COMESA NEWS

COMESA Virtual University

Programme Kicks-off

Research Forum Spawns Innovations Galore

Vol.3/19’

Editorial

Forum for Harnessing Research and Innovation

The annual COMESA Research Forum was conducted this year and again, and it did not disappoint. This is one event that seasoned and budding scholars and Think tanks look forward to. It provides them a platform for stimulating intellectual discourse. It's a no-holds-barred debate where research papers are critically examined and free expression reigns. From these research forums, six so far recommendations that have far reaching implications on policymaking emerged.

Since the forums began, decisions made by COMESA have been fortified with evidence harnessed from the studies conducted. The 2019 forum was different in a thrilling way as it marked the return of the COMESA Innovation Awards. This award was last conducted in 2015. The award Seek to recognize young innovators that have come up with new products, new methods of production and new ways of improving technology. Also included in the criteria of innovations were new ways of doing business, conquest of new sources of supply of raw materials and implementation of a new form of commercialization among others. The main target groups were small and medium enterprises, youth and women. However, innovation concepts were open to all innovators. Five new innovative products on science and technology were presented. They ranged from energy conservation, barter trade, agriculture, transport and medical fields.

Once again, the forum demonstrated that the region is not short of innovative brains, but what lacks are incentives to harness this potential for social economic development.

Mwangi G

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COMESA Virtual University
Programme Kicks-off

The first steps to establish the COMESA University of Regional Integration begun in September this year with the launch of a virtual Masters Degree programme at the Kenyatta University of Kenya.

The Master of Regional Integration (MRI) programme is designed for government officials working in divisions or units dealing with trade, integration and cooperation issues; students intending to work as trade officers, trade policy analyst, advisers, researchers, trade attaches, and private sector trade practitioners among others.

Kenyatta University was selected to host the programme owing to its advanced e-Learning facilities and will collaborate with other 22 universities in other COMESA Member States, which have been involved in the design of the project. COMESA has also secured EUR 60,000 for annual scholarships for the programme from the European Union through Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP Group) under the TradeCom II Capacity Building Programme.

Addressing the 6th COMESA Annual Research Forum in Nairobi in September 2019, the Chairman, Department of Applied Economics, Kenyatta University, Dr. Samuel Muthoga, said the commencement of the programme followed approval by the Commission of University Education in Kenya.

"The MRI programme will be offered during the first semester of 2019-2020 academic year in collaboration with the School of Virtual and Open Learning of Kenyatta University. About 30 students have so far applied for the programme," Dr Muthoga said.

L-R: Senior Research Fellow, Benedict Musengele, Trade Expert Dr Dr Seth Gor and Finance Director Clement Kanyama

Senior Research Fellow at COMESA, Mr. Benedict Musengele told the delegates that besides Kenyatta University, COMESA has signed Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Mauritius; the Open University of Mauritius; l'Institut Supérieur de Gestion des Entreprise (ISGE) of Burundi; and the University of Zimbabwe to begin offering the programme.

Kenyatta University advertised for students' admission to the programme in September 2019. Open University of Mauritius and University of Mauritius will advertise for January intake while University of Zambia is at advanced stage of signing the MoU.

Mr. Musengele explained: "The programme shall be offered by Course Work and Dissertation over the duration of two years. It consists of 10 compulsory and five elective courses. Examinations will be conducted at Kenyatta University campuses, in the Embassies and COMESA Secretariat offices."

The launch of COMESA Virtual University was approved in October 2016 during the 19th COMESA Heads of State Summit held in Madagascar. The objective was to inculcate the dimension of regional integration in learning in higher institutions. Later, an MoU was developed to provide the framework for collaboration with the participating universities.

The rationale for establishing the Masters programme was to build the capacity of member States to address the slow progress of regional integration in the COMESA region. Under this programme, the inability of member countries to implement the numerous Protocols, Decisions and Acts due to the apparent lack of institutional and human capital and related support mechanisms will be addressed.

Professor Nelson Wawire, who has been coordinating the launch of the programme at the Kenyatta University, said preparations are underway between COMESA Secretariat and Kenyatta University to officially launch the programme.

New Measures to Harness Regional Livestock Trade

Regional trade in live animals, meat and meat products are set to rise following a raft of new measures being put in place by COMESA and livestock exporting and importing countries. These measures include: regional live animal grading standard, linking enterprises in exporting and importing countries and sharing experiences on livestock value addition and export capacities.

The first meeting to discuss the modalities of implementing these measures was conducted in Ethiopia, on 23-25 July 2019r and brought together key players in the livestock trade including public, academic and private sectors from livestock producing countries such as Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda and Zambia and importing countries; the D R Congo, Egypt and Seychelles.

Ethiopia's State Minister in charge of inputs and products marketing, H.E Mrs Ayinalem Nigusie, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Secretary General (SG) of COMESA Chileshe Kapwepwe addressed the delegates.

In a statement presented by Chief of Strategic Planning at COMESA Secretariat, Mr Simal Amor, the SG said the development of a harmonized grading and classification system for livestock in the COMESA region will guide and catalyze the marketing of beef animals, sheep and goats across the region.

> **"A uniform regional grading system will create opportunities for importers to make orders based on the common specification of grades and, for exporters to aggregate and supply the orders based on similar specifications,"**

"A uniform regional grading system will create opportunities for importers to make orders based on the common specification of grades and, for exporters to aggregate and supply the orders based on similar specifications," she said: "This will enhance confidence among traders, provide value for money for both producers and buyers, and other actors, stimulate improved animal husbandry and overall growth of the sector."

She noted that the current dynamics in the world economy, increasing investments in the livestock sector, high and rising demand, and consumer preferences for animal source foods provide opportunities for increased trade in livestock and livestock products among others.

Stakeholders in livestock trade have often cited the lack of market information and linkages among enterprises in importing and exporting countries, as a major hindrance to trade. Thus, the project interventions present an opportunity to establish a regional market information system and catalogue of enterprises that can inform trade decision making even at a distance.

Among the issues that also featured in the workshop was livestock production and the challenges impacting trade. Speakers observed that the region has many similarities in almost all areas of animal production and trade, hence member States need to develop pragmatic terms of trade in line with the specificities of the regional context rather than embracing unrealistic measures that may not add value to their collective wellbeing.

Participants who included representatives from the International Livestock Research Institute Addis Ababa and Nairobi campuses, later visited Allana foods; an ultra-modern abattoir and meat processing complex located in Ethiopia's livestock rich Adami Tulu district in Oromia State.

The High Level Presidential Dialogue

Kenya Hosts the First COMESA High Level Business Dialogue

The implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA), integration of Small and Medium Enterprises in the regional and global supply chains, elimination of trade barriers and promotion of digital and financial inclusiveness for enterprises were among the key highlights of the first COMESA Source 21 High Level Dialogue that took place in July 2019, in Kenya.

The events were joint initiatives of the COMESA Business Council (CBC), the Government of Kenya, the Kenya Association of Manufacturers, the private sector and the COMESA Secretariat. Heads of State, hundreds of business people, investment seekers and a wide array of experts on regional trade attended.

The Presidential Roundtable provided a unique platform for regional Heads of State to share their best practices and knowledge and to address critical issues for agriculture and manufacturing sectors against emerging concepts of digitalization and strategies for spearheading regional and continental integration

For businesses, the event was an opportunity to promote engagement on new markets, potential business partnerships through showcasing and sampling of new products from the region. The aim was to promote and encourage more consumption of quality African products in the regional markets.

Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta who opened the forum, emphasized the importance of digitizing African economies saying it will improve transparency and accountability.

"The business community eagerly await the benefits of trade that will come not only with expanded markets but with the opportunities for rapid development and access to innovation and technology," he said in the company of fellow Heads of State; Presidents Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), Edgar Lungu, (Zambia), and Acting President of Mauritius Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory.

"If we want to integrate the continent, we have to be at the same level with regard to our digitization so that the process that we are using in Kenya has interconnectivity with the processes that are being used in Uganda, in Zambia, in Mauritius and elsewhere," President Kenyatta said.

President Museveni decried the fragmented markets which he observed were too small to have meaningful economic impact and called for their integration. These, he said were major bottlenecks that undermine the continent's efforts to move out of the poverty trap.

"If we want to integrate the continent, we have to be at the same level with regard to our digitization so that the process that we are using in Kenya has interconnectivity with the processes that are being used in Uganda, in Zambia, in Mauritius and elsewhere," President Kenyatta said.

President Lungu said African governments must demonstrate political will to support SMEs for them to benefit from the AfCFTA. He said governments need to promote and identify SMEs ahead of the full establishment of the AfCFTA otherwise only the big companies will benefit.

"As a region, we must help SMEs fit in the bigger picture," President Lungu said.

President Vyapoory spoke of the need to provide incentives to small and medium enterprises by implementing favourable policies and setting up special funds to support them.

Secretary General of COMESA Chileshe Kapwepwe spoke of the critical need for digitization of commerce through electronic trade which will eliminate paperwork that constitutes a major impediment to intra-COMESA trade.

Dr Mukhisa Kituyi, the Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development said COMESA was placed to lead the continental trade integration as it had many successful institutions. He said the region needs to give preference to 'Made in Africa' and COMESA to promote locally produced goods.

