

24th COMESA Summit and Meetings Set for Nairobi, Kenya



L-R: H.E Hakainde Hichilema, H.E Evariste Ndayishimiye and H.E William Ruto at the 2023 COMESA Summit in Bujumbura, Burundi

All is set for the COMESA Meetings scheduled for Nairobi, Kenya starting on Monday 6th – 9th October 2025.

The first meeting will be the COMESA-EU Horticulture Connect which is expected to bring together buyers and horticulture producers from the European Union to interact with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) including women-owned businesses from the region. This engagement will strengthen capacity of the SMEs by them getting firsthand knowledge of EU market requirements, certification processes and quality standards, ensuring that they remain competitive in international trade.

Over the past years, COMESA Secretariat has been organising trade missions for SMEs from Member States to participate in EU Business Partnership Dialogues meant to enhance market access by connecting the SMEs with European buyers, investors and trade facilitators.

This has helped them secure export deals

and expand distribution networks. “These engagements have been very helpful and contributed to the improved way of doing business for our SMEs,” said Ms Mshuka Kamwela, European Union Development Fund (EDF) Manager at COMESA Secretariat. The COMESA-EU Connect will be followed by the 18th COMESA Business Forum and Exhibition where more than 300 business people from the region will gather to share innovation, trade, showcase their products and form partnerships.

“It offers a platform where business leaders, policymakers, innovators and investors from the region gather annually to network and explore way of deepening trade and collaboration,” COMESA Business Council Chief Executive Officer Mr Teddy Soobramanien said ahead of the Forum.

The 20th Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs will be held on 8th October 2025. The meeting will review the peace and security situation in the COMESA region and map ways of promoting peace, promoting

democracy and encouraging dialogue in conflict resolution. “This meeting will bring together Ministers who deal with peace and Security. They will receive a detailed report on the current situation and they will guide how the region moves forward,” Dr Oita Etyang Head of the Governance Peace and Security Unit added.

This will culminate into the 24th COMESA Heads of State and Government Summit to be held on 9th October. All the meetings will take place at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC).

Kenya's President His Excellency William Ruto is expected to take over as Chairperson of the COMESA Authority for a period of one-year. The current Chair of the Authority, Burundi's President His Excellency President Evariste Ndayishimiye will handover to President Ruto. The theme for this year's Summit is Leveraging Digitization to Deepen Regional Value Chains for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth.



A milestone moment, as COMESA launches the Electronic Certificate of Origin (eCO) in Kenya

COMESA Electronic Certificate of Origin Launched in Kenya

COMESA Secretariat working with the Government of Kenya have on 2nd October 2025 launched the electronic Certificate of Origin (eCO) which is expected to advance the regional digital integration agenda. The launch marks a steady move towards modernizing trade facilitation by digitizing the registration of exporters and the issuance of electronic Certificates of Origin.

Mr. Timothy Were, Director of ICT at the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment who was the Guest of Honor at the event remarked that the launch sends a strong signal to the region and continent that Kenya is ready to drive forward digital transformation, deepen regional integration and foster continental unity. "By embracing innovation, we reaffirm our commitment to making trade more efficient, transparent, and inclusive for all," he said.

Dr Christopher Onyango, Director of Trade and Customs at COMESA Secretariat, described the event as a significant advancement under the COMESA Digital Free Trade Area (DFTA).

Kenya's commitment and leadership in advancing COMESA's integration agenda. We commend Kenya for embracing this innovation, which promotes efficiency, competitiveness, transparency and trust in regional trade," he said.

Certificates of Origin are essential for exporters to access preferential trade benefits under regional agreements, including COMESA, the East African Community (EAC) and the

African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Previously, the certification process was fully manual, requiring physical applications, printed certificates, and in-person verification. The digital system eliminates these inefficiencies, reducing costs, minimizing fraud risks and improving record accuracy and tracking for exporters.

"This launch is a clear demonstration of Kenya's commitment and leadership in advancing COMESA's integration agenda. We commend Kenya for embracing this innovation, which promotes efficiency, competitiveness, transparency and trust in regional trade," he said.

