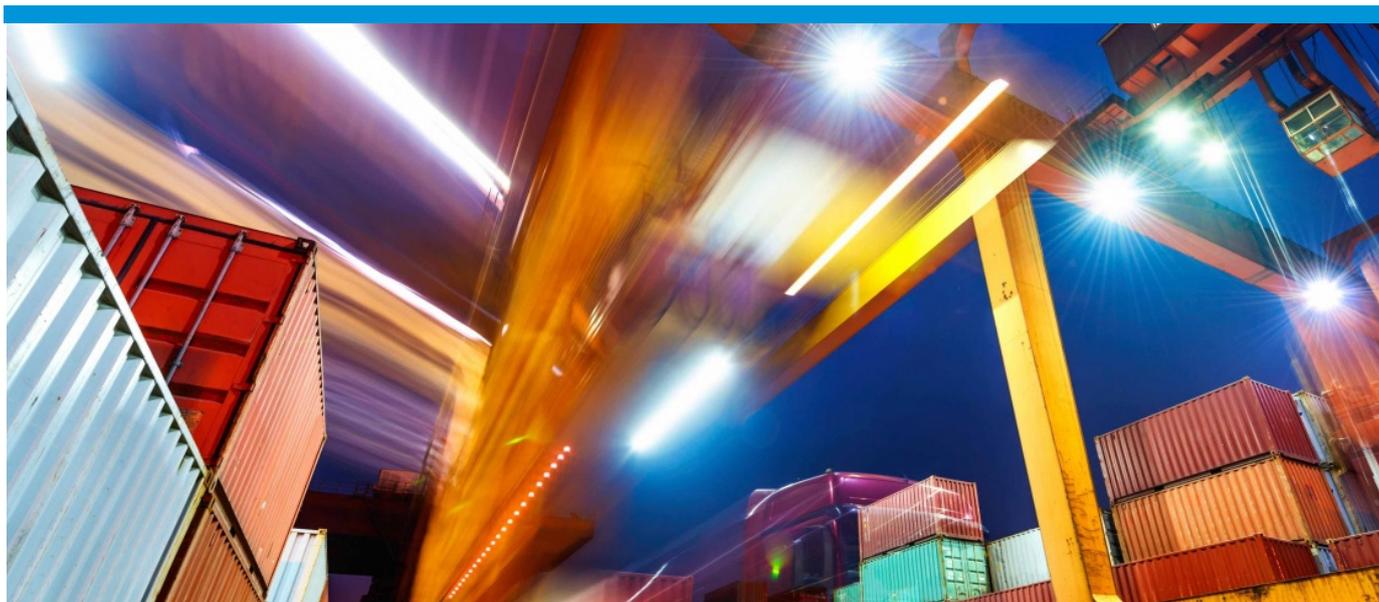


More Countries Ratify Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement



Goods in transit at the port

The Republic of Namibia has become the eighth country to ratify the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) Agreement moving the region closer to having a fully operational Agreement this year. Six more countries are required for the Agreement to enter into force.

Tripartite Coordinator at COMESA Secretariat, Dr Seth Gor has confirmed in Lusaka that seven more countries from the EAC-COMESA-SADC are at advanced stages of ratifying the important document which will spur intra-regional trade.

“We are optimistic that the remaining six countries will ratify the Agreement and we can have it fully operational this year,” Dr Gor said.

He has also revealed that the Republic of Burundi deposited its instrument of

ratification in November 2019. The TFTA is a building block for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its aim is to gradually reduce the tariffs for all goods traded in the bloc to zero percent.

The TFTA is focusing on three pillars, Market Integration, Industrial Development and Infrastructure Development. These three areas have been prioritised to support the regional economic integration efforts in the region and the continent.

Other Member States that have so far ratified the TFTA Agreement are Egypt, Uganda,

Kenya, South Africa, Rwanda, Botswana and Burundi.

The TFTA was launched in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt on 10 June 2015 and signed by 22 of the original 26 countries covered by the deal. Tunisia, Somalia and South Sudan have since joined the configuration, bringing the total membership to 29 countries. These countries together represent 53 percent of the African Union membership, 60 percent of continental GDP and a combined population of 800 million.

