

# USTR NEWS

## UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

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**For Immediate Release:**

April 10, 2008

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### **USTR Lauds Progress by COMESA on African Regional Economic Integration**

Washington, DC – At a meeting today with a delegation from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Deputy U.S. Trade Representative John K. Veroneau commended COMESA’s work in advancing economic integration in sub-Saharan Africa.

“COMESA has made great strides in integrating the markets of its 19 member countries,” said Ambassador Veroneau. “During the ten-year tenure of outgoing COMESA Secretary-General Mwencha, COMESA has launched a free trade area, addressed regional customs and transportation bottlenecks, and laid the basis for a common investment area and a customs union. These achievements have facilitated the region’s integration into the global economy and improved the economic competitiveness of COMESA member countries. The United States is pleased to have provided technical assistance to advance much of this work.”

Veroneau was speaking at the opening of the latest high-level consultation between the United States and COMESA under the United States-COMESA Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA). Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Africa Florizelle Liser led the discussions for the United States during most of the half-day meeting, which included discussions on U.S.-COMESA trade, implementation of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the WTO Doha negotiations, trade capacity building activities, infrastructure issues, and investment.

Secretary-General Mwencha, who led the discussions for COMESA, is leaving his COMESA post later this month to be the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

**Background:**

COMESA is the largest regional economic organization in Africa, with 19 member states. The United States and COMESA signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement in October 2001 and have held five high-level meetings under the TIFA since then, including the meeting that took place April 10.

Total two-way trade between the United States and the member countries of COMESA was valued at \$14.6 billion in 2007, up 21 percent from 2006. U.S. exports to the COMESA region were \$7.3 billion, up 27 percent; U.S. imports from COMESA countries were also \$7.3 billion, up 16 percent. The leading U.S. exports to the COMESA region are cereals, machinery, aircraft, and motor vehicles. U.S. imports from COMESA countries include oil, apparel, fertilizers, precious stones, and coffee. Thirteen COMESA countries are eligible for benefits under AGOA. In 2007, U.S. imports from COMESA countries under AGOA and the Generalized System of Preferences were valued at just over \$1.0 billion.

U.S. trade capacity building assistance for COMESA member countries totaled \$303 million from FY05 through FY07. This included \$1.8 million in technical assistance to the COMESA Secretariat by USAID and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, as well as additional support for COMESA regional initiatives through the USAID Regional Mission for East Africa and the USAID-funded East and Central Africa Global Competitiveness Hub.

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