

COMESA NEWS

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COMESA drops COMTEL project

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Editorial

Unlocking gridlocks in programmes' implementation



The second quarter of this year was a busy one. Picking from the rather sluggish first quarter, this one was marked by a flurry of programme activities. Among these were high-level ministerial meetings that provided direction for implementation of programmes. They involved ministers in charge of transport, energy and Information Communication Technology and industry. Ministerial decisions are binding to the members States and the COMESA Secretariat. Oftentimes, they unlock gridlocks that affect programme implementation. One such was the decision of ICT ministers to throw out the moribund COMESA Telecommunication Company (COMTEL) project. This project had stubbornly remained in the books since the 90s. Though well intentioned, it was overtaken by time. Another significant output came from the ministers of industry who approved the implementation strategy of the regional Local Content Policy framework, the management of the Special Economic Zones and Industrial Parks. This holds the promise of transforming the region's low productivity economies, from overreliance on export of unprocessed primary commodities, to competitive value added products. It is however the ministerial meeting on youth affairs that was most remarkable. Firstly, because it was the first time-ever that the ministers were meeting albeit virtually. Admittedly, this was long overdue, given the significance of the youth demographics in the region. Youth under 35 constitute 70% of the population in Africa. With this news focus, it is expected that the immense potential of this segment of the population will be unlocked to meaningfully participate in civic and economic opportunities.

Mwangi G

COMESA INSTITUTIONS

COMESA Clearing House
COMESA Monetary Institute
Trade and Development Bank
African Trade Insurance Agency
COMESA Competition Commission
PTA Reinsurance Company
COMESA Regional Investment Agency
Africa Leather and Leather Products Institute
COMESA Federation of Women in Business

Specialized Agencies

Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa
COMESA Business Council
Regional Association of Energy Regulators in Eastern and Southern Africa
East African Power Pool

Judicial Arm

COMESA Court of Justice

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Global Environment Facility approves \$ 5.7million

The Comoros, Eritrea, Seychelles, and Zambia to benefit under the first multi-country project to strengthen capacity of Member Countries to monitor and report climate actions.



Eswatini farmers under the COMESA Climate Smart Agriculture support project

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council approved a US\$5.7 million project in June to boost the capacity of four Member States of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) to effectively track and report their progress in tackling climate change, in line with their commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement. The project includes a \$4.2million grant from the GEF and a \$1.54 million co-financing from partners.

The five-year Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT) project will enable the Comoros, Eritrea, Seychelles and Zambia to comply with the Paris Agreement's enhanced transparency framework (Article 13). The framework specifies how Parties to the Agreement should report on progress in climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, and support provided or received in capacity building, climate finance, and technology.

The project will establish an Eastern and Southern Africa Regional CBIT transparency framework for Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) of

climate actions; report on country climate commitments or Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs); and knowledge dissemination on transparency-related activities.

The project is managed by non-profit Conservation International, a GEF Implementing Agency, in partnership with COMESA, governments of the four COMESA Member States, the Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa, and the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development.

Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe commended the four countries for responding to the call and thanked GEF for the grant.

"We are pleased to receive this good news from GEF. This is an excellent development which will help us implement activities under the climate change programme," Ms Kapwepwe said.

"The four project countries are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. This CBIT project will help them transition towards a more

climate-resilient and low-carbon pathway through strengthening the country's institutional and technical capacity to track and report their climate action," said Ms. Edith Tibahwa, the Climate Change Programme Manager at COMESA.

"This project is vital since it's the first multi-country CBIT project approved by the GEF Council. A regional approach to capacity building for transparent monitoring and reporting of climate action provides an opportunity for peer learning among countries and contributes to addressing the climate challenge at a lesser cost," said Michael O'Brien-Onyeka, Senior Vice President, Conservation International, Africa Field Division.

"In the long term, the results of this CBIT project will improve policy and decision-making in the management of natural resources and promote sustainability of nature-based economic sectors such as agriculture and tourism. It will also strengthen local communities' resilience to climate change. For instance, availability of accurate Green House Gasses (GHG) data is more likely to lead



COMESA drops COMTEL project

Time factor and improved backbone connectivity has made the project unviable

A project initiated over 20 years ago to create a telecommunications company for the COMESA region has been dropped. The decision was made by ministers of infrastructure during their meeting on June 2, 2021. Instead, the ministers directed COMESA Secretariat to undertake a new study to assess and determine if there are any missing links between Member States.

The virtual meeting was attended by ministers in charge of transport, energy and ICT from the 21 Member States and their representatives.

The COMESA Telecommunication Company (COMTEL) project was started in the late 90s to bridge the gap in access to essential communication and information services in the region. This was expected to unlock the potential of the digital economy for the COMESA region. Its implementation however failed to take off mainly due to lack of potential financiers and lack of interest from key stakeholders.

An assessment of the viability of the COMTEL project was carried out taking into consideration the emerging industrial

trends. The report which was presented to the ministers in 2019 recommended for the discontinuation of the project noting that efforts to get key stakeholders; the National Telecoms Operators (NTO) had been difficult. Other key stakeholders such as banks had lost interest in the project because it had taken too long.

The assessment established that due to the favorable enabling conditions brought about by market reforms in the ICT sector; there had been a tremendous increase in the number of terrestrial installations and marine fiber optic cables investments by both public and private entities. Hence, the infrastructure gap was quickly closing in the region in the form of fibre optic backbones being developed in the COMESA member countries.

In discontinuing the COMTEL project, the ministers cited the time factor and improved backbone connectivity within countries and between countries making the project unviable.

Global Environmental Facility...

→ continued from page 1

to formulation of multi-sectoral climate-proof policies as well as measures to reduce GHG emissions and increase carbon sequestration.” he added.

The CBIT project will address the key barriers to climate transparency, such as inadequate data for effective MRV of GHG emissions; inadequate institutional and technical capacity to operationalize MRV, and lack of a regional integrated platform for learning and knowledge management of the Paris Agreement transparency-related activities. It will yield the results below which will improve climate transparency reporting over time:

- Improve technical capacities and institutional frameworks of participating countries to transparently plan, monitor, and report on their NDC targets and climate actions. This will include development of GHG inventories.
- Strengthen regional institutional framework for COMESA member Countries to transparently plan, monitor, and report on their NDC targets and climate actions.
- Strengthen the capacity of selected national academic institutions to train relevant Government officials to transparently measure, report and verify emissions on agriculture, forestry, and land-use (AFOLU) sector NDC targets.
- Enhance transparency through the establishment of regional platforms for learning, sharing, and knowledge management.

As of April, this year, there were 74 CBIT projects supported by GEF through its Agencies like Conservation International and others. Conservation International manages CBIT projects for at least 10 African countries, including completed ones in Kenya and Uganda and others at various stages of development or implementation.

Kenya hailed for achieving 75% electricity access rate

Uganda also performing well on the Electricity Regulatory Index



Wind power turbines in Kenya

Kenya has dramatically increased electricity access over the last few years from 2.3 million in 2013 to 8.2 million by the end of April 2021 thereby achieving electricity access rate of over 75%.

This was disclosed during the joint meeting of COMESA ministers responsible for transport and communication, information technology and energy on 2 June 2021. The meeting further noted that most COMESA countries were actively working to increase the share of renewables in the energy mix as well creating an enabling environment for conducive development of the energy sector. This will be achieved through among other initiatives, creating regulatory bodies and institutions responsible for accelerating access to

electricity.

Uganda has also continued performing well on the Electricity Regulatory Index (ERI) which is a report of the African Development Bank, that measures the level of development of electricity sector regulatory frameworks in African countries against international standards and best practice. Of the 36 countries which participated in the study, Uganda ranked 1st, for the third time in a row), Zambia 4th, Kenya 5th, Zimbabwe 6th, Ethiopia 10th and Rwanda 11th.

The meeting was informed that almost all Member States have developed policies and regulations that are compliant to the COMESA Model Energy Policy Framework which was developed in 2007. Djibouti and DR Congo were

recognized for the efforts made towards the establishment of energy regulators. The COMESA model policy is however, expected to be reviewed and updated to make it responsive to new developments that have occurred since its adoption.

These include increased focus on climate change, new technological developments such as renewable energy cost decrease, e-mobility and ICT. The review was delayed by the outbreak of COVID-19 but is expected to be re-launched and concluded before the end of this year, 2021.

The ministers urged Member States to consider and implement the recommendations of the ERI 2020 report to enhance regulatory best practice on the continent.



Zambia, Zimbabwe develops joint implementation plan

The Zambia-Zimbabwe Technical Working Group (TWG) on the Joint Industrialization programme has agreed on an action matrix to guide the implementation of the programme and provide a timeframe for achieving the set targets. The programme is intended to promote industrial cooperation and increase competitiveness of goods produced within the two countries.

In its 3rd joint meeting, conducted virtually on 18 June 2021, the TWG also agreed to immediately establish committees comprised of technocrats from the ministries of industry, commerce, trade and agriculture to work jointly to advance the different pillars agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding.

Speaking at the meeting, COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes, Dr Kipyego Cheluget said the Joint Zambia-Zimbabwe Industrialization Programme (JIP) holds the best promise towards achieving COMESA's industrialization goals.

"In COMESA, we take this programme seriously as it will set the pace towards achieving the aspirations of the region as we regard it as a Flagship Project," he said.

Article 99 of the COMESA Treaty calls for

COMESA Member States to cooperate in the field of industrial development and to coordinate their policies in establishing agro-industries to achieve regional sustainable and inclusive economic transformation.

The Programme is also a tool for the implementation of the COMESA Industrial Strategy whose vision is to have a globally competitive environmental-friendly, diversified industrial sector which is based on innovation and manufacturing as tools for transforming regional resources into sustainable wealth and prosperity for all.

The government of Zambia has placed industrial development at the core of its development agenda in its 10-year National Industrial Policy. According to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Mr Mushumba Mulenga, the additional policy and strategic measures will create an enabling environment to enhance inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

Dr Mavis Sibanda, the PS in the Zimbabwe counterpart Ministry, said the timing of the programme was most appropriate as it coincides with the commencement of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

"The AfCFTA promises a greater opportunity for both countries to widen access to global supply chains and export higher value goods and services," she noted. "Increasing African intra-trade through regional value chains provides African manufacturing firms the economies of scale and linkages to value chains connected to the global market."

The implementation of the JIP is in line with the Zimbabwe National Development Strategy and the Vision 2030.

Both PSs appreciated the support received from COMESA and cooperating partners such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). UNECA commissioned a study on "Assessing the Feasibility of Establishing and Managing a Common Agro-Industrial Park between Zambia and Zimbabwe" which was validated in May 2021. UNECA has further committed to support the development of the project's policy, legal and regulatory framework.

Other cooperating partners that attended the meeting included the African Development Bank, Trade and Development Bank, UNIDO, Afreximbank and UNECA. The regional private sector was also represented.

Regional ministers urge member states to scale up infrastructure programmes

Estimates by the AfDB places the annual infrastructure funding gap at between \$68 billion and \$108 billion

Ministers of infrastructure have called on regional states to scale up programmes to upgrade and maintain infrastructure and facilities, adopt and implement COMESA transit instruments to improve transport corridors' efficiency.

In their 12th joint meeting conducted virtually, on June 2, 2021, the ministers responsible for transport, energy and Information, Communication Technology (ICT) acknowledged the huge infrastructure efficiency gap across the region as a pressing policy priority.

Estimates by the African Development Bank, (2018) places the annual infrastructure funding gap at between \$68 billion and \$108 billion across the continent.

In their communique, the ministers invited Member States to take up the financing, technical assistance, and capacity building opportunities available under the Regional Infrastructure Finance Facility (RIFF) of the World Bank and other development partners, to help address the gap.

