



Distr:
LIMITED

June 2017
CS/TCM/GLTFP/RCC/02
Original: **ENGLISH**

**COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN
AND SOUTHERN AFRICA**

**REPORT OF THE 2ND MEETING OF THE REGIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE
(RCC) OF THE GREAT LAKES TRADE FACILITATION PROJECT
19-20 June 2017
Kampala, Uganda**

ICU/DK-tb/2017

A. INTRODUCTION

1. The 2nd meeting of the Regional Coordination Committee (RCC) of the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation (GLTF) Project was held on 19-20 June 2017 in Kampala, Uganda in accordance its rules of procedure and terms of reference. The meeting was convened to review the progress of the project implementation since December 2016, share experiences from the member states as well identify policy issues that would need further processing by the member states.

2. The RCC meeting was held back to back with the Trade and Trade Facilitation Sub-Committee that was running from 22nd to 24th June 2017; so that any policy issues that may emerge from the RCC meeting are channelled to the Trade and Trade Facilitation Sub- Committee for onward consideration and processing by the COMESA Policy Organs.

B. ATTENDANCE

3. The meeting was attended by delegates from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Rwanda, Republic of Uganda, Officials from the COMESA Secretariat and a representative of the World Bank. A detailed list of Participants is attached as ***Annex I***.

OPENING REMARKS (AGENDA ITEM 1)

WELCOME REMARKS BY THE PERMANENT SECRETARY FOR THE MINISTRY OF TRADE, INDUSTRY AND COOPERATIVES OF UGANDA

4. The Meeting was officially opened by the Permanent Secretary for The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives of Uganda, Ambassador Julius B Onen. He welcomed her Excellency the Permanent Secretary from DRC, Assistant Secretary General in charge of Programs as well as other delegates to Uganda and to the second meeting of the RCC of the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project.

5. He indicated that the Ministry is honored to host the 2nd meeting of the Regional Coordination Committee of the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project. He extended special gratitude to the World Bank, for the support to COMESA and the Great Lakes Countries to improve our common border infrastructure and remove cross border constraints to regional trade.

6. He informed the meeting that the GLTFP project was effective in Uganda and the Ministry considers it as one of the most important projects that are aimed at boosting intra-regional trade within the great lakes region.

7. The Permanent Secretary observed that the great lakes region stands out as the hub of East Africa and COMESA intra- regional trade and thus the project will cement the momentum. He noted that most of this trade is undertaken by SMEs who face a lot of challenges and need to be supported. He cited compliance with standards and existence of NTBs as some of the main challenges affecting cross border traders. However he

cautioned the Member States not to use or apply unnecessary measures that restrict trade. He therefore called upon RCC to devise practical measures to facilitate increased cross border trade instead of focusing on issues that are not relevant for the promotion of cross border trade.

8. He called for project interventions that will improve trading environment and the standards of living of the border communities. He further underscored the need for the project to focus on supporting value addition programmes at the national level as this has the potential to more than double the current value informal cross border trade.

9. He thanked COMESA Secretariat for taking the GLTFP as one of the key projects and also assured the meeting that Member States will do everything in their powers to ensure that the project delivers on the intended objectives. To this effect, all national coordinators were called upon to ensure successful implementation of their respective components.

10. In concluding, the Permanent Secretary highlighted three key issues that will guarantee project success. These include the need to;

- i. Appreciate that the project is for small scale cross border traders and not big firms who have capacity to engage in cross border trade. Interventions should therefore be geared towards uplifting and improving small scale cross border trade.
- ii. Remove artificial borders and dismantle the current NTBs at the respective borders. He noted that trade has no borders, no tribe and no color. He therefore called upon all stakeholders to focus on the means and ways of promoting trade, which is key to avoiding border conflicts and promoting peaceful co-existence among the border communities.
- iii. Address standards in the practical sense of trade facilitation and this should not be used to block. This should aim at doubling intra-trade by the end of the project as well as minimize conflicts in the region. He observed that most of the cross border trade is done by women and appreciated the presence of the Director of Gender and Social Affairs in the COMESA Secretariat.

