

COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA



**REGIONAL DECLARATION
OF THE
COMESA BUSINESS COUNCIL
AT
Lusaka, Zambia
18th July 2018**

WE the Regional Business Community, under the umbrella of the COMESA Business Council, herein present our Business Declaration on Smart Technologies for Sustainable businesses, that was adopted following the 1st COMESA Connect Industry Dialogue, that was held in June, 2018, in Kigali, Rwanda.

EXPRESSING our utmost appreciation of the mandate and the platform that has been given to the COMESA Business Council, giving direct interface to the COMESA Policy makers, affirming the indomitable partnership between the public and private sector in regional economic development.

RECOGNISING that ICTs, digital and smart technologies have gradually become a major determinant of performance and competitiveness of any economy.

FURTHER RECOGNISING that through smart technologies, we can develop solutions and platforms that can propel our industry competitiveness in agriculture, manufacturing and services, develop our SMEs businesses, improve our access to services and trade facilitation.

AFFIRMING the need to develop and implement business friendly policies and strategies for the growth of sustainable businesses, particularly SMEs to effectively compete in national, regional and global markets. This ensures that the private sector directly contributes to job creation, poverty alleviation and intra- trade in Africa.

COMPLEMENTING the direction of COMESA Regional Integration agenda in accordance to the theme of the COMESA Summit, 'Towards Digital Economic Integration'.

WE HEREBY PRESENT THE POSITIONS OF INDUSTRY ON SMART TECHNOLOGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIES, AS FOLLOWS;

- 1. On Data Governance and Regulation**; Member States are urged to develop or review and update their data protection legislations at national level. At regional level, COMESA is urged to strengthen regional harmonization of data protection regulations.

- 2. EU General Data Protection Regulation.** Member States are called upon to work with COMESA to develop a Regional Model on the GDPR to support Member States in domestication and implementation of the regulation.
- 3. On Digital Financial Inclusion;** Member States are urged to put in place a policy framework for Regional Payment system, as well as a digital payment service for SMEs and cross border traders, (women, disabled and youth) that drives the cost of transaction downwards.
- 4. On block chain technologies;** Member states are urged to develop awareness programs on block chain technology and how it can influence performance of business processes as well as government services.
- 5. On supporting SMEs in Intellectual Property Rights;** Member states are requested to consider the proposal on credit scoring mechanisms under banks to add criteria that encourages IP registration especially in brands and trademarks. This will encourage awareness of business on the importance of protecting their business identities.
- 6. On Cooperation and Collaboration on Digital Financial Services Regulation;** Member States are urged to work with the CBC to host a multi stakeholder dialogue with the central bank governors, telecommunication industry, financial services and banks, to develop a common vision and approach towards expanding digital financial inclusion in Africa.
- 7. On Digital Farming technologies;** Member states are called upon to establish digital facilities for small scale farmers, in order to disseminate information, reduce dependency on cumbersome physical infrastructures and along the agriculture value chain.

8. On promoting airport sustainability through travel retail industry:

Member States are urged to note that airport retail contributes directly to non-aeronautical revenues for airport sustainability and can play a vital role in the transformation of African Airports, and this can only happen when you have a successful and highly operative travel retail channel systems at the airports. In this regard;

- Member States are requested to appeal to the WHO Protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products, to consider a balanced regulatory framework for tobacco and alcohol duty free sales and ensure no unjustified restrictions on duty free tobacco and alcohol sales are imposed.
- On measures to counter Illicit Trade. Member States are called upon to note and support the duty-free retail industry's adoption of technologies such as track and trace as some of the ways to counter illicit trade in the region, particularly with respect to tobacco and alcoholic beverages industries.

9. On a Regional Agriculture Competitiveness Strategy:

Member states are urged to strengthen enforcement regulation around sales and marketing fake seeds, primarily by putting in place a stronger enforcement through sanctions such as custodial sentence or the mandatory use of track and traceability technologies to encourage compliance with the policies and regulations.

10. On a Balanced Tobacco regulatory framework for sustainable agriculture

development: We commend the Member States endorsement of COMESA's application of Observer status at the WHO FCTC, Conference of Parties. Member States are further, urged to support the efforts for tobacco growing countries in the region in pushing for a balanced framework at the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).

WE, the voice of the private sector in the COMESA, commit ourselves to fulfilling the above decisions of the 13th Declaration of the COMESA Business Council, presented to the 20th Summit of the COMESA Authority, held at Lusaka Zambia on the 18th day of July, year 2018.