

## Media Releases 2009

### South Africa to chair new African tax forum

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**Kampala, Uganda, 19 November 2009** - The Commissioner for the South African Revenue Service, Mr Oupa Magashula, was elected unanimously today as the chairperson of the African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF) at its inaugural conference in Kampala, Uganda.

The conference also unanimously voted for South Africa to host the secretariat of the new African tax body.

ATAF's goal is to become the central platform for African tax administrators to articulate African tax priorities, develop and share best practices in the region and further afield, and build capacity in African tax policy and administration.

Mr Magashula will head up a 10-member general council comprising of the heads of tax administrations of the elected countries. The council was elected by the 28 members of ATAF. Each of the five geographical regions of Africa (north, south, east, west and central) elected a regional representative. The remaining four positions on the general council were filled by a majority vote by ATAF members.

The regional members of the general council are:

South: Botswana  
East: Rwanda  
West: Nigeria  
Central: Gabon

The northern region, comprising Morocco, Chad, Sudan, Egypt and Mauritania requested to postpone the election of a representative from that region.

The four other members who were voted onto the council are: Senegal, Ghana, Kenya and Zimbabwe.

"I am both humbled by your vote of confidence and excited about the challenges and opportunities before us. I would also like to congratulate the members of the first ATAF Council on their appointment," Mr Magashula said.

He said it was appropriate to remind delegates again of ATAF's objectives of improving the performance of tax administration in Africa so that they can more effectively mobilise domestic resources.

"This forum will allow us to pursue stronger cooperation and build a united approach in the field of tax policy and revenue realisation among African countries," he said. The countries of Africa should join hands and overcome the challenges of language, diversity and culture to build effective and efficient tax administrations that can contribute to the development of the continent.

This would help contribute to economic growth and increase the accountability of the state to its citizens, he added.

28 African countries have already signed up for membership. Mr Magashula, said that though this is an impressive number for a new organisation ATAF wanted more African countries to join.

"I urge each and every one of you here today, to speak to your African partners that have yet to commit to ATAF, in order for this organisation to be truly representative and become the central platform for African administrators to discuss and develop tax priorities and policy on the African continent," he said.

The 28 members of ATAF are: Botswana, Benin, Cameroon, Coite d'Ivoire, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Ghana, Gabon, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Niger, Lesotho, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

## **Background Information about ATAF**

The idea of establishing ATAF is the result of deliberations at a conference attended by African tax commissioners from 30 countries and representatives of international organisations and donors who met in Pretoria, South Africa in August 2008 to discuss Taxation, State Building and Capacity Development.

During deliberations at the Pretoria conference it became clear that a new way of thinking about tax collection in Africa was required. Delegates increasingly became aware of the need to think beyond tax collection as a purely technical or administrative exercise, and rather to understand that the broader role of domestic resource mobilisation is support of social and economic development. In addition delegates realised that the efficient and effective administration of tax collection had wide-ranging political significance in entrenching accountability, promoting democratic governance and state building as it focuses on the relationship between the taxpayer and the government.

The conference mandated a steering group of seven countries (Botswana, Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda) to work towards the establishment of the forum. In the build-up to the launch, several ATAF technical events have been held and projects begun in collaboration with ATAF's development partners, including the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the International Tax Dialogue (ITD).

Membership of ATAF is open to tax administrations of all African states who commit to ATAF's objectives and who pay an annual membership fee.

## **Information about Mr Magashula**

Mr Magashula joined SARS in January 2006 as the General Manager: Corporate Services. He was appointed Deputy Commissioner in April 2009, became Commissioner for SARS in September 2009.

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