

First COMESA High Level Dialogue Hosted in Kenya



The High Level Presidential Dialogue

The COMESA Source21 High Level dialogue and international trade fair took place from 17 July in Nairobi, Kenya, attended by heads of state, hundreds on business people, investors seekers and a wide array of experts on regional trade. Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta opened the forum in the company of Presidents Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), Edgar Lungu, (Zambia), and Acting President of Mauritius Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory.

Among the key issues that took centre stage during the dialogue that followed the official opening was the implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), integration of Small and medium enterprises in the regional and global supply chains, elimination of trade barriers and promotion of digital and financial inclusiveness for enterprises.

Speaking at the event, President Kenyatta said: "The business community eagerly await the benefits of trade that will come not only with expanded markets but with the opportunities for rapid development and access to innovation and

technology."

He emphasized the importance of digitizing African economies saying it will improve transparency and accountability.

"If we want to integrate the continent, we have to be at the same level with regard to our digitization so that the process that we are using in Kenya has interconnectivity with the processes that are being used in Uganda, in Zambia, in Mauritius and elsewhere," President Kenyatta said.

President Museveni decried the fragmented markets which he observed were too small to have meaningful economic impact and called for their integration. These, he said were major bottlenecks that undermine the continent's efforts to move out of the poverty trap.

President Lungu said African governments must demonstrate political will to support SMEs for them to benefit from the AfCFTA. He said governments need to promote and identify SMEs ahead of the full establishment of the AfCFTA

otherwise only the big companies will benefit "As a region, we must help SMEs fit in the bigger picture," President Lungu said.

President Vyapoory spoke of the need to provide incentives to Small and medium enterprises by implementing favourable policies and setting up special funds to support them.

Secretary General of COMESA Chileshe Kapwepwe spoke of the critical need for digitization of commerce through electronic trade which will eliminate paperwork that constitutes a major impediment to intra-COMESA trade.

Dr Mukhisa Kituyi, the Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development said COMESA was placed to lead the continental trade integration as it had many successful institutions. He said the region needs to give preference to Made in Africa and COMESA to promote locally produced goods.

This will clear the path for Africa's products to access regional and world markets.

COMESA Source21: A Strategic Showcasing Opportunity



COMESA information resource centre at Source 21 expo

The first COMESA Source 21 International Trade Fair that took place in Nairobi, Kenya from 17 – 21 July presented a strategic opportunity for COMESA, its institutions and projects to engage with stakeholders and demonstrate their benefits to the region.

Three COMESA institutions: COMESA

Competition Commission, the COMESA Court of Justice and the COMESA Business Council were part of the hundreds of exhibitors at the fair, the first of its kind.

At the expo, COMESA Secretariat established an information centre to engage with stakeholders directly and receive feedback,

mainly from business people and investors on experiences and challenges that they face. The 50 Million African Women Speak Project (50MWS), a new project under the COMESA Gender Division was the trade fair to. It took advantage of the event to introduce itself to the Kenyan public and international exhibitors.

The 50MWS is a three-year project funded by the African Development Bank, jointly implemented by three regional economic communities (RECs) COMESA, East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community for Western African States (ECOWAS) in 38-member countries of the three regional bodies. The objective of the project is to empower women entrepreneurs by providing access to financial and non-financial information relevant to develop and grow business.

The SOURCE21 expo was a joint initiative of the COMESA Business Council, the Government of Kenya, the Kenya Association of Manufacturers and the private sector.

Business Facilitation Handbook is Unveiled



Immediate former Chair of the CBC Dr. Amany Asfour presenting the business handbook to President Kenyatta.

A business handbook aimed at facilitating regional trade by providing market information to inform business partnerships and investments has been launched.

The 43-page COMESA Business Council Handbook was unveiled in Nairobi, Kenya during the opening of the COMESA Source 21

High Level Business Dialogue and International Trade Fair on 17 July 2019.

The publication showcases products and opportunities that exist in each of the 21 COMESA Member States including the countries performance in intra-COMESA trade. The publication is expected to address

the lack of access to information across African economies, which undermines the intra-African trade potential which is further compounded by the fragmented nature of the respective markets.

Immediate former Chair of the CBC Dr. Amany Asfour unveiled the handbook describing it as essential tool for all investors.

“We saw it necessary to consolidate relevant trade and economic information and opportunities within the 21 countries hence producing this handbook,” Dr Asfour added. “The information therein can be used by potential and existing investors to target the desired sector or area of investment.”

The handbook will also be available online at www.comesabusinesscouncil.org



Outcomes of the High-Level Business Dialogue

Zambia Prepared for the Launch of the 50 Million Women Platform



High level business dialogue in session

The COMESA High Level Business Dialogue dubbed SOURCE21 has concluded two-days of deliberations in Nairobi, Kenya and identified key areas to deepen regional trade. These are: promoting manufacturing competitiveness, curbing illicit trade, improving access to finance for businesses, bridging the digital gap and improving agriculture competitiveness. The Dialogue involved a Presidential and Private Sector Roundtable that brought together Presidents Uhuru Kenyatta (Kenya) Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), Edgar Lungu (Zambia) and the Acting President of Mauritius Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory.

Also, in the panel were COMESA Secretary General Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe, UNCTAD Secretary General Dr Mukhisa Kituyi and Chair of the COMESA Business Council Marday Venkatasamy who presented the raft of recommendations made.

The key messages from the Presidential dialogue was the need to address bottlenecks to business competitiveness and dealing with the drivers of high cost of doing business such as infrastructure, transport and the high cost of printing money.

While advocating for education and skills development, the leaders also called for the promotion of local sourcing in Member States and the need to identify under-consumption and develop strategies to address it.

