



**World Customs Organization  
East & Southern Africa Region  
Regional Private Sector Group**

# **ESA COVID-19 situation report**

**August 2020**





## Introduction

This update – *the fourth of its kind* – contains an overview of the flow of goods for 24 respective countries that form the East and Southern Africa (ESA) region. This update is for August of 2020. The outbreak of COVID-19 continues to impact on business and life at all levels. As a consequence, many people and businesses alike are recalibrating their understanding of normalcy at every possible juncture.

Since the turn of the year, nearly all countries have closed their borders and suspended flights to enforce lockdowns in response to the pandemic. Global attempts have been made to contain the virus and ‘flatten the curve’, which has also been the case in the ESA region. After absorbing the initial impact of COVID-19 globally and regionally, most countries have subsequently reopened their borders to a certain degree in an attempt to kick-start their respective economies.

In terms of infections, the ESA region currently accounts for approximately 60%<sup>1</sup> of the COVID-19 recorded cases in Africa (up by 10% compared with the same time last month), with the share progressively increasing after the initial delayed infection rate.

The pandemic is truly on African shores, with even some of the most remote and rural places in Africa also being hit. To further combat the spread, it is vital to continue with the measures put in place by the respective countries’ authorities across the region. However, a concerted effort has been made towards the accelerated reopening of economies. Economic stimulus has become a necessity given that the preservation of the livelihoods of citizens is paramount, especially the most vulnerable Africans, which includes many people involved in regional cross-border trade.

Therefore, the Regional Private Sector Group (RPSG) encourages the liberation of trade during this time while still adhering to all the recommended health precautions as set out by the relevant authorities.

The aim of this paper is therefore to provide an update on the current situation across the ESA region regarding the movement of goods. It consists of

1. a continent summary;
2. a regional summary;
3. a country summary;
4. ESA COVID-19 Statistics; and lastly
5. updates and recommendations from Regional Economic Communities in the ESA.

## Continent Summary

Africa experienced a delayed reaction compared with the rest of the world in the preceding six months that led up to July, which was followed by a rapid spread of the virus. August has brought some relief as the spread of the virus across the continent appeared to be slowing down. In

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<sup>1</sup> 62,98% on 7 September, as extracted from: <https://africanarguments.org/2020/09/07/coronavirus-in-africa-tracker-how-many-cases-and-where-latest/>



confirmation of this, Figure 1 shows that the daily rate of confirmed cases has seen a noticeable decline since late July.

However, South Africa's decline in infection rates has contributed to the majority of the said decline – South Africa is the African country with the highest incidence of confirmed cases across the region.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that over the past six months, the continents' overall preparedness to face the pandemic has improved from 62% to 78%, reflecting the efforts of governments to ensure that people receive the care they need. The scores for coordination (38%), infection prevention (46%), and clinical care for patients (47%), however, remain relatively low<sup>2</sup>.

*Figure 1 – Epi curve of confirmed COVID-19 in the WHO Africa Region, February 25 to August 25<sup>3</sup>*

For customs and trade-related matters throughout the ESA region, COVID-19 effects have accentuated the reliance on road transport, which is the primary means of doing cross-border business throughout the African continent.

It is estimated that approximately 80% of intra-African trade takes place by road transportation. Consequently, regional vulnerability and overall supply-chain security exist, with the IRU (World

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<sup>2</sup> SADC. August 2020. Bulletin 11. <https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/covid-19/regional/4058-sadc-regional-response-to-covid-19-pandemic-bulletin-no-11-august-2020/file.html>

<sup>3</sup> WHO. August 2020. Situation Report. [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/334003/SITREP\\_COVID-19\\_WHOAFRO\\_20200826-eng.pdf](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/334003/SITREP_COVID-19_WHOAFRO_20200826-eng.pdf)



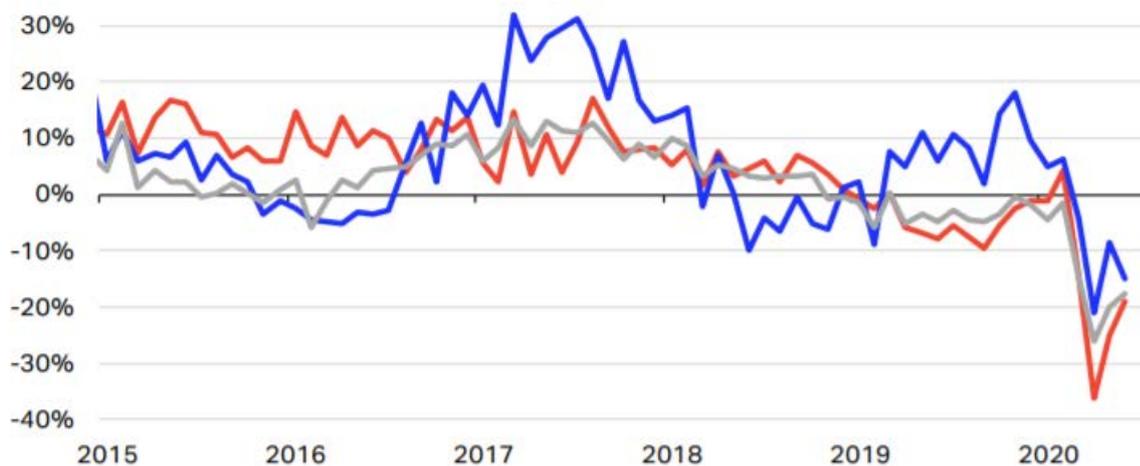
Transport Organization) reporting that the road transport industry is one of the sectors most impacted by COVID-19.

*“This is caused by transport and movement restrictions put in place by countries to manage the pandemic, resulting (in) disruptions to supply chains and (mobile) networks and the overall economic slowdown.<sup>4</sup>”*

Accordingly, there is a need for a continuous focus on improvements at respective regional border posts, especially concerning the improvement of border operations and reduction of transaction costs for trade and facilitating intra-Africa trade.

Although there has been a constant reliance on road transport throughout the region, there has been a significant increase in air freight volumes across the continent<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) reports that Africa and Middle East Region has not been affected as severely as other regions in terms of air cargo flows. The following figure shows the growth in air cargo volumes.

