

**COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND
SOUTHERN AFRICA**



**STATEMENT BY HER EXCELLENCY CHILESHE MPUNDU KAPWEPWE,
SECRETARY GENERAL**

COMESA-IOC MOU SIGNING CEREMONY STATEMENT

15 APRIL 2024

MAURITIUS

Honourable Maneesh Gobin, **Attorney General and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mauritius.**

H.E Secretary General of Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Prof. Vêlayoudom MARIMOUTOU.

Group President and Managing Director, Trade Development Bank, Mr Admassu Tadesse.

Senior Government Officials

My colleague the Assistant Secretary General Administration and Finance Dr. Dev Haman

Heads of COMESA Institutions here present:

Invited Guests

Print and Electronic Media Representatives

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Allow me to welcome, Honourable Maneesh Gobin, **Attorney General and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mauritius**, to the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean Commission. The last MOU we had with IOC was signed in 1999 and had long expired. Given the fruitful outcomes that both organisations realized through the last

MOU, it has become necessary to renew and continue this partnership for the next five (5) years.

Distinguished invited Guests,

The MoU we are signing with the Indian Ocean Commission today will facilitate the implementation of joint actions in the field of cooperation and regional integration, to consolidate economic development in our Member States.

Regional integration provides a good avenue for boosting economic growth through an environment where there is a seamless flow of goods, services, capital, and people. The aim of this MOU is to stimulate further the economic growth of the region and that of the IOC Countries. The areas of cooperation outlined in the MoU seek to address the key challenges that COMESA and IOC Member States continue to face in their day-to-day economic and trade operations. We commit to address these challenges through a broad range of strategies and areas of cooperation which include but are not limited to, governance, peace , security and regional stability; regional trade and an inclusive economy; sustainable development through support and protection of people by preserving natural resources (land and sea); maritime safety; development of the ocean industry and the blue economy; joint programs to mitigate the effects of climate change; promotion of health ;capacity-building and promotion of mobility and employability among young people in our member states.

Distinguished Guests,

COMESA is dedicated to achieving sustainable economic and social progress in all its Member States through increased co-operation and integration in all fields of Socio-economic development particularly in trade, customs and monetary

affairs, transport, information and communication technology, industry, energy, gender and social affairs, youth, agriculture, environment, and natural resources.

Out of the 5 countries that form the Indian Ocean Commission, 4 of these are COMESA Member States (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles) therefore, it is imperative that our two organizations work closely in the promotion of a blue economy with high added value and island advocacy will be the cornerstone of this cooperation.

Distinguished invited Guests.

The performance of our organization is based on the continued realization of COMESA's ambitions as stated in its 2021-2025 Mid Term Strategic Plan as earlier alluded to. The plan is structured around four pillars namely Market integration, Physical connectivity, Productive integration, and social integration.

In the area of Market Integration, COMESA has consolidated further the operationalization of its Free Trade Area, which includes , Digitalization of customs procedures, including the planned piloting and implementation of the electronic certificate of origin, implementation of the cargo tracking systems, Online monitoring, reporting and elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers to trade, and Liberalization of trade in services in the six priority areas namely business and financial, transport, communication, tourism, construction, and energy.

In terms of productive integration, COMESA supports the implementation of the Continental program on agriculture development (CAADP). Some of the activities include, enhancing regional agricultural commodity trade, developing a digital regional food balance sheet platform to enhance food data systems, and

Implementing the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Program to enhance competitiveness and value addition in selected products.

In terms of physical integration, On connectivity of our Member States, efforts are underway to upgrade priority cross border infrastructure such as roads, rail, and ports to ensure that there is free flow of goods across borders and for the creation of an enabling environment to facilitate trade. In the area of transport, priority is given to accelerating the establishment of the navigational route between Lake Victoria and the Mediterranean Sea project, as well as the establishment of a shipping line for COMESA Island States.

In terms of social integration, we recognize the critical role played by the empowerment of women and youth. The guiding principle in this area is to mainstream women and youth empowerment in all integration programs.

Distinguished Guests,

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the IOC Secretary General, Prof. Vêlayoudom MARIMOUTOU, and all the IOC members for their trust and willingness to partner with COMESA. I look forward to the next five years of great insights, joint advocacy, concerted programs and efforts in implementing practicable solutions for the growth and sustainability of businesses and industries, as well as regional and global partnerships.

I am very confident that this MOU between COMESA and IOC will further help to promote the interests of our common Member States to assist them to emerge as poles of economic growth, trade, and investment. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone whose dedication and efforts have contributed to the finalization of this MoU and eventual signing of this MoU.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our commitment to continue working together with the Indian Ocean Commission which is based in this beautiful country known for its tourist resorts and attractions. I would also like to thank the Minister for staying with us to witness this signing ceremony between COMESA and IOC.

I thank you for your attention.