



COMESA Hosts Consultative Forum with its Development Partners

Lusaka, Monday, May 6, 2019: The 2nd joint coordination forum of COMESA and its Development Partners began today in Lusaka, Zambia. The objective of the forum is to provide a platform for regular and structured dialogue at the policy and technical levels for constructive engagement and the promotion of best practices on development cooperation matters.

The Forum is open to all Development Partners and Special Representatives accredited to COMESA. It also brings together participants from COMESA Institutions and Agencies that receive funding through the Secretariat and Development Partners.

The forum provides a platform for the COMESA Secretariat to present to the Development Partners potential project proposals and priority areas that require

funding.

About 64% of the COMESA Development Budget is financed by Development Partners with the European Union taking the lead. Under the current multiannual financial framework of the 11th European Union Development Fund (EDF 11) covering the period 2014 - 2020, the EU has allocated 85 million Euros to COMESA. This is part of its regional cooperation programmes to address four key areas: trade facilitation; small scale cross border trade, regional value chains development and capacity building.

The Forum also provides the Development Partners the opportunity to share information on the national programmes they are implementing in the COMESA Member States.

"This Forum will enable us to share our experiences, learn from each other as well

as agree on the modalities of harmonizing future interventions and implementation of integration programmes," Secretary General of COMESA Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe said at the opening of event.

"The benefits from such joint discussions, she said, will enable us to maximize the synergies, ensure elimination of duplications and promote complementarities among the various players."

The other objective of the Forum is to ensure synergy and complementarity of development assistance provided at the national, regional as well as continental levels taking into account the new developments at the continental level.

"We want to ensure alignment, harmonization and streamlining of

Malawi Calls for Training in REPSS Usage



Dr Francis Mangeni

Various stakeholders from financial institutions, cross border traders, importers and exporters in Malawi have called for a national workshop to help them build capacity on the use of the COMESA Regional Payment and Settlement System (REPSS).

The stakeholders have requested the COMESA Secretariat to urgently organize the sensitization session which will enable them to understand and fully appreciate the REPSS. The system is currently under-utilized in that country standing at 0.2 percent usage.

This was revealed in Lilongwe during national consultative meetings organized by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism in collaboration with the Central Bank of Malawi. Staff from COMESA Secretariat were also part of the meetings led by the Director of Trade and Customs Dr Francis Mangeni.

Some of the key issues that were raised by the stakeholders includes; the lack of sufficient information about the REPSS among commercial banks and the private sector, commercial banks were not involved during the REPSS conception and testing hence there is no ownership of the system among the banks, commercial banks do not trust the

System due to a perceived view that there could be manual intervention of transactions in the Reserve Bank and customers do not have information on the system and therefore are not keen to use it.

The Reserve Bank of Malawi is among the nine Central Banks that are transacting on the REPSS however the uptake of the system is low compared to other Member States. In 2018, Malawi transactions using the REPSS constituted only 0.18% compared to countries like Kenya that recorded 91%.

The meeting resolved that the REPSS should be retested and all relevant stakeholders to be involved. In view of this, a technical working group with representatives from the Reserve Bank, Commercial banks, Ministries of Finance and Industry and the private sector was constituted. It should ensure all the concerns are addressed and oversee the smooth operation of REPSS in Malawi.

The workshop also received a presentation on the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) and the African Continental Free Trade Area. Malawi was urged to fast track the ratification of the TFTA.

EU and RECs Sign Financing Addendum to Regional Programme

The EU Commission in Brussels and the Chief Executives of the five Duly Mandated Regional Organisation (DMROs) of the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean (ES-SA-IO) have signed the addendum to the Regional Indicative Programme (RIP).

The signing ceremony took place in Brussels on Tuesday 30 April 2019 where the five DMROs namely: COMESA, EAC, IGAD, IOC and SADC participated to among other issues, review the status of implementation of the 11th EDF RIP which was signed with the EU in 2015.

The overall cross-regional allocation has been increased to a total of €507 million.

The RIP aid supports the Eastern Africa, Southern and the Indian Ocean in accordance with the provisions of Articles 6 to 10 of Annex IV to the partnership agreements between the member of the ACP group of states on one part and the EC and its Member States on the other.

The financial resources provided are available to the EA-SA-IO in the period 2014 – 2020.

A Mid-Term Review (MTR) for the RIP was undertaken in 2017, following the new European Consensus on Development which recalibrated the development policy of the EU in coherence with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Prior to signing the DMROs chairperson, Ms Chileshe Kapwepwe, Secretary General of COMESA said the MTR was an important step to translate modified policy into concrete actions and results.

“This review will refocus the RIP actions towards the Sustainable Development Goals and to respond to evolving global challenges as well as regional developments,” she said. “It is therefore a critical exercise considering the fact that countries priorities of development cooperation have evolved and require to be re-aligned.”



