



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2020

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

COMESA Business Council (CBC) is pleased to present the 2020 Annual Report, Building Regional, Going Global.

The report covers activities from collaborative partnerships with corporates, chambers of commerce, national trade bodies, complementary business associations, fellow COMESA institutions, private sector consultancies and development partners from across the region.

The CBC Secretariat is led by Ms. Sandra Uwera, the Chief Executive Officer, under the overall management of the CBC Board of Directors. The CEO provided oversight and supervision in the development of the Annual Report.

We would like to thank the COMESA Secretariat for their continued support towards the CBC, and towards private sector engagement and inclusiveness.

CBC appreciates the support of its partners: - United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), African Development Bank (AfDB), Centre for International Private Enterprises (CIPE), International Trade Centre (ITC), European Union (EU), private sector memberships and partners. We look forward to increased working partnerships and enhancing CBC's presence within regional and global private sector markets.

## ABSTRACT

Citation: COMESA Business Council Annual Report 2020.

The COMESA Business Council (CBC) is a Business Member Organization and the recognized private sector institution of the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

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## ACRONYMS

<b>COMESA</b>	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
<b>CBC</b>	COMESA Business Council
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>EAC</b>	East Africa Community
<b>ICC</b>	International Chamber of Commerce
<b>CII</b>	Confederation of Indian Industries
<b>ICT</b>	Information Communication Technology
<b>LSP</b>	Local Sourcing for Partnerships
<b>FTA</b>	Free Trade Area
<b>TFTA</b>	Tripartite Free Trade Area
<b>RECAMP</b>	Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme
<b>SMEs</b>	Small and Medium Enterprises
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>KOAFEC</b>	Korea Africa Economic Cooperation
<b>RPSF</b>	Rwanda Private Sector Federation
<b>HACCP</b>	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point
<b>WEDF</b>	World Export Development Forum
<b>USAID</b>	United States Aid for International Development
<b>AfBD</b>	African Development Bank
<b>NTBs</b>	Non - Tariff Barriers
<b>ITC</b>	International Trade Centre
<b>NAFTA</b>	North America Free Trade Area
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations
<b>ZAM</b>	Zambia Association of Manufacturers
<b>ZFAWIB</b>	Zambia Federation Association of Women in Business



“

Successfully navigating the impact of the COVID-19 has been as a result of our agility, responsiveness and use of digital tools and technologies, as part of our Business Continuity Plan.

”

On behalf of the COMESA Business Council (CBC), I present to you the 2020 Annual Report and Financial Statement of the institution.

As an anchor and business support institution, our role has been greatly accentuated in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has had unprecedented effect on the functioning of businesses and industry, affecting sustainability, trade and economic development. With the World Trade projecting a decline in world trade, between 13% and 32% in 2020, and the World Bank projecting a decline of 11% and 7% in exports and imports for Sub-Saharan Africa, resilience and sustainability have emerged key business agendas.

To address the above, the focus of CBC in the year was strengthening its advocacy to address policy and trade facilitation issues; pioneering market information to inform market gaps and deficiencies; promoting digital financial inclusion; tripartite and continental integration to increase business opportunities; and digitizing its services to ensure business continuity and services to its membership.

#### **Strengthening Advocacy and Policy Engagement**

With countries implementing several measures that were affecting the movement of goods and services, public-private engagement and dialogue became an imperative. CBC structured various engagements with its membership through surveys, webinars and meetings to develop industry positions, proposing recommendation to alienate some of the key impediments faced by businesses and presented them for consideration in various COMESA policy meetings. I can cite some examples: the COMESA Business Declaration - *Facilitating the Movement of Essential Goods and Services Across Borders During the Period of the COVID-19 pandemic*, which provided input to the COMESA Regional Guidelines. Other positions that informed agriculture policy initiatives, focusing on *Unlocking Agriculture Trade and Food Security through improved seed trade in COMESA and Harmonisation of Food Standards*.

#### **Innovative Public-Private Engagement**

Throughout this period, the CBC has remained ready to swiftly handle the challenges faced by businesses and Associations, developing innovative platforms of public- private engagement bringing together the businesses and policy makers to share experiences and solutions through webinars. These covered various issues from the future of industry post COVID, trade facilitation, unlocking food security and tackling illicit trade. I underscore the importance of public-private dialogue, engagement and collaboration provided by the CBC, as collective actions are the solutions for development and implementation of regional strategies for sustainable business and economies.

### **Pioneering Market Intelligence**

Accurate and timely market information has emerged as of the essential needs for businesses in the face of disruption of traditional supply chains, with a greater demand for market and trade opportunities within the COMESA and rest of the African region. CBC developed thirteen country specific market briefs and ten product market pointers providing information on market requirements and profiles of key trading partners and products. Aligned to the above, is the upgrade of the CBC BIZNET e-market portal with activities focusing on mapping and adding a database of suppliers and buyers from 6 countries to the existing pool of 9 countries that already exists. Market and business information is integral to strengthening regional supply chains, which not only creates opportunities for local business, SMEs but aids industrialisation and business sustainability.

### **Advancing Cross-Border Digital Payments Systems**

Payments are at the centre of trade, and CBC is implementing the MSMEs Digital Financial Inclusion Project focusing on development of a digital integrated regional common payment scheme that is affordable, interoperable and with minimal charges to address the needs of the smaller businesses and traders. This will result in increasing the participation of MSMEs into digital markets, and payments systems that are affordable, interoperable, transparent and offer real-time financial transactions. A business case report and several public -private stakeholder engagements have been carried out between SMEs, businesses, fintech, mobile operators, telecommunications, ICT, financial, and payment systems regulators and are informing the draft model policy and regulation guidelines for the scheme that is expected to be developed in 2021.

### **Tripartite, Continental and International Partnerships**

I am also excited to highlight various initiatives, strengthening the participation of the CBC in regional, continental and international fora for increased partnerships and alliances to strengthen our services to our membership. We have signed two MOU's this year, one with the International Chamber of Commerce, and another with the Africa- E-Trade Group, both providing a mechanism of cooperation to facilitate digital trade facilitation for businesses, inter-regional partnerships, and CBC's participation in multilateral policy platforms. At Commonwealth level, CBC was nominated as the Chairperson of B2B Cluster under the Commonwealth Connectivity forum, and at continental level, CBC is part of the Interim Committee leading private sector engagements forming the African Business Council. With projections that the full implementation of AfCFTA will raise intra-Africa trade from 15% or \$50 billion in 2017 to 25% or \$70 billion by 2040, being at the centre of such regional and continental partnerships enables us to effectively partner and advocate for measures that can advance the participation of our members and industry to attain the benefits of integration.

