

Infrastructure Africa 2016 (Johannesburg)

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The African Development Bank has welcomed the *Infrastructure Africa 2016* forum taking place June 9-10, 2016, in Johannesburg.

This year the Bank is sponsoring the event in partnership with UK Aid. The forum has proved important over the years in addressing the continent's infrastructure investment opportunities.

The AfDB advocates for inclusive infrastructure, and encourages infrastructure investments that also pay attention to diverse groups, particularly women and the girl child, who utilise infrastructure in many parts of the continent.

In her opening remarks, Geraldine Joslyn Fraser-Moleketi, the Bank's Special Envoy on Gender, described infrastructure as a critical element of any African economic strategy. "It affects the competitiveness of every business in the country; it is the invisible thread that ties the continent's prosperity together. It is how we get power to our lights, water to our taps, workers to their jobs, and food to our shops. It enables factories, offices, warehouses, workshops to function, to trade, to grow," she said.

She noted that much of the discussion focused on large-scale infrastructure around regional corridors and ports, power stations and sub-sea telecommunication cables. While these are vital to the development of African economies, Fraser-Moleketi regretted that they exclude needs of women and girls.

"The benefits from such infrastructure are often not evenly spread to all sections of the economy or society. Many people, particularly women and girl children are acting as 'Living Infrastructure' in many parts of the continent due not only because of a general lack of infrastructure investment, but also because of the priorities we make around what type of infrastructure should be supported," she added.

Similarly, Elham Mahmoud Ahmed Ibrahim, African Union's Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, pointed out the importance of developing rural areas to facilitate lives of women and girls.

The forum agreed that the challenge for new infrastructure was not only to deliver growth but to contribute to delivering greater equality. The expectation was that the *Inclusive Infrastructure for Africa Forum* would promote the awareness of and policy debate about ensuring that Africa's infrastructure development is inclusive. "It is important that the right choices are made technically, policy-wise and financially so that everyone benefits from the infrastructure that needs to be developed for Africa, stated Fraser-Moleketi.

Establishing partnerships emerged as a critical area in accelerating Africa's infrastructure growth. "With good partnerships, financial resources are used efficiently. And the private sector can play an important role in infrastructure development as long as the projects to be financed are attractive and bankable," said Tas Anvaripour, a Partner in the energy infrastructure team of the Abraaj Group.

She lauded **Africa50** as an effective instrument for infrastructure development in Africa. It is an initiative of the AfDB, aimed at accelerating infrastructure development in Africa.

A key convenor and sponsor of the *Infrastructure Africa 2016* forum, the AfDB has financed 114 projects across 44 countries, amounting to USD 11 billion.

The event seeks to bring together key actors in the infrastructure sector including government, policy-makers, industrial leaders, academia, private sector, civil society, and potential investors. This meeting sought to deliberate on the process of developing world class infrastructure in Africa and reach consensus on importance of integrating gender in infrastructure.