Figure 2 - Cargo tonne-kilometres (CTKs) growth year-on-year<sup>6</sup>



The picture is similar for ocean freights. Global maritime shipping saw a dramatic slowdown earlier this year due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. UNCTAD reports that by mid-June, the average number of container vessels arriving weekly at ports worldwide sunk to 8,722, an 8.5% year-on-year drop<sup>7</sup>.

Despite these number, the latest figures indicate that the average vessel calls have started to recover gradually around the third week of June. By early August, weekly container ship port calls in the East (most notably China and Hong Kong) had increased by 4.1% compared to the same

<sup>4</sup> IRU, June 2020. Intelligence Report.

<sup>5</sup> IATA, Regional Briefing: Africa and the Middle East. <https://www.iata.org/en/iata-repository/publications/economic-reports/regional-briefing---africa--middle-east---august-2020/>

<sup>6</sup> As above.

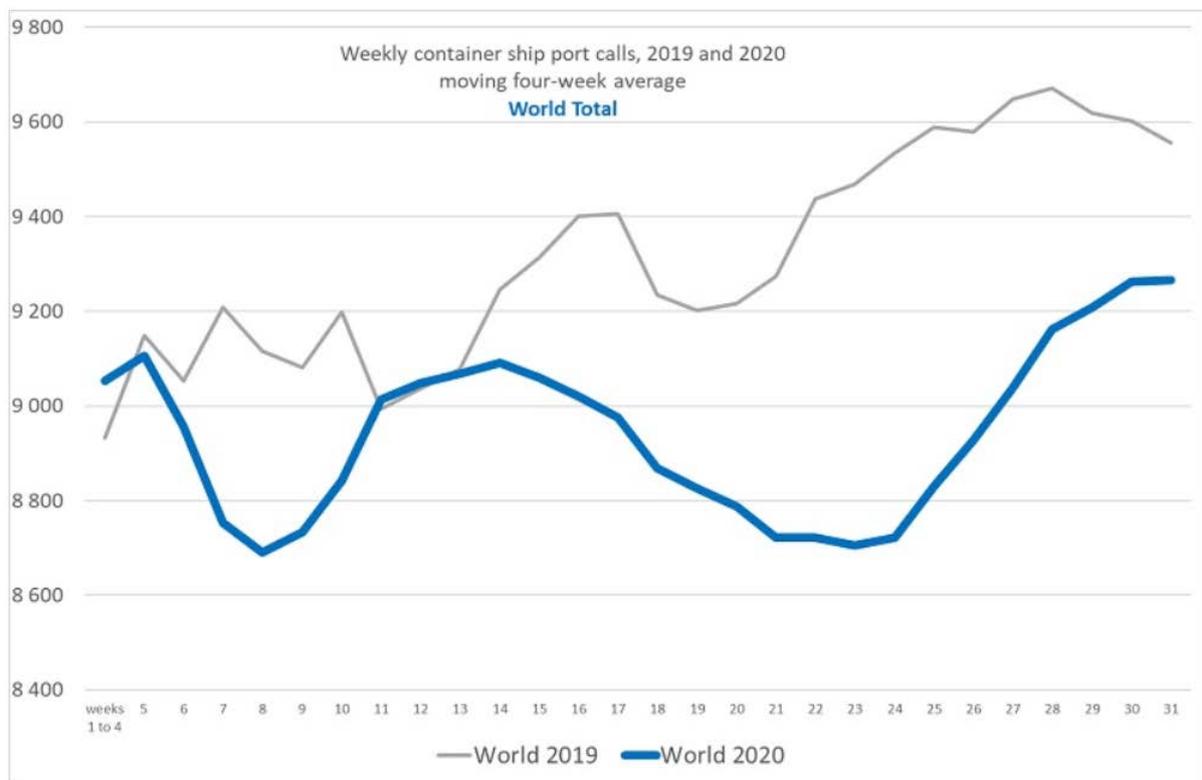
<sup>7</sup> UNCTAD, COVID-19 shipping data. <https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2466&s=09>



time in 2019. However, calls in North America and Europe were still 16.3% and 13.2% below the levels registered one year earlier.

In summary, UNCTAD reports that the regional and country trends appear to follow the progress of the pandemic, with port call patterns in South America and Africa also reflecting the delayed onset of the COVID-19 outbreak and consequent lockdowns. The following figure is a summary of the port calls made globally.

Figure 3 - Weekly container shipping port calls<sup>8</sup>



## Regional Summary

### 1. Southern Africa

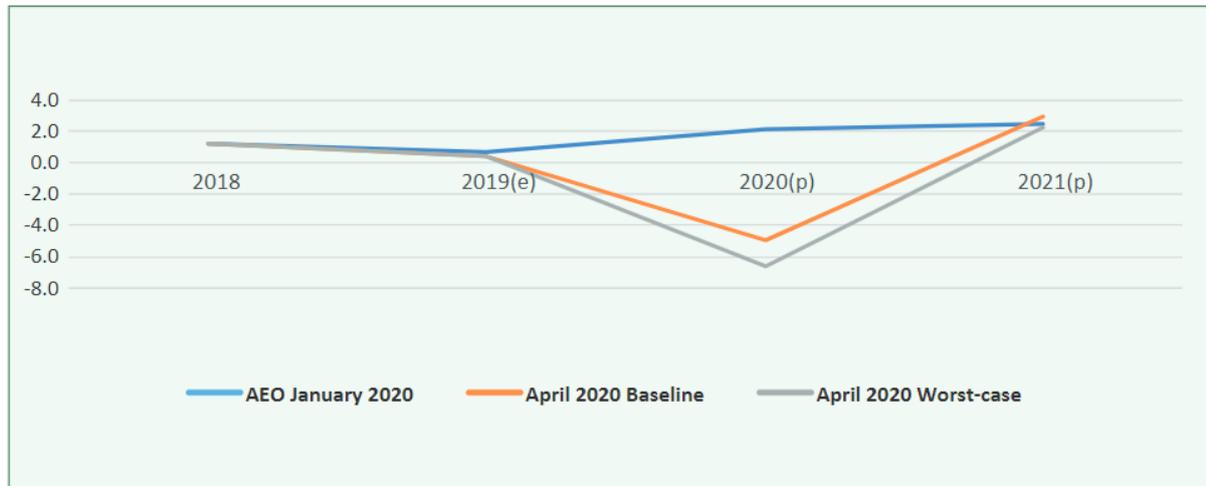
Compared with other regions in Africa, the pandemic had an enormous impact on Southern Africa to date. The enormity is mainly attributable to the severe economic impact on the largest economy in the region, namely South Africa. The country has seen its economy contract by 16% in the second quarter of 2020<sup>9</sup>. As a region, the African Development Bank (AfDB) projects that, in the worst-case scenario, growth will decline to -6.6% in 2020. Projections then indicate a recovery of 2.2% in 2021, as showcased by Figure 4 below.

