

## Zambia to Host the 22nd COMESA Summit in June



Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe (seated 2nd left) with Hon. Chipoka Mulenga (seated middle) joined by representatives from the Zambian government and COMESA Secretariat after signing the Host Agreement

The Government of the Republic of Zambia has announced that it will this year host the 22nd COMESA Heads of State and Governments Summit on 8 June in the capital Lusaka. The Summit will be preceded by the Meeting of the Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 6 June and the COMESA Business Forum and Exhibition on 7 June 2023.

The Summit follows the COMESA Policy Organs meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee and Council of Ministers which were held in Lusaka in December 2022.

President Hakainde Hichilema of Zambia is expected to take over the Chair of the COMESA Authority from President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt who is the current Chair.

Zambia's Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry Hon. Chipoka Mulenga and Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe revealed this on Tuesday 25 April 2023 in Lusaka during the signing ceremony of the

Agreement for the Hosting of the COMESA Heads of State and Government Summit. The meetings shall be held at the Kenneth Kaunda wing of the Mulungushi International Conference centre.

"I am delighted to inform you that, Zambia will be hosting the 22nd COMESA Summit of Heads of State and Governments on 8th June. Hosting this session is a great opportunity for Zambia to strengthen its role and participation in regional integration," Hon. Mulenga said.

He added that this being the first purely physical summit that is being held post the COVID-19 pandemic, it offers a timely opportunity for the region to show unity and solidarity in the face of the challenges that individual Member States have experienced over the last few years.

Secretary General Kapwepwe commended the President and Government of Zambia for accepting to host the Summit in the process contribute towards

the deepening of the regional integration agenda of COMESA for sustainable development and economic growth.

The theme of the Summit which has been jointly developed by Zambia and the COMESA Secretariat is 'Economic Integration for a thriving COMESA, anchored on green investment, value addition and tourism.'

"This theme acknowledges the need to tackle many of the challenges faced by our continent especially with regard to emerging issues on climate change, regional value addition to move away from the export of raw materials and the need to create additional wealth and jobs," Ms Kapwepwe added.

Over 3,000 delegates from the 21 Member States are expected to participate in the COMESA meetings over the three-day period.



Participants in the Technical Working Group Meeting on the Electronic Single Window in Nairobi, Kenya

## Steps Towards a Regional Customs Single Window

With a membership of 21 countries, trade within the region can be complex involving extensive documentation and coordination amongst multiple agency stakeholders. To overcome this challenge, COMESA has been working with Member States to promote the establishment of an Electronic Single Window (ESW).

A Single Window is a trade facilitative measure in Customs administration that allows parties involved in trade and transport to lodge standardized information and documents with a single-entry point to fulfill all import, export and transit related regulatory requirements.

Towards this end, COMESA Secretariat has been working with the Member States and cooperating partners through a Technical Working Group (TWG-eSW) on the Implementation of a Regional Single Window. The mandate to develop the COMESA Regional Electronic Single Window (COMSW) Project was derived from the decisions of the 26th and the 37th meetings of the Council of Ministers.

Specifically, the 37th Meeting of the COMESA Council of Ministers held in 2017 decided that all the Member States should promote the establishment of an ESW. This would lead to a harmonized and standard data connectivity platform among government agencies and private stakeholders who are active players across the trade supply chain

aiming at improving the intra-regional trade and investment.

In the same decision, the Council directed that Member States and the COMESA Secretariat should work with development partners to develop a regional single window strategy and draw up activities that implement the strategy and embed ESW as a component of national and regional trade facilitation strategy.

On 17 – 20 April 2023, the TWG conducted its second meeting in Nairobi, Kenya with over 50 delegates comprising of IT and legal experts from the COMESA Member States, and cooperating partners including the UNCTAD and UNECA.

The objective was to finalize the revised Draft Regulations for the implementation of the COMESA Single Window, present country status reports on the implementation of National Single Window and the draft Terms of Reference to engage a consultancy firm to assist in developing and implementing COMSW.

