

Pomp, Debate, Awards Mark COMESA @25 Commemoration



The Anniversary Gala

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa – COMESA, celebrated 25 years since it was established in 1994 to succeed the Preferential Trade Area (PTA), on Friday 28 November 2019.

About 400 delegates, led by Ministers and their representatives from the 21 Member States attended the celebrations hosted alongside the annual COMESA Policy Organs meetings in Lusaka, Zambia. Government officials, diplomats, business community were among the guests that graced the occasion.

Key activities of the event was a high-level panel discussion that reflected on the past and the future of COMESA. Immediate former Deputy Chair of the African Union

Mr. Erastus Mwencha, who is also a former Secretary General of COMESA was among the panelists. Others were the COMESA Secretary



(L-R) Hope Murera, George Lipimile, Admassu Tadesse, Erastus Mwencha and Chileshe Kapwepwe

General, Chileshe Kapwepwe, President of the Trade and Development Bank, Mr Admassu Tadesse and Chief Executives of the COMESA Competition Commission and PTA Reinsurance Company (ZepRe) Mr George Lipimile and Mrs. Hope Murera respectively.

The panelists addressed a cross section of key issues in regional integration under the theme: *25 years, Growing Together for Prosperity* with reflections on the past and future. Guests were taken through the journey of COMESA regional integration with Mr Mwencha providing insights into the past while SG Kapwepwe forecasting the future outlook.

Mr. Tadesse's briefed the guests on how the Trade and Development

Bank has been a runaway success with global credit ratings higher than that of many countries. This means, the Bank can attract credit to support some Member States., which on their own, cannot access. Equally, the Zep-Re, as elaborated by Mrs. Murera, is a global player with ratings as high as that of its sibling, the TDB.

Mr. Lipimile spoke about the role of COMESA Competition Commission, which is the first one in Africa, in ensuring fair business practices in regional trade and investment. To demonstrate its impact Mr. Lipimile revealed how the Commission stopped the commercialization of marketing and media rights of main regional football competitions under the Confederation of Africa (CAF) to allow investigation into anti-competition practices.



Other events at the Gala included long service awards to staff that have recently retired from the Secretariat, financial support to the underprivileged, support to

budding innovators and launch of a commemorative COMESA Coffee Table Book.

Burundi Presents Instrument of Ratification of the Tripartite Agreement



Burundi has become the 7th Country to ratify the COMESA, EAC and SADC Tripartite Agreement. The Ratification Instrument was presented to the Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe who is the chair of the Tripartite Task Force during the 25th Anniversary of COMESA, on Thursday, November 28, 2019.

Burundi's Minister for Trade, Industry and Tourism Hon. Jean-Marie Niyokindi who was in Lusaka and presented the Ratification Instruments. The Tripartite brings together 28 countries in the three regional economic blocs. A total of 14 ratifications are required for the Tripartite Agreement to come into force.

Burundi Minister of Trade Hon. Jean-Marie Niyokindi (L) handing over the Ratification Instrument to COMESA SG, Chileshe Kapwepwe



Innovators Receive \$10,000 to Help Commercialize their Innovations



COMESA has provided \$10,000 to two innovators to help them commercialize their innovations. Mohamed Gaber of Egypt received the prize during the COMESA @25 anniversary, on Thursday, 28 November 2019. The innovations were identified under the COMESA Innovation Award Scheme, which focused on new products, new methods of production and new ways of improving technology.

The other is Billy Munyenembe of Zambia who was not at the award Ceremony.

Mr. Gaber developed a trade platform known as African Gate (AFGT) intended to create value by exchanging goods with the potential of re-exporting to new markets and thereby expand inter- African Trade was recognized.

“The major benefit of counter-trade is that it facilitates conservation of foreign currency, which is a prime consideration for cash-strapped nations and provides an alternative to

traditional financing that may not be available in developing nations,” said Mohamed.

