

# **SADC Regional Integration: Experience From Zimbabwe In The Last Decade**



## Introduction and Background

SADC is a grouping now consisting of 16 member states that are working together to foster regional cooperation and integration. SADC member states endorsed the SADC Vision 2050, which is based on a firm foundation of Peace, Security, and Democratic Governance, and premised on three interrelated Pillars, namely: Industrial Development and Market Integration; Infrastructure Development in support of Regional Integration; and Social and Human Capital Development. The three pillars also recognize Gender, Youth, Environment and Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Management as important cross-cutting components. The region is now implementing the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2020-2030 in order to operationalise the Vision 2050

## Justification

Zimbabwe is a founding member of SADC one of whose objectives as espoused in the SADC Treaty is the achievement of sustainable socio-economic development. The challenge, however, is that the Zimbabwean economy remains weak and poverty levels are still high. Further, Zimbabwe's trade performance remains weak and the country largely seems to be failing to seize available regional market opportunities. Instead, its markets in the region have been dwindling over time. It is therefore imperative to assess the extent to which Zimbabwe fulfilled its regional commitments of Zimbabwe's country's implementation of regional commitments. This information will equip civil society with evidence to engage the government in influencing policy. Further, it will assist CSOs in documenting Zimbabwe's experience in participating in SADC regional integration.

## Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to assess Zimbabwe's progress in implementing SADC regional commitments in the last decade.

Specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify key SADC resolutions that have been passed at the SADC Heads of State Summits over the last Decade.
2. Provide an analysis of the implementation and domestication status from a Zimbabwe Perspective
3. Suggest policy recommendations on how Zimbabwe can benefit from the SADC trade arrangement.
4. The key SADC resolutions that have been passed at the SADC Heads of State Summits over the last Decade.

Analysis of the resolutions made during the period 2014 and 2022 is classified into five strategic pillars, that are core for both RISDP and the SADC Vision 2030-2050. These are summarized below.

### The Foundation: Peace, Security, and Good Governance

Three major resolutions were made under this pillar that are relevant to Zimbabwe. One relates to SADC's collective call for the removal of sanctions placed on Zimbabwe after noting the adverse impact they have on its economy. This featured in the 38th, 39th, and 42nd Head of State Summits.

The Region set 25th October as the date on which SADC Member States can collectively voice their disapproval of the sanctions through various activities and platforms until the sanctions are lifted.

The second was made at their 40th summit where member states resolved to take proactive measures to mitigate external interference, the impact of fake news and the abuse of social media, especially in electoral processes. The third resolution was made at the 39th Summit where SADC member states noted the gravity of security challenges, especially on terrorism activities and transnational organized crime, and agreed to prioritize the implementation of the SADC Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

### Pillar 1: Industrial Development and Market Integration

The resolution that industrialisation takes centre stage in SADC regional integration featured in almost all the summits that were held between 2014 and 2022. Related to this resolution was a resolution made at the 36th Summit where Member States were urged to speed the process of operationalizing the SADC Regional Development Fund in order to support the Industrialization Agenda. At the 38th summit, member states were further urged to remain committed to the implementation of the SADC industrialization agenda, as the overarching priority for the region. More so, Member States were urged to scale up efforts aimed at diversifying their economies, improve domestic revenue collection mechanisms, and manage public expenditures.

At the 38th, Member States were urged to focus on implementing priority activities within the approved frameworks of the Revised RISDP 2015-2020, and their policy documents, including the Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap, Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan, the Regional Agricultural Investment Plan, and the Strategic Indicative Plan of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Cooperation.

At the 34th Summit, member states agreed to expeditiously complement the Tripartite FTA negotiations in order to pave the way for the Continental FTA process. This was reiterated at the 39th summit where Member states that had not yet signed and/or ratified the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) Agreement were urged to do so, and urged Member States to expeditiously finalise the exchange of tariff offers and pave the way for the implementation of the TFTA.

The 35th Summit noted the critical role played by the macroeconomic convergence programme in facilitating stability and deepening market and financial integration and urged Member States to intensify and consistently implement regional policies and programmes as well as Member States' economic reforms, plans and strategies to resolve the challenges affecting SADC economies for sustainable growth path.

