

## Integration Programmes Good for the Region – Uganda Veep

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*Uganda Vice President H.E. Jessica Alupo (R) receives COMESA Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe*

The Vice President of Uganda H.E. Jessica Alupo has commended COMESA Secretariat for its efforts in ensuring that regional integration programmes are being implemented across the 21-member bloc. Madam Alupo says the commitment by the Secretariat has contributed to the region benefiting from the various programmes that are being implemented to deepen trade and development.

She was speaking at her office in Kampala, Uganda when she met a COMESA delegation led by Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe on 8 May 2024.

"Your team is doing a commendable job to ensure that most programmes that have been earmarked for implementation are being done. We in Uganda are witnesses to this," Madam Alupo said.

She expressed gratitude towards COMESA for its support to the Ugandan government, particularly in enhancing trade within and across borders. She highlighted the significant benefits, especially for women and youths, resulting from COMESA's interventions in promoting seamless trade flows and value addition and enhancing market access, such as the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP) funded by the EU.

Regarding challenges posed by climate change, Vice President Alupo emphasized the need for assistance in building climate-resilient infrastructure, including bridges, to facilitate trade movements, especially on major trade corridors. She also underscored the importance of implementing projects

for clean energy production in rural areas to enhance economic activities in those areas that will result in value addition and economic development.

"We therefore need you to come and assist in building climate resilient bridges which can withstand all weather patterns. We also need you to come and implement projects that shall produce for our rural people clean energy through use of technology because we see a lot of potential for value addition in these rural areas," the Veep requested.

Secretary General Kapwepwe, in turn, briefed Vice President Alupo on major regional integration programs and projects in Uganda, highlighting COMESA's appreciation for Uganda's membership and longstanding contributions to various initiatives. She

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# Regional Horticulture Programme Launched in Kenya



L-R: Ms Eliya Mumba from COMESA Secretariat, NPCK Chairman Prof. John Nderitu, Ms Catherine Kithinji from Kenya's State Department, COMESA ASGP Amb. Mohamed Kadah and ACTESA CEO Dr John Mukuka

The COMESA-EAC Horticulture Accelerator (CEHA) National Chapter has been launched in Kenya. Agriculture experts have described the move as a significant step towards exposing the capacity of the horticulture sector in Eastern and Southern Africa. And that the initiative is set to catalyze major economic growth, job creation and improved nutrition throughout the region.

Speaking at the launch in Nairobi, COMESA's Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Amb. Dr. Mohamed Kadah highlighted the strategic importance of the initiative. "CEHA was created to speed up the growth of the Fruit and Vegetable sub-sector in the COMESA and EAC Regions, ensuring that by 2031, climate-smart horticulture value chains will become a significant driver of income growth, inclusive job creation and improved nutrition," he explained.

Prof. John Nderitu, Chairman of the National Potato Council of Kenya (NPCK), emphasized the transformative impact of horticulture during the launch. "Horticulture emerges as an important sub-sector within agriculture with huge potential for economic prosperity and empowerment," he stated.

Horticulture, with more than half of its workforce being women, plays a critical role not only in agriculture but also in empowering women along the value chain.

The CEHA initiative, hosted by NPCK, targets key value chains such as avocado, onion and potatoes, which have been identified for their high economic impact and job creation potential. According to Alliance for Commodity Trade for Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) CEO Dr.

John Mukuka, these crops could generate an additional USD 230 million per year for around 450,000 smallholder farmers across Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. "In Kenya alone, avocado and Irish potato have the potential to create more than 430,000 additional jobs," Dr. Mukuka noted in his speech.

Moreover, the CEHA initiative aims to modernize the regional horticulture value chains through coordinated investments, policy improvements, and fostering access to finance and technical assistance. It also focuses on empowering women, integrating smallholder farmers into markets, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

Catherine Kithinji, speaking on behalf of Kenya's State Department for Trade, reinforced the national commitment to the program. "The CEHA initiative comes at an opportune time in line with Kenya's aspirations to enhance productivity and boost our exports of agricultural products, which include key value chains like horticulture," she declared.

