

## COMESA Initiatives Cited as Good Practices at Global Forum on Trade and Investment

The COMESA Innovation Award, the Annual Research Forums and the Virtual Master's degree programme in regional integration have been acknowledged as some of the best practices in trade and investment.

The three were presented during a Knowledge Sharing on Trade and Investment Good Practices forum conducted in Brussels on 4- 5 February 2020. Arising from the presentation made by COMESA representatives and subsequent deliberations, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) has now expressed interest in collaborating with COMESA on the Master's degree programme in regional integration.

The knowledge sharing forum was organized to disseminate good practices developed by Trade Com II supported programmes. COMESA signed a contribution agreement with the European Union under the ACP TradeCom II Capacity Building Programme in July 2019. The Grant aims at supporting COMESA in trade policy analysis, enhance capacity for trade policy research and training and build practical skills and knowledge to support regional integration.

At the forum, COMESA was represented by Research Fellow Ms. Jane Kibiru, and Finance Specialist Ms. Fungwa Kabati. Ms. Kibiru presented a paper on "Enhancing Capacity of Trade Policy Analysis and Training for Deeper Regional Integration" under trade policy and regulation cluster.

In the paper, she outlined the envisaged outputs under the Grant including training of policy makers/trade officials in economic and trade policy analysis and trade



File photo: Dr. Patrick Gomes, the Secretary General of ACP Group addressing COMESA Policy Organs meeting in Lusaka, November 2019.

negotiations; undertaking applied trade policy research, dissemination of research outputs, implementation of the Virtual Master's degree programme in regional integration and scholarships opportunities available to students.

The presentation also highlighted the enhanced capacity in trade and economic policy research and negotiations and increased partnerships and networks to be undertaken under the grant.

**COMESA highlighted activities undertaken during the period July-December 2019 including as the Sixth Annual Research Forum on the theme "Promoting intra-COMESA Trade through Innovation...."**

Regarding the COMESA Innovation Award, Ms Kibiru informed the delegates that prize money given to the winning innovators was instrumental in providing seed capital for commercialization of innovations. She cited the 2015 award winner, who was featured in the Africa Forbes under 30 List, 2019 in the technology category as one of the success stories.

The knowledge sharing forum was opened by Dr. Patrick Gomes, the Secretary General of ACP Group who underscored the role of the ACP Secretariat in building and sharing knowledge across the TradeCom II Programme.

He noted: "Uncertainties in the multilateral trade system demand solid knowledge and stronger capacities to innovate and enhance knowledge on

global trade issues and to deal with the difficulties emerging from the demographic dividends, such as the youth who leave their countries in search of better opportunities.”

The Forum coincided with the 8th Meeting of the TradeCom II Steering Committee. At the meeting, COMESA highlighted activities undertaken during the period July-December 2019 including the Sixth Annual Research Forum on the theme “Promoting intra-COMESA Trade through

Innovation,” the COMESA Innovation Awards and the review and mounting of teaching modules for the Master’s Degree programme on the digital platform. The meeting called on COMESA to fast track commencement of the Master’s Degree programme to ensure that the scholarships are utilized before the end of the Grant.

The forum was attended by among others, representatives of the European Commission, ACP Group, United Nations Commission for

Africa (UNECA), Trade Policy Training Centre in Africa-The Eastern and Southern African Management Institute (TRAPCA-ESAMI), OECS, international organizations and ACP beneficiary countries: Botswana, Cameroon, Comoros, Cote D’Ivoire, Djibouti, Guyana, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

## COMESA, WIPO sign Cooperation Agreement to Boost Intellectual Property Rights



Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe signing cooperation agreement with WIPO

COMESA and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) have signed a cooperation agreement for collaboration in capacity building programmes on Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) for COMESA Secretariat staff and Intellectual Property Officers in Member States.

The Agreement will support awareness creation on the importance of IPRs and assist to develop programmes in the COMESA region to support inventors in protecting their inventions.

WIPO Director General Mr. Francis Gurry signed the Cooperation Agreement on 10th February 2020 in Geneva, Switzerland while COMESA Secretary General (SG) Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe signed on Thursday, February 20, 2020 at her office in Lusaka.

