

## Steps Towards Modernization of Regional Statistics

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Participants attending the National Strategies for Development of Statistics (NSDS) workshop in Lusaka, Zambia

Member States need to migrate from traditional national statistical systems to emerging data ecosystems to ensure reliable statistics which are key elements towards better measurement, monitoring, and management of results.

The call was made during the opening of a four-day regional workshop on National Strategies for Development of Statistics (NSDS) that began Monday 14 March 2022, in Lusaka Zambia. It was organized under the auspices of the Statistical Capacity Building Program Phase 5.

The objective of the workshop is to improve provision and use of official statistics in Africa through the NSDS framework that uses the sectoral approach. It is also aimed at enabling participants to employ best practices in the design of NSDS through specific

resource materials including the Guide to Mainstreaming Sectors into the National Statistical System (2007).

Participants are drawn from 37 African Development Fund Countries representing National Statistics Offices, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and PARIS21. Others are from the African Union Commission (AUC), the UN Women, SADC, EAC, IGAD, AFRISTAT and Statistical Training Institutes.

Acting Secretary General, Dr Dev Haman, officially opened the workshop. He called on all statistical bodies to embrace technologies that can be used to collect and process data quickly and accurately for decision makers in the Member States as well as globally.

"There is need to work with member states as they develop their NSDS and to align to the COMESA Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS) and the Strategy for Harmonization of Statistics (SHASA 2)," he said. "All this calls for close collaboration from bottom up i.e., national, regional and continental."

During the workshop participants will be trained on the most recent international guidelines on the design of the NSDS/RSDS, as well as on development of sector statistics plans. The workshop will also undertake capacity building related to issues of institutional aspects of the statistical systems. It seeks to ensure that member states mainstream gender in all their programmes related to statistics.

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# Fresh Impetus Towards a Single African Air Transport Market

As Regional Aviation Experts Meet to Harmonize Work Plans



Deputy Director for Rwanda Civil Aviation Authority, Ms Winnie Ngamije (centre), Mr. Bernard Dzawanda (3rd left), PIU Coordinator (AFCAC) Mr. Jean Paul Matsoungou (3rd right), and other aviation experts at the COMESA/AFCAC retreat

Aviation experts from the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) concluded a three days' retreat in Kigali, Rwanda, on 10th March 2022. Its objective was to harmonize workplans, strengthen institutional arrangement and collaboration in the operationalization and implementation of the SAATM: one of the AU Agenda 2063 Flagship Projects.

The retreat followed the signing of two Grant Projects Agreements with African Development Bank (AfDB) with AFCAC on Institutional Support for Implementation of the SAATM, and European Unions (EU) with COMESA as a lead Regional Economic Community (REC) on the Support to Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and Indian Ocean Region (EA-SA-IO).

Aviation Experts at the retreat came up with a harmonized advocacy and Communication Strategy on the application, domestication and harmonization of the Continental

Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) regulatory instruments at the RECs and the national level. The retreat was officially opened on Tuesday 8 March 2022, by the Deputy Director for Rwanda Civil Aviation Authority (RCAA), Ms. Winnie Ngamije, on behalf of the Director General and the President of AFCAC, Mr. Silas Udahemuka.

She underscored the need for cooperation between the organizations dealing with the liberalization of the air transport in Africa:

"Cooperation between AFCAC and the RECs is not optional; it is a must if aviation programmes on the continent are to succeed, we are therefore compelled to ensure that such cooperation is reinforced through harmonization of the work plans." Ms. Ngamije stated.

The SAATM Project Implementation Unit Coordinator at AFCAC, Mr. Jean Paul Matsoungou, in his opening remarks highlighted the need for synergy creation among the two institutions stressing that:

"..the two projects have similar objectives of implementation and operationalization of SAATM and thus the need to Create Synergy between AFCAC and COMESA for the full implementation of YD and operationalization of SAATM in the EA-SA-IO region in particular, and the African Continent in general so as to ensure realization of the AU Agenda 2063."

In his opening remarks, the Senior Transport Economist at COMESA, Mr. Bernard Dzawanda, said the establishment of SAATM and the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision provides opportunities for cooperation hence the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between COMESA and AFCAC.

He also highlighted other sectors of the economy that will benefit from the SAATM such as the tourism sector, industrial and trade sectors which rely heavily on Air transport. Growth of these sectors will positively contribute to GDP growth, with more citizens being able to afford air travel especially given the potential reduction in airfares.

## COMESA Diary

Dates	ACTIVITY	VENUE
14 -17 March	COMESA SCB V Regional Workshop on National Strategies for Development of Statistics	Lusaka, Zambia
17 – 19 March	The 3rd ECOFISH and COMESA Steering Committee meeting	Lusaka
22 – 25 March	COMESA Regional Labour Migration Trends Report Validation Workshop	Lusaka





# Kenya Lifts Major COVID-19 Restrictions



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Kenya has taken the first major step towards easing restrictions imposed two years ago with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, it has waived the requirement for PCR test for travellers to Kenya, for those that are fully vaccinated.

