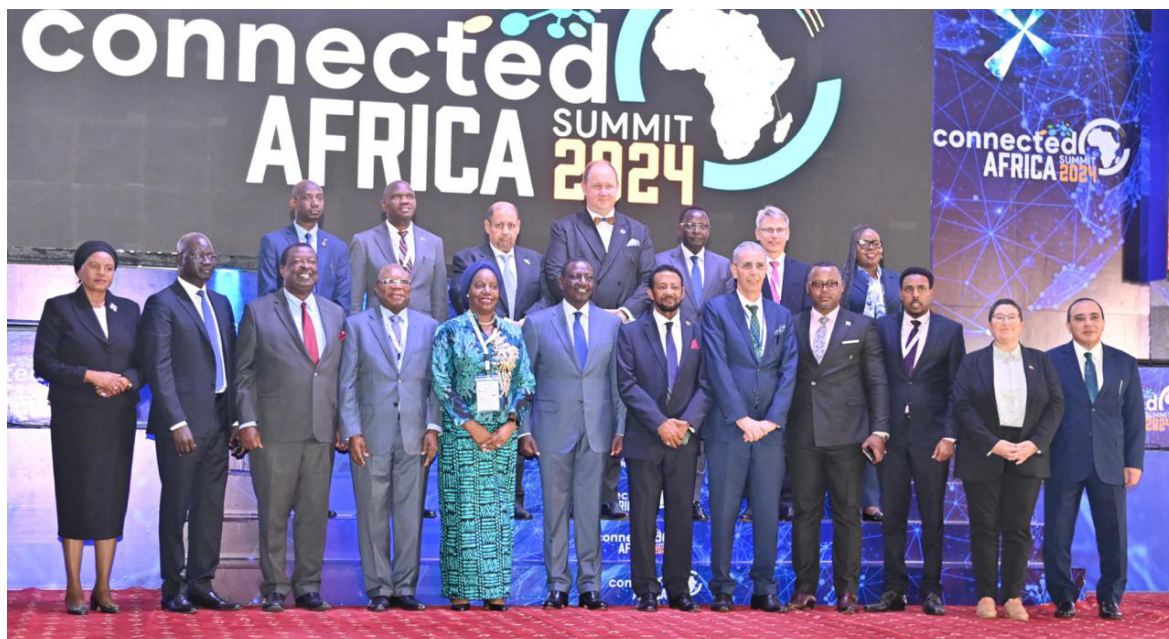


COMESA at the Africa Connect Summit 2024



Kenya's President Dr William Ruto (6th left) COMESA SG, Chileshe Kapwepwe (5th left) and other dignitaries at the Connected Africa Summit

The 2024 edition of the Connected Africa Summit was conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, 22 – 24 April 2024, with a resounding call to position Africa as an essential hub of technological innovation. COMESA was a key player in this forum with the Secretary General, Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe among the presidential and thought leaders' voices that addressed the Summit.

Themed "Shaping the Future of a Connected Africa: Unlocking Growth Beyond Connectivity" the Summit was dedicated to fostering extensive collaboration and driving investment towards realizing Africa's Digital Agenda 2063 and Vision 2030.

It emphasized the pivotal role of the digital economy in propelling economic growth and development. Besides, it served as a platform for African leaders, investors, and businesses to converge, exploring the immense opportunities offered by the digital economy while tackling pertinent barriers and challenges affecting our economies.

In a panel discussion featuring voices from African leaders, the Secretary General highlighted COMESA's commitment to leveraging new digital technologies to facilitate seamless trade within the region.

"This commitment is evident through the introduction of various digital initiatives such as the Electronic Certificate of Origin (ECO) system, set to be launched soon, the Cloud Africa Ecosystem, and the implementation of no-stop-border-posts through Smart Border concepts across various borders in the region," she said.

As the largest regional economic community in Africa, Ms. Kapwepwe stressed that COMESA recognizes the critical importance of adopting diverse digital platforms that bolster trade connectivity among various traders in the region.

"We are far apart but digitalization of trade shall help us link with different people from different parts of the continent to trade seamlessly and build our economies," she added.

She called upon governments across Africa to integrate digitalization into their national development agendas and educational curricula. This, she emphasized, is the most effective strategy for propelling progress in the digital realm.

Kenya's President, Dr. William Ruto who opened the Summit decried the low levels of digital technology

accessibility across Africa, with a mere five percent penetration rate for the entire continent.

He emphasized the profound implications of this disparity for Africa's aspirations in terms of connectivity and economic advancement through the digital economy. He called for higher digital inclusion which he said will intensify job creation and will help deal with the challenge of poverty.

