

50 Million African Women Speak platform Launched in Zimbabwe



SG Kapwepwe giving her opening remarks

Zimbabwe became the third COMESA Member State to unveil the 50 Million African Women Speak (50MAWSP) platform in a colourful ceremony hosted in Harare on 3rd September 2020. The national launch of the platform was presided over by the Minister for Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development, Hon. Stembiso Gladys Nyoni.

The event was held through a hybrid arrangement where a limited number of local participants gathered physically at the launch venue were joined virtually by several invited guests, with COMESA's high-profile participation led by Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe, Assistant Secretaries General Amb. Dr. Kipyego Cheluget and Dr. Dev Haman and FEMCOM Chief Executive Officer Ms Ruth Negash, among others.

Chief Guest and Women Affairs Minister Hon. Nyoni commended COMESA for its support stating that it was "a bold acknowledgement of the critical role women play in Zimbabwe's economy." She observed that the 50MAWSP platform would allow women to connect across borders and create businesses online, adding that it would ultimately contribute significantly to the empowerment of women.

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Existing and aspiring women entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe for whom traditional markets may be shut are looking for solutions, and the 50MAWSP platform is one such practical solution," the Secretary General said.

"Deliberate and meaningful assistance of women will help them to become viable entrepreneurs," Hon. Nyoni said in reference to the 50 Million African Women Speak initiative.

Secretary General Kapwepwe noted that the platform could not have come at a better time, as businesses are more seized than ever before of the need to move online.

"Existing and aspiring women entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe for whom traditional markets may be shut are looking for solutions, and the 50MAWSP platform is one such practical solution," the Secretary General said.

"Zimbabwean women will have an opportunity to create their own virtual market stalls where they can showcase their products all day long and all year

Unconventional Monetary Policies Necessary to Address the Impact of COVID-19

Central Banks in the COMESA region has been implementing new policy instruments and made changes to their monetary policy frameworks in order to address low growth and increase in unemployment resulting from the negative impact of COVID-19,

According to a special report published by the Director of the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI), Mr Ibrahim Zeidy, most of the banks in the region and beyond are applying different combinations of what have been labelled as Unconventional Monetary Policy Tools (UMPTs) and adapted their operations to the circumstances in their jurisdictions.

In view of this, the CMI has come up with key recommendations of possible tools for the Central Banks to consider in addition to the UMPTs during this time of the coronavirus pandemic. These include the need to provide funding to market segments where liquidity has dried up.

"The possible tool to consider is providing funding for Lending Schemes whereby Central Banks provide collateralized long-term funding to banks to aid monetary transmission through the banking system and to support provision of new credit to bridge financing needs of specific sectors," Mr. Zeidy states

However, before implementing such tools, he notes, careful consideration should be given to the potential financial risks to Central Bank balance sheets, the operational readiness of such tools, potential distortions and spill overs and the importance of transparency and accountability in the use of such instruments.

"Central Banks should consider lowering the interest rate to increase loans to businesses (and decrease their cost) and provide commercial banks with more liquidity to support business activities," the director says. He adds that a temporary use of capital flow management measures can help prevent a free fall of the exchange rate. This is in addition to Capital flow management including a wide range of measures, such as restrictions on resident investments and transfers abroad, caps and other limitations on non-resident transfers abroad etc.

He however cautions that such measures should be implemented with due regard to countries international obligation, in a transparent manner, be temporary and lifted once crisis conditions decreases.

Other proposals made include the need for countries to initiate fiscal stimulus packages to minimize the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the national economies; fiscal stimulus to taxpayers impacted by COVID-19 and tax suspension, waiver of tax payments in critical sectors and encouraging local sourcing by the public sector to support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and other businesses.

Mr. Zeidy proposes that governments through Central Bank can also renegotiate external debt payment plans, and conditions to ensure smooth servicing of the debt, including suspension of interest rates payments during the time of the crisis.

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round," she added, highlighting the fact that women who use the platform will not have to worry about restrictions imposed by COVID-19.

Ms Kapwepwe thanked the funding partner, African Development Bank for the financial support which has made the 50 Million African Women Speak Project possible in 36 countries across the COMESA, EAC and ECOWAS regional blocs, as well as the Government of Zimbabwe for its support in implementing the initiative. She urged the government to devote the required resources to ensure its sustainability.

The 50 Million African Women Speak platform aims to facilitate a dynamic and engaging exchange of ideas among women entrepreneurs, using in-built social media functionality to connect them with one another in ways that will foster peer-to-peer learning, mentoring and the sharing of information and knowledge within communities, and access to financial services and market opportunities between urban and rural areas, and across borders and between countries.

