

Home is Best III - Diaspora Summit highlights

On December 29th and 30th 2009 all roads led to Hotel Africana for the third annual Diaspora summit dubbed **Home is Best-III**. The event organized and sponsored by Uganda Investment Authority and the Private Sector drew participants from across the globe and the Uganda private sector.

Day One featured the opening remarks by Dr. Martin Alier the Chair of the Nation Media Group who encouraged the Diaspora community to return and invest back home. He mentioned the north as particularly virgin territory now that the war was officially over and a thing of the past. "All indications show that Gulu is the second fastest growing city in Uganda after Kampala and now boasts of over 7 major banks, a University and several donor agencies with a major presence in the town", Dr. Alier reiterated.

Later on in the day, seminars on initiatives and opportunities in Agro-Processing, Medical Services, SME development, E-Government were also conducted by the technocrats including Dr. Prof. Maggie Kigozi who presented a summary of listed opportunities that the Diaspora community could tap into in order to re-invest back home.

Day two saw a shift into Government Initiatives to foster Diaspora Investment. This session discussed the political climate, Executive, Legislature and Judiciary issues that challenge and constrain Diaspora investment. It was a public platform where issues of land ownership, migration and duo-citizenship, company registration procedures, tax administration were analysed.

Several politicians and their parties also made an appearance focusing on the need to protect the investment of the Diaspora community with the run up to the 2011 Presidential elections. Some members of the opposition also spoke about the inter-party cooperation as one of the avenues to strengthen their participation in the upcoming elections.

Other activists who attended included Hon. Betty Kanya from the Uganda Federal Alliance who presented a case for regional federalism as the only way that could ensure an equitable distribution of the country's resources. Others like Mr. Bidandi Ssali pushed for a federal system that ensures that all resources are controlled by the State. Other speakers included Dr. Ssebana Kizito the President of DP party and Mr. Asimwe from the NRM Secretariat who came under severe attack for the CHOGM scandals less than a year following the global fund debacle.

As the conference drew to a close presentations on Uganda's booming IT sector were made by Mr. Andrew Lutwama the Acting Director of Uganda National Telecommunications Authority a newly formed department meant to regulate the booming IT sector.

A Presentation on the newly established Oil sector and Uganda's Oil and Petroleum department was also made by the technocrats from the Ministry of Energy.

One of UIA's mandates is to provide Entrepreneurial skills to young people especially those who are currently graduating in large numbers from the 35 Universities in Uganda. At this Diaspora Summit, the youth were not left out either. UIA, together with Hotel Africana and Crown Beverages Limited (Pepsi) organised a one-day career guidance seminar at the Africana People's Space. The main objective of the programme was to inspire the youth to think about their lifelong goals in terms of education and career, and their potential to create and fashion their own Uganda. The Youth Forum attracted over 100 youth from Uganda and the Diaspora who were keen and eager to learn from the varied range of presenters who included some of Uganda's top Young Business moguls, like Grace Nanyonga and David "JK" Kazoora; famous Radio Presenters like Fatboy; Artists like Navio; Ethan Musolini a Motivational Speaker, among others. The youth also received some mentoring from Hajj Bulaimu Kibirige, the Proprietor of Hotel Africana and Chairman of the BMK Group of Companies, as well as from Prof. Maggie Kigozi and Mr. Edward Katende from the UK. .

The Conference was then closed by Mr. Henry Pacuto, a member of the Uganda Investment Authority Board of Directors.

The Home Is Best Initiative assesses the Diaspora needs, discusses challenges and looks at new investment opportunities in Uganda that can be tapped into by those Ugandans living abroad. Special thanks to Roofings Uganda Ltd, The Monitor Publications and DFCU Bank for sponsoring this growing initiative.

To book a slot next year's summit contact Mr. John Musajjakawa at musajja@ugandainvest.com or info@ugandainvest.com www.ugandainvest.com

By UIA Communications and UNAA Times Team

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