

**COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND
SOUTHERN AFRICA**



SPEAKING NOTES

By

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COMESA SECRETARY GENERAL**

At the

53rd Joint Advisory Group (JAG) Meeting

Geneva, 2nd July 2019

Your Excellency, Mr. Roberto AZEVEDO, WTO Director General;
Your Excellency, Mr. Mukhisa KITUYI, UNCTAD Secretary General;
Your Excellency, Ms. Arancha GONZALEZ, ITC Executive Director;
Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentle, Mr. Amadou TRAORE, ECOWAS Commissioner for Industry and Private Sector;
Your Excellency, Mr. U Aung HTOO, Deputy Minister of Commerce for the Republic of the Union of Myanmar;
All Ambassadors and Dignitaries present,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great honor and privilege for me to be able to join you and address the Joint Advisory Group meeting.

I join others in congratulating you, Chairperson, on your assumption of office in the Joint Advisory Group of the International Trade Centre.

Ladies and Gentlemen

COMESA has adopted a developmental approach for its regional integration agenda which covers market integration, industrialization and infrastructure development.

The approach continues to place trade at the center of its regional integration process and builds on the achievement of the Free Trade Area that was launched in 2000 and customs union that was subsequently launched in 2008.

In the context of *Trade for Structural Transformation*, one of the key programmes being adopted is the the Digital FTA which recognizes that e-commerce has to be an integral part of all efforts. The instruments being developed enhance the trade facilitation instruments including e-certificates

of origin, e-single window and online trade portal. The instruments are being designed from the traders point of view to ensure the address issues that are considered relevant to ease the trading process. Trade facilitation portals are currently being implemented in 10 COMESA Member States (Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritius, Malawi, Rwanda, Seychelles, Uganda and Zimbabwe).

Ladies and Gentlemen

COMESAs structural transformation is giving industrialization even more importance. This is in recognition that in order to change the trade dynamics, strategic focus on building productive and export capacities of the private sector is required. Areas that are being addressed includes strengthening of national and regional value chains; capacity on product development; and provision of market information systems as well as market linkages throughout the value chain. Some of the key approaches are the clustering of the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises at all levels of the value chain in order to achieve sufficient volumes for procurement of inputs as well as to meet the demands of the market.

In all of this, improved standards and quality assurance infrastructure for market access is necessary.

Distinguished and Honorable participants,

COMESA is also consistently ensuring that programmes are inclusive of the women and youth and programmes are being put in place to ensure that they are consulted and are also beneficiaries and key players at all levels.

While a lot has been done on infrastructure within the region, more still needs to be done to reduce the physical divide, improve availability of energy as well as provide improved ICT connectivity and availability.

Human capital is also critical for the region. This is cognizant that most of our industries are labour intensive. In addition, the human capital is what drives innovation in all processes.

COMESA is making efforts and results are being seen with brilliant examples like the case of Zimbabwe where support is resulting in exports of shoes to

south America, re-opening of litchi exports by Madagascar, and established capacity by Malawi textiles and clothing clusters to supply government services with uniforms. A number of countries have also implemented improved customs automated systems and single windows and regional laboratories have been identified and also a number of standards and SPS bodies are being strengthened.

Ladies and Gentlemen

While I can take some time to highlight the success stories, I believe what is important is to emphasize that more needs to be done as we are not even half way there. A deeper and more meaningful collaboration with international and multilateral institutions is required. Such collaboration will allow for interchange of ideas and approaches for addressing the gaps and challenges that still exist. This will help in strengthening the interlinkages and complementarity between the national and regional strategies that we are currently implementing. Further, it will allow the necessary leveraging of financial and human capital that is required to effect the transformation of the regional economy.

In this regard, I take this opportunity to thank ITC under the leadership of Arancha, for the successful collaboration that we have put in place. The collaboration with ITC already gives us an example of the frameworks that have been put in place and have actually worked. ITC has given COMESA and its member States access to expert knowledge and technical support in areas on value chain development, standards and SPS, Non-Tariff Barriers and Gender and Youth. In addition, it has facilitated the mobilisation of additional partners and resources for particular projects at national and regional level.

This results achieved are unquestionable in part due to ITC's approach for designing programmes that have clear intervention frameworks that are designed to achieve tangible results.

I am not leaving out in any way what has been done with institutions like WTO and UNCTAD and a lot more who are here present here. Mine is to just say that we need to strengthen, renew and establish collaboration with all the partners of COMESA's regional integration process as transformation cannot happen if we work alone.

I thank you for your attention.