

## POMP & COLOUR AS COMESA *Turns* 25

1994-2019

# Editorial

## At Just 25, COMESA Done Pretty Well



On 28th November, COMESA celebrated its Silver Jubilee with pomp. The actual anniversary date was 8 December but we brought the fete forward to coincide with the end of the year policy organs meetings. We wanted to have a full house with all the 21 family members represented and we did. In the history of Nations and States, and even human beings, 25 years is a relatively young age. Even 38 years, since the creation

of the COMESA predecessor, the Preferential Trade Area, is still young. It takes many years for countries to qualify as developed and prosperous. Likewise, it takes even longer for regional organizations to reach the level of integration that can be considered mature. They require years of nurturing, amidst many setbacks such as balancing regional good versus national interests. For COMESA, at 25, the going hasn't always been smooth. We have learnt many lessons along the way. One, that the benefits of regional integration do not go to the biggest or strongest, but to those that prepare and organize themselves. The European Union, which is a successful model, and our biggest development partner is 62 and still facing stiff challenges such as Brexit. At the level where COMESA is, we have done very well. Our programmes and institutions are the benchmark of the continent and we are determined to stay the course. Suffice to state that we have every reason to sing and dance for the small and the giant gains that we have made.

*Mwangi*

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# COMESA Institutions, Secretariat in Fresh Move to Deepen Collaboration

## COMESA at a Glance

Average GDP growth rate: **8.0%**  
Gross Domestic Product: **\$768 Billion**  
Population: **560 Million**



Chief executives and staff of COMESA institutions and the Secretariat retreat in Lusaka, Zambia

COMESA Institutions and the Secretariat have developed a draft framework of cooperation. The tool is intended to deepen collaboration and synergy in the delivery of their different mandates towards their common goal of promoting regional integration.

In a one-day Retreat conducted in Lusaka, Zambia on November 24, 2019, the heads of the institutions and Secretariat agreed on the need to adopt a more coordinated approach in joint planning and procedures for reporting to the COMESA Policy Organs and resource mobilization.

The initiative is in line with Article 175 of the COMESA Treaty, which provides for the relationship between the institutions taking into account the objectives, policies, programmes and activities of the Common Market in the implementation of the Charter of each institution.

Speaking at the opening of the Retreat, Secretary General (SG) of COMESA,

Chileshe Kapwepwe noted that a lot of work on implementation of the COMESA Treaty was being undertaken by COMESA institutions.

"In terms of reporting the achievements of the Common Market, the contributions made by the institutions are not reported properly," the SG noted. "It is therefore important that we chart the way on how we shall be working together to ensure that COMESA Member States are aware of and realize the benefits of regional integration."

The forum considered the structure and modalities for reporting to COMESA Policy Organs and agreed on the need to specify the roles and targets for

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The initiative is in line with Article 175 of the: **COMESA Treaty**, which provides for the relationship between....

institutions and harmonize them to promote complementarity.

In this regard, a joint task team would be constituted to come up with a draft framework of reporting by institutions to demonstrate their achievements especially on value addition at the national level.

The forum also acknowledged that all COMESA Member States invested resources in the establishment of each institution, hence the need to uphold the aims and objectives of the Common Market while respecting their specific mandates and governance structures.

In coming up with a cooperation framework, the forum noted that some institutions of the Common Market have membership that goes beyond COMESA. Hence there was need to ensure balance between their responsibilities as COMESA institutions, and the interests of the other stakeholders.

As part of joint planning, information sharing between the institutions on one hand and with the Secretariat on the other, will be enhanced through harmonized communication strategy. The Secretariat will share the calendar of major events where institutions can leverage such as the Secretary General's missions to Member States, in which they have special interests.

To formalize the working relationships, the parties will develop memoranda of understanding to provide the framework of collaboration and synergy.

# COMESA-EU Sign 8.8m Euros to Support Private Sector Competitiveness

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H.E. Jacek Jankowski (R) and SG Chileshe Kapwepwe (L) signing the Agreement

The European Union and COMESA has signed an 8.8 million Euros Contribution Agreement to increase private sector participation in sustainable regional and global value chains. The facility will improve investment/business climate and enhance competitiveness in the COMESA region.

This was one of the activities conducted during the opening of the 40th Meeting of the Council of Ministers that took place in Lusaka, Zambia, on 29 November 2019.

The EU Ambassador to Zambia and Permanent Representative to COMESA, H.E Jacek Jankowski and Secretary General of COMESA Chileshe Kapwepwe signed the Agreement.

The funds will be used to implement the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP), focusing on agro-processing, horticulture and leather products. RECAMP will also support pre-selected value chains based on the potential to generate value addition, job creation and attraction of investments to the region.

RECAMP is supported under the 11th

European Development Fund COMESA sub envelope. The Programme is in line with the EU and COMESA policies in support of the private sector, with a budget of EUR 8.8 million and a duration of 48 months. Ministers and senior government officials witnessed the signing.

RECAMP will also address critical issues, such as provision of business information, facilitating market linkages, harmonizing regional industrial policies and creating a conducive business environment to attract investments. It will strive to ensure collaboration with activities of national trade support institutions and business development and service organisations in Member States as they provide services to value chains as part of their mandate.

These include product development; technology transfer, provision of business intelligence and connection to buyers. The programme will identify champions or lead firms within the selected value chains that have both backward and forward linkages with SMEs and other intermediary firms in order to enhance coordination and improve competitiveness.

In her remarks, Ms Kapwepwe said the

programme will strive to enhance the capacities and skills of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises to make them capable players in the value-chain development.

"A significant number of MSMEs, especially women and youth-owned enterprises, are vulnerable when it comes to participating in value-chains networks at the national, regional and global level because of their competitiveness," she said.

It is estimated that there are between 3.5 to 5 million SMEs in the region, but their growth and competitiveness are constrained by various bottlenecks. These include; lack of access to finance and related services, restrictive business environment, lack of affordable technology among others. A significant number of them are active women entrepreneurs.

In particular, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the region play a pivotal role in their contribution to employment and Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of Member States which is estimated at between 20 – 25%.

Ambassador Jankowski expressed EU's commitment to continue the partnership with COMESA to ensure that regional integration remains as inclusive as possible in view of the challenges posed by climate change.

"Increasing exploitation of natural resources and the environment, and in view of demographic trends makes prioritizing investments in value chains that are environmentally sensitive, socially sound and economically viable," he said.

# 50MAWSP Progress Lauded

The Steering Committee of the 50 Million African Women Speak Project gave the initiative a stamp of approval for the progress registered so far. This followed the Steering Committee's meeting held in Mwanza, Tanzania from 5-6 December 2019.

At the two-day meeting, the Committee lauded the project team on the successful launch of the 50 Million African Women Speak platform on 26 November 2019 in Kigali, Rwanda.

The Committee comprise of executive staff from the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) implementing the project namely; COMESA, EAC and ECOWAS, representatives of the countries chairing these RECs, and heads of regional associations of women in business.

Dr. Siga Fatima Jagne, the ECOWAS Commissioner for Social Affairs and Gender and chair of the Steering Committee, observed that after the 50MAWSP launch, the platform was no longer the property of RECs, but that of women entrepreneurs on the continent.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of Programmes, Amb. Kipyego Cheluget lauded the Steering Committee for its leadership which ensured the successful implementation of the project. He said the programme will ensure that regional integration is meaningful to ordinary people across the continent.

The 50MAWSP aims at contributing to the economic and social empowerment of women across 38 African countries through the provision of a networking platform to access information on financial and non-financial services. Funded by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the project targets 50 Million women in business.

## Tunisia Affirms Support for 50 Million African Women Speak Project



COMESA/50MAWSP delegation to Tunisia with Minister of Trade Hon. Omar Behi (center)

The implementation of the 50 Million African Women Speak Project (50MAWSP) is underway in Tunisia after a team from COMESA commenced engagements with the north African country, which is also one of the newest members of the regional bloc.

