

COMESA NEWS

Vol 1 | Jan - March 2024

Advancing coordinated border management



- World Bank's \$50m regional platform to accelerate energy access
- COMESA electronic Certificate of Origin set for piloting
- Mobilizing resources for the Zambia- Zimbabwe common agro-industrial park
- COMESA-EAC Horticultural accelerator project rolled-out

Editorial

Electronic Certificate of Origin is finally here



In regional trade, Rules of Origin are considered as passport for goods. They determine whether goods can be exempted from taxes or taxed less under a preferential trade arrangement or free trade area (FTA). Certificates of origin are therefore used to show compliance to the rules. A recent study by UNCTAD and COMESA, showed that the rules can be complex to comply with, especially

for products made using materials from different countries through global value chains. They can make it difficult for products to qualify for trade preferences. That is why, it is so critical that they should be as less complex as possible if regional trade is to flourish. Aware of this, COMESA has been doing something about it since 2014, when the 32nd Council of Ministers decided that Member States should adopt an electronic certificate of origin (eCO) system to replace the manual one. Fast forward to 2024, COMESA Secretariat has developed the eCO and is now ready for piloting in Eswatini, Malawi, and Zambia. It has been long in coming as several things have to be fixed first to enable its implementation. For example, the legal provisions for electronic certificates of origin and for provisions for self-certification; types of self-certification systems applied worldwide; the experiences of other free trade areas on eCO and even amendments to the Protocol on Rules of Origin. With the eCO, the flow of goods in the region can only get better.

Mwangi G

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Trade and Development Bank
African Trade Insurance Agency
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Advancing coordinated border management: strategies for efficiency and competitiveness



Tunduma/Nakonde one stop border post between Tanzania and Zambia

Borders serve as crucial points where various agencies act as gatekeepers to territorial boundaries, with Customs authorities and other border management agencies playing essential roles in community protection. These roles include tax collection, preventing international terrorism, and safeguarding public health and cultural heritage.

However, there is a notable shift towards facilitation and competitiveness through the implementation of Coordinated Border Management (CBM) programs. CBM aims to enhance efficiency and competitiveness by facilitating legitimate trade and travel while ensuring predictable and streamlined clearance procedures.

In the COMESA region, CBM is being implemented under the Trade Facilitation Project, funded by the European Union under the EDF 11 program. Previous efforts to facilitate trade within COMESA

have not yielded significant results, as intra-COMESA trade flows remain low at around 10%. The COMESA Medium-Term Strategic Plan 2021-2025 aims to raise this figure to 25%.

“Effective implementation of CBM is a crucial strategy that can significantly contribute to achieving this ambitious goal,” remarked COMESA Director of Trade, Dr. Christopher Onyango, during his address at the Coordinated Border Management Implementation Workshop held in Lusaka, Zambia, on March 20 – 22, 2024.

The workshop aimed to collaborate with stakeholders to coordinate various activities aimed at enhancing efficiency and competitiveness. This workshop followed the decision of the 42nd COMESA Council of Ministers in November 2021, which adopted regional CBM guidelines and an Implementation Strategy.

These documents were developed to assist member states in implementing CBM, transitioning from national to regional implementation using a standardized approach based on international benchmarks.

“If properly designed, implemented, and adequately resourced,” Dr. Onyango emphasized, “collaborative border management can deliver a range of benefits to governments and the private sector alike.”

These benefits include cost and efficiency improvements, promoting good governance and integrity to meet the increasing policy and procedural requirements at borders. Additionally, there is a growing expectation from the private sector and heightened awareness of costs, leading to political pressure for competitiveness as countries aim to attract trade and tourism.

By developing a regional implementation blueprint, bilateral arrangements for CBM implementation will be simplified, fostering a culture of shared services where collaborative operating models and facilities can be created to deliver strong performance and service delivery.

To date, several interventions aimed at enhancing CBM have been undertaken at selected border posts in the region. These include upgrades to facilities, processes, and procedures at border posts such as Chirundu (Zambia/Zimbabwe), Mwami/Mchinji (Malawi/Zambia), Nakonde/Tunduma (Tanzania/Zambia), Moyale (Kenya/Ethiopia), and Galafi (Djibouti/Ethiopia).



Political will is a key ingredient in developing regional agriculture value chains

COMESA in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) are collaborating to enhance political will and strengthen the capacity of Member States to apply the African Union Guidelines for the Development of Regional Agricultural Value Chains (RAVCs) in Africa.

This is being done under a project: Strengthening Member State capacity to develop RAVCs to promote Diversification and Intra-African Trade. Currently, the project is being piloted in the COMESA region to promote regional value chains of two strategic commodities; maize and dairy in Zambia and Zimbabwe. The aim is to foster agro-processing and support the actualization of the Common Agro Industrial Park (CAIP) initiative which was mooted under the Joint Industrialisation Cooperation Programme between Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Towards this goal, COMESA and UNECA conducted a validation workshop on January 22, 2024, to discuss the recommendation report for strengthening maize and dairy value chains. The report was based on the review of the policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks in Zambia and Zimbabwe and the industrialization and export strategy for maize and dairy products in the two countries.

The workshop was one in a series to be conducted in Zambia and Zimbabwe aimed at providing stakeholders in the maize and dairy value chain an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the two reports. This is in addition to training stakeholders in the two value chains to strengthen their capacities to mainstream regional value chain development in agricultural policies and strategies.

The validation workshop, specifically, aimed at reviewing the draft recommendation report for strengthened maize and dairy value chains based on review of the policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks in Zambia and Zimbabwe. It was also intended to garner feedback from stakeholders on the industrialization and export strategy for maize and dairy products in the two countries and to generate consensus from stakeholders on the next steps to actualize the contents of the two documents.

"The present project is in line with COMESA's Industrialisation Strategy and the two study reports will act as an input into the feasibility study of the proposed CAIP between Zambia and Zimbabwe," said COMESA's Value Chain Expert, Mr. Pardon Njerere. He stressed the importance of securing strong collaboration between the two countries

to realize the desire for cross-border trade expansion and advancing agro-processing.

UNECA's representative Mr. Medhat El-Helepi said an appropriately structured regional agricultural commodity value chains will not only promote cross-border trade and the envisaged Common Agro Industrial Park but also improve food security.

Government officials including Mr. Rich Kaitano, Director of Business Development, Markets & Trade in the Zimbabwe's Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Fisheries and Rural Development and Mr. Brian Ngandu, Director of Policy Planning in Zambia's Ministry of Agriculture addressed the meeting.

Thirty experts representing a broad stakeholders' base, including government, academia, and the private sector attended the workshop.

Going forward, UNECA and COMESA Secretariat will engage Zimbabwe to identify policies and regulations that are in need for amendment in support of maize and dairy value chains across the two countries, and to develop action plan to develop and adopt the validated draft export strategy.



Three States ready to pilot the COMESA electronic Certificate of Origin

Three COMESA Member States; Eswatini, Malawi, and Zambia, successfully integrated and interfaced their national systems with the COMESA Electronic Certificate of Origin (e-CO) system. They are now set to commence the first phase of piloting its implementation.

The COMESA e-CO is a vital component of the COMESA digital Free Trade Area (FTA) Action Plan, which includes e-Trade, e-Logistics, and e-Legislation. The development and implementation of the COMESA e-CO fall under e-Logistics, aimed at facilitating intra-regional trade.

This initiative will eventually replace the manual Certificate of Origin procedures currently in use by Member States. It comes with a web-based e-CO system accessible via web browsers, aligning with the COMESA Protocol on Rules of Origin and its implementation guidelines. The COMESA Secretariat is overseeing the e-CO implementation through

the Divisions of Trade and Customs, and Information, Communication Technology.

From 19 – 21 February 2024, e-CO national focal persons were in Lusaka, Zambia, to meet with the COMESA Project Implementation Team for joint testing of the system integration and exchange of e-CO through the Platform. This was a crucial step in preparing for the pilot phase of the e-CO.

Dr. Christopher Onyango, Director of Trade and Customs at COMESA, highlighted key achievements in implementing the COMESA e-CO. These include the development and adoption by the Council of Ministers of the software life cycle, regulations for e-CO implementation, and amendments to the Protocol on Rules of Origin and its Appendixes. Additionally, the implementation procedures manual and e-CO user guides have been prepared.

National situational assessments were conducted to review the readiness and needs of Member States. Further engagements are ongoing with Member States that have responded to the questionnaire and indicated their readiness. The Secretariat has also aided selected Member States, including Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Seychelles, in preparing their country-specific action plans to interface and pilot the COMESA e-CO system, as well as providing necessary training and support.

During the joint technical meeting, the three Member States provided national status reports on their preparations for piloting the e-CO and shared their experiences with other counterparts. The meeting also agreed on a joint piloting action plan and outlined constructive



COMESA, World Bank launch \$50m regional platform to accelerate energy access

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the World Bank are set to implement a \$50 million regional platform to support COMESA Member States and other participating countries to promote sustainable energy access investments.

This is part of a new World Bank \$5 billion program designed to accelerate sustainable and clean energy access and provide life-transforming opportunities for 100 million people across countries in Eastern and Southern Africa over the next seven years.

The Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation (ASCENT) program will be a game-changer in a region where only 48 percent of the overall population, and just 26 percent in rural areas, has access to electricity.

The new regional platform, under the supervision and implementation of COMESA, will support participating

countries through various initiatives designed to fill the technical gaps identified in the energy sector, particularly with regards to project preparation, investment readiness, technical know-how and energy access.

The platform will engage specialized firms and individuals to provide demand-led technical support in an agile manner to public and private sector entities from participating countries.

It will also have a Digital Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (DMRV) platform which will act as central repository for information on new energy connections resulting from the ASCENT Program in the participating countries. The consolidation of data on the DMRV platform is expected to pave the way for the countries and their energy service providers to gain access to carbon finance through the amalgamation of the carbon credits resulting from clean energy connections.

"This is an African-owned and led platform to enhance project implementation and accelerate access to clean energy through the facilitation of knowledge exchange, project preparation, provision of advisory services and support for policy development in a timely manner," said Chileshe Kapwepwe, Secretary General of COMESA.

