

Burundi Reaffirms Support to COMESA



(Left) Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe with President Evariste Ndaishimiye

President Evariste Ndaishimiye of Burundi has reaffirmed his government's commitment and support to COMESA's regional integration agenda and called for deeper trade within the 21 Member States. He has urged the region to focus on implementing programmes that benefit the people by encouraging the growth of businesses and interaction. He said this during a meeting with a delegation from COMESA Secretariat led by Secretary General (SG) Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe in Bujumbura.

The meeting with the Head of State was part of a two-day working visit for COMESA to update the Burundi leadership on ongoing regional programmes and projects. The two leaders discussed several issues on trade facilitation and enhancing collaboration among others. They also reviewed the implementation of COMESA programmes by Burundi which has been a member of COMESA for many years.

"Our government believes in the ideals of COMESA and we are determined to continue working to deepen trade and integration

with the other Member States," said President Ndaishimiye during the meeting held on 18 May 2022 at the Presidential Palace.

Secretary General Kapwepwe used the opportunity to brief His Excellency on the state of integration focusing on programmes that foster inclusive and sustainable development in the region. She also highlighted on areas which Burundi could tap into, to benefit more in the region.

"Burundi can access some of the US\$425 World Bank funds which has a US\$10 million component for capacity building in Member States for their bankable projects in off-grid renewable projects," Ms Kapwepwe said.

Earlier, the Secretary General held bilateral meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation Amb. Albert Shingilo, Minister of Finance Hon. Domitien Ndihoimbwayo and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Tourism and Transport, Madam Catherine Faïda and senior

government officials. Representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and Industries also attended the meeting.

This was the second official visit to Burundi for Ms Kapwepwe as Secretary General. Others in her delegation were the Director of Trade and Customs Dr Christopher Onyango, the Director of Human Resources and Administration Mr Dumisani Banda, COMESA African Union Liaison Officer, Amb. Salvator Matata, SG's Executive Support Officer Maluba Sinyambo and Phillip Kambafwile from Corporate Communications.

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ESREM Project Closes on a High Note



Members of the ESREM PTSC during the project closure meeting in Livingstone

The Enhancement for a Sustainable Regional Energy Market (ESREM) Project is closing on 30th May 2022 after being in operation for the past five years. Through the support of the European Union, the Project has endeavored to create a favorable regulatory environment and tools for regulatory oversight in the Eastern Africa -Southern Africa-Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO) region. This is expected to stimulate increased power trading and bring a new horizon of cross border power trade opportunities for the countries in this region.

As part of the process for project closure, the 8th Programme Technical Steering Committee met from 17 – 18 May 2022 in Livingstone, South of Zambia to review progress achieved and to discuss the closure.

The overall objective of ESREM was to enhance a sustainable regional energy market in the EA-SA-IO region, which would be conducive to investment and sustainable development of the energy sector. The project was also meant to achieve a harmonized, efficient and gender-sensitive regulatory environment and it sought to capacitate regional regulatory associations and power pools to oversee and stimulate increased regional power trade more effectively.

Funded by the European Development Fund (EDF 11) with Seven million Euros, ESREM has been identified as a game-changer that aims to boost regional and cross-border energy trade within the coming years tailored to address the energy needs of the EA-SA-IO region by promoting regional cooperation in energy development, trade and capacity building.

Steered by COMESA, in partnership with five other Regional Economic Communities (RECs) namely EAC, IGAD, IOC, and SADC, ESREM targeted the harmonisation of Energy policy and regulatory frameworks for the region as well as developing the necessary frameworks that will promote investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Speaking at the same event, COMESA Assistant Secretary General Programmes, Amb. Kipyego Cheluget read out ESREM's achievements which included development of 45 reports and guidelines on energy which had been validated by the stakeholders and in some cases, adopted by some RECs for domestication at national level.

Some of the adopted reports include the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Action Plan (REEESAP) for

Eastern Africa-Southern Africa-Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO), Framework for Regulatory Oversight of the EA-SA-IO region, and the Framework and Roadmap for the Transformation of RERA into a Regional Energy Regulatory Authority For SADC.

“This support has demonstrated the commitment of the European Union to enhance the regional energy market in the region which, in turn, will enhance EA-SA-IO region's regional integration agenda and facilitate improvement of the standard of living of the people,” Amb. Cheluget said.

The meeting was attended by partner RECs, the Independent Regulatory Board of the Eastern Africa Power Pool, the Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA), the Southern and Eastern African Power Pool, the European Union delegation to Zambia and COMESA, and the Regional Centers for Renewable Energy and Energy efficiency for East and Southern Africa.



COMESA and UNCTAD Train Customs Experts in ASYCUDAWorld

Twenty-one customs experts from the COMESA Secretariat and eight Member States have completed a three-months training on the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA)World Functional and Technical Courses. ASYCUDA is supplied by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Over the years, the system has evolved through various versions and the current one is known as ASYCUDAWorld. Through ASYCUDA, UNCTAD developed advanced software applications for Customs Administration and the trading community to comply with international standards when fulfilling import, export and transit related procedures.