11. He wished the meeting fruitful deliberations and officially opened the meeting.

REMARKS BY THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL (PROGRAMMES), COMESA SECRETARIAT

12. The Assistant Secretary General (Programmes) at COMESA Secretariat, Ambassador Kipyego Cheluget; on behalf of the COMESA Secretary General, made opening remarks and welcomed all the delegates to the meeting. He expressed his gratitude and appreciation to H.E. Ambassador Julius Onen and the Ministry at large, for graciously hosting the meeting. Through the Permanent Secretary, he extended the appreciation to the Honorable Minister of Trade Industry and Cooperatives, Hon. Amelia Kyambadde for the warm hospitality and support that the Ministry and indeed the Government of Uganda continues to extend to COMESA Secretariat and regional integration efforts.

13. He further expressed appreciation to the World Bank for providing both financial

and technical resources not only for this meeting but for the entire GLTFP.

14. He observed that the meeting was aimed at reviewing the project implementation progress so as to take stock of what has been achieved such as training of TIDOs, development of the data collection APP, need to integrate the trade for peace Programme since the last RCC meeting, the challenges encountered (if any) and provide the necessary policy guidance on what is required to ensure attainment of the intend Programme objectives.

15. He noted that the RCC meeting being at the margins of the regular COMESA Member States meeting of the COMESA Trade-Sub-Committee that is scheduled to take place from 22nd – 24th here in Kampala provides an excellent opportunity for the MS an opportunity to push forward whatever issues that cannot be resolved in the RCC meeting to the upcoming Trade Sub-Committee meeting. As agreed with the World Bank, COMESA secretariat will always endeavor to hold the RCC meeting at the margins of the COMESA Regular meetings so as to ensure immediate reporting and integration of policy issues into the COMESA regular processes and structure for further discussions and appropriate decisions.

16. In conclusion, the ASG-P pointed out the key project activities for the next six months and called for members' participation and support to ensure successful implementation. Indeed your usual guidance will enable us to further fine tune the foreseen activities that are planned in the coming period.

REMARKS BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE WORLD BANK, MR PAUL BRENTON: LEAD ECONOMIST- CO TEAM LEADER

17. The representative of the WB, Mr Paul Brenton made some opening remarks in which he expressed delight that the convening of the 2nd RCC meeting was as scheduled. He explained that the role of the bank is to bring expertise to project and noted that the end of the Trading for Peace programs should be treated as a transition from trading for peace to trading for prosperity.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (*AGENDA ITEM 2*)

18. The meeting adopted the agenda with amendments as follows;

- 1) Opening Remarks & Introductions
- 2) Adoption of the Agenda.
- 3) Review of the report of the last RCC Meeting and matters arising from the meeting
- 4) Progress Report from;
 - a. COMESA Secretariat
 - b. Rwanda
 - c. DRC
 - d. Uganda
- 5) Monitoring and Evaluation –updates from surveys in March as well as planning of future surveys, debrief from Rwanda and DRC on their experience undertaking the data collection and proposals for improvement in the future. Consolidation of the data.

- a. Rwanda
 - b. DRC
- 6) Presentation of New Data Collection Tool (App) –COMESA Sec
 - 7) Presentation of ICBT data – COMESA Sec
 - 8) Work Programme and Budget for the next six months (July-December 2017)
 - 9) Designation of the next RCC chair
 - 10) Date and venue of the next meeting
 - 11) Any other business
 - 12) Adoption of the report

PROGRESS REPORT FROM COMESA (AGENDA ITEM 4a)

19. The COMESA GLTFP Project Coordinator provided an update on the implementation of the project since the last RCC meeting. In the presentation, he highlighted the following;

- a. Recruitment of key project staff that had been completed, except for the regional TIDO Coordinator and 6 TIDOs for Uganda
- b. Procurement of consultants to undertake the development of training modules for training of trainers (TOT) on simplified trade regime (STR), trade and gender, communication and delivery skills and the communications strategy are almost complete
- c. Induction of the 14 TIDOs that have been recruited, has been undertaken
- d. The findings of the field country missions undertaken to assess the project implementation infrastructure/framework needs, communication needs, gender and other policy issues.

