

Libya Reboots Economic Engagement with COMESA

Libya has renewed its commitment to COMESA and resolved to actively participate in the implementation of regional integration programmes. To kickstart this process, COMESA Secretariat hosted a two-day virtual sensitization workshop on 25-26 January 2021 which was attended by stakeholders from diverse public and private sectors in Libya.

Libya's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohamed Taher Hamouda Siala addressed the workshop. He said his government's resolve is to be more engaged in the activities and programmes of COMESA for the benefit of the country and the region for more meaningful impact.

"Libya has long believed in the ideologies of COMESA and it was the right time to re-focus and prioritise regional integration in order to transform the economy of the country," Minister Siala said "This marks a new phase for Libya's participation in COMESA programmes and activities."

During the workshop, the Secretariat made presentations on the current regional integration programmes covering trade, infrastructure, industry, agriculture, and gender among others. Participants were also taken through programmes implemented by specialized institutions on COMESA.

Speaking during the opening ceremony, Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe said Libya has always shown



File photo: Libyan delegate during the 20th COMESA Summit, in Lusaka, Zambia, July 2018

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determination to fully benefit from regional integration programmes having joined the COMESA Free Trade Area in 2006 just after becoming a member of the organization. Libya joined COMESA in 2005.

Participants acknowledged how COVID-19 had placed additional strain on Member States' economies, which is likely to put a risk on the socio-economic gains recorded so far.

The Secretary General however, expressed

optimism on a quick return to normal business following the success of collective efforts at national, regional and continental level, to acquire and distribute vaccines.

She called for innovative ways to mobilise support for implementation of programmes and enhanced cooperation through frameworks that support joint planning and resource mobilization by Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

Among the COMESA institutions that participated in the workshop were Trade and Development Bank, Zep-Re Reinsurance Company, Africa Trade Insurance Agency, COMESA Competition Commission, COMESA Monetary Institute, Africa Leather and Leather Products Institute, COMESA Business Council, COMESA Clearing House, Regional Investment Agency, COMESA Court of Justice, and COMESA Federation of Women in Business.

Zimbabwe Leather and Textile Clusters Shake-off COVID 19 Effects and to Register Impressive Growth



Members of the Bulawayo Leather Cluster display Shoe shoes earmarked for export to Namibia

The COVID-19 pandemic is the worst thing that has happened to many small scale enterprises across the globe, but the Zimbabwe leather and textile sector has defied the odds. Two clusters, one dealing with leather and the other in textiles have recorded over USD 36,600 in profits on goods produced during the COVID 19 era.

The textile cluster is located in Chitungwiza south of the capital, Harare while the leather cluster is in Bulawayo. The clusters managed to withstand the pandemic effects partly by changing tack and producing essential products needed to mitigate the pandemic such as face masks. This was in

addition to their customary school uniforms and sportswear.

The textile cluster was supported the COMESA Adjustment Facility (CAF), Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM) which is funded by the European Union. In the first phase of the funds' disbursement, Zimbabwe got €4.2 million through a Grant Agreement signed in September 2014 between the Government and COMESA

At the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, the textile cluster switched to manufacture products which required readily available raw materials and

COVID personal protective products. In majority of cases, the customers would provide the materials with the clusters doing the manufacturing.

The total value of textile produced during the period is estimated at USD 16,600. The Cluster also managed to train eight people in tailoring (5 female and 3 male) who are still under apprenticeship.

Despite the various challenges, the pandemic has created a unique demand for local textile products. The cluster is therefore expecting an increase in its business orders from schools across the country.

The leather cluster has also continued to thrive, producing an array of products ranging from formal shoes, school shoes, sandals and leather belts. Within the pandemic period, the cluster has produced goods worth USD 20,000 with Namibia being one of the export destination for school shoes.

During the first two phases of the lockdown, which were stricter, the government of Zimbabwe supported the clusters with documentation which designated them as essential services. This enabled them to open and operate while adhering to the required health protocols.

