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EU-AFRICA BUSINESS FORUM

OPENING SESSION

VIDEO MESSAGE BY PIERRE GATTAZ, BUSINESS EUROPE PRESIDENT

It is a great pleasure to be here today at the official launch of this important week for EU-Africa relations.

Representatives of the European and African Union, governments, business, and civil society have worked tirelessly over the past weeks and months.

The result is a truly promising agenda with five days of inspiring discussions on the most central issues of EU-Africa relations.

These discussions will culminate in the sixth EU-Africa Summit, which will lay the foundations for a renewed and deeper partnership between our continents.

As in previous editions, the summit will be preceded by the EU-Africa Business Forum.

The programme of this forum is the result of an unprecedented level of cooperation between European and African business organisations.

BusinessEurope has actively contributed to this process, and therefore I am proud to say that the outcome is impressive.

This edition of the business forum takes place against the backdrop of unparalleled challenges.

In the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented disruptions to our economies and societies.



However, these ongoing challenges may also create opportunities. Let me mention just two:

- The pandemic has accelerated the digital transformation of our economies, making it easier for SMEs in Africa and Europe to trade with each other.
- Supply chain disruptions have driven some European companies to seek ways to diversify their sources of supply to reduce future risks. For its proximity to Europe, Africa is a natural choice.

In an uncertain and rapidly changing context, a close structured dialogue between the public and the private sector is even more crucial.

It helps create an enabling business environment and ensure that challenges can be transformed into opportunities.

The upcoming business forum is an important platform for this kind of public private dialogue.

And the topics we will discuss this year will have a strong impact on future EU-Africa relations.

Allow me to mention just a few:

- **First, the integration of European and African value chains:**

We think that the African Continental Free Trade Area is a major opportunity in this regard.

The EU Economic Partnership Agreements and Association Agreements can be important building blocks towards this end, too.

- **Second, infrastructure and connectivity:**

The EU recently announced the Global Gateway, which will play a key role in his context.

It is crucial that this strategy is implemented effectively and provides attractive and sustainable solutions to our partner countries.



- **Finally, development financing and risk mitigation:**

The involvement of the private sector in development efforts is essential.

Business welcomes the EU's efforts to leverage more private investment through its development financing instruments.

In the future, we will need a stronger Team Europe approach in this area to maximise impact.

Before concluding, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed towards making this EU-Africa week a reality.

Now I look forward to inspiring exchanges.

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