



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

ESA COVID-19 situation report

September/October 2020





Introduction

This update – *the fifth of its kind* – contains an overview of the flow of goods for 24 respective countries that form the East and Southern Africa (ESA) region. The update covers the period of September to October 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.

At the beginning of the year, most countries decided to close their borders and to ban international flights, enforcing lockdowns across the world in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There has been a global effort to curb the spread of the virus. As the spread of the virus has started to slow down, countries have begun gradually reopening their borders, bringing some much-needed relief to strained economies.

In terms of infections, the ESA region currently accounts for approximately 60%¹ 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.

Although the spread of the virus has shown signs of slowing in recent weeks and months, it is crucial to remember that this does not mean the crisis has passed. Countries should take caution in reopening borders and resuming economic activities. 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. The 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. It consists of

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

Continent Summary

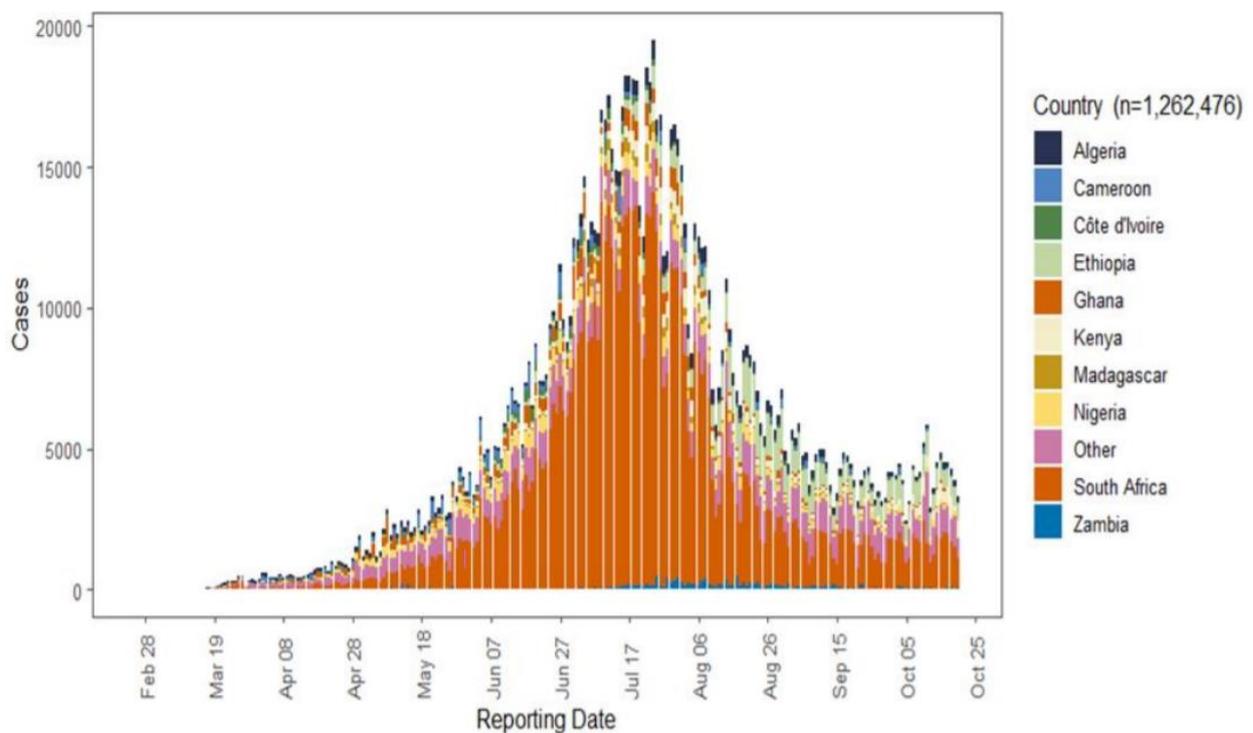
Compared to the rest of the world, Africa's infections were delayed by approximately six months, with the virus beginning to spread rapidly across the continent only in June/July. By August, however, the spread started to taper down, mostly due to the rapid decline in cases in South

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



Africa, which has been the region’s most affected country in terms of infections. Figure 1 shows following the rapid descent from June to August. The infection rate across the continent remained constant over from August to October. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recorded only a 1% decrease in infections over the final week of reporting (14 to 20 October), indicating that the spread of the virus is no longer slowing at a significant rate. Although the spread of the virus has not drastically decreased in recent weeks, the WHO estimates that new deaths have decreased by 37% in the African region.

Figure 1 – Epi curve of confirmed COVID-19 in the WHO Africa Region, 25 February to 20 October²



WHO Regional Director for Africa stated that, although COVID-19 is a serious challenge which has caused much damage, it has also sparked an increase in innovation and technology across the continent. The pandemic has given the region the necessary drive to increase focus around innovation, ingenuity, and entrepreneurship. The organisation has emphasised the need to continue with the investment in information and communications technology (ICT). These facets of ICT include infrastructure, artificial intelligence, robotics, and related fields of technological developments³.

² WHO. October 2020. Situation Report. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SITREP_COVID-19_WHOAFRO_20201021-eng.pdf

³ WHO. 2020. Weekly operational update on COVID-19. 30 October. <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/weekly-operational-update---30-october-2020>.



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.

