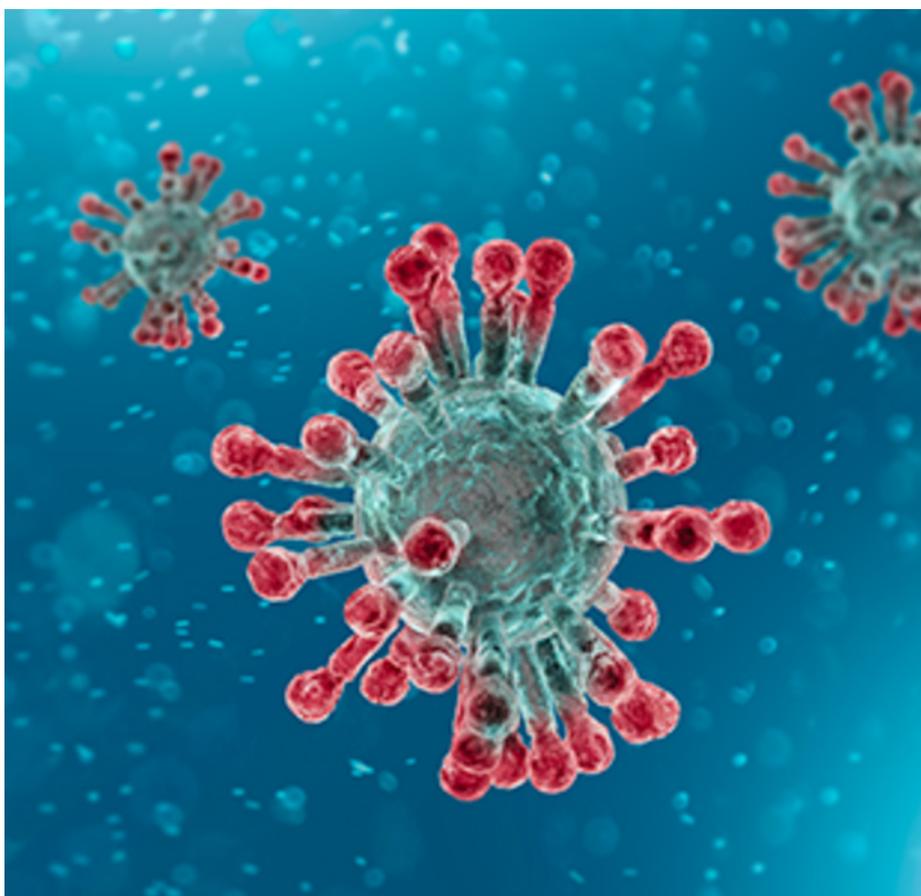


Bracing for COVID 19 Impact and the Aftermath ..in solidarity with our MS and the world



As the Corona Pandemic runs rampage across the globe, COMESA region has, in the past three weeks started to bear the brunt of the disease with cases crossing the 1,000 mark Friday, March 27. Out of the 21 Member States, only three were yet to report any case.

The region is however bracing for the worst and has taken far reaching measures to stave off the devastating effects on human lives and the aftermath of the pandemic on the regional

socioeconomic infrastructure. In her statement issued early this week, Secretary General of COMESA, Chileshe Kapwepwe urged the regional States to learn and apply best practices that have worked elsewhere in slowing down the spread of the virus.

“Our countries must brace themselves for increased disease burdens – social and financial burden of the COVID-19,” she said. “Let us mobilize our human and financial resources and coordinate preventive measures to counter the likely spread

of the pandemic.”

Already, Member States have taken various containment measures including restrictions on travel and congregational gatherings, working from home, encouraging cashless transactions, disinfecting public places, enhanced screening and intense public awareness.

In addition to health challenges expected, the SG also outlined the key economic sectors that will mostly be adversely affected by the pandemic, among them trade and investments, manufacturing and tourism.

The most affected regions and countries are the major trading partners for COMESA, that is the European Union, China and the United States. Any economic slow-down in these countries have global repercussions given the interconnectedness and fragmentations in production, trade and investments.

