

## COMESA Summit in Zambia - Leaders Close Ranks on **PRIORITY ISSUES**



# Editorial

## New home for COMESA HQs is now within sight



Ben Bella Road in Lusaka is the typical downtown city street characterized by traffic congestion, crowding and general disorder. Swirls of dust and trash and a cacophony of noises from street vendors and public service vehicles rends the air all day long. Calm and quiet prevails when the sun sets, and night claims the space. It is on this street that the Secretariat of COMESA, the largest economic community in Africa has had its permanent headquarters for decades. This location defies the general expectation of an international diplomatic mission. Such are commonly found in serene, orderly and upmarket environs. Past efforts to move COMESA HQs out of this location have been made, but all have faced headwinds. Could it be that its name: the Common Market has something to do with this destiny!

In 2015, the Zambian government allocated 10 acres of land, near the International Airport to the headquarters project. But funding to develop the facility has kept this project on hold. Now there is light at the end of the mythical tunnel: a commitment from the highest authorities in the land. In their final Communique issued at the recent 22nd COMESA Summit, the leaders called upon the COMESA Secretariat to engage with the host country towards implementation of the project. The call was timely, given that President Hakainde Hichilema of Zambia, is now the Chair of COMESA. Besides, he stated clearly that a new home for the Secretariat will be a priority during his tenure as chair. Now, the COMESA HQs project has acquired the critical ingredient to succeed: the political will at the highest level. So, it is no longer about if but when this long-awaited project will lift off.

*Mwangi G*

## COMESA INSTITUTIONS

COMESA Clearing House  
COMESA Monetary Institute  
Trade and Development Bank  
African Trade Insurance Agency  
COMESA Competition Commission  
PTA Reinsurance Company  
COMESA Regional Investment Agency  
Africa Leather and Leather Products Institute  
COMESA Federation of Women in Business

### Specialized Agencies

Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa  
COMESA Business Council  
Regional Association of Energy Regulators in Eastern and Southern Africa  
East African Power Pool

### Judicial Arm

COMESA Court of Justice

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### EDITORIAL TEAM

#### EDITOR:

Mwangi Gakunga

#### CONTRIBUTORS:

Mwangi Gakunga  
Muzinge Nampito-Chibomba  
Daniel Banda  
Philip Siphon Kambafwile

#### ARTWORK/LAYOUT:

Philip Siphon Kambafwile

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

Philip Siphon Kambafwile  
Daniel Banda,  
Mwangi Gakunga  
Muzinge Nampito-Chibomba

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## Zambia Hosts the 22nd COMESA Summit

The Government of Zambia announced in April that it would host the 22nd COMESA Heads of State and Governments Summit on 8 June in the Capital, Lusaka. Zambia's Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry Hon. Chipoka Mulenga and Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe made the announcement on 25 April 2023 in Lusaka during the signing ceremony of the Agreement for hosting the Summit.

Hon. Mulenga said this being the first fully physical Summit after the COVID-19 pandemic, it offered an 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.

The Summit was 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.

Secretary General 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.

Meanwhile, the theme of the COMESA Summit was unveiled a month ahead of the Summit in May 2023. The theme ***"Economic integration for a thriving COMESA anchored on green investments, value addition and tourism"*** focuses on the activities of the regional bloc for the next one year.

This theme was motivated by the need to address the current regional and global economic and trade dynamics including the effects of COVID-19 which especially affected tourism- dependent economies. Besides, the current geo-politics that continue to affect global supply chains, such as the conflict in Eastern Europe, high debt burdens and extreme weather conditions among others continue to weigh heavily on regional economies.

Hence, the theme was designed to rally

COMESA Member States on key areas of focus in dealing with these challenges to ensure the regional integration agenda remains on track.

The COMESA theme was jointly developed by the host government in collaboration with the COMESA Secretariat. It therefore reflects the focus of the incoming chair of the Summit during his tenure. Each Summit comes with a theme which is maintained until the next Summit. Previous themes have been as follows:

**2021 - 2023:** Building Resilience Through Strategic Digital Economic Integration

**2016 - 2021:** COMESA: Towards Digital Economic Integration

**2015 - 2016:** Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialisation

**2014 - 2015:** Consolidating Intra-COMESA Trade through Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Development;



COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe presenting the state of integration report during the COMESA Summit

# State of Integration Report

## SG Outline Key Achievements

The 22nd COMESA Summit presented an opportunity for the COMESA Secretariat to brief the Heads of State on the state of integration and the milestones that have been covered this far. In a State of Integration Report, Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe detailed the key developments and achievements in the past year focusing on the market integration and physical integration pillars.

Under trade liberalization which falls under market integration pillar, she noted that the membership to the COMESA Free Trade Area has remained at 16 States with four remaining countries; the DR Congo, Eritrea, Eswatini and Somalia at different stages of full liberalisation.

"There was significant increase in COMESA's trade globally and within the region above the pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels," the SG said. "The value of COMESA's total exports to the world

significantly increased by 56% from US\$ 100 billion in 2020 to US\$ 156 billion in 2021. The sectors that contributed to this increase were manufactures, fuels, ores and metals and food."

The value of Intra-COMESA total exports increased by 28% from US\$ 10 billion in 2020 to US\$ 13 billion in 2021. Key exports included palm oil, cement, copper ores and concentrates, beet/cane sugar, live animals and petroleum oils.

Among the largest exporting countries in the COMESA region, were Egypt, DR Congo, Tunisia, Seychelles, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Zambia. They registered a combined increase of 41% in exported manufactured products in 2021 compared to 2020.

On the liberalization of Trade in Services, she highlighted the Secretariat's continued

support to negotiations in six priority areas; business, financial, transport, communications, tourism construction and energy services.

Implementation of trade facilitation instruments to overcome barriers and accelerate intra-regional trade and investments has been strengthened with financial support from European Union, World Bank, African Development Bank, Afrexim Bank, and others.

On the Tripartite Free Trade Area, she said engagement with countries that have not ratified it has been ongoing. The goal is to get three more signatures to attain the required threshold of 14 countries to enable the agreement to enter in force. Currently a total of 26 signatures and 11 ratifications have been received.

In the efforts to strengthen democratic





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The value of COMESA's total exports to the world significantly increased by 56% from US\$ 100 billion in 2020 to US\$ 156 billion in 2021. The sectors that contributed to this increase were manufactures, fuels, ores and metals and food.” Chileshe Kapwepwe

governance, inclusivity and promote peace and stability, she underlined COMESA's continued support towards entrenching good governance which is the foundation of peace and security. Activities under this initiative included mounting observer missions to Member States that have been conducting elections.

The report also highlighted some of the key challenges and constraints that have been experienced in the implementation of programmes. They include slow and delayed domestication of agreed protocols, proliferation of non-tariff barriers, low levels of value addition, slow harmonization/weak coordination of multiple integration arrangements, restrictions to free movement of persons, labour and services and technical and financial constraints.

Going forward, the Secretary General urged Member States to eradicate barriers to trade, allow free movement of people, strengthen connectivity and invest in clean technologies to achieve the desired intra-regional trade and sustainable economic development.



President Hakainde Hichilema (L) and President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi (R) congratulate Dr Mohamed Kadah after taking the oath of office as the new Assistant Secretary General of COMESA in charge of programmes

## COMESA has a New Assistant Secretary General

Dr Mohamed Mansour Kadah is the new Assistant Secretary General of COMESA in Charge of Programmes. He was sworn-in during the 22nd COMESA Heads of State and Government Summit in Lusaka, Zambia on 8 June 2023. Dr Kadah, an Egyptian national, succeeds Dr Kipyego Cheluget of Kenya whose term ended in February this year. He is a career diplomatic and has served in various positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt and diplomatic positions in Africa and beyond.

