

Address issues of free movement, Zambian VP

Zambian Vice President and Minister of Justice George Kunda has reiterated the need for the Member States of the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) to address the issue of the free movement of persons if the objectives of the regional grouping are to be attained.

Mr. Kunda was speaking in Lusaka this week (Wednesday 16 March 2011) when he officiated at the fourth meeting of COMESA ministers responsible for immigration. The vice-president pointed out that while progress had been made in the movement of trade in goods, there is need to address the movement of persons.

"The people of our region or our human resource are one of our greatest assets or resource and if we are to fulfill our goal of attaining a complete free market for the COMESA region, we have to address this important aspect of our integration agenda," he said.

He called on COMESA Member States to agree on the measures, however modest, that the region needs to take to make progress in the area of the movement of persons. He pointed out that COMESA already has legal instruments in force to govern the issue of the free movement of people. "We already have legal instruments that are already in force and that govern our programme such as the protocol on the gradual relaxation and eventual elimination of visas, but what is retarding our progress is lack of implementation" said the Vice President.

"I am also aware that since the protocol on free movement of persons, services, labour and right of establishment was adopted by Member States, only four countries have signed the protocol with one, Burundi ratifying it," he added. The other three countries that have signed



Zambia Vice President, poses for a photo with Ministers in charge of Immigration and heads of delegations at COMESA, Lusaka, Zambia

the protocol are Kenya, Rwanda and Zimbabwe.

The Vice President said the region was endowed with vast resources which remained unexploited because of lack of implementation and compliance to the integration agenda.

"If we talk about moving forward in our regional integration agenda or deepening it, we have to explore various measures through which our citizens can enjoy the experience of living in an integrated region," he emphasized.

Mr Kunda added that it is sad that while the COMESA region has highly skilled men and women equipped with high standards of education that could facilitate technology transfer for enhancing competitiveness in trade commodities, the key obstacle was that they were not allowed to move freely.

The Vice President urged the Member States that have not yet signed and ratified the protocol to do so, adding that the aspirations of the Member States for a better life for their people would only be achieved if leaders took

bold decisions to implement what has been agreed upon. He pointed out that regional integration agenda would not be complete if people do not enjoy basic tenements of regional integration such as free movement across the borders.

Speaking at the same function, COMESA Secretary General Sindiso Ngwenya said the success of the programme on the movement of people depended on the harmonisation of immigration laws among COMESA Member States.

"It is important that our ministers give us direction on how we can enhance the process of harmonising our immigration laws," Mr Ngwenya said.

Secretary General Ngwenya called upon the harmonization of immigration practices in the COMESA region in order to integrate immigration practices. COMESA Member States were cautious of the fact that this process of relaxing border controls for movements of citizens implies assuring national security in Member States by reinforcing the control, management and monitoring of entry points in Member States." they also recognized the fact

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Zambia Vice President been received by Assistant Secretary General Ambassador Nagla El - Hussein

that in implementing the programme on Free Movement of Persons, there cannot be any successful integration of immigration practices without harmonizing their national laws, hence the adoption of the COMESA Model Law on Immigration, which is a yardstick or point of reference on which COMESA Member States can harmonize their national immigration laws and practices" he pointed out.

Mr. Ngwenya concurred with the Vice President that the people in the

region are at the centre of the COMESA integration agenda as a factor of production as well as movement of goods and other factors of production such as technology transfer. He observed that countries in our region complain about brain drain, yet do not allow "brain circulation" within the region. "If we allowed our skilled human resources to move and work freely in our region, I am sure we would reduce brain drain and have instead brain circulation as our people seek opportunities within our Member States" he concluded.

COMESA works towards migration laws relaxation



Delegates to the 7th Meeting of Chief Immigration Officers

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) countries have stepped up efforts to relax migration regulations.

COMESA Secretary General Sindiso Ngwenya says there is political will at a very high level in the region, to ensure that there is free

movement of people among Member States adding that the COMESA Model Law on Immigration was adopted by the COMESA Council Ministers as far back as May 2006.

Secretary General Ngwenya made this pronouncement at the opening of the COMESA's 7th Meeting of Chief Immigration

Officers, taking place on 14-15 March 2011, at the COMESA Headquarters, Lusaka Zambia. He called upon for a speed implementation of the free movement of people. "The full implementation of the COMESA programme on Free Movement is key to the successful attainment of a well integrated Common Market" emphasized Mr. Ngwenya, adding that COMESA has made strides in the free movement of goods, and that if goods are free to move yet traders are not, it would be difficult to fully realise integration.

