

New COMESA HQs Project gets a Boost Saudi Arabia contributes \$2m towards the project

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Saudi Ambassador to Zambia H.E. Ali Saad Alkahtani, presents USD 2 million dummy cheque to COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe

Plans to construct a new headquarters of COMESA received a major boost after the government of Saudi Arabia donated two million dollars towards the project. Saudi Ambassador to Zambia H.E. Ali Saad Alkahtani, presented the cheque to COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe at the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka on Monday 24 July 2023.

Ms Kapwepwe described the contribution by Saudi as significant, as it puts COMESA a step closer to the beginning in earnest of the construction of the new headquarters.

"This donation is very opportune as we embark on a full-fledged resource mobilization effort to raise funding for the construction of the COMESA headquarters," she said.

The project is estimated to cost USD 35 million. Amb. Alkahtani, said the motivation to support the stems from the strong relations project that exist between the Kingdom and the COMESA bloc based

on mutual respect and joint action in all fields.

It also comes as an affirmation of the Kingdom's support for efforts being undertaken by COMESA to achieve its goals which include strengthening relations among the Member States, promoting trade, encouraging peace, stability and promoting economic development, he added.

The Saudi donation comes shortly after the 22nd COMESA Summit, in Lusaka, on 8 June 2023 which directed the Secretariat to work with the government of Zambia to hasten the implementation of the project. Zambia President Hakainde Hichilema, who is the current chair of COMESA, also undertook to oversee the construction of the new headquarters

as one of his priorities.

The decision to construct a new headquarters was made by the COMESA Heads of State and Government several years ago. In 2015, Zambia provided 10 acres of land for this project, near the main international airport.

Currently, COMESA Secretariat is based in downtown Lusaka in office premises procured in 1997. Over time, this facility has become constrained owing to the expansion of the organization in terms of the number of projects and staff complement.

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COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe (in brown outfit) and delegates touring the exhibition stands at the launch of the BIAWE Project in Nairobi

€20 million Regional Business Incubator Prog for Women Launched

The COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB) working with the Spanish Government and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) has launched the implementation of the second phase of the Business Incubators for African Women Entrepreneurs Project (BIAWE). Spanish Government will commit Euro 20 million towards the implementation of this project.

The BIAWE 2 project is designed to provide comprehensive support to women entrepreneurs, including business incubation services, mentorship, training, access to markets, and financial assistance. It represents a notable advancement in empowering African women entrepreneurs and promoting inclusive economic development.

Building upon the achievements of its precursor, BIAWE 1, the BIAWE 2 seeks to empower women entrepreneurs in Africa by equipping them with essential assistance and resources for business incubation and is now being replicated in Malawi, Zambia and Rwanda.

Speaking during the launch on 17 July 2023 at the Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI) in Nairobi, COMESA Secretary General Ms. Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe highlighted the importance of addressing the

challenges women entrepreneurs encounter in the region.

"Women entrepreneurs still face significant challenges due to a lack of business planning, marketing and management skills. This is compounded by limited access to financial services so this second phase of the BIAWE project has come at the right time," she noted.

She added that the BIAWE project through its first phase supported women entrepreneurs in producing high value products which are certified by authorities such as the Kenya Bureau of Standards. However, more still needs to be done to help the women.

AUDA-NEPAD Director of Technical Cooperation and Programme Funding Mr Symerre Gray-Johnson emphasized the importance of investing in women

entrepreneurs as they can have a profound impact on local communities.

He underlined AUDA-NEPAD's commitment to equip women with resources, tools, and opportunities that will enable them to unleash their entrepreneurial potential and achieve success. The agency collaborates with international financial institutions, UN agencies, and Africa's development partners to support the continent's development efforts. In his statement, the Head of Mission at the Embassy of Spain to Kenya Amb. Alba Espino Gomez said her government is committed to supporting the BIAWE project and will disburse Five million Euros this year, 2023 for project implementation.

During the event, a sanitary pad making machine which was procured by the project for KIRDI was launched.

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Participants at the 13th Meeting of the Committee on Trade in Services in Mombasa, Kenya

Unlocking the Potential of Trade in Services

in Accelerating Intra-Africa Trade and Regional Integration

The service sector has emerged as the driving force towards reshaping economic landscapes across the world. With 54 African countries, 1.3 billion people, and \$3.4 trillion in GDP, it's time to leverage significant opportunities for export-led growth, economic diversification, inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI) and integration into regional and global value chains.