As of 2022, thirteen COMESA Member States namely Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, DRC, Eritrea, Eswatini, Madagascar, Malawi, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe use different versions of ASYCUDAWorld and one Member State Eritrea is using ASYCUDA++ to facilitate merchandise trade as well as providing national and regional trade statistics.

To support this, COMESA Secretariat working with UNCTAD organised the recent course which enabled participants to share experiences and raise pertinent questions on implementing and enhancing ASYCUDAWorld and customs connectivity in the countries and the region

The training held virtually from 1st March to 20th May 2022 covered all the modules of the ASYCUDAWorld and included theoretical and practical lectures, quizzes and case studies which led to the successful achievement of the objectives of the course.

The interaction and sharing of experiences also stressed the crucial role of capacity building on ASYCUDAWorld to Member States to improve their customs automation management systems and to enhance facilitation of intra-regional trade and revenue collection.

"This is a continuation of our concerted efforts to work together with our partners to support the capacity needs of Member States in implementing and improving customs management systems and inter-connectivity," said COMESA Assistant Secretary General for

Programmes Amb. Kipyego Cheluget.

At the end of the training, participants agreed to establish an online database/platform of Experts in ASYCUDAWorld where they will continue to exchange data and experiences. According to Article 71 (2) of the COMESA Treaty, the simplification, harmonization and standardization of customs regulations, documents and procedures and their computerization will be facilitated by the regional Automated System for Customs Data Centre at the headquarters of the Common Market.

In consideration of this provision and the regional action plan towards the Digital Free Trade Area, COMESA Secretariat and UNCTAD signed a Co-delegation Agreement in 2018 under the European Development Fund (EDF 11) Trade Facilitation Programme to develop and implement a Customs Automation Regional Support Centre (CARSC) and Trade Information Portal (TIP) at the Secretariat. This training on ASYCUDAWorld Functional and Technical Courses is among activities on the development of the CARSC.

Boosting Intra-African Agricultural Trade through Harmonisation of Seed Regulatory Frameworks



Members of the AU Seed and Biotechnology Working Group

With the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, Member States stand to benefit from wider market access for seed trade. This will lead to competitiveness of the seed industry and pricing given the ongoing efforts by the African Union Commission and partner organizations in seed policy and regulatory harmonization on the continent.

Sharing the success story on the status of harmonization efforts in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region, the interim Chief Executive Officer of the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA), Dr John Mukuka, stated that achieving regional seed security, would essentially require Member States to leverage on harmonised regional seed regulatory frameworks that offer opportunity to support and facilitate exchange of germplasm and/or varieties among countries, audit one another's seed production systems including reduction in costs of varietal certification.

Countries with less developed seed systems will access improved varieties from neighbouring countries with better supply system while those States with well-developed seed system will benefit from simplified processes and wider markets. This implies that countries with high comparative advantage in the production of

certain seed crops will be encouraged to produce surplus.

He observed that a functioning seed system is one with seed policy instruments, functional institutions to regulate seed certification, variety release processes, production and distribution channels. He further noted that there were more similarities than differences in the seed trade harmonization efforts among Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa implying that they have a lot in common, and hence it is time to consider continental harmonization in view of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

COMESA's story was shared during the consultative meeting to mainstream advanced genetic improvement innovations into National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIPs) in Nairobi, Kenya on 17 May 2022. The Meeting was organized by the African Union Commission-Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (AUC-DARBE).

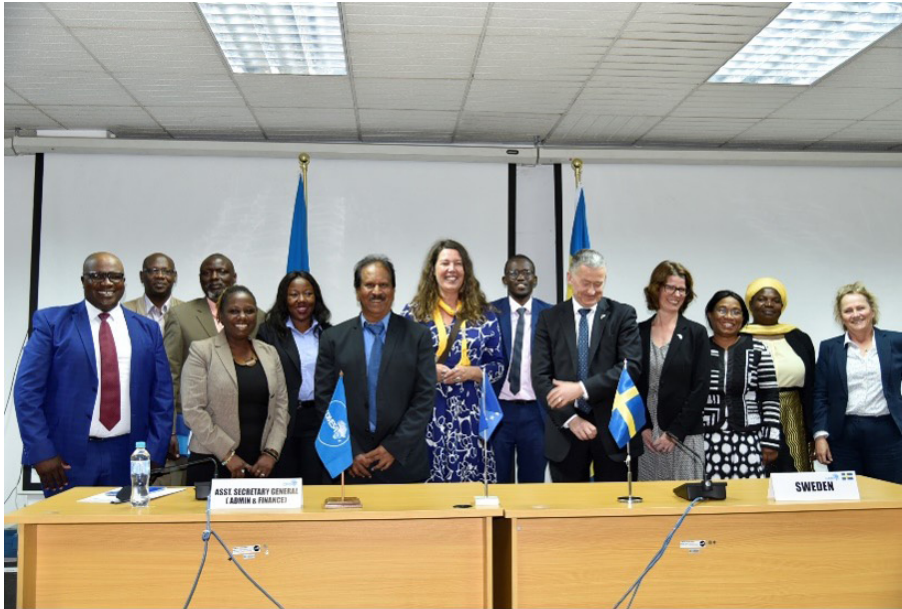
To facilitate achievement of continental harmonization, Ms. Beatrice Egulu, Policy Officer-AUC-DARBE pointed out that Heads of State and Government endorsed the Continental Guidelines for the Harmonisation of Seed Regulatory

