

15 September 2022

PRESS RELEASE

HONOURABLE MARK KATSONGA-PHIRI (MP) MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY FOR MALAWI OFFICIATES AT THE SEVENTH ANNUAL COMPETITION AND ECONOMIC REGULATION WEEK ORGANISED BY THE COMESA COMPETITION COMMISSION, COMPETITION AND FAIR TRADING COMMISSION AND THE UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG CENTRE FOR COMPETITION REGULATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The COMESA Competition Commission ('the Commission') collaborated with the Malawi Competition and Fair Trading Commission and the University of Johannesburg's Centre for Competition Regulation and Economic Development to host the Seventh Annual Competition and Economic Regulation Week (ACER WEEK). The ACER Week started off with Professional Training Programmes that were held from 12-14 September 2022 followed by a conference being held on 15 -16 September 2022.

ACER benefits from experienced academics and practitioners who are facilitators in the professional training programmes as well as provides a platform for researchers to present their research work for discussion by a panel of peers during the conference. This year's ACER themes are centred around competition law and policy in light of regional and continental integration, new thinking in competition regulation for African markets and looking at alternative enforcement by competition agencies in Africa.

Honourable Mark Katsonga-Phiri (MP), Minister of Trade and Industry, noted that participants will discuss competition regulation in digital platforms and share experiences on how digital markets in various African countries are regulated both at national and regional level. This would include the key elements regulated under the regional laws such as mergers and acquisitions, consumer protection, identifying and prosecuting cross-border cartels, development of a competition framework for the success of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and suggestions for enhancing regional and national enforcement. He highlighted that these are matters that impact our markets in one way or another mainly owing to the fact that markets are no longer restricted to national borders but extend regionally as well as globally. This, therefore, calls for

deliberate policies and statutes in our respective jurisdictions to promote trade, competition and consumer protection for the benefit of manufacturers, suppliers and consumers. The Honourable Minister highlighted that the concerted efforts and cooperation among competition enforcement agencies, practitioners and academia are key to achieving the same.

The Board Chairperson of the Competition and Fair Trading Commission, Dr Jerry Jana, observed that trade and trade related issues were cross cutting and need to be factored into all development policies. He noted that there were factors that affected trade such as the availability and non-availability of foreign exchange and how to address matters of inequality in our communities.

Dr Jana highlighted that there is a need to address trade matters and the non-competitive policies that hamper free trade including tariff and non-tariff barriers. He highlighted that there is a need for countries in Africa to harmonise policies as this will assist Africa to negotiate as a group and have a bigger voice at global forums such the World Trade Organisation and get better deals for the growth of the African Continent.

The Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Commission, Dr Willard Mwemba, highlighted that the reality of globalisation and digital markets make it evident that cross-border cooperation and enforcement are essential to ensure a holistic approach in protecting the competitiveness and attractiveness of integrated markets and ecosystems for consumers. African countries have entered into varying forms of commitment with each other to facilitate the movement of goods, capital, and people within the continent; and a recurring obligation which features in the various bilateral and multilateral agreements prevailing on the continent that is the adoption and enforcement of competition rules to assist the trade liberalisation movement. However, the overlapping memberships of most Member States in different regional economic communities mean that the Member States are subject to different, and often conflicting, obligations. This places urgency on concluding the Tripartite and Continental negotiations and makes cooperation a pre-requisite to ensure past successes are not negated and to focus our efforts on critical impact areas rather than fighting over jurisdiction. If well designed, a continental approach to competition will help to defend, drive and accelerate the achievement of the socio-economic policy objectives under the AfCFTA agreement.

The Director of the Centre and Competition Regulation and Economic Development, Dr Thando Vilakazi, noted that the ACER Week provides a valuable platform for competition authorities and regulators to share knowledge, keep abreast of key developments across the region, and build networks for collaboration between agencies. CCRED has taken

steps to undertake research in food markets as they impact the most vulnerable in society and it is hoped that such research will make an impact in the communities.

The ACER Conference will host more than 50 speakers and delegates from more than 12 countries who will discuss various issues including competition and food markets in the context of climate change, cross border competition enforcement in light of the AfCFTA, digital platforms, buyer power, and competition in regulated sectors specifically energy and telecommunications.

The Commission shall continue to partner with different stakeholders in order to raise awareness on the enforcement of competition law in the Common Market.



Meti Demissie Disasa

Registrar

COMESA Competition Commission

5th Floor-West Wing, Kang'ombe House

P.O. Box 30742, Lilongwe 3, Malawi

Office Phone: +265 (0) 1 772466

Email: mdisasa@comesa.int or compcom@comesa.int