

## Initiative to Assist MS Develop NTBs Elimination Strategies is Underway

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Workshop on the development of the draft National Strategy on the Elimination of NTBs in Kenya

About 29% of Non-Tariff barriers reported through the tripartite online reporting, monitoring, and eliminating mechanism are in the intra-COMESA trade. Majority of them, 82% emanate from operational issues including on Rules of Origin while the remaining 18% are policies/measures that result in NTBs.

Currently the tripartite NTBs system, which is a joint initiative of the regional economic blocs, COMESA, the EAC and SADC is used to maintain vigilance on the NTBs as they pose the greatest hindrance to intra-regional trade.

COMESA Member States are therefore under obligation to establish the recommended institutional and regulatory frameworks. These include strengthening the NTB implementation framework at national level, including setting timelines for their elimination as they occur.

Notwithstanding, some member States lack the capacities to report, monitor and resolve such trading disputes, according to COMESA Director of Trade and Customs, Dr Christopher Onyango:

"Besides, multiple memberships to various RECs also pose a challenge to harmonizing the various mechanisms for resolving trade disputes across regional and international markets," Dr Onyango said. He was addressing delegates at the Kenya National

Workshop on the Development of the National Strategy on Elimination of NTBs conducted in Mombasa, Kenya on 3 – 7 July 2023.

The strategy is expected to facilitate reduction in NTBs affecting Kenya's Trade through a systematic identification and efforts to eliminate stringent non-tariff measures regulating imports and exports and expounding policy interventions for resolving policy related NTBs.

The workshop is part of the COMESA's technical support to Member States to establish appropriate institutional and regulatory frameworks for dealing with NTBs. The COMESA regulations on elimination of NTBs provides basis for the development of national NTBs elimination strategies at national and regional levels.

The strategy is expected to set out the general policy framework for Kenya's engagement with regional trading partners as well as the AfCFTA and World Trade Organization frameworks and effectively address some of the long standing NTBs between the country and its key trading partners.

Similar support has been provided to Zambia, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, and Malawi. More are planned for Comoros, Egypt and Tunisia.

Kenya is among the Member States complying with the legal provisions of the NTBs regulations. This includes the formal establishment of functional NTBs institutional arrangements specifically the National NTBs Focal Points and formal establishment and notification of its National Monitoring Committees. "The importance of eliminating NTBs cannot be overemphasized. Worldwide, NTBs have become an unfortunate trade policy tool to protect domestic economies," Dr Onyango stressed.

Most of these measures, including sanitary and phyto sanitary and technical barriers to trade are hardly reported, yet significantly hinder intra-regional flow of goods and services in the region.

He observed that the use of NTBs increased steadily after the 2007 – 2008 financial crisis and has escalated following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some NTBs have remained unresolved for periods ranging from one year to more than a decade.

Participants at the workshop included members of the national monitoring committee, members of the Kenya cross border trader's association, representatives of the transporters association and the private sector. It was funded by the European Union through the European Development Fund 11 under the COMESA Trade Facilitation Programme.



*Participants at the COMESA AU/AGA Meeting in Lusaka*

## COMESA and AU/AGA Push for second Phase of Youth Engagement Project

The pilot phase of the Joint AU/AGA-COMESA Project on Youth Engagement in Democratic Governance and Socio-economic Development Processes in Africa came to an end on 30 June as the implementing and cooperating partners held the Fourth Project Steering Committee at the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka, Zambia.

The meeting brought together representatives from the African Union Commission (AUC), African Governance Architecture (AGA) Secretariat which was COMESA's implementing partner, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), which was the co-operating partner.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General (Admin & Finance) Dr Dev Haman presided over the opening of the two-day Steering Committee meeting on 29 June 2023. He lauded the project as a great success, citing the capacity building of youth leaders, support for youth networks and development of knowledge products that were undertaken since implementation began in June 2019.

Ms Patience Chiradza, Director for Governance and Conflict Prevention at the AU congratulated the partners upon the

successful execution of the pilot phase, adding that the AU recognizes the critical role citizens play in democratic governance, conflict prevention and sustainable peace.

"The African citizens, particularly young women and men are important stakeholders in unpacking governance and holding our institutions accountable. The project also has a healthy balance between issues of democratic governance and socio-economic development which are different faces of the same coin," Ms Chiradza said. "This is why we need to double down on our efforts and ensure that phase 2 of this project happens."

On behalf of SDC, Ms Sarah Fankhauser, Head of Finance, Personnel and Administration spoke of the "need to celebrate the project's achievements" and praised its coping mechanisms in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are very happy that targets were achieved even far beyond what was set out," Ms Fankhauser said, adding that "strong leadership and ownership" had been crucial and making young people drivers of change was key.

