What is Linking Africa?

Linking Africa is an African led global alliance for investment, trade and capacity building

Linking Africa is a powerful concept for "informational architecture" that can make a major contribution to economic and business development across Africa, and most importantly facilitate jobs creation.

Linking Africa is also:

- ➢ **A gateway to attract foreign investment to Africa**
- ➢ **A trusted and integrated continent wide information source**
- ➢ **A link between local firms exporting goods and services and world markets**
- ➢ **A catalyst for economic diversification**
- ➢ **A practical support tool for local entrepreneurs and business people**
- ➢ **Information to support African government policy**
- ➢ **A means of attracting world-best business practices**
- ➢ **A means to gauge economic and business performance**

Africa represents a complex puzzle. One size solutions haven't worked in Africa's diverse economies. Individual country solutions are required within a standardised global framework.

By mapping the GDP of African nations in a consistent format, Linking Africa will provide governments, investors and the private sector with urgently needed economic and business information and knowledge. This knowledge will help to attract investment, introduce international trading skills, improve market access, create jobs and contribute to the building of a sustainable business environment.

In its very simplest form, Linking Africa can be seen as a series of country specific trade and investment databases that will be owned by the countries but publicly available to investors around the world.

Linking Africa will deliver a set of country specific databases for each country, and each set of country databases will contain:

- ➢ Macro-economic information
- ➢ Micro-economic information
- ➢ Cross-border trade information
- ➢ City and provincial economic and business information

Economic information and intelligence – covering industries, enterprises and business opportunities – has a vital role in ensuring the development of a vibrant private sector and success by entrepreneurs who drive the sector. Such development, and success, will generate the market and employment growth to help African nations be full members of the global economy and enjoy its benefits.

Creating a global coalition for success

In order for this programme to succeed and deliver real benefits it is imperative that the whole initiative is demand led and fully supported by the governments of African countries themselves.

Private and government sector involvement is envisaged at each step of the programme

The Linking Africa programme has received positive responses from many organisations, including the United Nations, World Bank, European Commission, OECD and the AU. A prerequisite for all support and funding is solid country led demand. Linking Africa is a collaborative programme that will bring together a coalition of organisations to establish a structure that will sustain the programme to completion. Partners to the programme will include governments, multilateral institutions, NGO's and private sector organisations.

A truly global coalition for success, under the leadership of the UN and AU

UNITED NATIONS & AFRICAN UNION		
LINKING AFRICA SECRETARIAT		
AFRICAN REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS		
INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES in AFRICA		
SPONSORS Multilateral agencies Private Sector Country Sponsors Global Institutions	**PARTNERS** African Partners NGO's RTA's Business Associations Global Institutions	**Programme Implementation & Delivery Partners**

Governments and business are being faced with new and complex challenges as the human capital (labour) market shifts to countries in the developing world. Only the best micro economic and business sector information on these countries will make it possible for their governments to take decisions on what sectors and skills they need to cultivate and nurture. This is particularly true in new emerging markets such as those to be found across the African continent.

Global or trans-national business enterprises require much of the same information as governments do, but they also need information on worker, supervisory, management talent and skills, and the technological know-how available in these new markets in order to take sound decisions on investment and expansion into new markets.

Scope of the Linking Africa Programme

Linking Africa is a pan-African country programme with a regional focus

The Linking Africa programme aims, in the long term, to encompass all countries in Africa. However, a phased approach will need to be undertaken to facilitate quick results and successful delivery. The extended benefits of the programme are best realised when many countries within a region are incorporated into the programme, and to that end it would be advantageous to target specific regions, e.g. the countries of the East African Community (EAC), ECOWAS, SADC, UMA etc.

Several regions have shown interest in engaging, and a suitable approach will be decided in consultation with the African Union. Linking Africa will be conducted over approximately a six-year period, probably with five regional African footprints.

Delivering for a whole region will also demonstrate the regional roll-up capabilities of Linking Africa programme. This roll-up capability is further enhanced with every country and region that is subsequently added. In fact it is this facet of Linking Africa, the ability to enhance intra-regional trade within Africa, that offers great potential for countries and regions involved.

Benefits of Informational Infrastructure for Trade and Investment

Facilitating increased trade, investment, job creation and stimulating the development of entrepreneurs

A tool that can better identify human capital resources with potential to meet the information demands of sector-specific business requirements will assist government and private sector planning in any country, and go along way towards satisfying the needs of international investors, traders, and expanding business enterprises.

Linking Africa provides such a tool and will have positive impacts on the economies where it is adopted in the following ways:

➢   Assist entrepreneurs focus of business opportunities and provide knowledge to develop enterprises across many industry sectors

➢   Increase the numbers of new enterprises and diversify the private sector

➢   Assist job creation and provide a more knowledgeable and capable human capital

➢   In addition, by providing governments the informational infrastructure tools to attract and sustain investment and increase domestic and foreign trade, a virtuous cycle is created by the Linking Africa project. More entrepreneurs, more enterprises, more jobs meaning a stronger private sector and economy and livelihood.

