

PRESS RELEASE

EU-Africa Summit: Private sector's recommendations to Heads of State

Ahead of this weekend's EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon (Portugal), EUROCHAMBRES welcomes the approach of both the EU and Africa to further strengthen the involvement of non-state actors in the shaping of EU-Africa relations. Both the Joint Africa-EU Strategy and the First Action Plan for its implementation – to be endorsed during the Summit – give a clear picture of the role the private sector can play within business-related fields of EU-Africa cooperation.

“The private sector is the ideal partner for giving constructive feedback to policy makers on the problems companies face when doing business in Africa, and on whether political reforms really help on the ground,” explains Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES. *“In this respect, we intend to put forward some recommendations in Lisbon on how to further strengthen Africa's economic development.”*

Such recommendations, jointly developed during the last EU-Africa Business Forum in Accra, comprise the following subjects:

1. Trade

Europe and Africa must join forces to successfully conclude comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements which contribute to the deepening of regional integration and facilitate investment.

2. Infrastructure

Impact assessments need to be carried out in order to assess the effect of different infrastructure projects on regional integration and development in Africa. Projects with a greater positive impact should be prioritised.

3. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

ICTs are a key tool to ensure economic convergence. Decision-makers should commit towards increased funding for ICT infrastructure, and invest in awareness-raising and capacity-building campaigns.

4. Entrepreneurship

Developing an entrepreneurial spirit is a precondition for an innovative society. Entrepreneurship should be part of educational curricula, from primary to secondary education. Also, 'one-stop-shops' should be established to support company start-ups in every African region/state.

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EUROCHAMBRES – The Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry represents over 19 million enterprises in Europe through 46 members and a European network of 2000 regional and local Chambers.

“The Accra recommendations show that the private sector has identified the same bottlenecks that are now addressed in the Action Plan,” said Mr Abruzzini. “We are ready to suggest proposals for its implementation and will give an assessment of its results at the next Business Forum in 2008.”

The full Declaration of the EU-Africa Business Forum can be downloaded from
http://www.eurochambres.eu/PDF/pdf_acp/RecommendationsEU-AfricaBusinessForumAccra2007.pdf

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