

## Expression of Agreement

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### The Pan-African Competitiveness Forum

On 25 April 2007 proponents of cluster-based competitiveness initiatives in Ethiopia, Ghana, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda convened in Addis Ababa with a number of key international development organizations to discuss how to reinforce business development momentum and economic growth through cluster-based competitiveness initiatives in countries across the African continent.

Africa is a fast-growing global region, with unique challenges in eradicating poverty, creating new jobs, and generating new levels of economic wealth. In this context, we – the stakeholders listed below – are taking the lead to establish a new continent-wide competence and action center for cluster-competitiveness approaches to national and regional economic development.

Already countries such as Tanzania, Uganda and South Africa have extensive cluster programmes – and new cluster initiatives are underway in number of other African countries such as Ethiopia, Ghana and Mozambique. These cluster programmes and initiatives facilitate new productive partnerships among stakeholders from business, knowledge institutions and government agencies that lead to the production of higher value added products, increased job creation and the generation of higher economic wealth.

However, cluster practitioners and other stakeholders involved in cluster initiatives often lack critical capacity of, and access to, knowledge on how to effectively facilitate and promote clusters. Also, even if the number of cluster initiatives in Africa is growing such initiatives are still not part of mainstream business and private sector development policies and strategies in Africa. This situation impacts negatively on the sustainability of cluster facilitation activities and calls for increased attention.

More specifically, on 25 April 2007 we have discussed how to conceptualize, structure and advance the activities of a Pan-African Competitiveness Forum (PACF). The idea of a new Pan-African platform for collaboration on key competitiveness issues was first born at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Global Conference of The Competitiveness Institute (TCI) in Lyon, France, October 2006 where more than 30 stakeholders from 8 African countries participated.

We see PACF as a strong response to the unique challenges and opportunities that African countries are facing in global competition. We believe that PACF should:

- 1) Provide a platform for exchange of experiences and learning on innovation and cluster-based competitiveness initiatives in Africa – with the objective to improve on existing initiatives and encourage new initiatives.
- 2) Increase the awareness of how cluster initiatives impact positively on economic growth in African countries – with the objective to mainstream sustainable cluster initiatives into the next generation of business and private sector development policies and strategies in Africa.

At the meeting on 25 April 2007 we agreed that PACF is to be provisionally established. We have decided to hold a first meeting of the PACF in September 2007. This first organizing meeting aims to bring together 3-7 representative stakeholders from each of 15-20 African countries.

To advance these objectives, we have established a steering committee that will take the lead in organizing and executing this meeting.

Initial members of the steering committee are representatives from: African Union, UNIDO and USAID; together with cluster initiative representatives from Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique, South Africa, Ghana and TCI.

Participating stakeholders at “Seminar on Pan-African Competitiveness”

Mr. John Stamm

**List of stakeholders 25 April 2007**

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