

**2017 FIDIC-GAMA CONFERENCE, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA
7 – 10 MAY 2017**

AFRICAN PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

FIDIC-GAMA 2017 LOC Chair, Abe Thela

The Executive Mayor of the City of Cape Town (Councillor Patricia de Lille), the Vice President of FIDIC (Eng. Moncef Ziani), the President of GAMA (Eng Kofi Asare-Yeboah), CESA President (Eng. Lynne Pretorius), Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen; good morning – Sanibonani.

This conference builds on the foundation that was laid in Ghana at the FIDIC-GAMA 2015 Conference under the theme "**Developing and Sustaining Africa's Infrastructure: Promoting African Consulting Engineering Partnerships**" and hence the theme for this year's conference: "**African Partnerships for Sustainable Growth**".

The vast opportunities that Africa presents for infrastructure development attracts consulting engineers from all over the world to the continent. More and more of these infrastructure projects are mega, some are built in one country and benefit another and others span across country borders. By their nature, these projects not only require intergovernmental partnerships but partnerships among consulting engineers to ensure their successful execution.

So far we have seen more partnerships between consulting engineers from outside Africa and African firms than partnerships between African firms.

According to the **African Development Bank**:

- The infrastructure need of Sub-Saharan Africa exceeds US \$93 billion annually over the next 10 years.
- To date, less than half that amount is being provided thus leaving a financing gap of more than US \$50 billion to fill.

On the flip side of these opportunities there are challenges that must be dealt with to ensure sustainable infrastructure development in Africa. These challenges include the following:

- Insufficient investment in infrastructure development.
- Corporate governance failure in both the public and the private sectors.
- Requirements designed to exclude African Consulting engineers in projects implemented by the Development Finance Institutions (DFI). These requirements are perceived to favour consulting engineers of the country of origin of the FDI.
- Inappropriate procurement strategies, etc.

You will hear more about these challenges and initiatives to address them during the conference.

Ladies and gentlemen, the sustainable growth of the African consulting engineering sector is only possible with:

1. The maximised involvement of local consulting engineers in the development and maintenance of Africa's infrastructure, as well as
2. Creating a favourable legislative, business, economic and political environment for carrying out the business of consulting engineering.

As part of the conference programme, we had a series of meetings yesterday, which included "GAMA Presidents, Directors & Secretaries" meeting. These meetings were designed for FIDIC, GAMA and its MAs to introspect and reposition themselves to better serve consulting engineering businesses in Africa.

Issues explored included, among others:

- Looking at how the supporting role of FIDIC could be enhanced.
- Revitalising GAMA Working Committees – which are core to driving and implementing GAMA initiatives.
- Further refining the roles country member associations should play in facilitating these partnerships and in dealing with the ever-changing business environment Consulting Engineers are confronted with across Africa, and
- Exploring ways to encourage other African MAs who are not yet members of GAMA to join GAMA – to ensure that the vision of GAMA reaches the whole continent of Africa.

We need a strong GAMA and MAs who are responsive to the business needs of their members to lead initiatives towards creating the environment which is conducive for these partnerships thrive.

In the next three days, you will hear from several keynote speakers including:

- **Consulting engineers**, who will share with us their experiences (bad and good) and lessons learnt,
- **Infrastructure owners** who will present their plans for infrastructure development in Africa,
- **Development Finance Institutions (DFIs)** (investors and funding agencies) who will give you insight into the various models and opportunities available as catalysts for infrastructure investment.

As I close, please allow me to quote Nathan Kalumbu, president for Eurasia and Africa group of Coca-Cola Company when he says:

"When you look at the challenges and opportunities that Africa faces, it is very clear that these challenges cannot be addressed and resolved by any single entity or by any single organisation. What we have realised over the years is that partnerships between government, civil society, and the private sector are critical to addressing the many challenges that we face."

I wish you good deliberations, open and constructive engagement as we dissect some of the issues which are pertinent to the sustainable growth of the Consulting Engineering fraternity in Africa.

Thank you.