

## Stakeholders Consult on Implementing the Regional Customs Guarantee



*Participants to the RCTG National consultative meeting in Lusaka, Zambia*

A national consultative meeting on the implementation of the COMESA Regional Customs Transit Guarantee (RCTG) Scheme was conducted with key stakeholders in Zambia on Thursday 25 August 2022. The one-day session updated the stakeholders on the status of implementation and operations of the RCTG in the region and discussed issues and concerns raised about the Scheme in Zambia.

The RCTG is a customs transit regime designed to facilitate the movement of goods under customs seals in the COMESA region and to provide the required customs security and guarantee in the transit countries.

In the North-South Corridor countries to which Zambia belongs, customs transit bonds are raised in each country of transit which is cumbersome, time consuming and costly. Nationally executed bonds have reportedly tied up huge sums of money belonging to importers, clearing and forwarding agents and transporters.

The combined effect of road transit fees and expenses that arise from the execution of nationally executed bonds also raises the cost

of transportation. Experts hold that these costs could be reduced or minimized by implementing the RCTG.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General Amb. Kipyego Cheluget who opened the meeting stressed the importance of having a common Customs Transit Bond Guarantee for Zambia and the region at large.

"We have spent years discussing issues and concerns in implementation of the RCTG. The ten-year experience in the North and Central Corridor countries should give you comfort that SMEs are also beneficiaries of this scheme," he said and called on importers, exporters, transporters, Clearing and Forwarding Agencies (CFA) to embrace the RCTG as it offers assured security for goods in transit.

He appealed for thorough discussion of the issues and concerns and objectively come up with a win-win proposal on how the RCTG Bond should be issued in the North-South Corridor countries.

For the past 10 years, the COMESA RCTG has been operational in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi

and Tanzania and expanding, with Ethiopia and Djibouti expected to commence operations next month. During this period, customs administrators have embraced digitization and are sharing data on their operations and adopting one declaration for transit covering several countries.

As a centrally located land linked country, Zambia is well placed to leverage on its geographical position by offering triangular transit routes and could become a transport and logistics hub for Southern and Central Africa. Hence in addition to facilitating goods to move faster, the RCTG is expected to improve the region's competitiveness through reduced transportation and transit costs.

Presently, there are nearly 1,000 Clearing and Forwarding Agents participating in the COMESA RCTG operations, 80% of these are Small and Medium Enterprises. In 2021, the CFAs had issued over 344, 000 transit Carnets for transit goods in the Northern and Central Corridors.

The outcome of the Zambia stakeholders' meeting will be presented for discussion at the regional RCTG stakeholders' workshop to be held in Malawi next month.

# Capacity Boost for Member Countries to Eliminate Trade Barriers



*Madagascar focal persons, NMC members and COMESA trade experts during at the training workshop in Antananarivo*

Five Member States of COMESA have received capacity building to support their institutional frameworks for eliminating Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) on common goods, in compliance with the requisite COMESA Regulations. The regulations define the roles and responsibilities of the NTBs institutions to deliver on the intended objective to eliminate barriers across COMESA region and increase intra-COMESA trade.

Madagascar and Egypt are the latest Member State to receive training to support the development of a National Strategy for Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs). Similar trainings have been conducted in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi.

The trainings follow an earlier decision by the COMESA Council of Ministers to the COMESA Secretariat to provide technical support to Member States to implement national NTBs elimination programmes. COMESA Regulations for the Elimination of NTBs provide legally constituted tools for reporting, monitoring and addressing NTBs, the institutional arrangements to manage the NTBs elimination process as well as procedures followed to tackle situations that create NTBs.

To ensure sustainability of national programmes, Member States are continuously exploring effective tools to implement the

regulations. This necessitates them to provide and where possible, outsource a wide range of necessary resources that include technical and funding support.

Pursuant to this objective, COMESA Secretariat secured funding under the European Union Fund Program to improve monitoring and resolution of NTBs. This funding covers support to institutionalize National Monitoring Committees (NMCs), development of national strategies and implementation plan for the elimination of NTBs and building capacity for NMCs and National Focal Points (NFPs) to resolve NTBs. The support is given to Member States upon request or needs assessment.

Madagascar is among the Member States that requested for support to hold a stakeholder workshop to develop their national strategy for elimination of NTBs. It is also one of the Member States that have fully constituted their NMC and notified COMESA Secretariat, which is a requirement of the National Trade Facilitation Committee under the World Trade Organization / Free Trade Area. Such arrangement is intended to ensure sustainability and consistency in reporting for policy decision making and implementation.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Industrialization, Commerce and Consumption, trade experts from the COMESA Secretariat

conducted the workshop on 25 – 29 July 2022.

