

## Regional Communication Experts and Media Trained on COMESA Regional Integration Programmes



Communications Coordinators and media experts from COMESA Member States with Secretary General and COMESA Secretariat staff during the training workshop in Lusaka

Thirty-one communication experts from 18 Member States of COMESA participated in a two-day capacity building workshop to enhance awareness of COMESA-led regional integration programmes at the national level.

The training, which was conducted in Lusaka, Zambia on August 31 - 01 September 2022 was in line with the 2018 Council of Ministers directive to have a vibrant communications ecosystem characterized by a well-equipped cadre of front-line communications and media experts in all the 21 Member States.

It brought together communications experts based in the Ministries that coordinate COMESA activities, who were appointed as COMESA Communication Coordinators and media practitioners.

COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, said the training was critical in addressing communication gaps in regional integration, while appreciating the indispensable role of communication professionals as key stakeholders in the realization of the integration agenda.

"It is well known that while many of the policy

decisions made by COMESA policy-makers have indeed been implemented, others have been partially implemented, while several are yet to become operational. This means the envisaged and potential benefits are not realized as intended.

She attributed this to various factors with the most pertinent being lack of, or limited awareness.

"This is where your role as communication professionals comes in: to ensure that key messages and information about the decisions and commitments made in public interest reach the key stakeholders as the intended beneficiaries."

She attributed the low awareness levels to two underlying factors: The responsible agencies in Member States are at times not well informed about the scope and benefits of implementation hence the limited motivation or urgency to act.

Secondly, the public, who are the ultimate beneficiaries of regional integration initiatives are not sufficiently aware of the different COMESA programmes and activities. This leads to the public being unable to demand from their governments to deliver on regional

integration commitments.

At the training, the participants recommended ways of improving publicity. Among them is to involve the communication coordinators and the media more robustly in activities and events relating to COMESA regional integration programmes in their respective Member States. They noted that currently, they had limited access to such information as they were not fully involved in such activities.

They also undertook to utilize the communication and news platforms and tools they manage such as websites, newspapers, social media to disseminate news and information on regional integration. This they said will increase the visibility on COMESA in Member States given that information will be disseminated in local languages as well.

Facilitators of the training comprised of technical experts from the COMESA Secretariat covering trade and customs, gender and social affairs, infrastructure and logistics, agriculture and industry, peace and security and the European Union Development Fund.

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# Regional ICT Programme Hosts Validation Workshop on Latest Studies



*Information and Communication Technologies experts attending the Validation Workshop for Stakeholder Mapping, Baseline Survey Study and E-Commerce Study in Malawi*

About 54 experts in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) from 29 Member States of four regional economic communities convened in Lilongwe, Malawi for two back-to-back workshops to validate findings from a recent stakeholder mapping, baseline survey study and e-Commerce study.

The meetings from 5 – 10 September will consider and validate the reports of the two studies undertaken under the Enhancement of Governance and Enabling Environment in the ICT Sector (EGEE-ICT) programme. The studies were conducted by two firms engaged by COMESA: The MA Consulting Group for the Stakeholder Mapping and Baseline Survey Study and DT Global for the E-Commerce Study.

MA Consulting Group was to carry out a stakeholder mapping analysis, develop a project stakeholder engagement plan, assess institutional capacity skills and gaps and identify institutional strengthening needs for programme success. The draft report takes stock of the status of ICT development at both national and regional levels covering supply, demand and affordability of ICT infrastructure and services, policy, regulatory environment and a mapping and analysis of ICT stakeholders.

DT Global, was engaged to conduct an in-depth review of the policy and regulatory frameworks

on e-Commerce and related policy, regulatory and administrative practices and processes of Member States in the EA-SA-IO region.

The delegates are drawn from Member/Partners States of COMESA, East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

The four-year EGEE-ICT programme is being implemented by COMESA in collaboration with the RECs. It is funded by European Union under the 11th European Development Fund through an eight million Euros Contribution Agreement signed between COMESA and the EU.

The programme supports the development and implementation of harmonized regional ICT policy and regulatory frameworks for enhanced competition and improved access to cost effective and secure ICT services.

Speaking at the opening of the validation workshop, Malawi's Permanent Secretary for e-government in the Ministry of Information and Digitalization Mr Francis Bisika said the survey holds immense potential for the development of the individual countries and the region at large.

"We will engage with the consultants and among ourselves, to consider the findings and analyse

the study, propose improvements thereon, note the success and challenges and finally make recommendations aimed at promoting ICT development at national and regional level," Mr Bisika said.

He added that the Malawi government is putting in place strategies to increase internet penetration that is currently at just over 43.1% of the population. He cited the high cost of internet capacity as one factor causing the low usage.