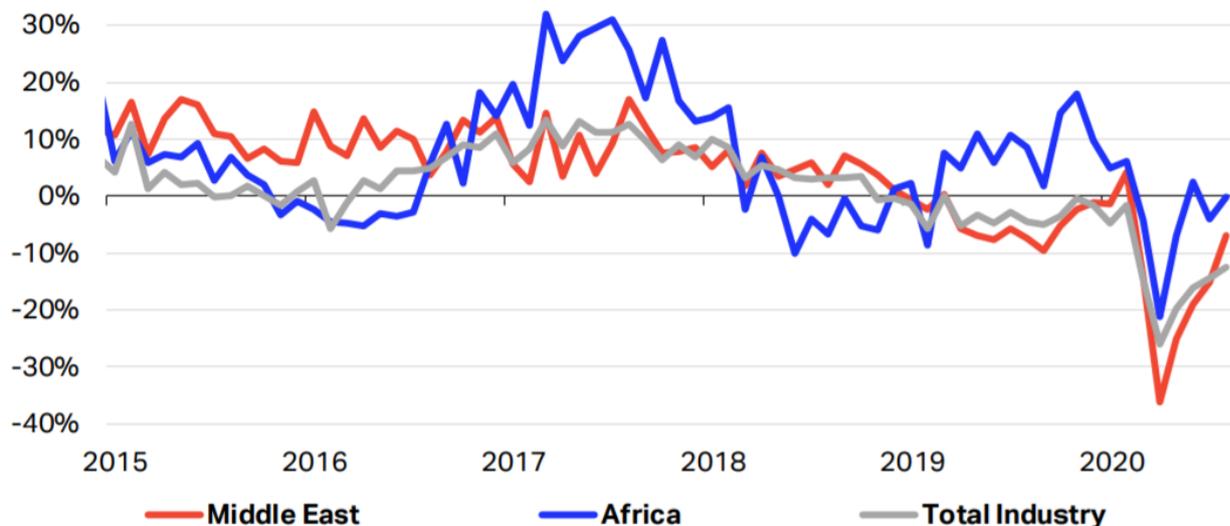
It is estimated that approximately 80% of intra-African trade takes place by road transportation. Consequently, regional vulnerability and overall supply-chain security exist, with the IRU (World Transport Organization) reporting that the road transport industry is one of the sectors most impacted by 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.”⁴

Accordingly, there is a need for a continuous focus on improvements at all regional border posts. Improvements are especially needed for the reduction of transaction costs and facilitation of intra-Africa trade.

Although the region has continuously shown a reliance on road freight, the area shows considerable growth in air freight volumes. International Air Transport Association (IATA) shows that the continent recovered faster than other regions following the pandemic, as can be seen in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 - Cargo tonne-kilometres (CTKs) growth year-on-year for October⁵



The African continent shows the year-on-year growth of 9.7% for September 2020, which is a notable improvement to the 1% growth in August. Figure 3 below shows that although the African

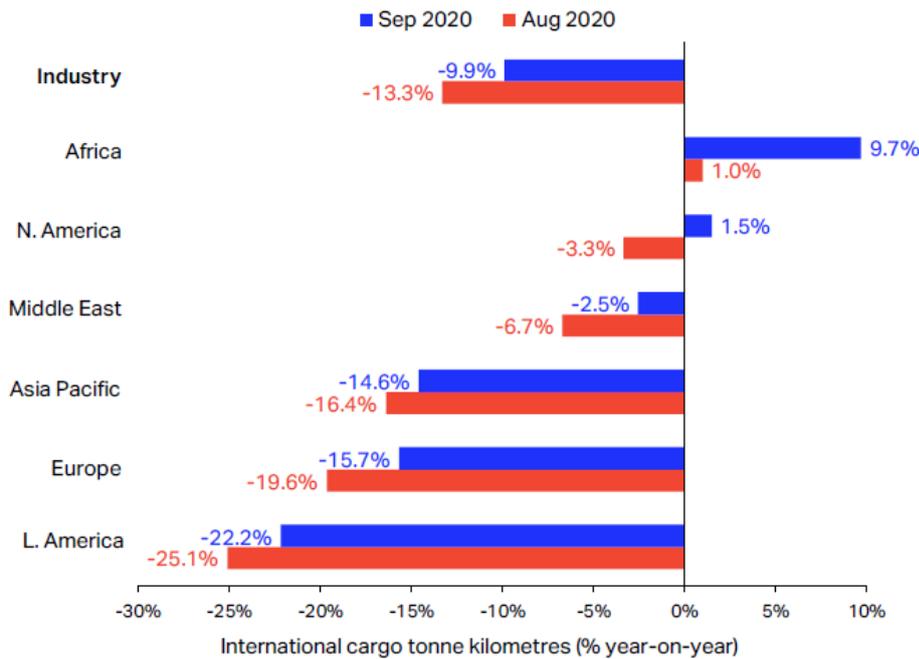
⁴ IRU, June 2020. Intelligence Report.

⁵ IATA. 2020. <https://www.iata.org/en/iata-repository/publications/economic-reports/regional-briefing---africa--middle-east---october-2020/>



continent has experienced improved conditions, the rest of the world is still struggling to recover following the pandemic, with a year-on-year decline of 9.9% for September.

Figure 3 Cargo tonne-kilometres (CTKs) growth year-on-year for August and September⁶



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 drop⁷.