### **Digitizing Our Services Offerings**

Successfully navigating the impact of the COVID-19 has been as a result of our agility, responsiveness and use of digital tools and technologies, as part of our Business Continuity Plan. From webinar, e-meetings, online trainings, market intelligence report, CBC has remained engaged with its members and stakeholders throughout this period. Against a background of uncertain I am glad to highlight; our technical and financial position remains strong as we continue to focus on measures to strengthen our sustainability and effectiveness in building interconnected industries to participate in regional and global trade.

### **The Year Ahead**

The Board and I remain focused on continuously delivering value to our membership, collaborating and partnering with our stakeholders to address private sector competitiveness within this period. With continued work on policy advocacy; facilitating business partnerships; carrying out national business dialogues and trade missions; adoption of the policy and development of the business model for the digital integrated common payments scheme for MSMEs; Local Sourcing for Partnerships training and linkages platform, and others.

In ending, I am grateful for the immense support that our membership, Board, partners, management, staff and all stakeholders continually avail to this great institution. It is only through collective and concerted efforts that we can support the growth and development of sustainable and competitive businesses and industries, particularly within this time.

**Mr. Marday Venkatasamy**  
**Chairman**



“

*In order to enhance our business and policy advocacy pillar, national and regional public-private sector dialogues were strengthened.....*

”

The world is facing the greatest threat of the 21st century so far. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our ways of doing business, regionally and across the globe. The new normal comprises restrictions in movement of human capital, goods and services; work-from-home arrangements; online shopping; supply-chain disruptions; cash crunches; ambiguous compliance obligations; and the mechanics of applying for new government programs. This global problem requires a global solution and as the leading Business Member Organization in COMESA, in 2020 we continued to play an influential advocacy role in pushing forward the regional agenda for the private sector, through the provision of services that are structured in our three main pillars; Business and Advocacy, Business Facilitation and Membership Development.

#### **Influencing Policy Through Advocacy**

In order to enhance our Business and Policy Advocacy pillar, several national and regional public private sector dialogues were convened towards increasing collaboration in addressing the challenges faced by businesses across COMESA. Three (3) sectoral positions were adopted and have been fed into the highest levels of decision making in the COMESA region. The positions focused on the issues of trade facilitation during the COVID-19 era, harmonisation of food standards, and promotion of seed trade in the region. CBC will relentlessly continue to work with the public sector towards creation of an enabling business environment for enterprise completeness.

In September 2020, CBC chaired the Zambia-DRC Private sector dialogue, bringing together businesses and freight/logistics associations from DRC and Zambia to present common positions at the second Joint Permanent Commissions (JPC) bilateral inter-governmental meetings between DRC and Zambia, in Lusaka, Zambia.

CBC is also implementing the Business Integrity Project which focuses on building the capacity of the private sector to stem corruption and enhance their participation in transparency and reform initiatives towards achieving a good and enabling business environment. The activities of the project included: adoption of the Regional Code on Anti-Corruption Compliance for Enterprises by the CBC Annual General Meeting in August 2020; training and mentorship of Associations on practical elements of the Regional Code to enable them to effect its implementation within their institutions.

In addition, CBC is implementing the MSME Digital Financial Inclusion project supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which is focusing on strengthening digital financial inclusion, improving financial regulation and ultimately facilitating lower cross-border transaction costs for MSMEs in COMESA through a regional common payment scheme. To this end, nine countries were visited to inform the development of a business case for an integrated digital regional common payment policy framework for MSMEs, which was completed and adopted. Following this milestone, the model policy was also developed and is pending validation at the *CBC Digital Financial Inclusion High-Level Public Private Dialogue*, scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

## **Business Facilitation for Competitiveness**

During the period under review, CBC signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MoU), with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and Africa- E-Trade Group, signifying commitment to strengthen cooperation in the areas of, but not limited to, digital trade facilitation, skills development, enhancement of inter-regional trade and SME sustainability.

The importance of business linkages and market access cannot be over emphasized in the region. As part of the *Local Sourcing for Partnerships Project*, a buyer-seller meeting was convened in Zambia, with support from Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP). Four (4) corporate buyers and fifty-four (54) SMEs participated in the platform. To facilitate further linkages, CBC is in the process of expanding the BIZNET e-market platform; the project seeks to create business partnerships between SMEs in COMESA countries to improve intra-COMESA trade as a steppingstone to supply to international markets. Sudan and Egypt are the latest countries to be added to the portal. Mapping exercises are being conducted to collect data from six countries: Seychelles, Malawi, Mauritius, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Kenya.

To support SMEs' access to larger supply chains nationally and regionally, in September 2020, CBC partnered with the Zambia Bureau of Standards, Zambia National Farmers Union, Zambia Chamber of Commerce and Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry and trained 54 SMEs on HACCP food safety management system. As a follow up, CBC will be organising a regional Buyer-Seller Platforms.

The year has also witnessed a substantial demand in our market intelligence knowledge products (Market Briefs and Market Pointers) as a direct response to the call for up to date relevant market information for traders and manufactures across the COMESA region due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, CBC has held five webinars with industry stakeholders and relevant public sector representatives. The webinars presented a platform for public-private sector to discuss and provide solutions on issues related to the movement of essential goods, addressing illicit trade, promoting seed trade, and industry responses to COVID-19.

## **Membership- Towards Strengthened Business Collaboration**

As the CBC's membership base expands, we're continually refining and customising our services to meet members' unique needs, and are typically inclined towards training, technical capacity building and resource mobilization. CBC formed new, and reactivated existing workgroups this year, with which we have active ongoing engagement. This is in alignment with CBC's agenda to build capacity of member associations to effectively respond to business interests and to support regional business agendas on policy, trade facilitation and industrial development.

To respond to members' needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, CBC developed the Sector Specific Insider bulletins and COVID-19 Special Additions. The publications shared pertinent information on regional market performance, current trends and best practice for business resilience and sustainability during the pandemic period.

