

## Zambia, Zimbabwe to Implement the Joint Industrialization Strategy



Indeni Refinery plant in Zambia

Zambia and Zimbabwe have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to implement a joint industrialization project spearheaded by COMESA Secretariat. The Joint Industrialization Project will promote self-sustained, balanced and inclusive economic growth between the two countries. It will provide opportunities for the private sector to benefit from the African Continental Free Trade Area through enhanced competitiveness.

Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry for Zambia, Hon. Christopher Yaluma and his Zimbabwe Counterpart Dr. Sekayi Nzenza signed the MoU virtually on 18th March 2021. COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe witnessed the signing.

In her statement, Ms Kapwepwe said that the success of the Project will enable the two Member States to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic transformation through industrialization.

"Once successful the pilot project will be upscaled to other Member States in the region," she said.

According to the 2020 World Bank estimates,

the average manufacturing value added as a percentage of GDP for the COMESA region stood at 10% while that of South East Asia stood at 18%. This indicates that the COMESA region and the African continent at large needs structural economic transformation through industrialization.

Minister Yaluma said the project has come at the right time as it fully supports the Zambian industrialization and job creation agenda for the country. It will enable the two countries to share ideas and resources for industrial development and further strengthen the working relationship between Zambia and Zimbabwe in the field of industrialization.

"Despite the growth potential in the region, poverty, unemployment, low investment levels, and depressed aggregate demand, among others, are prevalent in the COMESA region," he said attributing this economic scenario to depressed industrialization.

He thanked the COMESA Secretariat for facilitating the milestones so far achieved towards the implementation the Joint Industrialization Project. These include; drafting the Roadmap and an indicative

action plan, formulating the MoU by the joint technical working group of the two member States and submitting the documents to respective Permanent Secretaries of the two Ministries which adopted them.

Hon Nzenza said that the project will result in high private sector participation, effective utilization of the Public Private Partnership framework, effective coordination, enhanced investment in science, technology and innovation including the availability of both human and financial resources necessary for its implementation.

He further stated that the project will harness the competitive advantage of the two countries resulting in improved product development for export into and out of the region thereby creating wealth for the citizens and the countries at large.

"Our two countries will ensure that the implementation of the project shall be done according to the project implementation plan through value chains from both countries so that no losses are made due to the long process of implementation," said Hon Nzenza.



File: 12th COMESA Meeting of the technical committee on Gender and Social Affairs-2.jpg

## Gender Experts Meet to Review Program' Implementation

COMESA Gender and Women's Affairs experts began their 13th Meeting on Monday 22 March 2021 to discuss progress on the advancement of gender equality and empowerment of women through implementation of policy and legal frameworks, council decisions, programmes and projects.

The objective of the three-day virtual meeting was to consider the progress made by both the Secretariat and Member States on the implementation of the Decisions of the Tenth meeting of the COMESA Ministers responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs held last year.

As a way of ensuring progress towards attaining national, regional, and continental goals on gender and women empowerment, Member States and the Secretariat are obliged to provide updates on the implementation of the Council Decisions.

The agenda of the meeting include the report on the 50 Million African Women Speak Project- an initiative which fits well in the current times where digital platforms hold the answer to access to information, services, and market opportunities for women in business. They will also receive an update on the Small-Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative and the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project both of which have a very strong focus on the creation of a conducive operating

environment for small scale cross border traders -majority of whom are women.

The meeting will also receive and discuss a report on the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP) initiative, which is aimed at strengthening the capacity of Small, and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) including women and youth in selected value chains and access to markets.

Speaking during the opening ceremony, Permanent Secretary in Zambia's Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry Mr Mushuma Mulenga appreciated the meeting coming shortly after the international Womens' Day when governments, private sector, community groups, professional associations, women's networks, celebrate women around the world, and their achievements in social, economic, cultural, and political spheres.

"It is the period when we celebrate, raise awareness about women's equality, calling for gender parity, economic empowerment of women, and elimination of violence against women and girls," he said.

Speaking during the same meeting, Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Dr. Kipyego Cheluget said despite the progress recorded so far in the advancement of women, current data shows that majority of

them globally work in the informal sector, and experience gender-based violence more than men.

"The issue of diseases like HIV is still high among females than males, illiteracy rates are higher among females than males, more women than men have limited access to information and business opportunities, fewer women than men are in decision making positions, and that COVID-19 has negatively affected women more than men among many other issues," he noted.

Within this broad spectrum of issues that affect women and men, the COMESA Secretariat has been involved in redressing the legal and policy gaps including programme implementation disparities that contravene the rights of women, men, girls, and boys in the cultural, social, political, and economic spheres.

To promote gender equality, Dr Cheluget said the Secretariat is pushing for the availability of statistics to support gender responsive planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation for mainstream programs in COMESA.

To this end, the Secretariat is working towards generating gender disaggregated data to strengthen availability of regional gender statistics in different sectors including small scale cross border trade.



# President Zewde launches 50 Million African Women Speak platform in Ethiopia



Ethiopian President Her Excellency Sahle-Worke Zewde on Thursday 18 March 2021 launched the 50 Million African Women Speak (50MAWSP) platform in Addis Ababa with a call on the country's women to embrace it and use it to grow their businesses.

Ethiopia became the thirteenth COMESA Member State to officially unveil the platform, which is an information and networking hub for women providing them with resources to start, grow and scale up their businesses and to access financial and non-financial services.

"The platform will contribute to uplifting women economically," President Zewde said. She challenged Ethiopian women to use the platform to collaborate with each other, and challenged the implementing institution, Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, as well as other stakeholders to "work hard to take the platform to the intended beneficiaries".