As these leaders affirm, the collective efforts under the CEHA initiative promise to transform the horticulture landscape in Eastern and Southern Africa, setting a foundation for a more prosperous and sustainable future. This is a clear example of how targeted agricultural development can lead to broad-scale economic improvements and greater social equity, particularly through the empowerment of women in the sector.

## Integration Programmes Good...

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reiterated COMESA's commitment to supporting Uganda's efforts to promote regional trade, particularly in value-adding sectors.

Ms Kapwepwe emphasized the importance of regional value chains in sectors such as leather, textiles, agriculture, and logistics and the potential to create jobs and reduce post-harvest losses that will result from the Regional Food Balance sheet programme being implemented by COMESA. She cited examples of how surplus commodities in one country could benefit others within the region an outcome expected to arise from implementation of the Digital Regional Food Balance Sheet Initiative to be piloted in six COMESA member states.

"For example, if Uganda has a surplus of Maize because they have good rain patterns, other countries with poor harvest can get the maize from here hence avoiding post-harvest losses on one part and assuring food security on the part of other countries," Ms Kapwepwe stressed.

During her tour of duty, SG Kapwepwe also paid a courtesy call on Uganda's Minister of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development, Hon. Matia Kasaija, and visited a Leather Incubation Centre set up with support by the Africa Leather and Leather Products Institute (ALLPI) at the Management Training and Advisory Centre in Kampala.

COMESA is this year commemorating its 30 years anniversary.





# COMESA advocates for Policy Harmonisation on Trade in Fertilisers and Soil Health Products



The COMESA Secretariat recently participated in the Special Summit of the African Union on Fertilizer and Soil Health held on Tuesday, 07 May 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya. Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe addressed the attendees, highlighting the concerning decline of soil health in many parts of Africa. She emphasized that this decline poses a threat to the resilience of agricultural systems and sustainable food production.

Ms Kapwepwe noted that compromised soil health inhibits the soil's ability to respond to yield-enhancing inputs such as fertilizers and improved crop varieties. This situation increases the vulnerability of smallholder farmers and rural communities to external shocks.

"African governments need to enact enabling policy, legal and regulatory frameworks to guide, support and incentivize the sustainable use of fertilizers and other soil resources," she said in her statement delivered by Dr Mohamed Kadah, Assistant Secretary General in charge of Programmes.

She added that regulatory provisions for sustainable soil management should address all possible uses of fertilizers and other soil health products and their impacts on the soil and the wider ecosystem, while ensuring consistency and streamlined processes across all concerned

governmental agencies.

"In this regard, specific attention should be given to quality assurance, packaging and labeling to deal with the challenges of counterfeit and low-quality products on the market," she added. Ms. Kapwepwe also called for strengthening of the private sector's involvement in driving business around soil fertility improvement for food and nutrition security and economic growth on the continent. She proposed appropriate schemes such as tax incentives to motivate the private sector, including small and medium-size enterprises to invest in fertilizer production and other soil health improvement products and services.

Some of COMESA's interventions to drive agricultural transformation and to improve food security in the region include supporting and promoting regional agricultural value chains through initiatives such as the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP).

COMESA is also promoting regional seed trade through harmonisation of seed regulations to trigger seed trade across the region and enhance farmers access to quality seeds for increased productivity. This program is being implemented by the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA), which is a

specialized agency of COMESA.

Strengthening agri-food data systems through the development of a digital Regional Food Balance Sheet is another flagship initiative under implementation in partnership with the African Green Revolution Alliance (AGRA) and several other development partners. This is a platform to provide real-time and forward-looking data to inform evidence-based food security and trade policies as well as business and investment decisions that can spur regional trade and investment in agri-food systems.

The Secretary General further informed the forum about COMESA's program on fertilizer policy and regulatory harmonization in partnership with the African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership. This program is aimed at harmonizing fertilizer policies and financing mechanisms and promote regional fertilizer trade.

Notwithstanding, the progress made on many regional and continental fronts, she stressed that much more needs to be done, especially on harmonization of policies and regulations as a prerequisite to enhancing regional investment and trade in fertilizers and soil health products and services.

