

## Kenya Elections: AU- COMESA Election Observers Issue Preliminary Statement

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Members of the AU- COMESA joint Elections Observer Mission to Kenya

For the first time, the African Union and COMESA have mounted a joint Election Observation Mission (EOM). The collaboration brought together 93 short term observers who covered 38 out of 47 counties and witnessed the voting process in 504 polling stations during the August 9 General Elections in Kenya. Of these, 59% were in urban areas and 41% in rural areas.

The joint Mission was led by former President of Sierra Leone, Dr Ernest Bai Koroma deputized by Amb. Marie Pierre Lloyd, a member of the COMESA Committee of Elders. On Thursday, August 11, 2022, President Koroma presented a statement of the preliminary findings of the observers, which noted that though highly competitive, the elections were conducted in a comparatively peaceful environment.

"Overall, the atmosphere was largely peaceful. The election day operations were reasonably well-conducted and orderly, and professional. The polling staff mostly adhered to the polling procedures," said President Koroma during a joint press conference with former Tanzania President Jakaya Kikwete, leading the East African Community EOM and former Ethiopian President



AU-COMESA Joint Election Observer Mission leader and former Sierra Leone President Dr Ernest Bai Koroma presents the preliminary statement on Kenya General Elections

**"This comprehensive engagement demonstrated the two organisations' determination and commitment to supporting Kenya's effort to entrench a culture of democracy and peace, which are critical prerequisites for sustainable socio-economic development," President Koroma**

Dr Mulatu Teshome, Mission leader for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

In its assessment, the EOM described the legal framework governing Kenya's elections adequate for conducting credible and democratic elections.

"The framework enshrines a multi-party-political system, regular elections, an independent election management body, national electoral dispute resolution mechanisms, and codes of conduct for stakeholders, including political parties, the media and civil society," said the Mission's statement.

With regard to the election administration and preparations, the Mission noted that the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) strategically communicated with stakeholders through periodic briefings and the use of social media and engaged political parties and candidates to promote peaceful elections by signing a Peace Pledge by the four presidential candidates.

On the campaign environment, the Mission noted that it was vibrant and largely peaceful, with messages centred around socio-economic issues

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# Rwanda Reaffirms its Support of COMESA



COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe with His Excellency Paul Kagame at State House in Kigali, Rwanda

Rwanda has reaffirmed its support of regional integration programmes being implemented by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). His Excellency Paul Kagame said his government believes that integrating African countries is a sure way of attaining economic prosperity and development.

He said this at State House in Kigali on August 2 when he met Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe who was leading a COMESA delegation on a three-day working visit to the country.

The President used the occasion to commend COMESA on making positive advancements in enhancing intra-regional trade by developing various trade facilitation instruments that are being used by the people.

In highlighting the importance of regional programmes, President Kagame reiterated his government's willingness to host the next Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) Summit. The last Tripartite FTA Summit was held in June 2015, in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt when the TFTA was launched.

"The Tripartite is an important milestone to harmonize trade and investment policies and therefore complement and accelerate the

continental integration. COMESA and Tripartite RECs (EAC and SADC) should strengthen mobilization to get additional signatures and ratifications prior to the Summit," President Kagame added.

Secretary General Kapwepwe expressed appreciation to Rwanda for its continued support to COMESA and thanked the Head of State for personally participating in the 21st COMESA Summit and advancing some regional programmes such as the free movement of persons.

"We hail Rwanda for playing a leadership role in promoting movement of persons in the region as it is the key to fostering trade and investments," said Ms Kapwepwe.

In her briefing notes, the SG discussed outcomes from the 21st Heads of State and Governments Summit held in 2021, the COMESA Medium Term Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025, the status of implementation of various programmes and activities on trade liberalisation and customs cooperation, infrastructure development, investment and private sector development. She also talked about agriculture development, gender issues and the digitalization programme among others.

Earlier, the COMESA delegation held meetings with different government ministries including Trade, Home Affairs and International Cooperation. They also met representatives of the Private Sector Federation respectively.

The COMESA delegation was comprised of Director of Trade and Customs Dr Christopher Onyango, Director of Industry and Agriculture Mrs Providence Mavubi, SG's Executive Support Officer Maluba Sinyambo and Phillip Kambafwile from Corporate Communications.