She commended the African Development Bank (AfDB) and COMESA for their financial and technical support, respectively. The launch event was graced by high-profile guests, among them the Minister for Women, Children and Youth, Hon. Filsan Abdulahi, State Ministers and senior government officials. COMESA's high-level representation at the event was led by Secretary General Her Excellency Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, who hailed the platform as an initiative that

will contribute to eliminating barriers that women face in the social and economic spheres.

"Making this platform available and accessible in Ethiopia today will empower existing and aspiring women entrepreneurs to run their enterprises in a digital environment which allows them to circumvent the barriers imposed by the pandemic," HE Kapwepwe said.

"This will no doubt enhance their chances of success at what they do, ultimately make a meaningful contribution to their livelihoods of their families, and their communities."

Dr. Abdul Kamara, the AfDB country representative for Ethiopia reiterated the Bank's commitment to supporting initiatives to improve women's economic fortunes.

The 50MAWS platform is jointly implemented by COMESA, the East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Funded by AfDB, it enables women in 38 countries in the three regional blocs to find information on how to run businesses, where to access financial services, how to create business opportunities online and where to access training resources, among others.

In the COMESA region, the platform has also been launched in Zambia, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Eswatini, DR Congo, Egypt, Djibouti, Tunisia, Mauritius, Malawi and Sudan.

## COMESA Develops Climate Change Strategy

COMESA has developed a Climate Change Strategy as part of efforts to ensure that cross-sectoral climate change issues are integrated in all its regional integration programmes. The Strategy will enable the organisation to operate as a green institution and provide guidance to the Secretariat, its organs, agencies and Member States on ways of integrating climate change initiatives in their national priorities.

Member States are expected to gradually align their strategies to the COMESA Regional Climate Change Strategy, which was endorsed in November 2020 by the Council of Ministers. At the same meeting, the COMESA Regional Resilience Framework was also endorsed to guide Member States on the key resilience areas of focus at the regional level. The framework is expected to be operationalized and rolled out for the implementation by Member States this year.

According to a report prepared by the COMESA Climate Change Unit, two institutions of higher learning namely the University of Seychelles and the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) will provide climate related capacity building in the region. COMESA has also applied for accreditation to the Global Climate Fund (GCF) and is awaiting a response.

In addition a study on carbon neutrality was undertaken in 2020 and a report produced which provides guidance on the key proposed areas where COMESA can reduce and or offset its carbon print.

# Rwanda Prioritizes Horticulture, Livestock and Cereals for Investment in Health Standards



Women package avocado for export inside the NAEB warehouse in Kigali.

Rwanda has prioritized three value chains namely horticulture, livestock and livestock products covering dairy and honey and cereals under the Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary (SPS) Investments for Market Access (P-IMA) project.

This was revealed during the meeting to validate Rwanda's outcome report on Prioritizing of SPS Investments for market access. The meeting held on 18 March 2021 also discussed the mainstreaming of SPS priorities into national policy and investment frameworks to enhance trade capacity for the country.

At the workshop, Rwanda Country Report was reviewed. The report was compiled after a series of sensitization, capacity building and continuous improvement sessions held in the country since September 2019 when the P-IMA Project was launched.

The report identified 14 SPS capacity building investment options out of an initially proposed 18 that were subjected to the P-IMA priority setting framework.

According to the findings, about US\$ 9 million is required to implement all the 14 capacity building options that could potentially generate about \$255 million worth of exports annually. However, since resources are limited, priorities were set based on a structured process of identifying SPS capacity building options that were relevant for market access, prior agreed objectives and agreed weights assigned to the decision criteria.

Speaking during the opening ceremony of the virtual meeting, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) Mr Jean Claude Musabyimana said Rwanda has had very limited export rejections by the United States and European Union on SPS issues. Even so, most agri-food exports from the country are susceptible to SPS compliance requirements.

Since 2012, the PS noted, there has been observable efforts including sector specific strategies and interventions in addressing SPS challenges. Both the Rwanda's Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (2018-2024) and the National Agricultural Policy (2018) recognizes the need to address SPS issues to access high-end consumer markets.

In effect, one of the strategic orientation of the plan is a focus on upgrading the provision of SPS/ quality standards for the horticulture, vegetable, poultry, pork and fisheries sectors.

"The plan intends to focus on two broad value chains namely animal resources and horticulture and therefore attention must be paid to SPS issues related to these value chains to facilitate agri-food trade particularly to high-end markets," Mr Musabyimana said in a speech read by Dr Charles Murekezi, Director General in charge of Agriculture Development in the MINAGRI.

In terms of regional trade, the recent WTO Trade Policy Review (2019) indicated that Rwanda's

intra-Africa trade has expanded drastically from 35.2% in 2011 to 49.7% in 2017 with the main markets in Africa comprising of D R Congo, Kenya and Uganda.

COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe commended Rwanda for the commitment to address SPS issues and championing the P-IMA which will lead to increased trade capacity for the country.

"COMESA views the P-IMA framework as a unique planning and sector-wide engagement and resource mobilization tool," she said. "We encourage our Member States to use P-IMA to take stock of SPS capacity building needs, prioritize and cost investment options with the best returns and integrate them into national agriculture sector investment plans,"

Her speech was presented by the Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Dr Kipyego Cheluget.

The P-IMA project is funded by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) and the Enhanced Integrated Facility (EIF). The Rwanda programme also benefited from support from the EU Trade Facilitation Programme.

COMESA rolled out the regional P-IMA Project through a high-level inception meeting conducted in 2019 in Rwanda.



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