

ZEP-RE signs Host Agreement with Zambian Govt



Zep-re Manager Dr Rajni Varia and Zambian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon. Fashion Phiri exchanging the signed MoU's after the signing ceremony



Sitted PTA Bank President Michael Gondwe and Zambian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon. Fashion Phiri with part of the delegation after the signing ceremony

The COMESA Re-insurance company popularly known as ZEP-RE has signed a Host Agreement with the Zambian Government paving the way for the company to start constructing a permanent office in Zambia's capital Lusaka.

The signing ceremony took place on Tuesday 26th April 2011 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Lusaka. Zambian

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon. Fashion Phiri, COMESA Acting Secretary General Mr Stephen Karangizi and the President for the PTA Bank (COMESA's financial arm) Dr Michael Gondwe witnessed the signing ceremony.

ZEP-RE was set up in 1992 as part of COMESA's desire to create a specialized institution that would serve the reinsurance and insurance industry and

contribute to the economic development of the region. The company is headquarter in Nairobi Kenya and has now two formally recognized officers in the COMESA region-that is Lusaka and Khartoum, Sudan.

Chairman of ZEP-RE Dr Michael Gondwe revealed that Lusaka was chosen to host a ZEP-RE office because of its central location in the COMESA region, its proximity to the COMESA headquarters and in recognition of the support and facilitation the company has consistently received from the Zambian government and insurance sector over the years.

"We are proud to report that the Republic of Zambia was among the earliest countries to join the membership of ZEP-RE and that the country currently holds 11.04% stake in ZEP-RE. The shareholders from Zambia include the Ministry of Finance, Zambia State Insurance Corporation General Limited and the ZSIC Pensions Trust Fund," Dr Gondwe revealed.

In 2002, ZEP-RE wrote premiums of USD1million from the Zambian market this however grew substantially to USD2.6million in 2007 after an office was set up in Lusaka and jumped to USD3.5million the following year. The new ZEP-RE office block is expected to be ready for occupation in the next 18 to 24 months.

Zambian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon. Fashion Phiri urged ZEP-RE to enhance its efforts to foster the full development of the insurance and reinsurance industry in Zambia and the region.



Group of participants at opening of the training with the Guest of Honour Mrs. Wolderghegis

Mrs. Matha Wolderghegis The first ever training workshop in public procurement administration took place in Asmara, Eritrea in April 2011. The Director General of the Treasury Department in the Ministry of Finance, Mrs. Matha Wolderghegis, officially opened the five day training workshop which commenced on 13th April.

In her opening remarks, Mrs. Wolderghegis recognized the objective of the training which was to build the capacity for government officials who are involved in procurement and also to familiarize with the international and COMESA procurement practices. The training workshop was well attended - Forty participants were drawn from all key Ministries involved with public procurement and in addition there were 25 participants who were taken through the COMESA Procurement Management Information system (PROMIS).

PROMIS is a web-driven portal which forms the core element of the COMESA public procurement market. Member States are now compelled to advertise all Tenders

notices of regional interest covering goods, services and works onto the PROMIS portal that can be browsed at <http://promis.comesa.int>. The site is currently carrying the first batch of Tenders that have been posted by a number of Member States as part of the ongoing PROMIS training in the region.

With more Tender expected to be uploaded in the next two to three months, COMESA should expect to see the start of a vibrant internal market in public procurement which should contribute to COMESA intra-regional trade – this was stated by the Mr. Colas Ziki the Project Manager of the Enhancing Procurement Reforms and Capacity Project who also attended the training Workshop. He said that for the market to work, Member States had to comply with the key market principles involving competition, transparency and non-discrimination in the tendering system – these are all enshrined in the Regional Procurement Regulations that were passed by the COMESA Council in June 2009 and are on the gazette page (Volume 15 No. 3) on the COMESA home page at <http://www.comesa.int>

As the market develops, interested Suppliers in the region and beyond will then be free to submit their Bids in line with specific tendering instructions given by the specific procuring entity. Given the high-level harmonization that has since taken place since the start of the COMESA procurement reforms where 13 out of 19 countries now have modern procurement system that are all nearly compliant to the COMESA Procurement Directive, Suppliers should be able to get a measure of comfort from the harmonized system that will encourage them to submit Bids knowing fully well that procurement systems are almost the same and that Bids will be treated in a non-discriminatory manner.

Regarding the regional tendering process, most of the Member States are still operating manual tendering system so Bidders will invariably be required to deposit their Bids at a given physical address in a given country. This accepted, what is crucial for the market to work is to ensure that there are no further obstacles that will discourage Suppliers from participating in the market.



LEATHER SECTOR CAN SURPASS MEAT INDUSTRY – Zambian Government



Part of the participants at supply, demand dissemination workshop

The Government of Zambia has commended the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa-COMESA for its efforts in putting up a regional leather sector, which is viable and competitive.

Livestock and fisheries deputy minister Albert Mulonga says COMESA has been working hard to rebrand the leather sector in the region.

Mr Mulonga says the leather sector has potential to grow and surpass the meat industry.

