

COMESA Council of Ministers Take Stock of Progress in Regional Integration Programmes

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Delegates at the 46th Council of Ministers Meeting in Lusaka

The 46th COMESA Council of Ministers Meeting was held on Thursday 4 December 2025 in Lusaka, Zambia and attended by Ministers responsible for Commerce, Trade, Industry and Foreign Affairs. The one-day meeting took stock of the status of implementation of regional integration programmes in the last one year. The Ministers also received reports of the sectoral meetings that have been held to date.

Zambia's Vice President, Her Honour. Dr. W.K Mutale Nalumango opened the meeting and was represented by the Minister of Defence Hon. Ambrose Lufuma. She commended the region for recording positive growth with intra-trade growing from US\$2.3bn in 2000 to US\$14bn in 2024 despite the complex global environment.

In a speech read on her behalf, Vice President Nalumango highlighted the positive strides the region has achieved such as policy alignment which has enabled 16 Member States to fully liberalise tariffs while advancing implementation of crucial instruments like the Regional Customs Transit Guarantee

Scheme and the Rules of Origin.

The Simplified Trade Regime (STR) between Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe was mentioned for having empowered about 35,000 small-scale traders annually most of whom are women and youth. In order to adapt to modern ways of doing business, she urged the region to embrace digital transformation as it has continued to play a positive part with mobile telephone penetration now exceeding 90 percent.

Another positive point she highlighted was the fact that greenfield investment into the region now comprises 18 percent of COMESA's total Foreign Direct Investment inflows, directly supporting regional climate resilience and sustainable growth.

The meeting invited the private sector to enter into Public Private Partnerships to construct world class physical and digital infrastructure, modernise the transport corridors, build regional data centers and invest in secure cloud services. Hon. Nalumango added that all these efforts would eventually lead to the

region becoming self-sufficient.

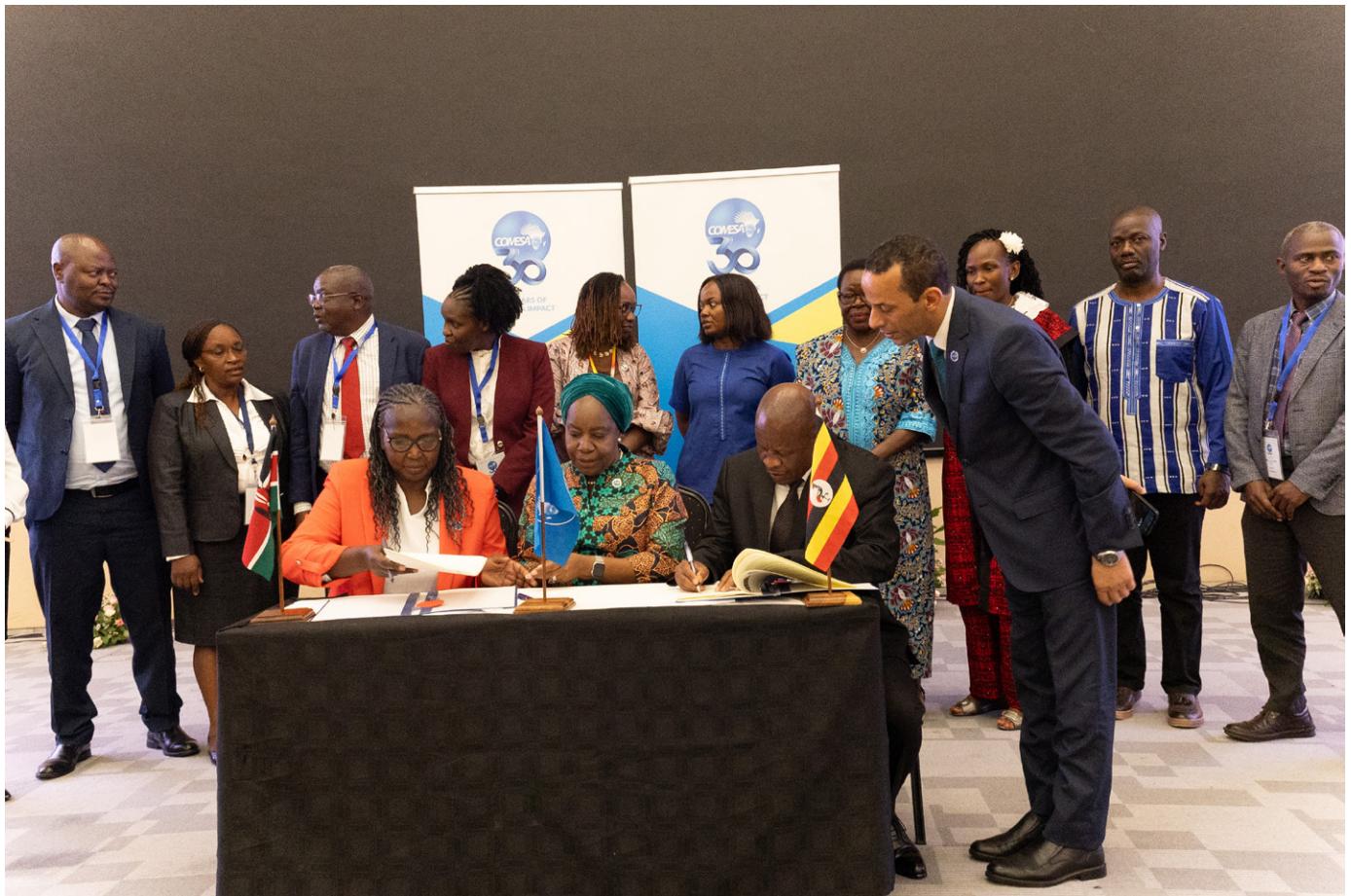
"There is need for our Member States to reflect on how we can start funding our own activities through implementation of the Market Levy. Our development partners to whom we are very grateful for their support have their own priorities. Africa cannot be developed through over reliance on our development partners."

