

SIGNING OF THE HOST AGREEMENT

The Government of the Republic of Zambia and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) have signed the Host Agreement for the 22nd COMESA Summit of Heads of State and Government scheduled to be held on **8th June, 2023 at Mulungushi International Conference Center, Kenneth Kaunda International Wing**. The signing ceremony took place on 25th April, 2023 at Raddison Blu Hotel in Lusaka.

The 22nd COMESA Summit of Heads of State and Government will be preceded by the Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the COMESA Business Forum that will take place on **6th June, 2023** and **7th June, 2023**, respectively.

The Summit will be held under the theme: ***“Economic Integration for a Thriving COMESA anchored on Green Investment, Value Addition and Tourism”***. The COMESA Business Forum will be held with participation from both the Private Sector and Public Sector from the COMESA Region.

Speaking at the signing ceremony at Raddison Blu, Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Hon. Chipoka Mulenga, MP said that Zambia last hosted and chaired the COMESA Summit of Heads of State and Government over twenty (20) years ago. Therefore, the hosting of the 22nd session is a great opportunity for Zambia to strengthen its role and participation in regional integration, exchange information on investment opportunities, create business partnerships across the COMESA region, boost foreign exchange revenues for the country and enhance the country's tourism potential.

The Honourable Minister, in his closing remarks, reiterated Zambia's commitment to the COMESA regional integration agenda as a founding member of the Organisation. He indicated that the Government of the Republic of Zambia is confident that hosting the upcoming 22nd COMESA Summit will foster common resolve as Governments to enhance Economic Diplomacy Agenda in the region.

And Her Excellency, Ms. Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, COMESA Secretary General who signed on behalf of COMESA Secretariat thanked His Excellency, Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia, his Government, and the people of the Republic of Zambia for graciously accepting to host the 22nd COMESA Summit of Heads of State and Government. She further indicated that Zambia is not only assisting the Secretariat to comply with one of its treaty provisions but is also contributing towards the deepening of the Regional Integration Agenda of COMESA for sustainable development and economic growth.

Additionally, she stated that the theme acknowledges the need to tackle many of the challenges that are being faced by the continent, especially with regard to emerging issues on climate change, regional value addition to move away from the export of raw materials and the need to create additional wealth and jobs, especially in support of regrowth of sectors such as tourism in the post COVID 19 recovery era.