

All eyes on Kenya as COMESA Hosts Business Summit



It is all systems go as Kenya readies to host Africa's leading premier small and Medium enterprises gathering, the Kenya Trade Week and COMESA High Level Business Summit dubbed Source 21, from Monday 15th to Sunday 21st July 2019. Preparations for the event are complete with delegates expected to start streaming into the Kenya capital from this weekend.

The High-Level Business Summit will be attended by heads of state, regional and international businesses leaders, visitors who operate in the region and those interested in exploring opportunities in the 21 COMESA member states.

The events are joint initiatives of the COMESA Business Council (CBC), the government of Kenya, the Kenya Association of Manufacturers, the private sector and the COMESA Secretariat.

A presidential roundtable has been organized on the first day of the summit which will bring together heads of state, business leaders and regional policy makers to set the pace for the

week long business parley and trade fair.

The Trade Fair will run on the margins of the Summit. It will host pavilions representing all COMESA countries featuring quality products and services that are currently breaking ground in terms of value, quality, innovation and demand in regional and international markets, across all sectors.

The presidential roundtable will provide a unique platform for regional heads of state to share their best practices and knowledge and to address critical issues for agriculture and manufacturing sectors against emerging concepts of digitalization and strategies for spearheading regional and continental integration.

Key issues on their agenda will include the regional trade frameworks such as the tripartite and the Africa continental free trade area which are expected to increase intra-Africa trade by 52% in 2022 and facilitate industrialization, driving sustainable economic development.

Speaking in Lusaka, ahead of the event, Assistant Secretary General of COMESA, Amb Kipyego Cheluget described the event as timely coming at the time when COMESA is celebrating its 25th anniversary and at the same time marking one year since the admission of two new members, Tunisia and Somalia to the regional, that brought the total membership of COMESA to 21.

"It is through public-private engagement, partnerships and such trade fairs where we can work towards the common goals and strategies to address competitiveness of local industries and increase regional trade and regional exports into global markets," he said.

For businesses, the event will promote engagement on new markets, potential business partnerships through showcasing and sampling of new products from the region. The aim is to promote and encourage more consumption of quality African products in the regional markets.

Rwanda Ratifies the Tripartite Free Trade Area agreement



File photo/ Rwanda delegates attending a past COMESA conference

Rwanda has become the fifth country to ratify the tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement (TFTA). Members of the Lower House of the Rwanda Parliament approved the draft law for the ratification of the agreement on Wednesday, July 10, 2019.

The TFTA was launched on 15 June 2015 in Egypt by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The *Times of Rwanda* quoted the Minister for Trade and Industry, Soraya Hakuziyaremye, telling the lawmakers that though the TFTA was officially launched by the heads of state in Egypt in 2015, the ratification process had taken long due to prolonged negotiations on rules of origin and tariff offers by the regional blocs.

She pointed out that the establishment of

the free trade area will bolster intra-regional trade by creating a wider market, increasing investment flow, enhancing competitiveness and developing cross-regional infrastructure.

“This agreement rose from the need to establish an integrated market of 27 countries with a combined population of nearly 600 million people and a GDP of approximately US\$1 trillion,” she said

The Tripartite Council of ministers of the three regional economic blocs had given member states up to April 2019 this year to sign and ratify the tripartite free trade.

A total of 22 out of 26 countries in the tripartite bloc have signed the agreement.

Delegates attending the seventh Extraordinary meeting of the COMESA Intergovernmental Committee that opened in Lusaka in April this,

were informed that eight of the 19 countries that had ratified the Africa Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) were Tripartite Member/ Partner States.

Speaking at the April meeting, Zambia’s Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry Hon. Christopher Yaluma said it was time for the remaining countries to sign the tripartite given that it was supposed to be the building bloc to the continental FTA.

“I cannot overemphasize the absolute importance of all of us ratifying the Tripartite Agreement so that it enters into force immediately. After years of negotiation, the Tripartite FTA is ready for implementation. It is very much a low hanging fruit,” Hon Yaluma had said.

The continental free trade area has already attained the requisite ratifications and was launched last week in Niger.