He has also served as the Egyptian

Ambassador to South Sudan, Deputy Chief of Mission in the Egyptian Embassy in Germany, Yemen and Portugal and Deputy Director for African Organizations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt. Prior to his appointment to COMESA, Dr Kadah served as Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for African Organizations in Egypt.

At COMESA, he will oversee the following programmes: trade and customs, infrastructure and logistics, gender and social affairs, agriculture and industry, information and networking.



Dr Mohamed Kadah (L) takes the Oath of Office aided by the Registrar of the COMESA Court of Justice Hon. Nyambura Mbatia



Ministers of foreign affairs meeting in session

## Foreign Affairs Ministers Push for Resolution of Conflicts in the Region

COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs conducted their 18th Meeting on 6 June 2023 ahead of the COMESA Summit where they lauded the resolution of the conflict in the Tigray region in Ethiopia. They also appreciated progress on Libya in getting back on track towards implementing components of the Ceasefire Agreement.

However, the Ministers expressed concern with the recently witnessed deadly escalation of fighting in Sudan where intense fighting was raging causing death and displacement of many and destruction of key infrastructure.

During the meeting which was opened by Zambia Vice President Mrs Mutale Nalumango and attended by 18 of the 21 Member States of the regional bloc, the Ministers noted the resurgence and escalation of activities of the M23 Movement in the Great Lakes region. This was also discussed as an area of concern that needs more to be done to resolve the issues.

In her statement, the Vice President

commended the Ministers for allocating time to discuss issues of regional democracy, peace and security. She noted that no meaningful integration and sustainable development can be realized in the absence of peace.

“While Africa, and COMESA in particular is making strides in shaping a continent beaming with tremendous progress towards peace and restoration of power to civilian governments, the conflict in Sudan, is indeed regrettable,” she added. “Therefore, it is in COMESA’s interest to ensure that peace prevails at all times because instability anywhere on the continent is instability everywhere.”

The Ministers also reviewed the programmes under the COMESA governance, peace and security programme, and commended efforts to address the root causes of conflict and recognising the impact of climate change on peace and security dynamics.

They appreciated the peaceful conduct of elections in the region and called for the review of electoral

processes to draw lessons and provide recommendations to consolidate democracy across the region.

COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe outlined some of the key programmes being implemented such as the silencing of the guns, enhancing youth participation in governance, support to Member States to strengthen their anti-money laundering efforts and the robust early warning system (COMWARN).

“The positives recorded in the region gives us more incentive to reinvigorate our collective determination to address the issues of conflicts and insecurity in our region because these inevitably accentuates the effects of such global threats,” she said.

The report of the Ministers’ meeting was presented to the 22nd COMESA Heads of State and Government Summit 08 June 2023 in Lusaka, Zambia.





COMESA Business Forum in session

## Business Community Issues 14-Point Plan to Spur Regional Trade

Over 500 regional and international businesses from the 21 COMESA Member States participated in the 16th COMESA Business Forum that took place in Lusaka, Zambia. The forum was a multisectoral platform for the promotion of quality products and services that are currently breaking ground in terms of high value and high demand in regional and international markets, with a focus on the COMESA market.

The one-day forum and exhibition on 7 June 2023 provided an opening for the business community to create opportunities for valuable linkages within the African market. Zambia's Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry Mr Chipoka Mulenga, who was the chief guest described it as most ideal for enabling the private sector to be more effective drivers of industrialization, economic diversification, trade and investment in the region.

Panel discussions by experts, keynote addresses, expo and a high-level roundtable were the key events of the forum whose main outputs were captured in a 14 Point Declaration presented to

the Heads of State and Government at the COMESA Summit. The Declaration covered the following issues in the COMESA region:

On private sector development, the business community called upon COMESA Secretariat and COMESA Business Council Secretariat to collaborate in drafting a regional private sector development strategy.

On digital financial inclusion, they urged Member States (MS) to support the ongoing efforts on the implementation of regional digital retail payment platform for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and to develop and domesticate relevant digital Financial Inclusion policy framework for payment scheme in COMESA region.

On facilitation of implementation of product standards, they called on MS to develop a framework to guide the implementation of product standard and a mutual recognition framework to reduce the barriers to trade that result from multiplicity of compliance requirements with respect to standards.

On enhancement of regional and continental integration, they urged MS to fast track the ratification process of the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement and hasten the development of regional implementation strategy for AfCFTA with full participation of private sector players.

Regarding anti illicit trade, they urged for setting up a regional coordination and cooperation mechanism in the enforcement of legislation and to develop a regional track and trace system for products in COMESA region affected by illicit trade.

On industrialization and value addition they urged MS to fast track the domestication of COMESA Industrialization Policy and Strategy and promote diversification of export products of strategic sectors.

With regard to skills development, they called upon States to revamp the education system to embrace technology i.e digitalization and to build capacity and develop skills among SMEs to enhance

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President Hakainde Hichilema (3rd left) COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe (3rd Right) flanked by the media award winner: Hany Fouad Caroline Tomno (L side) and Gerald Tenywa (R) and Rakotomiarintsoa Claude

## Journalists Recognized for Promoting Regional Integration

Four journalists whose works have contributed towards promoting regional integration were recognized and awarded during the COMESA Summit. They included Carolyn Tomno (Kenya), Rakotomiarintsoa Claude (Madagascar), Hany Fouad (Egypt) and Gerald Tenywa of Uganda.

They were picked among 65 entries submitted by journalists from the COMESA Member States. This followed a call for entries made in November 2021. Their winning entries covered various topics including the use of technology to boost agriculture in COMESA region, the effects of climate change and how COMESA strategy on climate change can help address unsustainable charcoal production which was accelerating deforestation in the region.

Chair of the COMESA Authority, President Hakainde Hichilema flanked by Secretary General of COMESA presented the trophies to the journalists.





# Push for Visa Relaxation and Free Movement

COMESA team on a mission to engage government, legislators towards implementing the COMESA Visa Protocol



Dr Suzgo Lungu - Legal Officer, COMESA Secretariat addressing stakeholders in Egypt

A joint team of officers from the COMESA Migration Taskforce on the Free Movement of Persons and the Taskforce on the Implementation of Legal Instruments and Council Decisions was recently in Cairo, Egypt as part of a seven-nation tour to advocate for the implementation of key instruments and decisions that are an integral part of trade facilitation in the region.

Specifically, the team went to engage government ministries and parliamentarians to improve the implementation of the COMESA Visa Protocol for Trade facilitation and to enhance the signature and ratification of the COMESA Protocol on Free Movement of Persons.

COMESA Secretariat Legal Officer Dr Suzgo Lungu, who was part of the delegation said the Secretariat hopes to engage Member States to ensure the implementation of the Treaty and to accelerate the regional integration agenda.

“With missions such as these, we are determined to engage the Member States and encourage them to implement

these key protocols. The two protocols are crucial to moving regional integration forward,” Dr Lungu said.

The consultative mission held on 21 and 22 June 2023 enabled the joint taskforce to discuss in detail the implementation of the COMESA Migration Agenda in the context of the Protocol on the Gradual Relaxation of Visas which is in force, and the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Goods, Labour and the Right of Establishment and Residence.

Members of the Taskforce were appointed in 2011 and in 2013 they visited eight Member States pushing for the same agenda. With support from the European Union, the taskforce has resumed the country engagements with so far Mauritius and now Egypt covered.

