



THE AFRICAN CAPACITY
BUILDING FOUNDATION

FONDATION POUR LE RENFORCEMENT
DES CAPACITES EN AFRIQUE

A specialized agency of the African Union | Une agence spécialisée de l'Union africaine

8th COMESA Annual Research Forum

STATEMENT OF PROFESSOR EMMANUEL NNADOZIE, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Your Excellency Madam Secretary-General

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates from COMESA Member States,

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

All Protocol Observed

I would like to begin by expressing the African capacity building Foundation's appreciation to COMESA for the kind invitation to witness the launch of the and Master's Degree Program, a further demonstration of the key role that COMESA plays in knowledge creation in support to regional integration in Eastern and Southern Africa, thus setting the pace for the rest of the African continent.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

COMESA has successfully organized 7 annual research forums since 2014, which guarantees the success of this 8th forum. These forums bring to the fore the critical role that research plays in fostering evidence-based policy making and program implementation in the areas of economics, trade and regional integration. The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) appreciates the role of COMESA i in generating knowledge that is key to promoting innovation and creativity as we rethink our ways of doing business in the wake of the covid-19 pandemic. Though it is a health matter,



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COVID-19 has had far reaching effects on the fabric of most economies in Africa, clearly demonstrating that it is no longer “business as usual” and that innovative approaches to economic management and regional integration need to be applied to ensure that trade activities can be conducted with minimum disruptions. The theme of this conference is therefore timely and speaks to some of the key challenges that the continent faces and aligns to the key areas of the longstanding partnership between COMESA and ACBF.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Since its inception in 1991, ACBF has pioneered in the development of, and support to, think tanks and research institutions across Africa to promote access to and provision of relevant knowledge related to capacity building, with the strong belief that Leveraging knowledge and learning is key in increasing development effectiveness. As such our relationship with COMESA dates back to the early 2000s when ACBF started supporting the COMESA Research unit with the aim of enhancing the capacity of the COMESA Secretariat and member states in such critical areas as trade negotiation, trade policy formulation, and customs union issues and to improve the participation of the private sector and civil society in trade policy and regional integration. This support led to the launch of the Maiden Annual Research Forum in Uganda and today we are at the count of the 8th Forum. We therefore take pride to be associated with these achievements and will continue to support the COMESA Secretariate to strengthen its institutional capacities and member states to deepen regional integration as well as enhance their integration into the global economy.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Beyond the collaborative support to research, ACBF has always put “building strong institutions” at the core of its capacity building interventions in Africa, as we believe



that such institutions are at the heart of Africa's ability to resolve its own development challenges and achieve tangible development results. The effects of the covid-19 pandemic has plainly demonstrated that only strong institutions can survive the tides that threatened development and have the capacity to quickly adjust and adopt new approaches to doing business with agility and resilience.

Since 2019, ACBF has been contributing to enhancing COMESA's organizational performance. The Foundation conducted an organizational and operational performance assessment of COMESA whose overall objective was to map and redesign information and workflows to achieve measurable operational efficiency, and to strengthen performance management of the organization. This exercise resulted in the identification of a number of gaps in the areas of capacity for human resource management, organizational management, procurement, information systems, performance management and monitoring and evaluation. ACBF made recommendations to improve capacity in these critical areas. In addition, ACBF proposed an organizational performance management improvement plan, which provided an opportunity to COMESA's leadership, management and staff to fully embrace and progressively introduce performance management principles in the day-to-day running of the Secretariat. ACBF also contributed to the review of COMESA's organizational structure through the assessment of its Shared values, Strategy, Structure, Systems, Staff, Skills and Style.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

ACBF and COMESA have gone further to conduct a Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) Exercise for the Secretariat, the outcome of which will result in efficiencies by elimination of redundant, paper-intensive and bureaucratic tasks, improvement of product/service quality, and significant reduction of costs. The exercise was carried out

in five stages: Mobilization, Analysis, Envisioning, Delivery and Deployment. This exercise is ongoing and has gone a long way in mainstreaming business processes at the Secretariat and ensure that the Secretariat delivers better on its mandate.

As you will all agree with me, this partnership clearly demonstrates the far-reaching commitment of the COMESA Secretariat to reforms that produce that enhance the capacity of the Institution to deliver quality services to its Member States. As the African Union's Specialized Agency for capacity building, ACBF continues to promote partnership building and networking as key instruments for achieving development goals efficiently to avoid duplication of roles and inefficient competition that undermines effort and hinders progress. Knowledge sharing platforms, like this one organized by COMESA, are key features of this partnership as they breed transformative ideas that lead to evidence based policy formulation and implementation.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

At this juncture, I would like to take this opportunity to renew ACBF's commitment to supporting and partnering with COMESA in areas of mutual interest as we collaboratively advance the continent's transformation agenda. ACBF continues to promote research working with its network of think tanks to ensure that there is adequate evidence base to inform the business transformations propelled by the occurrence of the covid 19 pandemic and ensure that African countries have the needed capacities to build back better.

The Covid19 pandemic has amplified the need for Africa to really focus on its capacity challenges cutting across all sectors and begin to address capacity gaps systematically for better disaster management and preparedness, as well as adopting

smart business methodologies, which are efficient, with limited human interference. The continuous lockdowns have been affecting trade and business activities, pointing to the need to begin to think outside the box and conduct some business activities virtually.

ACBF will continue to develop Africa Capacity Reports, Occasional papers, Development memoirs, and Policy Briefs, to help countries and development partners have requisite data on what is working and not in order to inform subsequent capacity development interventions, in the wake of covid-19, that promote better economic management, trade and regional integration.

While thanking the COMESA Secretariat once again for the invitation, I wish all success to this 8th Annual Research Forum.

I thank you.