

South Africa's role in BRICS

Stepping onto the global stage, and offering many benefits

South Africa's ascension into the BRICS club of emerging economies raised some eyebrows internationally, but there is no doubt that the country has the credentials to back its membership.

Perhaps the foremost advantage South Africa is able to offer its BRIC partners is access to 1 billion consumers living in Africa, as well as the vast mineral and agricultural opportunities the continent offers.

In December 2010, South Africa was formally invited to become the most recent member of the BRICS bloc — formerly BRIC — of powerful and influential emerging economies. These comprise Brazil, Russia, India, and China with the 'S' standing for South Africa.

Between them, this group accounts for nearly 20 percent of the world's GDP, illustrating just how formidable they have become. In three years' time, they are expected to account for 61 percent of the world's growth, according to the International Monetary Fund. It's an elite club and membership is strictly by invitation only.

It is by far the smallest economy to be admitted to this club, with a population of just 50 million people compared to the billion-plus populations of India and China. Likewise, South Africa's GDP is a fraction of that of China, the group's powerhouse economy.

We might therefore legitimately ask how the country has been able to pull off such a feat.

South Africa brings a lot to the BRICS table in its own right. As the gateway to Africa, it offers access to a market of a billion people in 61 territories and 54 countries — equivalent to 15 percent of the world's population.

Membership of the BRICS underlines the potential advantage available through its relationship with African economies, and the increased strategic importance given to Africa and its resources.

BRICS countries are growing rapidly, and to secure their growth, they need Africa's commodities. The BRICS intend to expand inter-trade amongst themselves to \$500 billion by 2015.

Already, South African companies are keen to do their bit in helping the trade bloc to reach this target. After South Africa formally joined the club, Robbie Ragless, head of



President of South Africa Jacob Zuma

immigration specialist Global Visa in South Africa, said:

"In the space of a little over a week, we have seen a 38 percent increase in enquiries from corporate clients and individuals wanting visas and information on obtaining work permits for BRICS countries."

As the country's Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan remarked in July, the BRICS nations are not only reflecting the shifting trends of the new global economic order but are increasingly shaping it.

South Africa's new allies are calling for change, such as reform of the world's financial bodies and the UN Security Council. Part of its job, as a BRICS member, will be to support these calls and add its own voice and diplomatic weight.

The BRICS countries share several global forums: the United Nations (UN), G20 and the India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) Dialogue Forum, which South Africa will host this year.

This year the BRICS will each serve on the UN Security Council as either permanent (China and Russia) or non-permanent (Brazil, India and South Africa) members in a move that augurs positively for enhanced cooperation.

Africa is the last frontier of the global economy and its third-largest market. It must have a voice in all major global forums



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Standing tall: Presidents of the new global economies at the BRICS Leaders' Summit, which took place in Sanya, China, in April.

including BRICS.

And it is in Africa's, and South Africa's, interests to call for a restructuring of international economic and political institutions, a more equitable and sustainable trade dispensation, and agreement on climate change. These agreements would ensure that all people are able to sustain and grow their livelihoods.

Bilateral trade

Although the US remains Africa's largest export market, Sino-African trade grew ten-fold between 2001 and 2008.

By 2009, trade values had grown by an incredible annual 53.9 percent, and overtaken the value of US-African trade, which dropped to second place.

Sino-African trade is two-way, with African economies importing almost as much from China as they export. China is now South Africa's premier trading partner, with trade between the two countries valued at 143.3 billion rand (\$21.3 billion).

By contrast, US trade with Africa is more cyclically unstable than China's. In 2009, as commodity prices fell, US-Africa trade almost halved, while China-Africa trade dipped by a

more modest 15 percent, illustrating its resilience.

South Africa is both a benefactor of better access to BRICS markets and, at the same time, a competitor or joint venture partner in the development of Africa. Africa grew at 4.5 to 5 percent last year and is expected to reach 5.5 to 5.7 percent this year. South Africa is set for a more modest 4 percent growth.

South African President, Jacob Zuma, has invited investors from BRICS countries to take up the major infrastructure and manufacturing opportunities in South Africa and on the African continent. Both the private and public sectors of the country, and the continent, stand to be leading beneficiaries of this offer.