## **Outlook**

The year 2021 will be year full of great opportunities for the private sector as we work towards increased business participation, impact and visibility in domestic, regional and global markets.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to our members and all stakeholders for the trust they've bestowed on us as an institution, and for their drive and ingenuity in contributing towards private sector development in the region.

I'm also immensely grateful to the CBC Board for their valued support and guidance throughout the year. To Management and Staff, thank you for your enthusiasm about the private sector and for your unwavering commitment to our mandate on this journey of enhancing the participation of businesses in regional and global trade.

**Sandra Uwera**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

## 1. BUSINESS POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Business policy and advocacy plays a central role and is a key strategic pillar as CBC's strives for an environment that improves business competitiveness in COMESA. CBC drives private sector's active contribution in the policy making processes through development and advocacy of industry position papers, policy briefs and studies on impediments to business, and creates a platform to directly advocate to the policy and decision makers of the region. Some key strategic highlights are below ;

### BUSINESS POLICY & ADVOCACY

- 2** Reports published informing business policy:
- The Regional Anti-corruption Compliance Code for Enterprises
  - The CBC Business Trader Observer: An Annual Survey of Business Impediments Along Trade and Transport Corridors in the COMESA Region

Regional Code on anti-corruption compliance published and adopted by CBC General Assembly.



- 3** Sectoral positions adopted at the COMESA Policy Organs Meeting. The positions focused on the issues for trade facilitation during the COVID-19 era, harmonisation of food standards, promoting seed trade in the region.

- 4** Key joint advocacy initiatives advanced to strengthen COMESA's private sector influence within Commonwealth, TFTA, AfCFTA, and the COMESA Trade in Services

### BUSINESS POLICY & ADVOCACY

- 8** Policy areas for harmonisation agreed upon to inform development of the CBC digital integrated common payment policy for SMEs

- 5** Sub-regional Stakeholder Meetings convened with MNOs, Fintechs, commercial banks, financial services regulators, ICT regulators, microfinance institutions, SMEs, to adopt the Digital Financial Inclusion for MSMEs Business Case Report.

- 9** Virtual national public-private dialogues convened with the pilot-study countries, to validate the Digital Financial Inclusion for MSMEs Business Case Report. The countries included Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.



## BUSINESS POLICY & ADVOCACY

**5** Webinars convened as public-private platforms for engagement to enhance stakeholder coordination towards increased industry Competitiveness in COMESA.

They were themed:

- The Future of Industry Post Covid-19: Reset? Revolutionize? Maintain?
- Taking stock: Implementation of the COMESA Regional Guidelines for the Movement of Essential Goods
- Unlocking Food Security Through Improved Seed Trade in COMESA
- Concerted Approaches to Tackling Illicit Trade for Industry Competitiveness
- Reshaping the Future of Industry and SMEs Through Digital Financial Inclusion



### 1.1 Five Industry Positions Developed to Inform Advocacy and Policy Agendas

CBC's advocacy and policy agendas focus on improving the competitiveness and deepening the participation of the private sector in regional and global trade. As part of the advocacy strategies, to address key business impediments and measures that affect industries participation in the region, CBC developed four industry positions below. The positions were presented in various COMESA Policy organs meeting, captured in 1.2 below.

#### 1.1.1 Trade Facilitation

- a) In April CBC developed the declaration on the COMESA Business Position Statement: *Facilitating the Movement of Essential Goods and Services Across Borders During the Period of the COVID-19 pandemic*, which advocated for a harmonised framework, expedited processing, pre-clearance mechanisms, increased awareness of regulations, and a reporting / monitoring mechanism.
- b) The report was presented to various platforms and was used as a policy brief to inform policy processes within COMESA, leading to the Regional Guidelines for the Movement of Goods and Services across the COMESA Region during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

#### 1.1.2 Harmonisation of Food Standards

- a) The CBC Agro-Industry Workgroup in June developed and validated a position report, *Harmonisation of Food standards in COMESA*, with key recommendation on ensuring harmonisation of standards and net weight regulations; promoting mutual recognition arrangements; improving laboratory capacities and addressing the cost of certification.
- b) The position report and recommendations were presented to the 10th COMESA SPS Committee Meeting in July, and 7th COMESA Joint Technical Committee on Agriculture.

#### 1.1.3 Promoting Seed trade

- a) The CBC Agro Industry – Seed Working group in June carried out a survey termed, “*Issue Identification and Policy actions for improved seed trade in COMESA*,” identifying key policy impediments. This was preceded by a validation meeting held in July. The meeting harmonized key positions for advocacy focusing on improving trade facilitation, harmonization, certification systems, public-private dialogue and seed statistics.
- b) Further to, in July CBC convened a webinar conference providing a platform of public- private sector engagement on key issues above pertaining to the improved seed trade in COMESA. The webinar was held under the theme “*Unlocking*

*Agriculture Trade and Food Security through improved seed trade in COMESA*". The key recommendations from the webinar included: simplification of trade processes, strengthening market information systems, policy and regulatory harmonization and addressing illicit/ counterfeit seed trade.

- c) The Recommendations were presented at and adopted by the 7th COMESA Technical and Ministerial Committee meeting on Agriculture at the end of July.

#### **1.1.4 Industry Technical Committee Report**

- a) On the margins of the CBC Annual General meeting in August, CBC convened the Industry Technical Committee Meeting which considered key agendas on the, *Business Trader Observer: An Annual Survey of Business Impediments along Trade and Transport Corridors in the COMESA Region; Digital Financial Inclusion Project- Business Case for a Digital Common Payment Policy for MSMEs; and Industry Response to Address COVID-19/ Post COVID-19 Impact on Private Sector Competitiveness*.
- b) The key recommendations of the meeting focused on harmonisation of market entry requirements, stronger enforcement for corruption and illicit trade, harmonisation of policies for regional common payments, addressing SMEs access to finance, strengthening data collection, market information portals and public-private engagement during the COVID-19 era. CBC will present the recommendations as part of the forthcoming COMESA Intergovernmental and Council of Ministers meetings in November 2020.

#### **1.1.5 CBC-SADC Business Council Position**

In June, CBC and the SADC Business Council developed a position report and carried out joint advocacy on addressing trade restrictive measures during the COVID-19 pandemic era. The position focused on adopting tripartite approaches to facilitating trade, and also removal of the tobacco sales ban.