<sup>8</sup> UNCTAD, COVID-19 shipping data. <https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2466&s=09>

<sup>9</sup> StatsSA, Steep slump in GDP. <http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=13601>



Figure 4 - Impact of COVID-19: Projected GDP growth in Southern Africa<sup>10</sup>



Unfortunately, the South African economic contraction is projected to spread to the rest of the Southern African economies. For the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) specifically, Botswana, eSwatini, Lesotho, and Namibia are especially vulnerable to effects felt in South Africa.

The projected economic contraction will likely have a negative impact on the region's performance on exports, with many countries being particularly dependent on export performance for growth. Other macroeconomic factors being particularly hard-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic are weakening current accounts, depreciating exchange rates, and deterioration in fiscal balances<sup>11</sup>.

## 2. Eastern Africa

On an economic note, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Eastern Africa has been less severe compared with Southern Africa, which can largely be attributed to the strong projected growth upon entering the pandemic period. Estimated regional economic growth stood at around 5.2% in 2019.

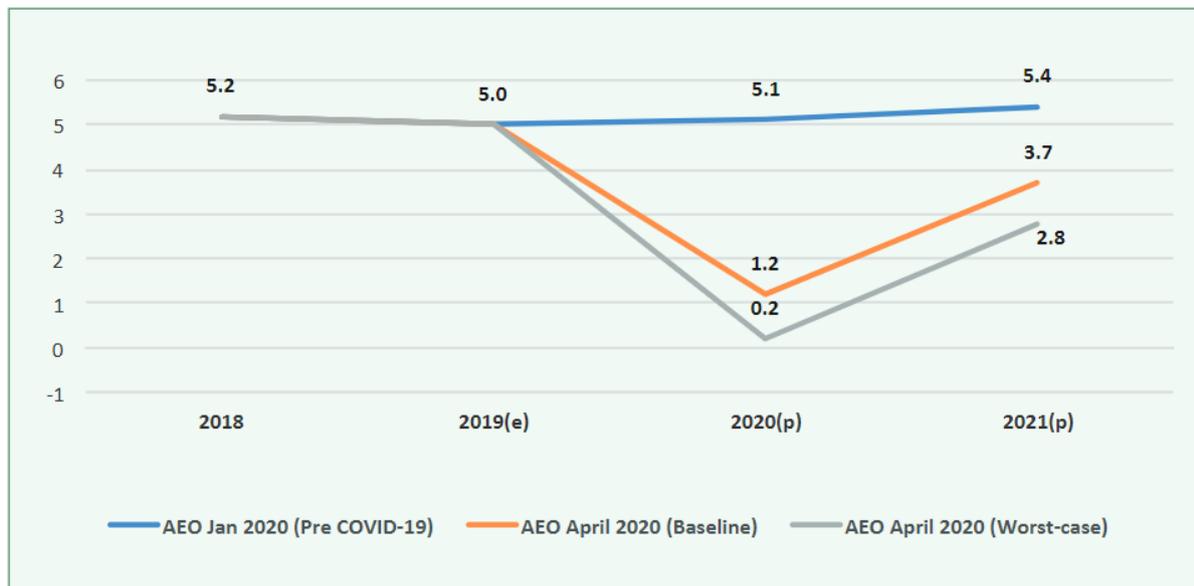
After accounting for the impact of COVID-19, the AfDB reports that baseline growth is projected to be 1.2% for 2020. In the worst-case scenario, projected growth at least remains optimistic for the year, at approximately 0.2%. Figure 5 below summarises this.

<sup>10</sup> AfDB, Southern Africa Economic Outlook 2020. <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/southern-africa-economic-outlook-2020-coping-covid-19-pandemic>

<sup>11</sup> As above.



Figure 5 - Impact of COVID-19: Projected GDP growth in Eastern Africa<sup>12</sup>



Despite the revised downward projections, a slight recovery is nevertheless projected for 2021. The optimistic forecast is cautiously made on the assumption that COVID-19 will be contained in the short to medium term. Other macroeconomic factors significantly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic are increasing inflationary pressure, government indebtedness, and progress in the reduction of poverty and inequality, according to the AfDB report<sup>13</sup>.

Notwithstanding the impacts outlined above, the region is overall better safeguarded against the effects of COVID-19. The safeguard is mainly due to its broader economic diversification and lower reliance on primary commodities.

## ESA COVID-19 Statistics

Table 1 summarises the COVID-19 statistics for the ESA region as of September 8, 2020, and also indicates the current state of border closures and lockdown statuses for the respective countries. The WCO ESA RPSG once again would like to extend its condolences to all families affected by COVID-19.

Table 1 – Covid-19 spread and border closures in East and Southern Africa – September, 8

Country	Infections	Deaths	Border Closure	Lockdown Status
 Angola	2 981	120	Borders are open to all cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (August 10), around the Luanda and Cazengo provinces.

<sup>12</sup> AfDB, East Africa Economic Outlook 2020. <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/east-africa-economic-outlook-2020-coping-covid-19-pandemic>

<sup>13</sup> As above.



