

COMESA Hands Over Stewardship of the Tripartite to SADC



From Left: EAC Deputy Executive Secretary Hon. Andrea Aguer Ariik Malneth, COMESA SG Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe and SADC Executive Secretary Amb. Alias Mpedi Magosi

The stewardship of the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) has changed hands with COMESA handing over the chair of the Tripartite Task Force (TTF) to the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The handing over was conducted on 14 July 2023 during the 36th TTF meeting on the sidelines of the 5th Africa Union Mid-Year Coordination Review Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe handed over to her SADC counterpart Amb. Alias Mpedi Magosi.

The TTF is responsible for the coordination of the TFTA programmes, and its leadership rotates among the chief executives of the three regional economic blocs. COMESA took over the chair from the East African Community in July 2022.

Speaking at the function, Ms Kapwepwe underscored the importance of the Tripartite FTA in addressing economic development challenges and fostering Africa's continental economic integration. She highlighted the achievements realized during COMESA's tenure under the three pillars of the tripartite, namely market integration, infrastructure

development and industrial development.

Specifically, under market integration pillar, she said 11 Member States have so far ratified the Tripartite FTA and that only three were required to reach the requisite 14 ratifications. Substantial progress has however been realized under negotiation of Tripartite Rules of Origin and developing of systems to address non-tariff barriers to trade. She emphasized the need to strengthen coordination and collaboration between the TFTA and the AfCFTA processes to avoid duplication of efforts, wastage of resources and possible conflicts.

She thanked SADC and EAC Secretariats for their steadfast support in driving the Tripartite agenda and called for even greater efforts towards enforcement and implementation of various programmes and activities. Moreover, she called upon the technical team to scale-up implementation of various Tripartite activities, for instance the simplified trade regime and the tripartite online non-tariff barriers platform among others.

"This will ensure complementarity and

harmonization with other regional and continental integration instruments," she added.

Amb. Magosi thanked the COMESA Secretary General for the excellent leadership and for laying a strong foundation for its eventual actualization. He underlined the importance of ratification of the tripartite agreement to unlock other activities, including resource mobilization, effective coordination structures and implementation of all the three pillars. Further, he undertook to prioritize the ratification of the Tripartite and affirmed commitment to work with COMESA and EAC.

Present was the EAC Deputy Executive Secretary Hon. Andrea Aguer Ariik Malneth who affirmed EACs commitment to the realization of the objectives of the Tripartite and called for establishment of an effective coordination mechanism.



Burundi stakeholders' awareness workshop on the single African air transport market in Bujumbura

Awareness Campaign Towards Open Skies Concludes in Burundi

The first round of an awareness campaign to enlist regional States that have not yet signed the commitment to establish the single African air transport market to do so, have concluded in Burundi.

The one-month campaign was conducted by COMESA under the Support to the Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) programme. It covered Somalia, Malawi, Seychelles and Burundi between 18 June and 20 July 2023.

Targeted were stakeholders in air transport and related sectors primarily in government and private sector, to create awareness of the establishment of Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) and to underscore its benefits.

The four countries are part of the remaining 16 in Africa that are yet to sign to the SAATM, with 13 being in the region covered by the SATSD programme: the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and the Indian Ocean region.

Since its launch in January 2018, 36 AU Member States have signed up to establish SAATM, which the Burundi Assistant Minister for Transport Industry and Tourism Hon. Kanene Jean Claude described as "a clear indication of the commitment that the continent has on realising the economic growth and integration agenda."

Hon Kanene was speaking during the SAATM awareness workshop in Burundi conducted on 19 – 20 July 2023 in Bujumbura. He underscored the commitment of Burundi during the implementation of the entire Support to Air Transport Sector Development programme.

Outlining the benefits that countries stand to gain from acceding to the single air transport market, the team leader of the SATSD programme Mr Adikiny Olwenge, cited a study conducted before COVID-19 on costs and benefits on "Open Skies" in Burundi.

"There will be an increase in traffic by more than 66%, which will attract more than 9,380 new jobs directly and indirectly and result to an annual increase of 0.19% of the total GDP," he noted.

The study focused on air transport in the East African Region. It highlighted the fact that liberalization will offer a means of restructuring the existing carriers in the region, increasing their profitability by expanding into new markets, accessing a wider pool of investment thus reducing fares and harmonizing taxation of air passengers across the region.

COMESA is spearheading the Support to Air Transport Sector Development programme on behalf of the other regional economic communities, namely East African Community, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Indian Ocean Commission, and the Southern African Development Community. The SATSD is an eight million euros programme funded by the European Union.





Zambia and UNCTAD sign deal to Modernize Customs Procedures

The Government of Zambia, through the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry (MCTI) has signed an agreement with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to modernize customs procedures using the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA).

The ASYCUDA is an integrated customs management system for international trade and transport operations in a modern automated environment. It has advanced software applications which are designed and developed for customs administrations and the trade community to comply with international standards when fulfilling import, export and transit related procedures.

The Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) is a key beneficiary of the system which is being provided under the MCTI Zambia Border Posts Upgrading (ZBPUP) Project, funded under the 11th European Development Fund, COMESA Trade Facilitation Programme.

“This is key to unlocking trade facilitation challenges as it will improve collaboration between border agencies and the private sector thus having goods and services moving and clearing faster and cheaply,” Mr Chaitezvi

The ASYCUDA support to ZRA is valued at €548,000 and will involve strengthening of existing automated customs processes through harmonisation of clearance processes in all customs offices and ensuring that there is adherence to the agreed customs and trade facilitation principles and procedures.

It will involve automation of the remaining processes on the Automated System for Customs Data world system and deployment of new ASYCUDA functionalities. These improvements will be made available and configured with the use of the latest ASYCUDA World version of the software, already deployed at ZRA, so as to maximize the benefits for the customs authority.

Once fully operationalised, it is anticipated that, this support will ultimately speed up customs clearance processes, improve revenue control and reduce legacy related administrative challenges faced by the private sector when utilizing the ASYCUDA world system. Specifically, the latter will involve development of a user-friendly ASYCUDA World system, which will improve access and increase utilisation of the system among the private sector.

According to the EDF 11 Trade Facilitation Programme Team Leader Mr Charles Chaitezvi, Zambia has begun the process of reducing the number of border agencies and encoding Coordinated Border Management principles within the operational framework for border

agencies.

“This is key to unlocking trade facilitation challenges as it will improve collaboration between border agencies and the private sector thus having goods and services moving and clearing faster and cheaply,” Mr Chaitezvi said.

More importantly, he added, the move will ensure better connectivity and enhancements in the Information and Communication Technology management systems as a result of this support, which is key to increase intra-regional trade flows of goods, persons and services. This will be done by reducing the costs/delays of imports/exports at specific border posts and reduction of Non-Tariff Barriers across the borders, and overall advance the Coordinated Border Management along the corridors.

The ZBPUP is anchored on the Sub-delegation Agreement signed between Zambia and COMESA in November 2022 valued at €6.8 million. The project focuses on improving operational environment through improving the legal and regulatory framework and procedures, enhancing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems and interconnectivity, upgrading of soft border infrastructure and capacity building and sensitisation and awareness related interventions. The three border posts targeted for support in Zambia include Chirundu, Mwami and Nakonde.



The last RECAMP PSC Meeting in Malawi

Taking Stock of the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme

The COMESA Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP), is coming to an end in December 2023. Launched in January 2020, the Programme has been advocating for practical and realistic ways in which to increase private sector participation in the regional and global value chains.

Funded by the EU under the 11th European Development Fund, the RECAMP focused on agro-processing, leather and leather products and horticulture value chains.

"There value chains are crucial to our region not only in promoting trade and value addition, but to further provide an opportunity for creating the much-needed jobs for the women and youths in the region," says the Director of Agriculture and Industry at COMESA Secretariat Mrs Providence Mavubi.

Speaking during the 3rd and final Programme Steering Committee (PSC) meeting for RECAMP held on 3 – 4 July 2023 in Lilongwe, Malawi, Mrs. Mavubi described the programme as crucial in the regional enterprise space as it has helped improve access to markets for Member States.

"It is encouraging that COMESA Member States have continued to prioritise improving

competitiveness, market access and improving the investment climate as a corner stone to growing the regional enterprise across different value chains," she added.

The objective of the four-year initiative was to contribute to the consolidation of COMESA's regional integration by enhancing the competitiveness and market access of the private sector in regional and global value chains.

With two primary result areas, the program has been concentrating on removing barriers to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) access to regional and worldwide markets in the horticulture, agro-processing, and leather and leather goods value chains.

Thirteen member States, namely Comoros, Eswatini, DR Congo, Djibouti, Kenya, Mauritius, Malawi, Uganda, Tunisia, Seychelles, Zambia and Zimbabwe participated in the meeting. The COMESA Secretariat and four of its institutions; The Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA), African Leather and Leather Products Institute, COMESA Business Council, COMESA Federation of Women in Business and the Regional Investment Agency (RIA) which are the implementing partners of the

programme were present.

The meeting provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to interact on matters of mutual interest, take stock of the activities implemented since its inception in January 2020, share experiences, and provide overall strategic guidance towards consolidating the effective implementation of pending activities.

Further, the PSC meeting provided an opportunity take stock of the successes and challenged of the different implementation partners undertaking RECAMP activities as well as developing an exit strategy for sustainability of the activities implemented under this action.

Speaking when he officially opened the meeting, Assistant Director at the Ministry of Trade in Malawi, Mr Mufwa Munthali, stressed the importance of the RECAMP to SMEs in the region. He urged Member States to continue building on the established collaboration efforts and address matters related to competitiveness, access to markets and value chains.