Thirty delegates including NFPs and NMC members representing key national stakeholders in public, private sector and civil society institutions including regulatory authorities responsible for policy and legal framework governing trade and trade-related matters attended.

In Egypt, similar workshop was conducted on 1- 5 August 2022 attended by 35 participants representing key national stakeholders. COMESA Secretariat and the Ministry of Trade and Industry facilitated the workshop. The main objective was to draft Egypt's National Strategy for the Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers and its Implementation plan and enhance capacity for NMC to resolve NTBs.

Egypt is among the Member States found suitable to receive support to undertake a stakeholder workshop to develop their national strategy for elimination of NTBs based on her trade potential with COMESA free trade area Member States. More importantly, Egypt has fully constituted its NMC a framework institution, which is instrumental to develop its National Strategy for elimination of NTBs.





Director, Mrs Nalubita Mwale (R) and COMESA EDF Programme Manager Mshuka Kamwela (L) hands over equipment to ZRA Mwami Border Assistant Commissioner, Jubilee Hamwala (middle)

## Malawi-Zambia Border Point gets €170,000 Worth of Equipment

Border agencies at the Mwami border post between Zambia and Malawi last week received equipment and furniture worth 170,000 euros to improve coordinated border services. The items were procured by the Zambia's Border Post Upgrade Project funded under the 11 European Development Fund (EDF) Trade Facilitation Programme coordinated by COMESA.

The Zambia Revenue Authority, which is the lead agency, received the items, on behalf of other border agencies at an event conducted at the border point on 22 August 2022. Director at the Ministry of Trade, Commerce and Industry Zambia, Mrs. Nalubita Mwale, and COMESA EDF Programme Manager, Ms. Mshuka Kamwela presented the items to the Mwami One-Stop-Border-Post (OSBP) Agencies represented by ZRA Mwami Border Assistant Commissioner, Mrs. Jubilee Hamwala.

The Mwami-Mchinji OSBP is earmarked for commissioning this year, hence the provision of the furniture and ICT equipment is timely. The new facility will lessen redundancy as it will accommodate agencies from both countries under one roof, cutting down on clearance time

for people and goods.

Mrs Mwale said more equipment are in the processes of procurement for the Mwami border.

"The project is in the process of finalizing the procurement of servers and other storage facilities, biometric web cameras, driver's license scanners, passport readers, card printers for permits, security Cameras (CCTV) to enable remote visual coverage of the borders, baggage scanners to facilitate clearance for passenger and small-scale cross border traders crossing the border posts," Mrs Mwale said. Other scheduled equipment includes metal detectors, Mini-labs equipment, and diagnostics kits for rapid assessment for sanitary and phytosanitary

The Trade Facilitation Programme support is aimed at increasing intra-regional trade flows of goods, persons and services by reducing the costs and delays of imports at specific border posts through the reduction of Non-Tariff Barriers across the borders, and improvement of Cross Border Management.

The programme covers activities to be

implemented across the tripartite region encompassing COMESA, East African Community and Southern Africa Development Community with specific interventions for targeted border posts. For Zambia, three borders namely Chirundu, Mwami and Nakonde, are covered under this programme.

Ms Kamwela appreciated the harmonious and coordinated working relationship between the Government of Zambia and other implementing agencies, which has enabled the achievement of the set objectives of the programme.

Mrs Hamwala appreciated the European Union for the support adding that the computers will make it easier to interconnect systems and facilitate electronic interactions among border agencies connected to the Zambia Electronic Single Window and using ASYCUDAWorld system.



## Curriculum on Human Mobility and Trade Facilitation Rolled Out

The implementation of the COMESA Human Mobility and Trade Facilitation Training Curriculum is underway whose objective is to build capacity of migration, health, trade and customs government authorities. The Curriculum was developed by COMESA and International Organization for Migration (IOM) supported under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF), COMESA Small Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative,

The training programme is designed to contribute to an improved understanding of the linkage between migration and trade amongst stakeholders, enhance appreciation of small-scale cross border trade and the role of different migration and trade authorities in facilitating small scale cross border trade. This will assist in the reduction of trade restrictions, corruption, bribery, harassment, and immigration challenges faced by small scale cross border traders, especially women and the youth.

On 15 - 19 August 2022 a five-day training was conducted in Livingstone, Zambia for Zambian government officials, agencies and Cross Border Traders Association (CBTA) in the Common

Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the Southern African Development Community. Participants were drawn from Immigration, Customs, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Health, trade, gender, office in the Presidency and Zambia Revenue Authority.