20. The COMESA Secretariat progress report is attached as annexes II.

Discussions

21. The meeting recalled the Council Decisions that:

- i. *The Ministries responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs should participate in the implementation and monitoring of the GLTF project at national level to ensure creation of conducive legal and policy environment for women cross border traders; and*
- ii. *That Ministries of Trade and Ministries of Gender and Women's Affairs should document and share information including good practices of the project with other member States.*

22. The meeting discussed challenges affecting women cross border traders, as follows;

- a. **Child Care Facilities:** The need for Member States to come up a policy on the treatment of women traders that have children. Rwanda shared experiences on how they are undertaking construction of border markets with appropriate child care structures to cater for the needs of women traders with children. The Ministry of Trade in Rwanda works closely with the Ministry of Gender in the implementation of the project to ensure addressing of specific needs of women and children. They indicated that other countries could learn from them and advised that countries should ensure that ministries of gender are involved in

the implementation of the project.

- b. **Illegal Services:** There is need to address existing unauthorized services and illegal fees/payments which increase the cost of doing business, and expose women traders to vulnerable situations including confiscation of goods and identity cards, and physical attacks when they fail to meet demands from different service points;
- c. **Border Officials Identification:** The need for uniforms and identity badges for officials operating at borders to enable easy identification of the border officials and minimize illegalities; and
- d. **Comprehensive Services:** The need to increase awareness among cross border traders of their rights and obligations, as well as a coordinated response to challenges of cross border traders through involvement of other sectors such as Ministries of Gender, Education, Health, Youth, Children, Justice, and others to ensure comprehensive services. However, the meeting cautioned that services to cross border traders such as training on their rights, should be provided in a manner that improves their participation in trade.

23. **Coordination and harmonization.** The meeting underscored the need to avoid the risk of duplication at country level and regional level. In this regard members called upon the Secretariat to ensure that the roles of TIDOs and their reporting channels are clearly articulated and harmonized with the respective Member States' requirements and modalities to share the information. It was noted that some countries such as Rwanda have more staff at the borders and have stationed permanent enumerators at border points to capture data on- trade volumes and values using tablets. The meeting noted the need to share from the continuous data capture on monthly basis and to ensure that such data is reported as part of exports cross-border informal trade. Also the hiring of consultants for the same thematic areas such STR, TOT and communications strategy at both COMESA and national levels should be harmonized.

24. **Trainings on STR.** It was observed that tailor made modules and sessions should be arranged especially for women traders to ensure that such trainings don't become disruptive to trade.

25. **Recruitment of national TIDOs for Uganda.** Uganda informed the meeting that it advertised the posts but COMESA Secretariat has delayed to undertake country missions and conclude the recruitment exercise. This has partially contributed to delays for the recruitment of the 6 TIDOs for Uganda. It was also observed that there is need to have more support from COMESA Secretariat regular staff in driving the implementation of project activities.

26. The meeting called upon the COMESA Secretariat to standardize the roles of the TIDOs and criteria for assessing their performance. The meeting noted that whereas in Uganda the TIDOs are part of the Cross Border Traders Association (CBTA), in Rwanda they are directly under the Ministry. It was suggested that a possibility for the TIDOs to work across the borders in an arrangement similar to one stop border post could be explored. It was also agreed that;

- a. COMESA Secretariat will define measures of performance for TIDOS that will be discussed with countries.

- b. that TIDOs will not be involved in the collection of ICB data where this data is being collected by enumerators under this project.
- c. to focus on the role of what is expected from the TIDOs and what are they expected to deliver
- d. to have a harmonized reporting format and such reports should be shared with the government institutions and ensure that data is shared/debriefing and agreed with the border agencies before it is disseminated
- e. to consider using OSPB bilateral agreements as one avenue to have the TIDOs operate in a similar arrangement
- f. Uganda model is the way to go but this needs to be cleared by the Ministry of Trade Industry and EAC Affairs of Rwanda. Rwanda to consult and report in next two weeks

27. There is need to ensure that TIDOs share with cross border traders information on other programmes funded by governments and development partners that support cross border traders on access to health, mitigation of gender based violence, nutrition and others related programmes. Such information could be availed to TIDOs by government ministries, local governments, border agencies, development partners and other stakeholders in the border lands.

