

COMESA – CONNECT INDUSTRY DIALOGUE

“Smart Technologies for Sustainable Businesses”
21st - 22nd June, 2018, Kigali, Rwanda.



INFORMATION NOTE



Corporate partners

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Today's socio- economic fabric is interwoven with technology. Digital transformation is no longer a space to be in, we are already there. What matters now is how businesses, customers and consumers harness technology to prepare for new markets, protect existing innovations and set the trends for newer innovative methods of doing business. We are at an age where traditional, manual systems have faded into the tapestry of time- and going digital, works best.

African economies are also well within the technology playing field. Countries have just grasped the magnitude of importance for systems, units and organizations to collaborate to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. Smart synergies are now seen as a tool to eradicate poverty, increase intra- trade, establish strong cross border alliances and increase the continent's overall trade facilitation systems.

Technology services are no longer perceived as a specialized sector- but considered as an all-inclusive, cross cutting component of high impact, high demand businesses. To-date, sectors in manufacturing, finance, agriculture, health, education, demonstrate their optimum performance and competitive advantage through the synchronization of systems that operate in a digital space- that respond to the standard customer needs of time, quality, cost and consistency.

Can African countries learn from, and cooperate with each other to leverage the opportunities of smart technologies? We have seen that at the firm level, IT Companies, Telecommunication industries, Banks, Distributors are all partnering in a supply chain network that provides solutions to various customer bases. What can be done in other industries?

The COMESA CONNECT Industry Dialogue will be held the June 2018, in Kigali, Rwanda. The event will be held under the theme; **“Smart Technologies, Sustainable Industries”**.

This forum seeks to structure strategic efforts towards harnessing today's digital solutions to respond to the needs of our industries in the region. It is in this regard, that **COMESA Connect** seeks to bring together businesses in goods and services on one hand, and digital services players on the other , to provide solutions that will create smarter, sustainable, innovative , efficient and profitable businesses in Africa. Integrating ICT into business is a cross cutting advocacy and business facilitation agenda under the CBC . It is a call from the membership to respond to the need for industries to harness digital services solutions as a means of improving company operations.

What's trending?

Demystifying Block Chain Technology

Block chain technology is at the center of the leading technology of the century with the potential to radicalize and change the world economy.

Block chain is a rapidly evolving area of information technology with potential for huge benefits in terms of security, reliability and cost efficiency in the exchange of information. Block chain technology is a distributed ledger which records transactions in sequential blocks, creating encrypted data that can be shared between several parties through the supply chain, updating them instantly without risk of fraud. The information management system is decentralized and can record, track, monitor and exchange assets without need of an intermediary thereby making institutions and companies that run on it more transparent, democratic, and secure and more efficiency in the sharing and transfer of the information. As such, there is need to take decisive steps to harness this technology to improve efficiency in our economy in terms of business solutions, finance, production, trade; logistics amongst others.

As a recent technology there is limited understanding on how to maximize and harness this technology for the benefit of improved competitiveness of our businesses and growth of regional and global trade. The Forum will explore the concept of Block chain technologies and engage the public and private sectors on some of the possible implications and practical ways in which the technology can be used to transform our economies in a positive way.

Block Chain Technology for Public -Private Efficiency

Blockchain technology can revolutionise e-government services and lead to efficient service delivery through; improvements in the quality and quantity of government services, greater transparency and accessibility of government information and the development of information-sharing across different ministries of institutions. Examples of such areas include land property registrations, tax systems, trace ability of products in agriculture and mining, conservation, education services and even election management. Land security system (cadastral management) running on blockchain already being tested in some countries; for instance, the BITLAND program in Ghana. Companies have developed animal Internet of Things (IoT) technologies that focus on providing more accurate, real-time and comprehensive data when detecting the wildlife and can contribute more effectively to wildlife conservation.

Block chain technologies can decentralize energy markets thereby lead to efficiency and increased access, especially for African countries burdened by energy distribution challenges. There are various technologies that have been used to promote greater efficiency in the distribution processes; for instance, on energy trading between utilities, on use of smart meters for tracking energy generation and consumption combined with smart contracts for energy transactions between actors on the grid.

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With respect to distribution and sale of alternative energy forms, block chain technologies can also be used to create decentralized blockchain-based solar energy distribution system. Sun Exchange, SolarCoin are examples of blockchain-based networks for global, decentralized energy trading that allow peer to peer trading of solar energy. By creating global market place, they build economies of scale and reduce the cost and increase the accessibility of solar energy.