"This is essential for the region as availability of clean, reliable and affordable energy is needed to drive the social and economic development of the region, which is crucial for the trade development agenda of COMESA". She urged Member States to engage the Secretariat on how they can be part of the initiative.

The objectives of the new platform and the wider ASCENT program are to provide reliable energy to increase productivity and job opportunities, expand access to information and

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This is an African-owned and led platform to enhance project implementation and accelerate access to clean energy through the facilitation of knowledge exchange, project preparation, provision of advisory services and support for policy development in a timely manner,” Chileshe Kapwepwe

technologies, improve health and reduce time spent on cooking chores, and boost resilience and services provided by electrified schools and health clinics. Women, who are often disproportionately burdened by the lack of energy access, will benefit the most.

“The World Bank is very pleased to partner with COMESA on the energy access agenda as a regional approach is required to meaningfully scale up energy access in a way that can transform economies in Eastern and Southern Africa. We look forward to supporting countries across the region with cutting edge knowledge, research, data, and technology to unleash a rapid expansion of energy access,” said Boutheina Guermazi, World Bank Director for Regional Integration in Africa and the Middle East.

Lack of energy access hinders the region's economic recovery, resilience, and faster progress toward poverty reduction. It is also results in significant food spoilage owing to lack of refrigeration, particularly in countries already plagued with food insecurity, and plays a role in poor health outcomes given that less than half of all hospitals in the region have reliable electricity access.



Horticultural farm in Ethiopia

Horticultural accelerator project rolled-out

Implementation of a new project known as the COMESA- EAC Horticultural Accelerator (CEHA) begun earlier this year. Its main objective is to enhance policy coordination, value chain development, financing, and research and development in the horticulture industry.

Established in 2022 through public and private sector partnerships, and launched in June 2023, the project covers five countries in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa – COMESA and the East African Community – EAC. These are Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

CEHA targets the development of avocado, onion, and Irish potatoes. Its initial activities are supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation with USD 5 million, and the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office providing a total of GBP 500,000.

The CEHA Secretariat is based at the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka under the coordination of the Alliance for Commodity Trade for Eastern and Southern Africa, (ACTESA,) a Specialized Agency of COMESA.

It will facilitate the modernization of regional horticulture value chains by coordinating private sector-led investments, improving policies and standards, and providing access to finance and technical assistance for accelerated growth.

The CEHA Board includes representatives from COMESA, EAC, and private sector entities, with support

from various development partners and observers.

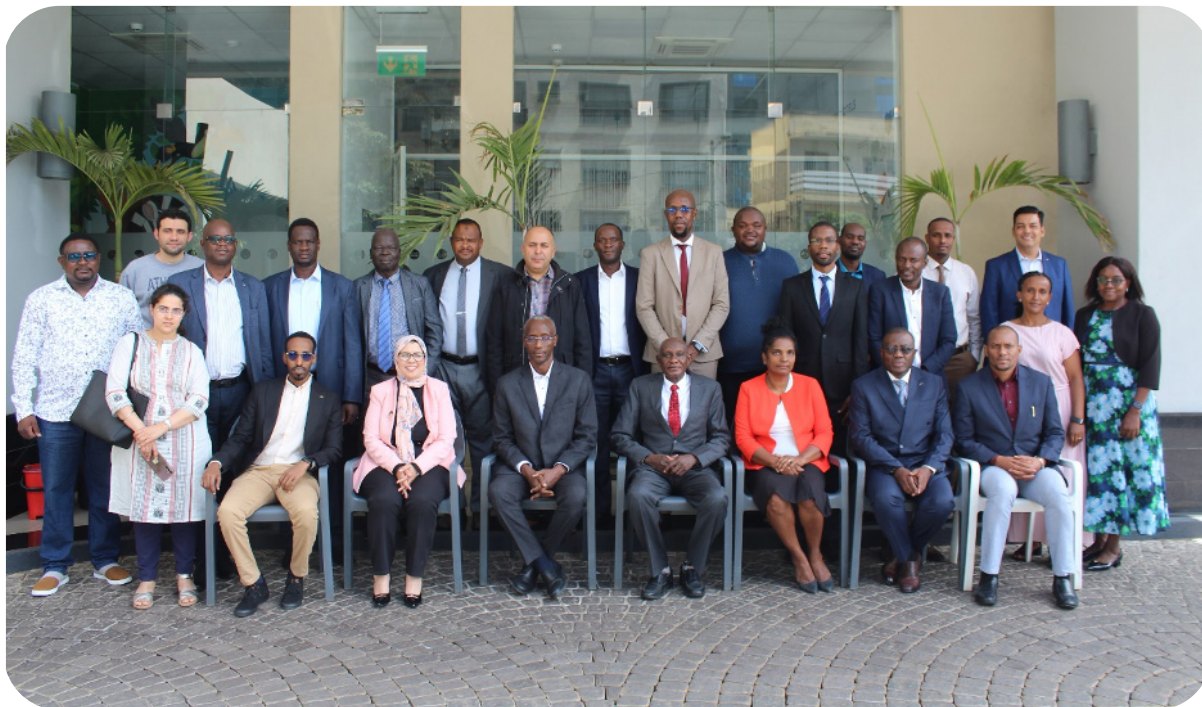
On January 25, 2024, the CEHA team led by Dr. John Mukuka, Chief Executive Officer of ACTESA, paid a courtesy call on the EAC Secretariat. Receiving the team, then EAC Secretary General Dr. Peter Mathuki acknowledged the significant potential of the CEHA initiative in the horticulture sector.

The EAC leadership expressed interest in aligning regional efforts to address critical issues in the horticulture sector, fostering increased incomes and employment opportunities across the COMESA and EAC regions. The meeting focused on formalizing collaborations and partnerships to ensure the effective implementation of the CEHA program.

Key outcomes of the meeting included the EAC assuming co-chairing responsibilities within the CEHA Board. The EAC leadership also highlighted the importance of advancing climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies within CEHA, with a focus on ensuring food security in the region.

The parties discussed establishing a formal communication channel and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for efficient project activity management.

At the meeting were EAC Deputy Secretary-General, Mr Andrea Aguer Ariik Malueth, EAC Director of Planning Mr. Aime Uwase, CEHA Coordinator, Mr. Apollo Owuor and Mr. John Patrick Mwesigye of the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GFA/GIZ).



Regional information technology and energy experts at the inception workshops in Nairobi, Kenya

COMESA leads regional energy regulatory harmonization for enhanced access and trade

Harmonization of regional energy regulatory frameworks is now a priority for the regional economic communities as a critical step in improving reliable and affordable energy access.

Towards this goal, COMESA is leading the implementation of a \$1.5m African Development Bank (AfDB) funded Project on Regional Harmonization of Regulatory Frameworks and Tools for Improved Electricity Regulation in the COMESA region.

The project aims to promote cross-border power trading by advancing intra-regional harmonization of electricity regulations in the region.

Two inception workshops for regional energy stakeholders were conducted back-to-back in Nairobi, Kenya, on 12 – 13 and 14 – 15 March 2024, to develop strategies for harmonization of regulations and developing information management systems (IMS) for the sector.

The first brought together energy experts to evaluate the best approach towards developing regional harmonization of regulatory frameworks and tools for improved electricity regulation in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region.

The second had information technology experts, working in the energy sector to discuss similar strategy for developing an IMS for the Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA). This would enable evidence-based decision-making crucial for the energy infrastructure development of the region.

A consultant that has been engaged to work on this initiative presented the draft inception reports for review, focusing on the proposed approach, methodology, and workplan. Inputs from the experts were incorporated into the plan to facilitate the consultant's finalization and submission of the final inception report. Thereafter, data collection from regional

energy stakeholders will kick off.

The AfDB funded project has three components: Elaboration and Adoption of Regional Electricity Regulatory Principles (RERP), Regulatory and Utility Key Performance Indicators (UKPI) for COMESA; Harmonized Comparison of Electricity Tariffs (HCET) and Cost Reflectivity Assessment Framework Tool (CRAFT); and Development of an Information Management System for the COMESA Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA).

Participants were drawn from 13 regional states that are members of the RAERESA and the Energy Regulators for Eastern Africa (EREA), the regulatory arm of the East African Community States.

Addressing the delegates, Chief Executive Officer of RAERESA, Dr Mohamedain Elnasr said that nearly half of the over 600 million people in the COMESA region lack reliable and

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affordable electricity.

"This disparity is stark with some countries like Egypt boasting near universal access, while others hover around 11%. This situation impedes economic growth, social progress and poverty reduction efforts."

Ironically, Dr Elnasr noted, the region has abundantly diverse and underutilized natural resources, with solar and wind practically present regionwide with geothermal potential flourishing in countries like Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. Similarly, DR Congo, Ethiopia and Zambia leads in significant hydropower resources.

In his remarks, Senior Energy Economist at the AfDB Mr Solomon Sarpong emphasized the need for an integrated regional energy market, urging the stakeholders and the consultant to focus on practical frameworks.

"We want to have something that is implementable and has the stakeholders' buy-in. Let's get it right from the start," he stressed.

Senior Research and Policy Analyst at the Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority, Kenya, Mr Lee Okombe, said beyond the energy infrastructure deficiency, the region faced legal and data management challenges.

"We need to have legal and regulatory frameworks that are aligned to allow for export and import of energy to facilitate regional energy trade."

A conducive regulatory environment and robust energy utilities are expected to attract private players in the sector, foster competition and enhance access to energy.

The IT experts meeting was also addressed by Mr. Callixte KAMBANDA, AfDB Manager for Policy, Regulation, and Statistics and Mr. Alan Gathuru, ICT Manager, Energy, and Petroleum Regulatory Authority of Kenya (EPRA).



COMESA Competition Commission fines CAF for breach of regional regulations

The COMESA Competition Commission imposed a fine of USD\$ 300,000 each on the Confederation of African Football (CAF) and BEIN Media Group LLC (beIN) for breach of the COMESA Competition Regulations. This followed the findings of the Commission's committee responsible for initial determinations (CID) that certain provisions of the beIN Agreements were in violation of Article 16 of the Regulations.