Currently, 14 out of the 21 COMESA Member States are implementing their National Single Window system, but at different levels and models. These are Burundi, Comoros, D R Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

COMESA Single Window will be implemented to interface with the National Single Windows of each Member State. Initially it will interface with the 14 currently operational NSWs and the COMSW will readily enable interface as each of remaining States completes implementation. Eventually, COMSW will interact with all the 21 National Single Windows within COMESA. The electronic trade documents to be exchanged by COMSW will consist of licenses, permits, certificates and others in support of cross-border trade transactions.

Addressing the delegates, the Director of Trade and Customs in COMESA, Dr Christopher Onyango, said differences in institutional and legal regimes across Member States complicates implementation of a regional/international Single Window Systems.

"It is commendable that most of the Member States are investing a significant amount of resources to develop and implement national single window and digital instruments to facilitate international trade," he said. "Furthermore, it is highly appreciated that Member States have responded positively to the need for the COMESA regional electronic single window system for interoperability."

The regional Electronic Single Window is part of the implementation of the COMESA Digital Free Trade Area and the Trade Facilitation Programme under the 11th European Development Fund.



# Zambia and Malawi meet to discuss the New STR Common List

COMESA convened a bilateral meeting between the Governments of Zambia and Malawi aimed at discussing implementation of the Simplified Trade Regime (STR) including additional items to be placed on the common list of products.

Other issues discussed included the value threshold for STR and the complexities of some regulatory procedures such as sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures and systematic recording of STR transactions which are important for the regime to work efficiently.

The meeting was held on 13th April 2023 at Chansolo Lodge in Chipata, Zambia.

Speaking during the meeting, Director in the Ministry of Trade and Industry from Malawi Ms. Charity Musonzo said the meeting was held to thoroughly scrutinize the STR so that it reflects the aspirations of small-scale cross border traders.

Ms. Musonzo noted that, although the STR between Malawi and Zambia was aimed at benefitting cross

border traders, there are several challenges that have been recorded while implementing the regime.

These include having few Trade Information Desk Officers (TIDOs) to support cross border traders, increased cost of doing business because priority is given to big traders with large consignments of goods and bureaucratic procedures in obtaining necessary documentation such as import and export permits, phytosanitary certificates, health veterinary certificates. The meeting heard that the fact that there are no updates of the Common list of products poses another challenge.

"The objectives of the COMESA STR are to reduce the cost of doing business for small scale cross border traders, but there are so many impediments to this that is why we are here to iron out these problems," Ms Musonzo said.

The Zambian government noted that since its establishment, the STR was a convenient procedure which offers small scale traders' quick facilitation. It however needs to be improved to smoothen

operations.

Director Foreign Trade at the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Mrs Bessie Chelemu, noted that apart from providing an enabling environment for small scale cross border traders to benefit from the tariff preferences, the STR has the ingredients to stimulate domestic production and cross-border trade.

European Union Development Fund (EDF11) programme manager at the Secretariat Mshuka Kamwela stated that COMESA looks forward to have the STR operational at all common border posts so that small scale cross border traders could enjoy the full benefits of duty and quota free entry of their goods.

"Simplifying and formalizing cross-border trade will help to empower marginalized population groups and make it easier for them to conduct business, earn incomes and also improve their livelihoods and those of their families, she said adding that, "we therefore view the STR as an instrument to help our governments to empower women and the youth,".



Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe signing the MoU with the IOM Regional Director Southern Africa Mr Ashraf El Nour

## COMESA, IOM Sign MoU to Strengthen Cooperation

COMESA and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to build a cooperative working relationship in different areas of common interest which centers on managing migration and related activities in the Eastern and Southern African region. Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe and the IOM Regional Director Southern Africa Mr Ashraf El Nour signed the MoU at the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka on Thursday 20 April 2023.

Other areas in the MoU include border management in the context of regional integration, mainstream/

integrate migration/mobility into the trade agenda, migrant protection within supply chains, recruitment and value chain. The organisations will also collaborate in research on the harmonization of legislation on migration and related matters.