This includes truck drivers who will also be exempted from the PCR test if fully vaccinated, a move that will facilitate movement of goods across the borders.

All eligible unvaccinated travellers arriving at any port of entry to Kenya must however have a negative PCR test result conducted not more than 72 hours before departure. Unvaccinated travellers arriving in Kenya will be subjected to a rapid antigen test at their cost of \$30.

The relaxation follows decline of reported Covid-19 cases in the country, which has been

below 1% for over month and below 5% in the months prior. Also stopped are quarantines for both vaccinated and unvaccinated contacts.

Mandatory wearing of masks in public places has been relaxed as well.

Announcing the new measures, on Friday 11 March 2022, Cabinet Secretary of Health, Mr Mutahi Kagwe, however encouraged the use of masks in all indoors functions and in public service vehicles, trains and aircrafts. He also announced the resumption of full capacity in meetings and gatherings if the participants are vaccinated.

"Positive asymptomatic cases need not isolate but shall observe five days and return to work without need for further testing," he announced.

Besides easing travel to Kenya, the new measures

are also expected to scale- up vaccinations in the country and thereby help the economy to return to the pre-COVID-19 normalcy.

Kenya is a leader in intra-COMESA trade and the new measures are expected to have a positive impact across the region.

**"Positive asymptomatic cases need not isolate but shall observe five days and return to work without need for further testing."**

## Steps towards modernization.....

Director for African Centre for Statistics at the Economic Commission for Africa Mr Oliver Chinganya emphasized the need for modernization of statistical systems if the profession is to remain relevant to the development of world economies.

"With the advent of technology, there is need

to identify new partners in development with tools and solutions, such as the academia, private sector players, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations," he added.

Facilitation of the training is being done by two international statistical consultants. They

are Prof. Ben Kiregyera, one of the originators of the NSDS concept and the author of the first NSDS guidelines that were published by PARIS21 in 2005. The other is Mr. Neil Dourmashkin, a specialist in "making good quality statistics available" and in using this information to inform public policies and private sector decisions in South-East Asia, Africa, Europe and elsewhere.

# Business Model to Promote Digital Financial Inclusion Plan Developed



Members of the CBC board and guests at the 4th Dialogue on Digital Financial Inclusion

A business model on operation and implementation of a regional online payment platform for Micro and Small Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the COMESA region has been developed.

The model was created by the COMESA Business Council (CBC) as part of its digital financial inclusion plan for MSMEs. It is aimed at supporting the design, development and deployment of an integrated digital financial services infrastructure that is low-cost, interoperable, real time and fraud resistant. It is intended to serve (MSMEs) and the customers they transact with at the bottom of the financial pyramid.

The model was validated during the 4th Digital Financial Inclusion Public-Private Dialogue conducted by the CBC on 10th March 2022. Close to 200 delegates attended the dialogue physically in Lusaka, Zambia and virtually.

CBC had engaged a consultant to conduct the study on the business model design as well as the progress made so far in driving this regional agenda in the Member States.

According to the experts, MSMEs contribute an estimated 50% to 70% of the Gross Domestic

Product (GDP) in COMESA and account for 50% to 60% of the employment opportunities in the region.

The key drivers of financial inclusion in the region have been mobile money and agent banking, now reaching millions of previously unbanked individuals, households and SMEs offering affordable, instant, reliable services on payments, savings, credit and insurance services among others.

Addressing the delegates, COMESA's Assistant Secretary General for Programmes, Dr Kipyego Cheluget appreciated the progress made towards broader financial inclusion in the region:

"However, there is still some key challenges namely low financial literacy in most COMESA member countries, high cost of services, regulation not keeping pace with innovation and weak consumer protection," he noted.

Kenya was recognized for having the largest and most successful mobile money sector in the region and has consistently led in the scale and innovation.

Speaking at the same event, CBC Board President, Mr Marday Venkatasamy said financial inclusion

is not only about facilitating access to formal financial systems but also about digital literacy skills.

"It is apparent therefore, that the private sector undisputedly has a pivotal role in driving the sustainable development agenda in the region," Mr Venkatasamy added.

Other keynote speakers at the event included Bank of Zambia Governor, Dr Denny Kalyalya who was represented by his deputy Dr Francis Chipimo.

At the same time, the CBC Digital Financial Inclusion Recognition Awards for the Industry were launched. The following companies were recognized for their commitment and contribution to the digital financial inclusion plan for MSMEs in the COMESA region: Vodacom, Techno Brain Group, Rwanda Information Society Authority (RISA), Kenya Bankers of Association, KCB Bank, COMESA Clearing House, Coca-Cola East and Central Africa Franchise, Bayer, Bankers Association of Zambia, Bank of Zambia and Airtel Africa.



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