

## COMESA global trade rises by 15%

value of intra-COMESA total exports reaches US\$14.1billion



COMESA's trade globally and within the region has recorded a significant increase with the total exports to the world gaining by 15% from US\$ 179bn in 2021 to US\$ 205bn in 2022.

The largest exporting countries in the COMESA region were Libya, Egypt, Tunisia and Sudan. These had a combined market of 98% in exported fuels in 2022. This was reported during the 39th Meeting of the COMESA Trade and Customs Meeting held from 23 – 27 October in Mauritius.

A report presented by COMESA Secretariat on trade developments in the region indicated that the value of intra-COMESA total exports equally rose by 10% from US\$12.8bn in 2021 to US\$ 14.1bn in 2022.

Exports in sulphur of all kinds, cobalt oxides and hydroxides, palm oil, refined petroleum oil, urea, electric current, cotton, sulphuric acid, main flour, gold and ammonia among others contributed to the increase.

According to the report, most of the COMESA Member States recorded growth in their 2022 intra-COMESA total export values except for D R Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi and Seychelles whose exports to the region

declined.

The report added that Mauritius had the highest utilization rate of 96% for its COMESA originating imports in 2022 followed by Seychelles, Malawi, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Zambia.

The COMESA Medium Term Strategic Plan 2021-2025 targets an increase of intra-regional exports to at least 25% of total exports by 2026 from the current 10%.

Based on 2019 trade statistics, the region has potential to increase intra-trade by US\$100 billion if all extra-COMESA trade could be diverted to the region.

This means that if at least 50% of current extra-COMESA trade is diverted to the region, intra-trade could expand by US\$50 billion.

"To attain this target, there is a need to change mindsets and practical approaches within the

COMESA family," said COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of programmes, Dr Mohamed Kadah when he addressed the delegates comprising of trade experts from the member States.

"Your committee is therefore invited to interact on this desired course of action in the interest of laying down a solid foundation for the advancement of COMESA regional trade and economic integration agenda." The Trade and Customs Committee is one of the COMESA's key policy structures through which the bloc has made significant strides in fostering trade and economic integration.

During the three-day meeting, the delegates received updates on various COMESA supported programmes and sectors, which are specifically connected to trade and economic development.

**"To attain this target, there is a need to change mindsets and practical approaches within the COMESA family,"** Dr Mohamed Kadah



COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe (R) witnesses the signing of the TFTA Agreement by Lesotho Minister, Hon. Mokhethe Shelile (middle) assisted by COMESA Legal Counsel Mr Gabriel Masuku

## Tripartite signatories rise to 23

State signatories to Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement that brings together COMESA, East African Community and Southern African Development Community have risen to 23. This follows the signing of the Agreement by the Kingdom of Lesotho on 27 October 2023 in a ceremony conducted in the capital Maseru. It was officiated by COMESA Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe, on behalf of the Tripartite Task Force.

Lesotho's Minister of Trade, Industry, Business Development, and Tourism Hon. Mokhethe Shelile signed on behalf of his government thus paving way for the country's ratification of the Tripartite FTA Agreement.

The COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement was finalised and opened for signature in 2015 at the third Tripartite Summit in Sharm-el-Sheik, Egypt.

Its objectives are to promote economic and social development of the Tripartite region, create a large single market with free movement of goods and services to promote intra-regional trade, enhance the regional and continental integration processes; and build a strong Tripartite Free Trade Area for the benefit of the people of the three Regional Economic Communities.

The Agreement covers trade in goods, trade in services; and other trade-related matters. So far, it has 23 signatures, and 11 ratifications. To

bring the Agreement into force it must attract 14 ratifications by Member/Partner States.

The entry into force of the Agreement will start the implementation of the three pillars of the Tripartite Free Trade Area, namely, market integration, industrial development, and infrastructure development.

The benefits to be accrued by Members/Partner States when the Agreement comes into force include expansion of value chains beyond borders, improvements in trading conditions, industrial outputs, input sourcing and markets connectivity and increased investments as result of fair and anti-competitive practices in the Tripartite region

The Agreement will also contribute to the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) by creating more liberalized environment for trade amongst African countries.

The Agreement also contributes to the objectives of the African Union Abuja Treaty and Agenda 2063, by boosting intra-African trade and deepening Africa's market integration, fostering competition and will assist the Member/Partner States to prepare them to compete more effectively on the global market.

## Burundi, DR Congo set to implement the Simplified Trade Regime

Burundi and the D R Congo are poised to start implementing the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime following a bilateral meeting conducted in Lusaka, Zambia, from 31 October to 2nd Nov 2023.