The engagements started with two courtesy calls on the Tunisian ministers responsible for gender and trade respectively on 21 October 2019 in the capital Tunis. Gender and Social Affairs Director Mrs. Beatrice Hamusonde led a five-member delegation which met Hon. Neziha Labidi, Tunisia's Minister for Women, Family, Childhood and the Elderly, before holding another meeting with Hon. Omar Behi, Tunisia's Minister of Trade.

The courtesy calls, the first business of a three-day stakeholder engagement that run from 21 to 23 October 2019, were intended to brief the ministers about the 50 Million African Women Speak Project, which is an initiative to empower women entrepreneurs through a digital networking platform that covers 38 African countries.

The minister responsible for gender Hon. Labidi affirmed Tunisia's support for the project, which she described as "the future of

Africa". While noting the importance of empowering women economically, the minister emphasized the need to provide holistic solutions which address economic, social and human rights of women.

She added that Tunisia had some good experiences to share with the rest of the COMESA region and highlighted the example of Rayda Project which she said had supported 4,500 women-led initiatives and created 40,000 jobs by



Hon. Neziha Labidi (left), Tunisia's Minister for Women, Family, Childhood and the Elderly exchanges publications with Mrs. Beatrice Hamusonde, Director, Gender and Social Affairs Division at COMESA

providing interest-free capital. The COMESA team, which also visited Minister of Trade Hon. Omar briefed both ministers about the various initiatives in the Gender Division, including the 50 MWASP, an upcoming program to empower youth as well as various instruments which have been developed such as the Social Charter and the COMESA Gender Policy.



# Over 60 Seeds Listed on the COMESA Variety Catalogue



COMSHIP, a COMESA Seed Programme that works in close collaboration with USAID facilitated this process as part of ongoing efforts to operationalize the COMESA...

The number of seed varieties listed on the COMESA Variety Catalogue increased to 69 by the end of 2019. This was after seeds from two more companies namely Western Seed and SEEDCO were listed through the Uganda National Variety list. This was made possible by the COMESA Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP).

COMSHIP, a COMESA Seed Programme that works in close collaboration with USAID 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 said the two seeds companies can now trade some of their seeds 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," Dr Mukuka said.

This listing also means that for the next two to three years, the two companies will be able to multiply their seed production without going through further testing or any restrictions and thereby have access to the larger COMESA market.

Currently, 13 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 the 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

# 69

The number of seed varieties listed in the COMESA Variety Catalogue

# Regional States Seek Support to Enhance their Trade Facilitation Capacities



Participants at the capacity building workshop for Regional States

Regional States have embraced the transport corridors model championed by COMESA and are now seeking to build their capacities to implement the trade facilitation instruments that apply. In a response to a request by regional States, COMESA Secretariat conducted a training on its trade facilitation instruments in October 2019, in Kafue, Zambia, targeting nine African States. They included Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The objective of the workshop was to improve awareness of the COMESA transport transit facilitation instruments and appreciation of resultant benefits among corridor States.

Among the instruments that have transformed trade in the transit corridors are: the COMESA Yellow Card, COMESA Carrier License, the Harmonised Road Transport Charges, COMESA Transit Plate, Axle Load Limits, Vehicle Dimensions, COMESA Customs Document, Regional Customs Transit

Guarantee, One Stop Border Posts (OSBP) and COMESA Virtual Trade Facilitation System.

"These instruments have contributed significantly to reducing the cost of doing business and yielded benefits of using the corridor framework in managing transit traffic and hence the need to strengthen corridor management," the COMESA Director of Infrastructure Mr Jean-Baptiste Mutabazi said.

He described the training on OSBPs as particularly important to country establishing transport corridors, in view of the important role they play in reducing delays at border crossings.

COMESA's strategy is to replicate OSBPs at other border stations along major traffic corridors in order to maximize the benefits. Trade facilitation is one of the pillars of the COMESA Strategic Plan and is also contained in the COMESA Treaty under the Protocol on Transit Trade and Transit Facilities.

At the workshop, participants were taken through specific sections of the COMESA Treaty and the Protocol on Transit Trade and Transit Facilities which form the basis of the various COMESA transit instruments.

As part of practical training and fact finding, participants were conducted on a tour of Chirundu One Stop Border Post between Zambia and Zimbabwe, which was established to minimize congestion, eliminate duplication of activities and processes.

The Chirundu OSBP has improved clearance time (within one day), quick truck turnaround, information sharing, joint operations, drastic reduction in fraud, enhanced interaction of officers, sharing of facilities, and reduced cost of doing business.

Representative from the Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS) and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) participated in the training.



# Towards Financial Independence

*Finance Ministers, Governors set up Team to Implement the COMESA Common Market Levy*

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Finance Ministers, Central Banks' Governors and staff of COMESA meeting in USA

In a move to entrench financial independence and sustainable implementation of the regional integration agenda in COMESA, a Joint Committee of Ministers of Finance and Central Bank Governors resolved to set up a technical working group to assess and come up with modalities for the operationalization of the COMESA Common Market Levy.

The Levy is provided for in the COMESA Treaty as a means of generating resources for financing Common Market activities. However, key aspects of the Levy such as incomes earned from activities undertaken by the Common Market has never been operationalized. This has created budget deficits which are addressed through Development Partners' support which is not sustainable in the long run.

To ensure sustainability, COMESA Secretariat decided to directly engage the Ministers and the Governors to deliberate ways of enhancing the implementation of COMESA Monetary Integration Programme and modalities for sustainable financing of its programmes.

Subsequently, a joint meeting was conducted on 16 October 2019 in Washington, DC on the sidelines of IMF/ World Bank 2019 Annual Meetings.

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Currently, over 70% of the COMESA Budget comes from development partners, a situation that is now being considered untenable....

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It was attended by Ministers and Governors from Djibouti, DR Congo, Egypt, Eswatini, Libya, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Tunisia and Zambia.

Making the case for implementation of the Common Market Levy, Secretary General (SG) of COMESA Chileshe Kapwepwe emphasized the need to intensify efforts to deepen the process of macroeconomic convergence and financial intermediation in COMESA region given the current enormous challenges facing the region.

"COMESA needs a guaranteed, predictable and adequate financial resources for the smooth execution of its regional integration agenda," she said. "Introducing the Community Levy is in line with COMESA Treaty provisions



and will go a long way in raising significant resources for harmonious development of the region.”

The Minister of Finance of Congo DR, Mr. Sele Yalaguli reaffirmed this position stating: “COMESA continues to lack sufficient funding on a sustainable basis to finance its flagship programmes,” he stated. “It is time that COMESA Member States find a sustainable way to fund them.” He emphasized that COMESA’s initiatives in deepening integration will complement member countries efforts to improve productivity and ensure diversification, partly through increased intra-regional trade.

Former Deputy Chair of the Africa Union Commission, Mr. Erastus Mwencha, who is also a former Secretary General of COMESA was the keynote speaker and shared insights on financing of regional integration in Africa in general, and the operationalization of the COMESA Common Market Levy, in particular.

Currently, over 70% of the COMESA Budget comes from development partners, a situation that is now being considered untenable given the changing financing mechanism of funding agencies.

Similar regional economic communities such as the Economic Community for Western African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community for Central Africa States (ECCAS) have successfully implemented such levies for sustainable financing of their integration agenda.

In attendance at the meeting in Washington were staff from the COMESA Secretariat and the COMESA Monetary Institute.

# Migration and Data Analysis System Launched at Zambia/Malawi Border

With support from the European Union, COMESA, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) and Malawian Government launched the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) at Mchinji Border Post in December 2019.

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 and higher incomes for small-scale cross-border traders.

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 travellers, 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.

At the launch, Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe said:

“The 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.”

The beneficiaries of the programme are primarily small-scale traders, in particular women who regularly cross the border to sell and buy goods.

COMESA has a Co-delegation Agreement with IOM to support implementation of the small-scale border trade initiative, which is funded under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF). Malawi is one of the first countries to receive the system in the region.

European Union representative Mr. Jose-Maria Medina-Navarro said the MIDAs initiative will be 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,” he said.