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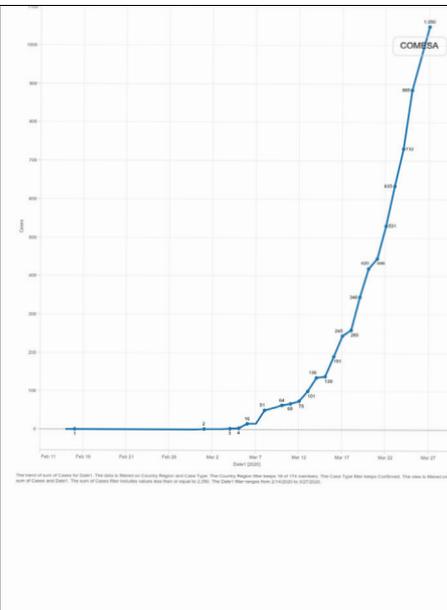
-Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe

➡ page 2

SG noted. "For the big economies, the effects would be much larger owing to their stronger interconnectedness with the rest of the world compared to smaller economies."

In addition, more diversified economies will most likely experience less severe effects compared to low diversified ones in the wake of reduced demand for exports and cut down in supply from import sources. Thus, commodity dependent countries in COMESA such as DR Congo and Zambia and beyond, such as Nigeria and Ghana are likely to be hard hit by the crisis following reduced demand for copper and cobalt.

Services-oriented economies, such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Kenya where air transport services, financial services and tourism services are relatively strong are more vulnerable, given



the nature of the epidemic. The cancellation of air flights, travel bans and restriction of movements of persons will slow down growth leading to job cuts.

As part of mitigation and post crisis recovery, the Secretary General says Central Banks in all countries should keep interest rates low to encourage private sector (including SMEs) borrowing to stimulate domestic production and consumption.

She notes: "Our governments must provide and sustain a conducive environment to private sector to expand production capacities and enhance competitiveness and reduce over-reliance on extra-African imports even for basic commodities."

In the meantime, COMESA remains in solidarity with its Members States as they face the greatest socioeconomic threat in living memory.

COVID 19: COMESA Secretariat Retreats Off-Site



COMESA Secretariat staff in Lusaka, Zambia, will begin working from home from Monday, 30 March 2020 for one month. This is part of the social distancing measures to prevent infections and transmission of the Corona Virus.

To ensure the Secretariat continues to render services, staff have been trained on the use of information technology to enable them work and communicate seamlessly. This includes hosting virtual meetings amongst themselves and with stakeholders in Member States. Only a small number of critical and essential staff will be left behind to man the Secretariat and respond to urgent matters during the period

In the last one week, heads of divisions, units and projects have developed Business Continuity Plans and workflows that will guide off-site delivery of service. Sections of

The move to isolate staff and promote social distancing, is part of the measures that the World Health Organization has recommended as a strategy to contain the spread of the virus.

staff whose services may not be required have been advised to take leave in the short term as management monitors the effects of the pandemic in Zambia.

Zambia is among countries that have recorded COVID-19 cases and the numbers are steadily rising while the Government is gradually tightening restrictions.

The move to isolate staff and promote social distancing, is part of the measures that the World Health Organization has recommended as a strategy to contain the spread of the virus. Countries that adopted this strategy early, such as Singapore, South Korea and China have successfully managed to contain the surge of the pandemic and many others are following suit.

Located in downtown Lusaka, COMESA Secretariat is particularly vulnerable as it is ringed with informal small-scale markets, public transport termini and vendors, thus compromising stringent pandemic control measures.

Management will review these decisions after the four weeks.



Plans to Acquire new Headquarters for COMESA Advance

Yellow Card Scheme to Commits US\$3.6m to the Project

The deal was reached during the 48th Meeting of the Management Committee of the Yellow Card Scheme