"This launch is a clear demonstration of



ASCENT Week 2025 Ignites a New Era for Regional Energy Transformation

Over 400 high-level stakeholders from the energy sector, including representatives from the public and private sectors, regional organizations, and the international community, gathered in Lusaka for the inaugural Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation (ASCENT Week) from 22-26 September 2025. The event aimed to reshape the energy landscape across Eastern and Southern Africa, focusing on expanding sustainable and clean energy access.

Organized by the COMESA Secretariat in partnership with the World Bank, ASCENT Week addressed energy access for over 100 million Africans. The event marked a crucial step in the region's pursuit of inclusive growth and sustainable development.

The ASCENT Programme is a multi-billion-dollar initiative designed to accelerate energy access through innovative solutions, digital technology and regional cooperation. With an initial investment of \$5 billion and plans to mobilize an additional \$10 billion from development partners and the private sector, ASCENT aims to electrify homes, power industries and unlock new economic opportunities across more than 20 countries. Central to the programme is COMESA's \$50 million Regional Acceleration Platform, which provides technical assistance, digital monitoring and knowledge exchange

to participating nations. Ambassador Dr. Mohamed Kadah, COMESA's Assistant Secretary General for Programmes emphasized the significance of ASCENT Week, stating, "It is not just about energy access—it's about unlocking opportunity, empowering communities and building resilient economies." He highlighted COMESA's commitment through the Regional Energy Access Acceleration Platform (REAAP), which supports Member States with expertise and tools to achieve tangible results.

Dr. Dev Haman, Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance, called on Member States to prioritize policy harmonization, infrastructure development and private sector engagement. "Aligning energy policies and standards will attract investment and facilitate cross-border trade," he explained. He also stressed the importance of expanding generation, transmission and distribution networks, especially in underserved regions.

The week featured workshops, policy dialogues and interactive sessions aimed at sharing best practices, accelerating impact, and planning the next phases of ASCENT's implementation. Participants included government officials, energy ministries, rural electrification agencies, utilities, regulators and project teams involved in ASCENT.

Zambia's Minister of Energy, Hon. Makoza Chikote, highlighted the country's leadership role in regional energy development. Represented by Hon. Mike Mposha, Minister of Green Economy and Environment, he affirmed Zambia's commitment to scaling up access, modernizing infrastructure and ensuring reliable, affordable energy for all Zambians. "Hosting ASCENT Week showcases our dedication to regional progress," he said.

The World Bank also underscored the importance of collaboration. Ms. Yadviga Semikolenova, World Bank Energy Practice Manager for Eastern and Southern Africa, noted, "The ASCENT Program signifies a new era of partnership and innovation. Working through regional platforms like COMESA allows us to scale solutions faster and ensure no community is left behind."

ASCENT Week 2025 is guided by five key objectives: raising awareness of the program's implementation, exploring ways to accelerate results, sharing successful practices, supporting national efforts, and defining the program's future steps. The event has set a clear path toward transforming energy access across the region, fostering regional cooperation and achieving sustainable development goals.



Peace and Security Committee Reviews Situation in the Region

The 20th Meeting of the COMESA Peace and Security Committee was held virtually from September 29-30, 2025, to review regional peace and security issues and guide collective responses among the 21-member trade bloc. The past year saw the region facing numerous challenges, including armed conflicts, transnational organized crime, terrorism and climate-induced insecurity, all requiring coordinated efforts.

In his opening remarks, Amb. Dr. Mohamed Kadah Assistant Secretary General for Programmes (ASGP) emphasized the importance of the Committee as a platform for Member States to deliberate on these issues and provide strategic guidance. He highlighted the principle of "African solutions to African problems," advocating for homegrown, inclusive and sustainable interventions. The ASGP reaffirmed that peace and security are central to COMESA's agenda and without stability, efforts to boost trade, investment and meet the goals of Agenda 2063 and the COMESA Treaty cannot succeed.

Committee Chairperson Mr. Ferdinand Bashikako, who is Burundi's Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, noted that the region recorded mixed progress over the period from November 2024 to September 2025. While some peace processes advanced, the region continued to face violence, political tensions and humanitarian

crises. Key conflict zones discussed included Ethiopia, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and eastern DR Congo, all of which remain unstable and require attention.