28. ***Recommendations;***

- a. ***Member States to come up a strategy on the treatment of women traders that have children, and to integrate child care facilities and services in the project***
- b. ***Rwanda should share national designs and policy frameworks that are being done for the implementation and construction of border child care facilities with other countries.***
- c. ***TIDOs reports should be shared with and discussed among the border agencies, CBTAs and other stakeholders to ensure full ownership and harmonization before such reports are sent to the respective Ministries and COMESA Secretariat.***
- d. ***Member States to introduce uniforms and identify badges for border officials for easy identification and to reduce illegalities;***
- e. ***All taxes should clearly be displayed on boards at border points; and translated into local languages***
- f. ***Regular meetings should be organized between the project coordinators both at COMESA and at the national level to ensure effective coordination and collaboration on implementation of the project. Such meetings could be held on a quarterly basis or whenever there is an urgent issue to consult.***
- g. ***COMESA Secretariat should always consult and share with the Member States the ToRs for consultants to ensure inputs and eliminate duplications.***
- h. ***Uganda's approach should be used to ensure sustainability the TIDOs***

and effective implementation of the STR. The role the TIDOs should be to service the private sector arrangement especially within the structures of the respective CBTAs. To this effect, Rwanda will consult and communicate their position on this matter.

- i. ***It was also recommended that Member States should hold bilateral discussions with the view to agree on modalities of how to exchange TIDOs across borders.***

COUNTRY PROGRESS REPORTS (AGENDA ITEM 4 B-D)

29. The countries provided progress reports on the status of implementation of the project at the national levels. s follows;

- (a) **Rwanda:** The Acting Cordinator in SPIU-MINEACOM, Ministry of Trade and Industry made a presentation on the status of project implementation in Rwanda. Details of the status of implementation is attached in Annex III
- (b) **DR Congo:** The National coordinator for the DRC made a presentation of the status of the project implementation at the national level. Details of the status of implementation is attached in Annex IV
- (c) **Uganda:** Uganda did not have a written/power point presentation. However , the national project coordinator highlighted the following;

In Uganda's project was approved by Parliament, the financing agreement signed and became effective on 17 April 2017. The Project Implementation Unit has been established, Project Account opened, and the work plan a long with procurement plan have been cleared by the Project Steering Committee and are awaiting a no objection from the World Bank.

The GLTF Project will support establishment of one stop border post and one Border Export Zones (Border Market) at Mpondwe, improvement of traffic flows at Bunagana and development of OSPB designs for Goli. It will also support capacity building for improving performance based management and implementation of the STR at the targeted borders.

In coordination with the COMESA Secretariat, the advertisement for the recruitment of the TIDOs at Mpondwe and Bunagana was carried out. Shortlisting and interviews are awaiting the Secretariat to

Discussions:

30. The meeting took note of the implementation reports and the progress made to date by all countries

Recommendation:

31. *The meeting encouraged Member States to speed up the implementation of approved activities and disbursement of project funds.*

MONITORING AND EVALUATION (AGENDA ITEM 5)

32. Monitoring and Evaluation –updates from surveys. The Meeting was briefed on issues relating to Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) under the GLTFP. DRC and Rwanda made presentations on M&E activities as highlighted below;

- a. **Rwanda:** The Acting Coordinator in SPIU-MINEACOM, Ministry of Trade and Industry made a presentation on the findings of the M&E survey that was undertaken in November 2016. Details of the M&E presentation are attached as Annex V
- b. **DR Congo:** The National coordinator for the DRC made a presentation on the findings of the M&E survey that was undertaken at the project borders. Details of the M&E presentation is attached as Annex VI
- c. **Uganda:** No similar that has been conducted in Uganda

33. The meeting took note of the monitoring and Evaluation reports and reserved the discussions to the following agenda item 7, which is linked to monitoring and evaluation.