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## Small-Scale Cross-Border Trade Initiative Extended by 31 Months

The European Union (EU) has granted a no-cost extension to the Small-Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative (SSCBTI) programme by 31 Months. The Project will now end in December 2024 from the initial deadline of May 2022.

Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance Dr Dev Haman revealed this in Lusaka during the opening of the third Meeting of the Project Steering Committee for the SSCBTI on 8 August 2022.

The programme has had four years of implementation and has made good progress with tangible successes in working to formalize small-scale cross border trade flows in the COMESA-EAC-SADC tripartite region. Therefore, this extension will allow for implementation of the remaining activities that are pending.

"We had challenges owing to the delays in the recruitment of project staff at the beginning of the programme, coupled with the COVID pandemic which limited physical interactions at Member States level for two years," said Dr Haman. "This programme requires on-the-ground interactions and thus was heavily affected."

Small-Scale cross border trade is significant

in the COMESA region and accounts for 30 or 40% of the total informal trade. In addition, majority of the traders are women. The region also recognizes that this trade provides incomes and a livelihood to many people as they move essential products from areas of surplus to areas of deficit.

The meeting reiterated the importance of small scale cross border trade whose volumes sometimes exceed official customs-recorded trade across entire categories of goods particularly in agriculture.

Hence, the SSCBTI is working to formalize small-scale cross border trade in turn addressing existing challenges such as high transaction costs arising from delays at the border, poor infrastructure at borders, high taxes and high transport costs. The traders also face bribery, corruption and harassment. Having data disaggregated by gender is also important as it will assist the region to fully understand small scale informal trade.

Speaking at the same event, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Zambia Mr Arnaud Bouchard commended COMESA Secretariat for introducing various trade

facilitation instruments which are working to enhance intra-regional trade. He also commended the signing of Sub-delegation Agreements with Member States and called on all other countries that are yet to sign to do so.

"This programme is important to the COMESA region and it is instrumental towards achieving the African Continental Free Trade Area. We therefore need to demonstrate that small scale cross border trade works. I urge you to speed up the implementation because there is likely no other extension," said Mr Bouchard.

The SSCBTI Steering Committee serves as an important conduit for sharing progress on the implementation of the cross-border initiatives taking place in the COMESA region. They also ensure overall policy and strategic guidance and coordination to guarantee a more effective and efficient deliverable of the programme.

The COMESA Cross Border Trade Initiative is funded by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).



ACTESA Chief Executive Officer Dr. John Mukuka (middle) with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation consultants on COMHOP.

## Regional Horticultural Observatory Programme Developed

The Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) has developed the COMESA Horticultural Observatory Programme which will be used to engage multi-stakeholders in the horticultural industry on how to sustainably increase exports, value addition and retention of the industry.

ACTESA, which is the agriculture arm of COMESA, worked closely with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) through international development consultant Rogers MacJohn to finalise the COMESA Horticulture Observatory Programme.

Mr MacJohn's consultancy will prioritise supply and sourcing networks, private sector partners, commodities and investments while assisting the BMGF to establish an ACTESA coordination mechanism to move the regional

horticultural industry forward.

"The focus currently is on three priority commodities namely avocado in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania, onion in Tanzania and Uganda and Irish potatoes in Kenya," said ACTESA Chief Executive Officer Dr John Mukuka.

He added that these crops were selected based on alignment with national priorities, market attractiveness, regional and international potential exports, production capacity and potential impact on the market.

These priority commodity assessments will also help ACTESA identify cross-cutting issues more broadly in the horticulture sector.

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rather than on an ethnic basis as was in the past.

The joint AU-COMESA Election Observation Mission was preceded by the deployment of a joint pre-election assessment mission from 14 May to 21 May 2022, an election expert mission from 25 June to 25 July 2022, and a long-term observation mission from 25 July to 20 August 2022.

"This comprehensive engagement demonstrated the two organisations' determination and commitment to supporting Kenya's effort to entrench a culture of democracy and peace, which are critical prerequisites for sustainable socio-economic development," President Koroma said.

The Mission appreciated the role of the Judiciary in Kenya for guaranteeing the right to a fair hearing of aggrieved citizens and parties during the electoral process.