Director of Infrastructure at COMESA Secretariat Mr Baptiste Mutabazi said stakeholder validation of an output of any development activity or study is a critical element of socio-economic development process.

"At COMESA, it is a requirement that any study has to be subjected to a stakeholder validation," he said.

The Stakeholder Mapping and Baseline Survey identified bottlenecks hampering the uptake of e-commerce in the region and proposed a regional work program which will guide and facilitate the development and adoption of a regional e-commerce framework. The established baseline of key indicators will constitute the basis for measuring the performance and impact of the programme and other ICT development initiatives in the region.





Participants attending the agricultural minimum set of core data Validation workshop at Pamodzi Hotel in Lusaka, Zambia

## COMESA Hosts Agricultural Minimum Set of Core Data Validation Workshop

Despite the Africa's potential to remain sustainable and food secure and further improve the rural economy, the lack of reliable data and capacity to disseminate to various end-users has affected the continent's growth. This notwithstanding the various initiatives by COMESA partners such as the Africa Development Bank (AfDB).

At a recent five-day regional compilation and validation workshop organized by COMESA on the Agricultural Minimum Set of Core Data for African Development Fund, the AfDB Country Manager, Zambia, Mr. Agola Oluoch stressed the need for the African continent to expand the data collection techniques to avoid wrong decision-making. The meeting took place in Lusaka, Zambia from 29 August to 2 September 2022.

Mr Oluoch stated that lack of reliable data has threatened the growth of agriculture and the rural economy, being the backbone of most of the countries' economies, contributing at least 40% to GDP, over 75% to total exports and above 80% of employment for most African countries.

"Agriculture and rural sectors remain cardinal to the national economy, making the sector the key to general improved economic performance, increased incomes and raising of standards of living of households as well as poverty eradication in most of our countries. Hence the

need to ensure reliable statistical data for policy formulation and economic development," he said

The failure to disseminate agriculture and rural economy information amid various headwinds prompted the AfDB since 2015 to initiate various strategies including the current Phase V of the Statistical Capacity Building program for (SCB-V), being executed by COMESA using AfDB Grant to develop and maintain the momentum built on past gains.

The SCB-V seeks to among other components; improve the availability and quality of economic statistics, including the measurement of the COVID-19 impact; Improving the quality and availability of Social Statistics and reporting on COVID-19; Data Collection, Management and Dissemination and Strategic Planning, Systems Development, Coordination, and Training.

The initiative envisaged that under SCB-V, all African countries would establish a Minimum Set of Core agricultural Data (MSCD) and accelerate information dissemination on a regular basis and provide national and international policy makers necessary information that goes across national boundaries.

Addressing the forum, Zambia Statistical Agency Executive Director Mr. Mulenga Musepa noted that COVID 19 and the poor funding to National

Statistical Systems (NSS) have generally weakened national capacities to generate data. He urged African Governments to invest in statistics for the agriculture sector to become resilient and contribute effectively to food security and reduce hunger and poverty on the continent.

"It is a well-known fact that the NSS in Africa are weak and poorly funded, this makes it difficult for regional member countries to undertake statistical operations in line with the international best practices for optimal evidence-based policy dialogue," he said.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of programmes Ambassador Kipyego Cheluget applauded the AfDB for introducing the SCB V-a compilation of updated minimum set of data for last year. He said this will ensure the realization of the realignment of the agriculture development in terms of economic development and enhanced living standards, fighting poverty and increasing food security adding that this will form part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are vital to the development of the sector.





Kenyatta University

## COMESA University Programme: Quality Assurance Mission

A team from the COMESA Secretariat has conducted a quality control mission on the Masters degree in Regional Integration programme being taught at the Kenyatta University in Kenya. This is the second such mission since the programme was introduced in 2020 in Kenyatta University and the University of Mauritius, which are the only ones offering the course for now. Twenty other universities in the COMESA region are expected to join in due course.

The assessment was conducted on 22 -26 August 2022 and focused on the implementation of the Programme, identifying existing challenges and areas of improvement including quality in teaching, learning experience and level of student engagement. The team was led by the Director of Trade and Customs Dr Christopher Onyango.

The Masters Degree Programme is conducted virtually through a collaboration involving 22 universities in COMESA. It seeks to provide a sound conceptual, policy and practical training on regional integration, as well as extending access to research opportunities and higher education on regional integration in the COMESA region.

It is mainly targeted at working professionals in the areas of trade and regional integration, students intending to work as trade officers,

trade policy analyst, advisers, researchers, trade attaches; private sector trade practitioners; media practitioners specialising in business, gender, climate and trade.

Kenyatta University enrolled its first cohort of 10 students in 2020 and has completed the trimester coursework. It is now in the process of undertaking their research projects. The second cohort enrolled in mid-2021 and will commence the third semester in September 2022. The University in the process of admitting the third cohort to start in September 2022.

