

COMESA Central Bank Governors Discuss Monetary Integration



Delegates at the Central Bank Governors meeting

Lusaka, Friday 13 December 2019: The 24th Meeting of the Bureau of the COMESA Committee of Central Bank Governors and their representatives met in Lusaka on Friday and discussed ways of enhancing implementation of the COMESA Monetary Integration Agenda. They have agreed that the success of several regional programmes including the Free Trade Area (FTA), the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA) is dependent on a sound monetary system.

Speaking in her address to the Governors, Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe emphasized that the drive towards industrialization and the plan to establish the Common Market and Economic Community requires greater monetary integration.

She commended the region for making significant progress in recent years towards improved, macroeconomic frameworks and adopting good

international practices and principles.

“Our region has made progress on institutional reforms, improved in operational frameworks for fiscal and monetary policies, we have improvements in transparency and reporting. Most countries have also recorded increased investments and improved the conditions of doing business,” said Ms Kapwepwe.

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“This upward trend suggest that the system will indeed, significantly contribute to the expansion of intra-COMESA trade and its full implementation will greatly facilitate achieving real economic integration of our region,” added Mr Osman

This development was described as positive and in line with COMESA’s Medium-Term Strategic Plan which focuses on contributing to the structural transformation of the economies of COMESA member countries to foster overall economic development through trade facilitation and investment promotion.

The Governors however noted that more needs to be done by the region in order to attain inclusive growth and development.

Chairperson of the Committee of Central Bank Governors Mr Ahmed Osman highlighted some of the positive developments recorded by the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) and the Regional Payment and Settlement System (REPSS).

For 2019, CMI undertook several research and capacity building activities to improve macroeconomic management and assessment

Over 60 Seeds Listed on the COMESA Variety Catalogue

COMESA Kick Starts Visibility Programme for the Great Lakes Project



Some Seeds found in the COMESA region

The number of seed varieties listed on the COMESA Variety Catalogue has increased to sixty-nine after seeds from two more companies namely Western Seed and SEEDCO were listed through the Uganda National Variety List. This has been made possible by the COMESA Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP).

COMSHIP, a COMESA Seed Programme working in close collaboration with USAID has facilitated this process as part of ongoing efforts to operationalize the COMESA Variety catalogue. As a basic requirement, a seed variety is eligible to be listed on the regional variety catalogue if it first registers on lists in two COMESA Member States.

Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) Head and Seed Development Expert Dr John Mukuka recently revealed in Lusaka that the two seed companies can now trade some of their seed within Uganda and freely export the rest to neighbouring COMESA Member countries.

“These early and medium maturing varieties of both Seed-co and Western seed are climate smart and shall assist small-holder farmers in mitigating climate change effects and maximum on increasing their house-hold incomes,” said Dr Mukuka.

This listing also means that for the next two to three years, the two companies will be able to multiply their seed production without under undergoing further testing or any restrictions and they can now access the larger COMESA market, Dr Mukuka added.

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Currently, thirteen national/regional and international seed companies have their varieties listed on the COMESA Variety Catalogue.

These include Bayer, Seed-co, Pannar, Pioneer Dupont, East African Seed Company, Hytech Seed Egypt, Europlant Pflanzenzucht, Kenya Seed co, Naseco MRI/Syngenta, Western Seed co and HZP Holland. Under the COMESA Regional Harmonised Trading System, these varieties can be traded freely without these seed companies having to register them for testing and certification before being traded in a given COMESA Member State.

The Seed-co varieties that have been listed include SC302 a very early maturing maize variety and early maturing maize varieties of SC403, SC 533, SC 529. Others are early maturing sorghum variety of SC Sila.

For Western Seed Company, the varieties listed include medium maize maturing varieties of WH101, WH 504, WH 505, WH507, WH 509 and late maturing maize varieties of WH 401 and 605.

COMESA Secretariat working with the Implementation unit of the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project (GLTFP) have started rolling out the communications strategy meant to enhance visibility of the project in the beneficiary countries.

The project is part of the wider World Bank Great Lakes Initiative (GLI) which reflects the commitment of the World Bank to assist countries of the Great Lakes Region to reduce poverty and promote common prosperity by targeting some of the most vulnerable groups in the border regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and neighboring countries namely Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

The GLTFP aims to support peace and stability in the region through programs to improve livelihoods in the border areas, promoting cross-border trade and strengthening economic interdependence.