According to trade experts, if the TFTA countries were one country, it would be the thirteenth largest economy in the world. Merchandise trade within the Tripartite region grew from US\$23 billion in 2004 to US\$55 billion in 2012 – an increase of 140 per cent during this period, reinforcing the ‘Africa rising’ narrative.

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Regional Approach Is Best Way to Fight Army Worms – COMESA/ACTESA



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“The Fall Army Worm is a transboundary pest and a regional approach on its management is inevitable at all levels which include the EAC-SADC-COMESA Tripartite level and at the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) level,” Dr Mukuka added.

Some Seeds found in the COMESA region

A seed development expert based at COMESA Secretariat has called for a regional approach towards the fight against army worms which have attacked agriculture fields in some Member States.

Dr John Mukuka says both small-scale and commercial farmers need to work together with governments and agriculture institutions to ensure that the army worms and other pests are eliminated before more damage is done to crops.

He has revealed that the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) through the COMESA Seed Harmonization Implementation Plan (COMSHIP) working in close collaboration with several key national and regional institutions have developed management options to help deal with the Fall Army Worm (FAW).

“The Fall Army Worm is a transboundary pest and a regional approach on its management is inevitable at all levels which include the EAC-SADC-COMESA Tripartite level and at the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) level,” Dr Mukuka added.

He however emphasized that an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for the FAW is the best option as no single method is effective, especially that other options including biorational pesticides, transgenic resistance, native genetic base and seed treatment can only protect the fields up to 2-3 weeks.

The management options within the COMSHIP framework include planting maize varieties which are resistant or partially resistant to the African Army Worm. The maize varieties with husks

extending 50-80 mm beyond the top of the cob and closing tightly around the silks restrict the entry of larvae into the cob. Available varieties can be accessed from existing seed companies on the COMESA Variety Catalogue.

According to Dr Mukuka, the Fall Army Worm can now be found in 44 countries in Africa covering more than 22 million square kilometers and it has also spread globally from Meso-America and North America.

In the 2015/16 season, a new attack of the Fall Army Worm was reported in the COMESA Member States of Malawi, Uganda Zambia and Zimbabwe as well as northern parts of South Africa and Mozambique.

The mature caterpillar is about 1.5 to 2 inches (51 mm) in length and feeds in large numbers on leaves and stems of more than 80 plant species, causing major damage to economically important cultivated grasses such as maize, rice, sorghum, sugarcane but also other vegetable crops and cotton.

Recommended insecticides which are generally effective for African Army Worm control when applied as sprays or dusts or in combination with trenching include: Endosulphan (1 litre/ha), Carbaryl (310g/ha), Cypermethrin (150ml/ha) and Fenitrothion. “As larvae are most active at night, spraying in the afternoon or evening may produce the best results, Dr Mukuka advised.

The COMESA Seed Programme was created in response to food and seed insecurity experienced in the period 2007/08 season. COMSHIP is aimed at enhancing the availability of quality and improved seed to 80 million small-scale farmers currently found in the 21-member COMESA region.

Zambia and Zimbabwe Planning Joint Industrialization Programme

The Governments of Zambia and Zimbabwe with support from the COMESA Secretariat are planning a joint industrialization programme which will build on the experiences and lessons learned from the existing joint ventures.

The two countries are already cooperating in a number of sectors for structural and economic transformation since the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. These include the joint power generation at Kariba Dam, the proposed Batoka hydroelectric power station and the joint tourism programme for the Victoria Falls among others.

The Officer in Charge of the Division of Industry and Agriculture Mr Innocent Makwiramiti revealed in Lusaka that the two countries recently held a meeting on the roadmap for the joint industrialization cooperation programme.

“The cooperation in industrialization will enable the two countries to harness comparative advantages from their diverse natural resources and synergies in resources utilization, improve the competitiveness and reap the benefits of economies of scale,” Mr Makwiramiti added.

