



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

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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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