

Media release on behalf of the NEPAD Council

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International experts rally to be part of East London NEPAD Council conference in Africa

Reversing Africa's brain drain will be one of many critical themes to be discussed at the NEPAD Council International Trade and Investment Conference to be held from 25 to 27 May in East London – the second largest city in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa.

With speakers such as Prof. Wiseman Nkuhlu, chairperson of the NEPAD Steering Committee, the Eastern Cape Premier Nosimo Balindlela, The South African National Minister of Sport, Makhenkesi Stofile, the National Minister of Science and Technology, Mosibudi Mangena, the CEO of South African Tourism, Moeketsi Mosola and the CEO of the South African semi state transport giant Transnet, Maria Ramos, already confirmed, the conference promises to be one of the most important for business practitioners, existing and potential investors in Africa and local and international academics and researchers.

According to the conference chairperson and NEPAD Council Vice President international relations, Prof. Lynette Louw, the conference will give a critical assessment of the current trade and investment climate in Africa. High profile international policy makers from government and industry will use their experiences to find practical ways to overcome Africa's investment challenges, of which the brain drain is one.

"The challenge the NEPAD Council is confronted with is how to translate intellectual and scientific resources into everyday strategies that will develop Africa and accelerate growth. To do this we have put together a wide range of conference themes. These include promoting trade between countries in Africa, human resource development and the reversal of Africa's brain drain," says Prof Louw.

One of the other major themes is how to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI's) into Africa. This has received a major boost with the news that several international experts on FDI's have indicated that they will be at the conference.

Amongst the experts are Prof. Aloys Hüttermann of the Georg-August University in Göttingen, Germany, and Prof. John-David Kabasa of the Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. They have both conducted research in how to attract FDI's into Africa and how to build Africa's capacity to respond optimally to FDI's.

They will be joined by local speakers such as Prof. Wiseman Nkuhlu, chairperson of the NEPAD Steering Committee, Eastern Cape Premier, Nosimo Balindlela, National Minister of Sport, Makhenkesi Stofile, National Minister of Public Works, S N Sigcau, CEO of South African Tourism, Moeketsi Mosola, and CEO of Transport, Maria Ramos.

Local academics speaking on FDI will include Prof. Wim Naudé, director of the WorkWell project of the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences at the North-West University.

According to Prof. Hendrik Lloyd of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) Business School, the presence of these experts at the conference is of great importance because it illustrates the support of the European Union for NEPAD as a Pan African initiative.

“International trade and investment has been made possible because of the European Union and G8 support of NEPAD as a first Pan African initiative to unite and promote the development of Africa as a continent,” says Prof. Lloyd.

Organized in cooperation with the NMMU the conference is the first of a series of international trade and investment conferences. The series of NEPAD Council's International Trade and Investment Conferences include:

- East London, South Africa, May 2005;
- Lagos, Nigeria, December 2005;
- Tokyo, Japan, May 2006;
- New York, United States, December 2006; and
- Frankfurt, Germany, May 2007.

Prof. Birahim Seck, President of the NEPAD Council has invited all African leaders and policy makers to attend the first conference. “As leading voices of the promotion of Africa's development, the presence of African leaders at this forum will be a major encouragement to all expected guests, national and international business leaders and private investors.

“As the forum deals with trade and investment, and particularly how to attract foreign direct investment into Africa, I am especially appealing to CEOs, Executive Directors and others leaders from both national and international industries to come and support one of the best strategies to foster a stronger and more prosperous Africa.”

Organisations involved in this conference include the NEPAD Secretariat, the NEPAD Council, the Office of the Premier of the Eastern Cape, the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) and NMMU Business School, the Buffalo City Municipality (incorporating East London and surrounding municipalities), the Border Kei Chamber of Business, the Eastern Cape Development Corporation, the Development Bank of Southern Africa, the East London Industrial Development Corporation (IDZ), the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC).

Starting on Wednesday 25 May 2005 at the Regent Hotel in East London, the conference opening will coincide with Buffalo City municipality's celebration of Africa Day. The conference closes on Friday 27 May.

To register for the conference, contact the conference secretary Alida Phielix on e-mail: Alida.Phielix@nmmu.ac.za, tel: +27 41 504 3789 or fax: +27 41 504 9789.

*Released by newzwise Media on behalf of the NEPAD Council.
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