The 37th Summit noted progress in the implementation of the Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap 2020-2063 in specific profiling of value chains in the three priority sectors of agro-processing, mining and pharmaceuticals and urged Member States to keep the momentum and develop and actualize the identified value chains.

The 39th Summit agreed to accelerate the implementation of the industrialization strategy given that member states continued to export unprocessed raw material to the rest of the world, thereby forfeiting the potential benefits of the resource endowments. At the 42nd Summit member states noted the urgent need to enhance the rollout of SADC industrialization and market integration programs as contained in the RISDP (2020-2030).

## **Pillar 2: Infrastructure Development in Support of Regional Integration**

The resolution to scale up the implementation of regional infrastructure as a key enabler to economic integration in support of industrialization came out strongly in the 35th and 36th summits. At the 36th Summit, Heads of State and Government approved the Agreement on the Operationalization of the SADC Regional Development Fund and urged Member States to urgently ratify the Agreement in order to facilitate mobilization of resources to finance key regional projects and programs, giving further impetus to the preparation of infrastructure and industrialization projects.

### **1. Pillar 3: Social and Human Capital Development**

During the period 2014 and 2022, the key resolutions relevant to this pillar focused on addressing the challenges related to HIV and AIDS; malaria, and ebola. Specifically, the 35th Summit noted achievements recorded in addressing the burden of HIV and AIDS, TB, and Malaria. To this end, Summit directed the Secretariat to monitor the situation and coordinate the necessary regional interventions with Member States in order to ensure that HIV and AIDS are no longer a threat to public health. Further, the 38th Summit approved the Declaration on Eliminating Malaria in the SADC Region to firmly place regional malaria elimination on the agenda of all Member States. More so, the 34th Summit also reviewed the threat posed by the Ebola Virus Disease and urged Member States to Page 6 of 7 continue putting in place measures to prevent its outbreak and to effectively contain it in case of an outbreak in the SADC Region.

### ***Cross-Cutting Issues: Gender, Youth, Environment and Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Management***

Under this pillar, the major resolutions that came out were on food security; women's representation in politics and decision-making roles; as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation.

On food security, the 34th summit reviewed the regional food and nutrition security and noted increases in food production during the 2013-2014 growing season. However, humanitarian assistance and malnutrition still remain a challenge. To this end, Summit endorsed a Regional Food and Nutrition Security Strategy for 2015 to 2025 to ensure improved food availability, accessibility, and utilisation in a more sustainable manner. At the 35th summit, Member States were urged to continue implementing the Regional Agriculture Policy and relevant protocols in order to improve agricultural production and food security. The 37th Summit noted the improvement in the overall 2017/18 food security situation in the region and urged Member States to take measures to improve storage facilities in order to minimise post-harvest

losses and put in place contingency plans. The 38th Summit noted the overall decline in food production in the Region, for the 2017/18 crop season, and urged Member States to put in place measures to tackle food insecurity in the Region, while developing contingency plans to enhance drought preparedness, in view of the likelihood of adverse El Nino induced conditions during the 2018/19 cropping season. The 39th Summit urged Member States to implement comprehensive multi-year response plans to tackle recurrent droughts and food insecurity to boost agricultural production.

The 34th, 35th, and 39th Summits urged Member States to put in place effective legislation, policies, and strategies necessary to sustain the achievements recorded so far on women's representation in politics and decision-making. The 36th and 37th summits went further and urged Member States to strive towards reaching the gender parity target at all levels. The same resolution was re-emphasized at the 40th summit where member states were urged to fully implement the SADC Protocol on Gender and put in place concrete measures to improve the representation of women and youth in elected political positions.

In the area of climate change, the 35th Summit underscored the need for the region to continue to work with all progressive partners to ensure the protection of the planet and strive to build consensus on a continental basis in preparation for COP 21 to be held in Paris, France, in December 2015. The Summit further resolved that the region works together to ensure that the region contributes to a successor statute to the Kyoto Protocol that expires in 2020. To this end, Summit directed the Ministers of Environment to finalise the SADC Common Position for COP21, during their meeting in October 2015. The 37th Summit Urged Member States to explore risk insurance options in cases of climate change-related disasters including facilities that are available at the African Development Bank.

Member states that have not yet signed and ratified SADC protocols were urged to do so at the 36th Summit.