They will establish a comprehensive migration information system in the COMESA region and support the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and regular Migration.

Combating smuggling of migrants and irregular migration, migration health, counter trafficking and

addressing mixed migration are some of the areas of common interest that they will collaborate on.

"We look forward to implementing this MoU because the IOM has been a partner of COMESA for many years having successfully collaborated in different sectors before," Madam Kapwepwe said.

Mr El Nour said his organization values COMESA as a strong regional Economic Community that have been committed to the promotion of economic growth and support for human development among its people.



Participants at the COMESA Institutions CEOs 2nd Annual Retreat in Lusaka

## COMESA and Its Institutions Hold 2nd CEO's Retreat

Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) from eleven COMESA Institutions joined by the Executive Management of COMESA Secretariat held their 2nd Annual Retreat on Tuesday 18 April 2023 in Lusaka where they jointly took stock of the successes achieved as a collective across the Common Market.

The CEOs noted that it was important to look out for opportunities in the Member States, region and continent and provide a stronger, larger and well-resourced front for the Secretariat and its institutions.

Speaking in her address to open the retreat, Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe emphasized the need to remain united and engage strategic partners using one large COMESA voice and not to work in silos.

On another hand, she said the event would help the CEOs identify gaps that exist in the region as the economies are growing and therefore there

are increasing demands from citizens. "Our new working environment is therefore dynamic due to the technologies and innovations. Further, the international financial and geopolitical architecture is fast evolving, requiring COMESA to be alert and responsive," Ms Kapwepwe said.

She highlighted the existing and emerging threats such as the cost of energy, food insecurity and climate change as existential threats which all call for increased coordination and collaboration.

Madam Kapwepwe was quick to point out that there are low levels of visibility of COMESA programmes in the Members States owing to the fact that the institutions have been working in silos and has since called on the secretariat to come up with a joint Communication and visibility plan.

"We need to come up with a visibility plan that

shall allow us to jointly embark on visibility campaigns that will encompass your institutions as well as the COMESA secretariat activities," she said.

The retreat was attended by new CEOs from the COMESA Monetary Institute, COMESA Clearing House, COMESA Competition Commission, COMESA Business Council, the Trade and Development Bank and the African Trade Insurance Agency.