RIFF is one of the latest major infrastructure financing facilities signed in August last year to expand long-term finance to private firms in selected infrastructure sectors in eastern and southern Africa. It has two components: US\$ 10 million grant to COMESA to provide technical assistance and capacity building to Member States, with special focus on private sector. The second is US\$415 million credit to Trade and Development Bank for infrastructure projects covering renewable energy, ICT and transport and technical assistance facility.

Madagascar Minister of Transport, Tourism, and Meteorology, Hon. Joël Randriamandranto, who chaired the meeting said the infrastructure gap needs to be narrowed if the region

hopes to accelerate regional economic development.

"Our region has found itself in this predicament due to lack of resources, both financial and technical. It is therefore imperative that we mobilize adequate resources to address this challenge in line with national and regional priorities," he said.

In their decision on facilitating transit infrastructure, the ministers urged Member States to connect border posts to the national electricity grid or install backup power services to reduce time due to load-shedding and power outages. They called on harmonization of all agencies working at border posts by adopting Integrated Border Management systems to complement the One Stop Border Points (OSBP).

Further the ministers urged Member States to deploy regional ICT systems such as Corridor Trip Monitoring Systems (CTMS) to enhance data and information sharing, improve regulation and progressively digitize border transactions and avoid paper-based transactions which are easy to falsify and are a COVID-19 vector. The CTMS enables operator, vehicle and driver information to be readily available along regional transport corridors at the roadside and at border posts to all regulatory and law enforcement agencies.

In her address, Secretary General of COMESA Chileshe Kapwepwe, underscored the importance of infrastructure in protecting the economy and people's lives.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the shortcomings of the African health infrastructure, the fragility of the transport sector (especially the aviation sector) and the vital role that ICT sector plays in sustaining economic and social activities during lockdowns and implementation



Minister of Transport, Tourism, and Meteorology, Madagascar, Hon. Joël Randriamandranto

of social distancing," she said citing the CTMS as one of the immediate remedial responses to the pandemic.

The meeting welcomed the technical assistance provided under the Tripartite Transport Transit Facilitation Programme (TTTFP) funded by the European Union to assist Member States to domesticate and operationalize surface transport regulations, trade and transit facilitation instruments.

They noted that the failure to implement COMESA facilitation instruments has been primarily due to lack of domestication at national level and lack of capacity to undertake oversight and the enforcement of the relevant protocols and Ministerial Council decisions.



.....
Our region has found itself in this predicament due to lack of resources, both financial and technical. It is therefore imperative that we mobilize adequate resources to address this challenge in line with national and regional priorities," Hon. Joël Randriamandranto.



Member states invited to bid for market access enhancement funds

The objective is to increase private sector participation in sustainable regional and global value chains

COMESA proposals in April launched a Call for Proposals to its Member States to bid for funding of up to 150,000 Euros to support market access. The funds would be provided under a Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) established with support of the European Union. Key activities for support are under the COMESA Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP) financed through the 11 European Development Fund (EDF 11).

This facility is meant to cater for priority needs of Member States on the implementation of the COMESA regional integration agenda at the national level.

Only interventions related to Result Area 1 of the RECAMP are eligible for support. Result Area 1 entails sustainable enhancement of the competitiveness and market access of small and medium enterprises and other firms in the targeted value chains/sectors. This is expected to enhance market access and business linkages in the targeted sectors. Under the result area 1, the capacities of beneficiary firms related to sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) and regional standards and quality management will

be improved. This includes the social and environmental standards required under the World Trade Organization and/or EU market.

RECAMP is an innovative approach to regional cooperation which complements other support mechanisms available to the COMESA Secretariat and its Member States.

Its objective is to increase private sector participation in sustainable regional and global value chains by enhancing their access to markets and improving business and investment climate. The maximum threshold for any Member State's application is Euro150,000, while the minimum threshold will be Euro 50,000, per year.

All eligible Member States could submit requests which will be assessed by the Secretariat. The successful requests will be awarded the necessary resources for implementation, in line with the COMESA rules and procedures.

This is the first call of applications to be launched under the RECAMP programme and it is expected that member countries will take the opportunity and benefit from the facility. Further information on guidelines and application process are available on the COMESA Website and EDF Programmes social media platforms.

New reporting guidelines developed for implementing programmes

The guidelines are part of the 2016 decisions made by the COMESA Council of Ministers

Implementation of youth programmes in the COMESA region is set to improve following the development of guidelines on reporting progress. The draft Guidelines were presented to the first Technical Committee on Youth on 14 June 2021. They will be used to monitor the implementation of commitments and priorities in the COMESA Youth Programme and other continental and global frameworks on youth.

The Youth Programme is intended to empower young women and men in the region through key focus areas; deepening research, documentation and knowledge sharing, accelerating implementation of the African Youth Charter and the UN World Programme of Action for Youth and enhancing active involvement of youth in political participation, civic engagement, socio-economic development and regional integration.

The guidelines are part of the 2016 decisions made by the COMESA Council of Ministers who directed the Secretariat to develop them as a monitoring tool to ramp up implementation of youth programme in Member States. This will ultimately stimulate and expand decent and productive work opportunities for youth in the public and private sector, spur youth entrepreneurship and skills development for greater employability.

Speaking at the technical meeting, COMESA Director of Gender and Social



Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde

Affairs, Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde said the Youth Programme will contribute to the broader development goals of poverty reduction and sustainable and inclusive development, social and political stability, and peace and security within the COMESA region.

“Cooperation of Member States on these programmes will not only deepen the regional integration process, but also result in higher and sustainable levels of socio-economic growth,” she said adding that the Programme is already integrated in the COMESA Social Charter and the Gender Policy.

The COMESA youth programme contributes to the African Union frameworks on youth such as the 2006 African Youth Charter, which focuses on employment, sustainable livelihoods, education, health, youth participation, peace and security, and law enforcement, among others.

The guidelines were thereafter adopted by the COMESA ministers in charge of youth affairs on June 22, 2021.

“.....
Cooperation of Member States on these programmes will not only deepen the regional integration process, but also result in higher and sustainable levels of socio-economic growth,”
Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde

Regional experts conduct first technical meeting

Over sixty experts in youth affairs from Member States, the African Union and partner international organisations met virtually in June to consider progress made on the implementation of the regional youth programme.

The three-day meeting, 14 – 16 June 2021, also considered and adopted strategic policy documents aimed at enhancing youth participation in development at the regional and national level. The experts comprised of senior government officials in charge of youth affairs led by Permanent/Principal Secretaries and representatives from partner organizations.

Nine documents which had been developed to support the implementation of the COMESA Youth Programme in Member States were reviewed. Among them, the report on the findings of Baseline Studies conducted in Member States, which analyzed the opportunities and challenges that young people face regarding their participation in socio economic development and democratic governance.

The report on the Joint COMESA/AUC-AGA Project on Youth Engagement in Democratic Governance and Socio-economic Development Processes and a presentation on the role of the youth in silencing the guns in COMESA region was also considered.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of Programmes, Dr Kipyego Cheluget and Zambia's Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development, Dr John Phiri addressed the meeting. Dr Cheluget noted that out of the 600 million population of COMESA, the vast majority are youth.

“We cannot continue to do business as usual without the participation of the youth who hold more than half the sky. We are obliged and mandated to develop policies to engage the youth more meaningfully,”

he said.

As part of implementation of the COMESA Social Charter, the COMESA Youth Programme was developed and adopted in 2015 to facilitate the integration of youth developmental projects in COMESA work. The programme is intended to empower young people in the region by promoting the creation of decent and productive work opportunities for youth in the private sector and by enhancing their political participation, civic engagement, entrepreneurship, and active involvement in the regional integration process.

The technical committee considered the policy and strategic documents presented at the meeting which were thereafter presented to the Ministers responsible for youth affairs on 23 June, respectively. Other documents considered;

- The report on the draft COMESA Youth Engagement Strategy – a framework to enhance youth engagement in thematic areas of COMESA,
- the draft Terms of Reference for the Establishment of COMESA Youth Advisory Panel,
- the Report on the draft COMESA Social Media Strategy,
- the Report on the draft COMESA Recruitment, Deployment and Management System for the Internship Program to institutionalize recruitment practices at national level and the Report on the Training Manual on youth in Electoral Processes and
- the Report on the draft Training Manual on Youth in Leadership as pan African standards and values.

Representatives from the African Union, the Swiss Agency for International Cooperation (SDC) and the International Trade Center (ITC) addressed delegates.



Eight countries have signed the **single African air transport market agreement**

Member States urged to grant Fifth Freedom Rights as a major step towards full liberalization of the air transport market

Eight COMESA countries have so far signed the Solemn Commitment for the establishment of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM). These are the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Eswatini, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This initiative is led by the African Union through the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC).

The goal of the SAATM is to fully implement the 1999 Yamoussoukro Decision (YD), which allows all participating countries to lift market access restrictions for airlines, remove restrictions on ownership, grant each other extended air traffic rights and liberalize flight frequency and capacity limits. SAATM also seeks to harmonise safety and security regulations in aviation, based on International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) requirements.

In view of this, the COMESA Ministers in charge of infrastructure (transport, energy and ICT) have called on the

remaining Member States to sign the Solemn Commitment and review their bilateral air service agreements to comply with the YD and SAATM requirements.

In their 12th joint meeting on June 2, 2021, the Ministers called on Member States to harmonize and domesticate regional transport policies. They urged for adoption and application of regional transport transit facilitation instruments and the economic regulations and consumer protection guidelines developed by the AUC through AFCAC.

“Member States should grant Fifth Freedom Rights as a major step towards full liberalization of the air transport market.” Ministers. The Fifth Freedom is the right for an airline to stop in a country other than its own and pick up passengers.

Air transport liberalization, with respect to improved air transport services and lower fares brings forth immense economic and financial benefits, noted the Ministers. A study by the International Air Transport Association in 2014 on 12 sample African countries identified fare savings, greater connectivity, time savings, greater convenience, and the

positive impact on other sectors of the economy once the liberalization programme is implemented.

COMESA region has been implementing the air transport liberalization programme and has signed a Memorandum of Cooperation on the establishment of the SAATM with the AU.

Other African countries that have signed the Solemn Commitment are Benin, Burkina Faso, Botswana, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia and Ghana. Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Togo.

“.....
Member States should grant Fifth Freedom Rights as a major step towards full liberalization of the air transport market.” Ministers

States urged to honour contributions as remittances drop



File/Delegates attending an administrative and budget matters committee meeting, 2019

Consistent budget absorption was however observed under Member States' funding on operational expenditures in the first quarter of the year

The 42nd Meeting of the COMESA Committee on Administrative and Budget matters met on June 23, 2021, with a call to Member States to meet their budgetary contributions to the annual budget of the Secretariat and its institutions. This follows a slow funding of the annual budget with four out of the 21 Member States having fully paid their contributions for 2021.

As of 21st June 2021, the Secretariat had received 21.6% contribution to the 2021 budget against a 50% threshold requirement under the COMESA Treaty. The 50% is expected within one month from the beginning of the financial year to which they relate, and the remainder within six months from the beginning of that financial year.

Speaking at the opening of the meeting, Secretary General of COMESA, Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe, noted that the slow remittance to the budget has resulted in the utilization of reserves to fund the planned

activities.

"Over the years approved sanctions have not been rigorously applied on Member States that have defaulted in paying their contributions to the annual budget and this needs to change. This may have been a contributory factor to the financial position that we now find ourselves in, where a few Member States fund the organization," said the Secretary General.

Article 171 of the COMESA Treaty provides for sanctions for Member States that are in arrears for more than two years.

The Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Matters comprise of technical experts in audit, administrative, budgetary, financial, and human resource matters. Its recommendations are presented to the Inter-Governmental Committee and eventually to the Council of Ministers for decision-making.