He said this will clear the path for Africa's products to access regional and world markets.

FEMCOM to Refurbish Cassava Cluster in Zambia

The Federation of National Associations of Women in Business (FEMCOM) will provide a USD 12,000 support towards the refurbishment of the Kanakantapa Cassava Cluster initiative in Zambia. The funds will go towards the purchase of new cassava processing equipment, reinstallation of new water reticulation facilities and general maintenance of the facility.

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

During her maiden mission to Zambia, in August, the new Chief Executive of FEMCOM, Ms Ruth Negash visited the project site. She said over 500 kilograms of cassava starch was earmarked for production per day compared to the previous output of 50 Kilograms per day.

The funding would be disbursed before the end of August 2019.

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

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

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

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

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

Ethiopia, Uganda **Financial Intelligence Units Join Egmont Group**

Countries' now able to exchange intelligence on financial crimes

Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) of two COMESA Member States, Ethiopia and Uganda, were among those recently admitted to the Egmont Group, a global financial network that formulates coordinated policies and responses to financial crimes such as money laundering and terrorism financing.

Their admission alongside the Dominican Republic, Palestine, Papua New Guinea and Turkmenistan was a key highlight of the 26th Plenary of the Egmont Group of FIUs held at the Hague, Netherlands, 1st – 5th July. This brought the membership of the Egmont Group to 164 FIUs.

The processes leading to the attainment of the standards required for a Financial Intelligence Unit to gain membership to the Egmont Group are long and can take many years. It requires among other things, that the country has enacted sound laws and legislation as guided by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

FAFT is the intergovernmental body that sets standards, develops and promotes policies to combat money laundering and terrorism financing. It has so far developed a set of 40 rules to provide measures against money laundering

File Photo: Financial intelligence analysts from member states in a past meeting in Lusaka

given that the crime is transnational and the success in combatting it requires international cooperation.

Among these rules is a requirement for a country to establish a national center for receipt and analysis of suspicious transaction reports and other information relevant to money laundering and terrorism financing.

Following this development, the Head of Peace and Security programme in COMESA Ms. Elizabeth Mutunga said Ethiopia Financial Intelligence Center (FIC) and Uganda Financial Intelligence Authority will now benefit from among other things, the ability to exchange financial intelligence with other FIUs through a secured communication platform.

"Their personnel will also benefit from regular training by experts in the field as well as opportunities for personnel exchanges to enhance the effectiveness of the FIUs," Ms. Mutunga said.

She added: "Given the trans-national nature of money laundering, information exchange between jurisdictions is very important but because of the sensitive nature of the information, FIUs are only willing to exchange information with peers that are established within the international standards."

Considering the benefits that member States derive from membership to Egmont, as well as an assurance of sustainability of MASE capacity building efforts, COMESA has prioritized support to FIUs to join the group.

Mauritius FIU was the first COMESA Member State FIU to join the Egmont Group in 2003. Others include the FIU of Seychelles, which joined in 2013, Egypt Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Combatting Unit (2004), Malawi Financial Intelligence Unit (2009), Sudan Financial Information Unit (2017) and Zambia Financial Reporting Center (2018).

Mauritius, Seychelles and Zambia are beneficiary countries to COMESA Maritime Security (MASE) programme. They attained membership to the Egmont Group before commencement of COMESA MASE support.

COMESA facilitated Ethiopia FIC to improve its operations and its ICT systems and, sponsored study tours to other countries with well-developed systems. COMESA MASE is currently working with the Madagascar FIU (SAMIFIN) towards its successful application for Egmont Group membership.

"Their personnel will also benefit from regular training by experts in the field as well as opportunities for personnel exchanges to enhance the effectiveness of the FIUs," Ms. Mutunga said.

Future **EU Funding** to be Based on **Performance of Ongoing Programmes**

Ambassador Allesandro Mariani

"The future of EU's allocation of programs' financing will be determined by the rate of implementation of the current Eleventh European Development Fund programme," the former Head of European Delegation to Zambia and COMESA Ambassador Allesandro Mariani, said as he bid COMESA farewell in July this year.

Amb. Mariani however noted that the joint EU-COMESA team had done an excellent job in project preparation and the focus going forward would be on effective implementation.

"What remains now is implementation! implementation! implementation," Ambassador Mariani stressed.

To improve on programme performance, especially on the ongoing projects on trade facilitation and the Small-Scale Cross Border Trade, he said there will be no need to establish Project Management Units (PMU).

"A number of countries already have European Development Fund (EDF) national offices with the requisite skills to carry out project coordination thus avoiding duplication," he noted citing Zambia as an example.

He urged COMESA to re-launch the Development Partners Forum and have more frequent meetings to harmonize implementation of programmes and also to keep the European Union countries engaged.

Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe said COMESA will conduct an assessment to identify which countries have the capacity to manage the EU supported regional integration project without having to create separate PMUs. She thanked Amb. Mariani for deepening the COMESA - EU partnership, which made it possible to make great strides in the implementation of EU supported regional integration programmes.

The EU is the largest single financier for implementation of regional programmes in COMESA.

In the past one year, the EU has signed several financing agreements including a 10 million Euro programme for the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets under the 11th European Development Fund. This is in addition to another 85 million Euros to implement activities under Trade Facilitation and the Small-Scale Cross Border Trade.

"A number of countries already have European Development Fund (EDF) national offices with the requisite skills to carry out project coordination thus avoiding duplication," he noted citing Zambia as an example.

Stringent Intellectual Property Rights Impede Innovations in Trade

COMESA countries and policy makers should be cautious when it comes to instituting regulations which emphasize stringent Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). According to research findings presented at the 6th COMESA Annual Research Forum that took place in Nairobi, Kenya, 2 – 6 September 2019, strong IPR may harm research which leads to innovation in developing countries.

The research titled 'Intellectual Property Rights, Innovation and Trade in Developing Countries: Evidence from COMESA Countries' was conducted by Professor Albert Makochekanwa of the Department of Economics in the University of Zimbabwe. It found that countries in the region lacked enough motivations to spur innovations.

According to empirical research cited by Professor Makochekanwa, innovation activities are mainly driven by the possibility of increased profits and market share; the perceived demand for new products and processes and "technology-push" factors that are related to advancements in technology and science.

The study investigated the role of IPRs protection in innovations using 12 developing countries in COMESA for which data was available, covering the period 2012 to 2017. These are: Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Arising from the study Prof. Makochekanwa observed that regional countries did not meet the threshold for stringent IPR given their level of development. This is due to low level of technological development, high cost of research and development, and the competitiveness of the economy in the global marketplace.

During discussions, researchers at the Forum observed that developed economies, such as Japan and Germany, used flexible or relaxed IPR when they were developing after the World War. They only introduced stringent regulations after attaining higher levels of development.
Reacting to the presentation, COMESA Senior Research Fellow Mr. Benedict Musengele observed:

"Developing economies rely much on imitation of technologies as well as technology transfer for their innovations, economic growth and development,

In addition, political stability provides confidence to firms to easily engage in research and development which yields new ideas, products and processes even in the long run without fear of possible expropriation or loss due to potential risks emanating from political challenges.

The findings demonstrated that stronger IPRs protection overall discourages or negatively impact on innovations. In the case of COMESA, this finding provides evidence to the fact that IPR discourages innovation.

Given the level of development across the Member States, the researcher

which is hindered by stringent IPR. Most of the innovation in developing countries are by the small and medium enterprises which have no capacity to register and acquire licenses for the intellectual property rights, but they need to be nurtured to grow and become large enterprises."

Further, empirical evidence shows that robust economic activities and manufacturing production stimulates innovation while vibrant economic activity implies profitability, thus encouraging innovation activities by firms.

recommended that the regional countries and policy makers should consider relaxed, as opposed to stringent IPR regulations in the spirit of encouraging innovation activities and economic development in member countries.

Thirteen research papers were presented at the one-week research forum, under the theme: "Promoting Intra-COMESA Trade through Innovation". The implications of the research are presented to the COMESA policy organs and forms the basis for policy decision making.

Tunisia Prime Minister H.E. Yousef Chahed (middle) and Minister of Trade Mr. Omar Behi (R) meet COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe.

Number of Countries Participating in the COMESA FTA set to Rise

... as Tunisia prepares to join before end of the year

The number of countries participating in the COMESA Free Trade Area is set to rise as Tunisia prepares to join the trading regime by the end of 2019. Trade Minister Omar Behi told a visiting COMESA delegation that was in the country in mid-September 2019, that the government had established a thirty-member national technical committee on the implementation of the COMESA FTA. The committee was composed of experts from the public and the private sector.

Currently, 16 out 21 Members are participating in the COMESA FTA with others in various stages of joining the trade regime. Tunisia joined COMESA in July 2018, together with Somalia, bringing the number of Member States to 21. Since then, the country has embarked on a series of activities aimed at deepening its integration into COMESA programmes.

COMESA FTA provides participating countries with access to the larger regional market including the East African Community and the Southern African development Community (SADC) through the COMESA-EAC-SADC tripartite arrangement.

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COMESA delegation was led by Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe and also participated in a two-day National Workshop in Tunis on: The Implementation of the Regional Economic Integration Agenda.

