

High Turnout at the 6th COMESA Annual Research Forum



Delegates at the 6th COMESA Annual Research Forum

Close to 100 delegates comprising of leading academicians, trade experts from the public and private sector, policy think-tanks, and innovators in science and technology attended the 6th COMESA Annual Research Forum Nairobi, Kenya that took place from 2 – 6 September 2019.

The week-long forum provided a platform to share knowledge and deliberate on empirical issues on how to promote intra-COMESA trade through innovation. Thirteen research papers prepared by researchers from across the region were presented at the Forum, which was anchored under the theme: “Promoting Intra-COMESA Trade through Innovation”.

In addition, five new innovative products on science and technology were presented at the Forum.

The forum was primarily concerned with ensuring that the highest quality research-derived evidence informs policy development in COMESA. Dr Kipyego Cheluget, Assistant Secretary General of COMESA, told the researchers that there was a ready demand for the research forum’s output.

“Member States have continued to appreciate the critical role of the policy analysis and many of them have been implementing the policy recommendations on various papers presented in the previous research forums,” he said. “Effective decision-making requires good advice, and that depends on informed use of evidence both in developing policy and in evaluating its effect once implemented.”

He added that capacity building

interventions in research and training carried out by COMESA are aimed at enhancing not only the capacity of the COMESA Secretariat but also the capacity of the Member States in economic and trade policy analysis and research, as well as trade negotiations.

Delivering the opening address, the Principal Secretary in the State Department of Trade in Kenya, Dr Chris Kiptoo, said the best way to achieve productivity growth is through greater innovation, which can be defined as the development of new or improved products, services and processes.

“Organizations that innovate successfully can enhance their competitiveness and position themselves for growth,” Dr Kiptoo said in a statement presented by the Director of Administration Ms. Fauzia Shauri.

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He observed that countries and regions with robust innovation activities have higher productivity, economic growth and job creation and have more government revenues available to support spending in core public priorities such as health, education and infrastructure.

“I urge you to focus your discussions on evidence-based issues that would enable us enjoy the trade benefits associated with innovation to attain economic growth and development for our people. The golden rule is to think of posterity instead of being guided by short-term challenges and short-term gains.”

Dr George Njenga, the Dean of the Business School at the Strathmore University in Nairobi, stressed the need for implementing the numerous high-quality research outputs from scholars in Africa stating that ‘research from our institutions have never known commercialization

He recommended the establishment of



Amb. Kipyego Cheluget addressing the Forum

data and exhibition centres for the small and medium enterprises in the COMESA region to promote the commercialization of innovation products.

Past winners of the COMESA innovation award were invited to share experiences of their success story. They included Dr Amr Helal of Egypt, the inventor of the

technology that transforms rice bran from waste material to nutraceutical to functional food. The other was Jacob Maina, the Co-founder of the AfriCarTrack International company that developed the InTouch Software for prevention of motor vehicle accident and crime.

King Mswati Appreciates COMESA's Presence at Eswatini Trade Fair



King Mswati III received by COMESA Corporate Secretariat staff, Daniel Banda at the COMESA expo stall

The 51st Eswatini International Trade Fair opened at the Mavuso Trade and Exhibition Centre in Manzini on 29 August, where the Head of State, King Mswati III officially opened the 10-day event. The King expressed

happiness to see COMESA Secretariat participating in the Fair and he paid a visit to the COMESA information stand as he was touring the exhibition.

He acknowledged COMESA's participation at the expo as an opportunity for the

business community in Eswatini and potential investors to understand the rules that govern investments in the COMESA region.

“The information provided at the booth



aligns with the theme of Eswatini trade fair and will help many potential investors to make informed decisions,” he remarked.

The theme for the year is “Eswatini is open for Business” and runs from 30 August to 9 September 2019. At the Trade Fair, COMESA Secretariat established an information desk to engage with stakeholders, sharing information on the implementation of COMESA programmes and directly engage and receive feedback from stakeholders. These are mainly business people, investors, students and researchers.

The 50 Million African Women Speak Project (50MAWS), a new project under the COMESA Gender Division is also represented at the trade fair to introduce itself to the people of Eswatini and international exhibitors.



COMESA Corporate Communications Staff Daniel Banda (L) engage with visitor at the COMESA Booth

COMESA Virtual University Programme Kicks-off

The first steps to establish the COMESA University of Regional Integration has begun with the launch of a virtual Masters Degree programme at the Kenyatta University of Kenya.

