

COMESA Experts Discuss Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources



Mr Thierry Kalonji, Director, IPPSD (L) and PS, Mr Hubert Ramazani (C) during the opening of the Joint Technical Committee meeting.

The COMESA joint technical committee on agriculture, environment and natural resources began meeting in Kinshasa, DRC Congo Tuesday, 11 November 2014. The three days meeting will discuss among others, the food security situation in the COMESA Region including the regional food balance sheet.

The committee comprise Permanent Secretaries from respective ministries in Member States. Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development Mr Hubert Ramazani, opened the meeting on behalf of the Minister H.E. Jean Chrisostome Mukesyayira.

The Minister informed the meeting

that the Government of DRC was currently implementing the National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP) to enhance agricultural production and productivity. This follows the signing of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) in 2011.

“The private sector and the development partners in this country have pledged over One billion dollars to support the implementation of the NAIP,” the Minister said. “We have also developed the concept of Agriculture Business Parks within the COMESA Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) framework in a Public Private Partnership arrangement.

COMESA seeks to adopt and promote initiatives for rationalization of agriculture production”

So far 14 COMESA countries have signed CAADP Compacts and eight have finalized their National Agriculture Investment Plans. A report on Implementation of the COMESA (CAADP) will be presented.

In his address the COMESA

Assistant Secretary General Amb. Kipyego Cheluget said COMESA seeks to adopt and promote initiatives for rationalization of agriculture production; sustainable agriculture and encourages common regional agriculture policy and food self-sufficiency. The speech was presented by the Director of Investment Promotion and Private Sector Development Mr. Thierry Kalonji.

Others programme reports to be discussed includes, the Implementation of Livestock and Fisheries, the Cassava Cluster, Sanitary and Phytosanitary issues, Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture, Natural Resources, Climate Change and Environmental Programmes and the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa.

A report on Fertilizer in the COMESA Region will be presented and a ceremony to launch the Joint Fertilizer Harmonization Programme conducted. Heads of Delegation from Member states will present reports on the status of implementation of the Agricultural development programmes at country level.

Djibouti providing a bridge between COMESA and the World

The development of transport and communication infrastructure in Djibouti will contribute in a big way to enhancing trade between COMESA, the Gulf States, Asia and the rest of the world.

Secretary General Sindiso Ngwenya describes Djibouti as strategically located in COMESA region to provide information Communication Technology (ICT) connectivity, ports facilities and transport gateway for the region to the world.

In a message of appreciation to the President of Djibouti for hosting the 8th Meeting of Ministers in charge of Infrastructure last month,

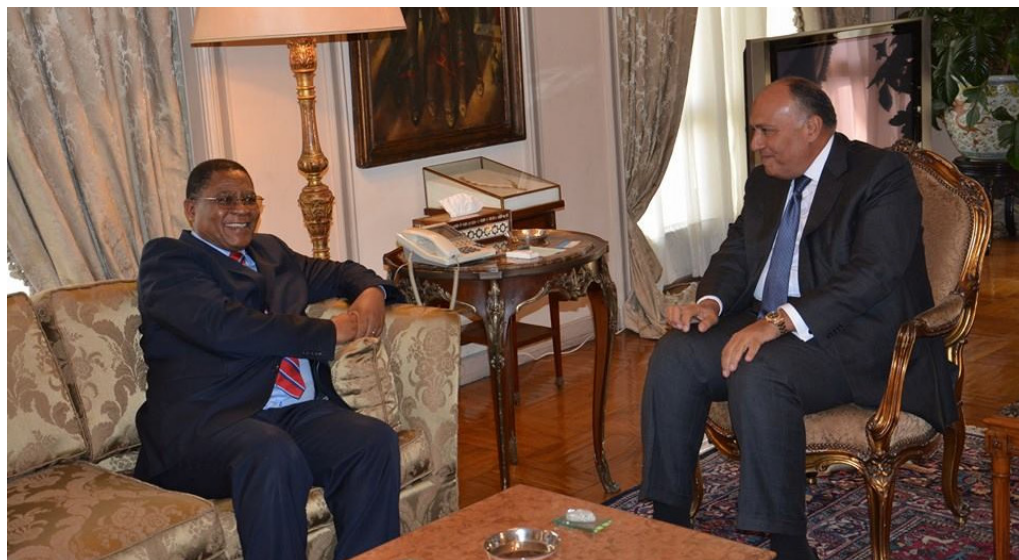
Mr. Ngwenya noted that the progress the country has made in infrastructure development especially the ports and telecommunications sub sectors have positioned Djibouti as a regional and international trade hub.