“The Agreement demonstrates the desire of WIPO and COMESA to promote knowledge-based trade and the need to protect and ensure sustainable usage of IP for the benefit of the region and the African continent as a whole,” she said.

“Through signing of this Cooperation Agreement COMESA is taking strides to partner and form an alliance with WIPO in the quest to attain trade diversification into knowledge driven commerce in the realm of IPRs.”

The Agreement comes at a time when the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement and AfCFTA negotiations are proceeding to Phase II, with IPRs forming part of these negotiations, thus underscoring the need for diversification of the regional and continental economies from tangible goods to “intangible” knowledge-based assets.

“COMESA will be calling upon WIPO for technical support to the negotiations to ensure that the region and the continent obtain the best possible result for the IP package of the negotiations,” the SG said.

WIPO and COMESA entered into their initial Cooperation Agreement in 2003 with a limited scope of cooperation. Over the years, the IPR landscape has changed into what it is now 17 years after.

WIPO is an intergovernmental organization situated in Geneva, Switzerland and functions as a global forum for intellectual property services, policy, information and cooperation. It was established in 1967 and has 192 Member States.



# COMESA Develops Draft Action Plan for STR Implementation by Djibouti



Participants at the Djibouti National Workshop on Simplified Trade Regime

COMESA has developed a draft Action Plan to be used by Djibouti in the implementation of the Simplified Trade Regime (STR) with its neighbouring Member States. The Draft National Road Map and Action Matrix is set for consideration by senior management officials in their respective ministries, institutions and administration before it is implemented.

The Plan was prepared during a national sensitization workshop on 28-29 January 2020 in Djibouti aimed at creating awareness of relevant stakeholders on the importance for Djibouti to formally adopt STR and other COMESA trade facilitation instruments.

The workshop was attended by national officials representing the public and the private sector (cross-border traders) from the capital city and the regions. Djibouti Minister of Trade and Industry, Hon. Hassan Houmed Ibrahim who was represented by Secretary General in the Ministry Mr. Ali Doud opened the workshop. He observed that sensitization on the STR would secure

stakeholder buy-in that will lead to its successful implementation.

COMESA Team Leader/Cross Border Trade Expert Mr. Tasara Muzorori and Coordinated Border Management Expert Mr. Ahmed Salih led the deliberations.

## The COMESA Cross Border Trade Initiative is funded under the 11 EDF programme that was signed between COMESA and the EU Delegation in Zambia on 8 May 2018