Secretary General Ngwenya took the opportunity to congratulate the countries that have signed the protocol "May I take this opportunity to congratulate the four COMESA Member States that have signed the Protocol on Free Movement, namely: Burundi; Kenya; Rwanda; and Zimbabwe. In addition, I would also like to commend Burundi for having deposited her instrument of ratification with the COMESA Secretariat" said Mr Ngwenya.

The Chief Immigration officer meeting was held ahead of the 4th COMESA's Meeting of Ministers responsible for immigration that was held on 16-17 February 2011. Both meetings benefited from the technical assistance provided under the framework of the joint European Commission (EC) and International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) Migration EU Expertise initiative –MIEUX.

The Ministerial meeting was opened by the Zambian Vice president and Minister of Justice George Kunda. The meetings were also attended by representatives from the AU, EU, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The objective of the meetings is to promote free movement of persons, services and labour within the COMESA integration Agenda through the following areas of focus; (i) implementation of the Protocol and Council Decisions on movement of persons, services and labour; (ii) harmonisation of national laws with the COMESA model law on immigration; and (iii) cooperation on immigration matters among COMESA Members States to facilitate trade.

To enhance a buy in and understanding of the above issues ICMPD committed to fund two workshops for immigration practitioners, the first workshop will be held in Swaziland from June 2011, and the second one will to held in partnership with the African Union Commission, in Addis Ababa in September 2011.

USAID-COMESA review progress of on the implementation of the Integrated Partnership Assistance Agreement (IPAA)



At the head of the table on the left Mr. Sindiso Ngwenya, Secretary General, COMESA and right Mr. Lawrence Meserve, Regional Mission Director, USAID East Africa.

An eight person mission from USAID East Africa was at the COMESA Secretariat on 14th -15th March to examine progress under the IPAA as part of their mid-year fiscal review exercise. The mission was headed by Mr. Lawrence Meserve, the USAID East Africa Mission Director.

The IPAA Implementation Letter (IL) was signed in November 2010. Various Program Managers at COMESA

presented their progress related to specific programme activities. These include Trade, Infrastructure, and Agriculture, Climate change, Peace and security. An in-depth interactive session was held following presentation by each programme manager on a background history of the programmes, progress on their performance, including successes and short falls, overview of the remaining planned activities and proposed future plans.

At the end of the two days, the mission held a wrap-up meeting with the COMESA Secretary General Sindiso Ngwenya, and Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance, Ambassador Nagla El-Hussainy. Both parties exchanged views on IPAA implementation progress, way forward and future programme activities, focusing on result oriented approach. Both COMESA and USAID, were in agreement on the need to strategically focus on areas that generate results.

A follow up mission to work on the next IPAA work programme, will be conducted in the coming months.

During the visit the USAID delegation also held discussions with Alliance for Commodity Trade for Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA), a specialised agency of COMESA, which is also a beneficiary of USAID assistance

The mission was facilitated by the USAID-COMESA Program Coordinator, Mr. Walter Talma and his team.

COMESA sends message to Japan

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) early this week sent a message of Support to Japan. The message sent by the COMESA Secretary General, Sindiso Ngwenya, through the Japanese Ambassador to Zambia Akio Egawa, who is also a special representative to COMESA read in part :

It was with profound shock and dismay that we learnt of the tragic and massive Earth Quakes that started in Tohoku, Prefecture, Japan when your country was hit by the 8.9 magnitude earthquake that started on Friday, 11 March 2011, followed by waves of tsunami which left thousands dead, hundreds of thousands of people shattered, traumatised and homeless. We are deeply saddened by the fact that more tragic events such as nuclear incidents followed.

These catastrophic natural disasters have caused Japan immense social and economic losses.

On behalf of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA and indeed on my own behalf, I wish to extend, our sincere condolences to you personally and, through you to the families of the bereaved, to Emperor Akihito, Prime Minister Noato Kan, the Government and the people of Japan.

Secretary General Ngwenya added that despite these tragic calamities, COMESA applaud with admiration the resilience, and determination of the Japanese people in the face of such an incredible disaster.

He urge the international community and all people of good will to give Japan support, in her reconstruction efforts.

Reminder to the Media: COMESA media Awards for the year 2011

The media in the COMESA region is reminded that submissions to the COMESA media Awards for the year 2011 have started. Rules for participation are available on www.comesa.int or simply Google "COMESA Media Awards 2011"

Remember: If you submit you stand an opportunity to win. If don't you lose outright.

