

AfCFTA, COMESA CEOs Resolve to Establish Cooperation Framework



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

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

This was resolved during the first visit by the Secretary General of the AfCFTA Secretariat Mr. Wamkele Mene to the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka, Zambia, Tuesday 13 April 2021. Mr Mene was received by his COMESA counterpart Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe and senior members of staff.

Stressing the need for COMESA and other regional economic communities to support implementation of the continental trade agreement, Mr Mene said the AfCFTA provides the best chance for Africa's development to succeed.

"The priority now is how to work together to push back the frontiers of poverty in our continent," he said adding that industrial development and deepening intra-Africa trade was among the key areas of focus.

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

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

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

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

She called for the extension of the piloting of the Pan African Payment System from the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) region to the rest of Africa as one way that the two organizations can begin to collaborate.

COMESA Clearing House is already implementing the Regional Payment and Settlement System (REPSS) which provides a single gateway for Central Banks within the region to effect payment in a multicurrency environment. Importers and exporters are therefore able to pay and receive payment for goods and services through an efficient and cost effective platform thus increase intra-regional trade.

Other cooperation areas could include partnerships with COMESA institutions such as the Trade and Development Bank, the African Trade Insurance Agency, the COMESA Competition Commission, COMESA Business Council, COMESA Federation of Women in Business among others.

Ms Kapwepwe identified some of the key challenges affecting regional free trade as dependency on development partners for funding programmes, slow ratification of instruments, high cost of doing business and inadequate infrastructure.



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

Italy Bestows COMESA SG Award in Recognition of Mutual Partnership

The Italian Government has conferred on COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe "the Night of the Star of Italy Award" for her support and resilience in the promotion of the relationship between Italy and the Members of the regional bloc.

The presentation of the award will be done in June this year during an art gallery exhibition to be conducted in Lusaka, Zambia, depicting the importance of energy on the social and economic development of the COMESA region.

Italian Special Representative to COMESA and Ambassador to Zambia, Antonino Maggiore disclosed this when he paid a courtesy call on the Secretary General, Tuesday April 13, 2021 at the COMESA Secretariat.

"The reason I wanted to meet you is to continue our concrete and fruitful cooperation and share with you a project idea and to inform you that the President of the Republic of Italy, has awarded you with a special recognition for your resolve, in supporting and promoting the relationship between Italy and COMESA," Ambassador Maggiore said.

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

Ambassador Maggiore said the art exhibition shall not only promote economic development but also cultural development, as well as people to people development.

"As you know art promotes creativity, imagination,

development, economic enterprises, and therefore our youths shall be inspired to startup some businesses in the energy sector by simply seeing what these artists shall bring to the fore on that day in June," he said.

Secretary General thanked the Italian Government for the gesture. She dedicated the award to COMESA staff and the Member States as an acknowledgement of the support rendered to her as she steers the regional bloc.

Madam Kapwepwe underscored the deep rooted relationship with Italy that dates back many years and looked forward to continued collaboration, with particular interest in small and medium sized enterprises, whereby a lot of them are trying to get onto the global stage, especially in areas like apparel, in which Italy is strong.

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

She added that COMESA is currently rolling out two projects funded by the World Bank, which will be addressing energy infrastructure and assured the Ambassador of COMESA's willingness to work together on the project.

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

COMESA Begins Implementing Business Process Re-engineering

COMESA Secretariat has embarked on implementation of Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) with a staff training in electronic information management. The two day training programme was intended to equip staff with competencies to manage information electronically.

The need for the training was identified from a BPR exercise conducted by the Secretariat which involved reorganizing its structure, reviewing its processes and procedures. It was supported by African Capacity Building Fund (ACBF) under the Regional Intergovernmental Organization (RIGO) System Strengthening programme.

Director of Human Resources and Administration (DHRA) Mrs Martha Elimu said the BPR assessment identified electronic information management as a priority.

