

Transnet seeks greater SADC investment in rail networks

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Transnet has pleaded with Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries to invest more on railway infrastructure to improve intra-regional trade.



TFR's Siyabonga Gama has urged SADC countries to put considerably more money into improving Africa's railway infrastructure. Image: [Railways Africa](#)

Transnet Freight Rail's Chief Executive Siyabonga Gama said the lack of rail infrastructure in Africa was a stumbling block to economic development in the region.

According to Gama, South Africa boasts 72% of the rail network in Africa, adding that the private sector was reluctant to invest it because the returns come over a 30-year period.

"The private sector [tends to want] shorter payback periods," Gama said at a conference organised by the Southern African Railways Association.

The Sustainable Railway Infrastructure Development for Regional Economic Growth Conference, which started earlier this week focused on ways to drive sustainable railway infrastructure for economic growth for the SADC region.

Gama's sentiments were echoed by Public Enterprises Director-General Tshediso Matona, who said a large part of the rail network in Africa was built during the colonial era.

"The required investments are too risky to attract private sector investments without the involvement of the state," Matona

said.

Swaziland Public Works and Transport Minister Lindiwe Dlamini said the country's rail network was helping it to be export-oriented.

Zambia Railways Chief Executive Muyenga Atanga said Zambia was in the process of building a rail network that would connect that country to Mozambique and Namibia.

"The aim is to link Zambia to as many countries as possible," he said.

Botswana Railways Chief Executive Dominic Ntwaagae said the country had 200bn tons of coal reserves that needed to be transported to ports but does not have the infrastructure to do that. Transnet supplied 562 wagons to Botswana but it needed to improve its railway network and have a great many more trains operating.

Source: Sowetan via I-Net Bridge

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