



# 16<sup>th</sup> COMESA BUSINESS FORUM

Economic Integration for a Thriving COMESA Anchored on Green Investment, Value Addition & Tourism

Mulungushi International Conference Centre, Kenneth Kaunda Wing  
Lusaka, Zambia

7<sup>th</sup> June 2023



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## COMESA BUSINESS DECLARATION

OF

16<sup>th</sup> COMESA BUSINESS FORUM

PRESENTED BY CBC PRESIDENT

ON

7<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

**We the Regional Business Community**, under the umbrella of the COMESA Business Council (CBC), herein present **COMESA Business Declaration 2023** that was adopted by the **16<sup>th</sup> COMESA Business Forum**, under the theme, **“Economic Integration for A Thriving COMESA Anchored on Green Investment, Value Addition and Tourism”** held today, on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023, in Lusaka, Zambia, whose resolutions are to be presented tomorrow on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023 to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Summit of the COMESA Heads of State and Government as a Declaration by the Business Community in the Common Market for consideration and endorsement.

**EXPRESSED** gratitude to His Excellency Hakainde Hichilema, the Government and People of the Republic of Zambia for hosting the Sixteenth COMESA Business Forum.

**ACKNOWLEDGED** with appreciation the efforts and support of COMESA Member States and COMESA Policy Organs in the provision of a platform for the Business Community and Other Interest Groups to express their interests and taking into consideration such interests in the development of COMESA Policies and programs towards the attainment of the aims and objective of COMESA.

**APPRECIATED** the collaborative efforts between COMESA Business Council, COMESA Secretariat and other COMESA Institutions in promoting private sector development in the COMESA region.

**AFFIRMED** the commitment towards deepening the COMESA Regional Integration Agenda through implementation of various programs/initiatives in the COMESA region.

## **WE HEREBY DECLARE AS FOLLOWS:**

### **1.0 Private Sector Development in the Region**

- a) Call upon COMESA Secretariat and COMESA Business Council Secretariat to collaborate in drafting a regional private sector development strategy for COMESA region.
- b) Urge more Member States to implement of COMESA Simplified Trade Regime (STR) to promote cross border trade for small-scale cross border traders including women and youth to formalize the informal cross-border trade, improve performance of cross border traders and enable them to benefit from the regional preferential treatment when importing or exporting goods within the region.
- c) Urge COMESA Member States to build the capacity of their private sector to participate in the development of agricultural sector.

### **2.0 Digital Financial Inclusion in the COMESA region**

- a) Urge Member States to support the ongoing efforts on the implementation of regional digital retail payment platform for Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in COMESA region.
- b) Urge Member States to domesticate the relevant policy frameworks for the operationalisation of the COMESA Digital Retail Payment Scheme.

### **3.0 Facilitation of Implementation of Product Standards in COMESA Region**

- a) Urge Member States to develop framework to guide the implementation of product standard within COMESA region.
- b) Urge Member States to develop mutual recognition framework to reduce the barriers to trade that result from multiplicity of compliance requirements with respect to standards.
- c) Urge Member States to explore the use of African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO) products standards to facilitate cross border trade in COMESA region and at the continental level.
- d) Urge Member States to build the capacity of conformity assessment bodies in the COMESA region to facilitate development of quality infrastructure.

### **4.0 Enhancement of Regional and Continental Integration**

- a) Urge Member States to fast-track the ratification process of the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement (EAC, SADC and COMESA).
- b) Urge Member States to fast-track the development of regional implementation strategy for AfCFTA with full participation of private sector players.

### **5.0 Anti illicit Trade in the COMESA region**

- a) Urge Member States to set up of a regional coordination and cooperation mechanism in the enforcement of legislation on illicit trade.
- b) Urge Member States to develop a regional track and trace system for products in COMESA region affected by illicit trade.
- c) Urge Member States to develop a regional approach to the issues of illicit trade at international platform.