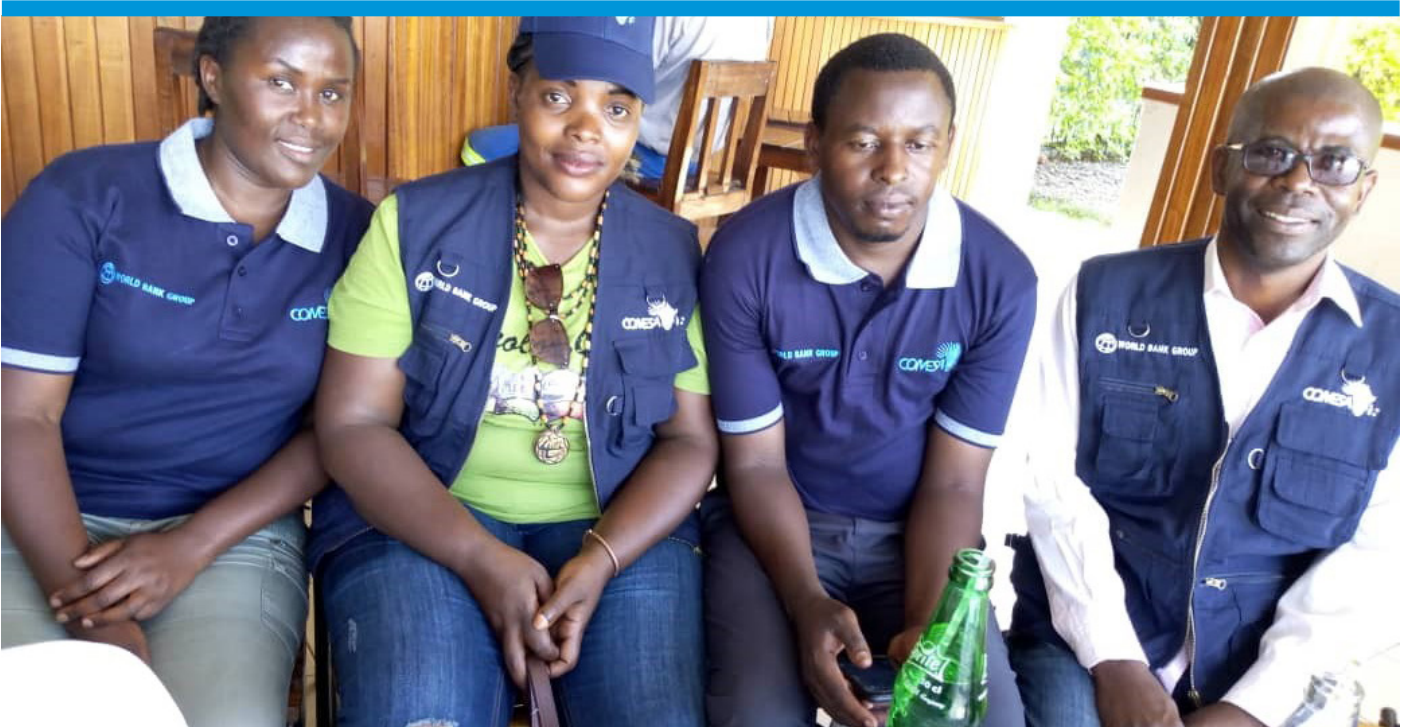
COMESA STR aims at simplifying and harmonizing customs and border procedures and improving efficiency of border clearance process for small-scale cross border traders. Hence, the

traders can benefit from the COMESA preferential trade regime. The development of the Action Plan is meant to support the adoption and implementation of the COMESA STR in Djibouti in trading with its neighbours Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Once the Action Plan is adopted and finalized, bilateral negotiations will be facilitated to agree on the implementation of STR, with COMESA providing demand-driven support.

The COMESA Cross Border Trade Initiative is funded under the 11 EDF programme that was signed between COMESA and the EU Delegation in Zambia on 8 May 2018. The programme aims at facilitating small-scale cross border trade flows between targeted countries through effective policy and governance reforms, institutional capacity building, improved border infrastructure and better data collection and monitoring.

# Two New Information Desks Established at the Rwanda/ DR Congo Border



Trade Information Desk Officers at the orientation workshop at Kamanyola border post

Two new trade information desks have been established at the Rwanda/ DR Congo border to promote small scale cross border trade. The two: Bugarama (Rwanda) and Kamanyola (DRC) bring to 12 the total number of Trade Information Desks (TIDs) established in the eastern DR Congo under the COMESA led Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Programme (GLTFP).

Four additional Trade Information Desk Officers (TIDOs) have been recruited and trained to man the two border points bringing the total number of TIDOs in the region to 24.

The launch of TID at Kamanyola took place on 11 February 2020 with Bugarama scheduled towards the end of March 2020. The two are the most recent set-up, reflecting the demand from Rwanda and D R Congo for TIDs to boost cross border trade and respective border markets.

The decision to establish the two desks was part of the priority activities and timelines agreed upon during the World Bank Implementation Support Mission held in June 12, 2019. The GLTFP is supported by the World Bank.

The joint border is crucial for development and expansion of trade between the two countries

but also with Burundi. Most of the commodities traded by small scale traders are agricultural and hence contribute to enhancing incomes for local communities and improving household food security.

The GLTFP Coordinator, Thomas Barasa said the establishment of additional trade information desks and officers is intended to enhance access to information among small scale cross border traders and boost trade.

**The project staff will provide on-the-spot information to traders on the COMESA Regulations and the STR, support the clearance process....**

“The traders are expected to better understand government regulations and procedures related to cross-border trade and avoid use of illegal crossings and pay relevant taxes that are due to governments of both DRC and Rwanda,” he said.

