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Business NEWS

COMESA lauds Uganda on infrastructure growth

By Samuel Sanya

Uganda has been commended for prioritising infrastructure development, especially energy and the road network which is boosting regional trade. This was during the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) council of ministers meeting in Lusaka, Zambia on Saturday.

The COMESA council of ministers officiated by the Vice President of Zambia Inonge Wina unanimously commended Uganda for the progress made in fulfilling the objectives of the common market, particularly in infrastructure development especially in energy and the road network.

Uganda, the minister noted, has taken steps to implement the economic bloc's treaty.

In 2016, Uganda passed the COMESA treaty implementation Act (2017) giving it the force of law to the treaty establishing the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa in Uganda.

Uganda has also taken steps to implement the COMESA customs union instruments. It has implemented 100% of the alignment to the customs management regulations, 74% customs tariff nomenclature and 74% common external tariff.

However, with all the progress that Uganda has made in COMESA, its annual contributions have been irregular.

The Minister of Trade, Industry and Co-operatives, Amelia Kyambadde, who represents Uganda on the COMESA council of ministers, justified the lapse to the council of ministers citing severe drought in the past year; the security situation in South Sudan in the last two years and electioneering period in the region that negatively impacted the economy.

She, however, reaffirmed that Uganda is now recovering from the challenges and will soon regularise its subscriptions.

Kyambadde reaffirmed Uganda's commitment to the regional arrangement saying the COMESA regional bloc remains the main destination for Uganda's exports. Particularly, in 2015, Uganda's export earnings from the COMESA region were $1,263m representing 48% of the total exports.

Uganda is currently benefitting from two major projects; support to Small and Medium Enterprises on value addition to leather, textiles, development of border export zones under the Regional Integration Implementation Programme, agricultural development and gender mainstreaming.

During the meeting, the ministers observed that COMESA region's growth registered a slight decrease to 5.0% in 2016 from 6.0% in 2015, through it remained one of the fastest growing globally.

The trend was attributed to weak global economic conditions, adverse weather conditions characterised by droughts and floods.

The council of ministers from the 19 member states made commitments to strengthen the regional bloc opportunities such as a larger market and the advantages of trading in a more liberalised environment. They provide a road map for deepening integration through the consolidation of the free trade area, development of infrastructure, development of agriculture and industry, climate change adaptation and mitigation, gender mainstreaming and establishment of the Customs Union among others.

The meetings of the COMESA policy organs commenced on October 26, with the meeting of the committee on budgetary and administrative matters. They ended on November 4 with the council of ministers, the second highest organ of the common market. The heads o State and Government/Summi is scheduled for next year ir Burundi.

Pressure shafts under construction at Karuma Hydropower project and interconnection transmission line. Uganda has prioritised infrastructure development

BETWEEN THE LINES:

- **Uganda has implemented 100% of the alignment to the customs management regulations, 74% customs tariff nomenclature and 74% common external tariff.**

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