The findings from these missions will be presented to the Joint Meeting of Ministers responsible for migration and labour scheduled for August this year.

In Egypt, the delegation was met by Amb. Suha El Gendy, Minister of Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates' Affairs and the Assistant Minister Amb. Emr Abbas.

## Over \$210 Billion Worth of Business Generated in COMESA

The 10 years anniversary celebrations of the COMESA Competition Commission (CCC) were held in Lilongwe, Malawi from 4 – 5 May 2023, an event that headlined key achievements of the commission in the past decade. One of the most outstanding is investigating over 360 merger cases with the companies involved deriving an aggregate turnover of over USD 210 billion, which represents the amount of business generated from the Common Market.

The Commission has also investigated 40 cases of restrictive business practices and 44 consumer cases and intervened to ensure that consumers are not misled nor exploited in the ordinary course of business.

Among the notable cases include the “Investigation into Agreements between the Confédération Africaine de Football, Lagardere Sports SAS, Orange SA and TOTAL SA relating to the commercialization of marketing rights for CAF competitions” and as well the investigation into resale price maintenance by The Coca-Cola Company. Other interventions included consumer product recalls and compensation of passengers for unfair treatment by some regional airlines.

Hundreds of stakeholders representing governments, national competition regulatory authorities, development and cooperating partners local and international delegates from various institutions active in competition and consumer protection law enforcement and related matters attended the festivities.

Activities included a two-day conference

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Guests at the opening of the CCC celebrations with Hon Simplex Chithyola (3rd left) and COMESA SG Chileshe Kapwepwe (3rd right)

**“Mergers and acquisitions are a form of foreign direct investment such that their regulation has direct implications on FDI inflows into the Common Market,” Dr Willard Mwemba.**

*Continued from page 7*

marked by keynote statements from leaders, experts' panel discussions on key issues in competition and consumer welfare matters the launch of the Commission's refurbished website, an exhibition, excellence awards to business reporters and legal practitioners that have supported the CCC.

COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe, Minister of Trade and Industry of Malawi Hon Simplex Chithyola and Chief Executive Officer of the Commission Dr Willard Mwemba were among the keynote speakers.

In her statement, Secretary General noted that despite numerous benefits

of regional trade liberalization, which COMESA promotes, there are also risks of unfair business conduct and exploitation of consumers by unscrupulous businesses.

She said: "The COMESA Member States foresaw this risk and therefore pursuant to Article 55 of the COMESA Treaty agreed to prohibit any practice that negates the objective of free and liberalised trade. Hence the establishment of the CCC to regulate competition and protect consumers within the Common Market on matters that have a cross-border dimension."

Minister Chithyola hailed the achievements of the Commission stating: "Effective implementation and enforcement of regional competition laws can only be realized where there are little or no structural and legal barriers to trade."

He underscored the commitment of Malawi government to support the Commission and announced the offer of land for the construction of its headquarters.

In his speech, Dr Mwemba said

despite the high number mergers and acquisitions investigated, the Commission's approach has always been cautious of the business implications of competition regulation.

"It should also be borne in mind that mergers and acquisitions are a form of foreign direct investment such that their regulation has direct implications on FDI inflows into the Common Market," he noted.

Others that addressed the participants included the chairperson of the Commission Ms. Ellen Ruparanganda and Mr Yahya Bellah, First Under Secretary and Head of Egyptian Commercial Office, representing the government of Egypt.

Meanwhile, the 7th COMESA Business Reporters Forum, which brought together 21 journalists, staff of the Commission and COMESA Secretariat preceded the celebrations. The two-day event 2 - 3 May 2023 is an annual forum for strengthening the capacity of regional journalists to report on the activities of the Commission and the COMESA regional integration agenda.





## Regional Experts Discuss Ways to Improve Livestock Trade

Representatives from 10 COMESA Member States participated in a three-day consultative meeting which took place from 3 - 5 May 2023 in Kenya, to map out ways of enhancing trade and promoting sustainable regional and global value chains by small and medium scale actors in animal and animal products.

The participants were drawn from the government and the private sector as well as regional and world associations. They discussed strategies to strengthen the capacity of producers, producer organisations and other value chain actors. The objective is to enhance competitiveness, value addition and market access.

The delegates also identified the challenges and agreed on the way forward to support small and medium scale dairy, poultry, meat, live animal and leather and leather products producers and value chain actors.

Member States represented at the meeting were the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Somalia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

On the agenda were topical issues including the current situation in the animal and animal product value chain and trade in COMESA. The challenges in maintaining international standards and policy directions were discussed as well as improving standards/sanitary of animal and animal products and activities by Member States in improving trade in dairy and poultry products.

The COMESA region is endowed with huge livestock resources and in 2019, cattle was recorded at almost 170 million, goats at 168 million, sheep at 140 million and camels at 19 million among other animals.

Speaking at the meeting, COMESA Director of Agriculture and Industry, Mrs. Providence Mavubi, said recent studies have found that several Member States within the region face constraints in improving animal and animal products trade.

Major limitations include weak organizational capacity of small-scale operators, post-harvest losses, lack of basic information on the trade, inefficient cross-border trade facilities as animal products are perishable.

"There is need to step up efforts to promote domestic and regional trade, by enhancing competitiveness of products, facilitation/smoothening of cross border trade as well as ensuring wider participation and empowerment of women and youth in the animal and animal product trade sector across the region," she said.

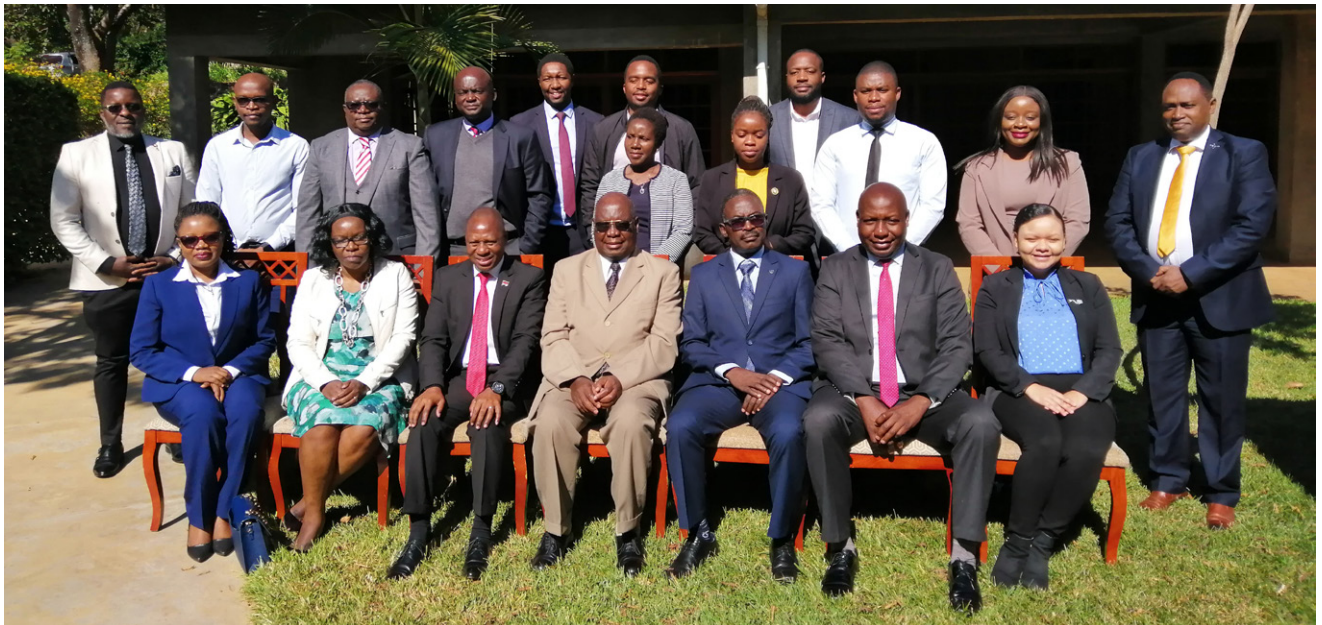
Kenya's Director of Livestock, Dr. Bishar Fille Elmi said the lack of access to markets for animal and animal products has confined livestock keepers and pastoralists to poverty and food insecurity in the region and his country as well.