The Programme is being implemented with financial support from the European Union (EU) through Enhancing COMESA Capacity in Trade Policy Analysis and Research and Training for Deeper Regional Integration and Participation in the Global Economy Project (TRADECOM II Project).

To ensure quality of the Programme and its implementation, COMESA Secretariat started undertaking quality control missions in July this year, beginning at the University of Mauritius. The mission involves holding consultations with different stakeholders including the University management, students, ministries and other government agencies.

During the Kenyatta University mission, the COMESA team met among others the Acting

Vice Chancellor Prof. Wacheke Wanjohi, who appreciated the fact that the programme was jointly developed by the University and COMESA, thus laying the foundation for its sustainability.

In a meeting with the 1st and 2nd cohort students, concern was raised on the scarcity of material on regional integration and weak link between certain economic theories and concepts and practical application in certain modules.

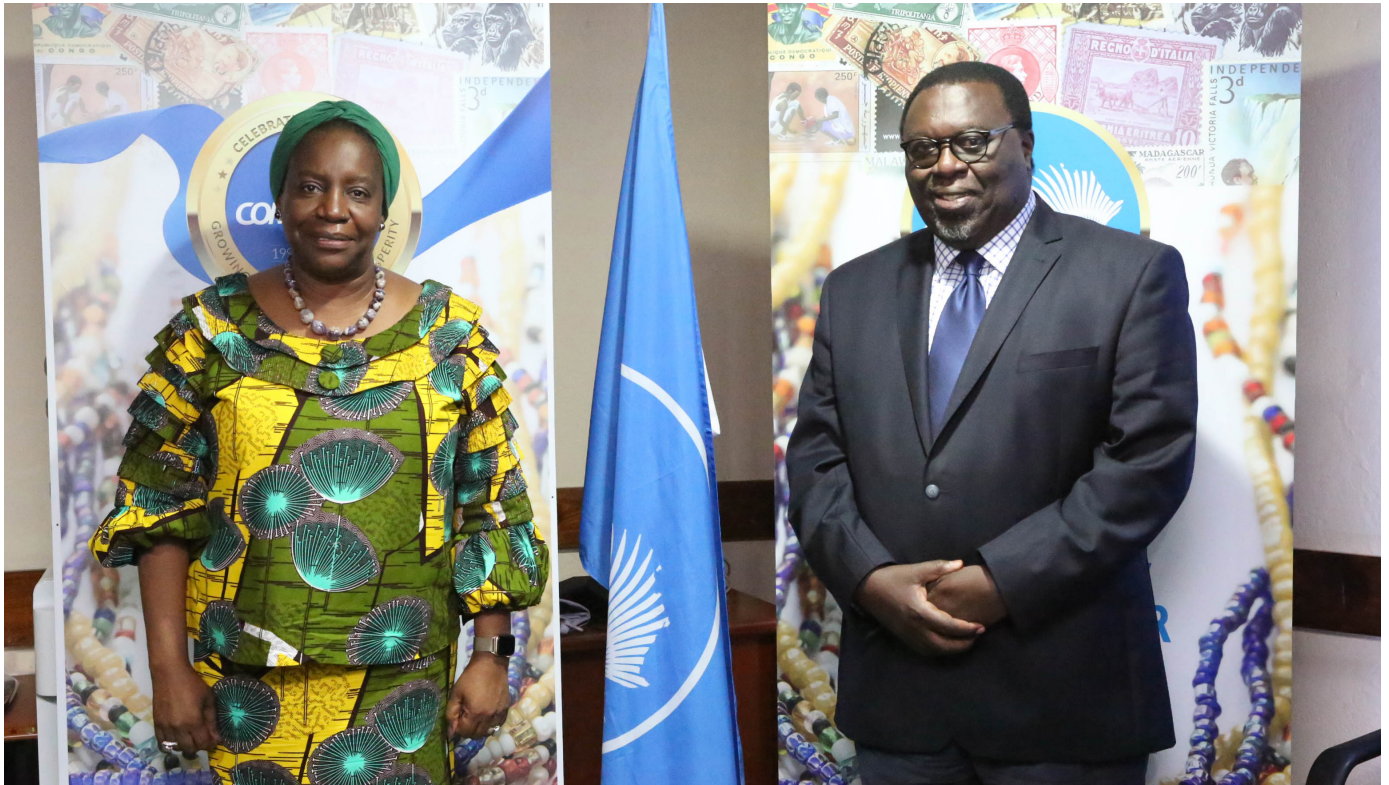
"There is need for student exchange programmes with other universities especially on the elective courses," said the students while appreciating the programme as building their capacities in various areas. They expressed the need for a pool of resource persons from the collaborating universities.