Craig Bond, Standard Bank China's chief executive, said the bank was committed to connecting BRIC companies with African markets.

"The BRICS summit has provided us with a great platform for the emerging economic powers to discuss mineral beneficiation, infrastructure development, stimulating foreign investment as a means for supporting employment and job creation," he said.

"By formally engaging one another

and understanding differing socio-economic challenges, the need for BRICS partnership and cooperation will become more visible and manageable. The BRIC countries should also benefit from Africa's growing consumer markets."

In developing trade opportunities even further, South Africa's world-class transport and communications infrastructure will be critical.

Both local and international investors have been able to use the country as a springboard into the rest of the continent, and a sophisticated ports network is vital. South Africa is able to function as a hub for commercial traffic emanating from and destined for Europe, Asia, and the Americas, as well as the east and west coasts of Africa.

Creating value chains between South Africa and its neighbors will allow countries to share benefits from joint development projects. Past development projects have seen Tanzania and South Africa partnering to develop the East African country's tanzanite industry and sugar mills.

South Africa has also been involved in Mozambique's aluminium smelter, and more of these projects are likely,

as 19 billion rand has been set aside to fund South African junior mining companies with interests in expanding into the rest of the continent.

For investors looking to develop business in Africa, South Africa will be a natural partner.

The country accounts for 25 percent of the continent's GDP, and two-thirds of its electricity. Its sophisticated banking and financial markets, political stability, and regulatory efficiency mean that it can be easier for foreign partners to invest there first before looking north of its borders.

Judging by recent economic activity, South Africa is already benefiting from its membership of BRICS.

In July, Tata Motors South Africa, a joint venture between India's Tata Motors and Tata Africa, opened a 100-million-rand truck assembly plant outside Pretoria, the South African capital.

Meanwhile US-based manufacturer Ford Motor Company in June completed a \$500 million upgrade of its manufacturing and assembly plants in South Africa, which will enable locally-produced Ranger pickup trucks to be exported to 148 countries in Africa and Asia.

Looking toward November expos

SA to invite up to 120 home-grown companies to Beijing and Shanghai trade expos

Diplomatic relations between South Africa and China were established on Jan 1, 1998.

In terms of economic relations, South Africa granted China Market Economy Status (in principle) and the commencement of free trade agreement discussions between the South African Customs Union (SACU) and China was announced in June 2004.

An agreement establishing a Joint Trade and Economic Committee between South Africa and was signed on Feb 2, 1999 by the then Minister of Trade and Industry Alec Erwin.

The agreement broadly commits the two countries to:

- Strengthen their mutually beneficial trade and economic ties

- Raise the profile of South Africa — China relations through the creation of an appropriate institutional mechanism for the strengthening of bilateral economic ties, hence the creation

of the Joint Economic Committee, which meets almost every 12 months.

- Facilitate trade and business networking through joint business participation in trade fairs and exhibitions in each country.

Subsequent to South Africa's recent admittance into the BRICS group of countries, the Chinese government has committed itself to assist South Africa with the increase in exports of value-added products to the country.

One of the outcomes of the recent BRICS meetings relates to the Chinese government offering South Africa an opportunity to stage an Expo in Beijing, China from Nov 24 — 26, 2011.

South Africa duly accepted the invitation and also intends to stage an Expo in Shanghai from Nov 28-30, 2011.

As an outcome of the BRICS summit in China, the Chinese government committed to assisting South Africa to increase manufactured/

value-added exports from South Africa to China.

As a practical step the Chinese government proposed the staging of the South African Expo in China.

The Chinese government indicated that it will cover a large portion of the costs to stage the Expo. South Africa has been requested to recruit 100-120 relevant companies for the event.

The mentioned Expos will be combined with Trade and Investment Seminars.

South Africa will, therefore, utilize the platform for the purposes of both penetrating the Chinese market and attracting foreign direct investment. TISA has therefore been tasked with ensuring the successful realization of the Expos targeting 120 South African companies as exhibitors.