To enhance trade efficiency and predictability, Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe informed the Ministers that COMESA has made decisive strides in embracing digitalization and trade facilitation to overcome bottlenecks in integration. Some of these include launching the electronic Certificate of Origin and the national single windows systems among many others.

"This Council convenes at a moment of renewed determination to consolidate our Common Market and accelerate implementation of our integration agenda. Under the guidance of this Council and the Authority, the Secretariat remains firmly committed to executing its Treaty-mandated

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Kenya and Uganda Sign Mutual Agreement to Boost Trade



Hon. Lee Kinyanjui of Kenya and Hon. Francis Mwebesa of Uganda signing the agreement in the presence of the COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe and ASGP Amb. Dr. Mohamed Kadah

The Governments of Kenya and Uganda have concluded and signed the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) on Conformity Assessment. This is part of the Enhancing Regional Agricultural Commodity Trade in COMESA Project which has now evolved into a practical solution that will make trade between the two neighbours faster, cheaper and more predictable.

The Project aims to promote regional trade by reducing technical barriers and enhancing the recognition of conformity assessment procedures such as inspection and sampling, testing and certification between Member States.

With this new MRA, Kenya and Uganda will now recognize each other's inspection, sampling, testing, and certification processes reducing the need for duplicate testing and certification of goods. This will lead to increased trade, competitiveness, and economic growth, particularly for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) that are

critical to the region's economic development. This also means fewer delays, lower costs, and smoother movement of key commodities such as maize, groundnuts, soybeans, rice, beans and sorghum.

The Agreement was signed by Hon. Lee Kinyanjui of Kenya and Hon. Francis Mwebesa of Uganda in the presence of the COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, during the 46th COMESA Council

of Ministers Meeting in Lusaka, Zambia on 4 December 2025. It adds to the momentum built earlier this year with the Malawi-Zambia MRA and completed negotiations involving Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The COMESA project is supported by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and the Foreign and the Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

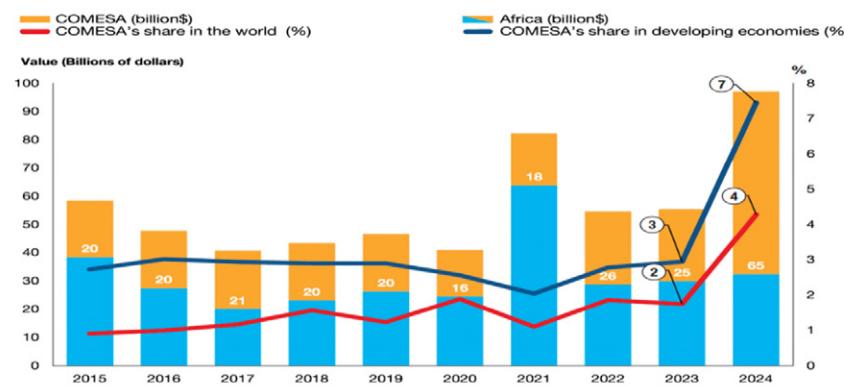


A handshake to seal the deal



FDI inflows to COMESA reach a record high in 2024

FDI inflows to Africa and COMESA, and COMESA's share in world and developing economies
(Billions of dollars and percentage)



Source: UNCTAD, based on FDI/MNE database (www.unctad.org/fdistatistics).

