

SADCSTAN ATTENDS CROSQ COUNCIL MEETING

The SADCSTAN Chairperson Mrs Maureen Mutasa and the Regional Coordinator Mr Donald Masuku recently attended the 8th meeting of the Council of the Caribbean Community 's Regional Organization for Standards and Quality {CROSQ} held in Port Au Spain, Trinidad and Tobago from 9-10 March 2006. Attendance was following an invitation to SADCSTAN by CROSQ. CROSQ was represented by its Chairman, Dr Omer Thomas at the 7th SADCSTAN annual meeting held in Port Louis, Mauritius in April 2004. SADCSTAN's attendance to the CROSQ meeting was therefore reciprocal.

In her presentation entitled "SADC Cooperation in Standardization" Mrs Mutasa gave an overview of the SADC Protocol on Trade and the SADC SQAM Memorandum of Understanding {MOU} and outlined the aims, objectives, membership, duties and governance of SADCSTAN and the development stages of National Standards Bodies within the SADC region. She further briefed the meeting of SADCSTAN's challenges and shared SADCSTAN' s plans for the future. In her concluding remarks, Mrs Mutasa expressed SADCSTAN's interest to establish a formal relationship with CROSQ in order to:

- Promote communication between the two organizations:
- Promote mutual understanding of the roles of each organization in their respective regions: and
- Promote knowledge of standards development activities of each organization.

All in an effort to promote regional standardization with the ultimate aim of facilitating trade between CARICOM and SADC within the context of South to South cooperation. The presentation stimulated a lot of interest and discussion and was an opportunity to share experiences and challenges in regional harmonization activities. Although it was noted that not much trade was taking place between CARICOM and SADC regions, both organizations agreed to formalize the cooperation and be proactive in laying the foundation for facilitating the exchange of goods and services in anticipation of increased trade between the two regions

The 8th meeting of the Council of CROSQ was attended by 25 delegates from 9 CARICOM Member States and observers from the USA and SADCSTAN.

CROSQ was established by an Intergovernmental Agreement signed in Belize in February 2002. CROSQ has a membership of 16 countries. CROSQ consists of a Council, Special Committees and a Secretariat. The Council comprises of the executive heads of national standards bodies of state parties. Out of the Council is elected an Executive Committee .The CROSQ reports annually to the Council for Trade and Economic Development {COTED} which determines the policy of CROSQ and agrees on its budget and contributions and in particular the establishment and adoption of regional standards and technical regulations. The Secretariat is led by an Executive Secretary who is appointed by the CROSQ Council and includes professional and support staff from member states of CARICOM. Currently the Secretariat has 8 full time staff. Within its short time of existence CROSQ has harmonized more than 300 standards and technical regulations. CROSQ Technical management Committee {TMC} was established at the 6th Council meeting and is responsible for the technical work of CROSQ including coordinating the organization's strategic planning and programming of technical work. The TMC consists of 8 members. At the 8th meeting, CROSQ agreed to establish 3 other special committees namely: Human Resources, Finance and Audit Committees. CROSQ is financed through member's contributions and donor funding.

Of particular interest to SADCSTAN and noted at the meeting is members commitment towards regional standardization activities and in particular the readiness of members to take on tasks voluntarily to progress regional standardization work. CROSQ has a direct link and reports to the COTED which comprises of the Ministers of Trade and Economic Development. CROSQ's Secretariat is fully devoted to regional standardization. CROSQ's activities are financed through members contributions paid directly to CROSQ by member NSBs. Donor agencies are very keen to finance projects within the region to strengthen regional standardization work. One of the projects currently on hand is US\$1.98m IDB funded project for SMEs

Taking advantage of the venue of the meeting, the SADCSTAN delegation also went on a tour of the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards and met with delegates to ISO/ TC 207 meeting, which had been held in Trinidad and Tobago. The SADCSTAN delegation's visit received national attention as we were interviewed by the national TV together with Dr Thomas the Chairman of CROSQ and Director General of the Jamaica Bureau of Standards, Mr. Dudley Rhind the Vice Chairman of CROSQ and Director of the Barbados

Bureau of Standards and Mr. Prem Nandlal the Managing Director of the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards.

SADCSTAN is grateful to the South African Bureau of Standards for funding this trip, which gave us an opportunity to exchange experiences and to learn from each other. It was also an opportunity to network with representatives of organizations whose expertise may also be valuable to our region.