China is the largest economy in the world as measured by purchasing power parity (PPP). In terms of US dollar exchange rate, China's economy is seventh largest. The huge population at 1.3 billion results in a

relative per capita income of \$7,518 at PPP.

As one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, China's role in the global economy would be: mature market economy, champion of trade, leadership for developing world and strong voice in the world's councils.

The South-South relationship among Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa is also of strategic importance as it grants preferential trade space.

The Expo objectives

- Strengthen mutually beneficial trade and economic ties between the two countries.

- Raise the profile of South Africa — China relations through the creation of an appropriate institutional mechanism for the strengthening of bilateral economic ties.

- Showcase South Africa's technology advancement and innovation, mining beneficiation and technology capabilities, defence technology, agro-processing, energy, ICT and engineering.

- Exhibit South Africa's value-added goods and services in order to create awareness.

- Increase value-added exports

Trade /export sectors

Agro-Processing
Mining beneficiation
Metals
ICT & Electronics
Automotives & components
Capital equipment

Investment sectors

Mining and Beneficiation
Renewable Energy
Energy
Infrastructure
Oil and gas
ICT and Electronics
Capital Projects
Transport
Agro-processing

to China and globally, therefore enabling South African firms to take advantage of export opportunities in the Chinese market.

- Increase foreign direct investment into South Africa and increase joint ventures.

Participation

Up to 120 South African companies in the targeted sectors will be invited to apply to participate during the event.

The approved companies will be provided with payment of air tickets, hotel accommodation, freight forwarding of exhibitor's promotional material, attendance of trade and investment seminars, arrangement of business-to-business meetings and possible site visits.

These companies will be selected from South Africa's nine provinces, namely: Eastern Cape, Free

State, Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West and Western Cape. South African brands from both the private sector and the public sector will be showcased.

The Expo will have 80 percent representation from the private entities (manufacturers and services providers from medium and large exporters), and 20 percent representation from industry associations, export councils, joint action groups, chambers of commerce and Provincial Investment Promotion Agencies.

These approved companies are expected to have a representation of key decision makers from their entities. The representatives' job functions should include: Managing Directors, General Managers, Directors, Chief Executive Officers and Export Managers.

The history of the Square Kilometer Array

Home of clear skies and little pollution, South Africa is a forerunner in space technology

Science and technology in South Africa have taken an impressive leap forward over the past decade, particularly in astronomy-related fields. This is due, in no small part, to government efforts to secure the development of the Square Kilometer Array (SKA) project for South Africa.

When completed, the 3,000-dish Square Kilometer Array will feature the world's biggest radio telescope, and will be between 50 and 100 times more sensitive than any other radio telescope in existence.

Dishes in the SKA will be spread over 3,000 kilometers but will work together as one instrument, allowing astronomers to listen to electromagnetic radiation which travels at a fixed speed of about 1.08 billion kilometers/hour.

The SKA is a global collaboration of 20 countries that are aiming to provide answers to fundamental questions about the origin and evolution of the universe.

With a budget of 1.5 billion euro, construction of the SKA is scheduled to begin in 2016 for initial observations by 2019 and full operation by 2024.

South Africa has been preparing for this challenge for years and has reaped benefits already.

MILLER MATOLA
CEO OF THE INTERNATIONAL
MARKETING COUNCIL

At present, such high-powered tools are not available and the SKA will play a key role in furthering our understanding of the Milky Way and neighboring galaxies.

The success of the project depends on widespread cooperation. Some 70 institutions and 20 countries are now involved in the project.

While Australia is competing with South Africa to host the SKA, both



Minister of Science and Technology
Naledi Pandor

countries are collaborating on the development of radio telescopes, called pathfinders, which will contribute to the technology needed.

In May 2008, the preparatory phase of the SKA was launched with 5.5 million euro (\$7.9 million) in funding committed by the European Union. This preparatory phase finalized a detailed technical design and developed SKA's governance and legal framework.

In April, South Africa and eight other countries: Australia, China, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom — signed a letter of intent, agreeing to work together to secure funding for the SKA and committing themselves to the project. Australia and South Africa trumped both Argentina and Chile who were ruled out as potential host nations.