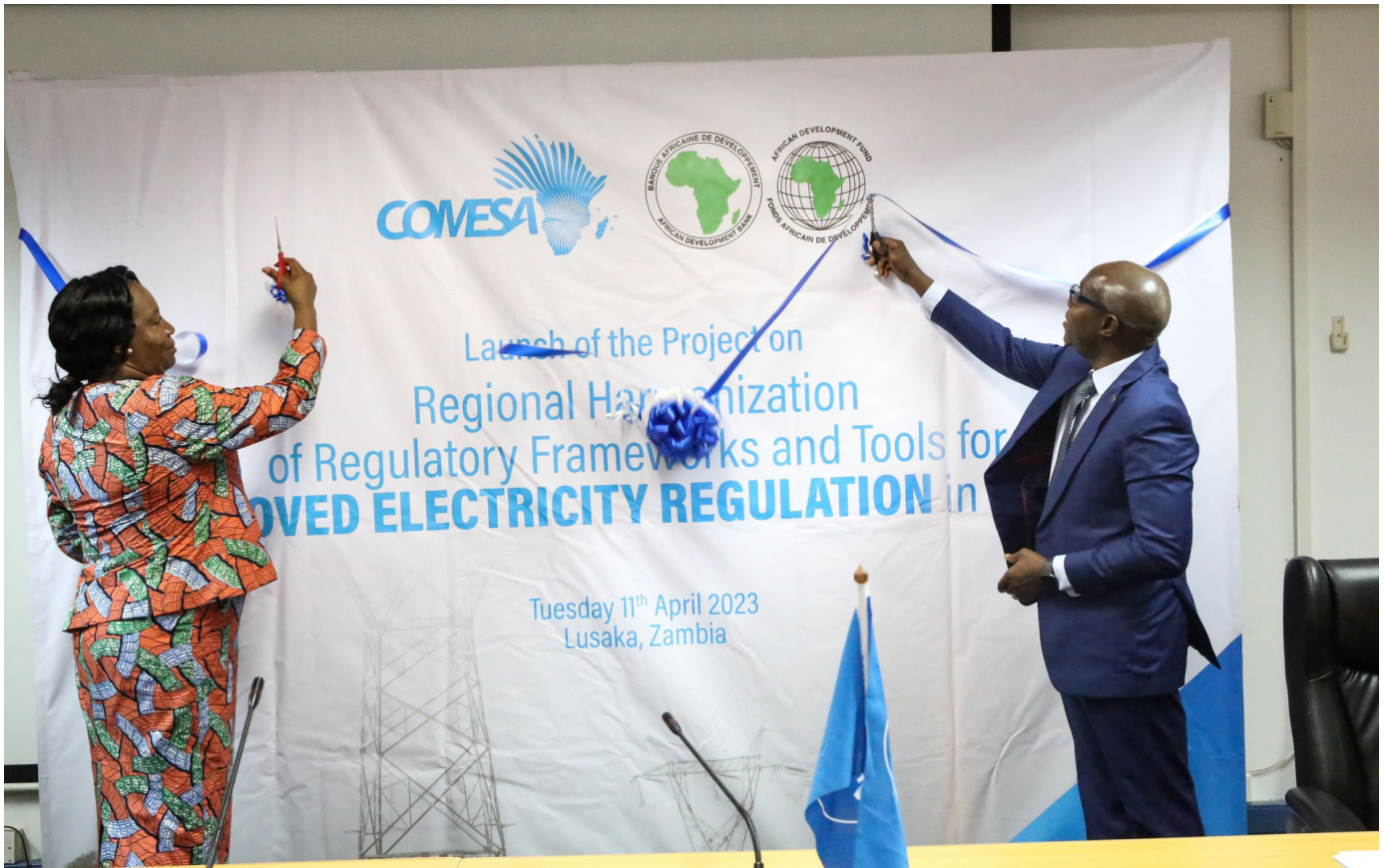
Other CEOs presents were from the African Leather and Leather products Institute, COMESA Court of Justice, the PTA Re-insurance Company (ZEPRE), the COMESA Federation of Women in Business, the Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa and the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa.

### COMESA DIARY

Date	Activity/Event	Venue/ Format
4 – 5 May 2023	10 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations of the COMESA Competition Commission	Lilongwe, Malawi
9 – 12 May 2023	3 <sup>rd</sup> High-level Ministerial Conference on the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in the East African Region	Bujumbura, Burundi
18 – 26 May 2023	Malawi International Trade Fair	Blantyre, Malawi
22 – 26 May 2023	COMESA Ministers of Infrastructure Meeting	Kigali, Rwanda



# COMESA, AfDB Unveil energy improvement project



Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe and AfDB Country Manager, Raubil Durowoju cut the ribbon to signify the launch of the project.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) and COMESA have launched a new regional initiative to enhance the sustainability of the electricity sector in Eastern and Southern Africa through harmonised regulatory frameworks. The AfDB has provided a US\$1.5 million grant for the project through the African Development Fund, the concessional window of the Bank.

The initiative, dubbed "Regional Harmonisation of Regulatory Frameworks and Tools for Improved Electricity Regulation in COMESA," was launched at the COMESA secretariat on Tuesday 11th April 2023. The project aims at creating effective, transparent, uniform and enforceable regulatory frameworks in the region.

Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe and AfDB Country Manager, Raubil Durowoju launched the project.

During the ceremony, it was noted that current electricity access rate in the COMESA region stands at 60 percent, meaning that almost half of the population lacks access to electricity with Egypt having 100% access, while other countries have rates as low as 11% which hampers economic growth, social development and poverty reduction efforts.

