

## The Global Environment Facility Approves US\$5.7m to Support Climate Actions in COMESA

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

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

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

The project will establish an Eastern and Southern Africa Regional CBIT transparency framework for Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) of climate actions; report on country climate commitments or Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs); and knowledge dissemination on transparency-related activities.

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

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

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

"The four project countries are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. This CBIT project will help them transition towards a more climate-resilient and low-carbon pathway through strengthening the country's institutional and technical capacity to track and report their climate action," said Ms. Edith Tibahwa, the Climate Change Programme Manager at COMESA.

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

"In the long term, the results of this CBIT project will improve policy and decision-making in the management of natural resources, and promote sustainability of nature-based economic sectors such as agriculture and tourism. It will also strengthen local communities' resilience to climate change. For instance, availability of accurate GHG data is more likely to lead to formulation of multi-sectoral climate-proof policies as well as measures to reduce GHG emissions and increase carbon sequestration." he added.

The CBIT project will address the key barriers to climate transparency, such as inadequate data for effective MRV of GHG emissions; inadequate institutional and technical capacity

to operationalize MRV, and lack of a regional integrated platform for learning and knowledge management of the Paris Agreement transparency-related activities. It will yield the results below which will improve climate transparency reporting over time:

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

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

## COMESA Telecoms Project Dropped, 20 Years Later



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

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

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

An assessment of the viability of the COMTEL project was carried out taking

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

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

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

## Regional Youth Affairs Experts Conduct First Technical Meeting

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

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

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

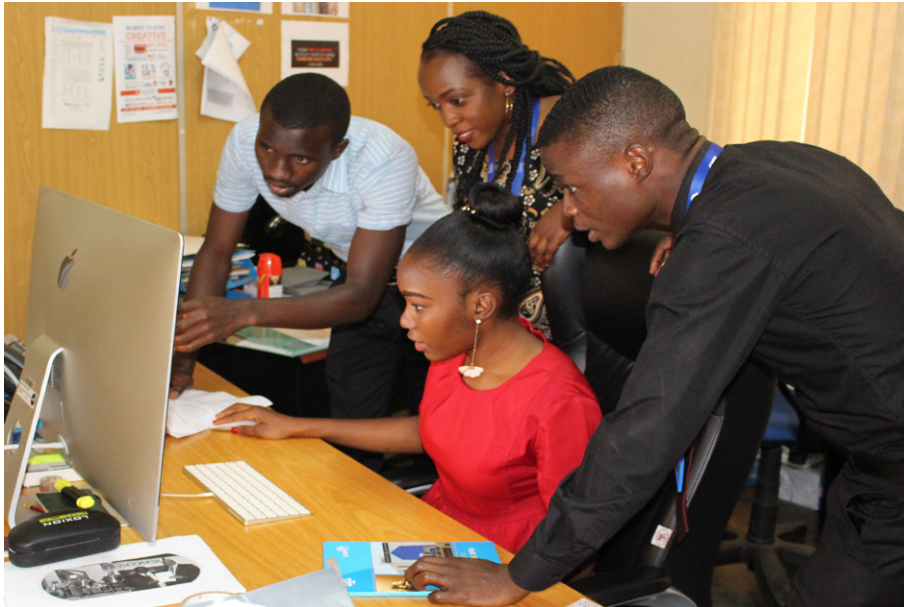
The Report on the Joint COMESA/AUC-AGA Project on Youth Engagement in Democratic Governance and Socio- economic Development Processes and a presentation on the role of the youth in silencing the guns in COMESA Region will also be considered.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General in



# Regional Youth Affairs Experts...

## Eight Countries have so far Signed the Single African Air Transport Market Agreement



charge of Programmes Dr Kipyego Chelugot and Zambia's Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development Dr John Phiri addressed the meeting.

Dr Chelugot noted that out of the 600 million population of COMESA, the vast majority are youth.

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

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

The Technical Committee will consider the policy and strategic documents presented at the meeting which will thereafter be presented to the Ministers responsible for youth affairs on 23 June, respectively.