A previous winner of the Innovation Award, Mr. Jacob Maina of Kenya, testified on how financial support from COMESA helped him set up a successful motor vehicle security company. He is now one of the 120

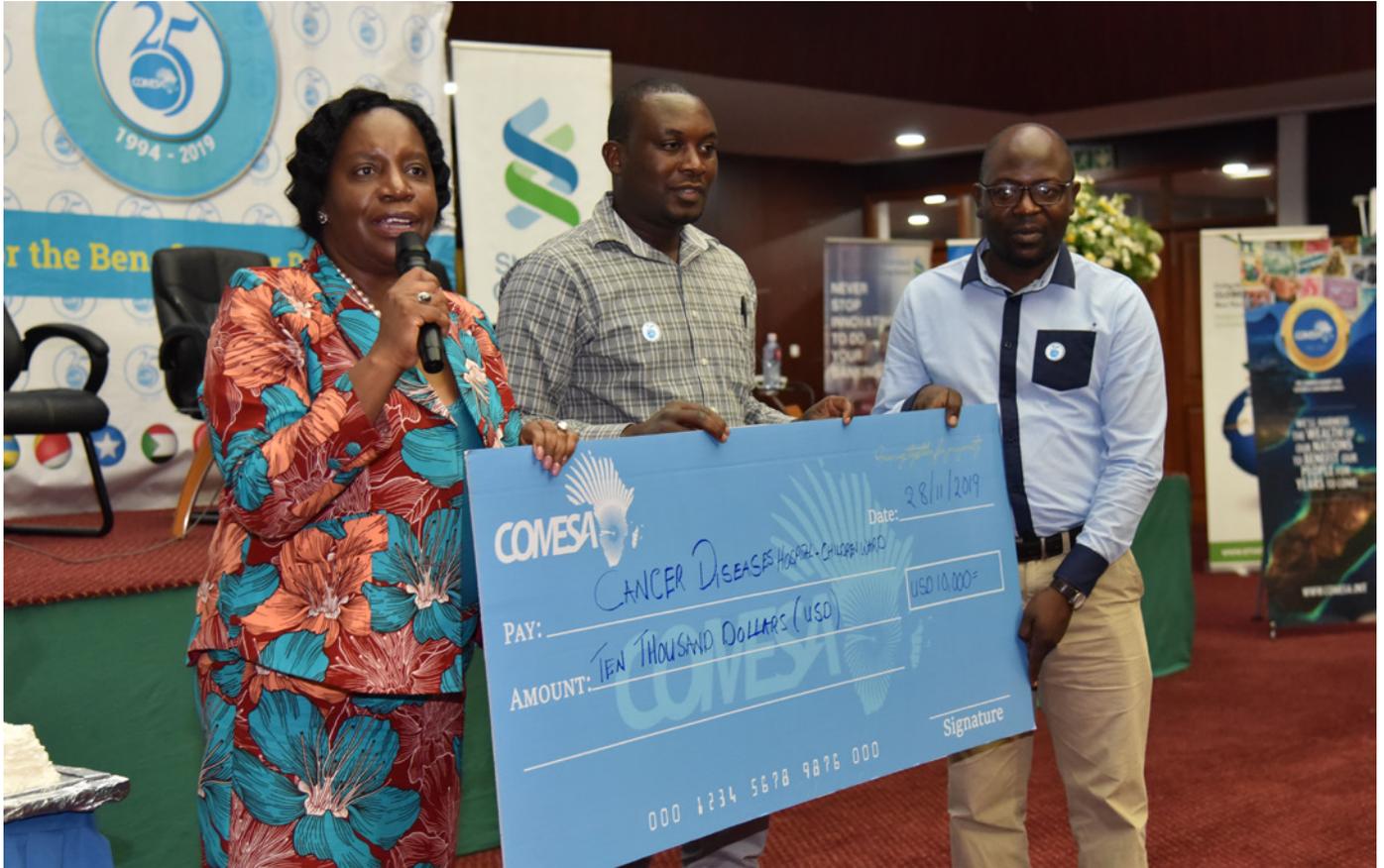
young African game-changers listed in Forbes Africa 2019, all under the age of 30.

Maina was invited by the Secretariat to demonstrate how, modest financial support to an innovative mind, which are plenty in the region, can propel young people to dizzying heights of success.