FDI Surges in COMESA Despite Global Decline

The 2025 COMESA Investment Report has revealed that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has increased into the region driven by renewable energy and mega projects while investment has remained highly concentrated in five countries namely – Egypt, Ethiopia, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya.

The Report was launched during the 46th COMESA Council of Minister's Meeting on 4 December 2025 in Lusaka, Zambia.

Developed by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in collaboration with the COMESA Regional Investment Agency (RIA), this landmark report provides a comprehensive assessment of FDI dynamics in the region and presents evidence-based recommendations aligned with the COMESA Medium-Term Strategic Plan 2026-2030.

In 2024, FDI inflows to COMESA rose by 154 per cent to a record USD 65 billion, largely supported by Egypt's Ras El-Hekma mega-project, but even excluding this project, FDI inflows would still have grown by 16 per cent, confirming a region-wide improvement in investor sentiment. As a result, COMESA's share in global FDI doubled, rising from 2 to 4 per cent, while its share in developing-economy inflows increased from 3 to 7 per cent, accounting for 67 per cent of total FDI inflows in Africa. This is according to the latest COMESA Investment Report 2025.

The Report also states that European and North American investors hold the largest share of FDI stock in COMESA led by the Netherlands and the United States.

A major highlight of the report is the exceptional increase in international project finance (IPF) in COMESA, which nearly doubled to USD 79 billion (+93%) and accounted for four-fifths of Africa's total IPF value. Large-scale renewable energy, grid expansion and construction projects—especially in Egypt, Tunisia, Rwanda and Malawi—were the main contributors.

Greenfield investment also remained strong at USD 77 billion announced in 2024 (second-highest on record) while COMESA captured two-thirds of all greenfield value in Africa.

Investment remains highly concentrated despite strong headline growth in five countries—Egypt, Ethiopia, Uganda, DRC, Kenya—accounted for 90% of inflows.

Intra-COMESA investment remained extremely low at 3% of greenfield project number and 6% of greenfield value.

The report warns that without wider country participation, COMESA's investment expansion may not translate into broad-based development gains.

Checkout the report on: <https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjCCMcA>



Minister Ambrose Lufuma

COMESA Council of Ministers...

obligations, including coordinating regional programmes, monitoring implementation of decisions, and supporting Member States in driving sustainable economic and social progress through cooperation and integration.

She added that despite the negative economic growth recorded for 2024 in some Member States, many economies-maintained resilience, supported primarily by increased public investment, stronger commodity export activity and improved macroeconomic management, as evidenced by easing inflation and stabilisation of public debt ratios. In response to these realities and aligned with continental integration agendas such as the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, COMESA's commitment to accelerating economic integration and structural transformation is anchored within the new Medium-Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) for 2026-2030.

Hon. Barry Faure, Minister of Foreign Affairs from Seychelles gave a Vote of Thanks and reiterated the bloc's resolve to continue implementing programmes that will deepen intra-regional trade.

The theme for the Meeting was 'Leveraging Digitalization to Deepen Regional Value Chains for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth'.

<https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjCCMcA>



The aviation experts at the validation workshop in Livingstone, Zambia

Civil Aviation Experts Call for Flexible Use of the Airspace in the EA-SA-IO Region

Experts in civil aviation, military representatives and industry stakeholders have called for the Flexible Use of the Airspace (FUA) in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region in order to transform air transport across 29 countries.

This move would significantly contribute to the promotion of trade and development and unlock a sector that has long been plagued by exorbitant operational costs and airfares, outdated and fragmented air infrastructure, rigid segregated airspace management, regulatory and mobility barriers, yet the sector has the potential to connect economies and people over the vast distances of Africa which would directly contribute to deepening intra-African trade and integration.