The two delegations, comprising mainly trade experts, came together under the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation and Integration project (GLTFIP) to provide an update on the status of implementation of the 2022 signed Trade Bilateral Agreements. The project is funded by the World Bank. Their discussions centered on ironing out pending issues and making proposals to improve the document before actualizing the full implementation of the STR.

The COMESA STR is an instrument of facilitating and formalizing the small-scale trade between countries. It assists small-scale traders to qualify for duty-free entry for certain goods and for a more simple and reduced set of documentary requirements to cross the border.

Under the STR, a Simplified Certificate of Origin is obtained at the border for consignments of an agreed list of community-originating goods with a total value less than the requisite threshold.

Under the agreement, qualifying goods are allowed to pass border points duty free, and traders are not asked to provide Certificates of Origin of their goods if they are agreed on the Common List of Products between the two countries.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes, Dr. Mohamed Kadah, who addressed the delegates through Senior Customs Officer, Ms Balness Sumani said GLTFIP is a deliberate response to address the empowerment of small-scale traders with an emphasis on women and women.

Burundi Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce, Transport, Industry and Tourism Madam Christine Niragira said the two countries will benefit significantly from easing the process of doing business for their small-scale cross border who are the majority.

The GLTFIP is a follow up project to the first phase which targeted the DR Congo, Rwanda and Uganda focusing on the Mahagi/Goli, Kasinde/Mpondwe, Bunagana, Goma/Rubavu and Bukavu/Rusizi borders. It ended in 2021.

The current project will contribute to safe, fast and resilient small scale trade integration.

Mr Jeremie Kalala Mukena, Advisor to the Minister of Commerce led the DR Congo delegation.





## Regional Optic Fiber study validated

Regional ICT experts have validated an Optic Fiber Study which identifies the status of optical fiber connectivity and challenges impeding country-wide fiber deployments. The study is intended to address the challenge that most African countries are currently facing on connectivity to the in-land. It was funded under the eight million Euros European Union supported Enhancement for Governance and Enabling Environment (EGEE-ICT) programme, being implemented in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and Indian Ocean regions.

The meeting took place in Lusaka from 1 – 3 November 2023 where the consultancy firm took the

delegates through the methodology, data collection, GIS fibre infrastructure analysis, policy and regulatory analysis and overview of regional fibre infrastructure development in the region.

The validation workshop in Lusaka also discussed the importance of having optic fiber given the high demand for data-based technological advancements such as Machine to Machine (M2M), Internet of Things (IOT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

"At the time 5G deployments are in the early stages in Africa, sufficient optic fiber capacity will promote the expansion of 5G networks as well as

internet connectivity for our citizens," Dr Mohamed Kadah, Assistant Secretary General in charge of programmes in COMESA said when he addressed the delegates.

He added that accessibility and affordability of ICT is key for the region to utilize e-services and reach all groups of society, in remote areas and the disadvantaged groups, a move that could help transform the landscape of development in EA-SA-IO.

Over the past few years, Africa has experienced growth in the use of ICTs such as increased subscription and improvements in coverage and accessibility, hence the need to improve ICT infrastructure coverage.

"We need to improve ICT and digital literacy at all levels, ensure that ICT services and devices are affordable and target to reach the underserved and unserved populations," Dr Kadah said.

The EGEE ICT programme focuses on coordinating regional public and private sector ICT policy development, enhancing policy and regulatory environment for competitive markets and gender sensitive ICT markets, and improving infrastructure connectivity and ensure access to ICT to all.

Regional Economic Communities namely COMESA, the EAC, IGAD, IOC and SADC are working together under the EGEE-ICT programme to achieve ICT regional integration.

## Enlisting the media in covering infrastructure programmes



Editor in Chief, Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, Mr Woldeyes Getachew (L) receives participation certificate from Amb. Vestine NAHIMANA, President of the National Council of Media, Burundi, flanked by Dr Bernard Dzawanda, Senior Transport Economist, COMESA and Dr George AH-THEW Senior Programme Officer (ICT) at SADC

The second media training and familiarization workshop on the Support to the Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) Programme and the Enhancement of Governance and Enabling

Environment in the ICT sector (EGEE - ICT) Programme, took place in Bujumbura, Burundi, on 25 - 26 October 2023.

The workshop was attended by media professionals

from national and regional media organizations in the Northern Africa, Horn of Africa, and Eastern Africa sub-regions. The target countries included Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Libya, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, and Uganda.