A statement issued by the Commission on 25 January 2024 stated that, the lack of an open tender process for the award of the Pay-TV broadcast rights for CAF competitions resulted in a significant prevention, restriction or distortion of competition within the Common Market.

In 2017, the Commission initiated an investigation against CAF in relation to agreements concluded with third

parties for the commercialisation of rights pertaining to the CAF football competitions.

In 2019, the Commission issued notices of investigation against Lagardere Sports S.A.S and beIN, in connection with two Memoranda of Understanding entered into between Lagardere Sports and beIN in 2014 and 2016 respectively for the commercialisation of media rights of football competitions organised by CAF.

On 22 December 2023, the Commission's CID stated that having regard to the fact that the CAF competitions were held annually or every two years, the duration of the exclusive beIN Agreements were disproportionately long and increased the likelihood of market foreclosure.



Uganda's Minister of Works and Transport Gen. Edward Katumba Wamala (seated middle) with the delegates attending the SAATM workshop

Uganda set to join Single African Air Transport Market

So far, only fourteen countries out of 29 that belong to the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Community (IOC) have acceded to the Single African Air Transport Market, six years since it was launched. This has limited the potential economic growth and development of the region and greatly affected air connectivity within Africa as air travel costs remain prohibitive.

To the contrary, many air transport markets outside Africa have been liberalised to a significant extent while most intra-African air transport markets remain largely closed.

This was communicated during a two-day national awareness workshop on the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) held in Kampala from 29 February to 1st March 2024. The objective of the workshop was to create awareness on the existence of SAATM and underscore its benefits to the people of Uganda,

In his statement during the workshop, Uganda's Minister of Works and Transport Gen. Edward Katumba Wamala acknowledged the importance of the SAATM and called for the establishment

of enabling legal and institutional frameworks at the continental, regional and national levels in order to operationalise the market.

"Apart from proper infrastructure that will ensure safe, effective and efficient air transport systems, he said the region requires appropriate institutions, infrastructure and procedures," he added.

He cited the experience during the Covid-19 outbreak, when international air cargo operations made it possible to maintain the much-needed supply chain operations and distribution of pharmaceutical products efficiently and within the shortest time possible.

As demonstrated during the COVID 19 pandemic, majority of States relaxed rules to permit smooth operations of air cargo services a move which underlined the importance of a vibrant air transport sector.

The Minister announced that Uganda through the Ministry of Works and Transport, jointly with the Uganda Civil Aviation Authority and the Uganda National Airline are committed and optimistic about adopting the SAATM

project and is now ready to present a cabinet paper on the benefits of SAATM to the national aviation industry.

In her address to the meeting, Secretary General of COMESA, Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe appreciated the support of the European Union for its contribution to the development of the air transport sector in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and the Indian ocean region.

"Air transport should be seen as a catalyst not only for tourism, but also for trade and industrialization," she said in the statement read by Chief of Strategic Planning Mr Simal Amor.

The SAATM is implemented under an eight million euros, four-year programme on the Support to Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) financed by the European Union under 11th European Development Fund. It covers four Regional Economic Communities (RECs): East Africa Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). COMESA is the lead REC.



COMESA, EU, Government officials and local leaders attending the groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of the border market.

Construction of a €920,000 border market begins in Zambia

COMESA with support from the 11th European Development Fund has launched the construction of a Euro 920,544 modern border market in Chipata district, Zambia. This was conducted during a ground-breaking ceremony on 15 March 2024.

The project will promote small scale cross-border trade between Zambia and Malawi with plans for construction of a similar market at Mchinji border on the Malawi side underway. This will be implemented in collaborating with the Government of Malawi.

Once completed the two markets will bolster cross-border trade between the two countries and beyond and increase activities at the Mwami/Mchinji One Stop Border Post.

The border markets are part of the Small-Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative (SCBTI), being implemented by COMESA Secretariat through a 15 million euros facility funded by the European Union.

Speaking at the launch, COMESA

Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Dr Mohamed Kadah said the project will enable cross-border traders to benefit from the Simplified Trade Regime and enjoy the ease of doing business.

“The construction of this market transcends the new physical infrastructure to impact the economy of the region,” said Dr Kadah. “It will create more business opportunities, lower trade costs, encourage cultural exchange, improve health and hygienic conditions, encourage better control and management of trade and enhance revenue generation by the regional government.”

Under the SSCBTI programme, four Zambian borders namely, Chirundu, Nakonde, Mwami and Kasumbalesa are benefitting and once these projects are completed, formal small-scale cross-border trade flows will flourish in the Tripartite COMESA, Southern African Development Community and East African Community region.

This will lead to higher revenue collection for governments at the borders and better incomes for small-scale cross-border traders. Other benefits will include enhanced small-scale cross-border trade flows between targeted countries through effective policy and governance reforms, institutional capacity building, improved border infrastructures and better data collection and monitoring.

The launch at Chipata was attended by European Union represented by Ms. Christiane Haziyo who encouraged the Government of Zambia and the Cross-Border Associations to take ownership and oversee the project to completion.

“.....
The construction of this market transcends the new physical infrastructure to impact the economy of the region,” Dr Mohamed Kadah



Permanent Secretary, Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, Uganda, Dr. Aminah Zawedde at the EGEE-ICT workshop

Regional optical fibre regulatory policy and framework validated

The draft Policy and Regulatory frameworks for fibre infrastructures has been validated by close to 50 experts in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector from Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and the Indian Ocean region. These frameworks will help enhance digital development in the region.

During a validation workshop held in Kampala, Uganda from 25th to 27th March 2024, officials acknowledged existing gaps in missing links which result in inefficiency and non-cost-effective utilization of installed capacity in the 29 Member States of the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and the Indian Ocean region (EA-SA-IO).

To promote efficient and cost-effective deployments and use of optical fibre cable infrastructure and services, the European Union funded Programme on Enhancement of Governance and Enabling Environment in the ICT sector (EGEE-ICT), supported several activities of this cause.

The first activity was a study on optical

fibre cable infrastructure, which identified missing links, capital and operational costs associated with fibre networks, and recommended appropriate policy and regulatory interventions to enable efficient and cost-effective utilization and deployment of fibre networks.

The policy and regulatory frameworks will guide the development of national frameworks at a regional and national level and support an enabling environment to accelerate the rollout of fibre-based broadband networks and penetration and use of fibre-based broadband services through effective infrastructure sharing in the EA-SA-IO region.

Additionally, a strategic framework of cooperation was developed to foster regional cooperation for the advancement of cross-border backbone fibre networks in Africa. This was necessitated by the need to improve policies, infrastructure connectivity, and access to ICT and to help the region develop policies and regulatory frameworks for open access and infrastructure sharing.

In this regard, two draft documents were developed to stimulate investments into regional communications infrastructure and improve access to ICT services in the five regional economic communities covered by the EGEE-ICT programme. They are COMESA, East African Community (EAC), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC).

Speaking at the workshop's opening on Monday, 25th March, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, Uganda, Dr. Aminah Zawedde noted that only 37% of Africans were using the Internet. She emphasized the need to improve ICT infrastructure coverage and target the underserved and unserved communities. To bridge the gap, digital infrastructure investments will require 250,000 new 4G base stations and at least 250,000 kilometers of fiber in Africa.

Senior Telecommunications Officer in COMESA, Mr. Leonard Chitundu, stated that the two documents will facilitate the sharing of optical fibre cable infrastructure among operators, leading to a reduction in the macroeconomic cost of fibre deployments, enhanced competition and access, and ultimately, improved affordability of fibre services.

One of the recommendations in the Draft Policy and Strategic Framework is to ensure that infrastructure deployment is encouraged locally and that dominance in national markets is not leveraged detrimentally into cross-border services.

Other partners in the meeting included the East African Communications Organisation (EACO) and the Southern Africa Telecommunication Association (SATA).



European Union Programme Manager, Ms. Christiane Haziyo (L), Ambassador Dr. Mohammed Kadar (R) and other team members visits Mwami-Mchinji One Stop Border Post.

COMESA, EU team visit to Zambia - Malawi border to assess upgrading project

The Mwami-Mchinji One Stop Border Post (OSBP) is among four borders that have undergone significant upgrades with technical and financial support from the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) COMESA Trade Facilitation Programme.

The upgrades include the installation of smart gates, baggage scanners, metal detectors, an advanced mini-lab, rapid testing equipment for Port Health inspectors, biometric web cameras, passport readers, and new furniture.

These enhancements are aimed at boosting border efficiency and reducing the time required to facilitate the import, export, and transit of goods and services at the Zambia-Malawi border post.

The improvements have already shown promising results. Revenue collection at the border has surged from approximately 50 million Kwachas to over 120 million Kwachas, as reported by Assistant Commissioner Alex Malama Chiwama of the Zambia Revenue

Authority. Furthermore, clearance times have plummeted from an average of eight days to just 12 hours.

To assess the impact of the upgrading project, a joint team comprising representatives from COMESA, the European Union Delegation to Zambia, and the Zambian government visited the border on 15th March 2024. Their visit aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the upgrades in enhancing trade facilitation and border operations between Zambia and Malawi.

Steps towards resource mobilization for the Zambia-Zimbabwe common agro-industrial park

The Zambia-Zimbabwe Common Agro-Industrial Park initiative is one of the flagship projects under the COMESA Industrialization Strategy. The programme is also being implemented within the continental framework of the Common African Agro-Parks (CAAPs) initiative, that has been endorsed by the 2024 AU Summit as one of the continental Flagship Programmes.

Mooted in 2019, the Zambia - Zimbabwe joint initiative was motivated by the need to achieve industrialisation in the two COMESA Member States through collaboration and have prioritized the establishment of a Common Agro Industrial Park (CAIP).

As part of the ongoing activities, a joint technical engagement meeting was hosted in Cairo on 15-16 March 2024 with the AFREXIMBANK and the Cote d'Ivoire-Ghana CAAP (CIG Cocoa CAAP), with support of the AU Commission. The objective was to discuss the support needed for the commencement of Zambia-Zimbabwe CAIP.

