

SADCAS CEO Meets with Acting Permanent Secretary, Zimbabwe Ministry of Industry and Commerce

The SADCAS Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mrs Maureen Mutasa met with the Acting Permanent Secretary Zimbabwe Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Mrs Beatrice Mutetwa on 10 January 2017 at the Ministry's Office at Mukwati Building in Harare.

The purpose of the meeting was to update the Ministry on developments in SADCAS, to pre-sensitize the Government of Zimbabwe of their funding contribution towards SADCAS operational budget deficit for the 2017 - 2022 strategic period, and to advise the Ministry of the challenges that conformity assessment bodies in Zimbabwe are facing in particular with payment of accreditation dues to SADCAS. The meeting was attended by various Senior Government Officials including Mr. L. Muzondo, Director Finance, Administration and Human Resources, Mrs. B. Dzimwasha, Acting Director Standards Development and Quality Assurance, Mrs. M. Machiri Standards Development Fund (SDF) and 2nd NAFP Zimbabwe, Ms. R. Chibanda, Standards Development and Quality Assurance and 1st NAFP – Zimbabwe, Miss. G. Mutetwa Standards Development and Quality Assurance and Ms. B. Zivanai, Enterprise Development Department.



From Left to Right are Mrs Chibanda Mrs B Mutetwa Mrs Mutasa, Mrs Dzimwasha, Mr Muzondo, Mrs Machiri, Mrs Zivanai and Ms G Mutetwa

In her welcoming remarks Mrs Mutetwa underscored the importance of SADCAS services to Zimbabwe and reiterated Zimbabwe's commitment towards SADCAS sustenance. The SADCAS CEO gave a brief update on developments in SADCAS highlighting the achievement so far and in particular the achievement of signatory status in the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation's Mutual Recognition Arrangement (ILAC MRA) and what this means to the 13 SADC Member States that are serviced by SADCAS including Zimbabwe. She further outlined how SADCAS was addressing Zimbabwe's accreditation needs highlighting the numbers of accredited facilities in Zimbabwe, the operational support provided to the NAFP, the training courses held so far in Zimbabwe and the experts trained/registered as assessors. Mrs Mutasa also advised the Acting Permanent Secretary that SADCAS business is growing steadily not only in terms of field and scope of accreditation but also in terms of geographical coverage. Dependency on Government funding had reduced from 100% in 2008 to 29% as at 31 March 2016, She however noted that break even on operational costs had not yet been achieved.

On Governments' contributions towards SADCAS sustenance for the period 2012 to 2017, Mrs Mutasa noted that whilst Zimbabwe was the first to honour its financial obligation, to date only 64% of the total operational budget deficit had been paid with countries such as Zambia and Tanzania not having paid any contribution despite benefiting from SADCAS services and countries such as DRC and Malawi having partially paid their contributions. The SADCAS CEO lamented that this situation was constraining the organization from meeting its

set objectives and targets. Mrs Mutasa then called upon the Government of Zimbabwe to support their request for SADC Member States to clear their outstanding deficit balances for the 2012 – 2017 operational budget.

Mrs Mutasa then presented a summary of the SADCAS 2017 – 2022 strategic plan whose theme is, “Towards Continual Sustainability”. She informed the meeting of the operational budget deficit for the period amounting to US\$ 2.38 million which was to be tabled at the 2017 CMT Meeting. She advised the Ministry of the proportion (US\$ 396,716) of this operational budget that the Government of Zimbabwe is to pay based on the formula used which takes into account the clientele base in each SADC Member State serviced by SADCAS. Mrs Mutasa further advised that all member state contributions must be paid up in full within the first 3 years of the strategic period i.e. by the 31st of March 2020 so as to ensure SADCAS as a going concern. The breakdown of Zimbabwe’s contributions would therefore be US\$ 130,916 being 33% to be paid by 31st March 2018, US\$ 138,851 being 35% to be paid by 31st March 2019 and US\$ 396, 716 being 32% to be paid by 31st March 2017. The SADCAS CEO then appealed to the Government of Zimbabwe to support the request for funding of the operational budget deficit of US\$ 2.38 million for the strategic period 2017 to 2022, a matter which will be tabled at the upcoming SADC Committee of Ministers of Trade. She further appealed to the Government of Zimbabwe to pay their first contribution of US\$ 130,916 soon after the funding of the SADCAS operational budget deficit is approved. However, it was indicated that amount budgeted for SADCAS activities under the SDF 2017 budget was insufficient to cover the initial contribution, hence the need for SADCAS to put their request in writing so that funds can be secured timeously as supplementary budget as the full amount has not been fully budgeted for in 2017. Mrs Mutasa further said that it is in the best of interest of SADCAS if the initial contribution is paid by September 2017 considering the cash flow challenges SADCAS was facing.

The SADCAS CEO then took the opportunity to inform the Ministry of the challenges that Zimbabwean conformity assessment bodies have been facing in remitting payment for services provided by SADCAS. She then informed the Ministry of the meeting held with the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) Governor, Dr John Mangudya in June 2016 who promised to facilitate the processing of these remittances. After the meeting some improvement was realized, however, the challenge had resurfaced again. Mrs Mutasa indicated that she had apprised the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe about the matter which they are pursuing. She further said that the conformity assessment bodies in Zimbabwe were not just having problems with payment of SADCAS service fees but had other related challenges which were now a threat to meeting accreditation requirements. She then recommended that the National Accreditation Focal Point Officers convene a meeting with the conformity assessment bodies to further understand and consolidate information on this issue. This will assist in building a case to present to the RBZ and the banking sector for the prioritization of these payments.

In conclusion Mrs Mutetwa once again expressed their appreciation of the good work that SADCAS was doing to enhance the competitiveness of Zimbabwean goods and services, facilitating trade and enhancing the protection of consumers and the environment and stated that Zimbabwe will endeavor to honour its obligations to SADCAS as the nation has been benefiting from the activities of SADCAS.

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