### **6.0 Industrialisation and Value Addition in the COMESA region**

- a) Urge Member States to fast track the domestication of COMESA Industrialisation Policy and Strategy and promote diversification of export products of strategic sectors to enhance value addition and strengthen value chains at both national and regional levels as a way of transforming the economies of member states and creating employment opportunities.
- b) Urge Member States to promote value addition and regional value chains in COMESA for strategic sectors.
- c) Urge COMESA Member States to identify means of driving high value chain markets through strategic partnership in the region, with a focus on sectors such as the automotive sector, and related components manufacturing sector, and the agroindustry value chains with value addition as a key component.

## **7.0 Skills development in COMESA region**

- (a) Call upon COMESA Member States to invest more in skills development by revamping the education systems to embrace technology i.e., digitalization.
- (b) Urge COMESA Member States to build capacity and develop skills among Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to enhance competitiveness of their products for entry into regional market as well as continental and international markets.

**8.0 Trade Facilitation in COMESA region:** Call upon COMESA Members States to implement fully existing trade facilitation instruments and embrace new trade facilitation instruments such as COMESA Digital Free Trade Area by adopting e-certificate of origin, e-commerce etc.

## **9.0 Attracting Investment from the Continent:**

- (a) Urge Member States to embrace the concept of African Direct Investment in different sectors including agriculture.
- (b) Urge financial institutions to consider structuring their financing to the agricultural sector in conformity with the industry's practices i.e., to follow the industry cycle.

## **10.0 Food Trade in COMESA region**

- (a) Urge COMESA Member States to adopt harmonised seed regulations and standards to promote cross border movement of quality seeds in COMESA region.
- (b) Urge COMESA Member States to promote the use of digital national and regional Food Balance Sheet to facilitate food trade in COMESA region.

## **11.0 Development of Pharmaceutical Industry in COMESA Region**

- a) Reiterate to the COMESA Member States our earlier call to:
  - Establish COMESA Medicine Agency to improve access to quality healthcare services and affordable, safe, and quality medicines and vaccines.
  - Harmonize regulatory requirements including procedures for registration and inspection of drugs in the COMESA region.
  - Develop a regional strategy to facilitate development of pharmaceutical sector.

## **12.0 Promoting the recovery from COVID-19 pandemic through tourism**

- a) Tourism sector is a major source of revenue for many Member States and is an important contributor to the region's GDP. The sector supports millions of direct and indirect jobs all over the world, particularly for women and young people. Evidence from other countries shows that domestic tourism recovered faster from COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, Member States are urged to consider putting in place measures that promote domestic tourism.

- b) Member States are also urged to promote regional flight connectivity and put measures in place to facilitate reduction of travel costs within the region to drive tourism as a recovery measure.
- c) Urge Member States to invest in aviation to accelerate the efficiency of movement of goods and people through liberalisation of the skies.
- d) Urge Member States to consider the need to diversify economic activities in the economy.
- e) Urge Member States to consider developing inward strategies at national and regional levels.
- f) Urge Member States to consider home grown solutions to the challenges facing their respective countries.
- g) Noting the devastating impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the economies especially the SME sector, we urge Member States to work with private sector financial institutions to provide business financing to SMEs.

### **13.0 Cooperation in the Management of Natural Resources and Environment**

- a) Urge Member States to develop national policy frameworks for green economy that supports low carbon development, with strategies that build resilience, promote sustainable infrastructure, promote resource efficiency, promote green investment, and enhance social inclusion and sustainable livelihood.
- b) Urge Member States to consider having a regional green economy strategy and action plan to promote sustainable development in the region.
- c) Urge Member States to put in place regulatory frameworks to promote investment in Green Economy.

### **14.0 Movement of Businesspersons in COMESA Region**

- a) Urge Member States to enhance the full implementation of the COMESA Protocol on the Gradual Relaxation and Eventual Elimination of Visas (Visa Protocol) to facilitate the movement of businesspersons in relation to both trade in goods and services as a Trade Facilitation Measure as well as enhance integrated border management.
- b) Call Upon Member States to embrace public private partnership in trade facilitation such as the development of infrastructure to enhance connectivity and border management.

**DONE AT Lusaka, Republic of Zambia on the Seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) day of June 2023**