In attendance were the Malawi Minister of Homeland Security Hon. Nicholas Dausi, IOM Regional Director Mr Charles Kwenin and Permanent Secretaries from Malawi and Zambia.

## MIDAS

Migration Information and Data Analysis System

**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.**

# Regional Policy on Biotechnology and Biosafety set for Revival



Sudanese farmer tending GMO cotton

In 2020, the focus of COMESA Secretariat will be to support the revitalization of the Regional Policy on Biotechnology and Biosafety under the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA). Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance Dr Dev Haman said the Secretariat will also support ACTESA in having its first meeting for the new board aimed at rebooting the institution.

He was speaking in Lusaka when he received a delegation from the region on Biotechnology and Biosafety led by the Chief Executive Officer at the National Biosafety Authority of Kenya Prof. Dorington Ogoyi.

During the discussions, it was agreed that operationalizing the biosafety program will require institutionalizing a Regional Biosafety Risk Assessment mechanism. This will ensure high-level policy support and commitment from Member States for safe and responsible use of modern biotechnology in agriculture.

Several COMESA Member States including Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia and Eswatini have already given approval to start cultivating insect-resistant cotton and maize. Other countries are conducting field trials and could benefit from data sharing, capacity enhancement and biosafety decisions from lead countries.

Acting Chief Executive Officer of ACTESA, Dr. John Mukuka said the institution is currently reviving its operations to come up with a revised strategic plan covering the period 2020 to 2030. The goal of the new plan is to enhance small-scale farmers access to agricultural input, output and financial markets through improved policy

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ACTESA facilitated the development of a common biotechnology and biosafety policy implementation plan...

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environment, expanded market facilities, services and capacity building.

He stated that the COMESA policy on Biotechnology and Biosafety mainly addresses Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in transit, low-level presence of GMOs, commodities for food, feed and processing and handling emergency food aid with Genetically Modified (GM) content.

"There is need to revive the biotechnology and biosafety harmonization program within COMESA in view of the emerging challenges from recurrent drought in the region and new pests like the Fall Army worm devastating our staple crops," Dr Mukuka added.

Former COMESA/ACTESA Senior Biotechnology and Biosafety Advisor Dr. Belay Getachew said ACTESA facilitated the development of a common biotechnology and biosafety policy implementation plan commonly referred to as "COMBIP" which was validated in 2015 by the Council of Ministers after nearly 10 years of consultations by Member States.

The visiting delegation included Dr. Charles Mugoya, Chairperson National Biosafety Committee of Uganda, Dr. Margaret Karembu Africa Director of International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA AfriCenter), Dr. Enock Warinda, Deputy Executive Director at the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) and Dr. Francis Nang'ayo, Senior Manager and Head of Regulatory Affairs at the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF).

Others were Dr Lilian Chimphepo focal point for biosafety responsible for coordinating biosafety issues in Malawi, Mr. Mudenda, Regulatory Head for Southern Africa at Syngenta Crop Protection and board member of African Seed Trade Association and Mr Lackson Tonga, Chief Executive Officer at the Zambia National Biosafety Authority.



# Project Steering Team for Regional Cross Border Programme Inaugurated



Delegates at the inaugural meeting of the Projects' Steering Committee on trade facilitation

Small cross border traders are among key beneficiaries of new projects whose implementation is underway across the COMESA, EAC and SADC Tripartite region.

The projects are; the 15 million euros Regional Small-Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative (SSCBTI), while the second is a 53m euros Trade Facilitation Project (TFP). These are funded by the European Union under the 11th European Union Development Fund (EDF 11) to increase formal small-scale cross border trade flows.

The Projects' Steering Committee (PSC) was set up in 2019 and had its first meeting in September, in Lusaka, Zambia where the participants reviewed the progress of the projects' implementation and outlined its mandate.

The role of the PSC is to provide the overall policy and strategic guidance and specifically, coordinate implementation among various actors, who have been delegated and co-delegated to handle various aspects of the entire programme.

Fifteen Member States were represented at the meeting. These were: Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

## NEW PROJECTS

Across the COMESA, EAC and SADC Tripartite region.

**15 million euros** Regional Small-Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative SSCBTI

**53 million euros** Trade Facilitation Project TFP

The SSCBT initiative was designed to address challenges facing small scale traders which include high transactions costs arising from delays at the border, high taxes and high transport costs; corruption and harassment among others. In COMESA region, small cross border trade accounts for 30 to 40% of total trade.

"These challenges are the basis for the COMESA Cross Border Trade Initiative which the programme aims to address and thus facilitate and formalize this trade," said Dr Kipyego Cheluget, Assistant Secretary General in charge of COMESA programmes when he addressed delegates.

At the meeting, it was observed that representatives of the cross-borders are not fully equipped to defend the interests of their members. Further, there is no adequate data (disaggregated by gender) to fully understand small scale

informal trade and there is lack of adequate border infrastructure for such trade.

The Trade Facilitation Programme aims at increasing intra-regional trade flows of goods, persons and services by reducing the costs and delays of imports and exports at specific border posts. This will be addressed through reduction of non-tariff barriers (NTBs), implementation of digital Free Trade Area (DFTA), World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA), improvements of the Coordinated Border Management (CBM) and liberalization of Trade in Services and free movement of persons.

Implementation of the two projects is expected to contribute to higher revenue collection for governments at the borders, increase security and improved incomes for traders.

Specific activities of the projects have been co-delegated to UN agencies to implement owing to their expertise and competences in the respective areas. These are: the International Trade Centre (ITC) the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO).

Some activities of the programme will be for the whole of the COMESA/ Tripartite region while others will be focusing on the targeted borders, namely: Chirundu, (Zambia /Zimbabwe); Mchinji/Mwami, (Malawi/Zambia); Moyale, (Ethiopia /Kenya) Kasumbalesa, (DR Congo/Zambia) and Tunduma/ Nakonde, (Tanzania /Zambia).

The PSC is made up of experts from the COMESA Secretariat, who will be the main drivers of the project and will include representatives from the European Union, the IOM and the five targeted Member States.

At the meeting, the Head of Cooperation at the European Union delegation to Zambia and COMESA Mr. Gianluca Azzoni stressed the need for effective coordination in the programme implementation between COMESA, the Member States and the Multilateral agencies involved.

# Regional Seed Harmonization Plan Launched in 18 Countries

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Delegates attending the launch of COMSHIP in Kigali, Rwanda

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“This region has the potential to record USD\$5 billion in seed trade in the next five years compared to the current trade levels of USD\$1.4 billion”

-Dr. Mukuka

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As at November 2019, 18 COMESA Member countries had successfully launched the regional Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP). Five of those countries were implementing the programme with support from USAID. The remaining Member States namely Somalia, Tunisia and Libya are yet to launch.

This was revealed during the opening of the 3rd COMESA Seed Committee meeting in Kigali on 6 November 2019. COMESA through its specialized agency the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) came up with COMSHIP to expedite implementation of the harmonized regional seed regulations ensuring compliance, coherence, transparency and synergies.

The overall goal of COMSHIP is to implement the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonisation Regulations in order to enhance seed production, reliability, seed trade including increasing the competitiveness of the seed industry in the southern and eastern African region.

In his presentation on the status of COMSHIP, ACTESA/COMESA Seed Development Expert Dr John Mukuka revealed that various issues have affected the implementation and domestication of the programme in the region. These include the slow rate in the utilization of the COMESA Seed Labels and Regional Certificates by seed companies and National Seed Authorities, lack of harmonized Seed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), mistrust and inefficiencies arising from lack of adequate and accurate information by key seed sector players.

However, a lot has been done in awareness creation and so far over 13,500 COMESA Seed Trade Harmonisation Regulations have been printed. A total of 270 delegates, mostly women from 13 COMESA countries have been trained in the regional Seed programme and 3,000 brochures distributed.

Agriculture experts have lauded COMSHIP pointing out that once fully domesticated, the programme will enable farmers access quality and improved seed which will lead to food security and poverty reduction.