Notwithstanding, consistent budget absorption was observed under Member States funding on operational expenditures in the first quarter of the year. Funds under grants however, had varied budget absorption rates based on their unique programming and expenditure

requirements. The cooperating partners have continued to honor their obligations and extended most projects timeframes to allow the programmes to improve their budget absorptions.

To implement programmes amid Covid-19 limitations, the Secretariat applied innovative modalities to increase budget absorption during these extended project timeframes.

"We have witnessed an upward trajectory in programme activities in the second quarter of the year as restrictions on movement of people in the region eases," said the Secretary General.

Meanwhile, Eswatini, D R Congo, Kenya, and Libya are now members of the COMESA Board of External Auditors (COBEA). This follows the decision of the Council of Ministers last year to adopt the COBEA as the official external audit entity of COMESA. Members of the Board are drawn from the offices of the Auditor's General in Member States.

The tenure of the four countries will be the 2020 - 2022 financial year. COBEA team was expected to kick off the 2020 audit during the month of June 2021.



Dr Kipyego Cheluget, Assistant Secretary General, COMESA (red shirt), unveils the CSOs/Private Sector platform flanked by representatives from the AU, Save the Children Fund and other guests.

COMESA unveils platform for non-state actors to participate in peace building

COMESA in partnership with the African Union, Economic Social and Cultural Council, (ECOSOCC) and the Save the Children International, in May launched an online information sharing platform to facilitate civil society organisations in the region to play a bigger role in conflict prevention and peace building.

The development of the platform followed a study and stakeholder consultations done by COMESA on the root factors of conflicts in the sub-region. These activities revealed that conflicts in the region were not only complex but required joint approaches to address them.

The platform <https://gps.comesa.int> was launched in Livingstone, Zambia by the Assistant Secretary General of COMESA, Dr Kipyego Cheluget. It is aimed at enabling robust networking amongst non-State actors to create strong partnerships for peace and security by sharing information on relevant themes to keep the wide population of CSOs informed.

Besides, it will encourage debate around key topical issues and build consensus on the positive role that CSOs and Private Sector Organisations can play and at the same time, showcasing their work to encourage replication of good practices.

Dr Cheluget stressed the need for States to complement their strengths and competencies with non-state actors in the region to address the conflicts sustainably and comprehensively.

"While national governments have the primary responsibility to ensure peace and security within its borders, civil society and private sector organisations also have an important role to play, particularly being close to the grassroots, where most intra-state conflicts start," Dr Cheluget said.

Over 30 CSOs from 17 Member States have been accredited since 2012 and have been partnering with COMESA in the development and implementation of its peace and security programme. This includes the development of the COMESA Early Warning System (COMWARN). They also serve in the

COMESA elections observer missions, with some of them providing analysis of the electoral environment in their respective countries.

Speaking at the launch, ECOSOCC representative, Mr Osei Kyeretwie said his organization is keen to support strategic partnership with COMESA in building the capacity of CSOs to be more effective in their role.

Ms. Hortense Minishi, Head of Programmes at Save the Children International, said the responsibility of protecting the children and youth from situations of conflict is a multi-stakeholder undertaking that should bring everyone on board.

The launch was attended by among others, a Kenyan delegation comprising of the Commissioners of the National Cohesion and integrity Commission and Members of the Kenya Parliamentary Committee on Cohesion and Equal Opportunities. The delegation was in Zambia for a COMESA-AU training on COMWARN and structural vulnerabilities and resilience assessment frameworks.

COMESA-EAC-SADC tripartite leadership change hands

... as the sixth anniversary pass



The sixth anniversary of the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite passed on Thursday 10 June 2021 with the East African Community taking over the rotational chair for the next one year. EAC Secretary General Dr Peter Mathuki took over the Chair of the Tripartite Task Force from his SADC counterpart Dr Stergomena Tax during the 33rd meeting held virtually on 8 June 2021.

COMESA Secretary General Ms Chileshe Kapwepwe attended the meeting which comprises of the chief executives of the three organizations.

The objective of the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite group is to strengthen economic integration of the southern and eastern Africa region through joint planning, design, coordination, and implementation of policies and programmes across the three blocs. The focus areas are trade, customs and infrastructure development, and industrialization. The Tripartite also provides a platform to address the overlapping memberships of countries to the three RECs. The TFTA Agreement was launched on 10 June 2015 in Egypt.

So far, 10 Member/Partner States have

ratified the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement (TFTA), short of the 14 required for the Agreement to enter into force. Those that have signed are Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, South Africa, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Botswana, Namibia and Zambia.

The meeting acknowledged that the attainment of this threshold remains a top priority of the TTF under the new leadership. Earlier on 15 February this year, the 2nd Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the Tripartite Council of Ministers had set June 2021 year as the deadline for attainment of the ratification threshold of 14.

Giving her scorecard of the past year of her tenure, Dr Tax outlined the achievements realized, key among them the approval of harmonized tripartite guidelines on trade and transport facilitation for safe, efficient and cost-effective movement of goods and services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other milestones were the drafting of legal instruments that will facilitate implementation of the TFTA. These relate to movement of businesspersons, elimination of import duties, trade

remedies, rules of origin, dispute settlement mechanism; vehicle load management agreement; multilateral cross border road transport agreement, vehicle load management model law, cross border road transport model law, road traffic model law, road traffic and transport transgressions model law and transport of dangerous goods by road model law.

These legal instruments will be presented to Tripartite Council of Ministers for adoption during its next meeting and thereafter commencement of their implementation.

The meeting noted that the approval of harmonized tripartite guidelines will help attain a coordinated approach to the fight against the pandemic by providing a seamless flow of essential commodities such as food and medical supplies.

Directors, Senior Officials and Technical Experts from the COMESA, EAC and SADC Secretariats also attended the meeting.

Ministers approve key documents for gender equality and women empowerment



File: Women in COMESA Region

Ministers responsible for gender and women's affairs from the COMESA region approved several toolkits and documents which are expected to help the countries promote gender equality, women empowerment, and social development. In their meeting conducted in March this year, the ministers noted that women have continued to be negatively affected by many challenges including COVID-19 which has contributed to most of them recording slow progress.

Among the documents approved during the meeting was the COMESA Gender Policy Implementation and Tracking Plan, the COMESA Online Course on Gender and Trade, the COMESA Social Charter Toolkit and the HIV and AIDS Policy Implementation and Tracking Plan.

Speaking during the official opening of the meeting, Zambia's Minister of Commerce, Trade, and Industry Hon. Christopher Yaluma encouraged the Ministers and Member States not to relent in their efforts of empowering women and fighting poverty. He described the meeting as crucial as it

was being held at a time when Africa is grappling with COVID-19 and women are bearing the major brunt of it.

"Gender inequality remains a major challenge affecting the regional integration agenda. women entrepreneurs continue to experience different forms of harassment and many gender specific non-tariff barriers," he added "This meeting has the opportunity to change this situation by implementing instruments that can support women and improve their welfare," Hon. Yaluma said through his representative at the meeting Hon. Elizabeth Phiri, Minister of Gender Affairs.

He highlighted the importance of the normative frameworks being developed by COMESA to advance gender equality and social development in the region. He said COMESA had done well in the inclusion of gender in trade matters. To overcome the challenges that COMESA Member States face, the Minister said there needs to be concerted efforts from all stakeholders.

Kenyan team trained on peace building ahead of elections next year

Delegation comprised of members of the National Cohesion and Integration Commission and Parliamentary Committee

Kenya is set to become the second country in COMESA, after Zambia to undergo structural vulnerability and resilience assessment as part of capacity building to prevent occurrence of conflicts.

In preparation, a Kenyan delegation comprising members of the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and the Parliamentary Committee on National Cohesion and Equal Opportunities attended a five-day training on the COMESA/African Union Structural Vulnerability Assessment and Resilience Assessment framework (SVRA). The training was held from 17 -21 May 2021 in Livingstone, Zambia.

It was organized by COMESA in collaboration with the African Union (AU) and the Save the Children International. Its key objective was to train the two institutions, which are key in building cohesion and integration in Kenya, to develop a roadmap of the

“.....
One of the identified roadblocks to a violence free election in Kenya is inadequate or total lack of immediate interventions to curb escalation of violence,” Rev Dr Samuel Kobia.



Members of the Kenya National Cohesion and Integration Commission and Parliamentary Committee at the COMESA training in Livingstone, Zambia

implementation of the SVRA process in the country. COMESA has been implementing an early warning system (COMWARN) that provides forecasts on the structural drivers that could lead countries towards higher or lower levels of peace and prosperity. The model is anchored on the COMESA Peace and Prosperity Index and has the overall goal of supporting member states to build resilience.

Speaking at the opening of the training, the Chair of the NCIC Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia said violence has become a common means of expressing opposition and dissent on most issues especially in African where there are young democracies.

"One of the identified roadblocks to a violence free election in Kenya is inadequate or total lack of immediate interventions to curb escalation of violence," Dr Kobia said. "In our elections' roadmap, we want to strategically disrupt violence by establishing a robust election early warning and rapid response system that will tap into the existing sub-systems across the

country."

As Kenya prepares for election next year, he said, it must address all potential sources of violence. This includes developing a social cohesion index using a set of quantitative indicators covering critical components, such as equity and trust. During the training, Zambia, which is the first country in COMESA to volunteer for the structural vulnerability and resilience assessment process of the AU and only the third in the Continent shared its experience with Kenya delegates.

COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe expressed hope that Zambia's lessons would provide enough incentives to hasten Kenya's action towards incorporating the use SVAs into the national early warning system. She assured the Kenyan team that COMESA and the AU will jointly mobilize the necessary resources to ensure its success.

"Apart from equipping your situation room, which shall be done by the AU, we shall also support the meetings and

.....
"We shall also readily provide you whatever technical support that you shall need to ensure that the process is successful." COMESA Secretary General

workshops as well as the recruitment of a consultant who will be identified by Kenya once the country agrees to volunteer to the process," she said. "We shall also readily provide you whatever technical support that you shall need to ensure that the process is successful."

Save the Children International Representative Mr. Anthony Njoroge, observed that the most burdensome brunt of armed violence and warfare is borne by children, hence his organization's resolve to work with regional economic communities' efforts towards this objective. Head of delegation of the Kenya Parliamentary Committee Prof Zadok Ogutu observed that politicians contribute to political conflicts and the involvement of the legislators in peace building initiatives was appropriate.



Activities under the EU supported migration programme begins

The European Union through the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) is working with COMESA to have an effective and coordinated management of migration and mobility in the framework of a health crisis. ICMPD Migration EU Expertise (MIEUX) Focal Point, Mr Naike Chancy, this is was a practical way of intervening in the migration and health sector.

He was speaking during a virtual meeting between his team and the COMESA Secretariat COVID-19 Task Force led by the Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Dr Kipyego Cheluget.

In addition, his organization will work with COMESA to strengthen capacities and migration authorities in Member States to manage migration and mobility at the borders in the framework of a health crisis.

To kick start the activities, a series of online meetings with the Secretariat and Member States will be conducted

to assess the training and information needs regarding the management of migration/ mobility at the borders during the pandemic.

“The aim of this activity will be to get a better understanding from key stakeholders in order to assess the general context, the roles of the stakeholders, the existing capacities and their needs and the ongoing projects in the region to ensure complementarities,” Naike Chancy

The stakeholders to be contacted may include relevant divisions/units of the COMESA Secretariat, the COMESA Business Council, the COMESA Federation of National Association of Women in Business (COMFWB), EU Delegation and international organisations implementing projects with COMESA such as International Organisation for Migration and the International Trade Center.

