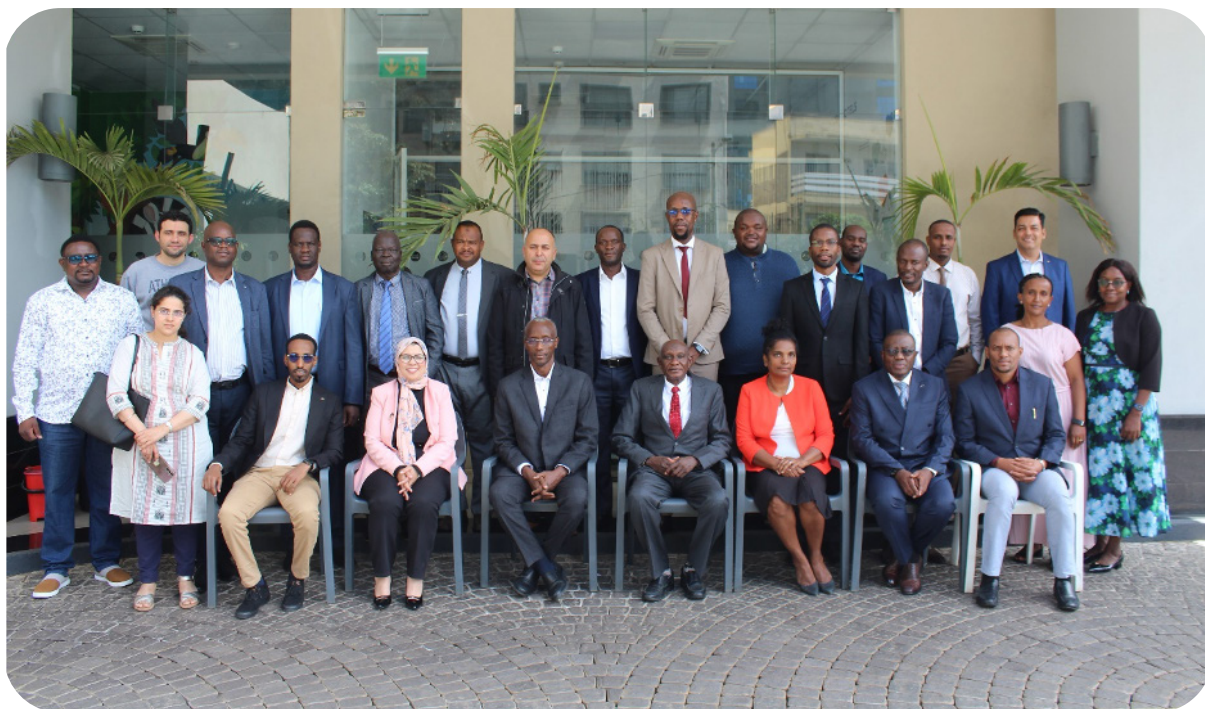


COMESA Leads Regional Energy Regulatory Harmonization for Enhanced Access and Trade



Regional information technology and energy experts at the inception workshops in Nairobi, Kenya

Harmonization of regional energy regulatory frameworks is now a priority for the regional economic communities as a critical step in improving reliable and affordable energy access.

Towards this goal, COMESA is leading the implementation of a \$1.5m African Development Bank (AfDB) funded Project on Regional Harmonization of Regulatory Frameworks and Tools for Improved Electricity Regulation in the COMESA region. The project aims to promote cross-border power trading by advancing intra-regional harmonization of electricity regulations in the region.

Two inception workshops for regional energy stakeholders were conducted back-to-back in Nairobi, Kenya, on 12 – 13 March and 14 – 15 March 2024, to develop strategies for harmonization of regulations and developing information management systems (IMS) for the sector.

The first brought together energy experts to evaluate the best approach towards developing regional harmonization of regulatory frameworks and tools for improved electricity regulation in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region. The second had information technology experts, working in the energy sector to discuss similar strategy for developing an IMS for the Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA). This would enable evidence-based decision-making crucial for the energy infrastructure development of the region.

A consultant that has been engaged to work on this initiative presented the draft inception reports for review, focusing on the proposed approach, methodology, and workplan. Inputs from the experts were incorporated into the plan to facilitate the consultant's finalization and submission of the final inception report. Thereafter, data collection from regional energy stakeholders will kick off.