Promoting Efficiency in Trade Facilitation and Logistics

Trade Facilitation lies at the core of boosting global trade. Bureaucracy, protectionism, multiplicity of documents and processes are some of the key challenges and Non-tariff barriers affecting business in cross border trade. Easier, quicker and less expensive processes will allow many companies to trade regionally, integrating into regional and global supply chains. Some countries had begun implementing the single window systems to streamline processes and increase efficiency at national level. The absence of regional single systems has always been an impediment. Emerging digital technologies such as Block chain technologies in trade logistics or through digital Free Trade Areas have the potential to revolutionize trade facilitation and integration in a humungous way through extreme process automation. It can help reduce or eliminate these impediments by reducing the red tape and readily providing and processing electronic documentation across countries. Two critical attributes of the block chain; the reduction of agency or intermediary fees and auditable traceability will provide the much-needed balance between trade facilitation and regulation. COMESA is in the process of launching the Digital Free Trade Area which includes the operation of an E-certificate of origin complemented by a more efficient and faster processing times and processes. It is estimated that this could save businesses in more than \$450 million per year in clearance documentation. The implementation of such initiatives needs the active participation of the private sector.

Building sustainable supply chain networks

The participation of African SMES in global supply chains and industrialization remains limited and this has resulted in limited trade growth and intra-regional integration. SMEs provide 75% of the employment in the economies of Africa and are crucial players in the attainment of the public policy objectives of poverty eradication, wealth creation and trade. Various regional and global leading reports have cited the need for integration into regional and global supply chains as the key to Africa's economic integration. Inclusive and sustainable industrialization is about; how we can develop and upscale the participation of SMEs in the economic sectors as key to accelerating sustainable development and trade in the COMESA and globally.

The CBC Local Sourcing for Partnerships Project has been running for two years, integrates SMEs into the regional supply chain networks of larger corporates. One of the key limitations identified is the lack of a centralized business process system of information that provides distributors and suppliers the key information that allows them to source quality goods and services, and the administrative documents that allows them to strengthen distribution channels to various markets across the region. This information would be relevant to buyers and sellers providing market and business information that enables cross border trade and transactions. Furthermore, decentralized suppliers make it cumbersome for a buyer to source products from local SME suppliers with limited quantities.

Smart technology solutions can support the formation of such value networks or multi-stakeholder collaboration platforms. This not only reduces the transaction costs but locating and locking in partners becomes easier and more comprehensive value networks can become profitable irrespective of the values of the transactions.

Accessible Financial Solutions to improve your business

For African SMEs it becomes easier to build systems that can connect producers and buyers with more brokers and financial products that are affordable and enable access to markets. SMEs are also able to effectively cluster amongst themselves thereby improving their values in terms of production, marketing, transportation and after sales services. While this rapidly growing sector highlights that operational inefficiency is a core problem to the sustainability of the business, not much is being done to address this. Digital finance through mobile networks, the cloud, big data, and blockchain can bring financial inclusivity. Financial institutions and fintech companies can structure products that allows businesses to pay for affordable power access, stronger business processes, customer management systems.

For instance, Hijra a US based startup using block chain developed a financial network, develops a network for peer-to-peer working capital marketplace that provides banking partners and non-bank lenders alike—including alternative finance providers, asset-based lenders, and hedge funds to promote easier accessibility to finance. Bitland, a Ghanaian non-profit organization is registering land and real property ownership using block chain technologies. This has increased transparency and efficiency in land registration processes, and improving revenue collected by government.

Digital Assets and Cryptocurrencies

Lack of accessible and affordable financial services remains one of the leading constraints for SME businesses with the COMESA region.

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Greater access to financial services for both individuals and businesses accelerates enterprise development and is key to promoting productivity.

Digital assets could accelerate the positive transformation and financial inclusion that has been brought by the mobile payment systems which are rapidly growing in Africa. It can help individuals to establish a digital identity thereby increasing their ability to access the financial systems.

Crypto currencies make cross-border trade easier and more feasible for those with limited banking and financial infrastructure. Furthermore, by using cryptocurrencies, one can hedge against issues like inflation and currency withdrawal limits. Some examples include; BitPesa a Kenyan start up providing foreign exchange and business-to-business bitcoin based payment services in Kenya and several M-Pesa mobile money network. Golix (formerly BitFinance) in Zimbabwe providing banking and withdrawal services for Bitcoin in Zimbabwe where there is generally a constraint of currency supply and withdrawals limitations. Countries like Senegal have even gone forward to consider plans to introduce a cryptocurrency (eCFA) overseen by the West African Economic and Monetary Union, which can be used in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, and Togo.

Smart manufacturing; Infusing manufacturing with technology

The Internet of Things, Smart technologies and the Industrial Revolution 4.1 are increasingly becoming essential elements to transforming manufacturing. Undoubtedly industry 4.0 will make global manufacturing much more competitive and there is growing impetus in Africa to adopt technologies for manufacturing. Such smart technologies include for example; the adoption of robotic manufacturing particularly in the automatize industry, adoption Three-dimensional printing for manufacturing and smart sensor technologies. Three-dimensional printing cuts down on the wait time for replacement parts and transportation and allows for mass production in various products for instance; toys and medical devices. The Internet of Things (IoT) in manufacturing promotes efficiency of operations. By collecting, analyzing, and using data generated by complex manufacturing processes companies can cut costs and effectively monitor their processes. Block chain technologies have also been used to support the above technologies. For instance, on supply chain management IBM and Maersk have developed a technology for tracking of containers during shipping. Block chain registers can also be used for issues like traceability of products especially in some industries where traceability is part of the Sanitary and Phyto sanitary regulations. By improving traceability, block chain technology can also be used to curb counterfeits and counter illicit trade.

