Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo have taken steps for starting the implementation of the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime (STR) for facilitating small scale trade at their common borders for goods with a value of USD 500 or less per batch.

The STR is a scheme that allows small scale traders to benefit from an exoneration from payment of customs duties and taxes for transactions under a threshold value which is currently of 2,000 USD per consignment, except in Malawi , that recently raised such threshold to 3,000 USD.

The implementation of the STR is based on three key tools, which include: 1) the adoption by the exporting and importing country of an agreed Common List of products eligible to be traded under the scheme; 2) the acceptance of a threshold value under which the STR will be applied (maximum value of goods admitted under the STR, that as indicated is normally 2,000 USD); and 3) the submission to Customs of a Simplified Customs Document for goods declaration. For goods that are on the Common List, the requirement to produce a Simplified Certificate of Origin is not anymore requested.

In 1994, COMESA adopted the Charter on the minimum standards for the treatment of small-scale cross-border traders in the region , a commitment addressed to traders and customs officials which is aimed at protecting the basic rights of traders that officials at the border must observe. The Charter, for instance, urges customs officials to avoid to ask traders the payment at the border of fees or charges that are not published, while traders shall not attempt to bribe any official to avoid payment of duties or obtain preferential treatment in any way, including avoiding queues.