

Challenges for laboratories in a changing world

Testing of products to facilitate trade is seen frequently as an unnecessary cost. However, one of the essential building blocks for effective and efficient implementation of trade agreements lies in the testing of products, using harmonized conformity assessment procedures, which are compliant with the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (WTO TBT) agreement and also meets the higher demands of external markets and consumers. The re-testing of products each time they enter a new economy is both expensive and time consuming.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies are disrupting the manufacturing workplace at an ever-increasing pace. This disruption challenges testing and calibration laboratories to introduce new methodologies and techniques for the services supplied and also for responding to the trends for data accumulation and transmission of the results to the client.

SRLA Awards

All members of the SRLA are eligible for consideration for the Margaret Ngobeni Floating Trophy for the best performing MS-NLA annual award.

SRLA Liaison with SADC TBT Cooperation structures

The SRLA liaises with the members of the SADC Technical Cooperation Structures as described in the TBT Annex to the SADC Protocol on Trade especially during events to raise awareness of the role of standards, quality assurance, accreditation and metrology (SQAM) in facilitating trade during World Metrology Day (20 May), World Accreditation Day (09 June) and World Standards Day (14 October).

SRLA and NAFFP collaboration in promotion accreditation for recognition

The SRLA members and the National Accreditation Focal Points (NAFFPs) that represent Member States without their own National Accreditation Body (NAB) has formed a platform for the MS-NLAs and NAFFPs to meet and exchange knowledge and experiences, as well as to identify potential synergies and linkages. The main areas of collaboration include training on quality management systems and technical capacity building; marketing and awareness-raising events on the importance of accreditation; and, the establishment of a harmonized database of CABs in the region.

SRLA Liaison with Pan African Quality Institutions (PAQI)

The SRLA became a Stakeholder Member of the African Accreditation Cooperation (AFRAC) in March 2020. Furthermore, the SRLA interacts with the members of the Infra-African Metrology System (AFRIMETS) during the General Assembly meetings.

Whilst the SRLA's main focus is the CABs in the various member states, it is recognized that SADC is an integral part of the continent and thus the SRLA has a long-term goal to bring CABs in the Pan-African context together in a meaningful structure.

Contact details of each MS-NLA is available on www.sadcrcla.org

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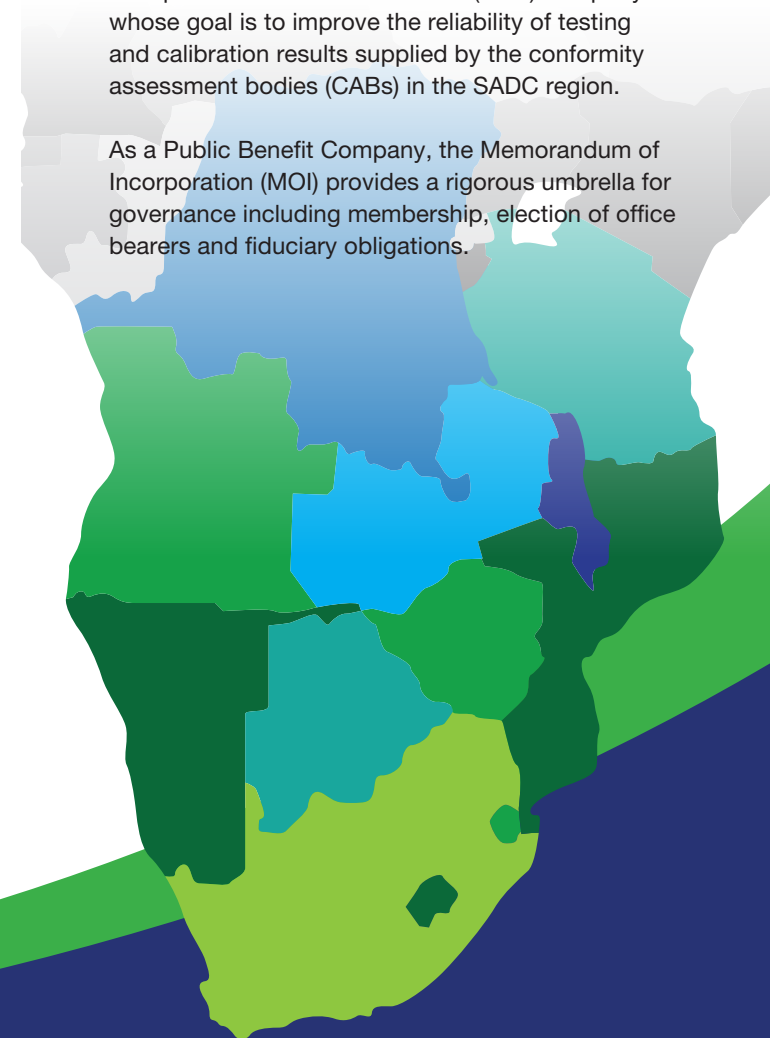
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SADC REGIONAL LABORATORY ASSOCIATION