"Though the host country will only be decided in 2012, with construction likely to be completed by 2022, South Africa has been preparing for this challenge for years, and has reaped considerable benefit already," says Miller Matola, CEO of the International Marketing Council (IMC).

"The SKA is already driving technology development in hi-tech

areas such as antennae, fiber networks, signal processing, software and computing in South Africa, and will also benefit other systems which process large volumes of data."

A wealth of experience

The SKA bid is not South Africa's first experience of advanced astronomical technology, as clear skies and relatively little pollution mean the country has always been a favorable location for space observation.

In 2005, the largest single optical telescope in the southern hemisphere, the Southern African Large Telescope, known as SALT, was inaugurated near Sutherland in the Karoo.

More recently, a precursor to SKA known as MeerKAT (Karoo Array Telescope) is being built near Carnarvon in the Karoo.

A seven-dish demonstrator project, called KAT-7, has been operational since last year. Work on MeerKAT's design, development and construction began in 2004.

Once completed, the 80-dish MeerKAT will be one of the most powerful instruments in the world, and demonstrates South Africa has the technical competence to build SKA.

Local researchers are already accessing a 10.4-million-euro ultra-high-speed broadband link between SALT, MeerKAT, and the South Africa National Research Network in Cape Town.

The proposed 10 gigabyte per second fiber-optic link demonstrates that South Africa can provide the bandwidth SKA would require and gives researchers near real-time access to the data collected by SALT and MeerKAT.

In order to support the SKA development, both as a potential host nation and as a collaborating partner to the overall project, South Africa launched the South African National Space Agency (SANSA) in December 2010 to oversee all



Meeting of African Partner Countries in Pretoria, June 2011

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of the country's space exploration programs and will work on the SKA bid, which will integrate existing science and technology institutions.

It will help develop a formal space program and will promote

astronomy, engineering and ICT have received 263 grants through government programs. The SKA is expected to provide practical work opportunities for these students and enhance uptake in science training programs.

Hosting the International Astronomical Union's Office for Astronomy Development gives us the opportunity to boost African astronomy and the economy through education and job creation.

NALEDI PANDOR
MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

research in areas of astronomy, earth observation, communications, navigation, and space physics, while also developing skills in these areas.

Since 2005, local training and skills development in astronomy-related subjects has received a major boost through support from SANSA. Students in physics,

Global support

Last year, South Africa beat 20 other countries to host the International Astronomical Union's Office for Astronomy Development, which promotes astronomy in developing countries and manages astronomy education.

Minister of Science and Technology Naledi Pandor hailed the

announcement as an opportunity to boost African astronomy and the economy through education and job creation.

In addition, the African Union has endorsed South Africa's bid, saying that it will help drive human capital development on the continent and boost its move to a knowledge-based economy.

The African bid for the SKA, though headed by South Africa, also involves Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius and Ghana.

"This collaboration is proof that regional integration and regional advancement is a reality," said Matola.

Though the success of South Africa's SKA bid will only be known in 2012, it is clear that, if successful, the country — and the continent — will reap benefits far beyond a deeper knowledge of our galaxy and universe. The sky may not be the limit after all.

Building the case for South Africa

Winning the bid would present opportunities for global R&D and future investment

Staring at the stars could be one of South Africa's smartest investments, if the country's bid to host the world's largest radio telescope, the Square Kilometer Array (SKA), is successful.

Securing the SKA for South Africa would provide not only a significant financial investment from international organizations, but it would significantly increase South Africa's research and development skills and boost the scientific capacity of universities all over the continent.

The potential impact of the project is already being compared to the

my. The SKA project will help foster talent and skills not only here in South Africa, but across the globe as well. Growing South Africa's scientific capacity is a government priority, and while the country is growing as an industrialized economy the SKA will spur investment and accelerate talent development."

Once built, the SKA will be the world's largest radio telescope, and will be between 50 and 100 times faster than any existing radio imaging telescope.

Radio telescopes enable astronomers to listen to electromagnetic

project, but both contenders are lobbying hard as the capital investment is estimated to be worth 1.5 billion euro (\$2.18 billion).

To cover the operating costs, a further 100-150 million euro will be spent every year, of which a significant portion would be spent in the host country. Construction is planned to start in 2016 and finish by 2022.

