

COMESA Courts Tunisian Businesswomen



Amb. Dr. Kipyego Cheluget

The COMESA Assistant Secretary General-Programmes Amb. Dr. Kipyego Cheluget has invited Tunisia businesspeople and women and youth in particular, to take advantage of the abundant trade and business opportunities in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.

Amb. Cheluget was speaking during the COMESA Tunisia Businesswomen Days, a two-day event held on 29-30 September in Tunis, Tunisia. Tunisian Minister of Trade Hon. Mrs. Fadhila Rebhi Ben Hamza officially opened the September 29-30 event, which was also attended by Minister for Women, Family and Seniors Hon. Mrs. Amel Belhaj Moussa.

Hon. Rebhi, who represented Tunisian Prime Minister Hon. Mrs. Najla Bouden, expressed Tunisia's readiness to grow its trade relations with the COMESA Member States, and challenged the organisers to consider the possibility of convening the conference on a biennial basis. The objective of this, she said,

would be to track the progress of Tunisia's involvement in the common market and also provide a forum of exchange between the women entrepreneurs.

Amb. Dr. Cheluget lauded Tunisia for actively engaging in the COMESA integration agenda and observed that the Member State had moved with "admirable speed" in its quest to harness the opportunities to trade with the other COMESA Member States.

"In March 2020, barely two years after the country's admission to COMESA, Tunisia deposited legal instruments with the COMESA Secretariat confirming her accession to the COMESA Free Trade Area.

Thanks to that important step Tunisia took, her businesspeople and enterprises can now export products, without paying import duties, to 15 other COMESA Member States which constitute the FTA," he said.

He added that fora such as the Tunisia Women in Business Days are a valuable avenue for providing training, disseminating information, building capacity and cultivating networks for Tunisian women to engage in economic activity at local levels and across borders.

He informed participants about the various customs and trade facilitation instruments COMESA has developed, including adoption of the Single Window System, Simplified Customs Documents, the Rules of Origin and an Online NTB Reporting and Monitoring System, among others. The COMESA delegation which included Director for Gender and Social Affairs Mrs. Beatrice Hamusonde, Director for Trade Dr. Christopher Onyango, and Director for Agriculture and Industry Mrs. Providence Mavubi also presented on the work of COMESA under trade, gender and agriculture, as well as initiatives such as RECAMP and the 50 Million African Women Speak digital platform (50MAWSP).

Strengthening the Capacity of National Youth Councils on Peace and Security



Young leaders and COMESA staff attending peace and security training in Alebtong, Uganda

Over 70 young leaders from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Somalia and Uganda convened at Alebtong, a rural outpost, 386 kilometres north of Kampala in Uganda for a four-day regional capacity building forum on 27 – 30 September 2022.

It was organized by COMESA through the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) working jointly with Save the Children and the Horn of Africa Initiative. Its objective was to strengthen the participation and capacity of national youth councils, youth-led and youth-focused organizations on the youth, peace and security agenda in Africa.

The training served to strengthen the role of youths in implementing the 'Silencing the Guns in Africa Initiative' and the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 2250) of 2015. This is in recognition that young people play an important role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.

The forum was also in response to an earlier Decision by the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs, who urged Member States to prioritise

building of resilience and adoption of the COMESA Early Warning System Structural Vulnerability Assessment (COMWARN SVA) model. Among other things, the model has identified youth unemployment as a structural factor to conflicts in most COMESA Member States.

At the forum, participants were taken through the African Union continental framework on youth, peace and security focusing on the five defined pillars; participation, prevention, protection, partnerships and disengagement and reintegration.

Head of the Governance, Peace and Security Unit at COMESA Secretariat, Ms Elizabeth Mutunga, who led a team of Early Warning Experts at the forum, said the interaction assisted participants to identify and strengthen innovative proposals undertaken by national youth councils in peacebuilding and peace processes at the national and regional level.

