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Contact Information:

Amanda Hilligas
Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub
Gaborone, Botswana
ahilligas@satradehub.org
www.satradehub.org

African Apparel Industry Suppliers and Buyers to Meet in Johannesburg

PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA The 4th Annual African Apparel Business to Business (B2B) Event will be held at the Leriba Lodge in Pretoria, South Africa May 20th and 21st, 2008. The event is supported and organized by the USAID-funded Global Competitiveness Hubs (the Trade Hubs) in East/Central, Southern and West Africa. As many as 60 companies are expected to attend, representing a cross-section of the apparel industry doing business in Africa, including buyers from the United States and Europe, sourcing houses, South African retailers and African producers of textiles (yarn, fabrics, trims) and apparel. The B2B event represents a cost-effective way to foster trade linkages in the sector and source textiles, apparel and trim products from producers throughout Africa.

Over the two days nearly 400 one-on-one pre-matched meetings will occur with matches based upon the specific sourcing requirements of buyers or the production characteristics of each manufacturer attending. These 30-minute “speed-dating” meetings for buyers and manufacturers are expected to encourage opportunities for sourcing, outsourcing and other business linkages expected to result in million of dollars in new business deals for African textile and apparel manufacturers. Joint ventures and investments have materialized from the past Business to Business events.

The B2B meetings have taken place since 2005, involving about 50 companies (60 delegates) in 2007. Participants who took part in the 2007 event estimated that their participating likely resulted in more than US\$8 million in new trade deals. Over half of the participants reported contacts strong enough to warrant factory visits. Buyers from the United States and South Africa found the event particularly useful, as it provided a cost-effective way to engage a number of potential suppliers from all over the continent within a two-day period. Many reported that achieving the same sourcing linkages on their own would have been expensive, if not impossible.

This year's B2B Event is expected to draw companies from 13 countries in Southern, East and West Africa as well as the United States, EU and Far East. The field of participants includes 16 companies with a declared intention to “buy”, 29 garment manufacturers, 12 textile manufacturers (of who 5 are also garment producers), and five trim manufacturers.

In June 2002, the United States Agency for International Development established the Southern African Global Competitiveness Hub in Gaborone, Botswana, to respond to President Bush's announcement of his new trade initiative for Africa. The Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub offers trade capacity building and trade competitiveness assistance, including support on AGOA, to facilitate increased trade between Southern Africa and the United States.

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