Meetings will be organized with the

relevant authorities in the COMESA Member States involved in the pre-selected pilot border posts in DR Congo, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. These will include border agencies and entities training border officials (training departments/ academies), as well as with the local chapters of the COMESA-SADC Cross Border Traders Association (CBTA).

“.....

The aim of this activity will be to get a better understanding from key stakeholders in order to assess the general context, the roles of the stakeholders, the existing capacities and their needs and the ongoing projects in the region to ensure complementarities,” Naike Chancy



File/ The 3rd meeting of ministers of industry, 2019, Kenya

Ministers approve frameworks to implement the regional industrial strategy

Local content policy framework will support transformation, from low to competitive productivity economies

Ministers of industry from the 21 COMESA Member States in May this year, approved the implementation strategy of the regional local content policy framework and the management of the Special Economic Zones and Industrial Parks.

The COMESA Local Content Policy Framework is aimed at helping to transform the region's low productivity economies, from overreliance on export of unprocessed primary commodities with either little or no value addition, to competitive economies that produce, and export value added products.

With the approval, Member States will formulate similar policies to maximize local benefits from industrialization. Equally, the adopted framework of managing special economic zones (SEZ) and industrial parks will guide Member States when domesticating SEZ strategies and industrial parks at the national level.

In their communique, the Ministers committed to ensure the harmonized regional frameworks and guidelines are implemented in their respective countries.

Speaking at the opening of the meeting, Thursday, May 27, 2021, the Minister of Industry and Commerce of Zimbabwe, Dr Sekai Nzenza, observed that despite high growth potential in the region, poverty, unemployment, low investment levels, and depressed aggregate demand among others, are prevalent.

"This is attributed to depressed industrialization in our region," she stated adding that industrial development was critical in addressing the productive constraints towards the realization of inclusive and sustainable transformation



There is no better time than now when coming into effect of the African Continental Free Trade Area promises to offer an even greater opportunity for countries to widen their access to global supply chains and export higher value goods and services," Hon.

Roy Kachale

of the region.

The approval of the frameworks will therefore enable the full implementation of the COMESA Industrialization Strategy and Action plan, which was adopted by the Ministers in 2019, to guide structural economic transformation of the region. Among its key component is the promotion of agriculture and value addition.

The COMESA industrialization strategy is aligned with the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa (IDDA3) whose guiding principles include: government ownership and leadership of the initiative; strengthened enabling business environment; prioritized sectors with high potential for growth; and strong partnerships for financial and non-financial resource mobilization at the multilateral, regional and bilateral levels.

On its part, COMESA Secretariat committed to continue providing a platform for lobbying international technical and financial assistance to support the special economic zones development.

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The first-ever meeting of COMESA ministers of youth affairs conducted



Egyptian Minister of Youth and Sports, Dr Ashraf Sobhy

The first-ever meeting of COMESA ministers of youth affairs took place on June 22, 2021. Its objective was to review the status of implementation of youth programmes and make policy decisions that will empower young people to meaningfully participate in civic and economic opportunities.

Among the issues that the ministers dealt with, was to review and adopt a report prepared by technical experts who met the previous week and came up with several recommendations on how to implement the COMESA Youth Programme. This programme was approved in 2015 to deepen youth participation in socio-economic development and democratic governance.

To enable tracking the implementation, the ministers approved a framework to assist Member States develop their annual reports on youth engagement, participation, and policies. The reports will enable COMESA Secretariat to develop an annual regional report on youth.

The ministers also adopted the findings of baseline studies on youth conducted in Member States, which will provide a framework for analyzing the

opportunities and challenges that young people face regarding their participation in socio-economic development and democratic governance.

Egyptian Minister of Youth and Sports, Dr Ashraf Sobhy, who chaired the meeting, noted that the youth have the potential to carry forward the regional integration agenda and urged Member States to domesticate the ministerial decisions at the national and regional level.

"It's good that the youths are now being discussed at these meetings as they are key in economic development of any country's economy owing to the fact that they are the majority in the world," Dr Sobhy said.

Youth Engagement strategy

Other documents adopted at the meeting included the COMESA Youth Engagement Strategy and the Terms of Reference for the establishment of the COMESA Youth Advisory Panel, and the Recruitment, Deployment and Management System for the youth internship program. Member States agreed to initiate the process of institutionalizing the recruitment practices at national level.

COMESA Secretary General, Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe said the region should

cultivate an enabling environment to empower youths to meaningfully participate in civic and economic opportunities.

"This can only happen by uplifting the youth to a level where they have decision-making power and opportunities in finding solutions to challenges facing their respective countries," she said.

The meeting appreciated the support from development partners including the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), the African Union, United Nations Volunteers, and the International Trade Center (ITC).

As a result of these partnerships, several initiatives are underway including the COMESA, African Union/ African Governance Architecture (AU/AGA) youth engagement project. This project is spearheading youth participation in socio-economic development and democratic governance, supported by the SDC.

Among those that also addressed the over 70 delegates from the 21 Member States that attended the meeting were the Rwanda Minister of Youth and Culture, Hon. Rosemary Mbabazi and representatives of the AU/AGA and ITC, Ms. Hagar Azzoz and Ms. Ludmila Azo, respectively.



File/ Interim ACTESA Chief Executive Officer Dr John Mukuka addressing an ACTESA and partners meeting in Kenya, 2017

New ACTESA board unveiled

The alliance is expected to work with alliance partners to deliver inclusive impact-oriented programs

The Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) unveiled a new board of directors in June to lead this specialized institution of COMESA in its mandate to promote trade in agricultural commodities.

The board is comprised of members from partner organizations including COMESA Member States of Egypt and Madagascar; Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU); East African Farmers' Federation (EAFF); African Fertilizer Agribusiness Partnership (AFAP); African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA); African Development Bank Group (AfDB) and Eastern African Grain Council (EAGC).

The inauguration of the Board was conducted on 17 May 2021, six months after the COMESA Council of Ministers gave the nod on its 41st meeting held on 26 November 2020. Mr. Jason Scarpone, President, and chief executive of AFAP was elected ACTESA Board Chairperson while Dr. John Mukuka was appointed Interim Chief Executive Officer.

With the board in place, ACTESA is expected to effectively address food security challenges in the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) region through

improved competitiveness of staple food markets and the development and harmonization of regional agricultural policies.

In line with its new Strategic Plan 2021-2031, ACTESA is expected to provide an answer to the region's agricultural challenges, including market access-related constraints, low productivity, technological and policy-related constraints.

Mr. Scarpone expressed gratitude for the appointment noting his previous working experience with COMESA Regional Agro-inputs Programme (COMRAP) between 2010 and 2012.

"I look forward to having ACTESA assist the private sector in developing agribusiness in the COMESA Member States," he said.

Secretary General of COMESA, Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe, observed that with the new governance structure in place, ACTESA should deal with the practical implementation of agricultural programmes such as the enhancement of the regional value chains to exploit economies of scale, lower production, and marketing costs, and assist in removing non-tariff barriers.

"Given that most COMESA Member States mainly export primary commodities, ACTESA's role will be key

in facilitating input supply chain in the region to stimulate productive synergies within the continent and ultimately boost intra-Africa trade currently at 20% across all commodities," she noted.

Going forward, ACTESA is expected to work with alliance partners that include private sector actors (staple food and seed traders), governments, farmer organizations, trader organizations and agricultural-based NGOs to deliver inclusive impact-oriented programs in the region.

The alliance partners are already in existence at the national and regional levels and will therefore assist in catalyzing and supporting the achievement of tangible results and contribute to the development of the value chain in areas that relate to policy, markets, trade, and stakeholder capacity building.



Given that most COMESA Member States mainly export primary commodities, ACTESA's role will be key in facilitating input supply chain in the region to stimulate productive synergies within the continent and ultimately boost intra-Africa trade currently at 20% across all commodities," Secretary General of COMESA



The Kazungula Bridge

Tripartite regional trade set to grow, as new bridge opens

The US\$259 Kazungula bridge will support small scale cross border trade which is key to regional integration agenda

The commissioning of the Kazungula Bridge and One Stop Border Post at the Zambia-Botswana border is set to boost regional trade especially among the tripartite regional economic communities: COMESA, East African Community, and the Southern African Development Community.

The 923 meters long bridge is part of the North South Corridor that carries about 85% of regional traffic dominated by trading activities between the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia and South Africa.

Commissioning of the US\$259 million bridge on Monday 10 May 2021 was conducted by Heads of State from the region and witnessed by among others, the COMESA Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe.

“The bridge and the one stop border post facility provide a solution to the problems experienced at the key border point which negatively impacted trade and transport facilitation between the regional States,” she noted.

The bridge provides solutions to endemic challenges including inadequate infrastructure, unreliable clearance systems, multiplicity of government agencies, lack of ICT connectivity among Government Agencies, lack of adequate signage, proliferation of customs clearing agents and several different charges, fees collected at different payment points.

Past studies indicates that cargo trucks took 5 to 10 days to cross the Kazungula border post due to the highlighted challenges and the limitation of the pontoons that carried vehicles across, which operated only between 06:00 hours and 18:00 hours daily. Each pontoon could only ferry an average of 70 vehicles in a day in both directions while traffic volumes exceeded more than 250 vehicles, way above the limited capacity of the pontoons.

“As COMESA, we are happy with this development because it will also support small scale cross border trade which is key to our regional integration agenda through implementation of One Stop Border Post principles and modern border clearance procedures,” Ms Kapwepwe added.

COMESA anticipates that once

the OSBP is fully functional, it will accommodate Trade Information Desk Officers which COMESA deploys in specific border posts to assist small scale cross border traders in dealing with border formalities and information on availability of products and their prices in the neighbouring countries.

Direct beneficiaries of this bridge will be sections of the population as well as business, engaged in key economic activities such as mining, agriculture and services, and contributing to between 60% and 80% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the region.

Before the commissioning of the Kazungula bridge, transportation across the Zambezi River was through the Chirundu and the Victoria Falls bridges both on the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe. The complicated customs clearance procedures at both bridges, exacerbated by inadequate road infrastructure in the form of steep and winding routes presented bottlenecks for trade and transportation along this section of the corridor.

The bridge was constructed jointly by Zambia and Botswana.

Ministers approve industrial strategy frameworks...

→ continued from page 15

learning events and profiling some SEZ projects that could serve as regional centers of excellence,” said the Secretary General Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe. “Besides, the Secretariat will promote the development of border economic zones and facilitate the needed technical assistance for their development.”

During the meeting, the ministers also approved the regional Guidelines on Increasing Sustainable and Inclusive Industrial Production during and after COVID 19. This is recognition of the negative impact that COVID-19 has had on industrial production by disrupting regional and global value chains.

Among others, the guidelines provide for enhancement of digital transformation such as e-commerce and e-trade to reduce and avoid physical contacts during transaction within and across member States while at the same time cutting down on transaction costs.

In his remarks at the close of the meeting, Malawi Minister for Industry Hon. Roy Kachale, described the development of the frameworks as timely given the disruption occasioned by the COVID 19 pandemic.

“There is no better time than now when coming into effect of the African Continental Free Trade Area promises to offer an even greater opportunity for countries to widen their access to global supply chains and export higher value goods and services,” he said.

Heads of the delegation representing development and cooperating partners that addressed the meeting included the European Union, the World Bank, United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the International Trade Centre. Representatives from the private sector in region also participated in the meeting.

Central Banks’ staff trained on assessing financial system connection



Source Google

Fifty-six delegates from nine Central Banks in the COMESA region have been trained on how to assess and analyze financial system interconnectedness. The five-day training was conducted virtually from 7 – 11 June 2021 by the Nairobi based COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI).

The training covered the relationship created among banks through financial transactions, borrowing and lending from each other, linkages in the payments system and exposure to a common economic sector, among others.