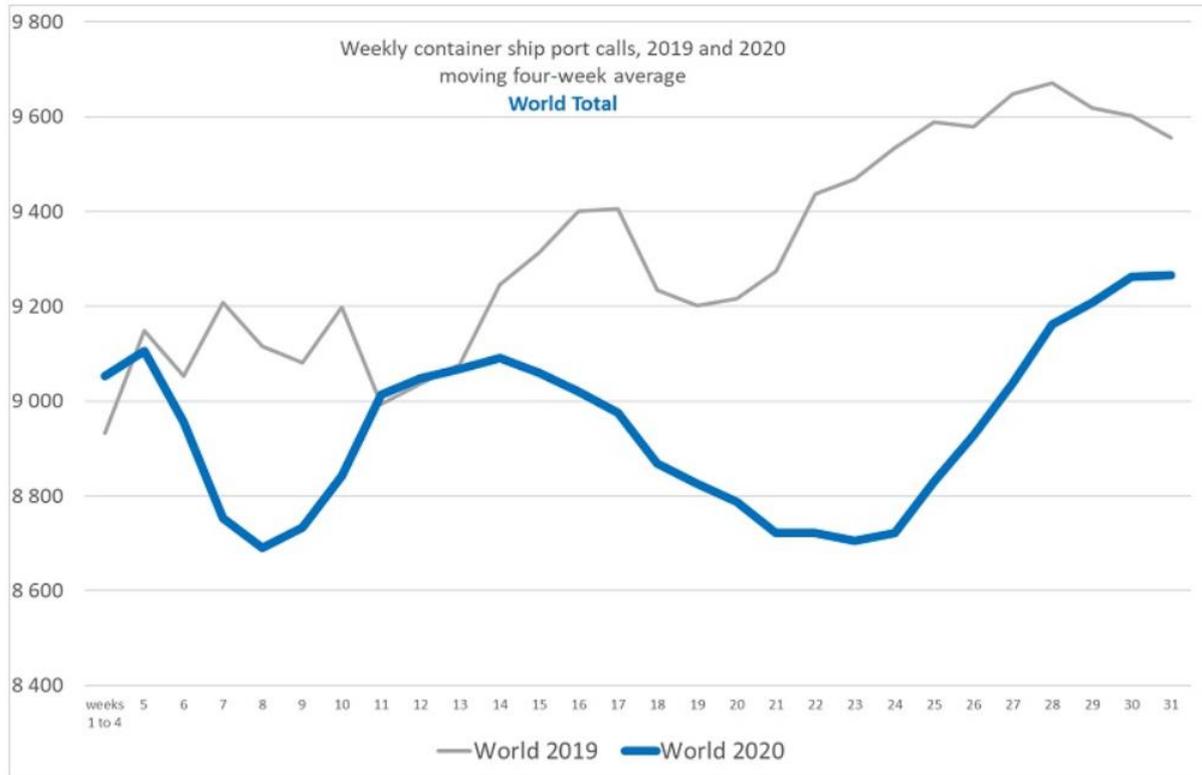
Furthermore, UNCTAD reports that the regional and country trends appear to follow the progress of the pandemic, with port call patterns in South America and Africa also reflecting the delayed onset of the COVID-19 outbreak and consequent lockdowns. The following figure is a summary of the port calls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

⁶ IATA. 2020. Air Cargo Market Analysis. <https://www.iata.org/en/iata-repository/publications/economic-reports/air-freight-monthly-analysis---september-2020/>

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



Figure 4 - Weekly container shipping port calls⁸



As the figure illustrates, the number of port calls are picking up; however, 2020 numbers are still far less compared with the same time last year. As a consequence of the pandemic, many ports throughout the world still have restrictions involving crew changes. The following image highlights the current situation in Africa.

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



Figure 5 - Weekly container shipping port calls⁹



The available information on the regions shows that most countries are ‘open for maritime business’, except for Angola and Mozambique. These two countries currently do not allow for crew changes.

ESA COVID-19 Statistics

Table 1 summarises the COVID-19 statistics for the ESA region as of 8 September 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

⁹ Wilhelmsen Ship Service. COVID-19 Port restrictions. <https://www.wilhelmsen.com/ships-agency/campaigns/coronavirus/coronavirus-map/>



East and Southern Africa
Region

Country	Infections	Deaths	Border Closure	Lockdown Status
 Angola	13 053	315	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (10 August),
 Botswana	8 225	27	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (13 August)
 Burundi	623	1	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	No lockdown (August)
 Comoros	574	7	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (11 August)
 Djibouti	5 641	61	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (August)
 Eritrea	493	0	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Full lockdown (31 July)
 Eswatini	6 060	117	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (31 August)
 Ethiopia	101 248	1 554	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (August)
 Kenya	66 723	1 203	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (August)
 Lesotho	2 026	44	Borders are open only to trade.	Partial lockdown (August)
 Madagascar	17 223	249	Borders are open only to trade.	Partial lockdown (August)
 Malawi	5 958	185	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (9 August)
 Mauritius	468	10	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	No lockdown (August)
 Mozambique	14 094	104	Borders are open only to trade.	Partial lockdown (18 August)
 Namibia	13 345	135	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (31 August)
 Rwanda	5 319	41	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (1 August)
 Seychelles	160	0	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (1 August)



	Somalia	4 301	107	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (August)
	South Africa	744 732	20 076	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (31 August)
	South Sudan	2 960	59	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (3 August)
	Tanzania	509	21	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	No lockdown
	Uganda	15 217	143	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (29 August)
	Zambia	17 056	350	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (August)
	Zimbabwe	8 696	255	Borders are open to cargo and international travel.	Partial lockdown (August)

Source: [Worldometers](#), updated 14/11/2020

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

Country Summary

1. Angola

On 28 October the Angolan government announced that the state of public calamity, initially imposed on 26 May, will be extended until at least 22 November. The country's capital, Luanda, however, remains closed according to reports¹⁰. The majority of the country's economy has opened up, with domestic flights resuming on 14 September and international flights, to a selected group of destinations, reopened on 21 September¹¹.

The border between Angola and the DRC has experienced some strain in terms of illegal immigrants crossing the borders, the fear being that these people could carry the virus across the border. In an attempt to combat this, 92 DRC citizens have been arrested and repatriated by 17 October¹².

Although the pandemic has caused severe damage to the country and its economy, on a positive side, however, the country's digitalisation of business is experiencing extremely positive growth.

¹⁰ Embassy of Sweden. 2020. <https://www.swedenabroad.se/en/embassies/angola-luanda/current/news/observations-on-the-state-of-emergency-that-has-been-in-place-in-angola-since-00.00-on-march-27-2020/>.

¹¹ GardaWorld. 2020. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/394201/angola-authorities-extend-nationwide-state-of-public-calamity-until-november-22-update-13>

¹² All Africa. 2020. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202010190150.html>



The movement towards a more digitalised economy has allowed companies to move towards a more online-based approach allowing the people from Luanda to gain access to medical services, food vendors, and pharmaceuticals through online platforms¹³.

In contrast, however, the declining oil prices have placed a massive strain on the country's economy. The heavy impact the drop in oil prices have had on Angola's economy has prompted UNCTAD to encourage the nation to diversify their exports while digitalising and automating their border posts, specifically mentioning implementing a single-window system¹⁴.

In October, the secretary of state for planning, Milton Reis, announced that the country has plans to extend the Luanda railroad by 1 000km, to lengthen the southern corridor to the copper belt of Zambia. Overall, the government is working to establish Angola as a logistics hub for southern Africa, especially for transshipments¹⁵.

