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Said 2000 to discuss impact of global trends

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MAPUTO (Mozambique), Sun: The Southern Africa International Dialogue (SAID 2000) beginning today will focus on emerging trends in the world and how these impact on emerging economies.

Issues to be discussed include ways of dealing with the negative impact of globalisation, strengthening regional cooperation, trade liberalisation, information technology, social issues, diseases and ways of sustaining economic recovery.

Practical business ethics for small to medium business enterprises will be explored and exploitation of knowledge-driven strategies raised.

The leaders will explore how smart partnership and cooperation with business, labour and media can be beneficial at the national and regional levels.

In addition, the leaders will review progress in the implementation of projects and programmes in tourism, transport and power agreed to at Victoria Falls last year.

The issue of available resources in Southern Africa and ways in which smart partnerships can be utilised and the beneficial exploitation of these resources will be raised.

In Southern Africa, for example, there is great potential for tourism with its world famous safaris and game parks. These cut across national borders. Joint promotion and development of accommodation, transportation and communications will be beneficial for the region and will be in keeping with the smart partnership spirit.

Recent events demonstrated that globalisation makes weaker and emerging economies particularly vulnerable to externally imposed shocks. As there is no single formula for either development or response to crisis, emerging countries need to be prepared to consider alternatives instead of adopting policies that are imposed on them from outside.

African countries need to cooperate and promote the region as a single market for investments and consumers. Individually, they are unable to attract the scarce foreign capital and investors to "promote economic growth and development".

The need to work together in a smart partnership will necessarily require a change in the way things are done on the continent. It will require greater sharing of equity among the various stakeholders instead of going it alone.

The common challenge in the region, however, is the need to overcome obstacles and eradicate poverty in addition to tackling the high unemployment and lack of capital to achieve the needed economic growth and development.

SAID '99 in Victoria Falls had concluded that smart partnerships provide a dynamic mechanism by which Africans and the African economies can participate along with other emerging countries in the global economy, predicated on their combined strengths rather than weaknesses.

This is the fourth SAID. Previous dialogues were held in Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe hosted the meeting last year at Victoria Falls. These dialogues were in addition to the annual Langkawi International Dialogue (LID) which was first held in 1995.

SAID 2000 brings together several leaders from Southern African countries. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is the only non-African leader invited to the dialogue.

It is part of the Global 2000 Smart Partnership International Dialogue which is being held in two parts. SAID 2000 from August 20 to 23 is the first part and the second part will be held in Langkawi from November 18 to 22 2000.

Dr Mahathir is expected to hold several bilateral meetings with other leaders as well as businessmen. In addition, many leaders and businessmen are keen to hear Malaysia's success story and about the unorthodox policies the Government adopted to pull the economy out of the recent financial crisis.

The leaders held informal discussions over dinner hosted by President of Mozambique Joaquim Alberto Chissano.

The first smart partnership dialogue - the Langkawi International Dialogue (LID) was held in 1995. This spawned other regional smart partnership dialogues - in Southern Africa and Barbados International Dialogue (BID) for the Caribbean region.

In addition, a number of countries, including Mozambique, St Lucia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Dominica and Malawi, have organised national smart partnership dialogues.

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