of the Abidjan Plan and proposed actions for 2019, including any other on-going interventions in the civil aviation industry.

The East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Commission of Western Africa States (ECOWAS) were part of the RECs that reported on progress. EAC was the first to sign the memorandum on the implementation of the SAATM with AFCAC and is participating in the

## A Regional Code on Anti-Corruption Compliance is Coming

➡ continued to page 3

and developing an effective compliance program that meets international standards and operationalize components of the anti-corruption ethics and compliance program.

In Zambia, the training in Zambia is initially targeted at 60 businesses. It is jointly organized by the CBC, CIPE, Bankers Association of Zambia, the Zambia Association of Manufacturers and the Zambia Bureau of Standards under the theme: Towards strengthening business integrity for SMEs in COMESA.

CIPE is one of the four core institutes of the National Endowment for Democracy and a non-profit affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

EDF 11 funded aviation programme led by COMESA.

In ECOWAS, 13 out of its 15 members have signed the Commitment with the remaining two states expected to come on board soon.

The prioritized action plans of the SAATM are based on six pillars: advocacy for effective operationalization of Single African Air Transport Market; a regulatory framework to ensure availability of appropriate regulations for the oversight of the SAATM; operationalization of SAATM; aviation infrastructure; enhancing safety and security and aviation financing.





## AfDB Extends Funding to the Tripartite Capacity Building Programme

The African Development Bank (AfDB) has provided USD 2.9 million supplementary funding for the Tripartite Capacity Building Programme (TCBP). The funds will be used to complete critical activities that are essential to the smooth operationisation of the TFTA.

Among them is the completion of the industrial and Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) databases, training of border staff and women traders in risk based sanitary and phytosanitary measures, finalization of the manual on use of tripartite rules of origin and implementation of the value chain action plans that are outstanding.

AfDB President Mr. Akinwumi Adesina confirmed the extra funding when he met Secretary General Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe in Abidjan on February 4, 2019. The two discussed the TCBP and other areas of regional integration that the Tripartite Task Force needs to pursue.

The initial TCBP grant of US 7.5 million was signed in November 2013 to support market integration, industrial and infrastructure development pillars of the tripartite work programme. As the executing agency, COMESA applied for supplementary funding in April 2018 following the depreciation of the initial funding against the US dollar which had resulted in a reduction of the amount to USD 7 million.

.....  
“The technologies for African Agricultural Transformation and the Trade Financing, programs of the Bank, have ready complementarity in the existing tripartite programmes and are therefore good candidates for this cause”

The mission to the AfDB offices in Abidjan Cote D'Ivoire enabled COMESA to meet with the Bank's officials and follow up on the matter.

Noting that COMESA was one of the most dynamic Regional Economic Communities (REC)s in Africa, Mr. Adesina said this was evident by the high number of AfDB funded projects in the regional bloc.

The SG observed that several programmes implemented by the Tripartite RECs, such as the Tripartite Capacity Building Programme, were aligned to the Bank's Regional

Integration Policy and Strategy.

“The technologies for African Agricultural Transformation and the Trade Financing, programs of the Bank, have ready complementarity in the existing tripartite programmes and are therefore good candidates for this cause,” she said.

The two affirmed their commitment to strengthen the existing partnership between the Bank and the Tripartite RECs by championing programs in which priorities of both institutions converged.

Mr. Adesina underlined the role of women in trade and called on the tripartite RECs to partner with the Bank in seeking ways to empower women. He further called on partnerships on the area of Investment, trade financing, and development of staple processing zones.

Other officials present in the meeting were the Director for Regional Integration at AfDB Ms. Moono Mupotola, the Director of Trade and Customs at COMESA Dr Francis Mangeni, AfDB Regional Integration Officer Ms. Zodwa Mabuza and TCBP Programme Coordinator Dr Seth Gor.

# Launch of the **50m Women Speak Digital Platform** Draws Near,

as Training for users in **COMESA, EAC and ECOWAS** is conducted



Joint team from COMESA, EAC and ECOWAS attending training on 50million WomenSpeak Digital platform

The 50 Million African Women Speak (50MAWS) digital platform moved closer to becoming a reality after the kickoff of a two-week training workshop in Lusaka, Zambia. The training which started on Monday, 25th March 2019 was meant to equip users with the required skills to manage the platform setting the stage for its official launch later this year.

The workshop was hosted by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). It brought together 22 participants from the host regional body as well as the collaborating Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on the 50 Million African Women Speak Project (50MASWP), namely; the East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS).

During the opening the workshop, the COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of Finance and Administration, Dr. Dev Haman described the platform as a “game changer” in the drive to economically empower women entrepreneurs across the African continent. The training, he noted, was an important step in the journey to operationalizing the platform.

.....  
“I have no doubt that all the three RECs will be able to use the platform to serve the women in our respective regions and Africa, and collectively achieve the intended goals of the project”

“This project is a game changer. You will agree with me that we are already experiencing the profound change and efficiency that modern technologies bring to the way we live, work, interact, and do business. Thus, the need to pull in one direction and share knowledge amongst ourselves cannot be overemphasized,” Dr. Haman said.

Through this first-of-a-kind platform, the Assistant Secretary General pointed out that the 50MAWS Project has the potential to transform the role of women entrepreneurs in Africa and noted that its success will immensely contribute towards the achievement of gender

equality and empowerment of women as outlined in the gender policies and frameworks of the respective RECs.

“I have no doubt that all the three RECs will be able to use the platform to serve the women in our respective regions and Africa, and collectively achieve the intended goals of the project,” he added.

With the platform design and development in its final stage, the main objective of the workshop is to conduct a hands-on training of the project implementing units, users and IT experts on the platform’s features and functionalities. The training will include detailed testing on content management on the platform.

The training featured two segments; the first for platform content managers and users, who include gender and communication experts is to run during the first week (25th to 29th March 2019), followed by a technical training for IT staff also drawn from the three RECs, which took place during the second week (1st to 5th April 2019).

The 50 Million African Women Speak Project (50MAWSP) is funded by the African Development Bank and seeks to address the unique challenges women in general and women entrepreneurs in particular face in accessing financial and non-financial services, which challenges ultimately limit the size and growth of their businesses.

COMESA is the coordinating REC and has the responsibility of developing the platform, hosting and maintenance of the project infrastructure and coordinating implementation of the project.

Once the platform is launched, it will be available in 38 countries which are member states of COMESA, ECOWAS) and the EAC. It will provide a social network that allows women to learn from each other and be able to share lessons, as well as conduct business online.



---

# Programme to Strengthen SPS Management launched in Uganda

---

COMESA in collaboration with the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) and TradeMark East Africa is implementing a five-year pilot programme to strengthen the management of sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS) in five eastern African States.

The Prioritization of SPS Investments for Market Access (P-IMA) project was launched on 18 December 2018 in Kampala, Uganda and will be rolled out to Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and Rwanda.

The programme is an evidence-based approach to inform and improve SPS planning and decision-making in the region. Its benefits include; enhanced public-private dialogue, evidence to support programme design and fundraising, high level awareness about value of investing in SPS capacity building, transparency and accountability and greater resource efficiency.

The regional SPS programme is an integral part of the regional integration agenda that includes the need to remove SPS trade barriers through equivalence and mutual recognition of SPS regulatory frameworks.

Speaking at the launch, COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of Programmes Ambassador Kipyego Cheluget, attributed the low intra-trade levels in the region to the varied SPS and Technical Barriers to Trade and regulatory frameworks across Member States. This is in addition to the low levels of compliance amongst regional Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Currently, COMESA's intra-regional trade stands at USD\$ 17.5 billion which amounts to less than 10 percent of total trade with the world. A study done by the Secretariat shows that the region has a potential trade worth of USD\$82 billion.

"Most of our Member States are heavily dependent on agriculture, fisheries and livestock", Amb. Cheluget said. "So, it is of paramount importance that the SPS programme is well managed at national and regional levels so that we can push intra-trade upwards."

Uganda's Minister of Trade, Industry and



(L-R) STDF Deputy Head Marlynne Hopper, Uganda's Minister of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives Hon. Amelia Kyambadde and COMESA SPS Coordinator Martha Byanyima

Cooperatives Hon. Amelia Kyambadde welcomed the initiative to develop a collaborative regional project. She said it builds upon the past initiatives in using evidence and engaging relevant stakeholders, to prioritize SPS investments and leverage support and resources to address related challenges.

She said: "Africa today is grappling with SPS challenges which have continued to impact intra-Africa trade as well as the continent's participation in global trade."

### SPS Challenges

The SPS challenges are manifest majorly in fruits and vegetables trade, horticulture and floriculture trade, fish trade, grain trade and livestock and livestock products (including poultry and eggs) trade. The contaminants includes pests and diseases particularly aflatoxins, mycotoxins, fruit fly, Foot and Mouth disease among others.

Minister Kyambadde said non-compliance with SPS measures has cost countries huge export opportunities, both at the intra-regional and the international level.

"You may recall the fish ban of 1997 that cost Uganda 45 million dollars and the recent interception of fruits and vegetables worth 60 million dollars by the European Union. This was due to lack of compliance with sanitary and

phytosanitary standards," she said. She described the launch of P-IMA as timely to help Uganda and other COMESA countries to address challenges they are facing in complying with SPS requirements in the face of limited resources.