The workshop brought together a cross section of officials from the public and private sectors. Its objective was to provide technical information to stakeholders in the country on the regional economic integration agenda, focusing on programme implementation and procedures for joining COMESA institutions.

Discussions centred on the implementation of the Free Trade Area, COMESA trade facilitation instruments, market access, the COMESA competition regime, the Regional Payment and Settlement System (REPSS) and the COMESA Standards and Quality Assurance (SQMT) programme. The COMESA Regional Investment Agency (RIA) the COMESA Competition Commission (CCC), COMESA Clearing House and the Federation of National Association of Women in Business in Business were part of the mission.

COMESA team held bilateral meetings with the Prime Minister H.E. Yousef Chahed, Ministers Mr. Omar Behi (Trade), Mr. Mohamed Ridha Chalghoum (Finance) Mr. Zied Laadhari (Investment) and the Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs Mr Sabri Bach Tobji.

Outcomes of the High-Level Business Dialogue

The COMESA High Level Business Dialogue dubbed SOURCE21 which was held in Kenya in July 2019 identified key areas to deepen regional trade. These are: promoting manufacturing competitiveness, curbing illicit trade, improving access to finance for businesses, bridging the digital gap and improving agriculture competitiveness.

The Dialogue involved a Presidential and Private Sector Roundtable that brought together Presidents Uhuru Kenyatta (Kenya) Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), Edgar Lungu (Zambia) and the Acting President of Mauritius Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory.

Also, in the panel were COMESA Secretary General Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe, UNCTAD Secretary General Dr Mukhisa Kituyi and Chair of the COMESA Business Council Marday Venkatasamy who presented the recommendations made.

The key messages from the Presidential Dialogue was the need to address bottlenecks to business competitiveness and dealing with the drivers of high cost of doing business such as infrastructure, transport and the high cost of printing money.

While advocating for education and skills development, the leaders also called for the promotion of local sourcing in Member States and the need to identify under -consumption and develop strategies to address it.

To accelerate the implementation of the AfCFTA, the leaders urged Member States to consider building upon the Rules of Origin and the negotiated tariffs from the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA). Promotion of market access for Made in Africa products was highly emphasized.

On promoting manufacturing competitiveness, several recommendations were agreed on among them the need to harmonize regulatory frameworks on standards including adopting equivalence measures within COMESA.

The meeting called on Member States

Kenya's Trade Minister Hon Peter Munya admires fabrics at the Source 21 Expo, flanked by COMESA SG Chileshe Kapwepwe (R) and Phyllis Wakiaga (L) Chief Executive of the Kenya Association of Manufacturers

to strengthen coordination and develop a regional strategy to address the illicit trade in the region. In particular, focus should be given to reinforcement of the cooperation between countries and law enforcement agencies.

The Dialogue also urged Member States to develop alternative affordable, specialized SME's financial mechanism or venture funds through partnerships with multilateral investments for improved SME's access to finance.

On bridging the Digitalization Gap, the key message was that countries should increase investment in road, rail, energy infrastructure to reduce the cost of doing business.

Speaking at the closing ceremony, Kenya's Principal Secretary for Trade, Dr Chris Kiptoo assured the participants that kenya would champion the implementation of the outcomes of the High-Level Dialogue.

An international trade fair that ran alongside the High- Level Dialogue for week provided business people from the 21 COMESA countries with networking opportunities.

COMESA Signs off Institutional Strengthening Report

Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe and USAID Chief of Party, Mr. Kap Kirwork signing the report on COMESA capacity assessment. The report covers the organizations performance assessment, identifies the gaps and recommends interventions. This is part of the USAID/Regional Inter-Governmental Organizations (RIGO) System Strengthening Activity. This Activity is providing organizational strengthening assistance to three Regional Economic Communities (REC) namely, the East African Community (EAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and selected sub-entities of those RIGOs to improve their performance, and in turn, provide economic growth and resilience.

Rwanda Takes **5th Position** in the List of **TFTA Ratification**

Minister for Trade and Industry, H.E Soraya Hakuziyaremye

Rwanda became the fifth country to ratify the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement (TFTA) in July 2019 when members of the Lower House of the Rwanda Parliament approved the draft law for the ratification of the agreement.

The Minister for Trade and Industry, Soraya Hakuziyaremye told the lawmakers that though the TFTA was officially launched by the Heads of State in Egypt in 2015, the ratification process had taken long due to prolonged negotiations on Rules of Origin and Tariff offers by the regional blocs.

She pointed out that the establishment of the free trade area would bolster intra-regional trade by creating a wider market, increasing investment flow, enhancing competitiveness and developing cross-regional infrastructure.

"This agreement rose from the need to establish an integrated market of 27 countries with a combined population of nearly 600 million people and a GDP of approximately US$1 trillion," she said

The TFTA was launched on 15 June 2015 in Egypt by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

"This agreement rose from the need to establish an integrated market of 27 countries with a combined population of nearly 600 million people and a GDP of approximately US$1 trillion," she said

The Tripartite Council of ministers of the three regional economic blocs had given member States up to April 2019 to sign and ratify the TFTA.

A total of 22 out of 28 countries in the tripartite bloc have signed the Agreement.

Over 90% of the work on Rules of Origin for the Tripartite has been completed, providing the basis for trade to begin. In addition, the legal texts have been concluded and adopted. Most of the Member/Partners States of the tripartite are already using the existing COMESA or SADC free trade area agreements.

Training Stakeholders to use new **COMESA Seed Certificates and Labels**

Following the launch of the COMESA regional seed certifications and labels early this year, COMESA has been conducting training on the electronic issuance and ordering of these documents since July 2019. National Seed Authorities (NSA) will be offering the certificates at the national level while seed companies will obtain them from COMESA.

The training and guidelines were part of the outcomes of a two-day sensitization meeting on the use of the certifications and labels. The meeting which took place July 23 – 25 in Lusaka, Zambia was attended by seed companies and NSAs from seven Member States: Burundi, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The launch of the COMESA seed labels and certificates is intended to boost regional seed trade in a region where only 20% of over 80 million small-holder farmers have access to quality and improved seed.

According to the Director of Agriculture and Industry in COMESA, Mr. Thierry Kalonji, lack of access to quality seeds

Participants at the COMESA Regional Seed Certifications and Labels meeting in Chaminuka, Lusaka.

is partly to blame for food insecurity and poor incomes for small-holder farmer house-holds across the COMESA region.

In a statement presented by COMESA Senior Private Sector Development Officer, Mr Innocent Makwiramiti, the Director said:

"The region has potential of total seed market of two million metric tonnes of quality and improved seed. However, it is currently producing less than 500,000 metric tonnes. This has affected about 130 million people out of 530 million."

He cited the main challenge in the region as the small national markets, with each country having its own policies and regulations, which is not only costly to the private sector but contributes to the delays before good quality seed reaches the small-scale farmer.

"Integrating these individual markets into one COMESA-wide market is a fundamental requirement for improved small-holder productivity as well as growth of the region's private sector operating in the seed industry," he said.

The development of seed labels and certificates is part of the implementation of the COMESA Seed Harmonization Implementation Plan (COMSHIP) aimed at facilitating regional seed trade. COMESA Agriculture Ministers endorsed the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonization Regulations in 2015 leading to the launch of the COMSHIP programme to expedite implementation both at national and regional level.

"Integrating these individual markets into one COMESA-wide market is a fundamental requirement for improved small-holder productivity as well as growth of the region's private sector operating in the seed industry," he said.

By July this year, the COMESA Seed programme had facilitated three stakeholders' meetings on seed certifications and labeling. The first and second meetings were conducted in February 2018 and April 2019. Their focus was to agree on modalities for production, printing and distribution of COMESA Regional Seed Certificates and labels.

The procurement of the Seed labels and Certificates has been fully sponsored by USAID through COMESA.

COMESA Institutions Target Lawyers in Publicity Drive

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

"We have the most expansive jurisdiction covering 21 countries in Africa, and the Court is required by circumstances, to sit in any of those countries," Ms. Mbatia said.

In a strategic step to raise awareness about their services, two COMESA institutions, the COMESA Court of Justice and the COMESA Competition Commission have been targeting key gathering of stakeholders' groups.

The latest is the Law Society of Kenya annual forum which is the largest gathering of Kenyan lawyers.

The event held in Mombasa, Kenya in August, attracted over 1,200 lawyers thus providing the best opportunity for the two COMESA institutions to publicize their programmes amongst a strategic target group.

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

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

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

At the conference, COMESA Court was specifically publicizing its digital evidence management system that was launched in February 2019 known as CaseLines. Under this system, lawyers can now file cases at the COMESA Court online thus cutting down on time and costs of manual practices.

Complex Dynamics

In her presentation to the lawyers, titled: Embracing technology – A case study of the COMESA Court, the Registrar said the need to go digital was informed by the complex dynamics of the regional court.

"We have the most expansive jurisdiction covering 21 countries in Africa, and the Court is required by circumstances, to sit in any of those countries," Ms. Mbatia said.