East and Southern Africa  
Region

	Botswana	2126	9	Borders are open only to trade.	Partial lockdown (August 13)
	Burundi	466	1	Borders are open to all cargo and international travel.	No lockdown (August)
	Comoros	452	7	Borders are open only to trade.	Partial lockdown (August 11)
	Djibouti	5 388	61	Borders are open to all cargo and selected international travel.	Partial lockdown (August)
	Eritrea	330	0	Borders are open to all cargo and international travel.	Full lockdown (July 31)
	Eswatini	4 884	94	Borders are open only to trade.	Partial lockdown (August 31)
	Ethiopia	59 648	933	Borders are open to all cargo and selected international travel.	Partial lockdown (August)
	Kenya	35 205	599	Borders are open to all cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (August)
	Lesotho	1148	31	Borders are open only to trade.	Partial lockdown (August)
	Madagascar	15 352	202	Borders are open only to trade.	Partial lockdown (August)
	Malawi	5 621	176	Borders are open only to trade.	Partial lockdown (August 9)
	Mauritius	356	10	Borders are open to trade, with a phased opening for tourism travel.	No lockdown (August)
	Mozambique	4 557	27	Borders are open only to trade.	Partial lockdown (August 18)
	Namibia	8 810	91	Borders are open to all cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (August 31)
	Rwanda	4 409	19	Borders are open to all cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (August 1)
	Seychelles	137	0	Borders are open to all cargo and selected international travel.	Partial lockdown (August 1)
	Somalia	3 362	97	Borders are open only to trade.	Partial lockdown (August)
	South Africa	639 362	15 004	Borders are open only to trade.	Partial lockdown (August 31)
	South Sudan	2 545	48	Borders are open only to trade.	Partial lockdown (August 3)
	Tanzania	509	21	Borders are open to all cargo and international travel.	No lockdown
	Uganda	3 776	44	Borders are open only to trade.	Partial lockdown (August 29)



	Zambia	12 836	295	Borders are open to all cargo and selected international travel.	Partial lockdown (August)
	Zimbabwe	7 298	210	Borders are open only to trade.	Partial lockdown (August)

Source: [Worldometers](https://www.worldometers.info/), updated 08/09/2020

The following section summarises some policy actions of ESA governments to counter the COVID-19 effects.

## Country Summary

### 1. Angola

The national state of emergency in Angola expired on August 10, upon which the Angolan government announced that it would be extended by a month and is thus set to expire on September, 8<sup>14</sup>. The majority of lockdown regulations are concentrated around the Luanda province and Cazengo municipality. Restrictions on domestic and international travel remain in place, especially in these two areas, although trade may continue<sup>15</sup>. Most of the economy has been opened up, with the exception of cinemas, casinos, theatres, and nightclubs, which will only open on October, 15, at the earliest. Schools and universities remain closed indefinitely<sup>16</sup>.

### 2. Botswana

Botswana has lifted some of their lockdown restrictions throughout the country, which has resulted in fewer domestic travel restrictions and more economic activity. The country's capital, Gaborone, has resumed a strict lockdown, as cases climbed at an alarming rate during the end of July and early August when the lockdown regulations were relaxed. The lockdown was, however, lifted again on August 13<sup>17</sup>. This was met with some relief, as those employed in the informal sector are carrying the bulk of the damage caused by the lockdown regulations<sup>18</sup>.

### 3. Burundi

Burundi has largely remained unrestricted during the pandemic, with no hard lockdown and little social distancing<sup>19</sup>. The President of Burundi, President Pierre Nkurunziza, passed away in mid-June from a heart attack. Soon after, President Evariste Ndayishimiye was sworn in, becoming the first Burundian president to be sworn in before the people instead of before parliament. President

<sup>14</sup> World Ware. September 2020. Angola extends state calamity measures. <https://www.worldaware.com/covid-19-alert-angola-extends-state-calamity-measures-through-sept-8>

<sup>15</sup> US Embassy. August 2020. Angola COVID-19 Information. <https://ao.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information/>

<sup>16</sup> GardaWorld. September 2020. Angola extends state calamity measures. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/369281/angola-authorities-extend-state-of-calamity-measures-through-september-8-update-10>

<sup>17</sup> Grada. August 2020. Botswana Lockdown. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/369236/botswana-authorities-lift-lockdown-in-gaborone-august-13-update-12>

<sup>18</sup> VOA News. August 2020. Botswana lifts lockdown. <https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/botswana-lifts-lockdown-capital-despite-worrying-rise-covid-19-cases>

<sup>19</sup> Foreign Policy. July 2020. Will Burundi's New President Seize the Moment? <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/15/will-burundi-new-president-seize-the-moment/>



Ndayishimiye seems to agree with his predecessor in terms of handling the virus, so regulations on the pandemic have remained as they were<sup>20</sup>.

#### 4. Comoros

Authorities in Comoros on August 11 decided to extend the period of restrictions to at least August 31. Although trade is allowed, borders remain closed to international movement as well as movement between the islands. Universities and schools remain closed and public gatherings prohibited<sup>21</sup>. Also, the wearing of face masks in public has been made mandatory starting August 11<sup>22</sup>.

#### 5. Djibouti

Djibouti has had a successful lockdown period, as they managed to contain the virus to a considerable extent. In recent weeks and months, the country has reopened its borders, allowing not only for the movement of cargo across borders but also passengers. Schools and day care centres have again been reopened<sup>23</sup>. Djibouti, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration of the United Nations, has even gone to great lengths to assist vulnerable migrants from Yemen during the pandemic<sup>24</sup>.

#### 6. Eritrea

Although a national response plan has not yet been announced, authorities are following the WHO's preparedness guidelines and response actions. Access to credit has been increased for small and medium enterprises, which, hopefully, prevents complete closure.

#### 7. eSwatini

eSwatini has transitioned to a partial lockdown, with the government indicating that the ban on alcohol will remain in place for the foreseeable future<sup>25</sup>. In a release made on August 31, Minister of Health, Lizzie Nkosi, urged people to stay vigilant and continue practising good hand hygiene and social distancing<sup>26</sup>. On August 20, King Mswati III announced the government's plans to roll out a US\$1,7 billion 18-month post-Corona recovery plan<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Aljazeera. June 2020. Ndayishimiye sworn in as Burundi's new president.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/06/ndayishimiye-sworn-burundi-president-200618103042383.html>

<sup>21</sup> WordWare. August 2020. COVID-19 alert Comoros. <https://www.worldaware.com/covid-19-alert-comoros-maintains-measures-restrictions-aug-11>

<sup>22</sup> COMESA. August 2020. COVID-19 Measures of member states. <https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/covid-19/regional/4048-covid-19-measures-in-place-in-comesa-member-states-18th-edition-21-august-2020/file.html>

<sup>23</sup> US Embassy. August 2020. Djibouti COVID-19 Information. <https://dj.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information/>

<sup>24</sup> IOM. August 2020. Djibouti Situation Report.