The Minister bemoaned Africa's huge food import bill compared to other continents in the world, estimated at over \$30 billion annually adding:

"The reasons for this are varied including the limited production capacities as well as market infrastructure and inconsistent policy regimes contributing to segmented markets."

Representatives of the two cooperating partners Ms. Marlynne Hopper, Deputy Head, STDF and Trademark East Africa Senior Director Trade Environment Richard Kamajugo committed to work with COMESA to scale up relevant interventions to address SPS barriers and boost exports to regional markets and beyond.

A high-level stakeholder dialogue and project inception meeting whose theme was 'Mainstreaming SPS Priorities into National Policy' was also conducted alongside the launch.



## Seven COMESA States have Harmonized their Seed Regulations

Seven out of the 21 States in the Eastern and Southern Africa region have so far harmonized their national seed regulations with the regional seed trade harmonization regulations. These are; Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The harmonization of seed laws under the COMESA Seed Harmonization Implementation Plan (COMSHIP) was adopted by the COMESA Council of Ministers in 2014, as a strategy to trigger seed trade, which is currently low across the region and a cause for food insecurity.

Presenting the status report early this year during a two-day High-Level Consultative Workshop on the Implementation of Harmonized Seed Regulations in Eastern and Southern Africa in Nairobi, Kenya, COMESA Seed Expert Dr John Mukuka said the framework was intended to address the lack of quality seed in the region which has led to food insecurity.

“Within the agricultural sector, access to improved or quality seed by our 80 million small-holder farmers in the COMESA region is low at 23%,” he said. “This has resulted in low productivity especially on cereals like maize, sorghum and pearl millet.”

He noted that despite the COMESA countries having most of the global arable land in the region, food production was not rising in tandem with population growth.

“The population in the COMESA

countries is increasing at 2.3% while food production was at 2%, a situation that has brought about food insecurity to 130 million out of 600 million people in the region,” Dr Mukuka said.

COMSHIP is one of the components in the entire value-addition chain; from agro-inputs, to output markets and financial markets with potential to spur regional seed trade. The other components that COMESA has lined up for harmonization from 2019 are: fertilizer standards; grades and standards for staple foods (maize, beans and rice); warehouse receipt system; implementation of the Regional Food Balance Sheet including Informal Cross Border Monitoring and Livestock Feed Sector.

Keynote speakers at the meeting called on the remaining countries to speed up the process of harmonization their seed regulations. They included Prof. Hamadi Iddi Boga, Principal Secretary, in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Irrigation in Kenya, the representative of the Director General of the Africa Development Bank, Dr Gabriel Negatu, and Executive Director of the Africa Agricultural Technology Foundation, Dr Dennis Kyetere represented by Dr Francis Nang’ayo.

In addition to the seven countries that have completed the harmonization process, an additional six have launched the COMSHIP and development/alignment of their domestic seed laws with the regional regulations and are expected to join the list of compliant States by end of 2019. They are Djibouti,

DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mauritius, and Eswatini.

Others that have launched the seed harmonization plan and preparing to begin the alignment process are: Comoros, Eritrea, Madagascar, Seychelles and Sudan. Only three COMESA States are yet to launch the plan. They are Libya and the new member States (that joined COMESA in July 2018) Tunisia and Somalia.

At the close of the meeting, delegates endorsed COMESA decision to embark on testing the COMSHIP in the countries that have completed harmonization of seed regulations so that seed companies, with varieties on the COMESA Seed Variety Catalogue can trade as soon as possible.

COMSHIP is implemented by the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA), a specialized agency of COMESA and provides a framework of implementation plans and modalities at national and regional level to facilitate regional trade in the seed sector.

Meanwhile, COMESA has developed Seed Labels and Certificates to facilitate regional seed trade. A total of 4.5 million COMESA Seed Labels and 2,500 Certificates will be ready by the first quarter of 2019 for use by major seed companies in the region.



Ambassador Alessandro Mariani (L) and Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe sign the financing facility

## COMESA, EU Signs €10m Facility to Support the Private Sector

The business community in COMESA Member States is set to benefit from Euro 10 Million kitty provided by the European Union to support increased private sector participation in regional and global value chains.

This followed the signing of a financing agreement between the EU and COMESA to implement the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP). The funding was signed on 18 February 2019 in Lusaka, Zambia. RECAMP is supported under the 11th European Development Fund.

The Secretary General of COMESA Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe and the Head of the EU Delegation to Zambia and COMESA, Ambassador Alessandro Mariani signed for their respective organizations.

The RECAMP programme will run for five years focusing on three priority value chains, namely; agro-processing, horticulture and leather and leather products.

Ambassador Mariani said the targeted value chains were selected for having high demand both in the region and international markets.

“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,” he said.

The programme has two key result areas: the first is to ensure that competitiveness and market access of small and medium enterprise (SMEs) and other firms in the targeted value chains are sustainably enhanced.

Under this result, the programme will facilitate networking, access to knowledge, vital market information and support formal business linkages

.....

**“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,” Amb.Mariani**

between SMEs, key regional suppliers and lead firms. Further, it will support more formalized governance structures in the value chains and enhance capacities of SMEs and other actors in adhering to sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) and technical standards

(TBT) to comply with regional markets requirements.

The second result area will focus on improving the business environment for SMEs and other firms in the selected value chains by complementing current national strategies developed by member states for economic transformation through industrialization. Activities will include supporting peer learning with the front-runner countries sharing experiences.

Ms. Kapwepwe cited supply side constraints as a major contributor to low competitiveness and productivity of industries in the region, as well as inability of SMEs especially women and youth owned enterprises to participate in regional production networks.

“According to the findings of a profiling exercise of SMEs in the footwear, garments and cassava processing that was undertaken by the COMESA Secretariat, it was noted that at least 65% of SMEs operating in the region are facing most of these constraints,” Ms. Kapwepwe explained.

Under the program, champions or lead firms within the selected value chains that have both backward and forward linkages with SMEs and other intermediary firms, will be identified to enhance effect coordination reduce coordination failures and improve competitiveness.





## Regional Strategy for Renewable Energy on the way

The COMESA Regional Association of Energy Regulators of Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA) appointed a Zambian firm to develop a Synthesized Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Strategy for the region.

The short-term consultancy contract is worth \$124,506. It was awarded to the Centre for Energy Environment and Engineering of Zambia (CEEEZ) after further negotiation on the proposed scope of work and work plan. CEEEZ representative Professor Francis Yamba and Dr Mohamedain Seif Elnasr, the Chief Executive Officer of RAERESA signed on behalf of their respective organizations.

Speaking at the signing ceremony Dr Elnasr observed that the region was in urgent need of developing facilities to provide energy for the development of regional economies. Congratulating the Consultant for meeting all the requirements for the project, Dr Elnasr urged him to deliver the task with precision and speed.

“One of the gaps identified in the energy sector is the absence of a synthesized renewable energy and energy efficiency

.....  
**“One of the gaps identified in the energy sector is the absence of a synthesized renewable energy and energy efficiency strategy for the ESA-IO region,”**

strategy for the ESA-IO region,” Dr Elnasr noted. “Therefore, once developed, the strategy will provide an integrated framework in the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency to support the achievement of the region’s clean energy goals.”

The supply side energy efficiency is another challenge that requires immediate redress. An analysis based on a sample of some countries in the region should form a perspective of what needs to be recommended for improving supply side efficiency in the EA-SA-IO region.

The overall objective of the project is to enhance a sustainable regional energy

market in the EA-SA-IO region, which is conducive to investment and promoting sustainable development. The project is relevant for the African Union’s Agenda 2030 and 2063.

Energy experts have observed that most countries in the EA-SA-IO region experience energy challenges, although it is endowed with high potential compared to other sub-Saharan African regions.

The challenges are manifested by: inadequate level and coverage of physical energy infrastructure due to insufficient investment in the energy sector; inefficiency and unreliability of existing energy infrastructure services; increased demand for economic growth and population growth; high cost of operating existing energy infrastructure facilities; energy poverty in terms of lower access rate and reliance on traditional fuels (wood fuels); and low utilization of clean energy option as a result of the absence of a market for energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies and services in the region.



## Twelve Member States Benefit from Fiscal Reform Training

Finance officials from 12 COMESA Member States participated in a training to address the significant gaps and weaknesses in public sector accounting standards and practices.

The training was organized by the International Monetary Fund's Regional Technical Assistance Centers for Southern Africa and for East Africa (AFRITAC South and AFRITAC East) in collaboration with the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI). Its theme was 'Improving Fiscal Reporting in developing countries using International Public-Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS)'.

Several areas of improvement were addressed including the need for more complete coverage of public sector institutions; more comprehensive reporting of assets and liabilities; recognition of a broader range of transactions and other economic flows.

The need for more frequent and timely fiscal reporting was emphasized as it requires more rigorous approach to fiscal forecasting and risk analysis; and alignment of standards for budgets,

statistics and accounts. The IPSAS provides solutions to these gaps and weaknesses and are designed to facilitate the generation of government financial reports of high quality that are internationally comparable.

### Stepping Stone

Countries' experiences presented during the workshop revealed that several COMESA, AFRITAC South (AFS) and AFRITAC East (AFE) Member States have recently chosen to adopt and implement the Cash-basis IPSAS as a stepping stone towards the ultimate adoption of the accrual basis of accounting and financial reporting.