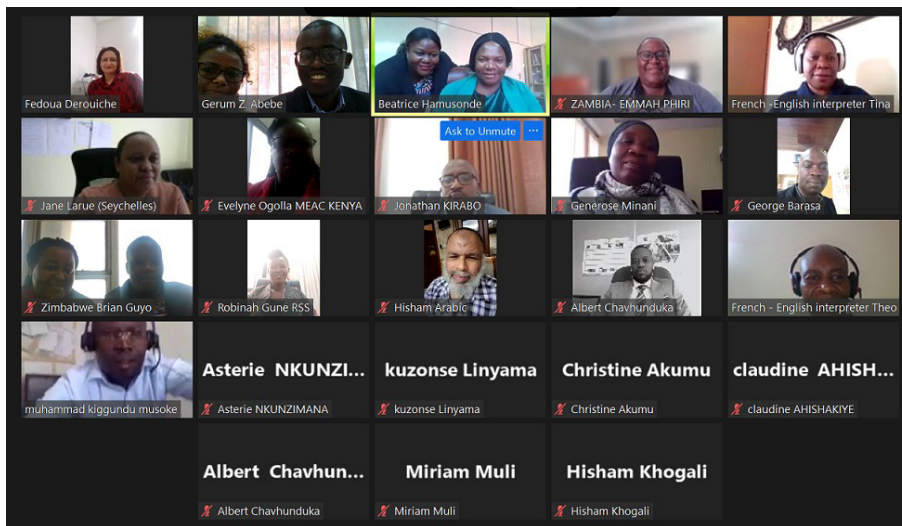
The deliberations of the two-day meeting focused on the findings of the final evaluation of the project, presentation of the financial report and audit report and the way forward following the pilot phase.

Dr Haman thanked SDC and the AU through AGA Secretariat "for the quality of partnership which we enjoyed during the pilot phase of this project."

"I wish to affirm COMESA's readiness to continue working with SDC and AUC-AGA and I look forward to continuing our discussions on obtaining support for the implementation of the second phase," he stated.

Other delegates at the meeting included Amb Salah Hammad, Head of the AGA and APSA Secretariat, Ms Beatrice Hamusonde, Director for Gender and Social Affairs, Amb Salvator Matata, COMESA Liaison Officer with the African Union and SDC Senior Regional Governance Adviser (Eastern and Southern Africa), Ms Annonciate Ndikumasabo, among others.





The 50MAWSP Focal Points virtual meeting

## Users of the Digital Women Empowerment Platform Rise ...as COMESA, EAC focal points meet

National focal points for the 50 Million African Women Speak platform (50MAWSP) met Tuesday 27 June to review progress on the implementation of the initiative in the COMESA Member States and East African Community (EAC) Partner States. It was the first-time focal points from the two regional economic communities (RECs) were brought together to jointly discuss ways to improve the platform.

The one-day meeting attracted focal points from Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Libya, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Opening the meeting, COMESA Director for Gender and Social Affairs Ms Beatrice Hamusonde thanked the focal points for their commitment to supporting the platform, which she said had contributed to its sustained growth.

"The women of Africa continue to endorse the 50 Million African Women Speak platform as a valuable tool for supporting their business needs, thereby affirming its viability as a vehicle for the economic empowerment of women and youth.

"As of December 2022, platform usage stood at approximately 375,000 users, up from 240,000 in December 2021. As of 31 May 2023, these numbers have grown to 470,000 users. This growth in no small part is owed to your efforts to promote the platform," Ms Hamusonde said.

On her part, the EAC Principal Gender and

Community Development Officer Ms Generose Minani lauded the move to conduct a joint meeting which would provide the Member and Partner States the opportunity to share updates on activities which have been undertaken, share experiences, and provide feedback.

The national focal points were urged to explore opportunities for increased promotion of the platform as well as funding of platform-related activities at national level. Among the proposals tabled during the meeting included enhancing platform accessibility for users with disabilities, organizing webinars to provide skilling for women and holding more regular review meetings.

The 50 Million African Women Speak platform is a women's economic empowerment initiative which is jointly implemented by three RECs, namely COMESA, EAC and ECOWAS. It seeks to address the business information needs of women entrepreneurs and provides information or resources on starting and growing a business, market access, access to finance, business training and financial literacy, among others.

It also boasts a social networking component which allows women to network with one another in real-time, showcase their goods and services and to learn from each other. The African Development Bank funded the first phase of the 50MAWSP.

## Small Scale Cross Border Traders Trained on Trade Facilitation

Close to 90 Small Scale Cross Border traders at Nakonde in Zambia and Tunduma Border Posts in Tanzania have undergone training in Trade Facilitation. The training included aspects of crossing the border formally, preparing to cross the border, dealing with harassment, corruption and bribery, working together as a group and formalizing growing their businesses.

The training modules were developed by the International Trade Centre (ITC) who are co-delegatees implementing some activities under the overall coordination of COMESA. This is under the 15 million euros COMESA Small Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative funded by the European Union under the EDF 11 which aims to facilitate trade by small scale cross border traders.