To this end, the ongoing negotiations on Trade in Services liberalization programme at the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA, African Free Continental Trade Area (AfCFTA) and World Trade Organization levels are a key step towards accelerating regional economic integration.

At the Thirteenth COMESA Meeting of the Committee on Trade in Services, that took place on 24 – 28 July 2023 in Mombasa, Kenya, COMESA Director of Trade and Customs, Dr Christopher Onyango, remarked that trade in services is a game changer towards unlocking the potential of regional and global trade. He underscored the relevance of undertaking inventories of legislation, regulations, institutions, and policy measures in the service sector as well as analysis of the participation of foreign service providers and trade liberalization commitments.

The service trade has been proven to promote

greater inclusiveness, particularly for female and young workers and entrepreneurs as well as micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The importance of the sector has been fuelled by technological changes and its increasing role as intermediate inputs into production and delivery of other goods and services.

The meeting was directed towards finalisation of the schedules for priority services, review of initial offers from member states and consideration of the draft procedures for the implementation of article 25(5) of the COMESA regulations on Trade in Services.

Dr. Onyango stated that the introduction of an online platform to facilitate ongoing negotiations will assist in addressing obstacles to trade in services and reaping the potential benefits its liberalization offers. Afreximbank has been supporting the establishment of the online platform to facilitate these negotiations.

"We hope the capacity building to be provided by the Bank enables Member States to fully utilise the platform during the negotiations to develop well informed and analytical decisions both under COMESA, continental and WTO negotiations," he said.

Recent studies by the COMESA Secretariat have established important roles being played by small-scale cross-border traders in various service sectors. These are consistent with studies by WTO and World Bank (2022) which established that 59 per cent of service women worked in the services sector and nine out of 10 service firms were MSMEs in 2021.

Dr Onyango appreciated the cooperating partners; the European Union, AFREXIM Bank, WTO, WTI and the World Bank for their support. Over 17 COMESA countries, including Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Burundi, Uganda, Zambia, Egypt, Kenya, Comoros, Tunisia, Zimbabwe, DRC Congo, Madagascar, Libya, Eswatini, Seychelles and Djibouti participated.

"We hope the capacity building to be provided by the Bank enables Member States to fully utilise the platform during the negotiations to develop well informed and analytical decisions both under COMESA, continental and WTO negotiations," Dr Christopher Onyango



File: Picture COMESA Meeting of Ministers of Gender

Tracking Progress in Implementing Gender and Social Affairs Programmes

The COMESA region has made progress in advancing gender equality and women empowerment including measures to support women and girls to rebuild after the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Acting Secretary General Dr Dev Haman says the COMESA Secretariat and Member States have over the period April 2021 – June 2023 implemented Council Decisions and other initiatives to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in the region.

He was speaking during the opening of the 14th Meeting of the COMESA Technical Committee on Gender and Women's Affairs held virtually on 24 July 2023.

He said the Secretariat developed the COMESA gender management system and gender-based violence in the workplace policy and organized training on gender and gender statistics for the Gender Technical Working group. This was conducted to strengthen gender mainstreaming in the different divisions and COMESA institutions.

On dissemination and sensitization of stakeholders on the COMESA gender policy and guidelines, the Secretariat undertook missions to Member States to conduct workshops to promote the policy, implementation plan, gender planning guidelines, checklists and indicators.

"These meetings increased the engagement of stakeholders including CSOs, private sector, parliamentarians and public officials at Member States level," Dr Haman said.

He emphasized on the need for the availability of gender statistics to support gender responsive planning. So far, the Secretariat has undertaken capacity building for professionals in Djibouti, Malawi and Zambia.

The importance of timely data collection was underscored during these missions and Member States got the opportunity to highlight the challenges faced in collecting statistics.

Progress has also been recorded in the culture and creative industries where the Secretariat has won a grant in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission to develop cultural and creative industries in the East Africa region through the European Union sub-grant from HEVA (finance, business support and knowledge facility for creative industries) and the British Council in Kenya.