Uganda Commences Training of its Law Enforcement Agencies



Uganda has commenced training its Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) on Financial Investigations and Asset Recovery (FIAR). This is in line with a recent COMESA Ministerial decision that underscored the importance of strengthening Anti-Money Laundering (AML)/Countering Financing of Terrorism (CFT) regimes in the region. This will ensure that existing gaps in support to Member States are covered.

According to the Head of Governance, Peace and Security at the COMESA Secretariat Ms. Elizabeth Mutunga, it has been observed that LEAs are generally the weakest link in the recovery of proceeds of crime hence the importance of the training.

"In general, LEAs have been the weakest link in the fight against money laundering globally, which is mostly attributed to their wider mandate that goes beyond the aspects that are important to financial crimes," she added. "We also need to capacitate all jurisdictions to ensure that the criminal activities do

not exploit the weaker jurisdictions to continue with the illegal activities." She was speaking during the opening of the training in Uganda.

The training was officially opened by the Director for Compliance and Training at the Uganda Financial Intelligence Authority (FIA) Mr Samuel Wandera. In his statement, he observed that the LEAs in the country would greatly benefit from the training and that is why his government had requested COMESA for the support.

He further stated that the training would help address the gaps identified in the 2016 Mutual Evaluation Report (MER) for Uganda and would thereby contribute to the concurrent processes of drafting one compound law to standardise Asset Recoveries.

The five-day training on 17 – 21 July 2023 was attended by various stakeholders from the Ministry of Ethics and Integrity, Directorate of Public Prosecutions, Inspectorate of Government, Financial

Intelligence Authority (FIA), Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) and the Uganda Police Criminal Investigations Directorate with its various wings.

While the training was intended to benefit more participants from Uganda, few LEAs from Kenya, Seychelles and Somalia also participated as a way of enhancing coordination, cooperation and communication among the Member States. Similar trainings have been conducted in Zimbabwe and Rwanda.

The FIAR regional trainings have been prompted by the ever-changing trends in financial crimes and other offences which are further complicated by structural vulnerabilities in Member States including gaps in AML/ CFT legal regimes. These include corruption and general limited capacity to investigate, prosecute and recover proceeds of ill-gotten assets and wealth in line with national legislation and international Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Standards.

COMESA DIARY

Date	Activity/Event	Venue/ Format
24 - 28 July 2023	Training of Law Enforcement Agencies on Financial Investigations and Asset Recovery	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
24 – 25 July 2023	14 th Meeting of the COMESA Technical Committee on Gender and Women's Affairs	Virtual
27 July 2023	Ministerial Meeting on Gender and Women's Affairs	Virtual
04 – 16 August 2023	Rwanda International Trade Fair	Kigali, Rwanda
14 - 15 August 2023	First Joint Meeting for Chiefs of Immigration and Commissioners of Labour	Livingstone, Zambia
16 – 18 August 2023	Africa Trade and Customs Week	Kigali, Rwanda
17 August 2023	COMESA Migration Dialogue	Livingstone, Zambia
18 th August 2023	Jointing Meeting of COMESA Ministers Responsible for Immigration & Ministers of Labour	Livingstone, Zambia
17 – 28 August 2023	Joint AU-COMESA Election Observer Mission	Zimbabwe



Participants to the SAATAM Awareness workshop in Mahe, Seychelles

Seychelles Targeted in Air Transport Market Liberalization Programme

A third two-day National workshop to create awareness about the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) to Member States was held in Mahe, Seychelles, on 11 - 12 July 2023. This was the third in a series of workshops whose objective is to enlist regional States that have not yet signed up to establish the SAATM to do so.

Participants at the Seychelles workshop were drawn from the Ministries responsible for transport, trade, finance, tourism and agriculture as well as the Civil Aviation Authority and Seychelles Airlines. Seychelles Minister of Transport Mr. Anthony Derjacque opened the workshop.

In his statement, the Minister stressed the need

to establish an enabling legal and institutional framework at the continental, regional, and national levels, along with the necessary infrastructure that will ensure safe, effective, and efficient air transport systems. This is the prerequisite to operationalize the Single African Air Transport Market.

"This requires putting in place appropriate institutions, infrastructure, and procedures," he said noting that the workshop would strengthen the aviation systems in pursuit of liberalization plans to enhance connectivity and foster regional integration.

Team Leader of the Support to Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) Mr Adikiny

Olwenge, observed that Island States faced many challenges in transport and logistics and shared common features and vulnerabilities such as geographic remoteness that emphasizes the importance of reliable, sustainable and resilient transportation systems, in particular maritime and air transport.

"Once the national awareness raising workshops are completed, the next step is to initiate a programme that will assist the Member States to meet SAATM requirements," he added.

The workshop was conducted under the EU funded SATSD programmes which covers Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean region.



Right: Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe on Thursday 20 July 2023 met the United Nations Economic for Africa (UNECA) Southern Africa Sub-Region Office Director, Ms Eunice Kamwendo at COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka. The two discussed various areas of collaboration which included issues relating to deepening integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).



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