

## COMESA Institutions Target Lawyers in Publicity Drive



Commissioner Danson Mungatana of the COMESA Competition Commission addressing lawyers conference in Kenya.

COMESA Court of Justice and the COMESA Competition Commission are taking part in the largest gathering of Kenyan lawyers in Mombasa this week. The event has attracted over 1,200 lawyers thus providing the best opportunity for the two COMESA institutions to publicize their programmes amongst a strategic target group.

COMESA Court Registrar Nyambura Mbatia, described the legal fraternity in COMESA Member States as a prime target audience of the Court as they mainly represent litigants in court.

"This huge gathering of lawyers provides the best opportunity for our Court to be known by key stakeholders," she said. "Quite a number of them are not aware of the type of cases handled by the regional court hence the need to raise their awareness, to know and use the court."

The lawyers conference is organized by the Law Society of Kenya. Among the key themes of the Conference is: 'Embracing Technology in Legal Practice; Litigation and Commercial Practice'.

At the conference, COMESA Court is specifically publicizing its digital evidence management system that was launched in February this year known as CaseLines. Under this system, lawyers can now file cases at the COMESA Court online thus cutting down on time and costs of manual practices.

***"We invite you to participate in these processes and provide advisory services to your clients on the need to avoid practices which negate the objective of free and liberalized trade"***

***-Mr Mungatana said.***

In her presentation to the lawyers, titled: Embracing technology – A case study of the COMESA Court, the Registrar said the need to go digital was informed by the complex dynamics of the regional court. "We have the most expansive jurisdiction covering 21 countries in Africa, and the court is required by circumstances, to sit in

any of those countries," Ms. Mbatia said.

"Previously, this required carrying physical files from one place to another thus risking destruction, loss or misplacement of documents and possibility of delayed arrival of files thereby derailing slotted hearings."

She informed the conference that the digital system has now eliminated the costs associated with sending documents to the Court or to Judges and airfreights to the venue of court sessions.

Mr. Danson Mungatana, a Commissioner of the COMESA Competition Commission said Kenya was one of the leading players in mergers and acquisitions in the COMESA region thus presenting lucrative opportunities for lawyers.

"We invite you to participate in these processes and provide advisory services to your clients on the need to avoid practices which negate the objective of free and liberalized trade," Mr Mungatana said.

He said the main role of the COMESA Competition Commission was to monitor and investigate anticompetitive practices of undertakings within the region, and mediation of disputes between Member States concerning anti-competitive conduct among others.

Under the COMESA Regional Competition Policy and Legal Framework, Member States have committed to prohibit undertakings that prevent, restrict or distort competition within the Common Market.

The two COMESA institutions were part of the co-sponsors of the conference which was addressed by eminent legal practitioners in Kenya and the Commonwealth Lawyers Association.

## Capacity Building Strategy for TFTA Developed

The tripartite Regional Economic Organizations namely COMESA, EAC and SADC have developed a Capacity building strategy to support implementation of the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) integration agenda.

The strategy aims at providing a mechanism for coordinating Tripartite capacity building initiatives, develop and promote utilisation of networks of expertise and enhance the capacity of regional training institutions to support the implementation of the Tripartite programmes. Tripartite Capacity Building Programme (TCBP) Programme Coordinator Dr Seth Gor says the strategy will also provide a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of the Tripartite Capacity building programme.

The Tripartite Capacity Building Strategy is premised on four pillars which include establishment of the Tripartite capacity building coordination framework, establishment of a network of expertise and capacity building institutions in the tripartite region and fostering collaboration and partnerships for the implementation of the TCB Strategy.

Earlier this week, the Tripartite Task Force held their 36th meeting from 11 -12 August 2019, in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania with the main purpose of finalizing the development of the draft Tripartite Capacity Building Strategy for the implementation of the TFTA Agreement and its Annexes.

The meeting refined the five-year TCBP work programme covering the period 2020 - 2025 taking into account ongoing programmes and activities.

COMESA, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community signed the Tripartite Free Trade Area in 2015 pending ratification by Member States. So far, only five countries have ratified the document out of 29.

## FEMCOM to provide a USD 12 000 to Refurbish Cassava Cluster in Zambia



*New FEMCOM CEO (in black jacket) at the Kanakantapa project in Lusaka*

The Federation of National Associations of Women in Business (FEMCOM) will provide a USD 12,000 support towards the refurbishment of the Kanakantapa Cassava cluster initiative in Zambia.

The funds will go towards the purchase of new Cassava processing equipment, reinstallation of new water reticulation facilities and general maintenance of the facility.

