

## Zambia's Vice President Calls for Stronger Health Systems in the Region

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Zambia's Vice President, Her Honor Madam Mutale Nalumango being ushered into the conference hall by Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe

Ministers responsible for Health from the COMESA region met on Thursday 14 August 2025 for their second meeting to review developments in the health sector. The sector remains key for a successful regional integration agenda. The meeting noted progress such as the establishment of the COMESA Health Desk at the Secretariat with the recruitment of staff.

The Health Desk begun its work in earnest, positioning the Secretariat to better coordinate regional health initiatives, mobilize resources, and strengthen Member States' capacities to respond to current and future challenges, while working together with technical and development partners. Zambia's Vice President, Her Honor Madam Mutale Nalumango, who officially opened the meeting urged the region to develop robust

strategies for universal healthcare access and enhanced preparedness for emerging health threats.

Vice President Nalumango highlighted the region's disproportionate share of the global malaria burden of over 90% and the growing impact of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which now accounts for 37% of deaths across the continent. She also pointed to the rising toll of mental health disorders, calling depression a "growing silent crisis" that imposes significant economic costs.

"In response to these challenges, we must strengthen disease surveillance, integrate mental health into primary healthcare, and build resilient systems to address both communicable and non-communicable diseases," she said. She also highlighted

the importance of strengthening local pharmaceutical manufacturing to reduce reliance on imported medicines, which currently account for over 70% of the region's supply.

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Hon. Mutolo Phiri and Hon. Eng. Vitumbiko Mumba proudly display the signed agreement

## Malawi and Zambia Sign Mutual Recognition Agreement to Boost Regional Agricultural Trade

Regional Agricultural Trade  
Zambia and Malawi have signed a Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) on Conformity Assessment, marking a major milestone in COMESA's drive to enhance regional agricultural trade and integration. The signing ceremony took place on 11 August 2025 at the Intercontinental Hotel in Lusaka.

The Agreement, facilitated by COMESA through the Enhancing Regional Agricultural Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa Project, will eliminate duplicate testing and certification for six key commodities including maize, groundnuts, rice, beans, soyabeans, and sorghum. This is expected to reduce trade barriers and lower transaction costs between the two Member States.

Zambia's Minister of Agriculture Hon. Reuben Mtolo Phiri commended the agreement as a major step forward for

regional integration, with the capacity to boost agricultural exports and drive economic growth.

Hon. Vitumbiko Mumba, Malawi's Minister of Trade and Industry who signed on behalf of the government, highlighted that the agreement will eliminate costly and time-consuming duplicate inspections, testing, and certifications for goods crossing between the two countries.

Speaking on behalf of COMESA, Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Amb. Dr. Mohamed Kadah commended the collaborative spirit that led to the signing. "This MRA is a testament to the value of regional cooperation and technical harmonization. It opens new opportunities for farmers, traders, and consumers across our region," he said.

The Malawi-Zambia MRA builds on

COMESA's broader MRA pilot involving Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, supported by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and the Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). The pilot has established mutual recognition frameworks, governance structures, and national technical working groups to strengthen inspection and sampling.

This agreement marks the beginning of the implementation phase and reinforces COMESA's commitment to unlocking the full potential of regional trade for inclusive economic growth. COMESA's Assistant Secretary General for Administration & Finance Dr Dev Haman, senior government officials and development partners witnessed the signing.





## ....Calls for Stronger Health Systems



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COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe echoed the Vice President's concerns, noting the inseparable link between health and economic stability. She thanked the Zambian government for hosting the event and reaffirmed COMESA's commitment to building resilient health systems across its 21 Member States.

"With a population of over 640 million, COMESA recognizes that public health is critical for regional trade and economic

growth," Ms Kapwepwe said. "COVID-19 taught us that pandemics do not respect borders and while we have overcome that crisis, the next outbreak is inevitable. Therefore, regional preparedness, not just national response, is crucial," She added.

In a vote of thanks message, Burundi's Health Minister Hon. Dr Lydwine Baradahana commended the Vice President for gracing the meeting and echoed her call for evidence-based policymaking, investment

in local pharmaceutical manufacturing, strengthened surveillance and the integration of mental health into primary care.