Specifically, the meeting was designed to facilitate discussions that clarify the technical, political, and legal aspects that are essential for conducting feasibility studies on the project, ensuring preparedness for funding from AFREXIMBANK. It provided an

opportunity to share experiences with the technical teams from the bank and the Cote d'Ivoire-Ghana team.

Director of Industry and Agriculture, COMESA, Ms. Providence Mavubi led the Zambia - Zimbabwe team which comprised of officials from both governments.

Under the Programme, the ZAM-ZIM CAIP and the Cote d'Ivoire-Ghana CAAP (CIG Cocoa CAAP) projects have prioritized for implementation at the continental level with follow up CAAPs to be identified for implementation.



ICT experts endorse draft policy and regulatory frameworks on roaming and interconnections

Stakeholders in the ICT sector have endorsed Draft Policy and Regulatory Frameworks on Roaming and Interconnections aimed at addressing high and uncompetitive tariffs for international mobile roaming in the region and a weak regulatory regime for cross-border interconnections.

This followed a study that was commissioned under the programme on Enhancement of Governance and Enabling Environment in the ICT sector (EGEE-ICT) funded by the European Union.

The validation of the policies and frameworks was conducted during a three-day workshop in Kigali, Rwanda, on 4 – 6 March 2024.

"Uncompetitive tariffs in the region are most persisting challenges in the regional ICT market that stifle the growth of the sector," remarked the COMESA director of infrastructure Mr. Bernard Dzawanda at the opening of the workshop.

Director General in the Rwanda Ministry of ICT and Innovation Mr. Gordon Kalema informed the meeting that Rwanda has developed a National Artificial Intelligence

(AI) Policy that outlines a comprehensive plan to leverage AI's transformative potential in key sectors as a step to address this challenge. It covers healthcare, agriculture, public services, education, finance, and smart cities. It was approved by Cabinet in April 2023.

The EGEE-ICT is a four-year programme that aims at supporting the effective review and/or development of various regional policy and regulatory framework in a harmonized manner that will contribute to enhancing competition, improved access to cost effective and secure ICT services in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean regions (EA-SA-IO).



.....

Uncompetitive tariffs in the region are most persisting challenges in the regional ICT market that stifle the growth of the sector."

Eight States benefit from macroeconomic analysis training

Representatives from eight Central Banks of COMESA Member States, namely Burundi, Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, participated in a training on macroeconomic linkages and economic policy analysis organized by the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) on 5 - 9 February 2024 in Kenya.

The training aimed at enhancing participants' comprehension of key macroeconomic accounts and their interconnections, emphasizing the policy implications stemming from changes in each account's parameters.

It provided participants with skills to grasp macroeconomic accounting principles and establish connections between various accounts, interpret the behavioral relationships among macroeconomic accounts and create a platform for participants to exchange knowledge and experiences related to macroeconomic policy analysis.

Director of the CMI Dr. Lucas Njoroge, said the training was a hands-on exploration of the four main macroeconomic accounts including real, fiscal, external, and monetary sectors and their intricate linkages. Hence, it involved scenarios for the economy, the introduction of policy shocks, analysis of alternative policy mixes, and the projection/forecasting of economic outcomes.

The forum was also intended to empower bankers with skills to assess the economic consequences of policy actions, compare the current economic situation with various policy alternatives, and forecast key macroeconomic variables, thereby facilitating evidence-based decision-making.



Participants at the validation workshop in Mombasa, Kenya

Nexus between climate change, peace and security

First phase validation of studies concluded

Early this year, COMESA completed the validation process of the study on climate change, peace and security for the Northern Cluster under the Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) IV European Union (EU) programme.

The validation was conducted on 30 – 31 January 2024 in Kenya and is aligned with the Decision of the 18th Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs which “called on the Member States to support the conclusion of cluster-specific studies on the nexus between climate change, peace and security through validation exercises and provide practical recommendations to enhance preparedness and address effects of climate change”.

About two years ago, in 2021, COMESA Secretariat conducted a regional mapping study to understand the nexus between climate change, peace and security. Considering the dynamics within the region, the study recommended an approach that

would cluster the region into five fairly homogeneous clusters namely Northern, Southern, Tropics, Horn and the Islands. Clustering would ensure an in-depth study and understanding of the region.

The cluster studies were concluded in 2023 and four of them validated including for the Horn, Tropics, Southern and Island clusters. The validation meetings took place in Entebbe, Uganda and Harare, Zimbabwe. The validations are meant to get inputs from subject area experts in the region to enrich the reports.

The remaining Northern Cluster study validated on 30 – 31 January 2024 in Kenya was the last. Participants were drawn from the region including from the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCCPA), Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations International Organisation on Migration (IOM), Center for the Study

of Conflict and Violence (CSVR), Save The Children International, Horn of Africa Youth Network, academia and COMESA Staff from the Climate Change and Governance, Peace and Security units.

With the validation of the Northern Africa cluster study, COMESA is now in a good position to proceed to the next step of consolidating the five cluster studies into one regional policy document. This will be further validated by government experts from the Member States. Thereafter, the regional policy document will be presented to COMESA's Policy Organs for adoption to guide its work on climate security



Aviation experts push for a model bilateral air services agreement

Aviation officials from the Eastern Africa-Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region are making steady progress in reviewing and having a model Bilateral Air Services Agreement (BASA) that conforms with the provisions of the Yamoussoukro Decision of 1999. Once fully adopted and implemented, the model BASA will clear the way for a single African Air Transport Market which will boost the sector.

Experts have long called for a Single African Air Transport Market contending that it would strengthen intra-regional connectivity between the capital cities of African countries. A single unified air transport market would be an impetus to the continent's economic integration and growth agenda.

As part of the process to activate this, representatives from ten countries in eastern and southern Africa and the Indian Ocean met in Kampala, Uganda 26 – 28 February 2024 for the 2nd Consultative workshop on the model BASA.

Uganda's Minister of Works and Transport Hon. General Edward Katumba Wamala who opened the meeting said one of the immediate measures required by Member States is to review their BASAs by removing all restrictions on traffic rights under the 3rd, 4th and 5th freedoms, frequencies, fares and capacity.

"BASA is one of the fundamental means of ensuring air transport interconnectivity between States and the current exercise is geared towards streamlining the instrument to conform with the provisions of the YD," said the Minister who was represented by the Minister of State for Transport Hon. Fred Byamukama

Adopting a model BASA, he said will hasten the process of reviewing BASAs among Member States of COMESA, the East African Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

Team Leader of the Support to Air Transport Sector Development Programme (SATSD), Mr Adikiny Olwenge stated that while many air transport markets outside of Africa have been liberalised to a significant extent, most intra-African air transport markets remain largely closed due to restrictive BASA.

"This has affected air connectivity within Africa

and has limited the potential economic growth and development," he added. "I urge all not to lose sight of the benefits this would bring in terms of tourism both local and international in the region, if all challenges associated with air transport infrastructure and costs are addressed."

With financial support from the 11th European Development Fund, COMESA and partner regional Economic Communities, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the African Civil Aviation Commission are collaborating to assist countries to change the narrative.

Th SATSD was established in 2020 to operationalize the Single African Air Transport Market, strengthen the regulatory and institutional capacity of civil aviation institutions in the East African-Southern African and Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO) region. It is also expected to improve air navigation efficiency in the region.



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Participants at the training of technical experts and small hydropower developers conducted in Lusaka

Push for development of small hydropower plant

COMESA working with partner regional economic communities and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) conducted a one-week training to boost the capacity of technical experts and small hydropower developers as a way of helping millions access affordable electricity.

The training conducted on 22 January 2024 at COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka was a crucial step towards building the capacities of the experts, standards bureaus and project developers for effective and efficient planning, management and operationalisation of small hydropower based on the technical guidelines.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the training session, Director of Infrastructure and Logistics at COMESA, Dr Bernard Dzawanda said access to energy remains a critical challenge in the region with many citizens lacking reliable and affordable electricity.

"The region has a population of around 600 million people, with a high demand for energy, particularly electricity. However, the energy sector in many of our member countries is still underdeveloped and underfunded, leading to low levels of electricity and unreliable energy supply," Dr Dzawanda said.

He added that the electricity access rate in the COMESA region is around 60 percent, meaning that almost half of the population do not have access to electricity. He noted that the region has enormous unexploited natural resources required for the development of the power sector. The region's natural energy resources are plentiful and diverse, ranging from the vast solar and wind resources that are present in all Member States. In addition, the region has significant geothermal energy along the East African Rift countries namely Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya while abundant hydropower resources are available in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Zambia.

Dr Dzawanda revealed that the underdeveloped regulatory frameworks and the absence of a framework for monitoring progress complicates implementation modalities and inhibits decisions on electricity infrastructure projects.