Frameworks in Africa during the Summit in February 2022 held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The Meeting further deliberated on how to guide the Member States on the safe application and harnessing of modern biotechnology and emerging technologies including Genome Editing in the field of agriculture. The Meeting noted that these advanced technologies have the potential to improve not only the productivity but also to improve and enhance the nutritional attributes of African staple crops.

The Meeting was also informed that although African countries have shown progress in developing National Regulatory Frameworks (NRFs), many are lagging behind. In this regard, the domestication of the Guidelines on use of Biotechnology in Food and Agriculture in Africa will catalyze collective actions by stakeholders to address existing gaps.

Meeting participants called for stronger collaboration and coordination between AUC and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) with Regional Economic Communities and other development organizations in order to achieve the goal of the ASBPP in line with the theme of the Year regarding strengthening resilience in nutrition and food security in Africa.



Sweden-COMESA to Expand Relations

Acting Secretary General Dr Dev Haman hosted a delegation from Sweden led by H.E. Anna Maj Hultgard on 17 May 2022, who is the Swedish Ambassador to Zambia. The delegation from the National Board of Trade Sweden visited the Secretariat and agreed to explore areas of collaboration in international trade, the internal market and trade policy among other areas. The team was in Zambia on a bilateral mission between the two countries.

Banks Trained on Macro Prudential Shocks to the Financial System

Twenty-Five financial stability experts from eight Central Banks in the COMESA region have been trained on the transmission mechanism of macro-prudential shocks to the financial system. The training held virtually from 9 – 13 May was motivated by the fact that macro prudential shocks have the potential to disrupt the normal credit intermediation channel and may result in a widespread curtailment of credit to bank dependent borrowers. This could then disrupt the entire financial system.

In view of this, the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) organized the training to enhance the capacity of analysing the most important features of transmission channels of macro prudential shocks on the financial system,

especially during periods of extreme widespread financial distress.

The other objective of the training was to deepen understanding of the interdependencies among key financial and macroeconomic variable and the feedback effects thereof.

Speaking during the opening of the training, CMI Acting Director Dr Lucas Njoroge, underscored the importance of understanding the transmission mechanism of macro prudential shocks, to safeguard the financial system against the build-up of systemic risk.

He noted that the training was an important step towards designing appropriate macro prudential

policies as it uncovered the process through which (macro prudential) policy impacts the financial system

“This training and opportunity to share experiences is important as the successful implementation of macro prudential regulations require an accurate assessment of how fast the effects of macro-prudential impulses spread to other parts of the financial system and the timing and size of these effects,” Dr Njoroge added. The training was titled “Transmission Mechanism of Macro Prudential Shocks to the Financial System: Application of Vector Auto Regressions (VAR), Structural VAR (SVAR) and Vector Error Correction Models (VECM).

COMESA Diary

Date	Event	Venue/Format	Responsible Office
23 – 24 May 2022	Zambia – Zimbabwe Joint Industrial Park Meeting	Livingstone	Agriculture and Industry
23–28 May 2022	Southern Africa Civil Society (CSO)/Private Sector/Think Tank Symposium	Malawi	GPS
30 May – 01 June 2022	55th Management Committee Meeting of the COMESA Yellow Card	Nairobi	Yellow Card - RCTG
23–28 May 2022	Southern Africa Civil Society (CSO)/Private Sector/Think Tank Symposium	Malawi	GPS

Photo FOCUS

A COMESA delegation recently undertook a two-day working visit to Bujumbura Burundi to Meet that country's Leadership on matters of regional integration. Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe led the team.



(Left) Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe with President Evariste Ndaishimiye



H.E. President Evariste Ndaishimiye (R) welcomes Director of Human Resources and Administration Mr Dumisani Banda



H.E. President Evariste Ndaishimiye (R) welcomes COMESA AU Liaison Officer, Amb. Salvator Matata



COMESA Delegation led by Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe with Permanent Secretary Madame Catherine Faida (in white) and Directors General in the Ministry of Commerce, Transport, Industry and Tourism




Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe (R) with the Minister of Finance Hon. Domitien Ndihoumbwayo



Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe (L) with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation Amb. Albert Shingilo



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