“This augurs well for deepening regional integration, economic growth and development leading to reduction of poverty and wealth creation.” He said. “Djibouti is not only the gateway for the Gulf States, Asia and Africa; it is also a bridge for COMESA to the region and the rest of the world that will play a great role in enhancing regional integration.”

The SG who earlier visited the Djibouti Institute of Diplomatic studies described it as a visionary idea, which the Ministers of Foreign Affairs during their meeting is likely to adopt as one of COMESA's regional centres of excellence.

COMESA infrastructure Ministers met in October 22 in Djibouti where they took key decisions related to Transport, Communications, Information Technology and Energy sub-sectors to address infrastructure issues and challenges across policy and regulatory harmonization, facilitation and development of physical projects.

Preparation for the Tripartite Summit on course



As the preparations for the launching of the Tripartite Free Trade Area gets underway, the Secretary General Sindiso Ngwenya visited Egypt where he met with government Ministers for briefing. Among those were the Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr

Sameh Shoukry (picture), Minister for Industry and Foreign Trade Mr Mounir Fakhry Abdel Nur and the Minister for Investment Mr. Ashraf Salman. The decision to launch the TFTA was made in Bujumbura, Burundi on 25 October 2014 by the Tripartite Sectoral Committee

of Ministers. This came after the majority of the Tripartite Member/ Partner States made Tariff offers and agreed on the Rules of Origin to be applied. The launching will be conducted during the COMESA-EAC-SADC Heads of State Summit next month.

Need for MS to Implement Programmes at the Same Pace

The 6th Meeting of the COMESA Committee on Statistical Matters ended last week in Lusaka, Zambia with a call on Member States to provide quality statistics as they are prerequisites for harmonized regional statistical frameworks.

Mr Felix Nkulukusa, the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Finance in Zambia said the varied level of implementation of COMESA programmes in Member States has led to an unbalanced field where some move faster than others.

Member States to take steps to access the available assistance from the TCF and RISM

“This poses a challenge for regional statistics as regional analyses require, as a prerequisite harmonized statistical frameworks implemented in all Member states,” the PS told delegates. “At the national level, lack of implementation may be as a consequence of prioritization or technical and financial constraints.”

Recognizing the constraints faced in funding statistical programs COMESA Secretariat with assistance from the European Union (EU) has developed mechanisms for assisting eligible member states to implement regional integration

Need for MS to implement programmes...



PS Felix Nkulukusa (5 right) and Amb. Dr Kipyego Cheluget (5 left) with delegates attending the meeting on Statistics

programs. These are the technical cooperation facility (TCF) and the Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM).

“This assistance is aimed at developing mechanisms for assisting eligible member States to implement regional integration programs that have been approved at COMESA Council of Ministers level,” Assistant

Secretary General Dr Kipyego Cheluget said in his address to the delegates.

The PS urged Member States to take steps to access the available assistance from the TCF and RISM which he described as offering immediate solutions to the financing constraints. These funding windows are supported by the EU through the COMESA.

He cited the recent approved by TCF for the implementation of the recommendations of the Council on international trade statistics submitted by the Central Statistical Office in Zambia.

Mr Nkulukusa urged the Committee to consider leveraging the assistance it receives from

key partners such as the African Development Bank to implement COMESA Council decisions in statistics. This is in addition rationalization the various donor-supported programs at the national level.

“The keen avoidance of duplication can translate into savings that are focused on areas with little support and hence fill the implementation gap,” the PS said.

The PS noted that the quality and dissemination of economic statistics has been a subject of criticisms on the accuracy of the numbers from statistical offices. He cited the Gross Domestic Product estimates, as receiving the most attention given the rebasing exercises that some countries have undertaken.

“Statistical data is used as a basis for policy decision making and thus the users required full disclosure on the integrity of the numbers, their methodological soundness, accuracy and reliability, serviceability and accessibility.