In recognition of these challenges, COMESA has prioritised the development of regional energy infrastructure aimed at increasing energy access and ensuring reliable, affordable and sustainable modern energy services. A number of specialised institutions have been established such as the Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA) and the Eastern Africa

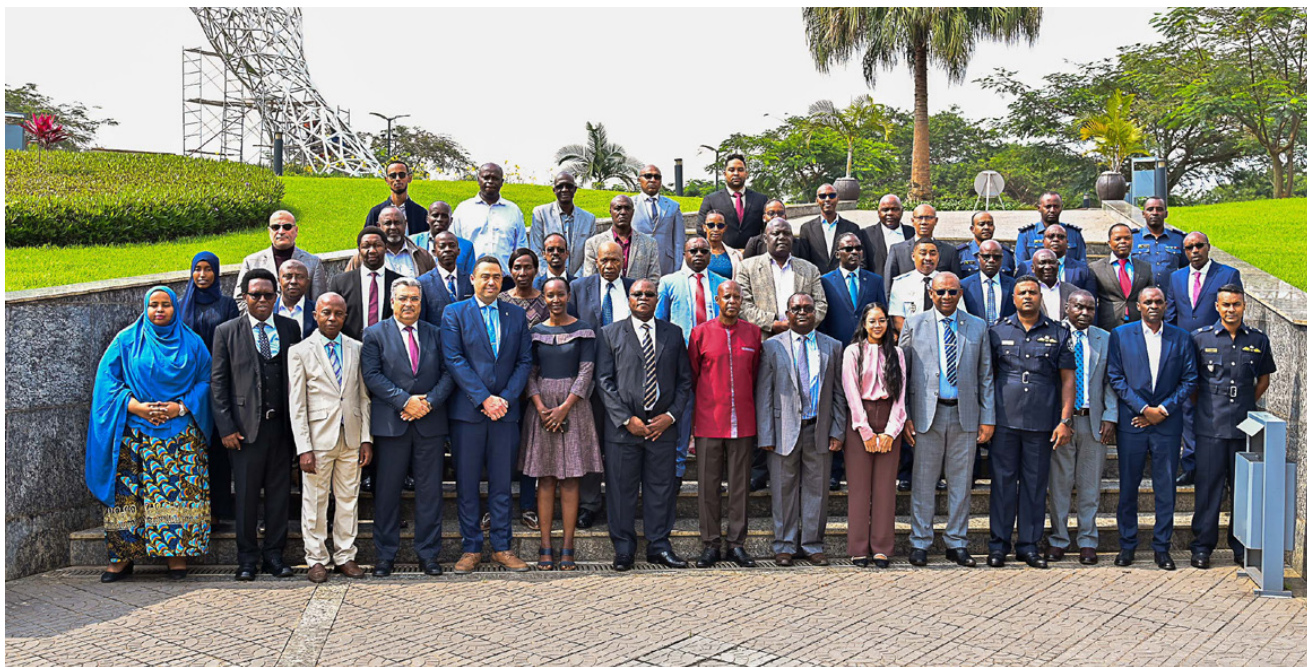
Power Pool. COMESA has also developed and adopted the COMESA Model Energy Policy Framework which has introduced reforms in the energy sector.

Acting Permanent Secretary in Zambia's Ministry of Energy Mr Mwape Chipala said hydropower projects can become important drivers of sustainable economic growth in Africa and it is also cleaner than some other technologies and more predictable than solar or wind and can be used for complementary activities such as irrigation and flood control.

UNIDO Senior Technical Expert Mr LIU Heng pledged the UN's support for countries to transform the access to energy.

"UNIDO stands with you. UNIDO will be a platform for technology and knowledge transfer, innovation and investments for Small Hydropower. We work with Member States to help them realise their energy and climate ambitions".

Key partners to the international training included the International Centre on Small Hydro Power (ICSHP) and the Southern African Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SACREE).



Aviation Experts at the three-day training workshop on Civil and Military Airspace Cooperation in Kigali, Rwanda

Military and civil aviation experts in joint initiative on airspace cooperation

In an initiative aimed at improving airspace management and cooperation between civil and military aviation sectors in Africa, COMESA brought together experts from the two sectors to address the challenges experienced within individual States and regionally in sharing airspace for the benefit of the air transport industry.

A three-day training workshop on Civil and Military Airspace Cooperation was conducted in Kigali, Rwanda, from 20 to 22 February 2024. The workshop targeted five regional economic communities (RECs), with over 50 experts from the two sectors participating. The RECs included COMESA, the East African Community, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Indian Ocean Commission, and the Southern African Development Community.

Organized by COMESA through the EU-funded Support to Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) programme, the training focused on enhancing the already agreed optimal solutions to

strategic and pre-tactical issues and challenges in airspace management, which cuts across civil and military operations.

Military and civil experts from 16 Member States in the five RECs covered by the SATSD programme attended the forum, which was jointly hosted with the Rwanda Civil Aviation Authority. They represented Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

COMESA Director of Infrastructure and Logistics Dr. Bernard Dzawanda, along with Rwanda Civil Aviation Authority Director General Silas Udahemuka, who addressed the participants, called on states that have not liberalised their air transport market based on the Yamoussoukro Decision to do so.

The Yamoussoukro Decision is aimed at creating a single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) and comes with a range of benefits, including

enhancements in the quality of air transport services, reduction in airfares, greater connectivity, and a positive impact on tourism and trade.

“To realize the full economic benefits of the Yamoussoukro Decision, there is a need to improve air navigation efficiency in the entire airspace within Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, the Indian Ocean region, and the entire continent of Africa,” Dr. Dzawanda said. “This can be achieved through civil-military airspace cooperation among the key airspace stakeholders attending this workshop.”

Mr. Udahemuka reminded the participants that it is exactly forty years ago when the Yamoussoukro Decision was initiated, hence it is particularly important to keep pushing its agenda.

“We all know that airspace is a natural resource with a finite capacity for which demand from all users is constantly expanding,” he said.



Amb. Rashid Mohammed Abdul Wahid presents his letter of accreditation to COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe

Ethiopia Ambassador accredited to COMESA SG urges for accelerated accession to the Free Trade Area

The Secretary-General of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) has urged Ethiopia's newly accredited Permanent Representative to the organization to assist expedite his country's ratification of the COMESA Free Trade Area agreement.

During the accreditation ceremony of Ambassador Rashid Mohammed Abdul Wahid on Wednesday, March 27, 2024, in Lusaka, Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe acknowledged Ethiopia's progress in the ratification process, which will allow it to participate in the COMESA Free Trade Area, now with 16 out of 21 member states participating.

Ms. Kapwepwe stated, "COMESA has been providing technical support to facilitate the implementation of the Action Plan to fast-track Ethiopia's accession to the COMESA FTA."

She outlined several COMESA-supported projects in Ethiopia, including a 5.6 million Euros funding signed in 2021 to enhance coordination of border management and trade and transport facilitation programs at the Moyale and

Galafi borders, linking Ethiopia to Kenya and Djibouti, respectively.

COMESA also supported the development of Ethiopia's national and regional AGOA strategy and provided training on Rules of Origin, World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement, and Non-Tariff Barriers for customs, public officials, and the private sector.

In the agriculture and industry sector, the Secretary-General cited the program on Prioritizing Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary Investments for Market Access (PIMA), where Ethiopian experts received training to ensure the sustainability and institutionalization of this framework.

Furthermore, equipment has been funded for the Ethiopian national metrology institutes and legal metrology organizations, supporting the development of a legal metrology legislative framework for Ethiopia in line with International Organization for Legal Metrology and World Trade Organization requirements.

With support from the African Development Bank, COMESA has trained

pharmaceutical enterprises in Ethiopia, such as Africure Pharmaceuticals Limited and Kilitch Estro Biotech Limited, to ensure that pharmaceutical products consistently meet safety and quality requirements as required by the regulatory authority.

Ambassador Wahid expressed Ethiopia's appreciation for its membership in COMESA and recognized the organization's pivotal role in promoting regional integration, economic development, and cooperation among its member states.

"We firmly believe that by working together, we can address the common challenges facing our region and unlock the immense potential for growth and development," said Mr. Wahid, who is also the Ambassador of Ethiopia to Zambia.

He pledged to strengthen the partnership between Ethiopia and COMESA and contribute constructively to its activities to advance the objectives of the regional bloc. <https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjBiTct>



Zambia borders get cutting-edge baggage scanners

The project is funded by the EU through COMESA

In a significant milestone to bolster border security and trade facilitation, a flag-off ceremony on 16 February 2024, marked the commencement of the deployment of cutting-edge baggage scanners as part of the Zambia Borders Post Upgrade project. The state-of-the-art equipment, valued at Euros 210,000, is poised to address gaps in detecting illegal items at the borders and ensure transparent cross-border movements.

The advanced baggage scanners, officially handed over to the Zambia Revenue Authority, are equipped with state-of-the-art detection capabilities. This initiative, funded by the European Development Fund (EDF) Trade Facilitation Programme, has allocated Euros six million to Zambia for the upgrading of three pivotal border posts – Nakonde, Mwami, and Chirundu.

Supported under the Euros 48 million 11 EDF Trade Facilitation Programme, the targeted borders, are poised to experience streamlined customs clearance processes, ultimately facilitating the seamless flow of

legitimate trade and travel.

Present at the flag-off ceremony included the COMESA Assistant Secretary-General Dr. Dev Haman, Ministry of Commerce, Trade, and Industry Director for Foreign Trade Dr. Simon N'gona, the European Union representative Mr. Matthias Reusing, and COMESA staff. Others were Zambia Revenue Authority Commissioner Dingani Banda and other senior government officials.

"The introduction of these scanners is a milestone for both Zambia and the COMESA region," said Dr Haman. "The borders, acting as the first line of defence against illegal activities such as trading, harassment, bribery, and illicit trafficking, will now be fortified with increased security measures."

Dr. N'gona stated that the equipment has been procured to support the connectivity of Border Agencies to the Zambia Electronic Single Window, an electronic platform that facilitates online clearance of goods.

"Our aim is to increase the use of Information Communication and Technology at border posts and thereby increase efficiency with the use of ICT," he said.

Mr. Reusing stated: "In today's interconnected world, the smooth transit of commodities and individuals is vital for economic growth, regional cooperation, and prosperity. The equipment we deploy today will play a pivotal role in achieving this goal."



.....
Our aim is to increase the use of Information Communication and Technology at border posts and thereby increase efficiency with the use of ICT

Somalia, Zambia youth trained on prevention of violent extremism



A section of youth delegates with COMESA Assistant Secretary General, Dr Dev Haman at the COMESA Secretariat

Youths from local communities in Somalia and Zambia have recently received training in preventing and countering violent extremism. The training took place from February 19 to 24, 2024, in Chingola, Zambia.

Prior to that, delegates from Somalia, along with representatives from the Zambia National Anti-Terrorism Center,

Save the Children, Horn of Africa Youth Network, and Agents of Peace, paid a courtesy call on COMESA Assistant Secretary-General for Administration and Finance, Dr. Dev Haman.

During the meeting, Dr. Haman reiterated the Secretariat's commitment to working with young people across all areas to foster enhanced regional integration.

COMESA Head of the Governance, Peace and Security, Dr. Oita Etyang, emphasized the importance of collaborating with targeted communities to ensure grassroots transformation. This approach underscores the significance of engaging local stakeholders in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism effectively.