2. Botswana

Botswana's economy, like every other economy across the world, has suffered under the virus. However, some positive news has been reported for the banking sector. The rate at which businesses default on their loan repayments has not increased due to the pandemic¹⁶. Adding to the good news, the District Health Management Team official said that she is satisfied with the transportation sector and the business community's adherence to COVID-19 regulations¹⁷.

Nonetheless, in September, authorities announced that the state of public emergency would be extended to March 2021 due to a reported steady increase in COVID-19 cases¹⁸. Furthermore, to alleviate some constraints on the current commercial operations, Botswana authorities announced that private charter flights would be accepted starting November¹⁹.

3. Burundi

Burundi has largely remained unrestricted during the pandemic, with no hard lockdown and little social distancing²⁰. Over the last couple of weeks of October, Burundi has reported new coronavirus cases in the country²¹. Despite this, the government has announced that Melchior Ndadaye International Airport in early November²². Towards the end of October, President Ndayishimiye visited Equatorial Guinea, resulting in talks about cooperative agreements. The two

¹³ Euronews. 2020. <https://www.euronews.com/2020/09/09/how-covid-19-is-accelarating-business-digitalisation-in-angola>

¹⁴ UNCTAD. 2020. <https://unctad.org/news/covid-19-affirms-urgency-trade-facilitation-reforms-angola>

¹⁵ Libin ChackoKurian. 2020. Angola, country that could become logistics hub for southern Africa.

<https://www.logupdateafrica.com/angola-country-that-could-become-logistics-hub-for-southern-africa>

¹⁶ CGTN Africa. 2020. <https://africa.cgtn.com/2020/11/04/covid-19-lockdown-leads-to-credit-growth-slumps-in-botswana/>.

¹⁷ All Africa. 2020. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202010130165.html>

¹⁸ WorldWare. 2020. Authoritiesm Botswana extend state of public emergency. <https://www.worldaware.com/intelligence-alert-authorities-botswana-extend-state-public-emergency-march-2021-due-covid-19>.

¹⁹ IOL. 2020. Botswana opens borders for private chartered flights.

²⁰ Foreign Policy. July 2020. Will Burundi's New President Seize the Mom<https://www.iol.co.za/travel/africa/botswana-opens-borders-for-private-chartered-flights-bc070083-38b4-58c2-9695-ea3f2abdab1dent?> <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/15/will-burundi-new-president-seize-the-moment/>

²¹ Fabrice Iranzi. 2020. Burundi records new coronavirus cases. <https://regionweek.com/burundi-records-new-coronavirus-cases/>

²² Airport Technology. 2020. Burundi set to reopened Mechior Ndadaye International Airport. <https://www.airport-technology.com/news/burundi-melchior-ndadaye-international-airport/>.



heads of state noted the importance of cooperation between African countries in these trying times²³

4. Comoros

As the pandemic begins to quiet down, Comoros has continued to reduce lockdown measures, with international passenger flights reopening early in September. Domestic flights and travel between islands have resumed, and schools and universities reopened early October²⁴.

5. Djibouti

Djibouti has reopened all land and sea borders, with domestic travel resuming, although with strict limitations. The country has had a relatively successful lockdown, curbing the spread of the virus²⁵. Djibouti is taking advantage of Ethiopia's rapid growth, attempting to establish Djibouti as global trade, logistics and industrial hub, driven by the Vision Djibouti 2035²⁶. On a less positive note, a group of migrants arriving at the Djiboutian shore from Yemen, highlighting the problematic situation in the region regarding migrants and the lack of resources to assist them in these trying times properly²⁷.

6. Eritrea

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the country a considerable amount of damage, Eritrea is facing another, and possibly more devastating pandemic, desert locust. Although these pests have always been a regional challenge, recent climate changes have made the problem grow at a rapid pace. The impact of the pest outbreak has hit the country especially hard in combination with the Coronavirus pandemic²⁸. In contrast, the government has handled the Coronavirus quite well, in part due to the country's young population and limited air traffic, Eritrea is one of the few countries that have recorded no COVID-19 related deaths²⁹.

7. eSwatini

Land and airports have been reopened, although commercial flights have not returned to normal. There is currently no curfew in place; however, there are still some restrictions on intercity and interstate travel. There are roadblocks between cities where temperatures are checked³⁰. If a vehicle is carrying more than 50 per cent of its allowed capacity passengers may be asked to

²³ Taarifa. 2020. Burundi President Ndayishimiye quarantined for 72 hours. <https://taarifa.rw/burundi-president-ndayishimiye-quarantined-for-72-hours/>

²⁴ WorldWare. 2020. Comoros gradually reopens borders with restrictions in place. <https://www.worldaware.com/covid-19-alert-comoros-gradually-reopens-borders-restrictions-place>

²⁵ ReliefWeb. 2020. Impact of COVID-19 movement restrictions

²⁶ Maritime Executive. 2020. How Djibouti is Maximizing its Strategic Position in Maritime Trade. <https://www.maritime-executive.com/editorials/how-djibouti-is-maximizing-its-strategic-position-in-maritime-trade>.

²⁷ Ankara. 2020. 10 African migrants die off Djibouti shore. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/at-least-10-african-migrants-die-off-djibouti-shore/2007840>

²⁸ Fikrejesus Amahazion. 2020. Eritrea - Fighting the World's Most Devastating Pest. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202011110528.html>.

²⁹ AllAfrica. 2020. Eritrea: Covid-19 - Eritrea's Success and Challenges. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202011020291.html>.

³⁰ US Embassy in eSwatini. Covid-19 Information. <https://sz.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information/>



disembark. Some positive news coming out of eSwatini includes the new Broadcasting Bill promoting freedom of speech. The Bill has been tabled amid the pandemic³¹.

8. Ethiopia

On 23 September Ethiopia ended the national state of disaster. Ethiopian authorities announced that the country's land borders would all be opened early in October. International flights are also operational³². There is still some concern about the 61% drop in employment, with domestic workers bearing the bulk of the damage³³. Unfortunately, the country is suffering severe civil unrest, which could cause the country a lot more damage than the virus should things continue to escalate. This conflict, in addition to migrants from Eritrea and Yemen, putting pressure on the country³⁴ could slow down the economic recovery of the country.