Nakonde District Commissioner Mr. Marvellous Sikapizye, spoke at the closing of the training and also presented certificates to the participants. He thanked the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, the EU, COMESA and ITC for working in collaboration with the Cross Border Traders Association in Zambia to enhance formalisation of the informal trading and other business activities. The Training at Tunduma was held 26 – 27 June and covered the same modules as Nakonde. It attracted participation from the Ministry of Trade, TanTrade and the leadership from the newly formed CBTA for Tunduma as well as the traders.

The next course of action will be to conduct similar training at Kasumbalesa after which the launch of the training programme will be in Lusaka later in the year. The traders in Chirundu, Mwami/Mchinji have already been trained,



COMESA staff engage members of the public at the the Zambia International Trade Fair

## COMESA, Stakeholders meet at the 57th Zambia International Trade Fair

COMESA Secretariat working jointly with the COMESA Business Council (CBC) participated at the 57th Zambia International Trade Fair held in Ndola from 28th June – 4th July 2023. The fair offered an opportunity for staff to interact with the public and share information and knowledge on regional integration programmes being implemented.

This is part of COMESA's outreach strategy to raise public and stakeholder awareness on regional integration programmes and encourage them to take advantage of the opportunities that COMESA provides. It was also part of the demonstration of the COMESA programmes in Member States. The

activity was supported under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF 11), Institutional Capacity Building Programme (ICBP).

COMESA information resource desk mounted at the fair served as the hub for engagements with businesspeople, students, small and medium entrepreneurs, policy makers, among others. Both local and foreign exhibitors took part.



COMESA Team after presenting publications at the Copperbelt University library in Kitwe

As part of information dissemination, the team paid a courtesy call to Copperbelt University library to present various publications. COMESA Research Fellow Ms. Jane Kiburu briefed the CBU Chief and deputy librarian about the COMESA Master's Degree programme which is being offered and invited the university to join the two other Zambian Universities offering the course.

Other high learning institutions that received COMESA publications included Mulungushi and Copperstone Universities.

Zambia's President Hakainde Hichilema, who is also the Chairperson of the COMESA Authority accompanied by His Majesty King Mswati III of Eswatini officially opened the Fair on Saturday 1st July 2023. Its theme was: 'Stimulating economic growth through partnership, trade and investment'.







# Regional Food Balance Focal Points Trained in Production of Quality Data



*Participants (above) at the RFBS Project Focal Points/Experts at Quality Data Production Training in Nairobi*

Focal persons working on the COMESA-led Regional Food Balance Sheet (RFBS) from the six pilot countries have been trained on production and management of quality data. This will enable them to capture accurate and clean data into the RFBS system and in producing analytical reports to be used in decision making.

The RFBS is a multi-stakeholder engagement where COMESA is collaborating with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), as well as a range of analytical and technology partners to provide reliable, timely, and accurate data for food trade, and food security-related decision-making in many Eastern and Southern African countries.

It seeks to generate a more predictable trade and policy environment in the region, which will lead to increased food security and enhance regional trade and investment. The six pilot countries are

Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Malawi and Zambia.

The training of the focal points was conducted on 26 – 28 June 2023, in Nairobi, Kenya and provided an opportunity for the delegates to share data sources for the RFBS, the opportunities presented by the initiative, the success achieved this far, the challenges they have encountered and the way forward for the initiative

Kenya's Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture Mr Kello Hassam, who addressed the delegates commended the RFBS as a timely initiative that will help address food security and support the development of a trade integration policy in the COMESA region.

In his speech presented by the Director Agriculture at the State Department for Crop Development Mr Kangi Douglas, the PS

underscored the importance of innovation in food production, transformations, predicting trade patterns and increasing stability and affordability of food in the region and beyond.

Agriculture Economist at COMESA Secretariat Mr Joel OKwir reiterated the importance of timely and accurate data in policy, trade and investment decisions for food systems transformation in the region and the commitment of the Secretariat to developing and driving the RFBS initiative.

Other partner institution involved in the RFBS initiative includes the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD), NASA Harvest/UMD, Bureau for Food and Agriculture Policy (BFAP), and Tetra Tech.

The initiative is funded by Rockefeller Foundation, The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO), USAID and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

## Funding for COMESA Peace and Security Programme Increased

COMESA and the African Union Commission have signed an Addendum to the Grant Contract for the implementation of Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The contract was initially signed between the two on 1st March 2020. The Addendum increases the initial allocation of 2,400,000 Euros to 5,248,310 Euros as a recognition of high rate of implementation of the APSA IV program by COMESA.

On 29 June 2023, Assistant Secretary General Dr Dev Haman and AUC Director of Governance and Conflict Prevention Ms Patience Zanelie Chiradza signed the Addendum at the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka.

The APSA IV program covers three strategic objectives, namely effective early warning and African Stand by Force and improvement of conflict cycle management, enhanced

cooperation and coordination among APSA actors including Civil Society Organizations. It also includes youth and children affected by armed conflicts.

The signing took place on the sidelines of the steering Committee of an AUC/COMESA project on youth participation in political governance processes and socio-economic Development funded by Swiss Development Cooperation.



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