COVID-19: COMESA Mourns Fallen Leaders



Dr Sibusiso Moyo



Dr Kombo James Moyana

Ms Kapwepwe also mourned two other leaders in Zimbabwe who have succumbed to COVID-19 namely former Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Settlement Gen. Perrance Shire and the former Minister of Manicaland Dr Ellen Gwaradzimba.

She commended the government of Zimbabwe for putting in place tight restrictive measures to control the further spread of the pandemic.

"We pray that with the support of the African Union, our development partners and friendly countries, we shall find an expeditious containment and ultimate eradication of the COVID-19 pandemic in our region,"

She described Dr Moyana as instrumental in the strategic development of successful regional monetary integration programmes which are currently under implementation.

"His contributions shall always be etched in the history books of the Republic of Zimbabwe and the entire COMESA region," she said.

The COMESA Secretariat has expressed sadness at the death of two leaders who played notable roles in bringing national development in Zimbabwe and contributed to enhancing regional integration in the rest of the region.

Zimbabwe's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Gen. Dr Sibusiso Moyo and former Executive Secretary of the COMESA Clearing House Dr Kombo James Moyana

died in the month of January due to COVID-19 complications.

In her message of condolences to President Emmerson Mnangagwa, Secretary General (SG) Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe expressed regret that COVID-19 has continued to rob the families, governments and the region of dedicated and hardworking leaders who were committed to economic development and transformation for the benefit of the citizens.



Malawi Women in Business Benefit from COMFWB, GIZ Training



Participants to the Leadership and Business Management Training in Malawi

The COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB) in partnership with GIZ-MEIRA recently organized a 10-day training in leadership and business management for the Women in Business in Malawi.

The training attracted small scale entrepreneurs from two cooperatives in Malawi: the Lusolawo Cooperative with 12 members and Chiwila Cooperative with 15 members. It was conducted in Nkhata

The objective of the training was to ensure that micro and small scale enterprises build their businesses and relationships to add value to their products. This would enhance their access to improved services and productive resources, as well as engage in structured markets to increase their income.

The training helped to improve understanding of how each group functions for sustainability and growth and provided a foundation for enhancing their entrepreneurship skills to develop their own personal businesses.

Speaking during the opening session, COMFWB Chief Executive Officer Ruth Negash said that her organization was responding to the identified need to connect business women and

SMES to other players in the various sectors by developing their business management skills.

"Although the Northern region has a great tradition of making Nsima (African Pulp) from cassava and dried cassava leaves, they do not produce value added products for the local markets," Negash said. "Hence the training will equip women entrepreneurs with skills thus enabling them produce value added cassava products for export to other countries in the COMESA region and beyond."

Participants appreciated COMFWB and GIZ for organizing the training saying it will go a long way in helping the women to reap the benefits of being members of the cooperatives.

"Business management is key to ensuring sustainability of the cooperative. This is my first training on leadership and business management," said Kaluso Nyimba a participant.

The capacity development offered by COMFWB and GIZ-MEIRA has enabled the two cooperatives to have a coherent shared vision and mission, develop short term plans and action plan.

COMESA Hails Outgoing African Union Youth Envoy

Outgoing African Union Youth Envoy Ms Aya Chebbi has received accolades for working with COMESA to advance the voices and participation of the youth in development programmes at both regional and continental level.

In a message from the Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, Ms. Chebbi was hailed for ensuring the Office of Youth Envoy (OYE) worked diligently to reshape youth participation in leadership and inspired millions of young women and men on the continent.

"The OYE broke barriers and proved that youth have the energy, the brains, they are innovative, they can be trusted, they are dedicated and committed to actively participate in the development of their communities and the region," Ms Kapwepwe added.

OYE worked closely with the Joint COMESA-AU/African Governance Architecture (AGA) Project on Youth Engagement in democratic governance and socio-economic development.

At continental level, Ms Chebbi involved COMESA in a number of activities including a series of virtual consultations on COVID-19 featuring high-level speakers from Africa and beyond. The meetings enabled high-level officials to share knowledge, strategies and initiatives on youth engagement from different perspectives.