Studies on roaming and development frameworks among key accomplishments of the EGEE-ICT programme

Five crucial activities were initiated by the programme on Enhancement of Governance and Enabling Environment in the ICT sector (EGEE-ICT) in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and Indian Ocean region in 2023. They included two studies on roaming and interconnection and optical fiber infrastructures, along with the development of three policy and regulatory frameworks associated with these studies.

This was part of the report presented at the 4th meeting of the Programme Steering Committee (PTSC) that took place at the end of the year, 2023 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

Participants in the two-day meeting on 5 – 8 December 2023 included Information and Communications Technology experts from partner Regional Economic Communities such as EAC, IGAD, IOC, and SADC. The Project Implementation Unit (PMU) members and staff from the COMESA Secretariat actively contributed to the discussions.

The meeting acknowledged significant advancements in program implementation, with an increase in overall budget utilization from 11% in previous years to the current 27 percent.

The Guest of Honour, Mrs. Georgina

Chingonzo, Director of Strategic Planning & Monitoring and Evaluation at the Ministry of ICT Postal & Courier Services in Zimbabwe, officially opened the meeting.

Representatives from the COMESA Secretariat included Dr. Benard Dzawanda, the Director of Infrastructure and Logistics, and Mr. Joseph Chibwe, the EGEE-ICT project manager at the EU delegation in Zambia. Their presence emphasized the collaborative and multi-stakeholder nature of the EGEE-ICT program.



Training manuals on border management during health emergencies validated

Senior government officials representing fourteen Member States validated the training manuals on border management during health emergencies. The manuals are designed to address challenges in border management and cross-border movement during a health crisis within the COMESA region. The manuals now await final approval by the ministers responsible for immigration and labour before they can be officially launched for use by Member States.

This is an initiative by COMESA, in collaboration with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) under the Migration EU Expertise (MIEUX+) program, and a direct response to the difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The manuals focus on addressing policy inconsistencies, cross-border policy variations, and resource inadequacies. The materials were designed to be customized to the specific needs of Member States and are to be implemented on a voluntary basis.

In a virtual workshop held on 15 February 2024, COMESA Assistant

Secretary-General for Administration and Finance Dr. Dev Haman expressed gratitude to ICMPD for its support. He acknowledged the adverse effects the pandemic had on border officials and small-scale cross-border traders in COMESA Member States.

The project's initial stages involved fact-finding meetings and surveys conducted in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo in June and July 2021. These activities revealed challenges faced by border agencies, including policy inconsistencies and insufficient resources to implement COMESA's 2020 Covid-19 guidelines.

In response to these findings, training modules were developed and piloted in a workshop held in Lusaka, Zambia, from 7 to 10 March 2023. Border officials from Mwami/Mchinji One Stop Border Post and Chirundu One Stop Border Post actively participated in refining the modules through constructive feedback.

Ms. Christiane Haziyo, the Programme Manager for Regional Cooperation and Trade Facilitation at the EU delegation, stressed the importance

of a collaborative approach, including enhanced dialogue and inter-agency cooperation at both national and cross-border levels. She said the approach is vital for addressing complex health-related challenges that arise at borders.

The meeting was attended by 80 experts from Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Participating government agencies included trade, external trade, home affairs, customs, immigration, regional integration, health, internal security, citizenship affairs, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, and the European Union.

The modules are slated for consideration at the next meeting of heads of immigration and commissioners for labour, with the aim of obtaining approval by the second meeting of the ministers responsible for immigration and labour.



File: Tunisia accession to COMESA in 2018

Tunisia's new law to promote COMESA activities in the country

The Tunisian Assembly of People's Representatives (ARP) on 21 February 2024, approved the draft organic law on the agreement relating to the activities of COMESA that will be hosted by Tunisia. The agreement, which was signed on June 19, 2023, by the Tunisian authorities, received 111 votes in favour and 1 vote against in Parliament.

It contains 12 articles related to the meetings, workshops and activities organised by COMESA and its associated bodies in the Member States. It also focuses on the range of benefits granted to officials of the organisation, its experts as well as representatives of the participating Member States in these various events.

The adoption of this bill will enable

both Tunisian officials to enhance their capacity building in various technical fields and economic operators to benefit from the advantages offered by this agreement.

The bill will also help increase the presence of Tunisian professionals in COMESA and its various bodies.

Through this law, Tunisia will be able to provide COMESA with all the necessary benefits (VAT exemption, visa, etc..) to hold its events and meetings in Tunisia, said the Minister of Trade and Export Development, Kalthoum Ben Rejeb.

"This will help promote Tunisia's image in Africa and worldwide as a tourist destination, particularly in terms of conference tourism, as well as a promising country for investment,"

the Minister added. She pointed out that Tunisia has signed 47 export agreements with African countries within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). (Source: Tunis Afrique Presse.)

Editor's note:

Under the COMESA Treaty, Agreement on Privileges and Immunities as well as subsequent Decision of the Council of Ministers, Member States undertook to accord privileges and immunities to COMESA, COMESA Officials, COMESA Institutions and officials of Member States when on official business. Such privileges and immunities include: (a) exemption from payment of exercise duties; (b) exemption from payment of taxes when on mission which include sales tax (VAT) and service charges, and (c) exemption from visa fees. Many Member States are yet to fully implement the Decisions, hence the move by Tunisia to entrench them in law is significant.

COMESA and Zambia Govt staff trained on Visual Basic for Applications

In collaboration with Statistics Sweden, COMESA Secretariat hosted a week-long training course on Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) programming in Excel for selected staff from COMESA Secretariat and the Zambia Statistical Agency (ZamStats). The training was facilitated by Mr Kjell Tambour, Senior

Adviser at Statistics Sweden, and aims at enhancing the capacity of participants to handle complex tasks efficiently.

Conducted on February 26 - March 1, 2024, at the COMESA Secretariat, Lusaka, this joint training initiative

aimed to foster knowledge harmonization between COMESA and its Member States. The workshop represented a crucial step towards realizing a regional capacity-building program designed to empower staff with the skills needed to handle complex tasks efficiently.



Participants attending training in Chingola, Zambia on prevention and countering violent extremism

Mitigating violent extremism through cross country collaboration

On 20 – 23 February 2024, a pivotal four-day training session was convened in Chingola, Zambia, where over 40 local community leaders from Somalia and Zambia were equipped with knowledge and skills to prevent and counter violent extremism.

Spearheaded by COMESA, in collaboration with Save the Children, Horn of Africa Youth Network, and Agents of Peace, this initiative responded to the escalating threats of violent extremism in Africa, particularly in the COMESA region.

While Zambia and Somalia have diverse historical trajectories, both nations grapple with characteristics of violent extremism and external influences affecting local communities. The training sought to address these challenges with a targeted focus on women leaders, child protection organisations, religious leaders, local police, and youth community leaders.

The training's rationale emerged from the 18th Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs in June 2023, underscoring the need for an integrated approach to address the root causes of conflict, including violent extremism. Its overarching goal was to

mobilize and enhance the contributions of local communities in preventing and countering violent extremism.

Covering a spectrum of topics such as Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) 101, youth engagement in politics, and fostering community participation. The comprehensive program also delved into topics like gender-sensitive approaches to CVE, and community-led CVE initiatives. The training objectives extended beyond enhancing understanding to building capacities, sharing experiences, and fostering collaboration among community leaders.

The engagement with the Somali group focused on reducing radicalization among youth through short-term community outreach programs, medium-term initiatives like media literacy training and psycho-social support, and long-term efforts including political leadership and equal representation in governance. Additionally, promoting gender equality and empowerment among women and girls was highlighted, emphasizing capacity building and transparent communication between organizations and authorities. Incorporating perspectives of traditionally

underserved demographics, such as women and youth, in land management initiatives was underscored. Strategies included translating materials into local dialects, engaging youth ambassadors, and using special days for discussions.

Concurrently, the impact of mining on communities emerged as a parallel discussion during the training from the Zambian participants. Identifying effects such as an increase in gangs and pollution. Mitigation strategies were explored, including awareness programs and regular engagement with authorities.

A cross-country collaboration was encouraged between Zambia and Somalia, emphasizing sharing knowledge between security ministries, government dialogues, youth exchanges, student exchanges, and cross-cultural events.

The training marked a crucial step in empowering local communities from Zambia and Somalia to actively participate in preventing and countering violent extremism, fostering collaboration, and contributing to sustainable development in their respective countries. The exchange of ideas and collaborative efforts laid the foundation for future initiatives and strengthened diplomatic ties between the two geographically distant but interconnected countries.



COMESA Director of Agriculture Mrs Providence Mavubi (3rd left) and delegates at the Zambia Blue Economy Strategy validation workshop in Lusaka

Zambia validates blue economy strategy

The Government of Zambia has developed and validated the national blue economy strategy which is expected to help increase the prospects for achieving sustainable, environmentally friendly and socially inclusive economic growth.

The strategy will guide the nation in advancing knowledge on biotechnology, environmental sustainability and ecosystem services. Other areas targeted include growth of inland water transport industry, management of fishing industry and better use of underwater mineral resources.

This was revealed in Lusaka on 16 January 2024 during the validation meeting held at COMESA Secretariat. The national strategy was developed with technical assistance from the African Union Commission's Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment (ARBE) and financial support from the French Development Agency.

Speaking at the opening of the meeting, Director of Agriculture and Industry at COMESA Secretariat Mrs

Providence Mavubi commended the country for developing the strategy which she described is an important tool and mechanism for attaining sustainable economic growth.

"The validation of the national blue economy strategy hastens the state of play of regional integration and will help development of ways and means of strengthening and deepening mutually beneficial cooperation in the area of blue economy for the benefit of Zambian citizens in particular and COMESA in general."

She added that COMESA with the support of African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources has formulated the Regional Blue Economy Strategy (2022 - 2032) which covers aquatic and marine areas, including oceans, seas, coastlines, lakes, rivers and groundwater.

