

COMESA NEWS



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Development of a **Regional Food** Balance Sheet Underway

- COMESA Bags Top Prize at the Zambia International Expo
- Framework for Strengthening Conflict Prevention Developed
- Fresh Impetus to Implement COMESA Protocols on Free Movement

Editorial

The regional food balance sheet initiative should succeed



In this edition, you will find an article on the remarkable efforts underway by COMESA and the Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and partners to develop a digital regional food balance sheet (RFBS). This is an essential tool for a region prone to food insecurity.

RFBS captures critical data that shows a complete picture of regional food availability which includes: production, imports, change in stocks on the supply side, and exports, food availability for human consumption, losses, feed, seed, industrial utilization and other use on the utilization side. It is helpful in estimating the overall shortages and surpluses in a region as well as developing projections of future food supply and demand needs. This helps in setting targets for agricultural production and trade. Even more important is that the RFBS brings transparency into agricultural markets whose lack of it is a pervasive problem that challenges farmers, traders, processors, investors, governments, and donors throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. The RFBS is anchored within COMESA framework, which already has a mandate from its Member States to consolidate it by leveraging its comprehensive trade database. This is in addition to COMESA's other relationships that enable it to more efficiently collect and aggregate stock and food price data. This is one initiative that should succeed.

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
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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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Quality testing for grains

COMESA, Texas Agrilife Research Sign Pact to Address Key Impediments to Regional Trade

COMESA and Texas A&M Agrilife Research, USA have begun collaborating in risk management of mycotoxin involving aflatoxins and fumonisins for trade commodities and staples. This is a key pillar in enabling mutual recognition of certificates of analysis amongst trading countries.

Aflatoxins and fumonisins are naturally occurring toxins and comprise key Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) issues of trade concern in the COMESA region.

COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe and Texas A&M Agrilife Research Director Dr. Cliff Lamb signed the MoU in a virtual event on 27 June 2022. Implementation of the MoU activities kicked off in July 2022, with the first Proficiency Testing (PT) Rounds conducted.

The collaboration will support

the technical activities under the COMESA/Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa project on 'Enhancing Regional Agricultural Commodity Trade in COMESA'.

The key areas of cooperation relate to Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) to trade such as the SPS and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBTs) estimated to account for 70 percent of the NTBs within the COMESA Region.

Among these are un-affordable and cumbersome conformity assessment systems, laboratory testing, certification schemes, inspection, market surveillance and sampling.

Through the COMESA-Agrilife collaboration, the application of regulatory science will help minimize these barriers and build capacity to measure and manage aflatoxin and fumonisin risk.

Further, there exists limited laboratory testing capacity in the COMESA region and competent and skilled laboratory technical staff in both the public sector and in small-and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) to accurately measure and manage mycotoxins. To process a transaction, traders in COMESA Member States go through cumbersome procedures in obtaining sanitary and Phyto-sanitary measures documents, quality certificates and other documents.

Speaking during the signing ceremony, Secretary General cited the above impediments as having contributed to the low intra-regional trade in COMESA and affecting the region's competitiveness in agriculture products in the domestic, regional and international markets.

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Trade in Services Negotiations Resume as Experts Meet



Dr Christopher Onyango



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A liberalized goods trading regime cannot offer its business community the freedom to expand and exploit existing potentials without complementary services sectors free of unnecessary restrictions and controls," Dr Christopher Onyango

Trade experts from COMESA Member States met in May this year to continue with the negotiations on the draft schedules of specific commitments under Trade in Services. This was the 11th Committee Meeting on Trade in Services, the apex forum of the Member States in the subsector.

Since 2009, following the adoption of the COMESA Regulations on Trade in Services, negotiations have been taking place in the priority sectors: business, communication, financial transport, construction, energy-related and tourism services.. The sector accounts for more than 70 per cent of the global output and

51.1 per cent of labour force.

The conclusion of the negotiations on the priority sectors, which is in the second phase, will guarantee preferential market access in both negotiated services sectors and goods.

According to the COMESA Director of Trade and Customs Dr Christopher Onyango, this will unlock the opportunities for regional businesses and suppliers to expand and strengthen existing value chains.

"The conclusion of the second phase of the negotiations would reflect the



strong commitment of COMESA towards the creation of a transparent, stable, and predictable environment for trade in services not only in the region but beyond including global markets,” he said when he addressed the delegates at the opening of the virtual meeting, 9 May 2022.

Even more significantly, he noted, it would place the COMESA Free Trade Area regime among the few in the world to guarantee its membership unlimited market access for both goods and services.

“A liberalized goods trading regime cannot offer its business community the freedom to expand and exploit existing potentials without complementary services sectors free of unnecessary restrictions and controls,” he said.

To support the negotiations, COMESA Secretariat has in the recent past conducted capacity building workshops on Trade in Services targeting negotiators, experts and aspiring professionals. The latest was the Digital Trade in Services training conducted on 25-27 April 2022 in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The Secretariat is also in the process of developing programmes to bolster transparency in the goods and services trade frameworks. Notable among these is the establishment of the trade information portal and an online platform for trade in services.

“We would like to see members make deeper commitments in the identified priority areas to make liberalization of services in the region more meaningful,” Dr Onyango added.

COMESA, Texas Agrilife Research...

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“The areas of cooperation outlined in the MoU document are very critical, pertinent, and timely as they seek to address key challenges that COMESA Member States continue to face especially on the low levels of trade at regional, continental and global levels,” she said.

In his remarks, Dr Lamb described the partnership as a tremendous opportunity to facilitate economic growth in the region, which COMESA oversees, that will benefit the population and the agriculturists of Texas.

“For us engaging in an MoU with COMESA will enhance the capacities of all the countries within the region and also help Texas A&M Agrilife in multiple ways for global food security and food safety, which are really important for us,” said Dr Lamb.

technical training sessions.

AgriLife is uniquely positioned to provide this technical support through the Office of the Texas State Chemist (OTSC), which provides regulatory oversight for the Texas feed and fertilize industry. The unique relationship of a regulatory agency housed within AgriLife Research is the academic component of systematizing knowledge and practices that can be extended globally, according to Dr. Tim Herrman, Professor, State Chemist and Director of OTSC, who also participated in the signing ceremony.

Under the pact, there will also be virtual training courses in regulatory science in food systems, laboratory quality management systems, and risk-based approaches to regulation, which will be done in collaboration with the COMESA Virtual University.



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“The two projects have similar objectives of implementation and operationalization of SAATM and thus the need to create synergy between AFCAC and COMESA for the full implementation of YD and operationalization of SAATM in the EA-SA-IO region in particular, and the African Continent in general so as to ensure realization of the AU Agenda 2063.”

Specific areas of cooperation enunciated in the MoU include a co-regulation driven regulatory regime for trade in aflatoxin and fumonisin safe staples (maize, soya bean, sorghum and groundnuts) and the Aflatoxin Proficiency Testing and Control in Africa programme (APTECA). Elements within APTECA include capacity building through a competency framework for regulators, conformity assessment through proficiency testing (PT) rounds and

The collaboration initiative started in 2015 when the COMESA Secretariat facilitated the participation of 12 regulatory testing laboratories from six Member States; Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe in the APTECA programme, which was run by Texas A&M Agrilife Research. At least 16 Member States are targeted to participate in the new Rounds of the APTECA PT Scheme.



Zambia President H.E. Hakainde Hichilema (left) cheers the COMESA team after presenting the winning trophy at the Zambia International Trade Fair.

COMESA Bags Top Prize at the Zambia International Expo

COMESA scooped the top award as the best international exhibitor at the Zambia International Trade Fair that took place in Ndola town in Zambia's Copperbelt Province 29 June – 5 July 2022. Zambia's President H.E. Hakainde Hichilema presented the Best International Exhibitor trophy to the COMESA expo team.

The expo was the 56th in the Zambia series and was anchored on the theme: "Promoting value addition for sustainable growth". This theme resonated perfectly with the COMESA's strategy of economic development through the promotion of value addition to the region's raw materials thereby promoting job creation for women, men and youths. COMESA countries participating at the Fair included Egypt, Kenya, Malawi, Congo DR and the host country, Zambia.

COMESA's participation at regional expos

is part of its outreach strategy to directly engage with stakeholders, raise public awareness on the opportunities and benefits that its integration programmes present to its members and citizens. The trade fair presented an opportunity to showcase COMESA as an organization, its programmes, its institutions, and to address any information gaps that might be existing.

At the Zambia expo, COMESA established an information resource desk where the staff team engaged with a wide cross section of stakeholders ranging from businesspeople, students, policy makers, small and medium entrepreneurs, among others.

In his keynote address, President Hichilema stressed the need for the countries in the COMESA region to partner with other COMESA member

States involved in value addition by creating regional value chains to fast track economic recovery post COVID-19.

He cited the signing of Memorandum of Understanding between Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo for mineral beneficiation which will see the two countries add value to their mineral resources.

Majority of the visitors to the COMESA stand were keen on COMESA trade facilitation programmes, information on available markets in the region, financial support to women entrepreneurs, cross border motor vehicle insurance and general information on its programmes.



Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Dr Kipyego Cheluget (Middle) with Mr Claudio Bacigalupi (right) launching the EGEE-ICT programme

Region to Benefit from an €8m ICT Programme

Programme launched to enhance governance and enabling environment in the ICT sector

Five Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are set to benefit from a new eight million euros project: Enhancement of Governance and Enabling Environment in the ICT sector (EGEE-ICT), funded by the European Union. It was launched on 12 May 2022 at the opening of the 2nd Programme Steering Committee Meeting.

The four-year programme covers 29 African countries in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) as the lead, the East African Community (EAC), the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). It will support the review and/or development of various regional policy and regulatory framework in a harmonized manner that will contribute to enhancing competition, improved access to cost effective and

secure ICT services.

The implementation of the project begun in late 2021 following the signing of a Grant contribution amounting to eight million Euros between the European Union and COMESA in December 2020. Its objective is to deepen regional integration and growth of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector in the Eastern Africa-Southern Africa and Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO) regions.

The programme will coordinate regional public and private sector ICT policy development, enhance policy and regulatory environment for competitive markets and gender sensitive ICT markets and improve infrastructure connectivity and access to ICT.

According to the EGEE-ICT project document, the penetration of mobile

telephones in the EA-SA-IO region has increased because of both private and public sector investments in infrastructure adding that internet penetration is also rapidly growing. The socio-economic benefits of accessing and using ICTs, in particular the internet, are rising as essential information and services, both in the public and private sectors, continue to move online.

Despite these positive developments, many people in the region are still not connected to ICT services, especially the internet, and the cost of access is prohibitive in most cases.

"ICT accessibility and affordability is the key for utilizing e-services and for reaching all groups of society in remote areas and other disadvantaged groups in order to transform the landscape for development," said Dr Kipyego Cheluget,

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Front (R – L): Ms. Providence Mavubi, Director, Agriculture and Industry (COMESA) Dr Apollos Nwafor, Dr Kipyego Cheluget, Mr John Mulongoti and Mr Nicholas Woolley with participants at the demonstration workshop of the digital Regional Food Balance Sheet in Lusaka, Zambia

Development of a Regional Food Balance Sheet at Advanced Stage

The Regional Food Balance Sheet will provide reliable, timely, and accurate data for food and nutrition security-related decision-making.

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"There is an urgent need for African governments to better understand the current and projected food status of their nations. Demand patterns, input availability and shifting climates are part of the knowledge needed to build future-resilient food security," noted Mr Woolley

The Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and COMESA are leading an effort to develop a digital Regional Food Balance Sheet (RFBS) that uses data from a variety of public and private sources to develop near real-time and forward-looking food balance estimates.

Once fully developed and operational, the RFBS will inform data-driven decisions around production support, trade policy, and stock management by governments, business decision-making and investment by the private sector, and food assistance by donors and emergency response organizations. Six countries are so far involved in the pilot phase namely, Kenya, Rwanda, Malawi,

Uganda, Zambia and Tanzania.

The initiative responds to the lack of reliable, timely, and accurate data for food and nutrition security related decision-making in many Sub Sahara Africa countries, a situation that was exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In recognition of these data gaps and needs, COMESA Council of Ministers, in 2020 directed COMESA Secretariat, to implement a COMESA-wide RFBS initiative.

This led to a collaborative and multi-stakeholder engagement, which has COMESA as the convener and eventual host of the platform, with support from



Dr Kipyego Cheluget

a range of analytical and technology partners. They include Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development, NASA Harvest/UMD, Bureau for Food and Agriculture Policy and Tetra Tech (among other key data providers in the region). Development partners supporting the project are the UK government, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, and the United States Agency for Internal Development (USAID).

On June 10, 2022, in Lusaka, Zambia, COMESA, AGRA and implementing partners conducted a physical demonstration of the RFBS platform for review by representatives from the six pilot countries, representing ministries responsible for agriculture, food security, and national statistics agencies. Others were regional private sector associations and development partners.

Addressing the delegates, COMESA Assistant Secretary General, Dr Kipyego Cheluget said gaps in food system data had made it challenging to understand who the food insecure were, where they lived and the level of food insecurity they were experiencing.

"These data gaps left many countries unable to respond effectively to the food needs of their citizens during this COVID-19 pandemic," he noted. "Several

stakeholders, including, governments, academic institutions, private sector, and humanitarian agencies, collect data, but rarely are these data shared or consolidated into one central database that can be used to inform decision-making by the stakeholders."

Speaking at the RFBS demonstration, the UK High Commissioner to Zambia, Mr Nicholas Woolley said avoiding disruptions in the food supply chains, for most COMESA countries, will be a critical part of building resilience in the region's food systems now and into the future.

"There is an urgent need for African governments to better understand the current and projected food status of their nations. Demand patterns, input availability and shifting climates are part of the knowledge needed to build future-resilient food security," noted Mr Woolley who is also the Special Representative of the UK to COMESA.

In his remarks, AGRA Vice President, Dr Apollos Nwafor described the RFBS as a suitable tool for estimating the overall shortages and surpluses in the region as well as developing projections of future food supply and demand needs which help in setting targets for agricultural production and trade.

Zambia's Director of Agriculture and Marketing Mr John Mulongoti, representing the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, pledged his country's support to the initiative. Data for the RFBS will be sourced from historic records from national governments and validated by the Food and Agricultural Organization, current season estimates from private and public data partners throughout East and Southern Africa, and both real-time and future estimates which use advanced analytics from satellite imagery and other technologies.

