



## PRESS RELEASE

### **SADC to Convene High-Level Engagement Meetings for DRC Accession to Key Regional Protocols**

**20 April 2026, Gaborone, Botswana:** The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat, in collaboration with the German Government through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit - Cooperation for the Enhancement of the SADC Regional Economic integration (GIZ-CESARE) Programme, will convene a High-Level Engagement Meetings in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from 27 April to 01 May 2026.

This five-day engagement will focus on advancing the Democratic Republic of Congo's accession to key SADC Protocols, reflecting the country's ongoing progress, transition, and integration into the regional framework. The protocols include:

- The Protocol on Trade (1996)
- The Protocol on Transport, Communication and Meteorology (1996)
- The Protocol on Trade in Services (2012)

The workshop is convened in line with decisions of the SADC Council of Ministers to support the DRC in accelerating its national processes toward accession and ratification of regional integration instruments. It aims to:

- Enhance awareness of the economic and developmental benefits of SADC Protocols
- Strengthen stakeholder understanding of the SADC Free Trade Area (FTA)
- Support policy alignment and legislative processes required for accession
- Facilitate dialogue between policymakers, legislators, and the private sector

The workshop will bring together a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including:

- Ministers and Members of Parliament
- Senior government officials
- Private sector leaders and business associations
- Technical experts from SADC and cooperating partners

The structured programme will unfold over **five key phases**:

1. **27-28 April 2026:** High-level political engagement sessions for ministers and legislators

2. **29 April-01 May 2026:** Technical and middle-level sessions targeting senior officials and private sector stakeholders

The Democratic Republic of Congo's accession to these Protocols represents a significant step toward deeper regional integration, trade facilitation, and economic transformation within the SADC region. The initiative also aligns with efforts to address trade bottlenecks, including those identified at key border posts such as Kasumbalesa. SADC remains committed to fostering inclusive regional economic integration and supporting Member States in unlocking the full benefits of cooperation. These meetings mark an important milestone in the DRC's journey toward full participation in the SADC economic community.

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### **About SADC**

SADC is an organisation of 16 Member States established in 1980. The mission of SADC is to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic development through efficient, productive systems, deeper cooperation and integration, good governance and durable peace and security; so that the region emerges as a competitive and effective player in international relations and the world economy.

**Issued by the SADC Secretariat**

**Gaborone, Botswana**