

46th COMESA Policy Organs Meetings Set for Lusaka

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Africa's largest trade, development and economic bloc, will be holding the 46th Annual Policy Organs Meetings at the Kenneth Kaunda International Conference Center in Lusaka from the 2nd to the 4th of December 2025. These Meetings include the Intergovernmental

Committee and the Council of Ministers who coordinate COMESA Programmes. Directors, Permanent Secretaries and Ministers from the 21 Member States are expected to gather for these important meetings to review and discuss Regional Integration as spearheaded by COMESA.

The Theme for this year is:- 'Leveraging Digitalization to Deepen Regional Value Chains for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth' Follow developments of these meetings in the media and on the COMESA Secretariat Social Media Platforms.

COMESA and World Bank Champion Digital MRV for Regional Energy Transformation

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in partnership with the World Bank, convened a high-level virtual webinar on Digital Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (dMRV) under the ASCENT Programme. The event, hosted on the Prospects platform, marked an important step toward strengthening regional capacity for data-driven energy access planning and climate resilience.

Sponsored by the World Bank through the ASCENT Project, the webinar which took place on 12th November 2025, attracted over 60 Monitoring & Evaluation experts and program managers from across the region, particularly those who missed earlier ASCENT training or required updates.

The webinar focused on practical skills, including navigating and interpreting the ASCENT dashboard, managing data ingestion workflows, and applying MRV for policy evaluation. Key expected outcomes included strengthening stakeholder capacity to use digital tools for monitoring and planning, improving coordination and transparency across regional energy programs and supporting climate-aligned electrification strategies through robust data analytics.

Opening the webinar, Mr. Ahid Maeresera, Programme Manager for ASCENT at COMESA Secretariat, underscored the strategic



importance of digital solutions adding that the dMRV platform stands as a cornerstone for regional energy transformation, ensuring that every household connected contributes to a greener, more inclusive future.

Mr Maeresera hinted that at the heart of this transformation is the ASCENT Regional dMRV Platform, hosted on Prospects which provides standardized, interactive dashboards that enable including real-time tracking of implementation at national and regional levels, benchmarking performance across countries and delivery models and alignment of progress with COMESA's regional energy and climate objectives.

He added that by integrating these capabilities, the platform empowers Member States to make evidence-based decisions, optimize resource allocation, and enhance accountability in the energy access ecosystem. "ASCENT is driving progress towards ambitious energy access targets, connecting millions of households through diverse delivery models.

To achieve this, we need transparent, real-time systems for tracking and decision-making," Mr Maeresera said.

The Eastern and Southern Africa region faces urgent energy access challenges, with millions of households still lacking reliable electricity. The ASCENT Program, coordinated by COMESA, is spearheading efforts to accelerate electrification across 21 Member States, leveraging diverse delivery models and partnerships. However, the scale and complexity of these initiatives demand transparent, real-time systems to track progress and inform policy decisions.

For Member States, adopting dMRV is more than a technical upgrade but a strategic enabler for achieving universal energy access, meeting climate commitments, and fostering sustainable development. On the other hand, by harmonizing data systems and reporting standards, the region can accelerate progress toward SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and regional climate resilience targets.

COMESA Governors Pledge Strong Push for Deeper Monetary Integration and Digital Trade



Central Bank Governments and their Representatives during the Kampala meetings

A renewed push for deeper monetary and financial integration dominated discussions as COMESA's Central Bank Governors met for their 29th Committee Meeting in Kampala on Friday 21 November 2025. They mapped out the region's economic future and underscored COMESA's core objective which is to accelerate economic growth and improve livelihoods through robust regional integration and trade facilitation.

Over the past three decades, COMESA has pressed ahead with initiatives to streamline cross-border procedures, boost ease of doing business, and accelerate intra-regional trade and investment. Intra-COMESA trade reached \$14 billion in 2024, a notable milestone, but still only accounts for about 6% of the region's total trade, signaling substantial room for growth and deeper integration.

Speaking during the opening ceremony, Dr Dev Haman COMESA's Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance stressed the need of addressing trade barriers and strengthening regional cooperation as essential to unlocking this potential.

He highlighted ongoing moves to improve cross-border efficiency through customs automation, digitalization of procedures, and closer coordination among border agencies.

"By cutting trade barriers and improving regional cooperation, we as COMESA seek to raise intra-regional trade and match or surpass peers, with automation of customs, digital procedures, and coordinated border agencies, alongside service-sector negotiations to advance economic integration," said Dr Haman.

Dr. Michael Atingi-Ego, Governor Central Bank of Uganda and Chairperson of the COMESA Committee of Central Bank Governors added that a resilient COMESA hinges on robust macroeconomic policy, vibrant regional trade and empowered financial institutions. With decisive action, central banks can anchor a more connected, prosperous and self-reliant COMESA.