The AfDB funded project has three components: Elaboration and Adoption of Regional Electricity Regulatory Principles (RERP), Regulatory and Utility Key Performance Indicators (UKPI) for COMESA; Harmonized Comparison of Electricity Tariffs (HCET) and Cost Reflectivity Assessment Framework Tool (CRAFT); and Development of an Information Management System for the COMESA Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA).

Participants were drawn from 13 regional states that are members of the RAERESA and the Energy Regulators for Eastern Africa (EREA), the regulatory arm of the East African Community States. Addressing the delegates, Chief Executive Officer of RAERESA, Dr Mohamedain Elnasr said that nearly half of the over 600 million people in the COMESA region lack reliable and affordable electricity.

"This disparity is stark with some countries like Egypt

Continued to page 3



Uganda's Minister of Works and Transport Gen. Edward Katumba Wamala (seated middle) with the delegates attending the SAATM workshop

Uganda set to join Single African Air Transport Market

So far, only fourteen countries out of 29 that belong to the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Community (IOC) have acceded to the Single African Air Transport Market, six years since it was launched. This has limited the potential economic growth and development of the region and greatly affected air connectivity within Africa as air travel costs remain prohibitive. To the contrary, many air transport markets outside Africa have been liberalised to a significant extent while most intra-African air transport markets remain largely closed.

This was communicated during a two-day national awareness workshop on the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) held in Kampala from 29 February to 1st March 2024. The objective of the workshop was to create awareness of the existence of SAATM and underscore its benefits to the people of Uganda,

In his statement during the workshop, Uganda's Minister of Works and Transport Gen. Edward Katumba Wamala acknowledged the importance of the SAATM and called for the establishment of enabling legal and institutional frameworks at the continental, regional and national levels in order to operationalise the market.

"Apart from proper infrastructure that will ensure safe, effective and efficient air transport

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Apart from proper infrastructure that will ensure safe, effective and efficient air transport systems, he said the region requires appropriate institutions, infrastructure and procedures," he added.

systems, he said the region requires appropriate institutions, infrastructure and procedures," he added.

He cited the experience during the Covid-19 outbreak, when international air cargo operations made it possible to maintain the much-needed supply chain operations and distribution of pharmaceutical products efficiently and within the shortest time possible.

As demonstrated during the COVID 19 pandemic, majority of States relaxed rules to permit smooth operations of air cargo services a move which underlined the importance of a vibrant air transport sector.

The Minister announced that Uganda through the Ministry of Works and Transport, jointly with the Uganda Civil Aviation Authority and the Uganda

National Airline are committed and optimistic about adopting the SAATM project and is now ready to present a cabinet paper on the benefits of SAATM to the national aviation industry.

In her address to the meeting, Secretary General of COMESA, Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe appreciated the support of the European Union for its contribution to the development of the air transport sector in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and the Indian ocean region.

"Air transport should be seen as a catalyst not only for tourism, but also for trade and industrialization," she said in the statement read by Chief of Strategic Planning Mr Simal Amor.

The SAATM is implemented under an eight million euros, four-year programme on the Support to Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) financed by the European Union under 11th European Development Fund. It covers four Regional Economic Communities (RECs): East Africa Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). COMESA is the lead REC.



COMESA Leads Regional Energy Regulatory harmonization..

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World Bank team, led by Dana Rysankova (2nd left) and Monali Ranade (L) received at the COMESA Secretariat by Director of Infrastructure and Logistics Dr Bernard Dzawanda (speaking) flanked by Director of Gender, Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde

Continued from page 1

boasting near universal access, while others hover around 11%. This situation impedes economic growth, social progress and poverty reduction efforts."

Ironically, Dr Elnasr noted, the region has abundantly diverse and underutilized natural resources, with solar and wind practically present regionwide with geothermal potential flourishing in countries like Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. Similarly, DR Congo, Ethiopia and Zambia leads in significant hydropower resources.

In his remarks, Senior Energy Economist at the AfDB Mr Solomon Sarpong emphasized the need for an integrated regional energy market, urging the stakeholders and the consultant to focus on practical frameworks.

"We want to have something that is implementable and has the stakeholders' buy-in. Let's get it right from the start," he stressed.

Senior Research and Policy Analyst at the Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority, Kenya, Mr Lee Okombe, said beyond the energy infrastructure deficiency, the region faced legal and data management challenges.

"We need to have legal and regulatory frameworks that are aligned to allow for export and import of energy to facilitate regional energy trade."

A conducive regulatory environment and robust energy utilities are expected to attract private players in the sector, foster competition and enhance access to energy.

