

SADC EMPLOYERS' GROUP

REPORT 2008-2009

Presented to the SADC Meeting of Ministers of
Labour and Employment and Social Partners

Maputo, Mozambique
26 to 30 April 2010

Introduction

1 This report highlights the main activities of the SADC Employers' Group (SEG) during the period of 2008 and 2009. The first section sets out background information on the Group. The second section focuses on major projects, participation in regional and global events, relationships with partners and capacity building of members.

Background

2 The SEG was formed in 2000 and a constitution adopted in 2002. The original purpose of the Group was to formalise the relationship between employers' organisations in Southern Africa. A loose arrangement had been in place since 1977 when the first meeting of East, Central and Southern Africa Employers' Organisations Conference was held in Mauritius.

3 The following is a list of the current members of the SEG:

- Association of Lesotho Employers (ALE)
- Association of Tanzania Employers (ATE)
- Botswana Confederation of Commerce Industry and Manpower (BOCCIM)
- Business Unity South Africa (BUSA)
- Confederation of Business Associations of Mozambique (Confederação das Associações Económicas de Moçambique) (CTA)
- Employers Confederation of Zimbabwe (EMCOZ)
- Employers Consultative Association of Malawi (ECAM)
- Federation of Swaziland Employers and Chamber of Commerce (FSE&CC)
- Mauritius Employers' Federation (MEF)
- Namibian Employers' Federation (NEF)
- Zambia Federation of Employers (ZEF)

4 Contacts have been established with private sector bodies in Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to look at membership from these two SADC countries. It is envisaged that the Seychelles will be

approached in 2010 to establish if there are potential members from these countries.

5 The SEG undertook an extensive review of its vision, mission and objectives at its Annual General Meeting held in January 2008. It was decided to reposition the Group as one that represents the broader interests of the SADC private sector rather than simply retain the focus on labour and employment activities. This reflects changes that have taken place in the region since the Group was formed in 2000. There has been a consolidation of organised business bodies in a number of countries (including Botswana, South Africa, Mozambique and Swaziland) and the interests of employers now go beyond labour market concerns to incorporate a range of economic, social and political issues.

6 The following is the overarching vision and mission statement that was adopted:

“SADC Employers Group (SEG) seeks to be a leading, proactive, regional private sector organisation that supports sustainable socio-economic development.”

7 The strategic objectives that follow from this vision are the following:

- Develop the capacity of SEG and its members
- Enhance the legitimacy and relevance of SEG to represent employers in SADC
- Promote strategic linkages between SEG and key institutions as well as between members and partners
- Improve trading and investment environment in the region
- Participate in the development of regional policies and programmes
- Promote sustainable business
- Enhance communication

8 The following people are the current office bearers within the SEG:

Chair – Mr Jerry Vilakazi, CEO, BUSA

Vice Chair – Mr Thabo Makeka, Executive Director, ALE

Treasurer – Ms Maria Machailo-Ellis, Executive Director, BOCCIM

Secretary – Ms Catherine Grant, Director: Trade Policy, BUSA

9 The Secretariat responsibilities of the SEG reside in South Africa at BUSA. After extensive discussions it has been agreed that the SEG will be registered in South Africa as a non-profit organisation (Section 21 organisation). This will enable a bank account to be set up and for the SEG to operate as a separate legal entity from BUSA. Work is also underway to adopt a logo and branding image for the Group that will then be used on a planned website as well as all other documentation. To date, the funds and activities of the SEG have been managed by BUSA.

10 It is intended that the Chairmanship and Secretariat of the SEG will rotate through the membership in the future. However there are capacity constraints in many of the member organizations which have prevented this happening to date.

11 There is currently no membership fee for the SEG. This is however under consideration and was discussed at the most recent AGM in Cape Town in April 2009. To date the SEG has supported its activities through resources provided by its members (including the Secretariat support provided by BUSA) as well as some donor funding for specific projects. Donors who have recently supported the SEG include the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Southern Africa Trust, ESIPP and the USAID Trade Hub.

Recent Activities

12 In line with the 5 year strategic plan adopted in 2008, the recent activities of the SEG have included the following:

12.1 Develop the capacity of SEG and its members

- Re-circulated capacity assessments done by some members as part of the Scandinavian Project
- Requested initial project proposals from members
- ILO funding secured for projects in Malawi and Namibia
- Two interns from University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business sent to EMCOZ in Zimbabwe to prepare consultants report
- Internships programme to be developed for SEG in 2010
- Consideration of SEG support for Africa ADR
- Participation in the Business for Development initiative
- Ongoing discussion with donors for capacity support, including Southern African Trust, PRO-INVEST and DFID

12.2 Enhance the legitimacy and relevance of SEG to represent employers in SADC

- CTA in Mozambique joined as member of SEG
- Regular electronic communication from the Secretariat but difficulties still experienced in reaching some members
- Four SEG meetings held in 2008 and three in 2009
- Programme of support put in place for EMCOZ, including press releases and statements at ILO
- Ongoing active participation as a Group at the ILO Annual Conference and other ILO events, including most recently at the African Employers Conference from 8 to 10 April 2010 in Johannesburg

- Strong relationship with the Pan-African Employers Confederation
- Development of a logo and website for SEG is underway

12.3 Promote strategic linkages between SEG and key institutions as well as between members and partners

- Agreement reached for SEG to assume rotational chair of SADC Business Forum - several attempts to implement SEG agreement with no success to date
- SEG participation in EU-SADC Business Council including completion and distribution of position papers on EPA negotiations
- Linkages established with NEPAD Business Foundation
- SADC representative appointed as International Organisation of Employers (IOE) President
- Strong SEG representation on ILO Governing Body
- Initial difficulties experienced in participating in SADC ELS Task Force but these have been overcome in the later part of 2009 and early 2010
- More regular contact with the SADC Secretariat and participation in various regional activities, including the SADC Customs Private Sector Partnership Forum, Mauritius Conference on Poverty and Development and the stakeholder consultations on a Poverty Observatory

12.4 Improve trading and investment environment

- Workshop held and regional position adopted on SADC FTA and proposed Customs Union
- Private Sector position presented to SADC Heads of States at FTA launch
- Regular information exchange on EPA negotiations
- Proposals for trade policy training course submitted to TradeCom Facility
- Research paper on FDI in the region completed
- Workshops on FDI with SATUCC held in August 2008 and April 2009
- Workshop held on challenges in the trading relationship between the US and SADC countries

12.5 Participate in the development of regional policies and programmes

- Participated in the SADC Conference on Poverty and Development held in April 2008 in Mauritius
- Developed private sector position for input into SADC Conference on Poverty and Development held in Mauritius (Business Against Poverty Declaration)
- Follow up workshop on the SADC Conference held with SADC Secretariat in August 2008 and SEG participation in the consultations on a SADC Poverty Observatory

- Terms of reference for China studies developed but funding not yet secured to implement
- Initial attempts made to strengthen relationship with SADC Secretariat beyond traditional ELS mechanism
- Active participation in the SADC Customs Private Sector Partnership
- Research undertaken on the regional impact of the global economic crisis on some SADC countries (results to be presented to this meeting)