



1st EU-South Africa Business Forum

Joint Business Declaration

Brussels, 17 September 2012

On 17 September 2012, the first EU-South Africa Business Forum took place in Brussels, Belgium. With an effort to effectively promote an enhanced bilateral dialogue on trade and investment related issues, BUSINESSEUROPE, Business Unity South Africa (BUSUA) and the Black Business Council (BBC) of South Africa identified areas of common interest to the European and South African business communities that are key to the development of the EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership. High-level business representatives also discussed investment opportunities and the prospects of cooperation in sectors such as energy, transport, infrastructure, manufacturing, agriculture and agro-processing. The issue of youth employment was also addressed. The issue of skills development as it relates to youth unemployment was also discussed.

EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership

The EU-South Africa Strategic Partnership was launched in 2007 to reinforce bilateral political dialogue and cooperation at both public and private levels. In this context, the “South Africa – European Union Strategic Partnership Joint Action Plan” was adopted. Trade was identified as an *area of cooperation to be developed*.

Business recommendations

European and South African business call on the political leadership to update the “South Africa – European Union Strategic Partnership Joint Action Plan” by further developing the thematic areas on trade and investment, infrastructure and development.

1. TRADE AND INVESTMENT

- i. Cooperate in WTO Doha Round and Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) to promote freer trade between EU and SADC region.
- ii. Cooperate on the regulatory environment by the exchange of information on public and private standards, customs regulations and technical barriers to trade.
- iii. Encourage Industry dialogues. Although trade between the European Union and South Africa is becoming more diversified and the EU imports South Africa’s highest value-added products, there is further scope to deepen this diversity. Inaugurating sector-

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specific dialogues, for example in the fields of energy, transport, manufacturing and infrastructure, will further enhance these trends. Furthermore, exchanges at a business-to-business level will reinforce innovation.

- iv. Strengthen relations and cooperation in the area of raw materials through partnerships with a particular focus on governance, best practices and enabling the value adding industrialisation of South Africa.
- v. Address the issues of red tape, market fragmentation and the improvement of the general business climate that will substantially contribute to the development of trade and investment opportunities.
- vi. Recognise the importance of agriculture. Agribusiness plays a vital role in the economic development of both trading partners, especially for South Africa.

2. INFRASTRUCTURE

Explore ways to strengthen EU – South Africa cooperation in this field by developing concrete recommendations within the next 6 months, with a focus on:

- i. Training and capacity building
- ii. Local content through encouraging investment, joint ventures and partnerships

3 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION

- i. Strengthen cooperation and dialogue between EU and South Africa private sector on skills development and training.
- ii. Skills development, including skills transfer and retention, play a crucial role in enhancing employability, and improving competitiveness. Within the context of enhanced economic relations, cooperation on these will mutually contribute to sustainable economic growth.
- iii. The strengthening of trade and economic relations between the EU and South Africa should contribute effectively to addressing the issue of unemployment common to both partners. With regard to the issue of youth employment specifically, close cooperation at business and political levels would reinforce the connection between businesses and the educational system. Cooperate on labour related issues in order to gain a better understanding of labour legislation which is crucial for sustainable business development.



Conclusion

The formal dialogue between the business and political leadership – introduced today in Brussels with the 1st *EU-South Africa Business Forum* – should be institutionalised and strengthened. Business Leaders therefore propose that the *EU-South Africa Business Forum* becomes an annual event, organised in parallel with the EU-South Africa Political Summit.

Philippe De Buck

Director General

BUSINESSEUROPE

Sello Rasethaba

Business Unity South Africa

Dr. Danisa Baloyi

Head, International Relations,
Trade & Investment

Black Business Council