Jacob Maina addressing the Gala

COMESA's Gives \$10,000 to Support to Cancer Children



Representatives of the Cancer Diseases Hospital receives \$10, 000 cheque

As part of its 25th anniversary corporate social responsibility, COMESA provided \$10,000 to the Children's Ward at the Cancer Disease Hospital in Lusaka, Zambia. This was part of the COMESA Silver Jubilee celebrations to support the less privileged in the society. The funds were raised by staff and corporate sponsorship of the COMESA @25 sports tournaments.

Long serving staff of the COMESA Secretariat recognized



Minister of Industry and Trade, Madagascar, also the chair of the COMESA Council of Ministers Hon. Lantsoa Rakotomalala (L) present a gift to retiring staff Timothy Phiri



COMESA Council of Ministers Conduct their 40th Meeting



The 40th COMESA Council of Ministers meeting in session

The 40th COMESA Council of Ministers meeting took place in Lusaka on Friday 29th November marking the culmination of one week of activities to commemorate the organization's Silver Jubilee.

Ministers responsible for Trade, Commerce and Industry and Permanent/Principal Secretaries led the delegations to the annual meeting. Its primary objective was to review progress made in regional integration and approve work programs and budget for 2020.

Addressing the Ministers during the opening of the meeting, Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe urged Member States to implement the decisions and programmes agreed upon during the meetings to deepen regional integration.

"The only reason we exist as an organization is to improve the living

conditions of our people," she said noting that the 25 years COMESA Anniversary had provided an opportunity for reflection and focus on the future priorities.

Latest Accomplishments

She cited the following among the latest accomplishments of the regional bloc: the establishment of the COMESA Virtual University of regional integration, a first in Africa; the rolling out of the Digital Free Trade Area; the resolution of 98% of all non-tariff barriers reported; the commitment by Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to operationalize the COMESA Community Levy and the launch of the 50 Million African Women Speak Programme among others.

"My foremost priority is to see a COMESA that is well-resourced, well managed and fit for purpose," she said

In a statement delivered by the Zambia Minister of National Development Mr. Emmanuel Chiteme, Zambia's Vice President Mrs. Inonge Wina observed that the approach taken by COMESA to promote integration was working well.

"We need to continue providing an enabling environment for market integration, infrastructure development and industrialization, with special attention to small and medium enterprises development," the Vice President said.

"In addition to this, the regional economic community must focus on regional industrial clusters, modernizing institutional and regulatory policies and capacity development as well as resource mobilization."

The Ministerial meeting ended on Saturday after approving the 2020 work programme and budget for the Secretariat and its institutions.

COMESA-EU Sign 8.8m Euros to Support Private Sector Competitiveness



H.E. Jacek Jankowski (R) and SG Chileshe Kapwepwe (L) signing the Agreement

The European Union and COMESA last week signed an 8.8 million Euros Contribution Agreement to increase private sector participation in sustainable regional and global value chains. The facility will improve investment/business climate and enhanced competitiveness in the COMESA region.

This was one of the activities conducted during the opening of the 40th Meeting of the Council of Ministers that took place in Lusaka, Zambia on Friday 29 November 2019.

The funds will be used to implement the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP), focusing on agro-processing, horticulture and leather products.

RECAMP will also support pre-selected value chains based on the potential to generate value addition, job creation and attraction of investments to the region.

The EU Ambassador to Zambia and Permanent Representative to COMESA, H.E Jacek Jankowski and Secretary General of COMESA Chileshe Kapwepwe signed the Agreement.

RECAMP will address critical issues, such as provision of business information, facilitating market linkages, harmonizing regional industrial policies and creating a conducive business environment to attract investments. It will strive to ensure collaboration with activities of national trade support institutions and business development and service organisations in Member

States as they provide services to value chains as part of their mandate.

These include product development; technology transfer, provision of business intelligence and connection to buyers. The programme will identify champions or lead firms within the selected value chains that have both backward and forward linkages with SMEs and other intermediary firms in order to enhance effect coordination reduce coordination failures and improve competitiveness.

In her remarks, Ms Kapwepwe said the programme will make efforts to enhance the capacities and skills of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises to make them capable players in the value-chain development.