Region to Benefit..

Continued from page 5

COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes.

Major challenges inhibiting the improved access to cost effective ICTs in the region include the existence of vertically integrated dominant operators providing both the infrastructure and services, limited resources or lack of expertise to implement harmonized policies, laws and institutions. Besides, uneven and fragmented implementation of policy and regulatory frameworks across the region impedes promotion of competitive markets and the development and adoption of regional policies and regulations vary among Member States.

To resolve these bottlenecks, the EGEE-ICT will leverage on available opportunities to enhance the capacities of public and private sector institutions and the civil society to develop, implement and monitor harmonized ICT policies and regulations. The programme will also develop model policy and regulatory frameworks that enhance cross-border interconnection, competition, trade facilitation, e-commerce as well as gender perspectives in regional ICT markets.

European Union Delegation to Zambia Team Leader for Infrastructure Mr Claudio Bacigalupi said the EGEE-ICT programme is fully aligned with the EU Global Gateway Strategy and it would contribute to the development of the ICT sector in Africa and deepen regional integration.



File photo: A section of regional business community members on a industrial visit to Rwanda

Joint Approach to Underpin Regional Industrialization

Industry experts adopt a Concept Paper on industrial integration

Industry experts from COMESA have adopted a Concept Paper to strengthen industrial integration in the region. This initiative is aimed at attaining comprehensive industrial integration taking into account other programmes such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and 'Made in Africa' initiative by the Government of Egypt.

The Concept Paper, which was presented to the experts on 11-12 April 2022 in a virtual meeting, was developed by the COMESA Secretariat and the Government of Egypt following an earlier directive by the ministers of industry. It provides a roadmap for the implementation of the COMESA Industrial Strategy and its attendant Action Plan, which Member States undertook to integrate into their National Industrial Development Plans for implementation.

In the meeting of the Ministers of

industry conducted in May last year, countries were required to allocate budgets to implement their industrial development plans in synergy with regional activities and in line with the Third Industrial Decade for Africa (IDDIII).

However, the level of implementation of the Action Plan at the regional level has been minimal and varied at the national level. The Concept Paper is therefore an attempt to strengthen the efforts of the Egyptian government initiative and COMESA Member States. Its focus is on activities that will contribute effectively to implementing the industrial strategy and raising the economic growth rates of the COMESA region.

Its major specific goals include formulating regional initiatives to achieve industrial integration among African countries, increasing the manufacturing value-addition thus linking it to the

Gross Domestic Product from the present forecast of 9 percent to at least 20 percent by 2025 and identifying opportunities for the African industrial integration.

The Paper also seeks to activate the role of financial institutions to provide services that contributes to stepping up the pace of African industrial integration, agreeing on terms of the information exchange by designing an information system platform that includes a map of the African resources to be better utilized for industrial integration and diversifying the industrial base to reduce imports of value-added components.

Further, it seeks to increase intra-regional manufactured exports to at least 25 percent of total manufactured imports to the region by 2026, up from the present 7 percent by using "Made in COMESA" initiative.

Speaking at the meeting, Dr Kipyego Cheluget, the Assistant Secretary General in Charge of Programmes at COMESA, observed that despite the region experiencing a robust annual real GDP growth of close to 6.5 percent in the past decade, this had not led to economic transformation.

"Many COMESA Member States still specialize in low value-added economic activities, and trade in primary products and natural resources. Production of hydrocarbons and minerals, both capital and technology intensive, and with few forward and backward linkages to the rest of the economy has contributed to limited job growth in the region," he noted.

Head of Egyptian delegation at the meeting, Mr Mohamed Abdelkarim stressed the need for all COMESA Members States to collaborate in achieving the regional and continental industrialization objectives.



Mr. Apollos Nwafor

Plans to Develop a Regional Agricultural Commodity Exchange Centre

Plans are underway to establish a regional Agricultural Commodity Exchange Centre as part of the implementation of the 2021-2031 strategy of the Alliance for Commodity Trade in East and Southern Africa (ACTESA).

The centre will link small-scale farmers to national, regional and international markets within COMESA the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) tripartite framework and later the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

According to the Chief Executive Officer of ACTESA, Dr John Mukuka, the centre will also provide a platform for buyers and sellers to trade their agricultural products through a team of brokers. Once established, the commodity exchange will reduce transaction costs, by accommodating active players in the production, trading, processing and consumption of commodities.

Dr Mukuka said this during a meeting

with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) Deputy President in charge of policy and state capability Mr. Apollos Nwafor, who was on a visit to COMESA. He said the centre will be either physical or virtual and shall include future agricultural commodity markets exchange.

"A physical venue involves brokers meeting for trading sessions in a room or 'exchange floor', and trading by 'open outcry'. A virtual venue is where brokers use remote computer terminals to trade through a central exchange facility to which they are linked electronically," Dr Mukuka explained.

The commodity exchange is expected to improve agricultural productivity which he noted, has gone down and needed a boost by providing access to regional agricultural markets.

This entails support and training to existing national commodity exchanges and strengthening their systems and

improving their operations, then link them virtually or spot market where necessary. This shall be included in the working arrangement with AGRA in their new 2022-2027 strategy.

Other key areas of ACTESA interventions include support to seed companies using COMESA regional seed labels in seed trade, annual renewal of COMESA varieties on its variety catalogue and harmonisation of fertilizer policies/regulations, standards, quality assurance and market development in the Member States. Thereafter, a financing mechanism will be established for bulk manufacturing and procurement of fertilizers and distribution in the COMESA countries.

ACTESA is a specialized agency of COMESA, established in 2009 to facilitate the integration of and improved regional competitiveness of staple food markets across the region with the ultimate goal of achieving broad-based growth and decreased food insecurity.



World Bank Scales-up Funding COMESA Programmes

The current portfolio of World Bank supported projects in the COMESA region is close to five billion dollars and set to rise as other programmes are set to come on board. The largest project is the Regional Infrastructure Finance Facility (RIFF) of US\$ 425 million whose objective is to promote access to long-term finance and improve the enabling environment for investment in infrastructure. The bulk of this funding is under the Trade Development Bank, a COMESA institution.

The review of the ongoing programmes and discussion on new areas of collaboration formed part of the agenda of a virtual bilateral meeting between COMESA and the World Bank Group (WBG) on April 26, 2022. It was led by the World Bank Regional Director for Africa and the Middle East Dr. Bouthenia Guermazi and COMESA Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe.

COMESA SG highlighted key areas where the Bank's support would be crucial including the implementation of smart border initiative, which leverage on technology to improve efficiency at border points. The other is the scaling up of climate smart agriculture focusing on small scale growers to link them to markets.

"Given that not all our Member States have the capacity to have big industries, we are looking at agro-processing value chains which can benefit all," she said.

The WBG team disclosed that discussions were underway to support a livestock insurance programme to be managed by yet another COMESA institution the ZEP-RE (PTA Reinsurance Company). In addition, a second phase of the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation programme would soon be rolled out focusing on Burundi and D R Congo.

The first phase covered the border points of eastern D R Congo with Rwanda and Uganda.

The two parties agreed to continue with the engagement on programmes relating to food security and digitalization.

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Given that not all our Member States have the capacity to have big industries, we are looking at agro-processing value chains which can benefit all," Chileshe Kapwepwe.



ECOFISH steering Committee members at Hilton hotel in Lusaka during the 3rd Programme Steering Committee

World Bank Approves \$250m for Small Scale Trade in the Great Lakes

Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and neighboring countries within the Great Lakes Region of Eastern Africa are set to benefit from the new Great Lakes Trade Facilitation and Integration Project approved on June 9, 2022, by the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors.

The \$250 million International Development Association (IDA) financing aims to facilitate cross-border trade and enhance the commercialization of selected value chains, primarily targeting small-scale and women traders in the borderlands of the Great Lakes region.

"Local cross-border trade, if properly facilitated, can be an important way to address poverty, food insecurity, conflict, and other socioeconomic vulnerabilities that populations in the border areas face," said Dr. Chris Onyango, Director of Trade and Customs of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

He added "We seek to reduce the cost and time to trade and improve the volume and quality of goods that are traded to boost incomes, prosperity, and

stability in Burundi, the DRC, and the wider region."

The project incorporates interventions combining policy and procedure reforms to address a mix of constraints related to poor infrastructure, insecurity, cumbersome trade requirements, poor handling of products post-production, and limited trust between traders and border agencies, among other factors.

In addition to traders (particularly women and youth), beneficiaries include producers, trade service providers such as transporters and boat operators, market vendors in the border areas, port authorities and border officials, medium and small-scale enterprises, and trade officials in COMESA states.

COMESA will support regional coordination to maximize the positive spillovers of the project. While it focuses only on two countries, the project interventions are a practical implementation of the measures necessary to achieve the ideals and objectives of trade integration across Africa, both at the continental and

regional levels.

"The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) provides a solid policy platform for African countries to accelerate economic transformation, but it is at the regional level that many concrete actions are needed to address major constraints to trade integration. This project brings specificity to local and regional constraints and provides solutions," said Boutheina Guermazi, World Bank Director for Regional Integration for Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Northern Africa.

The new project scales up many of the elements of previous and ongoing World Bank projects in the Great Lakes region. In addition to financing infrastructure at additional border posts, as well as ports and roads access, it addresses border communities' lack of resources to improve trade facilitation by including specific support for value chain development and commercialization. The COVID-19 pandemic encouraged small-scale traders to work in associations, thereby improving their organization and

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Fresh Impetus to Implement COMESA Protocols on Free Movement



The Visa Protocol has existed since 1984 but has not yet achieved full implementation in the region while the Free Movement Protocol was adopted in 2001 with only four countries; Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Zimbabwe having implemented its fundamental principles.

The COMESA Protocols on free movement have over the years faced slow pace of implementation, with many decisions of the Council of the Ministers calling on Member States to speed up ratification. The protocols are on the Gradual Relaxation and Eventual Elimination of Visa Requirements (commonly known as the visa protocol) and on the Free Movement of Persons, Services, Labour and the Right of Establishment and Residence.

The Visa Protocol has existed since 1984 but has not yet achieved full implementation in the region while the Free Movement Protocol was adopted in 2001 with only four countries; Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Zimbabwe having implemented its fundamental principles.

Concerned at the slow pace of implementation, the COMESA Council of Ministers have made several decisions to spur action on this front. This led to the creation of two COMESA Task Forces on the implementation of the legal instruments, the COMESA Council of Ministers Decisions and

capacity building on the COMESA programme on free movement protocol.

The teams had their last meeting in Lusaka, Zambia from 30 May - 01 June 2022 funded by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF), through the COMESA Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP). Its objective was to discuss, a revised draft strategy, a roadmap/action plan and the draft capacity building programme for implementing the COMESA legal instruments and the decisions of the Council of Ministers relating to the free movement of persons in the region.

Implementation of the protocols is critical in deepening COMESA's regional integration for economic development under the Free Trade Area. This is in respect to trade in goods and services, in the context of the COMESA Trade



World Bank Approves \$250m...

Continued from page 11

enabling them to reduce their trade costs and potentially increase the quantity and quality of goods that can be traded.

The new project will also build on these social structures. An additional financing for the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project provides a grant of \$23 million to the DRC to finance a resettlement action plan and modernize border infrastructure at Petite Barrière in Goma, North Kivu Province.

On the border between DRC and Rwanda, Petite Barrière is the busiest pedestrian crossing point in the Great Lakes Region, handling more than 50,000 pedestrian crossings per day. More than three quarters of traders are women and there is also a significant community of people with disabilities who provide important services such as the transport of goods.

However, trade has been constrained by poor and limited infrastructure. The additional financing will directly benefit these groups as well as hundreds of thousands of people residing in eastern DRC, Rwanda, and the wider region of East Africa.

The World Bank's International Development Association (IDA), established in 1960, helps the world's poorest countries by providing grants and low to zero-interest loans for projects and programs that boost economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve poor people's lives.

(Source: The World Bank)

in Services Protocol which requires movement of labour, among others, as a factor of production and service providers. Once validated, the draft strategy and roadmap/ action plan will be presented to the COMESA Ministers responsible for immigration for adoption and subsequent implementation.

Addressing the delegates, the COMESA Assistant Secretary General - Administration and Finance, Dr Dev Haman, urged Member States to put in place policies to domesticate the principles of free movement.

He noted: "It is detrimental to the regional bloc to continuously develop new policies at the expense of existing and unimplemented ones hence the need for Member States to speed up the ratification process for the Visa Protocol to enter into force."

International Labour Organisation
Acting Regional Director, Mr. Jason

.....

"Restricting regular and orderly migration have negative economic consequences particularly in the areas of tourism, trade and general economic growth," Mr Theede

Theede, emphasized the importance of improving labour migration in the COMESA region.

He urged the Member States to address restrictions to the mobility of various groups including migrants, professional service providers, seasonal workers and cross-border traders.

"Restricting regular and orderly migration have negative economic consequences particularly in the areas of tourism, trade and general economic growth," Mr Theede said.

The Chief Technical Advisor at the International Labour Organisation, Dr Gloria Moreno-Fontes observed that labour migration was a foundation of the economic development of the African continent, and a key feature of movements in the continent and particularly in the region.

Delegates from 10 Member States, namely: Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe attended.

Technical support for the meeting was provided by the International Labour Migration (ILO), under the Southern Africa Migration Management (SAMB) Project and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a co-delegate under the COMESA Small Scale Cross Border Traders (SSCBT) initiative.



Delegates participating in the TRIST training in Lusaka

Trade Policy Analysis Training Targeting Non-Free Trade Area States

Five COMESA Member States; D R Congo, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia and Somalia are at various levels of fully joining the COMESA FTA

A weeklong trade policy analysis training for five COMESA Member States that are not fully participating in the Free Trade Area (FTA) was conducted in Lusaka, Zambia 30 May – 3 June 2022. The training also known as the Tariff Reform Impact Simulation Tool (TRIST) was intended to build the capacity of the participants to undertake partial equilibrium analyses of trade and revenue implications of joining the COMESA FTA.

