


# **SADC COOPERATION IN STANDARDIZATION**



## **REPORT ON SADCSTAN DELEGATES ATTENDANCE TO THE INTERNATIONAL ELECTROTECHNICAL COMMISSION (IEC) GENERAL MEETING HELD IN CAPE TOWN, RSA, 17 – 21 OCTOBER 2005**




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PREPARED BY:

DONALD MASUKU  
REGIONAL COORDINATOR  
SADCSTAN

Circulation:

DR KAI STOLL MALKE (PTB)  
STANSA EXECUTIVE  
STANSA STRATEGY GROUP  
SADCSTAN CHAIR  
SADCSTAN MEMBERS  
IEC ACP SECRETARY (Mrs F Rauser)



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## 1. **Introduction**

Thirteen SADCSTAN member states are members of the IEC affiliate country programme while South Africa is the only SADC member state that is a full member of the IEC. Under the IEC affiliate country programme members enjoy the privilege to adopt IEC standards up to a limit of 200 freely. These standards are to be used as the basis of SADCSTAN harmonization work. Up to 4 country experts can review documents and participate in IEC technical work in those areas relevant to them. The IEC Secretariat has an office dedicated to affiliate country matters with Mrs Françoise Rauser as the secretary. This makes for convenient communication channels between the IEC and its affiliate members. The leader of the IEC Affiliate country Programme (IEC/ACP) is currently Mr Mesai Girma, Director General of Ethiopia's Quality and Standards Authority (QSAE). He, however, was not able to make it to the meeting due to last minute hitches.

Membership to the IEC is through national technical committees whose composition is expected to be fully representative of industry. These technical committees can then have a relationship with the NSB in a way best suited to the country's particular preferences. This is in contrast to ISO where the NSB takes up membership.

Also, unlike ISO, the IEC has conformity assessment schemes and a conformity assessment board (CAB) responsible for the overall management of the IECs conformity activities. The conformity assessment schemes are;

IECEE	conformity testing and certification of electrical equipment
IECQ	quality assessment system for electronic components
IECEX	scheme for certification to standards for electrical equipment for explosive atmospheres

The IEC General Meeting was hosted by the South African Bureau of Standards in Cape Town from 17 – 21 October 2005. More than 1600 from most IEC members and IEC affiliates around the world attended the general meeting. It was the largest IEC GM ever held.

The SADCSTAN Secretariat took advantage of the fact that the GM was hosted by a SADC member state and arranged for participation of all SADC member countries through funding from PTB. One delegate from each of the 14 SADC member states was funded by PTB to attend the meeting. Several workshops were arranged for the IEC affiliates running back to back with the IEC TC meetings.

## **2. Affiliate Member programme**

The IEC meeting in Cape Town coincided with several technical committee meetings taking place throughout the week. A special parallel programme was prepared for affiliate members by the IEC Affiliate programme office (Mrs Rauser).

### *2.1 Hazardous Substances Management Session*

Due to static electricity, arcing or sparking, the requirements for wiring and connecting in explosive environments are specialized. This session reviewed some of the work in this area being carried out by IEC TCs. These requirements apply in areas where dust, powders and unstable volatiles can be present and in some chemical manufacturing environments.

### *2.2 Attendance of TC Meetings*

There was one full day available for affiliate delegates to attend TC meetings on the tight affiliate member programme. Most SADCSTAN delegates attended the meeting of TC 61 on Safety of Household and Electrical appliances. The aim of TC 61 is to produce and maintain international standards relating to the safety of household and similar appliances in a manner that is timely, efficient and which keeps pace with modern technology. Their scope, however, can extend beyond households appliances to cover equipment and appliances in similar fields where there is no IEC technical committee in existence.

TC61 has seven sub-committees working in the following areas:

- Safety of microwave ovens
- Household appliances for refrigeration
- Appliances for air-conditioning for household and similar purposes
- Safety of electrical commercial catering equipment
- Safety of hand held motor operated electric tools
- Safety of electrically operated farm appliances
- Electrical motor operated cleaning appliances for industrial use.

To cover topics or appliances where specialized knowledge may be needed, TC 61 uses its sub-committees along with working groups (WG), maintenance teams (MT) and project teams (PT).