It emphasizes the importance of balancing between sustainable economic development and environmental protection, anchoring this to SDG 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The meeting was informed that COMESA has adopted a clear definition of the blue economy that encompasses a range of several productive sectors such as fisheries and aquaculture, tourism, energy, transport, ports and shipping, underwater extractive industries, environment, research and innovation, marine biotechnology and bioprospecting.

Currently, there is limited information on the blue economy as the focus has been primarily on land-based economic development or on conservation rather than on the sustainable use of the investment in ocean and inland water-based economy, for national benefit.

AUC Head of the Blue Economy Division Georges Mba Asseko called on other African countries to emulate Zambia and finalise their national strategies. "By validating these national instruments, we are not only downscaling and domesticating the African Blue Economy Strategy, we are providing ourselves with the needed tools to align and operationalise African blue value chains on the fields." He added, "these instruments are for the government and intergovernmental institutions of course, but also for communities and development partners including private sector."



Representatives from twenty Chapters at the COMESA Federation of Women in Business extraordinary General Assembly in Kigali, Rwanda

Women in business strengthens legal instruments

Representatives from twenty Chapters of the COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB) held a two-day extraordinary general assembly in Kigali, Rwanda, from 19 to 20 February 2024. The objective was to strengthen the organization's legal instruments and decision-making processes.

Rwanda's Minister of Trade and Industry, Hon. Prof. Jean Chrysostom Ngabitsinze, opened the meeting and emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability in Women in Business. Recognizing the seriousness and the capacity of women in business, he urged all governments in COMESA Member States to give full support to women in

business.

He cited limited access to finance coupled with the effects of climate change, droughts, and the escalation of exchange rates as key challenges that most women are facing in the region, and these have a significant impact on business.

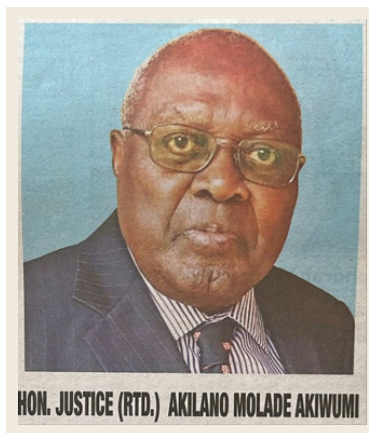
"It is for such reasons that we commend COMFWB for setting up a committee to ensure that COMESA has a regional functional committee to address such needs," he said.

Director of Gender and Social Affairs at COMESA, Mrs. Beatrice Hamusonde, applauded COMFWB chapters for the

commitment and support they have given to their country chapters and women in business. She encouraged the chapters to tap into COMESA Member States' established policies that enable a conducive environment for Women in Business and hence improve on capacity building.

"Chapters need to take advantage of opportunities such as the Simplified Trade Regime, digital platforms like 50Million Africa Women Speak and ensure that all African women in business are not left behind in digital trade and information access," Mrs. Hamusonde said.

COMESA Court mourns former Judge



The COMESA Court of Justice (CCJ) sent a message of condolences to the family of Justice Akilano Molade Akiwumi following his demise in February 2024. Justice Akiwumi served as the Second Judge President of the CCJ from 2001 to 2003.

The late judge, who hailed from Kenya, played a pivotal role in the establishment of the CCJ and in the formulation of the Court's initial legal instruments, including the Staff Rules and Rules of Procedure, which continue to be invaluable for the Court and legal practitioners.

"On behalf of the COMESA Court of Justice and on my own behalf, I extend my heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of the late Honourable Justice Akiwumi. We wish his family comfort during this difficult time. May the almighty God rest Justice Akiwumi's soul in everlasting peace," stated Lady Justice Lombe



Climate change statistics and monetary policy application

Regional apex banks' staff trained

In a concerted effort to address the pressing challenges posed by climate change, the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) conducted a virtual training on “Climate Change Statistics and its Application to Monetary Policy” in February 2024.

This collaborative effort signified a proactive approach by COMESA Member Central Banks to address the challenges posed by climate change and integrate sustainable practices into monetary policy considerations.

The training held on 19 – 23 February 2024, attracted over 50 professionals from apex banks of nine COMESA Member States; Burundi, Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, and Somalia.

Participants learned about the fundamental concepts and frameworks related to climate change, identified key statistics using national and international data sources and basic data requirements for macroeconomic research on climate change. Moreover, the training facilitated knowledge sharing on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Also featured were carbon reduction commitments, targeting priority sectors, adaptation measures, and financing commitments toward transitioning to a green economy.

Director of the CMI, Dr. Lucas Njoroge, speaking during the opening of the training highlighted the adverse effects of rising temperatures and

extreme weather events on agriculture productivity and energy production in the COMESA region.

“These impacts, have direct implications for output and inflation,” he said.

According to the Director, financial regulators are increasingly focusing on the implications of climate change on monetary policy and financial stability. Thus, he underscored the urgency for Central Banks to deepen their understanding of climate change dynamics, leverage existing statistics on climate change indicators, and enhance their analytical toolkits and macroeconomic models to incorporate climate change risks.



COMESA staff takes part in the International Womens Day march in Lusaka, City

International Women's Day: Celebrating women's achievements

COMESA joined the rest of the world in marking the International Women's Day with the Chief Executive and the staff participating in the events in different ways. The Secretariat staff took part in a march-past in Lusaka city to commemorate the Day on 8 March 2024.

The day's theme and activities resonated with COMESA's programmes on gender equality and women's economic empowerment, as enshrined in the COMESA Treaty, and articulated through the various Charters, policies and strategies.

In her statement, Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe underlined the region's collective commitment to inspire inclusion and celebrate the remarkable strides made by women across the Common Market

for Eastern and Southern African region.

"Our goal is not only to grow together, but to prosper as a unified and inclusive community, where women play an integral role to ensure peace and sustainability," she said.

The Secretary General also graced the Lusaka Indian Ladies Association to mark International Women's Day, which highlighted the invaluable contributions of women, touching upon their remarkable impact across social, political, and economic spheres.



SG addressing Lusaka Indian Ladies Association event on 14 March 2024



Malawi Minister of Trade and Industry, Honorable Sosten Gwengwe (centre seated)/ flanked by Trade Secretary, Ms Christina Zakeyo (4th left seated) with participants to the Media Sensitization workshop in Lilongwe

Malawi media enlisted in COMESA regional integration programs

In an initiative to demonstrate the impact and benefits of COMESA led programmes in Member States, Malawi hosted a media sensitization workshop on 7 – 8 March 2024 in Lilongwe, organised by the COMESA Secretariat in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MIT).

Attended by over 35 media practitioners in the public and private sector, the forum provided a unique platform for participants to engage directly with the COMESA Secretariat and MIT staff on various projects that have been implemented in the country.

The goal was to equip local media practitioners with in-depth knowledge about COMESA's regional integration programs, and thereby enhance public awareness through accurate and consistent reporting on the subject.

Malawi Minister of Trade and Industry, Hon. Sosten Gwengwe who opened the workshop set the pace by citing five projects which he described as having immensely benefitted Malawi.

They include Capacity building trainings for cross border traders on Simplified Trade Regime; upgrading of the Mchinji-Mwami One Stop Border Post (OSBP),

development of the COMESA Electronic Certificate of Origin legal framework and training of Malawi Revenue of Authority officers, establishment of a Leather Design Studio (LDS) in Blantyre; and procurement of sewing machines for Blantyre textiles cooperative.

The minister described the media workshop unique as it presented a rare opportunity for COMESA and his Ministry to bring together media practitioners to not only have a round table discussion on COMESA's regional integration matters and success stories registered in Malawi' but also to offer them an opportunity to ask questions and receive the necessary feedback from the experts.

"We need a Media that better understands the COMESA regional integration configuration under which Malawi and other state parties operate if you are to effectively disseminate information on regional and national development agenda to the general public," the Minister said adding: "it goes without saying that well-informed journalists also make well-informed citizens."

At the same event, Secretary for Trade and Industry Ms Christina

Zakeyo underscored the importance of a vibrant media in the country to communicate the various programmes and projects that COMESA is implementing. She said this would enable the citizenry to appreciate the contribution of COMESA in economic development of the Member States.

"As a Ministry we are delighted to be part of the workshop because it aligns with our mandate as a ministry of disseminating information about COMESA's regional integration programmes," Ms Zakeyo added.

The media was taken through various programmes by COMESA experts covering trade facilitation and liberalization, investments, agriculture, gender, social affairs. Experts from the coordinating ministry provided profiles of COMESA-led projects in the country and their impacts.

A visit to the ultramodern Mchinji/Mwami One Stop Border Post (OSBP), was conducted for the media to demonstrate the impact of the COMESA-led regional integration programmes, to learn about the concept and how it facilitates regional trade.



D R Congo Minister, Hon. Antipas Mbusa Nyamwisi (3rd left) and his team, meets Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe (3rd right) at the COMESA HQs in Lusaka, Zambia. On the right are Assistant Secretaries General Dr Mohamed Kadam (extreme right) and Dr Dev Haman.

DRC Minister visits COMESA: affirms commitment to regional integration

The Minister of Regional Integration in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Hon. Antipas Mbusa Nyamwisi visited the COMESA Headquarters in Lusaka, Zambia on Friday 22 March 2024 and held discussions with the Secretary General, Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe.

The discussions focused on key developments in the implementation of regional integration programmes that relates to the DR Congo, including an update on the COMESA Free Trade Area (FTA) which the country is poised to fully enlist.

Currently, the FTA has sixteen participating Member States while the DRC is in the process of tariff reduction that will pave way for its full participation once it is completed. Hon. Nyamwisi affirmed the DRC government's commitment to the ideals of COMESA regional integration agenda and pledged to continue doing more to advance this agenda in deepening trade within the regional bloc.

advance regional integration," said Minister Nyamwisi. "The DRC believes that as Africa and the COMESA region, we should avoid remaining isolated. We need each other by pooling our resources for the betterment of all people."

The SG urged the DRC to complete the process of tariff reduction so that it can fully participate in the FTA.

Further, she commended the government for preparing phase 1 of the Great Grand Inga hydropower project with support from the African Development Bank and the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD. This project, she noted, will have a significant positive impact on the energy security in the region which has

been facing a deficit of power.