The meeting also reviewed recent elections within COMESA, the progress of flagship programmes such as the COMESA Conflict Early Warning System (COMWARN), Conflict Prevention and Management initiatives, the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Programme, efforts for Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC), climate security initiatives and measures against terrorism, violent extremism, money laundering, and terrorism financing (AML/CFT).

Further discussions highlighted Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development efforts through the "Trade for Peace" Programme, underscoring the link between economic integration and peace. The Committee emphasized that sustainable peace depends on regional solidarity, cooperation, prevention, democratic governance, social inclusion and resilience against emerging threats.

The report from this meeting will be presented to the upcoming COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs Meeting on October 8, 2025, in Kenya, setting the stage for further regional action to address ongoing peace and security challenges.



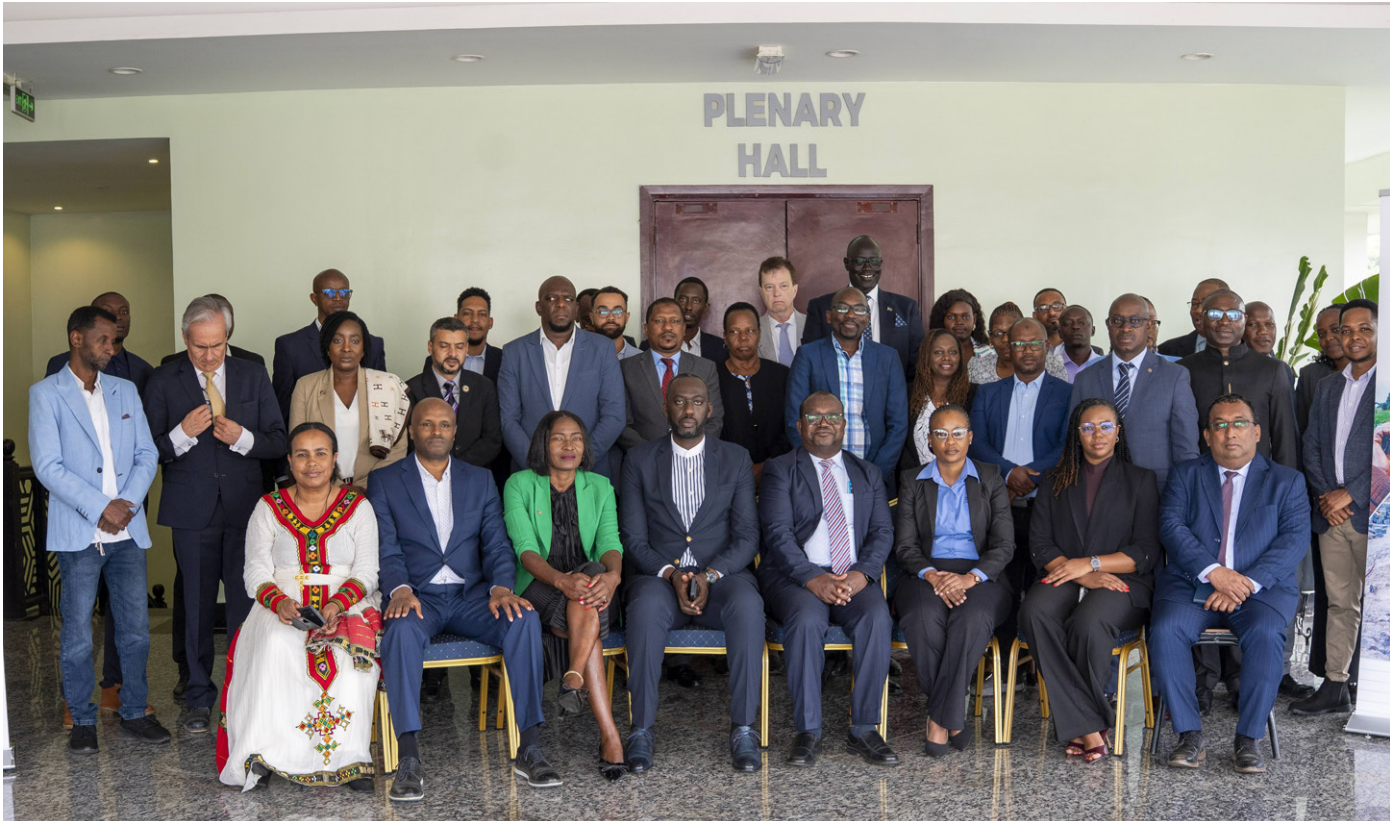
COMESA Toasts Malawi's President-Elect Peter Mutharika

COMESA Secretary General Madam Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe has congratulated Malawi's President Elect H.E. Peter Arthur Mutharika for emerging winner in the September 16 General Elections.