According to a report by the COMESA Director, of Legal and Corporate Affairs Mr. Gabriel Masuku, five training modules were delivered during the training including Small Scale Cross Border Trade in Africa and in the COMESA Region; The COMESA Policy Framework on Free Movement of Persons and The Nexus of Migration and Cross Border Trade. Others were on Migration Health, Population Mobility and Cross Border Trade; and Migration, Trade and Gender - Harassment, Corruption and Bribery.

The first module underscored the widespread nature and importance of small-scale cross border trade in the economies of the COMESA region and highlighted the challenges small scale cross border traders face while trading. The second focused on existing COMESA policies that facilitate human mobility. It addressed provisions of the COMESA Treaty on Free

Movement of Persons, the COMESA Protocol on Gradual Relaxation and Eventual Elimination of Visas (the Visa Protocol) and the COMESA Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Labour, Services, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment (the Free Movement Protocol) and highlighted challenges faced in its ratification and implementation.

The third module examined the inherent interrelationship between cross border trade (CBT) and human mobility across international borders and emphasized the importance of facilitating the movement of persons in the conveyance of goods and services across borders. Module four demonstrated the value of integrating policy, practice and procedures in health, population mobility and trade, using the COVID-19 global pandemic as a case study.

The final module covered the ways in which corruption, bribery and harassment, especially that of women, affects small scale trade flows.





# Review of the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme

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Delegates attending the 2nd steering committee meeting of the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme in Lusaka, Zambia.

The second steering committee meeting of the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP) was conducted in Lusaka, Zambia, 17 – 18 August 2022. Its objective was to review progress made in the implementation of the programme in Member States and find ways to attain increased private sector participation in the regional and global value chains.

RECAMP is funded by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) and focuses on challenges that affect value chain actors - both small and large scale that are relevant to regional economic integration as well as efforts to increase intra-regional trade of value added and manufactured products.

Delegates from Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia attended the meeting. Also present were COMESA Institutions namely; African Leather and Leather Products Institute, Regional Investment Area, Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA), COMESA Federation of Women in Business and the COMESA Business Council.

The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce and Tourism in Djibouti, Mr. Ali Daod Abdou was the Chief Guest. In his statement he noted that COMESA Members States have continued to prioritise the improvement of

the investment climate in the region as a cornerstone for growing regional enterprises.

"The integration of markets is vital in addressing matters of competitiveness, improving the business environment in which Small and Medium Enterprises SMEs operate as well as ensuring factors limiting access to markets within the region such as the non-tariff barriers are addressed," he said.

He noted that the sectors that RECAMP is focusing on such as Agro processing, leather and leather products and horticulture are crucial to the COMESA regional not only promoting trade and value addition, but further providing an opportunity for creating the much-needed jobs for the youth.

Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance, Dr Dev Haman said RECAMP remains one of the COMESA Regional flagship programmes expected to contribute to the deepening of regional economic integration in the region. This will be done by increasing and strengthening private sector participation in regional and Global Value Chains with a focus on Agro-processing, Horticulture and Leather and Leather Products.

"Performance of this programme remains a priority in catalyzing development of our target value chains to participate with equal footing

into the Global Value Chains," Dr Haman said.

In his remarks, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Zambia and COMESA Mr. Arnaud Borchard emphasized the importance of trade facilitation to deepen the regional integration, which is the core of COMESA's Mandate as the largest REC on the African continent. He underscored the EUs continuous commitment in supporting the African continent as demonstrated by the new continental Multi-Annual Programme in addition to the ongoing Trade Facilitation Programme.

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President of Mauritius H.E. Prithvirajsing Roopun welcoming the COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe

## COMESA SG Conducts Eventful Mission to Mauritius

COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe concluded a four days mission in Mauritius, Thursday 25 August 2022 whose objective was to strengthen relations with the Member State, by updating the leadership on the status of implementation of COMESA regional integration programmes.

The President of Mauritius H.E. Prithvirajsing Roopun was the first to host the delegation. He expressed appreciations and support to regional integration programmes being implemented by COMESA stressing that his government believed in integration of African countries as a sure way of attaining economic prosperity and development.

"We remain committed to COMESA and the regional integration activities under implementation. The disturbances in Ukraine have highlighted the need to balance multilateralism and globalization with regional economic integration and diversification of sources of food and other essential goods," he said.

The President welcomed the Secretary General and congratulated her on being appointed as the first female COMESA Secretary General following similar developments in the WTO. He acknowledged the achievements being made under the 50 Million African Women Speak Project and its ongoing activities in Mauritius.