*TC 61 is an excellent example of TC structures within the IEC and has a scope of work quite relevant to the needs of developing*

*countries. It is well worth for SADCSTAN to track the work of this committee and where appropriate adopt the standards it produces.*

### *2.3 AFSEC Workshop*

Initiatives have been in place to form a regional organization to deal with standardization in the electrical/electronic area within Africa. It would appear that the arrangement is meant to mirror the situation in Europe where CEN and CENELEC exist mirroring ISO and IEC as it were. ARSO (African Regional Standardization Organisation) already exists in Africa and AFSEC (African Electrotechnical Standardization Commission) is seen to be the standardization arm for electro-technical issues at the Pan-African level.

At the workshop it was reported that the launch of AFSEC took place at the UPDEA (Union of Producers, Transmitters and Distributors of Electrical Power in Africa) congress held in Accra, Ghana in June 2005, at which a cooperation agreement was signed between UPDEA and AFREC (The African Energy Commission) to develop AFSEC as a Pan African standardization body. A working group was formed under the Chair of the Director of AFREC with representatives nominated from UPDEA, IEC National committees in Africa and ARSO.

The inaugural/founding General Assembly of AFSEC is being planned for June 2006.

### *2.4 “Switching On Africa’s Potential” Workshop*

The workshop was organized by the SABS on the sidelines of the IEC Meeting and several IEC TC representatives shared their experiences with electrotechnical standardization work. In addition several African countries made presentations describing their involvement with the IEC at national level. Some of these presentations are attached to this report.

### *2.5 Council Meeting*

As expected this was a huge meeting held on the last day of the conference to deal with the administrative issues of the IEC. One delegate each from the affiliate member countries present was allowed to attend. The affiliate programme itself was described as working well but members were encouraged to think about setting up national committees and taking up full membership of the IEC. It was noted that Kenya, Macedonia and Kazakhstan had upgraded their memberships to associate this year.

The other highlights relevant to Africa drawn from the meeting were:

- The IEC would be celebrating its centenary next year and the Berlin meeting would be a huge celebration of this.
- The IEC believes in taking standardization to the people and has regional centers in various parts of the world to bring IEC work closer to people. In addition they undertake “road shows” in various countries to highlight international standardization issues.
- The IEC is running an essay competition aimed at University and college students as part of its centenary celebration activities.

#### 2.6 *Visit to SABS Cape Town Office*

The SADCSTAN Regional Coordinator arranged an impromptu visit to SABS Cape Town Branch for SADC affiliates. The Branch deals mostly with fisheries and water testing. It is also the centre for certification activities for the Western Cape province. It is to a large extent the microcosm of the SABS Head Office. The laboratories are all accredited.

#### 2.7 *IEC/WTO Workshop*

The final planned function for affiliates was a workshop on trade, international standards and conformity assessment. The focus of the workshop was a presentation by Vivien Liu of the WTO highlighting the history of the WTO, TBT issues and the role of standards and conformity assessment in trade. The issues discussed were really a compressed summary of the workshop that had taken place in Windhoek, Namibia earlier in the week.

### **3. Summary and Recommendations**

*The close working relationship between ISO and IEC means that through the ISO membership SADCSTAN members can access most of what we require from the IEC. The membership of the IEC ACP (affiliate country programme) takes SADCSTAN members even closer to the activities of the IEC. So far most SADCSTAN members have not fully taken advantage of the privileges they have by virtue of IEC ACP membership.*

*Noting that development today is defined by electrotechnical progress in the main, and that some of the quality problems in the SADC region have been with electrical products, the SADCSTA members should*

*become more involved in IEC activities. The starting point could be adopting relevant IEC standards as SADC harmonized standards especially those standards covered by TC 61.*

*Attendance to the IEC General Meeting by SADCSTAN delegates was an excellent opportunity for networking and getting a closer feel of how the IEC operates. The next IEC General Meeting will be hosted by DIN in Berlin, Germany in October 2006 and it would be recommended that PTB consider funding the SADCSTAN delegates to attend. At this meeting the IEC will be celebrating 100 years of electrotechnical standardization work and will focus on encouraging and ensuring active participation developing countries in international standardization.*

**Donald Masuku**  
**SADCSTAN REGIONAL COORDINATOR**

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