[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IOM%20Djibouti%20Sitrep\\_31%20August%202020.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IOM%20Djibouti%20Sitrep_31%20August%202020.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> EWN. September 2020. Eswatini alcohol ban. <https://ewn.co.za/2020/09/03/eswatini-sticks-to-2-month-old-alcohol-sales-ban-amid-covid-19>

<sup>26</sup> Eswatini government. August 2020. Health Statement. <http://www.gov.sz/images/CORONA/Health-statement-COVID-31-AUGUST-2020-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> COMESA. August 2020. COVID-19 Measures of member states. <https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/covid-19/regional/4048-covid-19-measures-in-place-in-comesa-member-states-18th-edition-21-august-2020/file.html>



## 8. Ethiopia

Although some lockdown restrictions and measures remain in place, the Ethiopian government announced at the end of August that schools would reopen for the new academic year in September. There is a growing domestic<sup>28</sup> concern about the 61% drop in employment, with domestic workers bearing the bulk of the damage<sup>29</sup>. The country was due for an election in April of 2020, which was postponed to late August, however, due to the continued spread, elections were once again postponed.

Amidst the global pandemic, however, Ethiopia has continued to harbour and support refugees from Eritrea; however, with the heavy toll that the virus is taking, refugee camps are overcrowded and have too little water. Talks of closing some of the camps have caused unrest and uncertainty in the camps<sup>30</sup>.

## 9. Kenya

After the easing of lockdown restrictions in late July, along with the reopening of the tourism industry in early August<sup>31</sup> as part of a phased approach to reopening the economy, the country saw a spike in coronavirus cases. The country's economy, as is the case with most, if not all, African economies, simply cannot afford to remain closed for much longer.

As is historically the case in large parts of Africa, a significant share of the Kenyan workforce's income is generated in the informal sector, which subsequently has meant that low-income employment (such as construction and domestic work) has suffered the most under the lockdown<sup>32</sup>. The private sector has reported that the easing of restrictions has led to a "sharp uptake" in business and commercial activities<sup>33</sup>. These restrictions include the reopening of restaurants and interprovincial borders and allowing international travel for passengers<sup>34</sup>.

## 10. Lesotho

Due to a sharp increase in confirmed cases during June and July, the government has decided to reinstate some of the lockdown measures. The reinstatement followed after some measures that had been relaxed in May. Borders remain closed to the movement of people, which is a growing concern, as many labourers from Lesotho cross the border into South Africa during harvesting

<sup>28</sup> Anadolu Agency. August 2020. Ethiopians struggle to cope with COVID-19 fears. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/ethiopians-struggle-to-cope-with-covid-19-fears/1935359>

<sup>29</sup> The Star. August 2020. Pandemic dashes hopes of Ethiopian families and youth. <https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/family/2020/08/11/pandemic-dashes-hopes-of-ethiopian-families-and-youth>

<sup>30</sup> The New Humanitarian. August 2020. Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia resist camp closure. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/08/17/Ethiopia-Eritrea-refugee-camps-coronavirus>

<sup>31</sup> News24. July 2020. Kenya announces phased reopening. <https://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/kenya-announces-phased-reopening-from-coronavirus-lockdown-20200706>

<sup>32</sup> The New Humanitarian. August 2020. Kenya coronavirus informal economy. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/08/06/Kenya-coronavirus-informal-economy-mama-mbogas>

<sup>33</sup> Nasdaq. September 2020. Private sector activity. <https://www.nasdaq.com/articles/kenya-august-private-sector-activity-growth-slows-firms-cut-staff-2020-09-03>

<sup>34</sup> COMESA. August 2020. COVID-19 Measures of member states. <https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/covid-19/regional/4048-covid-19-measures-in-place-in-comesa-member-states-18th-edition-21-august-2020/file.html>



seasons for work, which they now are not able to do, thus putting further pressure on informal workers<sup>35</sup>.

## 11. Madagascar

On August 23, President Rajoelina announced that the national state of a health emergency would be extended to early September, accompanied by the easing of some measures and restrictions. President Rajoelina said that the regulations in place are becoming “economically unbearable”<sup>36</sup>. One concern is the hospitals that are filling up at a rapid pace. Restaurants can operate, and intercity travel is permitted with certain conditions and restrictions. Public transport will also resume on August 26. Domestic air travel will reopen on September 1. International flights remain suspended with the exception of cargo flights<sup>37</sup>.

## 12. Malawi

Following a spike in coronavirus cases, on August 9 the Malawian government imposed a series of restrictions to curb the spread of the virus. These included the closure of places of worship, restaurants and bars, and the strict prohibition of public gatherings of more than 50 people. The country’s borders remain closed to the entry of any passengers that are not Malawian nationals or nationals with residency<sup>38</sup>.

The Malawian government has announced that schools and airlines, which have been closed since March, may operate starting September 1<sup>39</sup>. Following the election that took place in April, the country’s president, Dr Lazarus Chakwera, seems to be winning over the Malawian people who have harboured distrust in all the country’s former elected presidents since the country gained its independence<sup>40</sup>.

## 13. Mauritius

The Mauritian government lifted all lockdown restrictions on businesses in June, and the country has seen little to no new cases following this period. The country’s borders remain closed to international travel, with the exception of cargo movements. A phased-in approach will begin in October to reopen the country’s borders to tourism<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> FEWS NET. August 2020. Lesotho Remote Monitoring Update.

[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/LS\\_RMU\\_August%202020\\_Final.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/LS_RMU_August%202020_Final.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> BBC News. August 2020. Madagascar president’s herbal tonic fails to halt Covid-19 spike. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53756752>

<sup>37</sup> Grada. September 2020. Madagascar authorities ease measures. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/371926/madagascar-authorities-ease-measures-and-extend-national-state-of-health-emergency-through-september-7-update-16>

<sup>38</sup> Grada. August 2020. Malawi new COVID-19 measures. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/367621/malawi-new-covid-19-measures-introduced-august-9-update-8>

<sup>39</sup> CNBC Africa. August 2020. Malawi to lift COVID-19 air travel and school restriction from September.

<https://www.cnbc.com/africa/coronavirus/2020/08/27/malawi-to-lift-covid-19-air-travel-school-restrictions-from-september/>

<sup>40</sup> Modern Diplomacy. September 2020. China India standoff. <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/09/07/china-india-standoff-the-emerging-world-order/>

<sup>41</sup> Tourism Mauritius. August 2020. Phased reopening of borders. <https://www.tourism-mauritius.mu/en-int/mauritius/news/prime-minister-announces-phased-reopening-borders>



In contrast to the myriad of state of emergencies declared across the world due to the pandemic, the Mauritian government announced a state of environmental crisis due to an oil spill caused when a Japanese vessel ran aground off the shore of the Pointe d'Esny area<sup>42</sup>. This has caused some unrest in the country as protests are being arranged because residents are unhappy with the government's handling of the situation<sup>43</sup>.