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

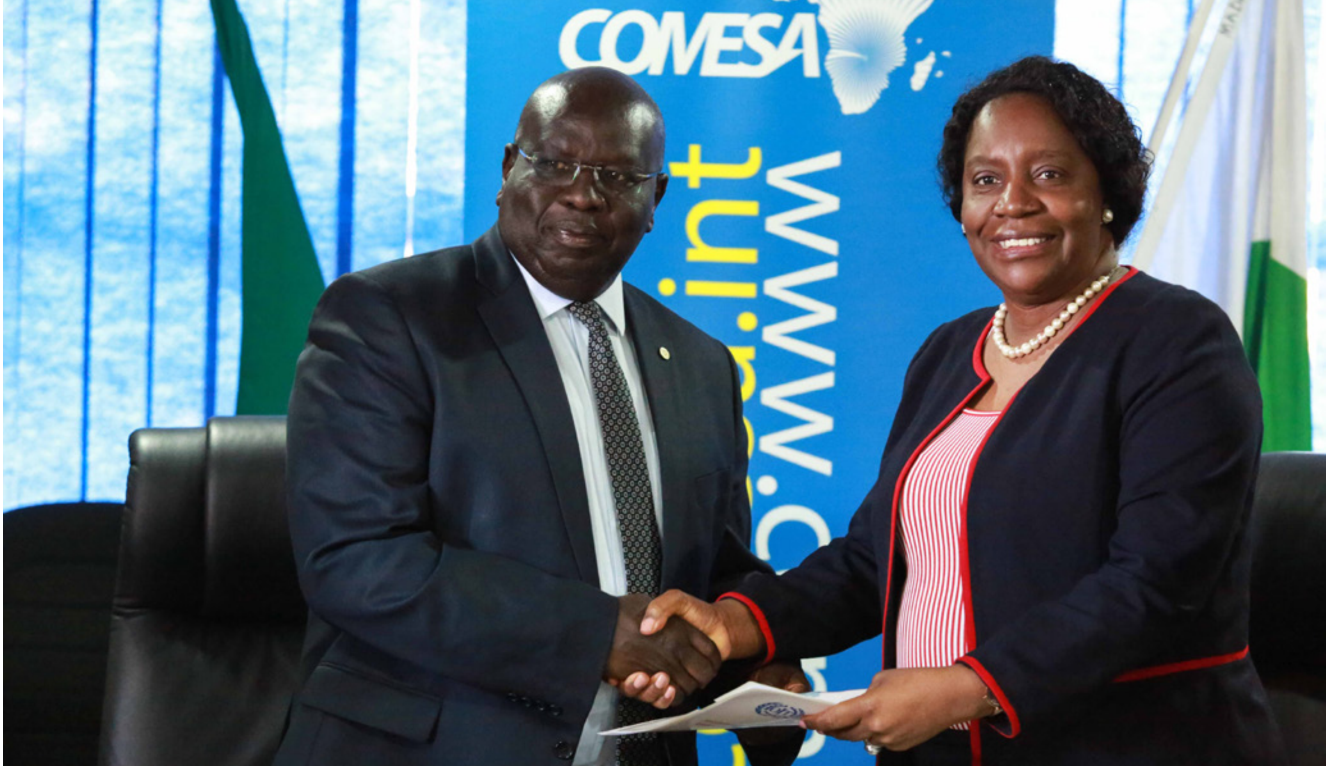
Mr. Danson Mungatana, a Commissioner of the COMESA Competition Commission said Kenya was one of the leading players in mergers and acquisitions in the COMESA region thus presenting lucrative opportunities for lawyers.

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

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

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

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



ILO Director Mr. George Okutho presenting the letter of credency to Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe

Programme to boost Labour Migration is Underway

COMESA is developing a Cross Regional Programme for Southern Africa to address irregular migration and promote regular labour mobility within the region. This is intended to spur regional trade and investment. A total of 20 million euros has been provided under the 11th European Union Development Fund, (EDF11) for this project. Among the issues to be addressed are matters relating to Mutual Recognition of Qualifications across the region.

Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe said this when she received the credentials of the incoming International Labour Organization Special Representative to COMESA Mr. George Okutho on 30 July 2019. Mr. Okutho is also ILO Country Director to Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique.

The SG said COMESA and ILO will work together on issues of Mutual Recognition of Qualifications among others, to facilitate trade in services in the region. This undertaking was also made by the ILO Director.

"We need to manage migration issues with very sober minds," Mr Okutho said.

"We need to manage migration issues with very sober minds," Mr Okutho said. "The issue of Mutual Recognition of Qualifications is very cardinal for migrant labour as most people are scared to move to other countries because they think their qualifications won't be recognized in another Member State."

Equal Opportunities

He said indicated that ILO will ensure all Member States come up with an agreed standard of qualification that shall be acceptable in the region so that equal opportunities are available to those that want to work outside their country.

In the last 20 years, trade in services has been the most dynamic segment of international trade, growing faster than trade in goods. Developing countries and transition economies have played an important role in this area, raising their share in the exports of world services from a quarter to one-third over this period.

"It would be very prudent to jointly identify additional programmes that we could implement together for the benefit of the entire COMESA through experience sharing," the SG noted. "COMESA is therefore keen on promoting trade in services among its Member States to increase the share of services in intra-COMESA trade."

Mr. Okutho said the collaboration with COMESA would enhance implementation of the programme on free movement of persons and goods as the only way of fulfilling regional integration initiatives which Member States ascribe to.

He stressed the need to address challenges that come up with movement of persons such as international organized crime, human trafficking and smuggling. He observed that the two organizations should benefit from the demographic dividends of migration for development.

Research Forum Spawns Innovations Galore

Billy Munyenyembe showcasing his innovation at the COMESA research forum

New innovative products that provides solutions to contemporary challenges, were the show-stoppers at the 6th COMESA Annual Research Forum that took place in Nairobi in September 2019. Five transformative innovations focusing on new products, new methods of production and new ways of improving technology were presented.

They included BRIISP Power System (BPS) a power system that sustains electric energy almost in its normal range despite being used. Developed by a young Zambian university student Billy Munyenyembe, the innovation has the potential to increase power access and reduce inconsistency of power supply.

Making his presentation at the Forum, Billy cited the acute power shortages facing African countries and particularly his country Zambia, which at the time faced power rationing of up to six hours a day, as one the factors that inspired him to come up with a solution.

Hw said, "Sufficient power is critical to meet the demand of local and eventually global market, youth em-powerment and massive job creation in the process, which will also contribute positively to the economic growth and poverty eradication in Zambia.

The other innovation presented at the Forum was African Gate (AFGT) by Giza Moto company of Egypt. AFGT is a trade platform intended to create value by exchanging goods with the potential of reexporting to new markets and thereby expanding intra African Trade.

AFGT will work as a Business to Business platform for commodities and products exchange through the Countertrade system between the Hub and the branch in each country. Counter-trade system provides a mechanism for countries with limited access to liquid funds to exchange goods and services with other nations.

Presenting the innovation, Mr. Mohamed Gaber said:

"The major benefit of countertrade is facilitating conservation of foreign currency, which is a prime consideration for cash-strapped nations and providing an alternative to traditional financing that may not be available in developing nations."

Other innovations presented were the M-Flock, an internet-based application that gives farmers access to information and essential services such as veterinary services, financial institutions, insurance companies and other livestock value chain players.

Presenting the system, Mr. Ancietos Mwansa from Zambia described the product as a comprehensive solution for livestock farmers to support enhanced production and also connect them to vital players in their agricultural ecosystem.

A carpooling system known as "Twende" developed by Mr. Ramah Madiba of Kenya was also presented. The platform was developed to provide means to connect drivers and passengers travelling in the same direction. Through car pooling, travel costs are reduced, efficiency enhanced and there is collective reduction of carbon footprint.

The other innovation was presented by a Zambian, Mr. Prince Malupande of Innovative Africa 360. Its objective is to create a market for creative innovations from various groups of individuals and start-ups in Africa. Currently, the company is promoting a Cholera preventer innovation that detects and prevents the bacteria that causes the disease.

Member States Discuss **Regional Climate Resilience Framework**

Experts in disaster management, mitigation and climate change in eastern and southern Africa want COMESA to finalize the regional climate resilience framework and hold a validation meeting with all Member States.

In a meeting conducted in Chisamba, Zambia, mid-July 2019, the experts, comprising of senior government officials representing 13 COMESA countries, pledged to work together to strengthen their policy and coordination mechanisms. This is in line with the COMESA Regional Climate Resilience Framework. They also agreed to use the framework as a guide to strengthen their national policies in handling issues brought about by climate change.

According to a status report presented at the meeting, most COMESA countries are vulnerable and face similar threats of climate change and droughts, flooding, industrial shocks, extreme rainfall and disease outbreaks, wars and civil unrest among others.

In view of this, COMESA Secretariat through the Climate Change Unit organized the two-day meeting with the officials from ministries responsible for planning, agriculture, environment, health, disaster management and mitigation to discuss the current status in the region and map the way forward.

Some of the topics covered in the meeting included: introduction to resilience and risk, the benefits/ dividends of resilience, insuring against risks, case studies from the African continent, the essentials of an effective early warning system, disaster preparedness, preventive and corrective response measures, policy requirements to promote resilience and financing resilience at the national level.