Also discussed was the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation and Integration Project targeted in the eastern borderlands of the DRC and Burundi. This is a USD 245 Million six-year project funded by the World Bank aimed at supporting peace and stability in the region through programs to improve livelihoods in the border areas, promoting cross-border trade and strengthening economic relationships.

Through the visiting Minister, the SG congratulated President Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo on his recent re-election, and to the government and people of DRC for upholding this important democratic process.



"We will continue doing our best to advance regional integration," said Minister Nyamwisi. "The DRC believes that as Africa and the COMESA region, we should avoid remaining isolated. We need each other by pooling our resources for the betterment of all people."

"We will continue doing our best to



World Bank team, led by Dana Rysankova (2nd left) and Monali Ranade (L) received at the COMESA Secretariat by Director of Infrastructure and Logistics Dr Bernard Dzawanda (speaking) flanked by Director of Gender, Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde

World Bank, COMESA collaborates to accelerate sustainable energy access in eastern and southern Africa

A landmark 5-day Implementation Support Mission for the “Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation (ASCENT)” program, jointly spearheaded by the COMESA and the World Bank, took place in Lusaka, Zambia, from 11 – 15 March 2024. This collaborative endeavor represented a significant stride towards enhancing energy access throughout the region.

Welcoming the World Bank team, led by Dana Rysankova and Monali Ranade, was Dr. Bernard Dzawanda, COMESA’s Director of Infrastructure. The reception marked the convergence of expertise and resources, reflecting a shared dedication to driving sustainable development through improved energy accessibility.

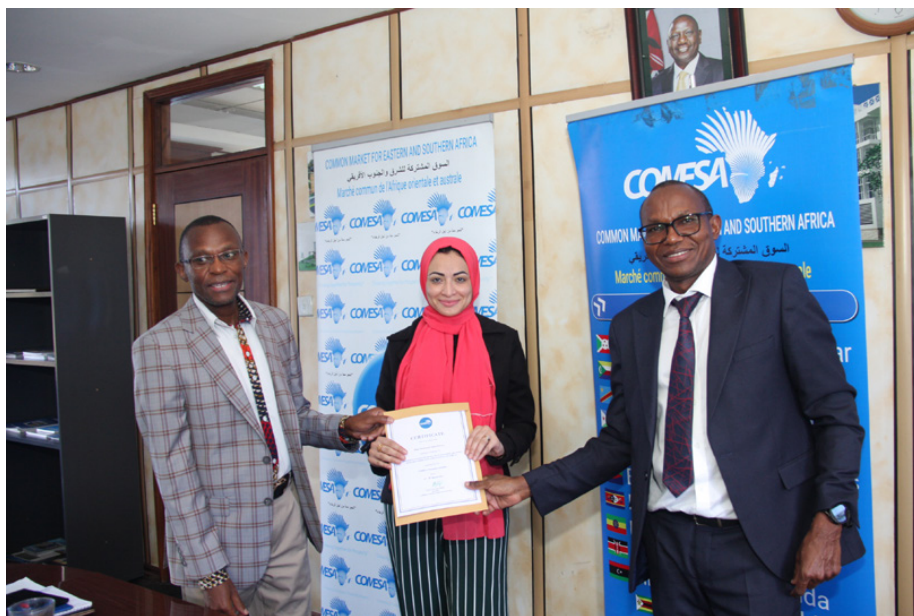
ASCENT aims to enhance health and reduce time spent on cooking chores

by providing access to clean energy sources, thereby improving overall well-being and alleviating the burden of domestic responsibilities, particularly on women. Additionally, the program endeavors to bolster the resilience of essential services by electrifying schools and health clinics, ensuring vital services remain accessible, even during times of crisis.

Critically, the ASCENT program prioritizes gender equality by acknowledging the disproportionate impact of energy poverty on women. Through targeted interventions, ASCENT seeks to empower women, recognizing them as catalysts for socio-economic progress.

The collaborative efforts between COMESA and the World Bank underscore a shared vision for a sustainable and inclusive energy

future in Eastern and Southern Africa. Through the leveraging of expertise and resources, the ASCENT program is poised to catalyze transformative change, unlocking new opportunities, and improving the lives of millions across the region.



CMI Director Dr Lucas Njoroge (right) presents certificates to training participants.

Monetary Programme: Building regional banks' capacity in financial management

The COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) is building the capacity of the regional apex banks to undertake reform measures to improve regulation, supervision, and risk management.

Central banks from eight COMESA Member States, namely Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Madagascar, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe are the latest beneficiaries of this initiative.

At least 19 staff of these banks participated in a comprehensive training program focusing on the "Implementation of Basel III Standards, 2017 Post Crisis Reforms, and Application of IFRS 9".

Basel III refers to a set of reform measures intended to improve regulation, supervision, and risk management in the international banking sector while IFRS 9 specifies how an entity should classify and measure financial assets, financial liabilities, and some contracts to buy or sell non-financial items.

Held from March 4th to 8th, 2024, in Nairobi, Kenya, the training aimed at bolstering understanding and application of critical regulatory frameworks within the COMESA region. It addressed the pressing need for enhanced adoption of Basel III standards across member jurisdictions.

With a renewed commitment to implementing international best practices, the training serves as a catalyst for advancing regulatory harmonization and fostering a resilient financial ecosystem within the COMESA region.

Addressing the delegates, Director of the CMI, Dr. Lucas Njoroge underscored the significance of the training in fortifying knowledge on Basel III standards and post-crisis reforms, aiming to reinforce supervisory policies and ensure financial system stability.

Participants benefitted from the training outcomes, including comprehensive understanding of Basel

III Standards that will enhance their capacity to implement and enforce regulatory requirements effectively. Moreover, the skills acquired will assist them to incorporate post-crisis reforms into the calculation of various Basel III capital and liquidity ratios, fostering resilience in financial institutions.

Participants also familiarized themselves with a roadmap outlining strategies for the successful implementation of Basel III standards within their respective jurisdictions.

The program facilitated an exchange of experiences and best practices among participants, providing an opportunity to learn from diverse country perspectives on Basel standards implementation.

Tools on handling children affected by armed conflict developed

COMESA Secretariat has developed three key documents that will help the region in handling issues of Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC). They include the CAAC Strategy and Technical Guiding Notes for involvement of Children in Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development.

The third are the Standard Operating Procedures on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of Children Formerly Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups

These have since been validated by all the strategic partner organisations during a workshop held on 12-15 March 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya. The validation provided an opportunity to generate fresh ideas and inputs from the regional experts to enrich the three documents for finalization.

The documents will be critical in progressing the CAAC agenda in the region and at the national level in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Agenda 2063.

The documents will be presented to Member States for validation later in the year and to the COMESA Policy Organs for adoption. This will then pave the way for roll out of the documents for use by the various stakeholders, according to Head Governance Peace and Security programme in COMESA, Dr. Oita Etyang.

The validation workshop was conducted in conjunction with Save the Children, with participation of the African Union Commission, African Union Transition Mission in Somalia, the UN Mission in DRC (MONUSCO), the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), the East African Commission, academic institutions, civil society organizations and independent experts.



Handbook on mediation of natural resources conflicts unveiled in Uganda

Uganda and Kenya are expected to sign an agreement on joint natural resources-sharing which has been necessitated by the deep-rooted and protracted inter-communal conflicts between and among pastoralist cross-border communities in the Karamoja cluster.

The Agreement is specifically targeted at improving cross-border community relations on security and harmonious natural resource sharing arrangements particularly on water and pasture.

This was disclosed during a training for local peacebuilding entities conducted by the COMESA Secretariat through the Governance, Peace and Security (GPS) Unit in collaboration with the Centre for Conflict Resolution Uganda (CECORE) from 21 – 23 February 2024.

Close to 40 experts representing different state and non-state organisations who work on conflict prevention and resolution have been trained on mediating natural resource-based conflicts in Soroti, Uganda.

The participants were drawn from

different organisations in the Karamoja Cluster side of Uganda covering the districts of Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto, Nakapiripirit, Amudat, Napak, Nabilatuk, Abim, and Karenga.

During the training, the Handbook on Mediating Natural Resource-Based Conflicts, developed under the implementation of phase III of the Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) programme was distributed.

The training identified additional natural resources that faced challenges in terms of their resolution in the Karamoja cluster-side of Uganda, (apart from water and pasture) which include extractives and forests.

The stakeholders appreciated COMESA for the development of the handbook and recommended future translation of the handbook to local languages.

GPS Early Warning Conflict Expert Mr Tapera Chinemhute represented COMESA at the event.



Photo/ Courtesy

Burundi prepares to host the 23rd COMESA Summit

Burundi is set to host the 23rd COMESA Summit of Heads of State and Governments towards the end of this year, and engagement with COMESA Secretariat have begun. On 11 – 13 March 2024, a team from the COMESA Secretariat officials led by Assistant Secretary General, Administration and Finance Dr Dev Haman was in the country to consult with senior government officials on the Summit preparations.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Amb. Albert Shingiro who received the officials said the country was ready for the event and activities towards this were underway.

"We would like to assure you that this government is committed to the ideals of COMESA and as an active Member State we are ready to host you for the Summit this year," said Amb. Shingiro.

Earlier, the COMESA team which included the COMESA Liaison Officer at the African Union Commission Amb. Salvator Matata met the National Organising committee led by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of

Trade, Transport, Industry and Tourism, Mrs Christine Niragira.

Ms Niragira said the main committee was being assisted by Sub-Committees with specific terms of reference and that they have already identified all the needs of the Summit. She assured the commitment of the Government and all the country's institutions, both public and private, to welcome the Summit with the hospitality that is the hallmark of the Burundian people.

Dr. Haman said the Secretariat was obliged to meet the organising team to get firsthand information on how the preparations were going. The two teams discussed in details the technical and logistical aspects of the organisation of the Summit and assigned clear responsibilities of all stakeholders.

In February this year, Burundi President H.E. Evariste Ndayimishiye met the Secretary General of COMESA Chileshe Kapwepwe, on the sidelines of the African Union Summit where he underscored his government's commitment to host the 23rd Summit



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