### **Zimbabwe's status of the implementation and domestication of SADC Heads of State Summits over the last Decade**

#### ***Status of implementation of resolutions made on The Foundation: Peace, Security, and Good Governance***

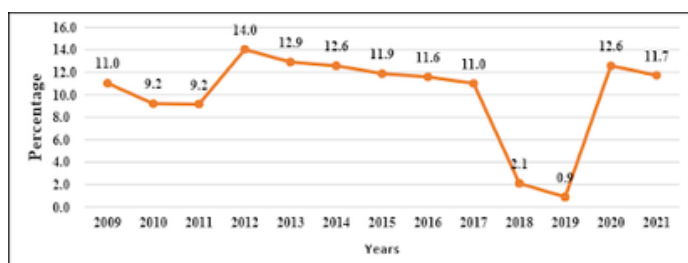
Zimbabwe is still campaigning for the removal of sanctions. On abuse of social media, Zimbabwe enacted a Data Protection Act [Chapter 11:22] in 2021 in response to this call. The Act seeks to provide for data protection with due regard to the Declaration of Rights under the Constitution and the public and national interest; to establish a Data Protection Authority and to provide for their functions; to create a technology-driven business environment and encourage technological development and the lawful use of technology; to provide for investigation and collection of evidence of cybercrime and unauthorized data collection and breaches, and to provide for admissibility of electronic evidence for such offenses; to amend the Interception of Communications Act [Chapter 11:20] to establish a Cyber Security Centre and to provide for matters connected with or incidental to the foregoing.

## Status of implementation of resolutions made on Pillar 1: Industrial Development and Market Integration

### Industrial Development

Zimbabwe registered an overall decline in manufacturing contribution to GDP between 2009 and 2021 (see Figure 1). Manufacturing sector contribution fell from 11% in 2011 to a mere 0.9% in 2019 before recovering to 11.7% in 2021. Some of the reasons explaining this include the reintroduction of the Zimbabwean dollar; foreign currency shortages that restricted companies from procuring inputs; declining levels of capacity utilization (see Figure 2); inefficiencies related to antiquated equipment; weak/broken value chains; high costs of doing business; erratic supply of key enablers as is reported by various CZI manufacturing sector survey reports.

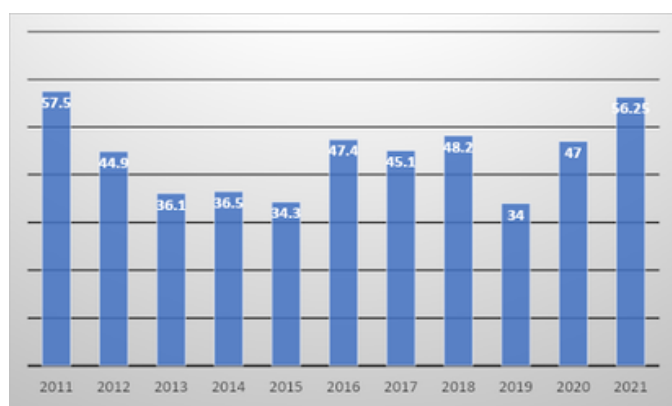
Figure 1: Manufacturing sector contribution to GDP from 2009 to 2021



Source: ZIMSTAT (2023) [National Accounts - ZimStat](#)

Industrial development is partly measured by manufacturing value added (MVA) to GDP. Since its formation, SADC highly placed industrialisation of its member states on its regional integration agenda. It is therefore important to track Zimbabwe's performance on MVA. The highest performance in terms of MVA was recorded between 1980 and 1992 where it rose from 20.4% to 26.9% of the country's GDP. Over the years, however, it slumped to its all-time low of 9.2% in 2011 before slightly recovering to 15.7% in 2020 owing to a myriad of economic challenges that bedeviled the country during that time. Performance in 2021 further deteriorated to 12.4% of the country's GDP in 2021.

Zimbabwe was rather deindustrializing during the last decade, and this is contrary to the resolutions that were made annually at the SADC Heads of State and Government.



Source: Various CZI Manufacturing Sector Survey Reports

The country's industry was not operating at full capacity as is illustrated in Figure 2 with the lowest performance in 2019. Recovery was then noted from 202 following the implementation of manufacturing sector strategies and statutory instruments that sought to promote the growth and transformation of the sector. For example, the NDS1 (2021-2025) prioritizes the resuscitation of the manufacturing sector to enhance value addition and move up the value chain for rapid economic transformation.

