



Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority

THE NORTHERN CORRIDOR DIGEST

For an Efficient, Smart and Green Corridor

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Northern Corridor: Sustained Sensitisation on the Spread of COVID-19

On Friday 3rd July 2020, the Northern Corridor Secretariat in collaboration with the Ministry of East Africa Community and Regional Development, Republic of Kenya, launched the first phase of a sustained "Sensitisation Campaign against the Spread of COVID-19 along the Northern Corridor". The event saw some of the 10,000 reusable Face Masks and Reflector Jackets; branded with messages of solidarity and hope distributed to transporters and cross-border truck drivers as part of the contribution from the Northern Corridor Secretariat.



Launch of the Northern Corridor Sensitization Campaign against the Spread of COVID-19 by the East African Community and Regional Development Minister, Hon. Aden Mohammed and NCTTCA Executive Secretary, Omae Nyarandi, at the Miritini COVID-19 Testing Centre, 3rd July 2020.

The launch occasion held at Miritini COVID-19 Testing Centre in Mombasa, attracted various Northern Corridor stakeholders in Mombasa, including the Mombasa County Government officials, Kenya Ports Authority as well as representatives of transporters and long distance truck drivers. The event was graced by Hon. Adan Mohammed, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of EAC and Regional Development and currently the Chairman of the Northern Corridor Council of Ministers. The Cabinet Secretary was accompanied by Dr Margaret W. Mwakima, Principal Secretary Regional Development and Northern Corridor Development and current Chairperson of the Northern Corridor Executive Committee.



East African Community and Regional Development Cabinet Secretary, Hon. Adan Mohammed officially launching the distribution of 10,000 face masks and reflector jackets to truck drivers' representative at Miritini COVID-19 Testing Centre, 3rd July 2020.

As part of the mitigation efforts, the Long Distance

Truck Drivers are tested at Miritini COVID-19 Testing Centre before they embark on their journeys to different destinations along the Northern Corridor. However, the testing capacity at the centre is currently low; resulting into delays in processing results for the tested drivers. The delays at Centre is mainly occasioned by the limited capacity of the facility as well as the Laboratory located at Kilifi. Currently, the capacity at Miritini Covid-19 Testing facility is 100 while the Laboratory in Kilifi handles only 250 samples per day.

"I understand that 600 Transit Cargo Drivers are cleared from the Port on daily basis, but our capacity to test here at Miritini is only 100", revealed CS Mohammed; pledging to contact his Health counterpart, CS Mutahi Kagwe to increase the testing capacity at the Miritini facility.

The Cabinet Secretary attributed the delays at Malaba to the number of truck drivers leaving the Port before taking a test and assured the drivers that the testing facility at Miritini would be enhanced so that the drivers are tested before starting their journey to the final destinations.

The CS further promised the removal of the roadblock at Athi-River so that the truck drivers can move with little hindrance from Mombasa to Malaba once they have valid COVID-19 free certificates.



A Social Distance Group Photo of some High Level Officials who took part in the Launch of the NCTTCA Secretariat Sensitisation Campaign against the Spread of COVID-19 along the Corridor, Miritini COVID-19 Testing Centre, 3rd July 2020.

The Northern Corridor Executive Secretary Mr. OMAE Nyarandi emphasised that, since the declaration of the COVID-19 as a health pandemic by WHO on 11th March 2020, the Northern Corridor Secretariat undertook several initiatives and interventions to advocate for the smooth movement of cargo and flow of cross border trade.

"The Northern Corridor Secretariat put in place a regional platform for online meetings every Tuesday with Stakeholders that mainly focuses on what is happening in real-time in each of the Northern Corridor Member States as well as all the transit and transport node along the Corridor including: Port, Weighbridges, Border Posts, ICDs, and Transit Parking Yards", said Omae Nyarandi.

He added that daily, the Northern Corridor Stakeholders and representatives of Regional Economic Communities

such as EAC share, follow up and intervene on the challenges being faced at the entry and exit points through a WhatsApp Group dubbed “Northern Corridor Stakeholders Forum” dedicated for rapid information sharing, providing quick interventions and collaboration in mitigating the challenges; likewise the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

“Above all, the Northern Corridor Secretariat has a regular and sustained monitoring of the impact of COVID-19 on Trade and Transport Logistics along the Corridor”, said Omae Nyarandi.