COMESA Countries Maintain High Sugar Production



Eight countries in the COMESA region have maintained their grip in sugar production with most of the raw produce being exported to the European Union, United States of America and China. The top producer of Sugar in the region is the Kingdom of Eswatini having produced over 650, 000 metric tonnes (MT) followed by Egypt at 595, 000 MT then Zambia with 450, 000 MT.

Ethiopia produced 450, 000 MT, Zimbabwe 391, 000 MT, Kenya is at 376, 000 MT while Mauritius and Malawi produced over 355, 000 and 239, 000 MT respectively.

Importers of the raw sugar are Israel, Russia and some countries in the Southern African Development Community such as Tanzania.

Recently, COMESA through the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) participated in the 9th Africa Sugar Conference held in Nairobi Kenya from 9 to 11 April 2019 where Seed Development Expert at ACTESA Dr John Mukuka made a keynote speech on global trends in sustainable agriculture with special focus on sugar.

During the conference, it was revealed that Africa accounts for 6% of the global

total sugar production with COMESA Member States accounting for 52% percent at 5,288,456 MT of the total African sugar production of 10,078,61 MT.

"The COMESA bloc is a net exporter, with close to 45 percent of the total African exports. The sugar net-exporting COMESA Member States are Malawi, Mauritius, Eswatini, Zambia and Zimbabwe," Dr Mukuka said.

The meeting was informed that African consumption has grown more than 70% over the past 15 years nearly double the annual growth of the rest of the world. Despite this growth, the African per capita consumption figure of 17 kg remains well below that of the global average of 23 kg. Sub-Saharan Africa holds the greatest potential for sugar consumption growth of any global region.

In his presentation, Dr Mukuka made some recommended how COMESA region can put in place measures to increase the levels of sugar production. These include implementing models such as the outgrower schemes with flexible contracts which can be beneficial to small scale farmers, implement Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) as outlined by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) with

supply of key agricultural inputs (seeds and fertilizers) at affordable prices in a reliable manner.

Other measures are to introduce enhanced national and regional policies; acquire new technology, conduct continuous research and development with a view of improving sugar cane quality and quantity.

Lastly, promoting inclusive growth by integrating women and youth in agricultural development and consolidating programmes to fight climate change and promote climate smart agriculture.

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operational procedures, rules and other practices in the delivery of development assistance to COMESA, taking into account local conditions, rules and regulations," the Secretary General said.

Speaking on behalf of the development partners, the EU Head of Cooperation Mr. Gianluca Azzoni, commended COMESA for bringing together cooperating partners for a hands on constructive exchange. He said good progress has been made in the implementation of the resources provided to COMESA.

"We have signed contribution agreements with COMESA for trade facilitation and small scale cross border traders for 68 million euros and a third contribution agreement for the regional value chain project will be signed this year," he said. "The formulation of a COMESA capacity building project is well advanced and is expected to be completed this year."

The event builds on the foundation of the 1st Joint COMESA - Development Partners Consultative Forum that took place in Lusaka in November 2016.

COMESA Hands Over Chair of Regional Programme to EAC

The 6th meeting of Chief Executives of the Duly Mandated Regional Organisations (DMROs) was held at the COMESA Brussels Liaison Office on the 29th April 2019. The meeting was chaired by Secretary General of COMESA Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe.

It was attended by the DMRO Chief Executives and technical experts representing COMESA, EAC, IGAD, IOC and SADC. This was followed by the Joint EU-DMROs High Level group meeting, that took place on the 30th April 2019,

where COMESA has been Co-Chairing with the EU.

At these meetings, Ms Kapwepwe handed over the Inter- DMRO committee chairmanship and Co-Chairmanship of the Joint EU-DMROs High Level Group to the Secretary General of the East African Community (EAC), Mr Libérat Mfumukeko.

Speaking on behalf of the Eastern Africa-Southern Africa-Indian Ocean DMROs, she thanked the European Union for the

financial support under the 11 EDF RIP and assured the incoming chairman of her support to the commitment of the implementation of the resources rendered by EU under the 11 EDF.

Mr Mfumukeko appreciated the responsibility and assured the EU and the DMROs that EAC will ensure continued engagement between all stakeholders through regular consultations.

Seychelles Mission to Advocate for the Blue Economy

A technical team on the Blue Economy from the Government of Seychelles Government was at the COMESA Secretariat, Friday May 3, 2019 for a sensitization mission. Led by the Principal Secretary for the Blue Economy Mr. Kenneth Racombo, the team took the COMESA Management team through the Seychelles experience and its plans to launch awareness campaigns to advocate for the Blue Economy development pathway. Seychelles has fervently taken onboard the concept of the Blue Economy as a development strategy, that could potentially be upscaled to bring forth benefits not only for the island State, but also other countries on the African continent. Seychelles President, H.E Danny Faure is the recipient of the Blue Economy Award on African Maritime sectors.