#### **1.1.6 CBC Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Services Industry**

- a) The CBC Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Services Industry workgroup had a meeting in December to develop and validate a position report, *"CBC Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Services Industry in COMESA: Issue Identification and Policy Considerations"*.
- b) The key recommendations focused on ensuring harmonisation of regulatory requirements to address the disparate regulatory requirements in the health and pharmaceutical sector; promoting mutual recognition arrangements; provision of financial assistance which may be provided for upgradation of selected pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities including biopharmaceuticals; improving research and development; addressing the cost of certification and simplify export procedures - remove duplication of clearances across various ministries.

#### **1.1.7 Tobacco Workgroup towards addressing illicit trade**

- a) The CBC Tobacco workgroup had a meeting in December themed *"Business Perspectives on Addressing Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products for the COMESA Region"*.
- b) The key recommendations were mainly on ensuring development of a harmonised regulatory framework for regional coordination, monitoring and enforcement to curb illicit trade; enforcing stiffer penalties to deter illicit trade and strengthen the capacities of enforcement agencies to detect and destroy illicit products; implementing track and trace technologies and strengthening Public-Private engagement.

#### **Results:**

- **5 Industry position developed and informed advocacy agendas for 2020.**
- **6 platforms for increased private sector coordination (6 workgroup meetings held for increased private sector coordination (Tobacco Workgroup, Pharmaceuticals Workgroup, Trade Facilitation Workgroup, Agro Industry Workgroup, Seed Workgroup, Digital Financial Inclusion Workgroup and Trade & Industry Committee).**

## 1.2 Policy Positions Presented and Adopted by the Policy Makers

- a) CBC provides a platform of engagement with the high-level policy makers in COMESA and presents the key positions and recommendations of industry to the policy makers to ensure inclusive private sector policymaking. CBC presented policy position reports to the following meetings:
- Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the Trade and Customs Committee, and Council of Ministers, in April 2020.
  - 10<sup>th</sup> SPS Committee Meeting in June, presenting the positions on harmonisation of food standards.
  - 7<sup>th</sup> COMESA Joint Technical Committee Meeting on Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, presenting the positions from on promoting seed trade in COMESA.
  - Customs Experts and Heads of Customs meetings, in October.
  - Trade and Customs Committee Meeting in October.
- b) As a result, 4 sectoral position papers have been adopted by the above policy making platforms. The positions focused on the issues for trade facilitation during the COVID-19 era, harmonisation of food standards, promoting seed trade in the region.

### Results:

- **4 Policy positions presented and adopted by the policy organs.**

## 1.3 Addressing Private Sector Concerns on The COMESA Trading Environment

### 1.3.1 Zambia-DRC Private sector Dialogue on Business Impediments at the Kasumbalesa Border

- a) CBC chaired the Zambia- DRC Private sector dialogue, bringing together businesses associations, freight and logistics associations from DRC and Zambia, to present common positions at the Joint Permanent Commissions (JPC) bilateral inter-governmental meetings between DRC and Zambia.
- b) The dialogue adopted a common industry focusing on strengthening enforcement to ensure adherence with transshipment rules, curbing customs fraud, prohibiting offloading of transit goods at the border, strengthening the Kasumbalesa One Stop Border Post, enabling increased customs interface and uniform processing facilitating speedier clearance of goods.
- c) On the margins of the meeting, CBC facilitated a courtesy meeting between the delegation from the DRC (led by the Federations des Enterprise du Congo), and the COMESA Secretariat.

### 1.3.2 Private Sector Engagement on the Issue of Preferential Tariff Treatment of COMESA-Origin Goods by Kenya

- a) CBC engaged with the private sector, Kenya Association of Manufacturers and COMESA on the issue of preferential tariff treatment of COMESA-Origin goods by Kenya. Through various engagements (also between COMESA and Government of Kenya), the matter was swiftly resolved.
- b) CBC issued a press brief advocacy paper on the said matter and recommended accelerated reversal of the non-preferential duties imposed. As a follow-up CBC carried out an interview with KAM to show the positive results of the removed duties on import and export trade relations between Kenya and COMESA, being that the former is a leading trading partner in the region.

### Results:

- **CBC provides a platform for engagement and intervention on 2 Private sector issues for address by the respective policy makers.**
- **DRC- ZAMBIA Logistics position paper for the industry published and circulated.**

## 1.4 Joint Advocacy Programs with Members/Stakeholders

CBC partnered or participated in various meetings or conferences organized by key stakeholders or partners to advance advocacy agendas and leverage partnerships for ongoing activities. Some of the meetings and their briefs are below:

#### **1.4.1 Commonwealth Private Sector Engagement Initiatives.**

- a) CBC participated at the 2nd Commonwealth Connectivity Cluster meetings in the United Kingdom, in February. Following which, CBC in partnership with International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) was appointed as B2B Cluster heads to lead private sector advocacy engagements and to present them at the next Commonwealth Heads of States meetings.
- b) Further to the above, CBC has been participating in a number of initiatives to further the above agendas, including B2B planning meetings and a panellist at the the ICC podcast series, *“The Covid-19 Recovery; Is there a global consensus emerging”* in May 2020. The engagement has strengthened the engagement with the ICC leading to the signature of an MOU.

#### **1.4.2 Strengthening the Tripartite Private Sector Platform**

- a) Stronger collaboration created through the Tripartite Private Sector platform, composed of the respective Business Councils: COMESA Business Council, East African Business Council and SADC Business Council. The platform promotes private sector engagement on the regional integration agenda within the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA).
- b) The platform developed and presented common positions pertaining to the framework and the Constitution on the formation of the African Business Council (AfBC).
- c) The platform has also participated in activities and events of the other partner; CBC and its membership participated in the EABC Meeting on the Harmonization of Codex GFSA beverage colour and sweetener provisions.

#### **1.4.3 Engagements on the Formation of the African Business Council**

- a) With the promulgation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), CBC has been contributing to the engagements and development of the framework on the African Business Council (AfBC).
- b) CBC has been selected to form part of the Interim Committee of the AfBC, tasked with the operationalization of the Council and Board Director- Dr. Amany Asfour was nominated to lead and chair the Interim Committee.