This approach offers several distinct advantages. Among them, providing a base which can be progressively supplemented with accrual disclosure notes. It also creates early awareness of the reporting requirements for consolidating controlled entities. Other AFS countries are already moving towards Accrual-basis IPSAS.

CMI Director Mr. Ibrahim Zeidy noted that the training would significantly

contribute to the ongoing fiscal reforms in member countries. He said the reforms are aimed at improving comprehensive reporting of assets and liabilities, producing more frequent and timely fiscal reporting, and for adopting a more rigorous approach to fiscal forecasting and risk analysis among others.

"The joint training will go a long way in ensuring compliance to international standards prior to implementing full accrual accounting, hastening reforms in public sector accounting practices and standards, identifying challenges related to implementation of IPSAS, providing solutions to address the challenges, which are based on best practices; and for Sharing Knowledge, peer to peer exchange of ideas, experiences and for networking," Mr. Zeidy said.

Participants were drawn from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Malawi, Rwanda, Seychelles, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.





Participants at the 20th Cross-Border Traders Association of Zambia Conference

## Cross Border Traders Association Poised for Support

The Cross-Border Traders Association of Zambia on 14 February 2019 hosted its 20th Conference under the theme; *“Building Cross Border Traders Association Membership, entrenching good governance and partnership for trade support.”*

The conference took place at the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka. It was addressed by COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe, who is the patron of the association, and the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry of Zambia Mrs. Kayula Siame.

In her statement presented by the Director of Agriculture and Industry, Mr. Thierry Kalonji, the Secretary General promised to provide capacity building for the association to support enterprise and banking solutions and inclusion and sensitization on the role of good governance.

In her remarks, presented by the Director

of Foreign Trade, Ms. Lillian Bwalya, the PS acknowledged the close collaboration between, her government, COMESA and CBTA as a key mechanism for the implementation of the Simplified Trade Regime. This has been actualized through the establishment of Trade Information Desks at border points to facilitate cross border trade.

“We expect in the near future to have more Trade Information Desks set up through the COMESA Cross Border Trade Initiative funded by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund”, she said. “This will contribute to increased intra-regional trade among COMESA Member States.”

At the conference, the CBTA launched the ‘Cross-Border Trader Magazine’ which will be used as an information sharing and advocacy tool.

.....

“We expect in the near future to have more Trade Information Desks set up through the COMESA Cross Border Trade Initiative funded by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund”, she said. “This will contribute to increased intra-regional trade among COMESA Member States.”



# Development of Port Sudan Corridor is Underway

Preparations have started to establish the Port Sudan Corridor (PSC). This will serve as a gateway to international markets, especially Asia, for countries in the eastern and southern African region.

Specifically, the corridor will directly serve COMESA States; Ethiopia and Sudan, and later Uganda. Afterwards it will extend beyond the PSC bloc to Central Africa Republic, Chad and South Sudan.

The decision to establish the Port Sudan Corridor was made by the COMESA Ministers of Infrastructure during their 10th meeting in Lusaka, Zambia in October 2017.

“The corridor concept has improved the management of international traffic as it provides scope for harmonization of operating procedures, policy, skills, infrastructure and equipment hence directly supporting regional integration,” Senior Transport Economist at the COMESA Secretariat Mr. Bernard Dzawanda said during the meeting of stakeholders from all Corridor States in Khartoum, 21 – 24 January 2019.

The meeting was part of the preliminary activities towards the establishment of the corridor. Its objective was to review and validate the project’s strategic plan and financial strategy and the Corridor Work Programme and Sustainability Strategy. A draft Corridor Agreement developed by COMESA was presented to the delegates.

The formation of a corridor management institution known as the

Port Sudan Corridor Authority (PSCA) was identified as a priority activity. The need to establish the corridor institution is to address operational efficiency and reduce the cost of doing business.

Among the activities proposed for



Mr. Bernard Dzawanda

.....

**“All these instruments are included in the COMESA Virtual Trade Facilitation System (CVTFS) providing an integrated Regional Single Window,” Mr. Bernard Dzawanda said. “This has proved to be very valuable in improving efficiency through coordination and streamlining of procedures.”**

the Authority are: facilitating the removal of physical and non-physical barriers to goods and people transiting through the corridor; monitoring corridor performance; advocating for and coordinating infrastructure development and maintenance and promoting business development along the corridor.

Others are, setting up stakeholders’ network, policy development, regulation and harmonization, streamlining and harmonization of documentation and procedures as well as promoting the use of COMESA transit transport facilitation instruments.

The meeting also agreed to support capacity building initiatives in key institutions engaged in transport operations and provide information services to stakeholders and other interested parties. It also considered the draft financial strategy and identified three sources of funding the PSCA namely; contribution by Corridor Member States, User levy and Development Partners contribution.

## Corridor authorities

Several corridor authorities have been established in the COMESA region and the Eastern and Southern African region in general all of which have produced positive results on infrastructure development and smooth flow of trade.

Mr. Dzawanda says the corridors have enabled the application of transit trade facilitation instruments such as the harmonized axle load limits and vehicle dimensions, harmonized road user charges, COMESA Carrier License, Regional Customs Transit Guarantee and the COMESA Yellow Card.

“All these instruments are included in the COMESA Virtual Trade Facilitation System (CVTFS) providing an integrated Regional Single Window,” Mr. Bernard Dzawanda said. “This has proved to be very valuable in improving efficiency through coordination and streamlining of procedures.”

The stakeholders meeting was organized by COMESA with support from the European Union under the eleventh European Union Development Fund (EDF 11) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).





## COMESA Seeks to Raise its Global Share of Seed Trade Value to 5%

COMESA targets to increase its share of the total global seed trade value from 2% to 5% in the next three years. This will be done through the implementation of the COMESA Seed Harmonization Implementation Plan (COMSHIP).

To this end, the COMESA Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) is collaborating with the AfricaSeeds - the implementing Agency on seed programmes of the Africa Union - in coming up with an integrated seed sector within the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Plan (CAADP) agenda aligned with the National Agriculture and Food Security Investment Plans (NAFSIPs).

This collaboration has led to the establishment of a comprehensive seed information system for Africa, known as Seed Knowledge Gateway (SKG). This will complement COMSHIP, whose objective is to increase production and quality, reliability, trade and competitiveness of the seed industry.

SKG is a web-based computerized database set up by Africaseeds. It will be used for seed data, statistics and information necessary for the seed sector planning and operations. It will be available for all seed development partners in the African continent.

In a report prepared by Dr John Mukuka, a Seed Development Expert at ACTESA, the increase in the regional seed trade value will be accelerated through the implementation of the COMSHIP complemented by the new SKG platform.

Dr Mukuka represented COMESA at the African Union's Seed Knowledge Gateway (SKG) meeting that took place, in Akosombo, Ghana, 11 – 14 February 2019. The objective of the meeting was to review and validate the development, implementation strategy and work plan of the preparatory phase of the SKG.

In attendance were delegates from AfricaSeeds partner countries and institutions, namely Ghana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Kenya.

Others were from the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), African Development Bank (AfDB) and Africa Agricultural Transformation Scorecards Compacts.

The meeting affirmed its strong collaboration with FARA on enhancing AfricaSeeds' role as technical partner of the SKG.



Dr John Mukuka



## COMESA Supports Comoros Migration to **ASYCUDA World**

COMESA has made significant progress in the modernization of its information systems in the Comoros to ease the process and cost of doing business for its economic operators. This has been achieved with support provided under the COMESA Adjustment Facility funded by the European Union

The island State has so far received €2.4 million to support its regional integration process and implementation of ASYCUDA World and is finalizing the Electronic Single Window project. It has received further support for standards and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) reforms with funding of over €864, 000.

The developments taking place at the island nation was of great importance to COMESA as it will help with customs data management system that facilitates the import and export process.

Mrs. Hope Situmbeko, the COMESA Aid for Trade (COMAid) Coordinator said the implementation of ASYCUDA World

is expected to improved linkages within the region and globally as this will also put the private sector at the core of development programmes including support for their productive capacities.

“Ownership and institutionalization of the programme is vital for its success,” she said. While the system was envisaged to improve revenue collection, it was also meant to be an efficient tool for trade facilitation.”

To operationalize the ASYCUDA World System the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) trained officials from the Directorate of Customs in Comoros with support provided under the COMESA Adjustment Facility programme.

The trainees were part of the national technical team put in place after the migration to ASYCUDA World.

The Minister of Finance and Budget, Said Ali Said Chayhane, indicated that the improvements observed that with the new system, delays will be reduced and governance issues relating

to customs clearance processes improved.

UNCTAD representative, Jean-Marc Benoit, said that the new system will assist Comoros achieve the commitments made under the World Trade Organization - WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, as it allows access from mobile telephones and laptops thus improving clearance procedures.

.....

**“Ownership and institutionalization** of the programme was vital for its success. She further reminded the team that while the system was envisaged to improve revenue collection, it was also meant to be an efficient tool for trade facilitation”





Director of Trade and Customs, Dr Francis Mangeni (in blue suit) with trainees from the Zambia Defence Forces Staff Training College in Lusaka.