Over 700 delegates attended the Summit including COMESA Directors, Ms Lanka Dorby (ICT) and Dr Bernard Dzawanda (Infrastructure).

We are far apart but yet digitalization of trade shall help us link with different people from different parts of the continent to trade seamlessly and build our economies," Chileshe Kapwepwe



Implementation of COMESA Trade Remedies Regulations Begins

COMESA has begun the comprehensive implementation of its Trade Remedies Regulations. This is aimed at recommending measures to prevent potential losses that its Member States might incur due to unfair trading practices and unforeseen surges in imports during business transactions.

The regulations were adopted way back in 2000, but their application has largely been concentrated in the enforcement of the Safeguard Measures. Specifically, the regulations together with the COMESA Treaty have been useful in the management and application of the Kenya Sugar Safeguard measures. These have effectively been applied to protect the country's sugar sector.

The full implementation of the regulations follows the inaugural (virtual) meeting of the Trade Remedies Committee, on 24 -25 April 2024. This committee was established as directed by the COMESA Council of Ministers during its 44th meeting in November last year, to ensure wider coverage of remedies.

The operationalization of the Committee signifies the beginning of the implementation of the trade remedies regulations. It is expected to promote fairness and stimulate intra-regional trade within the COMESA free trade area (FTA), which currently consists of 16 participating Member States.

Dr. Mohamed Kadah, COMESA's Assistant Secretary-General in charge of programs, noted; "Trade liberalization alone cannot deliver anticipated benefits to all Member States equally. There are bound to be winners and losers in the trading arena."

In a statement delivered by the Director of Trade, Dr Christopher Onyango, Dr Kadah cited the lack of effective product diversification and existence of non-tariff barriers in the region as some of the key challenges to intra-regional trade, hence the relevance of the COMESA trade remedy regulations.

Apart from the safeguard mechanisms, the trade remedy regulations cover anti-dumping, subsidies and countervailing measures, dispute settlement and other related areas. "Many if not all these issues are likely to arise time and again and affect Member States participation in the COMESA region," said Dr Kadah.

He called on the Committee to ensure that implementation of the FTA regime and more specifically the COMESA Treaty and the COMESA remedy regulations are well-coordinated and implemented across the region in a way that does not disadvantage any Member State or sectors.

The implementation of Kenya sugar safeguard measures provided valuable and practical experiences in COMESA and the region in encouraging fair intra-regional trade while protecting vulnerable industries from adverse effects of trade liberalization.

The Committee's two-day meeting discussed its draft rules of procedure and terms of reference. Additionally, the Kenya report on the status of implementation of sugar safeguard measures was reviewed. The report on the allocation of sugar quotas for the year 2024 was also presented.

Malawi Ratifies the Tripartite Free Trade Agreement

Malawi has ratified the Tripartite Free Trade Agreement, bringing the total number of States that have done so to 12. Now, only two are remaining to reach the requisite threshold of 14 to enable the agreement to enter into force.

The ratification instrument, signed by Malawi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon Nancy Tembo was delivered to the office of the Secretary General of COMESA, Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, on 23 April 2024.

The Tripartite FTA is an inter-regional co-operation and integration arrangement amongst countries of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

To date, 22 Member States have signed the TFTA Agreement, and 12 have ratified it. These are Egypt, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Eswatini, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi.

The Tripartite FTA was launched in June 2015 in Egypt to enhance integration among the Tripartite Member/Partner States for their mutual benefit and to pursue the development of common programmes which will enable all parties to utilise the available resources effectively.

In addition, it is intended to harmonise trade and investment regimes and in particular to establish a Free Trade Area amongst COMESA, EAC and SADC; enhance inter-REC economic cooperation.

It is also intended to harmonise infrastructure programmes focusing on developing joint inter-regional infrastructure, and co-operation on transport and communications and financing of regional infrastructure projects.

The implementation of the TFTA will facilitate the movement of businesspersons in the Tripartite region and enable the development of joint programmes that enhance cooperation and strengthen coordination in industrial and competition policies, financial and payment systems, development of capital markets and commodity exchanges.

These objectives are anchored on three pillars namely, market Integration, industrial development and infrastructure Development.

The pace of ratification of the TFTA has however been slow the latest move by Malawi is expected to inspire the remaining States to do the same.



Minister Hon. Eng. Collins Nzovu (middle) COMESA Assistant Secretary General, Dr Dev Haman (left), EU Ambassador to Zambia and Special Representative to COMESA Ms. Karolina Stasiak (2nd left) and other guests at the launch of the Zambia Green Growth Strategy.