# COMESA Toasts Zambia for Blue Economy Strategy



*Some of the Delegates hold out the newly launched National Blue Economy Strategy*

COMESA has commended the Zambian Government for launching the National Blue Economy Strategy and pledged to continue providing technical expertise to assist in its implementation. Speaking during the official launch of the Strategy in Lusaka on 9 May 2024, Acting Secretary General Dr Dev Haman said the concept of the Blue Economy has been embraced by COMESA Member States as a mechanism to realize sustainable economic development. The challenge at hand is, however, the limited information on blue economy sustainable planning and development as much of the focus has been primarily on land-based economic development.

"We are very happy to associate ourselves with this significant event which provides strategic direction and effective utilization of the aquatic resources for transformative and sustainable blue economic growth in Zambia," Dr Haman said. He added that the strategy will guide the nation in advancing knowledge on biotechnology, environmental sustainability, ecosystem services, growth of inland water transport industry, management of fishing industry and better use of underwater mineral resources. He informed the gathering that Zambia has been earmarked as a high aquaculture potential country and this strategy together with a number of national, regional and international frameworks will foster growth of the sector to full potential.

On its part, COMESA with support of the African

Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources has been able to formulate the Regional Blue Economy Strategy which spans a vast domain with 21 Member States comprising nine coastal countries, eight land linked countries and four Ocean States. The COMESA Blue Economy Strategy (2022 to 2032) designates the Blue Economy as covering aquatic and marine areas, including oceans, seas, coastlines, lakes, rivers, and groundwater. It emphasizes the importance of balancing between sustainable economic development and environmental protection, anchoring this to SDG 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The regional bloc has adopted a clear definition of the blue economy that encompasses a range of several productive sectors such as fisheries and aquaculture, tourism, energy, transport, ports and shipping, Underwater extractive industries, environment, research and innovation, marine biotechnology and bioprospecting.

To support sustainable blue growth and development within Zambia and its neighbors, COMESA has undertaken a number of initiatives which include construction of a mini-lab at Luangwa boarder point which serves Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique as a means of improving the quality, safety and value of fish products processed and traded at this boarder point. The Secretariat has also conducted capacity building in risk-based regulation to the public authorities and in self-regulation to fish

traders.

This initiative has been rolled out to two other boarder points, Chirundu and Mwami/Mchinji. Additionally, COMESA is in the process of making available a modern fish smoking technology at Luangwa which is a prototype successfully implemented in the East and West Africa to increase the shelf life, value and quality of products processed and traded. This technology is specifically targeting women since they are the key players in this value chain node. To COMESA, this initiative stands out as a gender mainstreaming enterprise that should largely be considered.

Zambia's Minister of Water Development and Sanitation Hon. Mike Mposha who officially launched the Strategy said its development required a lot of effort, resources, time and most importantly good coordination among all the stakeholders. "This will support private investment in the development of the Blue Economy sector and it will guide the nation in advancing knowledge on biotechnology, environmental sustainability, ecosystem services, growth of inland water transport industry, management of fishing industry and better use of underwater mineral resources," said Hon. Mposha.

The Minister also congratulated COMESA on its 30th anniversary which will be commemorated later this year.





## Malawi Rice SMEs Broker New Export Opportunities at the 64th Zimbabwe International Trade Fair



*The SMEs from Malawi participating at the 64th Zimbabwe International Trade Fair in Bulawayo*

The COMESA Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP) through the Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) funded the participation of the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Malawi and the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the rice value chain to the 64th Zimbabwe International Trade Fairs (ZITF) from 23rd to 27th April 2024. ZITF brought together more than 500 business exhibitors from the regional and international countries. The trade mission explored trade and investment opportunities between the SMEs and relevant businesses from across the world.

The delegation comprising five small and export ready Small and Medium Enterprises engaged in rice value chain businesses and representatives from the Ministry and Malawi Investment and Trade Center were part of the mission to support trade negotiations. Rice is one of the high performing export value chains in Malawi with great potential to redefine the country's export growth due to unique aromatic varieties that are on high demand on the global market.