“A significant number of MSMEs, especially women and youth owned enterprises, are vulnerable when it comes to participating in value-chains networks at the national, regional and global level because of their competitiveness,” she said.

It is estimated that there are between 3.5 to 5 million SMEs in the region, but their growth and competitiveness are constrained by various bottlenecks such as lack of access to finance and related services, restrictive business environment, lack of affordable technology among others. A significant number of them are active women entrepreneurs.

In particular, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the region play a pivotal role in their contribution to employment and Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of Member States which is estimated at between 20 – 25%.

Ambassador Jankowski assured of the EU’s commitment to continue the partnership with COMESA to ensure that regional integration remains as inclusive as possible in view of the challenges posed by climate change.

“Increasing exploitation of natural resources and the environment, and in view of demographic trends makes prioritizing investments in

value chains that are environmentally sensitive, socially sound and economically viable,” he said.

RECAMP is supported under the 11th European Development Fund COMESA sub envelope. The Programme is in line with the EU and COMESA policies in support of the private sector, with a budget of EUR 8.8 million and a duration of 48 months.

Ministers and senior government officials witnessed the signing.

COMESA Provides IT Equipment for Cross Border Trade Data Collection



ASG Programmes Amb. Dr Cheluguet (R) handing over some of the IT equipment to ZAMSTATS Interim Statistician Mr Musepa

COMESA has provided \$13,000 worth of assorted state of the art Information Technology (IT) equipment to the Zambia Statistics Agency (ZAMSTATS) to support data collection for small scale cross border traders.

The equipment comprises of four Desktop Computers with flat screens,

four Laserjet Printers, four Un-Interruptible Power Supplies (UPSs), four Routers and 38 Samsung Galaxy Tablets.

The equipment were provided under the European Union backed COMESA Small Scale Cross-Border Trade Initiative (SSCBTI) Programme.

They will be distributed to staff working at five border areas in the COMESA -EAC-SADC Tripartite region to support a more effective, efficient and modern data collection process.

The targeted borders include the Mwami/Mchinji between Zambia and Malawi, Kasumbalesa between Zambia and the DR Congo, Chirundu

between Zambia and Zimbabwe, Tunduma/Nakonde between Zambia and Tanzania and Moyale between Ethiopia and Kenya.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Dr Kipyego Cheluget, handed over the equipment to the ZAMSTATS team in Lusaka led by Interim Statistician General Mr Mulenga Musepa. Dr Cheluget represented Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe.

“It is my sincere hope that this equipment will fully support ZAMSTATS in collection and dissemination of data on small scale cross border trade so as to increase evidence-based knowledge and inform trade policy making processes both at national and regional level,” SG Kapwepwe said.

COMESA received funds from the EU towards the implementation of the SSCBTI whose aspecific objective is to facilitate small-scale cross-border trade flows between targeted countries through effective policy governance reforms, institutional capacity building, improved border infrastructure and better SSCBT data collection and monitoring.



The COMESA SSCBTI programme has five key result areas of which Result 4 will focus on gender disaggregated statistical data collection, analyses and dissemination for small-scale cross border trade so as to increase evidence-based knowledge on the topic and inform better trade policy-making processes at national and regional level.

The beneficiaries of this programme are primarily small-scale traders (in particular women traders) who regularly cross borders in the COMESA-EAC-SADC tripartite region

to sell and buy goods, as well as the associations who represent them and defend their interests.

Mr. Musepa commended COMESA for the donation which is an added resource to towards support of improving the quality of trade statistics at ZAMSTATS and the region at large.

“These assorted equipment will be used to collect data for the SSCBTI data management at the borders in order to enhance quality of data which will be shared with the Secretariat,” Mr Musepa added.



Mr. Anthony Walakira (L) of COMESA Statistics Unit presents a tablet to staff of ZAMSTATS

Under the COMESA SSCBTI programme, there are five key result areas identified, of which Result 4 will focus on Gender disaggregated statistical data collection, analyses and dissemination for small-scale cross-border trade so as to increase evidence-based knowledge on the topic and inform better trade policy-making processes in the region. Zambia is the first country to initiate the data collection programme which will be rolled over to other targeted COMESA Member States.

COMESA @25 GALA