COMESA Supports Zambia's Launch of the Green Growth Strategy

The Government of Zambia, in collaboration with COMESA and various development partners, has launched the National Green Growth Strategy (GGS). This strategy aims to drive the country towards sustainable development, prioritizing environmental sustainability, economic growth, and social inclusiveness.

The Zambia Green Growth Strategy is a comprehensive framework designed to integrate green growth principles into the national development agenda. It focuses on key sectors such as agriculture, energy, and water management, with the goal of enhancing resource efficiency, promoting sustainable infrastructure, and fostering resilience against climate change.

Officially launched in Lusaka on Wednesday, April 24, 2024, by Minister of Green Economy and Environment Hon. Eng. Collins Nzovu, the GGS is anchored on four pillars, namely resilient and climate compatible growth, enhanced resource efficiency, enhanced natural capital and improved inclusivity.

Minister Nzovu said the Government has resolved to transition the country to a green economy, because the economic growth attained so far towards the vision of becoming a prosperous middle-income nation by the year 2030, has come at great cost to the environment, ecosystems and natural resources.

"Economic growth has also not been inclusive as total poverty remains persistently high and income inequality is equally high compared to the vision 2030 target," the minister said.

In this regard, the Strategy has been formulated to promote development pathways that lead to Zambia's transition to a low-carbon, resource efficient, resilient and socially inclusive economy by 2030.

The implementation of the GGS is also expected to accelerate the attainment the commitments made in Zambia's Nationally Determined Contribution, (NDC), a climate action plan to cut emissions and adapt to climate impacts. Additionally, execution of the interventions in the GGS will present Zambia with additional opportunities for creation of green jobs.

On its part, COMESA is fully committed to supporting Member States in their transition to green growth, said the COMESA Assistant Secretary General, Dr Dev Haman in his address to the gathering.

"We are proud to be part of this transformative

initiative in Zambia, which serves as a model for regional collaboration on environmental sustainability," he said and congratulated Zambia for the successful launch.

The launch of the strategy has been made possible through the support of COMESA with funding from the NDC partnership and a coalition of international donors and organizations committed to sustainable development and climate resilience in Africa.

Present at the event were representatives of the Global Green Growth Institute, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the Nationally Determined Contribution Partnership, the European Union Delegation to Zambia.

Others were the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Focus Climate Security and the CGIAR Climate Resilience Initiative and the International Labour Organisation. These provided technical, material, and financial support rendered during the development of the strategy.

“Economic growth has also not been inclusive as total poverty remains persistently high and income inequality is very high compared to the vision 2030 target,” Hon. Eng. Collins Nzovu



Stakeholders in sanitary and phytosanitary matters meeting in Nairobi, Kenya.

Steps Towards Harmonized Agricultural Policies and Regulations

Stakeholders in sanitary and phytosanitary matters from the COMESA regional began a nine-day workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, on 22 April 2024. Its objective was to revise the COMESA sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regulations, SPS Strategy, and to develop implementation plans for the food safety, plant health, and animal health technical working groups (TWGs).

This initiative aligns with the COMESA Treaty, which requires Member States to cooperate in promoting agricultural exports in the region by coordinating and harmonizing agricultural policies and regulations.

COMESA SPS regulations were developed in 2009, with a focus on the harmonization of SPS policies and measures to facilitate trade in the region and beyond. However, these regulations have been facing difficulties in terms of implementation due to several factors, including lack of technical capacity.

Moreover, with the passage of time, several developments have taken place, such as the African Continental frameworks on trade and SPS. New challenges have also emerged hence the need to revise these tools to reflect the new developments, address new challenges.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of Programmes, Dr Mohamed Kadah, who opened the forum, highlighted the lack of capacity in risk assessment/analysis within the COMESA region. He stressed the need for establishment of a COMESA

risk assessment/analysis centre to address this issue, as recommended by the COMESA SPS subcommittee.

He also emphasized the need to revise COMESA SPS regulations to incorporate new developments, tackle emerging challenges, and align with continental SPS frameworks and strategies, including the AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Goods.

Dr Kadah urged Member States to ensure that interventions in the Strategy are comprehensive and inclusive of the wider COMESA region. He also challenged SPS experts to address packaging

and labelling in the regulations for a harmonized approach within the region.

Among the participants were representatives of SPS authorities of COMESA Member States, agriculture and livestock experts, the African Union Commission, the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, and the World Organisation for Animal Health – Eastern Africa Sub-Region. Representatives from the Inter-Africa Phytosanitary Council (IAPSC) Coordinator, and senior government officials attended.