“Overall better understanding between small-scale cross-border traders and border officers will

promote bilateral trade, food security, harmonious co-existence, peace and prosperity for local communities in both countries.”

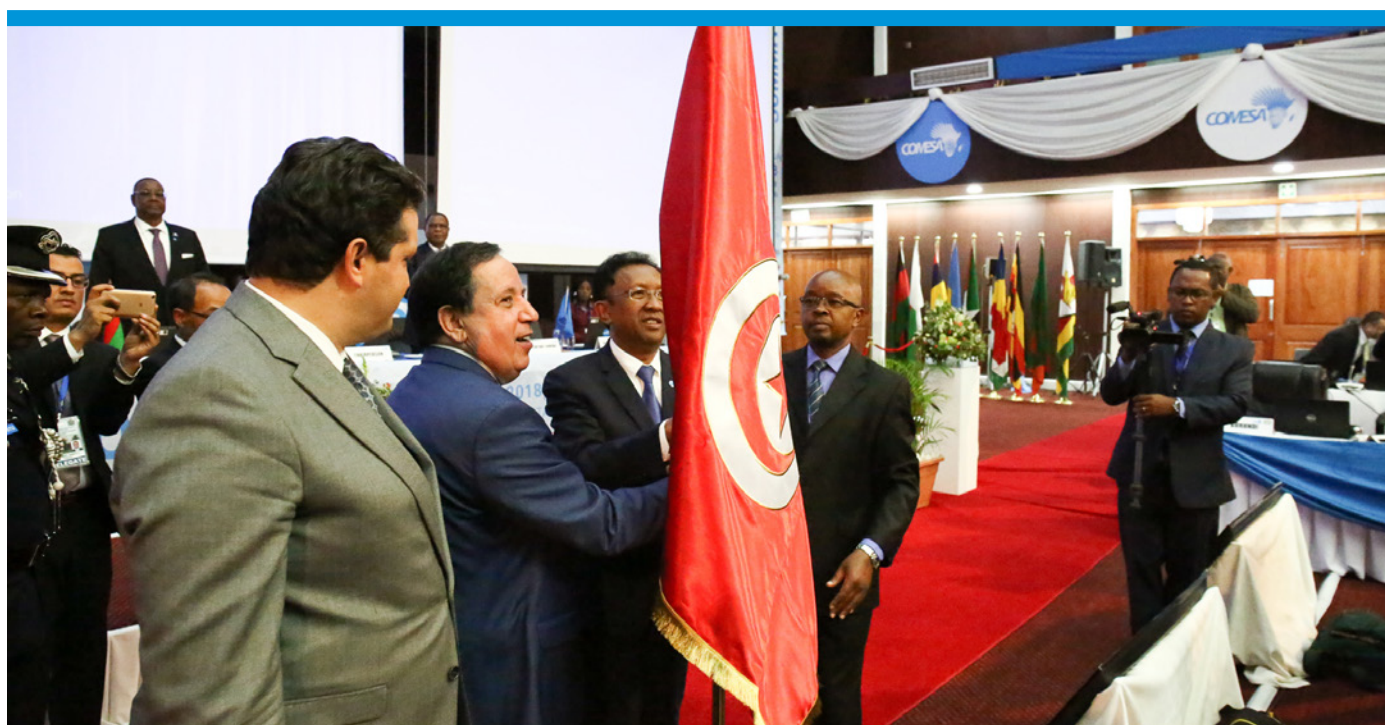
The project staff will provide on-the-spot information to traders on the COMESA Regulations and the STR, support the clearance process (e.g. by helping filling the required forms), seek to resolve disputes between traders and officials as well as collect relevant data on STR transactions at the Kamanyola and Bugarama borders, among other duties.

At the launch, the TIDOs were introduced to the local community and leadership. This was followed by an orientation programme on their roles and responsibilities, to enable them clearly to understand their tasks, including reporting obligations and how to facilitate small scale traders.

The Kamanyola launch was attended by border officials from immigration, customs, police, health, Ministry of Commerce, D R Congo at Provincial level and by the Coordinator of GLTFP, South Kivu, among others.