According to CMI Director Mr Ibrahim Zeidy, greater interconnectedness among banks means that stress from one bank tends to spread more rapidly and extensively across the financial system, leading to reduced provision of financial services such as lending to the real economy.

During the training, participants were exposed to step-by-step approach in the deployment of Network Framework to the assessment and analysis of banking and payments system interconnectedness

and systemic risk using the COMESA money market data.

In his address to the delegates, Mr. Zeidy, said the training was motivated by concerns on possibilities of systemic crisis in the event of shocks to the financial system. This can be caused by the interconnectedness of not only the banking sector, but also with other non-banking financial institutions and sectors of the economy, including the debt market, real estate and the financial markets infrastructure.

Hence, the training would enable participants to share knowledge and experiences and enhance the implementation of the COMESA Financial System Development and Stability Plan as it adds to the suit of analytical tools that COMESA member countries can use to advice policy.

Central Banks from Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe participated in the training.



Amb. Dr Kipyego Cheluget

Experts discuss progress in regional infrastructure development

Member States are engaged in creating conducive environment for investment through suitable policy and regulatory frameworks

The 12th Joint COMESA Committee Meeting on Transport and Communications, Information Technology and Energy met on May 31 and June 1, 2021, to discuss the implementation of their respective programmes in the last two years. The virtual meeting preceded the ministers meeting and brought together over 100 delegates comprising of technical experts from Member States led by Permanent/ Principal Secretaries and their delegations, regional and international organizations, and cooperating partners.

Among the key highlights were reports on the development of energy sector, covering power generation, transmission and distribution which has been one of the key priorities for the Member States. According to a report presented at the meeting, a steady rise in the total installed power generation capacity in the COMESA region has been maintained. Currently it is estimated at 95,945 megawatts (MW) up from 65,791 megawatt in 2016 and 48,352 megawatts in 2012.

Thermal power dominates power generation accounting for about 78% of total installed capacity while Hydro and renewable energy account for 17% and 5% respectively.

Assistant Secretary General of COMESA, Dr Kipyego Cheluget told the delegates that many Member States are now engaged in initiatives to create a conducive environment for investment through enactment of suitable policy and regulatory frameworks and are also working on increasing the share of renewables in the energy mix.

"Djibouti and the DR Congo, which previously did not have dedicated energy regulatory bodies, have each approved legislation to establish energy regulatory bodies," he said.

Regarding power generation, transmission and regulation, several initiatives are also underway including the setting up of an electricity trading platform and rules, by the Eastern Africa Power Pool. This is in readiness for the regional electricity trading which is expected to be launched within the next two years.

On transport, the adoption of the COMESA instrument on trade and

.....
"Djibouti and the DR Congo, which previously did not have dedicated energy regulatory bodies, have each approved legislation to establish energy regulatory bodies," Dr Kipyego Cheluget

transit facilitation has been a key accomplishment. These instruments cover licensing of transit and cross-border transporters, third party insurance (the Yellow Card), harmonization of axle load limits, vehicle overload control, gross vehicle masses, vehicle dimensions and road user charges.

Specifically, the COMESA Yellow Card has gained acceptance beyond the region with non-COMESA member States such as Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique and South Sudan adopting it. These countries are in the process of domesticating the Yellow Card through technical support under the Tripartite Transport and Transit Facilitation Programme. The programme is financed by the EU covering the COMESA, SADC and EAC regions.

The recommendations arising from the experts meeting was presented to the joint meeting of ministers of infrastructure on June 2, 2021, and adopted.



Post-Covid recovery plan in aviation

Recovery plan is meant to deal with the aviation sector's post pandemic challenges

Ministers responsible for transport, energy and Information, Communication Technology (ICT) have called for post COVID-19 recovery plans to ensure the survival of the aviation industry. The recovery plan is meant to deal with the aviation sector's post pandemic challenges based on the African and international initiatives.

During their 12th meeting on June 2, 2021, the Ministers specifically called for collaborations among African airlines and strategic partnerships with global counterparts. Further, they urged Member States to maintain a united front against the pandemic, notably on the potential imposition of travel certificates by some parties in line with African common position, as well as harmonizing the cost of COVID 19 tests and mutual recognition of certificates.

Said the Ministers: "Aviation has immense potential to contribute to economic growth and development

through opening markets, facilitating trade and enabling African firms to link into global supply chains."

In 2020, international travel in Africa declined by 70.5% in passenger numbers compared to 2019, while domestic travel went down by 63.16%. Similarly, revenue accruing from international aviation business fell by \$11,204 million and \$2,345 million for the domestic sector. This is according to the International Civil Aviation Organization.

The ministers noted that five regional economic communities had jointly formulated an €8 million Support programme to the Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO) region, whose objective is to contribute to the promotion of regional integration and equitable economic growth of the air transport sector. These are COMESA, East African Community, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Indian Ocean Commission, and the Southern Africa Development Community.

COMESA Secretariat, which is the programme lead, signed the Grant Contribution Agreement with the European Union (EU) in December 2020 with the first Project Steering Committee meeting conducted on 29 - 30 March 2021.

The ministers therefore invited Member States to support implementation of the program by providing requisite information; align their national programs to the regional program and identify areas requiring support in line with the project design.

The meeting was attended by delegates from Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Regional associations representing transport, energy and ICT sectors and economic communities (Southern Africa Development Community – SADC and the East African Community) among others, participated.

Experts adopt the COMESA local content policy framework on industrialization



.....
 “The Implementation Strategy of the Local Content Framework must outline successful, local content initiatives based on a well-conceived strategy as well as legal and institutional considerations that recognize the need for joint contributions from host governments, national entrepreneurs, and foreign investors,” Dr Mavis Sibanda

Its objective is to ensure that a high proportion of project inputs are sourced from the host country

The COMESA Technical Committee on Industry conducted its 4th meeting from 24 – 25 May 2021 with the key agenda being the adoption of the draft harmonized COMESA Framework of Managing Special Economic Zones and Industrial Parks. These were tabled before the committee of ministers on 27th May 2021 for approval and implementation.

The decision to develop an Implementation Strategy of the COMESA Local Content Policy Framework was issued by the Ministers in their 3rd meeting in 2019 conducted in Kenya. Its objective is to ensure that a high proportion of project inputs are sourced from the host country without compromising the economics of the project or sector being leveraged.

Speaking when she opened the meeting, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, of Zimbabwe, Dr Mavis Sibanda said in doing so, there will be economic multiplier effect that results in greater value extraction by host countries.

“The Implementation Strategy of the Local Content Framework must outline successful, local content initiatives based on a well-conceived strategy as well as legal and institutional considerations that recognize the need for joint contributions from host governments, national entrepreneurs, and foreign investors,” Dr Sibanda stressed.

Hence, the Framework is intended to optimize the economic value to be derived from the development of natural resources through domestic linkages while giving regard to the country's development goals, vision for a given sector, trade competitiveness and the financial viability of the natural resource being leveraged.

The development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) or industrial parks was identified as one of the key industrialization enablers for successful industrialization. This is primarily motivated by the necessity to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) based on experiences from countries, which demonstrate that with proper management and incentives, these zones and parks can be an important tool for industrialization.

Assistant Secretary General of COMESA Dr Kipyego Cheluget who addressed the meeting said the draft strategy and the Framework of managing SEZs was designed to be in tandem with other regional, continental and international development frameworks.

Further, the Framework is part of the thrust to foster local value addition through utilization of local resources and localization of supply chains. It is also a tool to promote local linkages between the agricultural, extractive, industrial and service sectors.

During the two-day meeting, the technical committee also discussed the draft guidelines on inclusive and sustainable industrial production during and after the COVID 19 pandemic. They also took stock of what has been achieved in implementing Council Decisions on Industry since its last meeting in 2019. Zimbabwe was the virtual host of the meeting.

The technical committee is comprised of Permanent/Principal Secretaries, directors and other senior staff in ministries in charge of industry.

Libyan/ Algerian economic forum attracts women in business



COMFWB Libyan Chapter Delegation to the Libya-Algeria Economic Summit
(L-R) Waity Tatanaki, COMFWB Libyan Chapter Chairperson Ibtisam Ben Amer, Salma Hassan Bek, Sobhia Elissawy and Fatma Elghadi

The Libyan chapter of the COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB) was among participants at the Libyan/Algerian Economic Summit held in Algiers, 29 – 30 May 2021. Over 500 economic operators from both countries, took part in the forum which marked the signing of an agreement establishing an Algerian-Libyan Business Council to strengthen trade and increase the level of investment flows between the two countries.

A series of recommendations relating to

the reactivation of bilateral agreements, considering the regulatory framework of partnership existing between the two countries, were signed during the meeting.

COMFWB Libyan Chapter Chairperson, Mrs. Ibtisam Ben Amer, led the Libyan Women in Business to the forum which provided opportunities on women's access to finances for trade. The women engaged with counterparts and chief executives of Islamic banks among others.

Participants also resolved to pursue logistical and technical measures to make the joint border at Debdeb-Ghadamès operational for persons, goods and services. Other agreements signed, included that of easing taxes on trade and securing borders to ease transfer of goods among both countries.

Libyan Delegation was headed by Prime Minister, Mr. Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh.

New regional statistics' strategy developed

COMESA has developed a new Regional Strategy for Development of Statistics (RSDS) for 2021 – 2025, which is expected to run concurrently with the COMESA Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) 2021 - 2025.

The RSDS was consolidated by experts from National Statistics Offices (NSOs) who consulted widely with stakeholders to come up with a comprehensive document. The draft RSDS was presented to the 12th Meeting of the COMESA Committee on Statistical Matters (CCSM) on 20 May 2021 for consideration and approval.

The next step is to present the RSDS to the next COMESA Council of Ministers meeting for adoption and subsequent implementation. The workplan and budget for implementation of the

Strategy have also been finalized.

COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe described the new RSDS as a statistical response to the COMESA regional integration policy agenda.

"This revised RSDS is in line with the COMESA's Treaty expectations for the role that statistics is to play in the common market," she said during the official opening of the virtual meeting.

She added that on its part, COMESA Secretariat will exert efforts towards mobilization of resources for implementation of the regional statistical agenda. Recently, the COMESA Secretariat signed a protocol of agreement with the African Development Bank (AfDB) as the executing agency for the Statistical Capacity Building (SCB)

programme.

Additionally, the Secretariat is in the final stages of implementing the European Union supported institutional capacity building programme, which will support among others, statistical capacity.

The one-day meeting was attended by Directors of National Statistics Offices, representatives of Central Banks, sector ministries, representatives of the EU, the European Statistical office (EUROSTAT), PARIS21, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Union Commission, the International Labour Organization, Statistics Norway and Statistics Sweden.



Great strides in regional energy development amidst COVID-19

The roadmap towards the transformation of the Regional Energy Regulators Association into a Regional Regulator for SADC has been developed

The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic reverberated across the region with almost every sector adversely impacted. Implementation of the COMESA projects, which are mainly driven through direct stakeholders' engagement, in multiple states were specifically affected.

The project on Enhancement of a Sustainable Regional Energy Market in the Eastern Africa-Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Region (ESREM/EA-SA-IO) is one of those whose final year of implementation, covering the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 experienced setbacks.

ESREM project covers the COMESA, the East African Community (EAC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the relevant regional specialized institutions.

According to the fourth progress report (2020-2021) presented by the Project Management Unit (PMU) during the 7th

Meeting of the Programme Technical Steering Committee (PTSC) on 20 May 2021, activities that were mostly affected by the pandemic situation were meetings, workshops, and capacity building programmes. The implementation of the Framework consultancy was also affected.

Despite the setbacks, several milestones were reached through virtual engagements with stakeholders. Among them, was the development of a framework for a regionally harmonized energy regulatory sector.