The Northern Corridor sensitisation campaign against the Spread of COVID-19 was mainly intended to remind our Stakeholders; especially Truck Drivers of our lethal weapons against the Spread of COVID-19: ‘Wear Face Masks, Wash Hands, Sanitise and Keep Social Distance’. On the other hand, the sensitisation campaign is intended to show solidarity with the Transporters and Cross border Truck Drivers who are at the forefront of bringing goods and other essential services to our midst in these difficult times of COVID-19 pandemic. We must therefore raise our collective voice against the stigmatisation of COVID-19 infected and affected people.

Mombasa Port Records a 5% Decline in Throughput during the First Half of 2020

The Northern Corridor route, like any other transit and trade corridors around the world, has suffered adverse effects following the outbreak and declaration of the Coronavirus disease as a pandemic by the World Health Organisation in March 2020.

Evidence from a quarterly report of the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory for the period April to June 2020 reveals that the occurrence of COVID-19 has had a profound effect on the transport and logistics sectors. The global pandemic has exposed how trade facilitation in the Northern Corridor region is vulnerable to sudden disasters.

According to the report, the challenges experienced in addressing cross border trade at the onset of the disease manifested lack of transboundary disaster management strategies, thus exacerbating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Statistics from the report showed a 5% decline in the aggregate throughput for the months from January to May 2020; from 14.3 million metric tonnes in 2019 to 13.6 million metric tonnes in 2020. During the same period, imports accounted for 82% of the total throughput; suggesting that the balance of trade was unfavourable.

Notably, a larger share of imported cargo through the port of Mombasa for the five months was containerized cargo that stood at 66%. Kenya accounted for the bulk of total throughput at 64%; whereas about 36% of total throughput was for transit market. Uganda remains the biggest transit market

destination cargo passing through the port of Mombasa; accounting for 3.28 million metric tonnes during the reporting period.

demand for crude oil globally.

Shrinking trade volumes

Available data indicated that from January to May 2020, a total of



Mv. CoscoYinkou is offloaded at Berth No.21 in June 2020

A further decline in imports as a share of throughput from 84% in January 2020 to 80% in May 2020 was witnessed; suggesting reduction in import trade in the countries that uses the port of Mombasa. However, in May 2020, exports accounted for 13% of total the throughput, increasing from 11% in January 2020; indicating a more-hard-hit import trade as opposed to export trade.

The same report showed a decline in the demand for crude oil which may be attributed to the outbreak of the Coronavirus and perhaps the subsequent cut in oil production by oil-producing countries. According to the Oil Market Report, since May 2020, OPEC+ countries have been reducing output by over nine million barrels per day; a factor that undermined the

214 ships docked at the port of Mombasa. Notably, the volume of cargo delivered by vessels through the port of Mombasa declined; with average metric tons per ship recorded at 61,598mt in January 2020, further declining to 44,278mt in May 2020. The report attributed these changes to the reduced global demand and trade and predicts that it will dwindle further in tandem with the shrinking trade volumes occasioned by the reduction in economic activities in all countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The average ship waiting time before berth varied from 36 hours in April 2020 to 16 hours in June 2020. Likewise, the average ship turnaround time improved from 111 hours to 75 hours; which may partly be attributed to the initiatives implemented at the port, including the modernization of equipment

and expansion of berths.

The Average Container Dwell Time at the Port has seen a steady improvement from 123 hours in April 2020 to 96 hours in June 2020 against a target of 78 hours by December 2020 as per the Mombasa Port and Northern Corridor Community Charter. However, a comparison with the same quarter in 2019 showed an increase in the dwell time for the quarter in 2020. In 2019, the Average Container dwell time ranged between 80 to 88 hours.

Statistics also showed that the indicator for the delays after customs release at the port of Mombasa worsened for the quarter in 2020 to a maximum of 51 hours when compared to the same quarter in 2019, which at its highest stood at 38 hours, as truckers experienced long waits for clearance for COVID-19 health protocols before embarking on their journeys. However, there was a gradual improvement in performance for the quarter from 55 hours in April 2020 to 34 hours in June 2020.