➢   A gateway to attract foreign investment and create jobs.

➢   A wealth of organised country, provincial and industry databases & research providing knowledge that will inform and attract

interest from leading foreign investors across multiple sectors of the economy.

➢ A tool to link local firms to world markets to export goods and services, and allow global buyers to access local firms.

➢ A means for achieving diversification of the economy and local industry establishment (e.g. tourism, light manufacturing, selected service sectors).

➢ A means of cultivating a vibrant private sector and deepening human capacity for the business sector with focused and relevant knowledge for training entrepreneurs, and small & medium business.

➢ Tools that will help formulate domestic & regional industry initiatives.

Delivering the Linking Africa vision

Successful delivery in Asia provides experience for success in Africa

The key components to successful development and delivery of the Linking Africa programme are the **Linking Africa Coalition**, and the **Linking Africa Secretariat**.

The Linking Africa project draws on more than 25,000 hours of research, planning and development. The originator of the original concept and principal delivery partner is eNotus International, which was founded to develop and manage the implementation of the Linking Africa project. The programme delivery partner has experience of delivering similar solutions in Asia (China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan).

A multi disciplinary team approach is being taken in association with the country stakeholders. Project management encompasses the entire program through to the presentation of the databases to government. The project teams will cover all facets of activity required to produce the world-class informational infrastructure within the time and financial constraints established.

The Linking Africa Secretariat

Secretariat to provide leadership, transparency, programme development and management

Linking Africa will be coordinated and programme managed by the Linking Africa Secretariat (to include the African Union), which will also bring together a coalition of key stakeholders with an interest in bringing about the successful development and implementation of the Linking Africa programme. The Secretariat will also have an Executive Council that directs its activities, and possibly an Advisory Council for ongoing strategic advice on programme development.

The overall responsibilities of the Secretariat include managing relationships with governments, donor bodies, and major corporations. The secretariat will also provide programme management and lead the marketing effort within and outside Africa to help ensure that multilateral and corporate funding is available, and to work ahead to secure the next region or group of countries to be engaged.

Specific functions of the Secretariat include:

➢ Implementing the directives of the Executive Council with respect to delivery of the programme.
➢ Fund raising and funds management.
➢ Engagement of partners and countries to the programme.
➢ Coordination and administrative matters relating to the functions of the programme.
➢ Publish information related to activities of the programme, and provide feedback to all stakeholders and partners.
➢ Other functions as designated by the Executive Council.

The Linking Africa Coalition

Positive feedback builds a global coalition for success

Steps have been undertaken in the latter half of 2006 to start building the coalition, and to that end many organisations have responded positively to the Linking Africa concept, including the AU, UN, SouthCentre (G77 countries), and the EC. The Linking Africa coalition will comprise of various organisations including:

➢ Private sector companies
➢ Multilateral organisations
➢ African regional organisations
➢ NGO's

The coalition, developed and managed by the Secretariat will be established through Q1/2 2007. African leadership of the programme is seen as key to successful funding and delivery; and the neutrality of having wide global support identified the United Nations patronage and leadership as essential.

Funding costs for Linking Africa are small when compared to the benefits that will be delivered on a pan-African basis

The total Linking Africa programme cost will be approximately US$100 million over the term of the programme. This funding is broadly proposed as follows:

Funding Schedule in US$(m)						
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
New countries	5	6	8	10	11	12
Total funding	12.5	12.0	16.0	20.0	22.0	24.0
Multilateral Sponsors	*7.5*	*6.0*	*8.0*	*10.0*	*11.0*	*12.0*
Corporate Partners	*2.5*	*3.5*	*4.5*	*6.0*	*6.5*	*6.5*
Country Sponsors	*2.5*	*2.5*	*3.5*	*4.0*	*4.5*	*4.5*

NB: Estimated production and delivery costs are based on an eighteen month development period per country (time estimates based upon experience of delivery in Asia)

The Linking Africa fund for programme delivery will be raised under the direction of the Linking Africa Secretariat and in consultation with the African Union and United Nations organisations.

Launching Linking Africa in 2007

Conclusions and Next steps

The Linking Africa project with the full support of governments will significantly contribute to an integrated strategy for creating a vibrant private sector, attracting direct foreign investment and improving human capacity within the business sector. **The core value proposition of the project is the delivery of baseline economic and business sector information essential to creating employment, industry and GDP growth.**

The Linking Africa secretariat supported by the Commonwealth Business Council is working to fully engage all key coalition partners and position the program as a global United Nations' initiative.

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NB: It is anticipated that the permanent Linking Africa Secretariat will be headquartered in Africa and at the UN in New York, with correspondent offices in Asia, Europe and the USA as necessary.