#### **1.4.4 Strengthening the CBC Collaboration with the State of Eritrea**

- a) CBC undertook a mission to Eritrea in February, to strengthen collaboration with both the government and the private sector. A meeting was held with the Eritrean Minister of Foreign Affairs: Honourable Osman Saleh Mohammed and His Excellency Mr. Beyene Russom, the Eritrean Ambassador to Kenya and Permanent Representative to COMESA.
- b) The meeting agreed on several actions including convening a national business dialogue: bringing together the Eritrean private sector to a platform of advocacy, and to increase awareness on the training opportunities and trade facilitation instruments within COMESA. A side meeting was also held with the Ministry of Trade and Industry focusing on strengthening private sector participation and cross border linkages with neighbouring countries.

#### **1.4.5 Training on Mutual Recognition Agreements for Services Negotiators**

- a) CBC participated at the above training meeting, convened by the Commonwealth and the COMESA Secretariat. The meeting which had the participation of COMESA member states and private sector Associations provided training on the development and negotiation of Mutual Recognition Agreements to inform the negotiations on COMESA Trade in Services- with a focus on Business services.

#### **Results:**

- ***CBC undertakes joint advocacy to support four key agendas: Strengthen COMESA’s private sector voice within Commonwealth, TFTA, AfCFTA, and the COMESA Trade in Services.***
- ***CBC nominated as Head of B2B Cluster under the Commonwealth.***
- ***CBC selected in Interim Committee on the African Business Council.***

### 1.1 CBC Business Integrity Project

#### 1.1.1 Introduction

CBC is implementing the CBC Business Integrity Project which focuses on building the capacity of the private sector to stem corruption and enhance their participation in transparency and reform initiatives thereby achieve a good and enabling business environment. The Project is implemented with funding and support from the Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) and is in its penultimate stages, having carried out trainings For Associations, developed country reports and a Regional Code on anti-corruption compliance for enterprises. The following activities were carried out in 2020.

#### 1.1.2 Adoption and Launch of the Regional Code on Anti-Corruption Compliance for Enterprises

- a) The Regional Code on Anti-Corruption Compliance for enterprises, developed at the end of 2019 was adopted by the CBC Annual General Meeting in August 2020. The Report has been published in all three COMESA languages: English, French and Arabic and can be accessed on the website at <http://comesabusinesscouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CBC-Anti-Corruption-Compliance-for-Enterprises4.pdf>
- b) CBC launched the Regional Code at a virtual training of Associations at the end of August 2020, to increase awareness and uptake of the Code by enterprises and Associations in COMESA. The Regional Code provides a guide that can used by enterprises to customize, develop and/or implement national anti-corruption compliance policies within the governance structures of respective enterprises in COMESA.

#### 1.1.3 Training of Associations and Launch of the Regional Code

- a) In August 2020, CBC in partnership with the Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), carried out an English and French training workshop for Chambers and Associations across the region, under the theme “Activating Business Communities in Africa Against Corruption: Online Training for Business Member Organisations and Launch of CBC Regional Code for Anti-Corruption Compliance for Enterprises”.
- b) 25 Associations were trained on on practical elements of the Regional Code on anti-corruption compliance to be implementation within their institutions. These are (Ethiopian Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, Kenya Association of Manufacturers, Zambia Association of Manufacturers, BPW-Zambia, Private Sector Foundation Uganda, Zimbabwe National Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Federation of Enterprises du Congo, Federation of Egyptian Industries, Madagascar Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Kenya National Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Federation of Chambers of Commerce- Madagascar, AWANA, Engineering, Iron & Steel Association of Zimbabwe, Mauritius Chamber of Commerce, Business Eswatini- Association , Malawi Chambers of Commerce, Addis Chamber, ACT Egypt, CSR Forum- Egypt, Africa Agribusiness Academy, Uganda Crane Creameries Cooperative Union, Consumer Grassroots Association, Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria).

#### 1.1.4 Mentorship of Associations

- a) To strengthen compliance frameworks for Associations, CBC partnered with CIPE to carry out a mentorship program for Associations. The objective is increase awareness and strengthen the capacity of members to implement anti-corruption compliance programs within their Associations and empower the businesses communities in the region to be champions for anti-corruption and business integrity.
- b) Trainers are providing mentorship to 6 Associations, directly supporting them to address compliance and business integrity within Associations; This includes putting in place and strengthening policies such as the Code of Conduct, Procurement and Financial Policies, Gift Policies and others. The program is currently ongoing since October 2020 till the first quarter of 2021. These associations are Zambia Association of Manufacturers, BPW-Zambia, Private Sector Foundation Uganda, Zimbabwe National Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Federation of Enterprises du Congo, Madagascar Chambers of Commerce and Industry, BPW -Zambia.

#### Results:

- **Regional Code on anti-corruption compliance adopted by CBC General Assembly and launched;**

- **25 trained on anti-corruption compliance and the Regional Code;**
- **6 Associations being mentored to put in place effective compliance mechanism within their institutions.**

## 1.2 SME Digital Financial Inclusion Project

CBC is implementing the SME Digital Financial Inclusion Project. The overall goal is to support the development of a regional common payment scheme that serves Micro Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) small and medium enterprises (at the bottom of the financial pyramid) thereby improving cross border trade. The Project will result in strengthening the digital market for cross border financial transactions that is affordable, with minimal charges that are well suited for MSMEs. This will increase volumes of cross border transactions, financial inclusion and the participation of MSMEs in regional trade. In 2020, the following activities have been carried out:

### 1.2.1 Business Case report

- A Business case report was developed on the value proposition and policy framework for the regional common payment scheme for MSMEs. This was informed by stakeholder engagements in nine countries (Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia). The key stakeholders included MSMEs, Mobile Network Operators, Commercial Banks, Manufacturers, Agro-Industry, Associations, Micro Finance Institutions, Fintechs, Technology Companies, ICT and Finance Regulators.
- The key findings confirmed a business case, recommended the harmonization of policy and regulatory framework within COMESA region to facilitate cross-border payments for MSMEs, foster innovative cross border payment solution to lower the cost of transaction, supporting MSMEs access to financial services, and addressing the requisite infrastructure needs.
- Country and Sectoral Stakeholder Validation Meetings: CBC convened nine country validation meetings of the Business case report. These were superseded by five sub-regional stakeholder meetings, comprising of MSMEs, Mobile Network Operators, ICT regulators, fintech's, microfinance institutions and industry associations. The meetings validated the Business Case report and identify key policy areas for consideration and harmonization in the development of the policy framework to support the scheme. Eight (8) Policy areas of harmonization were agreed upon.