“This region has the potential to record USD\$5 billion in seed trade in the next five years compared to the current trade levels of USD\$1.4 billion,” Dr Mukuka added.

Rwanda's Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources Mr Jean Claude Musabyimana said the region needs to improve seed trade as the bloc marked its silver jubilee in December 2019. The PS was represented by Deputy Director General at the Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board (RAB), Dr Charles Bucagu.

Rwanda is among the countries that have aligned their national seed laws and regulations with the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonization Regulations. Others are Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, DR Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.



# COMESA Court Launches Revised Rules of Arbitration



Zambia Justice Minister Hon Given Lubinda (middle) flanked by Judge President of the COMESA Court Justice Lombe Chibesakunda (R) launching the revised CCJ Arbitration Rules.

COMESA Court of Justice has revised its Arbitration Rules which guide the business of the Court. The revised rules were launched in Lusaka during the opening of the 22nd Meeting of COMESA Ministers of Justice and Attorneys General in November 2019.

Delegates attending the meeting commended the Court for its consistent improvement of its processes and procedures thus making it a dispute resolution institution of choice for citizens of the regional trade bloc. The revised Rules were adopted by the Council of Ministers in November 2018.

"The COMESA region looks up to the Court to maintain the Rule of Law thereby guaranteeing the existence of a conducive environment for doing business," Zambia's Minister of Justice Hon. Given Lubinda said as he officially launched the Rules.

The meeting also noted that majority of the Court's Judges had undergone skills-building in arbitration and most of them were now qualified as Members and Fellows of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators.

Among the key issues in the agenda of the meeting of the Ministers and

Attorney's General were: an Amendment to Article 28 of the Treaty to expand the jurisdiction of the Court to include Investor State Dispute Resolution, amendment of the Treaty to include Arabic as the fourth language of the Court and the renewal of tenure of the judges.

In her statement, the COMESA Secretary General Ms Chileshe Kapwepwe commended the Ministers and Legal Officials for the sound legal frameworks that have enabled the organisation to record remarkable achievements.

These include the successful implementation of the COMESA Free Trade Area that has seen an increase in intra-regional trade and investment in the form of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

COMESA has also been a trendsetter in the development of trade facilitation tools which include the Motor Vehicle Insurance known as COMESA Yellow Card and the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime among others.

The Judge President of the COMESA Court, Justice Lombe Chibesakunda said the Court would continue its commitment to regional integration by upholding the rule of law in the enforcement of the COMESA Treaty.

# Pomp and Colour as COMESA

About 400 delegates, led by Ministers and their representatives from the 21 Member States attended the celebrations in Lusaka, Zambia.

On 28 November 2019, COMESA celebrated 25 years since it was established in 1994 to succeed the Preferential Trade Area (PTA). The celebrations were held earlier to coincide with the Policy Organs Meetings. The actual anniversary day was on 8 December.

About 400 delegates, led by Ministers and their representatives from the 21 Member States attended the celebrations in Lusaka, Zambia. Government officials, diplomats and the business community were among the guests that graced the occasion.

Key activities of the event were: a high-level panel discussion that reflected on the past and the future of COMESA. Immediate former Deputy Chair of the African Union Mr. Erastus Mwencha, who is also a former Secretary General of COMESA was among the panellists.

Others were the COMESA Secretary General, Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, President of the Trade and Development Bank (TDB) Mr Admassu Tadesse and Chief Executives of the COMESA Competition Commission (CCC) and PTA Reinsurance Company (ZEP-RE) Mr George Lipimile and Mrs. Hope Murera respectively.

The panellists addressed a cross section of key issues in regional integration



under the theme: '25 years, Growing Together for Prosperity' with reflections on the past and future. Guests were taken through the journey of COMESA's regional integration programme with Mr Mwencha providing insights into the past and SG Kapwepwe forecasting the future outlook.

Mr. Tadesse briefed the guests on the runaway success that has been the Trade and Development Bank story whose global credit ratings are now higher than that of many countries. This means, the Bank can attract credit to support some Member States, which on their own, cannot access. Equally, the ZEP-RE, as elaborated by Mrs. Murera at the event, is a global player with ratings as high as that of its sibling, the TDB.

Mr. Lipimile spoke about the role of COMESA Competition Commission,

which is the first of its kind in Africa, which ensures fair business practices in regional trade and investment.

To demonstrate its impact Mr. Lipimile revealed how the Commission stopped the commercialization of marketing and media rights of main regional football competitions under the Confederation of African Football (CAF) to allow investigation into anti-competition practices.

Other events at the Gala included long service awards to staff that retired from the Secretariat in 2019. There was also financial support to the underprivileged, support to budding innovators and a commemorative COMESA Coffee Table Book launched.



# IESA Turns 25





# \$13,000 worth of IT Equipment Provided for Cross Border Trade Data Collection



ASG Programmes Amb. Dr. Kipyego Cheluget (R) handing over some of the IT equipment to ZAMSTATS Interim Statistician Mr. Mulenga Musepa

COMESA provided \$13,000 worth of assorted state of the art Information Technology (IT) equipment to the Zambia Statistics Agency (ZAMSTATS) to support data collection for small scale cross border traders. The equipment comprised of four Desktop Computers with flat screens, four Laserjet Printers, four Un-Interruptible Power Supplies (UPSs), four Routers and 38 Samsung Galaxy Tablets.

The equipment were provided in November 2019 under the European Union backed COMESA Small Scale Cross-Border Trade Initiative (SSCBTI) Programme. They would be distributed to staff working at five border areas in the COMESA -EAC-SADC Tripartite region to support effective, efficient and modern data collection process.

The targeted borders include the Mwami/Mchinji between Zambia and Malawi, Kasumbalesa between Zambia and the DR Congo, Chirundu between Zambia and Zimbabwe, Tunduma/ Nakonde between Zambia and Tanzania and Moyale between Ethiopia and Kenya.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Dr Kipyego Cheluget,

handed over the equipment to the ZAMSTATS team in Lusaka led by Interim Statistician General Mr Mulenga Musepa.

COMESA received the funds from the EU towards the implementation of the SSCBTI. Its specific objective is to facilitate small-scale cross-border trade flows between targeted countries through effective policy governance reforms, institutional capacity building, improved border infrastructure and better data collection and monitoring.

COMESA provided \$13,000 worth of assorted state of the art Information Technology (IT) equipment to the Zambia Statistics Agency (ZAMSTATS)

The COMESA SSCBTI programme has five key result areas of which Result 4 focuses on gender disaggregated statistical data collection. The others is analysis and dissemination for small-scale cross border trade so as to increase evidence-based knowledge on the topic and inform better trade policy-making processes at national and regional level.

The beneficiaries of this programme are primarily small-scale traders, in particular women traders who regularly cross borders in the COMESA-EAC-SADC tripartite region to sell and buy goods, as well as the associations who represent them and defend their interests.

Zambia is the first country to initiate the data collection programme, which will be rolled over to other targeted COMESA Member States.



Mr. Anthony Walakira (L) of COMESA Statistics Unit presents a tablet to staff of ZAMSTATS

# Central Bank Governors Hold Symposium on the Continental and Tripartite FTA



Governors of COMESA Central Banks

Central Bank Governors, deputies and their representatives from the COMESA region held a one-day symposium on 13 December 2019 in Lusaka with the theme 'Role of Central Banks in Advancing the Continental and Tripartite Free Trade Area.'

The meeting agreed that Central Banks have a critical role to play in the full and successful implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) by ensuring macroeconomic and financial stability hence the need to start engaging on the matter.

Speaking at the Symposium, Chairperson of the COMESA Committee of Governors of Central Banks, Mr. Ahmed Osman said it was important to start discussing the Agreements in order to have the right pricing mechanism, efficient trade and appropriate payment channels required for trade exchanges as the region leaps forward with the two free trade arrangements.

He added that formulating and implementing appropriate exchange rate policies to support trading activities will also be important as the Continental and Tripartite Free Trade Area come into force.

