

Powering Regional Integration: Zambia-Tanzania-Kenya Power Interconnector Relunched



Ambassador Dr. Mohamed Kadah speaking at the opening ceremony

The Zambia-Tanzania-Kenya (ZTK) Power Interconnector Project has officially been relaunched in Lusaka by the three participating governments, with strong backing from the World Bank, the European Union and the United Kingdom.

Aimed at linking the East African Power Pool (EAPP) with the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP), the ZTK project will create one of Africa's largest power markets. The benefits are wide-ranging: enhanced electricity trade, increased energy security and deeper regional integration and socio-economic development.

COMESA has been a key supporter of the initiative, particularly in mobilizing resources.

Under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF), the EU committed €4.4 million through COMESA and the Government of Zambia in 2011, facilitating key milestones including feasibility studies, environmental

and social impact assessments, and conceptual designs for the Mbeya-Kabwe section.

Speaking at the relaunch, COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe who was represented by Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Amb. Dr. Mohamed Kadah emphasized the urgency of energy security and the strategic need to diversify sources and enhance interconnectivity across the region.

"The fear of future resource shortages, climate change awareness, and the need to diversify energy sources have brought power trade to the forefront...Energy interconnectivity and increased power production from renewable sources are high-priority action areas in the COMESA region."

Acting Minister of Finance Hon. Chipoka Mulenga and representatives of cooperating partners all commended the relaunch

describing it as a game changer for the region.

Key officials in attendance included Hon. Makozi Chikote – Minister of Energy (Zambia), Mr. Robert Kobia – Deputy Head of Mission Kenya High Commission and Eng. Innocent Luoga – Commissioner for Electricity and Renewable Energy (Tanzania). The European Union was represented by Ms. Karolina Stasiak – EU Ambassador to Zambia and COMESA who was joined by Mr. Achim Fock – World Bank Country Manager, Mr. Henrik Hololei – EU Special Advisor to the Directorate General for International Partnerships and Ms. Berni Smith – Acting Development Director, UK.

Construction on the remaining line—from Kasama (Zambia) to Mbeya (Tanzania)—is set to begin in January 2026, with contractor and consultant engagement expected by mid-2025.

DRC Signs Interministerial Decree to Implement the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime



Noting the need to facilitate and enhance small-scale cross-border trade, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) signed an Interministerial Decree on 10 March 2025 to enable the implementation of the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime (STR) on its borders with neighbouring COMESA countries. The DRC shares borders with four COMESA countries Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia. The Decree amends and updates the one previously signed on 29 July 2016. COMESA is providing technical support to DRC to implement STR at its borders with Burundi under the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation and Integration Project (GLTFIP) with financial support from the World Bank.

According to Dr Christopher Onyango Director Trade and Customs at COMESA Secretariat, the Decree formally enables small-scale cross border traders between DRC and its neighbouring COMESA Member States to trade at zero customs duty on goods/products eligible for STR.

However, Value Added Tax shall be payable where applicable. In addition, the Decree endeavours to further decrease the costs of trading by providing for preferential rates on other services provided by the Congolese Control Office, the Animal and Plant Quarantine Office, the Animal and Fisheries Quarantine Office. The charges are regulated to cover only the costs of providing services on imported goods and products under STR.

This Decree is a game changer in organising small-scale cross border traders and the eventual formalisation of small-scale cross border trade. Small-scale cross border traders are required to be members of a recognised association of small-scale cross-border traders. It is easy and effective to support organised small-scale traders.

Organic small-scale cross border trade financing such as savings and credit cooperatives and revolving funds are well manageable under associations. Similarly, capacity building interventions can be

effectively delivered to organised small-scale traders. Cross border traders' associations form a critical pillar in the implementation of the STR.

COMESA, under the World Bank financed GLTFIP, is supporting Burundi and DRC to strengthen capacities of small-scale traders associations and encourage traders to join government recognised associations of their choice.

The Decree also provides a legal basis for the establishment of Trade Information Desks within the border post control zone. TIDs help small-scale traders clear their goods under STR, assist traders to get required support to address challenges experienced at borders, mediate between traders and border officials, and collect gender disaggregated trade statistics required to support evidence-based policy making process.