"The training will also help strengthen the capacity of the youth councils in engaging with Regional Economic Communities (RECs),

Regional Mechanisms and the private sector in fostering the peace discourse," she said.

Going forward it is expected that youth engagement in peace and security will be strengthened especially the Silencing the Guns agenda and reinforce the capacity of the national youth councils. The partners also plan to establish a regional platform based in Alebtong for networking, information and sharing of lessons.

COMESA in collaboration with partners has since November 2021 organized two High Level Inter-Ministerial Conferences in Nairobi, Kenya and Harare, Zimbabwe whose main objective was to deliberate on how to better support, promote and invest in young peace-builders in the region and their engagement with RECs. A key recommendation from the engagements is on the need to establish a one stop youth centre and strengthening the capacity of youth-led organizations and national youth councils to engage in national and regional peace-building discourse.



Data on Women and Girls in Focus at the Joint Africa Gender Statistics Conference

On 26 - 30 September 2022 COMESA and its partners convened a Joint Africa Gender Statistics Conference on the latest innovations and best practices in gender statistics to inform action plans for gender statistics in Africa. More than 150 civil society actors including policy analysis and gender statistics experts from 40 African countries attended the conference held in Nairobi, Kenya.

Themed 'Gender Statistics Imperatives for Africa', the Conference interrogated gender statistics through the lens of Agenda 2063—the African Union's blueprint for transforming Africa into a global powerhouse, the Sustainable Development Goals that support gender equality and women's empowerment, and global guidance on violence against women data, among others.

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Dr. Maxime Houinato

Delegates comprising policy analysts and gender statistics experts from line ministries, national statistical offices, and civil society exchanged knowledge on the latest innovations and best practices in gender statistics to inform action plans in AU Member States and the region.

The production of gender statistics in the region has been slow due to a combination of factors including a reluctance to change how statistics have traditionally been compiled and presented, lack of knowledge on how change can be effected and a constrained policy and financial environment.

Speaking at the forum, COMESA Chief Statistician, Mr. Themba Munalula said: "Gender equality has increasingly been recognized as being essential to the process of sustainable development and the formulation of effective national development policies and programmes."

Principal Statistician at the African Development Bank Group (AfDB) Roza Mamuye Bora underscored the role of gender statistics in her statement at the forum:

"Given the pivotal role of gender equality in socioeconomic and cultural development, ensuring that African countries produce high-quality, timely, and reliable gender data has far-reaching benefits," she said.

Specifically, gender statistics are instrumental in measuring progress towards achieving regional and global gender development goals. However, the production of gender statistics is relatively new, and information is not fully consolidated and always readily available, even at the global level.

In his statement, Dr. Maxime Houinato, UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Director, noted that gender data and statistics are not just important for their own sake.

"The end goal is really to improve the lives of women and girls as envisioned by the SDGs and other regional and international plans," he said. He added that while nearly all countries in the region have endorsed the SDGs and incorporated them into national strategies and plans, lack of funding is often cited as the most critical impediment in the region.

Fatouma Sissoko, Gender Statistician at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) observed that such challenges have hindered progress of national statistical offices in designing the systems and operations needed to generate gender data for evidence-based policymaking and advocacy.

Notwithstanding, regional initiatives such as the Africa Programme on Gender Statistics (APGS), have contributed significantly to improvements in gender statistics at both the regional and national level.

COMESA Business Council, UTICA sign MoU



CNFCE President Mrs. Leila Belkhiria Jaber and CBC Vice Chair Mr. James Chimwaza signing Memorandum of Understanding

COMESA Business Council (CBC) and the Tunisian Union of Industry and Commerce (UTICA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to foster cooperation. The President of the Tunisian National Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs (CNFCE), Mrs. Leila Belkhiria Jaber and CBC Vice Chair Mr. James Chimwaza signed the MoU during the COMESA Tunisia Business Women Days in Tunis, 27 – 30 September 2022.