Other documents for consideration are

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

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

The meeting was also addressed by representatives from the African Union, the Swiss Agency for International Cooperation (SDC) and the International Trade Center (ITC).

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

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

In view of this, the COMESA Ministers in charge of infrastructure (transport, energy and ICT) have called on the remaining member States to sign the Solemn Commitment and review their bilateral air service agreements to comply with the YD and SAATM requirements.

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

"Member States should grant Fifth Freedom Rights as a major step towards full liberalization of the air transport market," the Ministers said. The Fifth Freedom is the

# COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Leadership Changes Hands as Sixth Anniversary Passes

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

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

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

The TFTA Agreement was launched on 10 June 2015 in Egypt.

So far, 10 Member/Partner States have ratified the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement (TFTA) short of the 14 required for the Agreement to enter into force. They include Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, South Africa, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Botswana, Namibia and Zambia.

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

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



the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other milestones were the drafting of legal instruments that will facilitate implementation of the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement (TFTA). These relate to movement of businesspersons, elimination of import duties, trade remedies, rules of origin, dispute settlement mechanism; vehicle load management agreement; multilateral cross border road transport agreement, vehicle load management model law, cross border road transport model law, road traffic model law, road traffic and transport transgressions model law and transport of dangerous goods by road model law.

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

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

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

## Eight Countries have Signed SAATM ...

right for an airline to stop in a country other than its own and pick up passengers.

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

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

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



## Kenya Hailed for Achieving 75% Electricity Access Rate

## Central Banks trained on Assessing and Analysing Financial System Interconnectedness

Fifty-six delegates from nine Central Banks in the COMESA region have been trained on how to assess and analyse financial system interconnectedness. The five-day training was conducted virtually from 7 – 11 June 2021 by the Nairobi based COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI). The training familiarized participants with banking system interconnectedness, which covers the relationship created among banks through financial transactions, borrowing and lending from each other, linkages in the payments system and exposure to a common economic sector, among others.

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

During the training, participants were exposed to a step-by-step approach in the deployment of Network Framework to the assessment and analysis of banking and payments system interconnectedness and systemic risk using the COMESA money market data.

In his address to the delegates, Mr. Zeidy, revealed that the training was motivated by the concern about possibilities of systemic crisis in the event of shocks to the financial system as a whole. This can be caused by the interconnectedness of not only the banking sector, but also with other non-banking financial institutions and sectors of the economy, including the debt market, real estate and the financial markets infrastructure. He also added that the training would enable participants to share knowledge and experiences and enhance the implementation of the COMESA Financial System Development and Stability Plan as it adds to the suit of analytical tools that COMESA member countries can use to advice policy.

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



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

This was disclosed during the just concluded joint meeting of COMESA Ministers responsible for transport and communication, information technology and energy on 2 June 2021.

The meeting further noted that most COMESA countries were actively working to increase the share of renewables in the energy mix as well as working towards creating an enabling environment for conducive development of the energy sector. This will be achieved through among other initiatives, creating regulatory bodies and institutions responsible for accelerating access to electricity.

Uganda has also continued performing well on the Electricity Regulatory Index (ERI) which is a report of the African Development Bank, measuring the level of development of electricity sector regulatory frameworks in African countries against international standards and best practice.


Of the 36 countries which participated in

the study, Uganda ranked 1st (third time in a row), Zambia 4th, Kenya 5th, Zimbabwe 6th, Ethiopia 10th and Rwanda 11th.

The meeting was informed that almost all Member States have developed policies and regulations that are compliant to the COMESA Model Energy Policy Framework which was developed in 2007. Djibouti and DR Congo were recognized for the efforts made towards the establishment of energy regulators.

The policy is however, expected to be reviewed and updated to make it responsive to new developments that have occurred since its adoption. These include increased focus on climate change, new technological developments such as renewable energy cost decrease, e-mobility and ICT. The review was delayed by the outbreak of COVID-19 but is expected to be re-launched and concluded before the end of this year, 2021.

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

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