9. Kenya

Although Kenya already opened its borders to international flights early in August, the country has kept a large portion of restrictions in place³⁵. Late in October authorities opened the newly commissioned Kenya Railways Transit Shed. The goal of the cargo transit shed is to fast track customs clearance and reduce the cost of doing business, with particular focus on improving services for micro, small and medium enterprises³⁶. It is estimated that the Transit Shed will serve around 7 500 small traders and 100 40ft containers per month, bringing in approximately \$1 million³⁷.

In addition to the cargo transit shed, the country has also published a new Start-up Bill, aimed at establishing the country as a leading hub of start-ups. It is encouraging to see that the government is consistently trying to improve conditions for trade and MSMEs in general, regardless of the pandemic³⁸.

10. Lesotho

After experiencing a surge in cases, Lesotho started reducing restrictions once more in September. International travel, however, remains restricted³⁹. Security forces have been

³¹ Daily Maverick. 2020. eSwatini Broadcasting Bill still in limbo as doubt hangs over legislation.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-11-04-eswatini-broadcasting-bill-still-in-limbo-as-doubt-hangs-over-legislation/>

³² WorldWare. 2020. Officials in Ethiopia have reopened land borders. <https://www.worldaware.com/intelligence-alert-officials-ethiopia-have-reopened-land-borders>.

³³ 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>

³⁴ ReliefWeb. 2020. Impact of COVID-19 Movement Restrictions on Migrants along the Eastern Corridor.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/djibouti/impact-covid-19-movement-restrictions-migrants-along-eastern-corridor-report-7-30>

³⁵ WorldWare. 2020. Kenya maintains nationwide restrictions. <https://www.worldaware.com/intelligence-alert-authorities-kenya-maintain-nationwide-restrictions-oct-30>.

³⁶ AllAfrica. 2020. President Kenyatta commissions new KRC cargo transit shed. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202011110140.html>

³⁷ Xinhau. 2020. Kenya launches container freight station to ease movement of goods. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-11/11/c_139506974.htm.

³⁸ Mikko Lemola. 2020. Kenya's new Start-up Bill is a game-changer. <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/2020-11-11-kenyas-new-start-up-bill-is-a-game-changer/>.

³⁹ WorldWare. 2020. Authorities in Lesotho have partially reopened borders. <https://www.worldaware.com/critical-alert-oct-8-authorities-lesotho-have-partially-reopened-borders>



employed to enforce these measures and to ensure compliance at borders and ports of entry⁴⁰. As is the case in many African countries, Lesotho is fighting a brutal fight against corruption, with overly inflated billing requests that have led to death threats being issued to the cabinet principal secretary, Mr Kabelo Lehora⁴¹.

11. Madagascar

In early September the government of Madagascar decided to extend the health state of emergency up to 15 October. Similar to Ethiopia, due to a slower spread of the virus, the state of emergency was not extended. The country planned to reopen their borders to international travel on 29 October but have decided to cancel it until further notice. International travel to the island of Nosy Be, however, is permitted starting 1 October⁴².

12. Malawi

International flights reopened on 1 September, while some restrictions remain in place⁴³.

Malawi and Tanzania have agreed to promote economic cooperation between the two countries after the Malawian President visited Tanzania in early October⁴⁴. In addition to this, Tanzania has announced the opening of a Port Office in Malawi. The office will allow Malawians to deal with port-related issues in their home country⁴⁵.

Although the virus has led to some important decisions and agreements being made, there is, unfortunately, a lot of regrettable matters going on as well. Records show that the country's suicide rate has increased by 57% since the pandemic started, 92% of these were men. Psychologists and family members conclude that the majority of these were men who felt too much financial pressure brought about by the pandemic, lockdown regulations, and economic problems⁴⁶.

13. Mauritius

On 1 September Mauritius started the three-phased opening of international air travel, the second phase began on 1 October. However, to continue with its hybrid system, the country risks not reaping the rewards of its much-lauded tourism sector. Currently, a plethora of uncertainty exists whether Mauritius will indeed be open for the holiday season.

⁴⁰ As above.

⁴¹ Pascalinah Kabi. 2020. COVID-19 payment saga turns deadly. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202009080940.html>.

⁴² COMESA. 2020. COVID-19 measures in member states. <https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/covid-19/regional/4139-covid-19-measures-in-place-in-comesa-member-states-24th-edition-2-october-2020/file.html>.

⁴³ WorldWare. 2020. Malawi resumed international flights. <https://www.worldaware.com/covid-19-alert-malawi-resumed-international-flights-sept-1>.

⁴⁴ Xinhua. 2020. Tanzania, Malawi agree to foster economic cooperation. <https://africa.cgtn.com/2020/10/07/tanzania-malawi-agree-to-foster-economic-cooperation/>

⁴⁵ Jack Chirwa. 2020. Magufuli says Tanzania to open Port Office in Malawi. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202010080143.html>.

⁴⁶ Lameck Masina. 2020. Rise in Malawi suicide cases linked to COVID-19. <https://www.voanews.com/africa/rise-malawi-suicide-cases-linked-covid-19>.



14. Mozambique

Although President Nyusi extended the national state of emergency for an indefinite period, the country has continued to ease lockdown regulations, with international flights reopening on 7 September⁴⁷. The port of Maputo recorded a 13% decline in the volume of cargo in transit handled between January and August of this year compared to 2019. Turnaround times from South Africa to Maputo increased from 25 hours to 96 hours during the lockdown period, while the flow of trucks across the border decreased by 37%⁴⁸. In other upsetting news, reports have stated that the Cabo Delgado have been turned into the latest Islamic State outpost. Further reports have noted that up to 2,000 people have been killed, with more than 430,000 left homeless in the conflict⁴⁹.