"We will need to move beyond resolutions towards concrete action that will make a real difference in the lives of the over 640 million people in our region."

Countries that attended the hybrid Meeting included Burundi, Zambia, Comoros, Egypt, Seychelles, Tunisia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Mauritius and Rwanda. Key health partners, including the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), were also in attendance.

**More Photos at** <https://fiic.kr/s/6HBqjCqCIR>





Delegates at the Validation Workshop in Kampala, Uganda

## Regional ICT & E-Waste Management Experts Shape Future of Digital Policy and Sustainability in Africa

About 60 experts in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and E-Waste Management from COMESA, EAC, IGAD, IOC and SADC met in Uganda from 12 – 14 August 2025 to validate the Draft Policy and Regulatory Documents for Phase III of the ICT Authorization and E-Waste Management Programme.

Once approved, adopted and implemented by Member States, the policies will shape the future of digital and environmental sustainability across Africa.

Speaking when she officially opened the meeting on Tuesday 12 August 2025, Dr. Aminah Zawedde, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance of Uganda, called on the delegates to craft actionable policies that Africa can implement and benefit from in order to transform the ICT landscape. She pointed out that ICTs are a tool for economic development and many studies have proven that there is a core relation which is attributed to several factors, including increased productivity, efficiency gains and the creation of new economic opportunities.

"I therefore urge you to draft policies and frameworks that will not gather dust in

offices but be implemented for our continent to see real transformation. We are good at coming up with these documents but implementation is usually a challenge."

She added that with the rapid growth in the use of ICT services and digital technologies, there has been a corresponding increase in the volumes of E-waste—both on the consumer side and from ICT service providers. Therefore, making it essential to have effective E-waste management measures in place to safeguard public health and the environment from the harmful effects of improperly disposed electronic waste.

The meeting acknowledged that as the region embraces the benefits of the dynamic digital innovations, they also continue to experience an exponentially growing volumes of electronic waste especially in Africa.

The PS noted that through initiatives such as the Enhancement of Governance and Enabling Environment in the ICT Sector (EGEE ICT) Programme coupled with actionable road maps, the programme can act as a key driver of transformation for the five region to harness the full potential of

ICTs.

Speaking on behalf of COMESA Secretariat, Telecommunications Officer Mr. Leonard Chitundu, emphasized the importance of a modern ICT Authorization framework to boost innovation, protect consumers and foster a thriving digital economy. He stressed that a modern, up-to-date ICT Authorization policy is crucial for fostering market competition, protecting consumers, promoting universal access, and efficiently managing resources like spectrum and numbering adding that a strong ICT framework also encourages innovation, introduces new services and supports the growth of Africa's digital economy.

Mr Chitundu reiterated COMESA's commitment to deepen regional integration and the growth of the ICT sector through the EGEE ICT Programme which is supported by the European Union.

During the three-days meeting, participants examined and improved the draft policy and regulatory frameworks which will ultimately benefit 29 African countries spread across Eastern Africa-Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean.



## Busy Kenya – Uganda Malaba Border Unites for Peaceful Trade

At the heart of one of the busiest cross-border areas in the region, COMESA, in collaboration with the Horn of Africa Youth Network (HoAYN), convened a sensitisation workshop for local cross-border traders from 28 – 31 July 2025.

Held in Malaba, Kenya, the workshop aimed to sensitise stakeholders on the Trading for Peace Project including the dissemination of developed tools such as the COMESA Charter on the Minimum Standards for the Treatment of Cross-border Traders, human rights and entrepreneurship. The event also strengthened a formalised network of cross-border trade stakeholders through the Joint Border Committee.

Discussions centered on the status of Cross-border Trade at the border, the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime, Conflict Analysis, Prevention and Resolution.