Through the training, participants were enabled to apply TRIST skills to analyse trade and revenue implications of other trade policies and reforms including understanding of the implication of joining the Tripartite Free Trade Area and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

They were also trained to produce draft country reports on revenue and economic impacts of tariff liberalisation in selected non-full FTA participating Member States for which data would be available. Overall, it provided a platform for engagement with Member States

while exploring strategies for addressing challenges towards joining the COMESA FTA.

COMESA launched the FTA in 2000 and so far, it has recorded an increase in intra-regional trade from US\$1.5 billion to US\$9.7 billion in 2020. This accounts for 10.7% of the region's total exports. These trade statistics do not include small-scale cross-border trade.

As a way of encouraging the non-FTA countries to join, the 42nd Council of Ministers Meeting held in November 2021 directed the Secretariat to engage them with a view of establishing and resolving what could be hindering their participation. Hence, the TRIST training was one way to help these Member States to join the FTA.

Currently, 16 out of 21 COMESA Member States are participating. These are Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Tunisia, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Other

COMESA Member States; Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia and Somalia are at various levels of joining the COMESA FTA.

Speaking during the official opening of the training, Director of Infrastructure Mr Jean Baptiste Mutabazi said, COMESA Secretariat would continue organising capacity building activities in trade and regional integration to address the existing knowledge gaps. This is expected to allay fears in some Member States regarding the issue of revenue and economic implications of the FTA.

"We hope that such trainings will translate into deeper regional integration policy decisions," said Mr Mutabazi who was representing the Assistant Secretary General for Programmes.

The training was supported by the European Union under the TradeCom II Capacity Building Project.



Burundi Set to Establish a Financial Intelligence Unit

Burundi is set to join the global agenda cracking-down financial crimes including money laundering by creating its Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU). Towards this goal, COMESA is supporting the country to conform to the international standards set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in line with Burundian needs.

Recently, Burundi FIU Board officials comprising of security and customs officers undertook a benchmarking tour of the FIU Unit in Mauritius. The trip was sponsored by the COMESA Regional Maritime Security (MASE) programme, which covers eastern and southern Africa and Indian Ocean (ESA-IO) region. A similar trip was planned to the Uganda Financial Intelligence Authority towards the end of April 2022.

The core functions of FIUs are receipt and analysis of suspicious transaction and activity reports identified and filed by reporting entities and disseminate the intelligence to law enforcement agencies and other FIUs, upon request. The FATF is the global money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation financing watchdog and sets international standards that aim to prevent these illegal activities and the harm they cause to society.

Undertaking benchmarking visit to two advanced FIUs is one of the conditions Burundi has been given in its process to join the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG) whilst this shall also aide the country in creation of its FIU. ESAAMLG is a FATF Style Regional Body (FSRB) for Eastern and Southern Africa.

“A well-functioning FIU is a key driving force of every national Anti-Money Laundering and Combating Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) agenda, among other interventions. This has compelled COMESA to invest support towards creation and strengthening of FIUs in the ESA-IO region to effectively deliver on their AML/CFT mandates, in line with FATF international standards” COMESA MASE Coordinator, Ms. Dalitso Bonongwe said.

Burundi is a second programme country supported to undertake benchmarking visits. The first was Eritrea whose delegation visited Seychelles in September 2016, when the country was contemplating creating its own financial intelligence unit.

To promote effective implementation of FATF recommendations, countries

are encouraged to acquire membership of FSRBs to ensure they are guided and monitored towards alignment of their respective AML/CFT policies and procedures to the international standards.

The FATF standards are implemented through measures adapted to countries' varying contexts. Member countries of FSRBs benefit from continuous capacity building opportunities, among other advantages.

COMESA has been implementing the MASE Programme since 2015, supporting 12 countries to strengthen their anti-money laundering regimes. This includes capacity building of their financial intelligence units and law enforcement agencies, strengthening of their anti-money laundering/ combating the financing of terrorism laws and enhancing internal and external collaboration.

This year, additional extra-budgetary resources to extend the programme to the whole region has been mobilized. This follows the decision of the 17th Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs to extend the programme to other countries.



Stakeholders in the COMESA University Programme Discuss Integration Reports

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and COMESA hosted a virtual workshop with students, staff of two universities that have rolled out the COMESA Masters Programme in Regional Integration to disseminate two ECA reports namely: "Assessing Regional Integration in Africa (ARIA X) focusing on the theme of Services Trade Liberalization and integration within the AfCFTA" and "Governing the interface between the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs)".

The first report highlights the growing importance of the Services Sector on the continent amidst the challenges the sector continues to face even as services trade constitute one of the protocols of the AfCFTA Agreement. The second focuses on the progress and the challenges regional economic communities have faced in trying to promote trade integration among their Member States.

The reports fall within the framework of ECA's policy strategy of translating ideas and findings (embodied in its knowledge products) to action. The Kenyatta University, Kenya and the University of Mauritius, are the two universities that are most advanced in rolling out the COMESA Masters programme on regional integration, having already enrolled students. This is a postgraduate virtual programme carried out through a collaboration involving 22 universities in the COMESA region.

The half-day workshop was aimed at showcasing and discussing the key findings and recommendations of the two reports with the stakeholders of the COMESA Universities' programme to facilitate uptake and implementation.

The analysis provided by the reports have the potential to contribute to deepening understanding of various nuances in Africa's regional integration efforts,

including concrete policy interventions that could increase the prospects of successfully implementing the Africa Continental Free Trade Area as well as improving Africa's overall integration environment.

The workshop therefore provided an engagement platform with students enrolled in this strategic programme, most of whom are already practitioners or alternatively, are prospective practitioners in various government departments, regional integration organizations and private sector institutions dealing with diverse issues of integration. It served to pitch the reports as dependable resource materials for the research efforts that the students of the COMESA MA Programme on regional integration would be engaging in.



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We expect that the overall translation of the success of the trade mission will be, improved viable and sustainable market access of the products on the Egyptian market and thereby ensure increased trade flow between Egypt,” Mr. Kajangwe Antoine



Rwanda SMEs Set to Access Egyptian Market

Rwanda's Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) engaged in horticulture and agro-processing are set to access the Egyptian market following a successful trade mission facilitated by the COMESA Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP).

Fourteen SMEs from the Private Sector Federation accompanied by two officials from the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Rwanda, participated in the four-day trade mission to Egypt 16 – 19 May 2022 and explored trade and investment opportunities.

Rwanda qualified for this support after meeting the criteria set under the Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) in which the RECAMP is funded. The TAF is funded by European Union under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).

TAF is designed to provide additional support to COMESA countries to implement activities, focusing on

national level commitments related to Result Area 1 of the RECAMP, which is; competitiveness and market access of SMEs and other firms in the targeted value chains/sectors are sustainably enhanced.

While in Egypt, the Rwanda delegation participated in trade and investment conference which brought together government officials and 300 businesses under the Egyptian Federation of Industries with discussions focusing on trade and investment opportunities. Most of the businesses were in textile, construction, agro-processing and the manufacturing sector.

Rwanda SMEs also got an opportunity to showcase some of their products to potential wholesale customers and distributors at an ongoing trade fair where business-to-business dialogue was conducted, and this enabled experience-sharing and mutual learning.

The teams discussed market access,

opportunities and joint ventures which led to one coffee supplier from Rwanda successfully securing market access for their products to Egypt. Field visits to Egypt's largest industrial parks were also conducted to industries which use raw materials that could help boost industrialization in Rwanda.

“We expect that the overall translation of the success of the trade mission will be, improved viable and sustainable market access of the products on the Egyptian market and thereby ensure increased trade flow between Egypt,” said Mr. Kajangwe Antoine, Director General of Trade and Investment in Rwanda.

RECAMP aims to enhance competitiveness and market access of SMEs in COMESA Member States by championing development of value chains in agro-processing (maize, livestock, fish, dairy, poultry, meat) and agro-inputs in particular quality seeds, horticulture and leather and leather products.



Delegates at the national consultations on COMWARN in Mauritius

Process of Establishing Early Warning Response Structures in Mauritius Begins

National Multi-Stakeholder Consultations on COMWARN SVAs conducted in Mauritius

National consultations on the COMESA Early Warning System (COMWARN) Structural Vulnerability Assessments Methodology (SVAs) got underway in Mauritius on 6 July 2022 involving government and key stakeholders. The three days consultations held in Port Louis aimed at developing an early warning system based on structural data. These reports provide Member States with the projected structural drivers of the COMESA Peace and Prosperity Index (CPPI).

The forum was intended to build the capacity of all the relevant national stakeholders on COMWARN, provide them with the opportunity to interact with the COMWARN SVA model and enhance ownership.

Stakeholders were taken through the COMWARN SVA model to understand how indicator profiles are created, analysed and how the regional and country specific CPPI forecasts are made. Further, they will learn how to interpret the CPPI forecasted drivers, and this will enhance demand for such

forecasts leading to greater ownership at national level.

Speaking at the opening of the meeting, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade Mr. Alan Ganoo said regional peace and security are vital for a successful regional integration.

“Our government is committed to working closely with COMESA and the African Union to explore the structural vulnerability structures that are inherent to our country as a small Island developing State and ensure the successful use of the COMWARN SVA methodology,” he said.

He added that the maintenance of regional peace and security are prerequisites to sustainable socio-economic development.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of Programmes, Ambassador Kipyego Cheluget urged the participants to fully engage and understand the SVAs and the important role they play in

fostering peace in the region.

“These consultations will serve as an opportunity to continuously validate the SVA methodology, the CPPI forecasts for targeted Member States as well as develop possible response structures and feedback mechanisms for the SVAs,” said Amb. Cheluget.

The forum was organized by COMESA Secretariat through the Governance, Peace and Security Unit. It provided both COMESA and the African Union the opportunity to commence the process of establishing early response structures in Mauritius.

Ultimately, the participants will collectively and jointly develop appropriate structures that will prompt the establishment of national and regional early response mechanisms. Through the participation of civil society and private sector organizations, the interaction will increase the chances for future implementation of SVAs at the grass-root level.



Administration of the Kenya Sugar Safeguard in Focus

COMESA Sugar exporting countries discuss implementation

The Fifth Meeting of the COMESA Sub-Committee on the Kenya Sugar Safeguard conducted a virtual two-day meeting 15-16 June 2022 to consider issues relating to the implementation of the Safeguard.

Over the years, Kenya has been granted safeguards by the COMESA Council of Ministers to enable it undertake measures to re-structure its domestic sugar sector to attain competitiveness and become a profitable sector. The Committee oversees implementation of Kenya sugar safeguard measures and address challenges that may arise therefrom.

Key issues in the agenda of the sub-committee were deliberations on the progress report on the implementation of the Kenya sugar safeguard measures and review of the implementation of the country's sugar recovery plan. The sub-committee

also considered proposals related to administration of the quotas allocated to member countries that export sugar to Kenya, which has been a key issue.

In attendance were representatives from the sugar exporting countries that constitute the Committee members: Burundi, D. R. Congo, Egypt, Eswatini, Malawi, Mauritius, Tunisia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Kenya, which is implementing the safeguard.

Speaking at the opening of the meeting, COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of Programmes, Dr Kipyego Cheluget, observed that challenges around the Kenya sugar safeguard measures and its administration continue to persist and different approach may be required to make a difference.

"The modalities for the administration of the safeguard measures have so far

been stable and serve all parties fairly under the circumstances. My plea to all of us is to avoid introducing drastic changes in the modalities, which may bring discomfort or dissatisfaction to some members or section of Member States given the diversity of sugar production regimes in the entire region," he urged the delegates.

Dr Cheluget called for technological flexibility to diversify from sugar production for food consumption to production of energy or ethanol. Citing the current disruption of global value chains following the Ukraine-Russian conflict, he said such energy production would cover supply shortfalls and arrest runaway prices while stimulating sugar production.

He further urged the participants, who are policy advisors in their respective governments, together with backing of private sector to look at the bigger picture beyond the safeguards measures.

"As revealed in one of our recent studies, there exist potential to increase intra-COMESA exports in excess of US 100 billion in products such as textiles, fish and fish products, vegetables, natural gas, cement, mineral ores, sugar among others," he said and urged Member States to make good use of COMESA's research outputs.

In its report, Kenya indicated a steady increase in sugar production due to enhanced investments by both Government and private players but had not reached self-sufficiency in sugar production as several mills continue to operate inefficiently and below capacity.

"For this reason, the country has been filling the deficit by importing sugar, especially from the COMESA region," said the report.



Officials of regional Central Banks and COMESA Monetary Institute attending the first working group meeting

Coming Soon: COMESA Financial Stability Report

The COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) has commenced preparatory work towards the production of a Financial Stability Report (FSR) for the COMESA region. The first working group of experts meeting took place in Nairobi, Kenya on 22 – 24 June 2022 with participants from the Central Banks of DR Congo, Egypt, Mauritius, Sudan and Zambia.

The FSR will contain reviews of the developments in the financial sector in the COMESA region to identify key risks, vulnerabilities and challenges facing the financial systems of member countries and provide policy recommendations to mitigate such risks and strengthen stability.

The decision to produce the FSR came from the COMESA Committee of

Governors of Central Banks during their 25th meeting in March this year. The report will also highlight the link between macroeconomic stability and financial stability in the region. This will go a long way in enhancing the implementation of the COMESA Financial System Development and Stability Plan.

During the three days meeting, the experts interrogated the 2021 data on FSR which was submitted by member Central Banks. They deliberated and agreed on the structure and content of the FSR and distributed the assignments among themselves. They also agreed on the timelines within which the 2021 FSR for the COMESA region will be prepared.

Campaign to Promote Investment Agreement Gets Underway



Ms. Providence Mavubi

A public awareness campaign to promote the implementation of the COMESA Common Investment Agreement (CCIA) across Member States was launched in June targeting governments and the private sector. The CCIA is a promotional tool to guide Member States in various programmes aimed at harmonizing investment best practices and facilitating the private sector operations development in the region.

The CCIA instrument is expected to be owned by COMESA Member States through ratification and domestication. Major programmes to be implemented under the CCIA provisions include national treatment to be equally granted to COMESA investors and citizens of all Member States.





Zambia's Director of Foreign Trade Ms. Bessie Chelemu (in green top) and COMESA Director of Industry and Agriculture Ms. Providence Mavubi (3rd right) with participants to the awareness workshop at the COMESA Secretariat

In 2014, the COMESA Council of Ministers recommended that the CCIA be reviewed to take into consideration the new emerging issues in the arena of international investment regimes and specific standards regarding investor protection, the rights and obligations of investors and the rights and obligations of the host countries. The revised version was finally adopted by the Council of Ministers in November 2017.

