Malawi needs an unconventional game plan which will justify its joining of the Tripartite Free Trade Area by putting in place enabling infrastructure for it to be connected to the rest of the region.

MCCCI Chief Executive, Chancellor Kaferapanjira made the remarks at the Market Opportunities and Challenges of the Comesa-Sadc-EAC Tripartite Free Trade Area for Malawi.

He said for intra-regional trade to occur, there must be connectivity between different states fearing that infrastructure within the region was still in deficit.

“Exchange of goods and services takes place via connectedness. Enabling infrastructure therefore must be put in place at any cost. We should ask ourselves, how well Malawi is connected to the rest of the region, or indeed, what plans are in the offing in this regard. This will determine whether Malawi stands to benefit from this arrangement if ratified,” said Kaferapanjira.

He said whilst ratifying the TFTA Agreement appears very attractive, Malawi should exercise caution in doing so by weighing its ability to benefit.

“We have to weigh our ability to benefit from the Agreement versus the potential impact on our local industry,” He said.

The Tripartite Free Trade Area comprises 26 countries that are members of the already existing blocs of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), and Southern African Development Community (SADC).