

SADC STATISTICS COMMITTEE CONCLUDES MEETING IN VICTORIA FALLS, PUSHES FOR PROTOCOL RATIFICATION AND REGIONAL DATA REFORMS

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Statistics Committee concluded its meeting in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, with a renewed focus on strengthening regional statistical cooperation and harmonisation. A key outcome of the meeting was a strong call for Member States to urgently sign and ratify the SADC Protocol on Statistics. The Committee recommended that SADC Member State seize the upcoming SADC Heads of State and Government Summit in August 2025 in Antananarivo, Madagascar, as the next statutory opportunity to sign the Protocol. Alternatively, Member States may sign Protocol in their countries at any convenient time with the facilitation of SADC Secretariat.

The Committee expressed concern over the continued delays in the signing and ratification of SADC legal instruments, highlighting the significant implications for regional integration. These delays undermine the timely execution of regional policies, limit access to potential funding from international cooperating partners and multilateral financial institutions and hinder effective collaboration among Member States. The Committee referenced a report considered by the SADC Council in August 2024, which outlined the far-reaching consequences of the slow pace in signing and ratification of protocols

The meeting also received reports from Member States on the progress that they have made at the national level towards the signing and ratification of the Protocol on Statistics.

The Committee also reviewed progress under the SADC–World Bank Regional Statistics Project and emphasised capacity building through training and technical assistance.

It also took key decisions across thematic areas:

- **National Accounts:** Capacity building for transitioning to the 2025 System of National Accounts (SNA) and undertaking reviews of methodology.
- **Poverty Statistics:** Training to support national Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) production and development of a regional MPI.
- **Price Statistics:** Harmonised Consumer Price Index (HCPI) reviews in select countries and follow-up on harmonisation progress.
- **Trade Statistics:** Finalisation of methodological guidelines for informal cross-border and services trade statistics.
- **Agriculture Statistics:** Strengthened collaboration for the SADC-Agriculture Information Management System (AIMS) portal and support for Food Balance Sheets.
- **Migration Statistics:** Adoption of harmonised tools and integration of migration modules in national censuses.

- **Labour Statistics:** The Committee urged Member States to produce labour statistics on a regular basis, using the latest statistical standards, to improve comparability among Member States and to inform the development of responsive employment policies and strategies.
- **Gender Statistics:** Endorsement of the Financial Inclusion Toolkit for gender-disaggregated data.

The Committee also directed the Secretariat to finalise key digital platforms, including the Open Data Portal and Integrated Trade Statistics Database System, to support sustainable and accessible regional data infrastructure.