He was speaking during the launch of the supply, demand dissemination workshop in Lusaka organized by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa in partnership with the International Trade Centre on 28th April 2011 at the Protea Hotel in Lusaka.

Mr Mulonga said that the COMESA region is currently facing challenges especially in the smallholder farming system where farmers do not know the economic value of

hides and skins.

“There is need to educate both commercial and small scale farmers involved in keeping cattle on the value of hides and skins and provide incentives so that they can be able to produce quality products”, Mulonga said.

He called on all ministries responsible for livestock development in the COMESA region to ensure that high quality production of Hide and skins is attained if the region is to become competitive in the industry.

And speaking at the same occasion COMESA assistant General Secretary in charge of programmes Stephen Karangizi said COMESA with other regional Economic Communities like SADC and East African Community is working on establishing the biggest ever-tripartite free trade area.

Mr. Karangizi said that there is need to strengthen the capacity of regional and national private

Gender, Agriculture and Climate Change Experts Meet in Lusaka

A team of experts in gender issues from the COMESA region and partner organisations met in Lusaka from 27th to 29th April 2011 to come up with a draft regional framework on integrating gender into agriculture. The meeting was organized by the Gender Division of the COMESA Secretariat with support from USAID.

COMESA through the COMESA Gender policy continues to recognize that sustainable economic and social development of the region requires the full and equal participation of women, men and youth. It was in response to this policy, that the regional block endorsed Conservation Agriculture and other COMESA Agriculture programmes such as CAADP, and COMRAP to ensure that at least 80 percent of the beneficiaries are female farmers and female-headed households in order to fully integrate them into agriculture and climate change adaptation and mitigation interventions.

COMESA Acting Secretary General Mr Stephen Karangizi was quick to point out that COMESA member states are cognizant of the critical role that agriculture plays in their national economies and while the majority of the citizens of COMESA derive livelihood from agriculture, the sector's overall productivity is low.

“The main challenges to enhanced agricultural development and competitiveness in COMESA are market-related challenges, technological obstacles and policy constraints that lead to low agricultural productivity resulting in food insecurity” Mr Karangizi stated in a speech read on his behalf by Mr Zerezghi Kidane from the Trade Division.

One of the often-cited reasons for inadequately addressing gender in agriculture, adaptation and mitigation interventions is that practitioners lack the tools, know-how and good practices to integrate gender perspectives in their work.

Mr Karangizi was hopeful that this meeting will be the start of many national and regional processes to be undertaken that will seek to strategically develop appropriate tools, instruments and interventions that will assist various development organizations and practitioners to design and implement programmes on agriculture development and climate change with a gender perspective.

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Cross-border Traders Form Association

4 **U**gandan cross-border traders have formed an association to foster their economic and security interests. The association was formed during a three-day conference at Brisk Hotel in Jinja town this month. It will give the traders a voice to push for opportune business conditions and resolve non-tariff barriers to trade.

The alliance created under the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Ugandan government comes as a big respite to the informal traders, who have suffered the brunt of doing business in hostile conditions.

The traders say they face abuse and harassment, bribery, theft, high transportation costs and lack of storage facilities.

The Assistant Commissioner for External Trade in the Trade Ministry, Patrick Okilangole, said the association would ensure that a trade information desk is established at every border point to capture information on goods leaving and entering the country.

A recent survey conducted by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics indicated that there was an increase in informal exports from \$1.3billion in 2008 to \$1.6billion in 2009. The figure is nearly half of

the total exports for the year 2009.

Stephen Kamukama, an official from the Trade Ministry, said the desk will also help the small traders process the necessary custom documents to protect them from being harassed in countries where they do business.

“Many traders have been losing money and goods over missing documents. The desk will be able to advise on what documents are required and also ensure that traders are helped to access those papers in time,” Kamukama said.

He disclosed that an information desk is already operational at Malaba, and that traders are charged only 300 shilling to access the services.

The COMESA private sector development specialist, Daniel Njiwa, said similar information desks were operating in Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Rwanda.

He also said COMESA was ready to provide infrastructural support to trader’s associations in Uganda. He said COMESA’s main objective is to help the Governments open borders and allow freer trade for all. Mr Njiwa urged the Ugandans to sustain the association and expand its membership.

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sector institutions and small and medium enterprises –SMEs in order to enhance export competitiveness, market linkages and export revenue especially with special focus on women-owned enterprises.

“We are trying to respond to the need for industrialisation and recognition that our industries are still dominated by SMEs along side the value chains of various sectors, therefore PACT II is dedicated to sector specific product and market development”, Karangizi said.

“We are also building capacities of these SMEs and Trade Support institutions for regional and international markets, in line with regional Leather and Leather products sector strategy framework”, He added;

The Assistant Secretary General said that the objectives of the workshop were to develop an intra-regional leather and leather product trade by linking SMEs to the regional markets such as South Africa, Egypt, India, and Italy.

“The COMESA region offers great opportunities for joint Partnerships and I would like to encourage our SMEs to identify potential opportunities for joint ventures”, Mr. Karangizi concluded.

The Programme for Building African Capacity for Trade (PACT II) is a COMESA programme funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).