Domestication of the instrument will ensure that investment and investors are protected and encourage countries to undertake more reforms and liberalization by opening economic sectors for growth to all investors, particularly the ones originating from the region. The CCIA is also aligned to the Pan African Investment Code championed by the African Union and inspired negotiations on Investment Protocol under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

On June 23, 2022, a public awareness meeting was conducted at the COMESA

Secretariat in Lusaka, for Zambia, attended by representatives from the government and the private sector.

Addressing the participants, COMESA Director of Industry and Agriculture Ms. Providence Mavubi said the CCIA was timely as the region cannot implement the industrialization strategy, trade policy initiatives, develop agricultural value chains and regional infrastructure without referring to private investment support initiatives.

"For COMESA region, our FDI inflows per year have been averaging \$18 billion during five years before the COVID -19 pandemic outbreak, which is little in comparison with the existing potential," she said. "This is therefore the right time, as Member States and the Secretariat are actively participating in the ongoing negotiations on the Investment Protocol under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) framework."

Leader of the Zambian delegation,

Ms. Bessie Chelemu, who is the Director of Foreign Trade, said the CCIA will contribute towards attracting investments for the development of intra-African value chains under the AfCFTA. She added that the AfCFTA presents the best opportunity for the African continent, including COMESA, to build resilience and promote more trade and investment.

"Abundant natural resources that call for more value addition through industrialization, unique tourism attractions, available of human resources seeking infrastructure development is among the numerous areas for investment in the COMESA region," she added.

The awareness activities on CCIA will be carried out under the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP).

AU, COMESA Rolls out Resilience Building Programme in Member States



Participants at the Joint AU/COMESA Training of Trainers Workshop Kenya

In a programme meant to assist countries to have a structured system to prevent conflicts while promoting the consolidation of peace, 26 officials from five COMESA/AU Member States were trained on methodologies to support the building of resilience in Member States. These include the COMESA Structural Vulnerability Assessments (SVAs) and the African Union Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment (CSVRA).

The training was held on 11 – 13 April 2022 in Nairobi, Kenya with participants from Kenya, Madagascar, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It was conducted jointly by the African Union Commission (AUC) Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Department and the COMESA Governance, Peace and Security (GPS) Unit.

The five countries have already hosted national multi-sectoral consultations on the Structural Vulnerability Assessment (SVA) methodology, while Zambia has progressed towards undertaking the AU

CSVRA process to develop her mitigation strategy. Kenya, Madagascar, Uganda and Zimbabwe have agreed in principle to the process, including working towards establishing response strategies to address structural vulnerabilities identified through the methodology.

One of the key presentations at the training was a detailed SVA methodology, that included country-specific forecasts to enhance the officials' understanding of structural vulnerability and resilience drivers to peace and prosperity.

"Through the training, the participants will be able to examine opportunities that can contribute to promoting and sustaining peace and prosperity, identify medium to long-term strategies and critical stakeholders required to address and mitigate violent conflict, underdevelopment, among others," said Ms Elizabeth Mutunga, Head of the GPS Unit at the COMESA Secretariat.

To support continental conflict prevention efforts, COMESA's Conflict Early Warning

System (COMWARN) has collaborated with the Continental Early Warning System of the African Union (AU-CEWS) in the development and implementation of its structural vulnerability/ resilience assessment methodology which focuses on economic dimensions of conflict as guided by policy makers.

The training of trainers' programme began robustly in 2019 with the intention of building a pool of SVA trainers in each Member State. The momentum was however slowed down by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The trainings and national consultative platforms have created opportunities for the AU to popularise the AU's Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework tools and processes. These will complement the SVA processes such as national multi-sectoral consultations and training of trainers through additional support to Member States to conduct sub-national consultations with different stakeholders at grassroots levels.



COMESA staff engage with the public at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair

Zimbabwe Trade Expo: COMESA's Showcase

Inquiries on trade facilitation, market access and financial support to women entrepreneurs dominated public inquiries at the COMESA booth at the 62nd Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) in Bulawayo, 26 – 30 April 2022.

COMESA's presence at the expo was part of its stakeholders' outreach strategy to raise awareness on its regional integration programmes and encourage uptake of the opportunities that the regional bloc provides. The participation is also intended to showcase the impact of regional integration programmes in Member States.

Visitors to the COMESA stand, who represented a wide spectrum of stakeholders, ranging from businesspeople, investment seekers, policy makers, academician and students, were also keen on other

general information such as cross border motor vehicle insurance. The theme of the ZITF was "Rethink, Reimagine, Reinvent Value Chains for Economic Development" and resonated with COMESA's strategy of economic prosperity through regional integration, supporting the social economic structure of the region.

"This is an exceptional opportunity to showcase COMESA as an organization, its programmes and institutions, and to address any information gaps that might be existing," said Ms Netta Gichuki, a Trade Expert at COMESA Secretariat after the first days' public engagement with the attendees.

Zimbabwe is among Member States that implement most of the COMESA programmes and is pioneering with Zambia the establishment a joint agro industrial park. This initiative is derived

from the COMESA Industrialization Strategy and has immense potential to increase the availability of industrial goods and services for the bilateral market and expand intra- regional trade in manufacturing.

A study conducted by COMESA last year titled 'Export Potentials of Intra-COMESA Trade' found that Zimbabwe has the potential to increase intra-COMESA trade by US\$ 4.1 billion. Eleven of its export products have the highest trade potential, including tar distilled from coal, fruits of the genus capsicum, avocados, glass products, and tungsten ores and concentrates.

Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and Zambia are some of the COMESA countries that exhibited at the Fair. Others were Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa and Tanzania.



Building Capacity for Digitally Enabled Trading System

Implementing digital trade facilitation reforms have positive impacts on intra-COMESA exports. It is estimated that an increase of 10 percent in the adoption of digital trade technologies would result in a 5.5 percent increase in intra-COMESA exports.

The regional organization is therefore scaling-up the Free Trade Area (FTA) to a Digital Free Trade Area (DFTA), to empower traders to apply ICT tools particularly on cross border trade. This will not only enhance efficiency but also cut costs and minimize physical-related barriers to trade.

Pursuant to this objective, COMESA and the Commonwealth Secretariat partnered to host a training on digital trade on 25 – 27 April 2022 to build the necessary capacity within the region on how to thrive in a fully digitally enabled trading system. The training targeted policy makers, trade officials and technocrats as well as legal reform officers involved in the digital trade process. It covered, among other topics, paperless trade facilitation, removal of barriers to facilitate digital trade in services sectors, creating an enabling regulatory environment for trade in

services with a special focus on digital trade, developing services specific regulatory frameworks and leveraging FTA chapters for different services sectors.

The COMESA DFTA was adopted by the Council of Ministers way back in 2018 and constitutes three thrusts, namely eTrade, eLogistics and eLegislation. These are implemented through instruments such as the Electronic Certificate of Origin (eCO), development of the COMESA Online Trade Portal, and the Electronic Single Window system.

However, there has been a slow pace in the implementation of the DFTA instruments despite their potential to improve business performance in order to create the much-needed jobs in the COMESA region amid the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“One of the important lessons from the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic is that as digital trade becomes increasingly critical in enhancing transactions and accessing markets globally, those lacking the ability to trade digitally risk falling further behind, economically,” COMESA Director of

Trade, Dr Christopher Onyango noted when he addressed the participants.

He added that less digitalized countries are at a disadvantage in leveraging on e-commerce. They are also less able to benefit from the resilience of digitally deliverable services in response to internal/external shocks and therefore likely to experience more extreme declines in export earnings and economic growth.

In his remarks, the Director - Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Division at the Commonwealth Secretariat, Mr Paulo Kautoke appreciated the collaboration with COMESA, in building resilient digital economies.

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“One of the important lessons from the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic is that as digital trade becomes increasingly critical in enhancing transactions and accessing markets globally, those lacking the ability to trade digitally risk falling further behind, economically,” Dr Christopher Onyango



Delegates at the validation workshop of the COMESA Blue Economy strategy

Coming Soon: A Regional Blue Economy Strategy

COMESA has developed a draft strategy to harness the benefits of the Blue Economy for its 21 Member States. The draft strategy was presented to delegates from the Member States on 26-27 April 2022 in Lusaka, Zambia, where it was reviewed and validated.

The concept of the Blue Economy has been embraced by the COMESA Member States as a mechanism to realize sustainable ocean-based economic development. Currently, there is limited information on the Blue Economy as the focus has been primarily on land-based economic development or on conservation rather than on the sustainable use of the investment in an ocean-based economy, for national benefit.

"An integrated approach to ocean-based and inland water development, which brings together economy, environment and society is crucial," said the COMESA Assistant Secretary General, Dr Kipyego Cheluget when he addressed the delegates.

He added that COMESA Member States had recognized that regional integration without a deliberate targeting of interventions on the Blue Economy would

not yield an all-inclusive developmental result.

Under the Blue Economy initiative, the regional bloc will support its Member States towards improving production and trade of fish and fisheries products; increasing contribution of tourism to economic growth in COMESA; improving shipping/transportation, trade, ports; sustainable energy and mineral resources and innovative industries; and enhanced management of natural resources.

Director for Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy at the African Union Commission Mr. Harsen Nyambe Nyambe stated that despite the recognition that Africa's oceans are some of the richest environmental resources in the world, there remains a low consideration of their importance as a source of income towards the growth of African economies.

"There is an urgent need to invest in the management of African oceans if the momentum of a blue or ocean economy is to be harnessed in a sustainable manner to contribute to national economies and the conservation of ecosystems and the

marine environment," he said in a speech presented by Ms. Linda Oje Etta.

According to the AU, two thirds of Africa are coastal and island states, with jurisdiction over 13 million square km of marine territory including approximately 6.5 million square km of continental shelf. Further, 65% of the African continent is covered with a network of rivers, lakes, aquifers and other freshwater sources.

The Blue Economy seeks to protect these fragile aquatic resources, while advancing the sustainable development of sectors which hinge upon them. Thus, the development of Blue Economy strategy will guide the implementation of an appropriate intervention to maximize the benefit from marine, inland and underground water resources.

The formulation of COMESA Blue Economy Strategy was financially supported by the Kingdom of Norway through the African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR).

The AU-IBAR Director Dr. Nick Nwankpa noted that COMESA was one of the first beneficiary institutions of this support among regional economic communities. He was represented by Dr Admore Chakandenga.



We have no doubt that these findings will contribute to increasing evidence-based knowledge and inform better trade policy at both regional and national levels,” he said.

File Photo: small scale trades at Kasumbalesa

Informal Cross-Border Trade on Steady Rise in Zambia

The overall import and export values of informal trade volumes in Zambia has significantly increased from USD 13.3 Million in 2019 to USD 77.2 Million in 2021. Similarly, the informal trade export value has risen from USD 81.02 million in 2019 to USD 206.08 million during the same period.

This is according to the results of a survey conducted on Zambia's Small Scale Cross Border Trade (SSCBT), announced on 3 May 2022 at the COMESA Secretariat. The highest volume of informal export was recorded at the Kasumbalesa border with DR Congo where the main informal export products are fish and fish products. Rice is the main informal import product.

The survey results were jointly announced by COMESA and the Zambia Statistical Agency (ZamStats), during a half-day workshop. The SSCBT data portal on ZamStats was also launched at the event. Also discussed was the possible continuation of SSCBT surveys when the current

funding comes to an end.

The data collection was done by ZamStats in collaboration with the COMESA Secretariat from 2019 to date. It was supported by the 11th European Development Fund (EDF 11), through the Small-Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative (SSCBTI). It followed the General Trade System of compiling international merchandise trade statistics, which requires that all goods leaving or entering the country are recorded as they cross the customs' frontiers.

The Permanent Secretary in Zambia's Ministry of Finance and National Planning, Mr. Trevor Kaunda officiated at the event. He urged all stakeholders to utilize the results for evidence-based policy formulation, decision making and socio-economic analysis.

In his remarks, COMESA Assistant Secretary General - Programmes Amb. Kipyego Cheluget noted that cross-border data flows have enormous potential for driving economic and

social development.

“We have no doubt that these findings will contribute to increasing evidence-based knowledge and inform better trade policy at both regional and national levels,” he said.

The Interim Statistician General, Zambia, Mr. Mulenga Musepa expressed optimism for the continuation of the survey and invited other development partners to support the initiative especially in other borders where significant informal trade takes place.

With funding from the European Union, COMESA has been facilitating small scale cross border trade with the aim of formalising and increasing its flows in the region. This is done through policy and government reforms, institutional capacity building, improved border infrastructure and actions towards removal of barriers to small scale cross border trade.



Daoud, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Tourism led the Djibouti team.

Among the key recommendations from the meeting that formed the next plan of action, was to enhance awareness on the Protocol and the services provided by state agencies at the borders.

To address unfavourable conditions for small scale traders identified at the borders, the meeting proposed the establishment of Cross Border Traders Associations and development of a platform/software that facilitates cross border trade. This is in addition to establishing common border market centers and simplifying procedures to clear the border traders.

Capacity building workshops will also be organized and experience sharing forums conducted among the two countries' associations and with the other COMESA Member States on implementation of simplified cross border trade. The meeting also agreed on the need to set up Trade Information Desk Offices.

In his remarks, Mr. Abdou appreciated the joint action plan stating: "Contrary to ordinary trade that benefit from the facilitation instruments, the small-scale trade has not benefited from the necessary consideration, and face administrative procedures and technical barriers," he noted.

Similarly, Mr. Mindaye noted that the implementation of the Ethiopia-Djibouti protocol has been lagging and appreciated the joint border trade committee meeting for seeking to address this challenge.

COMESA Secretariat, representative Mr. Tasara Muzorori, encouraged the two States to implement the STR noting that this mechanism, which is operational in several other Member States has impacted positively on the small cross border trade.

Ethiopia - Djibouti Border Trade Set to Rise

Officials hold first joint border trade committee meeting to resolve current impediments

Small scale cross border trade is set to thrive along the Djibouti- Ethiopia borders following the first joint border trade committee meeting on 27 – 30 April 2022. The meeting was driven by the need to identify and resolve challenges facing the implementation of the Djibouti – Ethiopia Border Trade Protocol signed in 2015.