## Regional Integration: Reaching out to Defense Forces

As part of COMESA stakeholders' outreach programme, members of the defense forces from the COMESA-EAC-SADC region were conducted on a public lecture aimed at deepening their understanding of regional integration and the role of peace and security.

The lecture was conducted by the Director of Trade and Customs, COMESA, Dr Francis Mangeni, February 20, 2019 at the Zambia Defense Forces Staff Training College in Lusaka. The military officers were drawn from various African countries and were attending a Masters programme at the college.

Acknowledging the security forces interest in regional integration, Dr Mangeni observed that the task of educating people on such matters was not a preserve of COMESA.

"It should be a responsibility of all Member States to include the integration agenda in their curriculum to help build skills that will help address the challenges each country is facing especially in domesticating and implementing regional commitments," he said.

He cited the COMESA Virtual University hosted at the Kenyatta University in Kenya as one outstanding project which will greatly contribute to knowledge on regional integration. Under this project, officials from governments and the private sector dealing with trade, integration and international cooperation issues will be enrolled for a Masters degree programme on regional integration.

"This programme is also intended to bring together world class academics, researchers and practitioners from leading institutions around the world through an e-learning platform," Dr Mangeni added. Twenty-two universities in COMESA Member States are participating in the project.

The Director implored participants to lobby for inclusion of regional integration issues in the national curriculum from basic schools' level to inculcate understanding of the subject at an early age. This would help to change the mindsets of many people in Africa regarding issues of integration.

He said: "Through an entrepreneurial

approach to education, human capital is built that will spark change and create individuals who shall not only graduate but also come up with bankable innovative projects that will produce new products needed for trade across our region."

He advised that education systems in the Member States should develop partnerships between industries and students so that the latter can do practical lessons in the subjects they learn thereby perfecting their skills.

.....

**"It should be a responsibility of all Member States to include the integration agenda in their curriculum to help build skills that will help address the challenges each country is facing especially in domesticating and implementing regional commitments,"**

# Livestock Trade Mapping Kicks-off

The project is intended to enhance the livestock value chain

COMESA has begun mapping enterprises involved in live animal trade in the region to establish basic data on regional and international markets. This project is intended to enhance the livestock value chain by linking animal fatteners, feedlot operators, abattoirs and slaughter house operators to the regional and international markets.

It is also one of the strategic objectives of the COMESA Livestock Policy Framework to facilitate access to markets, services and value addition among different stakeholders who produce, and market livestock.

A report prepared by the COMESA Senior Livestock Officer, Dr Yoseph Mamo, after conducting the exercise in Ethiopia, states that access to markets and distribution of risks and gains along different steps of live animal and meat value chains, vary according to the gender of producers, processors, market agents, grades and the economies of scale.

"Thus, this program will work to improve the traditional marketing channels of ad hoc sales to well-coordinated links among different enterprises to reduce risks and improve gains," he said.

The mapping of enterprises is being conducted by the COMESA livestock expert in collaboration with the national departments of livestock development, veterinary services and national level association of private sectors.

"Once the enterprises involved in the value chain of live animal marketing in the major exporting country is mapped, the market channel in the major importing countries will also be mapped," Dr Mamo said.

Similarly, the meat value chain in the exporting and importing countries will be mapped. The outputs from the exercise will be used to formalize the current ad-hoc market system to well-structured marketing system to establish sustainable well linked

marketing channels.

Ethiopia is the first country to be mapped with the activity taking place from 10 -15 February 2019. The project is supported by COMESA and USAID through Regional Development Objectives Grant Agreement with COMESA.

Meanwhile, the Ethiopian State Minister of Agriculture Hon. Mrs. Aynalem Nigusie Ali said the number of live animals traded informally through Somaliland, Djibouti, Sudan and Kenya is higher than those traded formally.

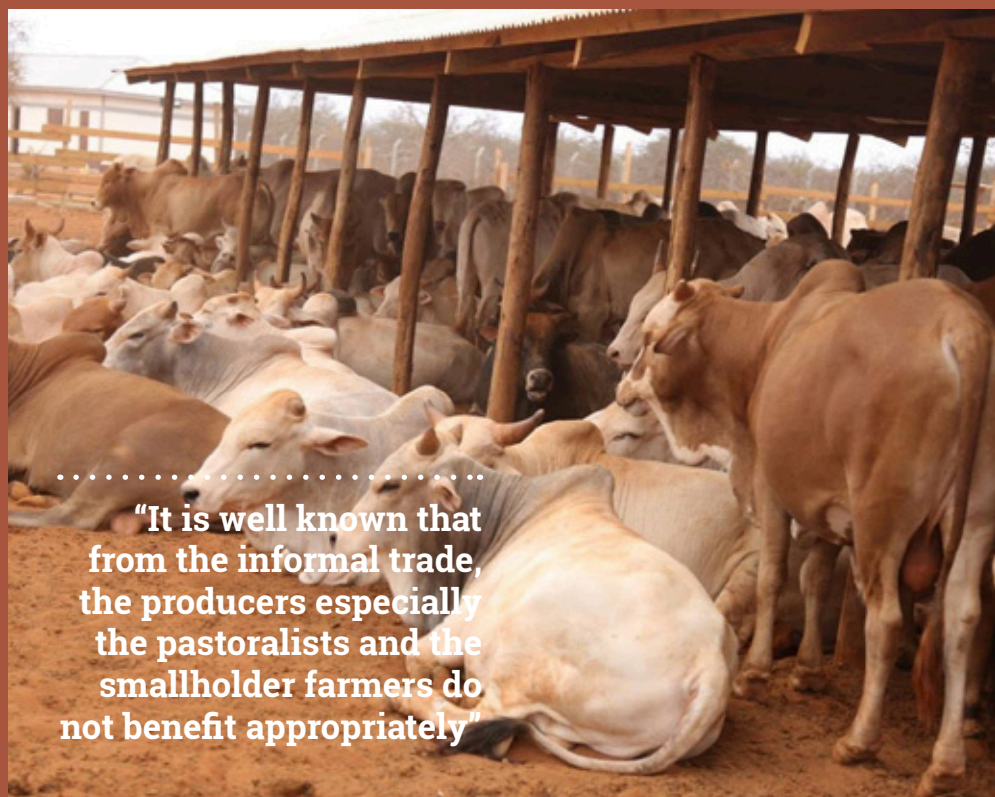
Speaking when she met the mapping team, the Minister said stringent animal health standards required in livestock trade has often led to evasion of formal import /export channels thus encouraging and maintaining the informal trade.

"It is well known that from the informal

trade, the producers especially the pastoralists and the smallholder farmers do not benefit appropriately," she said adding that most of the profits end up with middlemen and informal traders.

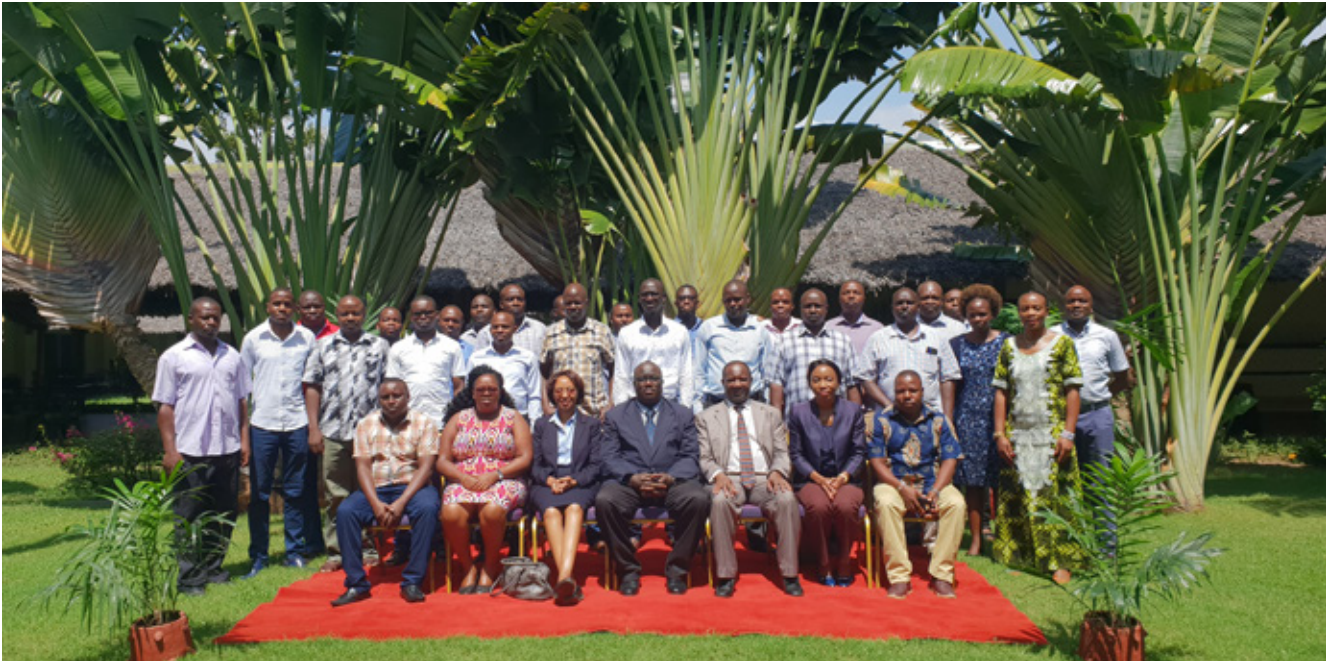
To address this challenge, the Ethiopian Government has taken several measures including strengthening veterinary services and diagnostic laboratories, surveillance, diagnosis and control of Transboundary Animal Diseases. It has also developed different guidelines including pre-purchase, construction of abattoirs and processing plans guidelines and standard operating procedures.