Key recommendations made included the need for COMESA to organize regional platforms for experience-sharing in preparedness for disasters (including Early Warning Systems) and success stories in mitigation disasters.

"COMESA should convene a pre-COP 25 meeting to prepare the region for effective participation in climate change negotiations especially in areas of climate change adaptation, loss and damage due to climate change," the delegates stated in their final report.

In addition, they requested for support to Member States to develop market-led resilience initiatives that are linked to Climate Smart Agriculture initiatives and weather index insurance.

Representatives from the African Union Commission (AUC), the East African Community (EAC), the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and ARC attended the meeting.

> ***"COMESA should convene a pre-COP 25 meeting to prepare the region for effective participation in climate change negotiations especially in areas of climate change adaptation, loss and damage due to climate change,"***
> *the delegated stated in their final report.*

Engaging Private Sector in Climate Financing

"We need to develop innovative financing strategies that will help us access the resources to deal with mitigation, resilience and adaptation of climate change...Unlocking this huge potential is the prime purpose of this gathering," he added

Delegates at the Green/Climate Financing Workshop in Harare, Zimbabwe

COMESA Secretariat is working with the African Union Commission (AUC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) regional office to assist Member States develop bankable climate smart projects that will attract financing from the private sector.

According to COMESA Climate Change Advisor Dr Mclay Kanyangarara, Member States have not benefited from the available finances meant to support adaptation, resilience and mitigation of climate change in the COMESA region and on the continent.

Speaking in Harare, Zimbabwe during the training workshop for Member States on Green/Climate Financing, Dr Kanyangarara attributed this to lack of awareness of the huge financial resources that are readily available from the developed world to assist Africa combat effects of and mitigation of climate change.

Dr Mclay Kanyangarara

The training took place on 1st and 2nd August 2019 and attracted experts in disaster management, mitigation, agriculture, planning, finance and representatives from the private sector. They deliberated on ways to strengthen Member States' capacities to access, manage and deliver national and international climate finance more effectively and the benefits of private sector engagement in climate action.

Dr Kanyangarara observed that most countries first need to build their capacities and know how to tap these resources and effectively implement the programmes.

"We need to develop innovative financing strategies that will help us access the resources to deal with mitigation, resilience and adaptation of climate change. Unlocking this huge potential is the prime purpose of this gathering," he added

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Zimbabwe's Minister of Lands Agriculture, Water, Climate and Rural Resettlement Rtd Hon. Chief Air Marshall Perence Shiri observed that Climate change mainstreaming in National Development Planning and Budget remained relatively low in most African countries due to other competing needs or limited awareness to the decision makers.

"...there is need to lobby our national governments to integrate climate action in development planning as well as budgeting processes to demonstrate country readiness to tackle climate change as well as attract international finances," Minister Shiri said.

Representatives from different African countries joined by the AUC, UNDP, African Development Bank (AfDB), Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA), the Commonwealth Secretariat (COMSEC) and the Infrastructure Development Bank of Zimbabwe participated in the training. Others were drawn from the National Designated Authorities for the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) focal persons from the AU Member States.

Hon. Lantosoa Rakotomalala (L) and COMESA SG signing the financing agreement in Geneva

Madagascar Receives 964,000 Euros

Madagascar will receive an additional 964,000 Euros to build its capacity to implement regional integration programmes. The funds are provided under the COMESA Adjustment Facility (CAF) funded by European Union under the 10th European Development Fund Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM).

Madagascar Minister of Industry Trade and Handicrafts, Hon. Lantosoa Rakotomalala and the Secretary General of COMESA Chileshe Kapwepwe signed the financing agreement in Geneva in July 2019, on the side-lines of the WTO Aid for Trade Global review forum. The new funding is an additional to earlier grants signed in 2015 amounting to slightly over one million Euros and the second one signed in 2018 amounting to over 370,000 Euros. This brings the total financing granted to Madagascar to over 2.3 million Euros under the COMESA Adjustment Facility.

At the same time, in Geneva, COMESA signed a contribution agreement of Euro 2.9 million with the ACP – EU under the TradeCom II Capacity Building Programme during a collective grant signing event at the World Trade Organization forum.

ACP Assistant Secretary General, Viwanou Gnassounou and COMESA Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe signed the agreement on behalf of the other organizations in the presence of the Director of Planet and Prosperity Development at the European Union Carla Montesi.

As a component of the TradeComm II Programme, the Grant is an inclusive, demand-driven facility that supports cooperative responses to the Programme's objectives and expected results. The Grant complements the demand-led support with longer-term and locally anchored institutional capacity building.

The funding will focus on, support to ACP trade institutions such as trade research and trade capacity building institutions, including academic institutions. It will encourage the establishment of both North-South-twinning for specialized providers of trade related activities from EU Member States in partnership with ACP beneficiaries and cooperation with international organizations.

COMESA also participated in a panel discussion dubbed ***"Promoting Regional Integration through MSME Value Chains"*** attended by various stakeholders from all over the world.

Panelists included, Permanent Secretary for Industry, Trade and Tourism, Malawi, Dr Ken Ndala , International Trade Centre Deputy Executive Secretary Dorothy Tembo and COMESA Secretary General. Others in the panel were the Executive Director, Africa Leather and Leather Products Institute, Prof. Mwinyikione Mwinyihija and Chief Executive, Southern Africa, Trade Development Bank, Gloria Mamba. COMESA Aid for Trade Unit, Coordinator, Mrs Hope Situmbeko moderated the discussion.

Tripartite Technical Teams in Full Steam as Ratifications Rise

As the COMESA, EAC, SADC region awaits the attainment of the required threshold on 14 Member/Partners States to ratify the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement, technical teams charged with the responsibility of preparing the ground for its implementation are in full throttle.

In July this year, the Tripartite Task Force (TTF) conducted a series of meetings for Technical Working Groups in Kenya, to facilitate development of working procedures, operational manuals and technical guidelines for the implementation of the TFTA Agreement.

These were: the 35 Meeting of the TTF on Development of Tripartite Capacity Building Strategy; the Meeting of Tripartite Experts on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS) / Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT); the First Meeting of Technical Working Group (TWG) on Trade in Services and the First Meeting of the TWG on Competition Policy

Among the key outputs of the meetings was the establishment of a Technical Working Group on Competition Policy, and development of its Terms of Reference to guide its work. The appointed team of experts commenced their tasks immediately and will, among other tasks, undertake a situational analysis on Competition and Consumer Protection Policies and Laws in Member/Partner States and RECs.

So far, 22 countries out of the 28 have signed the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement since its inception in June 2015. Five of the countries; Egypt, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa and recently, Rwanda have ratified the Agreement.

The Director of Trade and Customs, Dr Francis Mangeni, who led the COMESA team, described the outputs of the meetings as ground-breaking:

"In particular on Competition Policy, we have produced in one seating a comprehensive zero draft for consultations and text-based negotiations. This has put the process on a good trajectory," Dr Mangeni said.

The working group on Tripartite Capacity Building Strategy commenced the development of an institutional framework to implement the Tripartite Programmes and also finalized the First Draft Tripartite Capacity Building Strategy.

"The draft has been circulated to the Tripartite RECs for comments and is due for finalization in the margins of the upcoming Tripartite Meetings in August in Zanzibar," the report of the meetings stated.

Experts dealing with the Tripartite TBT/SPS considered the existing tools in each Regional Economic Community (EAC/COMESA/SADC) with a view to establishing and escalating regional metrology, conformity assessment, accreditation, health and food safety infrastructure to the tripartite level.

The meeting proposed additional tool to guide the Ninth Meeting of the TWG on TBT/SPS and NTBs, planned in Zanzibar.

The Technical Working Group on Trade in Services was also established and its Terms of Reference and Roadmap to guide its work developed. This team will lead negotiations that will eventually create a single services market for the Tripartite RECs of COMESA, EAC and SADC.

Joint Project for Youth Participation in Governance to be Launched

In partnership with COMESA the African Governance Architecture (AGA) Secretariat of the African Union Commission (AUC), will launch a joint project to enhance youth participation in democratic processes and socio-economic development in Africa.

The project will strengthen the participation of youths in democratic governance and socio-economic development in Africa in line with aspiration six of Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

COMESA and the AUC-AGA engaged the Swedish Development Corporation (SDC) to solicit support for funding a Project on Youth Participation in Democratic Processes and Socio-Economic Development in Africa. The SDC agreed to support the initiative and the different phases of the project development processes have already been completed.

Director of Gender and Social Affairs Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde, who represented COMESA in the first planning workshop hosted at the AU in Addis Ababa, in August, said the project would greatly help young people get involved in governance issues.

"We are cognizant of the fact that Africa has the youngest population globally with approximately 65% of its population aged below 35 years," she noted.

AGA acting Deputy Director Ms. Rizzan Nassum appealed to COMESA and AUC to actively implement the recommendations made during the planning workshop so that the project could be launched soon.

COMESA was chosen as the first pilot Regional Economic Community (REC) of the project in recognition of the close nexus between democratic governance and socio-economic development in Africa as stipulated in the COMESA Strategic Programme on youth.

In view of this, technical officers from COMESA and AGA Secretariat met at the AUC in December 2018 and developed the detailed project proposal that was submitted to the SDC for approval. So far, COMESA and SDC have signed the contract and funds to implement activities for the first year have already been transferred.