PRESENTATION OF NEW DATA COLLECTION TOOL (APP) –COMESA SEC (AGENDA ITEM 6):

Presentation of E-initiatives

34. The **COMESA Director for Information and Networking**, Ms Lanka Dorby, made two presentations on the application that are being developed by the Secretariat to capture small scale cross border trade (SSCBT) trade data as well as the Digital FTA concept. Under the mobile application, smart phones will be used to collect data.

35. The COMESA Digital Free Trade Area (DFTA) is all about empowering traders to do cross-border trade using ICT as a tool to minimize physical barriers. Providing traders with the necessary digital tools and infrastructure they need for enhancement of intra regional trade and global trade. Digital Free Trade Area (DFTA) has three trusts. Namely E Trade, E Logistics and E Legislation. E Trade will promote e – commerce by providing an online platform for COMESA region traders to trade online. This platform will enable trade within COMESA FTA inclusive of all tax concessions making it an online market for COMESA region. Digital logistics can help drive a differentiated customer experience and

highly optimized and efficient operations. Digital logistics uses ICT as a tool to improve the commercial activity of transporting goods to customers. Some of the instruments under this trust would be COMESA e- certificate of origin, standardized customs procedures etc. Digital legislation will address the readiness of laws in member states to cater for digital transactions.

36. The participants welcomed the initiatives, It was also noted that harmonization of Tools is of importance. The Director of IT informed the participants that the development of the two systems was at an advanced stage and for the Mobile application 14 TIDOS were trained and Secretariat is in the process of procuring Smart phones for TIDOS. The application will be rolled out in the Great Lakes countries as a pilot soon following dialogue and approval by countries. COMESA will ensure that the app does not replicate data collection by the countries and will ensure that application for TIDOS is distinct from that being developed and that Digital FTA instruments will be rolled out in member States as and when they are ready. Four countries are selected for piloting the application, training has already been undertaken during the procurement of smart phones for TIDOS

37. **Recommendation:**

- I. The meeting recommended that member States to study further the application and provide additional inputs*
- II. Member States that are willing to use the application should do so. In cases where a member State already has a tool to collect similar data can go ahead with their tool.*

PRESENTATION OF ICBT DATA – COMESA SECRETARIAT (AGENDA ITEM 7):

38. Under agenda item 8, the Secretariat made a presentation on available ICBT data for Rwanda and Uganda for the period 2014-2015. The presentation covered the sources of data for ICBT, list of collected variables, composition of the top traded products for 2015 and some ICBT trade statistics by flows and trading partners for 2014-2015 for both countries. It was reported that no ICBT data was available from DRC.

39. The RCC was informed that a regional workshop is being scheduled for next month to deal with ICBT data collection and harmonization issues.

Discussions:

40. In the discussions that followed, it was proposed that for meaningful comparison of informal to formal trade, only the neighboring trading partners should be considered for formal trade and not trade with the rest of the world.

41. **Recommendations**

- i. Secretariat should proceed to design harmonized ICBT data collection methodologies, instruments and variables in the region.*
- ii. Member States to consider including in the subsequent border surveys collection of trade statistics trade in services across borders. Rwanda to share the study findings which were carried out in November last year.*

WORK PROGRAMME AND BUDGET FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS (JULY-DECEMBER 2017) AND INTEGRATION OF T4P (AGENDA ITEM 8):

a) Presentation of 6 months' work plan

42. The COMESA Secretariat GLTFP Project Coordinator highlighted the key activities planned for the next six months till December 2017 and called upon member States to fully participate and support the planned activities.