"The growing protectionism in advanced countries naturally means that we in COMESA and Africa need to explore the possibility of expanding and enlarging our market beyond individual country

borders," Mr Osman, who is also the Governor of the Central Bank of Djibouti said. "The AfCFTA and TFTA are crucial in this exercise."

The bankers noted that the AfCFTA ushered in a new era of deeper collaboration in trade among African countries and builds on the integration attained by Regional Economic Communities such as COMESA, EAC and SADC.

The governors noted that lack of trade finance can limit the full trade potential of the AfCFTA and TFTA. Hence, they discussed the role of central banks in eradicating obstacles for advancing AfCFTA and TFTA, the use of Blockchain to increase efficiency in the CFTA and the importance of regional payments systems to increase trade.

Once fully implemented, the AfCFTA is expected to cover all 55 African countries with an estimated combined current GDP of US\$2.5 trillion and a population of one billion, 60 percent of whom are below the age of 25 years.

The symposium identified some of the key obstacles in advancing the AfCFTA and TFTA. These include the failure by some Member States to diversify their economies and add value to products, poor road and rail infrastructure which hinders economic growth and limited and inactive cross listings on the stock exchanges. Restrictive customs procedures and high fees making cross border trade expensive.

Twelve Member States namely: Burundi, Djibouti, DR Congo, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Libya, Malawi, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe participated in the symposium which was organized by the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI).

## Burundi Becomes 7th Country to Ratify Tripartite Agreement



Burundi Minister of Trade Hon. Jean-Marie Niyokindi (L) handing over the Ratification Instrument to COMESA SG, Chileshe Kapwepwe

Burundi presented the instrument of Ratification for the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Agreement on 28 November 2019, thus becoming the 7th country to do so. Burundi's Minister for Trade, Industry and Tourism Hon. Jean-Marie Niyokindi presented the instrument to the Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe during the 25th Anniversary of COMESA. The SG is the current chair of the Tripartite Task Force

The Tripartite brings together 28 countries in the three regional economic blocs. A total of 14 ratifications are required for the Tripartite Agreement to come into force.



# Reinforcing Comoros' Capacity to Fight Money Laundering

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Government officials and stakeholders attending training on combating money laundering and terrorism financing

.....  
 "Our country will now be regarded positively in the global market after this training, considering our strategic location on the map, which can be used as a route for transnational crimes,..."  
 .....

As rising cases of money laundering and related crimes continue to pose global threat to peace and security, regional countries are taking measures to reinforce their capacity to combat the crime.

The Union of the Comoros is one the States that have taken this threat seriously and is working with stakeholders to enhance its capacity to fight money laundering and terrorism financing. From 2-4 October 2019, over 100 staff from vulnerable sectors of the economy including banking, bureau de change, insurance and real estate, were trained on the use of World

Bank National Risk Assessment tool in assessing their country's Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing (ML/TF) risks.

The training took place in Comoros's capital Moroni. It was supported by COMESA Maritime Security (MASE) programme funded by the European Union and facilitated by World Bank experts.

According to experts, assessment of countries' risks and application of risk-based approaches is a requirement in the global fight against the vice hence the importance of undertaking national money laundering and terrorist financing risk assessment.

"This helps in prioritization of resource allocation, formulation of policies relating to anti-money laundering and combating financing of terrorism," said the experts.

The Comorian Minister of Finance and Budget Mr Said Ali Chayhane, who was

the chief guest at the event, expressed his government's commitment to curb financial crimes which he described as potentially damaging to economic development.

"Our country will now be regarded positively in the global market after this training, considering our strategic location on the map, which can be used as a route for transnational crimes," he said.

He added that identification of the risks was an important aspect of development and transparency and since Comoros was also a member of other regional groupings, it is imperative to be involved at every level to ensure its development is not hindered.

Minister Chayhane thanked COMESA for continuously supporting Comoros to ensure the country's anti-money laundering capacity is strengthened. In the past, COMESA MASE has provided support to train Comoros Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) analysts in tactic and strategic analysis and law enforcement agencies in financial investigations and asset recovery.

The country has also received support towards joining regional inter-governmental action group against money laundering and attachment of government officials to Financial Intelligence Units in other countries for benchmarking.

At least six ministers attended the opening ceremony of the workshop. These were ministers in charge of Justice, Interior, Health, Education, Telecommunications, and Public Works. Other guests included representatives of the World Bank, Inter-Governmental Action Group Against Money Laundering in West Africa, the Diplomatic Community in Comoros, Central Bank of Comoros various anti-money laundering stakeholders and COMESA

# Council of Ministers Conduct its 40th Meeting



The 40th COMESA Council of Ministers

**We need to continue providing an enabling environment for market integration, infrastructure development and industrialization, with special attention to small....**

-Mrs. Inonge Wina

The 40th COMESA Council of Ministers meeting took place in Lusaka on Friday 29th November marking the culmination of one week of activities to commemorate the regional bloc's Silver Jubilee.

Ministers responsible for Trade, Commerce and Industry and Permanent/Principal Secretaries led the delegations to the annual meeting. Its primary objective was to review progress made in regional integration and approve work programs and budget for 2020.

Addressing the Ministers during the opening of the meeting, Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe urged Member States to implement the decisions and programmes agreed

upon during the meetings to deepen regional integration.

"The only reason we exist as an organization is to improve the living conditions of our people," she said noting that the 25 years COMESA Anniversary had provided an opportunity for reflection and focus on the future priorities.

## Latest Accomplishments

She cited the following among the latest accomplishments of the regional bloc: the establishment of the COMESA Virtual University of regional integration, a first in Africa; the rolling out of the Digital Free Trade Area; the resolution of 98% of all non-tariff barriers reported; the commitment by Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to operationalize the COMESA Community Levy and the launch of the 50 Million African Women Speak Programme among others.

"My foremost priority is to see a COMESA that is well-resourced, well managed and fit for purpose," she said.

In a statement delivered by the Zambia Minister of National Development Mr.

Emmanuel Chiteme, Zambia's Vice President Mrs. Inonge Wina observed that the approach taken by COMESA to promote integration was working well.

"We need to continue providing an enabling environment for market integration, infrastructure development and industrialization, with special attention to small and medium enterprises development," the Vice President said.

"In addition to this, the regional economic community must focus on regional industrial clusters, modernizing institutional and regulatory policies and capacity development as well as resource mobilization."

**"My foremost priority is to see a COMESA that is well-resourced, well managed and fit for purpose."**

-Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe



# Exploring Sustainable Financing Mechanism

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COMESA Committee on Administrative and Budget Affairs meeting in session

Over 100 senior officials from Ministries that coordinate COMESA programmes in the 21 Member States attended..

The 40th COMESA Meeting of the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Matters took place in Lusaka from 13 – 15 November 2019. The focus of the meeting was on strengthening the organization's structures responsible for implementation of regional programmes at the national level.

Over 100 senior officials from Ministries that coordinate COMESA programmes in the 21 Member States attended the three days meeting. The committee reviewed the 2020 Budget and expenditure submissions from COMESA Secretariat, its institutions and Organs

that are funded by Member States including detailed work programmes.

Currently, COMESA has been exploring sustainable financing mechanism to address funding challenges such as low remittance levels of assessed contributions. It is also exploring possibilities of gradually increasing the proportion of Member States funding towards COMESA programmes. The initiative is led by the Ministers of

Finance.

Established under Article 15 of the COMESA Treaty, the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Matters provides technical advisory in internal controls and risk management oversight assurance services, budget policy, budgeting and its linkage with the Medium-Term Strategic Plan and decisions of COMESA Policy Organs.



# COMESA/ ASARECA Sign Pact to Promote Agriculture

In the current fast-changing global economy, innovations, improved technologies and practices are key to agricultural transformation as they support smallholder farmers and other agricultural producers to become competitive. Not only do they increase agricultural productivity and sustainability, but they also reduce losses in the value chains thus enabling adaptation and mitigation of the effects of climate change.