Events:

23 -24 March 2011 : 4th COMESA Investment Forum
Venue: Madinat Jumairah hotel, Dubai, UAE

29-31 March 2011: Terrestrial Carbon Policy Workshop on Innovative Approaches to Land in the Climate Change Solution,
Venue: Golfview Hotel - Lusaka Zambia

French Command in Southern Indian Ocean consult COMESA

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The Commander-in-Chief of the French Armed Forces in the Southern Indian Ocean, Gen. Jean Marc Nebout visited COMESA Secretariat on Thursday 17 March 2011. He paid a courtesy call to Secretary General Ngwenya. During the discussion Gen. Nebout emphasised the crucial role of regional economic communities in the fight against piracy in the Indian Ocean, pointing out that whereas the international community like France have an army on the spot their mandate is limited to rescuing their national ships. "We can for instance help in preventing a hijacking of a vessel of another country, but once it has been taken our mandate ends there".

Secretary General Ngwenya pointed out that the issues of piracy are of grave concern to COMESA since they touch on its core business of trade and investment. He pointed out that for example, the cost of insurance has gone high as a result of piracy and therefore making import into the region more expensive at the same time increasing the cost of export.



Gen Jean marc Nebout, Secretary general Ngwenya and ambassador Olivier Richard

Before paying the courtesy call to the Secretary general, Gen. Nebout held an intensive discussion with Ambassador Nagla El-Hussainy, Assistant secretary General in charge of Administration and Finance, and Brian Chigawa, Director, Legal and institutional Affairs



Ambassador Nagla addressing the meeting with Gen Nebout

on issues related to piracy, and piracy prevention particularly in the Indian Ocean.

In her welcoming remarks, Ambassador Nagla informed the General that piracy issues fall under the programme of peace and security at the COMESA Secretariat. She said that COMESA attaches a lot of importance to peace and security as it is a prerequisite to economic development. She explained that the peace and security programme at COMESA falls under three broad complementary areas namely, Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post Conflict Reconstruction. She went on to explain the components of each broad area.

Ambassador Nagla also touched on the issue of piracy. She said that COMESA and Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) Member States are greatly affected by piracy and that the ripples of its effects are felt far beyond the coastal states. She commended the actions already taken by the RECs, in Eastern and Southern Africa and Indian Ocean (ESA-IO) Member States and the EU partner. These actions included the Regional Action Plan and the Regional Strategy against piracy. She however noted that these actions still needed to be implemented. She ended her remarks by expressing satisfaction with the cooperation that exists between France and COMESA on one hand and the EU and COMESA on the other.

On his part, Gen. Nebout expressed happiness for being at COMESA Secretariat and expressed satisfaction with the warm reception that was accorded to him and his entourage. He said that he had come to the COMESA/SADC region to present his Government's actions against piracy in the Indian Ocean.

After the exchange of pleasantries, each side made a presentation on its actions against piracy. The presentations were followed by discussions. Gen. Nebout was accompanied by the French Ambassador to Zambia and Special representative to COMESA Olivier RICHARD, and two of his navy officers.





The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region is proud to announce that 13 out of its 19 Member States have managed to modernize their procurement laws and regulations which are now nearly compliant with the various provisions of the COMESA Procurement Directives. The COMESA Procurement Directives were passed by the Heads of State and Government in 2003. They involve the need for the region to have uniform laws and a modern public procurement system which would in turn promote intra-regional trade.

“Visible progress has been noted in the area of legislative reforms at national level given that a sizeable number of States has developed new procurement laws and regulations that were either nearly compliant, or partially compliant with the COMESA Directive - this should now pave the way for the introduction of the regional

procurement market,” COMESA Secretary General Mr Sindiso Ngwenya revealed.

This revelation was made during the opening of the Sixth Meeting of the COMESA Technical Committee of Procurement Experts (TCPE) held in Lilongwe Malawi from 15th to 18th March 2011. Mr Ngwenya was represented at the TCPE meeting by Gabriel Masuku, the Legal Affairs Officer at COMESA Secretariat. Prior to this, the Nine Member Sub-committee meeting was held ahead of the TCPE.

The key issues under discussion were:- having thresholds which would guide Member States on levels of Tenders that would go regional, Regional Preferences which would give first choice priority to bidders from the COMESA region before considering those from outside and reviewing of the Bidder Protest Mechanisms.

In 2009, the COMESA region adopted the regional Procurement Regulations and Member States were urged to domesticate as soon as possible the various provisions of these regulations.

The main task of the TCPE, which is made up of Heads of National Procurement Agencies –previously known as National Tender Boards, is to push their respective countries to implement the Regulations.

Despite the enormity of the procurement reform challenges, a few Member States have now posted Tender Notices on the regional PROMIS system at <http://promis.comesa.int> The PROMIS System was developed to create awareness of public procurement opportunities in the COMESA region and very soon there will be a major awareness and advertising campaign designed to inform the private sector and suppliers in the region on available procurement opportunities.