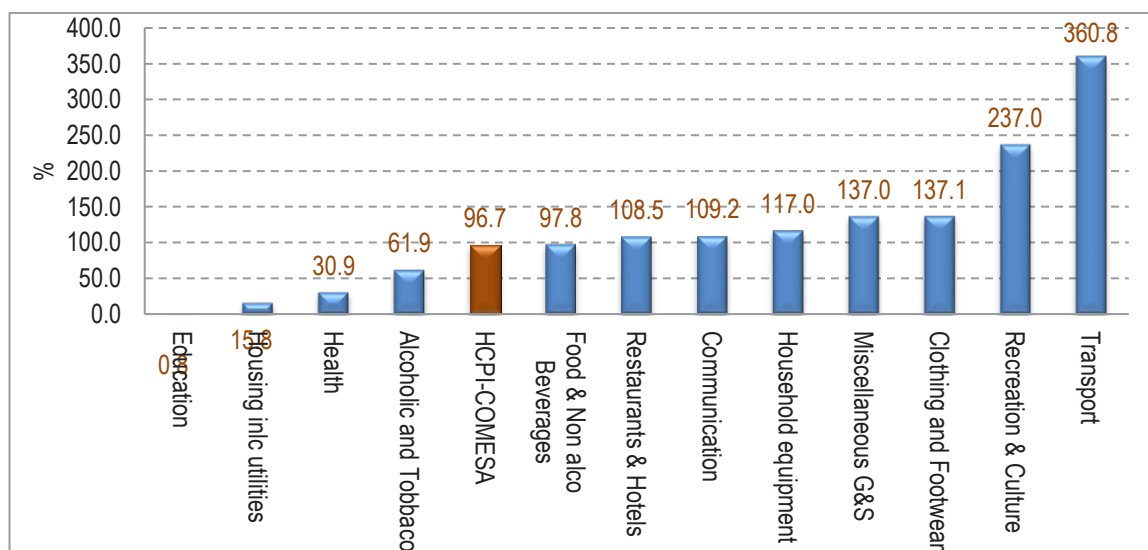
"The organization would like to reap immediate benefits which includes improving efficiency, controlling costs and gaining a competitive advantage as highlighted in the new process models designed by the consultants," she said.

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



COMESA Regions Inflation Rate Rises to 96.7%

Average HCPI-COMESA and main components of expenditure, year on year inflation rates as at January 2021



The year on year, inflation rate (annual percentage change) in the COMESA region as measured by the Harmonized Consumer Price Index (HCPI-COMESA) stood at 96.7% for the month of January 2021, up from 94.1% registered in January 2020. A year earlier, the rate was 31.6%.

It means that the prices of goods and services as measured by HCPI-COMESA increased by an average of (+96.7%) between January 2020 and January 2021. Using a particular or common currency, an item that cost an average of 100.00 cents in January 2020 increased to 196.70 cents in January 2021.

The month on month inflation rate in the COMESA region as measured by HCPI-COMESA stood at 2.0% for the month of January 2021, down from 5.1% registered in Dec 2020. It was 0.7% in January 2020.

HCPI-COMESA comprises of twelve divisions of expenditure. These divisions registered the following average price changes during the month of January 2021 compared with January 2020.

Food & Non-alcoholic Beverages (+97.8%); Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco (+61.9%); Clothing and Footwear (+137.1%); Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels (+15.8%); Furnishings, Household Equipment and Routine Household Maintenance (+117.1%); Health (+30.9%); Transport (+360.9%); Communication (+109.2%); Recreation and Culture (+237.0%);

Education(+0.8%); Restaurants and Hotels (+108.5%); and Miscellaneous Goods and Services (+137.0%)

As at Jan 2021, the participating Member States that contribute to HCPI-COMESA registered the following rates of total inflation in January 2021 compared to January 2020: Burundi (-2.2%); Democratic

Republic of Congo(+16.0%); Djibouti(+0.3%); Egypt(+5.5%); Eswatini(+4.3%); Ethiopia(+17.1%); Kenya(+7.9%); Madagascar(+7.5%); Malawi(+7.7%); Mauritius(+0.5%); Rwanda(+1.7%); Seychelles(+2.8%); Sudan(+254.9%); Tunisia(+5.2%); Uganda(+3.7%); Zambia(+25.6%); and Zimbabwe(+364.3%).

Annual (Year on Year) Inflation rates (%) for each Member State, measured by country HCPIs and HCPI-COMESA in 2021

2021													
Year on Year (Y-O-Y) inflation rates in 2021 in the COMESA Member States and COMESA Region													
COMESA Member States	Weights	Jan21	Feb21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May21	Jun21	Jul21	Aug21	Sept21	Oct21	Nov21	Dec21
		Jan 20	Feb20	Mar20	Apr20	May20	Jun20	Jul20	Aug20	Sept20	Oct20	Nov20	Dec20
Burundi	0.4	-2.2											
Comoros													
DRC	3.9	16.0											
Djibouti	0.2	0.3											
Egypt	57.0	5.5											
Eritrea													
Ethiopia	6.7	17.1											
Kenya	8.0	7.9											
Libya													
Madagascar	1.6	7.5											
Malawi	0.9	7.7											
Mauritius	1.0	0.5											
Rwanda	0.9	1.7											
Seychelles	0.1	2.8											
Sudan	7.1	254.9											
Eswatini	0.4	4.3											
Tunisia	5.0	5.2											
Uganda	3.6	3.7											
Zambia	1.5	25.6											
Zimbabwe	1.6	364.3											
HCPI - COMESA	100.00	96.7											

Photo Focus



Visit by the AfCTA Secretary General Mr. Wamkele Mene (4th left) to COMESA Secretariat.



Courtesy call by Italian Ambassador to Zambia and Special Representative to COMESA, Mr Antonino Maggiore



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