The AfDB has supported African including COMESA countries to develop statistical data portals which are meant to serve as an engine for quick dissemination of the much needed statistics.

During the three day meeting, reports on statistics on Transport and Communication, Energy, Agriculture and environment among others were presented. These sectors are important parts of regional statistics that are required by the COMESA Secretariat.

CCC Publishes New Merger Guidelines

The COMESA Competition Commission has developed and published new guidelines on merger assessment. The COMESA Merger Assessment Guidelines were prepared as part of the Commission’s ongoing efforts to clarify and provide guidance about its merger enforcement policies and practices.

The preparation of the Guidelines was done in cooperation with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group. The work involved wide consultations with the various stakeholders

among them, the International Bar Association, the American Bar Association, international and regional law firms, National Competition Authorities and the International Competition Network.

Part of the reference literature used was from the European Union (EU) Merger Regulations and Guidelines and the prevailing Regulations and Rules of Member States. The nature of markets in the Common Market was also taken into account.

The CCC is charged with the

administration and enforcement of the COMESA Competition Regulations. Since the CCC commenced operations in January 2013, the most active provisions of the Regulations have been the Merger Control Provisions.

As a consequence of this, the Commission has found itself with the responsibility of explaining and interpreting the Regulations and for responding to inquiries from the public regarding their application.



Tripartite Agreement on Movement of Business Persons

The COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Technical Committee has come up with a Draft Agreement on Movement of Business Persons within the region. This is one of the instruments for simplifying the movement of business people in the tripartite region.

The committee meeting was convened in Mauritius last week whose objective was to consider the revised matrix of Tripartite Member/ Partner States of currently applied immigration practices with regard to movement of business persons. Further it was aimed at developing and negotiating an instrument to facilitate the movement of business persons in the Tripartite region.

In the draft agreement, the delegates adopted most of the provisions that were introduced except for five of them that require further consultations. The critical ones are two provisions for visa on arrival and for the multi country multi visa cooperation arrangement. These two provisions are the crux of the Agreement and the value it would bring to the

tripartite region.

The meeting was attended by delegates from Botswana, Comoros, Egypt, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Others were officials from the Tripartite Task Force comprising the Secretariats of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC). The African Union Commission attended as an observer.

COMESA holds Training on using E-views Statistical Software

COMESA in partnership with the African Institute for Economic Development (IDEA) has conducted a Hands-on Training on Trade Policy Analysis using E-views Statistical Software. The aim of the training is to ensure that staff in COMESA and its Member States are competent in generating relevant empirical research in the areas of intra-African trade and trade policy analysis in general

“COMESA recognizes that this is one area where the region has been failing in making policy decisions which are evidence-based,” according to the report on the training that took place 03 - 07 November 2014 in Kenya. “The training will play a critical role in ensuring that the technical staff of the secretariat and the coordinating Ministries are equipped with necessary skill to undertake policy research and analysis.”

The capacity building programme will address critical trade related concerns such as impact of

liberalization on growth, tariff and non-tariff barriers such as import quotas, export restrictions, subsidies, imposition of minimum local content for imports and various technical and health standards, trade flows, and to derive development benefits from well-articulated, consistent and evidence-based trade policies.

Representatives from Burundi, Congo DR, Djibouti, Egypt, Kenya, Malawi, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda and Zimbabwe attended the training.

In February 2013, the COMESA Secretariat signed a Grant agreement with Africa Capacity Building Framework to implement the project on Enhancing Capacity of the COMESA Secretariat to Support Economic and Trade Policy Analysis and Research over a period of four years.

The project responds to the policy analysis and trade mechanism capacity needs emerging from the implementation of the COMESA Medium Term Strategic Plan.

COMESA Diary – November to December 2014

11 – 13 November	6th meeting of the Joint Technical Committee on Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment, D R Congo
15-19 November	Meeting of the technical Working Groups on Customs Cooperation, South Africa
25-26 November	Eighth Meeting of The Committee on Legal Affairs, Khartoum, Sudan
27 November	Seventh Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Justice, Sudan
27 November	Inauguration of The COMESA Court of Justice, Sudan
1-9 December	COMESA Policy Organs Meetings, D. R. Congo
19-20 December	Tripartite Summit, Egypt