The project is expected to benefit over 250 women and youth cassava farmers in the surrounding community. Once operational, the farmers will supply their cassava to the plant for processing hence uplifting their living standards.

During her maiden mission to Zambia, last week, the new Chief Executive of FEMCOM, Ms Ruth Negash visited the Cassava. She said over 500 Kilograms of Cassava starch is earmarked for production per day compared to the previous output of 50 Kilograms per day.

The funding will be disbursed before the end of this month, August 2019.

"This facility needs improvement and we are supporting you with USD12, 000 so that they can start operating as soon as possible," she said.

Ms Negash said FEMCOM further plans to replicate the establishment of the Cassava processing plants in the other Member States to support the production of the much-needed cassava by-products like starch used in the breweries, pharmaceutical industry, confectionery and many others.

"I want to see to it that as production begins in the next two months, we should start a school feeding programme in nearby schools and ensure that we find market for access cassava into the mining industry, in the production of medicine, and of course for home consumption within and outside this community," she stated.

She however emphasized the need for high quality production of the Cassava by-product if the cluster is to remain competitive on the market.



*Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe this week held fruitful discussions with the Japanese Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary H.E. Sobashima Kidenobu*





## 50MAWS Project and Zambian Women's Club create Partnership



From Left BPW Zambia Club President Rose Sibisi and 50MAWS Consultant Emma Phiri seal the discussions with a handshake in Lusaka witnessed by Ministry of Commerce Economist Ms Kabuswe Bwalya

The 50 Million Africa Women Speak project (50MAWS) and the Business and Professional Women Club of Zambia (BPW) will soon engage in a partnership to support local women in business. 50MAWS Consultant Emma Phiri and BPW Club President, Rose Sibisi recently met in Lusaka and discussed possible areas of partnering as a way of enhancing women's participation in business.

The collaboration is expected to help minimize challenges that women face especially in the business circles.

Ms. Phiri said the 50MAWS has identified the gaps faced by women in business and her pan-African project will contribute to the economic and social empowerment of women across 38 African countries by providing a networking platform to access information on financial and non-financial services.

The 50MAWS, which is supported by the African Development Bank (AfDB) targets to reach 50 million women in business. It is jointly

implemented by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Ms. Phiri pledged to support and work with women in the club by linking them to the digital platform in order to allow them network, share information and be empowered.

And Ms. Sibisi welcomed the idea of creating the partnership that will enable women thrive in their various businesses. She added that the club is willing to partner with an institution or organization that will facilitate women empowerment leading them to realize the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ms. Sibisi emphasized that the club aims to reconnect Zambia women in business and professions to the Global network of affiliates in 110 countries on five (5) Continents with intentions of recommitting themselves to the 17 SDGs.

She added that it for this reason that the club will focus on Goal number 17 which is "Partnerships for Goals".

## New FEMCOM Chief Outlines her Immediate Agenda

The Federation of National Associations of Women in Business in Eastern and Southern Africa (FEMCOM) has a new Chief Executive Officer Ms Ruth Negash from Eritrea. She took over this month from Mrs Katherine Ichoya of Kenya who has served the COMESA institution for the past 10 years.

Ms Negash outlined some of her immediate actions as to brand all FEMCOM chapters in Member States to be recognized entities which shall create strong partnerships with the various sector players including government ministries.

This, she said, will allow FEMCOM to easily provide entrepreneurial skills that are needed to develop businesses in the various sectors including the cassava clusters.

The FEMCOM boss assured that she will also

work with the COMESA led, 50 Million Women Speak project through the utilization of the online platform to create networks of women entrepreneurs not only in COMESA but Africa at large.

Earlier this week, Ms. Negash conducted an induction programme at the COMESA Secreriat where she met Executive management, Directors, Heads of Units and projects to familiarise her self with operations of the Institution.

Created in July 1993, FEMCOM is a COMESA institution that acts as a forum for the exchange of ideas and experience among women entrepreneurs. It provides a network among women entrepreneurs and is also an instrument for encouraging women to set up or expand existing enterprises.



Ms Ruth Negash new FEMCOM CEO

Dates	Event	Venue
19 August 2019	National Multi Stakeholder Consultations	Lilongwe
19 August 2019	Regional Workshop on Electronic Single Window	Lusaka
20 August 2019	1 <sup>st</sup> Steering Committee Meeting of the 11 <sup>th</sup> EDF ICT Programme	Lusaka
30 Aug – 9 Sept 2019	Eswatini International Trade Fair	Manzini
2 – 6 September 2019	The 6 <sup>th</sup> COMESA Research Forum	Nairobi

