

## **Statement by**

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It is an honour for me to be here today and to have this opportunity to address the Intergovernmental Committee on behalf of the Enhanced Integrated Framework Board. You will be aware that the EIF is a multi-donor programme that supports the Least Developed Countries and is aimed at assisting them to integrate more fully into the global trading system through the provision of technical assistance. The EIF provides a vehicle for Least Developed Countries to leverage additional Aid for Trade resources. The EIF is also a useful mechanism for donors through which initial Aid for Trade commitments can be delivered.

The EIF is based on the premise that LDCs can achieve sustainable economic growth through increased trade, and this will depend on the removal of constraints and improving the policy environment. The programme's key objective is to support LDCs' efforts to mainstream trade into the national development policy. In order to ensure that this happens, the EIF has committed itself to a strong, active and inclusive partnership between EIF countries, core and observer agencies, donors and other international partners and so that people most in need in our countries benefit from trade development.

Allow me at this juncture, Chair, to appraise the Committee on the current state of play of the programme. As an Aid for Trade partnership, the EIF is currently benefiting 47 LDCs, of which 12 are COMESA members. The EIF has been operational for the last year following a major review in 2005 of the old IF put in place in 1997. The programme is supported by a Multi-Donor Trust Fund with contributions from 22 Donors. Total funding currently available stands at approximately US\$100 million, with total pledges made of over US\$180 million, to be disbursed over a five-year period.

To date 21 countries, of which five are COMESA countries, have benefited from the Tier 1 window for institutional capacity building. An additional 17 countries are at different stages of finalizing their proposals. The COMESA EIF countries with approved Tier 1 projects are Burundi, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia. Among Tier 1 projects in the pipeline are those from the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Sudan.

Of more importance to the beneficiary countries is the accessibility to the Tier 2 window for projects aimed at addressing specific supply side-related interventions, which have been identified as priorities in the trade diagnostic studies.

In order to improve on delivery and impact, the EIF programme has now strengthened its administrative mechanisms so as to be more results-focused, accountable and responsive. Emphasis is on country ownership, greater coordination and stronger national and global governance structures.

As part of our support, we are rolling out a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to assist in managing for results. We are also running a Capacity-Building Programme at both regional and national levels to support countries' identified needs and as a way to share best practices. We have also developed a Communications Strategy targeted at meeting the demands of the different EIF stakeholders. All of these activities are being rolled out in COMESA EIF countries.

The EIF's Five-Year Strategic Plan currently under development will be complemented by a resource mobilization plan to boost contributions to the Trust Fund and allow a more efficient planning of current and future needs and demands on the EIF.

The EIF is also looking for a more effective engagement with strategic partners and regional alliances so as to harmonize assistance provided to LDCs and within the framework of the Paris Principles. On our part, initiatives are already under way to collaborate with the African Development Bank, the World Bank's Trade Facilitation Facility, DFID's TradeMark Southern Africa, among others.

The COMESA–EAC–SADC Tripartite is viewed as a potential and critical partner in the EIF process for Eastern and Southern Africa, a region with 15 EIF countries. In this regard, Chair, we propose a dynamic collaboration and partnership between COMESA and the EIF that would bring together available resources and advance the complementarities between regional and national agendas. It is vital that Tier 1 and Tier 2 EIF projects work to complement wider regional initiatives to maximize the results on the ground and work towards sustainable economic growth through trade.

The EIF, based on the demand from beneficiary countries, looks forward to working with the COMESA Secretariat to identify specific areas of collaboration to allow us to work with LDCs in a more systematic and structured way so as to boost results in selected sectors and thematic areas.

I thank you for your attention.