Firms have already started developing anti-counterfeiting blockchain applications especially on luxury items.

For instance, a China based blockchain company BitSE has teamed up with Direct Imported Goods (DIG), China's largest importer of fine wines, to establish a proprietary blockchain to address wine counterfeiting. By documenting the stages of manufacturing and location of products along the value chain retailers and consumers can trace the authenticity of products.

Policy and Regulatory Issues; Data Protection and Intellectual Property

The creation of a good regulatory business environment and the requisite infrastructure is a fundamental requirement to promote the infusion of technology to our industries and society. Some of the biggest challenges on the African continent remain connectivity and accessibility, and progress in these will drive broader adoption of block chain technologies, industry 4.0 or IoT applications by businesses and consumers. Furthermore, it is imperative that legislative or regulatory policies address the use and workings of those technologies as countries move towards economies and societies based on information and knowledge.

Ensuring a balanced data privacy regulatory framework that does not prove overly burdensome to business operations, hamper innovation, or impede legitimate cross-border data flows, while realizing regulatory interoperability. Very few countries in Sub Saharan Africa, except for SA, Botswana, Seychelles and Mauritius have a comprehensive data protection regulation and regime. The modern technologies such as Block chain technologies, and emerging issues in global regulation such as the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) call for the strengthening of data protection regulation as Africa leaps on to the shuttle of technology. There is need for adopting a cyber security framework that enables data protection for business to flexibly implement and voluntarily adopt market-driven, consensus-based internationally recognized standards.

Furthermore, protection of consumer and business data and innovation remains a key policy issue if technology is to be maximized. Over the past decades, intellectual property has invariably become intertwined with trade and business development. Intellectual property is currently one of the most valuable assets in commercial transactions, be it joint ventures, foreign collaborators, manufacturing, purchase or distribution agreements, or mergers and acquisitions. The value of intellectual property and intellectual property protection has not been fully utilized within the COMESA region. African tailored solutions are imperative for creating a balanced intellectual property regime.

It is essential that we grow knowledge based economies, and harness the power of knowledge, innovation and technology to develop solutions that are tailored to the specificities and dynamics of the African and COMESA economies.

From copyright, trademarks, patents, traditional knowledge, industrial designs and geographical indications- There is need to strengthen regional and national IP systems, promote use of IP to enhance business competitiveness of small and medium enterprises and collaborate in protection and exploitation of the above.

A) Dialogue Objectives

- § Establish a collective understanding and strategic focus on the potential of blockchain and other technologies for supporting trade and trade facilitation as well as the other business and industry within the African region.
- § Address the constraints that affect business competitiveness in the region and promote synergies between industry and IT to promote the use of technology and growth of African private sector.
- § Structure policy recommendations to ensure the use of technology address digital financial inclusion, industry competitiveness and revolutionary innovations for competitive sustainable enterprises.
- § Address the ideal structures that to ensure data protection policies in the region
- § Increase awareness and strengthen the national and regional intellectual property framework.

B) Venue- Kigali; Rwanda

C) Dates– 21st-22nd June 2018

D) Participants

- § Industry: Manufacturing and services companies,
- § SME companies
- § Manufacturing and Services Industry Associations,
- § ICT companies,
- § ICT industry federations and Associations,
- § Research and innovation Hubs and funding agencies,
- § Innovators,

- § Intellectual property regulators.
- § Consumer rights institutions.
- § Public Sector responsible for Manufacturing, Trade, ICT, I.P

E. How to attend

REGISTER NOW;
INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS- 300 US\$
REGIONAL PARTICIPANTS- 200US\$
LOCAL PARTICIPANTS- 50US\$
EXHIBITION- SHOWCASE YOUR INNOVATIONS- REGISTRATION APPLIES

To participate in this meeting, contact CBC. Please note the meeting offers a limited number of seats- on a first come, first serve basis. Registration is free. Kindly submit your name and business profile to – kmadzivanyika@comesa.int , or GTembo@comesa.int , or RBanda@comesa.int .



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COMESA CONNECT INDUSTRY DIALOGUE **REGISTRATION FORM**

All delegates and any accompanying persons are required to complete the registration form in full. Please photocopy this form for additional delegates. You may submit your proof of payment by fax at +260 211 225107 or online kmadzivanyika@comesa.int ; GTembo@comesa.int . Delegate fees must be paid in full before the event.

FEES STRUCTURE (tick relevant box)

Regional Delegate fees: EAC, SADC, COMESA, Rest of Africa	200 USD	
International Delegate fees;	300 USD	
National	50 USD	
Exhibition		

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