Kenyan government representative Mr Vincent Ogutu and Ugandan government representative Mr. Abdu Rizi commended COMESA and its partner organisation HoAYN for facilitating this crucial engagement, noting that a firm grasp of COMESA's cross-border trade guiding

documents is essential for improving trade practices. They also underscored the value of networking as a method for strengthening cooperation between the cross-border stakeholders. Head of Governance, Peace and Security at COMESA, Dr. Oita Etyang echoed similar sentiments, stressing that exchanging knowledge can help address the security concerns surrounding cross-border trade. He called for the strengthening of Cross-border Trade Associations, coupled with stronger accountability measures, to sustain economic growth and mitigate security risks.

Key recommendations from the workshop included the need to build the capacity of Joint Border Committee members in legal frameworks, operational standards, and regional trade protocols to support peaceful trade. Additionally, participants emphasized the importance of promoting cultural programs and peace initiatives to foster intercultural exchange, strengthen peacebuilding efforts, and improve living and working conditions.

Additional recommendations included increasing youth participation in economic

and cultural programs to enhance skills development, market access, entrepreneurship, and intercultural networking. There was also a call for grants and trade facilitation support targeting vulnerable groups such as women, youth, cooperatives, and persons with disabilities engaged in cross-border trade.

The COMESA Trading for Peace Project was initiated in 2006 with the objective of supporting post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts to boost peacebuilding efforts through the facilitation and formalisation of cross-border trade. Over the years, the programme has gradually enhanced trust between small-scale cross-border traders and relevant border management agencies including customs, immigration, security and local administration.

Further gains and wins have included the construction of vital cross-border infrastructure such as markets, the installation of Trade Information Desk Offices, and the capacity building of traders geared towards fast-tracking their socio-economic development.



# Building Capacity in Data Excellence



The COMESA Statistics & Research Unit, in collaboration with Statistics Sweden, through its bilateral projects at the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Zambia Statistics Agency (ZamStats), hosted a three-day RStudio training for COMESA and ZamStats staff from 12–14 August 2025 in Lusaka, Zambia. The course is part of a Sida-funded migration statistics capacity development project (2023–2026) involving six Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

RStudio is a leading platform for statistical computing and visualization which is being introduced to COMESA and ZamStats staff members. Participants are learning how to set up RStudio, perform basic data wrangling, and conduct survey analysis.

Facilitated by Mr. Kjell Tambour, Senior Adviser at COMESA from Statistics Sweden, the training aimed at enhancing the availability of quality migration statistics for policymaking. Sessions were conducted in

English and featured practical, hands-on lessons.

This initiative reflects the ongoing commitment to strengthening Africa's statistical capacity for better migration data and informed decision-making.

The training was officially opened by Mr. Gabriel Masuku, Director of Legal and Corporate Affairs at COMESA Secretariat. In his remarks, he noted that the main objective of the course was to build capacity in using RStudio for data analysis, thereby enhancing the harmonization of knowledge between COMESA and its Member States.

In addition, Mr. Wilson Kamali, Head of the COMESA Statistics & Research Unit, expressed appreciation for the training and the support provided through Statistics Sweden's bilateral projects, emphasizing that this initiative will contribute to improving the efficiency of statistical work within COMESA and ZamStats.

## Unleashing Carbon Market Potential — I4C 2025 and ASCENT's Climate Mission

**Unleashing Carbon Market Potential — I4C 2025 and ASCENT's Climate Mission**  
Amid an escalating global climate crisis and evolving carbon finance landscape, the 2025 Innovate for Climate Conference (I4C) and the ASCENT Carbon Day strategic planning workshop held mid this year convened a gathering attended by a coalition of governments, private sector leaders, development banks and technical experts to accelerate access to climate finance in developing regions.

The I4C 2025 Conference held in Seville Spain opened with bold calls to action. In a keynote address, Hania Dawood, Climate Finance and Economics Manager at the World Bank, underscored the human toll of climate change with over 26 million people pushed into poverty annually catalyzing passionate debate on carbon finance as a lifeline for vulnerable populations.

Dirk Forrister, CEO of the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA), emphasized the pillars of trust, transparency, and equity for carbon markets to truly contribute to the global NetZero ambition by 2050.