Coming Soon: New Capacity Building Programme for COMESA Secretariat

(L-R) Mr. Giancluca Azzon and Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe

COMESA and the European Union Commission will launch a Euro 7 Million programme to build the institutional capacity of COMESA. The programme will be funded under the 11 EDF COMESA Sub envelope with the overall objective to enhance the capacity of the COMESA Secretariat and its Member States to deepen regional integration.

To prepare for the programme, a validation workshop was conducted at the Secretariat in Lusaka on 23 August 2019 which brought together management and professional staff of COMESA to discuss and validate the action document. Discussions were led by the Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Zambia and COMESA Mr. Giancluca Azzon and Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe.

The project will address organizational challenges and constraints that COMESA faces which have contributed to the reduction of effectiveness and efficiency of the Secretariat to deliver its mandate. It will support enhancement of key identified areas which include management, monitoring and evaluation process, procurement systems, financial management and audit processes.

The programme will also provide support to implement the Statistics Strategy to support the development of statistical data on infrastructure, industrialization and ensure harmonization of gender statistics and ability to measure progress towards the attainment of targets on gender equality and empowerment of women.

Further it will provide support to ensure COMESA communicates and makes visible its achievements. Under this initiative, the programme is expected to support the creation of ICT platforms to enhance effective communication between the Secretariat and stakeholders both internally and externally.

Linked to this, COMESA also needs to strengthen partnership through structured engagements with relevant stakeholders including at the level of donor coordination, networking with other organizations to exchange knowledge and skills, good practices and progress towards the achievement of common goals and commitments.

Capacity Building Strategy for TFTA Developed

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

The strategy aims at providing a mechanism for coordinating Tripartite capacity building initiatives, develop and promote utilization of networks of expertise and enhance the capacity of regional training institutions to support the implementation of the Tripartite programmes.

Tripartite Capacity Building Programme (TCBP) Programme Coordinator Dr Seth Gor said in a report of the Tripartite Task Force meeting in Zanzibar, that the strategy will also provide a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation.

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

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

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

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

Egypt Keen to Share **Energy Development Experiences** with COMESA

Participants from COMESA Member States and course instructors on training in Egypt.

Egypt is keen to share its experiences in the implementation of energy projects with other COMESA Member States to address the energy deficit in the region. The country is working with the COMESA Secretariat towards this initiative.

In August 2019, Egypt and COMESA Secretariat organized a one-week training in Cairo that was attended by delegates from 12 Member States focusing on Policy, Financing and Implementation of Energy Projects. Djibouti, DR Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe participated.

Among the topics covered were: renewable energy strategies; investment environment in renewable energy; financing methods and lending agreements and procurement; renewable energy independent power producers among others.

The Minister of Electricity and Renewable Energy of Egypt, Dr Mohamed Shaker, told the Secretariat team, that Egypt now has excess generation capacity following massive investments since 2014.

> "As a result of these investments, Egypt now has excess generation capacity," he said

"Egypt had been experiencing frequent power cuts due to lack of supply of natural gas in 2014. Therefore, we had to connect 3,600MW to the grid in a record time of 8 ½ Months," the Minister said adding that by June 2015, Egypt did not have any more power cuts attributed to lack of generation capacity.

He further said that his government had also signed a deal with Siemens to provide 4,800MW combined cycle power plants which were also delivered in record two and half years instead of the normal 5-6-year period.

"As a result of these investments, Egypt now has excess generation capacity," he said adding that with an electricity generation capacity of over 55,000MW, Egypt has the largest installed electricity generation capacity in the COMESA region.

With regards to renewable energy, the Minister informed the team that his country had 6.6 GW installed capacity by mid-2019 and planned to reach 20% of generation capacity by 2022.

The country has also signed a deal with Russia for the construction of a 4800MW nuclear power plant. The first reactor is expected to be operational by 2026.

"Egypt is working on upgrading the transmission network to 500KV and a number of inter-connectors with a view of being hub of power trading and conduit to Europe," he said. "Egypt is ready to prepare training on specific subjects to deepen African cooperation."

Thanking the government of Egypt for providing the training, Director of Infrastructure in COMESA, Mr Jean Baptiste Mutabazi, said the region had a huge energy deficit and there was need for Member States to address this matter.

"Generation and distribution of energy could be extended to the private sector, while transmission is left to governments. The missing link was in installing inter-connectors." he said.

The training also provided an opportunity of sharing experiences from the Member States present as well as field visits to the Kuraymat Solar Thermal Power Plant, and the Mokatam Training Centre.

For the trainings to be more effective, participants recommended the creation of a critical mass of COMESA energy experts to help in wider dissemination of knowledge to the region.

Egypt Welcomes
50 Million African Women Speak Networking Platform

Egyptian Minister of Trade and Industry HE Amr Nassar (2nd right) flanked by Director for Gender and Social Affairs Mrs. Hamusonde (2nd left) and FEMCOM CEO Mrs. Ruth Negash (right) and 50MAWSP Project Manager David Sabiti

Egypt became the latest country to formally commence the implementation of the 50 Million African Women Speak Project (50MAWSP) on 21 August 2019, joining over 30 other States across the continent on an initiative to empower women entrepreneurs through a digital networking platform.

The launch of the 50 Million African Women Speak Project in Egypt took place in Cairo.

The project aims at supporting African women in business through a platform, which will provide easier access to information on financial and non-financial services, and in turn help women entrepreneurs grow their businesses.

Presiding over the launch, the Board Chair of the Egyptian Women Council Amb. Mona Omar lauded the transformative potential of the project.

“Let me point out that the project has the potential to transform the role of women entrepreneurs in Egypt and Africa at large,” Amb. Omar said.

“We all agree that women play a critical role in the social economic development of our economies despite the numerous challenges, some gender specific, that they encounter,” she added, and explained that the 50 Million African Women Speak digital platform will be one way to overcome these challenges.

Studies have shown that Africa has a thriving start-up community with dynamic women entrepreneurs targeting new opportunities in sectors such as agriculture. One study has shown that Egyptian women account for at least 10% of all micro and small enterprises in the country. In addition, the African Economic Outlook 2017 also revealed that women in Africa are twice more likely to start a business than women elsewhere in the world.

“Let me point out that the project has the potential to transform the role of women entrepreneurs in Egypt and Africa at large,” Amb. Omar said.

The COMESA Director for Gender and Social Affairs Mrs. Beatrice Hamusonde who led the COMESA delegation at the launch, explained that the platform development was complete. The next step was to update it with content for the benefit of women entrepreneurs in the countries where it will be operational.

“Women entrepreneurs in Egypt and the region will use the platform to access information and linkages to business services, training and market opportunities,” Mrs. Hamusonde stated.

In a brief courtesy call, which preceded the official launch, Egyptian Minister of Trade and Industry HE Amr Nassar affirmed his country’s commitment to the Project, stating:

“I am a strong believer in the use of digital platforms to empower women.”

When complete, the platform aims at connecting at least 50 million women across the African continent, providing information to help them grow their businesses as well as giving them opportunities to connect through a variety of networking features.

The launch of the project implementation team in Egypt is the second such activity in the COMESA Member States this year. A similar launch was done in Eritrea at the end of June. Similar launches are in the pipeline for Libya and Tunisia.

Renewable Energy Strategy Validated

> The challenges in our energy networks, as well as ever increasing deficiencies in energy supply are a common feature of our countries. These challenges contribute to the reduction of revenue of our industries through increase in production costs," Dr Seif Elnasr said

The final draft of the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Action Plan for from Eastern Africa Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean region (EA-SA-IO) was validated in August 2019. This was done in Lusaka, Zambia, during a workshop of energy experts hosted by COMESA through Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (REARESA).

The strategy is expected to support the region address the production capacity in the context of climate change challenges which are increasingly affecting generation of energy and the resultant cost of living. It is estimated that energy deficit causes about 2% loss of growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in most countries.

Participants were drawn from ministries responsible for energy and regulators from the representative Regional Economic Communities as well as power utilities. Chief Executive Officer of the REARESA Dr Mohamedain Seif Elnasr officially opened the workshop.

Dr Elnasr said statistics for the region are an indication of the amount of work needed to be done to ensure that energy becomes a key enabler and game changer to doing business and increasing the productivity of industries.

"The challenges in our energy networks, as well as ever increasing deficiencies in energy supply are a common feature of our countries. These challenges contribute to the reduction of revenue of our industries through increased in production costs," he said.

According to the World Energy Outlook 2014 Factsheet, published by the International Energy Agency related to sub-Saharan Africa over the period to 2040, 950 million people are projected to gain access to electricity.

Urban areas experience the largest improvement in the coverage and reliability of centralized electricity supply.

Elsewhere, mini-grid and off-grid systems provide electricity to 70% of those gaining access in rural areas. Cumulative investment of more than $200 billion lowers the total without access by 15%: a major step forward, but not far enough, as it still leaves 530 million people in the region, primarily in rural communities, without electricity in 2040.

Acting Principal Energy Officer at the

Ministry of Energy in Zambia, Mafayo Ziba who addressed the participants thanked COMESA for coming up with an initiative that will see individual Member States tap into regional strategies for the development of renewable energy projects.

