

COVID 19: COMESA's Empathy with Member States

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-Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe

As the number of COVID 19 reported cases gains pace in the region, crossing the 2,000 mark on Friday, April 3, 2020, COMESA has sent out a solidarity message to its Members States as they face one of the biggest socioeconomic challenges in modern history.

"On behalf of the Chairperson of COMESA Authority, His Excellency, Andry Rajoelina, President of the Republic of Madagascar and all COMESA Member States, and indeed on my own behalf, I have the honour to convey to you, our message of solidarity as you face the worst health and economic crisis of our lifetime," Secretary General Chileshe Chileshe Kapwepwe said in the message issued on Friday.

Noting that the African continent was spared an early attack of the pandemic compared to other regions, she called on governments to prepare adequately to face the pandemic through lessons learnt and applying best practices that have worked in other countries.

"As we put measures to address the pandemic, we feel this should not be the time to panic but rather, to harden our collective resolve to contain this pandemic by preparing well and taking effective measures," she said. "Given the negative



File photo: COMESA Secretary General Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe

impact that the pandemic has on our economies as a result of travel restrictions, which affect trade in goods as well as services, it is our resolve to push on with the timely implementation of the COMESA Digital Free Trade Area covering eTrade, eLogistics and eLegislation."

Some of the online services that will support business continuity include the Customs Automation (ASYCUDA); Online monitoring of non-tariff barriers, reporting and resolution mechanism; COMESA Virtual Trade Facilitation System; the RCTG and Digital Yellow Card System; the 50 Million Women Speak Platform among others.

"COMESA notes with appreciation the resolve that our Members States have demonstrated by taking far-reaching measures to ensure our region escapes the worst of the pandemic," the Secretary General noted. "Some of these measures are

disruptive on our people's livelihoods. But they are necessary if our countries hope to stem the tide of the pandemic whose impact and aftermath is unprecedented."

Recognizing the roles of National Disaster Management structures in times of crisis, she urged Member States to support and strengthen them to build resilience and capacity to provide humanitarian assistance that is critically required.

SG said COMESA will continue to engage cooperating partners to explore ways of supporting Member States in containing the pandemic. She called on the all citizens in the region to follow the precautions issued by the World Health Organization and the respective governments in containing the pandemic.

"This is a fight for our lives, and everyone has a role to play," she concluded.

The ZTK Regional Power Interconnector is on Course

Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya Power Interconnector to bridge the energy gap

Development Community.



ZTK power line near Kasama sub-station in Zambia

Lack of adequate regional infrastructure in energy in the COMESA region has often been cited as one of the missing links to the reduction in the cost of doing business and scaling up the competitiveness of the countries in the local, regional and global markets. Bridging the energy gap, is therefore one of the main priorities of COMESA infrastructure development.

Estimates indicate that the total installed power generation capacity in the COMESA is around 92,000 megawatts (MW) with Thermal power accounting for more than 69%, and Hydropower at 30%. The biggest paradox is that though richly endowed with power generating natural resources, only a few of them are harnessed. The D R Congo, Ethiopia and Zambia leads in untapped hydropower potential, which if fully developed, could provide for the entire African continent and even have surplus.

To trigger investment in power generation, in countries with high potential is also influenced by the demand of evacuating it to others with deficit. This is why development of regional energy infrastructure, including power transmission

interconnectors, is accorded high priority.

“The energy challenges which the region is facing is an investment opportunity for power generation on a regional basis and an opportunity to build regional power interconnectors in order to facilitate trade in power from surplus to deficit regions,” says Dr Kipyego Cheluget, the Assistant Secretary General in Charge of Programmes in COMESA.

The region is now on the way to achieving the Cape to Cairo electricity corridor by implementing the Zambia-Tanzania-Kenya (ZTK) interconnector project. This is a Tripartite project of COMESA, the East African Community and Southern Africa

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The project will interconnect and make it possible, for power trade between the Eastern Africa Power Pool and the Southern African Power pool, paving the way for a competitive regional power market.

The ZTK project kicked off in 2014 after the signing of an Intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding between the three countries and provision of seed capital by the European Union of €4.4 million for preparatory activities. It entails construction of high voltage transmission lines and associated substations from Kabwe in Zambia through Tanzania and terminating at Isinya in Kenya, over 2,300 kilometres at an estimated cost of US\$ 1.2 billion.

On the Zambian side, the line passes through Kabwe, Mpika, Kasama to Nakonde Border (Tunduma) for 1000km. In Tanzania, which is the longest section, the line passes through Mbeya, Iringa, Dodoma, Singida, Shinyanga, Arusha and terminates at Namanga on the border with Kenya. The Kenyan scope of the interconnector is shortest, 98km, running from Namanga to Isinya. The construction of this section is expected to be completed by May 2020. Commissioning of the Zambia- Tanzania Interconnector is expected in 2022.

