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COMESA COMPETITION COMMISSION FINES AIRTEL KENYA KES 7.8 BILLION OVER MISLEADING MOBILE MONEY TRANSACTION CHARGES

The COMESA Competition Commission has imposed a **KES 7.8 billion** fine against Airtel Kenya following investigations into misleading and non-transparent Airtel Money transaction charges affecting consumers across the COMESA region.

The Commission found that Airtel Kenya engaged in unfair and misleading business practices by displaying transaction charges that differed from the actual charges deducted from customers during Airtel Money transactions. Investigations further established that the company failed to adequately disclose key information relating to intermediary parties and exchange rates applied in certain cross-border mobile money transactions.

According to the Commission, the conduct violated COMESA competition and consumer protection regulations, which prohibit false representations, misleading pricing practices, and denial of material information necessary for consumers to make informed financial decisions.

"The Commission has a duty to protect consumers from unfair and deceptive market conduct. Mobile money services play a critical role in financial inclusion and economic activity across the COMESA region, and consumers must be provided with accurate, transparent, and complete information regarding transaction costs," the Commission said.

The Commission noted that transparency in digital financial services is essential to maintaining consumer trust and safeguarding fair competition within the telecommunications and mobile financial services sector.

As part of the ruling, Airtel Kenya has been directed to:

- i. Immediately cease all misleading pricing and transaction disclosure practices;
- ii. Enhance transparency in Airtel Money transaction confirmations and customer notifications;
- iii. Clearly disclose all applicable charges, intermediary fees, and exchange rates for cross-border transactions; and
- iv. Implement corrective compliance measures in line with COMESA consumer protection regulations.

The Commission reaffirmed its commitment to promoting fair markets, protecting consumers, and ensuring accountability among companies operating within the COMESA region.

The investigation forms part of broader efforts by the Commission to strengthen consumer rights and oversight in the rapidly growing digital payments and mobile money ecosystem across Eastern and Southern Africa.

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