Location is key, as the SKA requires an area of at least 100 km surrounding the project which is free from radio interference.

In addition, the 3,000-km surrounding the project needs to be silent from all interference, including radio signals.

South Africa is able to offer at least 150 km of land free from interference in an area near Carnarvon in the Karoo. With its partners, South Africa would have substantial research capacity.

Outlying stations will be located in Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, Kenya and Ghana. Madagascar and Mauritius are also supporting South Africa's bid and the African Union has acknowledged the importance of the bid for capacity building across the continent. "This is truly an African bid and project," says Matola.

South Africa is already reaping the benefits of the SKA through a comprehensive skills development program to support students in physics, astronomy, engineering and ICT.

To date, 263 academic grants have been awarded since 2005. In addition, the University of Botswana, Madagascar's University of Anta-



Karoo Array Telescope (KAT-7) is already operational in the Northern Cape Province, South Africa.

marivo, and Mozambique's Eduardo Mondlane University have introduced courses in astronomy and astrophysics.

Minister of Science and Technology Naledi Pandor said the SKA will provide practical work opportunities for these students and will enhance the uptake of science training programs.

Bilateral agreements have been established with some of the key institutions in the SKA consortium, including the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the University of California at Berkeley and Caltech, the National Radio Astronomy Observatory of the US, the National Radio Astronomy Center in India and three radio astronomy institutes in Italy.

Last year, South Africa beat 20 other countries in its bid to host

the International Astronomical Union Office, which, among other objectives, promotes astronomical research and education in developing countries.

This development signals the prestige South Africa has already gained in astronomy. If South Africa is chosen to host the SKA, the facility will pave the way for Africa to contribute significantly to the global technology economy.

The Karoo, a vast desert area in western South Africa, is already a favored location for astronomy, and the Karoo Array Telescope (MeerKAT), a powerful 80-dish radio telescope in its own right, is being built as part of South Africa's bid.

MeerKAT will be commissioned in 2014 at the earliest but is already in demand, with more than 43,000 hours of radio observation time

already allocated. MeerKAT's precursor, a seven-dish demonstrator project known as KAT-7 is already operational.

In a further boost to South Africa's bid, a 10.4-million-euro ultra-high-speed broadband link now connects the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) — the largest single optical telescope in the southern hemisphere, in Sutherland — and the MeerKAT site with the South Africa National Research Network in Cape Town.

The 10 gigabyte fiber-optic link demonstrates that South Africa can provide the bandwidth SKA would require, and gives researchers real-time access to the data collected by SALT and MeerKAT. SALT, MeerKAT and similar projects demonstrate that South Africa already has the capacity to successfully host the SKA.

We are just touching the surface of China and we have the potential to attract many more visitors. We want to increase the numbers by 15 percent within five years."

ALBERTO LIM
SECRETARY OF TOURISM AT THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

World Cup, and with good reason.

Just like the FIFA 2010 Soccer World Cup, the Square Kilometer Array (SKA) will place South Africa firmly on the world stage and leave a lasting infrastructural legacy which will benefit both the world's scientific and research communities, as well as the people of South Africa and the African continent through economic growth and education and skills development.

According to Miller Matola, CEO of the International Marketing Council of South Africa (IMC), custodians of Brand South Africa, "knowledge is the most important commodity in the modern econo-

radiation, which travels at a fixed speed of about 1.08 billion km/h.

The SKA will enable astronomers to observe objects in the outer edges of the universe, and help researchers better understand the universe's origins. At present, these tools are not available, so the SKA will have a considerable impact on world scientific knowledge.

Both South Africa — supported by eight other African countries — and Australia (allied with New Zealand) are bidding for the right to host the SKA project, having already beaten Argentina and Chile.

The final decision will be made in 2012 by those countries funding the



A front view of the energy efficient Absa Towers West (ATW) in the Johannesburg Central Business District.



A section of ATW's glass-roofed atrium, which allows natural sunlight in.