Even as the construction of transmission infrastructure progresses, this must go hand in hand with improvement in the generation capacity. Currently, there is not enough to cover the nations own needs and allow for cross-border trade. COMESA is addressing some of these barriers and challenges by aligning regulatory framework in the region to stimulate investments in power production and transmission as well.

Energy experts observe that it will also be necessary to stimulate production from renewable energy sources, for which the COMESA region has expansive potential, in terms of solar, wind, geothermal, bioenergy, among others to ensure sustainability.



COMESA Develops a Regional Grading and Classification System for Trade in Animals

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The development of the manual is a strategic objective of COMESA Livestock Policy Framework to strengthen regional livestock value chains.

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COMESA has developed a Manual for harmonized regional grading and classification system of beef cattle, goats and sheep.

The Manual will be launched at the next meeting of Ministers of Agriculture and Livestock later this year. It will be used across COMESA Member States to facilitate trade between livestock buyers and the sellers. Under the system, livestock importers from one country can make orders in another, based on the classification.

According to Senior Livestock Officer at COMESA Secretariat Dr Yoseph Mamo, the system will create opportunities for long distance trade deals without the need for buyers and sellers to be physically present in the same market.

In developing the grading and classification system, Member States that export and import beef cattle, goat and sheep played a key role including its validation in July 2019.

Dr Mamo described the Manual as an essential tool for stakeholders to enhance their capacities for cross-border trade. Hence, adopting it will contribute to the formalization of live animal trade, enhance confidence in export markets, support the establishment of regional market linkages and information systems, and facilitate capacity



File photo: Livestock

building among stakeholders.

"The system will be helpful as it classifies animals according to preference of the buyer and it caters for different parameters," Dr Mamo said. "Member States can use it as a basis to classify different breeds of animals to facilitate trade, which is currently being conducted using traditional

methods."

He added that the initiative to develop the system was a deliberate effort to create a level playing ground for livestock stakeholders across the region.

"This will have the triple benefit of stimulating cross-border trade, institutionalizing value for money by promoting price-setting based on animal grades and classes, thus catalyzing improved animal husbandry to gain premium prices," he added.

COMESA has the highest population of livestock in Africa and therefore huge potential for intra and extra-regional trade. This potential, however, remains largely untapped as it is predominantly informal.



Dr Yoseph Mamo

COVID 19: Social Safety Nets Critical for SMEs Survival



File photo: Small scale traders

In the wake of the Corona Virus pandemic whose socioeconomic ramifications are still unfolding, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are taking the greatest hit, threatening their survival. To save this critical sector, COMESA gender and social affairs expert is proposing to governments, to consider introducing national social safety net policies.

Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde, Director of Gender and Social Affairs, observes that as governments enforce public health preventive and mitigation measures, it is paramount to also consider policy measures that address the economic and social aspect of the lockdowns especially on the MSMEs.

"Though the Corona virus pandemic affects all groups of the population, its socio-economic effect is detrimental among micro and small-scale businesses including small scale cross borders traders of whom the majority are women," she said in a statement issued in Lusaka.

Currently, several COMESA Member States have placed stringent limitations on the movement of people in compliance with the recommendations by the World Health Organisation (WHO), to stop further spread of the COVID 19. This has affected trade in goods and services especially for MSMEs.

"In the formal institutions, work from home has been introduced and it seems going well in different organizations including government offices," the Director said.



Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde

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-Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde,

"Applying the same measure for self-employed citizens will obviously present difficulties in many ways to micro and small-scale businesses."

Noting that regional some governments have already acted and mobilized resources to provide direct support to disadvantaged families, Mrs. Hamusonde called for enhanced partnerships with the private sector to reduce the burden of the outbreak on limited public resources.

Further, she noted, it is also timely for Member States to prioritize the analysis of the resilience index and vulnerability scale of the informal economy.

In Africa especially in Sub Sahara Africa, more than 75% of the population's source of livelihood comes from micro and small informal businesses including Small Scale Cross Border Traders. This sector is mainly dominated by women and young people. These informal businesses mostly generate meager daily incomes that are the sole source of livelihoods for many families in semi urban and low-income communities.



The COMESA Diary

6-8 April 2020	COMESA Business Council (CBC) Annual Meetings Organised by: CBC Venue: Lusaka Status: On hold. Fresh dates to be communicated
7-8 April 2020	National Launch of the 50 Million African Women-Speak Platform – Ethiopia Organised by: COMESA/ Govt of Ethiopia Venue: Addis Ababa Status: Postponed. Fresh dates to be communicated
23-24 April 2020	7th Meeting of the Technical Working Group of the RCTG Carnet Organised by: Yellow Card/ RCTG Venue: Lusaka
29-30 April 2020	5th Meeting of the IT Committee on the Digital Yellow Card Organised by: Yellow Card/ RCTG Venue: Lusaka

NB: Changes to the events likely owing to COVID 19 mitigation measures