The meeting, which was conducted at Semera in Ethiopia brought together officials from different ministries and agencies, representatives of regional trade bureaus, customs control offices from Ethiopia and Djibouti and COMESA Secretariat.

Key on the agenda was how to bring the Protocol, into compliance with the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime (STR). The STR is a trade

facilitation mechanism for small scale cross border traders dealing in small quantities of goods. It enables their goods to benefit from the removal of customs duty if those goods are on the Common Lists.

Also on the agenda were bilateral negotiations on the Common List of Goods that qualify for preferential treatment under the STR. The delegations agreed to amend the list of tradable goods to make the list compatible with COMESA STR and to include the Harmonized System (HS) code.

The Ethiopian delegation was led by Mr. Mussie Mindaye, Director General of Bilateral Trade Relations and Negotiations at the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, while Mr. Ali



Regional Energy Experts Visiting the Nord Pool

Building Capacity for Key Stakeholders in the Regional Energy Sector

The project on Enhancement of Sustainable Regional Energy market for Eastern and Southern Africa (ESREM) has conducted a series of events in the region and beyond to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency, foster independent energy regulation and study tour on interconnected power system operations.

The latest was a workshop on the framework for regulatory oversight of the regional electricity market and renewable energy and energy efficiency strategy and action plan for Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO). It was conducted in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on 17 – 18 April 2022, with participants drawn from Ministries of Energy in Burundi, Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. Also participating were regulatory authorities from Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania, Uganda and a representative from the Energy Regulators Association of East Africa (EREA).

Two reports were discussed including the Framework for Regulatory Oversight of the Regional Energy Market in EA-SA-IO region and the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Action Plan. Key barriers for scaling up renewable energy (RE) and energy efficiency (EE) activities in the region that need to be addressed were identified. They include inadequate and weak enabling environment for RE and EE resulting in failure to attract investments.

The workshop proposed strategic interventions including the establishment of harmonized common regional RE/EE market for trading in technologies and services in the region. This is in addition to creating an enabling environment for private sector participation and investment in RE/EE across the region.

Earlier in Juba, South Sudan, ESREM project conducted a national workshop on regulation to facilitate dialogue between regulation experts from the region and the local energy sector leadership. It was conducted on 24 – 25 March 2022 as part of the drive to establish an autonomous energy regulator. Its main objective was to enable the target audience to appreciate the importance of establishing energy regulatory and institutional frameworks in supporting governments' long-term objectives of providing affordable and reliable energy supply and services to its citizens.

The event's participants represented stakeholders in the South Sudan energy sector including the Ministry of Energy and Dams, the Ministry of East Africa Community Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Parliamentary Committee on Energy and Dams and the National Revenue Authority.

Other participating entities were the Nile (Exploration and Production) Petroleum Corporation, Chamber of Commerce, the South

Sudan Bureau of Standards, the South Sudan Electricity Corporation and the Juba Electricity Distribution Company Ltd (JEDCO) among others.

In another initiative the ESREM project organized a study tour to the Nord Pool Market in Oslo Norway, 28 March – 8 April 2022, on interconnected power system operations and market surveillance. In the tour were Members of the Eastern Africa Power Pool (EAPP), the Southern Africa Power Pool (SAPP) and their respective regional economic communities and regulators. The aim was to appreciate the concepts of energy imbalance processes and settlements; ancillary services trading; interconnected pools and market surveillance.

Nord Pool is considered a model market power pool globally, with about 80% of electricity and energy resources consumption in Europe thus provides a good example of regional power trading concept.

The study tour was therefore intended to strengthen the capacities of regional power pools and regional regulatory bodies and human resource to develop an efficient and sustainable regional energy market. This is especially significant as the region implements the Zambia-Tanzania-Kenya power interconnector, which is expected link energy markets of the two power pools (the Eastern Africa Power Pool (EAPP) and the Southern Africa Power Pool SAPP).



Mr Malama Chileshe

Power installation in Zambia

Opportunities, Resources Available in Promoting Renewable Energy

Over 40 Energy Experts from COMESA Member States attended a capacity building workshop on Off-Grid Renewable Energy from 10 – 12 May in Lusaka conducted by the Regional Infrastructure Finance Facility (RIFF). This is a World Bank financed project implemented jointly by COMESA and the Trade and Development Bank (TDB).

The workshop, which took place in Chisamba, Zambia, was intended to identify opportunities for collaboration with Member States, especially in the promotion of off-grid sub sectors in renewable energy infrastructure.

The RIFF project has a total funding of US\$ 425 million divided between a grant facility of \$10 million to COMESA and a credit facility of \$415 million to TDB. The TDB component is primarily concerned with provision of loans to viable infrastructure projects with private sector interest while the

COMESA component is supporting the creation of a conducive environment for private sector investment in infrastructure.

Participants to the workshop were drawn from Ministries of Energy and energy regulators from 16 COMESA Member States.

The project's component on infrastructure finance facility amounts to US\$ 325 million and is being administered by TDB. It will provide long-term finance to infrastructure sub-projects that meet the set development impact criteria.

The need for capacity building was informed by a study commissioned by COMESA to gain an understanding of the current status of renewable energy with specific focus on off grid energy.

Speaking during the opening of the workshop, COMESA Energy Economist,

Mr Malama Chileshe said it was crucial to share the findings of the study to facilitate understanding of the gaps in promotion of off grid renewable energy and come up with solutions.

"This capacity building workshop will therefore be used as a platform to disseminate the findings of the study to the Member States targeting policy makers and regulators in the energy sector," he said.

He added that the COMESA Secretariat has the resources to support Member States to develop policy and regulatory instruments that may be required to move the off grid renewable agenda forward.

The workshop is expected to identify common opportunities that allows member countries to work together with the RIFF project also identify unique challenges and opportunities to leverage upon.



(L-R) Hon. Zintombi Thandi Motsa Xumalo, Ms. Nomcebo Hadebe, Ms. Ruth Negash and Mr. Deepark Shah at the MoU signing ceremony in Mbabane

Eswatini Women Farmers to Supply School Feeding Programme

The economic fortunes of women farmers in Eswatini are set for better times after three international organizations signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to support them to increase their supply of local produce in a school feeding programme in Eswatini.

The MoU was signed in Mbabane on 4 May 2022 by the COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB), Chief Executive Officer Ms. Ruth Negash, Center of Financial Inclusion (CFI) counterpart Ms. Nomcebo Hadebe and the World Food Programme (WFP) Eswatini Coordinator, Mr. Deepark Shah.

They undertook to collaborate in strengthening the capacity of women farmers' groups as local produce suppliers in the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme. This will be done through capacity building in business skills and finance, registration of women groups in cooperatives, adaptation of climate smart agriculture and precision farming technologies to increase agriculture productivity.

COMFWB will be responsible

for organizing the farmers into cooperatives, while CFI will deal with market linkages. The WFP will be responsible for training and identifying linkages for women farmers' cooperatives. The organizations will also support the provision of appropriate agricultural inputs and value chain development in horticulture.

Ms Negash said COMFWB will mobilize local farmers to have opportunities to produce quality products and market access, locally and abroad.

"We will work on mechanisms that ensure a reduction in the number of imported products which can be sourced locally as there is a lot of potential for local products to feed the local market," she said.

Mr Shah said the WFP intervention was in line with the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 2 on ending hunger and poverty.

In her remarks, Ms. Hadebe said the CFI was focused on promoting women and youth farmers locally to increase their visibility in the market. It was targeting to

raise the percentage of female farmers to 60 percent of the currently active farmers estimated at 18,500.

"We have to make sure that farmers understand how money is handled in the business sector and that they are able to separate it from personal accounts," she said. "Some farmers are not able to tell the difference between loans, aid and grants."

Speaking at the same forum, COMFWB Eswatini Chapter Chairperson, Thandi Motsa said there is need to engage government and relevant stakeholders to discuss and agree on the pricing of local produce.

"We need to engage parliament on the regulation of prices for local produce, because it forces farmers into black market and failure of their business," she said.

She added that one of the reasons why produce like maize was imported was because of low prices offered to farmers by the national entity responsible for purchase of strategic food reserves.



Experts Call for Sustainable Regional Energy Market

The regional energy market has immense potential in strengthening and deepening regional integration but for many COMESA countries, the generation capacity is not enough to cover the nations own needs and allow for cross-border trade. According to the Chairperson of the Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA) Mr. Daniel Bargoria, plans are underway to improve the transmission capacity across borders, but the same is not enough to secure unimpeded trade across the countries and regions.

Mr Bargoria, who is also the Executive Director of the Kenya Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority (EPRA),

said this in a speech presented at the 11th Annual General Meeting of RAERESA conducted virtually on 10 May 2022. He was represented by his deputy Dr John Mutua.

He said better energy infrastructure facilitates relations between countries, stimulating integration of the productive sectors as it brings close together economic spaces, reduces and/or eliminates the physical barriers to trade and transport costs and expands the market size.

Recent studies have shown that many African countries suffer power shortages and regular interruptions to services. For example, African countries are estimated to lose 12.5% of production time compared to 7% for South Asia owing to power outages thus suppressing countries production.

To overcome these challenges, Dr Bogoria said an aligned regulatory framework was necessary to stimulate investments in power production and transmission.

“For reasons of sustainability, it is also necessary to stimulate production from renewable energy sources, for which the COMESA region has expansive potential,

in terms of solar, wind, geothermal, bioenergy, among others,” he said.

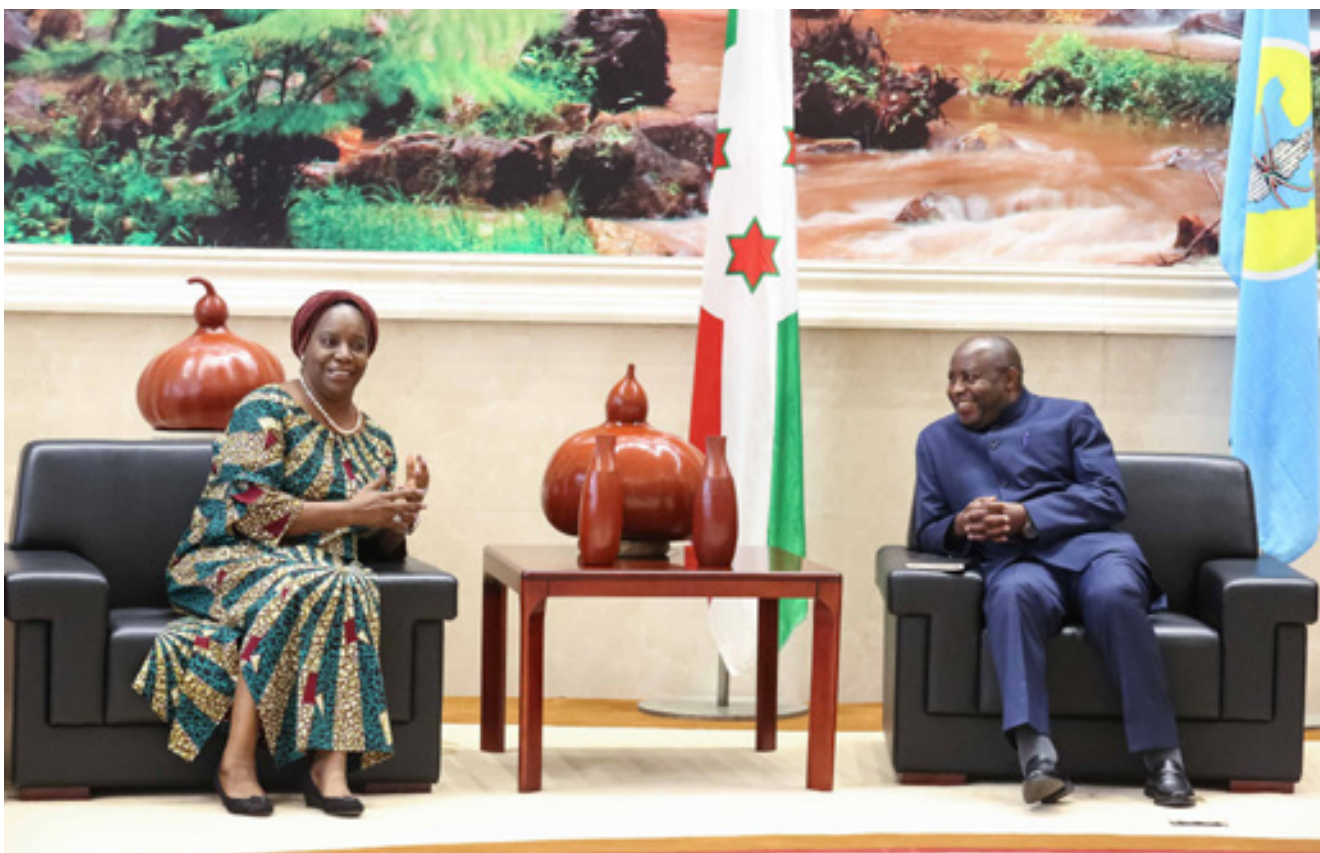
In his statement, COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes, Dr Kipyego Cheluget observed that trade in energy was as critical and beneficial as trade in goods and other services.

“Energy trade allows all nations to benefit from their comparative and competitive advantages and from the advantages of the economies of scale and scope,” he said. “The power sector should be open for the private sector investment and ownership.”

He stressed the need for development of a harmonized regulatory framework to enhance sustainability of regional energy market. This will provide the enabling environment for the needed investments, power trade and promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency to thrive.

The AGM was attended by representatives of energy regulatory authorities from COMESA Member States which are members of the RAERESA, Associate Members and observers. Key items in the agenda were reports by the Portfolio Committees and consideration of application membership to the regional association.

“.....
For reasons of sustainability, it is also necessary to stimulate production from renewable energy sources, for which the COMESA region has expansive potential, in terms of solar, wind, geothermal, bioenergy, among others,” he said.



President Evariste Ndayishimiye (R) receives Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe

Burundi Reaffirms Support to COMESA

President Evariste Ndayishimiye of Burundi has reaffirmed his government's commitment and support to COMESA's regional integration agenda and called for deeper trade within the 21 Member States. In a meeting with a delegation from COMESA Secretariat led by Secretary General (SG) Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe in Bujumbura, 18 May 2022, the President urged the region to focus on implementing programmes that benefit the people by encouraging the growth of businesses and interaction.