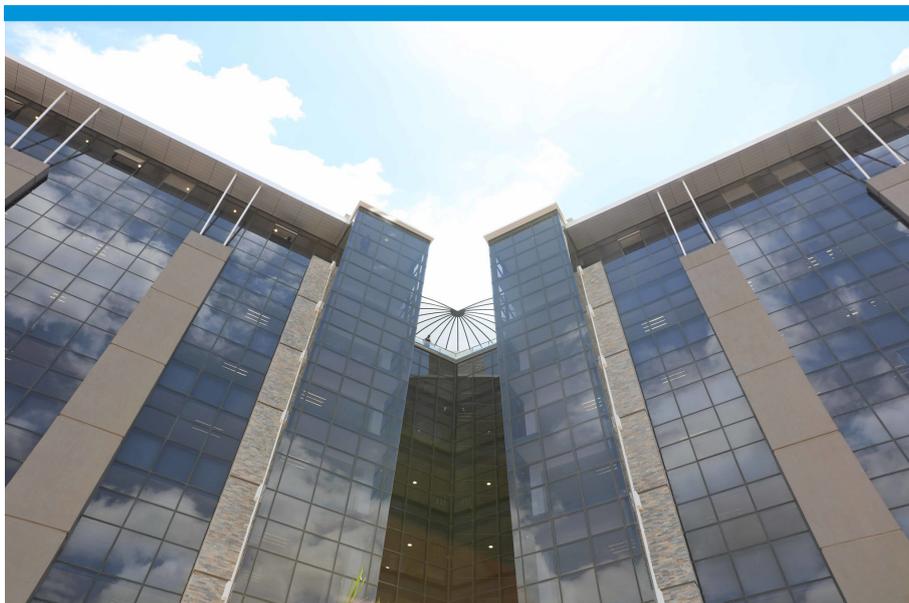
The Yellow Card Scheme (YCS) has committed US\$3.6 million towards the acquisition of the proposed new headquarters of COMESA. This is part of the US\$33 million that the PTA-Reinsurance Company (Zep-Re) is selling its new state-of-the-art Business Park building in Lusaka suburb.

Both the Yellow Card and ZEP-Re are specialized agencies of COMESA with the former being a regional Third-Party Motor Vehicle Insurance Scheme. It provides legal liability cover and compensation for medical expenses resulting from road traffic accidents caused by motorists visiting countries in the Scheme.

The deal was reached during the 48th Meeting of the Management Committee of the Yellow Card Scheme, which was held on 23 - 25, March 2020 at the COMESA Secretariat through video conferencing.

The meeting agreed to recommend to the Council of Bureaux of the Yellow Card that the Project should acquire one floor of the Zep-Re Business Park building for US\$ 3,666,667. The meeting noted that the COMESA Secretariat was already processing partial payment.

The two COMESA Assistant Secretaries Amb. Dr Kipyego Cheluget (Programmes) and Dr Dev



The new Zep-Re building

Haman (Administration and Finance) attended the meeting. Participants were drawn from Member National Bureaux from Burundi, D R Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Staff from the COMESA Competition Commission (CCC), PTA Reinsurance Company (ZEP-Re) and the COMESA Secretariat

also attended the meeting. Subsequent meetings, will also be conducted through video conferencing in the wake of COVID 19 pandemic

The Zep-Re building was opened in December 2019 by the Zambian President H.E Edgar Chagwa Lungu.



President Edgar Lungu tours the facility before the opening ceremony in December 2019

Working with AGRA to Fast Track Seed Harmonization



File photo

Lack of quality and improved seed in the COMESA Member States has contributed significantly to food insecurity and poverty with 123 million people out of total population of 650 million (22.8 percent in sub-Saharan Africa) affected.

In light of this, the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA), a Specialized Agency of COMESA has been working with Member States' governments and non-governmental organizations in joint strategies to respond to food insecurity challenges in the region.

Currently, ACTESA is collaborating with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) to fast-track trading by seed companies on the harmonized COMESA Seed Trade Platform. A draft proposal between COMESA and AGRA has been developed aimed at contributing to regional seed trade in staple food crops of maize, rice, cotton, soybeans and rice in COMESA region.

The draft agreement of COMESA and AGRA with its COMSHIP consortium members titled: "Improved Regional Seed Trade in the Common Market for East and Southern Africa" is expected to establish a regional platform for regulatory

dialogue and learning trips as well as enhancing the efficiency of information and communication technology (ICT) systems used to clear of shipments at borders.



Dr. John Mukuka

According to ACTESA Seed Expert Dr John Mukuka, over 500 million people living in the region depend on seed-based crops such as beans, maize, rice, cotton, wheat, cassava, potatoes, soya beans and, small grains for their livelihoods.