# Tunisia Moves to Entrench Itself in the Regional Marketplace



Tunisia joining COMESA, July 2018

In less than two years since Tunisia joined COMESA, the country has actively embarked on activities to integrate its economy into the regional market and benefit from wide market access of 560 million people. But unlike the common trend where countries liberalize their market in measured steps, some running into decades, Tunisia has done it in a record time.

Tunisia joined COMESA in July 2018, signed the COMESA Free Trade Agreement, ratified the Agreement and deposited the ratification instruments in a span one and half years.

Now the country is actively participating in the FTA and hosting forums to entrench itself in the regional marketplace. The latest such forum was the "Tunisia-Africa Business Council FITA 2020 and Launching of Prosper Africa" held on 4 -6 February 2020 in Tunis. This was meant to introduce Tunisians entrepreneurs to the African business networks for linkages and partnerships and assess opportunities and challenges for solutions aimed at facilitating, joint ventures, investment and trade.

The objectives of the meeting were: to share knowledge on available opportunities, experiences and lessons learned and deepening the existing networks on trade and private investment between Tunisia and Africa. Enough time was equally allocated to the business community for aside "business-to-business " meetings that helped to initiate or conclude business and investment deals.

The attendance to the forum was impressive. About 100 high level officials including Ministers and Chief executives from 40 countries as well as 4,000 businesspeople from Tunisia attended the Forum. COMESA was represented by Senior Investment Promotion Officer, Mr. Joseph Mpunga.

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In addition to hosting trade forums, the country has established networks with key stakeholders in the investment and trade in Tunisia and Africa as well as with other international partners. This has been done through sharing of information among participants on the existing opportunities for investment and trade growth.

COMESA used the forum to showcase investment opportunities in other Member States for participants including Tunisian business community and global investors.

The Tunisia-Africa Business Council is a private sector led organization established by the Government to create and increase private sector investment and trade linkages between Tunisia and the rest of Africa. The body delivers on its mandate by organizing inwards and outwards visits of the private sector and government officials in Africa with the Financing Investment and Trade in Africa (FITA) being an annual event.



Ethiopian Airlines Country Manager in Zambia Mr. Aman Wole (R) and Senior Sales Representative Natasha Kombe (L) pays a courtesy call on the Secretary General, 21st February 2020



Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe and Assistant Secretary General (Programmes) Amb. Kipyego Cheluget at the signing of the COMESA WIPO Cooperation Agreement, 20th February 2020



Trade Information Desk Officers and DRC Government officials at the launch of Kamanyola border post Trade Information Desk

### COMESA Diary

| No | Meeting/Activity   | Organised By                                  | Date              | Venue  |
|----|--|---|-------------------|--|
| 1. | Namibia to deposit the Instrument of Ratification of the Tripartite Free Trade Agreement                       | Namibia High Commission                       | 25 February 2020  | COMESA Secretariat   |
| 2. | Sixth Regional Coordination Committee meeting of the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project (GLTFP)            | Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project -GLTFP | 27 - 28 Feb 2020  | Kinshasa, DRC  |
| 3. | National Launch of the 50 Million African Women Speak Platform in Zambia                                       | COMESA/Govt of Zambia                         | 27-28 Feb 2020    | Mulungushi International Conference Centre, Lusaka, Zambia |
| 4  | Basic DSGE modelling and forecasting for monetary policy formulation – COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI)         | COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI)               | 2 - 6 March 2020  | Nairobi, Kenya   |
| 5  | 7 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Technical Working Group of the Regional Customs Transit Guarantee (RCTG Carnet) | Yellow Card/ RCTG                             | 23-24 March 2020  | Lusaka   |
| 6  | 48 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Management Committee of the Yellow Card Scheme                                 | Yellow Card/ RCTG                             | 16 -17 March 2020 | To be confirmed  |
| 7  | Technical Working Group Meeting for the EDF Trade Facilitation Programme                                       | European Development Fund (EDF Programme)     | 19 March 2020     | COMESA Secretariat, Lusaka                                 |
| 8  | Meeting of Project Implementation Units, Ministries and Communication experts to harmonise programme for 2020) | Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project -GLTFP | 30 – 31 Mar 2020  | Chisamba, Zambia,  |