#### **14. Mozambique**

On August 4, President Nyusi announced that the national state of emergency would be extended to September 6. He also announced that, starting August 18, the country would begin with the first phase of the three-phased reopening of the economy, with the second phase scheduled to start in September<sup>44</sup>. Social distancing and wearing face masks in public remain mandatory<sup>45</sup>.

#### **15. Namibia**

On July 31 President Geingob announced that amid an uptake in confirmed cases, certain restrictions would be re-imposed to curb the spread of the virus, which included the closure of schools for 28 days and public gatherings were reduced to 100 people. The state of emergency will remain in effect until September 17<sup>46</sup>. Stage 3 restrictions were imposed from 12 to August 28<sup>47</sup>.

On August 26, the president announced that the ban on foreign arrivals would be lifted from September 1, with specific health and safety regulations in place<sup>48</sup>.

#### **16. Rwanda**

Starting August 1, the country has reopened Kigali International Airport and eased restrictions, allowing people to visit places of worship and reopening some non-essential businesses. Certain areas with higher infection rates are subject to enhanced restrictions should government deem it necessary<sup>49</sup>.

Due to a spike in confirmed cases, travel restrictions were imposed between the capital of Kigali and the district of Rusizi. In some areas, businesses are expected to operate at 50% capacity while

<sup>42</sup> Grada. August 2020. Mauritius Authorities declare state of environmental emergency. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/367246/mauritius-authorities-declare-state-of-environmental-emergency-due-to-oil-spill-august-7>

<sup>43</sup> Grada. August 2020. Mauritius nationwide protest. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/373831/mauritius-nationwide-protests-over-oil-spill-to-be-held-august-29>

<sup>44</sup> US Embassy. August 2020. Mozambique COVID-19 measures. <https://mz.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information/#:~:text=On%20August%205%2C%20President%20Nyusi,social%20distancing%20measures%2C%20and%20limits>

<sup>45</sup> Grada. August 2020. Mozambique authorities announce new state of emergency. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/366521/mozambique-authorities-announce-new-state-of-emergency-and-plans-to-ease-restrictions-august-5-update-8>

<sup>46</sup> Grada. July 2020. Mozambique authorities reimpose lockdown measures. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/365346/namibia-authorities-to-reimpose-some-covid-19-restrictions-july-31-update-8>

<sup>47</sup> Grada. August 2020. Namibian authorities tighten restrictions. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/369286/namibia-authorities-tighten-covid-19-restrictions-from-august-12-28-update-9>

<sup>48</sup> Grada. August 2020. Namibian authorities to lift ban in foreign arrivals from September. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/373176/namibia-authorities-to-lift-ban-on-foreign-arrivals-from-september-1-update-10>

<sup>49</sup> Grada. August 2020. Rwanda international commercial flights to resume from August. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/363946/rwanda-international-commercial-flights-to-resume-from-august-1-update-12>



businesses in high-risk areas are expected to close up completely<sup>50</sup>. The sudden spread of the virus is linked in large to two markets that operated in Kigali, which were closed on August 16<sup>51</sup>.

## 17. Seychelles

As a country that is heavily reliant on tourism to generate income, the reopening of the tourism industry was a great relief. On August 1, the government reopened its borders to international flights and leisure vessels, but only for visitors from low and medium-risk countries<sup>52</sup>. The reopening of borders comes with stringent health and safety measures to ensure the virus remains at bay<sup>53</sup>.

## 18. Somalia

Amidst the pandemic, unrest continues in Somalia as the United States targeted a senior commander of the Al-Shabab force<sup>54</sup>. The country still has minimal restrictions in place, and testing for the virus remains difficult under current circumstances. There are concerns that the group that controls the majority of the more rural areas of the country will prevent humanitarian partners from accessing the region (as was the case in the 2017 cholera outbreak)<sup>55</sup>. In addition to all this, in early August the country had its third battle (apart from the coronavirus and civil unrest) to fight, namely a Locust crisis in the northern and central regions of the country<sup>56</sup>.

## 19. South Africa

On August 17, President Ramaphosa announced that the country would enter into level 2 of the five-stage restriction easing process. The national state of disaster was extended to September 15. The majority of economic activity has been reopened. At the end of August, overall ocean freight stood at approximately 87% compared to the same time in 2019, with international air freight being down to around 39% compared to last year.

Unrest is, however growing in the country as multiple protests and altercations with police have dominated the news. These protests covered a range of issues including gender-based violence, police brutality, anti-corruption, anti-immigration, and strikes by healthcare workers due to poor working conditions and inadequate supplies of PPE.

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<sup>50</sup> Grada. August 200. Rwanda curfew extended. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/373201/rwanda-curfew-extended-and-additional-restrictions-introduced-on-august-26-following-surge-in-covid-19-cases-update-14>

<sup>51</sup> Grada August 2020. Rwanda curfew extended. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/373201/rwanda-curfew-extended-and-additional-restrictions-introduced-on-august-26-following-surge-in-covid-19-cases-update-14>

<sup>52</sup> Grada. August 2020. Seychelles authorities announce the resumption of commercial passenger flights. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/356546/seychelles-authorities-announce-the-resumption-of-commercial-passenger-flights-from-august-1-update-5>

<sup>53</sup> IOL. August 2020. Seychelles to welcome tourists back in August. <https://www.iol.co.za/travel/africa/seychelles-to-welcome-tourists-back-in-august-but-under-strict-conditions-50591409>

<sup>54</sup> Grada. August 2020. Somalia US airstrike targets Al Shabaab commander <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/372616/somalia-us-airstrike-targets-al-shabaab-commander-near-saakow-middle-juba-region-on-august-25>

<sup>55</sup> AP News. March 2020. In Somalia, coronavirus goes from fairy tale to nightmare. <https://apnews.com/b23baf8f62dfda03b6ef73777175e8d9>

<sup>56</sup> IOM. July 2020. Somalia COVID-19 Preparedness and Response. <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/iom-somalia-covid-19-preparedness-and-response-mission-update-19-26-july-1-august>



In addition to the matters outlined above, the country has been plunged into temporary darkness as load shedding is reinstated because of the national power utility Eskom's struggles to meet the domestic electricity demand<sup>57</sup>.