Over 90% of the work on Rules of Origin for the Tripartite has been completed, providing the basis for trade to begin. In addition, the legal texts have been concluded and adopted. Most of the member/partners states of the tripartite are already using the existing COMESA or SADC free trade area agreements.

The ratification by Rwanda is expected to trigger similar actions from the remaining Member States.

COMESA DIARY		
Dates	Event	Venue
15 – 21 July 2019	COMESA Source 21 Business Summit	Nairobi
23 -24 July 2019	Private Seed Companies meeting with National Seed Authorities on the use of COMESA Regional Seed Certificates and Labels	Lusaka
23-24 July 2019	Meeting on Climate Change Resilience Building - with delegates from 17 Member States	Lusaka
30-31 July 2019	Meeting on Nationally Determined Contributions Target Indicator Tracking - Climate Change	Harare
1-2 August 2019	Green Climate Finance Training co- organized with the African Union and UNDP	Harare



Madagascar Receives Additional 964,000 Euros from COMESA



Hon. Lantoso Rakotomalala (L) and COMESA SG signing the financing agreement in Geneva

Madagascar will receive an additional 964,000 Euros to build its capacity to implement regional integration programmes. The funds are provided under the COMESA Adjustment Facility (CAF) under the 10th European Development Fund Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM).

This follows the signing of the financing agreement between the country's Minister of Industry Trade and Handicrafts, Hon. Lantoso Rakotomalala and the Secretary General of

COMESA Chileshe Kapwepwe.

The signing ceremony was conducted in Geneva last week on the side-lines of the WTO Aid for Trade Global review forum.

The new funding is an additional to earlier grants signed in 2015 amounting to slightly over one million Euros and the second one signed in 2018 amounting to over 370,000 Euros. This brings the total financing granted to Madagascar to over 2.3 million Euros under the COMESA Adjustment Facility.

COMESA Conducts Panel Discussion on Value Chains at the 2019 Global Review

The first panel discussion dubbed "Promoting Regional Integration through MSME Value Chains" was conducted in Geneva by COMESA and attended by various stakeholders from all over the world.

This was on the sidelines of the 2019 Aid for Trade Global Review.

Panelists included, the Secretary General, Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, Permanent Secretary for Industry, Trade and Tourism, Malawi, Dr Ken Ndala, and International Trade Centre Deputy Executive Secretary Dorothy Tembo. Others were Executive Director, Africa Leather and Leather Products Institute, Prof. Mwinyikione Mwinyihija and Chief Executive, Southern Africa, Trade Development Bank, Gloria Mamba

The discussion was moderated by the Coordinator for COMESA Aid for Trade Unit, Hope Situmbeko.

Addressing the audience, Secretary General emphasized the need for the region to embrace technology in the development of regional and global value chains.

Ms Kapwepwe added that the development of value chains in the COMESA region should adopt a sequential model of implementation which will ensure that the region adopts the most important issues.

COMESA, ACP ink Euro 2.9 Million Agreement



A section of COMESA delegation to the Aid for Trade Global review forum in Geneva

COMESA, African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) ink Euro 2.9 Million Agreement
COMESA has signed a contribution agreement of Euro 2.9 million with the ACP – EU under the TradeCom II capacity building programme. This was done in Geneva, July 4, 2019 during a collective grant signing event at the just concluded World Trade Organisation Aid for Trade Global review forum.

ACP Assistant Secretary General, Viwanou

Gnassounou and COMESA Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe signed the agreement on behalf of the other organisations in the presence of the Director of Planet and Prosperity Development at the European Union Carla Montesi.

As a component of the TradeComm II Programme, the Grant is an inclusive, demand-driven facility that supports cooperative responses to the Programme's objectives and

expected results. The Grant complements the demand-led support with longer-term and locally anchored institutional capacity building.

The funding will focus on, support to ACP trade institutions such as trade research and trade capacity building institutions, including academic institutions. It will encourage the establishment of both North-South-twinning for specialized providers of trade related activities from EU Member States in partnership with ACP beneficiaries and cooperation with international organizations.