### Market integration

#### Regional trade

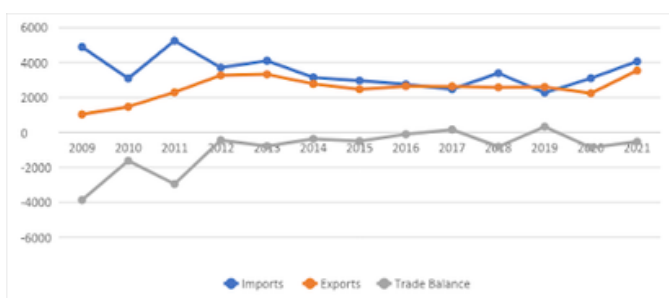
The RISDP seeks to deepen efforts towards the free movement of goods, services, and skills. This is achieved through the implementation of the Protocol on Trade in the SADC Region whose objectives are to liberalise intra-regional trade in goods and services; enhance economic development and diversification and industrialisation of the region, and establish a free trade area in SADC. Article 3 of the Protocol provides for the phased elimination of barriers to intra-SADC trade within a period of 8 years from the entry into force of the Protocol. The protocol entered into force on 1 January 2000. The SADC member states agreed to phase down tariffs using the principle of asymmetry where goods were categorised into four categories A, B, C, and E. By 2008, Zimbabwe had not only complied with the SADC requirement to have achieved liberalized 85% of Category A and B but was ahead of schedule since it had achieved 87% tariff reduction of the two categories (ZEPARU, 2018). Over the years, Zimbabwe has backtracked on this achievement with tariff reduction reaching 84%.

Implementation of tariff phase down on Category C (products sensitive to agricultural and industrial activities) did not take place in 2009 as per plan where Zimbabwe was supposed to reduce to zero the tariffs of these goods between 2009 and 2012 (ZEPARU, 2018). Instead, in February 2011, Zimbabwe obtained a derogation, pursuant to Article 3 (C) of the Protocol, from implementing the tariff phase-down for sensitive products (Category C products), such as textiles and clothing (WTO, 2020). Major reasons for this decision included the acute economic challenges the country was facing. Some of these include antiquated equipment; shortages of affordable lines of credit and low capacity utilisation among others. The phase-down period for Category C was then set to commence in 2012 ending in 2014 but the country failed to meet this new commitment as the cited challenges had not eased (ZEPARU, 2018).

During the period under study, Zimbabwe was implementing protectionist policies through an import program as evidenced by the removal of many goods from the Open General Import

License through Statutory Instruments 6 and 126 of 2014 as well as Statutory Instruments 18, 19, 20, and 64 of 2016. Further, in January 2012 Zimbabwe introduced 25% surtax on selected products through Statutory Instrument 156 of 2011. Although this was meant to protect the industry from external competition, it had the effect of reversing the regional integration milestone of 85% liberalisation that Zimbabwe had achieved in 2008.

In terms of trade flows, Zimbabwe was largely a net importer of goods from the SADC region for the period 2009 to 2021 with a trade balance of almost zero in 2016, 2017, and 2019 largely due to the implementation of the import management program (see Figure 1).



Source: ITC Trade Map [www.trademap.org](http://www.trademap.org) (Accessed on 2 August 2023)

Table 1: Zimbabwe's top 10 imports from SADC region between 2009 and 2021

Product Code	Product Description	Total value in US\$(000)
'31	Fertilisers	4,828,821
'84	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof	4,350,372
'27	Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral ...	4,050,524
'30	Pharmaceutical products	3,539,398
'10	Cereals	2,575,889
'87	Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof	2,355,687
'39	Plastics and articles thereof	1,884,849
'15	Animal, vegetable or microbial fats and oils and their cleavage products; prepared edible fats; ...	1,823,867
'85	Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers, television ...	1,648,193
'72	Iron and steel	1,459,042

Source: ITC Trade Map [www.trademap.org](http://www.trademap.org) (Accessed on 2 August 2023)

Table 1 shows that Zimbabwe imports largely manufactured products. It should be noted that these are largely from South Africa given that imports from that country constitute 82.7% of total SADC imports.