Cognizant of this, COMESA has forged strategic partnership with the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), to develop solutions to challenges that face farmers in the region. These include poor access to improved technologies, limited knowledge of good production practices, climate change, limited innovations, poor access to market and weak enabling policy environment.

In October 2019, the partnership was sealed in Lusaka, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the Executive Director of ASARECA Professor Jean Jacques Muhinda and the COMESA Secretary General (SG) Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe.

Under the MoU, the two organizations will collaborate in agriculture research, food and natural resources management, markets and market information systems; capacity building; agricultural knowledge and technology transfer; and policy development and harmonization.

According to the SG, these issues are aligned to the COMESA Regional



Executive Director of ASARECA Professor Jean Jacques Muhinda (L) and COMESA SG Chileshe Kapwepwe

Agriculture Investment Plan, the Medium-Term Strategic Plan, and new ASARECA Strategic Plan as well.

"It is therefore in COMESA's interest to form strategic partnerships for implementation of Agricultural Research for Development to foster economic integration and indeed we are committed to regionally coordinated AR4D," she added.

In the recent past, COMESA and ASARECA have implemented joint programmes approved by the Council of Ministers of the regional bloc, especially in the areas of the seed trade harmonization regulations, climate change adaptation and biotechnology for some Member States, with notable benefits.

Reacting to the conclusion of the MoU, Prof. Muhinda said: "I am excited to be your partner and we have the same objectives for the development of our region." He noted that 10 out of 12 ASARECA Member States are in COMESA.

ASARECA has also appointed Ambassador Dr. Kipyego Cheluget, Assistant Secretary General in Charge of programmes in COMESA, as the Vice Chair of its Board of Directors. The Board unanimously endorsed the appointment in September 2019 in its meeting in Kampala, Uganda.

Under the COMESA Treaty, Member States commit themselves to cooperate in agricultural research and extension, utilizing existing national agricultural research and extension institutions on a network basis for the benefit of the Common Market. This enables agricultural research in the region to play a leading role in promoting market and income generation-oriented agriculture.

In addition, COMESA is implementing the Agenda 2063 and CAADP/Malabo Declaration whose aims include accelerated and inclusive agricultural transformation in Africa. The pact with ASARECA is therefore expected to provide impetus towards the realization of these goals.



# US\$2bn Worth of COMESA Customs Bond Issued for Goods-in-Transit

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The COMESA Regional Customs Transit Guarantee Scheme (RCTG Carnet) is expected to maintain a steady growth trajectory in 2019 based on its 2018 performance in which customs guarantees for goods-in-transit issued in the Northern and Central Corridors reached US\$2 billion mark.

This is according to a statement issued by the RCTG/Yellow Card Chief Programme Officer Mr. Berhane Giday. The bonds were issued for customs duty and taxes for goods in transit in the countries where COMESA RCTG Carnet has been operational since 2012. These are Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

The RCTG Carnet is a COMESA trade facilitation instrument which is digitally integrated with other Member States national customs IT systems such as iCMS (Kenya) TANCIS (Tanzania) and ASYCUDA World in Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.

The COMESA bond has enhanced competitiveness for companies on the Northern Corridor. Experts say the implementation of the RCTG Carnet has reduced the cost of transport and clearance by between 10 and 15 percent.

At present, over 1000 clearing and forwarding agents and 66 Insurance companies are participating in the RCTG. Eighty percent of the agents are Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMSE).

A study conducted by Kenbright Actuarial & Financial Services Limited of Kenya found that most COMESA RCTG Bonds are General Bonds at 99%. About 70% of the CARNETs are below \$10,000.



"We engaged the Kenbright to conduct a study on the COMESA RCTG Carnet, which revealed that a significant growth in the performance of the instrument was recorded between 2017 and 2018," Mr Giday said.

The study further established that the RCTG regional premium rates are lower than most national rates except in Uganda. Since 2015, thirteen bonds with an estimated loss of duty and taxes of \$342,731 were called upon of

.....  
**"We engaged the Kenbright to conduct a study on the COMESA RCTG Carnet, which revealed that a significant growth in the performance of the instrument was recorded between 2017 and 2018,"**

**-Mr. Giday**  
.....

which six were for the Uganda Revenue Authority and seven were for the Rwanda Revenue Authority.

The reduction in the cost of transit and transport during 2018, to the land-linked Member States in terms of bond premium, documentation and bond-fees is estimated to be USD\$30million.

The RCTG Agreement was signed and ratified by 13 COMESA member and non-Member States, namely: Burundi, Djibouti, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

The scheme is fully operational in the northern and central corridor countries namely Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. In addition, DR Congo, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Djibouti Sudan and South Sudan are expected to commence operations in the first quarter of 2020. The Northern corridor covers Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda while Tanzania, Burundi and DR Congo are in the Central Corridor.

The RCTG was introduced in 2012 on the Northern Corridor to facilitate movement of goods from the port of Mombasa to the landlocked countries in the region. It is the first of its kind in the eastern and southern Africa region and second of its kind after the European Union TIR Carnet.

# Inaugural Youth Leaders Bootcamp



Participants at the youth Boot Camp in Arusha, Tanzania

The event focused on the role of youths in influencing cross-border policy and the type of of change narrative the youth could drive across COMESA...

Thirty policy makers and youth leaders from 10 COMESA countries participated in a five-day residential boot camp in policy formulation, democratic governance and socio-economic development in Arusha, Tanzania in December 2019.

The main objective of the boot camp was to increase youth participation and engagement in policy formulation and implementation and also increase experience sharing among youth leaders from the region.

The bootcamp, which was the first of its kind by COMESA was supported by the Swiss Agency for Development

Cooperation (SDC) while training was facilitated by MS-Training Centre for Development Cooperation (MS-TCDC).

Ethiopian State Minister for Youth Cluster in the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Hon. Hiwot Hailu and the Director of Gender and Social Affairs at COMESA Secretariat Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde officially opened the Boot Camp.

The event focused on the role of youths in influencing cross-border policy and the type of of change narrative the youth could drive across COMESA in line with regional inter-state cooperation, trade and commerce facilitation.

During the boot camp held 14 – 18 December 2019, the policy makers and youth leaders interacted, discussed and identified the key problems that limit or undermine the participation of the youth in democratic governance and socio-economic development processes and designed workable solutions.

Delegates from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe also deliberated on the state of the policy environment with regard to equal access to opportunities for youth, policy implementation gaps, capacity gaps and measures to address these concerns.

The residential boot camp was part of ongoing activities of the Joint COMESA-African Governance Architecture (AGA) project on youth engagement which falls under the Division of Gender and Social Affairs at the COMESA Secretariat. This initiative is expected to operationalize the COMESA Youth Programme and the AGA-Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) in democratic governance processes.

The objective of the boot camp was to increase youth participation and engagement in policy formulation



## Innovators Receive \$10,000 to Help Commercialize their Innovations



Mohamed Gaber of Egypt receives \$10,000 for his winning innovation of a barter trade platform.

The innovations were identified under the COMESA Innovation Award Scheme, which focused on new products....

COMESA provided \$10,000 to two innovators to help them commercialize their innovations. Mohamed Gaber of Egypt received the prize during the COMESA anniversary celebrations on 28 November 2019. The innovations were identified under the COMESA Innovation Award Scheme, which focused on new products, new methods of production and new ways of improving technology.

The other recipient was Billy Munyenembe of Zambia who was awarded in absentia.

Mr. Gaber developed a trade platform known as African Gate (AFGT) intended to create value by exchanging goods

with the potential of re-exporting to new markets and thereby expand inter-African Trade.

"The major benefit of counter-trade is that it facilitates conservation of foreign currency, which is a prime consideration for cash-strapped nations and provides an alternative to traditional financing that may not be available in developing nations," said Mohamed.

A previous winner of the Innovation Award, Mr. Jacob Maina of Kenya, testified on how financial support from COMESA helped him set up a successful motor vehicle security company. He is now one of the 120 young African game-changers listed in Forbes Africa 2019, all under the age of 30.

