

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

10th November 2020

COMESA Business Council and International Chamber of Commerce sign an MOU Towards Strengthening Partnerships for Business in Regional and International Markets

COMESA BUSINESS COUNCIL
Voice of the Private Sector in the Region
BUILDING REGIONAL. GOING GLOBAL

ICC INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
The world business organization

MOU Signatory Representatives:

- John W.H. Denton AO**
Secretary General, ICC
- Marday Venkatasamy**
Chairman, CBC

High-level Panel Dialogue on Strengthening Partnerships for Business in International Markets & COMESA:

Panellists

- Sandra Uwera**
CEO, COMESA Business Council
- Amany Asfour**
• Board Director, CBC
• President, Egyptian Businesswomen Association/International Federation of Business Professional Women
- Christopher Holden**
Development Manager: Business Action Projects, Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation
- Chris Southworth**
• Co-Chair, B2B Cluster, The Commonwealth
• Secretary General, ICC United Kingdom

Moderator

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Tuesday, 10th November 2020, Lusaka – “This engagement is very timely, for both the CBC and ICC. The impact of COVID-19 has necessitated a change in trade dynamics, emphasizing the need for greater reliance on business and private sector-led growth. Through this MOU, CBC becomes the partner, through which we can strengthen the participation of African businesses in multilateral negotiations related to trade, investment and sustainable development,” said Mr. Marday Venkatasamy, Chairman of the [COMESA Business Council](#), during the CBC-ICC MOU signing ceremony which took place during the ICC/ World Chambers Federation Action Network Meeting, held on 9th November, 2020.

The event was graced by over 70 business leaders representing business Associations from Africa and the rest of the world, including CBC Board Directors and ICC members. In his remarks, the ICC Secretary General, Mr. John W. H. Denton AO said, “There are enormous similarities between the objectives of ICC and those of CBC. The fact that we are now able to come together to work for the advancement of the interests of business in Africa is a fantastic opportunity. We will not let you down. We look forward to working closely with CBC and are greatly honoured by the trust they have shown in ICC by seeking to join forces for the common endeavour to improve the lives and livelihoods of all those who live in Africa.”

With the signing of the MOU, the parties will develop an implementation plan on facilitating business partnerships and increasing inter-regional trade; advocacy and strengthening African business participation in multilateral policy; business facilitation measures to advance Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, it will address key emerging issues for business, such as digital trade facilitation, SMEs sustainability, and other strategies to facilitate movement of goods and services particularly within the COVID-19 pandemic period.

During the event, a high-level panel of business leaders from the CBC and ICC engaged on strengthening partnerships for business in international markets and COMESA. The panel was moderated by Mr. Southworth, Secretary General, ICC- United Kingdom. The key discussions focused on trade facilitation, private sector participation in global policy, financial inclusion for women and SMEs, and a roadmap for a digital-inclusive economy. In the dialogue, CBC’s Chief Executive Officer, Ms. Sandra Uwera, stated, “The MOU provides

a platform for leveraging synergies between CBC and ICC, for linking global business to African markets and vice versa, promoting digital trade facilitation and strengthening the voice of African business in international negotiations ”.

Dr. Amany Asfour, CBC’s Board Director, underscored, *“Digital financial inclusion is a key priority for African continental and COMESA regional integration agendas, essential to the facilitate cross border payments, alleviate poverty and improve livelihoods for SMEs, particularly women-led enterprises”.* Mr. Christopher Holden of the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation highlighted public-private partnership to accelerate the policy frameworks for trade facilitation in Africa as key to realising the opportunities offered by the African Continental Free Trade Area. The panel recommended strengthening public-private dialogue, private sector participation, and financing of National Trade Facilitation Committees as a way of ensuring an improved business environment.

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About COMESA Business Council

The COMESA Business Council (CBC) is a business member organization bringing together a diverse group of businesses and associations in the region from 34 sectors in 21 countries of COMESA. CBC is the recognized regional apex body of the private sector in the region. CBC as the key advocacy driver for business, provides a link between the private sector and organs of the Common market. We seek to improve the competitiveness and deepen the participation of the private sector in regional and global trade, through advocacy, business facilitation and enterprise development. This includes prioritizing and taking specific advocacy strategies to address key business impediments and measures that affect our industries and have a direct bearing on the participation of our businesses in trading in the COMESA region.

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About International Chamber of Commerce

The International Chamber of Commerce is the institutional representative of more than 45 million companies in over 100 countries with a mission to make business work for everyone, every day, everywhere. Through a unique mix of advocacy, solutions and standard setting, ICC promotes international trade, responsible business conduct and a global approach to regulation, in addition to providing market-leading dispute resolution services. ICC’s members include many of the world’s leading companies, SMEs, business associations and local chambers of commerce.

The institution represents business interests at the highest levels of intergovernmental decision-making, whether at the World Trade Organization, the United Nations or the G20 – ensuring the voice of business is heard. It plays a vital role in scaling widespread action on Sustainable Development Goals and has a long history of formulating the voluntary rules by which business is conducted every day – from internationally recognised Incoterms® rules to the UCP 600 Uniform Customs and Practice for Documentary Credit that are widely used in international finance. In addition, the institution specialises in world-class business and legal training and is an industry-leading publisher of practical tools for international business, banking and arbitration.

Website: <https://iccwbo.org/>