

SAZ Signs MoU with BOBS

The SAZ, Zimbabwe's national standards body signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Botswana national standards body, the Botswana Bureau of Standards (BOBS) at the SAZ head office in Harare on Friday 25 November 2005. This was the second such MoU that the SAZ has formally entered into with another national standards body within the region following the signing of a similar MoU with the Congolese Control Office in 2004.

SAZ has also signed cooperation agreements with the Zambia Bureau of Standards in July 2005 and BOBS in 2001 in the area of management systems certification training and skills transfer.

The MoU between the SAZ and BOBS covers cooperation in six key areas, i.e. standardization, conformity assessment and accreditation, information exchange, training in standardization and quality assurance, exchange visits and representation at regional/international standardization fora.

Of particular interest to the Zimbabwean exporters to Botswana, especially timber and timber products manufacturers, the MoU facilitates easy trade between the two countries as it allows for the recognition of both organizations' certification marks and undertaking on each other's behalf or jointly, pre-shipment inspection and certification of designated products traded between the two countries. This means that SAZ certified products being exported to Botswana would not need to be re-tested to gain entry into that country.

Furthermore, SAZ and BOBS agreed to apply uniform standards and procedures for the inspection and testing of goods traded between the two countries so that the results may be more easily interpreted and coordinated.

Formalization of the SAZ and BOBS' relationship through a MoU was inevitable considering the two organizations' common interest in contributing to the socioeconomic development of the respective countries. The MoU will therefore help improve the socioeconomic development of both countries through the facilitation and promotion of trade enhanced by the role of the two organizations' activities through the assurance of the quality of products traded between the two countries.

Commenting on the MoU, the SAZ director general, Mrs Maureen Mutasa highlighted that the MoU concept is a means of achieving more formal and closer coordination of standardization activities between SAZ and other stakeholders. She said that whilst the MoU idea seeks to encourage wider participation in standardization activities and wider application of standards, it is also a means of facilitating trade.

The SAZ director general added that the SAZ has also signed seven other MoUs with local stakeholders, five of which are with local authorities, one with the Institute of Directors Zimbabwe (IoDZ) and the seventh with the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ). She emphasized the need to implement the undertakings made in the MoU.

In response, the BOBS managing director, Mr CDRA Jayawardene reiterated his organization's commitment to implementing the MoU undertakings. Mr Jayawardene highlighted that the MoU will help facilitate trade between the two countries through harmonization of standards. He hastened to add that BOBS stands to benefit more from this relationship as it has only been in existence for eight years.

The MoU signing and adoption ceremony was attended by SAZ management with BOBS being represented by the managing director, Mr CDRA Jayawardene.