The RECAMP, which is funded by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund aims to enhance competitiveness and market access of SMEs in COMESA Member States by championing development of Value Chains in agro-processing and agro-inputs in particular quality seeds, Horticulture and Leather and Leather products. This funding was provided as part of RECAMP's initiative to promote business linkages to the participating SMEs within the broader private sector engagement

under the programme's Technical Assistance Facility initiative.

The trade mission included an exhibition which allowed the participating SMEs to showcase their products to potential wholesale customers and distributors and evaluate entry into new markets and exploit new trade opportunities.

The also help Business to Business (B2B) dialogues which allowed the participants to engage into experience sharing and learning from their peers. The participants benefitted from discussions and meetings that created new business opportunities and networks. Specific market access, opportunities and joint venture business were discussed. A B2B engagement was conducted between Malawi SMEs and United Refineries Limited, an agro processor based in Harare, Zimbabwe who showed their interest in off-taking up to 3,000 metric tonnes of Malawian rice monthly utilizing their own logistical chain.

During the engagements, Ms Rose Kadewere, a senior official in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, said "This mission has been inspiring for our SMEs who have managed to showcase their products to international markets, link with new markets and networked with other businesses from the region. COMESA's continued support has been instrumental towards these outcomes".

Further negotiations to reinforce the supply deals made during the trade mission are underway and this will impact positively on the intra and inter COMESA trade.

## COMESA AML/ CFT Support Commended at 47th ESAAMLG Meeting

Most countries in the COMESA region have continued to advance their Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorist Finance (AML/ CFT) jurisdictions with support from COMESA, the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG) and other regional partners. This was revealed during the 47th ESAAMLG Task Force of Senior Officials Working Group meeting held from 5 – 12 April 2024 in Huila, Angola. In particular, COMESA's support was reflected in the reporting during the plenary session as having made a positive impact on the AMF/CFT programme.

"We would like to acknowledge and appreciate the support provided by COMESA in organising a regional training on Financial Investigations and Asset recovery held last year. The training exposed our officers to new strategies that transformed their work. You can see by the results" Director General of the Zimbabwe Financial Intelligence Unit Mr Oliver Chiperesa said.

Some of the support mentioned included the July 2023 ombus trainings of Law Enforcement Agencies on Financial Investigations and Asset Recovery that were conducted in Zimbabwe, Uganda and Ethiopia. These trainings benefitted Police Criminal Investigations Units, Revenue Authorities, Immigration, National Prosecution Authorities, Attorney General's office and the Wildlife and Parks Authorities among others. In addition, COMESA supported Financial Intelligence Units in Eswatini, Kenya and Rwanda towards their assessment processes in line with joining the Egmont Group of FIUs to benefit from a global network of immigration sharing through the Egmont platform and training opportunities to meet emerging global AML/CFT trends.

COMESA was thrilled to learn that countries such as Kenya was admitted to the Egmont Group of FIUs in late 2023 and this can be associated with the COMESA support. Furthermore, upon request by Seychelles, COMESA offered its support through the development of AML/CFT Guidelines for Seychelles reporting entities to cover gaps that had been created with the enactment of a new AML/CFT law in 2021.

This decision is supported by the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs who in 2023 reemphasized the importance of strengthening AML/CFT regimes and urged COMESA to mobilise extra-budgetary resources to ensure existing gaps in support to Member States are covered.

For 2024, COMESA is planning to hold a regional training for judges and national prosecutors on prosecution, Adjudication and Asset recovery as well as a Regional Training of FIUs on Strategic and Operational Effectiveness and Financial Intelligence.

# COMESA Region is Moving Closer to a Harmonized Energy Regulatory Regime



*Chief Executive Officer of RAERESA Dr Mohamedain Seif Elnasr addresses energy experts at the regional consultative workshop in Egypt.*

Energy experts met in Cairo, Egypt for a two-day consultative workshop on regional harmonization of regulatory frameworks and tools for improved electricity regulation in the COMESA region.

The meeting, on 13 - 14 May 2024 reviewed a study report of the energy market, institutional structure, and tariff frameworks in 13 regional states, focusing on their current and future energy mix, technical and operational performance along with the tariff determination mechanisms.

Twelve COMESA Member States are covered in the study including Burundi, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, and Uganda and additionally, South Sudan.

