

**COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND
SOUTHERN AFRICA**



**STATEMENT BY
HER EXCELLENCY CHILESHE MPUNDU KAPWEPWE,
SECRETARY GENERAL
AT THE OCCASION OF PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS**

By

H. E Mr. Michael C. Gonzales
USA Ambassador to the Republic of Zambia
Now formally Accredited Special Representative to COMESA

Monday, September 18, 2023
At 14.30hrs, Lusaka time

Your Excellency,

Ambassador Michael C. Gonzales,

United States Ambassador to the Republic of Zambia and Now formally Accredited as
Special Representative to COMESA

The Assistant Secretary General Programmes

Colleagues from the USA Embassy,

Directors, Heads of Units and Staff from COMESA Secretariat,

Members of the Press,

I have the honor to welcome you, Mr Ambassador to the COMESA Secretariat. Let me congratulate you, upon your appointment as Special Representative to COMESA and extend my best wishes in your new role.

Your Excellency,

As you may be aware, COMESA was established in 1994 to succeed the former Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa, that had been in existence since 1981.

Today, COMESA comprises of 21 Member States stretching from Tunisia, in the North to the Kingdom of Eswatini, in the South, making us, one of the largest Regional Economic Community recognized by the African Union. COMESA's principal focus is outward-oriented with the vision of promoting regional integration through trade development, investment promotion and sustainable utilization of natural resources for the benefit of the citizens of the region.

Ambassador, in pursuit of our mandate, COMESA has achieved tremendous success, with the gradual evolvement, through the attainment of the free trade area in 2000 and launching of a Customs Union in 2009. This is a clear testimony to the commitment by our Member States towards increasing trade and investment opportunities, creation of jobs and improving the livelihood of our people through regional integration.

Furthermore, COMESA has developed an industrial strategy which focuses on nine priority areas and these are: agro-food, energy, textiles and clothing, leather and leather products, mineral enhancement, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and agro-chemicals, light engineering and blue economy.

Coming to Cooperation between COMESA and the USA

COMESA and USA have a long standing partnership and have enjoyed cordial relations over the years. In 2022, USA was ranked 6th of the region's export destination markets. The value of COMESA's exports to USA increased by 7% from US\$ 6.3 billion in 2021 to US\$ 6.8 billion in 2022. The value of COMESA's imports from the USA increased by 12% from US\$ 10.4 billion in 2021 to US\$ 11.7 billion in 2022. However, in percentage terms, USA's import market share remained the same at 4% in 2021 and 2022.

Through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), COMESA has been working in partnership with USA since 1994. There have been numerous Agreements and Programmes that have been implemented through this partnership. The most recent one being the Regional Development Objective Grant Agreement signed in 2016.

Several programmes have been implemented under this Grant Agreement in trade and investment, agriculture and food security among others.

Your Excellency, With the support of the USAID-funded Regional Intergovernmental Organization System Strengthening (RIGO-SS) project, we have been able to strengthen the capacity of the COMESA Secretariat to coordinate and facilitate regional integration programmes, such as Business Process Re-engineering of the Secretariat, review of the organizational structure as well as support to strengthen COMESA strategic and operational management and among others. We continue to address the gaps identified during the studies and with your support we will continue to implement the work already started.

Your Excellency,

COMESA participates in the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Events and Meetings. We also attend the UN events in New York and we continue to attend the annual IMF/World bank meetings that are held in Washington DC.

You may be aware, in 2016 COMESA was given the Status of Public International Organization (PIO) classification by the US Government. To further improve on our existing cordial relationship and partnership, COMESA will engage the USA Government with a view to further deepen and strenghten our collaboration and cooperation.

Your Excellency,

As you may have been informed, we have recently been engaged in discussions with USAID discussions, with a view to further extend our cooperation beyond 2023 through support for the implementation of 2-3 projects to be mutually agreed. Is is our hope our continued engagement, will further improve the cooperation between our two organisations.

Your Excellency

As I conclude, I would like to underscore the value that COMESA places on the Cooperation and partnership with the USA. We look forward to strengthening the current cordial relationships even further.

Allow me, once again, to take this opportunity to congratulate you upon your appointment and wish you success in your tenue. You can count on my full support and indeed that of my entire team. I, therefore, formally accept your letters of credence and accredit you as Special Representatives to COMESA.

I thank you for your kind attention.