

Fresh Thrust Towards Free Movement in the COMESA Region as Immigration, Labour Ministers Meet



Immigration and labour ministerial meeting in Livingstone, Zambia

Ministers responsible for immigration and labour matters in COMESA have renewed their countries commitment to the implementation of the regional protocols on free movement as a critical step towards unlocking the benefits associated with having free movement of factors of production in the region.

In their meeting conducted on 18 August 2023, in Livingstone, Zambia, the ministers welcomed the initiative to revise the strategy for the implementation of COMESA Protocol on the Gradual Relaxation and Eventual Elimination of Visa, and the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Labour, Services, Right of Establishment and Residence.

The two protocols have been in existence for a long time but have not yet attained the required ratifications by Member States to enable full implementation. Hence the Ministers adopted the immigration and labour experts' recommendations

to have a strong component on capacity building for migration stakeholders in the implementation of the Protocols as well as the past Decisions of the COMESA Council of Ministers relating to migration.

The ministerial meeting was preceded by the joint meeting of heads of immigration and labour and the COMESA Migration Dialogue (MIDCOM) hosted jointly with the International Organization for Migration with the support of the European Union.

Addressing the ministers, COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe said there

cannot be meaningful integration of the region and the attainment of the aims and objectives of COMESA without the facilitation of seamless movement of goods, services and investment across the region.

"Trade is on-going in goods, provision of services, investment, tangibles and intangibles. However, for the goods, services and investment to move across borders, there is need for a human interface between them to facilitate an effective delivery of those goods and services," the Secretary General said.

Continued to page 3

Trade is on-going in goods, provision of services, investment, tangibles and intangibles. However, for the goods, services and investment to move across borders, there is need for a human interface between them to facilitate an effective delivery of those goods and services," Secretary General



COMESA Ministers of Gender Meet to Review Progress

The 12th Meeting of the COMESA Ministers Responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs was held on 3 August 2023 as the region took stock of the progress it has made in advancing gender equality, empowerment of women and girls, as well as social and cultural development. The meeting, which was being held for the first time since 2021, was virtual.

It was organized to allow the ministers to consider and adopt the Report of the 14th Meeting of the COMESA Technical Committee on Gender and Women's Affairs held 24-25 July, also virtually. COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe delivered the opening remarks at the meeting, noting that the COVID pandemic had made the region much more aware of how unforeseen calamities can have a disproportionate impact on women compared to men, or girls compared to boys.

"The pandemic pushed more women out of employment because they dominate the services sector which were shut down to prevent the spread of COVID. Moreover, according to a 2021 survey by the International Labour Organization, only 43.2 per cent of the world's working-age women were likely to be employed post-COVID, compared to 68.6 per cent of working-age men. Women were also more likely to lose their jobs permanently compared to men," she said.

She added that in the event of disasters and

epidemics, such inequalities get reinforced and amplified. "This should not be accepted as normal, and I am in no doubt that you are all already seized of the need to move with speed to make our region more equal, and a place where everyone be it male or female is respected, protected and afforded the social and economic opportunities to be able to realize their full potential."

The Secretary General also informed the ministers about COMESA's collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission to promote the cultural and creative industries in the East African region through a grant secured from HEVA Fund and the British Council in January this year. The aim of the project is to strengthen policy framework on cultural and creatives industries, which contribute significantly to the socio-economic development of the region through tourism and art.

She made a case for continued empowerment of women, highlighting various initiatives undertaken by the COMESA Federation of Women in Business

(COMFWB) as well as the 50 Million African Women Speak digital platform for women in business which continues to grow.

"If women are equipped with the necessary resources, skills and opportunities to start stronger businesses, and pursue the growth potential of these enterprises, this would contribute significantly to poverty reduction, wealth creation and employment generation, and improved well-being for millions of the citizens of our region," the Secretary General affirmed.

