

SADC reviews progress on implementation of initiatives enhancing Financial Inclusion in the Region

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Financial Inclusion Subcommittee has reviewed progress on the implementation of Financial Inclusion initiatives in the Region, including the development of the new five-year SADC Strategy on Financial Inclusion and Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Access to Finance at its ordinary meeting held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 13th to 15th June 2023.

The meeting, which was attended by Senior Officials from the Ministries of Finance and Central Banks from 14 SADC Member States, prepared a report which will be presented to the Ministers of Finance and Investment in July 2023 and discussed implementation of recommendations and decisions of the Subcommittee and the Ministers of Finance and Investment.

The Draft Strategy on Financial Inclusion and SMEs Access to Finance envisages an inclusive, stable and innovative SADC financial system that empowers individuals and businesses to access and use domestic and international capital and to contribute to industrialisation, inclusive growth and resilient, and sustainable economic well-being. This vision contributes to the overarching SADC Vision 2050 for a peaceful, inclusive, competitive middle to high income industrialised Region, where all citizens enjoy sustainable economic well-being, justice and freedom.

The meeting also reviewed progress on the implementation of the Financial Inclusion Work Plan 2021-2023, and received updates from the SADC Committee of Central Bank Governors (CCBG) Secretariat, the SADC Development Finance Resource Centre (DFRC), the Committee of Insurance, Securities and Non-banking Financial Authorities (CISNA) Secretariat, and the Committee of Stock Exchanges (CoSSE) Secretariat regarding their key initiatives pertaining to financial inclusion.

The meeting deliberated on the Draft Financial Inclusion Gender Action Plan which provides strategic direction to Member States in realising the objectives of the SADC Strategy for Financial Inclusion and SMEs Access to Finance.

The Financial Inclusion Subcommittee has been established by the SADC Committee of Ministers of Finance and Investment to coordinate the work on financial inclusion and build synergies among the structures dealing with financial inclusion. This Subcommittee consists of relevant Senior Officials or their representatives, from each Member State tasked with dealing with financial inclusion matters.

The meeting was supported by the European Union (EU) through the Support to Improving the Business Environment in the SADC Region (SIBE) Programme. SIBE seeks to help SADC achieve economic diversification and job creation, and for Member States to develop more enabling investment regimes and advance in economic integration. The €15 million programme aims to improve the investment climate and attract more foreign direct investment in the Region's non-extractive sectors. The

programme is helping remove unfavourable business measures and improve the investment regulatory framework, policy certainty, predictability, consistency and transparency as pre-requisites to attract investment.