43. The detailed work plan and budget is provided as Annex VII.

b) Presentation of the proposed integration of Trading for Peace Programme into the GLTFP

44. The Chief of Resource Mobilisation highlighted the draft paper that has been prepared by COMESA Secretariat and discussed by the COMESA management for guidance. The paper on the proposed integration was circulated to Member States and is attached as Annex VIII

45. He further informed the meeting that an Extra-Ordinary GLTFP- PSC convened to discuss the integration of the Trading for Peace project into the GLTFP. In principle the GLTFP – PSC agreed to integrate the two projects subject to approval by the Member States. Minutes of the meeting of the Extra- Ordinary GLTFP- PSC were also circulated to all member states involved in trading for peace and also attached as Annex IX.

Discussions:

46. The meeting took note of the activities being planned for the next six months under the COMESA Secretariat components. It was observed that COMESA Secretariat should ensure that member States are consulted and provide inputs to the COMESA Secretariat work plan. Delegates in principle agreed to the proposal for integration of the KfW Trading for Peace programme into the GLTFP but advised that further consultations be done at the bilateral level i.e. between COMESA secretariat and respective member States. It was also observed that the issue of integration should be considered under the phase two of the GLTFP. However, since not all countries in phase one are involved in phase two, COMESA should undertake country missions to discuss the same with Burundi and DRC as well as the World Bank to ensure that the current momentum generated by the trading for peace project is not lost.

Recommendations

47. The meeting further made the following recommendations;

- i. The Secretariat should ensure full participation by member States in all planned activities beyond being invited to attend meetings*
- ii. Member States should start identifying national officials to be trained as trainers under the various training modules.*
- iii. In regard to the integration, the GLTFP should integrate some of the studies that were foreseen under the Trading for Peace project for as long as these studies have a direct impact on promoting successful implementation and attainment of the GLTFP Objectives. Support for infrastructure projects should be subject to further discussions and approval by the respective member States.*
- iv. The focus over the next 6 months should be on increasing disbursements.*

DESIGNATION OF THE NEXT RCC CHAIR (AGENDA ITEM 9)

48. In line with the decisions of the 1st RCC and rules of procedure as agreed at the 1st RCC meeting, Rwanda will chair and host the next meeting.

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 10)

49. The RCC agreed that the meeting will be held in December 2017. The exact date and venue will be communicated by COMESA Secretariat in consultations with the incoming chair/Rwanda.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 11)

50. The Delegation of DRC raised strong concern on the need to ensure that the meeting reports are available in two languages. The secretariat explained the circumstance and assured the DRC delegation that their concern had been noted and will be fully attended to in the subsequent meetings;

51. Recommendations:

- a. COMESA Secretariat should avail the adoption documents in two languages on time before the adoption sessions.*
- b. COMESA secretariat should Contact the delegates for the itinerary before issuing of tickets and ensure that delegates are given tickets on the most direct route*

CLOSING REMARKS

52. In his closing remarks, the ASG-P appreciated the leadership of H E Ambassador Julius B Onen and his commitment for chairing of the meeting. He further appreciated the hospitality of the Ministry in hosting the meeting. Having this meeting at the Ministry shows full ownership and commitment to the project.

53. He also expressed his appreciation to the MS for coming to the meeting. Special thanked to the PS from DRC for her frank and honest observations. He called upon the project team to ensure that next meetings are properly organized and all necessary logistics are provided in time. He regretted the lack of instant translation for the meeting documents and the subsequent challenges it assured during adoption of the meeting report. He assured the PS from DRC and all the French colleagues that the issue of translations will not re-occur.

54. He noted the interest and commitment to the project and assured of the meeting of the Secretariat's commitment to do everything to ensure successful implementation so as to enhance trade within the great lakes region. He thanked the delegates for agreeing on the proposals the integration of the trading peace Programme into the GLTFP. He further thanked the WB for the understanding.

55. Finally, he encouraged the project team at COMESA Secretariat to communicate effectively with the national teams/coordinators. The use of IT should be key to facilitate trade coordination and share information across the countries and COMESA Secretariat. He underscored the importance of gender and that COMESA Secretariat considers gender very seriously and hence the reason the Director gender is highly involved in this project.

56. In his concluding remarks, the chair thanked delegates for coming to Uganda and assured them that Uganda is always their second home. He encouraged delegates to always feel free to come back and visit and thereafter he declare the meeting is closed

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