The workshop was organized by the COMESA Division of Industry and Agriculture.

COMESA DIARY

Date	Activity/Event	Venue
6 - 10 May	Launch of the National Chapter for the COMES-EAC Horticulture Accelerator (CEHA).	Kenya
22 - 24 May	Launch of the National Chapter for the COMES-EAC Horticulture Accelerator (CEHA).	Rwanda
13 – 16 May	RAERESA Annual General Meeting and Consultative Workshop	Egypt
27 – 29 May	Launch of the National Chapter for the COMES-EAC Horticulture Accelerator (CEHA).	Tanzania
18 – 21 June	Launch of the National Chapter for the COMES-EAC Horticulture Accelerator (CEHA).	Uganda
28 – 29 June	5th COMFWB Trade Fair and Conference	Madagascar



Members of the COMESA Legislative Drafting Sub-Committee, staff of the COMESA Secretariat and the Court meeting in Kenya.

COMESA Court's Initiative to Bridge Administrative Gaps

Legal experts are convening in Kenya to review three key legal documents of the COMESA Court of Justice. These include the draft Staff Rules, the draft Executive Management Staff Rules, and a proposal to amend Article 20 of the COMESA Treaty.

The presentation of these draft legal instruments took place during the 25th COMESA Legislative

Drafting Sub-Committee meeting in Thika town, Kenya, held from April 20 to April 29, 2024. This Sub - Committee comprises legal experts from Egypt, Djibouti, Kenya, Malawi, and Mauritius.

The Registrar of the Court, Hon. Nyambura Mbatia, informed the meeting that the revision of the Court's Staff Rules aimed to address some gaps in the current rules, such as the lack of clear

performance appraisal and disciplinary procedures, and to align the rules with modern legislative drafting best practices.

Furthermore, she highlighted Article 20 of the Treaty, which stipulates the composition of the Court, regarding the terms and conditions of the judges. The Court is composed of twelve judges appointed by the COMESA Authority of Heads of State, with seven serving in the First Instance Division and five in the Appellate Division.

The proposed amendment stems from the decision made at the 25th Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Justice and Attorneys General, held in Lusaka, Zambia, on 3 November 2022. This decision directed that Article 20 of the COMESA Treaty be amended in accordance with Article 17(4) of the Treaty and be submitted to the Legal Drafting Sub-Committee for legal review.

The Sub-Committee meeting is chaired by Mr. Isaac Chiundira of Malawi, with Kenya serving as the Vice-Chair and Egypt as the Rapporteur. Mr. Chiundira welcomed the delegates and staff members from the Court and the COMESA Secretariat to the meeting, emphasizing the importance of the task and wishing them fruitful deliberations.



COMESA Prepares bid for Pandemic Fund

COMESA is developing a proposal for submission to the World Bank's Pandemic Fund which is targeted at supporting low and middle-income countries to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness, and

responses capacities at national, regional and global level.

A panel of experts from Member States, technical partners such as Africa Centre for

Disease Control, International Organization for Migration, World Health Organization, Zambia Public Health Institute, civil society organisations including AMREF, Cross Border Traders Association and others are working on a proposal at the COMESA HQs for submission to the Pandemic Fund.

Among the key issues in focus is on strengthening resilience by enhancing disease surveillance, early warning systems, laboratory capabilities and public health workforce development and community engagement. The aim is to build a more resilient and prepared region in the wake of future pandemics.



Enhancing Capacity for Implementing NTB Regulations

The COMESA Secretariat has successfully completed the first phase of its intervention aimed at enhancing the efficiency of national focal points (NFPs) that deal with non-tariff barriers (NTBs). These NFPs play a crucial role in implementing national NTB elimination programs in COMESA Member States.

Selected from the Ministries responsible for trade matters within the region, the focal points oversee the identification and resolution of NTBs through national NTBs monitoring committees (NMCs).

The first targeted capacity building workshop for the NFP members was conducted on 17-19 April 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya. They were drawn from Member States that are actively engaged in intra-COMESA trade and have reported significant numbers of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) through the online tripartite non-tariff barriers reporting, monitoring, and elimination mechanism. They included the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritius, Madagascar, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

At the workshop, the participants identified

challenges and developed short-term action plans to address them. They include facilitating national monitoring committees (NMCs) to establish and implement time-bound work programs aimed at resolving all operational non-tariff barriers (NTBs). These recommendations will be presented to the COMESA Policy Organs.