"Efforts to access regional markets have continued to face many challenges which include stringent Sanitary and Phytosanitary requirements, exotic quality standards, lack of market information, lack of linkages among enterprises in various countries, poor communication networks and inter-connectivity, lack of harmonized procedures and standards, Transboundary Animal Diseases, competition from cheap imports from other region," he noted.

Dr. Patrick Bastiaensen, representing the World Organization for Animal Health said, sourcing of safe and nutritious food of animal origin needs to remain high on the national and the regional agendas for decades to come.

Dr Nick Nwankpa representing the African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources commended COMESA's efforts in promoting the involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the African Continental Free Trade Area.

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**The COMESA region is endowed with huge livestock resources and in 2019, cattle was recorded at almost 170 million.**



*Delegates at the national awareness workshop on the Single African Air Transport Market, conducted in Malawi.*

## Free Air Space: National Campaign to Enlist Member States Underway

COMESA kicked-off a series of workshops to create awareness about the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) in June this year. The initiative sought to enlist regional States that have not yet signed up to establish the SAATM to do so. This will lead to the liberalization of their air transport sector. So far 36 African States have signed with only eight from the COMESA region.

Four countries are targeted in the first round: Somalia, Malawi, Seychelles and Burundi. The first workshop took place in Mogadishu, Somalia, 18 – 19 June 2023, and the second in Malawi on 22 – 23 June 2023. They were conducted under the programme on Support to Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) in Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean Region (EA-SA-IO). SATSD is an eight million euros programme funded by the European Union.

The need for awareness creation on SAATM is informed by the fact that while many air transport markets outside Africa have been liberalized to a significant extent, most intra-African air transport markets remain largely closed.

“This has affected air connectivity within Africa as air travel costs remain prohibitive and continue to limit the potential for economic growth and development in our region,” said

the Secretary General of COMESA Chileshe Kapwepwe in a statement presented by Mr. Francis Okome, Air Transport Policy and Regulatory Expert under the SATSD project.

Inherent fear of domination and competition by big airlines and the need to protect small national carriers was cited as part of the reasons holding back the decision to open the sector.

### **Full liberalization**

Launched in 2018, SAATM provides for the full liberalisation of intra-African air transport services in terms of market access, traffic rights for scheduled and freight air services by eligible airlines thereby improving air services connectivity and air carrier efficiencies.

It removes restrictions on ownership and provides for the full liberalisation of frequencies, tariffs and capacity. It also provides eligibility criteria for African community carriers, safety and security standards, mechanisms for fair competition and dispute settlement as well as consumer protection.

Within the tripartite region of COMESA, EAC and SADC, 13 States have signed the SAATM, which is low compared to the Western part of Africa.

In Somalia, the Deputy Minister of Transport

and Civil Aviation, Mr Mudane Ahmed Jama Omar who opened the workshop underscored the need to establish enabling legal and institutional frameworks that will ensure safe, effective and efficient air transport systems.

“The outcome is therefore very clear in our minds and whatever emanates from this workshop will clearly guide us and strengthen our resolve as a State to actively participate in the continental agenda for the benefit of our generation and the generations to come,” Mr Omar said.

Malawi underscored its commitment during the implementation of the entire Support to Air Transport Sector Development programme. This was in a statement delivered by Mr. Fergus Gondwe, Director of Technical Services in the Ministry of Transport and Public Works on behalf of the Principal Secretary.

“We have established a Civil Aviation Authority and a board of directors is in place. Concurrently we are establishing an airport operator where the Airport Developments Limited will assume management and operations of all public airports in the country,” he said.

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.





Participants at 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.

### Status Reports

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 the national single window (NSW) 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 with each of remaining States as they complete implementation. Eventually, COMSW will interact with all the 21 NSWs 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 funded under the 11th European Development Fund.



## Supporting Member States in Managing Special Economic Zones

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) have become an increasingly popular development tool across the world as they attract Foreign Direct Investments and encourage innovation, productivity and ultimately economic growth. Due to liberal policies related to taxation, trading, quotes, customs and labour regulations, enterprises located in SEZs become more competitive and grow at a faster pace.

It is against this backdrop that the COMESA Industrial Strategy was developed focusing on promoting the SEZs as one of the important enablers for industrialization through enacting key policies. Subsequently a draft COMESA Framework of Managing Special Economic Zones and Industrial Parks was developed and adopted by Member States at a Committee Meeting on Industry in May 2021. It is ready for full domestication or alignment in Member States based on demand.

At least eight COMESA countries are targeted to receive technical assistance on the management of the SEZs and

Industrial Parks (IPs) including Ethiopia, Tunisia, Kenya, Rwanda and others to be identified based on desk study. The support will mainly focus on promoting the operationalization of the COMESA Framework for managing SEZs/IPs.

### Integrated approach

On 11-14 April 2023, COMESA conducted a technical workshop in Nairobi, Kenya which provided an opportunity for Member States representatives to interact and align their national SEZs/IPs policy instruments with the regional framework in a way that promotes an integrated approach towards regional industrialization.

The participants included stakeholders from the private and public sector involved in the implementation of SEZs/IPs in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mauritius, Kenya, Sudan, Seychelles, Ethiopia and Egypt.

Speaking at the workshop, COMESA Director of Agriculture and Industry Ms. Providence Mavubi assured of COMESA's

commitment to work with Member States to ensure that they receive the much need support for the SEZs and IPs.

"With proper management and well-crafted incentives, SEZs can be an important tool for industrialization," She added that Member States need to enact policies and legislation that support the development of SEZs and promote investments in these economic zones.

The meeting also discussed other industrialization enablers related to SEZs which need to be supported including the establishment of industrial parks, export processing zones and free zones that take advantage of economies of scale as a result of expanding markets from regional integration initiatives.

The programme to support COMESA's vision of promoting SEZs in Member States is funded under the 11th European Union Development Fund through the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP).





Delegates at the launch of the CBC e-Portal in Livingstone

## Informal Traders Experience Difficulties in Digital Transactions - Study

The COMESA Business Council (CBC) has launched an online learning portal, the e-Academy aimed at stimulating the entrepreneurial efficiencies and enterprise competitiveness of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the region. This move is expected to deepen intra-COMESA trade.

The launch is a response to a study conducted on the state of national and regional payment systems that found that due to little or no knowledge, informal traders experience great difficulty in carrying out digital transactions that are transparent, affordable, secure and provide access to formal working capital. The e-Academy is an initiative of the CBC's Digital Financial Inclusion Programme.

"Today about 400 million adults in Africa, 60% of whom are women, remain financially excluded. Failing to provide financial services to millions of African adults means limiting their opportunities to escape poverty and increasing their vulnerability to economic shocks," said

CBC's Chief Executive Officer Mr Teddy Soobramanien.