Increased Transit Times

Transit time is determined as the period from the time goods are released at the Port/Inland Container Depots up to the exit points at the border and final destinations. Member States have employed different tracking regimes.

In most of the routes along the Northern Corridor, transit times increased partly due to the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under the Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System (RECTS) regime which is being implemented to reduce the cost of cargo transportation along the Northern Corridor, transit times from Mombasa to Kampala varied from 156 hours in January to 185 hours in June 2020.



Truck drivers park along the road awaiting clearance at Malaba border

From Mombasa to Kigali, the transit time increased from 167 hours in January to almost twice at 306 hours in the month of June 2020. Mombasa to Elegu increased from 91 hours in January to 179 hours in June 2020.

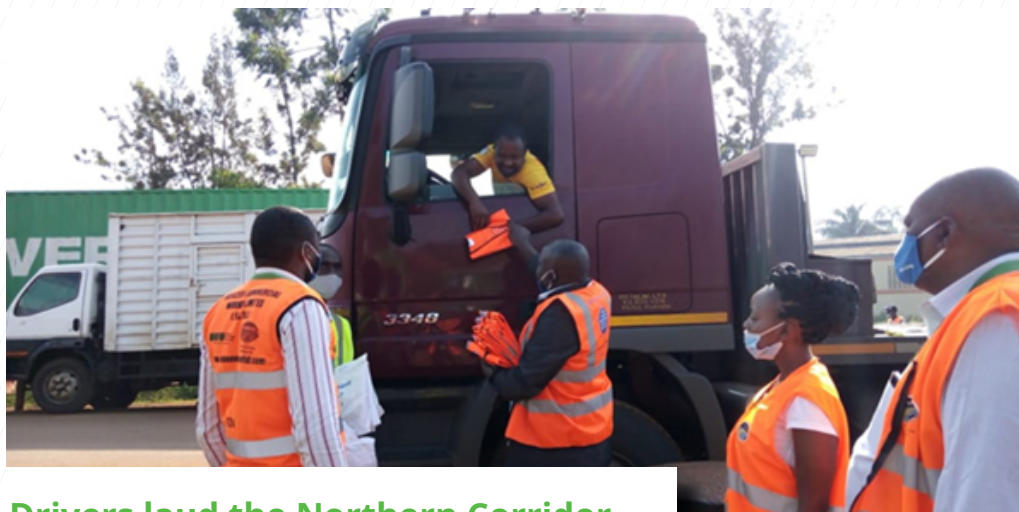
In Kenya, under the SIMBA System, a total of 20,242 trucks for Mombasa to Malaba border route and 718 trucks for Mombasa- Busia border route were sampled to determine the transit times. The report reveals that the average transit time from Mombasa to Malaba border worsened from 152 hours in January to 237 hours in June against a Charter target of 60 hours by December 2020. Furthermore, the average transit time between Mombasa and Busia recorded a similar trend, rising from 90 hours in January to 344 hours in June 2020.

Towards a Resilient, Smart and Responsive Corridor

The report noted that the performance of the Northern Corridor during the quarter was adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with regional and country-specific containment measures including lockdowns, curfews, social distancing measures, relay trucking, and mandatory testing for truckers precipitating delays. The report further pointed out the need for regional guidelines, collective efforts, and robust systems for early detection and interventions.

The report recommends that the Northern Corridor Member States develop policies geared towards addressing the hazards that may occur and disrupt transport and supply chain logistics. Also, the report emphasizes the need for a detailed assessment of regional vulnerability and putting in place country-specific and transboundary disaster mitigation measures.

In a bid to develop resilience and prepare the Transport Corridor to respond to emerging issues, the report, while appreciating ongoing conversations and roadmaps being suggested by the Member States and different stakeholders aimed at facilitating a quick socio-economic recovery, the following proposals may hold: a regional multi-stakeholder response approach where risk factors and disaster risk reduction measures are integrated into both national and regional policies, plans and programmes; and regional and international cooperation in assessing, monitoring and responding to transboundary hazards.