This activity is part of ongoing project funded by the African Development Bank to ultimately, enhance the sustainability of the electricity sector of the region through effective, uniform, transparent and enforceable regulatory frameworks that set out clear principles, rules, processes, and standards for the COMESA region.

Despite being endowed with significant energy resources, the COMESA countries face

enormous challenges in increasing energy access to its ever-increasing population and building a robust physical energy infrastructure. Average electricity access rate in the COMESA region is slightly above 50 percent.

Many countries in the region continue to face an energy crisis and are plagued by challenges that include, absence of robust regulatory frameworks, under-performing utilities, lack of funding for new infrastructure, overreliance on coal and hydropower, lack of cost-reflective tariffs and heavy and unsustainable reliance on biomass energy (traditional fuels such as wood fuels, charcoal, animal waste) etc.

The slow pace of power sector development hampers overall economic growth and leads to an unsustainable energy system.

Addressing the energy crisis calls for harmonized policy and regulatory frameworks to strengthen operational and financial efficiency of power utilities and create an enabling environment for attracting private sector investment.

This will enable the cost-effective expansion of generation and transmission infrastructure that will facilitate regional energy trade and

increase electricity access.

Speaking at the workshop, the Chief Executive Officer of the COMESA Regional Association of Energy Regulators in Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA) Dr Mohamedain Seif Elnasr said, the experts' inputs were critical before the final validation of the report. Validation of the report will pave the way for its presentation to the Ministers responsible for energy for adoption and eventual implementation.

COMESA - RAERESA is the Implementing Agency of the Project assisted by the Energy Regulators Association of East Africa (EREA) of the East African Community (EAC).

Once fully implemented, this project is expected to promote regional cooperation in energy development, reduce the cost of doing business, increase cross-border energy trade and enhance COMESA's competitiveness in regional and extra-regional markets.





# COMESA Member Central Banks' Staff Trained on Monetary Policy Formulation in an Era of Inflation Targeting Regime



In an effort to bolster expertise in monetary policy formulation and implementation within the context of an Inflation Targeting (IT) regime, the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) recently conducted an intensive training session for representatives of Central banks from 11 Member States. The workshop was held from the 22nd to the 27th of April 2024 in Mombasa, Kenya. Aligned with the 2024 Work Plan for CMI, the training sought to address the evolving landscape of monetary policy frameworks, with a particular focus on the merits and intricacies of IT. Speaking during the opening session, Director

of CMI, Dr. Lucas Njoroge, highlighted the increasing global preference for IT as a monetary policy framework, even among nations with nascent financial markets and institutions. He underscored the potential of IT to fortify financial institutions and foster market development, dispelling the notion that robust financial infrastructure is a prerequisite for its adoption. "Among the key advantages of IT are its ability to mitigate inflation variability, address time inconsistency issues, stabilize output, and anchor inflationary expectations in the face of macroeconomic shocks," outlined by Dr. Njoroge.

He noted the ongoing transition of several COMESA member countries towards adopting IT, a trend catalyzed by rapid financial innovations and market integration.

Throughout the training, participants delved into the nuances of IT compared to alternative monetary policy frameworks, such as monetary targeting. They also gained insights into forecasting methodologies, policy analysis systems, and strategies for managing shocks within an IT framework.

A pivotal aspect of the workshop was the exchange of experiences among participants regarding their respective countries' journeys towards implementing IT. Delegates from Burundi, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Kenya, Madagascar, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe shared valuable insights, enriching the collective understanding of IT's practical implications across diverse economic contexts. Through collaboration and knowledge-sharing among Central Bank professionals, the training facilitated a deeper comprehension of the complexities involved in formulating and executing monetary policy under an IT regime.

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## Kenyan Women and Youth in Business Sensitized about COMESA

One hundred and forty Kenyan women and youth in business got sensitized about the various COMESA trade instruments at a dialogue forum held in Nairobi. COMESA Secretariat and Kenya's State Department for Gender organized the Multistakeholder Capacity Building Dialogue on 3 April. The dialogue aimed to sensitize women and youth in business about COMESA tools and initiatives which are available for facilitating trade, and ultimately equip women and youth to enhance their participation in regional trade.