Maina was invited by the Secretariat to demonstrate how, modest financial support to an innovative mind, which are plenty in the region, can propel young people to dizzying heights of success.

## COMESA and Partners Hold Successful Side Events at COP25

COMESA in partnership with the African Union Commission and other Regional Economic Communities (RECs) successfully hosted side events at the 2019 UN Climate Change Meetings also known as the 25th Conference of Parties (COP) to the Climate Change Convention to promote the continental agenda.

The first meeting was a technical side event to showcase Africa's efforts on resilience building. The meeting examined ongoing efforts and operational levels at continental and RECs, discussed best practices, challenges and opportunities for synergy and better programming of resilience interventions.

COMESA Climate Change Programme Advisor Dr Mclay Kanyangarara said the side event developed recommendations to strengthen resilience building. This includes increasing synergy among different stakeholders at regional level, inclusion of gender at all levels of resilience building, having more effective and sustained engagement with the communities, youths and women and long-term advocacy and policy development among others.

"While the world has recorded an average temperature increase of 1 degree Celsius, Africa as a continent has already experienced a 1.5-degree Celsius temperature increase over the same period, therefore we cannot down play the role of resilience," Dr Kanyangarara added.

The event was attended by more than 150 delegates from across the continent and beyond.

COMESA also participated in the Africa Climate Day side event which provided a platform for the continent's decision makers and other stakeholders to

engage in a dialogue that informs the region's course of action around climate change.

Ministers of Environment, Forestry and Climate Change from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Seychelles, Tunisia and South Africa attended this meeting. They reiterated the need for increased ambition and resource mobilization to transform African Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) into vehicles for development.

They also discussed effective means of implementation including finance, capacity building, technology development and transfer of the Paris Agreement and the implications for Africa as a continent.

The third and final engagement was the side event to take stock of African Member States NDC implementation and share experiences, best practices, opportunities and associated challenges. This was convened by COMESA and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the NDC Partnership and the East African Community (EAC). It was necessitated by the fact that many African countries are faced with developmental challenges such as limited access to markets, lack of competitiveness, fragile economic development, high poverty levels and limited availability of analytical and technical capacity.

The event allowed African countries to explore further opportunities for implementation and to provoke discussions among experts and stakeholders in development policy and practice on how opportunities in climate change can enhance Africa's transformative economic growth and development agenda.

The 25th Conference of Parties was held in Madrid, Spain from 2 to 13 December 2019 and an estimated 27,000 delegates from around the world attended. The conference provided the much-anticipated opportunity to finalize the 'Rulebook' of the Paris Agreement, which is the operating manual needed when the Agreement takes effect. It sets the rules for carbon markets and other forms of international cooperation under Article six of the agreement.

## 40th Intergovernmental Committee Meeting Held in Lusaka



A section of the heads of delegations and delegates attending the Intergovernmental Committee meeting.

The three days meeting was attended by Permanent/Principal Secretaries, ambassadors and technical experts from the 21 COMESA Member States.

Close to three hundred delegates converged in Lusaka to attend the 40th COMESA Intergovernmental Committee Meeting from 25- 27 November 2019. This is an annual forum for delegates from Member States to review the implementation of COMESA's regional integration programmes and the state of development in the region.

The three days meeting was attended by Permanent/Principal Secretaries, ambassadors and technical experts

from the 21 COMESA Member States. The meeting reviewed the COMESA budget for 2020 and work programme and human resources matters.

The meeting was held ahead of the celebrations to mark the 25th COMESA Anniversary.

To open the meeting was the Zambia Minister of Trade, Commerce and Industry Hon. Christopher Yaluma represented by Permanent Secretary Mr. Mushuma Mulenga. Delegates were also addressed by COMESA SG Chileshe Kapwepwe, the Head of the European Union Delegation to Zambia and Special Representative to COMESA, Ambassador Jacek Jankowski and heads of cooperating and development partners of COMESA.





# COMESA Forms Gender Technical Working Group

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Members of the Gender Technical Working Group

COMESA Secretariat established a Gender Technical Working Group in September 2019 to strengthen gender mainstreaming across all sectors of regional integration programming. To kick start this process, the officers drawn from all divisions, units and some COMESA institutions participated in a two-day workshop in Lusaka 24 - 25 September 2019.

Director of the Gender and Social Affairs Division Mrs. Beatrice Hamusonde said the technical working group was necessary as an accountability mechanism for gender.

"This move is important because of existing inequalities that impede inclusive and sustainable development. We are all aware that there are inequalities between men and women, girls and boys in many areas in our region," Mrs Hamusonde said.

According to findings by COMESA, there are several root causes and consequences of gender inequality in the region. Key among them is the fact that women still own far less of productive resources. For example,

in Kenya, only six percent of women hold title to land. In Malawi, only three percent of women are registered owners of commercial land while in Uganda, women own only 5% of the land.

Climate change is listed as having a greater impact on women as they are most reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods and have the least capacity to respond to natural hazards, such as droughts, landslides, floods and hurricanes. Other drivers of inequality include patriarchal norms that result in economic, legal, political and social discrimination against women and girls, reflected at individual, household, community and organizational levels and in the public areas.

Over the years, COMESA has made positive strides in the area of promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. Mrs Hamusonde revealed that the region has seen an increased level of political will and commitment to gender mainstreaming with the establishment of institutions such as the Gender Division, the Federation of National Associations of Women in Business in Eastern and Southern

Africa (FEMCOM) and now the Gender Technical Working Group.

The Secretariat has also introduced initiatives to improve capacity of staff through face to face and online training on gender. Member States have adopted reporting guidelines on gender and social development. In addition, the Secretariat has established a digital information and networking platform for women in business called the 50 Million African Women Speak.

**"The technical working group was necessary as an accountability mechanism for gender."**

-Mrs. Beatrice Hamusonde

# Secretariat Hosts Educational Visit



25

Students from Ndola Trust School based in the Copperbelt Province in Zambia on a study tour at the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka on 23 September 2019. Students' visits are part of COMESA's Corporate Social Responsibility initiative to raise awareness amongst young people on regional integration programmes. Assistant Secretary General (Programmes) Dr. Kipyego Cheluget (in blue shirt) welcomed and addressed the students.

## Great Lakes Project Visibility Programme Rolled Out

The GLTFP aims to support peace and stability in the region through programs to improve livelihoods in the border areas,....

COMESA Secretariat working with the Project Implementation Unit of the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project (GLTFP) rolled out publicity campaign in December 2019 to enhance visibility of the project in the beneficiary countries of DR Congo, Rwanda and Uganda.

The campaign involved community radio talk shows aimed at reducing the information gap between the small-scale cross border traders and the various government agencies operating at the implementing border points.

The radio campaign started running in Uganda's Mpondwe and Bunagana borders following a joint mission from COMESA Secretariat and officials from the Ministry of Trade in Uganda.

The team was led by GLTFP Procurement Expert Joyce Mutale accompanied by Senior Commercial Officer at the Ministry of Trade, industry and cooperatives in Uganda Daniel Ssekamwa, Regional Trade Information Desk Coordinator Mr Serge Musana and COMESA Communications Assistant Daniel Banda.

The awareness raising programmes are intended to facilitate cross-border trade by raising the awareness of traders and state agencies operating at the border points on the standards, rules and regulations that apply at border crossing

in order to facilitate cross border trade.

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. This is done by targeting some of the most vulnerable groups in the border regions of the DR Congo and neighbouring countries namely Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

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



# Sportsfest in the Countdown to COMESA @25 Anniversary

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COMESA Football team with the Zambia Minister of Sports Hon. Emmanuel Mulenga (green jersey) and Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe (white polo shirt) after winning the Silver Jubilee Anniversary cup.

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"The power of football is not only in its entertainment value, but its ability to unite everyone..."

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COMESA Secretariat held a sports festival on 22nd and 23rd November 2019 as 120 golfers and 16 football teams participated in the COMESA @25 sports activities in the countdown to the regional bloc's Silver Jubilee Anniversary, held on Thursday, November 28, 2019.