## **20. South Sudan**

The country already started easing lockdown measures in early May, and the virus does not seem to be spreading at a rapid pace. This can, however, be attributed to the fact that testing remains an issue, especially in refugee camps<sup>58</sup>. The conflict within the country complicates the fight against the virus with contributing factors such as poverty and starvation, causing as much as if not more damage than the virus<sup>59</sup>.

## **21. Tanzania**

The majority of restrictions will be eased, with schools and universities reopening. The Tanzanian government has also started relaxing the rules on public gatherings<sup>60</sup>. As the country approaches the elections scheduled for October of this year, some unrest has developed<sup>61</sup>, with the headquarters of the opposition party being burnt down on August 14<sup>62</sup>.

## **22. Uganda**

At the end of July, through to the start of August, non-essential businesses have been allowed to reopen as lockdown restrictions were relaxed<sup>63</sup>. During the last weeks of August, the country has seen an increase in confirmed cases. President Museveni declared August 29 a public holiday as a day of prayer in response to the coronavirus pandemic<sup>64</sup>.

## **23. Zambia**

Although Zambia did not impose a full lockdown, due in part to the country's reliance on the informal sector to generate income, but restrictions were put in place, especially on the movement of people and the closure of borders<sup>65</sup>. The Zambian government has started to relax some of the restrictions, including opening the country's borders to tourism, but under strict

<sup>57</sup> Daily Maverick. September 2020. Level 2 brings a new normal and loadshedding. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-09-03-level-2-brings-a-new-normal-and-load-shedding/>

<sup>58</sup> WFP. August 2020. External Situation Report #13. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WFP-0000118512.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> IPS News. September 2020. South Sudan COVID-19 and ongoing violence has catastrophic impact on civilians. <http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/09/south-sudan-covid-19-and-ongoing-violence-has-catastrophic-impact-on-civilians/>

<sup>60</sup> Grada. August 2020. Tanzania authorities announce restrictions for all travelers entering the country. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/366236/tanzania-authorities-announce-restrictions-for-all-travelers-entering-the-country-august-1-update-7>

<sup>61</sup> The Conversation. August 2020. At the edge of democracy. <https://theconversation.com/at-the-edge-of-democracy-what-the-upcoming-general-election-holds-in-store-for-tanzania-144601>

<sup>62</sup> Grada. August 2020. Tanzania opposition party office burned down in Arusha. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/369336/tanzania-opposition-party-office-burned-down-in-arusha-august-14>

<sup>63</sup> Grada. July 2020. Uganda COVID-19 restrictions eased as curfew hours reduced. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/362066/uganda-covid-19-restrictions-eased-as-curfew-hours-reduced-july-22-update-11>

<sup>64</sup> Grada. August 2020. Uganda President Museveni declares public holiday. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/373256/uganda-president-museveni-declares-public-holiday-and-day-of-prayer-on-august-29>

<sup>65</sup> Daily Maverick. August 2020. Human rights and Zambia's new normal. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-08-21-covid-19-human-rights-and-zambias-new-normal/>



regulations<sup>66</sup>. There have been some allegations of the government's implementation of the restrictions being inconsistent, and uncertainty due to lack of constant communication with the people is growing<sup>67</sup>.

## 24. Zimbabwe

A considerable portion of restrictions remains in place with restrictions on inter-regional travel and a ban on public gatherings and events<sup>68</sup>. The country's borders remain closed with the exception of the movement of cargo and citizens returning home<sup>69</sup>. Schools are expected to reopen in mid-September<sup>70</sup>.

The United States and European Union (EU) have expressed concern regarding the number of opposition activists and government critics that have been arrested during the pandemic<sup>71</sup>. Anti-government protests are also increasing<sup>72</sup>.

## Updates and Recommendations from Regional Economic Communities in ESA

### 1. COMESA:

The COMESA Extra-Ordinary Council of Ministers issued a set of guidelines for the movement of goods and services across the COMESA region during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report continuously emphasises the importance of cooperation and free movement of goods in the region, primarily to ensure the effectiveness of supply chains. Some of these guidelines include<sup>73</sup>:

- a. Prioritising the clearance of essential goods and relief consignments within the region.
- b. Facilitate the movement of essential products, food supplies, pharmaceuticals, and medical equipment, including PPE, into the region.
- c. Apply risk management and perform inspections on essential products only when deemed high risk.
- d. Encourage coordination of inspections by Customs Authorities and other government agencies (OGAs) to speed up the process.

<sup>66</sup> Travel bans. August 2020. Zambia. <https://travelbans.org/africa/zambia/>

<sup>67</sup> Daily Maverick. August 2020. Human rights and Zambia's new normal. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-08-21-covid-19-human-rights-and-zambias-new-normal/>

<sup>68</sup> Grada. August 2020. Zimbabwe reduce COVID-19 curfew hours. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/370591/zimbabwe-authorities-reduce-covid-19-curfew-hours-august-18-update-13>

<sup>69</sup> US Embassy. August 2020. Zimbabwe COVID-19 Information. <https://zw.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information-2/>

<sup>70</sup> Xinhua Net. September 2020. Zimbabwean schools reopen on Sept 14. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-09/02/c\\_139335333.htm#:~:text=English.news.cn,Zimbabwean%20schools%20to%20reopen%20on%20Sept.%2014%20after%20nearly%20six,closure%20due%20to%20COVID-19&text=HARARE%2C%20Sept.%201%20\(Xinhua,to%20the%20COVID-19%20pandemic.](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-09/02/c_139335333.htm#:~:text=English.news.cn,Zimbabwean%20schools%20to%20reopen%20on%20Sept.%2014%20after%20nearly%20six,closure%20due%20to%20COVID-19&text=HARARE%2C%20Sept.%201%20(Xinhua,to%20the%20COVID-19%20pandemic.)

<sup>71</sup> EWN, August 2020. US EU warn against Zimbabwe using coronavirus for crackdown. <https://ewn.co.za/2020/08/28/us-eu-warn-against-zimbabwe-using-coronavirus-for-crackdown>

<sup>72</sup> Grada. August 2020. Zimbabwe. [https://www.garda.com/search?query=Zimbabwe&sort\\_by=created](https://www.garda.com/search?query=Zimbabwe&sort_by=created)

<sup>73</sup> COMESA. 2020. Guidelines for the movement of goods and services across the COMESA region during the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.comesa.int/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidelines-for-the-Movement-of-Goods-Services-Across-COMESA-Region-2.pdf>



- e. Facilitate and encourage the use of e-commerce and electric payment platforms to reduce the use of cash and curb the spread of the virus.
- f. Ensure that the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation measures does not create unnecessary obstacles in the supply chain.