15. Namibia

President Geingob announced that the state of disaster would not be extended when it expires on 17 September. Hosea Kutako International Airport (Windhoek) reopened to international trade on 1 September. Although land and maritime borders remained close to all movement apart from cargo, there have been reports that these borders will be reopening soon as well⁵⁰. On 8 October Namibians took to the streets to protest against gender-based violence, which is a growing concern across the region. Authorities noted that, apart from one incident, the protests were peaceful and safe. It is however expected that more protests can be expected shortly⁵¹.

16. Rwanda

International flights are operating, albeit it a reduced capacity, while land borders remain closed to all movement apart from cargo. As contagion slows, restrictions are being eased, with the curfew shortening as part of this process⁵². The majority of Rwanda's other operations have also resumed, mostly at a reduced capacity. The state of disaster was however extended to 11 November⁵³.

Rwanda has used the pandemic to improve the country's border procedures, with a large portion of documentation being submitted and distributed online in an attempt to curb the spread of the virus. In addition to this, the Kiyanzi Dry Port has aided in reducing contact between people, while

⁴⁷ WorldWare. 2020. Mozambique declares state calamity. <https://www.worldaware.com/covid-19-alert-mozambique-declares-state-calamity-sept-7>.

⁴⁸ AllAfrica. Sharp fall in transit trade in Maputo. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202010221102.html>.

⁴⁹ BBC, 2020. Militant Islamists 'behead more than 50' in Mozambique. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54877202>

⁵⁰ WorldWare. 2020. Namibia ends state emergency. <https://www.worldaware.com/covid-19-alert-namibia-ends-state-emergency-lifts-curfew-cancels-movement-restrictions>.

⁵¹ Grada. 2020. Gender-based violence protests held in Windhoek. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/387116/namibia-gender-based-violence-protests-held-in-windhoek-october-8>.

⁵² WorldWare. 2020. Rwanda shortens curfew hours. <https://www.worldaware.com/covid-19-alert-rwanda-shortens-curfew-hours-eases-movement-restrictions>.

⁵³ Grada. 2020. COVID-19 restrictions extended until November 11. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/394011/rwanda-covid-19-restrictions-extended-until-november-11-update-17>



also reducing some of the pressure experienced at Rusumo Border Post, serving as a customs logistics point for trans-border truck drivers⁵⁴.

17. Seychelles

International flights and vessels are still allowed to operate, although only from a specific set of countries, and under strict regulations⁵⁵. As a country that is heavily reliant on tourism, it was a relief when the borders were opened. The joy was short-lived, however with less than satisfactory booking rates and tourist activities⁵⁶, towards the end of October.

Amid the restrictions and regulations, the country had a presidential election which concluded on 25 October with no violence reported. There have however been warnings that protests may ensue⁵⁷.

18. Somalia

Somalia's borders remain open to road and air travel for both passengers and cargo. Due to the slowing spread of the virus, the full basecamp lockdown of Mogadishu Airport will be lifted through a four-phased approach starting November⁵⁸. Amidst of unrest and airstrikes from the US, Somalia's government has signed an agreement with a UK-based consortium to construct a port at the coastal town of Hoybo, which could be a great advantage to the country⁵⁹.

19. South Africa

Starting 21 September, South Africa moved to level 1 lockdown restrictions, easing an additional portion of regulations. Starting 1 October the country also reopened international flights for selected countries. The South African government, however, decided to extend the state of national disaster to 15 November⁶⁰. Unrest is growing amidst, as protests have become the order of the day with at least one demonstration per week.

⁵⁴ UNCTAD. 2020. Managing trade facilitation pandemic times experience of Rwanda. <https://unctad.org/news/managing-trade-facilitation-pandemic-times-experience-rwanda-kiyanzi-dry-port>.

⁵⁵ WorldWare. 2020. Seychelles maintains restrictions due to virus activity. <https://www.worldaware.com/covid-19-alert-seychelles-maintains-restrictions-due-disease-activity>.

⁵⁶ Bangkok Post. 2020. Spared by COVID-19, Seychelles suffers dearth of tourists. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/2007123/spared-by-covid-19-seychelles-suffers-dearth-of-tourists>.

⁵⁷ Grade. 2020. Presidential and legislative elections continue October 24. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/392626/seychelles-presidential-and-legislative-elections-continue-october-24>

⁵⁸ ReliefWeb. 2020. Logistics cluster. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/logistics-cluster-covid-19-situation-update-4-november-2020>

⁵⁹ Patrick Mulyungi. 2020 Somalia Government to build Hobyo Port in the coastal town. <https://constructionreviewonline.com/2020/11/somalia-government-to-build-hobyo-port-in-the-coastal-town/>.

⁶⁰ Grada. 2020. South African government extends national state of disaster. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/389406/south-africa-government-extends-national-state-of-disaster-until-november-15-update-30>



As was reported in the media^{61,62,63}, violence and attacks on trucks have persisted on major South African highways. More than 30 trucks have already been targeted, with the rampant attackers stating that ‘any truck is fair game’. The motivation behind this vicious violence is voiced under the pretext that ‘foreign nationals are taking away jobs from South African citizens’, but this is questionable since most of the victims have been South African. Attacks have been carried out along the N3 (notably Marianhill and in Heidelberg) and N12 highways.

Two separate letters by leading industry bodies have been sent to President Ramaphosa in an attempt to resolve this critical matter. In response, the president “condemns the violence and vandalism affecting the road freight industry”⁶⁴. He further stated that “*As South Africans, we cannot possibly tolerate the mindless and bloody lawlessness with which the road freight industry is being targeted. We cannot tolerate this loss of life and destruction of property.*”

On the medical front, President Ramaphosa urged the nation to remain vigilant as the infection rate is slowly on the rise. However, the government indicated that the country would not go back to a higher lockdown level.

20. South Sudan

The country continues to ease lockdown restrictions, allowing international travel and trade, and as of October sports activities have also resumed⁶⁵. Civil unrest and tribal tension remain a serious issue within the country. In protest to a peace deal protesters blocked access to Port Sudan’s container terminal⁶⁶.

21. Tanzania

Tanzania had a presidential election towards the end of October, which was riddled with accusations of fraud. The effects have led to some unrest, along with reports that social media was restricted during the election process⁶⁷. Despite the turmoil and accusations, President Magufuli was sworn in in late October for his second term in office⁶⁸.

