

AFIF 2009 officially opens today

The official opening of this year's edition of the Africa Finance and Investment Forum (AFIF), organised by the Brussels-based EMRC, in cooperation with the Netherlands Development Finance Company FMO, will take place today, 14 December 2009.



Delegates have been arriving since yesterday from 43 countries in Africa, Europe, Asia and the Americas to register for the forum, which will open at 8.45am at the ABN AMRO conference centre in Amsterdam.

Yesterday's proceedings started with a pre-conference interactive workshop on business plans for potential investors. It was followed by a special ministerial session on improving the business environment to attract foreign investment to Africa, addressed by cabinet ministers from Uganda, Chad, Angola and the General Manager of the Kenya Investment Authority.

AFIF has become a permanent feature of the conference circuit on African affairs and the role of the finance sector in the continent's development. AFIF has also been an opportunity to witness geopolitical shifts in the global balance of power, with an increasing number of delegates from Asia, as well as a very strong presence of some key emerging economies in Africa such as Angola and Nigeria. The conference, however, aims to include not just countries already in the media headlines, but also to highlight the quieter success stories on the continent and the untapped opportunities for international investors.

The dominant theme of the conference this year is partnerships for growth and development, with a specific focus on financing of SME projects.

Says Idit Miller, vice-president and MD of EMRC, "This conference will be much more than a talk shop. Holding AFIF in Amsterdam carries a powerful message from the African continent onto the doorstep of key international decision-makers. This message, which is increasingly being heard, is that the African continent is no longer just about natural resources and commodities but much more about untapped opportunities in the fields of energy, agri-business, trade, retail, health, finance, housing and industrial development - to name just a few."

This year's edition will be attended by more than 300 delegates. The forum will be addressed by a number of high-profile speakers from the fields of banking, industry, trade and academia.

EMRC aims to facilitate business in Africa at the conference through its professional matchmaking services in collaboration with ITC (International Trade Centre).

The Gala Evening will take place tonight in the winter garden of the Grand Hotel Krasnopolsky, when EMRC will present the winner of the US\$15,000 EMRC-African Development Bank Project Incubator Award, a ceremony that will be attended by government officials, ambassadors, as well as media officials and business leaders.

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