Its objective is to enhance the skills and capacity of media practitioners to improve the creation and dissemination of media content related to these regional infrastructure programs. The training is intended to foster closer connections between media and communication experts in Member/ Partner States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). It also expected to facilitate collaboration in the promotion of EGEE-ICT and SATSD programs and investments within the COMESA, EAC, SADC, IGAD, and IOC regions. The two programmes are funded by the European Union under the European Development Fund.

The Assistant Minister of Communications, Media, and ICT in Burundi Mr. Thierry Kitamoya opened the workshop, which was also addressed by COMESA





Participants at the IRSK Inaugural Conference in Nairobi

## Stakeholders call for enhanced research in conflict prevention and management

Researchers, policy makers, diplomats, scholars and political leaders from the COMESA region and beyond have called for in-depth research into causes of conflict and re-assessment of the current interventions in order to address some of the ongoing geopolitical dynamics in Africa and the world.

This call was made during the inaugural conference to dissect the multiple crises and geopolitical divides that are redefining international relations and diplomacy in the world today.

The conference was organized by the International Relations Society of Kenya (IRSK) with support from COMESA Secretariat and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD).

Stakeholders from the key sectors in peace and security met from 25 – 27 October in Nairobi Kenya to discuss and make recommendations to address the multiple crises and unprecedented geopolitical changes that have far-reaching implications on future growth and development for the COMESA region and Africa as a whole.

Speaking on behalf of COMESA Secretariat, the Head of Governance, Peace and Security Unit Ms Elizabeth Mutunga described the conference as significantly important to the regional bloc whose programme on peace and security is a product of policy research.

“Whether it is conflict prevention, conflict management or post conflict reconstruction, our programmes have mostly been guided by research and upon assessment of the interventions by other RECs, COMESA has carved its niche around the economic dimensions of conflict,” Ms Mutunga said.

Sha added that the current global environment has manifested in an increase of terrorism and violent extremism for the region and continent, including a rise in unconstitutional changes of governments, hence it is time again to reassess existing interventions to establish if they are fit for purpose.

Delegates hailed the conference as timely in the wake of the current conflicts in the middle east, the aftermath of the COVID-19 and the Ukraine war all of which have negative impacts. The effects of climate change were also discussed as contributing to the complexity of the already

complex situations in the world.

Keynote speakers at the hybrid meeting included former COMESA Secretary General Amb. Erastus Mwencha in his capacity as Chairperson African Capacity Building Foundation, H.E. Anthony Okara, Special Amb. African Leaders Malaria Alliance and Dr Vasu Gounden Executive Director of ACCORD.

Others were Ms Rose Makena Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations Office at Nairobi and UNEP. The Swedish ambassador to Kenya H.E. Ms Caroline Vicini and Ms Betty Sungura-Nyabuto National Gender and Equality Commission Chief Executive Officer also spoke at the grand events.

.....

**“Whether it is conflict prevention, conflict management or post conflict reconstruction, our programmes have mostly been guided by research and upon assessment of the interventions by other RECs, COMESA has carved its niche around the economic dimensions of conflict,” Ms Mutunga.**





Aviation experts at the workshop in Cairo, Egypt

## Aviation experts meets in Cairo to validate laws, regulations and policies

Aviation experts from five regional economic communities (RECs) from the eastern Africa, southern Africa and the Indian Ocean are meeting in Cairo to validate national laws, regulations and policies in the sector.

The two days validation workshop, 30 -31 October 2023, is aimed at ensuring they conform with the provisions of the Yamoussoukro Decision (YD). This is the second workshop after the first one which conducted in Kenya in 2022.

Participants are drawn from the COMESA, the East African Community, Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, Southern Africa Development Community and the Indian Ocean Commission. The

RECs are jointly implementing the eight million euros, four-year programme on Support to the Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) funded by the European Union under the European Development Fund.

The Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) is a commitment by signatory African States to eliminate restrictions on open skies including transit rights and frequency limits on international routes.

The workshop was officially opened by Egyptian Minister of Civil Aviation Hon. Mohamed Abbas and COMESA statement was read by the Director of Infrastructure and Logistics Mr Jean Baptiste Mutabazi.

The Digitalisation Toolkits for Greater Financial Inclusion Workshop was attended by approximately 50 Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) and inaugurated by President Prithvirajsing Roopun of Mauritius. The event also featured key addresses from Mr. Marday Venkatasamy, President of the CBC, and Mrs. Namita Jagarnath Hardowar, President of the MCCI.