The meeting with the Head of State was part of a two-day working visit for COMESA to update the Burundi leadership on ongoing regional programmes and projects. The two leaders discussed several issues on trade facilitation and enhancing collaboration. They also discussed the implementation of COMESA programmes by Burundi.

"Our government believes in the ideals of COMESA, and we are determined to continue working to deepen trade and integration with the other Member States," said President Ndayishimiye during the meeting at the Presidential Palace.

Secretary General Kapwepwe briefed the President on the state of integration focusing on programmes that foster inclusive and sustainable development in the region. She also highlighted areas which Burundi could tap into, to benefit more. "Burundi can access some of the US\$ 425m World Bank funds which has a



.....
"Our government believes in the ideals of COMESA, and we are determined to continue working to deepen trade and integration with the other Member States," President Ndayishimiye

US\$10 million component for capacity building in Member States for their bankable projects in off-grid renewable projects,” Ms Kapwepwe said.

During the trip, the Secretary General also had bilateral meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation Amb. Albert Shingilo, Minister of Finance Hon. Domitien Ndihoumbwayo and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Tourism and Transport, Madam Catherine Faida and senior government officials. Representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and Industries also attended the meeting.

This was the second official visit to Burundi for Ms Kapwepwe as Secretary General. Others in her delegation were the Director of Trade and Customs Dr Christopher Onyango, the Director of Human Resources and Administration Mr Dumisani Banda, COMESA African Union Liaison Officer, Amb. Salvator Matata, SG’s Executive Support Officer Maluba Sinyambo and Phillip Kambafwile from Corporate Communications.



Top: Burundi Minister of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation Amb. Albert Shingilo (3rd right), Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe (middle) and members of their delegations. **Centre photo:** Minister of Finance Hon. Domitien Ndihoumbwayo with COMESA Secretary General. **Bottom:** Ministry of Commerce, Transport, Industry and Tourism Permanent Secretary Madame Catherine Faida (in white) and team receives COMESA delegation





Call to Utilize COMESA Court Services

Zambia's Attorney General, Mr. Mulilo Kabesha has urged businesspeople in the region to utilize the COMESA Court of Justice for arbitration of disputes. Addressing judges of the Court during their one-week annual retreat in Lusaka, Zambia, Mr. Kabesha observed that trade disputes are taken to other courts based in far flung areas, such as United Kingdom instead of using the COMESA Court which offers affordable services to aggrieved parties.

He called for robust sensitization campaigns about the Court's services in the region.

The retreat was conducted on 9 -13 May 2022 as part of the implementation of the Court's Medium-Term Strategic Plan 2021-2025 which is focused on achieving institutional strengthening and capacity building, among other

things.

COMESA Regulations on Trade Remedies and Article 28 of the Treaty, provide that any dispute or appeal against findings and recommendations of the panel established by the Secretary General, is referred to the Court of Justice for arbitration.

In her remarks Judge President of the Court, Justice Lombe Chibesakunda said that although the permanent seat of the Court is in Khartoum, Sudan, it holds sessions in other Member States which ensures access to its services in the region.



Judges of the COMESA Court led by Judge President Justice Lombe Chibesakunda (2nd Right seated) and Zambia Attorney General Mr. Mulilo Kabesha (middle seated) at the annual retreat in Lusaka, Zambia.



Members of the ESREM PTSC during the project closure meeting in Livingstone

ESREM Project Comes to an End

The Enhancement for a Sustainable Regional Energy Market (ESREM) Project closed on 30 May 2022 after successful implementation in the last five years. Through the support of the European Union, the Project endeavored to create a favorable environment and tools for regulatory oversight in the Eastern Africa -Southern Africa-Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO) region. This is expected to stimulate increased power trading and bring a new horizon of cross border power trade opportunities for the countries in this region.

The overall objective of ESREM was to enhance a sustainable regional energy market in the EA-SA-IO region, which would be conducive to investment and sustainable development of the energy sector. The project was also meant to achieve a harmonized, efficient and gender-sensitive regulatory environment and it sought to capacitate regional regulatory associations and power pools to oversee and stimulate increased regional power trade more effectively.

Funded by the European Development

Fund (EDF 11) with seven million Euros, ESREM was considered as a game-changer in boosting regional and cross-border energy trade within the coming years. It was tailored to address the energy needs of the EA-SA-IO region by promoting regional cooperation in energy development, trade and capacity building.

Steered by COMESA in partnership with five other Regional Economic Communities (RECs) namely EAC, IGAD, IOC and SADC, ESREM targeted the harmonisation of Energy policy and regulatory frameworks for the region as well as developing the necessary frameworks that will promote investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

As part of the process for project closure, the 8th Programme Technical Steering Committee met from 17 – 18 May 2022 in Livingstone, Zambia to review progress achieved and to discuss the closure.

ESREM's achievements included

development of 45 reports and guidelines on energy which had been validated by the stakeholders and in some cases, adopted by some regional economic communities (RECs) for domestication at national level.

Some of the adopted reports include the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Action Plan (REEESAP) for Eastern Africa-Southern Africa-Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO), Framework for Regulatory Oversight of the EA-SA-IO region, and the Framework and Roadmap for the Transformation of RERA into a Regional Energy Regulatory Authority For SADC.

The meeting was attended by partner RECs, the Independent Regulatory Board of the Eastern Africa Power Pool, the Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA), the Southern and Eastern African Power Pool, the European Union delegation to Zambia and COMESA, and the Regional Centers for Renewable Energy and Energy efficiency for East and Southern Africa.



COMESA and UNCTAD Train Customs Experts on ASYCUDAWorld

Twenty-one customs experts from the COMESA Secretariat and eight Member States went through a three-months training on the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA)World Functional and Technical Courses in March – May 2022.

ASYCUDA is an integrated customs management system for international trade and transport operations in a modern automated environment. It is supplied by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Over the years, the system has evolved through various versions and the current one is known as ASYCUDAWorld. Through ASYCUDA, UNCTAD developed advanced software applications for Customs Administration and the trading community to comply with international standards when fulfilling import, export and transit related procedures.

As of 2022, 13 COMESA Member States namely Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, DRC, Eritrea, Eswatini, Madagascar, Malawi, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia

and Zimbabwe used different versions of ASYCUDAWorld and one Member State Eritrea was using ASYCUDA++ to facilitate merchandise trade as well as providing national and regional trade statistics.

To support this, COMESA Secretariat, working with UNCTAD organised the course which enabled participants to share experiences and raise pertinent questions on implementing and enhancing ASYCUDAWorld and customs connectivity in the countries and the region. It was conducted virtually from 1st March to 20th May 2022 covering all the modules of the ASYCUDAWorld and included theoretical and practical lectures, quizzes and case studies which led to the successful achievement of the objectives of the course.

The interaction and sharing of experiences also stressed the crucial role of capacity building on ASYCUDAWorld to Member States to improve their customs automation management systems and to enhance facilitation of intra-regional trade and

revenue collection.

At the end of the training, participants agreed to establish an online database/platform of Experts in ASYCUDAWorld where to enable continued exchange of data and experiences.

According to Article 71 (2) of the COMESA Treaty, the simplification, harmonization and standardization of customs regulations, documents and procedures and their computerization will be facilitated by the regional Automated System for Customs Data Centre at the headquarters of the Common Market.

In consideration of this provision and the regional action plan towards the Digital Free Trade Area, COMESA Secretariat and UNCTAD signed a Co-delegation Agreement in 2018 under the European Development Fund (EDF 11) Trade Facilitation Programme to develop and implement a Customs Automation Regional Support Centre and Trade Information Portal at the Secretariat.



Members of the AU Seed and Biotechnology Working Group

Boosting Intra-African Agricultural Trade through Harmonisation of Seed Regulatory Frameworks

With the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, Member States stand to benefit from wider market access for seed trade. This will lead to competitiveness of the seed industry and pricing given the ongoing efforts by the African Union Commission and partner organizations in seed policy and regulatory harmonization on the continent.

Sharing the success story on the status of harmonization efforts in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region, the interim Chief Executive Officer of the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA), Dr John Mukuka, stated that achieving regional seed security, would essentially require Member States to leverage on harmonised regional seed regulatory frameworks that offer opportunity to support and facilitate exchange of germplasm and/or varieties among countries, audit one another's seed production systems including reduction in costs of varietal certification.

Countries with less developed seed systems will access improved varieties from neighbouring countries with better supply system while those States with well-developed seed system will benefit from simplified processes and wider markets. This implies that countries with high comparative advantage in the production of certain seed crops will be encouraged to produce surplus.

A functioning seed system is one with seed policy instruments, functional institutions to regulate seed certification, variety release processes, production and distribution channels. There are more similarities than differences in the seed trade harmonization efforts among Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa implying that they have a lot in common, and hence it is time to consider continental harmonization in view of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

COMESA's story was shared during the consultative meeting to mainstream advanced genetic improvement

innovations into National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIPs) in Nairobi, Kenya on 17 May 2022. The Meeting was organized by the African Union Commission-Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (AUC-DARBE).

To facilitate achievement of continental harmonization, Ms. Beatrice Egulu, Policy Officer-AUC-DARBE pointed out that Heads of State and Government endorsed the Continental Guidelines for the Harmonisation of Seed Regulatory Frameworks in Africa during the Summit in February 2022 held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The meeting further deliberated on how to guide the Member States on the safe application and harnessing of modern biotechnology and emerging technologies including Genome Editing in the field of agriculture. Participants noted that these advanced technologies have the potential to improve not only the productivity but also to improve and enhance the nutritional attributes of African staple crops.

The meeting was also informed that although African countries have shown progress in developing National Regulatory Frameworks (NRFs), many are lagging behind. In this regard, the domestication of the Guidelines on use of Biotechnology in Food and Agriculture in Africa will catalyze collective actions by stakeholders to address existing gaps.

The participants called for stronger collaboration and coordination between AUC and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) with RECs and other development organizations in strengthening resilience in nutrition and food security in Africa.



His Excellency Claude Morel (R) presents his Letter of Credence to Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe at the COMESA Secretariat

Seychelles has a New Representative to COMESA

Seychelles appointed His Excellency Claude Morel as the Permanent Representative to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Mr Morel, who is the High Commissioner of Seychelles to South Africa, presented his credentials to COMESA Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe, on 6 May 2022 in Lusaka.

Over the years, Seychelles has remained an active participant in various regional integration programmes in trade and customs, gender and social affairs, climate change and the agriculture and industry sector. Specifically, its exports have continued to grow steadily with a 15.8 percent increase recorded in 2020 from USD 985m to USD 1,586 million despite the negative impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector.

Seychelles is active in Trade in Services negotiations and is among the Member States that have submitted draft offers in five priority areas namely communication, finance, tourism, transport, construction, and energy related services among others.

Secretary General Kapwepwe hailed Seychelles for its commitment to regional integration adding there were opportunities to expand the country's share of intra-COMESA exports which was currently minimal.

Ambassador Morel noted that COMESA's approach to mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis has been effective more so in formulating a pathway toward recovery through capacity building, digitalization and targeted support.

"Digitalization, facilitation of information exchanges and being available to support the business community wishing to conduct intra-regional and international trade have proven essential tools against the COVID-19 pandemic," he noted.

He added that COMESA's efforts in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement will enable swift economic recovery and improve intra-Africa trade hence the importance of consolidating the nexus between COMESA's and AfCFTA agendas.

He also identified the following COMESA programme as having been most valuable to Seychelles: Regional Integration Support Programme, the Regional Integration Support Mechanism, the Regional Maritime Support Programme, the Technical Assistance Facility and Climate Change programmes.

In August 2021, Ms Kapwepwe led a COMESA delegation to Seychelles where they met President Wavel Ramkalawan, held meetings with different Ministers and officiated at the launch of the COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB) National Chapter.

“..... Digitalization, facilitation of information exchanges and being available to support the business community wishing to conduct intra-regional and international trade have proven essential tools against the COVID-19 pandemic,” Amb. Claude Morel



Banks Trained on Macro Prudential Shocks to the Financial System

Twenty-five financial stability experts from eight Central Banks in the COMESA region have been trained on the transmission mechanism of macro-prudential shocks to the financial system. The training held virtually from 9 – 13 May 2022 was motivated by the fact that macro prudential shocks have the potential to disrupt the normal credit intermediation channel and may result in a widespread curtailment of credit to bank dependent borrowers. This could then disrupt the entire financial system.

COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) organized the training to enhance the capacity of analysing the most important features of transmission channels of macro prudential shocks on the financial system, especially during periods of extreme widespread financial distress.

The other objective of the training was to deepen understanding of the interdependencies among key financial and macroeconomic variable and the feedback effects thereof.

Speaking during the opening of the training, then Acting Director of CMI Dr Lucas Njoroge, underscored the importance of understanding the transmission mechanism of macro

prudential shocks, to safeguard the financial system against the build-up of systemic risk.

He noted that the training was an important step towards designing appropriate macro prudential policies as it uncovered the process through which (macro prudential) policy impacts the financial system

“This training and opportunity to share experiences is important as the successful implementation of macro prudential regulations require an accurate assessment of how fast the effects of macro-prudential impulses spread to other parts of the financial system and the timing and size of these effects,” Dr Njoroge added.

The training was titled ‘Transmission Mechanism of Macro Prudential Shocks to the Financial System: Application of Vector Auto Regressions (VAR), Structural VAR (SVAR) and Vector Error Correction Models (VECM).

Countries that participated in the training are Djibouti, Egypt, Malawi, Mauritius, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

AUDA-NEPAD to Establish Centres of Excellence in the Region

The African Union Development Agency AUDA-NEPAD plans to establish Centres of Excellence in COMESA Member States. This was disclosed during a visit to the COMESA Secretariat by an AU delegation led by Acting Director for Knowledge Management and Programme Evaluation, Dr Martin Bwalya, on 22 May 2022.

During the ensuing consultations, the AU and COMESA officials agreed to complement each other, given COMESA's work in knowledge capitalization of the planned Centers of excellence.

Dr Bwalya said the visit was conducted in the spirit of the AU institutional reform process, that demands the establishment of standardized working and coordination modalities with all of Africa's Regional Economic Communities.

