



Address by Mr Azad Jeetun
Secretary General
BUSINESS AFRICA

Launching of BUSINESS AFRICA

10 October 2011

Sandton Convention Centre, Gallagher Hall, Johannesburg
South Africa

Hon. Nelisiwe Oliphant, Minister of Labour, Republic of South Africa

Mr Charles Dan, ILO Regional Director for Africa

Prof. Wiseman Nkhulu, Honorary President of IOE and Chairman High Level Panel, BUSINESS AFRICA

Mr Mdwaba Mthunzi, Vice President of High Level Panel, BUSINESS AFRICA and Vice President, Business Unity South Africa

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure for me to address this meeting on the auspicious occasion of the launching of BUSINESS AFRICA. Let me wish a warm welcome to the Hon. Minister of Labour of the Republic of South Africa who has honoured us by her presence and who has kindly accepted to launch BUSINESS AFRICA.

It is almost a year since PEC established a Roadmap to position the organisation to face the development challenges of Africa. In fact, in December 2010 at a High Level Conference in Mauritius, it was unanimously decided that there was a need for a new vision, a new strategy and a new structure. It is natural for an organisation to review its structure after 25 years of existence. The environment has changed drastically and we have to adapt to this new environment.

A Task Force was set up which worked relentlessly to prepare the Strategic Framework for BUSINESS AFRICA and an Action Plan. Both documents were endorsed by the General Assembly of the Confederation in June 2011.

In line with the new vision for PEC to be the effective voice of Business in Africa, there is a need for a new appellation, a new name, a change that reflects the new strategy, a change that reflects a new brand.

This transformation comes at an opportune moment given that Africa is called upon to play a major role in globalisation. Africa is emerging as the economic force to be reckoned with in the future. While much pessimism pervades developed economies, Africa is forging ahead steadily with an average growth rates of almost 5 per cent in 2011. In this particular year 25 countries have grown by 5 per cent or more.

It is well known that the private sector is the engine of growth and the driver of economic development. The role of African business and private sector will be critical in the years ahead in meeting the numerous challenges like growth, employment, education, poverty alleviation, investment, infrastructure development, etc. BUSINESS AFRICA would like to be a major partner in the process. It wants to build up its network both regionally and internationally besides its existing key partnerships with the African Union, the European Union, the ILO and the IOE. We are in the process of extending this partnership with the

World Bank, UN Economic Commission for Africa, African Development Bank and many others.

In this way, we can fulfil our mission which is “to contribute to the economic and social development of Africa through the promotion of the enterprise, investment and employment.”

I would like to thank the ILO in particular Mr Charles Dan, Regional Director for Africa for his unflinching support and encouragement all along.

I should not forget Frederick Muia from IOE and Francis Sanzouango from ACT/EMP for their valuable contribution. It has been really a team work.

Prof. Nkuhlu is providing us the leadership necessary to make the transition growth and effective for which we are grateful.

It was the feeling of all members that this launch should be done in an African country. We are pleased that BUSINESS AFRICA is being launched by the Minister of Republic South Africa . Coincidentally, we had a High Level Conference on Trade Liberalisation and Sustainable Development in Johannesburg itself in 1997 with the collaboration of UNCTAD and International Trade Centre. At that time the need for stronger partnerships was felt. Today we have gone a long way in this respect. It is a milestone for African business and private sector of the continent. Another coincidence is that the PEC was launched in Cairo on 12 October 1986. BUSINESS AFRICA is being launched on 10 October 2011 – exactly after 25 years. It is the best way to reiterate our commitment to promote the development of the continent, to encourage business to invest on the continent for higher growth, to create the much needed jobs for our people and to improve the standard of living of all Africans. This is the best way to celebrate our 25 years of existence and prepare for the next 25 years.