The Conference also unveiled the World Bank's 2025 State and Trends of Carbon Pricing report, highlighting a significant expansion in carbon pricing policies worldwide. With coverage now reaching nearly two-thirds of global GDP, the findings not only signal momentum but also a mandate to ensure accessibility for emerging markets.

Representing Eastern and Southern Africa, the COMESA delegation led by ASCENT Project Coordinator, Dr. Chileshe Malama, showcased its flagship initiative, the Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation (ASCENT) programme through an engaging side event booth, co-hosted with Carbon Clear, Odessey, and A2EI.

With ASCENT aiming to reach 100 million people with clean energy and bring clean cooking solutions to over 20 million people, the potential to channel carbon financing into tangible development outcomes drew keen interest.

Mr. Axel Van Trotsenburg, Senior Managing Director of the World Bank and ASCENT's pioneer, visited the booth and reaffirmed the urgency for impact, stressing the need to

identify both accelerators and roadblocks to success.

On June 13 2025, the ASCENT Carbon Day workshop brought together stakeholders to evaluate progress, align on policy priorities, and chart the next phase of implementation. The Global Carbon Council, Carbon Clear, and A2EI provided updates on technical workstreams, while COMESA shared insights on regional harmonization of carbon markets.

Key takeaways from the workshop included ownership matters urging countries to shape carbon strategies that reflect their specific policy contexts.

Dr. Malama said the ASCENT Carbon Day resolved that beyond carbon, access to clean energy was reaffirmed as the program's foundational priority.

As ASCENT gears up to mobilize an additional US\$10 billion in financing including through carbon markets, the initiative is positioned not just as a climate response, but as a catalyst for equity, innovation, and long-term resilience in Africa.



## ASCENT Champions Clean Energy Access at RENPOWER Zambia 2025

The Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation (ASCENT) programme took center stage at the RENPOWER Zambia 2025 Conference held at the Pamodzi Hotel in Lusaka in July. Organized under the theme “Unlocking Access to Green Energy Generation and Accelerating Grid Stability,” the conference served as a catalytic forum for stakeholders shaping Zambia’s energy future.

Hosted by influential energy players and featuring a lineup of presentations, Q&A sessions and expert panel discussions, the one-day event attracted a diverse assembly of developers, technology providers, financiers, policy makers, and regulators. The conference focused on critical topics including grid access, infrastructure, solar and wind potential, the role of energy storage systems, regulatory reform, Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) standards, and unlocking financial solutions for sustainable energy initiatives.

Among the standout sessions was a panel discussion dedicated to rural electrification in Zambia where COMESA through ASCENT, outlined the programme’s ambitions to overcome barriers in bringing clean energy to remote regions.

Speaking on behalf of ASCENT, Technical Manager Mr. Ahid Maeresera emphasized

the programme’s strategic role in driving socioeconomic transformation across Member States.

“While global investments in renewable energy are soaring, Africa receives less than 3% of that funding,” said Mr. Maeresera adding that, “this disparity has been blamed on policy barriers and effort has been directed and designing policy frameworks conducive for attracting investment.”

He however indicated that, the ASCENT PIU knows that 80% of projects being prepared in Africa fail between prefeasibility and feasibility stages which signals a need for an ASCENT component dedicated to project preparation to increase the number of projects prepared to bankability and investment readiness.

Backed by funding from the World Bank, ASCENT aims to bridge this gap by offering both technical and financial support.

Mr. Maeresera stressed that the previous assumption that energy access spontaneously leads to economic empowerment and wellbeing has been proven to be false adding that the two cannot be an afterthought of provision of energy access, but a critical mission.

“The ASCENT programme is actively

supporting Member States in crafting bankable renewable energy projects guiding them from concept to implementation. Beyond financial backing, it also offers advisory support services to navigate technical challenges and regulatory hurdles.”

Capacity building emerged as a key theme, with Mr. Maeresera highlighting the need to fortify local institutions.

The RENPOWER Zambia 2025 conference ended on a high note, with ASCENT’s presence affirming COMESA’s commitment to inclusive, sustainable energy development. Delegates left with renewed motivation to collaborate across borders and sectors to realize Africa’s energy potential.

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