Sensitisation Team during the distribution exercise of 10,000 Masks and Reflector Jackets to Long Distance Truck Drivers at the weighbridges in Busia, Webuye, Mariakani, Mlolongo and Gilgil.

Drivers laud the Northern Corridor Secretariat for its efforts in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic

During a week-long exercise of distributing 10,000 Masks and reflective jackets to Long Distance Truck Drivers in Mombasa and at the Weighbridges namely; Busia, Webuye, Mariakani, Athi-River and Gilgil; Truck drivers have lauded the Northern Corridor Secretariat for its relentless efforts in the fight against the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking during the Launch of the sensitization campaign against the spread of COVID-19 and stigmatisation along the Northern Corridor, truck drivers said they are grateful for the interventions the NCTTCA Secretariat has put in place so far including the real time quick response forum through WhatsApp group dubbed “Northern Corridor Stakeholders Forum”.

Truck drivers expressed their gratitude for the masks and reflective jackets issued by the NCTTCA Secretariat and appreciated the donation of a handwashing station erected at the testing centre as a contribution to increased sanitation and handwashing for drivers before entering the testing booth.

The drivers, led by Kenya Long Distance Truck Drivers and Allied Workers Union chairman Roman Waema, said stigma was the biggest challenge they face when on transit.

“Tunashukuru sana Idara ya Kanda la Kaskazini kwa kukumbuka madereva na kutuletea barakoa na kwa yale mazuri mmetufanyia hapa (We appreciate the Northern Corridor Secretariat for their solidarity with the drivers, issuing us with masks and more that we have seen here),” said Mr Roman Waema, Chairman for Kenya Long Distance Drivers and Conductors Association (LoDDCA).

Waema said some counties like Machakos do not allow them to stop at their designated resting places saying truck drivers *“have corona and will spread it to their people”*.

“Sometimes we are forced to drive for over four hours without stopping, going as far as 400km, just because people do not want us to stop in their neighbourhoods,” Waema said.

The drivers said they had been facing stigmatisation in different places due to misinformation of the public with some regarded with suspicion even by close family members.

However, with messages of hope and solidarity inscribed on the reflective jackets, ‘Even after the Worst Storms, the Sun will shine again’, truckers felt motivated and appreciated for their vital contribution to the economy of the region.

“Drivers are the most important people in building an economy,” said Hon. Adan Mohamed, CS for Ministry of EAC and Regional Development during the Launch of the Sensitization Campaign against the Spread of COVID-19 and Stigma along the Northern Corridor.

CS Mohamed pledged to have the drivers’ request for increased processing capacity at the laboratories effected. He also promised to dismantle the roadblock at Mlolongo and to engage his counterparts in the EAC and other Northern Corridor Member States to ensure drivers are treated with dignity.



A Truck Driver receiving Masks during the Sensitisation Campaign against the Spread of COVID-19 and Stigma along the Northern Corridor

Since the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic and the institution of regional guidelines and country-specific protocols to curb the spread of COVID-19, truckers, who are essential service providers are required to undergo mandatory testing. Lack of adequate reagents to process the COVID-19 test results at the laboratories led to the delayed release of test results, creating a traffic backlog at the borders as COVID-19-free test certificates and attestation forms became a mandatory clearance document.

Kenya Transporters Association CEO Dennis Ombok said the delay in testing and releasing of results has increased turn-around times.

It used to take an average of four days to make a return trip to Kampala, Uganda, but since Covid-19 and the testing requirement, the same trip now takes an average of 14 days.

“Going to Rwanda and coming back to pick another cargo at the Port of Mombasa used to take an average of eight days. Now that has increased to 20 days,” Ombok said.

In its endeavours to keep the cross-border trade and transport open, the Secretariat has also been convening every Tuesday online consultation meetings with Northern Corridor stakeholders to respond to challenges faced by truck drivers at different borders points and transport nodes along the corridor.

“We thank the NCTTCA for facilitating the weekly online meetings for all Northern Corridor route stakeholders. ... it was tough for drivers, but since the Tuesday meetings started, things have slowly started moving,” said Mr Dennis Ombok, the CEO Kenya Transporters Association.