Table 2: Zimbabwe's top 10 exports to SADC region between 2009 and 2021

Product Code	Product Description	Total value in US\$(000)
24	Tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes; products, whether or not containing nicotine, ...	8596066
'71	Natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals, metals clad ...	6694356
'26	Ores, slag and ash	5576439
'75	Nickel and articles thereof	3545296
'72	Iron and steel	2050707
'52	Cotton	1064658
'17	Sugars and sugar confectionery	815205
'25	Salt; sulphur; earths and stone; plastering materials, lime and cement	622585
'99	Commodities not elsewhere specified	303748
'44	Wood and articles of wood; wood charcoal	285326

Source: ITC Trade Map [www.trademap.org](http://www.trademap.org) (Accessed on 2 August 2023)

As illustrated in Table 2, Zimbabwe largely exports primary and semi-finished agricultural and mineral commodities to the SADC region. This is not in the spirit of the SADC regional integration agenda that seeks to diversify economies as mirrored by their exports. It is important to note that Zimbabwe's export markets in the SADC region are not diversified as given that 81.1% of what the country exported to SADC between 2009 and 2021 was destined for South Africa.

With regards to the call for the signing and ratification of TFTA, Zimbabwe did and also submitted its offer.

### Macroeconomic convergence

Annex 2 of the Protocol on Finance and Investment requires all Member States of SADC to converge and cooperate on economic policies that promote stability. In pursuit of these goals, SADC Member States agree to restrict inflation to low and stable levels, maintain prudent fiscal stances with minimal deficits, maintain sustainable balances in current accounts, and minimise market distortions.

With the liberalisation of regional economies, Annex 2 of the Protocol on Finance and Investment set out deficit targets for SADC Member States. Member States were to achieve ratios of budget deficit to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of less than 5% by 2008, decreasing to less than 3% by 2012 and maintaining that ratio through 2018

SADC convergence criteria were set to achieve an annual inflation rate between 3-7% by 2018. Zimbabwe's experience between 2014 and 2022 was somewhat unsatisfactory and outside the convergence commitment. For example, between 2014 and 2016, the country was in a deflation ranging from -1.5% and -2.4%, way below inflation levels expected to stimulate growth and development of the economy. Thereafter, inflation levels skyrocketed from 0.9% in 2017 to 255.3% before reaching a high of 557.2% in 2020 as the country had fully adopted the local currency that was inflationary and that the public lacked confidence in. Re-adoption of the US dollar during the COVID period to some extent arrested the 3-digit inflation levels that fell to 98.5% in 2021 but resurged to 104.7% in 2022.

The SADC countries agreed to have achieved a 7% growth rate by 2018 and a current account balance to GDP of less than 3%. Zimbabwe registered negative growth of -6.1% in 2019 and -5.3% in 2020 largely due to COVID-19 impacts. The economy however recovered in 2021 as evidenced by 6.3 growth recorded in 2021. The IMF reported that Zimbabwe's current account

balanced ranged between 3.3% and 5.1% of GDP during the period 2019 to 2022 which is slightly above the SADC target. The current account balance share to GDP is, however, expected to fall to 1.5% in 2023 and this will be in line with the country's regional commitment.

The Afrodad (2019) report reveals that Zimbabwe's total debt to GDP gradually increased from 34.24% in 2013 to 54.60% in 2016 and this was the only period when it was within the SADC convergence target of less than 60%. Thereafter it shot to 93.2% in 2019 before reaching 102.7% in 2020 and is expected to decline to 68.1% in 2023

### Economic reforms at the national level

In the last decade, Zimbabwe has been implementing various economic reform programs with the view of resuscitating the economy and increasing its capacity to participate in SADC regional trade. Some of these programs include the ease of doing business reforms under ZIMASSET; public sector reform under the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP) and National Development Strategy 1 (2021-2025). Further, the

country crafted a new Industrial Development Policy for 2019-2025 as well as a Trade policy for the same period.

The country's economic blueprints implemented during the study period notably ZIMASSET, TSP, and NDS I all called for value chain development and strengthening as well as value addition and beneficiation. The major challenge, however, has been implementation.

