

## Introduction

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) is a free trade area that encompasses 19 countries stretching from Libya to Zimbabwe. COMESA was established when a treaty was signed on November 5, 1993, in Kampala, Uganda, and then ratified the following year in Lilongwe, Malawi, on December 8, 1994. It replaced the former Preferential Trade Area (PTA) that existed in 1981. COMESA was established as an “organization of free independent sovereign states which have agreed to cooperate in developing their natural and human resources for the good of all their people”. However, due to its economic and historical background, its current main focus is upon the formation of a large economic and trading unit that is capable of overcoming some of the trade barriers put in place within individual states.

**Number of member countries:** 20

**Region(s):** Africa

**Headquarters:** Lusaka, Zambia

**Composition:** Plurilateral

**Coverage:** Goods and Services

**Signed:** November 5, 1993

**Entry into force:** December 8, 1994

**Web Site:** <http://www.comesa.int/>

## Member Countries

Angola	Malawi
Burundi	Mauritius
Comoros	Namibia
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Rwanda
Djibouti	Seychelles
Eritrea	Sudan
Ethiopia	Tanzania
Kenya	Uganda
Libya	Zambia
Madagascar	Zimbabwe

## History

**November 4, 1965** - A ministerial meeting is held in Lusaka, Zambia, for the consideration of organization proposals.

**March 1978** - The recommendation for the creation of a sub-regional Preferential Trade Area is made during a meeting of Ministers of Trade, Finance, and Planning in Lusaka, Zambia.

**December 21, 1981** - A treaty to establish a Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa in Lusaka, Zambia is signed.

**September 30, 1982** - The Preferential Trade Area Treaty is ratified.

**November 5, 1993** - The COMESA Treaty is signed by 16 founding members in Kampala, Uganda.

**November 10, 1994** - Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, and Tanzania join COMESA.

**December 8, 1994** - The COMESA Treaty is ratified in Lilongwe, Malawi.

**November 12, 1997** - Lesotho and Mozambique withdraw from COMESA.

**January 6, 1999** - Egypt joins COMESA.

**November 22, 2000** - COMESA, as a member of the Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States sign the Cotonou Agreement with the European Union in Cotonou, Benin.

**September 2, 2001** - Tanzania leaves COMESA.

**November 7, 2001** - Seychelles joins COMESA.

**November 9, 2004** - Namibia leaves COMESA.

**November 9, 2005** - Libya joins COMESA.

**November 14, 2007** - Angola suspends itself from COMESA.

**November 18, 2008** - The non-reciprocity of the original Cotonou Agreement is transformed into an Economic Partnership Agreement.

**November 10, 2009** - COMESA holds the 13th Meeting of the COMESA Committee of Governors of Central Banks in Cairo, Egypt, where the decision to create the COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) is made.

**March 7, 2011** - The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Monetary Institute (CMI) is officially launched on March 7, 2011 at the Kenya School for Monetary Studies in Nairobi.

**2012** - COMESA signs contracts appointing a team of advisors who will work to assist the trade bloc in raising \$1 billion to fund the COMESA Infrastructure Fund.

**April 8, 2013** - The COMESA Innovation Council is inaugurated.

**2013** - COMESA, EAC, and SADC launch a Tripartite Capacity Building Programme to increase trade within the three blocs.

**2015** - COMESA and International Trade Center sign a pact to boost intra-Africa trade.