Mr. Ziba who is a renewable energy expert implored all the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to take a regional approach to the development of energy production projects as Climate change is affecting not only parts of the region but all the countries.

"This is an important development as the project end results is an enhanced regional energy market with a harmonized, efficient and gender- sensitive regulatory framework; and capacitated regional regulators and power pools to more effectively oversee and stimulate increased regional power trade," Mr. Ziba said.

The programme on Enhancement of a Sustainable Regional Energy market in Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Region (ESREM- EA/SA/IO) is an EU funded project and the beneficiaries of the programme include all the RECs in Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region including their energy regulatory associations and power pools.

The overall objective of the programme is to enhance a sustainable regional energy market in the EA-SA-IO region, which is conducive to investment and promoting sustainable development.

Further, the project aims at achieving an enhanced harmonized, efficient and gender-sensitive regulatory environment in the EA-SA-IO region; and capacitate regional regulatory associations and power pools to more effectively oversee and stimulate increased regional power trade. It is expected that this will stimulate an average increase of 10% in investment flows in energy generation and transmission projects in the region.

Green Pass Piloted in Three Countries

Fish Trading at Luangwa Harbor in Zambia bordering Zimbabwe and Mozambique

COMESA Green Pass Scheme was launched in December 2018 to facilitate small scale cross border traders, by reducing the overall trading costs and minimizing disruptions and operates within the framework of the Simplified Trade Regime (STR).

Activities to roll out the Green Pass and Mini-labs modalities begun in the border of Luangwa, Mwami/Mchinji and Kasumbalesa on the Zambia-Malawi and Zambia-DR Congo borders in August 2019.

Luangwa was selected as the pilot border as it is at the intersection of three countries in the Southern Africa region – Zambia; Mozambique and Zimbabwe. It serves as a fish trade transit route for DR Congo, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola, through some of the targeted borders (Kasumbalesa between Zambia and DRC, Mwami/ Mchinji, between Zambia and Malawi and Nakonde/Tunduma between Zambia and Tanzania).

A Green Pass committee was established in Luangwa comprising officials from fisheries department, fish traders, Zambia Revenue Authority, Luangwa District Council, Ministries in charge of health and immigration. The Committee is coordinated by the district fisheries department.

Some of the duties of the Green Pass Committee are to ensure that testing of food products/fish is done at the source, with only verification procedures conducted at the borders. This will ease the work and shorten the process.

The Committee shall also guarantee that Fish Traders' Associations implement self-regulation by putting in place internal rules and penalties to those who fail to comply with the requirements

COMESA Experts on Sanitary and Phytosanitary matters: Ms. Martha Byanyima, Dr. Mukayi Musaruwa, Ms. Regina Kayitesi led the Green Pass activities.

During their mission in August, the team conducted fish stakeholders' meeting with representatives from the district councils, fisheries department, health, fish traders, Zambia Revenue Authority, Trade Information Desk Officer (TIDO) and the police.

Traders requested the establishment of infrastructure facilities including modern markets, fish processing facilities and weighing and platform scales for quantifying the fish statistical data.

€7.15m Provided for Climate Change Mitigation

...but more is needed

The effects of Climate Change

Eastern and Southern Africa region has not been spared the effects of climate change that have resulted in huge losses in the agriculture and energy sectors. This has prompted COMESA Secretariat to start implementing climate resilient programmes to mitigate its effects by adopting a proactive programme that advocates for Climate Smart Agriculture.

To date, an estimated $2.5 trillion USD per year is needed to help mitigate the effects of climate change globally. If this milestone is to be achieved, the international community needs to mobilize significant additional funding in order to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Under the COMESA Climate Change Programme about €7.15m has been provided by the European Union to support climate change projects in the Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Eswatini and Uganda.

The support is targeted at the Foundations for Farming in Zimbabwe, a group of different institutes involved in research, training and diffusion or conservation agriculture or no-till farming in Madagascar known as Groupement Semis Direct Madagascar (GSDM). Others aew NamBoard in Eswatini, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries in Uganda.

In an interview conducted in Lusaka Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe said more stakeholders should come on board to partner with the regional bloc by providing financial support to implement the climate change programme.

She said the 21-member economic grouping has prioritized tackling effects of climate change to prevent abject poverty among its 600 million people, but more still needs to be done.

Countries in the region are implementing polices to combat effects of climate change key among them, measures to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Further, educating citizens on the importance of “going green” was another major policy consideration being pursued and advocated among Member States.

“COMESA is striving to be the best performing region in the world by having programmes that incorporate aspects of climate action particularly, the CO2 emissions in the region and Africa at large,” she said.

Despite many African countries investing heavily in energy and transport infrastructure climate change posed danger to these investments far-reaching effects on human beings and the environment.

High Turnout at the 6th COMESA Annual Research Forum

Close to 100 delegates comprising of leading academicians, trade experts from the public and private sector, policy think-tanks, and innovators in science and technology attended the 6th COMESA Annual Research Forum Nairobi, Kenya that took place from 2 – 6 September 2019.

The week-long forum provided a platform to share knowledge and deliberate on empirical issues on how to promote intra-COMESA trade through innovation. Thirteen research papers prepared by researchers from across the region were presented at the Forum. It was anchored under the theme: “Promoting Intra-COMESA Trade through Innovation”.

In addition, five new innovative products on science and technology were presented at the Forum.

The forum was primarily concerned with ensuring that the highest quality research-derived evidence informs policy development in COMESA. Dr Kipyego Cheluget, Assistant Secretary General of COMESA, told the researchers that there was a ready demand for the research forum’s output.

“Member States have continued to appreciate the critical role of the policy analysis and many of them have been implementing the policy recommendations on various papers presented in the previous research forums,” he said. “Effective decision-making requires good advice, and that depends on informed use of evidence


The 6th COMESA Annual Research Forum in session

both in developing policy and in evaluating its effect once implemented."

He added that capacity building interventions in research and training carried out by COMESA are aimed at enhancing not only the capacity of the COMESA Secretariat but also the capacity of the Member States in economic and trade policy analysis and research, as well as trade negotiations.

Delivering the opening address, the Principal Secretary in the State Department of Trade in Kenya, Dr Chris Kiptoo, said the best way to achieve productivity growth is through greater innovation, which can be defined as the development of new or improved products, services and processes.

"Organizations that innovate successfully can enhance their competitiveness and position themselves for growth," Dr Kiptoo said in a statement presented by the Director of Administration Ms. Fauzia Shauri.

Robust Innovation

He observed that countries and regions with robust innovation activities have higher productivity, economic growth and job creation and have more government revenues available to support spending in core public priorities such as health, education and infrastructure.

"I urge you to focus your discussions on evidence-based issues that would enable us enjoy the trade benefits associated with innovation to attain economic growth and development for our people.

"Organizations that innovate successfully can enhance their competitiveness and position themselves for growth," Dr Kiptoo said

The golden rule is to think of posterity instead of being guided by short-term challenges and short-term gains," he said.

Dr George Njenga, the Dean of the Business School at the Strathmore University in Nairobi, stressed the need for implementing the numerous high-quality research outputs from scholars in Africa stating that 'research from our institutions have never known commercialization.

He recommended the establishment of data and exhibition centers for the small and medium enterprises in the COMESA region to promote the commercialization of innovation products.

Past winners of the COMESA innovation award were invited to share experiences on their success stories. They included Dr Amr Helal of Egypt, the inventor the technology that transforms rice bran from waste material to nutraceuticals and functional food. The other was Jacob Maina, the co-founder of the AfriCarTrack International company that developed the InTouch Software for prevention of motor vehicle accident and crimes.

King Mswati III touring the booths at the Trade and Exhibition Centre

King Mswati III Appreciates

COMESA's Presence at Eswatini Trade Fair

The 51st Eswatini International Trade Fair opened at the Mavuso Trade and Exhibition Centre in Manzini, where the Head of State, King Mswati III officially opened the 10-day event. This is the first time that COMESA Secretariat was participating in the Fair and this did not escape the attention of the King who paid a visit to the COMESA information booth.

"The information provided at the booth aligns with the theme of Eswatini trade fair and will help many potential investors to make informed decisions."

The King acknowledged COMESA's participation at the expo as an opportunity for the business community in Eswatini and potential investors to understand the rules that govern investments in the COMESA region.

He remarked: "The information provided at the booth aligns with the theme of Eswatini trade fair and will help many potential investors to make informed decisions."

The theme for the year was "Eswatini is open for Business" and ran from 30 August to 9 September 2019. At the Trade Fair, COMESA Secretariat established an information desk to engage with stakeholders, sharing information on the implementation of COMESA programmes and directly engaging and receiving feedback from stakeholders. These are mainly business people, investors, students and researchers.

The 50 Million African Women Speak Project (50MAWS), a project under the COMESA Gender Division was also represented at the trade fair.

National Content Developers Trained on 50 Million Women Project

National content developers from Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar and Tunisia were trained on the use of the 50 Million African Women Speak platform (50MAWSP) at the COMESA headquarters in Lusaka, Zambia. The 9-11 September 2019 induction workshop was also attended by gender focal points from DR Congo and Mauritius.