Zimbabwe is implementing value chain policies and has through the Ministry of Industry and Commerce created a SADC value chains committee to deliberate on value chain issues. This committee constitutes all the relevant stakeholders from the government, private sector, research institutions, and academia among others. Furthermore, it is actively involved in the SADC Pharmaceutical value chain program.

- Status of implementation of resolutions made on Pillar 2: Infrastructure Development in Support of Regional Integration

RISDP aims towards interconnected, integrated, and quality seamless infrastructure and networks, including cross-border infrastructure, which will be pivotal in facilitating the movement of people, goods, services, and knowledge. In response to the resolutions that were made in the last decade, Zimbabwe made strides in infrastructure development although huge challenges still remain.

- Telecommunication

In the area of communication, there was a marked increase in internet penetration of XXX. Further, there was massive deployment of mobile digital platforms (2G, 3G and 4 G ) that facilitate e-commerce and digital trade in Zimbabwe although it is asymmetrical in favour of urban areas. This is despite the fact that about 70% of the population resides in the rural areas. For example, while 74.7% of the rural population is covered by 2G and 67% by 3G, only 1.83% are covered by 4G technology (yet it's the platform that facilitates internet access) (POTRAZ, 2021). More so, coverage in urban areas: 99.9% of the population is covered both 2G and 3G technology and 91.99% under 4G technology (POTRAZ, 2021).

- Energy

In energy, Zimbabwe prioritized a number of infrastructure projects under the SADC Regional infrastructure development. Some of these include the Hwange Poer Station Units 7 and 8 as well as the Batoka Gorge Hydropower project among others. The former is under implementation by the Zimbabwe Power Company. It is estimated to cost US\$1.4 billion and will deliver an additional 600MW to the national grid. Zimbabwe secured the loan to undertake this project from the China Export Import Bank (SADC, 2019). The Batoka Project is still at feasibility stage. It will be jointly implemented by Zambia and Zimbabwe and has a projected generation capacity of 2400MW. The total estimated cost for the project is US\$3.6 billion. Implementation of this project is urgent given the critical energy shortages in the country thereby crippling economic activity. Zimbabwe is currently producing around 908MW against power demand of about 2,200MW per day. Not much investment has been undertaken towards green energy like solar and gas Zimbabwe is abundantly endowed with such natural resources.

In line with harmonisation of regional energy policies, Zimbabwe is one of the 9 SADC countries whose national generating plants have been interconnected in order to promote the development of least-cost power generation and power trading. This inter-connectivity has facilitated the establishment of the SAPP trading platform, enabling Member States with power shortfalls to purchase power from those with surplus power within the framework of the regional energy security framework

- Roads

Zimbabwe prioritized the widening and resurfacing of major roads and implementation has been in progress with much of it complete.

- Railway

Recapitalisation and Rehabilitation of the National Railways of Zimbabwe which has been on the priority list for some time is still pending and the country. This forces economic agents to move goods via roads which is very costly thereby pushing the country's cost structure up.

- One-stop border posts

Under the SADC infrastructure program, Zimbabwe prioritised the implementation of the one-stop border post concept at the Beitbridge border post with South Africa as well as the Plumtree/Ramokgwebane one-stop border post with Botswana. Implementation is ongoing at Beitbridge whilst the latter is still at the feasibility stage.

#### *Status of implementation of resolutions made on Pillar 3: Social and Human Capital Development*

Zimbabwe has been implementing various programs in collaboration with development partners to address the challenge of HIV/AIDS and malaria. In fact, these programs receive financial support from the national budgets.

#### *Status of implementation of resolutions made on Cross-Cutting Issues: Gender, Youth, Environment and Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Management*

- Women Representation in politics and decision-making

Article 5 of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development stipulates that State Parties shall put in place special measures with particular reference to women in order to eliminate all barriers that prevent them from participating meaningfully in all spheres of life and create a conducive environment for such participation.

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In this regard, the Government of Zimbabwe has instituted a ministry that is dedicated to women's empowerment. Further, it has been implementing a gender policy including several affirmative action programs that seek to achieve gender equality in all spheres of life. Further, in response to Article 5 of the SADC Protocol on Gender, Zimbabwe has made significant strides in promoting gender equality. Section 17 of the 2013 Constitution, promotes gender equality where subsection (1)(a) provides that the State must promote the full participation of women in all spheres of Zimbabwe society on the basis of equality with men. Subsection (b)(i) requires both genders to be equally represented in all institutions and agencies of government at every level. Evidence, however, reveals that women's representation in local government (council) was only 14% in the 2018 general elections. Efforts have recently been made through the Constitution Amendment (2) of 2021 to ensure that at least 30% of the total members of the local councils elected on a ward basis are women. This will still be far from the 50% constitutionally provided for.