Among the challenges identified was the need to balance the enrollments into the programme of both fresh graduates and professionals in the public service to meet the capacity building objective of the programme.

Some of the recommendations from the consultations with stakeholders were to review the Masters programme after the current cycle in line with Kenya Commission of University Education requirements. Further, COMESA in collaboration with the two Universities to consider establishing a joint facility for delivering elective courses across the



# CABI, COMESA to Revive Collaboration



COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe (L) receives Dr Dennis Rangi, Director General of CABI at the COMESA Secretariat.

COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe on 1st September 2022 received a delegation from Centre for Africa and Bioscience International (CABI) led by Director General Dr Dennis Rangi who paid a courtesy call on her in Lusaka.

Among the issues discussed was the need to rekindle past collaboration that covered, among others, Sanitary and Phytosanitary issues. The CABI delegation highlighted its work in Zambia

with the Ministry of Agriculture in the Cassava Sector, where it is leading in creating awareness to farmers and how they can find a solution to the cassava diseases affecting their crops.

Dr Rangi congratulated the Secretary General on her new role as the only African on the CABI board adding that this is a great milestone for the African women. He noted that Africa will be well represented on the board through COMESA, which has 21 Member States.

SG Kapwepwe welcomed the CABI team and the work it was doing. She said her membership in the CABI board will ensure that, through COMESA, Africa's voice is heard. She reiterated the need to collaborate with organisations working on the ground to avoid effort duplications.

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## COMESA to Build Walkway for Small Scale Cross Border Traders at Kasumbalesa

Plans are underway by the COMESA Secretariat to build a walkway for the small-scale cross border traders between Zambia and D R Congo at the Kasumbalesa border. The walkway will facilitate smooth passage of the traders in a more organized manner, avoiding the use of illegal routes.

This was one of the issues discussed during an assessment mission and stakeholders' meeting, conducted on 29 August 2022 at the border.

The routes in the walkway will be demarcated to

facilitate movement of transporters and traders while ensuring that it passes through border agency control points.

The assessment mission was led by COMESA Director of Trade and Customs, Dr Christopher Onyango comprising of Government officials from the Coordinating Ministries of DR Congo and Zambia, the European Union, Immigration officials and the International Organization for Migration. Its purpose was to observe on the ground the activities financed by the European Union under the Cross Border Trade Initiative

programme. It was also intended familiarize the EU delegation on the activities being implemented under the European Development Fund 11 (EDF 11) funding.

The Mission provided a holistic first-hand information to the EU and other key stakeholders on operations at the border financed by the programme and appreciation of the achievements, constraints and challenges that exist at the border.





File photo: Small Scale Cross Border Traders at Kasumbalesa Border Post

## COMESA to Build Walkway at Kasumbalesa..

Stakeholders in Kasumbalesa were requested to do further work on the designs and costing of the walkway and make the necessary submission to the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Zambia for further processing with the Ministry of Infrastructure and the COMESA Secretariat.

A new border market will also be built at Kasumbalesa to facilitate organized trade flow by the cross-border traders. The two projects will be supported with funding from the European Union funding under the (EDF 11) envelope. Once

constructed the market will provide shelter for the traders. It will have all the necessary facilities including bathrooms, toilets and sleepers to accommodate traders who travel from other parts of the region.

The COMESA Small Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative is funded by the European Union under the EDF 11 and aims to facilitate trade by small scale cross border traders. The total budget for the programme is EURO 15 million. The programme comprises five result areas all aimed

at addressing the constraints faced by small scale cross border traders.

The Programme has five key interventions being implemented at the Kasumbalesa border including: supporting Trade Information Desk Officers, supporting enumerators collecting small scale cross border trade data; piloting the Green Pass, and preliminary work on development of a border market at the DR Congo side.

## COMESA Diary

Date	Event	Venue/Format
12 – 15 Sept 2022	The 9th COMESA Annual Research Forum	Cairo, Egypt (Hybrid)
15 Sept 2022	Task Force Committee on Qualification Equivalence Framework	Virtual
19-23 Sept 2022	Regional Infrastructure Financing Facility (RIFF) Consultative Meetings on Development of COMESA Model Solar Standards, Model Common Tariff Framework for Solar Products, COMESA Energy Policy and Solar Standards Training Workshop For COMESA/Trade and Development Bank Member States.	Kigali Rwanda (Hybrid)
26-27 Sept 2022	Meeting of the Committee of Human Resource Experts	Virtual
28 Sept 2022	The 1st Annual COMESA Federation of Women in Business, Northern Sub Regional Summit	Tunis, Tunisia (Hybrid)
29 – 30 Sept 2022	COMESA Tunisia Businesswomen Days	Tunis, Tunisia (Hybrid)



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