Ministers in attendance commended the progress made on advancing gender equality and lauded the Secretariat for its good work in supporting various gender-related activities in the Member States, including the training provided to enhance capacity to collect gender-sensitive statistics. In the same meeting, the Member States which are yet to ratify the Social Charter were urged to do so.



COVID 19 pushed more women out of employment because they dominate the services sector which were shut down to prevent the spread of the pandemic.



ILO Director Mr Wellington Chibembe (L) meets Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe during the presentation of his letter of accreditation.

New regional ILO Chief accredited as Special Rep to COMESA

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has appointed the Director in-charge of Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique as the Special Representative to COMESA. Mr Wellington Chibembe presented his Letter of Credence to Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe at the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka, Friday 11 August 2023.

Receiving the credentials, Ms Kapwepwe said the two organizations have enjoyed cordial relations for many years and was growing.

For example, the two are working together in the Southern African Migration Management (SAMM) project, which is promoting effective migration management and governance. ILO has also provided technical support to promote the implementation of the COMESA Treaty, COMESA Protocols and Decisions of the COMESA Council of Ministers and Ministers Responsible for Immigration under the COMESA Free Movement of Person programme.

"ILO is an all-weather friend of COMESA. We have continued to collaborate in many programmes and project that benefit the people of COMESA. We look forward to

formalizing this collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding," Ms Kapwepwe said.

Other areas that the two organizations have collaborated include the development of the COMESA Labour Migration Statistics Report.

The COMESA Secretariat, through its gender and legal departments, is also working with ILO on the study on skills recognition under the Joint Labour Migration programme.

On his part, Mr Chibembe said ILO has the capacity to continue providing support to COMESA through technical assistance to strengthen the implementation of COMESA protocols on Migration and ILO conventions. This can be extended to the promotion of the signatures and ratifications of the COMESA Free Movement Protocol as well as the migration-related ILO conventions that some COMESA Member States have not yet signed or ratified.

Fresh Thrust Towards Free Movement...

Continued from page 1

Currently, intra-COMESA trade potential is valued of over US\$100 billion which could be unlocked through enhanced movement of goods and services across the region.

Making a case for enhanced cross border trade, the Regional Director of the International Organization for Migration, Mr. Ashraf el Nour called for facilitation of the safe, orderly and regular movement of small-scale cross border traders who constitute the largest segment of regional trade. Particularly, he called for ending the informality associated with cross-border trading.

"We don't call for 100% regularisation because that may bring the risk of losing the flexibility that is needed for such trade to grow, to blossom and to expand. So, we need to strike the right balance between ending the informality and bringing some interdisciplinary support to such movement," said Mr Nour.

The Chief Guest at the ministerial meeting Hon. Cornelius Mweetwa, Provincial Minister for Southern Province, Zambia called for more public awareness about the regional initiatives on migration including the protocols on free movement.

"As we implement programmes to facilitate the movement of persons across our borders for development, let us make sure that we also carry our people with us on board," Hon Mweetwa said. "That is the only way we shall be able to address negative perceptions of migration."

At the meeting, the First Report on Labour Migration Statistics in the COMESA region and the COMESA Regional Migration Database were launched. The report covers data for the decade 2010 to 2019 and contains the results on both the regional (COMESA) and the national levels. The Database and the report are available on www.comesa.int



Mission Leaders with the over eighty observers ready to be deployed ahead of the 23rd August harmonised election.

AU-COMESA launch joint election observer mission to Zimbabwe

Once again, the African Union and COMESA have launched a joint Elections Observer Mission (EOM) to the 23 August 2023 harmonized elections in Zimbabwe. The arrival of the Mission was announced on Sunday, 20 August 2023. The AU-COMESA EOM follows the invitation by the Government of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. Subsequently, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, approved the deployment of the joint short-term AU-COMESA EOM to assess and report on the conduct of this election.