This call was made in Livingstone, Zambia during the regional workshop held 8-10 December 2025 to review and validate the draft model frameworks for Flexible Use of the Airspace across five Regional Economic Communities namely COMESA, EAC, IGAD, IOC and SADC.

The workshop organized under the Support to Air Transport Sector Development (SATSD) Programme and supported by an €8 million EU grant, aimed to translate model frameworks into practical, on-the-ground procedures.

Dr Benard Dzawanda, Director of Infrastructure and Logistics at COMESA Secretariat addressed the gathering and described the SATSD as a strategic regional response to the urgent need for competitive, safe and efficient air travel.

"Despite the air transport sector's strategic role as the lifeblood of modern commerce, tourism and diplomatic exchange, our region continues to grapple with systemic and costly challenges," Dr Dzawanda added. He pointed out that the SATSD Programme is laser-focused on three interlocking strategic objectives that are fundamental to the collective future namely: Operationalization of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), Strengthening Regulatory and Institutional Capacity of African Civil Aviation Authorities (CAAs) and regional institutions and Improving the Efficiency of Air Navigation Services and Performance.

During the workshop, COMESA committed to work closely with every Member State, regional partners and international stakeholders to finalize these frameworks and translate them into actionable, on-the-ground procedures.

Mr Paul Christian Rwegasha, Principal Civil Aviation Officer at the EAC Secretariat called for the Flexible Use of the Airspace describing it as an management concept where airspace is considered a single resource,

rather than being permanently designated as purely civil or purely military, aiming at accommodating all user requirements to the greatest extent possible.

"We in the EAC are working towards a unified approach to air traffic management across the region. This involves harmonization and aligning national regulations and procedures with harmonized regional standards, including those related to FUA and civil-military cooperation," he said.

IGAD's Representative Mr Ismail Garo Guyo said this initiative aligns with their broader mandate of promoting regional integration, enhancing infrastructure connectivity and strengthening peace and security across Member States."

"The outcomes of this workshop will not sit on shelves, they will serve as guiding instruments to support states in aligning policies, strengthening coordination, and unlocking the full economic and security potential of aviation in our region.....We pledged continued cooperation with COMESA, EAC, SADC, ICAO, AFCAC, and all partners to ensure that these frameworks are adopted, implemented, and sustained," said Mr Guyo who is the Head of Trade Industry and Tourism at IGAD Secretariat.



Ambassador Dr. Mohamed Kadah

Inclusive Digitalization Reviewed through the IDEA Project

The COMESA Secretariat has reaffirmed that digital transformation is no longer optional but a necessity for sustainable development, economic growth and social inclusion. Speaking at the official opening of the 2nd Project Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting for the Inclusive Digitalization for Eastern and Southern Africa (IDEA) Project, Assistant Secretary General – Programmes, Ambassador Dr. Mohamed Kadah, emphasized that IDEA offers a collaborative platform for countries to overcome policy barriers and accelerate innovation related to digital access.

Dr. Kadah highlighted significant progress since the project's launch in April 2025, including efforts to expand affordable, high-quality broadband connectivity to bridge infrastructure gaps, develop secure and interoperable digital platforms for regional integration, and promote high-impact digital applications across key economic and social sectors.

"IDEA represents a transformative regional effort aimed at expanding affordable, high-quality broadband connectivity; strengthening safe and interoperable digital platforms; and supporting high-impact digital applications across priority economic and social sectors, which will in turn positively benefit our citizens," he

stated.

The Assistant Secretary General underscored that digital transformation is now an essential driver of sustainable development and regional integration. He reiterated that the IDEA Project provides a comprehensive framework for addressing infrastructure gaps, policy challenges, and the need for innovative digital services.

"Digital transformation is not merely an option but a necessity for sustainable development, economic growth, and social inclusion," he said.

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"IDEA represents a transformative regional effort aimed at expanding affordable, high-quality broadband connectivity; strengthening safe and interoperable digital platforms; and supporting high-impact digital applications across priority economic and social sectors, which will in turn positively benefit our citizens," Amb. Dr Mohamed Kadah

The PSC reviewed the 2025 Progress Report, assessing achievements and lessons learned, considered and approved the 2026 Annual Work Plan and Budget, adopted the Terms of Reference for the Technical Working Group and clarified COMESA's role in supporting implementation aligned with regional priorities.