South Africa ready to host COP 17 Summit

An increasingly vocal player in the fight against climate change, South Africa leads by example

By MILLER MATOLA

When the sun rises over Durban's Indian Ocean coastline in November, the world's eyes will be firmly centered on the city as the world gathers for the 17th United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP 17).

The parties to the convention have met annually from 1995 in Conferences of the Parties (COP) to assess progress in dealing with climate change.

In 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was concluded and for the first time established legally binding obligations for developed countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

Whether or not more landmark policies to fight climate change will be agreed in Durban, COP 17 is an opportunity for South Africa to take a leadership position in showcasing its efforts to address this global issue.

COP 15, held in Copenhagen in 2009, marked a huge shift in the politics of the fight against climate change when South Africa, alongside China, India and Brazil, played a key role in drafting the Copenhagen Accord.

Durban, as host to COP 17, is foremost an African city, a place of rich contrasts and honored traditions where vast undeveloped landscapes provide the backdrop for large-scale urban growth and traditional rural lifestyles. Through this diversity, the city embodies the challenges facing most cities in the developing world.

Long a leading light and success story for sustainable urban development, South Africa has undertaken several bold projects to mitigate climate change while providing a platform from which to generate socioeconomic benefits.

Durban is piloting a Green Roof Project and extensive community reforestation projects to show how Africa's biodiversity can become a tool, not just for fighting climate change, but in creating economic opportunities.

Johannesburg, meanwhile, is credited with having some of the largest manmade forests on earth, with around 10 million trees in the city.

Elsewhere in the country, around 1.3 million hectares are covered by lush forests used commercially with South Africa's forestry sector which

protect the city's open spaces and biodiversity and a large-scale domestic recycling project as well as poverty relief programs that provide employment and improved inner-city public transport systems. It is also developing innovative water technologies and catchment management programs.

As one of the host cities during last year's FIFA World Cup soccer tournament, Durban demonstrated its ability to host large-scale carbon-neutral events.

More broadly, South Africa has demonstrated its leadership in the fight against climate change across the African continent, as it aggressively seeks to move to green energy and capitalize on the advances already achieved in the green economy.

Speaking in June 2011, South Africa's Finance Minister called for "A new formula, which links action on climate change to genuine development, and that such initiatives should be directed at genuine job creation and skills development."

He also reiterated his belief that Africa would become the R&D site

“Long a leading light for sustainable urban development, South Africa has undertaken several bold projects to mitigate climate change while providing a platform from which to generate socioeconomic benefits.”

MILLER MATOLA

CEO OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARKETING COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA, CUSTODIANS OF BRAND SOUTH AFRICA

Unfortunately, COP 15 was seen by many as a failure because of the conference's inability to pass binding carbon reduction policies. However, others have argued that this perceived failure at Copenhagen may prove useful, if it allows new global leaders like South Africa to rally the support of developing countries and broaden dialogue on the critical issues of climate change.

contributes R16 billion annually to the economy.

Within an African context, Durban's municipal leadership is mindful that its renewable energy and climate change mitigation projects are not simply about protecting the natural environment, but about creating jobs and fostering development.

The local government has introduced pioneering initiatives that

for new technologies and policies to fight climate change.

While South Africa is clearly taking climate change seriously from a policy-making standpoint, its corporate leaders are equally involved.

"For example, in June 2011, Vodacom — owned by Vodafone — invested \$3.5 million to a green innovation center at the cellphone company's Johannesburg-based"



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South African President Hon J G Zuma signing the Free Trade Agreement at the COMESA-EAC-SADC summit.

head office.

Vodacom wants the building to be South Africa's first six-star rated property under the Green Star South Africa certification scheme initiated by the Green Building Association of South Africa.

The building will house Vodafone's global operations for reducing the multinational's carbon emissions around the globe and will rank among the most environmentally friendly buildings in the Vodafone group, powered with renewable energy, using cooling and heating technologies.

Set in the Johannesburg CBD, the Absa Towers West (ATW) building has been constructed in line with the South Africa Green codes. The building has among the environmental priorities the reduction of energy consumption, water consumption, material sources and carbon emissions.

Key among the green building ele-

ments of ATW is the gas-powered energy center, which contributes immensely to reducing environmental impact.