The joint EOM is led by H.E. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in collaboration with Rt. Hon. Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda and Member of the COMESA Committee of Elders. It is comprised of 86 Short Term Observers (STOs) that includes Ambassadors accredited to the African Union, Officials of Election Management Bodies, members of African civil society organisations, African election experts, Human Rights specialists, gender and media experts, and representatives of youth organizations.

The observers are drawn from 23 countries including Benin, Botswana, Central African Republic, Djibouti, Liberia, Libya, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia. Observers will be

deployed to all 10 Provinces and 16 electoral districts in Zimbabwe.

The EOM will base its assessment on the legal framework governing elections in the Republic of Zimbabwe and the OAU/AU Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections, the standards and obligations stipulated in the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, the Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation (PEMMO), COMESA Elections Observation Guidelines and the International Declaration of Principles (DoP) for International Election Observation among others. The assessment will be based on the electoral process's regularity, transparency, equity, and fair conduct.

The Mission shall interact with state authorities, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission political parties, the media, civil society organisations and representatives of the international community. The Mission will equally interact with other election observation missions deployed to observe the 2023 Harmonized Elections in Zimbabwe.

The Mission will release a Preliminary Statement of its overall findings and assessment of the conduct of elections on 25 August 2023 in a Press Conference in Harare, Zimbabwe. A final and comprehensive Report will be released within two months from the date of announcement of final election results and will be posted on the AU Commission and COMESA websites.



H.E. Goodluck Jonathan with COMESA Secretary General Madam Chileshe Kapwepwe after the meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Harare.



COMESA Labour Migration Statistics Report launched



COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe (R) and Zambia Minister for Labour and Social Security Hon. Brenda Mwika Tambatamba launches the COMESA Labour Migration Statistics Report with Labour Minister Hon Florence Bore, (Kenya) and Home Affairs Minister Hon. Kenneth Zikhale Ng'oma (Malawi).

The first report on labour migration statistics in the COMESA region has been launched. The launch was conducted at the Joint Meeting of Ministers responsible for immigration and labour held in Livingstone, Zambia, Friday 18 August 2023.

The report covers data for the decade 2010 to 2019 which was collected under the AU–ILO–IOM–UNECA Joint Programme on Labour Migration Governance for Development and Integration in Africa. The report contains the results on both the regional (COMESA) and the national levels.

Key findings of the report include the steady rise of the total population within COMESA from 488 million in 2010 to 567 million in 2019 representing an annual growth rate of 2.7 per cent. There were 223.8 million males and 224.6 million females in 2010, compared to 2019 where males were 283.6 million and females 283.9 million. The working-age population in the region was estimated at 338.4 million in 2019, which implies an increase of 27.2 per cent since 2010. The female working-age population grew by around 26.7 per cent over the period, while the corresponding growth rate for men was 27.7 per cent.

During the period, male labour force, which

refers to all persons of working age, accounted for 57.4 per cent of the total labour force with females at 42.3 per cent.

"This suggests that greater efforts need to be invested into the development of policies and strategies aimed at removing the obstacles that prevent women in Africa from entering the labour market," the report states.

Sudan, Rwanda and Zimbabwe recorded the highest labour force participation rates in COMESA region.

Regarding labour migration, the report notes a steady rise, as indicated by estimates of the international migrant population of the region, which increased from 5.7 million in 2010 to 9.6 million in 2019. The estimated number of working-age international migrants in COMESA region increased from 4.1 million in 2010 to 7.2 million in 2019.

The population of young international migrant workers in the region grew from 1.2m to 2m between 2010 and 2019 constituting about 38% of total international labour force migrant population.

The volume of remittances sent by international migrants within the COMESA region and by

those living and working outside COMESA increased from US\$ 20 billion to US\$ 39.6 billion from 2010 to 2019. The volume of remittances increased by 98 per cent under the period of review.

At the regional level, the report recommends the establishment of a system for regular reporting on migration statistics by Member States and for regular production of labour migration statistics based on administrative data sources. Facilitate the use of harmonized definitions and indicators relating to labour migration in each of the regions.