He was speaking in Livingstone, Zambia on Friday 26 May 2023 during the official launch of the platform where over 50 women-run MSMEs were awarded certificates for their completion of a three-day training workshop on Digitalisation Toolkits for Greater Financial Inclusion that preceded the launch.

Further expounding on the programme, the CEO added that the DFI Programme particularly had a keen focus on the empowerment of women and youth in trade, and the customers they transact with at the bottom of the financial pyramid.

The Mayor of Livingstone Her Worship Ms. Constance Nalishebo Mukelabai, who was the Guest of Honor, urged the participants to take full advantage of the e-Academy and learn the right skills, embrace financial digital services and to grow their business.

"The information acquired through this platform will demystify the classical norms of operating small-scale businesses, particularly for those who wouldn't otherwise get equal access to regional markets due to lack of access to knowledge," she stated.

The e-Academy's content has been created in a beginner-friendly, compact, and well-structured approach, that will complement the traditional in-person training courses. The modules are designed to provide instructive, professional, and enjoyable learning experiences, focusing on the thematic areas of, among others, financial literacy, e-commerce, business plan development, negotiation, and sales technique skills development.

More modules, which will be tailored to address the knowledge-gaps of various participants of the COMESA Digital Retail Payments Platform, are on course to be developed.



AfDB Country Manager, Raubil Durowoju (R) and Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe

## COMESA, AfDB Unveil Energy Improvement Project

The African Development Bank (AfDB) and COMESA 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 11 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% 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.

### Utility performance

The Secretary General said 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 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

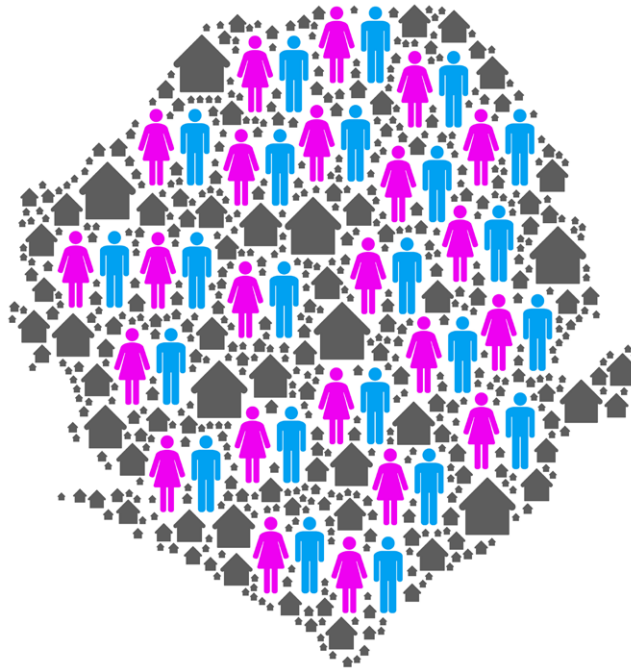
reduction in the COMESA region," Ms Kapwepwe stated.

In recognition of the enormous energy challenges in the region, she said COMESA has prioritized the development of regional energy infrastructure to increase energy access and ensure a reliable and affordable supply. 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).





## Malawi Builds Capacity in Compiling Gender Statistics

COMESA Secretariat in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender in Malawi conducted a five-day national capacity building workshop in June on gender statistics. The aim was to build the capacity of key stakeholders in the country in producing and using timely data for effective policy making.

Speaking during the opening of the workshop, Director of Gender Affairs in Malawi Ms Alice Mkandawire described the training as an opportunity to have crucial stakeholders trained to strengthen the capacity to collect, analyze and disseminate gender statistics. This will assist to collect evidence on progress towards gender equality, contribute to closing persistent gender gaps and to correct gender bias.

According to a 2021 study by UN Women, Malawi, many Government ministries, departments, and agencies which are part of the national statistical system that collect and use gender statistics, do not have adequate capacity, infrastructure, and systems to ensure that quality gender statistics are regularly collected and organized.

“Gender statistics are very important because they are used for evidence-based decision-making in the country and at global level,” she added “It is for this reason that this workshop targeted most sectors that deal with gender issues to inform interventions that would ensure that no one is left behind in the development sector as espoused in the SDGs, “leaving no one behind”.

The workshop had representation from the grassroot women organizations.

Director of Gender at COMESA Secretariat Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde said the regional organization believed that gender equality is central to the process of sustainable development and the foundation of effective national development policies and programs, for which data that reflects economic and geopolitical reality is required by all.

“For us to ensure that our policies align with the national, regional, and continental vision such as the Agenda 2063 of the African Union which informs the development of Medium Term Strategic Plans of Regional Economic

Communities, it is imperative that we are familiar with the legal instruments in the region and especially those related to monitoring and evaluation of progress made in the field of women empowerment,” Mrs Hamusonde said.

The workshop was expected to assist in achieving the result of the COMESA 2021 – 2025 Medium Term Strategic Plan on Strengthened Capacity of Member States to compile gender-sensitive statistics related to COMESA’s regional integration agenda.

The training received financial support from the European Development Fund through the Institutional Capacity Building Programme (ICBP).

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**Gender statistics are very important because they are used for evidence- based decision-making in the country and at global level,” Ms Alice Mkandawire**



*Ethiopian services negotiators and stakeholders attending the COMESA Training Workshop on Trade in Services in Addis Ababa*

## Ethiopia Moves Towards Liberalization of Trade in Services

Trade in Services plays a key role in the economic growth and development of a country. Services directly support production but also value chains and create jobs and other economic and non-economic opportunities.

For Ethiopia, there exist numerous strategic services namely transport (Ethiopia Airlines leads in air connectivity), arts, sports & recreational services. Others are financial, tourism and energy related services.

Over the years, Ethiopia has been undergoing crucial economic reforms in line with regional and international developments. The goal is to gradually, yet effectively liberalize the economy, enhance competitiveness in production and export of goods and services.

Dr Chris Onyango, Director of Trade and Customs in COMESA, says it is in such context that COMESA undertakes to provide technical assistance and capacity building in services to Member States to facilitate the negotiations.

Addressing the Ethiopian services negotiators and stakeholders attending the COMESA Training Workshop on Trade in Services in Addis Ababa, 11 April 2023,

he said this will facilitate speeding up the preparation of the country's services offer.

"It will enable the country to participate fully, not just in the COMESA regional integration, but also in the broad continental and multilateral contexts," he added. "The workshop was therefore critical given the great interest expressed by the Ministry of Trade, Ethiopia, to speed up the stakeholder engagement process as Ethiopia finalizes its services offer in preparation for its submission."

At the training, the officials received practical guidance on how to prepare a Services Offer under the World



*Dr Christopher Onyango*

Trade Organization, COMESA, and the AfCFTA, taking into account the special circumstances of the country.

Going forward, the trained officials are expected develop legal and institutional frameworks, defending the country's interests and positions with the knowledge acquired, on how to mainstream global and regional frameworks on trade in services into national development plans for easier implementation of agreed commitments.

Currently, negotiations on trade in services liberalization programme in COMESA, the AfCFTA and WTO levels are still ongoing. These form an integral part of Ethiopia's national development and by extension regional economic integration. Thus, as a member of COMESA and the other regional economic communities, Ethiopia is expected to play an active role in these negotiations and make specific commitments in various services sector.

The training was funded by the 11th European Development Fund.