“We would like to ensure that we come up with well-informed decisions on the matters, hence, the need for continuous consultations and coordination towards a shared approach for the effective achievement of regional integration and Agenda 2063,” Dr Bwalya stated.

In July 2018, the AU Assembly mandated AUDA to coordinate and execute priority regional and continental projects to promote regional integration towards accelerated realisation of the AU Agenda 2063. The Assembly also agreed to, among others strengthen



COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe (L) and the AfDB President Dr Akinwumi Adesina at the AfDB Annual meetings in Ghana

Two COMESA Institutions Feted at the AfDB Annual Convention

As COMESA SG hold roundtable with heads of AfDB, ACFTA, and RECs

The Trade and Development Bank and the African Trade Insurance Agency (ATIA) have been recognized for excellence in development financing and insurance services. The two received the awards on the side-lines of the 57th Annual meeting of the African Development Bank and the 48th Annual meeting of the African Development Fund.

The TDB received two awards, namely Sustainable Bank of the year and Development Finance Institution of the Year, while ATIA through the Luanda Bitá Water Supply Project won the Infrastructure Deal of the Year. The was during the 16th edition of the African Banker Awards Gala Accra, Ghana on 23 – 27 May 2022 side event.

The AfDB is one of COMESA's development partners and currently provides funding to the regional bloc under Phase V of the Statistics Capacity Building Programme, Phase II of the Tripartite Capacity Building Programme, the pharmaceuticals programme and most recently support for the Market Analysis (Pre-Investment Study) on a Regional Cloud Ecosystem

– Phase I.

COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe participated as special guest to the 2022 AfDB Annual Meetings. She also took part in a roundtable meeting with the President of the African Development Bank, Dr Akinwumi Adesina, the African Union Commission, Heads of Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat and Development Finance Institutions. The discussions centred on mobilizing resources for regional integration and development in Africa.

The leaders reviewed the Bank's latest resource mobilisation initiatives aimed at promoting investment in Africa. Ms Kapwepwe stressed the importance of capacity building, harmonization as well as the digitalization of trade such as e-commerce, e-logistics and e-legislation.

The meetings also brought together Heads of State and Government, Ministers of Finance, Central Bank Governors, regional and continental leaders. Further, the Meetings served as

a precursor to the UN Climate Change Conference, COP 27 scheduled in November 2022 in Egypt. Anchored under the theme "Achieving Climate Resilience and a Just Energy Transition for Africa," the meeting focused on the impact of climate change on Africa and the need for a just energy transition on the continent.

Meanwhile, the Secretary General paid a courtesy call on the AfCFTA Secretary General Mr Wamkele Mene at the AfCFTA Secretariat in Accra on 26 May 2022. This was her first visit to the AfCFTA Secretariat (Africa Trade House). The two discussed the need for continuous collaboration in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement. The SG commended the ACFTA on the progress made so far in the negotiations under Trade in Services.

Mr Mene appreciated COMESA's support to the AfCFTA indicating that the AfCFTA continues to rely on the already existing instruments as well as institutions under COMESA.



The AU, COMESA and EAC Team with Commissioners of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission in Kenya

Joint AU-COMESA-EAC High-Level Pre-election Assessment Mission to Kenya

COMESA and the African Union conducted a joint pre-election assessment mission to Kenya on 14 – 21 May 2022 ahead of the country's General Elections on 9 August 2022. The high-level mission was headed by H.E. Domitien Ndayizeye, former President of Burundi and the current Chairperson of the African Union Panel of the Wise.

During the Mission, the delegation assessed the state of preparedness for elections and engaged in consultations with key stakeholders to ensure fair and credible elections that will strengthen Kenya's democratic process. Among these were the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, the Chief Justice, the Attorney General, the Registrar of Political Parties, political party coalitions, and representatives of CSOs and the private sector, among others.

The delegation encouraged all stakeholders to continue with the efforts to create a conducive environment for peaceful, credible and inclusive elections. It further

encouraged political tolerance and promotion of peace among citizens before, during and after the elections. It assured the Government and people of Kenya of their commitment to supporting the country's efforts to entrench a culture of democracy and peace, which is a critical prerequisite for sustainable socio-economic development. The government had already invited the AU, COMESA and East African Community to observe the elections.

Other members of the mission team included Hon. Amre Mahmoud Moussa, former Foreign Minister of Egypt and Member of the AU Panel of the Wise, Hon. Mike Kennedy Sebalu, Member of the EAC Eminent Persons, Amb. Ashraf Rashed, Chairperson of COMESA Committee of Elders, Amb. Marie Pierre Llyod and Hon. Monique Andreas Esoavelomandroso, both Member of COMESA Committee of Elders, independent electoral experts and technical support staff from AU Commission, COMESA and EAC Secretariats.

AUDA-NEPAD to Establish Centres ...

capacity of African Union Member States and regional bodies, advance knowledge-based advisory support, undertake the full range of resource mobilisation, and serve as the continent's technical interface with all of Africa's development stakeholders and development partners.

COMESA has been involved in the establishment of regional collaboration mechanisms between the AUDA-NEPAD and African Regional Economic Communities Technical Coordination Committee. It also participated in the 1st Africa Regional Technical Reference Group Meeting on Development Effectiveness in preparation for the 3rd High Level Meeting to be held later this year as well as the Technical Consultative Meeting with RECs on Joint Resource Mobilisation, held in April 2022.

Assistant Secretary General Dr Dev Haman welcomed the team and pledged COMESA's commitment and ensure the programme is implemented smoothly.

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"We would like to ensure that we come up with well-informed decisions on the matters, hence, the need for continuous consultations and coordination towards a shared approach for the effective achievement of regional integration and Agenda 2063," Dr Bwalya

Framework for Strengthening Conflict Prevention Developed

The framework will enable the parties to analyse data and information for conflict prevention, peace building and conflict management in the region and beyond



Delegates attending the COMESA-AU-CSO Symposium in Malawi

COMESA Secretariat working with the African Union Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department (COMESA-AU) has developed a framework for sharing early warning tools on conflict prevention and management with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from Southern Africa. The framework will enable the parties to analyse data and information for conflict prevention, peace building and conflict management in the region and beyond.

This was agreed upon during a symposium on the thematic areas of conflict prevention and conflict management held in Lilongwe, Malawi on 24 - 26 May 2022. Among the key objectives of the Symposium was to identify areas of partnership and develop an action plan for deeper engagement where COMESA can leverage on the CSOs networks and expertise in enhancing implementation and wider programme impact.

The current and emerging gaps in governance, peace and security were identified at the symposium and a road map formulated to provide necessary interventions. Key on the solutions was the need to conduct a regional conflict security mapping which will focus on

climate change-induced conflicts in East Africa, Horn of Africa, Southern Africa, Northern Africa and the Islands.

This was prompted by the consensus that climate change increases the risks of conflict and instability. It further intensifies resource competition, exacerbates conflicts and contributes to forced displacement. Furthermore, research and capacity building of CSOs and Member States in conflict prevention, conflict management, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD), maritime security, transnational crimes and crosscutting issues on gender and youth were also recommended. In addition, the bloc should develop standardized models for Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and other stakeholders building on regional and universally accepted principles and guidelines on the independence of EMBs.

Given that COMESA has been supporting Member States in the consolidation of democracy in the region through election observation, the delegates recommended that an inventory of standards that will provide criteria for best practices on the electoral environment in the region be

developed.

On countering violent extremism, the meeting proposed among others, that there is need to strengthen COMESA linkages with the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (CAERT) and the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL) and facilitate cooperation among national counter-terrorism centers. This could be done through joint study tours and peer learning of the national counter-terrorism centers.

Thirty-two CSO representatives from the African Union's Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), the Institute of Security Studies (ISS), the Levy Mwanawasa Regional Center, Save The Children, Pan African Lawyers Union, Dag Hammarskjold participated in the symposium. Representatives from the governments of Comoros, Mauritius, Madagascar, Zambia and Zimbabwe participated.

The newly developed framework will guide the development of the 2022 APSA Workplan, including joint programming with CSOs to address gaps identified in the agreed thematic areas.



COMESA Management Retreats for Team Building

Management and Senior staff at COMESA Secretariat participated in a two-day team building retreat in Lusaka from 29 – 30 June 2022. This followed over two years of flexi-working, from home or office since the onset of COVID-19. The retreat was an opportunity to

reconnect, meet and bond with new staff that have joined the organization during the past two and half years. It was themed: 'Enhancing our workspace through team building'

Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe said

the activity was necessary as human resource is the number one asset. "We can have the best results or the best action plan, but it has to be executed through people and the people must be in a situation where they are working together."



Silencing the Guns

AU and Regional Economic Communities converge to finalize implementation plan and road map



Zambia Airforce Chief of Operations, Brig General Arthur Kalaluka (in red tie) with participants to the AU-REC consultative meeting on Silencing the guns

The African Union Commission held a meeting for Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs) on the Implementation of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2030.

The three-day meeting in Lusaka, Zambia, 6 - 8 June 2022 brought together participants from the relevant department of the AU Commission, Divisions within the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department, representatives from RECs/RMs, representatives of the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL), African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) and Economic, Social & Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) and representatives of AUC partners supporting silencing the guns project such as the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

The meeting finalised the implementation plan that would guide the operationalization of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework of the of the AU Master Roadmap on Practical

Steps to silence the guns in Africa. This is addition to adopting the terms of reference of an AU-RECs/RMs Steering Committee on Silencing the Guns.

The meeting also agreed on the establishment of the Steering Committee including the relevant departments of the AUC and focal points/officers in each REC/RM to follow up and coordinate activities related to the STG Initiative. The committee will contribute to enhancing collaboration and synergy with the RECs/RMs on the implementation of the AU master Roadmap, in particular in increasing its domestication and popularization at the regional level.

It will also serve as a collaborative platform to facilitate regular exchanges between the AU, RECs/RMs, Civil Society Organizations, academia, private sector and other stakeholders that have a role to play in the implementation of the Silencing the Guns Master Roadmap.

Zambia Airforce Chief of Operations, Brig General Arthur Kalaluka opened the meeting on 6 June 2022. It was

co-hosted by COMESA through the Governance, Peace and Security Unit.

Coordinator of Silencing the Guns under the Political Affairs, Peace and Security at the African Union Commission, Mr. Advelkader Araoua, said:

"The extension of the life span of the AU master roadmap on practical steps to silence the guns in Africa to the year 2030, is a test of our ability to deliver on our commitments to free the African continent from wars, civil conflicts, humanitarian crises, human rights violations, gender-based violence, and genocide."

Head of Governance, Peace and Security at the COMESA Secretariat, Ms. Elizabeth Mutunga stressed the need to continuously assess the external environment in developing an implementation plan for the monitoring and evaluation.

"Emerging and unpredictable factors, that have not necessarily originated from our region are having a very big impact on the peace, conflict and security dynamics of our region," she noted.



Advisor in the Royal Court of the Saudi Kingdom, His Excellency Mr. Ahmed bin Abdulaziz Kattan (3rd left) and Assistant Secretaries General, Dr. Dev Haman (centre) and Dr Kipyego Cheluget (R), COMESA Permanent Representatives and Secretariat staff

Saudi Seeks New Investments in COMESA

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seeks to enhance relations with countries in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa by establishing new areas of investment and development through the COMESA Secretariat.

On 9 June 2022 the Advisor in the Royal Court of the Saudi Kingdom, His Excellency Mr. Ahmed bin Abdulaziz Kattan, visited COMESA Secretariat, to discuss cooperation and seek support in hosting the World Expo 2030 in Saudi Arabia.

He met with ambassadors and high commissioners of COMESA States based in Zambia and COMESA management led by then Acting Secretary General Dr Dev Haman.

Mr Kattan conveyed a special message from King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and His Royal Highness Crown prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, expressing interest in cooperating with COMESA to advance the interest of its Member States.

He said: "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia considers COMESA as an important

organisation in achieving the objectives of the Arab-Africa partnership. I look forward to this meeting as a starting point for further coordination and cooperation between the Kingdom and all Member States."

Mr Kattan said the Kingdom had committed US\$1 billion for investment projects in Africa in the following sectors: industry, finance, agriculture, fishing, mining, transportation, regional security and energy.

Further, he said Saudi Arabia has contributed funds to the development of Africa including fighting hunger, poverty, epidemics and pandemics such as the COVID-19. A total of \$500 million was provided to combat COVID-19, \$150m in the vaccine alliance and \$200m in supporting health entities.

The Kingdom is also seeking to achieve deeper relations and participate in development efforts through investment initiatives that will be launched in many African countries in coordination with African regional organisations such as COMESA.

With diplomatic representation in 27 countries on the African continent, Saudi Arabia will this year (2022) be hosting the first Saudi-Africa Summit and the fifth Arab-African Summit, to which COMESA Secretariat has been invited. Mr Kattan asked for COMESA's support in its bid to host the World Expo 2030 in Riyadh.

In his remarks, Dr Haman said the support and commitment exhibited by Saudi Arabia was a true testimony of the strong relations that have existed between the Kingdom and African countries over the years. He appreciated Saudi Arabia's decision to seek new investment and development opportunities in COMESA, which he noted will focus on uplifting the standards of living of the people.

Dr Haman added that COMESA will continue to create an enabling environment for private sector investment to thrive, through trade facilitation, market integration, infrastructure development and industrialization among others.

The Saudi delegation visited all the 21 Member States of COMESA.



Malawi Minister of Trade Hon. Mark Katsonga Phiri (2nd right), COMFWB Chief Executive officer Ruth Negash (3rd right) and beneficiaries at the launch of a cooking oil processing line at Homes Industries Limited in Karonga, Malawi

Small-Scale **Women-led** Industrial Projects Launched in Malawi

COMFWB has also signed implementation agreements with other women-owned organizations to implement textile and agro-processing projects, business incubators and a microfinance institution

The Malawi Chapter of the COMESA Federation of National Associations of Women in Business (COMFWB) has launched three small-scale women-owned and led industrial projects in the northern region of the country. The launch took place on 6 – 7 June 2022 in Nkhata Bay, Mzuzu and Karonga.

Three organisations namely, Homes Industries Limited in Karonga, Chiwila Women in Landcare & Agribusiness in Mzuzu, and Lusolawo Cooperative in Nkhata Bay are among the beneficiaries of the projects. Homes Industries launched a cooking oil processing line on 6 June 2022 while Chiwila and Lusolawo launched cassava plant and solar driers respectively on the following day.