Ms Grace Wasike, the Director for Social Economic Empowerment in the State Department for Gender, representing the Principal Secretary, opened the dialogue. She lauded the European Union for its support to the dialogue initiative and highlighted the significant role COMESA is playing in boosting cross border trade through tools such as the Simplified Trade Regime (STR). "Cross-border trade constitutes a significant component of trade in the region especially

by women who constitute a big percentage of small-scale traders importing and exporting goods worth USD 2,000 or less, which are on the Common List of eligible products negotiated and agreed on," she noted. "As a region we have to ensure that regional integration translates into positive opportunities for all citizens," Ms Wasike added.

Ms Tsige Biyazen, Senior Gender Mainstreaming Officer, thanked the Kenyan Government for its partnership in organizing the dialogue. She explained that the concept of the multistakeholder dialogues is directly linked to COMESA's 2021-2025 Mid-Term Strategic Plan which builds on a commitment to regional integration based on four interdependent pillars namely; Trade and Market Integration, Physical Integration, Production Integration and Gender and Social Integration.

"COMESA recognizes the need for public awareness and continuous engagement with

key stakeholders as critical components of an inclusive regional integration agenda. It bears significance reminding ourselves that women and youth are not only two of COMESA's key stakeholders groups, they are the largest in terms of population across the region," Ms Biyazen said.

The dialogue participants were taken through the various COMESA initiatives, specifically the tools for facilitating trade. They were also sensitized about the COMESA initiatives supported by the European Union through EDF-11, the COMESA gender frameworks as well as the women in business digital platform. Participants had an opportunity to pose questions through an interactive session. The event in Nairobi, Kenya followed similar dialogue forums held in Mauritius and DR Congo. Similar events are planned in more Member States this year.



## COMESA and Save the Children Join Forces to Advance Children's Rights in Conflict Zones

COMESA has partnered with Save the Children to conduct a comprehensive sensitization program in a proactive move towards addressing the plight of children affected by armed conflict (CAAC) in the COMESA region. This initiative is aimed at empowering Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) to champion the CAAC agenda effectively. In this regard, a workshop was from 22nd to 25th April 2024 in Mbabane, the Kingdom of Eswatini, which underscored the urgent need for collaborative efforts in safeguarding the rights of children caught in conflict zones.

Participants deliberated on various strategies, including the establishment of a regional platform for NHRIs aimed at fostering shared learning and exchanging best practices. Integral to this initiative is the integration and dissemination of the CAAC Agenda at both national and regional levels within the Southern Africa region. During the workshop, attendees reached several key agreements. They resolved to develop Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)

between CSOs and NHRIs focusing on CAAC, co-develop child-specific indicators for early warning systems, and collaborate on data collection, analysis, and reporting. These measures are designed to enhance regional research on CAAC, capacity-building efforts for NHRIs and CSOs, and the implementation of the COMESA CAAC Strategy.

Head of the Governance Peace and Security Unit at the COMESA secretariat Dr. Oita Etyang, emphasized the pivotal role played by NHRI and CSOs in advancing the CAAC agenda.

Dr. Etyang stressed the grim realities faced by children in conflict-ridden areas the urgency for collective intervention citing ongoing conflicts in the COMESA region, particularly in Sudan, Eastern DR Congo, and Libya, as alarming examples which should necessitate immediate action.

"In response to these challenges, COMESA has developed a comprehensive regional CAAC strategy alongside Post-Conflict Reconstruction

and Development Guidance Note (PCRD) and Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) on Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) of Children Formerly Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups. These frameworks are expected to guide member states in effectively addressing the needs of children affected by armed conflict," Dr Etyang added. The workshop also served as a platform to exchange experiences and discuss the challenges and opportunities in holding states accountable for protecting children's rights in conflict situations. With nearly 34,000 people forcibly displaced every day globally due to conflict or persecution, the imperative for concerted action to safeguard the rights of children affected by armed conflict cannot be overstated.

Through these collaborative efforts between COMESA, Save the Children, CSOs, and NHRIs, Dr Etyang said that there is a renewed commitment to ensuring that the voices of these vulnerable children are heard and their rights protected, even in the most challenging circumstances.