“The training will enable the country to participate fully, not just in the COMESA regional integration, but also in the broad continental and multilateral contexts” Dr Christopher Onyango





From left: COMESA ASG Dr Dev Haman, EU Head of Delegation to Zambia and COMESA Mr Jacek Jankowski, Dr George Sinyangwe PS Ministry of Health and Commerce PS Mrs Lillian Bwalya

# Zambia Receives Rapid Test Kits to Facilitate Transit Trade

**The equipment was procured under the COMESA Trade Facilitation Programme**

COMESA handed over equipment worth 227,526 Euros to the Government of Zambia, on 16 June 2023 to be used in facilitating transit trade. They will be used by port health offices and other key border agencies that work on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS) and issues related to Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT).

The equipment includes testing and diagnostic kits for tradable food products.

Commerce, Trade and Industry Minister Chipoka Mulenga, represented by Permanent Secretary at the Ministry, Mrs Lillian Bwalya received the equipment. They are expected to provide solutions towards eliminating impediments to trade at Chirundu, Mwami and Nakonde One Stop Border Posts (OSBP) under the Zambia Border Post Upgrading project.

The equipment was procured under the COMESA Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP), with funding from the 11th European Development Fund. The TFP is a 53 million Euros programme in COMESA, under which a 6.8 million Euros

sub-delegation agreement was signed with Zambia in November 2020.

Mrs Bwalya said that testing of products in Zambia has been highly centralised and is usually done from the provincial centers. Hence the procurement and placement of the kits at the designated borders will enable testing of products without having to send samples to the provincial centers. This will allow for more effective surveillance and result in more effective planning.

“Rapid response in addressing public and plant health concerns such as disease outbreaks due to food contamination and plant diseases will now be detected easily at the point of entry,” she noted.

Assistant Secretary General in charge of Administration and Finance at COMESA, Dr Dev Haman, said the decision to upgrade operational efficiencies at these border posts was partly motivated by inefficiencies identified at the borders.

“Several studies conducted in the region had revealed that border posts on major trade corridors in the COMESA region

were characterized by inefficient clearance procedures that cause delays in the movement of goods leading to increased costs of doing business in the region and consequent lack of competitiveness for regional producers,” he said.

Thus, Zambia being a key transit country in the COMESA region linking many countries to the seaports, any inefficiencies at the country borders affect the whole region.

The European Union Head of Delegation in Zambia and COMESA Mr Jacek Jankowski emphasized the need to remove barriers to trade especially sanitary and phytosanitary related issues as they affect the movement of tradable food products at the borders.

“The sanitary and phytosanitary standards can indeed become technical barriers to trade if proper training coupled with agreed processes at borders do not take place,” he noted adding that the equipment is one of the solutions to eliminate impediments to regional trade.



## Laboratory Quality Systems Education Course



*Dr Mukayi Musarurwa*

Over Sixty lab technicians from all COMESA Member States graduated from a six-month course on Laboratory Quality System (LQS) which is a process approach to ensure accurate, defensible and timely results. This was in April 2023. The online course was part of the continuing education programme by AgriLife Research of the United States of America in collaboration with COMESA Secretariat.

The two organisations signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2022 to support mycotoxin risk management involving aflatoxins and fumonisins for trade commodities and staples.

COMESA advertised the course in August 2022 and asked for applications from individuals in all Member States who had a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Science, Biochemistry, Chemistry or a related discipline. In addition, the would be participants had to be employed and responsible for laboratory operations and analysis.

Nearly 80 applications were received

with each participant indicating why they wished to take the course and how they would apply the knowledge together with a letter of resources commitment from their laboratory.

Participants who completed all course assignments in the four units namely ISO/IEC 17025:2027 laboratory standard, quality control techniques, method validation and laboratory management and scored 70% or higher received a certificate of completion.

Dr Mukayi Musarurwa, the Trade Expert on Technical Barriers at COMESA Secretariat said the participants appreciated the continued access to the materials for use in their laboratories.

"Specifically, they mentioned that they would use the course materials and concepts to improve their laboratories and share the newly acquired knowledge with colleagues," Dr Mukayi added.

## High-Level Ministerial Conference on the Youth, Peace and Security

More than 120 delegates representing young people, governments, regional economic communities and civil society organisations gathered in Bujumbura, Burundi to advocate for more inclusive participation of youths in peacebuilding and conflict prevention in eastern Africa.

The three-day meeting opened on Monday 9 May 2023 with calls from all partners to recognize the strategic role that young people have continued to play on governance issues and how to deepen their role in peace processes in the region.

Burundi Minister of East African Affairs, Youth, Sports and Culture Dr. Ezechiel Nibigira addressed the meeting. He called on governments in East Africa to include young people in national programmes and provide the needed support to achieve the youth aspirations.

"The seemingly low levels of inclusivity of young people in many national programmes, and turning a blind eye to their demands has contributed to some conflicts which could have been easily prevented," he noted. He pledged Burundi government's commitment to work with the young people.

African Union Commission representative for the Great Lakes







The opening session of the High-level Ministerial Conference in Bujumbura, Burundi.

Region and Head of the Liaison Office in Burundi, H. E. Sghair M'bereké said the adoption of the Continental Framework on Youth Peace and Security in 2023 and its 10-year implementation plan, added the much-needed impetus to the empowerment of youth in peace and Security.

"Conflict is multi-dimensional and it requires that a wide range of stakeholders work together to address conflict which must be done in a coordinated manner," he said. "I believe the Continental Framework and its implementation plan have provided the Member States, AU and RECs a very good tool to include a very important stakeholder, the youth, in the quest for peace and security in a coherent manner."

In her statement, the Head of Governance, Peace and Security (GPS) at COMESA Secretariat Ms Elizabeth Mutunga said that RECs, and the Regional Mechanisms are good vehicles to support the empowerment of youth

as they have platforms to encourage sharing of experiences and exchanges on best practice.

"We have found that there is normally a lot of value on youth learning from youth, based on experiences. This makes them good providers of skills to empower the young people," she noted.

The GPS has commenced an internship programme to provide



**The seemingly low levels of inclusivity of young people in many national programmes, and turning a blind eye to their demands has contributed to some conflicts which could have been easily prevented,"**  
**Dr. Ezechiel Nibigira**

hands-on experience to the youth in an environment that supports regional integration and regional peace and security. Ms Mutunga said this has created a symbiotic relationship, where the engaged youth acquire valuable skills, while COMESA benefits from their innovative ideas.

Others that spoke at the event were Mr Geoffrey Kirenga, Save the Children Burundi Mission Director, Angel Mbuthia, the Chair of the COMESA Youth Advisory Panel and Diana Chado, the AU Youth Ambassador for Peace East Africa Region.

The Burundi conference is the third in a series of four conducted in the COMESA Region. The last regional workshop will be for north Africa and will be convened during the second half of 2023.



## Zambia, Malawi Discuss the New STR Common List

COMESA convened a bilateral meeting between the Governments of Zambia and Malawi to discuss implementation of the Simplified Trade Regime (STR) including additional items to be placed on the Common List of products.

The meeting which was held on 13 April 2023 at Chansolo Lodge in Chipata, Zambia also discussed the value threshold for STR and the complexities of some regulatory procedures such as sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures. The systematic recording of STR transactions which are important for the regime to work efficiently were also discussed.

Speaking during the meeting, Director in the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Malawi Ms. Charity Musonzo said 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. The meeting was therefore necessary to

thoroughly scrutinize the STR so that it reflected the aspirations of small-scale cross border traders.

Key challenges include few Trade Information Desk Officers (TIDOs) to support cross border traders, increased cost of doing business as 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. Besides, there are no updates of the Common List of products.

Ms Musonzo noted: "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."

Director of Foreign Trade at the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry of Zambia, Mrs Bessie Chelemu, said

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.