"Most stakeholders consulted expressed confidence in the Judiciary, as evidenced by the willingness of citizens to approach the courts for adjudication. The Mission notes the establishment of the Judiciary Committee on Elections to adjudicate electoral petitions speedily," noted the Mission leader.

"The Mission notes, however, that last-minute electoral litigations and court decisions necessitated procedural changes, which posed a risk to the smooth implementation of electoral operations, as the IEBC had limited time to communicate and implement the changes."

The Mission urged the people of Kenya to remain peaceful while waiting for the conclusion of the electoral process and the government to continue with efforts to create a conducive environment for peaceful, credible and inclusive elections.

COMESA and the AU have typically maintained high levels of collaboration during election observation missions in Member States, but the Kenya mission was the first fully-fledged joint mission.

The final comprehensive report on the elections in Kenya will be issued later.





# Trade Facilitation Programme Records Notable Progress



Trucks at Kazungula Border

COMESA Member States, through the European Union-backed Trade Facilitation Programme have revised and adopted regulations for the elimination of non-tariff barriers (NTBs), a move which is expected to enhance intra-regional trade. The programme has also supported the development of national elimination strategies for NTBs in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Madagascar and Egypt.

The programme has equally supported Member States to implement selected measures under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, development of the Regional Trade Information Portal and adoption of its standardized guidelines.

Regarding improvement of border management operations, the programme facilitated the signing of Sub-delegation Agreements with six Member States and implementation of activities at the various border posts is gathering pace.

Capacity building activities in the areas of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) has been conducted and the procurement of the much-needed measurement equipment for national metrology institutes has been done.

The programme has also supported meetings for negotiations and capacity building for Trade-in-Services covering both the skills required for negotiations and the collection and analysis of Trade-in-Services statistics for Member States.

This was revealed during the third Project



Steering Committee for the COMESA Trade Facilitation Programme held in Lusaka, Zambia, August 11-12, 2022. The TFP is funded by the European Union under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).

Ethiopia's State Minister for Trade Integration and Export Promotion Hon. Kassahun Gofe called for strategies to fast-track implementation of the programme. He also appealed for more financial support on programmes that will support the integration agenda for the region.

"In addition, I expect to hear from the Secretariat and our partners on the possibilities of increasing more financial and technical support to Member States to implement and sustain the trade facilitation instruments in line with national, regional and international standards," Hon. Gofe stated.

Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Zambia and COMESA, Arnaud Borchard pointed

out that the Trade Facilitation Programme aims to facilitate trade mainly by addressing barriers to trade such as non-tariff barriers, Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures, technical standards as well as border inefficiencies.

He emphasized the importance of trade facilitation to deepen the regional integration in COMESA, the largest Regional Economic Community on the African continent. "The continuous commitment of the EU in supporting the African continent can be proven by the new "continental" Multi-Annual Programme in addition to the ongoing Trade Facilitation Programme," Mr. Borchard pointed out.

Speaking at the same event, Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance Dr Dev Haman thanked the EU for giving a no-cost extension to the programmes at COMESA adding that this will allow the Secretariat and partners to fully implement the projects.

"The extension will provide additional time for activities at Member State level to continue especially those related to provision of infrastructure at border posts and procurement of works and supplies that have longer delivery and implementation timelines," Dr Haman said.

Dr Haman further stated that the interventions being covered under the five result areas of the TFP are key to the attainment of the COMESA goals of addressing obstacles constraining the growth of intra-regional trade (which has remained stubbornly stuck at around 10%).



## COMESA Diary

Date	Event	Venue/Format	Organizer
4 – 20 Aug 2022	Election Observer Mission	Kenya	Governance Peace and Security Unit
21 – 22 Aug 2022	Handing over Border Management Equipment to Government	Mwami/Mchinji Border	EDF Programme
31 Aug – 1 Sept	Regional Media and Communications Workshop	Zambia	Trade Div and Corporate Communications Unit
29 Aug – 2 Sept 2022	Minimum Set of Core Agriculture Data (MSCD) Workshop	Zambia	Statistics Unit
22 – 26 Aug 2022	Quality Assurance Mission to Kenyatta University	Kenya	TradeCom



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