



# CRASA

WORKING IN PERFECT HARMONY



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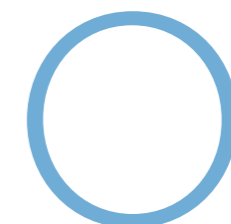
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*Bridget Linzie talks about how harmonising policies and regulations across the region can stimulate investment and growth*

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One of the cornerstones of social and economic development in today's competitive global marketplace is collaboration. In 1997 the national ICT regulators in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) came together to form a joint body, the Communication Regulator's Association of Southern Africa (CRASA), whose remit was to facilitate harmonisation of regulatory frameworks across the region, for the benefit of SADC Citizens.

Today, CRASA's remit has been expanded to include the closely related Postal sector, following a merger in June 2011 with the postal regulators' association, Southern Africa Postal Regulatory Association (SAPRA). "There are huge opportunities in the SADC countries for investment and growth in the ICT and postal sectors," explained CRASA Acting Executive Secretary, Bridget Linzie. "By harmonising the regulatory environment across the region we hope to make it much more attractive for investors to enter and operate in any of the SADC countries and therefore accelerate the region's social and economic growth."

While CRASA has its headquarters in Botswana, 13 of the 15 countries in the SADC are active members, namely Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. "Our strength as an organisation is that we are one of the implementing agency of SADC. We were created under the Protocol of Transport,



CRASA's remit has been expanded to include the Postal sector

Communications and Meteorology, so we have strong links Ministerial Annual Meetings and have influence on the development of policies and regulations for the ICT and Postal sectors. Advocacy is one of our core strategies for ensuring the region reach consensus,” she said.

CRASA liaises with other regional and international organisations in Africa, Europe, America and Asia and benchmark its activities to ensure that it is advising the SADC regulators on the latest technologies and best practice. Currently one of its primary objectives is to support the migration

to digital technology, both in terms of fibre telecommunications networks and broadcasting technology.

“We have made significant progress from this perspective,” said Linzie. “We now have six submarine cables coming to the region providing adequate international bandwidth for global communications. The current status of ICTs in the region shows that one of the main problems is that although most of the underlying infrastructure is in place, it is not efficiently used. Landlocked SADC Member States still pay more to get to the coast or to the rest of Africa than they do

**1997**

The year that CRASA was established

“CRASA BENCHMARKS ITS ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE THAT IT IS ADVISING THE SADC REGULATORS ON THE LATEST TECHNOLOGIES AND BEST PRACTICE”

to get from the coast to Europe, the US or Asia”. CRASA, therefore, is looking at how the region can address the issue of ensuring cost effective access to the submarine cables especially for the landlocked countries.

Another major issue in the SADC region is that roaming tariffs for mobile telecommunications are still unacceptably high, even though the mobile operators in the region have initiatives to reduce the tariffs. “If we are to open up this region to trade, we are going to need cost based roaming prices. So we are currently exploring on how we can work further with the operators, regulators and government officials to agree on a mechanism for reducing the roaming tariffs to the benefits of our citizens and visitors,” she commented.

From the broadcasting perspective, CRASA is collaborating with all its member states to help promote the migration to digital broadcasting technology. As part of the initial decision making process, ministers have recently debated whether the region should base its technology on American, Japanese, Brazilian or European standards, and have decided on the European model. Even though the initial target of the switch off date for the region of 31 December 2013 is not likely to be met, CRASA is working

with the SADC Secretariat and governments to ensure the foundations for the switch are harmonised, and that all countries will be able to complete the migration by the internationally recognised deadline of June 2015.

This past year CRASA has had the additional challenge of integrating the needs of postal sector regulators into its organisational



CRASA are making significant progress in the switch to digital technology



Bridget Linzie, Acting Executive Secretary, CRASA



#### CRASA will base its broadcasting technology on European standards

structure and operational strategy. “Because the subject is new to us, most of our activities and achievements so far have been on the topic of ICT,” said Linzie. “However, as most regulators across SADC are what we call converged, that is they are already regulating communications, broadcasting and postal services, the merger has not had a disruptive

influence on our business plans. We are largely dealing with the same regulators, which will ultimately make it much easier for us to push forward market reforms to the postal services.”

There is undoubtedly much still to do, and there are many issues on the horizon that will require ongoing roundtable discussion

and the mediating skills of CRASA. Many countries have no framework of policies for dealing with cyber security, and it will take a joint effort to achieve regional consensus to address the issue. Meanwhile, there is a role to play for the communications, broadcasting and postal sectors in order to bring awareness of sustainable development and social responsibility especially on issue regarding the environment.

Once harmonisation has been achieved across SADC, Linzie believes CRASA will continue to have a key role to play for regulators and governments in the region. The ICT sector, for example, will continue to be intensely dynamic. “We must make

sure our plans for the region are always forward looking and that we are always ready for change as it happens,” she said. “That’s why CRASA is so important. It gives the regulators a forum where they can talk about the challenges and learn from each other and other regions; a forum into which we can bring expertise from Africa, Europe, America and Asia, and where we can explore how our colleagues are tackling the regulatory issues.” **BE**

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For more information about  
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