In her Message of Congratulations sent to Malawi, Ms Kapwepwe also commended the people of Malawi for exercising their civic right to vote in a peaceful manner.

She added that COMESA in collaboration with the African Union (AU) closely followed the preparations leading to the 2025 general elections and deployed a joint pre-election assessment mission which was followed by the deployment of a joint AU-COMESA Election Observer Mission.

"On behalf of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Secretariat, and indeed on my own behalf, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, upon being overwhelmingly elected as the President of the Republic of Malawi," adding that "We wish to commend, through you, the political actors as well as the people of Malawi for the peaceful and harmonious conduct of the entire electoral process."



Participants at the Stakeholder Validation Workshop held in Kigali, Rwanda

Policy and Frameworks to Increase Access to ICTs in the EA-SA-IO Region Validated

About 40 ICT experts from five Regional Economic Communities – COMESA, EAC, IGAD, IOC and SADC have reviewed and validated the new draft Policy and Regulatory Frameworks meant to increase access to affordable, reliable and meaningful ICT services for millions of Africans.

The documents will now be presented to the individual RECs before they can be domesticated by Member States.

According to the experts, this Policy and Frameworks will unlock the full potential of ICTs and improve inclusive access across the regions.

Through the European Union-funded Enhancement of Governance and Enabling Environment in ICT (EGEE-ICT) Programme, the five RECs acknowledge that in today's interconnected world, ICTs are no longer optional—they are vital for economic growth, social inclusion, regional trade and innovation. For COMESA and its partners, digital infrastructure is a key component of regional integration, connecting markets, people and opportunities.

This was said during the Stakeholder Validation Workshop for Policy and Regulatory Frameworks for Universal Access held in Kigali, Rwanda from 30 September – 2nd October 2025. The event allowed the experts to ensure that the Policy and Frameworks are relevant, feasible and effectively address the key policy and regulatory challenges.

Director of Infrastructure and Logistics at COMESA Secretariat Dr Benard Dzawanda emphasized that “These gaps are particularly pronounced in rural areas, among marginalized populations and in countries with limited infrastructure. If left unaddressed, they could widen the digital divide and hamper our development goals.” The workshop pointed out that despite progress, millions across the regions do not have access to ICTs and If left unaddressed, the situation risks widening the digital divide and undermining development goals.

Mr. Rodrigue Ruhashya, Director General at Rwanda's Ministry of Digital Transformation, added: “Robust universal access policies are essential for ensuring inclusive ICT services

across the region. By updating and validating Universal Access policies, we can bridge the digital divide, drive economic growth and empower marginalized communities.”

He highlighted key developments done in Rwanda to improve access to ICTs which include installing fiber optic and broadband network over all districts and border posts and over 4.5 million citizens have been trained, with the ambition of achieving universal digital literacy within the next four years.

The EGEE-ICT programme aims at deepening regional integration and the growth of the ICT sector in EA-SA-IO region. The programme supports the review and development of various ICT policy and regulatory frameworks that contribute to enhanced competition and improved access to affordable and secure ICT infrastructure and services. The beneficiaries of the programme are the 29 countries of the EA-SA-IO region.



L-R: H.E. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili with Hon. Justice Andrew K. C. Nyirenda

Seychelles Elections Declared Peaceful and Orderly

The Joint AU-COMESA Election Observer Mission (AU-COMESA EOM) to the September 25 - 27 General elections in Seychelles has declared that the elections were held in a peaceful and orderly manner. Mission leader H.E. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, former Prime Minister of Lesotho stated that based on its observation, the election process also followed international practice and the law of the island.