COMESA develops COVID-19 online portal to spur e-Trade

In response to a directive by the COMESA Council of Ministers in May 2020 to develop a platform to support regional trade, during the COVID-19 pandemic, COMESA has developed an online portal to be used by Member States to exchange information on availability of essential products within the region.



Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe, Secretary General of COMESA

“The platform will enable Member States to share information on availability of products and their potential to produce and supply all different types of goods. It will connect buyers to suppliers of essential goods thereby promoting and fostering regional intra-COMESA trade”, said Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe, Secretary General of COMESA, during the launch of the prototype platform to

representatives of member States.

According to the COMESA Secretariat, the focal points in Member States will coordinate with the private sector in populating the platform with information on essential supplies. This is expected to boost local production and address shortages in supply from outside the region.

As part of the roll out and implementation of the platform, the Secretariat conducted a training programme considering that multiple stakeholder use is needed to make it versatile, functional and sustainable.

COMESA Secretary General said the platform will also help small-scale cross-border traders and SMEs to have access to market information and linking producers, sellers and buyers. She noted that measures being implemented by Member States such as closing borders to prevent the spread of the pandemic are slowing down economic activity and have severely impacted cross border trade.

She said the implementation of the Digital Trade Facilitation programme and other instruments and the liberalization of services remained core to strengthening the stability of the COMESA region against external shocks.



“Over the mid-to long-term, disruption in supply chains could lead to filling of the gap by regional producers and hence the need to strengthen and fully implement the Free Trade Area,” said Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe. She added: *“The successful implementation of the online platform will no doubt be an important step towards realization of COMESA Digital Free Trade Area initiatives.”*

COMESA is a regional economic community established in 1994. It brings together 21 African Member States with a population of 560 million people into a cooperative framework for sustainable economic growth and prosperity through regional integration.

COMESA's strategy in combating Covid-19 include the need to strengthen openness, coordination and collective approach by Member States in facilitating movement of goods and services amidst restrictive measures and safeguarding the existing trading arrangements and avoid erosion of gains already made as far as liberalization of trade and investments.



Northern Corridor Stakeholders commend KMA for the extension of Free Empty Containers Return Period

On 3rd July 2020, the Kenya Maritime Authority (KMA) in a notice issued to the public directed shipping lines to extend the free period on the return of empty containers by additional seven (7) days and three (3) days for transit and local traffic, from the existing granted periods.

This materialized after consultations with various stakeholders in the maritime industry following KMA's pledge to engage key players in the logistics chain, with a view of putting in place measures to handle delayed containers in the Northern Corridor stakeholders Zoom meeting convened and chaired by the Northern Corridor Secretariat for rapid information sharing, providing quick interventions and collaboration in mitigating the challenges and the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in each Member State and at each transit or transport node along the Corridor: Port, Weighbridges, One Stop Border Posts, ICDs, and Transit Parking Yards.

The COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged all sectors of the economy with measures, guidelines and protocols instituted by the East African region and individual member countries to curb the spread of the Coronavirus disease partly contributing to delays in clearance and movement of cargo at the port of Mombasa and along the Northern Corridor. These delays have contributed to longer truck turnaround times to neighbouring countries.

To reduce the costs on importers who have been incurring additional charges in the form of penalties associated with delays in cargo clearance and return of empty containers, the KMA sought to have the shipping lines extend the free period on the return of containers to mirror the delays.

"Under the prevailing circumstances, it is important that penalties associated with delays in cargo clearance and return of empty containers prior to the COVID-19 reflect the prevailing circumstances on the ground," said the KMA in a public notice signed by the Director General, Maj. (Rtd) George Nyamoko Okong'o.

The notice further clarified that the extension period of the return of the empty containers by KMA took effect on 1st July this year and will stay throughout the period of COVID-19.

With the new schedule, importers are allowed 17 days from the current 14 days for domestic cargo and 52 days from 45 days currently allowed for transit cargo, to return empty containers to designated yards in Mombasa. If the importers fail to return the containers in time, storage penalties technically referred to as demurrage, start accruing daily.