At the national level, it recommends the effective sharing of migration data which is aligned with international standards and definitions with COMESA. This is in addition to establishing mechanisms for the dissemination of labour migration data at the national level with relevant disaggregation.

Welcome to COMESA Amb. Dr. Mohamed Kadah



The new COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Amb. Dr. Mohamed Mansour Mohamed Kadah (left) is received by Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe when he reported to office on Monday 14 August 2023. Dr Kadah was appointed to the position during the 22nd COMESA Summit held on 8 June 2023 in Lusaka, Zambia.

COMESA region annual inflation rate at 28%

The year on year, inflation rate (annual percentage change) in the COMESA region as measured by the Harmonized Consumer Price Index (HCPI-COMESA) stood at 27.9% for the month of June 2023, down from 35.4% registered in May 2023. A year earlier, the rate was 142.9%.

Further, the month-on-month inflation rate in the COMESA region as measured by the same index stood at 3.5% for the month of June 2023, up from 0.7% registered in May 2023. On year ago, in June 2022, it was 9.6 %.

Go Well, Ambassador Jankowski



Ambassador Jacek Jankowski (centre left) with Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe (centre right). They are flanked by Assistant Secretaries General Dr Dev Haman (Administration and Finance) on the right and Amb. Dr. Mohamed Kadah (Programmes) on the left.

Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe hosted a farewell cocktail in honour of Ambassador Jacek Jankowski, whose tenure as the Head of the European Union Delegation to Zambia and Special Representative to COMESA has ended. The Secretary General appreciated Amb Jankowski for his role in deepening the development cooperation between the EU and COMESA.

The event was graced by Ambassadors and High Commissioners in Zambia who serve as Special Representatives to COMESA. Also in attendance were senior Government Officials representing the Government of Zambia, and COMESA staff. The European Union is the largest development partner to COMESA and contributes the largest external funding for the regional bloc's programmes.

HCPI-COMESA index comprises of twelve divisions of expenditure. They include food & non-alcoholic beverages; alcoholic beverages and tobacco; clothing and footwear; housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels; furnishings; household equipment and routine household maintenance; health; transport; communication; recreation and culture; education; restaurants and hotels; and miscellaneous goods and services. These divisions registered varied average price changes during the month of June 2023 compared with June 2022.

Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels registered the highest annual inflation rate of +131.3% whilst clothing and footwear division registered the least average price change of +7.4%).

On the Member States inflation rate performance, Seychelles recorded the least average change of -0.3% while Zimbabwe recorded the highest year-on-year inflation at +154.1% during the same period. Seventeen out of the 21 Member States participate and contribute to HCPI-COMESA.



Training of AU-COMESA Election observers underway in Harare

Zimbabwe Election: Mission leaders briefed, observers trained

Former Nigerian President and leader of the AU-COMESA Election Observer Mission to Zimbabwe, H.E Goodluck Jonathan and Rt Hon. Ruhakana Rugunda, former Prime Minister of Uganda who is a member of the COMESA Committee of Elders met the technical teams on Sunday 20 August 2023 in Harare for a briefing ahead of the elections on 23 August 2023. The African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Amb. Bankole Adeoye and the Head of Governance, Peace and Security in COMESA, Ms Elizabeth Mutunga briefed the two leaders.



Briefing of the Mission leaders

As part of the observation process, the observers went through a two-day orientation programme conducted by the AU and COMESA officials. This is the second AU-COMESA joint mission with the first being in Kenya's last year. The mission is among 18 invited foreign observers currently in Zimbabwe to observe presidential, parliamentary, and local government election.

Meanwhile, COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe has arrived in Zimbabwe for the elections observation activities.



L-R: COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe, Rt Hon Ruhakana Rugunda and H.E Goodluck Jonathan



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



+260 211 229 725



www.comesa.int



info@comesa.int



facebook.com/ComesaSecretariat/



[@twitter.com/comesa_lusaka](https://twitter.com/comesa_lusaka)