The capacity building initiative, whose primary goal is to enhance MSMEs' financial literacy and increase their adoption of digital financial services, forms an integral part of CBC's Digital Financial Inclusion (DFI) Program.

The Program is dedicated to establishing a low-cost, interoperable, and fraud-resistant regional digital financial services infrastructure, with a primary focus on serving MSMEs. It is a response to the pressing issue of financial exclusion, affecting approximately 400 million adults in Africa, particularly women, who do not have access to formal financial services. The President recognized the significance of fostering innovation, promoting financial stability, and empowering people.

"It is in the spirit of collective determination, of innovation, and of a collective vision that we gather today, to make our SMEs, especially women and young entrepreneurs, better equipped to navigate the digital world with confidence. We look forward to a future where our SMEs, especially women and youth entrepreneurs, are equipped to navigate the digital landscape with confidence and resilience", he stated.

## Empowering MSMEs for Enhanced Participation in Intra-COMEA Trade



Mauritius President H.E. Prithvirajsing Roopun (middle) with CBC President Mr. Marday Venkatasamy (2nd left), MCCI President Mrs. Namita Jagarnath Hardowar, and Chief Executive Officer of the CBC Mr Teddy Soobramanien (R).

CBC's Digital Financial Inclusion Workshop  
A transformative three-day workshop, jointly organized by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa

(COMESA) Business Council (CBC) and the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) was conducted on 17 October 2023 in Balaclava, Mauritius.

Mr. Venkatasamy provided an overview of the CBC, highlighting its role as the regional apex body of the private sector and business community in the 21 COMESA member states.

"The CBC's Digital Financial Inclusion (DFI) Programme, which we are gathered to discuss and implement, represents our response to this pressing issue. Capacity building stands at the core of our strategy," he said.

The transformative potential of digital financial services and cross-border transactions are poised to reshape the financial landscape, enhancing the capabilities and reach of SMEs. This collaborative effort, led by the CBC and supported by the MCCI, signifies a significant step towards inclusive and digitally empowered entrepreneurship, driven by the words of the esteemed speakers and their collective vision for the future.



## Statistics experts meet in Lusaka

The 13th Session of the COMESA Committee on Statistical Matters taking place in Lusaka, Zambia, 6-8 November 2023. The meeting coincides with the midway point of the COMESA Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS) and demonstrates the collective dedication to enhance statistical capabilities within COMESA Member States. Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe officially opened the meeting conducted at the COMESA Secretariat.

Participants include Directors of National Statistics Offices, representatives from Central Banks, various sector ministries, and delegates representing international organizations such as the European Union, African Development Bank (AfDB), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), African Union Commission (AUC), Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa (MEFMI), Paris21, Statistics Norway, Statistics Sweden, as well as our partner regional economic communities, IGAD, SADC, and EAC.

### COMESA DIARY

Date	Activity/Event	Venue/ Format
04 – 10 Nov	COMESA Monetary and Integration meetings/ Governors Symposium	Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe
6 – 8 Nov	Single African Air Transport Market Awareness Workshop for the Indian Ocean States under (SATSD) Programme	Lusaka, Zambia
06 - 08 Nov	13 <sup>th</sup> COMESA Committee Meeting on Statistical Matters:	Lusaka, Zambia
9 – 15 Nov	2023 Inter African Trade Fair	Cairo, Egypt
16 Nov	Election Observation in Madagascar	Madagascar
20 – 22 Nov	Stakeholder validation workshop of the Draft Final Report of the roaming and interconnections Study – EGEE-ICT	Nairobi, Kenya
23 – 25 Nov	Stakeholder validation for draft policy and regulatory and strategic framework of cooperation for fibre infrastructure – EGEE- ICT	Nairobi, Kenya
21 – 22 Nov	44 <sup>th</sup> Intergovernmental Committee Meeting	Lusaka, Zambia
23 Nov	44 <sup>th</sup> Council of Ministers Meeting	Lusaka, Zambia
29 – 30 Nov	National Media Capacity Building Workshop on Regional Integration	Mbabane, Eswatini
5 – 8 Dec	Technical working group and steering committee meeting Of the EGEE-ICT programme	Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe



COMESA SECRETARIAT  
COMESA Center  
Ben Bella Road  
P.O. Box 30051



+260 211 229 725



[www.comesa.int](http://www.comesa.int)



[info@comesa.int](mailto:info@comesa.int)



[facebook.com/ComesaSecretariat/](https://facebook.com/ComesaSecretariat/)



[@twitter.com/comesa\\_lusaka](https://twitter.com/comesa_lusaka)