

## Southern Africa Regional Forensic Science (SARFS) Network

Vienna, 11 December 2008

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (SARPCCO) co-organized a meeting to set up the basis for a forensic network in Southern Africa in recognition to the regional efforts undertaken by the SARPCCO Forensic Science Working Group (FSWG). Regular meetings of Heads/Directors of Forensic Science Institutes in Southern Africa have been taking place under the umbrella of SARPCCO since a couple of years and the FSWG recommended, earlier this year, to the SARPCCO Permanent Coordination Committee the establishment of a regional network of forensic science institutes. The meeting was held in Pretoria, South Africa, on 27-28 October 2008 and attended by Heads/Directors of Forensic Science Institutes from 12 countries in Southern Africa.

In their opening addresses, Assistant Commissioner Edward Ngokha, Head of the SAPS Forensic Science Laboratory, and Dr. Jonathan Lucas, Representative of UNODC Regional Office for Southern Africa, emphasized the urgent need to join efforts and resources to advance forensic services in the region to a higher level.

The discussions led to the drafting of Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct for the Southern Africa Regional Forensic Science (SARFS) Network. The Executive of the Network will be comprised of the members of the SARPCCO FSWG. However, it is anticipated that the SARFS Network will expand beyond forensic institutes recognized by SARPCCO to cover all institutes supplying regularly reports used by the criminal justice system, regardless of the ministerial affiliation and whether the institute covers multiple forensic disciplines or is offering forensic services in selected disciplines. The draft documents will be submitted for approval to the SARPCCO Permanent Coordination Committee by the end of December 2008.

The Africa region, through its SARFS Network, will strengthen its presence in the international forensic community alongside the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors (ASCLD), the Senior Managers of Australian and New Zealand Forensic Laboratories (SMANZFL), the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI), the Iberoamerican Academy of Forensic Sciences (Academia Iberoamericana De Criminalistica Y Estudios Forenses, or AICEF) and the recently established Asian Forensic Sciences Network (AFSN).

Facilitating and supporting regional networking activities is one of the priorities UNODC, through its Laboratory and Scientific Section, is pursuing in order to enhance forensic capacities and capabilities of Member States.

