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EU-AFRICA BUSINESS SUMMIT – LISBON 7 DECEMBER 2007

SPEAKING NOTES FOR PRESIDENT SEILLIÈRE 14H30 OPENING SESSION

“UNLEASHING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT – AN EFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY”

Our hosts, the presidents of AIP and CIP – Portuguese industry federations
Our partners, the Pan-African Confederation of Employers
Our friends from the EU-Africa Business Forum,
Fellow presidents, business leaders,

I am honoured to open this EU-African Business Summit today in Lisbon because I feel that it is very important, particularly in this context, to strengthen the voice of business. Now that leaders from Africa and the EU will propose tomorrow a ‘continental shift’ in EU-Africa relations, it is time for the business community to step up to play a decisive role for growth, jobs and competitiveness. As President of BUSINESSEUROPE – the Confederation of European Business – I am proud to be part of that effort.

In this short presentation, I am going to advocate for business to be put at the heart of the EU-Africa Joint Strategy to be adopted by our Heads of State and Government gathering in Lisbon this week-end because business can offer hope for a brighter future to both African and European peoples.

When some see Africa as a continent with problems, business sees new challenges to overcome. Some say that Europe no longer has a role to play in Africa compared to emerging powers like China, India or Brazil. But judging by the large number of African business representatives here today, I gather that they are interested in cooperating in the future with European business.

Some describe Africa as the continent that has missed out on globalisation, but business on both continents sees it as a new frontier for trade and investment opportunities. Through partnerships with African business, we can mutually strengthen our competitiveness.



Africa is facing health, education and environmental crises, but business is developing new models to address health issues and to promote sustainable development. Companies are working to spread information technology to all levels of African society. Europe is also facing challenges adapting its social systems to globalisation, and companies are already actively engaged in finding solutions here.

Africa's infrastructure is in need of repair, but business is ready to partner with governments to build state of the art facilities. Europe is facing tough competition in infrastructure procurement markets, yet our companies remain world leaders capable of deploying the most advanced technologies.

We face different challenges, but through partnership and cooperation, business can provide cost-effective solutions to promote growth and development. So what can EU and African governments do to promote real development? Unleash the entrepreneurs, many of whom are sitting with us today, who will build the infrastructure, deploy the technology, create the jobs, engage in international trade and increase the competitiveness needed for the future.

It is in that light, that BUSINESSEUROPE welcomes the first ever Joint EU-Africa Strategy which aims to promote development based on a full partnership of equals. This partnership of equals is vital for the success of the Joint Strategy because it is only by standing side-by-side with shared responsibilities and commitments that the EU and Africa can truly engage on a path for growth and competitiveness.

Some key items which will help unleash entrepreneurship in this joint strategy include:

- A new trade and investment framework – Economic Partnership Agreements with African regions and the Barcelona Agreements for the Mediterranean area – that should boost business opportunities for exports and imports in both the EU and Africa by reducing non-tariff barriers and customs delays and encouraging higher investment flows.
- A strong commitment to promote entrepreneurship in Africa through cooperation programmes and specific commitments to improve the framework conditions for businesses to develop.
- A full partnership for infrastructure development based on coherent planning and in close cooperation with business through public-private-partnerships.
- A promise to foster cooperation in technological development in areas like information technologies and energy efficiency technologies.
- A renewed focus on ensuring the sustainable development of natural resources to maximise benefits for local people while providing clearer conditions for essential business development.



For the time being, these are only promising proposals from our governments. We all share the understanding that only industrialisation and increased trade will help African countries to develop and create better conditions for their citizens. To develop the economy you need a stable political situation, which is the main duty of national governments. Now we, the business leaders, must work hard during the course of this meeting – and beyond – to ensure that our governments deliver on these promises and to make sure that business can contribute fully to the process.

And as a final message to our leaders, I would argue that while the politicians can certainly create *development policy* without business; there can be no *development* without business. BUSINESSEUROPE, with other colleagues, will be fully engaged in that process.

Thank you for your attention. We are looking forward to hearing the conclusions of the Africa-EU summit tomorrow.