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Laboratory Association (SRLA) is incorporated as a “Not for Profit” (NPC) company whose goal is to improve the reliability of testing and calibration results supplied by the conformity assessment bodies (CABs) in the SADC region.

As a Public Benefit Company, the Memorandum of Incorporation (MOI) provides a rigorous umbrella for governance including membership, election of office bearers and fiduciary obligations.



SRLA Objectives

The overall objective of the SRLA is to improve the collaboration, technical and managerial skills of laboratory personnel in the region. Ultimately the SRLA wishes to provide a mechanism to help increase trade by assisting the member state laboratories to achieve accreditation to international standards (such as ISO/IEC 17025 General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories). It is recognized that the reduction of the costs associated with trade and ensuring access to foreign markets is of extreme importance to all the member states.

The objectives of the SRLA are as follows:

- Establish and maintain a self-sustaining organization whose goal is to improve the reliability of test results supplied by the CABs in the SADC region;
- Be a platform for the region's laboratory associations to raise concerns and obtain advice from peers;
- Be the regional voice of laboratories within the SADC region and other Regional Economic Communities (RECs);
- Assist the members in adding testing, analysis and calibration capacity in every SADC member state and provide adequate means for the exchange of information and experience;
- Improve the knowledge and skills, both technical and management, of laboratory personnel in the SADC region;
- Provide a mechanism to help increase trade by assisting the member state laboratories to achieve accreditation to international standards and thus reducing the cost of trade and ensuring access in foreign markets; and,
- Promote accreditation of test, analysis and calibration laboratories in compliance with the requirements.

Responding to industry needs

In developing the quality infrastructure (QI) of the SADC member states, it became evident that there would be an increasing reliance on the services of testing and calibration laboratories. During the mid-2000s, a number of SADC member states formed their own national laboratory associations, in order to mobilize support for their members.

Since then, 13 out of 16 SADC member states have formally established independent laboratory associations and now perform an active role in supporting laboratory activities in their own member states.

SRLA Membership



The Member-State National Laboratory Associations (MS-NLAs) are registered entities in the respective SADC Member State:

1. **Associação Angolana de Laboratórios (AAL)**
– formed in 2018
2. **Botswana Testing Laboratory System (BTLS)**
– formed in 2013
3. **Association Congolaise des Laboratoires (ASCOLAB)** – formed in 2013
4. **National Laboratory Association of Eswatini (NLAE)** – formed in 2010
5. **Laboratories Federation of Lesotho (LFL)**
– formed in 2010
6. **Laboratory Association of Malawi (LAM)**
– formed in 2011
7. **Associação de Laboratórios de Moçambique (ALM)** – formed in 2011
8. **National Laboratory Association of Namibia (NLAN)** – formed in 2019
9. **Association of Seychelles Laboratories (ASL)**
– formed 2019
10. **National Laboratory Association of South Africa (NLA-SA)** – formed in 1998
11. **National Laboratory of Tanzania (NLAT)**
– formed in 2015
12. **Zambia National Laboratory Association (ZNLA)** – formed in 2012
13. **National Laboratory Association of Zimbabwe (NLAZ)**
– formed in 2004