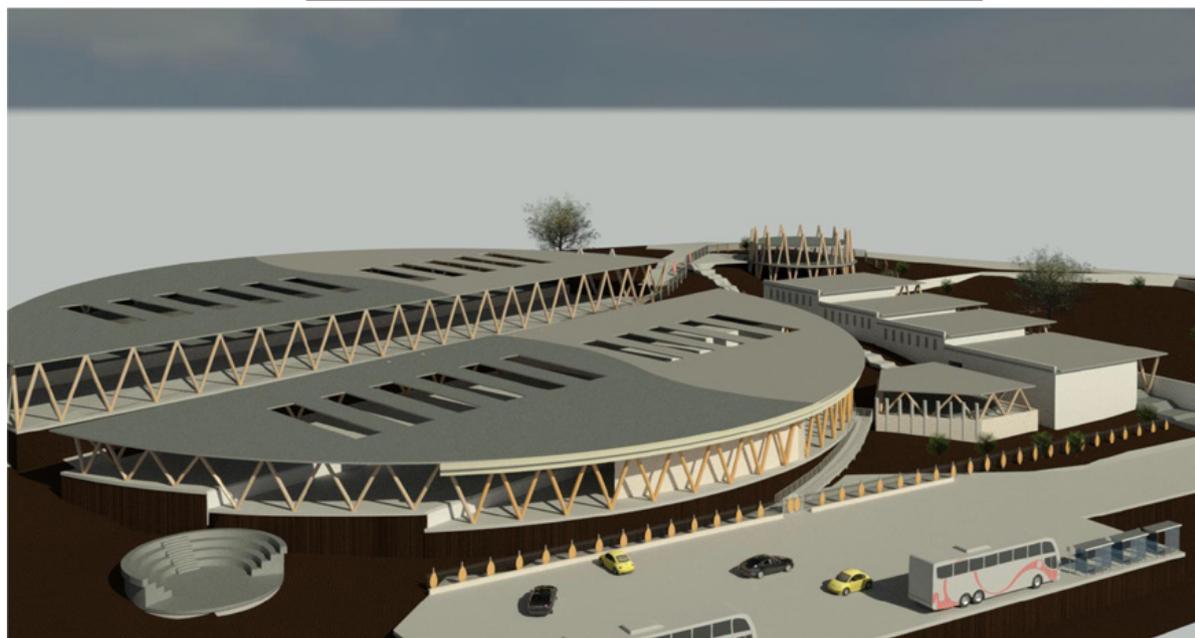


€1.2m Trade Hub set for Launching in Eswatini

Financing agreement to be signed March 15, 2019



Artist's impression of the Manzini Trade Hub

Eswatini is set to launch the construction of a trade hub and private sector support project in Manzini town. About 1.2 million euros provided by the European Union through the COMESA Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM) will be used to finance this project.

Signing of the Financing Agreement will be conducted on Friday 15 March 2019 paving way for the commencement of construction of the project known as The Manzini Trade Hub and Private Sector Support.

Eswatini Minister of Finance, Hon. Neil Rijkenberg and his Commerce counterpart, Hon. Mancoba Khumalo with jointly sign the agreement with COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe witnessed by the Head of Delegation of the European Union.

The overall objective of the project is to improve the production, trading and investment environment for the private sector in the Kingdom through the construction of phase 1 of the Trade Hub.

Upon completion, the hub will provide an improved environment for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) production and trade capacities. Specifically, it will enhance the performance of the leather value chain, improve quality infrastructure services to support production and trade, and raise the capacities for investment promotion in the country.

Eswatini, qualified for the project support by responding to the 7th and 8th Calls for Submissions made by the COMESA RISM to countries that have met the set criteria. This includes signing and ratifying the COMESA Fund Protocol thus becoming a member

of the Fund. The country must also be compliant with its obligations for payment of its assessed budgetary contributions to the COMESA Secretariat.

Under the 7th Call, Eswatini was allocated €331 246 as project support to finance the Trade Hub project with an overall objective of establishing a Women's Business Centre. This facility would contribute to the alleviation of poverty in the long term by assisting the women in generating income through trade. The project was endorsed in August 2018.

Under the 8th Call, the Kingdom qualified for €854,643 as project support and the two tranches were consolidated totaling €1,185,899. These funds were used to formulate and implement the trade hub and private sector support.