"Shipping lines through their local ships agents are hereby directed as follows: - To extend free period on return of empty containers by additional seven (7) days and three (3) days for transit and local traffic respectively, from the existing granted periods," said the Director General.

To this end, Kenya Ports Authority (KPA), earlier in May 2020, also extended its free storage period package to its customers effective 18th May 2020 for a period of 90 days. The KMA public notice also hinted that KPA was considering extending the free storage period on the domestic cargo as well.

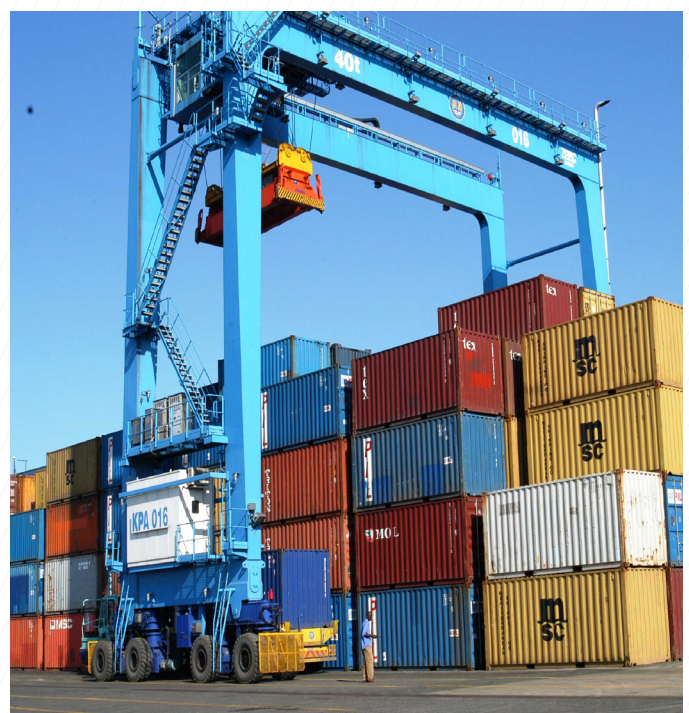




PHOTO: COURTESY

EAC Digital Surveillance Tracker will allow the users to share information across borders in a transparent manner

EAC Partner States have adopted a regional COVID-19 surveillance system for trucks and their crew to be hosted at the EAC Headquarters in Arusha Tanzania, following EAC directive to its Partner States to finalise and adopt a digital surveillance and tracking system for drivers and crew on COVID-19 for immediate use.

The system piloting starts Monday, June 15, 2020 and its full implementation scheduled for the week of June 22, 2020. It will share truck driver's information leveraging on that which is managed and operated by Revenue Authorities in the region, and the existing health information systems in the Partner States.

"And now we are starting piloting this week since we have agreed with transporters. Also, we have finished purchasing equipment through the support of TradeMark East Africa that will be used for screening: these are tablets that will be having an application on," said Eng. Daniel Murenzi, the Principal Information Technology Officer at the EAC Headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania.

A Joint Consultative Meeting of the EAC Ministers/Cabinet Secretaries of Health, Transport and EAC Affairs held via Video Conferencing on May 29, 2020, agreed that the system would be supported by four (4) Command Operating Centres (COCs) located in four locations at designated national Revenue authorities in Kenya, Uganda, DRC and Rwanda, with one additional COC set up at the Nimule border post for the Republic of South Sudan.

The report of the Joint Consultative Meeting chaired by Rwanda's Minister for Health, Hon. Dr Daniel Ngamije was signed by Partner States' Heads of Delegation/Health

Ministers, namely: Hon. Dr Daniel Ngamije (Rwanda); Hon. Mutahi Kagwe (Kenya); Hon. Dr Jane Ruth Aceng (Uganda), and; Hon. Elizabeth Achuei (South Sudan).

The report reveals that, as a tracking tool, the system allows the users to share information across borders in a transparent manner, and the truck drivers will need to download a mobile phone application on their phones.