Currently the major outlet for Ethiopian livestock is the Middle East market. The government is however keen for alternative markets, which the COMESA project of linking enterprises to the regional market is promising.



.....  
**"It is well known that from the informal trade, the producers especially the pastoralists and the smallholder farmers do not benefit appropriately"**





Anti money laundering workshop in Kenya

## Greater Inter-Agency Collaboration Needed as Financial Crimes Gets Sophisticated

Rising sophistication of financial crimes especially money laundering and terrorism financing necessitates greater inter-agency collaboration and regional partnerships.

Countries that faces higher incidences of terror attacks have particularly been responsive to regional initiatives, such as the COMESA Maritime Security (MASE) programme, which deal with Anti Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT).

As a victim of terror, Kenya has been working actively with COMESA under the Regional Maritime Security Programme (MASE) in implementing customized capacity building interventions to respond to the gaps as identified by the authorities. The aim is to deepen understanding of AML/CFT laws by all relevant stakeholders, their respective obligations and various techniques used in money laundering and financing of terrorism.

Pursuant to this objective, the MASE programme conducted a capacity building workshop at Kenya's South Coast town of Diani on 26 - 28 February 2019. It brought together a wide cross section of border management agencies and Financial Reporting Center and

enforcement agencies that work at various land and sea border posts. Participants were drawn from internal security, immigration, police, airports and ports authorities, asset recovery units, anti-counterfeit, and revenue authorities among others,

The Director General of the Financial Reporting Center (FRC) in Kenya Mr. Maika Saitoti, who opened the workshop stressed the need for collaboration among the various agencies that support the strengthening of anti-money laundering and combating terrorism regime initiatives.

"The strength of the Kenyan Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism regime is determined by the weakest stakeholder in the link," Mr. Saitoti said in statement presented by the Head of Legal Compliance and External Relations, Mr. James Manyonge.

The Head of Governance, Peace and Security of COMESA Ms. Elizabeth Mutunga informed the delegates that financial institutions in most of the countries implementing the MASE programme have put in place reasonable measures for identification and making it difficult for unscrupulous

dealers to easily use the financial systems, thus shifting illicit proceeds through porous borders.

"Criminals take advantage of unaware/ unsuspecting border officials to perpetrate crime including moving their dirty money from one country to another," Ms. Mutunga said and lauded the Kenyan authorities for identifying the need and priority to strengthen capacity of border officials.

Ms. Mutunga emphasized the importance of ensuring that different countries have adequately developed their AML/CFT regimes. If this does not happen, she said, the crime will move from the stronger to the weaker regimes hence the importance of a regional programme.

Through the training, the border officials are expected to have a better understanding of the manifestation of illicit flows and money laundering at their respective work stations and thus increase the identification of suspicious transactions. Such information will then be shared with the FRC for analysis and further dissemination of intelligence to the law enforcement agencies for investigation and prosecution.



Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe (seated 4th left) with co-sponsors and a section of the delegates attending the anti-corruption compliance training in Zambia.

## Digitization of Trade Facilitation Tools will Reduce Corruption Risks

Secretary General of COMESA Chileshe Kapwepwe says implementing the trade facilitation tools such as the digital free trade area, simplification and automation of documents and processes will address some of the risks that provide space for corrupt practices in the COMESA region.

Addressing over 60 enterprises in Zambia that participated in an Anti-Corruption Compliance Training organized by the COMESA Business Council, on 27 – 28 February 2019 in Lusaka, the SG observed that the vice was not just a national problem but a regional challenge as well.

“Whilst, the overarching goal is to improve trade and regional integration in COMESA; if corruption is not dealt with, it can affect the cost of goods, deter local and foreign direct investment and cause a huge dent into the growth of businesses and the economy,” she said.

She cited trade facilitation as one area where corruption is often reported specifically at the border points thus posing significant impediment to trade and investment.

To promote regional integration, she

said: “We must deal with political and economic effects of corruption, individually as sovereign States and collectively at COMESA level and the rest of the Africa continent.”

The SG accentuated the need to incorporate the private sector in the fight against corruption noting that the sector is often forgotten when measures to combat the vice are put in place.

“The private sector is the catalyst for the growth of regional economies and therefore at the forefront when dealing with issues of economic transformation,” she added.

### **Business Integrity**

The COMESA Business Integrity project, which COMESA CBC was rolling out to Member States, was private sector-focused thus presenting the best approach towards combating corruption.

“There is a positive relationship between business integrity and increased capital flows, investment and integration into regional and global chains,” she said. “Tacking corruption is not just as a private sector agenda but as a public-private agenda; demanding concerted

efforts from all stakeholders.”

The anti-corruption compliance training was targeted at Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which constitute 70% of the private sector in the COMESA region hence the theme: “Towards strengthening business integrity for (SMEs) in COMESA”.

Speaking at the same event, CBC Chief Executive Officer, Sandra Uwera said SMEs generally do not have the resources to implement processes to detect and mitigate corruption.

“In fact, the likelihood is that such resources would be directed to other operational costs and less on corporate governance and compliance of the businesses,” she noted.

The anti-corruption training for Zambia was organized by the CBC in collaboration with the US Center for International private Enterprise, the Bankers Association of Zambia, the Zambia Bureau of Standards and Zambia Association of Manufacturers for the support to the event.



## COMESA Peace Elders Retreat; Elects New Chair

The COMESA Committee of Elders (CoE) is one of the critical pillars that seek to promote peace and security in the region as enshrined in Article 3 (d) of the COMESA Treaty. It was established in 2009 to augment the Office of the Secretary General with peacemaking assignments through the Peace and Security programme.

Over the years, the Committee has been leading peace building activities with the most pronounced being the COMESA Election Observer Missions where one of the elders takes charge. But on 19 - 22 February 2019, the entire team of nine converged in Kampala, Uganda for a different mission: a retreat to review their activities and elect their leaders for the next one year.

“The retreat was the second since 2011 and provided an opportunity for the elders to identify the good and best practices as well as the challenges encountered, with the view of maximizing the impact of their activities,” Richard Atwaru, Governance,

Peace and Security Officer at the COMESA Secretariat who attended the retreat said.

Ambassador Mohamed Ashraf Rashed from Egypt was elected Chairperson and Madam Hope Kivengere of Uganda as Vice Chairperson.

The Head of Regional Peace and Security Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uganda, Ambassador Paul Mukumbya addressed the meeting and expressed confidence with the work of the Committee, which he described as a positive contribution to regional peace building.

“It is very important to resolve conflicts through mediation and preventive diplomacy instead of allowing it to blow out and thus involve more expensive and costly resolution efforts,” Ambassador Mukumbya said. During the retreat, the COMESA Programme on Peace and Security disseminated a draft handbook for the Mediation Strategy for COMESA for validation by the CoE. This will

be mainly used by the CoE in their activities.

Six of the Committee members appointed in July 2018 during the 20th Summit of the COMESA Authority in Lusaka were inducted at the retreat. This involved introduction to the Rules of Procedure of the Committee, the Standard Operating Procedures and the Mediation Guidelines.

The retreat was also attended by a representative from the Africa Union Panel of the Wise, independent experts on peace and security and representatives from the Uganda Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Other members of the CoE include: Dr Sabine Nkarutimana (Burundi), Ambassador, Professor Judith Bahemuka (Kenya), Bishop Mary Catherine Nkosi (Malawi) Ambassador Patrice Eugene Cure (Mauritius) Ambassador Marie-Pierre Lloyd (Seychelles) Dr Mohammed Ahmed Abdelghaffar (Sudan) and Dr Simbi Mubako (Zimbabwe).

## Support to Madagascar Policy Organs Meetings on the Agenda

As President Rajoelina, SG Meet in Madagascar:

Secretary General of COMESA Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe was in Madagascar early March 2019 to brief and consult the Chair of the COMESA Authority of Heads of States and Government H. E. President Andry Rajoelina of Madagascar on COMESA programmes and the 2019 Summit.

During the mission that took place between 4 and 6 March 2019, the SG met with the Chairperson of COMESA Council of Ministers Hon. Lantosoa Rakotomalala.

This was the first meeting between the executive management of COMESA and the leadership of Madagascar since the formation of the new government following democratic elections in the country which took place late 2018.

The SG congratulated the President

upon his election and briefed him on key programmes that COMESA was implementing. These include industrialization, the Digital Free Trade Area and the Blue Economy programme which island countries like Madagascar have keen interest.

She further briefed the President on the Africa Union and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) meeting coming up in June 2019 in Niger. The President was expected to represent COMESA in the meeting which seeks to harmonize the activities of the AU and the RECs.

The President expressed his commitment to support the organization achieve its set goal in regional integration.

During the meeting with the Chair of the Council Hon. Rakotomalala, who is also the Minister for Trade and

Industry, they discussed the allocation to Madagascar of a total of 1.3 million Euros under the COMESA Regional Integration Mechanism (RISM).