COMESA-AU Deploy Pre-Election Assessment Mission to Malawi



File: AU-COMESA Joint Elections Observer Mission to Kenya in 2022

Malawi is scheduled to hold general elections on 16 September 2025 to elect a President, Members to the National Assembly and representatives Ward Councils to serve for a five-year period. The 2025 elections come after the previous elections in 2019 that were initially nullified by the Supreme Court, the Court besides the nullification of elections in 2020 also ordered for constitutional amendments one of which is for the President to obtain more than 50% of the votes, the initially it was by simple majority. H.E President Lazarus Chakwera will be seeking to extend his tenure while two former presidents, H.E Peter Mutharika and H.E Joyce Banda will also contest in the poll.

Against this background, the African Union Commission (AUC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Secretariat with support from the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) and

International IDEA, deployed a Pre-election and Needs Assessment Mission (PAM/NAM) to Malawi from 31 March to 5 April 2025. The mission was led by H.E Geoffrey Onyeama, former Foreign Affairs Minister of the Republic of Nigeria. The objective of the assessment was two pronged; firstly, to assess the level of preparedness by electoral stakeholders for the General Elections.

Secondly, the mission aimed at evaluating the needs and areas for support for the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) and other electoral stakeholders. The outcome of the needs assessment was meant to inform strategic technical support and engagement by AU and COMESA. To achieve its objectives, the mission held consultations with key electoral stakeholders including MEC Malawi Police Service (MPS), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, leaders of political parties, UN agencies, EU and Civil Society Organisations among others.

Central Bank Staff trained on FinTech and Monetary Policy

Fifty staff from Central Banks in twelve COMESA countries have been trained in understanding the complex interaction between monetary policy and fintech. The comprehensive training will enable staff to provide advice for effective policy responses to the challenges and opportunities presented by fintech in the COMESA region.

Organised by the COMESA Monetary Institute, the virtual training held from 07 – 11 April (CMI) enabled the participants to share knowledge on each country's Fintech journey, conduct and implementation of Monetary policy.

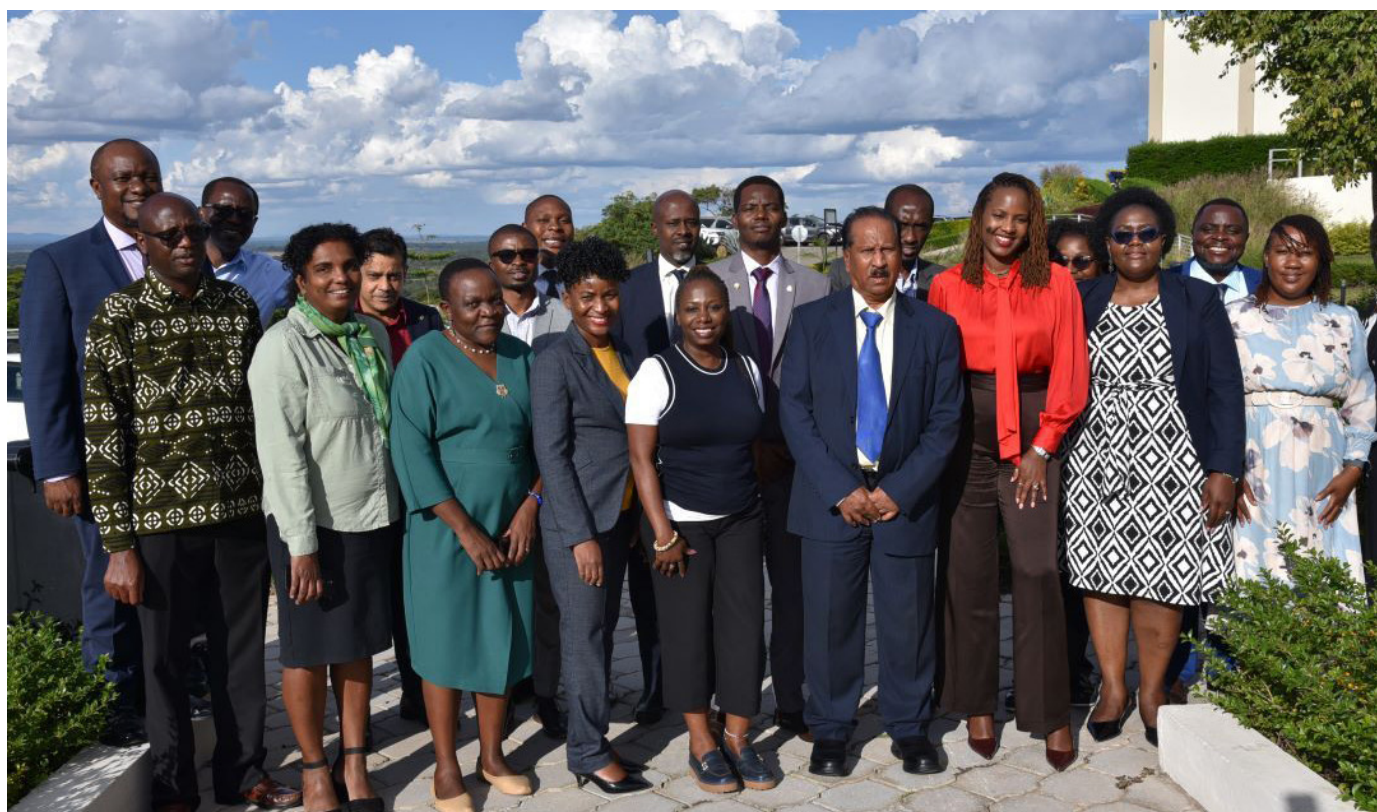
Speaking when he addressed the trainees, CMI Director Dr Lucas Njoroge observed that the rapid growth of fintech in the world, including in the COMESA region, has continued to revolutionize the traditional financial services, offering innovative solutions such as digital currencies, peer-to-peer lending, and blockchain technologies. He noted that Fintech has the potential to increase financial inclusion, reduce transaction costs, and improve access to credit. These changes can influence the effectiveness of traditional monetary policy tools and alter the speed and the manner in which monetary policy decisions are transmitted throughout the economy, potentially impacting inflation, economic growth, and financial stability.