### 1.2.2 Draft model policy and regulatory guidelines.

- CBC is currently working on the draft policy and regulations for the regional common payment scheme for MSMEs, with a consultant, Legis Policy Associates. The business case report and policy framework will serve as the basis for the establishment and development of the business model, governance and operational aspects of a regional digital integrated common payment scheme for MSMEs.
- The draft model policy is earmarked to be completed by end of November, 2020 and shall be presented at the CBC-TDB high-level Public-Private dialogue meeting scheduled for January, 2021.

### 1.2.3 Stakeholder Engagements

- Engagements with possible payment system integrators.** Over the year, CBC had meetings with stakeholders several stakeholders in the digital payment eco-system, including, Vericash, System D Global, Mowali and Netlogic Zambia. The stakeholders have digital platforms to drive digital transformation and financial inclusion in emerging markets and can inform the regional digital integrated common payment system.
- Partnership with TDB.** CBC is engaging with the Trade Development Bank (TDB) focusing on collaboration and synergies through the DFI Project and strengthening joint advocacy and engagement of the Finance regulators and Central Bank governors on the policy and regulatory framework for the digital common payment scheme for MSMEs.
- Partnership with Glenbrook.** CBC has partnered with Glenbrook who are providing technical expertise and knowledge to inform the development of the policy framework and business model on the digital integrated common payment scheme for MSMEs in COMESA region.

#### **1.2.4 DFI Marketing activities**

Project awareness was carried out through various media platforms such as newsletters, social media, website and print media. 2 DFI Insider newsletters were published to inform stakeholders on the key ongoing activities related to digital financial inclusion and the project.

#### **1.2.5 Going Forward**

- a) CBC and the Trade Development Bank(TDB) have partnered to host the High-Level Public-Private Dialogue in January 2020. The objective will be to consider and adopt the COMESA digital integrated common payment policy and framework for SMEs. The event will have the participation of the Central Bank governors and Ministries of Finance, SMEs, Chamber of Commerce, Agro-Industry, Manufacturers, Mobile Network Operators, Commercial banks, Non-banks (Fintechs/Micro-Finance Institutions/Integrators), and ICT Regulators.
- b) This will lay the foundation for the development of business model and infrastructure for a low cost/retail digital payment scheme, which will be developed in 2021.

#### **Results:**

- ***9 virtual national public private dialogue in nine countries held to validate the Business case report.***
  - ***5 virtual sub-regional sectoral public- private dialogues held to adopt the business case report and agree on 8 policy areas that will inform the digital common payment policy for SMEs.***
  - ***350 stakeholders from nine countries actively engaged with in the development of the business case and regional policy paper.***
  - ***One business case report completed and adopted.***
  - ***One model policy completed and pending validation at the COMESA Digital Financial Inclusion High Level Forum, 20- 21 January 2021.***
-

## 2. BUSINESS FACILITATION SERVICES

CBC develops activities and facilitates platforms that promote partnerships and linkages amongst businesses, as well as inform businesses on various trade opportunities available in the region and beyond. The strategic highlights are below;



### 2.1.1 Market Briefs and Market Pointers

- a) To address market information gaps in the COMESA Region, CBC developed Market Briefs and Pointers to disseminate relevant and up-to-date trade and market opportunities. Market Briefs and Pointers are knowledge products which review export potential for products and markets of interest. They contain product information, country trade performance, market intelligence and regulatory requirements for trading in the region the reports are uploaded on the CBC website for easy accessibility.

- b) Thirteen country specific market briefs on the following countries: Kenya, Egypt, Djibouti, COMESA-South Africa, Burundi, COMESA-EU, Seychelles, COMESA-China, COMESA-USA, Tunisia, Zimbabwe, Mauritius and Seychelles.
- c) Ten product market pointers on Grapes, Pineapples, Cashew Nuts, Fresh Strawberries, Ginger, Garlic, Fresh Lemons, Chilli Peppers, Mangoes, Blueberries and Beans.

### **Result**

- **23 market information briefs developed and circulated to the public and private stakeholders in the region to inform partnerships and trade (13 Market Briefs developed, 10 Market Pointers)**
- **5 Workgroup Insider Brief Developed**
- **5 special edition Insider publications of “Business Insights of COVID-19” developed**

## **2.2 Business Linkages and Partnerships Platform**

### **2.2.1 Buyer - Seller Platform**

- a) As part of the Local Sourcing for Partnerships (LSP) Project a buyer – seller meeting was convened in Zambia. The buyer-seller platform was on the margin of the LSP training workshop. The online training was held from the 9th to 10th September 2020, under the theme, “Promoting Efficient and Sustainable Local Supply Chain Systems”.
- b) Four corporate buyers namely, Hilton Garden Inn, VAMARA (Freshpikt), Choppies Supermarket and COMACO and 54 SMEs participated in the platform. The platform provided an opportunity of sharing of information on buyer requirements and expectations for participation in their supply chains.

### **2.2.2 BIZNET Mapping**

- a) To facilitate online interaction of buyers and sellers in the COMESA region, CBC is implementing the upgrading of BIZNET, which is an online portal which provides services such as business linkages, sourcing, business or trade flow analysis for regional and international companies looking for working partnerships within the region. BIZNET currently hosts more than 4000 subscribers who are readily available and drawn from 8 countries; Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Egypt, Malawi, Ethiopia, Sudan and Zambia.
- b) Mapping exercises are being conducted to collect data from six countries: Seychelles, Malawi, Mauritius, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Kenya. The project consists collection of company data for SMEs and corporates in these countries who have the capacity to source and supply goods to other COMESA countries. The project seeks to create market linkages between SMEs in COMESA countries to improve intra-COMESA trade as a steppingstone to supply to international markets.

### **Results:**

#### **Local Sourcing for Partnerships Buyer-Seller Platforms:**

- *1 buyer supplier meeting held in Zambia,*
- *4 buyers mobilised to participate,*
- *54 SMEs participated in the platform.*

**2 BIZNET Country databases have been received from Kenya and Ethiopia.**

## **2.3 Stakeholder Engagements**

CBC carried out several engagements to facilitate linkages and partnerships at regional and global levels:

### **2.3.1 CBC and Africa e-Trade Group**

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed with the Africa e-Trade Group in February 2020 to advance the interests and concerns of business, cooperating on matters related to technical skills development, digital business facilitation, trade partnerships and private sector development. The African e-Trade Group is a social enterprise initiated by a group of African, multi-stakeholder and multi-talented professionals and entrepreneurs, with a strong focus on supporting interventions for the digital economy under the African Union agendas.