President Rajoelina, SG Meets in Madagascar

2019 Summit and Policy Organs Meetings on the Agenda



H. E. President Andry Rajoelina welcoming COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe

Secretary General of COMESA Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe was in Madagascar this week to brief and consult the Chair of the COMESA Authority of Heads of States and Government H. E. President Andry Rajoelina of Madagascar on COMESA programmes and the 2019 Summit.

During the mission that took place between 4 and 6 March 2019, the SG met with the Chairperson of COMESA Council of Ministers Hon. Lantsoa Rakotomalala. Discussions centred on the status of the preparation of the Extra Ordinary Council of Ministers meeting that will take place on 5 April 2019 in Lusaka.

This was the first meeting between the executive management of COMESA and the leadership of Madagascar since the formation of the new government following democratic elections in the country late last year.

COMESA SG congratulated the President upon his election and briefed him on key programmes that COMESA was implementing. These include industrialization, the Digital Free Trade Area and the Blue Economy programme which island countries like Madagascar have keen interest.

She further briefed the President on the Africa Union and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) meeting coming up in June 2019 in Niger. The President is expected to represent COMESA in the meeting which seeks to harmonize the activities of the AU and the RECs.

The President expressed his commitment to support the organization achieve its set goal in regional integration.

During the meeting with the Chair of the Council Hon. Rakotomalala, who is also

the Minister for Trade and Industry, they discussed the allocation to Madagascar of a total of 1.3 million Euros under the COMESA Regional Integration Mechanism (RISM).

Madagascar qualified for the funds which are in tranches of €373,953 and 964,842. The funds are provided by the European Union through COMESA to support Member States implement programmes that deepen regional integration.

Three other ministers had meetings with the Secretary General. They included Hon. Richard Randriamandranto (Finance and Budget) who is a former Chief of Strategic Planning and Research in COMESA, Hon. Lucien Fanomezantsoa, (Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries) and Hon. Naina Andriantsitohaina (Foreign Affairs).



Small Scale Women Traders Recognized as COMESA Marks Women's Day

Two events were conducted at the COMESA Secretariat to mark the 2019 International Women's Day. These were: a dialogue with the small-scale cross border women traders organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in collaboration with COMESA Secretariat and the government of Zambia on March 7, 2019.

The second was the celebration COMESA women staff to acknowledge their contribution to regional integration. The two events were conducted separately on March 7, 2019, the eve of the International Women's Day (March 8, 2019).

About 50 women involved in diverse types of small-scale cross border trade from and around Lusaka, Zambia were invited to share experiences on issues that affect them when conducting cross border trade. "We are here to recognize and celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women across various sections," Mrs. Kayula Siame, Permanent Secretary in Zambia's Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry said during the opening of the meeting.

She described the meeting as a unique

opportunity to dialogue with women small scale traders on pertinent issues affecting their trade.

COMESA Assistant Secretary General in Charges of Programmes Dr Kipyego Cheluget urged more women to get involved in trade to empower themselves and contribute to poverty reduction.

"Many women still face disproportionate lack of access to resources and opportunities to trade across borders and often have challenges in accessing education, trade information, credit, adequate women friendly services at borders and low visibility as women traders," he said.

In her statement, Ms. Marianne Lane, the IOM Chief of Mission said there was growing recognition at the global, regional and national levels of the linkage between migration and trade.

In line with this year's theme of 'Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change', she said her organization is supporting innovative ways of enabling women to succeed in trade. A mobile App known as the MigApp

developed by the IOM was presented at the event. The App is one of IOMs innovative platforms aimed at filling the existing information gap.

Appreciating the recognition accorded to women cross border traders, the Vice General Secretary of the Cross-Border Traders Association (CBTA) Ms. Christine Phiri said:

"Platforms of this nature give us the privilege to share testimonies, encourage and motivate one another on how best we can support the common effort of women cross border traders." She was represented by the CBTA Gender and Trade Specialist Mrs. Veronica Mwaba.

COMESA in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade, the IOM and other key stakeholders are implementing EU-funded COMESA Small Scale Cross-Border Trade programme Initiative. The programmes seeks to increase formal cross border trade by promoting trade facilitation measures and tools such as the Simplified Trade regime (STR).



Building Capacity of MS to Access International Markets

COMESA is developing a harmonized food safety regulatory environment and a credible quality verification infrastructure that will be trusted by the bloc's trading partners. The initiative is financed under the European Union Development (EDF 11), According to Secretary General (SG) Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, this initiative will improve the quality and competitiveness of goods produced in COMESA.