Partnerships

COMESA's partnerships and networking efforts became more vibrant in this period as evidenced by close collaboration with organisations such as the African Union, International Labour Organisation (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM) among others. All these were part of efforts to promote the participation of women in trade and the regional economy, leadership and in decision-making.

The report from the 14th Meeting will be presented to the Ministerial Meeting on gender and Women's Affairs set for 3rd August 2023.

COMESA Trains Central Banks Experts in Banking Interconnectedness

COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) conducted a training for member Central banks' experts on "Analysis of Payments System, Banking Interconnectedness and Systemic Risk using Network Analysis framework", in Nairobi, Kenya, from 17th to 21st July 2023.

Greater interconnectedness among banks means that stress from one bank tends to spread more rapidly and extensively across the financial system, leading to reduced provision of financial services such as lending to the real economy.

The training was therefore meant to familiarize Member States with banking system interconnectedness, i.e., a relationship which is created among banks through financial transactions, such as borrowing and lending from each other, linkages in their payments system and exposure to a common economic sector, among others and systemic risk using COMESA money market data.

The workshop attracted 20 delegates from 10 Central Banks of COMESA Member States namely: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Comoros, Eritrea, Kenya, Libya, Mauritius, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Participants were also exposed to a step-by-step approach in the deployment of Net Work Framework to the assessment and analysis of banking and payments system interconnectedness.

According to CMI's Director, Dr. Lucas Njoroge, the motivation for the training was the concern that financial institutions have expanded regionally, upscaling cross-border transactions and in turn creating regional interlinkages. Hence the training will enhance the implementation of the COMESA Financial System Development and Stability Plan as it adds to the suite of analytical tools that COMESA member countries can use to inform data-driven policy.



COMFWB Conducts RECAMP Training in Zambia



Participants at the COMFWB RECAMP training in Lusaka

The COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB) conducted a five-day training, 24 – 28 July 2023 for women entrepreneurs in Zambia to equip them with skills in marketing, branding and business management.

The training was conducted in Lusaka, under the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP), a COMESA project funded by the European Union.

The objective of the training was to increase private sector participation in sustainable regional and global value chains. Participants were drawn from micro, small and medium-sized enterprises involved in agri-business from Lusaka province and the surrounding areas.

Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Mrs Lillian Bwalya, who addressed the meeting said Zambian government appreciated working with cooperating partners in strengthening the capacity of the local enterprises

and improving the country's competitiveness. Hence, Mrs Bwalya said her government is reviewing laws to strengthen intellectual property rights enforcement to encourage and protect innovation and creativity as well as development of the National e-Commerce Strategy.

"I am aware that the COMESA Treaty recognises the importance of women as a vital economic link within the chain of agriculture, industry and trade and, therefore, this programme you are undertaking will contribute to the attainment of the COMESA Treaty provisions on private sector development," the PS said.

COMFWB Board Chairperson Ms Maureen Sumbwe urged women entrepreneurs to embrace the digital technology to fit in the national as well as regional markets.

She said: "Business trends are now moving into the digital space and therefore the need for all players to utilize the technology for purposes of advertising and

marketing products, procurement of raw materials including payment systems."

"Some of the challenges hampering the private sector include poor production capacity and technology, limited access to end-markets and trade, poor value chain finance, and weak enabling business environment amongst many others."

COMFWB Acting Chief Executive Officer, Mr Chikakula Miti said the RECAMP project is providing technical assistance and advisory services for SMEs with the aim of improving business management performance and coordination among SMEs and other value chain players. Specifically, the focus of the advisory services is to overcome preidentified barriers to internationalization and value-addition in the targeted value chains.

"This training is aimed at ensuring that entrepreneurs are better prepared to turn business ideas into successful new ventures that have a greater-than - average chance of success," he said.

