

## COMESA Committee of Elders Hold Retreat



COMESA Committee of Elders at the mediation training in Nairobi, Kenya.

As part of its ongoing strategy to strengthen the mediation and preventive diplomacy capacity of the COMESA Committee of Elders (CCOE), COMESA Secretariat in collaboration with the Clingendael Institute based in The Hague, Netherlands, provided a tailor-made mediation training to the Elders on 11-12 October 2025 in Nairobi, Kenya.

This initiative sought to reinforce COMESA's commitment to equipping the Committee with the necessary skills to address the evolving peace and security challenges across the region. Mediation lies at the heart of the Elders' mandate, which focuses on conflict prevention, dialogue facilitation, and resolution of disputes affecting governance, borders, trade and the management of shared resources such as water, all critical enablers of regional integration and stability.

Prior to the training, the COMESA Committee of Elders held their retreat on 10 October 2025. The retreat was meant for the Committee

members to discuss related to their work, which is in line with Rule 11(1) of the Rules of procedure for operation of the COMESA Committee of Elders which stipulates that the Committee shall meet at least once a year.

During the opening of the Retreat and the training, the Assistant Secretary General for Programmes of COMESA, Ambassador Dr. Mohamed Kadah, commended the Elders for their valuable contributions to COMESA's governance, peace and security architecture. He appreciated their unwavering commitment during the preventive diplomacy efforts for the Malawi 2025 General Elections. He emphasised that "building the mediation and negotiation skills of the Elders is essential to maximise their collective influence and ensure impactful engagement in regional peace processes".

The Chairperson of the Committee of Elders, Ambassador Ashraf Rashed, echoed this sentiment and stressed the need for the

CCOE to take on a broader role that extends beyond election observation. He highlighted that deeper involvement in governance support, dialogue facilitation and intra-state mediation initiatives would make the Elders more effective contributors to COMESA's preventive diplomacy efforts.

By strengthening the capacities of the Committee of Elders, COMESA reaffirms its recognition that peace and dialogue are foundational to economic development and cooperation among Member States.

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## Partnering with China in Renewable Energy, Trade and Infrastructure

COMESA hosted a high-level delegation from the Ministry of Water Resources of the People's Republic of China, led by Vice Minister H.E. Mr. Wang Baoen, at the Secretariat in Lusaka, Zambia, on 14th October 2025. The meeting reaffirmed the long-standing partnership between COMESA and China, focusing on collaboration in renewable energy, trade, water management, research and infrastructure development.

During the meeting, Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance, Dr. Dev Haman, highlighted the growth in trade between the two regions, noting that imports from China rose by 63% and exports from COMESA increased by 127% between 2020 and 2023.

"Through our collaboration, we are not only expanding trade but also building the foundations for sustainable industrialization and clean energy access across the region," said Dr. Haman.

Vice Minister Wang Baoen reaffirmed China's commitment to supporting COMESA's vision, noting: "China stands ready to share expertise and resources to help advance Africa's goals for sustainable growth and regional

integration." Both parties are finalizing a Joint Action Plan (2026–2030) to deepen cooperation in renewable energy, technology transfer, and capacity building.

The partnership continues to deliver tangible

results, including the ongoing construction of the new COMESA Headquarters by a Chinese company a project symbolizing the enduring friendship between COMESA and China.







# Strengthening Technical Capacity of the Gender Technical Working Group



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Members of the COMESA Secretariat Gender Technical Working Group (GTWG) held a workshop from 14 to 16 October 2025 to enhance their capacities for mainstreaming gender in their work. The three-day workshop which took place in Lusaka had 26 staff in attendance. The activity sought to reinforce the role of gender mainstreaming in advancing COMESA's objectives.

Participants were trained on the importance of gender and social inclusion for sustainable development, with a specific call to ensure a human development focus as they

implement strategies to address barriers faced by marginalized and excluded groups. Workshop participants were also equipped with skills to effectively communicate gender data through a session that provided them with the tools and approaches for reporting this data to different stakeholders.

Key among the themes of the training were sessions on gender-responsive budgeting and auditing, as well as an exposition to results-based planning and data systems to strengthen the technical working group's ability to undertake data collection, analysis, tracking and monitoring of gender-responsive

indicators.

The workshop concluded with the presentation of the COMESA Regional Workplace Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Policy.

In his brief remarks to close the workshop, Head of Statistics Unit, Mr Wilson Kamali thanked participants for their active participation, contributions and commitment. He described the training as enriching and challenged staff to apply the knowledge and skills acquired to engender their work.

## COMESA, ZEP-Re Tee-Off Inaugural Joint Golf Tournament



The Lusaka Golf Club came alive on 23 October 2025, as COMESA, in partnership with ZEP-Re (PTA Reinsurance Company), teed off the inaugural COMESA and ZEP-Re Golf Tournament.

With over 110 participants attending, the event becomes a cornerstone for professional and social interaction within the insurance and reinsurance fraternity. The event marks an important step toward strengthening regional collaboration through sport, while promoting wellness,

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## KAZINI CARAVAN: Using Art and Culture to Drive Trade Awareness Across Africa

On Tuesday 21 October 2025, COMESA Secretariat hosted the Kazini Caravan, a youth-led continental initiative, which promotes inclusive regional integration by using art, culture and innovation as tools for trade awareness and empowerment, with the aim to simplify complex trade policies for youth innovators and women entrepreneurs across Africa's 55 countries.

This initiative supports COMESA's broader efforts to enhance youth engagement, women's economic empowerment, and creative industry participation in regional development. It also aligns with COMESA's strategic objective of ensuring that integration is people-centered, practical and inclusive of all sectors, including the cultural and creative economy.

Speaking during the event, Secretary General of the Lozi Arts and Culture Association— a Zambian based group, Ms. Diana Namakau Wasamunu emphasized the power of art in translating trade into lived experience, stating: "Trade agreements can sometimes seem abstract—numbers, charts and protocols. But when a poet performs a

verse about cross-border opportunity, when a dancer interprets freedom in movement, when a painter captures the spirit of Pan-African unity, then trade becomes real, felt in the hearts of our people."

COMESA Acting Secretary General, Dr. Dev Haman, commended the Kazini Caravans impact, noting that it embodies COMESA's vision of an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful region. "This is a powerful intervention that encourages all 54 African countries to open their doors to cultural exchange allowing creativity to be shared, celebrated, and economically empowering for those who make a living through it," he said.

By connecting to initiatives such as this, COMESA continues to strengthen the link between culture, trade and economic development, ensuring that regional integration is not only a policy goal but a lived reality for Africa's youth, women and creative communities.

## COMESA, ZEP-Re...

networking, and stakeholder engagement among representatives from both the public and private sectors.

ZEP-Re, a COMESA institution and a leading force in the region's reinsurance landscape, continues to champion financial risk management and economic resilience. The tournament reflected the shared impetus by COMESA and ZEP-Re to drive regional integration, economic diversification, and sustainable development across Africa.

The day saw competitive play, special awards and a celebratory closing ceremony. Dr Dev Haman, Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance, expressed enthusiasm about the collaboration, stating, "It aligns with our shared values of fostering regional partnerships and stakeholder engagement, reflecting our commitment to building strong ties not only through trade and development, but also through shared experiences."

Echoing this sentiment, Mr. Owen Munthali, ZEP-Re's Country Manager for Zambia and Malawi, highlighted the importance of industry-wide cooperation. "Today, we celebrate the insurers, reinsurers, and brokers who work with us to expand risk capacity, innovate products, and protect communities across COMESA Member States and beyond," he says.

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