The Governors reaffirmed support for negotiations across key service sectors—business, financial, transport, communications, tourism, construction, and energy—to advance a broader economic integration agenda that benefits all member states.

In remarks highlighting their important role, the Governors, noted the critical role of monetary and financial integration in removing capital-flow barriers and boosting intra-regional trade. A more integrated monetary framework is seen as the bedrock for stabilizing economies and sustaining development across COMESA.

The discussions also celebrated progress amid global headwinds, including shifting U.S. policies, tightening global financial conditions, and climate-related shocks. Governors were urged to sustain resilience and pursue climate-smart financial policy, with a focus on digitalization as a driver of inclusion and competitiveness as the region builds interoperable financial and trade systems.

On the institutional front, the COMESA

Monetary Institute (CMI), who are the convenors of the annual meetings, reported on the continued capacity-building and research programmes which they said help strengthen macroeconomic management and financial-sector stability in the region. CMI Director Dr Lucas Njoroge said the training programmes and evidence-based policy work are helping member central banks sharpen their analytical capabilities and policy advice.

The COMESA Clearing House (CCH) highlighted momentum toward modernization of REPSS and migration to the ISO 20022 standard, a major step for interoperability and data harmonization in regional payments. Ms Jedidah Ndebele CCH Executive Secretary encouraged the Governors to bring more central banks onto the system to maximize the benefits—faster export payments, reduced mistrust among traders, and deeper regional trade.

Additionally, the Digital Retail Payments Platform (DRPP) is advancing, with a Friendly User Trial between Malawi and Zambia marking a milestone toward regional digital financial integration. This platform promises to reduce dependence on hard currency, empower small traders and women, and broaden financial inclusion.

As the meeting closed, officials reaffirmed their commitment to accelerating monetary and financial integration, reinforcing COMESA's readiness to become a stable, integrated economic zone capable of delivering sustained growth and development for the region.



Dr. Christopher Onyango

Regional Workshop on the Simplified Trade Regime

COMESA held a Regional Awareness Workshop on the inclusion of selected services under the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime (STR), on 25 November 2025 in Harare, Zimbabwe. It was officiated by senior government officials from the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community and Small and Medium Enterprises Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, alongside representatives of the European Union Delegation and the implementing agency FIAP.

The workshop builds on progress made during the Validation Workshop held in Lusaka, Zambia, in May 2025, where Member States endorsed the Feasibility Study on the inclusion of selected services in the STR. The study highlighted the growing importance of informal cross-border trade in services such as tourism, construction, transport, and mobile financial transactions. Building on these findings, the Harare meeting aims to raise awareness among policymakers, cross-border traders, and media stakeholders while deepening dialogue on practical approaches to expanding the STR beyond goods.

In his remarks, Director of Trade and Customs at COMESA Secretariat, Dr. Christopher Onyango, expressed appreciation to the Government of Zimbabwe for hosting the event and to the European Union for its continued support through the EU Technical Assistance Facility (EU-TAF).

He underscored that services account for nearly half of the GDP in many COMESA Member States, providing significant employment opportunities and supporting key sectors such as logistics, tourism and finance. The delegates agreed that extending the STR to sectors such as Trade in Services is therefore expected to enhance small-scale entrepreneurship, promote formalisation through predictable procedures and empower women and youth who constitute the majority of small-scale traders.

This initiative complements ongoing COMESA Trade in Services negotiations by providing a people-centred, bottom-up framework that links regional integration with the realities of small-scale trade. Dr. Onyango reaffirmed COMESA's commitment to advancing simplified procedures, professional mobility, and regulatory cooperation as the region moves toward a more integrated African services market. He thanked the Government of Zimbabwe, the European Union, FIAP, and all participating Member States for their continued collaboration, noting that the workshop represents an important step in strengthening inclusive regional integration and deepening intra-COMESA trade.

Participants used the meeting to review recommendations of the Feasibility Study, identified potential pilot services and exchanged experiences with other Regional Economic Communities to ensure harmonisation and avoid duplication.

Building Capacity on Trade Remedies

On 11-13 November 2025, COMESA in collaboration with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) held a Joint Capacity Building Workshop on Trade Remedies to strengthen capacity and increase knowledge for effective application of trade remedy measures for the COMESA Trade Remedies Sub-Committee members. The virtual workshop provided participants with practical knowledge, guidance and a platform for exchanging experiences to support seamless trade across the COMESA Region.

Speaking during the opening of the meeting, Mrs. Alice Twizeye, Senior Trade Officer, at COMESA Secretariat expressed appreciation for the continued collaboration between COMESA and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in advancing initiatives to promote fair and rules-based trade in the region. She emphasized that trade remedies are vital tools for protecting domestic industries while facilitating fair and efficient intra-regional trade.