## 2. EAC:

The EAC's COVID-19 response plan includes a list of areas to focus on once the necessary steps for curbing the spread of the virus has been implemented<sup>74</sup>. These focus areas include:

- a. Develop and share guidelines to partner states to support and maintain quality care.
- b. Provide information to the staff of EAC organs and institutions and people in the community to help them manage the risk of exposure and reduce the spread of the virus.
- c. Capacity strengthening for the EAC partner states in various areas.
- d. Share relevant scientific knowledge and conduct regional research to guide policy and practice.
- e. High-level advocacy for resources.
- f. Facilitate the movement of goods and services in the region, including support to Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs).

## 3. SADC:

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Response to COVID-19 Pandemic has released its eight report, listing a range of crucial recommendations for the region along with an update on the progress of treatment testing<sup>75</sup>.

### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

- Safely manage healthcare waste resulting from COVID-19 and safely contain dead bodies as part of infection prevention measures.
- Prioritise district and sub-national response and interventions to realise results fully of their intervention at the national level.
- Engage in frequent hand hygiene using appropriate techniques.
- Implement regular environmental cleaning and disinfection practices.
- Managing excreta safely.
- Develop and implement a regional strategy on hygiene and hand washing. The focus should not only be on risk communication and community engagement but should also include support for the provision of handwashing infrastructure and products to households.

<sup>74</sup> EAC Secretariat. 2020. East African Community COVID-19 Response Plan. <https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/covid-19/regional/3466-eac-covid-19-response-plan-april-2020/file.html>

<sup>75</sup> SADC. August 2020. SADC regional respons Bulletin 11. <https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/covid-19/regional/4058-sadc-regional-response-to-covid-19-pandemic-bulletin-no-11-august-2020/file.html>



## Transport

- Amend and align national transport guidelines in line with the Tripartite Guidelines on Trade and Transport Facilitation for Safe, Efficient and Cost-Effective Movement of Goods and Services during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Notify about plans to introduce and or amend new taxes and fees applicable to cross-border trade and transport operations through the Secretariat.
- Notify of temporary closures or changes to operating hours of points of entry through the Secretariat.
- Establish and or designate National Trade Facilitation Committees with expanded membership to include Public Health Experts to coordinate the implementation of SADC Guidelines/SOPs.
- Share information on additional commodities that can move cross border, designated routes waypoints, truck stops and fuelling points to be used by commercial truck drivers and revised and new regulations affecting cross-border trade and transport through the Secretariat.

## Food and Nutrition Security

- Encourage crop diversification through the promotion of diversified diets, including indigenous foods. The broadening includes species diversification in livestock production, especially small ruminants that are adapted to harsh weather conditions.
- Share information on additional commodities that can move cross-border, designated routes, waypoints, truck stops and fuelling points to be used by commercial truck drivers and revised and new regulations affecting cross-border trade and transport through the Secretariat.
- Assist food and nutrition insecure populations, including women and children and ensure harmonisation with national shock-responsive social protection programmes.
- Address market-related challenges for small-scale farmers by improving and developing the road infrastructure to improve farmers' access to markets and suppliers for enhanced production.
- Strengthen mechanisms that prevent the impact of COVID-19 from disrupting the food supply chains and associated livelihoods by minimising disruption to farming operations, enabling access to production inputs and critical emergency veterinary drugs and markets by farming households and communities.

## Economic Recovery

- Develop economic recovery plans to ensure, among others, improvements in macro-economic indicators, revive job creation, and fast track government efforts towards mobilising resources to revitalise heavily affected sectors at the national level.
- Develop resilience-building initiatives, including employment creation in rural areas, incorporating climate-smart technologies in subsidies, and conservation agriculture.
- Provide an indirect income transfer to households and communities to buffer the negative economic and food security consequences of COVID-19. Where on-site distribution of school meals is not feasible, consider providing or larger take-home rations or cash-based transfers.



- Pay special attention to the rising cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic by, among others, ensuring that women and girls are protected from all forms of abuse. Shelters, places of safety and helplines for victims of abuse must be considered an essential service and remain open for use and must be afforded the necessary financial and other support.
- Furthermore, Member States are to incorporate gender perspectives in all responses to COVID-19 to ensure that actions during and after the COVID-19 crisis aim to build equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies.

## Conclusion

This update – *the fourth of its kind* – contained an overview in respect of the flow of goods in and out of the 24 respective countries that form part of the ESA region. The majority of ESA countries have eased lockdown measures in an attempt to reboot their respective economies as the infection rates have started to slow down. Nonetheless, striking a balance between life and livelihoods remains important.

Many ESA member countries still have some form of economic lockdown in place. The inactivity in many industries continues to be a strain on overall economic activities, not to mention the livelihood of its people. As mentioned in the previous report, the concerns for food security, income generation, and – in some countries – even social unrest with reports of police brutality remains as apparent as ever.

Regionally, the collective economy is expected to contract between -3% and -5%. This will also have a lasting effect on trade throughout the region; however, some countries will be worse affected than others. Internationally, Global GDP is projected at -4.9% in 2020<sup>76</sup>, which will in all likelihood further negatively impact the trading industry. As such, global trade is expected to fall to around 18.5% compared to last year, according to the WTO<sup>77</sup>.

These figures necessitate a recovery plan of some sorts. Ultimately, the size of impact and path of recovery could vary significantly across commodity groups, depending on the supply and demand shocks. As such, economic recovery for the region's supply chain broadly depends on three key factors:

1. Upward trends in the global economy and the ESA Members' respective trading partners,
2. The efficacy of the support measures taken by each country so far, and
3. The resilience of the local trading community in successfully returning to full operation when the lockdown is over and attaining higher volumes compared to pre-lockdown levels.

<sup>76</sup> IMF, 2020. World Economic Outlook. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/06/24/WEOUpdateJune2020>

<sup>77</sup> WTO, 2020. Trade falls steeply in first half of 2020. [https://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/pres20\\_e/pr858\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/pres20_e/pr858_e.htm)