The Mission noted that Seychellois were able to freely exercise their Constitutional rights in peaceful elections and has implored all parties to manage the next stages in accordance with the law. There was no clear winner in the Presidential contest where incumbent Wavel Ramkalawan got 46.4% against the main opposition leader Patrick Herminie who got 48.8% of the vote. According to the law, the island country needs to hold a rerun on 9, 10 and 11 October 2025 for the Presidential elections in order for the winner to have 50 + 1 percent of the votes.

"The AU-COMESA EOM therefore implores all parties to manage the remaining processes including the second round peacefully. The Mission urges aggrieved

parties to use the legal channels to address any concerns they may have," the Statement read in part.

The Mission made several commendation practices which the region can emulate which includes among many others having adequate polling staff, providing appropriate adjustable polling booths, timely updates on number of electors who had voted, discipline and respect by the locals towards polling staff and high representation of women among polling staff.

Other recommendations cited to improve

the election process were made to the Government and relevant officers such as the Seychelles Police Force, the National Electoral Commission, Civil society organisations and the Media.

The preliminary statement was issued at the press conference hosted by the SADC Electoral Observation Mission led by Hon. Justice Andrew K. C. Nyirenda, former Chief Justice of the Republic of Malawi.

More Photos at

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/comesa/>

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(L-R) Ms. Kemsah Rehan Ali, Dr. Winnie Rugutt, H.E. Amb. Dr. Mohamed Kadh, H.E. Amb. Erastus Mwencha and H.E. Mr. Anouar Ben Youssef

3rd Annual COMESA-IRSK Conference Paves the Way for Regional Diplomacy and Economic Integration in the Region

From 1 - 3 October 2025, COMESA working with partners held the 3rd Annual COMESA-IRSK Conference – an event meant to showcase the region's growing influence in regional affairs. Under the theme “Enhancing COMESA’s Strategic Positioning and Resilience in the Evolving Global Order”, the Conference served as a precursor to the 24th COMESA Heads of State Summit and celebrated accomplishment, resilience and vision for the future.

Speakers acknowledged that the world has changed in recent years. From the COVID-19 pandemic to geopolitical conflicts and shifting trade alliances, Africa continues to face both daunting challenges and exciting opportunities. Thus, the Conference aimed to foster constructive dialogue around current policies, challenges and opportunities in order to provide participants with avenues for advancing their expertise and capacity.

Amb. Dr. Mohamed Kadh, COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes, who participated at the conference, emphasised the need to accelerate regional

growth and integration.

“COMESA is a transformative platform to boost trade in this evolving global order -which represents immense opportunities. The question to ponder on is - how can COMESA lead with a clearer vision, unity of purpose and vision?”

The Conference provided a platform where researchers, policymakers, diplomats and practitioners interrogated critical issues – from peace and security, governance and trade, to digital transformation, energy transition and regional integration. With thematic tracks spanning international relations, diplomacy and COMESA’s 30-year journey, issues such as good governance, various forms of diplomacy and the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite were explored through keynote speeches and panel discussions. A highlight was a roundtable on COMESA at 30, celebrating its decades long legacy and achievements in the economic and socio-political spheres.

Beyond intellectual exchange, the

Conference embodied partnership and collaboration. The partnering organisations included – COMESA Secretariat, the International Relations Society of Kenya (IRSK), the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Acacia Dialogue Center, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) and the Australian High Commission to Kenya – convened the Conference with the objective of facilitating knowledge exchange and collaborative projects in order to inspire forward-thinking solutions to the pressing challenges faced by the continent in contemporary times.

The IRSK Conference effectively reflected Africa’s ability to unite, learn, adapt and lead with confidence. It further affirmed the region’s unwavering commitment to shaping a resilient, integrated, prosperous and globally respected Africa.

COMESA urges Member States to harness full potential of \$5bn ASCENT Power Initiative

By Benedict Tembo Freelance Writer

Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Assistant Secretary for Administration and Finance Dr. Dev Haman has urged partner Member States to focus on five strategic priorities to realise the full potential of the Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation (ASCENT).

Mooted in June last year, ASCENT is a US\$5 billion initiative aimed at electrifying 100 million people across Eastern and Southern Africa by 2030.

