**THE SHIPPING & FORWARDING AGENTS ASSOCIATION OF ZIMBABWE TO HOST RAME 2014 IN VICTORIA FALLS**

The Shipping and Forwarding Agents’ Association of Zimbabwe (SFAAZ) was founded around 1955 with a mandate to represent the interests of its member companies. Estimates are that members of the association handle in excess of 95% of the country's commercial imports and exports.

Predominant members of the association are Shipping Lines represented in Zimbabwe, Freight Forwarding companies, Cargo Handling companies, Customs Clearing Agents (companies), In-house Customs Clearing companies and Bonded Warehouse operators. The customs clearing members of the association play a very significant role in import revenue collection on behalf of government in Zimbabwe.

The association also has a mandate from its membership and an expectation from its stakeholders, including government, to be the vanguard of a very high level of professionalism and to provide competent and relevant training programmes for the industry.

SFAAZ is a member of the world wide body, FIATA, which represents freight forwarders internationally and is headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland. The International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA) is a non-governmental organisation, representing an industry covering approximately 40,000 forwarding and logistics firms and employing around 8 - 10 million people in 164 countries.

FIATA has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations (inter alia ECE, ESCAP, ESCWA), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

It is recognised as representing the freight forwarding industry by many other governmental organisations, governmental authorities, private international organisations in the field of transport such as the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the International Union of Railways (UIC), the International Road Transport Union (IRU), the World Customs Organization (WCO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), etc.

In summary FIATA is the largest non-governmental organisation in the field of transportation with a worldwide influence.

FIATA is divided into four regions i.e., the Americas, Europe, Asia (and Pacific) and Region Africa Middle East (RAME). Zimbabwe (obviously) belongs to the RAME region. Each of the regions holds annual conferences were regional issues are brought to the fore for discussion in a more focussed manner than at the FIATA level. These meetings also offer a fantastic networking platform for freight forwarders, stakeholders and their service providers.

Following stiff competition from other competing member countries, we are delighted to announce that Zimbabwe won the bid to host the 2014 RAME Conference and Field Meeting at the majestic Elephant Hills Hotel, Victoria Falls, **on 18-20 June 2014.**

This has presented SFAAZ with a unique opportunity to showcase what Zimbabwe has to offer as a top business tourism destination. The timing for Victoria Falls is perfect as it presents us with the chance to ride on the infrastructure that the country used to successfully host the United Nations World Tourism Organisation in the same town in August this year.