Owing to the pandemic, national launch events of the platform will be held either virtually or as a hybrid of virtual and conventional launches. Before the launch in Zimbabwe two launches had been held in Zambia and Seychelles. Launch events in 12 other COMESA Member States are planned. The next launch is scheduled for 9 October 2020 in Madagascar.



COMESA Releases Schedule for the Annual Policy Organs Meetings



File: Council of Ministers meeting last year

COMESA Secretariat has released a schedule of its annual policy organs meetings which will be conducted between now and the end of the year. For the first time in history, the meetings will be virtual as possibilities of conducting them physically faded in the midst of COVID-19.

The meetings bring together government officials at four levels: technical experts, accounting officers comprising of Permanent/ Principal Secretaries, Ministers and the Heads of State Summit. The Summit which was earlier scheduled to be hosted in Egypt will take place early next year.

The theme for the meetings is 'COMESA: Towards Digital Economic Integration'. The Secretariat has maintained last year's theme in order to refocus attention on the need to harness the potential of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in addressing the existential challenges of regional integration especially with the advent of the Corona virus pandemic.

The impact of COVID-19 on regional integration and in particular the movement of goods and services across the region will constitute key discussion points for all the meetings as it will influence decisions on the way forward towards the implementation of programmes in Member States.

The first policy organ to meet will be the 40th Intergovernmental Committee on 23-24 November and the 40th Council of Ministers meeting on 26-27 November 2020. Prior to these, a series of technical and sectoral ministerial meetings have been lined up from mid-September leading up to the policy organs.

They include the 36th Trade and Customs Committee (27- 29 October) the 11th Meeting of the COMESA Ministers responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs (1-2 October), the 12th Joint Meeting of the Committee on Transport, and communications, Energy and Information Technology & 12th Infrastructure Ministers Meeting (20 - 23 October), the Ministerial Meeting of the

COMESA Fund Committee (9 November), the 23rd Meeting Ministers of Justice and Attorneys General (09 November) and the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (11-12 November)

Recommendations of the technical committee will be tabled before the Council of Ministers for decision making and those from the Sectoral ministerial committees endorsed. to all the Member States and will also constitute the work programme for the COMESA Secretariat in the coming year and beyond.

Participants to the policy organs meeting will include all COMESA institutions and specialized agencies, development partners that support COMESA programmes such as the European Union, The World Bank, USAID among others.

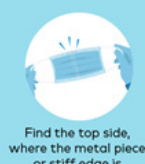
COMESA DIARY

Dates	NAME OF MEETING	VENUE	ORGANISER
9 & 10 Sept 2020	Local Sourcing Programme Training in Lusaka	Virtual	COMESA Business Council
15 Sep 2020	6th Meeting of the Programme Technical Steering Committee (PTSC) of the Project on Enhancement of a Sustainable Energy Market in Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and Indian Ocean (EA- SA-IO) Region (ESREM).		Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA)
15-18 Sep 2020	Technical Committee meeting of Experts from Auditors General Office	Virtual	Secretariat
16 Sep 2020	8 th Meeting of the Committee on Trade in Services	Virtual	Trade & Customs
21 – 22 Sep 2020	Technical Expert Meeting on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE)	Virtual	Gender and Social Affairs
23 September	Meeting of Auditors General	Virtual	Secretariat

HOW TO WEAR A MEDICAL MASK SAFELY

who.int/epi-win

Do's →



Find the top side, where the metal piece or stiff edge is



Ensure the colored-side faces outwards



Place the metal piece or stiff edge over your nose



Wash your hands before touching the mask



Inspect the mask for tears or holes



Cover your mouth, nose, and chin



Adjust the mask to your face without leaving gaps on the sides



Avoid touching the mask



Remove the mask from behind the ears or head



Keep the mask away from you and surfaces while removing it



Discard the mask immediately after use, preferably into a closed bin



Wash your hands after discarding the mask

Don'ts →



Do not use a ripped or damp mask



Do not wear the mask only over mouth or nose



Do not wear a loose mask



Do not touch the front of the mask



Do not remove the mask to talk to someone or do other things that would require touching the mask



Do not leave your used mask within the reach of others




Do not re-use the mask

Remember that masks alone cannot protect you from COVID-19. Maintain at least 1 metre distance from others and wash your hands frequently and thoroughly, even while wearing a mask.

EPI-WIN

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