Section 124(1)(b) of the Constitution provides for a quota of 60 seats reserved for women in Parliament elected through proportional representation for the life of two parliaments. This has, however, seen women constituting about 44% of members of the Upper House of Parliament and 32 percent in the Lower House (ZIMSTAT,2020). Recently, this provision has been amended through the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (2) of 2021 to extend the proportional representation of women by another 2 parliaments. Further, this amendment has also inserted a new provision that is reserving 10 seats for youths.

Article 12 of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development states that State Parties shall endeavor to ensure equal and effective representation of women in decision-making positions in the political, public, and private sectors including through the use of special measures as provided for in Article 5. ZIMSTAT(2020) report, however, reveals low women representation in senior decision-making positions of government. For example, women only constituted 30% of the cabinet ministers in 2019. Although this is still way below the desired 50%, it is an improvement from the 15.4% that was reported in 2016(ZIMSTAT, 2016). The Report also showed an increase in women's representation in provincial ministers from 40% reported in 2016 to 50% reported in 2020. As much as 27.3% of vice-chancellors of state universities were reported to be women in ZIMSTAT (2016) but these were reduced to zero in the 2020 report. A fall in the share of women was also noted at the ambassadorial level where women constituted 18.2% in 2020 down from 24.4% in 2019 as reported in the ZIMSTAT reports cited above. A similar low representation was noticed in the public service.

Section 17(b)(ii) of the Constitution requires that women constitute at least half the membership of all Commissions and other elective and appointed government bodies established by or under this Constitution or any Act of Parliament.

### **1. Ratification of SADC Protocols**

In terms of signing and ratification of SADC protocols, Zimbabwe is up to date.

## **Conclusion**

Although Zimbabwe is a founding member of SADC, the country is yet to fully realise the benefits of regional integration under this grouping. Zimbabwe lags behind in terms of industrial development, trade performance as well and macroeconomic convergence commitments. The country's industrialisation level has been declining as evidenced by falling manufacturing share to GDP, falling manufacturing value added to GDP as well as low capacity utilisation. In trade, Zimbabwe was a net importer in the SADC region during the period under study with South Africa as a dominant trading partner constituting more than 80% of the country's share of either imports or exports. In fact, the country was implementing protectionist policies contrary to the spirit of the SADC Trade Protocol of creating a free trade area. More so, the country lagged behind its tariff phase-down program and has had to seek derogation. On a positive note, the country signed and ratified the implementation of the TFTA as per SADC Summit resolutions. Most of the country's macroeconomic indicators such as inflation, total debt to GDP, and current account balance were off target greater part of the period under study.

On infrastructure development, the country continues to face a huge infrastructure gap besides efforts in implementing prioritized projects in energy, communication, and rail although notable investments have been made in road widening and resurfacing.

On women's representation, Zimbabwe has legislated provisions and implemented policies that promote gender equality. Evidence, however, reveals low women representation and participation in politics and decision-making posts. The country has implemented the Data Protection Act to curb abuse of social media in line with one of the Summit resolutions made during the period under study.

## **Recommendations**

- There is a need for the Government of Zimbabwe to continue committing to implementing its macroeconomic convergence criteria. The government needs to ensure macroeconomic stability by implementing economic policies that ensure price stability and debt sustainability. Reengagement efforts made so far and the implementation of the Accelerated Debt Arrears Clearance Programme are commendable and need to be expedited.
- The government of Zimbabwe needs to implement a more robust industrial strategy that helps it seize opportunities in the region. There is a need for a balance between national interests and regional commitments.
- The government of Zimbabwe needs to explore robust options for infrastructure financing to reduce the gap to ensure the availability of key enablers to business activities including trade facilitation.
- There is a need for the government to strive towards gender parity on women's participation in politics and positions of power through the effective implementation of the legislative provisions and policies that guarantee their effective participation.

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