Mr. Maxim Shmelev, from the WTO Secretariat, commended COMESA for the collaboration in organizing the workshop, emphasizing the importance of building regional capacity in trade remedies, reaffirming the WTO's commitment to the COMESA Member States while they put into practice the knowledge gained to ensure that trade remedies are applied fairly, transparently and in compliance with international obligations, thereby promoting sustainable and predictable trade.



Building Resilience Through Regional Trade and Stronger Central Banks

Global shocks are tightening the world's supply chains and sparking volatile commodity prices, underscoring a fragile global economy. For COMESA, a resource-rich region dependent on exports, the impact is significant. Yet resilience emerges when intra-regional trade and coordinated monetary and financial systems are strengthened to transform volatility into strength.

Despite a dip in overall trade, COMESA has shown steady performance, with intra-COMESA exports at about US\$14 billion in both 2022 and 2023. This consistency reveals robust regional ties and a solid foundation for growth and deeper integration. The region's export potential is vast—estimated at US\$101.1 billion annually—while intra-COMESA trade remains only 6% of total trade, signaling substantial room to expand. This was revealed and discussed during the 2025 COMESA Central Bank Governors Symposium held in Kampala, Uganda on Thursday 20 November 2025.

The Governors noted that unlocking this (trade) potential requires concerted action. They must push for enhanced regional sourcing to build resilience against external shocks, while addressing production constraints and expanding market information. A regional trade information system and product catalogue

could streamline the flow of quality goods across borders, supported by tailor-made production lines that meet Member States' demand.

Beyond physical trade, the African continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was named as being a key enabler. It enlarges markets, spurs cross-border investment in infrastructure and stimulates services trade, all while serving as a shock absorber against global turbulence. There was a common agreed that stronger regional markets also attract investment and support industrial development.

"We as Central banks play a pivotal role. Traditionally tasked with price stability, today we are architects of financial ecosystems. Stable, well-regulated financial systems credit, trade finance and cross-border payment mechanisms—are essential to sustaining intra-COMESA trade and investment flows," the Governors added "When banks and capital markets function smoothly, small traders and exporters gain access to finance and opportunities, boosting regional competitiveness,"

In summary, they all agreed that a resilient COMESA hinges on robust macroeconomic policy, vibrant regional trade and empowered financial institutions. With decisive action, central banks can anchor

a more connected, prosperous and self-reliant COMESA.

The Symposium had two Panel Discussion sessions whose topics were:

"Central Banking and Global Shocks: Conduct of Monetary Policy in the Times of Crisis and Positioning Monetary Policy for Dealing with Commodity Booms and Busts" and "Assessing Financial sector Stability and Resilience To Exogenous Shocks in the COMESA Region."

The Governor of the Central Bank of Uganda and Chairperson of the COMESA Committee of Central Bank Governors Dr Michael Atungi-Ego and the Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance at COMESA Secretariat Dr Dev Haman officially opened the Symposium.



H.E. Dr. Musalia Mudavadi Prime Cabinet Secretary of the Republic of Kenya

COMESA participates in the 5th Conference on Safe Schools Declaration

COMESA participated in the 5th Conference on Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) which took place on 25-26 November 2025 at Safari Park hotel in Nairobi Kenya. The conference which was hosted by the Government of Kenya was co-organised by COMESA, UNICEF, Plan International, Save the Children, UNESCO, Government of Norway, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack among others.

The Safe School Declaration is an Inter-governmental political commitment dedicated to protecting education from armed attack. It outlines a set of commitments to strengthen the protection of education from attack and restrict the use of schools, universities for military purposes. Since the Declaration was opened for countries to endorse in May 2015, more than 120 countries have since endorsed the declaration.

The Conference organised under the theme "Safe Education for All: A Decade of Commitment, A Call to Action through the Safe Schools Declaration" brought

together high-level and technical representatives from UN Member States, regional organizations, UN agencies, civil society, academia, and children and youth advocates. The conference was a platform for cross-regional dialogue, mutual learning, and new partnerships to advance the protection of education in conflict.

H.E. Dr. Musalia Mudavadi, the Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary in charge of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs of Kenya officially opened the meeting. He encouraged countries to domesticate and implement the provisions of the Safe Schools Declaration. Speaking during the workshop, COMESA representative Mr. Richard Atwaru from the Governance, Peace and Security Unit underscored the commitment of COMESA to work with various stakeholders to encourage the implementation of the provisions of the SSD.

He added that COMESA has taken deliberate actions to develop a comprehensive regional strategy on Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC). The framework is fully

aligned with the African Peace and Security Architecture and with the principles of the Safe Schools Declaration.

Other documents developed by COMESA are Guidelines on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration for Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG) and Technical Guidance Note on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD).



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