The IT experts meeting was also addressed by Mr. Callixte KAMBANDA, AfDB Manager for Policy, Regulation, and Statistics and Mr. Alan Gathuru, ICT Manager, Energy, and Petroleum Regulatory Authority of Kenya (EPRA).

COMESA and World Bank Collaborate to Accelerate Sustainable Energy Access in Eastern and Southern Africa

A landmark 5-day Implementation Support Mission for the "Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation (ASCENT)" program, jointly spearheaded by the COMESA and the World Bank, took place in Lusaka, Zambia, from 11 – 15 March 2024. This collaborative endeavor represents a significant stride towards enhancing energy access throughout the region.

Welcoming the World Bank team, led by Dana Rysankova and Monali Ranade, was Dr. Bernard Dzawanda, COMESA's Director of Infrastructure. The reception marked the convergence of expertise and resources, reflecting a shared dedication to driving sustainable development through improved energy accessibility.

ASCENT aims to enhance health and reduce time spent on cooking chores by providing access to clean energy sources, thereby improving overall well-being and alleviating the burden of domestic responsibilities, particularly on women. Additionally, the

program endeavors to bolster the resilience of essential services by electrifying schools and health clinics, ensuring vital services remain accessible, even during times of crisis.

Critically, the ASCENT program prioritizes gender equality by acknowledging the disproportionate impact of energy poverty on women. Through targeted interventions, ASCENT seeks to empower women, recognizing them as catalysts for socio-economic progress.

The collaborative efforts between COMESA and the World Bank underscore a shared vision for a sustainable and inclusive energy future in Eastern and Southern Africa. Through the leveraging of expertise and resources, the ASCENT program is poised to catalyze transformative change, unlocking new opportunities, and improving the lives of millions across the region.



COMESA staff takes part in the International Womens Day march in Lusaka, City

International Women's' Day: Celebrating Women's Achievements

COMESA joined the rest of the world in marking the International Women's Day with the Chief Executive and the staff participating in the events in different ways. The Secretariat staff took part in a march-past in Lusaka city to commemorate the Day on 8 March 2024.

The day's theme and activities resonated with COMESA's programmes on gender equality and women's economic empowerment, as enshrined in the COMESA Treaty, and articulated through the various Charters, policies and strategies.

In her statement, Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe underlined the region's collective commitment to inspire inclusion and celebrate the remarkable strides made by women across the Common Market for Eastern and Southern African region.

"Our goal is not only to grow together, but to prosper as a unified and inclusive community, where women play an integral role to ensure peace and sustainability," she said.

The Secretary General also graced the Lusaka Indian Ladies Association to mark International Women's Day, which highlighted the invaluable contributions of women, touching upon their remarkable impact across social, political, and economic spheres.



SG addressing Lusaka Indian Ladies Association event on 14 March 2024





Malawi Minister of Trade and Industry, Honorable Sosten Gwengwe (centre seated)/ flanked by Trade Secretary, Ms Christina Zakeyo (4th left seated) with participants to the Media Sensitization workshop in Lilongwe

Malawi Media Enlisted in COMESA Regional Integration Programs

In an initiative to demonstrate the impact and benefits of COMESA led programmes in Member States, Malawi hosted a media sensitization workshop on 7 – 8 March 2024 in Lilongwe, organised by the COMESA Secretariat in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MIT).

Attended by over 35 media practitioners in the public and private sector, the forum provided a unique platform for participants to engage directly with the COMESA Secretariat and MIT staff on various projects that have been implemented in the country.

The goal was to equip local media practitioners with in-depth knowledge about COMESA's regional integration programs, and thereby enhance public awareness through accurate and consistent reporting on the subject.

Malawi Minister of Trade and Industry, Hon. Sosten Gwengwe who opened the workshop set the pace by citing five projects which he described as having immensely benefitted Malawi. They include: Capacity building trainings for cross border traders on Simplified Trade Regime; Upgrading of the Mchinji-Mwami One Stop Border Post (OSBP), Development of the COMESA Electronic Certificate of Origin legal framework and training of Malawi Revenue Authority officers; Establishment of a Leather Design Studio (LDS) in Blantyre; and procurement of sewing machines for Blantyre textiles cooperative.

The minister described the media workshop unique as it presented a rare opportunity for COMESA and his Ministry to bring together media practitioners

to not only have a round table discussion on COMESA's regional integration matters and success stories registered in Malawi' but also to offer them an opportunity to ask questions and receive the necessary feedback from the experts.

