

**WORLD TRADE
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developing countries, development of local markets through regional integration, development of the necessary financing facilities and finally the integration of the regional economic block into the multilateral trading system.

COMESA has emerged as one of the most successful regional economic cooperation and integration groupings in Africa in the area of trade. Economic integration is founded on cooperation among its members in all fields of economic development enhanced by increased competitive advantage of

Programmes for trade financing and payments throughout the PTA Trade and Development Bank, the COMESA Clearing House and the COMESA Reinsurance Company

These programmes facilitate both regional and international trade of the Member States.

Specific programmes on the development and promotion of intra-and extra-COMESA trade

Market research is being done on products of export interest to many enterprises. The products of this research are supply and demand surveys. Buyers/sellers contact promotion meetings are undertaken, a trade information network was established as is operational in 47 business sector organizations in the region.

The implementation of the above trade facilitation programmes go hand in hand with other complementary programmes in Transport and Communication facilitation, Industry, Energy and the development of Agriculture and Tourism.

These programmes are now having a considerable impact on intra-COMESA trade. Between 1985 to 1996 intra-COMESA trade has been growing at an average of 14.1 per cent compared to trade with third world countries, which has been growing at an average growth rate of 7.2 per cent.

If these result oriented programmes of COMESA are complemented by global efforts providing for favourable market access conditions of products from Africa as well as support of more elaborate programmes of COMESA and other regional organizations, the declining trend of Africa's share in world trade could be stopped if not reversed.

However, being a young economic grouping comprising almost exclusively Least-Developed Countries, we will from time to time require the support of cooperating partners, bilateral and multilateral institutions such as the WTO.

In this context, I take the liberty to refer to three important pronouncements by the WTO:

- Firstly, the Decision on Measures In Favour of Least-Developed Countries;
- Secondly, the Singapore Ministerial Declaration adopted at the First Ministerial Conference in Singapore

The WTO Plan of Action for the

facilitating the diversification