

Caleb M Fundanga: The importance of cross border information exchange for Zambia

Remarks by Dr Caleb M Fundanga, Governor of the Bank of Zambia, at the launch of the Alumniportal Deutschland, Lusaka, 25 November 2008.

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- Her Excellency the Ambassador of the Germany Embassy in Zambia
- Management and staff from the Germany Embassy in Zambia
- Fellow alumni
- Members of the press
- Distinguished invited guests
- Ladies and gentlemen

Guten Abend meine Damen und Herren. I am truly honoured to officiate at this important Launch of the Alumniportal Deutschland. I am informed that Africa has a rare honour of being the first continent to implement the Alumniportal Deutschland. I am certain that our implementation process will define the failure or success of the whole project. We thus have a huge challenge to ensure that we achieve success and provide a benchmark for others to emulate. However, looking at the many beaming faces present in this room, I have no doubt that we will provide more than just a benchmark for others to follow. I am glad to note that we are all optimistic on the success of this project in Zambia in particular and Africa in general. We have a duty to represent our continent and give it the honour that it so deserves.

Your Excellency, the Launch of the Alumniportal could not have come at more opportune time when cross border information exchange has become cardinal in every aspects of life especially trade. I am reliably informed that almost 250,000 people from all over the world receive education or training in Germany annually. Furthermore, I am advised that about 2000 African students are awarded a degree every year. The Germany curricular is certainly becoming increasingly influential in business and other field in Africa. This is beneficial to our continent as we are in a position to benefit from interactions with a diverse human resource in alumni activities after completion of the courses or training.

However, after graduation, a good number of us Zambians have a tendency to forget and cut off all windows of communications with the past. We properly pack our certificates and contacts in our archives and let them accumulate dust. We therefore, end up forgetting the precious friends that were once a great part of our lives and a source of knowledge. It is no wonder that the country's representations at International Institutions like the United Nations, International Monetary Fund and the World Bank is very low. This is a sharp contrast to the levels of representations at such institutions by other African countries especially in West Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen, on numerous occasions, our businesses have dwindled mainly due to lack of genuine suppliers, reliable customers or due to excessive costs. These are mainly caused by a lack of knowledge of cheaper sources of inputs, little knowledge about customers and supply bottlenecks as a result of dealing with many agents in the supply line. This is costly and no business can be profitable in the medium to long term without proper networks in their business lines. Net working is about creating a set of contacts and subsequently building a trusting and genuine relationship with these people. Networking provides the opportunity to discover people who may be able to offer assistance to one's business and who may also benefit from the assistance that one has to offer.

In this global economy, millions of transactions are made on a daily basis across borders, regions and continents. For these transactions to be cost effective and profitable there is need to remove information asymmetries and to reduce the risk of moral hazard. These significant impediments can greatly be avoided by counting on the contacts that one may

have in a different country region or continent. The end product would thus be increase in economic welfare for all.

Your Excellency, at a country level, Zambia still requires significant levels of investment in many sectors of the economy to achieve desirable levels of growth. The country possesses abundant natural resources and human capital. It is also surrounded with eight neighbouring countries and close proximity to the large market of South Africa, a surface area of over 750,000 sq km, and an approximate population of over 11 million people. Its active participation in the SADC Trade Protocol and the COMESA/FTA offers preferential tariff access to market potential of about 380 million plus people. The country also boasts of a suitable climate, peace and a multi-party competitive democratic political system. The country thus possesses all the necessary attributes for sustainable economic growth and development.

However, most economic resources remain untapped due to low investments. The low investment levels in the country could partly be attributed to the lack of knowledge of the local situation by the potential investors. In order to complement, Government's efforts in marketing the country's investment potential, we all need to use our contacts and friends to disseminate information on the vast economic potential that exists in the country.

With the current economic challenges emanating global financial meltdown, the need for increased investment levels in the country can not be over emphasised. Therefore, I challenge all of us gathered here today, to take advantage of the Alumniportal and market not only our Curriculum Vitae or businesses but also our country. Such initiatives will no doubt increase awareness among businessmen outside the country and lead to increased investment that would result in job creation that our citizens so much need. We are therefore in a better position to contribute a little to the economic growth of our country through this Alumniportal.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, personally, since my graduation from Konstanz University in 1985, I have managed to keep my contacts close to my heart. I have continued to benefit immensely from the interactions and friendship with most alumni from my days in Germany. I can even boast that in the process my contacts have expanded ten fold. I enjoy interacting with people whom I have a common interest and even those who have different views on several issues.

In closing, let me reiterate that I have no doubt that the Alumniportal Deutschland will enable alumni to tap into an invaluable source of skills, vast experience and necessary expertise in many areas of development. It will link people beyond professional and cultural boundaries and organisational sectors meaning that it will act as a catalyst for rapid and continuous success. In a global world, success can only be guaranteed from long term cooperation and constant interactions with business partners and friends. Let us build our potential through the Alumniportal and in effect add to our own successes.

I thank you.