During her two year tenure, the OYE pooled leaders and youth on an intergenerational approach to promote African and Global Solidarity for youth empowerment, engagement, employment and sharing of experiences and knowledge, showcasing youth innovations and promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

Ms Chebbi from Tunisia, has served as African Youth Envoy from 2018-2020.

A Shot in the Arm for the Madagascar Leather Industry



Leather products

The COMESA Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM), with support from the Africa Leather and Leather Product Institute (ALLPI), has supported the leather sector in Madagascar by bringing various players in the to form a leather cluster known as GasySkin.

In addition, RISM has provided training to over 30 participants, including local artisans, in regional systems for the improved traceability of skins, the application of standards for value chains in leather, and the certification of leather products that are environmentally friendly.

Through this support the cluster has acquired leather tannery equipment for sewing, leather skiving, strip cutting, hydraulics plane cutting press machines, etc) valued at more than 100,000 Euros. This has raised awareness amongst leatherworkers, salespeople and tanners, leading to national cohesion among players in the leather value chain.

It has also triggered rising demands, the most significant being an order from India for 2,000 pieces each of 17 different leather items. The production of leather items is now projected to grow tenfold.

The RISM programme received funds from the European Union (EU) through the COMESA Adjustment Fund (CAF), and has provided financial support to Madagascar of more than 1.8 million Euros over the 2016-2020 period. An additional 500,000 Euros is expected in 2021.

Disbursement of the funds followed Madagascar's government identifying the local leather sector as a cluster with great potential for producing quality goods at international and regional level and for creating much-needed employment opportunities in the country.

One of the main challenges identified by local stakeholders was the need for a national leather value chain strategy and better equipment and training on quality and standards that would facilitate exports to regional and international

markets.

The ALLPI, a specialized institution of COMESA provided technical expertise to develop the leather value chain strategy for the country. The strategy will help to ensure that artisans meet market requirements, in terms of quality and standards.

As a logical continuation of the strategy, Madagascar's Directorate General of Handicrafts (DGA) has included in its priority activities the standardization of the leather sector. This has been done by upgrading to COMESA and international standards, and also by making sure such standards adapt the specifications of Madagascar.

Under the latest support, it is programmed that in 2021, further leather processing equipment worth 150,000 Euros will be procured. This equipment will enable production of more diverse items, better designs, and more precise cutting of the raw leather.



COMESA Welcomes New CEO of African Trade Insurance Agency



Mr Manuel Moses (L) and Dr Dev Haman

The African Trade Insurance Agency (ATI), a specialized institution of COMESA has a new Chief Executive Mr Manuel Moses. Mr Moses formally assumed office as the fourth CEO of the ATI in early December 2020. He has

over 25 years of experience in finance, banking, insurance and investment at the international level.

He joins ATI from the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC),

where he had been for the last 15 years, most recently as country manager for East Africa. He has also held senior positions at the Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank (TDB), the Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Development Bank.

In his maiden visit to the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka, January 29, 2021, Mr Moses was received by Assistant Secretary General in charge of Administration and Finance Dr Dev Haman. The two discussed possible programmes that could be enhanced as a way of revitalizing ATI's role in the regional integration agenda spearheaded by COMESA.

ATI is a pan-African provider of credit and political risk insurance.

COMESA Toasts Ugandan President for Re-election



President Yoweri Museveni celebrating his win of the 2021 election

COMESA has congratulated President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda on his re-election in the January 14

General Elections. In her message, Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe commended efforts made

by the government of Uganda to hold the elections within the constitutional timeframe and amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Your Excellency's track record in the economic transformation of your country as well as your role in supporting the peace processes in the region particularly the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region are just a few examples that has made your tenure in the office and as a leader in our region stand out," said Ms Kapwepwe.

Uganda is a founder member of COMESA and has been an active participant in the various programmes of regional integration.



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