Mr Durowoju, said AfDB was committed to

complementing its effort with soft infrastructure initiatives on harmonisation of policy and regulatory frameworks as well as financing key regional power interconnectors across the continent to boost regional electricity trade.

"A consistent and coordinated approach to addressing key regional energy infrastructure deficits, particularly regional interconnections, supported by relevant Institutional, Policy and Regulatory Reforms at the regional level will be required to achieve a fully integrated, competitive, and harmonised electricity market in Africa as envisaged under the African Single Electricity Market (AfSEM) initiative," he said.

Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe pointed out that the Project would focus on improving regulatory and utility performance indicators and also promote transparency and accountability in the sector, leading to more efficient and effective delivery of energy services to our citizens in the region.

"Ultimately, this Project will help to create a conducive environment for investment in energy infrastructure, which will contribute to the wider objective of promoting economic development and poverty reduction in the COMESA region," Ms Kapwepwe stated.

She added that in recognition of the enormous energy challenges in the region, COMESA has prioritized the development of regional energy infrastructure aimed at increasing energy access and ensuring a reliable and affordable supply of energy.

The Project is therefore a critical component of the initiative of development of regional energy infrastructure which will elaborate Regional Electricity Regulatory Principles (RERP), and Regulatory and Utility Key Performance Indicators (UKPI) for countries in COMESA.

It will also standardize data collection, analysis, and reporting procedures to enable effective monitoring of progress. By doing so, the project will help to promote harmonization and convergence of regulatory practices and procedures, thereby reducing regulatory barriers to investment and increasing private sector participation in the energy sector.

Participants to the meeting included representatives of the AfDB, the European Union Delegation to Zambia and COMESA, the Energy Regulators Association of East Africa, and the Regional Association of Energy Regulators of Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA).



Left: Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation from Eswatini, Hon. Senator Thulisile Dladla with Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe

## Eswatini Aplaoud COMESA support

The Kingdom of Eswatini has applauded COMESA's support in enhancing the livelihood of the youths and women in the Kingdom through the construction of the soon to be launched Manzini Trade Hub.

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation from Eswatini, Hon. Senator Thulisile Dladla, who was in Zambia on an official visit indicated that the trade hub is a milestone achievement in easing trading for over 300 handicraft traders and will impact over 400 businesses. COMESA provided Eswatini with more than three million Euros under the COMESA Adjustment Facility in collaboration with the European Union.

The last tranche under this fund was utilized to build the Trade Hub which will also house the COMESA Federation of Women in Business Eswatini Branch.

The Minister, who was speaking when she paid a courtesy call on Secretary General Chileshe


Mpundu Kapwepwe expressed the Kingdom's gratitude towards COMESA and the European Union for providing various support including the construction of the Mphakeni Dam that has helped farmers in the Kingdom with irrigation hence producing crops throughout the year. She said the construction of the Earth Dam at Mphakeni, and installation of irrigation equipment and piping, construction of a cold room and furthermore linking farmers to markets in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives has been very beneficial to the people of Eswatini.

"Among the many projects that have impacted positively on Emaswati and the way that we are able to grow, is the construction of the Inhlanguisela Yabo Make Trade Hub, a modern and multi-purpose trading hub in Manzini, the busiest city in Eswatini. This project, has the affections of, and personal investment through the donation of land from, Her Majesty, the Queen Mother," The minister said.

Secretary General Kapwepwe, welcomed the Minister and thanked the Kingdom of Eswatini for the commitment to regional integration as seen through many activities and programmes that the country is participating in.

She indicated that Eswatini is one of the 16 Member States that received support towards regional integration programmes. Eswatini received €3,019,700 which was used for the construction of the Trade Hub, upgrading to ASYCUDA World and developing the leather value chain among others.

Ms Kapwepwe assured the visiting Minister of COMESA's support towards the lifting of living standards of Women and Youth as envisaged in the Medium-Term Strategic plan for the organisation.

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