Madagascar qualified for the funds which are in tranches of €373,953 and 964,842. The funds are provided by the European Union through COMESA to support Member States implement programmes that deepen regional integration.

Three other ministers had meetings with the Secretary General. They included Hon. Richard Randriamandranto (Finance and Budget) who is a former Chief of Strategic Planning and Research in COMESA, Hon. Lucien Fanomezantsoa, (Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries) and Hon. Naina Andriantsitohaina (Foreign Affairs).



## Small Scale Women Traders Recognized as COMESA Marks Women’s Day

Two events were conducted at the COMESA Secretariat to mark the 2019 International Women’s Day. These were: a dialogue with the small-scale cross border women traders organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in collaboration with COMESA Secretariat and the government of Zambia on March 7, 2019.

The second was the celebration COMESA women staff to acknowledge their contribution to regional integration. The two events were conducted separately on March 7, 2019, the eve of the International Women’s Day (March 8, 2019).

About 50 women involved in diverse types of small-scale cross border trade from and around Lusaka, Zambia were invited to share experiences on issues that affect them when conducting cross border trade.

“We are here to recognize and celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women across various sections,” Mrs. Kayula Siame, Permanent Secretary in Zambia’s Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry said during the opening of the meeting.

She described the meeting as a unique opportunity to dialogue with women small scale traders on pertinent issues affecting their trade.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General in Charges of Programmes Dr Kipyego Cheluget urged more women to get involved in trade to empower themselves and contribute to poverty reduction.

In her statement, Ms. Marianne Lane, the IOM Chief of Mission said there was growing recognition at the global, regional and national levels of the linkage between migration and trade.

In line with this year’s theme of ‘Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change’, she said her organization is supporting innovative ways of enabling women to succeed in trade. A mobile App known as the MigApp developed by the IOM was presented at the event. The App is one of IOMs innovative platforms aimed at filling the existing information gap.

Appreciating the recognition accorded to women cross border traders, the Vice General Secretary of the Cross-Border Traders Association (CBTA) Ms. Christine Phiri said:

“Platforms of this nature give us the privilege to share testimonies, encourage and motivate one another on how best we can support the common effort of women cross border traders.” She was represented by the CBTA Gender and Trade Specialist Mrs. Veronica Mwaba.

COMESA in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade, the IOM and other key stakeholders are implementing EU-funded COMESA Small Scale Cross-Border Trade programme Initiative. The programmes seeks to increase formal cross border trade by promoting trade facilitation measures and tools such as the Simplified Trade regime (STR).



Permanent Secretary Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Zambia Mrs. Kayula Siame





## Building the Capacity of MS to Access International Markets

COMESA is developing a harmonized food safety regulatory environment and a credible quality verification infrastructure that will be trusted by the bloc's trading partners. The initiative is financed under the European Union Development (EDF 11).

This initiative will improve the quality and competitiveness of goods produced in COMESA.

Among the beneficiary States, is Madagascar which is renowned throughout the world as the primary source of high-end spices, but many of these products have yet to find their full potential as they lack external market access owing to food safety and regulatory requirements.

As a way of assisting the country overcome these barriers to trade, COMESA is addressing the sanitary and phytosanitary regulatory hurdles, through capacity building initiatives training.

Speaking at the opening of a National Workshop on Food Safety Regulation and Access to US Market training for producers and exporters in Madagascar, the Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe said the intervention by COMESA was aimed at helping Member States respond to new food safety regulations by the United States government which came into force in October 2017.

The training workshop in Antananarivo began on March on 4-6 March 2019. Similar trainings were planned in six additional Member States to ensure COMESA exports do not lose their competitive advantage in USA markets.

Madagascar lost AGOA eligibility following the 2009 political crisis, and this led to a decline of Madagascar's total exports to the USA.

However, the AGOA eligibility was reinstated in 2014 and exports resumed. The Madagascar National AGOA strategy launched in April 2015, identified the following products as having great potential for export to the US market; Vanilla, clove, coffee, shrimps and prawns, prepared or preserved tunas and essential oils.

The SG told the workshop participants to not only focus on the requirements by the US food safety requirements, but also use the forum to share knowledge on the requirements of regional markets and other major markets such as the EU.

"The requirement for food safety management systems and the high costs associated with certification locks majority of SMEs in domestic markets. Export markets require procurement of voluntary third-party certification schemes, which are way beyond the means of local companies," she said.

At the borders, she said, some of the SPS measures applied to intra-regional trade do not even reduce risk at all, but only serve to increase trading costs which consequently discourages cross border trade thereby depressing regional exports.

She said the region has since made great strides to harmonize the SPS and standard regulatory environment in a way that facilitates trade, supports industry growth, and increases the competitiveness of COMESA food and agricultural exports.

## Ethiopian Flight ET 302 Tragedy Shocked the Region



Susan Abulfarag



Esmat Orensa

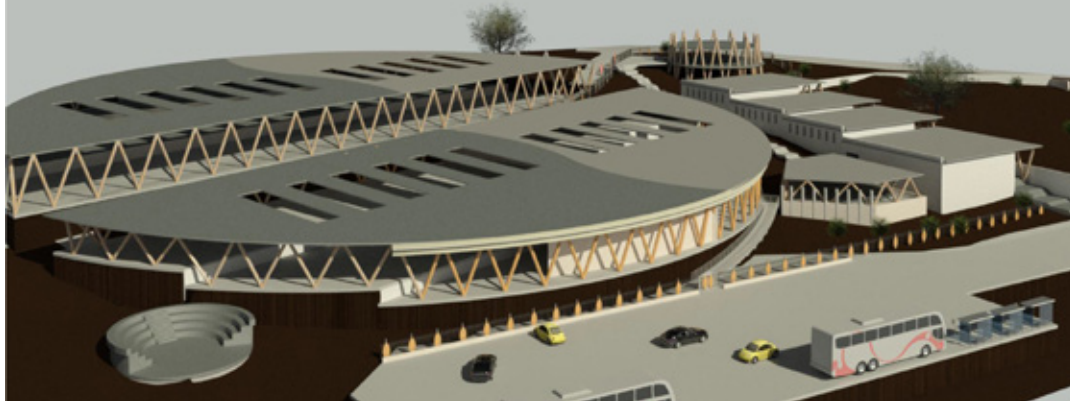
The crash of the Ethiopian Flight 302 on Sunday March 10, enroute to Nairobi from Addis Ababa sent shockwaves across the entire COMESA region. As one of the biggest regional carriers, ET connects COMESA Member States and the region to the world thus immensely contributing to regional integration.

Hundreds of delegates attending COMESA meetings and staff travelling on duty use this airline almost on day to day basis. The deep sense of loss was profound as COMESA came to terms with the tragic accident that took away the lives of 157 people, with Kenya taking the hardest hit, losing 32 of her citizens and Ethiopia losing nine. Egypt, Djibouti, Rwanda, Uganda, Sudan and Somalia are the other COMESA States which had citizens on board the ill-fated plane.

Two private professional Arabic interpreters, Susan Abulfarag and Esmat Orensa, whose services COMESA engaged often perished, in the tragedy.

"At this difficult moment, as you search for answers on what could have gone wrong, COMESA shares your grief and that of all the families affected by this tragedy," read the message of condolences from the Secretary General of COMESA.

# Construction of Modern Trade Hub in Eswatini is underway



The construction of a modern multi-purpose Trade Hub in Manzini town in Eswatini is set to begin following the signing of a 1.2 million euros financing agreement with the government, the European Union and COMESA, on March 15, 2019 in Ezulwini. The funds will also be used to provide private sector support to the country.

Minister of Finance Hon. Neal Rijkenberg and the Minister of Commerce, Trade

.....  
**“The construction of the Trade hub locally known as ‘Inhlanganisela Yabomake’ will bring relief to majority of handcrafts most of whom are women and youth. They currently operate in the open in back yards spread across the country,”**

and Industry Hon. Manqoba Khumalo signed the document on behalf of the Government while COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe signed for COMESA. The Head of Cooperation at the European Union Office in Eswatini Ariane Labat signed for the EU.

The Project will enhance the performance of the leather value chain, improve quality infrastructure services to support production and trade, and raise the capacities for investment promotion in the country.

Ministers Rijkenberg and Khumalo said the support will help develop the micro,

small and medium trade by improving the quality of products, marketing skills and find bigger markets. The Project will also help the country attain the required economic transformation for the betterment of the people of Eswatini.

“The construction of the Trade hub locally known as ‘Inhlanganisela Yabomake’ will bring relief to majority of handcrafts most of whom are women and youth. They currently operate in the open in back yards spread across the country,” Minister Khumalo said.

The Trade Hub is expected to accommodate 300 traders and impact over 400 businesses focusing on women and youths; both young and old. The new facility will also protect the artisans from unfavourable weather conditions which makes it difficult for them to operate.

“Bringing them under one roof will enhance the capacity of government to offer support services, improve collaboration in procurement, production and marketing,” Minister Khumalo added. The cost of extension support is expected to decline significantly as technical support officers will meet the critical mass of handcrafts in one place.

The project is consistent with COMESA Market Integration Strategy, which is anchored on trade and investment and is key to assisting countries realize structural transformation. The strategy provides for market integration, infrastructure development, industrialization, science, technology and innovation pillars.

