

**Address at the 2026 Southern African Development Community (SADC)
Quality Awards**

Premier Hotel, Johannesburg

25 March 2026

Programme Director

SADC Secretariat

Ladies and Gentlemen

Distinguished Delegates from SADC Member States, Private sector representatives, CEO's and colleagues from the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition as well as international development partners, good evening.

Ladies and Gentlemen. on behalf of the Government of South Africa and the Department of Trade , Industry and Competition, it is a great pleasure and honour to welcome you all to South Africa, and to address you at the 6th SADC Quality Awards. The SADC Quality Awards for 2026, are aimed at recognising and awarding those who demonstrated outstanding performance in the field of quality infrastructure and services.

These awards are happening at the same time delegates of the World Trade Organization (WTO) will be meeting for the 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) from tomorrow until the 29th March 2026 in Yaoundé, Cameroon. That will be the first Ministerial Conference hosted on the African continent.

Key issues on the agenda will be agriculture and food security; the renewal of the moratorium on e-commerce – trade in services; intellectual property rights; and WTO reform on special and differential treatment. A notable new addition is trade and environment as LDCs push back against reforms for environmental preservation such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

I am particularly pleased to note that participants and winners have been drawn from an increasing number of the SADC Member States who are keen to promote the success of trade in and out of the shores of SADC Region.

The SADC TBT Cooperation Structures are established under Article 11 of the TBT Annex to SADC Protocol on Trade for a progressive elimination of TBT amongst the Member States and between SADC and other Regional and International Trading Blocks.

The overall objective is to facilitate dialogue between Member States on issues pertaining to Standardization, Quality Assurance, Accreditation, and Metrology (SQAM) matters, in support to implementation of the SADC Free Trade Area which was established in 2008.

This event gives us an opportunity to interact with you, the business community, the experts and the functionaries on standards, technical regulations, metrology, and conformity assessment procedures. The sharing of ideas on how we can improve the quality of goods in our respective countries as we embrace global trade and cultivate Africa's Industrialisation, Competitiveness, Transformation and Integration through increased manufacturing, value addition and innovation is critical. Regional value addition is critical for growth of the region.

The quality awards initiative was endorsed by the SADC Council of Ministers of Trade to raise the awareness of the Quality Infrastructure in the region. In order for a country to be eligible to enter the regional awards, it shall adhere quality system that ensure product safety, health and environment, live up to it and then follow its annual national awards process.

The aim of the awards is to recognize and appreciate organizations and individuals who are contributing to quality advancement in all sectors of the economy, by having measurement and quality systems, procedures and processes that are in line with local, regional and international practices and who use quality advancement to support national and regional economic development and growth.

The objectives of the SADC Quality Awards are as follows:

- To recognize organizations that excel in continuous quality improvement,
- To motivate organizations to adhere to proper quality business norms,
- To encourage organizations to comply with local, regional and international quality systems.
- To encourage application by organizations of the measurement tool kits, quality assurance and quality management practices,
- To enhance understanding of quality principles, business methods and all national and SADC harmonized standards that promote competitiveness and
- To recognize individuals that excel in their contributions to the SQAM Quality Drive.

It is clear from the objectives that quality in the context of quality infrastructure is not subjective, but is a marketable and tradable resource. It allows companies to distinguish themselves from less reputable counterparts and act as an enabler to be part of national, regional or international value chains.

Ladies and Gentleman, a developed quality infrastructure is an essential prerequisite for the SADC Region, in effect for African countries, to have access to international markets in accordance with modern quality principles. Even if many products and services produced in developing countries are of a high quality, it is nevertheless difficult for developing countries to market their products and services internationally, if the national quality infrastructure is not functioning satisfactorily and according to international acceptable practice. In order to be able to benefit from the global multilateral free trade system to achieve sustainable economic growth nationally, profound knowledge about rules and procedures, as well as access to information concerning on-going processes is of vital importance.

We as government recognises the increased importance of quality and the quality infrastructure that supports it, especially as our economy moves to more value added manufacturing. The tools available from the quality infrastructure enable manufacturers to adhere to the technical requirements that are a prerequisite for participation in export markets and allows for seamless integration in global supply chains.

We will therefore continue to actively support initiatives such as these, but see an increasing need to foster closer relationships with all stakeholders, especially the users of the quality infrastructure in order for us to remain relevant in this rapidly changing global environment.

In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to congratulate the 2026 SADC Quality Award Winners for their dedication to the norms of quality systems and conformity assessment procedures, the SADC secretariat and Government of South Africa for making it possible to have this event, All sixteen (16) Member States for improving their respective national quality systems and associated conformity assessment procedures, the government functionaries, , and support staff that was instrumental to assist with all logistics of this event.

I thank you for this opportunity and trust that you will enjoy these celebrations.