Continuous screening will be done at selected checkpoints along the transport corridors, which have already been designated, and information made available for all Partner States. Verification of documents will be done by customs, immigration, law enforcement agencies/persons who will confirm if a particular traveller is fit to proceed on their journey.

The Digital surveillance tracker will interface and connect directly to designated laboratories in the Partner States to allow the Partner States, for purposes of Coronavirus laboratory results needed to generate the COVID-19 Test Certificates/attestation forms.

Among the directives issued by the Ministers/Cabinet Secretaries during the meeting were: Partner States to designate, provide, establish or ensure that the required critical enablers for the digital system to work are in place; the EAC Secretariat to fast track the implementation of the EAC Digital Surveillance Tracker; the EAC Secretariat to coordinate the rollout of the existing EAC Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System to cover the Central Corridor, and the Secretariat in collaboration with the Partner States and National Transporters' Associations to sensitise key stakeholders on the EAC Digital COVID-19 Surveillance tracker.

EAC Secretariat also adopted an EAC COVID-19 Test Certificate for truck drivers and crew members. The digital surveillance system would facilitate a common approach

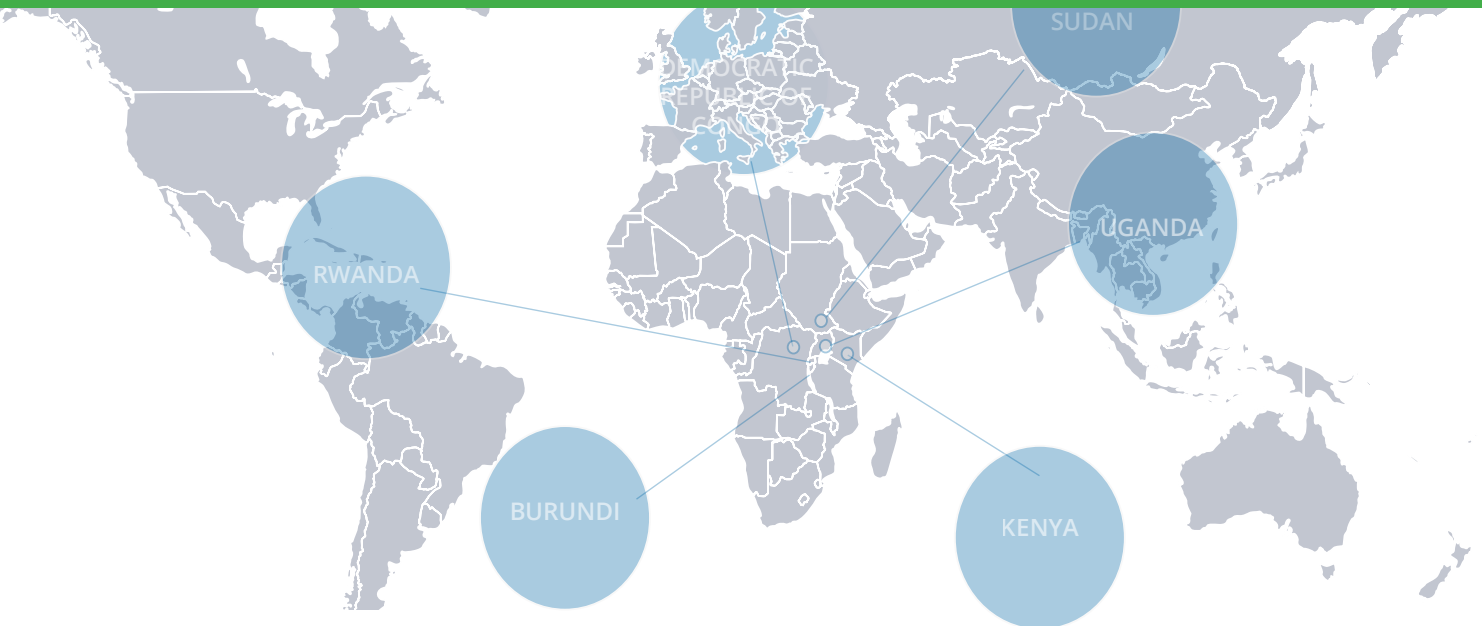


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