The Master of Regional Integration (MRI) programme is designed for government officials working in divisions or units dealing with trade, integration and cooperation issues; students intending to work as trade officers, trade policy analyst, advisers, researchers, trade attaches, and private sector trade practitioners among others.

Kenyatta University was selected to host the programme owing to its advanced e-Learning facilities and will collaborate with other 22 universities in other COMESA Member States, which have been involved in the design of the project.

COMESA has also secured EUR 60,000 for annual scholarships for the programme from the European Union through Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP Group) under the TradeCom II Capacity Building Programme.

Addressing the 6th COMESA Annual



Prof Nelson Wawire of Kenyatta University addressing the 6th COMESA Annual Research Forum

Research Forum in Nairobi, which ended Friday, 6 September 2019, the Chairman, Department of Applied Economics, Kenyatta University, Dr. Samuel Muthoga, said the commencement of the programme follows approval by the Commission of University Education in Kenya.

“The MRI programme will be offered during the first semester of 2019-2020 academic year in collaboration with the School of Virtual and Open Learning of Kenyatta University. About 30 students

have so far applied for the programme,” Dr Muthoga said.

Senior Research Fellow at COMESA, Mr. Benedict Musengele told the delegates that besides Kenyatta University, COMESA has signed Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Mauritius; the Open University of Mauritius; l’Institut Supérieur de Gestion des Entreprise (ISGE) of Burundi; and the University of Zimbabwe to begin offering the programme.

Kenyatta University has advertised for

students' admission to the programme in September 2019. Open University of Mauritius and University of Mauritius are advertising for January intake while University of Zambia is at advanced stage of signing the MoU.

Mr. Musengele explained: "The programme shall be offered by course work and dissertation over the duration of two years. It consists of 10 compulsory and five elective courses. Examinations will be conducted at Kenyatta University campuses, in the Embassies and COMESA Secretariat offices."

The launch of COMESA virtual university was approved in October 2016 during the 19th COMESA Heads of State Summit held in Madagascar. The objective was to inculcate the dimension of regional integration in learning in higher institutions. Later, the MoU was developed to provide the framework for collaboration with the participating universities.

Professor Nelson Wawire, who has been coordinating the launch of the programme at the Kenyatta University, said preparations are underway between COMESA Secretariat and Kenyatta

University to officially launch the programme.

The rationale for establishing the Masters programme was to build the capacity of member States to address the slow progress of regional integration in the COMESA region. Under this programme, the inability of Member countries to implement the numerous protocols, decisions and Acts due to the apparent lack of institutional and human capital and related support mechanisms will be addressed.

COMESA, Japan to Collaborate on Initiatives Endorsed at the TICAD VII Summit

As part of further strengthening partnership between COMESA and Japan, COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Kapwepwe participated in the TICAD VII Summit that took place from 28th to 30th August 2019 in Yokohama, Japan.

TICAD VII was co-organized by the Japanese Government, the African Union, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank Group under the theme "Advancing Africa's Development through People, Technology and Innovation. The Summit attracted 42 Heads of States and Government from Africa and the Private Sector players from Africa and Japan.

The outcomes of the Summit were declaration and action plan focus on Japan supporting Africa's development through accelerating transformation and improving business environment, deepening sustainable and resilient

society and strengthening peace and stability.

On the sidelines of TICAD VII The Secretary General held a bilateral meeting with the Japanese Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mr. Masahisa Sato. They discussed possible areas of cooperation between Japan and COMESA including industrialization, infrastructure development and the use of ICT at borders crossings to minimize physical contact with clients and to reduce on the time spent at the borders.

"The Government of Japan is ready to offer

assistance in human training, transfer of technology," the Minister said adding that TICAD VII places emphasis for Japanese companies to invest in Africa, which is a more sustainable way of giving support to the continent.

The two leaders agree on the need to engage further at a technical level between government of Japan and the COMESA Secretariat, to identify specific areas that the latter can benefit from initiatives endorsed by the TICAD7 Summit.

Minister Sato congratulated COMESA on its 25 years anniversary, which is being marked this year, and its contribution to Africa's development and the integration of African continent.

"COMESA has played a critical role in the Continental Free Trade Area negotiations process through the work that has been done under the Tripartite Free Trade Area arrangement," he noted.

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***"Advancing Africa's
 Development through
 People, Technology and
 Innovation..."***

-Mr. Benedict Musengele observed



Go Easy on Stringent IP Rights,

Researcher Advises Policy Makers in the Region



Research Forum in session

COMESA countries and policy makers should be cautious when it comes to instituting regulations which emphasize stringent Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). According to research findings presented at the ongoing 6th COMESA Annual Research Forum in Nairobi, Kenya, strong IPR may harm research which leads to innovation in developing countries.