Secretary General Kapwepwe commended the Kingdom of Eswatini for consistently participating in regional integration frameworks as a way of enhancing its trade performance in the COMESA region.

“This project preserves the Kingdom’s unique culture by pulling on the knowledge of the gatekeepers of Eswatini traditions while applying modern technologies and designs that are attractive to an international market,” Ms. Kapwepwe added.

EU Head of Cooperation Ms. Ariane Labat assured his organization’s commitment to continue supporting regional integration programmes and commended the Government of Eswatini for its decision to establish modern infrastructure for small-scale traders.

“The Trade Hub is a significant Project for Eswatini. It will improve the environment for MSME production and trade capacities for creation of jobs and growth.”

COMESA has provided Eswatini with over three million Euros from 2013 – 2018 under the COMESA Adjustment Facility (CAF) and with support of the EU through the Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM).

Programmes supported under RISM include the free trade area, the customs union, resolution of non-tariff barriers, harmonization of standards, trade in services, investment, competition policies transport and trade facilitation policies.



## IGAD Early Warning Team in COMESA for Benchmarking



COMESA and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have intensified collaboration on areas of commonalities through joint activities to advance the conflict early warning in the region.

The two Regional Economic Communities (RECs) separately conduct conflict early warning and response analysis on their Member States, majority of which belong to both organizations. IGAD has the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) while COMESA has the COMESA Conflict Early Warning System (COMWARN).

The need for deeper collaboration through experience sharing and best practices is therefore informed by the overlapping of country membership to the two RECs with six out of the seven members of IGAD belonging to COMESA.

The collaboration is further reinforced by a Memorandum of Understanding signed between African Union (AU) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in 2008.

.....  
"This is more critical in conducting and disseminating structural vulnerability results to stakeholders. Let us therefore strengthen such initiatives to maximize on our individual capabilities,"

On 4 – 8 March 2019, a team from IGAD's CEWARN Unit conducted a mission to the COMESA Secretariat for benchmarking with COMWARN team in the Governance, Peace and Security (GPS) Unit.

During the four days of interactions, the two teams shared experiences on data collection, analysis and reporting using various tools that are being used by both institutions.

COMESA team shared its experience on Structural Vulnerability Assessment methodology which includes data collection, analysis, report writing and dissemination. On the other hand, IGAD team took their COMESA counterparts through its indicator module-based application, which relies on dynamic data collected by field monitors based across their Member States.

Receiving the IGAD team, the Head of GPS Elizabeth Mutunga said collaboration and partnership in early warning provides the two RECs with the opportunity to leverage on each other strength.

"This is more critical in conducting and disseminating structural vulnerability results to stakeholders. Let us therefore strengthen such initiatives to maximize on our individual capabilities," she said.

## Building the Capacity of Monetary Authorities to Forecast Inflation

With several countries in COMESA gradually moving to inflation targeting monetary policy framework, the need to upgrade the skills of monetary authorities to forecast inflation with a high degree of accuracy is becoming critical.

Contemporary monetary policy formulation requires information and forecasts on the interaction between sectors and variables in the economy which can be better understood through Dynamic Stochastic General Equilibrium (DSGE) Model. This model has richer micro-foundation that captures economic relationships than others.

The DSGE model is a method in macroeconomics that attempts to explain economic experiences, such as economic growth and business cycles and the effects of economic policy through econometric models based on applied general equilibrium theory and microeconomic principles.

Based on the instruction by the 39th Meeting of the Bureau of the COMESA Committee of Governors of Central Banks that was held on 4th December 2018 in Djibouti, the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) organized a training titled "DSGE Modelling and Time Series Analysis" from 4th – 8th March 2019 Nairobi, Kenya.

The objectives of the training was to enhance the capacity for monetary policy formulation and implementation using DSGE models in member Central Banks. It was also intended at enabling CMI to fulfill its mandate of monetary policy coordination at a regional level, which is a prerequisite for higher degree of monetary integration.

Delegates from nine Central Banks in COMESA Member States namely: Burundi, D R Congo, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Mauritius, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe attended the training.



(L-R) Eswatini Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg, Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade Manqoba Khumalo and Representative of the European Union Mission in Eswatini

## Eswatini has so far Received Three Million Euros for Integration Support

From 2013 to date, the Kingdom of Eswatini has received a total of three million Euros from the European Union through the COMESA Adjustment facility (CAF) to support the implementation of regional integration programmes.

Some of the projects that have successfully been implemented with the funds includes, the Automated System for Customs Data known as ASYCUDA World, Climate Change programme and the construction of a modern trade hub and private sector support project.

ASYCUDA is a computerized system designed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to administer a country's customs.

In Eswatini, ASYCUDA project was implemented with 950,000 Euros provided by the European Development Fund Union through the CAF.

"This is a clear success story for us because it has helped modernize the customs systems in the Kingdom, decongest the borders and enhanced trade facilitation by reducing the time spent on clearing goods," Commissioner General of Eswatini Revenue Authority Mr. Dumisani Masilela said.

He was speaking when he received in his office, a COMESA mission led by Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe.

He added that the cost of doing business has also reduced as the number of documents to be processed are fewer. The system has helped the Kingdom to automate Customs processes relating to imports and export of goods border points, and compilation of accurate trade statistics.



*"Borders must work for both the government and the importers and exporters. We need to continuously leverage on technology to achieve this"*

The Commissioner added that the local telecommunications company has provided support to his office to ensure that the system is always working, and this has led to increased revenue collection.

Since its launch in 2016, ASYCUDA has been rolled out in all the 13 commercial borders and six non-commercial borders in Eswatini. To make the project fully acceptable, UNCTAD provided technical training to the revenue authority and government Agencies.

The Secretary General said COMESA was focusing on use of technology to speed up the border processes to make them more efficient.

"Borders must work for both the government and the importers and exporters. We need to continuously leverage on technology to achieve this," Ms. Kapwepwe added.

During the mission, the COMESA team visited the Ngwenya border post between Eswatini and South Africa and witnessed the inspection and clearing processes for cargo trucks.

The COMESA Climate Change programme is another success story. Launched in 2017, the programme is a partnership with Cooperating Partners and the Ministry of Agriculture of Eswatini. It was implemented through a grant to Empatheni vegetable farmers for Climate Smart Farming.

Through this grant, the farmers are now irrigating their farms, have built cold rooms, to store their harvest, and have two new tractors. They have also increased their vegetable production and the quality of the produce while minimizing post-harvest losses.

In 2018, COMESA provided video conferencing equipment to Eswatini through the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade. This has enabled the Government to conduct virtual meetings and conferences thus enhancing efficiency in business processes and making economic savings by cutting travel expenses.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister of Eswatini the Right Hon Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini underscored his country's commitment to regional integration to strengthen its position and become an export-based economy. He said COMESA was a key market for Eswatini's products particularly sugar which contributes about 16% to the Gross Domestic Products (GDP).

He was speaking when he hosted COMESA Secretariat team led by the Secretary General. The team was in the country from 14 – 16 March 2019 to assess the implementation of COMESA led programmes. during the mission, the team visited the Satellite Bus Rank market where micro, small and medium entrepreneurs dealing in assorted handicrafts and traditional wear operates.



## Need for Coordination of RECs- AU Activities in Regional Integration Programmes

Assistant Secretary General in charge of Programmes, Dr Kipyego Cheluget led a COMESA delegation to the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development that took place in Marrakech, Morocco in March 2019.

The team participated in the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa (RCM-Africa) meeting, which derives its mandate from UN resolution 32/197. RCM-Africa directed the Regional Communities (RECs) to take leadership and responsibility for enhancing cooperation and coordination of UN activities at the regional level.

The Mechanism and its four Sub-regional Coordination Mechanisms (SRCMs) covering the five sub-regions of Africa, have become the frameworks for the UN family to work together in supporting the priorities of the African Union (AU) and its organs, the RECs and other regional and sub-regional organizations.

"Taking into account the new developments both at the UN and AU Reforms, this calls for a rethink of the RCM-Africa, aim at aligning the coordination and leadership roles to the ongoing reforms, the four sub-regional mechanisms need to focus on the regional economic communities where the regional mechanism focuses on support to the AUC," Dr Cheluget observed in his address to the meeting.

He said there was need to strengthen the UN system-wide policy coherence, coordination and cooperation at the regional level to 'deliver as one' in response to identified regional priorities and initiatives of the AU, and at the REC level.

"The aim is to reduce fragmentation in their operations and increasing coherence, coordination and



(Right) Assistant Secretary General, Dr Kipyego Cheluget speaking at the Regional Coordination Mechanism Conference in Morocco.

cooperation in their support of their programmes and priorities to the member states," he noted adding that the current practice lacks in efficient coordination of all stakeholders.

Addressing delegates in a side event assessing the status of regional integration in Africa, Dr Cheluget said COMESA is guided by its Treaty that binds the member states to integrate practically.

He gave examples of successful COMESA trade facilitation instruments such as the Yellow Card that is now digitalized and travelers from as far afield as Europe showing interest in it.

"COMESA has robust specialized institutions many of which have expanded continentally such as the Trade and Development Bank, ZEP-RE Reinsurance Company, African Trade Insurance Agency, COMESA Competition Commission among others," Dr Cheluget said. "COMESA takes the role of women in regional integration very seriously as evidenced by its setting up of FEMCOM, the 50 Million Women Speak Project and we are proud to have our first woman SG."