Dr. Kadah commended Member States, national Project Implementation Units, the IDEA Project Coordination Unit, and regional partners for their commitment, and expressed appreciation to the World Bank for its technical and financial support. He urged participants to uphold collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity, noting that decisions made will shape the region's digital future for years to come.

The meeting was concluded with a clear roadmap for 2026 and renewed commitment toward building a more connected, digitally empowered, and inclusive eastern and southern Africa.



Seychelles Moves to Harmonize Migration and Gender Data

Gender experts from ministries, departments and institutions in Seychelles participated in a high-level technical assistance workshop on Migration Statistics focusing on gender mainstreaming. The workshop held 25-28 November 2025 was hosted by COMESA Secretariat with the support of Statistics Sweden.

Opening the workshop, the Seychelles National Bureau of Statistics Chief Executive Officer Mr. Kevin Bistoquet, underscored the importance of strengthening migration statistics and integrating gender perspectives to align with regional and global standards. He noted that the workshop would strengthen national coordination through the establishment of a Technical Working Group on Migration Statistics, enhance knowledge of migration concepts and methodologies, and develop a roadmap for improved data production and dissemination. Participants were encouraged to actively engage,

collaborate and contribute to building an inclusive and efficient statistical system capable of supporting Seychelles' long-term development priorities.

Ms. Tsige Biyazen, Senior Gender Mainstreaming Officer, emphasized the importance of the workshop which aligns with the regional agenda for the Free Movement of Persons, trade and development. She expressed appreciation to the Government of Seychelles for providing an ideal setting to advance gender-responsive migration statistics and acknowledged the strong support of partner institutions, including IOM, Statistics Sweden, and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office.

During the workshop, COMESA's commitment to mainstreaming gender across all sectors through its Gender Policy Framework, Implementation Plan and

supporting guidelines, was highlighted with emphasis that gender equality and evidence-based policymaking require timely, accurate and disaggregated data. The workshop strengthened Seychelles' capacity to produce, harmonize and analyze migration statistics in accordance with international standards, while integrating gender considerations and enhancing coordination through a National Technical Working Group.

Partner organisations that participated in the workshop included the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Statistics Norway, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN Resident Coordinator for Mauritius and Seychelles, the Zambia National Statistics Office (ZamStats) and COMESA Secretariat.

COMESA DAY

8th December

'Growing Together for Prosperity'





AU-EU Summit Commits to Support Africa to Develop, Industrialise and Diversify Global Supply Chains

The 7th African Union (AU) – European Union (EU) Summit recently held in Luanda, Angola has committed to continue supporting all African countries to develop, industrialise, diversify exports and integrate into regional markets.

A declaration from the Summit agreed on the need to accelerate the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and promote the sustainable development of value chains to enhance the capacity of local industries to participate in regional and global markets.

"To diversify and secure global supply chains, for instance in the field of strategic and critical minerals, We will continue our support to regulatory changes to facilitate trade and investment, including through experience sharing,"...the declaration read in part.

COMESA Secretariat led by the Assistant Secretary General in Charge of Programmes Dr Mohamed Kadah participated in the

Summit from 24 -25 November 2025.

It was a historical event as it coincided with the 25th Anniversary of the AU-EU Partnership. This was a significant milestone that showcased the enduring and evolving relations between Africa and Europe and COMESA being a key part of this collaboration.

Dr Kadah commended AU and the EU for organising the Summit adding "It presented a unique opportunity to reflect on shared achievements and to chart a bold course for the future of Africa-Europe cooperation...the Summit served as a critical platform to assess progress and reaffirmed joint efforts of support and development,"

Besides the Summit, the COMESA delegation engaged in bilateral talks with the EU. The bilateral culminated in some key follow up actions which include the implementation of the joint work plan on the Sectoral Areas of Cooperation.

In order to facilitate trade, the Summit stressed the importance of maintaining open, transparent, and inclusive channels of dialogue and efforts to address climate change and promote environmental sustainability. Peace and security and migration were also discussed in detailed and the need to continue supporting the sectors.

The final text reflects several important outcomes including Shaping a Prosperous and Sustainable Future for Africa and Europe; Renewed and Enhanced Cooperation on Peace, Security, and Governance; Stronger Commitment to Multilateralism; and Enhanced and Reciprocal Partnership for Migration and Mobility.

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