The research titled 'Intellectual Property Rights, Innovation and Trade in Developing Countries: Evidence from COMESA Countries' was conducted by Professor Albert Makochekeka of the Department of Economics in the University of Zimbabwe. It found that countries in the region lacked enough motivations to spur innovations.

According to empirical research cited by the researcher, innovation activities are mainly driven by the possibility of increased profits and market share; the perceived demand for new products and processes and "technology-push" factors that are related to advancements in technology and science.

The study investigated the role of IPRs protection in innovations using 12 developing countries in COMESA for which data was available, covering the period 2012 to 2017. These are: Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar,

Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Arising from the study Prof. Makochekeka observed that regional countries did not meet the threshold for stringent IPR given their level of development. This is due to low level of technological development, high cost of research and development, and the competitiveness of the economy in the global marketplace.

"Developing economies rely much on imitation of technologies as well as technology transfer for their innovations..."

-Mr. Benedict Musengele observed

During discussions, researchers at the Forum observed that developed economies, such as Japan and Germany, used flexible or relaxed IPR when they were developing after the World War and only introduced stringent regulations after attaining higher levels of development.

Reacting to the presentation, COMESA Senior Research Fellow Mr. Benedict Musengele observed:

"Developing economies rely much on imitation of technologies as well as technology transfer for their innovations,

economic growth and development, which is hindered by stringent IPR. Most of the innovation in developing countries are by the small and medium enterprises which have no capacity to register and acquire licenses for the intellectual property rights but they need to be nurtured to grow and become large enterprises."

Further, empirical evidence shows that robust economic activities and manufacturing production stimulates innovation while vibrant economic activity implies profitability, thus encouraging innovation activities by firms.

In addition, political stability provides confidence to firms to easily engage in research and development which yields new ideas, products and processes even in the long run without fear of possible expropriation or loss due to potential risks emanating from political challenges.

The findings demonstrated that stronger IPRs protection overall discourages or negatively impact on innovations. In the case of COMESA, this finding provides evidence to the fact that IPR discourages innovation.

This was one of the 13 research papers being presented at the one-week research forum, under the theme: "Promoting Intra-COMESA Trade through Innovation", whose implications will be presented to COMESA policy organs and form the basis for policy decision making.

Given the level of development across the member states, the researcher recommended that the regional countries and policy makers to consider relaxed, as opposed to stringent IPR regulations in the spirit of encouraging innovation activities and economic development in member countries.

The forum closes on Friday after receiving presentations from innovators in science and technology from COMESA Member States.

New Innovations Unveiled at the COMESA Research Forum



Billy Munyenembe displays his innovation

New innovative products that provides solutions to contemporary challenges, were the showstoppers at the 6th COMESA Annual Research Forum that took place in Nairobi, 2 – 6 September 2019. Five transformative innovations focusing on new products, new methods of production and new ways of improving technology were presented.

They included BRIISP Power System (BPS) a power system that sustains power almost in its normal range despite being used. Developed by a young Zambian university student Billy Munyenembe the innovation has the potential to increase power access and reduce inconsistency of power supply.

Making his presentation at the Forum, Billy cited the acute power shortages facing African countries and particularly his country Zambia, which is currently facing power rationing of up to six hours a day, as one the factors that inspired him to come up with a solution.

“Sufficient power is critical to meet the demand of local and eventually global market, youth empowerment and massive job creation in the process, which will also contribute positively to the economic growth and poverty eradication in Zambia,”

he said.

The other innovation presented at the Forum was African Gate (AFGT) by Giza Moto company of Egypt. AFGT is a trade platform intended to create value by exchanging goods with the potential of re-exporting to new markets and thereby expanding inter- African Trade. AFGT will work as a Business to Business platform for commodities and products exchange through the Countertrade system between the Hub and the branch in each country. Countertrade system provides a mechanism for countries with limited access to liquid funds to exchange goods and services with other nations.

Presenting the innovation, Mr Mohamed Gaber said: “The major benefit of countertrade is it facilitates conservation of foreign currency, which is a prime consideration for cash-strapped nations and provides an alternative to traditional financing that may not be available in developing nations.”

Other innovations presented were the M-Flock, an internet-based application that gives farmers access to information and essential services such as Veterinary services, financial institutions, Insurance Companies and other Livestock value

chain players.