"We need a Media that better understands the COMESA regional integration configuration under which Malawi and other state parties operate if you are to effectively disseminate information on regional and national development agenda to the general public," the Minister said adding: "it goes without saying that well-informed journalists also make well-informed citizens."

At the same event, Secretary for Trade and Industry Ms Christina Zakeyo underscored the importance of a vibrant media in the country to communicate the various programmes and projects that COMESA is implementing. She said this would enable the

citizenry to appreciate the contribution of COMESA in economic development of the Member States.

"As a Ministry we are delighted to be part of the workshop because it aligns with our mandate as a ministry of disseminating information about COMESA's regional integration programmes," Ms Zakeyo added.

The media was taken through various programmes by COMESA experts covering trade facilitation and liberalization, investments, agriculture, gender, social affairs. Experts from the coordinating ministry provided profiles of COMESA-led projects in the country and their impacts.

A visit to the ultramodern Mchinji/Mwami One Stop Border Post (OSBP), was conducted for the media to demonstrate the impact of the COMESA-led regional integration programmes, to learn about the concept the how it facilitates regional trade.



Media visit to the Mchinji/Mwami OSBP



COMESA, EU, Government officials and local leaders participated in the ground breaking ceremony for the construction of the border market. Inset: COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Dr Mohamed Kadhah

Construction of a €920,000 Border Market Kicks-off in Zambia

COMESA with support from the 11th European Development Fund has launched the construction of a Euro 920,544 modern border market in Chipata district, Zambia. This was conducted during a ground-breaking ceremony on 15 March 2024.

The project will promote small scale cross-border trade between Zambia and Malawi with plans for construction of a similar market at Mchinji border on the Malawi side underway. This will be implemented in collaborating with the Government of Malawi. Once completed the two markets will bolster cross-border trade between the two countries and beyond and increase activities at the Mwami/Mchinji One Stop Border Post.

The border markets are part of the Small-Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative (SSCBTI), being implemented by COMESA Secretariat through a Euros 15 million funded by the European Union.

Speaking at the launch, COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Dr Mohamed Kadhah said the project will enable cross-border traders to benefit from the Simplified Trade Regime and enjoy the ease of doing business.

"The construction of this market transcends the new physical infrastructure to impact the economy of the region," said Dr Kadhah. "It will create more business opportunities, lower trade costs, encourage cultural exchange, improve health and hygienic conditions, encourage better control and management of trade and enhance revenue generation by the regional government."

Under the SSCBTI programme, four Zambian

borders namely, Chirundu, Nakonde, Mwami and Kasumbalesa are benefitting and once these projects are completed, formal small-scale cross-border trade flows will flourish in the Tripartite COMESA, Southern African Development Community and East African Community region.

This will lead to higher revenue collection for governments at the borders and better incomes for small-scale cross-border traders. Other benefits will include enhanced small-scale cross-border trade flows between targeted countries through effective policy and governance reforms, institutional capacity building, improved border infrastructures and better data collection and monitoring.

The launch at Chipata was attended by European Union represented by Ms. Christiane Haziyo who encouraged the Government of Zambia and the Cross-Border Associations to take ownership and oversee the project to completion.

Mrs. Nalituba Mwale, Director Human Resource and Administration in the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, represented the Government of Zambia on behalf of the Permanent Secretary Mrs. Lillian S. Bwalya.

Local and traditional leaders attended the ceremony.



Royal Highness Chief Madzumawe, Acting Permanent Secretary Eastern Province, Ms Princess Beauty Mwale and Mrs. Nalituba Mwale, Director Human Resource and Administration in the Ministry of Commerce cutting the ribbon.



Participants in the training in Chingola, Zambia

Mitigating Violent Extremism through Cross Country Collaboration

On 20 – 23 February 2024, a pivotal four-day training session was convened in Chingola, Zambia, where over 40 local community leaders from Somalia and Zambia were equipped with knowledge and skills to prevent and counter violent extremism.

Spearheaded by COMESA, in collaboration with Save the Children, Horn of Africa Youth Network, and Agents of Peace, this initiative responded to the escalating threats of violent extremism in Africa, particularly in the COMESA region.

While Zambia and Somalia have diverse historical trajectories, both nations grapple with characteristics of violent extremism and external influences affecting local communities. The training sought to address these challenges with a targeted focus on women leaders, child protection organisations, religious leaders, local police, and youth community leaders.