During the opening ceremony of the ASCENT Week, Dr Haman said firstly, there was need to align Member States' energy policies and standards to attract investment and enable cross-border trade.

"Secondly, we need to invest in infrastructure development by expanding generation, transmission and distribution networks, especially in underserved areas. Thirdly, we need to engage the private sector by creating predictable, transparent environments for private capital to thrive," he said.

He also said there is need to build capacity by investing in technical, managerial and financial skills across institutions.

"And finally, we shall put in place an inclusive Energy Access framework to ensure that the transition benefits all, especially women, youth

and vulnerable populations," Mr Haman said.

He underscored COMESA's commitment to the renewable transition which he said was unwavering.

"We see it not as an end, but as a means towards achieving our broader aspirations of economic growth, social equity, regional unity, and environmental stewardship. I have no doubt ASCENT will be productive and impactful," Dr Haman said.

He said the gathering at Ciela Resort was not only a symbol of commitment, but also a signal of collective purpose - a purpose rooted in the desire to build a resilient, interconnected and sustainable energy future for the Eastern and Southern African region.

"We meet at a critical juncture in our development journey. Globally, the energy sector is undergoing a seismic shift moving away from fossil fuels and toward clean, renewable and decentralised systems. In COMESA, this transformation is not aspirational, it is essential," he said.

"Our industries face high energy costs, rural communities remain largely off grid and our economies are vulnerable to external shocks from volatile fuel prices to the intensifying impacts of climate change," he said.

Yet, within these challenges lies opportunities.

"Most of the countries represented here are

endowed with abundant renewable energy potential: solar, wind, hydro, and geothermal. The question is not whether we can harness these resources but how quickly, how equitably, and how sustainably we can do so," he said.

Speaking at the same event, COMESA Assistant Secretary for Programmes Amb. Dr. Mohamed Kadah said universal energy access targets are unlikely to be attained at the current pace, which is particularly challenging for low-income and rural communities living in developing countries.

"Yet the global transition to a renewable, decarbonised, decentralised and efficient energy system provides a sustainable solution to delivering energy to communities at the last mile," Dr Kadah stated.

He said policy and institutional reforms targeted at stronger governance and smarter energy policies can unlock investment and accelerate progress.

"As countries make that shift, energy needs, priorities and capacities of diverse gender and vulnerable groups and communities need to be integrated into the energy policies and strategies to ensure that our efforts reflect the differentiated and context-specific realities and needs of our region," Dr Kadah said.

He was happy to acknowledge that ASCENT was designed to meet the challenges associated with energy access by accelerating

energy access through grid and off-grid solutions.

"We are here to facilitate the effective optimization of regional platforms through dialogue and knowledge exchange, supporting Member States in preparing bankable projects, providing technical assistance and policy advisory services, mobilising the private sector, and mobilising development financing as well as ensuring that ASCENT interventions are inclusive, scalable, and sustainable," said Dr Kadah.

And Government declared its full commitment to joining ASCENT.

During the official opening session, Zambia's Minister of Energy Makozo Chikote said Government believes that through regional collaboration, shared innovation and strategic investment, ASCENT can bridge the energy access gap, not just for Zambia, but for its neighbours in Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Tanzania, Namibia, Botswana and beyond.

Mr Chikote said ASCENT's three pillars - regional and national platforms, grid electrification, and scaling distributed renewables align seamlessly with Zambia's national energy strategy.

"We are particularly encouraged by the programme's emphasis on clean energy technologies. Zambia enjoys one of the highest solar irradiation levels in the region, averaging 5.5 kWh/m²/day. Yet, our installed solar capacity is under 400 MW. This is a missed opportunity we intend to correct. I believe that ASCENT offers the technical and financial scaffolding to scale this capacity exponentially," he said.

In a speech read for him by minister of Environment and Green Economy Mike Mposha, Mr Chikote said Zambia's economy has grown steadily over the past decade, driven by mining, agriculture, and manufacturing among other key sectors adding that the country has increased national electricity access from 34 percent in 2021 to 54 percent by 2023 while the rural access increased from eight percent to 34 percent during the same period.

He also urged the private sector to seize the opportunity ASCENT presents.



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