Additionally, fintech developments might lead to the emergence of new financial markets or disrupt existing ones, requiring central banks to adapt their policy frameworks and monitoring tools.

Dr Njoroge observed that as fintech continues to evolve, it is essential for central banks to understand the complex interaction between monetary policy and fintech to better manage potential risks and leverage opportunities to enhance monetary policy outcomes, ensuring the stability of the financial system and the broader economy.

Participating countries included Burundi, Congo DR, Egypt, Eswatini, Malawi, Mauritius, Madagascar, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zambia. The COMESA Clearing House (CCH) also attended the training.

Towards an Effective and Efficient COMESA Secretariat



Members of the PSC Committee Meeting in Lusaka

Members of the Programme Steering Committee for the European Union funded Institutional Capacity Building Programme (ICBP) at COMESA Secretariat and EU Delegation in Zambia met in Lusaka to review progress in implementation of the Programme.

Funded under the 11th European Development Fund, the initiative continues to be a cornerstone in COMESA's efforts to strengthen institutional effectiveness and deepen regional integration.

Speaking at the opening of the Meeting on Tuesday 15 April 2025, COMESA Acting Secretary General Dr Dev Haman reaffirmed the organisation's commitment towards regional integration and transformation of the lives of the people. He said this could only be achieved by the organisation having a well-functioning, effective and efficient Secretariat to coordinate all the different programmes in the 21 Member States.

He commended the European Union for its continued support to COMESA which has resulted in the organisation achieving

many tangible results. Through the ICBP, the Secretariat has fully operationalised the COMESA Online Monitoring and Evaluation System, modernised the procurement and financial management frameworks, strengthened the regional statistical capacity and gender-responsiveness. The organisation also enhanced communication, visibility, and stakeholder dialogue, through activities such as the COMESA Week held in Madagascar.

EU Delegation to Zambia Programme Manager Christiane Haziyo described the meeting as an opportunity to track progress, discuss challenges and map out the way forward to full implementation.

She said through the 6.89 million European Development Fund, the EU's partnership has been more than just a funding relationship, but a shared commitment to building stronger institutions, fostering policy coherence, and promoting sustainable socio-economic development in the COMESA region.

"Allow me to express our sincere

appreciation for your continued commitment and collaboration in advancing the goals of regional integration and institutional strengthening across your Member States,"

The Steering Committee plays a guiding role while reviewing and validating the programme's achievements to ensure transparency, inclusivity and impact. As we reflect on the last year, let's feel encouraged by the progress made across the programme's four result areas.

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