The purpose of the MOU is to establish the principles and basis for increased cooperation between the CBC and UTICA, with a view

to improve business environment, promote trade and investment in COMESA, through joint programs, business partnerships and cooperation.

In a declaration codenamed the Tunis Declaration of Friday, September 30, 2022, which was read by CNFCE President, Mrs. Jaber, the private sector advocated an initiative to launch a 'Made in COMESA' standard, emphasizing the need to promote a Trustmark linking local professionals in the Member States.

They also expressed their support for the

launch in Tunisia of a "mega incubator and a business center for women entrepreneurs" for the COMESA Member States.

The COMESA Tunisia Businesswomen Days event was jointly organised by Tunisia's Ministry of Trade, COMESA, UTICA, COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB) and CNFCE, with support from GIZ. Its objective was to connect women entrepreneurs from Tunisia and the rest of the COMESA region and to encourage them to take advantage of the opportunities on offer. More than 100 Tunisian women business leaders took part in the event.

Banking supervisors and Financial Stability Analysts Trained on Macro-prudential Surveillance

Forty-Five banking supervisors and financial stability analysts from 10 Central Banks from the region have been trained on Basel III and Macro-Prudential Surveillance which aims at strengthening the resilience of the banking system, improve market confidence in regulatory ratios and promote a level playing field.

The training took place in Nairobi, Kenya on 19 – 23 September 2022.

While addressing the delegates at the commencement of the training, the outgoing CMI's Director, Mr. Ibrahim Zeidy, noted that

the implementation of Basel III framework within the internationally agreed timeframe is aimed at strengthening the resilience of the banking system, improving market confidence in regulatory ratios and promoting a level playing field.

He further observed that COMESA member countries are making progress at implementing different facets of Basel III, and that they are aware that Basel III transition arrangements had provided for a period for observation and partial implementation of leverage, capital and liquidity ratios such that countries should have fully complied by January 1, 2019.

Therefore, he noted that this training also aimed to familiarize participants with Basel III standards and principles and equip them with tools and techniques for conducting supervision under the revised framework. Mr Zeidy added that knowledge gained from the training would enhance the implementation of the COMESA Financial System Development and Stability Plan.

Participants to the workshop were drawn from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.



New CMI Director Dr Lucas Njoroge (left) with staff bids farewell to Mr Ibrahim Zeidy (4th left)

COMESA Monetary Institute Boss Bows Out

The Director of the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) Mr Ibrahim Zeidy has retired. He left on 30 September 2022 after serving the institution since 2011 when it was established. Prior to that, he was the Senior Monetary Economist at the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka, Zambia before moving to Nairobi, Kenya to start the CMI. The CMI is hosted by the Central Bank of Kenya in Nairobi at the Kenya School of Monetary Studies.

During his tenure, Mr Zeidy oversaw several milestones including improved macroeconomic convergence among COMESA Member States with available data showing that the region has achieved greater harmonization of macroeconomic policies. The COMESA region has also recorded an enhanced stability in the financial system with many countries having established a financial stability unit within the Central Banks.

The new Director is Dr Lucas Njoroge, the former Senior Economist at the institute. In a farewell statement, Dr Njoroge acknowledged his former boss's passion for research, which enabled the institute to publish over 40 country specific studies between 2011 and 2022.

"Over 4,000 economists from Central Banks in Member States have been trained as a way of building capacity and improving macroeconomic management and promoting financial stability in the bloc," said Dr Njoroge.

New UN Coordinator Pays Courtesy Call on COMESA

The newly appointed United Nations Resident Coordinator to Zambia Ms. Beatrice Muntali (R) paid a courtesy call on the COMESA Secretary General, Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, Wednesday 21 September 2022. Their discussions centred on agriculture, market integration, gender, early warning system, connectivity, immigration and cross border trade facilitation among others.

Ms. Muntali also briefed the Secretary General on the UN's role in the African Continental Free Trade Area and support to COMESA in the Tripartite Free Trade Area agenda





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