



**DRAFT OPENING STATEMENT BY
GUEST OF HONOUR**

**AT THE OFFICAL OPENING OF THE THIRTEENTH MEETING OF
COMESA INFRASTRUCTURE MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR
TRANSPORT, ICT AND ENERGY**

14TH SEPTEMBER 2023

KIGALI, RWANDA

Director of Ceremonies

Honourable Ministers from the COMESA Member States

Secretary General of COMESA

Distinguished Representatives of International and Regional Organisations

Senior Government Officials

Representatives from our Sister Regional Economic Communities

COMESA Staff

Distinguished delegates

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is my great pleasure to warmly welcome you to Kigali, Rwanda for the 13th Meeting of COMESA Ministers of Infrastructure being held physically for the first time in two years following the restrictions imposed by the COVID 19 pandemic.
2. We are relieved that the COVID 19 pandemic is on its tail end, thanks to the global, continental, and national Leaders for the quick response in the production and administration of COVID-19 vaccines that have reduced the risk and impact of the virus on the lives of people everywhere.
3. Although COVID 19 pandemic is on its tail end, we are still battling its impact on logistics, trade, transport and economy, and doing businesses.
4. COVID-19 reminded us of the interdependence and integrated nature of our economies through the global and regional value chains. This is the reason why we need each other, and COMESA joins us together for our prosperity.

**Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

5. Infrastructure is one of the cornerstones of regional integration and economic growth as it provides physical connectivity necessary for the flow of trade and movement of people among COMESA Member States, easing doing business, therefore making our countries competitive regionally and internationally.
6. Inadequate networks of road, rail, air and waterways make transport costs in Africa to be among the highest in the world. For the landlocked countries, these costs account for as much as 70 percent of the value of exports.

**Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

7. Cognisant of the transformative nature of infrastructure towards our economic growth and development trajectory, COMESA Member States have put significant effort and committed a lot of financial resources on infrastructure development and maintenance.
8. Despite the positive efforts of Member States, regional infrastructure is unfortunately still lacking in terms of its quantity and qualitative maintenance. In addition, our national policies sometimes could hinder easiness of trade, mobility and logistics.
9. It important to mention that liberalization of regional and African sky contribute to ease trade and transport as well as supporting growing tourism industry in Africa.

10. Investing into railways, regional roads, maritime and inland water ways infrastructure contribute to reduce the cost of transport in the region.
11. We all share that the access and the quality of electricity are core pillars for industrialization and human welfare. The energy should be affordable across the region and strive to be clean to save the environment.
12. In addition, it is imperative that IT technology to optimize services and safeguard infrastructure assets constructed.

**Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

13. I am delighted to note that this meeting provides a forum for policy makers to consider and critically review the state of regional infrastructure against current and future requirements and discuss the associated challenges.
14. I am confident that policy guidance will be made to facilitate development and adoption of practical solutions to mitigate the infrastructure challenges both on transport and energy to ensure adequacy of the infrastructure in relation to current and future demand.

**Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

15. The realization of COMESA agenda will go a long way in addressing the infrastructure needs of our region and uplifting of the standard of living of our citizens while implementing continental flagship projects under Agenda 2063 and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) to support African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA).
16. For Rwanda, a new Kigali international airport is under construction, the national carrier-Rwandair is serving various destination in Africa. Regional railway demarcation was completed and under funds mobilisation while ports and regional road sare being constructed
17. On energy side, hydropower plants such as Rusomo and Nyabarongo II are completing while Rusizi IV is underway. Various local and regional transmission lines were constructed to support the use of the generated electricity. Current efforts are being put clean and renewable energy through solar and nuclear.
18. For IT, a system was developed to track the border crossing time using License Plate Recognition (LPR) technology starting with Rusumo border between Rwanda and the United Republic of Tranzania. In addition, we have developed a Single Window Information for Trade (SWIFT) intended to minimize time taken to complete standard import and export processes across the EAC, increase user compliance with trade procedures, and decrease the time it takes to complete documentation.
19. However, it is important to note that the required investment for infrastructure plans and policies need huge financial resources.

20. This reality compels us to mobilize resources as individual countries and also collectively. On the other hand, treasury financing demonstrated limitations, therefore there is a need to explore public private partnerships to diversify sources of projects financing

**Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

21. I am aware of the support COMESA is receiving from development partners to support implementation of most of the projects in the region. We therefore need recognize and applaud our development partners for their important contribution towards the development of our region. These include but not limited to the European Union, World Bank, African Development Bank, GIZ and USAID.

22. As I conclude, I wish you success in your deliberations which will shape the future development trajectory of our region and a safe stay in Kigali.

23. On that note, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates and Invited guests, it is now my honour and privilege to declare the Thirteenth Meeting of COMESA Infrastructure Ministers responsible for Transport and Communications, IT and Energy officially open.

I Thank You for Your Kind Attention.

14th September 2023