The framework was finalized in 2020 and submitted to the five regional economic communities (RECs) participating in the project for adoption and implementation.

The COMESA policy organs considered and adopted the report during its October/November 2020 Council meetings. The framework consultant, CPCS Transcom International Limited was engaged to provide technical support to domesticate the harmonized regulatory framework at RECs and Member State level. This was in addition to reviewing national regulatory instruments for 14 Member States in the region.

The framework consultancy was further

engaged to provide technical support to enhance market rules for regional energy trading and develop MoUs between the East African Power Pool (EAPP) and the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP) to support the inter-regional power trading. This is intended to achieve a harmonized transmission pricing, interconnection and marketing codes and development of regional memorandums of understanding and agreements.

The project also provided technical support to several countries without autonomous energy regulators at the time the project commenced in 2017. Among them, the D R Congo, Djibouti, Comoros, Libya and South Sudan.

Other accomplishments include the development of a roadmap towards the transformation of the Regional Energy Regulators Association (RERA) into a Regional Regulator for SADC. In its current form, RERA does not have a mandate to provide regulatory oversight over the regional energy market in SADC.

The meeting was attended by representatives of Regional Economic Communities COMESA, EAC, SADC, IGAD and IOC.



COMESA and partners to enhance trade in animal products

AfCFTA will complement COMESA in creating greater market opportunities, triggering more trade and investment and allowing greater value addition

COMESA Secretariat held a one-day consultative meeting with Member States and other regional economic communities (RECs) on optimizing returns from intra-Africa trade in animals and animal products under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Key issues discussed during the virtual meeting included reinforcing multilateral cooperation for disease prevention and control, integration of informal trade in animals and animal products into formal trade and access to information on available market opportunities and potential in the region.

Trade complementarity was also addressed and the need for creating value addition opportunities to create diverse markets within Africa and financing the animal resources sector to boost productivity and development of the sector.

The consultative meeting came up with a communique in which they called for integration of AfCFTA animal resources development strategies into national AfCFTA strategies. This is in addition to identifying opportunities for investment along the value chains to enhance export capacity. They also called for the development of productive capacities in

the animal resources sector to advance industrial competitiveness and economic transformation among several other recommendations.

Zambia's Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Fisheries, Dr Benson Mwenya who was represented by the Director of Animal Production Dr Chibwe Kaoma, observed that lack of access to markets and market uncertainty for animal and animal products stagnates livestock production and productivity.

"The AfCFTA therefore gives an opportunity for our producers to increase livestock production and productivity and create more jobs especially for women and youth."

Similar challenges

According to the experts, many COMESA countries face similar challenges when accessing regional markets which include stringent SPS requirements, exotic quality standards, lack of market information, lack of linkages among enterprises in various countries, poor communication networks and inter-connectivity, lack of harmonized procedures and grading standards, transboundary animal diseases and competition from cheap imports from other regions.

To address some of these challenges, the COMESA Secretariat has been facilitating and coordinating the implementation of the Livestock Development Strategy for Africa (LiDeSA) and the COMESA Livestock Policy Framework in the region.

Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Dr Kipyego Cheluget said these policies were assisting the Member States to address some of the identified challenges.

"We are witnessing Member States increasing their attention to the agricultural transformation and enhancing value chains and expanding agro-processing and opening up their economies to domestic and international investments," Dr Cheluget said in a statement presented by the Director of Agriculture and Industry, Mrs Providence Mavubi.

He noted that the creation of the AfCFTA will play a major role in complementing COMESA's efforts in creating greater market opportunities, triggering more trade and investment and allowing greater value addition. This underscores the need to develop infrastructure such as animal source food processing plants, abattoirs, quarantines and laboratories, including strengthening surveillance system, early detection, reporting and containment of the problems in collaboration with other RECs.

African Union InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) Officer in Charge, Mr Talal Kishlat also addressed the meeting and called for increased collaboration with Member States and partner organisations.

Convention to promote trade in agriculture commodities



The COMESA-SADC-EAC tripartite agreement and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) present huge opportunities for enhancing intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and food.

According to the Secretary General of COMESA, Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe, while the African continent has the potential to feed itself as well as export to the rest of the world, trade data disappointingly shows that over the last 15 years the African countries have been net food importers.

Ms. Kapwepwe was the keynote speaker during the 7th Edition of Africa Fairtrade Convention (AFC) held virtually on 22nd June 2021. The event brought together producers, traders, partner organizations, Fairtrade movement, government, policymakers, among other stakeholders.

Organized by Fairtrade Africa (FTA), the Convention provided a forum to discuss improvement of value chains, trade relations, and conditions which translate to improved livelihoods for farmers and workers in Africa. FTA is an African producer organization, certified on international Fairtrade standards producing traditional export commodities.

Ms Kapwepwe said that the AfCFTA will lead to a substantial increase in agricultural trade between regional economic communities (RECs), and particularly in semi-processed and processed agricultural products by removing all forms of intra-African trade barriers.

"Diversification of agricultural exports, away from primary commodities is key to intra-African trade expansion," she said. "There is potential for intensifying intra-regional trade by building on localized comparative advantages within the region for selected regional agricultural value chains."

The one-week convention served as a platform that afforded Fairtrade producers, traders, buyers, public and private sector the opportunity to deliberate on trade and agriculture, particularly within the COVID-19 context and in the light of the emerging opportunities, and trends in the international trade in agricultural commodities.

Fairtrade International Board Chairperson Lynette Thorstensen said the growing threat of climate change and the COVID 19 has become louder than ever, and this has put the prices of commodities very high for the common person.

In this regard, she said her organization was willing to provide justice and fair trade to all farmers to protect them from various forms of exploitation as the only way to reach a people-centered recovery which will be successful and resilient. She added that the board has so far spent over 10.5 million euros in farmer support in the world with over 300 million euros going towards supporting those in Africa.

"The farmers need to have a dream register that will enable them look to the future instead of concentrating on the current situation," she added.

“There is potential for intensifying intra-regional trade by building on localized comparative advantages within the region for selected regional agricultural value chains.”

Among those that addressed the meeting were Ms. Mary Kinyua, Board Chair, Fairtrade Africa from Kenya and Norman Kativu, youth representative and Fairtrade Africa board member from Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe, Egypt envoys accredited to COMESA

Newly appointed ambassadors of Egypt and Zimbabwe to Zambia were accredited as Permanent Representatives of their respective countries to COMESA in April 2021. H.E. Charity Angelina Charamba (Zimbabwe) and H.E. Moataz Anwar (Egypt) presented their letters of credence to the Secretary General of COMESA, Chileshe

Kapwepwe on Friday, 30 April 2021.

The two underlined their governments' commitment to the regional economic bloc given the large market it provides for trade.

"Zimbabwe has continued to benefit from the different trade and integration

programmes that are being implemented by COMESA with support from cooperating partners such as the European Union," she said.

In February, COMESA and Zimbabwe signed an agreement that sub-delegated the implementation of coordinated border management activities including the trade and transport facilitation activities at the Chirundu border post.

The sub-delegated activities are worth Euro 4.1 million and will support upgrading of priority cross-border infrastructure and equipment at Chirundu border between Zimbabwe and Zambia and will enhance trade between the two States.

Ambassador Anwar commended COMESA for deepening economic integration and promoting regional cooperation among the Member States.

Ms Kapwepwe appreciated the good working relations with both countries which has enabled implementation of country specific programmes. Through the COMESA Adjustment Facility, the Secretariat has helped revive the textile sector by providing financial support/grant to Zimbabwe.

A Joint Industrialization Cooperation programme, between Zimbabwe and Zambia has also been supported to develop priority sectors including agriculture and agro-industries, mining and mineral processing, petrochemicals, fertilizers and pharmaceuticals, capital goods industries, textiles, and forest-based industries, among others.

On Egypt, the SG said the country accounts for the largest share of intra-COMESA trade at 28% of the total trade.



Amb. Charity Angelina Charamba (R) Presenting Her letter of Credence to SG Chileshe Kapwepwe



Amb. Moataz Anwar Presenting His letter of Credence to SG Kapwepwe



Caption: (L-R) H.E Istem H.E. Circiroglu, COMESA SG, H.E. Chileshe Kapwepwe and H.E Arthur Henrique Villanova Nogueir

Brazil, Turkey envoys accredited

Brazil and Turkey have appointed new ambassadors to Zambia and Special Representatives to COMESA. H.E Arthur Henrique Villanova Nogueir (Brazil) and H.E Istem H.E. Circiroglu from Turkey presented their letters of Credence to Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe during a ceremony held in Lusaka on 24 May 2021.

Both reaffirmed their governments commitment to support COMESA's regional integration agenda through continued cooperation in different programmes.

Ambassador Nogueir said Brazil follows with great interest developments involving the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), where COMESA has a special role given its institutional strength and experience in promoting free trade.

He said, Brazil is committed to regional integration as a key member of the Mercosur, the Common Market for Southern America, which has been in existence for 30 years and has maintained a long and successful

trajectory. Hence Brazil is keen to forge closer relations between the two institutions through identified areas of cooperation.

Turkish Ambassador said her country was committed to continue working with African countries and regional organisations such as COMESA to develop a win-win approach in commercial and economic relations.

"Our approach to African countries is built on a holistic, inclusive and equal partnership based on mutual respect and benefit," she said. "We continue to contribute to peace and stability and economic and social development in Africa through our public institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector."

Further, she said Turkey was the 5th country in the total number of diplomatic missions established in Africa and continues to promote the continent at the global level especially on digitalization for sustainable development. The official development aid provided by Turkey's public institutions to Africa between 2005



We continue to contribute to peace and stability and economic and social development in Africa through our public institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector."

Chileshe Kapwepwe

and 2019 is approximately US\$3.5 billion.

Secretary General Kapwepwe said the two countries have remained important trading partners with the regional bloc. COMESA's main export products to Brazil are mainly natural resources whereas the main imports are manufactured products.

In recent years, Brazil and Turkey have increased their presence in Africa through the south-south cooperation in areas such as agriculture, health, environment, livestock, industry, education, aid and humanitarian dimension.



COMESA extends technical support to Central Bank of Lesotho

COMESA Secretariat has provided technical assistance to the Central Bank of Lesotho (CBL) to help create a trade database, which is able to import and validate trade data files from the Lesotho Customs office. This followed a request from the CBL through the Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa (MEFMI).

The Automated Data Processing (ADP) Expert at COMESA Secretariat, Mr Wilson Chizebuka conducted an online technical mission with the CBL to assist the bank with the upgrading of their system from MS Excel to Microsoft Access.

Subsequently, COMESA has been involved in several interventions at all levels of statistical development in its member States and those of the EAC, SADC and SACU. One key intervention is technical assistance in the production of trade statistics through Eurotrace software installations and general trade database development. This is to ensure the continued timely and regular remittance of trade data to users.

The request from Lesotho mostly focused on the development of correlations between the Harmonized System (HS) and Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) nomenclatures.

Prior to this, a fact-finding meeting between COMESA and the CBL was conducted virtually where it was established that the bank was using MS Excel files with trade data from Customs and were updating the SITC codes and descriptions manually. The manual process was tedious and time consuming hence, it was agreed that COMESA helps in coming up with a Database capable of uploading the Ms Excel files, validate and generate a relation between the HS and SITC.

According to experts, statistics play a critical role in providing evidence-based monitoring and evaluation of programs in any organization. Trade statistics have played a major part in the monitoring of progress made towards regional integration.

Regional banks' staff trained to prevent institutional failures

The training was motivated by recurrent bank failures due to poor credit risk management frameworks and practices

In an initiative to prevent failure of banks, which is common in the COMESA region, COMESA Monetary Institute in April 2021 trained over 50 staff from 10 Central Banks in the region on new accounting principles for financial instruments. The training on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS9) and Internal Capital Adequacy Assessment Process (ICAAP) was conducted virtually from 26 – 30 April 2021. It mainly addressed the concerns of measuring financial assets at fair value with forward looking assessment of expected credit losses.

