

SADC Heads of Anti-Corruption Agencies discuss anti-corruption initiatives in relation to Disaster Risk Management and Correctional Services

The Heads of Anti-Corruption Agencies (ACAs) from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Member States met for a Regional Workshop from 02-04 October 2024, in Lusaka, the Republic of Zambia. The workshop was co-hosted by the Anti-Corruption Commission of Zambia and the SADC Secretariat under the theme “*Strengthening anti-corruption efforts in Disaster Risk Management and Correctional Services in the SADC region*”.

The workshop was premised on the SADC Protocol against Corruption, which was adopted by SADC Heads of States and Government in 2001. The Protocol, which came into effect in July 2005, serves as a vital tool in the fight against corruption, aiming to promote and strengthen the development of mechanisms to prevent, detect, punish, and eradicate corruption in both the public and private sector the workshop’s objectives were to:

- enhance awareness amongst the Heads of the ACAs on emerging issues and trends in corruption in the region.
- Facilitate information sharing on strategies and good practices for addressing corruption in disaster risk management response and correctional/ Prison services.
- develop key priority actions that are aligned to the Strategic Anti-Corruption Action Plan (2023-2027) that would facilitate enhancement of anti-corruption efforts by ACAs in disaster risk management response and correctional services; and
- strengthen implementation of the SADC Strategic Anti-Corruption Action Plan (2023-2027).

Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) Heads meet annually to deliberate on emerging trends in anti-corruption and the 2024 workshop highlighted the recognition that when disasters strike, governments and other stakeholders mainly humanitarian aid organisations are required to swiftly mobilise essential relief in the form of among others food, shelter, and more for those affected. Corruption has increasingly undermined these noble efforts impacting every stage of disaster management response.

Similarly, Correctional/ Prison services are risk prone to corruption. Those that are incarcerated sometimes engage in corrupt practices inclusive of such acts as running criminal organisations from inside the prison in exchange for bribes, sexual or other favors, or a share of the illicit profits. In other cases, the officials themselves may provide inmate labor to private business or to individuals for a Perpetuation of criminal networks. These acts undermine rehabilitation, pose safety risks for inmates, staff and the public.

In her opening remarks, the outgoing Chairperson of the SADC Anti-Corruption Committee from the Republic of Zambia, Mrs. Monica Chipanta Mwanza stated that it is imperative for SADC

member states to strengthen anti-corruption initiatives in both Disaster Risk Management and in Correctional Services and ensure that what must be done is done, either in development of relevant policies, legislation, sectoral reforms, capacity building or putting in place corruption risk mitigation strategies.

In his remarks, the Director of Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Affairs at the SADC Secretariat, Professor Kula Theletsane highlighted that fighting corruption requires strong cooperation at domestic, regional, continental, and international levels. The necessary frameworks at regional level to facilitate cooperation between the Member States exist. It is hoped that convening of such platforms and others at the regional level will continue to strengthen cooperation and coordination of efforts. The Director thanked the cooperating partners for their presence and contribution in the workshop as it bears testimony of the collaborative efforts between the Organisations.

The workshop recommended:

- Harmonisation of legislation, procedures as well as development of strategies mainstreaming anti- corruption in Disaster Risk management response as well as in Corrections/Prison Services.
- Capacity building and skills building for correctional officers and disaster risk officers on emerging trends as well as sharing of information and intelligence sharing
- Member States to urgently establish the National Task Forces comprising of different Sectors to coordinate the implementation of the Transnational Organised Crime Strategy in line with the Decision of the Ministerial Committee of the Organ of July 2023 in Windhoek, Republic of Namibia.
- Collaborating with the SADC Parliamentary Forum to leverage the SADC Model Law on Public Finance Management to strengthen the frameworks, systems, and processes for combating corruption
- Member States to consider review of Prisons Acts to ensure that corruption is adequately defined and not implied in definitions like 'smuggling'

Heads of ACAs appreciated that corruption is a predicate offence for transnational crime and that inter-agency cooperation is crucial to engender a community of response.

The workshop was attended by SADC Heads of Anti-Corruption Agencies as well as representatives from the SADC Parliamentary Forum, World Customs Organisation, African Union Advisory Board Against Corruption, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Corrections/Prison Services representatives; and SADC Secretariat – Disaster Risk Desk and Customs Desk