⁶¹ Business Tech. 25/11/2020. Government looks to limit the hiring of foreigners in South Africa, as tensions grow. <https://businesstech.co.za/news/business/451514/government-looks-to-limit-the-hiring-of-foreigners-in-south-africa-as-tensions-grow/>

⁶² Business Tech. 25/11/2020. A trucking group has written a letter to president Ramaphosa as attacks continue - here’s what it says. <https://businesstech.co.za/news/business/451476/a-trucking-group-has-written-a-letter-to-president-ramaphosa-as-attacks>

⁶³ Singh, Pijoos & Hosken. ‘Any truck is fair game’: Fears mount as rampant attacks leave one driver dead. <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times-daily/news/2020-11-24-any-truck-is-fair-game-fears-mount-as-rampant-attacks-leave-one-driver-dead/>

⁶⁴ The Presidency. 25/11/2020. President condemns violence affecting road freight industry. <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/press-statements/president-condemns-violence-affecting-road-freight-industry?s=09>

⁶⁵ Xinhua. 2020. South Sudan lifts sports ban. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-09/22/c_139388622.htm.

⁶⁶ Arab news. 2020. Port Sudan container terminal blocked in peace deal protest. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1744271/middle-east>.

⁶⁷ Grada. 2020. Tanzania. https://www.garda.com/search?query=Tanzania&sort_by=created

⁶⁸ Taarifa. 2020. Magufuli takes oath as new President. <https://taarifa.rw/tanzania-magufuli-takes-oath-as-new-president/>.



On a positive note, Malawi and Tanzania have agreed to promote economic cooperation between the two countries after the Malawian President visited Tanzania in early October⁶⁹.

22. Uganda

On 1 October international travel reopened, for both air and land transport. The domestic restrictions remain in place to prevent the virus from spreading⁷⁰. Amidst the pandemic, the country has rehabilitated and revived old railway lines that were last operational in 2009. The reopening of these railway lines will reduce travel time and cost of doing cross-border business⁷¹. In addition to this, the country has partnered with the private sector to create a digital transformation plan which is aimed at streamlining microfinance supervision and regulation processes for Uganda Microfinance Regulatory Authority (UMRA)⁷².

23. Zambia

Although Zambia did not implement a particularly hard lockdown compared to other African countries, some restrictions remain in place⁷³. However, international travel is open for air and land borders, along with the opening of the tourism industry to generate some much-needed revenue. There are however some protests against police brutality, although these were intended to be peaceful, given the current situation, some clashes ensued⁷⁴.

24. Zimbabwe

Authorities announced that domestic flights would resume on 10 September and international flights on 1 October. All land borders remain closed. In its response to the pandemic, the WHO has commended Zimbabwe's government for alleviating the impact thereof⁷⁵. On the other side of the coin, the restriction of movement across the South African border is taking its toll. With the high food prices and low employment in Zimbabwe, many residents are reliant on access to jobs in South Africa and lower food prices to ensure their survival⁷⁶. In terms of cross-border road freight, many delays have been experienced in the last couple of months⁷⁷.

⁶⁹ Ximhua. 2020. Tanzania, Malawi agree to foster economic cooperation. <https://africa.cgtn.com/2020/10/07/tanzania-malawi-agree-to-foster-economic-cooperation/>

⁷⁰ WorldWare. 2020. Land and air borders Uganda reopened. <https://www.worldaware.com/warning-alert-land-and-air-borders-uganda-reopened-oct-15>.

⁷¹ Tausi Nakato. 2020 Jinja railway container delivery back to life. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202010230602.html>.

⁷² Godrey Ivudrua. 2020. Uganda Set For Digital Transformation To Streamline Microfinance Supervision And Regulation Processes. <https://www.busiweek.com/uganda-set-for-digital-transformation-to-streamline-microfinance-supervision-and-regulation-processes/>.

⁷³ WorldAware. 2020. Zambia maintains COVID-19 restrictions. <https://www.worldaware.com/intelligence-alert-zambia-maintains-covid-19-restrictions>.

⁷⁴ Garda. 2020. Protesters to gather in Lusaka against alleged police brutality. <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/393826/zambia-protesters-to-gather-in-lusaka-against-alleged-police-brutality-october-30>.

⁷⁵ The Herald. 2020. Zimbabwe: COVID-19 readiness improvement. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202011100297.html>.

⁷⁶ John Ray. 2020. Why hunger is worse than COVID-19 in Zimbabwe. <https://www.itv.com/news/2020-10-19/if-you-dont-wake-up-youll-have-nothing-on-the-table-why-hunger-is-worse-than-covid-19-in-zimbabwe>.

⁷⁷ Goddard, 2020. <https://www.freightnews.co.za/article/border-beat-exporters-trucks-stuck-beitbridge-monday>



Updates and Recommendations from Regional Economic Communities in ESA

1. COMESA:

The COMESA Member States imposed two categories of measures. The first was to curb the spread of the virus by restricting the movement of people, curfews, closure of businesses, and mandatory self-isolation. The second was aimed at reducing the socio-economic effects of the virus through reduced tariffs and taxes, in an attempt to ensure that essential goods such as certain foods and medical supplies. Member States have embraced electronic transactions.

COMESA provided a list of things to consider when attempting to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic on trade⁷⁸:

- A coordinated regional approach in mitigating the impact of COVID-19;
- Allow free movement of both, essential and non-essential goods within and out of COMESA;
- Enhance production capacity and regional value chains in the region to reduce overreliance on external trade and vulnerability to global shocks/crisis;
- Diversify markets for COMESA imports and exports to reduce dependency on few countries;
- Identify and provide incentives to manufacturing companies with the capacity to produce covid-19 essential products and facilitate their trade in the region;
- Institute tax policies such as tax holidays, reduction of VAT, Corporate tax, Pay as You Earn and other incentives to cushion the consumers and investors against the effects of the pandemic;
- Fast track the creation of an online platform for sharing information on the availability of essential products during the Covid-19 period;
- Embrace e-commerce in trade; and
- Fastrack the implementation of the COMESA Digital Free Trade Area.

