

PRESS RELEASE

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AFRICA TOLD TO USE FRIENDS AND EXPATRIATES TO BUILD THE AFRICAN BRAND

2 June 2005 Cape Town, South Africa – Existing investors in Africa, existing friends in leadership positions and the Diaspora of Africans living around the world were identified at a plenary session during the World Economic Forum’s Africa Economic Summit 2005 in Cape Town on Thursday as key elements in building and projecting a new and positive African brand. The Forum’s meeting serves as a unique platform for frank, informal dialogue to rally the key actors in collaborative efforts and innovative partnerships to address the major development challenges facing Africa.

Participants were advised to stop asking the media to write “positive stories” about Africa but rather to help a news hungry media identify the many news stories that would show a continent that presents opportunities for business and foreign investment.

The session focused on the images Africa would like to see projected, how to raise awareness about trade and investment opportunities and identifying core components of the African brand.

The communication value of existing investors was raised by Millard W. Arnold, Director, Murray & Roberts, South Africa. He said he had previously been involved in helping to attract American investors to

South Africa. “We found that the best way to get foreign investment is to talk to investors already in your country. Put them on film and let them tell others why they invested. A business person is far more likely to pay attention to another business leader who is saying he is in Africa because it makes business sense.”

The African Diaspora was highlighted as a brand-building opportunity by several members of a panel of African business leaders.

Ishmael E. Yamson, Non-Executive Chairman of Unilever, Ghana, said African countries too often make those who have left for other countries feel that they are traitors who have abandoned their homeland. However, these people represent a huge amount of human capital. Countries should see them as a positive resource, for projecting positive images of their continent, and as a source of funds and as potential returnees.

Last year, Ghanaians living abroad sent back US\$ 800 million to the country – more than Ghana earned from cocoa or gold.

“Why is the money coming back now? Because they are beginning to believe in their country, because they are beginning to see consistency of leadership, of economic environment and of political environment.”

Carol Pineau, Producer and Director, USA, was asked the frequently raised question – why the media focus on negative stories about Africa and how to get journalists to reflect the many positive changes taking place.

She said Africa has an image problem as a continent of war, famine and disaster, and is labelled with the “iconic images of starving African children”. However the solution is in news coverage, not in seeking a positive slant for Africa. “Stop asking for positive stories, she told participants. “I don’t do positive stories. We [journalists] are not publicists. We do news.”

She said the problem is that news coverage of Africa is biased and unbalanced because it does not show the whole story of Africa – Africans with an economic life, a family life and individual personalities. Africans must demand this complete news coverage,

and point to news stories such as the Ghana stock exchange, the fastest growing market in the world.

The value of friends in other countries as brand ambassadors for Africa was highlighted by **Cyril M. Ramaphosa**, Chairman, Shanduka Group, South Africa. “We need to engage key stakeholders around the world about the progress we are making,” he said.

“We need to get Tony Blair to go beyond setting up the Commission for Africa. We need him to stand on a platform and advocate our story, our successes. We need the G-8 to say positive things about a continent that is changing. We need the United Nations to be used as a platform to talk not about problems, but about progress.”

Ramaphosa said Africa also needs what advertising calls a “pay-off line”, to be used by political and business leaders. He suggested “Africa, the changing and growing continent”. The session was told later that Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, endorsed the idea and had suggested a variation: “Africa – the changing continent with a soul”:

Lazarus Zim, Chief Executive, Anglo American Corporation of South Africa, a Co-Chair of the Africa Economic Summit 2005, said Africa is a changing continent. It needs to trumpet its successes, building brand communication around the many good things now happening on the continent.

However, Africa is a continent of 800 million people spread over 50 countries and 12 economic communities. It will always have some problems, but Africa must project the positive messages to build a strong brand.

Yamson said branding a continent is not the same as branding a product, but basic principles will always apply. “A brand is a bundle of promises, benefits and experiences. We must be clear about what we are offering the world.” Africa’s brand must be honest, credible and different, and backed by emotional and financial commitment because it will not come cheaply.

Pat Davies, Chief Executive Designate, Sasol, South Africa, said Africa would build its brand and encourage foreign investor

confidence by speaking passionately about its successes and how it has overcome challenges. But first Africa must focus on the fundamentals – once the substance is right, the perceptions will follow.

In her concluding remarks, Maria Ramos, Group Chief Executive, Transnet, South Africa, said Africans will have to build and sell the African brand. “If we believe in it, others will believe in it. We will never get it done unless we believe in ourselves.”



Lazarus Zim, Chief Executive,
Anglo American Corporation of South
Africa, South Africa; Co-Chair of the
Africa Economic Summit 2005
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