Both countries have prioritised industrialisation in their National Development Plans as a critical engine for driving their economic development and growth. They also have industrialisation strategies which are aligned to the COMESA and SADC regional industrialisation policy and strategies.

The 1st technical meeting to actualise the cooperation was held in Lusaka in November 2019 and was attended by officials from the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry of Zambia and the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Zimbabwe. They were joined by representatives from Embassy of Zimbabwe, COMESA Secretariat and the Head of the Rural Economy Division at the African Union Dr Janet Edeme as an observer.



Sudan and Zimbabwe Envoys Bid Farewell to COMESA

regional integration as spearheaded by COMESA. Her Excellency Ambassador Gertrude Takawira said the region has common challenges and therefore needed solutions that cut across. She reiterated Zimbabwe's commitment and support to COMESA.

The outgoing ambassadors were presented with gifts from the Secretary General.

Ambassador Takawira has served in Lusaka for five years while Ambassador Ali was deployed in 2016.



The envoys at COMESA Secretariat during the farewell ceremony



The ambassadors from the Republic of Sudan and Zimbabwe to Zambia and Permanent Representatives to COMESA their Excellencies Hussein Awad Ali and Gertrude Takawira have bade farewell to COMESA Secretariat as their tour of duty has come to an end.

Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe held a brief ceremony at the Secretariat on Tuesday 14 January to appreciate the good working relations that exist between the two ambassadors and the Secretariat.

Ms Kapwepwe, who was represented by the Assistant Secretariat General Administration and Finance, Dr Dev Haman described the two diplomats as champions of regional integration.

She added that the organization has greatly benefitted from the wise counsel and guidance from both diplomats in the past years that they have been serving in Lusaka.

"I will always remember our great collaboration, our joint actions and the strong ties that, I must admit have connected us," Ms Kapwepwe said. Both envoys thanked the Secretary General and staff at the Secretariat for their commitment and hard work in pushing the COMESA agenda across the 21 Member bloc.

His Excellency Ambassador Hussein Awad Ali said the bloc has continued to grow because of the dedication of the staff led by the Secretary General. He pledged to remain a champion of

COMESA Secretariat Opens after Industrial Break

The COMESA Secretariat has resumed operations after a two-week industrial break from Friday 20 December 2019 to 5 January 2020. Official business resumed on Monday 6 January when most staff members reported back for duty.

COMESA Invited to the China International Fair for Investment & Trade



Mr Ngwenya with Secretary General Kapwepwe in Lusaka

The COMESA Secretariat has been invited to participate at the 2020 China International Fair for Investment and Trade scheduled for early September in Xiamen China. The fair will focus on investment negotiation and policy promotion, coordinated development of national and regional economies, as well as economic and trade exchanges.

Asia-Africa Digital Economy Cooperation Forum

Executive Chairman Mr. Sindiso Ngwenya delivered the invitation to Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe in Lusaka during a recent visit.

Mr Ngwenya, who is also immediate former Secretary General of COMESA, recommended the China fair as strategic for the organisation to be a part of. He added that Ms Kapwepwe's presence at the annual fair will add value to the event and

offer a rare opportunity for COMESA to showcase its activities and potential.

"We would be delighted to have you personally and COMESA as an organisation to join us in September for this important event," Mr Ngwenya added

Secretary General Kapwepwe will be expected to deliver a keynote address to the gathering. In welcoming the former SG, Ms Kapwepwe thanked him for his role over the past years in enhancing regional integration in the 21-mMember bloc and added that his presence was missed during the celebrations of the COMESA Silver Jubilee held on 28 November 2019 in Lusaka, Zambia.

She gave a brief about the celebrations and handed him the souvenirs which were issued to delegates and invited guests.

Mr Ngwenya thanked the SG for the invitation that had been extended to him to participate at the Silver Jubilee celebrations and applauded the Secretary General for her visionary leadership.

He expressed regret that due to prior commitments outside of Africa, he could not be available.

COMESA Diary			
	Meeting/Activity	Date	Venue
1.	COMESA/ESREM Framework for Regulatory Oversight in EA-SA-IO	22-23 Jan 2020	Dar es Salaam