### 2.3.2 CBC and International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

An MoU was signed with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) to promote and strengthen inter-regional partnerships for private sector development. The MoU consider cooperation in strengthening of SMEs by providing tools, resources, skills and networks that will enable them to constructively influence policy and economic decision-making processes; and increase the participation of the African business voice in multilateral negotiations related to trade, investment and sustainability. The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) is one of the largest, most representative business organization in the world, with more than 45 million members in 100 countries, and have interests spanning in every sector of private enterprise.

### 2.3.3 Stakeholder Meetings

CBC participated in three stakeholder meetings, highlighted below, related to the impact of COVID-19 on the movement of essential goods, trade and investment opportunities, business sustainability:

- a) International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) podcast series themed, “*The Covid-19 Recovery; Is There a Global Consensus Emerging?*”
- b) Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) webinar themed, “*Southern Africa Economic Update – COVID & Beyond.*”
- c) Webinar by Africa Pharma Platform’s (APP) Connecting the Dots Initiative (CDI) themed, “*African Manufacturers Coming to Africa’s Aid.*”
- d) ICC’s COVID-19 Policy Briefing Series themed, “*COVID-19 and Commonwealth FDI: Immediate Impacts and Future Prospects.*”

#### **Results:**

##### **2 Memorandums of Understanding signed:**

- **MOU signed with International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) to facilitate inter regional partnerships and CBC’s participation in multilateral policy platforms.**
- **MOU signed with Africa- E-Trade Group to cooperate on digital trade facilitation, skills development, and e-commerce.**
- ***Recommendations were put forward towards policy reform on issues relating to the movement of essential goods across COMESA; post-COVID-19 recovery in the region’s FDI inflows; government interventions to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on business; investment and trade partnerships for enhanced inter-regional trade; and business sustainability, particularly for SMEs, within the pandemic period.***

### 2.4 Webinars

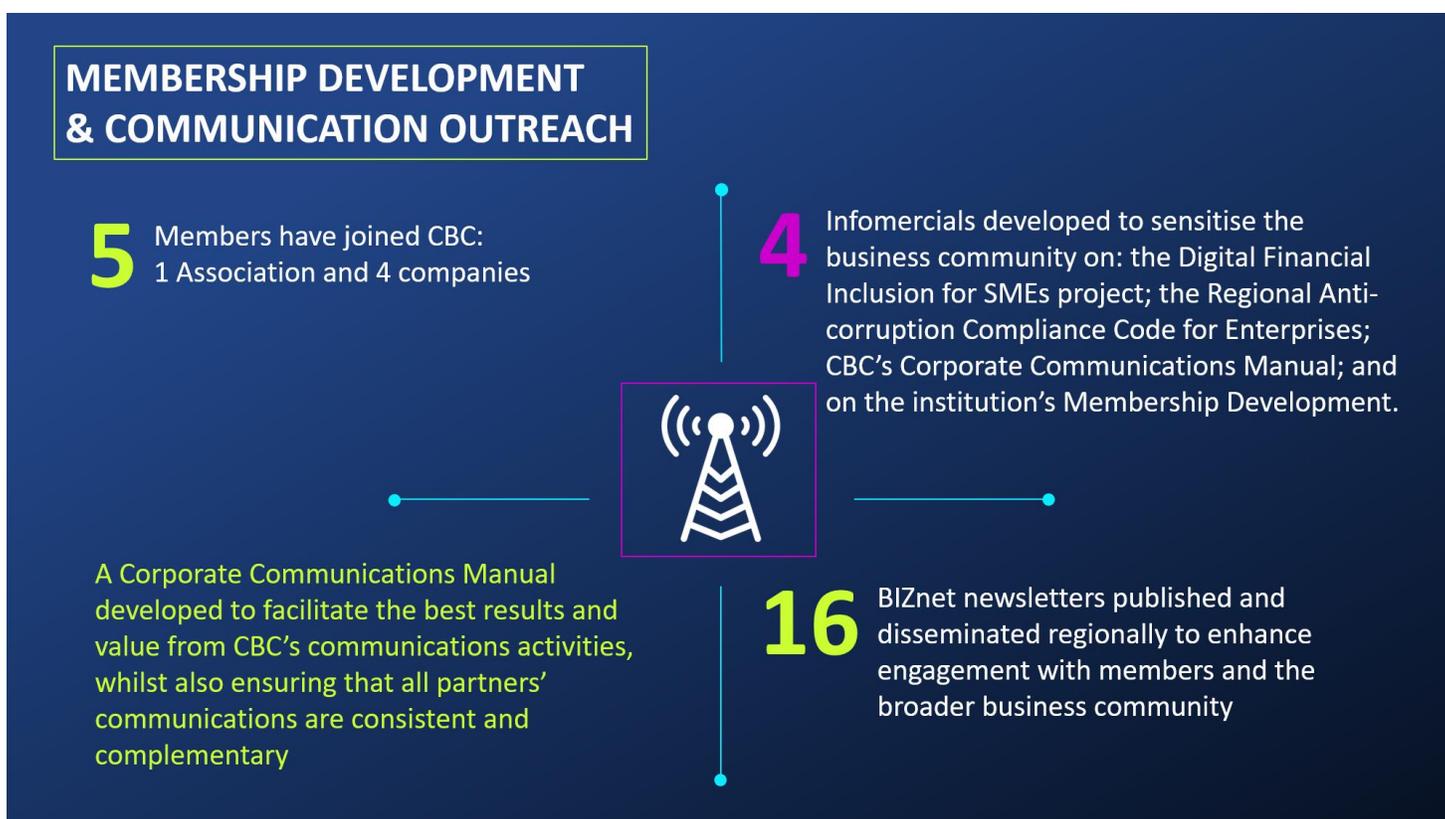
- a) CBC conducted four webinars with industry stakeholders and relevant public sector representatives. The webinars presented a platform for public-private sector to discuss and provide solutions on issues related to the movement of essential goods, addressing illicit trade, promoting seed trade, and industry responses to COVID 19.
- b) The following were the webinar topics;
  - i. *The Future of Industry Post Covid-19: Reset? Revolutionize? Maintain? Insights from Leading Manufacturing Companies, SMEs And Associations in COMESA.*
  - ii. *Taking Stock: Implementation of The COMESA Regional Guidelines for The Movement of Essential Goods and Supplies Across the Region During the Covid-19 Pandemic.*
  - iii. *Unlocking Food Security Through Improved Seed Trade in COMESA.*
  - iv. *Concerted Approaches to Tackling Illicit Trade for Industry Competitiveness in COMESA*
- c) The key recommendations from the webinars included strengthening enforcement mechanism to address illicit trade; public-private border management consultative committee to monitor the implementation of COMESA Guidelines; implementation of harmonised standards to promote seed trade. The recommendations will form part of the CBC’s policy reports to the upcoming COMESA policy organs meetings.