As part of its activities, a communications strategy was developed which highlights importance of the media in communicating, advancing and publicizing the GLTFP Agenda within the region and beyond. The publicity efforts will involve modern information and communications technology as they make it easier to reach a wider audience.

The COMESA team joined by officials from the Ministry of Trade in Uganda and the Trade Information Desk Officer is in that country to among many other things supervise the rollout of radio campaigns in selected radio stations specifically those that have been contracted to run radio campaigns in Uganda’s Mpondwe and Bunagana borders.

The radio talk shows are aimed at reducing the information gap between the women small scale cross border traders and the various government agencies operating at the implementing border points. This is aimed at facilitating cross-border trade by increasing the capacity for commerce and reducing the costs faced by traders, especially small-scale and women traders, at targeted locations in the borderlands.

The team is led by GLTFP Procurement Expert Joyce Mutale who is accompanied by Daniel Ssekamwa, a senior commercial officer at the Ministry of Trade, industry and cooperatives in Uganda, Serge Musana, the Regional TIDO coordinator for the GLTFP and COMESA Communications Assistant Daniel Banda.



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of intra-COMESA trade and its full implementation will greatly facilitate achieving real economic integration of our region,” added Mr Osman who is also the Governor of the Central Bank of Djibouti. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)’s World Economic Outlook 2019, the real GDP for the COMESA region is projected to grow by 3.5% for the year. This is insufficient to make a dent on unemployment and poverty.

The Governor’s Committee agreed that the region needs to focus on implementing deep structural reforms to diversify the economies through among others enhancing integration into global value chains by upholding technical and labour standards and reinforcing regional integration. The Bank Governors meeting is organised by the



Delegates in the Governors Meeting

of financial stability in member states while REPS has continued to grow with transactions through the live payment system reaching more than US\$115 million over a five-year period as at 30 September 2019. The month of October 2019

saw transactions amounting to US\$6 million processed by REPS.

“This upward trend suggest that the system will indeed, significantly contribute to the expansion

COMESA, EU, IOM Launch Migration Information and Data Analysis System at Mchinji

Mchinji, Malawi, Friday 13 December 2019: COMESA with support from the European Union and the International Organization of Migration (IOM) working with the Malawian Government have launched the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) at Mchinji Border Post.

The system is part of the COMESA small scale cross border trade initiative which aims at increasing formal small-scale cross-border trade flows in the COMESA-EAC-SADC tripartite region. This is expected to lead to higher revenue collection for governments at the borders as well as higher incomes for small-scale cross-border traders. Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe revealed that the beneficiaries of this programme are primarily small-scale traders in particular women traders who regularly cross the border to sell and buy goods.

“Today’s event marks an important step for the whole COMESA region to attain its resilience as we embark towards facilitating small-scale-cross border trade flows between targeted countries through effective policy and governance reforms,” said Ms Kapwepwe. She was represented at the event by the Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance Dr Dev Haman.

COMESA has a co-delegation agreement with IOM to support implementation of the COMESA



The MIDAS system being tested

small scale border trade initiative, a programme with financial support under the 11 European Development Fund (EDF) COMESA sub envelope. Malawi is one of the first countries to receive the system in the region.

EU representative Mr. Jose-Maria MEDINA- NAVARRO at the meeting added that the Union is hopeful that once successful, the MIDAS initiative will be quickly rolled out to other COMESA borders.

“This Initiative ties in with COMESA efforts to operationalise a Digital Free Trade Area which is about empowering traders to participate in cross border trade using ICT as a tool to minimize physical barriers.”

The Event was attended by the Malawi Minister of Homeland Security Honourable Nicholas Dausi and IOM Regional Director Mr Charles Kwenin. Permanent Secretaries from Malawi and Zambia also attended the event.

MIDAS is an IOM supported Border Management System which allows Member States to collect, process, store and analyse information for the purpose of identification of travelers, data collection and analysis. It supports the evaluation of cross-border traffic, helps determine the optimum deployment of human resources at border posts and supports a better understanding of human mobility flows.