To accelerate the implementation of the AfCFTA, the leaders urged Member States to consider building upon the Rules of Origin and the negotiated tariffs from the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA). Promotion of market access for

Made in Africa products was highly emphasized.

On promoting manufacturing competitiveness, several recommendations were agreed on among them the need to harmonize regulatory frameworks on standards including adopting equivalence measures within COMESA. The meeting called on Member States to strengthen coordination and develop a regional strategy to address the illicit trade in the region. In particular, focus should be given to reinforcement of the cooperation between countries and law enforcement agencies.

The Dialogue also urged Member states to develop alternative affordable, specialized SME's financial mechanism or venture funds through partnerships with multilateral investments for improved SME's access to finance.

On bridging the Digitalization Gap, the key message was that countries should increase investment in road, rail, energy infrastructure to reduce the cost of doing business.

Speaking at the closing ceremony, Kenya's Principal Secretary for Trade, Dr Chris Kiptoo assured the participants that his country will champion the implementation of the outcomes of the High-Level Dialogue.

Assistant Secretary General of COMESA in charge of Programmes Dr Kipyego Chelugot thanked the government of Kenya for the leadership it has provided in spearheading regional integration programs.

Meanwhile the international trade fair that ran alongside the High-Level Dialogue will continue until Sunday 21 July 2019 to provide business people from the 21 COMESA Countries with networking opportunities.

COMESA conducted an inception meeting for the 50 Million African Women Speak Platform project, on July 16, 2019 at the Secretariat in Lusaka, Zambia. The meeting marks a critical step in preparing the country for the impending launch of the platform.

The 50MAWS Platform project aims at empowering women entrepreneurs by providing access to financial and non-financial information relevant to developing and growing a business. It was developed by the African Development Bank (AfDB) in partnership with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the East African Community (EAC).

The digital networking platform will provide African women entrepreneurs with a comprehensive one stop shop for information on financial services, as well as peer to peer learning, transfer of knowledge and exchange of business ideas and opportunities

The will also be accessible on hand-held devices, including smartphones and tablets, will enable women to access business training, financial services, locally relevant business information, and mentors, among other services, to support the overall goal of enhanced financial inclusion of women, leading ultimately to increased economic activity in Africa.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Zambia, Mrs. Kayula Siame opened the meeting. She said as a country, Zambia.

She said: "This platform will spur growth of women and youth run businesses, resulting in enhanced economic prospects, wealth, job creation and ultimately much more empowered womenfolk in Zambia and the COMESA Region." Participants were trained on content generation which involves information gathering from respective institutions. This will be uploaded to the 50 MAWSP Digital Networking Platform as soon as the platform is launched to the public in the next few days.



COMESA, IOM Conducts Peer Review on their Partnership

COMESA and the International Organization for Migration, IOM conducted a Peer to Peer meeting at the secretariat to identify areas and activities the two organizations need to implement to enhance the implementation of regional integration programmes.

Participants to the two-day meeting which took place 15-17 July 2019 was drawn from the IOM regional offices in Pretoria as well as the Zambian office and the COMESA secretariat staff.

So far, the two organizations are carrying out two projects funded under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF 11). These are; the Small-Scale Cross Border Trade Programme and the Trade Facilitation Programme. The latter is expected to accelerate the implementation of the Free Movement of persons.

“COMESA’s enhanced implementation of the programme on Free Movement of persons shall result in Member states harnessing the benefits

of migration for development through trade and investment opportunities,” the Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe said in a statement presented by Assistant Secretary General (Administration) Dr. Dev Haman.

She stressed: “No one cannot talk of investment and related programmes such as the COMESA Common Area Investment Agreement (CCIA) without addressing the issue of movement of persons and goods.”

The relationship between COMESA and IOM has existed for close to two decades with tangible results in various aspects such as the establishment of the Regional Consultative Platform for COMESA (MIDCOM). This is a biannual event through which Member States conduct non-binding dialogue on migration as well as the development of tools for capacity building and awareness creation of COMESA Legal instruments on Migration.

International Organization for Migration, Regional Director for the Southern African, Charles Kwenin reiterated the need to address challenges that come up with movement of persons such as international organized crime, human trafficking and smuggling.

“If COMESA and IOM are to harness the dividends of migration for development, the two organizations need to do more to promote regular migration and address irregular migration,” he said.

To build confidence among our Member States to fully ease the movement of persons, Mr. Kwenin said there is need for migration data at the regional level and related information sharing mechanisms.

“So, as we emphasize the need for data or statistics, we also have to recognize the fact that Member States will only make policies and decisions on the basis of evidence,” Kwenin said.

COMESA DIARY

Dates	Event	Venue
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



COMESA Signs off Institutional Strengthening Report



SG Chileshe Kapwepwe and Mr Kap Kirwork

Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe and USAID Chief of Party, based in Kenya, Mr. Kap Kirwork signing the report on COMESA capacity assessment. The report covers the organizations performance assessment, identifies the gaps and recommends interventions. This is part of the USAID/Regional Inter-Governmental Organizations (RIGO) System Strengthening Activity. This USAID Activity is providing organizational strengthening assistance to three Regional Economic Communities (REC) namely, the East African Community (EAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and selected sub-entities of those RIGOs to improve their performance, and in turn, provide economic growth and resilience.

COMESA SG, Tunisia Minister of Trade Hold Talks



Exactly one year since Tunisia became the 20th Member of COMESA, the Minister of Trade H.E. Mr. OMAR BEHI met Secretary General Ms Chileshe Kapwepwe on the sidelines of the SOURCE21 High Level Business Dialogue and International Trade in Nairobi, Kenya. The two leaders discussed Tunisia participation in regional integration programmes now that the country has completed all the process of admission to COMESA. Tunisia joined COMESA in July 2018.