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-Dr. John Mukuka

"The availability of quality seed in this region in terms of variety, accessibility, and volume currently stands at a meagre 25%. Total seed being traded in the COMESA Member States as of beginning of 2020 is averaging USD1.9 billion, equivalent to less than 2% of global seed trade values and volumes," he said.

With a harmonized system, seed trade within the region is expected to grow from \$1.9 billion to \$5 billion in the next ten years as a result of the incentives embedded in the COMESA Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP).

Last month, COMESA and AGRA held a joint meeting with its COMSHIP Consortium Members, namely African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), Cellsoft Technologies, New Markets Lab (NML), Emerge Centre for Innovations (ECI) and AGcuity Consulting Nairobi, Kenya to finalize activities to be implemented on the overall project.

The meeting also reviewed the approach used by private sector to regional variety catalogues and support to the development of a digital information portal in each country for access to information on seed trade volumes.

COMSHIP Consortium Members also agreed to support seed trade associations to play key advocacy roles in seed trade, including the implementation of harmonized seed laws in their individual countries.



Comoros Receives Equipment Worth \$88,000 ICT to Tackle Financial Crimes



The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) of Comoros has received ICT equipment and software worth over US\$ 88,000 strengthen its capacity to disrupt illicit financial networks. The equipment was procured through the COMESA Maritime Security (MASE) Programme.

Though the support, the country is also expected to strengthen domestic and international cooperation through improved sharing of information to combat piracy, money laundering and enhance security in the region.

The Minister of Finance and Budget Hon. Said Ali Said Chayhane received the equipment and affirmed Comoros' commitment to fight money laundering and financing of terrorism. The Island country, which is now a full member of the West African Financial Action Task Force-Styled Regional body known as GIABA has made great strides towards strengthening its Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Combating Financing of Terrorism (CFT) regime.

Among notable developments in the recent past is the relocation of the FIU from the country's Central Bank to attain operational independence as required by the Financial Action Task Force. Hon. Chayhane described COMESA's intervention as timely as it has helped in strengthening the country's AML/CFT regime.

"The ICT equipment support is timely as the country is about to recruit dedicated staff to operate the Unit," he said.

Recently, COMESA supported the Comoros FIU by hosting sensitization workshops and capacity building for different stakeholders including analysts and law enforcement agencies. Comoros has also been supported to sign MoUs with other countries to facilitate information sharing.

Ahead of the handing over of the equipment, on 11 March 2020, 50 delegates from various reporting entities and stakeholders in Anti-Money Laundering and Combating Financing of Terrorism participated in a sensitization workshop on the operationalization of the country's FIU.

Earlier in February this year, another 25 senior officials from law enforcement agencies were trained in investigation and asset recovery with COMESA support which was delivered by the Basil Institute of Governance.



Hon. Chayhane speaking at the handing over ceremony

Minister of Interior, Information and Decentralization, Hon. Mohamed Daoudou and the Minister of Justice, Islamic Affairs, Public Administration and Human Rights, Hon. Mohammed Housseini Djamalilali attended the ceremony. Also in attendance was the Governor of the Central Bank and a representative of the European Union Delegation to Comoros.

At the handing over ceremony of the equipment, COMESA's Head of Governance, Peace and Security Ms Elizabeth Mutunga gave a brief overview of the MASE programme and its objectives while appreciating the European Union for its support to the programme.

The COMESA Diary

30-31 Mar 2020	Meeting of Project Implementation Units, Ministries and Communication experts to harmonize programme for 2020 Organised by: Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project -GLTFP Venue: Chisamba, Zambia Status: Cancelled
6-8 April 2020	COMESA Business Council (CBC) Annual Meetings Organised by: CBC Venue: Lusaka Status: On hold. Fresh dates to be communicated
7-8 April 2020	National Launch of the 50 Million African Women-Speak Platform – Ethiopia Organised by: COMESA/ Govt of Ethiopia Venue: Addis Ababa Status: Postponed. Fresh dates to be communicated
23-24 April 2020	7th Meeting of the Technical Working Group of the RCTG Carnet Organised by: Yellow Card/ RCTG Venue: Lusaka
29-30 April 2020	5th Meeting of the IT Committee on the Digital Yellow Card Organised by: Yellow Card/ RCTG Venue: Lusaka

NB: Changes to the events likely owing to COVID 19 mitigation measures