The 50MAWS platform project is jointly implemented by COMESA, the East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It enables women in 38 countries in the three regional blocs to find information on how to run businesses, where to access financial services, how to create business opportunities online and where to access training resources, among others.



Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Hon Pravind Kumar Jugnauth with COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe





Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Hon Pravind Kumar Jugnauth (L) welcoming SG and Assistant SG Dr Dev Haman (R)



With the Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon. Alan Ganoo



With Hon. Renganaden Padayachy Minister of Finance



At the Indian Ocean Commission Headquarters



Inauguration of the TDB Principal Office



Meeting at Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The President also acknowledged the innovations that COVID-19 had brought about for the use of digital applications which gave Africa a quantum leap in this area. He stressed the importance of education citing the need to equip the youth for their future role and the need for local research and development and innovation.

Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe expressed appreciation to Mauritius for its continued support to COMESA. She noted with appreciation that Mauritius always paid her COMESA contributions on time and actively participated in COMESA activities evidenced by the virtual participation of the Prime Minister in the 2021 Summit hosted by Egypt.

"Member States had endured a challenging two years under COVID lockdowns hence it is important to engage with Member States, particularly Coordinating Ministries, on emerging issues" she said.

She briefed the President on the on-going COMESA programmes including the Eco-Fish that focuses on improved aquaculture farming methods and capacity building, interventions focusing on renewable energy under the USD 425m Regional Infrastructure Financing project and Trade in Services negotiations among others

A series of meetings was held with among others, the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Hon Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Minister of Finance Hon. Renganaden Padayachy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade Hon. Alan Ganoo, Indian Ocean Commission Director Mr. Dev Phokeer and the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

While in Mauritius the Secretary General also participated in the 38th Session of the Trade Development Bank Annual Meetings and the launch of its Principal Office in Mauritius and meeting of the Committee of Governors of

Central Banks.

The COMESA delegation was comprised of Dr. Dev Haman, Assistant Secretary General and Mr. Charles Chaitezvi, Trade Facilitation Programme Team Leader.

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# Climate Change Experts Give Final Nod to Resilience Plan; Share Best Practices on Adaptation



Delegates having group discussions

The COMESA Regional Resilience Implementation Plan and Resource Mobilization Strategy is nearing completion following final review by experts in climate change, resilience, disaster risk reduction and management, drawn from 14 Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Union Commission.

At the same time, country focal points for the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) from these Member States and organizations met and shared best practices in implementing the Paris Agreement on climate change and the pledges their countries made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. NDC is a climate action plan to cut emissions and adapt to climate impacts

The two meetings ran back-to-back from 12-15 July in Lusaka, Zambia.

The financing for NDC implementation, opportunities and challenges in scaling up was one of the main subjects in focus. This meeting was part of ongoing COMESA support to the Member States to implement their NDC commitments and contribute to the attainment of the Paris Agreement goals.

Zambia's Acting Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment

Mr Ephraim Shitima, who addressed the meeting urged the member States to review the implementation status of NDCs and recommend policies to improve it.

"The opportunities for NDC implementation outweigh the challenges, therefore we need to utilize all the available opportunities on finance, technology transfer, capacity building and to achieve the setout targets," he said. The meeting has further identified the regional priority issues for negotiation at the COP27 UN Climate Conference set for December 2022 in Egypt.

At the meetings, delegates raised common issues of concern which included lack of financing and the need for COMESA to support them in raising funds, build capacity, publicity, political buy-in and hasten the slow implementation of agreed targets.

Representatives from partner RECs namely the East African Community (EAC), the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) as well as the Commonwealth, AUC and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resilience Hub addressed the meetings. The UNDP Resilience Hub through Dr Eric Loubaud provided technical support to the

development of the Regional Resilience Framework and now the implementation plan and resource mobilization strategy.

Technical Coordinator for Disaster Risk Reduction at the AUC, Mr Gatkuoth Kai said the implementation of climate change frameworks and programmes requires effective coordination and collaboration with the RECs. He added that the AUC has developed overarching programmes and frameworks and ready to share experiences with the regions.

Mr Dismas Mwikila representing the EAC said his organization has developed a regional Climate Finance Mobilization and Access Strategy aimed at addressing technical capacities deficiencies, enhance the enabling environment for green private sector investment and promote innovative financing solutions.

IGAD Climate Change Adaptation Officer Dr Geoffrey Sabiiti noted that the impact and risks from climate change have increased threatening livelihoods and accelerating poverty in Africa. Representatives from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, Seychelles, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe attended the meetings.





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