Programme Manager of the 11th European Development Fund (EDF11) at the COMESA Secretariat, Ms. Mshuka Kamwela said, having the STR operational at all common border posts would enable small scale cross border traders to 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. "We therefore view the STR as an instrument to help our governments to empower women and the youth."





## COMESA Region is Largely Peaceful, only a few Areas of Concern

The COMESA region has to a large extent remained stable and peaceful, with a few areas of concern where conflicts have emerged or continue brewing. This was observed during the 18th Meeting of the COMESA Peace and Security Committee conducted virtually on 31 May 2023.

Notable progress towards peace building has been recorded in Somalia, Libya and Ethiopia. For Somalia, the committee noted that stakeholders have resolved the challenges and there is commitment to hold the next elections under universal suffrage.

Ethiopia was commended for settling the conflict in the Tigray region and the progress towards holding national dialogues in June this year. Positive developments were noted for Libya.

Speaking during the opening of the meeting, Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe said despite the impressive progress made in some parts of the COMESA region, there is still need for the Committee to provide the much-needed guidance to maintain stability across the bloc. She cited the situation in Sudan and the Great Lakes region in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo as worrying and detrimental to regional economic integration.

"Despite the impressive progress made in some parts of our region the two developments have caught our attention and re-ignited the urgent need for us to review the conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategies that have been employed in recent times," Ms. Kapwepwe said.

She added that the Secretariat through the Governance, Peace and Security Unit will continue to focus on addressing the economic and structural dimensions of conflicts in the region. This includes efforts to forge strategic partnerships to enhance synergies and maximise the efficient use of resources.

During the one-day meeting, reports were presented on the current peace and security situation, progress made on implementation of the conflict early warning system and implementation of programmes developed to address conflict prevention and management. A report on the implementation of the COMESA component of the regional Maritime Security (MASE) programme was also presented and discussed.

The report of the Committee was presented to the 18th Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 6 June 2023, conducted in Lusaka, Zambia.

## Central Banks Staff Trained on Dynamic Stochastic General Equilibrium Modelling Framework

Seventeen economists representing nine Central Banks from the COMESA region were trained on basic analysis of various monetary policy transmission channels using the Dynamic Stochastic General Equilibrium Modelling Framework (DSGE) in April this year.

The training was organized by the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) on 24 - 28 April in Nairobi Kenya. It provided a platform for knowledge sharing and networking among staff from member apex banks.

CMI Director, Dr Lucas Njoroge said the training on the DSGE modelling for monetary policy formulation particularly in inflation targeting monetary policy regime was critical for the participants as most Central Banks are transitioning to the new system.

"Contemporary monetary policy formulation requires information and forecasts on the interaction between sectors and variables in the economy while underscoring that the DSGE framework is best suited given its richer micro-foundation that captures economic relationships than other comparable models," he said.

Participants were drawn from Burundi, D R Congo, Egypt, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The skills gained are expected to contribute to improved monetary policy formulation and ultimately enhance the implementation of the COMESA Monetary Integration Programme by all COMESA member countries.



*President Lazarus Chakwera meets COMESA SG Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe at the Presidential Palace in Lilongwe*

## COMESA's Programmes have Positively Impacted Malawi - President Chakwera

Malawi President H.E. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera has underscored his government's commitment to continue supporting COMESA institutions based in his country and regional integration programmes being implemented in the region. He was speaking when he hosted the COMESA Secretary General (SG) Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe at the Presidential Palace in Lilongwe on 3 May 2023. The SG was in the country for the 10th Anniversary celebrations of the COMESA Competition Commission (CCC) which is based in Malawi.

The President stated that his administration believes in fair trading practices among sector players in the country which the CCC continues to support this cause through various interventions. Specifically, the President thanked COMESA for supporting government agencies in the country with capacity building programmes conducted by the CCC.

"I'm proud to say that the USD 1.9 million given to the Fair-Trading Commission for capacity building in various government institutions has gone a long way in uplifting the standards of service delivery in the country," said the President.

The SG thanked the President for hosting two COMESA institutions including the COMESA Federation of Women in Business. She assured that COMESA remains committed to always provide the needed support to its Member States and cited the newly commissioned USD 3.5 million Mwami/Mchinji One Stop Border Post between Malawi and Zambia.

She also cited the Malawi Enterprise Productive Enhancement (MEPE) project which has supported the leather, textile and agribusiness sectors in the country whose economic impact has been impressive. The project was

funded by the European Union through COMESA.

COMESA is also supporting the construction of a 300km road to the tune of over USD 42 million under the Africa Investment Facility Grant. COMESA Director of Trade and Customs Dr Christopher Onyango and the Chief Executive Officer of the CCC accompanied the Secretary General.

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**I'm proud to say that the USD 1.9 million given to the Fair-Trading Commission for capacity building in various government institutions has gone a long way in uplifting the standards of service delivery in the country,"**  
**President Lazarus Chakwera.**





Participants attending the CMI training in Kenya, on the Bayesian VAR Approach

## Monetary Institute Rolls out Capacity Building Programmes

The COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) conducted a training on the “Practical Application of Bayesian Vector Auto Regression (BVAR) Approach to the Analysis of Monetary Policy Transmission Mechanism using coding in R software”. The training was organized on 8 - 12 May 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya.

Twelve economists from seven Central Banks of COMESA Member States namely: Burundi, Congo DR, Egypt, Eswatini, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe attended the training. It provided a platform for knowledge sharing and networking among staff from member Central Banks.

The training was intended to enhance familiarity of the Bayesian VAR approach as a tool kit to the analysis of Monetary Policy Transmission Mechanism. This will lead to improvement in the capacity to conduct analytical works in Monetary Policy and Forecasting, deepen understanding

of interdependencies among key macroeconomic variables and the feedback effects thereof, and ultimately enhance the implementation of the COMESA Monetary Integration Programme by all COMESA member countries.

While opening the training, the CMI Director Dr Lucas Njoroge observed that developments in the BVAR approach to the analysis of monetary policy transmission mechanism is fast-gaining traction in recent years because it is more adept at dealing with different data sources or incorporating information from other studies. Besides, it is precise at parameter estimates yet with limited mathematical complexities; and produces more efficient forecasts.

Meanwhile CMI, convened the 3rd meeting of the working group of experts, in Nairobi, Kenya between 17 - 19 April 2023. The objective was to review the existing COMESA Financial

Stability Assessment Framework (FSAF) and prepare for the production of COMESA- wide 2022 Financial Stability Report (FSR).

It was attended by experts from the Central Banks of Egypt, Mauritius, Uganda and Zambia. Dr. Ahmed Sahloul, Assistant Sub-Governor for Banking Supervision, Central Bank of Egypt, who chaired the meeting, noted that the key task in reviewing the existing COMESA FSAF was to identify elements that had become redundant. Based on best practices, improve on the elements of the FSAF that are still a going concern and make new additions to the FSAF and eventually come up with a revised one.

The revised FSAF now awaits submission to the Bureau for approval and thereafter adoption by the COMESA Committee of Governors of Central Banks.



Participants attending the 1st African Trade Portal training in Zimbabwe

## More than 100 Small Businesses Trained on the 1st African Trade Portal

The COMESA Business Council (CBC) in collaboration with the International Trade Centre (ITC) has trained staff from more than 100 firms and public agencies in Eswatini and Zimbabwe on the first continental portal, the Africa Trade Observatory.

The portal is meant to unlock the continent's trade opportunities and is one of the five operational instruments of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to drive intraregional trade of small businesses. The online dashboard

.....  
**"This capacity building initiative is vital and timely as COMESA Member States continue to position themselves for commercially meaningful trade under the AfCFTA," Teddy Soobramanien.**

is critical for helping businesses identify and compare emerging opportunities across the continent. It provides integrated and reliable trade intelligence on international market performance and opportunities as well as market access conditions.