Among the beneficiary States is Madagascar which is renowned throughout the world as the primary source of high-end spices, but many of these products have yet to find their full potential as they lack external market access owing to food safety and regulatory requirements.

As a way of assisting the country overcome these barriers to trade, COMESA is addressing the sanitary and phytosanitary regulatory hurdles, through capacity building initiatives training.

Speaking at the opening of a National Workshop on Food Safety Regulation and Access to US Market training for producers

and exporters in Madagascar, the SG said the intervention by COMESA is aimed at helping member States respond to new food safety regulations by the United States government that came into force in October 2017.

The training workshop in Antananarivo began on March 4-6 March 2019. Similar trainings will also be rolled out to six additional Member States to ensure COMESA exports do not lose their competitive advantage in US markets.

Madagascar lost AGOA eligibility following the 2009 political crisis, and this led to a decline of Madagascar's total exports to the U.S. AGOA eligibility was reinstated in 2014 and exports resumed. The Madagascar National AGOA strategy launched in April 2015, identified the following products as having great potential for export to the US market; Vanilla, clove, coffee, shrimps and prawns, prepared or preserved tunas and essential oils.

The SG told the workshop participants to not only focus on the requirements by

the US food safety requirements, but also use the forum to share knowledge on the requirements of regional markets and other major markets such as the EU.

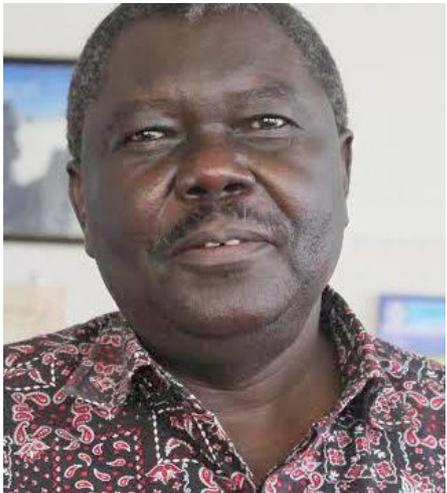
"The requirement for food safety management systems and the high costs associated with certification locks majority of SMEs in domestic markets. Export markets require procurement of voluntary third-party certification schemes, way beyond the means of local companies," she said.

At the borders, she said, some of the SPS measures applied to intra-regional trade do not even reduce risk at all, but only serve to increase trading costs which consequently discourages cross border trade thereby depressing regional exports.

She said the region has since made great strides to harmonize the SPS and standard regulatory environment in a way that facilitates trade, supports industry growth, and increases the competitiveness of COMESA food and agricultural exports.



Ambassador Julius Onen: A Champion of Regional Integration



COMESA mourns the sudden demise of Ambassador Julius Onen, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives of Uganda. Ambassador Onen has been instrumental in driving the regional integration agenda. His depth of knowledge on regional integration and his insightful contributions on the subject in various fora, regionally and globally has often informed major policy decisions.

He was a polished diplomat and nurtured excellent working relations between COMESA Secretariat and the Ministry which oversees the implementation of COMESA programmes in Uganda.

"His demise leaves our region poorer of champions that it needs to spur economic take-off and realize our common vision," the Secretary General of COMESA Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe said in a message of condolences.



Ethiopian Flight ET 302 tragedy shocks the region

The crash of the Ethiopian Flight 302 on Sunday March 10, enroute to Nairobi from Addis Ababa has sent shockwaves across the COMESA region. As one of the biggest regional carriers, ET connects COMESA Member States and the region to the world thus immensely contributing to regional integration.

Hundreds of delegates attending COMESA meetings and staff travelling on duty use this airline almost on day to day basis. The deep sense of loss was palpable as COMESA came to terms with the tragic accident that took away the lives of 157 people, with Kenya taking the hardest hit, losing 32 of her citizens

and Ethiopia losing nine. Egypt, Djibouti, Rwanda, Uganda, Sudan and Somalia are the other COMESA States which had citizens on board the ill-fated plane.

In a message of condolences to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, H.E. Abiy Ahmed, Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe expressed deep sadness and solidarity with the victims of the tragedy:

"At this difficult moment, as you search for answers on what could have gone wrong, COMESA shares your grief and that of all the countries affected by this tragedy."