He informed the meeting that COMESA was one of the initiators and champions of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA), building on the success of its own Free Trade Area (FTA) and the Tripartite FTA.

He said: "The ACFTA, can learn from and benefit from COMESA's tried and tested instruments such as the Rules of Origin, digital FTA among others."

He called for rationalization of the multiplicity of efforts and organizations dealing with the free trade issues for better coherence and synergy.

.....

"The aim is to reduce fragmentation in their operations and increasing coherence, coordination and cooperation in their support of their programmes and priorities to the member states,"

# Looking out for Investment Opportunities in COMESA

35 Egyptian business people on a mission



An Egyptian business delegation was in COMESA on March 20, 2019 to meet and discuss trade and investments opportunities in the region. The 35-member team was led by the President of the African Cooperation Committee of the Federation of Egyptian Industries Mr. Sherif Al Gabaly (pictured) and Egyptian Ambassador to Zambia and COMESA Ambassador Ahmed Mostafa.

This was the first time such a delegation has been to COMESA and the region. Egypt takes the lion's share of the COMESA market at 22%. Globally, Egypt's total exports to COMESA is at 8% and imports at 1% thus presenting huge potential to increase trade with COMESA Member States.

Mr. Gabaly said the Federation of Egyptian Industries has 19 chambers specialized in different sectors of the industries and is also a member of the COMESA Business Council (CBC).

The delegation had representation from sectors such as food processing, packaging, engineering, chemical industries, pharmaceuticals and others.

Ambassador Mustafa said the business delegation was in Zambia to seek economic cooperation with their fellow businessmen and women in Zambia and the COMESA region at large. Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe received the delegation and appreciated the country for ratifying both the Tripartite and the Africa Continental Free Trade Area.

The Director of Trade Dr Francis Mangeni took the delegation through the potential trade opportunities in the

## Steps to Maintain Exports to US Market as the country introduces stringent safety standards



Mr. Thierry Kalonji

There is potential loss of the USA markets, if COMESA exporters do not upgrade processing facilities to meet the US food safety regulations that came into force in October 2017. COMESA is therefore keen to support both the both public and private sectors in achieving compliance with US Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) rules.

The FSMA was signed into law in January 2011 and came into effect October 2017. The Act is implemented by two regulations with new requirements for food processors; the regulation on preventive controls for human food and the regulation on produce safety.

To this end, COMESA is continuing to strengthen the capacity of its Member States' producers and exporters in their efforts to respond to the new US food safety regulations. This is being done through capacity building training workshops. The trainings are being rolled out to Member States to ensure that COMESA exports do not lose their competitive advantage in US markets.

During a food safety training workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, on 11 March 2019, the Director of Agriculture and industry, Mr. Thierry Kalonji informed the participants that COMESA is developing a harmonized food safety regulatory environment and infrastructure to enhance the quality and competitiveness of goods produced in COMESA.

The Director noted that compliance with FSMA was a challenge to governments and the food safety regulatory authorities already faced with resource constraints. He stressed that, this was also an opportunity to leverage public/private resources for enhanced food safety compliance and increased consumer confidence in locally produced products.

Further, he said building local capacity on FSMA and providing a pool of human resources in Africa that industry can draw on, is an important contribution, for which he thanked the US Government for the support.

An important requirement under the regulations is that food safety management in the food processing facility should be performed by a Preventive Controls Qualified Individual (PCQI) who has successfully completed training under a standardized curriculum recognized by the FDA.

The second most important requirement for exporters of food products into US is the FSMA Rule on Foreign Supplier Verification Program (FSVP). This requires US importers to verify that their foreign suppliers are producing food according to the US food safety regulations.

This implies that at the request of a US importer, the exporter's food processing facility will be subjected to periodic food safety audits to verify compliance with US regulations.

In Kenya, the agriculture sector is key to the country's economic development as evidenced by its 26% direct contribution to the GDP and its 65% contribution to total national exports.

COMESA has also spearheaded similar initiatives in the Tripartite Free Trade Area framework that brings together the EAC-COMESA-SADC, which in turn provides lessons to inform and support the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area.



## Africa Peace Team Visits Secretariat



*A team from the African Union (AU) comprising representatives of the programme management team of the Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and a European Union (EU) consultant meeting with Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe (middle)*

A team from the African Union (AU) comprising representatives of the programme management team of the Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and a European Union (EU) consultant paid a courtesy call on the Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe.

The team was at COMESA Secretariat to discuss the implementation of the APSA programme and set priorities for its next phase, which is expected to run from 2020 – 2023. During the meeting, the Secretary General signed an addendum to the APSA grant agreement.

Under APSA, COMESA has been able to produce key results that support its overall integration agenda and some of these include the establishment of a robust theory informed data-driven early warning system that focuses on identifying key structural vulnerabilities of Member States and providing recommendations. It is expected that

this will ultimately lead to strengthening the resilience of Member States especially if the partnership with the African Union Continental Early Warning System is maintained.

The second key result area is to build mediation capacity of COMESA through the COMESA Committee of Elders which was established by the COMESA Authority in 2017. This has enabled the Elders to support the consolidation of democracy through pre-elections assessments as well as supported the mitigation of conflicts and crisis through fact-finding missions and preventive diplomacy mission.

Another key result area supports cross border cooperation that has led to relations at the borders between DRC and its eastern neighbours by using trade as a mechanism for peace and security.

## Digital Yellow Card Clocks 2,500 Users Daily



The Digital Yellow Card is so far being accessed by 166 insurance companies, over 566 branches and an average of 2,500 users daily in the region. This was revealed during the third Meeting of the information technology committee of the Digital Yellow Card Scheme that met in Lusaka, Zambia, in March 2019.

The meeting's deliberations focused on progress regarding the status of implementation of the Digital Yellow Card; the consolidation and enhancement of the Digital system and implementation of the second phase which deals with mobile applications.

This meeting followed the October 2018 Council of Bureaux meeting held in Livingstone, Zambia which made several decisions to fully roll-out and consolidate the operations of the Digital Yellow Card scheme.

The Scheme is in line with one of COMESA's Strategic objectives which is to strengthen market integration, through the seamless flow of goods, services, capital, people and the right to establish and reside within the COMESA region.

This ensures trade facilitation through simplification and harmonization of documents thereby lowering the cost of cross border trade through removal of trade barriers. IT Directors and experts of the National Bureaux of the Yellow Card Scheme from Member States attended the meeting.

## COMESA Receives AU Service Passports

COMESA Secretariat has received the first batch of the African Union travel document known as the Laissez Passer (LP) for the use by members of staff. A total of 123 AU Service LPs and seven Diplomatic LPs were handed over to the COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance Dr Dev Haman in Lusaka.

## Fare thee well PS Onen



On March 11, 2019, COMESA woke to the sad news of the demise of Ambassador Julius Onen, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives of Uganda. Ambassador Onen was instrumental in driving the regional integration agenda with unparalleled depth of knowledge on regional integration. His insightful contributions on the subject in COMESA meetings and other fora, regionally and globally often informed major policy decisions.

Many acknowledged him a polished diplomat. He nurtured excellent working relations between COMESA Secretariat and his Ministry, which oversees the implementation of COMESA programmes in Uganda.

“His demise leaves our region poorer of champions that it needs to spur economic take-off and realize our common vision,” the Secretary General of COMESA Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe said in a message of condolences.

## COMESA Observed Elections in Comoros



*Voting in Comoros in March 2019*

COMESA deployed a team of election observers to Comoros ahead of the Presidential elections which took place on March 24, 2019. The team was led by Ms. Hope Kivengere, a member of the COMESA Committee of elders from Uganda.

This deployment was in line with the Decision of the 16th Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs in July 2018 in Lusaka that called on the Secretariat to support Member States planning to hold elections.

Through the Governance Peace and Security Unit (GPS), COMESA has prioritized elections observation mission as a means of promoting and enhancing the consolidation of democracy in the region. In 2018 for instance, the election observer mission was deployed to support the Zimbabwean elections.

During the deployment, the COMESA team covered 56 out of the 731 polling stations in the country.

## Somalia Seeks to Invest in COMESA Region

Six months after Somalia rejoined COMESA, the country, envoy came looking for investment and trade opportunities in the region. The key areas of interest being livestock, fisheries and infrastructure development.

The Charge d’Affaires at the Embassy of Somalia in Lusaka, Mr. Ahmed Abdirahman Sheikh Nur said in January this year, that Somalia has over 50

million heads of cattle and therefore stands to contribute greatly to the leather sector in the region and beyond.

Mr. Ahmed was at the COMESA Secretariat on a courtesy call on Secretary General Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe. The two-discussed regional integration and possible areas of investments that Somalia can venture into within the region.





COMESA SECRETARIAT  
COMESA Center  
Ben Bella Road  
P.O. Box 30051. Lusaka, Zambia



+260 211 229 725



[www.comesa.int](http://www.comesa.int)



[info@comesa.int](mailto:info@comesa.int)



[facebook.com/COMESA/](https://facebook.com/COMESA/)



[@twitter.com/comesa\\_lusaka](https://twitter.com/comesa_lusaka)