

PRESS RELEASE**European Chambers reach out to Africa**

In response to the growing political and economic interest towards the ACP region, European Chambers of Commerce and Industry have reiterated their commitment towards Africa, stressing the importance of economic cooperation as a key tool to foster development in that continent.

Pierre Simon, President of EUROCHAMBRES – the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry – said: *“The contribution that trade and FDI can make to growth and development of the African continent has been increasingly recognized in recent years. Therefore, the promotion of a business friendly environment to attract the private sector is key. In particular, we must focus our efforts on helping the development of SMEs, as a critical source for sustainable development and job creation.”*

Mr Simon added: *“The current negotiations on Economic Partnership Agreements should build the right framework; we as European Chambers can design and implement the right tools to exploit the potential of such a framework, for the benefit of European and African companies alike. Chambers have a long standing engagement in Africa. Also, the Association of ACP National Chambers of Commerce is a member of the Global Chamber Platform, which links Chambers of Commerce and Industry around the world.”*

The next step of this commitment will be the participation of EUROCHAMBRES in the first ever EU-Africa Business Forum, starting today in Brussels. Paul Skehan, EUROCHAMBRES’ Deputy Secretary General, will be the moderator for the session on “Good governance and corporate ethics”.

Then, on 21-23 November, EUROCHAMBRES will represent European Chambers at the CONNECT Africa 2006 in Cape Town, South Africa. The event will focus on facilitating new relationships and partnerships between intermediary organisations from Africa and the European Union. In this context, European Chambers plan to reinforce cooperation with their African counterparts through SME-support and capacity building initiatives in the framework of the European Commission’s Pro Invest and ESIPP programmes.

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