Central Banks' staff from COMESA Member States namely Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Libya, Malawi, Mauritius, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe participated.

According to the CMI Director, Mr Ibrahim Zeidy, the training was motivated by recurrent bank failures in the COMESA region, like in many parts of the world, due to poor credit risk management frameworks and practices.

"The Basel Committee on banking supervision's principles for management

of credit risk recommends that banks should have an effective system in place to identify, measure, monitor and control credit risk as part of an overall approach to risk management," he said.

The Basel Committee is the primary global standard setter for the prudential regulation of banks and provides a forum for regular cooperation on banking supervisory matters. Following the training, the participants will be able to recognize impairment of financial instruments and offer a practical hands-on knowledge on how to review internal capital adequacy. Hence, they will be able to identify and assess credit risks by the banking system in their respective countries.

The training also empowered them to measure expected credit loss and the impact on banks' financial statement.

ICAAP is an internal capital management approach which enables banks to determine the level of capital that is adequate to support the scope of their risks. With comprehensive ICAAP, banks are better placed to set internal capital targets that are consistent with their business model and strategy, risk profile and operating environment.



Farewell to our founding father: Dr Kenneth Kaunda

Zambia's founding Father, Dr Kenneth David Kaunda who died on 17 June 2021, was the remaining independence era Head of State who founded the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) the precursor to COMESA. On behalf of the organization, Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe, sent a message of commiseration to the government, the family and the people of Zambia:

"We received the news of the demise of the founding father of Zambia, H.E. Dr Kenneth David Kaunda, with a deep sense of sadness and immense loss. Dr Kaunda was one of the great sons of the continent whose contribution to the liberation of Africa and enhancement of regional integration is immeasurable.

Dr Kaunda was not only a leading freedom fighter for the independence of African States, but he played a key role in the establishment of regional economic communities including the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) the precursor to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, COMESA.

A long-time champion of regional integration, Dr Kaunda remained a constant inspiration through the vision of our founding fathers which continues to shape and guide our actions.

Our region will forever remember him for his visionary leadership that firmly believed that economic independence of African States can only be achieved and sustained through unity, peace and self-reliance. His vision is now our vision of a fully integrated economic community that is prosperous, internationally competitive, and ready to merge into the African Economic Community. We cannot honour this great Pan African more, than by remaining true to his vision.

His commitment to peace laid a solid foundation for Zambia that has over the years ensured the country remains a beacon of peace in the region. Amidst daunting challenges, he successfully steered his country Zambia to independence and beyond, while actively supporting other regional States to achieve their own self-rule.

We pray for his soul to rest in eternal peace".





File: Signing ceremony of financing agreement for construction of multi-purpose Trade Hub in Manzini, Eswatini. (L-R) Eswatini Minister of Finance Hon. Neal Rijkenberg, COMESA SG Chileshe Kapwepwe, Trade Minister Hon. Manqoba Khumalo and Ms. Ariane Labat (EU - Eswatini)

COMESA Fund due for review

A framework that allows support at a large scale for its infrastructure development is envisaged

COMESA Fund Technical Committee met on 12th May 2021 to discuss the progress made in the implementation of various projects. The meeting was attended by delegates from, Comoros, Kenya, Malawi, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

They noted the achievements attained through COMESA Adjustment Facility

over the years, including the ongoing construction of the Manzini Trade hub in Eswatini and border export zone structures across four border markets in Uganda. This is in addition to supporting the leather clusters in DR Congo, Eswatini, Madagascar, Malawi, Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Addressing delegates at the virtual meeting, Assistant Secretary General in charge of COMESA programmes Dr Kipyego Cheluget, said the COMESA Fund was put place with support of the European Union to facilitate such a regional response and it was now opportune to review the mechanism for continued delivery on its mandate.

years that have passed, and the opportunities missed, COMESA is now going forward to provide a framework that allows support at a large scale for its infrastructure development,” Dr Cheluget said adding that time was of essence to quickly position the Fund as a viable instrument.

At the same function, Chairperson of the COMESA Fund Mr. Peter Obol said that most Member States have suffered the effects of the Coronavirus and therefore, the key issue now was how to continue such support in the face of the pandemic’s impact and the need to strategically launch into the continental and global integration.



It is COMESA’s hope that given the years that have passed, and the opportunities missed, COMESA is now going forward to provide a framework that allows support at a large scale for its infrastructure development,” Dr Kipyego Cheluget

He said the challenges surrounding the operationalization of the Infrastructure Fund under this facility are being addressed following the decisions and amendments of the COMESA Fund Protocol. The amendments allow a clear distinction of the role of Member States under the COMESA Infrastructure Development Fund (CIDF).

“It is COMESA’s hope that given the

He further stated that when trying to address the development of regional infrastructure, the demand for resources remains a challenge that must be addressed if the links that will facilitate development have to be achieved.

The deliberations of the meeting would provide technical guidance to the COMESA Fund Ministers when it meets for decision-making.

COMESA taskforce team to work with AU- CDC



The COMESA COVID-19 Taskforce Team with the AU-CDC after their meeting at the COMESA Secretariat



AU-CDC Team conducts an assessment of the COMESA offices on COVID-19 preparedness

The COMESA Secretariat COVID-19 Taskforce led by Assistant Secretary General for Programmes (ASGP) Amb. Dr Kipyego Cheluget on Tuesday 6 April received representatives from the Africa Union Centre for Disease Control (AU-CDC) to discuss the pandemic and how the Secretariat should plan and prepare to return to work physically.

Leading the AU CDC team was the Regional Collaborating Centre (RCC) Coordinator Dr Lul Riek who together with the Infectious Prevention Control (IPC) Focal Point Dr Ariyo Bakare briefed the

COMESA team on the different measures and steps that need to be considered before the Secretariat could re-open.

Amb. Kipyego welcomed the delegation to COMESA Secretariat and briefed them on the measures that have been put in place since March 2020. He informed the delegation that the Secretariat has continued to operate smoothly through the Business Continuity Plan.

The AU-CDC delegation was taken round the offices and surroundings and later held a meeting with the COMESA team.

Regional apex banks' staff trained on stress testing

Staff of Central Banks from the COMESA region have been trained on macro and micro stress testing, which are key tools for assessing the stability of the financial system. The virtual training was conducted by the COMESA Monetary Institute from 10 – 14 April 2021.

Forty-six delegates from 10 Central Banks from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe participated.

The training familiarized the participants with stress testing tools, which focuses on identification of channels through which shocks are transmitted between the financial sector and the real economy, and within and between financial systems.

They learned to link changes in macroeconomic and financial variables with financial results and measure their relative impact on the health of the banking system. Besides, the training would enable them to assess the resilience of individual banks and the financial system to solvency, liquidity and contagion risks and their interaction. Ultimately, the trained staff will be able to analyze the health of commercial banks and assess their interconnectedness.

Construction of border export zones in Uganda at 85%

Construction of Border Export Zones in four sites in Uganda has reached 85%. The border markets under construction in the zones include Busia, Lwakhakha, Oraba and Katuna. According to a report from a technical mission conducted by the COMAid Unit (COMESA Aid for Trade) at the border markets from 8th to 19th April 2021, the works done at the Busia and Lwakhakha were at 85%, Oraba at 77% and Katuna at 45%. The lag at Katuna is because of adverse weather pattern in the area, which prompted the change of construction site.

Structural works have been completed while the floors and external works were the only ones remaining.

Construction of the border markets is being done under the Regional Integration Implementation Project, Phase II with funding amounting to Euro 2,766,945. The project was formulated and signed in October 2017 with an end date of 30th June 2021. Uganda commenced construction of the four border markets in September 2020 with a total budget of Euro 1.5 million. By April this year, the country has received a total of Euro

1,343,846 under its workplans.

Uganda has been benefitting under the COMESA Adjustment Facility (CAF) since 2014 and has secured a total approved allocation of Euro 5,592,824. The funds have been disbursed through project support. The first project was the Regional Integration Implementation Project, which attracted funding of Euro 2,825,879 under the 9th European Development Fund (EDF 9) component and ended on 30th June 2018. The construction of the markets is the biggest activity undertaken by the project.



Ethiopian Amb. Addisu Abera (L) and Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe

Tripartite agreement discussed as Ethiopia ambassador visits COMESA

The ratification of the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) and signing of the COMESA Social Charter were among issues discussed during a courtesy call by the Ethiopia's Ambassador to Zambia and Zimbabwe H.E Addisu

Abera and the Secretary General of COMESA Chileshe Kapwepwe Friday, 30th April 2021.

During the meeting which focused mainly on the developments in

Ethiopia and its participation in COMESA's regional integration programmes, the Ambassador also sought COMESA's support to Dr Arkebe Oqubay, as Africa's sole Director-General candidate for the United Nations Development Organisation (UNIDO).

On TFTA, the Secretary General urged the Ambassador to lobby his government to sign and ratify the Agreement to enable it to enter into force. So far, 10 countries in the COMESA, EAC and SADC regional blocs have ratified the TFTA with four more needed to attain the ratification threshold of 14 States. In February this year, the Tripartite Council of Ministers set a new deadline for countries that have not yet ratified the agreement to do so by June.

Amb. Abera who is resident in Harare, Zimbabwe reiterated his government's commitment to COMESA whose programmes have continued to benefit the people of Ethiopia and the region. Ethiopia has been the Rapporteur of the COMESA Policy Organs since 2016 after serving as Chair of the Authority and Vice Chair respectively.

Ethiopia also hosts the African Leather and Leather Products Institutes which is a specialized COMESA institution.



File: 2019 COMESA Council of Ministers meeting

Tunisia ready to participate in the COMESA trade regime

Regional trade has grown by an average of 7% every year with a higher increase reflected among participating Member States.

Tunisia is ready to fully participate in the COMESA Free Trade Area regime (FTA) one year after giving notification of participation in the trade regime in March 2020.

To prepare for this, the COMESA Secretariat through the Division of Trade conducted a three-day virtual sensitization workshop for Tunisia on 20th April 2021, covering not only the FTA but other trade facilitation instruments as well. Participants were drawn from the Tunisian government and the private sector. COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Amb. Kipyego Cheluget opened the event by welcoming Tunisia's decision to join the FTA.

"We welcome this decision by Tunisia," Amb. Cheluget said. "It is

encouraging to note that traders and producers from Tunisia are already active in the COMESA market going by the number of notifications to the Secretariat of emerging NTB's already being encountered in its commercial transactions."

Besides the FTA, COMESA is implementing various programmes aimed at promoting regional integration through trade. They include infrastructure upgrading, enhancing competitiveness of industry and agricultural sectors and social programmes that address issues of gender, health and better use of natural and human resources.

The FTA was established in 2000 under the trade integration pillar and is one of the major milestones which has contributed to growth in regional trade which is now at an average of 7% every year with a higher increase reflected among participating Member States.

Notwithstanding, the region's potential for growth is set back by among other

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It is encouraging to note that traders and producers from Tunisia are already active in the COMESA market going by the number of notifications to the Secretariat of emerging NTB's already being encountered in its commercial transactions." Amb. Kipyego Cheluget

factors, non-tariff barriers, inadequate infrastructure, high cost of doing business, limited information on available market opportunities and supply side constraints.

Going forward, the Secretariat intends to address some of these constraints through the implementation of the Digital Free Trade Area (DFTA) instruments such as the COMESA electronic certificate of origin and the COMESA online market and by increasing the scope of trade in services.