The workshop was the second 2019 after the first one held in May where 10 national content developers were trained. The induction workshops were designed to introduce the platform to the national content developers and give them a comprehensive understanding of the its operations, goals and objectives.

In addition, the workshop sought to explain the features of the platform and train the national content developers on how to update it as the primary content managers, guide them on content needs, generation and publishing guidelines.

Speaking at the official opening of the workshop, Assistant Secretary General, Programmes, Amb. Kipyego Cheluget (in picture) said the platform would help to address challenges that women entrepreneurs face, including gender-specific barriers such as limited access to information and networking opportunities, lower levels of education and business training.

On her part, the Officer in Charge of the Gender and Social Affairs Division Mrs Mekia Redi welcomed the content developers to the 50MAWSP team and noted that the inclusion of the gender focal points from Member States was critical in enhancing ownership of the platform at national level and ensuring its sustainability.

A total of 17 national content developers will support the project at the COMESA Member State level by generating relevant content to meet the information needs of women entrepreneurs. Of these, 14 have commenced work.

Funded by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the project targets 50 Million women in business and is implemented by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community for Western African States (ECOWAS).

Deepening Collaboration with **Regional Business Reporters**

Member of the COMESA media network, staff of the COMESA Secretariat and the Competition Commission at the 6th Regional Workshop, Kenya

Over 220 merger transactions have so far been assessed in the Common Market, with USD 77 billion in turnover derived by merging parties. This is in addition to over USD 30 million having been received in notification fees.

According to the Director of the COMESA Competition Commission Mr George Lipimile, most African countries have come to recognize the economic benefits (productivity, innovation, competitiveness) of safeguarding or increasing market competition, as evidenced by the growing economic liberalization reforms that is taking place in the region.

Mr Lipimile said this when he addressed the 6th Regional Workshop for COMESA Business Reporters that took place on 9 -10 September 2019 in Kenya.

COMESA Merger Regulations have contributed to the growth of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the region. According to the CCC Manager in charge of Mergers and Acquisitions, Mr. Willard Mwemba, COMESA posted an increase in FDI inflows of 3.6% from USD 18.6 billion in 2016 to USD 19.3 billion in 2017.

“This translated to 46% of Africa’s FDI inflows in 2017 with Egypt and Ethiopia accounting for the majority of the inflows in COMESA,” he said.

Twenty journalists representing media houses from 13 COMESA Member States participated in the workshop sponsored by the COMESA Competition Commission. The workshop is an annual forum that provides updates on recent developments in regional integration and competition regulations. The aim is to deepen the knowledge and understanding of business reporters in the Common Market.

The network of COMESA Business Reporters has been most instrumental in publicizing regional integration in Member States owing to its advanced understanding of the related issues and enhanced access to information.

At the workshop, staff of the COMESA Competition Commission (CCC) and COMESA Secretariat provided updates on recent developments in regional integration, competition policy, business mergers and acquisitions and challenges in business reporting in the digital age among others.

Mr. Okilangole said this has lessened the benefits of private sector participation in terms of economic development and poverty reduction. He added that the key feature of competition rules was to create a level playing field for all business players in the market.

Senior Research Fellow at the COMESA Secretariat, Benedict Musengele took the participants through the current trends on intra-regional trade in the Common Market, and the status of implementation of the regional and continental Free Trade Area regimes.

Meanwhile, the CCC has developed three guidelines to strengthen competition in the Common Market. The guidelines cover: Restrictive Business Practices, Abuse of Dominance and Market definition. The guidelines were launched during the workshop.

“The existence of restrictive business practices in our national markets have reduced investment opportunities, increased business risks, raised the costs of essential business inputs needed to compete in domestic and international markets,” he noted.

The Chairman of the Board of the CCC Mr. Patrick Okilangole, told the journalists that enterprises operating in the Common Market do not fully enjoy the benefits of free trade even though many Member States have introduced the market economic systems in recent years.

“The existence of restrictive business practices in our national markets have reduced investment opportunities, increased business risks, raised the costs of essential business inputs needed to compete in domestic and international markets,” he noted.

Regarding formalizing the COMESA Business Reporters Network, the meeting agreed to develop a joint concept paper on how it will be configurated and facilitated to support the regional integration programmes.

Journalists from Burundi, DR Congo, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe participated.

> "Financial leakages, transfer pricing and other vices have continued to characterize our extractive sectors leaving us the owners of the resources in poverty," Mr Mulenga

RECs Steps in to Support Member States Benefit from Mineral Resources

Multinational firms from other parts of the world still dominate the mining sector in many COMESA Member States with minimal roles for African firms. From these minerals, foreign manufacturing firms produce consumer and industrial goods for sale in global markets at much higher prices than what is paid for as a raw material from the sources. This has resulted in many policymakers and economists in the region calling for increased local participation in the mining industry.

According to the African Economic Outlook, one of the critical deficiencies in the management of the mineral resource in the COMESA region, and Africa in general is the poor mining contracts that governments sign with the mining companies.

However, the narrative is slowly changing as African governments begin to consider adding value to their natural resources to drive economic development. This seemingly obvious reasoning is the basis of a growing policy focus on mineral beneficiation which involves improving the economic value of a mineral by turning it into a final or intermediate product.

As part of the efforts to support this endeavour, COMESA and the African Union Development Agency (NEPAD) organized a regional dialogue on Contract Negotiation and Fiscal Policies in the Extractive Industries in Lusaka on 18th September 2019.

The objective of the dialogue was to share ideas on best practices around issues that African countries face when negotiating contracts, designing and administering an extractive fiscal policy.

Mining Laws

Zambian Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Development Mr. Barnaby Mulenga, who opened the forum, noted that African countries were now revising their mining laws and fiscal policies to align them with emerging challenges.

"Financial leakages, transfer pricing and other vices have continued to characterize our extractive sectors leaving us the owners of the resources in poverty," Mr Mulenga said in a speech delivered by Director of Planning Bernadette Mwakacheya. "Key is to understand what we are giving out in these contracts."

The meeting observed that most COMESA Member States continued to enter into poor contracts with multinationals, resulting in raw deals from its mineral resources, thus perpetuating poverty of the citizenry especially those residing in mining areas.

Addressing the delegates, Assistant Secretary General (Administration and Finance) of COMESA, Dr Dev Haman said despite many challenges that the sector faces, COMESA is supporting Member States to implement the Africa Mining Vision (AMV) which endeavours to deepen the developmental role of the sector.

Dr Haman indicated that approximately, half of the world's vanadium, platinum and diamonds originate from the COMESA region, along with 36% of gold and 20% of cobalt. These minerals he said, contribute greatly to several COMESA Member States' Gross National Product and employment, and many of them depend on mining exports for their foreign exchange earnings.

Mrs. Estherine Lisinge-Fotabong, Director of Programme Innovation and Planning at the AUDA-NEPAD stated that negotiating mining contracts was an extremely complex endeavour that requires a clear set of objectives articulated by leadership.

"To reach an agreement that is stable over time, the investor-state relationship must be perceived to be fair by the foreign investor and the host government, as well as local communities, broader civil society and the business community," she said.

Second Meeting of the Committee of Experts on Finance of the COMESA Convergence Council

Finance Experts call for Revision of Regional Macroeconomic Convergence Criteria

Finance experts from Ministries of Finance and Central Banks from the region have called for the revision of the COMESA macroeconomic convergence criteria and the road map to the Monetary Union. The call was made during the Second Meeting of the Committee of Experts on Finance of the COMESA Convergence Council held from 4 - 6 September 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya.

The officials deliberated on the proposals for the revision of the COMESA Macroeconomic Convergence Criteria, the Template for Reporting Fiscal Risks and the Common Market Levy for the purpose of generating resources for financing Common Market activities. This is expected to enhance the implementation of the COMESA regional integration agenda.

At the meeting, Assistant Secretary General, Programmes Amb. Kipyego Cheluget emphasized the importance of harnessing fiscal policy instruments to achieve SDGs.

He said: "Fiscal policy is vital for "crowding in" private investment in the region which has a significant effect on real GDP."

To ensure effectiveness of fiscal policy, he said it was important to improve governance in revenue collection; leveraging technology to reduce the cost of compliance and tax collection and widening the tax base. Other factors are; to reduce corruption, improving the quality of public spending and introduction of an effective tax administration among others.

Convergence Criteria

The revised Convergence Criteria aims at coordinating member countries' macroeconomic policies in the interests of the stability and sustainability of the integration process.

Speaking at the same event, Assistant Secretary General (Administration and Finance) Dr Dev Haman said there was need for COMESA Member States to find a sustainable way to fund the COMESA regional integration programmes. One possibility is to operationalize Article 168 of the COMESA Treaty on the Common Market Levy for the purpose of generating resources for financing Common market activities.

In his keynote address, former AU Deputy Chairperson and COMESA Secretary General, Mr Erastus Mwencha shared insights on how to operationalize the Community Levy.

Representatives from twelve Member States namely: Burundi, Djibouti, DR Congo, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Seychelles, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe participated in the meeting.

The report of the meeting will be presented to the COMESA Ministers of Finance and Governors of Central Banks for consideration on the side-lines of the 2019 IMF/World Bank Annual Meetings.

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