

World Economic Forum Chair highlights Africa

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Ahead of the annual World Economic Forum meeting, kicking off Wednesday, 23 January, the current WEF chair has highlighted Africa's development as among the issues to be addressed at the five day event.

This year, the world's political and financial leaders will convene in Davos, Switzerland for policy-influencing discussions around the theme 'The Power of Collaborative Innovation'.

"Collaboration, the main theme of this year's Davos meeting, is the keyword to make progress on the issues of climate change, Africa's development and the global economy," said Yasuo Fukuda, Prime Minister of Japan in a statement.

"As this year's G8 Chair, Japan will take a lead in addressing these challenges," he explained.

Japan is well placed to highlight issues related to African development, as it has been involved in this endeavour for over a decade.

A number of forums exist to propel Africa-Asia co-operation, among them the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) and the Forum on China-Africa

TICAD is an initiative for African development, launched in 1993 through the joint efforts of the Japanese Government, the UN and the Global Coalition for Africa.

Both TICAD and the Forum on China-Africa Co-operation, are being synchronised with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to serve as implementing institutions.

The Annual Meeting 2008 programme will be based on the following five conceptual pillars:

- Business - Competing While Collaborating;
- Economics and Finance - Addressing Economic Insecurity;
- Geopolitics - Aligning Interests across Divides;
- Science and Technology - Exploring Nature's New Frontiers; and
- Values and Society - Understanding Future Shifts.

The seven co-chairs of this year's meeting represent industry and political experience.

They include Tony Blair, who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1997 to 2007. Blair is also a Member of the Foundation Board of the WEF.

President Thabo Mbeki is also expected to attend the WEF's Annual meeting, having done so for over a decade, since the time he was Deputy President of South Africa.

The country's Minister of Trade and Industry Mandisi Mpahlwa and Finance Minister Trevor Manuel are expected to form part of his delegation.

In his address to the WEF in 1997, the then Deputy President Mbeki focused on the emerging trend of globalisation, and called on business and political leaders to contribute and assist the developing world to be effective participants in that regard.

A decade later at the 2007 meeting, the world's ever changing political and economic landscape was reflected in the session in which President Mbeki took part, entitled 'Africa Sets a New Pace'.

At that session leaders discussed how resource-rich economies could be given incentives to introduce good governance systems; identifying which successful non-resource driven economies can provide models for growth; and the required strategies for supporting and sustaining growth.

These were apt discussions which fell under the 2007 WEF theme of 'A Shifting Power Equation'.

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