Since 2014, COMESA Member States have adopted strategies aimed at the full implementation of the regulations, albeit at a slow pace. With support from the EDF- 11 programme that provided for technical and funding support, the Member States have now achieved key milestones in implementing the regulations for elimination of NTBs.

They include development of guidelines for the implementation of the regulations, establishment of NTBs structures and tools for reporting, monitoring and eliminating NTBs, undertaking capacity building activities at national and regional level, as well as developing user friendly tools for use by the small-scale traders, women and the youths to report NTBs.

COMESA Secretariat has supported regional and

bilateral engagements among Member States to identify new NTBs and resolve the outstanding ones. However, success in institutional and capacity building has not translated into significant increase in identification and resolution of NTBs. The pace of reporting NTBs by COMESA Member States remains slow.

COMESA Senior Trade Office, Ms Alice Twizeye, highlighted some of the factors contributing to the slow pace. They include weak NTBs national structures and underutilisation of capacities as Member States are yet to designate permanent desks for NTBs.

It is against this background that more robust interventions are being explored to achieve implementation of the objectives of the regulations with focus on resolving all operational NTBs and identifying solutions to the longstanding ones of a policy nature.

The capacity building intervention is expected to turn around the trajectory and redirecting national NTBs institutions to focus on undertaking activities that lead to increased identification and resolution of intra COMESA NTBs.



EU & COMESA Sign new Programme SWITCH to Circular Economy



Amb. Dr Mohamed Kadah (L) signing Agreement with Acting Director for Africa, DG International Partnerships, Mr Christian Stausboll in Brussels, Belgium

On the margins of the World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF, 2024) that took place in Brussels, Belgium, on 15-18 April 2024, the European Union and COMESA signed an agreement that paves the way for implementing a joint programme dubbed SWITCH to Circular Economy in East and Southern Africa.

Prior to the signing, the 40 Million Euro programme was officially introduced by the European Union Commissioner for International Partnerships, Ms Jutta Urpilainen. Commissioner Urpilainen said the programme aims to foster a transition to circular economy in East and Southern Africa, support policy making and improve access to finance in the plastics, textiles and electronics sectors.

The SWITCH to Circular Economy in East and Southern Africa Programme is expected to foster skills development and job creation in SMEs in the region. It also includes several other key areas, including promoting sustainable

consumption and production practices, sustainable business models and eco-friendly technologies; enhancing policy frameworks and regulatory environments to incentivize green investments and innovation; and strengthening the capacity of government institutions, private sector actors and civil society organizations to mainstream sustainability into their activities.

The transition to circular economies is a main pillar of the newly introduced European Green Deal, which is a concerted strategy for a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and competitive economy. As a traditional development partner of COMESA, the EU will extend support to ensure long-term sustainable development in East and Southern Africa (ESA), including tackling issues such as natural-resource management, economic diversification and establishing circular economic systems that maximise resource consumption and minimise waste.

The agreement was signed by COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes, Amb Dr Mohamed Kadah and Acting Director for Africa, DG International Partnerships, Mr Christian Stausboll, during a courtesy call at the DG INTPA offices. This is a preliminary step that will be followed by extensive consultations to hammer out the details of the programme and launch it officially under the leadership of the COMESA Secretary General, Ms Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe and the Head of the European Union Delegation to Zambia and COMESA, Ambassador Karoline Stasiak.

Grade Nine Pupils from Sentinel Kabitaka School of Solwezi North-Western Province of Zambia visited COMESA Secretariat on Wednesday 25 April 2024 as part of their educational tour programme. They were hosted by selected staff from the Corporate Communications Unit, the Information Resources Unit and the Governance Peace and Security Unit who made presentations about COMESA, its different programmes and activities. Hosting students is part of the COMESA's stakeholder's engagement and outreach initiative. The session was highly interactive and informative as the pupils got to learn about COMESA's regional integration agenda.

Pictorial



COMESA Secretary General in a panel discussion during the Connected Africa Summit in Kenya, 22 April 2024



Heads of COMESA institutions awareness forum in Mauritius, 15 April 2024



Launching of the Zambia National Green Growth Strategy, 24 April 2024



COMESA ASG Dr Mohamed Kadah addressing delegates at SPS workshop in Kenya



Ms. Angela Nantulya, (2nd left) Zambia Country Lead, Global Green Growth pays courtesy call on COMESA Assistant Secretary General, Dr Dev Haman (left) and staff in the Climate Change programme, Ms Edith Tibahwa and Lwembe Mwale, 26 April 2024



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