Golf was first with 120 players taking to the greens at Bonanza Golf Course to participate in the COMESA 25th Anniversary Golf tournament, an event that attracted a high turnout of players from the international and business community, diplomatic corps, government, academia and individual golfers. The Trade and Development Bank (TDB), a COMESA institution was the event's key sponsor.

The golf tournament was the first event of the COMESA Week constituting build-up activities leading to the main celebration of the COMESA Day.

On Saturday 23rd November, a nascent COMESA football team conquered 16 teams to lift the trophy in a daylong contest where it overcame Zambia Revenue Authority 4 – 2 in the final. The football competition was organized by COMESA and Barclays Bank of Zambia.

Zambia Minister of Sports Hon. Emmanuel Mulenga was the chief guest. He urged COMESA to make the football competition an annual event going by the interest the commemorative event had attracted. He said COMESA's choice of football to celebrate its anniversary was spot-on given the uniting power of the sport.

"The power of football is not only in its entertainment value, but its ability to unite everyone. When it comes to football, everybody speaks the same language. There is no language, class, social or cultural barriers in football," the minister said.

Zambia's Minister of Justice Hon. Given Lubinda was the chief guest at the golf event. He said COMESA sets the pace for the entire continent and now provides the strongest building block for the integration of the African continent.

"We are celebrating an organization and its stable of institutions that have outgrown the vision of the founding fathers; that of integrating the eastern and southern African region," the Minister said.

The immediate former Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Mr. Erastus Mwencha, who is also former Secretary General of COMESA, was part of the first coterie to tee off the tournament. Mr. Mwencha stated that the growth path of COMESA from PTA was motivating given that the organization started with very few members but is now the leading regional bloc in Africa with 21 Member States.

Other corporate sponsors of the golf tournament were the Yellow Card (a COMESA motor vehicle insurance scheme), Black Dot, Atlas Mara, Liquid Telecoms and Ethiopian Airlines among others.



Former COMESA Secretary General, Erastus Mwencha tees-off at the COMESA @25 anniversary Golf tournament Assistant Secretary General Dr Kipyego Cheluget scores during the football curtain raiser





Representatives of the Cancer Diseases Hospital receives \$10, 000 cheque

As part of its 25th anniversary Corporate Social Responsibility, COMESA provided \$10,000 to the Children's Ward at the Cancer Disease Hospital in Lusaka, Zambia. The funds were raised by staff and corporate sponsorship of the COMESA @25 sports tournaments.



2015 winner of COMESA Innovation Award  
Jacob Maina addressing the Gala



Innovation award winner Mohamed Gaber of Egypt receives  
\$10,000

## Long serving staff recognized



Minister of Industry and Trade, Madagascar, also the chair of the COMESA Council of Ministers Hon. Lantsoa Rakotomalala (L) presents a gift to retiring staff Timothy and Gervais Nkanangu, former COMESA Liaison Officer in EU



# Egypt Domesticates COMESA Seed Regulations

Egypt is the eighth COMESA Member State to domesticate the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonisation Regulations. This follows the signing of a Gazette notice by Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation Prof. Dr. Ezaladin Abusteit.

Egypt now joins Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, which have completely aligned their national seed regulations or laws with the regional Seed Trade Harmonisation Regulations.

COMESA Seed Development Expert at the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) Dr John Mukuka said the gazetting followed the validation of the draft COMESA Aligned National Seeds Laws of Egypt by stakeholders earlier in 2019.

Subsequently, Hytech-seed Company of Egypt has registered six varieties on the COMESA Variety catalogue. These are: two medium maturing maize varieties of Hytec 203, 2055, late maturing maize varieties of 1100 and 2031 and late sorghum varieties of Horus and Mabrouk.

Five other Member States namely Djibouti, Eritrea, DR Congo, Ethiopia, and Eswatini are advancing steadily in domesticating the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonisation Regulations. They have developed draft COMESA aligned national seed laws / regulations awaiting official gazetting at national level.

The remaining eight countries Comoros, Madagascar, Libya, Mauritius, Tunisia, Somalia, Seychelles and Sudan are yet to align and domesticate the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonisation Regulations.

The development of the COMESA Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP) was aimed at expediting the implementation of the harmonized regional seed regulations to enhance seed production, reliability, seed trade including increasing the competitiveness of the seed industry in the Southern and East African Region.

# Statistical Team from Somalia Visits Secretariat



Visiting Somali statistics experts Mr. Ahmed Ismail and Mahdi Abdikarim (R) with COMESA SG (middle), COMESA Head of Statistics Mr. Themba Munalula (L) and Executive Support Officer Ms. Maluba Sinyambo (2nd Left)

COMESA Secretariat is assisting Somalia build its national capacity to respond to regional statistical demands.

A combined team of the Somali Directorate of National Statistics and the Central Bank of Somalia visited the Secretariat in November 2019 to learn more about the COMESA Statistics Strategy and give an update on the Somali Statistical System.

The engagement of these key stakeholders of the Somali statistical system was an important component of the process of Somalia's integration into the COMESA community.

Mr. Ahmed Hassan Ismail, Director responsible for statistical production in the Directorate of National Statistics and Mr. Mahdi Abdikarim, Director of Economic Research and Statistics at

the Central Bank of Somalia represented their respective institutions.

Besides the consultations with the COMESA Statistics Department, the team was also briefed on COMESA programs by the Divisions of Trade, Customs, Legal and Institutional Affairs, Gender and Social Affairs, Industry and Agriculture, Strategic Planning Unit and the Governance, Peace and Security Unit.

COMESA Secretariat is assisting Somalia build its national capacity to respond to regional statistical demands.

Statistics as elaborated in Article 40 of the COMESA Treaty are key to monitoring the developments of the COMESA Market. As a new Member State, the COMESA Treaty provisions expect Somalia to cooperate in the provision of statistics that are aggregated to provide a comprehensive regional picture.

# Cassava Cluster Project Transforming Lives in Kenya

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**Market opportunities for farmers and processors include cassava flour as a replacement for wheat flour, cassava starch as a raw material for food..**  
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The demand for cassava in the international market has over the years been rising and the need for efficient markets and a better coordinated cassava value chain among cassava producers and processors has become even more important.

It is estimated that the current potential market for starch is 66 million tonnes thus providing opportunities for cassava producing countries in COMESA region to exploit. This has inspired the COMESA Federation of National Associations of Women in Business in Eastern and Southern Africa also known as FEMCOM, to pilot cassava cluster projects in selected Member States.

The pilot programme is implemented in 10 COMESA cassava growing countries namely Burundi, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Madagascar, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The objective is to enhance the competitiveness of cassava MSMEs by building their capacity for integration in intra-regional trade.

One of the success stories is the, Tangakona Commercial Village Cassava Cluster initiative in Kenya's Busia County. The cluster received funding



from COMESA through the Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM) in 2015. Since then, it has managed to grow its business and now supplies value added cassava products across the country.

In October 2019, COMESA/FEMCOM and Farm Concern team conducted a monitoring and documentation visit to the Cassava Clusters in Busia. The team found that farmers have now registered their value-added products with the Kenya Bureau of Standards. Hence, the new product meets the required quality standards for the national and regional markets.

The Tangakona Cassava Cluster supplies over 10,000 tons of Cassava chips per month to Trufoods an agricultural company based in Nairobi. This has helped them expand their production of Cassava allowing them to build a new structure accommodating their offices.

On her maiden tour of the Cluster, FEMCOM Chief Executive Officer Ruth Negash expressed satisfaction with the success of the cluster.

"You can see for yourselves that if we empower the businesses of cassava farmers through capacity building on commercialization of small holder enterprises, major results can be in creating jobs and reducing poverty in the region," she said.

In 2016, Kenya produced approximately 600,000 metric tons of cassava.

Market opportunities for farmers and processors include cassava flour as a replacement for wheat flour, cassava starch as a raw material for food and non-food industries and cassava chips for domestic livestock feed sector and export.





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