The COMESA FTA started off with nine Member States participating in a scheme that provides for duty free quota free trade and has now grown to 16 Member States with the participation of Tunisia. Tunisia joined COMESA in 2018.

Ireland and COMESA revitalize collaboration



Mr. Pronch Murray

The Government of Ireland and COMESA Secretariat have begun engagements to identify potential areas of future cooperation to boost their mutual relations. On April 22, 2021, the Acting Head of Mission of the Irish Embassy in Zambia Mr. Pronch Murray and the Secretary General of COMESA, Chileshe Kapwepwe held a virtual meeting during which they discussed potential areas of partnership.

Ireland has supported the COMESA Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) particularly in the development of seed certification systems and had the potential of further upscaling. Other potential areas of collaboration are in mitigating the socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on member States and the promotion of digital technology and innovation to facilitate intra-COMESA trade. Key in this priority would be the development of COMESA Digital Free Trade Area to promote trade through ICT platforms and tools to replace paperwork and need for physical contacts.

Another potential area of support is women's participation in regional trade particularly on improving their access to information and collection of gender disaggregated data. Mr. Murray observed that the Irish mission in Zambia is accredited to COMESA hence enabling more robust interactions on potential cooperation. He said the Irish embassy's 2022 - 2026 strategy, which is expected to be finalized before the end of this year, also provides an opportunity to chart the way forward for the embassy programmes in Zambia and COMESA for the next five years.

Secretary General Kapwepwe commended Ireland for its commitment to Africa citing its recent commemoration of 40 years of diplomatic existence in Zambia.

Other issues discussed included the COMESA peace, stability, and security programme. The Secretary General explained that COMESA has developed early warning systems to manage potential conflicts.

"This is a potential area of collaboration to support Member States in early warning and monitoring mechanisms, as opposed to waiting for conflict to escalate," she said.

She emphasized that peace and stability were essential for trade and that this was a strong pillar for COMESA which had been supported very strongly by the EU in the past. The two agreed to further engage on the highlighted issues and develop a programme to work on.



This is a potential area of collaboration to support Member States in early warning and monitoring mechanisms, as opposed to waiting for conflict to escalate," Ms Chileshe Kapwepwe.



AfCFTA Secretary General Wamkele Mene (L) and COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe

AfCFTA, COMESA CEOs to establish cooperation framework

“AfCFTA will count on COMESA owing to its strong institutions established over the years to facilitate regional trade”

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat and COMESA will establish a partnership framework to support the implementation of the continental trade regime. Technical teams from the two organizations will start working immediately on the framework by establishing committees to deal with specific aspects of the partnership.

This was resolved during the first visit by the Secretary General of the AfCFTA Secretariat Mr. Wamkele Mene to the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka, Zambia, Tuesday 13 April 2021. Mr Mene was received by his COMESA counterpart Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe and senior members of staff. Stressing the need for COMESA and other regional economic communities to support implementation of the continental trade agreement, Mr Mene said the AfCFTA provides the best chance for Africa's development to succeed.

“The priority now is how to work together to push back the frontiers of poverty in our continent,” he said adding that industrial

development and deepening intra-Africa trade was among the key areas of focus.

Mr Mene observed that COMESA has well established and strong institutions to support implementation of the AfCFTA besides being the largest regional economic community in Africa, hence an important building bloc for the success of the continental trade regime.

He underscored the important role that regional economic communities will continue to play as the building blocs for the successful implementation of the AfCFTA. COMESA, he said was one of those that AfCFTA will count on owing to its strong institutions established over the years to facilitate regional trade.

Secretary General Kapwepwe assured that her organization was keen to work with the AfCFTA and other RECs in advancing intra-African trade as the answer to poverty reduction and enhanced development in Africa.

“We need to work together to deepen intra-Africa trade as this is the only answer to the many challenges that our continent is facing,” Ms Kapwepwe said. “Trade in many areas such as agriculture production and developing our manufacturing and industrial sectors can

greatly assist Africa.

She called for the extension of the piloting of the Pan African Payment System from the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) region to the rest of Africa as one way that the two organizations can begin to collaborate. COMESA Clearing House is already implementing the Regional Payment and Settlement System (REPSS) which provides a single gateway for Central Banks within the region to effect payment in a multicurrency environment.

Importers and exporters are able to pay and receive payment for goods and services through an efficient and cost-effective platform thus increase intra-regional trade. Other cooperation areas could include partnerships with COMESA institutions such as the Trade and Development Bank, the African Trade Insurance Agency, the COMESA Competition Commission, COMESA Business Council, COMESA Federation of Women in Business among others.

Some of the key challenges affecting regional free trade are dependency on development partners for funding programmes, slow ratification of instruments, high cost of doing business and inadequate infrastructure.



COMESA updates Libya on the regional energy programme

COMESA Secretariat working with the Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA) conducted a one-day virtual sensitization workshop on 24 May 2021 for Libyan stakeholders on the regional energy programme and projects.

The objective was to appraise the stakeholders on the COMESA energy programme with specific focus on the RAERESA whose mandate includes the promotion of regional energy regulation and protection of consumer welfare and facilitating integration of the energy markets.

RAERESA Chief Executive Officer Dr Mohamedain Seif Elnasr said Member States had adopted the report on the status of the energy efficiency and environment in the electricity sector in the region. Subsequently, several energy guidelines, including feed-in-tariffs guidelines, public private partnership guidelines, guidelines on regulatory framework on off-grid electrification and guidelines on joint development of a project have been developed.

"Using the renewable energy guidelines, some COMESA Member States such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia have managed to attract investments in the sector through

independent Power Producers," Dr Elnasr said.

COMESA countries have continued to implement energy reforms using the RAERESA guidelines by adopting transformation plans on the structure, operation, and financing of their state-owned operators. These are articulated in their national energy policies which are compliant to the COMESA Model Energy Policy Framework.

The COMESA Energy Programme promotes regional cooperation in energy development, trade and capacity building to address the supply side constraints, reduce the cost of doing business and enhance regional and global energy market competitiveness.

COMESA Energy Economist, Mr Malama Chileshe informed the delegates that despite notable accomplishments in the energy sector, the region lagged in infrastructure development, which could partly be addressed through public, private partnerships.

The total installed power generation capacity in the region is gradually rising and is now estimated at 95,945 megawatts from 65,791 megawatts in 2016 and 48,352 megawatts in 2012.

COMESA begins implementing business process re-engineering

COMESA Secretariat has embarked on Implementation of Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) with a staff training in electronic information management. The two-day training programme was intended to equip staff with competencies to manage information electronically. The need for the training was identified from a BPR exercise conducted by the Secretariat which involved reorganizing its structure, reviewing its processes and procedures.

It was supported by African Capacity Building Fund (ACBF) under the Regional Intergovernmental Organization (RIGO) System Strengthening programme. Director of Human Resources and Administration (DHRA) Mrs. Martha Elimu said the BPR assessment identified electronic information management as a priority.

"The organization would like to reap immediate benefits which includes improving efficiency, controlling costs and gaining a competitive advantage as highlighted in the new process models designed by the consultants," she said.

She added that management brings together a range of resources including data, content, technology, information systems, business processes and most importantly the people towards a business outcome and it can also improve coordination between divisions, units, projects, institutions, cooperating partners and Member States.

Italy bestows award to COMESA SG for promoting bilateral ties

The award is an order that Italy has created for people that have played a key role in promoting the country's relationship with the other parts of the world



Italian Ambassador to Zambia and Special Representative to COMESA Mr. Antonino Maggiore (R) and COMESA Secretary General Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe

'The Night of the Star of Italy Award' is in recognition of mutual partnership between the country and the regional bloc

The Italian Government conferred on the COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe "the Night of the Star of Italy Award" for her support and resilience in the promotion of the relationship between Italy and the Members of the regional bloc. The presentation of the award will be conducted during an art gallery

exhibition planned in Lusaka, Zambia.

Italian Special Representative to COMESA and Ambassador to Zambia, Antonino Maggiore disclosed this when he paid a courtesy call on the Secretary General, on 13 April 2021 at the COMESA Secretariat. He said the award is an order that Italy has created for people that have played a key role in promoting the country's relationship with the other parts of the world.

Secretary General thanked the Italian Government for the gesture. She

dedicated the award to COMESA staff and the Member States as an acknowledgement of the support rendered to her as she steers the regional bloc.

"It's not just for me, it's for the region and most importantly, the little girl somewhere, who can also look up and say, one day, I can do that," she said.

Businesswomen celebrate their heroines

- 50 Million African Women Speak digital platform users pick out the women who inspire them most
- Dozens of women leaders nominated from all over the COMESA region

Businesswomen from countries in the COMESA region have spoken out on who their female role models are as part of a campaign named '30 days of women in business'. The campaign which is running on the 50 Million Women African Speak platform (50MAWSP) in celebration of the international women's month of March invites platform users to name the women who inspire them.

Two weeks into the campaign, dozens of users from Tunisia to Kenya to Zambia and Eswatini have had their say, nominating well-known women leaders who run large enterprises, as well as women who may be out of the limelight but are an inspiration to those in their communities.

Among those nominated were Mrs. Tabitha Karanja of Keroche Breweries, a leading beverage producer in Kenya, leading Zambian banker, and Absa Zambia chief executive officer Mrs. Mizinga Melu, and former Democratic Republic of Congo First Lady Mrs. Olive Lembe Kabila.

The 50MAWSP users cited reasons such as passion exhibited by these women leaders, their entrepreneurial achievements, the fact that they have

defied the odds, and their ability to break through male-dominated spheres for picking them out as the women who inspire them most.

Women who wish to participate in the campaign are required to visit www.womenconnect.org or to download the 50MAWSP app, and to then submit short stories about their most admired businesswomen, giving reasons why, and what they would tell them if they had a chance to meet them in person. The most compelling of these submissions are being published on the platform and those who submitted them may have an opportunity to meet their role models.

Nominating Mrs. Tabitha Karanja, a Kenyan platform user, Ms. Sheila Karwitha Mabe, wrote: "Your growth and tenacity in the brewing industry, a business dominated by our male counterparts, has not only given the women of today hope and confidence of a bright future in contributing greatly to the economy of this country but also, motivated us to start our businesses. You have spearheaded the journey to Women in Leadership not only in Kenya but across Africa."

Ms. Precious Limamu, a Zambian user, picked Mrs. Mizinga Melu as her inspiration and stated thus: "Seeing you get to such great heights gives me

assurance that I too can climb the ladders of success despite being female."

In another moving tribute, a user from Eswatini had this to say about her heroine, Ms. Sindisiwe "Sindi" Dlamini, "Your passion for women moving forward is infectious and I would love to see you break into the African markets primarily as a stepping-stone into international markets. You're a trailblazer despite the obstacles that come with being a voice of hope to young women and I pray you keep doing what you do relentlessly because I and so many others appreciate you."

The COMESA Director for Gender and Social Affairs Mrs. Beatrice Hamusonde expressed her delight at the responses from women all over the continent, "When we rolled out this campaign, we were focusing on the COMESA region, but we are excited to see so many women from all over Africa interacting and celebrating one another."

"This feedback affirms one of the key objectives for the 50 Million African Women Speak platform, which is building deep and beneficial connections among women on the continent for them to tap into their knowledge and resources to start, grow, scale up and sustain their businesses and ultimately achieve economic empowerment."



Your passion for women moving forward is infectious and I would love to see you break into the African markets primarily as a stepping-stone into international markets. You're a trailblazer despite the obstacles that come with being a voice of hope to young women and I pray you keep doing what you do relentlessly because I and so many others appreciate you." Ms. Sindisiwe Dlamini

The '30 days of women in business' campaign covers Comoros, Djibouti, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Eswatini, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sudan, Tunisia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, the countries where COMESA is implementing the 50 Million African Women Speak Project.



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