

# SERVICES IN COMESA – AN INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

INTEGRATING THE VOICE OF  
BUSINESS IN POLICY





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**Services in COMESA – An Industry Perspective: Integrating the Voice of Business in Policy**

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This joint ITC–CBC paper provides a regional overview of services sectors and services trade for COMESA, drawing attention to opportunities for growth and regional integration – analyses data for four key services subsectors (travel, transport, communication and financial and insurance services), and provides Services Snapshots for each COMESA member. The paper maps business and professional services associations in COMESA services industries and identifies the major challenges faced by services stakeholders; examines the option of developing a COMESA Regional Services Industries Group (RSIG) as a positive step towards a coordinated platform for overcoming the growth challenges to provide a better business environment for services industries in the COMESA region; includes bibliographical references (pp. 105-106).

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For further information on this technical paper, contact Ms. Marion Jansen ([jansen@intracen.org](mailto:jansen@intracen.org)).

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ITC, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland ([www.intracen.org](http://www.intracen.org))

The COMESA Business Council (CBC) is a Business Member Organization and recognized private sector institution of the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

CBC, Ben Bella Road, P. O. Box 30051, Lusaka, Zambia (<http://www.comesabusinesscouncil.org>)

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## Foreword

The growth of the services industry provides opportunities for regional economic growth, employment and development. Backbone services such as telecommunications, transport and other infrastructure services are of critical importance to making trade happen, and shape the business environment and competitiveness of any economy.

For the majority of the COMESA member countries, services sectors account for a substantial share of domestic output, typically around 50% of GDP. Services outpace traditional manufacturing and agriculture sectors as contributors to growth, income and job creation. Trade in services has also grown exponentially in the COMESA region, offering enormous opportunities for COMESA countries to diversify their exports, increase investment, pursue new opportunities for dynamic and sustainable growth and promote greater efficiency in the domestic economy.

Despite recognition that the private sector has to be an integral part of the discussion around trade policies, there is much room for improvement in ensuring that the business sector – including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – has a seat at the discussion table. As the competitiveness of the services sectors often depends on the policies and regulatory practices that shape the services business environment, growth potential can be accelerated by more inclusive participation of the private sector in national, regional and international policymaking processes.

In 2014 and 2015, the COMESA Business Council carried out extensive private sector consultations to map services industries and services trade in the COMESA region and provide suggestions to promote services growth. Industries expressed the need to have cross-border synergies, such as business support services and direct participation of the private sector in the regional integration process that could contribute to the growth of their businesses.

This joint International Trade Centre–COMESA Business Council report is a response to these consultations. It provides a regional overview of services sectors and services trade for COMESA, and draws attention to growth and regional integration opportunities. It also analyses data for four key services areas: travel, transport, communication, and financial and insurance services. Finally, it provides ‘Services Snapshots’ for each COMESA country.

The report offers practical guidance on how to move towards a more coordinated approach that integrates the voice of business into policymaking. For this purpose, the report maps major business and professional services associations in COMESA services industries, identifies key challenges faced by services stakeholders, and examines the option of a common regional platform for the services industries to channel the voice of business to policymaking organs.

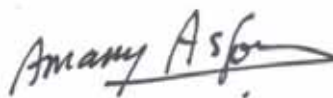
A COMESA Regional Services Industries Group would facilitate the move towards coordinated action to overcome challenges, and provide a better business environment for services industries. Information in this report is an initial step to establish measures that engage the services industries in COMESA and ensure their participation in policy processes, while also contributing to regional growth of the industry.

We acknowledge the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the preparation of this report.

We look forward to continuing our partnership, including with private sector partners, to ensure that the voice of business fully becomes part of the regional policymaking machinery.



Arancha González  
Executive Director  
International Trade Centre (ITC)



Dr. Amany Asfour  
Chairperson of the Board  
COMESA Business Council (CBC)

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