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Opening speech

for the

Publicity Seminar

of

COMESA Court of Justice

by

H.E. Mr. Erastus Mwencha

Deputy Chairperson
of the African Union Commission

Addis Ababa, Tuesday 26th July 2011

Your Excellency, the Chief Justice of the Federal Supreme Court of Ethiopia

Your Excellency, the Secretary General of COMESA Secretariat

Your Excellency, the President of the COMESA Court of Justice

Honorable Minister of Finance and Economic Development of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Honourable Judges

Ladies and Gentlemen

Distinguished guests

1. I wish to express my tremendous joy in welcoming you all to the African Union Commission. Welcome to Addis Ababa, the Home of Africa in the Federal Republic of Ethiopia.
2. I am exceedingly happy to note that the COMESA Court of Justice, which started functioning in 1998, has made tremendous progress in the Justice delivery system.
3. The Court remained steadfast in discharging its mandate to uphold the Rule of Law in the interpretation and application of the COMESA Treaty.
4. Indeed, over the years, litigants in both the Public and Private sectors in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, have confidently taken their disputes to the COMESA Court of Justice for resolution, faithfully expecting to obtain fair and substantive relief from the COMESA Court of Justice.
5. Relief sought from the COMESA Court do as a matter of Law, include appropriate damages that are generally accepted as an

effective remedy for redressing breaches of Contracts. Other reliefs go beyond the purely monetary – to equally fundamental areas of economic and political welfare among and between the different transactors in the Common Market.

6. It gives us all a very pleasant feeling therefore, to see the distinguished Judges appointed from their respective Member States hold a Publicity Seminar at the AU Commission in order to share views with the stakeholders of the COMESA Court of Justice on the diverse issues of the Court's operations and functions - including Arbitration matters which arise from breaches of contracts.
7. COMESA and the African Union are inextricably bound together – each supporting the other in the noble effort to forge continental Economic Integration for Africa. The fact of this symbiotic relationship is manifested here today in this Official Launch of the Court's Publicity Seminar.
8. The presence of the AU's top Management – as well as the AU's top operational personnel – to make various presentations jointly with the top echelons of both the Court and COMESA Secretariat, is extremely significant.
9. This is the first time ever that anything like this has happened in the life of our two institutions. It is also a vivid reflection of the two institutions – standing side by side, shoulder to shoulder – in the pursuit of our common endeavour: namely, to bring prosperity to the citizens of our Common Market; and to do so, transparently and fairly under the Rule of law.
10. In this regard, the Theme of this Publicity Seminar is spot on: ***“Ensuring Economic Integration by Bringing Justice to the Common Market”!***
11. Even more importantly, are the particular topics that have been identified for presentation and discussion at this Seminar. In their totality, they bring out a comprehensive and profound package of

information and knowledge which all the Court's Users and Stakeholders need to know.

12. Distinguished Participants, you will be delighted to learn that among the topics to be dissected and analyzed by the distinguished jurists, are COMESA Jurisprudence, Case Law and the implications of the Common Market on litigation; the Court's Rules of Procedure and Practice; Interaction with the Municipal Law; Economic Integration at the Continental level; to mention but a few.
13. As will be evident, the chariot of justice is running at full speed, with its wheels turning in all directions of the COMESA Region to ensure equitable delivery of justice to all.
14. The COMESA Court, in pursuit of its mandate under the COMESA Treaty, is determined to offer economic justice by ensuring peaceful settlement of disputes among the Member States and between the Residents of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.
15. I wish all you Participants very enlightening and edifying discussions at this Seminar.
16. I thank you for your attention.