The training's rationale emerged from the 18th Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs in June 2023, underscoring the need for an integrated approach to address the root causes of conflict, including violent extremism. Its overarching goal was to mobilize and enhance the contributions of local communities in preventing and countering violent extremism.

Covering a spectrum of topics such as Countering

Violent Extremism (CVE) 101, youth engagement in politics, and fostering community participation. The comprehensive program also delved into topics like gender-sensitive approaches to CVE, and community-led CVE initiatives. The training objectives extended beyond enhancing understanding to building capacities, sharing experiences, and fostering collaboration among community leaders.

The engagement with the Somali group focused on reducing radicalization among youth through short-term community outreach programs, medium-term initiatives like media literacy training and psycho-social support, and long-term efforts including political leadership and equal representation in governance. Additionally, promoting gender equality and empowerment among women and girls was highlighted, emphasizing capacity building and transparent communication between organizations and authorities. Incorporating perspectives of traditionally underserved demographics, such as women and youth, in land management initiatives was underscored. Strategies included translating materials into local dialects, engaging youth ambassadors, and using special days for discussions.

Concurrently, the impact of mining on communities emerged as a parallel discussion during the training from the Zambian participants. Identifying

effects such as an increase in gangs and pollution. Mitigation strategies were explored, including awareness programs and regular engagement with authorities.

A cross-country collaboration was encouraged between Zambia and Somalia, emphasizing sharing knowledge between security ministries, government dialogues, youth exchanges, student exchanges, and cross-cultural events.

The training marked a crucial step in empowering local communities from Zambia and Somalia to actively participate in preventing and countering violent extremism, fostering collaboration, and contributing to sustainable development in their respective countries. The exchange of ideas and collaborative efforts laid the foundation for future initiatives and strengthened diplomatic ties between the two geographically distant but interconnected countries.

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“While Zambia and Somalia have diverse historical trajectories, both nations grapple with characteristics of violent extremism and external influences affecting local communities”



COMESA Monetary Programme: Building Regional Banks' Capacity in Fiscal Management

The COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) is building the capacity of the regional apex banks to undertake reform measures to improve regulation, supervision, and risk management.

Central banks from eight COMESA Member States, namely Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Madagascar, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe are the latest beneficiaries of this initiative.

At least 19 staff of these banks participated in a comprehensive training program focusing on the "Implementation of Basel III Standards, 2017 Post Crisis Reforms, and Application of IFRS 9".

Basel III refers to a set of reform measures intended to improve regulation, supervision, and risk management in the international banking sector while IFRS 9 specifies how an entity should classify and measure financial assets, financial liabilities, and some contracts to buy or sell non-financial items.

Held from March 4th to 8th, 2024, in Nairobi, Kenya, the training aimed at bolstering understanding and application of critical regulatory frameworks within the COMESA region. It addressed the pressing need for enhanced adoption of Basel III standards across member jurisdictions.

With a renewed commitment to implementing

international best practices, the training serves as a catalyst for advancing regulatory harmonization and fostering a resilient financial ecosystem within the COMESA region.

Addressing the delegates, Director of the CMI, Dr. Lucas Njoroge underscored the significance of the training in fortifying knowledge on Basel III standards and post-crisis reforms, aiming to reinforce supervisory policies and ensure financial system stability.

Participants benefitted from the training outcomes, including comprehensive understanding of Basel III Standards that will enhance their capacity to implement and enforce regulatory requirements effectively. Moreover, the skills acquired will assist them to incorporate post-crisis reforms into the calculation of various Basel III capital and liquidity ratios, fostering resilience in financial institutions.

Participants also familiarized themselves with a roadmap outlining strategies for the successful implementation of Basel III standards within their respective jurisdictions.

The program facilitated an exchange of experiences and best practices among participants, providing an opportunity to learn from diverse country perspectives on Basel standards implementation.

Steps Towards Resource Mobilization for the Zambia- Zimbabwe Common Agro-Industrial Park

The Zambia-Zimbabwe Common Agro-Industrial Park initiative is one of the flagship projects under the COMESA Industrialization Strategy. The programme is also being implemented within the continental framework of the Common African Agro-Parks (CAAPs) initiative, that has been endorsed by the 2024 AU Summit as one of the continental Flagship Programmes.