**Results:**

- **4 platforms of engagement convened to increase stakeholder coordination.**
- **4 Reports with recommendations feeding into Industry position papers.**

### 3. MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

CBC focuses on strengthening collaboration with the business community, promoting entrepreneurial and technical capacity building of enterprises and associations to ensure a strong and competitive private sector. The Key strategic highlights are below;



#### 3.1 Strengthening Enterprise Competitiveness Through Training and Capacity Building

##### 3.1.1 Local Sourcing for Partnership (LSP)

- a) The LSP Project focuses on strengthening and building the enterprise competitiveness of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through standards and quality compliance. Firstly, through training on the food safety management systems, and secondly, business linkages facilitation to enable integration of SMEs into the competitive supply chain network of corporate companies and key regional value chains.
- b) In view of, a training workshop on food safety management for enterprises was carried out, in partnership with the Zambia Bureau of Standards, Zambia National Farmers Union, Zambia Chamber of Commerce and Ministry of Commerce, Trade

and Industry. The online training was held from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020, under the theme, “*Promoting Efficient and Sustainable Local Supply Chain Systems*”.

- c) 54 SMEs were trained on HACCP food safety management system and on meeting the requirements of corporate buyers from the retail and hospitality sector in Zambia. Post the training, a mentorship program was initiated for 20 SMEs to provide practical guidance on the implementation of the standards.

**Results:**

- **54 SMEs trained on basic standards and food safety management systems.**
- **20 SMEs are undergoing business counselling and will be linked to buyers.**

### **3.1.2 Membership Communications**

To increase communication and engagement with members, CBC publishes bi-weekly reports, business insiders, research papers, newsletters and policy briefs that are widely disseminated.

#### **a) BIZnet Weekly**

One of the publications is the BIZnet bi-weekly newsletter, a tool that is used to disseminate information on upcoming events, meeting reports, policy updates, market research and many more news from the region. In the year 2020, a total number of 13 Issues have been published.

#### **b) Insider Bulletins**

##### **i. Sector Specific Insider bulletins**

CBC developed and disseminated 5 Insider Bulletins, providing sector-focused updates on industry performance, for the following Workgroups: Tourism, SMEs, Professional Services, Digital and Financial Services.

##### **ii. COVID-19 Special Additions**

Five special editions of Insider publication, which were themed, “Business Insights of COVID-19,” were developed and disseminated. The publications shared pertinent information on regional market performance, current trends and best practice for business resilience and sustainability during the pandemic period.

#### **Result**

- **13 Newsletters developed and disseminated.**
- **5 Insider Workgroup / sector specific insiders developed and disseminated**
- **5 Special Edition Insider publications developed and circulated providing update on business sustainability during the pandemic**

### **3.1.3 Membership Drives**

Being a member driven institution, CBC endeavours to reach out to the private sector as a way of building its portfolio and position itself as the “Voice of the Private Sector in the COMESA Region,” In the year 2020, physical membership drives and company visits were restricted due to the global pandemic of Covid- 19. However, various online membership meetings were held, and we have recorded four new members that joined the CBC (3 Corporates and 1 association).

## 4. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The focus is on strengthening the governance and institutional framework of the institution. The following was the scope of focus for the year 2020.

### 4.1 Statutory Meetings

CBC convened two statutory meetings convened: One board meeting held in May 2020, and an Annual General Meeting convened in August 2020. The Board and Annual General Assembly (AGM) is the annual gathering for the CBC Board of Directors and the general membership. During these meetings members of CBC meet and deliberate on various issues including governance, operations and workplans of CBC.

#### **Results:**

***Two statutory Board meetings convened, and one AGM held in August 2020, to report on administrative, program and governance performance of the CBC.***

### 4.2 Policies and Strategies

**As part of strengthening the governance and operations of the Institution, the following activities were carried out related to policies and strategies.**

- a) *CBC Procurement Rules adopted by the General Assembly.* The Procurement Manual provides a guide and framework for processes regarding procurement of goods and services.
- b) *CBC Communications Manual developed and adopted by the General Assembly.* The Manual provides guidelines on issues of Editorial policy, brand management, crisis management, media policy and business – continuity plans to ensure consistent internal and external communication management.
- c) Implementation of the CBC Digital Strategy which includes the following:
  - An Enterprise Resource System has been procured and is being implemented to streamline and efficiently manage business processes.
  - Internal knowledge management system and data server being implemented to strengthen data management.
- d) CBC is currently carrying out a Mid-term review of the 2018-2022 Strategy, in partnership with the International Trade Centre. This is important in view of the changing landscapes: a COVID response, and an overall adaption to evolving business and trade environment, including engagement with new strategic partners.

#### **Results:**

- ***Two CBC Administrative and Compliance policies adopted.***
- ***Digital Services Strategy implemented to support institutional operational efficiency.***

### 4.3 Business Continuity during COVID-19

In view of the 'new normal', necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, CBC is implementing its Business Continuity plan as guided by the Corporate Communication Manual for continued operations. This includes:

- Remote/offsite work arrangements with limited physical presence in the office.
- Continued implementation of its activities and workplan through offsite workplace models. Increased use of digital models for service delivery: use of digital channels, virtual meetings and online technical skills capacity building training workshops for enterprises and associations.

#### **Results:**

- ***CBC Corporate Communication Manual adopted by the General Assembly and Board, which includes the CBC Business Continuity Plan.***

#### **4.4 Strengthening Corporate Social Investment**

CBC, as part of its COVID-19 CSR initiatives, partnered with Barefeet Theatre and Lusaka Food Bank to donate COVID-19 care-packages and face-shields to vulnerable local communities that the institution has worked with in its Local Sourcing for Partnerships program.

***Results:***

***One CSR activity carried out- The distribution of PPE equipment to communities and markets in Zambia.***