Through the energy center and other green elements, ATW will reduce its carbon dioxide emission by an estimated 19,000 tons a year. The building also boasts the largest grey water system in South Africa, which contributes to the reduction of water consumption by recycling 43,000 liters of water a day.

Climate activists have long urged for collaboration between policymakers, corporate entities, academics and NGOs. To this end, the UN established the Green Climate Fund following the Cancun COP meeting in 2010.

The \$100 billion fund is co-chaired by South Africa's National Planning Minister, Trevor Manuel, a further testament to the international community's recognition of South Africa as a leader in climate

change solutions.

The fund, which is financed through carbon pricing, is used to mitigate deforestation and open up new agricultural land in Africa.

South Africa's role as host to COP 17 follows a year where it has become increasingly vocal on the world stage. In addition to being the only African nation holding G20 membership, it recently joined the BRICS group of nations alongside Brazil, Russia, India and China, and is one of the non-permanent members on the UN Security Council.

These are all forums where South Africa provides a voice for the fight against climate change and environmental development that balances with the demand for job creation and economic diversity.

The author is CEO of the International Marketing Council of South Africa, custodians of Brand South Africa.

Leading airline growing its business into Asia

SAA is expanding its global route network with growth planned for routes to Beijing

Award-winning airline South African Airways (SAA) is planning to introduce a thrice-weekly service to Beijing, China by the end of October 2011.

SAA is working with the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) to obtain slots that will enable the airline to effectively connect with the greater African or South American markets, both of which cater for a large percentage of Chinese traffic.

The enterprising airline has, once again, won the Best Airline Africa award and the Service Excellence Africa award. The Skytrax awards were presented

in Paris on June 22, 2011.

For the ninth consecutive year, SAA outperformed other airlines to claim the Best Airline Africa award. The lucrative title is awarded to the airline rated the best in the region for all the different items of airline front-line product and service.

The Service Excellence Africa award was given to SAA for the second consecutive year. A quality, unrivalled product as well as unwavering service standards and consistency experienced at the airport and onboard the aircraft were judging criteria for this award.

As CEO of SAA, Siza Mzimela said: "Excellent service is a key differentiator in the mind of discerning customers. We take service extremely seriously and are proud that our effort to focus on this key area of our business has been acknowledged. It only motivates us to do more for our valued customers so that SAA is their first and only airline choice."

Internally, amongst each of its employees, SAA constantly works at refreshing its focus on providing good service as well as keeping abreast of global trends in product innovation. Mzimela re-iterates:

"Improving on SAA's customer service and the consistency of quality delivery is one of SAA's key strategic initiatives.

"SAA's intense focus on customer service will ultimately ensure consistency and efficiency in striving to offer service in a personalised and professional manner."

The Skytrax awards are based on customer responses to an online survey, which is run over a 10 month period on the Skytrax website.

The study analyzes customer satisfaction for the Airline Passenger Experience across the airport and onboard environments — from check-in to boarding, onboard seat comfort, cabin cleanliness, food and beverages, In Flight Entertainment (IFE) and staff service (behaviour, attitudes and consistency).

This year, 18.8 million airline customers of more than 100 differ-

ent nationalities participated in the survey. The survey includes over 200 airlines, from the largest international airlines to the smallest domestic airlines, and measured standards across more than 38 different items of airline frontline products and service.

About SAA

SAA is the leading carrier in Africa, serving 20 destinations across the continent, as well as major destinations within South Africa, from its hub, Johannesburg. It is a member of the largest international airline network, Star Alliance.

SAA's core business is the provision of passenger airline and cargo transport services together with related services, which are provided through SAA and its four wholly owned subsidiaries: SAA Technical; Mango its low-cost carrier; Airchefs,

the catering arm of SAA and South African Travel Center (SATC).

SAA CEO Siza Mzimela is the first woman to be appointed to the IATA Board of Directors in its 67-year history. SAA has been the winner of the "Best Airline in Africa" Award in the regional category for ninth consecutive years and the winner of "Service Excellence Africa" in 2010 when this category was introduced.

Mango and SAA hold the number one and number two consecutive spots for South Africa's most on-time airlines.

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