Mooted in 2019, the Zambia – Zimbabwe joint initiative was motivated by the need to achieve industrialisation in the two COMESA Member States through collaboration and have prioritized the establishment of a Common Agro Industrial Park (CAIP).

As part of the ongoing activities, a joint technical engagement meeting was hosted in Cairo on 15-16 March 2024 with the AFREXIMBANK and the Cote d'Ivoire-Ghana CAAP (CIG Cocoa CAAP), with support of the AU Commission. The objective was to discuss the support needed for the commencement of Zambia-Zimbabwe CAIP.

Specifically, the meeting was designed to facilitate discussions that clarify the technical, political, and legal aspects that are essential for conducting feasibility studies on the project, ensuring preparedness for funding from AFREXIMBANK. It provided an opportunity to share experiences with the technical teams from the bank and the Cote d'Ivoire-Ghana team.

Director of Industry and Agriculture, COMESA, Ms. Providence Mavubi led the Zambia - Zimbabwe team which comprised of officials from both governments.

Under the Programme, the ZAM-ZIM CAIP and the Cote d'Ivoire-Ghana CAAP (CIG Cocoa CAAP) projects have prioritized for implementation at the continental level with follow up CAAPs to be identified for implementation.



Stakeholders after the training in Soroti

Handbook on Mediation of Natural Resources Conflicts Unveiled in Uganda

Uganda and Kenya will soon sign an Agreement on joint natural resources-sharing which has been necessitated by the deep-rooted and protracted inter-communal conflicts between and among pastoralist cross-border communities in the Karamoja cluster.

The Agreement is specifically targeted at improving cross-border community relations on security and harmonious natural resource sharing arrangements

particularly on water and pasture.

This was disclosed during a training for local peacebuilding entities conducted by the COMESA Secretariat through the Governance, Peace and Security (GPS) Unit in collaboration with the Centre for Conflict Resolution Uganda (CECORE) from 21 – 23 February 2024.

Close to 40 experts representing different state

and non-state organisations who work on conflict prevention and resolution have been trained on mediating natural resource-based conflicts in Soroti, Uganda.

The participants were drawn from different organisations in the Karamoja Cluster side of Uganda covering the districts of Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto, Nakapiripirit, Amudat, Napak, Nabilatuk, Abim, and Karamoja.

During the training, the Handbook on Mediating Natural Resource-Based Conflicts, developed under the implementation of phase III of the Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) programme was distributed.

The training identified additional natural resources that faced challenges in terms of their resolution in the Karamoja cluster-side of Uganda, (apart from water and pasture) which include extractives and forests.

The stakeholders appreciated COMESA for the development of the handbook and recommended future translation of the handbook to local languages.

GPS Early Warning Conflict Expert Mr Tapera Chinemhute represented COMESA at the event.

Burundi Prepares to Host the 23rd COMESA Summit



Minister of Foreign Affairs Amb. Albert Shingiro (middle) meets Dr Dev Haman (2nd from Left), Amb. Salvator Matata (L) in Bujumbura accompanied by other government officials

Burundi is set to host the 23rd COMESA Summit of Heads of State and Governments in August this year, and engagement with COMESA Secretariat have begun. On 11 – 13 March 2024, a team from the COMESA Secretariat officials led by Assistant Secretary General, Administration and Finance Dr Dev Haman was in the country to consult with senior

government officials on the Summit preparations.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Amb. Albert Shingiro who received the officials said the country was ready for the event and activities towards this were underway. "We would like to assure you that this government is committed to the ideals of COMESA and as an

active Member State we are ready to host you for the Summit this year," said Amb. Shingiro.

Earlier, the COMESA team which included the COMESA Liaison Officer at the African Union Commission Amb. Salvator Matata met the National Organising committee led by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Trade, Transport, Industry and Tourism, Mrs Christine Niragira.

Ms Niragira said the main committee was being assisted by Sub-Committees with specific terms of reference and that they have already identified all the needs of the Summit. She assured the commitment of the Government and all the country's institutions, both public and private, to welcome the Summit with the hospitality that is the hallmark of the Burundian people.

Dr. Haman said the Secretariat was obliged to meet the organising team to get firsthand information on how the preparations were going. The two teams discussed in details the technical and logistical aspects of the organisation of the Summit and assigned clear responsibilities of all stakeholders. In February this year, Burundi President H.E. Evariste Ndayimisiye met the Secretary General of COMESA Chileshe Kapwepwe, on the sidelines of the African Union Summit where he underscored his government's commitment to host the 23rd Summit



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