

For immediate release

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SADC Public Works Ministers agree on way forward for the region

Following one and a half days of deliberations, Southern African Development Community (SADC) Ministers of Public Works and representatives ended proceedings on a high note at Sun City today (Wednesday 25 April 2006), with agreement on the way forward regarding integration of the construction industry in the region.

Speaking on behalf of Public Works Minister Stella Sigcau, Deputy Minister Ntopile Kganyago said: "This meeting of minds has been very successful in terms of taking the process further. As a start, we have agreed on a Plan of Action to pave the way for the harmonisation of regulations in the region. This will allow greater co-operation between SADC member states with a view to breaking down the artificial barriers standing in the way of integrated economic activity in the region."

The Plan of Action focuses on draft guidelines for the region on the participation of foreign construction companies in projects, including the participation and development of local companies in such projects. It also focuses on draft proposals to: harmonise the regulatory framework for the construction industry and procurement practices; address the construction shortage skills in the region; facilitate the development of the construction material industry; share best practices on contractor development; and increase access to information on construction sector activities.

In a Statement of Intent signed by the eight Public Works Ministers who attended the Conference, commitment was made to:

- harmonising regulation practices, norms and standards in the SADC region to enable shared socio-economic development;
- prioritising construction and property-related skills development in the region;
- developing the regional construction industry, and indigenous, black and women contractors in particular;

- promoting and facilitating the development of the construction materials supply industry in the region; and
- reviewing procurement practices of addressing skills and capacity development and empowerment of indigenous black and women enterprises, promoting value for money and increasing the integrity, efficiency and effectiveness of the procurement process.

The Forum also pledged to follow up this first Conference with annual meetings to be held on a rotational basis in each of the SADC member countries. Each country will also appoint a committee of senior officials to ensure implementation and monitoring of the action plans. A time-frame for full integration and harmonisation of the construction industry will be put forward at the Forum's next meeting, scheduled for the first half of 2007.

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