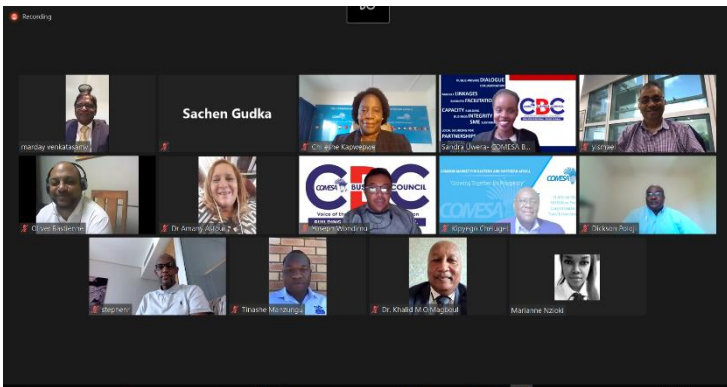
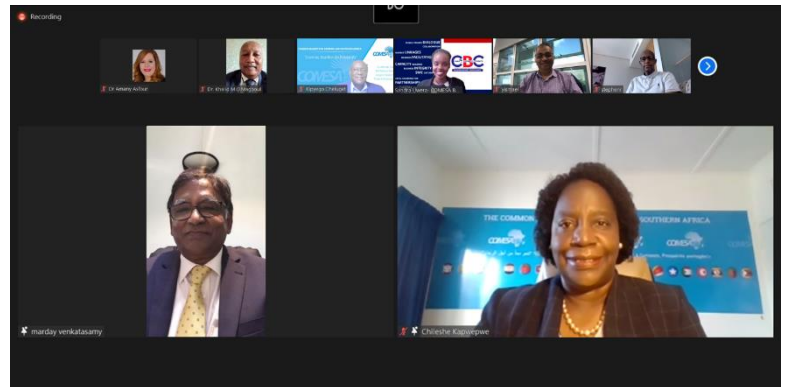


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THE 16TH MEETING OF THE CBC BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETS TO REVIEW THE INSTITUTION'S MID YEAR PROGRESS REPORT IN 2021, AND THE CALENDAR GOING FORWARD.



Virtual 16th meeting of the CBC Board



Mr. Marday Venkatasamy,
Chairman of the CBC Board

Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe,
Secretary General, COMESA

Thursday 1st July 2021, Lusaka – *“COVID-19 has exacerbated the non-tariff barrier of restrictions in the free movement of people. This is due to the emerging discriminatory practice of certain approved WHO vaccines being a prerequisite for international travel. The business community requests an appeal by the African Union against this inequitable practice.”* This was said by Mr. Marday Venkatasamy, the CBC Chairperson at the 16th meeting of the COMESA Business Council (CBC) Board of Directors, held on Thursday 1st July 2021.

The 16th meeting of the CBC Board of Directors, Presidents and CEOs of national apex private sector Associations and Chambers of Commerce from the COMESA region, was attended by Mr. Marday Venkatasamy and Dr. Ismael Yousouf from the Mauritius Chambers of Commerce; Dr. Khaled Magboul from Sudan Chambers of Commerce; Mr. Sachen Gudka from Kenya Association of Manufacturers; Dr. Amany Asfour from Egypt Business Women Association; Mr. Stephen Ruzibiza from Rwanda Private Sector Federation; Dr. Tinashe Manzungu from Zimbabwe Chamber of Commerce; Mr. Oliver Bastienne from Seychelles Chamber of Commerce, and Ms. Sandra Uwera the CBC Chief Executive as Secretary to the Board. The meeting was also attended by the COMESA Secretary General, Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe, as Guest of Honor, and as an ex officio member of the Board.

In the opening of the meeting, Mr. Marday Venkatasamy paid tribute and a moment of silence to the late political and business pioneers of Africa, namely Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, a leading figure in Africa’s liberation and the first President of Zambia; Sir Aneerood Jugnauth, father of economic development in Mauritius, former Prime Minister and President who served the country for more than 20 years in these highest positions; and Mr. Gideon Badagawa, CEO of the Private Sector Foundation of Uganda, who passed on two weeks ago.

Further opening remarks highlighted the emerging barriers on the free movement of people as it relates to COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Ventakasamy noted that there was an emerging discriminatory practice on the World Health Organization (WHO) approved vaccines that were a requisite for entry to some European countries and called for the African Union to appeal against it. He pointed out that the practice was coming at the time when Africa is exploring ways of developing its own vaccines, further noting that health security should be a top priority issue for African countries.

Mr. Ventakasamy went on to share highlights on COMESA Business Council’s achievements for the year 2020 and the first half of 2021, some of which included the establishment of the CBC Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Workgroup, which has had three

seatings since December 2020; the facilitation of training for the private sector on the African Continental Free Trade Area's opportunities, with a keen focus on trade in goods and market access requirements; and the convening of the regional Public-Private Dialogue on Digital Financial Inclusion in January 2021, an event that brought together over 200 industry players to deliberate on policy areas for harmonisation, to inform the Model COMESA Digital Common Payments Policy for Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

Affirming the above, the COMESA Secretary General, Ms. Kapwepwe, recognised that CBC, working in collaboration with COMESA, had been at the forefront of the development of the *Regional Guidelines on the Movement of Essential Goods and Services Across the Region During the COVID-19 Period*. "This underscores the importance for consistent involvement and advocacy of the private sector in policy making processes and public-private dialogue to address some of the notable challenges in regional trade," stated Ms. Kapwepwe.

Speaking on the fundamental role of trade facilitation, she went on to add, "digitization of industry remains a core pre-requisite for promoting trade and regional integration especially within this pandemic period, where there is a greater call for improving regional supply chains in order to advance industrialization and increase trade among COMESA countries." Ms. Kapwepwe cited further constraints affecting the industry competitiveness that needed to be addressed, as: inadequate infrastructure development; limited technical capacity of manufacturers and agro-industry players; limited access to finance by growth enterprises; and limited access to regional and global value chains by SMEs.

Ms. Sandra Uwera, CBC's Chief Executive, presented on CBC's planned upcoming program activities in the second half of 2021, which include the signing of an MoU with the Corporate Council of Africa (CCA) scheduled for July 2021; the 2nd Digital Financial Inclusion Public-Private Dialogue whose objective will be to consider and adopt the COMESA Digital Integrated Common Payment Policy and Framework for MSMEs; the Egypt-COMESA Business Linkages Forum which is expected to bring together 150 businesses from four sectors and five countries; and the digital technical skills capacity building program for MSMEs that will be rolled out in selected countries in COMESA, as well as the development of a business model on COMESA digital retail payment platform for Micro Small and Medium Enterprises.

The CBC 16th Board Meeting also commended the institution's 2020 financial performance and approved the financial statements; also lauded were the strides made in institutional strengthening; the agility in adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic; and the collaborative initiatives with other COMESA institutions and the private sector in the region, in advocating for a conducive business environment to promote intra-COMESA/Africa trade.

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ABOUT CBC:

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

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