COMESA DIARY

Date	Activity/Event	Venue/ Format
03 August 2023	Ministerial Meeting on Gender and Women's Affairs	Virtual
04 – 16 August 2023	Rwanda International Trade Fair	Kigali, Rwanda
14 - 15 August 2023	First Joint Meeting for Chiefs of Immigration and Commissioners of Labour	Livingstone, Zambia
16 – 18 August 2023	Africa Trade and Customs Week	Kigali, Rwanda
17 August 2023	COMESA Migration Dialogue	Livingstone, Zambia
18th August 2023	Jointing Meeting of COMESA Ministers Responsible for Immigration & Ministers of Labour	Livingstone, Zambia
17 – 28 August 2023	Joint AU-COMESA Election Observers' Mission	Zimbabwe

Ethiopian Law Enforcement Agencies Trained on Tackling Financial Crimes

COMESA has conducted a five-day training of Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) in Ethiopia, on Financial Investigations and Asset Recovery (FIAR). The training is intended to build the capacity of LEAs to address the menace of transnational organised crime.

Director-General of the Ethiopian Financial Intelligence Service Mr. Muluken Amare, who opened the workshop on 24 July 2023, appreciated COMESA Secretariat for organising the training which he said came at an opportune time when Ethiopia is currently strengthening its AML/ CFT laws.

Early Warning Expert at COMESA Secretariat Mr Raymond Kitevu said this activity follows the Decision of the 18th Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Lusaka, Zambia in June 2023. In this meeting, the Ministers stressed the importance of strengthening Anti-Money Laundering (AML)/Countering Financing of Terrorism (CFT) regimes in the region to ensure existing gaps in support to Member States are covered.

"This Decision was informed by research findings that identified LEAs as generally the weakest link in the recovery of the proceeds of crime," Mr Kitevu said. Hence the training was tailored to address the ever-changing trends in financial crimes and other predicate crimes which are further complicated by structural vulnerabilities in Member States.

This is being done through the drafting of a new law called the Prevention and Suppression of Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism Draft Proclamation.

In addition, the training will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of Ethiopian LEAs in investigations and the forfeiture of proceeds of crime, including enhancing internal cooperation among the different law enforcement entities represented.

Officials from various government ministries, departments and agencies, including the ministry of justice, the police as well as the Ethiopian Financial Intelligence Service participated.

COMESA Taskforce in Madagascar to Follow-up Implementation of the Visa and Free Movement Protocols

The COMESA Taskforce that is following up progress on the implementation of legal instruments and Council of Ministers' Decisions by Member States was in Madagascar on 25 – 28 July 2023 to track progress.

The team specifically focused on the ratification and implementation of the Protocol on the Gradual Relaxation and Eventual Elimination of Visas (Visa Protocol) and the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Service, Labour and the Right of Establishment and Residence (Free Movement Protocol).

This is part of the Taskforce's mandate to build capacity in Member States on the Free Movement of Persons and the Implementation of Legal Instruments and Council of Ministers Decisions. Meetings were conducted with officials of the ministries of foreign affairs, interior, labour, employment, public services and social legislation. Other meetings were conducted with officials from the public security industrialisation, trade and consumption and the National Assembly and Senate. Madagascar is the 11th COMESA Member State to hold bilateral talks with members of the Task Force.

The Taskforce will present a report on the findings of their missions to the Joint Meeting of Ministers of Migration and Labour which is scheduled to take place on 14th – 18th August in Livingstone, Zambia.

The Taskforce was established through the decision of the 4th Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Immigration held on 17th March 2011 in Lusaka, Zambia. Its objective is to, inter alia, build capacity of Member States in readiness for rolling out of the COMESA Free Movement agenda, as well as developing a roadmap on the implementation of the Protocol on the Movement of Persons, Labour, Services, Right of Establishment and Right of Residence.



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Online- Course on Laboratory Quality Systems

Applications are now open for the Online Course on Laboratory Quality Systems being offered by Texas A&M University (TAMU). The course will run from **11 September – 17 November 2023**. Interested candidates have until 18 August 2023 to submit their applications.

The course is being offered free of charge under a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and Texas A&M AgriLife Research.

Eligibility

Interested Candidates must have a Bachelor's degree (BSc) in Animal Science/ Biochemistry/Food Science or related field. It is essential that all candidates are employed and responsible for the laboratory operation and analysis.

Successful candidates will be informed of their selection on or before **01 September 2023**. The application should include a one page motivation letter which should be emailed to Dr Mukayi Musarurwa on MMusarurwa@comesa.int. Details available on:- <https://www.comesa.int/on-line-course-on-laboratory-quality-systems/>



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



+260 211 229 725



www.comesa.int



info@comesa.int



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