The establishment and growth of such small-scale agro-based industries is expected to add value to job and wealth creation, food security and nutrition, and the creation of opportunities for Malawian women and youth to engage in competitive agriculture value chains as outlined in the Malawi National Development Plan 2063 (MW2063).

Representatives of women associations in Malawi, the COMFWB Malawi Chapter Chairperson and executive board members, the COMFWB Chief Executive Officer, Ms Ruth Negash, staff and senior officials from the Ministry of Trade and Industry were among the participants.

Trade and Industry Minister Hon. Mark Katsonga Phiri presided over the launch. He said COMFWB's mandate and role were strategically aligned to the country's national development plan.

"More specifically in support of Pillar 1 on Agricultural Productivity and Commercialisation and Pillar 2 on Industrialisation, the plan affirms our collective ambition to develop Malawi into a food secure nation with a highly productive and commercialised agriculture sector that feeds into and propels the country's manufacturing industry," Mr Phiri said.

COMFWB, through the Malawi Chapter has up-scaled the implementation of business incubator for African Women Enterprises (BIAWE) program and

implemented various interventions in the Cassava value chains as indicated by Ms Negash.

"The program outcome includes establishment of clusters, provision of skills required by Cassava SMEs, enhancement in knowledge of Cassava trading centers and facilities, and creation of regional sector value chain supply and demand database."

COMFWB Malawi Chapter has also signed implementation agreements with several other women-owned organizations in Malawi to implement Textile and Agro-processing projects and to establish business incubators and a Microfinance institution.

Chapter chairperson, Barbra Banda appreciated the COMFWB Secretariat and the Malawi government for the support which has led to the launch of the women projects

COMFWB was established in July 1993 in Zimbabwe with the endorsement of the Authority which is made up of Heads of State and Governments of the COMESA Member States.



Comoros to have a National Energy Regulation Board

Comoros is set to establish an autonomous energy regulator with support from the project on Enhancement of a Sustainable Regional Energy Market (ESREM) in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO) Region. Currently, the island country has no active energy regulator.

The ESREM is a seven million euros European Union funded project whose implementation was led by COMESA in partnership with the regional economic communities including the East Africa Community, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Indian Ocean Commission and the Southern Africa Development Community.

Among the deliverables of the project, whose tenure ended in May this year, was to support Member States in enhancing regulatory capacity and strengthening capacity of the regional associations and power pools so that they can proactively influence developments in the energy sector.

Pursuant to this objective, Comoros hosted a National Workshop on Regulation 23 – 24 May 2022, aimed at facilitating dialogue between regulation experts from the region and Energy Sector leadership in Moroni, as part of the

drive to establish an autonomous energy regulator.

The meeting drew participation from various organizations relevant to the development of the Comoros national energy sector. Among them were representatives from the Ministry of Energy, Water and Hydrocarbons, National Power Utility, National Water Utility, representatives from the Private Sector and International Cooperation Partners.

The objective was to enable the target audience to appreciate the importance of establishing energy regulatory and institutional frameworks in supporting national governments' long-term objectives of providing affordable and reliable energy supply and services to its citizens.

The workshop was officially opened by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Energy, Water and Hydrocarbons, Madam Njda Said Abdallah. The Minister expressed gratitude to COMESA and the European Union, for the successful implementation of the ESREM project.

"Comoros considers electrical energy as an essential element of the productivity of industrial activities and tourism

development as part of economic growth plans, and therefore, electricity will play a key role in driving the economic transformation by allowing the various economic actors to have access to a quality resource at an affordable cost," she added.

Chief Executive Officer of the Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA) of COMESA Dr. Mohamedain Seif Elnasr cited key challenges facing the sector in the region. They include under-developed regulatory frameworks, absence of autonomous regulatory environment in some Member States and harmonized regulatory framework to support an integrated electricity market at regional level in the EA-SA-IO. This had increased the regulatory risk, complicated implementation modalities and inhibited investment decisions on electricity infrastructure projects.

The ESREM project provided technical support to align Member States' national legislations with the adopted harmonized regional regulatory framework through development of 12 regional guidelines to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives and provisions of trainings to 363 officials from the region.



Ministers Endorse Procedures to Establish COMESA Health Desk

Ministers responsible for health from the COMESA region have adopted Rules of Procedure to guide the establishment of a COMESA Health Desk and a regional statutory committee on health matters.

This follows the recommendations by the 42nd COMESA Council of Ministers Meeting held in November 2021 which directed that a committee on health be established. Towards this goal, health experts and Ministers of Health meetings were scheduled to develop a plan to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and other diseases.

Once established, the health committee will develop the COMESA health programme and monitor illegal commercial practices in the medical and pharmaceutical sector in the region. The newly adopted Draft Rules of Procedure have been discussed and reviewed by health experts in consultation with other Regional Economic Communities and partners such as the Africa Union Center for Diseases Control (AU-CDC).

Specifically, the health desk is expected to facilitate the development of policy and strategic frameworks on health, promote and coordinate the implementation of health programmes, promote research and sharing of best practices on health, promote local manufacturing

of medicines, prepare reports and service meetings of Member States.

Speaking during the opening of the first meeting of COMESA health ministers on Wednesday 22 June 2022, Zambia's Minister of Health Ms Sylvia Masebo described the proposed health desk as the foundation upon which the COMESA health programme will be built.

She said COVID-19 had triggered the region to act on an area of the integration agenda that had been ignored.

"We can ill-afford to be caught unawares ever again," she stressed.

"We all agree that establishing mechanisms to predict and avert possible challenges relating to our region's health sector is critical. Similarly, the need to put in place the infrastructure to coordinate our responses to any health risks, or needs, has become a matter of urgency". Hon. Masebo, who was Chairing the

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 "We all agree that establishing mechanisms to predict and avert possible challenges relating to our region's health sector is critical. Similarly, the need to put in place the infrastructure to coordinate our responses to any health risks, or needs, has become a matter of urgency", Hon Masebo

virtual meeting, urged the delegates to pay attention to what the statistics indicate about the relationship between the economies and disease noting that the very existence of the regional bloc is anchored on promoting trade.

A study by the International Monetary Fund titled 'The Long Economic Hangover of Pandemics' which interrogated the impact of pandemics from the past, came to the conclusion that nations require at least 20 years to recover from the effects of the slowdown in business which these pandemics cause.

In her address, Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe said the health desk would enable the region deal with diseases such as Malaria, Tuberculosis, Hepatitis and HIV/AIDS, Cancers, and maternal and child health matters and other diseases that have had a devastating impact on the population in the COMESA region.

Centre for Disease Control (CDC) Africa Director, Dr Ahmed Ouma said his organisation will support the operationalization of the COMESA health desk which he described as a step towards regional health security.

"Indeed, the health desk will be one of the steps to achieving health security of the citizen through coordination of programmes on health in COMESA and will support building resilience in health systems, COVID-19 vaccine rollout, cross border disease surveillance, and other means to limit the transmission of existing and emerging health threats," Dr Ouma added.

The meeting also discussed the need to support the COMESA with financial resources once it is launched to effectively achieve its mandate.

Earlier, senior officials from the health sector reviewed the draft rules of procedure and the report on the operationalization of the COMESA Health Desk before presenting to the Ministers.

Enabling Governments to Deal with Monetary Risks

CMI rolls out a training programme on testing fiscal stress

One of the key roles of a government is to develop the national budget as a guide towards achieving specific development and social objectives. This includes determining the resource envelope namely; domestic revenue (tax and non-tax revenue), donor grants, and the borrowing needs for funding the identified priorities.

Quite often, fiscal outturns differ substantially from the budget forecasts, owing to factors outside the government's control such as deviations of economic growth from expectations, terms of trade shocks, natural disasters, calls on government guarantees, among others. This poses challenges to the attainment of the government's intended objectives.

Specifically, the occurrence of fiscal risks, defined as the deviation of fiscal outturns from initial forecast, leads to additional government obligations, revenue losses, larger public debts, and occasionally, refinancing difficulties and crises. Moreover, unexpected spending pressures or revenue losses often require disruptive adhoc adjustments during the fiscal year.

This challenge prevails among COMESA countries hence, addressing fiscal risks is a key element of the COMESA Multilateral Macroeconomic Surveillance Framework. Pursuant to this effort, the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) has developed a training programme on how to deal with fiscal risks.

On 27 June - 1 July 2022, CMI organized Fiscal Stress Testing training that brought together 35 delegates from 12 Central Banks and Ministries of Finance from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan,

Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The training was aimed at providing a deeper understanding of how to deal with fiscal risks.

Fiscal stress test examines how the public finances would respond to fiscal risks. A comprehensive disclosure and analysis of fiscal risks can help governments to ensure that fiscal policy settings can respond to a range of potential future economic and fiscal shocks; those specific risks are actively monitored and managed; and that abrupt and disruptive changes in policy are avoided when risks materialize.

Fiscal stress test is therefore, an important activity that all countries are required to perform for prudent public finance management, in order to understand how public finances would respond to significant economic and/or financial shocks.

Addressing the delegates, Director of the CMI, Mr. Ibrahim Zeidy, underscored the importance of conducting fiscal stress tests in COMESA member countries. "Countries need a more complete understanding of the potential threats to their fiscal position, in form of fiscal risk test that can help policy makers simulate the effects of shocks to their forecasts and their implications for government solvency, liquidity and financial needs," he said.

The training will enhance the implementation of the COMESA multilateral fiscal surveillance framework and skills to identify specific fiscal risks and design stress test scenarios for fiscal stress test.



The 16th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments of the African Union

COMESA at the AU Summit on Terrorism, Unconstitutional Removal of Governments

COMESA Secretariat was among Regional Economic Communities that participated in the 16th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments of the African Union on terrorism and unconstitutional changes of government held on 28 May 2022 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

The Summit assessed the persistent threat that the upsurge of terrorism and incidences of unconstitutional changes of government have continued to impact on the peace, security, stability, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States.

The Summit agenda was aligned with COMESA activities with the AU, Civil Society and other RECs implements through the Governance, Peace and Security Programme. Among them is the COMESA Early Warning System (COMWARN) that identifies structural

vulnerability/ resilience drivers at a very early stage and provide ample time for decision makers to initiate the necessary and appropriate responses. The initiative is part of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) framework.

Early Warning System

In 2021 COMESA collaborated with the African Union's Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) to support Zambia in undergoing the Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment (CSVRA) process where nationwide multi-stakeholder consultations were held with various stakeholders in order to enhance the resilience and address vulnerabilities identified.

On consolidation of democracy in the region, COMESA has been supporting Member States through the deployment

of election observer missions. On terrorism, efforts have been made as well towards strengthening linkages and cooperation between the AU's Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (CAERT) and select national counter-terrorism centres aimed at enhancing peer learning and capacity-strengthening through training.

COMESA was represented at the Summit by the Director of Gender and Social Affairs Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde and Mr Raymond Kitevu the Conflict Early Warning Expert.



Victor Malombe

My Journey of Faith

Testimonial on COMESA Youth Development Programme

Firstly, I express my deepest appreciation to the COMESA Court of Justice for allowing me to intern in their organization. It has indeed been an enormous opportunity for both personal and organizational growth.

I was born normal like any other perfect child on 14th September 1990. I grew up in Umoja, Eastlands, in Nairobi. While in grade six, I noticed that I couldn't read books with small fonts.

I began to have difficulties taking part in sporting activities such as football which was my favorite. At age fifteen, my vision got more blurred. I was given corrective spectacles after a visit to the eye clinic. The optician assured my

parents that all was well and that low vision was a common problem, and I would get better vision with spectacles. His words boosted my faith. I dedicated my time to reading. I was glad to have worn spectacles and associated them with professors, a thing I would use to put off teasers.

Soldering On

In succeeding years, the deterioration of my sight continued despite the use of spectacles. The condition got worse, and in 2005, when I was preparing to sit for my final Primary exams, I would frequently trip over things or knock people coming in my direction.

By God's Grace, I did my exams and managed to score 407 out of 500 marks. I got an admission to join Upper Hill High School in Nairobi. I soldiered

on and became an excellent listener as compensation for my failing sight. I sat for my high school examination and later joined the Catholic University of East Africa, Kenya for my Law Degree. My childhood dream was unfolding.

I graduated from campus with Second Class Honors, Upper Division, enrolled in Kenya School of Law for a postgraduate diploma in Law, and passed. In 2017 I was admitted to the bar as an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya. It was a dream come true. I had long fancied the idea of being a Senior Counsel from my formative years in school. In the same year, I got married to Nicole Munyiva Musembi.

I enrolled in Management University of Africa in 2018 for a Master's Degree in



Victor Malombe participating in a virtual meeting of the COMESA Court of Justice

Business management and leadership. Studies proved to be strenuous compelling me to drop. I couldn't recognize people's faces and frequent headaches made studies difficult. At the time, I was working for The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK).

Impaired Vision

While working, I visited various hospitals for specialized ophthalmology tests. I was diagnosed with a condition known as Retinitis Pigmentosa.

It's a degenerative condition that damages the retina causing visual impairment. In my case, the condition is compounded by maculopathy, a secondary progressive condition that also affects the retina. The condition is characterized by night blindness, impaired peripheral and central vision.

There is no known cure, but the condition has several medical research to its credit.

2020 was not devoid of challenges in

December I lost my job at NCCK. This loss broke my heart, not to mention struggles with visual disability, taking care of my family, and my marriage was fairly young. I had seen and heard stories of marriages that collapsed after one spouse was diagnosed with a long or permanent health condition. I thank God for Nicole who turned out to be my pillar of strength.

Later, I registered and joined the Kenya Society for the Blind and began to undertake a rehabilitative course in mobility and adaptive computer training. I also registered with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities and the association for the physically disabled.

Coming to Terms

Coming to terms with reality, that I may totally be blind, has not been easy. My vision is very low but am still hopeful of a curative discovery. Nonetheless, I am taking measures not to be caught ill-prepared. Adherence to doctors' advice on the use of special diets, food

supplements, constant observational visits has not been easy given their expensive nature and my family's limited income.

It is my appeal to COMESA and other partner institutions and employers to break the back of social inequity and embrace affirmative action and be more inclusive of People with Disabilities, women, and the marginalized. Disability is a matter of perception if I can do things well when given a task to do.



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