2. EAC:

In September the EAC announced a training project that will equip staff at One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) that come into direct contact with people and their luggage, with the necessary skills to ensure that they know how to respond to and prevent the spread of the virus. The training sessions were planned to take place during September and October⁷⁹.

⁷⁸ COMESA. 2020. How COMESA can mitigate negative effects of COVID-19 pandemic on trade. <https://www.comesa.int/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/How-COMESA-can-Mitigate-Negative-Effects-of-COVID-19-on-Trade.-1.pdf>

⁷⁹ EAC Secretariat. 2020. <https://www.eac.int/press-releases/147-health/1856-eac-targets-one-stop-border-posts-staff-tp-prevent-the-spread-of-covid-19-in-the-region>.



3. SACD:

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Response to COVID-19 Pandemic has released its 14th report, listing a range of crucial recommendations for the region along with an update on the progress of treatment testing⁸⁰.

Health sector:

- Member States are urged to implement some of the WHO's recommended strategies to mitigate service disruptions. These recommendations include triaging to identify priorities, shifting to online patient consultations, changes to prescribing practices and supply chain and public health information strategies.
- Member States are urged to suspend or remove user fees, to offset potential financial difficulties for patients.
- Member States are urged to notify and routinely share with WHO and Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), data regarding suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases, deaths, recoveries, tests conducted. Healthcare workers infected to inform these continually and other updates.
- Member States are urged to utilise the planning tools that have been provided by the WHO to project
- their COVID-19 vaccine needs with the view to future discussions with GAVI on vaccine procurement and delivery

Law enforcement and security

- Member States and the Regional Early Warning Centres should continue exchanging and sharing information/intelligence to prevent violent conflicts emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

Food, nutrition security and livelihoods

- Member States and all agricultural stakeholders should prioritise the protection of farmers from COVID-19 infection, as they form the bedrock for national food security and household nutrition, in addition to the significant contribution to rural and downstream livelihoods.
- Member States should maintain the status of the essential service of agriculture during the COVID-19 pandemic, and beyond, to continually garner food production-friendly agricultural policies and service provision.
- Member States are urged to strengthen farmer organisations better to organise distribution and marketing channels for their members, relying more on aggregation, yet less on labour-intensive intermediation to reduce the exposure of farmers to the risk of COVID-19.
- Member States are urged to track coverage, monitor, and assess the effectiveness of default
- e-extension approaches during COVID-19 era: through farmer feedback mechanisms including phone-ins, WhatsApp messaging, periodic telephone-based outcome surveys, and

⁸⁰ SADC. October 2020. SADC regional response Bulletin 14. https://www.sadc.int/files/1916/0398/2311/COVID-19_14th_Report_EN_mail.pdf



appoint focal points in the community to gather and communicate critical M&E information on project activities.

In addition to this, SADC's Executive Secretary, Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax, emphasised the importance of having harmonised processes and the need for countries to invest in ICT infrastructure⁸¹.

Conclusion

This update contained an overview of the flow of goods to and from the ESA region. Most ESA countries have eased lockdown restrictions and reopened international flights in an attempt to save and restore their economies, and especially the tourism industries. It is becoming clear that finding the balance between keeping people safe from the virus and keeping them employed and fed is an arduous task.

All ESA member countries still have some form of restrictions in place, mostly on the movement of people and the capacity at which the economy can function. Only a handful of governments have decided not to extend their national state of emergency or disaster into November. Concerns for food security and income generation, especially in rural communities, is growing. In addition to this, unrest is growing within the region with a large number of protests being held every week against supposedly unfair elections, gender-based violence, police brutality, murder, corruption, and much more. The rising tension within the region and continent should not be left unattended as these some of these protests are turning violent and could pose a real threat to the continent as a whole.

Furthermore, with the recent positive news regarding the development of a vaccine, the RPSG wonders how long it will take to provide immunity for the people of our region. Africa is typically last in line to receive the medical assistance which it desperately needs. To add to that, the historical constraints of infrastructure and logistics networks will also be testing since it has become apparent that the distribution — once it commences — of the vaccine will not be an easy task.

In economic terms, the updated indicators project that the collective regional economy is expected to contract between -3% and -5%. The outlook will harm trade throughout the region; however, some countries will be worse affected than others. The international perspective is similar, with the global GDP projected to contract by -4.9% for the year⁸². As a whole, the WTO⁸³ expects international trade to contract by -18.5% for the year. Yet, the contraction is mainly dependent on the speed of recovery.

Ultimately, the size of impact and path of recovery could vary significantly across commodity groups, depending on the supply and demand shocks. Many commodity goods are in turn flourishing at the moment, most notably trade in food and other related agricultural commodities.

⁸¹ SADC, 2020. SADC Member States step up efforts to mitigate impact of COVID-19. <https://www.sadc.int/news-events/news/sadc-member-states-step-efforts-mitigate-impact-covid-19/>

⁸² IMF, 2020. World Economic Outlook. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/06/24/WEOUpdateJune2020>

⁸³ WTO, 2020. Trade falls steeply in first half of 2020. https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/pres20_e/pr858_e.htm



Nonetheless, the path to economic recovery for the region's supply chain broadly depends on several key factors:

1. the speed at which the vaccine gets distributed, allowing all citizens to return to normal,
2. mounting production, output and consumption following rising trends in the global economy,
3. the increased purchasing power of the ESA Members and their respective trading partners,
4. the efficacy of the support measures taken by the government in each country so far, and
5. the determination of the regional trading community in successfully returning to full operation once all restrictions are lifted.

Finally, despite the seeming pessimism frequently being emitted, the regional trading community remains as robust as is humanly possible given the extent of the prolonged externalities created by COVID-19. But it must be understood that the severe drop in purchasing power and therefore, economic activity will not be fixed overnight so that recovery will be slow and drawn-out. Nonetheless, let's continue to hope that the ESA supply chain and greater trading community continue to pull together and ensure that everything possible is done to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the region as a whole.