The trainings were conducted on 3 - 5 and 8 - 10 May with support from the 11th European Union Development Fund through COMESA's Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP). Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce and Business Eswatini were also partners in the trainings.

The trainings will also complement other COMESA initiatives such as the COMESA Digital Retail Payments Platform, and the Regional Customs Single Window, according to CBC Chief Executive Officer Mr Teddy Soobramanien.

Speaking during the opening of the training sessions, Mr Soobramanien noted that availability of good quality data is critical for business success in the ever-evolving regional and global economic landscape.

"This capacity building initiative is vital and timely as COMESA Member States continue to position themselves for commercially meaningful trade under the AfCFTA," he said. He observed that small and medium-sized enterprises contribute over 70% to the region's economic growth, hence galvanizing their transition into regional and global value chains is fundamentally important to the regional integration agenda.

So far, similar trainings have been carried out in Zambia, Malawi, Egypt and Ethiopia. Four more are earmarked for the third and fourth quarters of the year in Kenya, Seychelles, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.





*Hon. Senator Thulisile Dladla (L) meets COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe*

## Manzini Trade Hub to be Launched

Eswatini government has applauded COMESA for supporting the enhancement of livelihoods 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, Hon. Senator Thulisile Dladla, said the trade hub is a milestone achievement in easing trading for over 300 handicraft traders and will impact over 400 businesses.

She was speaking when she paid a courtesy call on COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe at the COMESA Secretariat. She expressed gratitude towards COMESA and the European Union for providing support including the construction of the

Mphakeni Dam that has helped farmers in the Kingdom with irrigation hence producing crops throughout the year.

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.

Hon. Dladla said the construction of the dam and installation of irrigation equipment and piping, construction of a cold room and 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 welcomed the Minister and thanked the government of Eswatini for the commitment to regional integration as seen through many activities and programmes that the country is participating in.

“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,” Hon. Senator Thulisile Dladla

Eswatini is one of the 16 Member States that received support towards regional integration programmes. It 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.

# COMESA, IOM Sign MoU to Strengthen Cooperation



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

COMESA and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a cooperative working relationship in areas of common interest centred 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 covered 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. COMESA and IOM will also collaborate in research on the harmonization of legislation on migration and related matters.

Further, 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.

## Malawi Urged to Speed up Joining ZEP-Re

Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe called on the Malawian government to speed up the process of joining the COMESA Re-insurance company ZEP-Re to foster the regional integration agenda. This was during a courtesy call on the Minister of Finance of Malawi Hon. Sosthen Alfred Gwengwe at his office on 5 May 2023 in Lilongwe. Currently, she said 86 percent of ZEP-Re shares are owned by the various governments and government institutions while the rest are owned by private sector players.

ZEP-Re is a highly rated company at B++ by global rating agencies with assets worth 500 billion US Dollars.

The Minister assured that Malawi would speed up the process of joining Zep-Re adding that he is aware of the numerous benefits that comes with joining the institution, more so as



Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe and Malawi Minister of Finance Hon. Sosthen Alfred Gwengwe

Malawi is a founding Member State of COMESA.

"Malawi has been looking elsewhere for the reinsurance services because there has been lack of information on the availability of services from within and therefore, I will engage my team to

discuss further with your team so that we bring this matter to a conclusion," the Minister emphasized.

He added that more capacity building for the government and private institutions on re-insurance and services was needed.





*The 2nd Annual Retreat of COMESA Institutions' CEOs*

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

Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) from eleven COMESA institutions and Members of the Executive Management of COMESA Secretariat held their 2nd Annual Retreat on 18 April 2023 in Lusaka where they jointly took stock of the successes achieved collectively across the Common Market.

The CEOs noted the importance 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. 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".

She said the retreat 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," she stressed.

She called for a joint Communication and visibility plan to raise the visibility of COMESA programmes in the Members States.

"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, Registrar of the 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.



**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," Secretary General.**



Participants at the gender policy workshop in Malawi

## Gender Stakeholders in Malawi, Zimbabwe Trained on COMESA Gender Policy, Instruments

Representatives from different government ministries, Non-Governmental Organisations, Civil Society, women business groups and individuals in Malawi and Zimbabwe have been trained on the COMESA Gender Policy, Implementation Plan and Gender Planning Guidelines.

The training conducted in April this year was intended to empower them to address gender inequalities and contribute to the achievement of gender equality, women empowerment and sustainable development in their respective countries.

In Malawi, the Principal Secretary for Gender, Community Development and Social welfare Mrs Roselyn Makhumula said the training was timely as it coincided with the review of its National Gender Policy and other strategic document, which will now be aligned to the COMESA Gender Policy.

"As Malawi, we have already signed the Charter," Mrs Makhumula said during the opening of the workshop on 17 April 2023.

She said the workshop created awareness in the public sector especially

for policy makers, practitioners, NGOs and the private sector on the COMESA Gender Policy and its instruments such as the Social Charter and other Member States to sign.

She further urged the participants to customize the COMESA documents and understand how they could work for Malawi to assist the women most of whom have continued to earn less compared to men. This is because women are more involved in micro, small and medium enterprises instead of largescale businesses.

In Zimbabwe, the participants were encouraged to strive to understand the COMESA Gender Policy and instruments for them to effectively work on women empowerment and gender equality.

Chief Director for Gender, Policy Planning and Programme Management in the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Mrs Lillian Matsika Takaendisa stated that the ministry was making use of sector specific gender disaggregated data that gives evidence on gender discriminatory laws, policies, institutional setups, practices, societal norms and beliefs.

"Efforts are being made across all sectors to narrow the gender gaps. Gender equality creates the conditions to boost economic development. Women contribute substantially to development and should be given the opportunity to participate effectively," said Mrs Takaendisa during the workshop on 19 April 2023.

According to the 2021 Zimstats Survey, over 56% of SMEs in Zimbabwe are owned by women. However, the majority of female businesses are at the micro level.

Director of Gender at COMESA Secretariat Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde said the workshops were part of the process of engaging governments to make consideration for women in a disadvantaged position to participate in regional trade.

To improve the state of women in the region, she said COMESA Treaty emphasizes that Member States should take action and revise gender discriminatory legal frameworks and policies in different sectors including trade, industry and agriculture sectors.





Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe interacting with one of the patients at the Children's ward

## Making a Difference in Zambia's Biggest Hospital

COMESA Secretariat through the 'Make a Difference Initiative' presented assorted equipment and items to the Hematology Ward at the Children's Hospital based at the University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka.

The donation included adult beds, baby cots, a fridge, heater, microwave and various items all meant to compliment government's efforts in providing quality health care for all. The ward caters for patients with blood disorders aged from two months with the total number of patients going up to 40 at a given time.

Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe led the COMESA team in the initiative as part of Corporate Social Responsibility and handed over the items to UTH management. In the recent past, the Secretariat using the same 'Make a Difference Initiative' supported the COVID-19 intervention by donating face masks and hand sanitisers. In 2020, COMESA provided \$10,000 to support the Children's cancer ward at the hospital.

UTH Children's Hospital Chief Medical Superintendent Dr. Mulaku Mwenechanya commended COMESA Secretariat for the kind gesture and appealed for more support.





COMESA SECRETARIAT  
COMESA Center  
Ben Bella Road  
P.O. Box 30051



+260 211 229 725



[www.comesa.int](http://www.comesa.int)



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