



## **U.S. – South Africa Business Forum**

### ***Strengthening Bilateral Relations Through Private Sector Dialogue***

#### **History and Mission**

##### **Background:**

The U.S.-South Africa Business Forum (Forum) is committed to enhancing trade and investment relations between the United States and South Africa. The Forum was established on September 29, 2009, in Washington, D.C. through a partnership between The Corporate Council on Africa (CCA) and Business Unity South Africa (BUSA).

The genesis of the Forum can be traced back to the U.S.-South Africa Binational Commission, formed in 1994 and jointly chaired by then former Vice President Al Gore and Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, tasked with resolving potential trade disputes and fighting international crime. The commission held numerous discussions prior to being disbanded in 2001 under the Bush administration.

The U.S.-South Africa Business Council, established in 1993, continued private sector dialogues between the two nations and encouraged U.S. businesses to increase investment in South Africa. However, after the stalled U.S.-Southern Africa Customs Union Free Trade Agreement in 2006, interests in the dialogues waned.

Further encouragement for expanding trade and accelerating investment between Southern Africa and the U.S. came in the form of the Trade, Investment and Development Cooperative Agreement, (TIDCA) signed in July 2008. The agreement between the U.S. and the Southern African Customs Union requests that both governments seek advice from the private sector on fostering trade and investment. The U.S.-South Africa Business Forum, supported at the highest levels in government in both countries, was formed, in part, to provide that service.

The new Obama and Zuma administrations have provided an opportunity to raise the profile of the bilateral relationship. American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in an August 2009 speech in South Africa referred to the U.S.-South Africa Business Forum in saying, “Economic ties between the United States and South Africa have a lot of room to grow. ...we intend to follow up on that. When a delegation comes to The Corporate Council for Africa meeting in Washington next month, we will begin with discussions that will lead, we hope, to [its] establishment.”

The CCA and BUSA have each formed steering committees that will meet in Johannesburg, South Africa on February 23, 2009, for the Forum’s inaugural planning event.

##### **Mission:**

The CCA and BUSA agree to foster public-private cooperation in an effort to deepen economic

ties between the United States and the Republic of South Africa. It is recognized that there is considerable interest in intensifying relations between the private sectors on both sides. The CCA and BUSA will set forth to serve as key facilitators in encouraging deeper engagement. Both parties will identify areas of cooperation, as well as work to discuss and address challenges to deepening trade and investment between the two countries. Through strengthened cooperation the parties will inject private sector views into the public policy debate in an effort to encourage further engagement on both the economic and political levels between the U.S. and South Africa.

**Objectives:**

CCA and BUSA agree to strengthen their cooperation in order to pursue the following objectives:

- To provide leadership on trade and investment policy issues
- To help resolve issues that inhibit greater investment between the two countries
- To help members of the organizations to navigate the commercial and political environments of the U.S., South Africa and the rest of the African continent
- To advise on significant legislative and policy developments in Washington and South Africa
- To provide commercial information, networking opportunities, and counseling to promote and advance business activity in the U.S. and South Africa as well as in partnership in the rest of the African continent
- To ensure access to key United States and South African government officials; and
- To provide input into the Consultative Group on Trade and Investment that was established in 2008 as part of the TIDCA agreement between the U.S. and SACU (see Article 3, Section 1F of agreement)

**Partnering Organizations**

**The Corporate Council on Africa**

A member based organization, is at the forefront of strengthening and facilitating the commercial relationship between the United States and the African continent. CCA works closely with governments, multilateral groups and business to improve the African continent's trade and investment climate, and to raise the profile of Africa in the US business community.

**Business Unity South Africa**

Represents South African business on macro-economic and high-level issues that affect it at the national and international levels. Our function is to ensure that business plays a constructive role in the country's economic growth, development and transformation and to create an environment in which businesses of all sizes and in all sectors can thrive, expand and be competitive.