Presenting the system, Mr. Ancietos Mwansa from Zambia described the product as a comprehensive solution for livestock farmers to support enhanced production and also connect them to vital players in their agricultural ecosystem.

A car-pooling system known as “Twende” developed by Mr. Ramah Madiba of Kenya was presented. The platform was developed to provide to provide means to connect drivers and passengers travelling in same direction. Through car-pooling, travel costs are reduced, efficiency enhanced and there is collective reduction of carbon footprint.

The other innovation was presented by a Zambian, Mr. Prince Malupande of Innovative Africa 360. Its objective is to create a market for creative innovations from various groups of individuals and start-ups in Africa. Currently, the company is promoting a Cholera preventer innovation, that detects and prevents the bacteria that causes the disease.

Two Regional Power Pools to Interconnect by 2022



Participants at the RAERESA consultative meeting

The Eastern African Power Pool (EAPP) and the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP) are working on modalities to form a partnership and interconnect by 2022 in order to further develop the electricity market and improve supply to eastern and southern Africa.

This was revealed during a consultative meeting on 3rd September in Lusaka between EAPP and SAPP supported by COMESA Secretariat through the Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA) Project.

In preparation for this major move, a study funded by the World Bank on the potential impact of interconnecting the two power pools has been undertaken. Arising from that, the two power pools have identified the need to have a high-level mandate from the three Regional Economic Communities (RECs) namely COMESA-EAC-SADC, to enable the two power pools engage and harmonize the technical, commercial, legal and regulatory frameworks to enable power trading.

Speaking at the meeting, COMESA Director of Infrastructure Mr. Jean Baptiste Mutabazi commended the two Power Pools for their cooperation which has continued to enhance regional integration.

He named existing cooperation frameworks in the region as important citing the COMESA – EAC – SADC Tripartite Agreement as well as the EAPP – SAPP Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as among the enabling tools facilitating regional cooperation. He further mentioned that, with respect to energy sector and particularly the electricity sub-sector, physical infrastructure will need to be supported by soft infrastructure to enhance having an enabling environment.

During the one-day consultative meeting, the EAPP and SAPP made a joint presentation on the Interconnection study which was completed in November 2018 and endorsed by both structures of EAPP and SAPP. Its recommendations will be tabled to relevant policy organs in the regional blocs.

The meeting agreed that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the RECs should be developed for consideration. This will allow the two power pools to enter into the necessary arrangements and agreements to cooperate and jointly ensure the smooth operation of the interconnection and facilitate power trade between the two regions.

RAERESA through the Project on Enhancement of a Sustainable Energy in Eastern Africa-Southern Africa-Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO) Region (ESREM project), which is European union funded project, is expected to assist with the development of the MoU.

The Lusaka meeting was attended by the representatives of COMESA, EAC, SADC, EAPP, SAPP. Regional Regulatory Bodies such as the Energy Regulators Association of East Africa (EREA), Independent Regulatory Board (IRB) of the Eastern Africa Power Pool, RAERESA and the Regional Energy Regulators Association of Southern Africa (RERA) also participated in the meeting.

COMESA Mourns its Founding Father, President Robert Mugabe



President Robert Mugabe

Lusaka, Friday Sept. 6, 2019: COMESA Secretariat has learnt with sadness the passing on of one of its founding fathers former President of the Republic of Zimbabwe His Excellency Mr Robert Gabriel Mugabe.

President Mugabe belonged to the first generation of Pan Africanists and he stood firm against the forces of imperialism and

spoke for all Africans.

He played a crucial role in liberating Africa and helped form regional economic organizations such as COMESA, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and he was key to the growth of the continental body the African Union.

COMESA will remember him as a fearless leader who actively participated in the different Heads of State and He helped give direction to regional integration.

President Mugabe was key in ensuring that his country remained an ardent believer in regional integration as spearheaded by COMESA.

President Mugabe chaired the COMESA Authority from 2009-2010 and hosted the COMESA Heads of State Summit in Victoria Falls town.



COMESA DIARY

Meeting	Dates	Venue
Inaugural meeting of the project steering committee for EDF funded COMESA small scale cross border trade initiative and trade facilitation programme	30 September – 02 October 2019	Lusaka
Trade and Customs meetings	14 – 25 October 2019	Livingstone
Retreat for COMESA Institutions	24th November 2019	Lusaka
Intergovernmental Committee - Institutions	25th November 2019	Lusaka
Intergovernmental Committee-Secretariat	26th to 27th November 2019	Lusaka
Celebrating 25 years of COMESA	28th November 2019	Lusaka
COMESA Council of Ministers	29th November 2019	Lusaka