

MAJOR NEW ANNOUNCEMENTS MADE AT NYFA 15

A number of significant announcements were made at the fourth edition of the New York Forum AFRICA, held in Libreville, Gabon, August 28-30. They included the launch of a new African low-cost airline and the construction of a pan-African music institute.

Venture capitalist and philanthropist Ivor Ichikowitz announced the launch of Gabon FlyAfrica.com, a Pan-African low cost airline aimed at enhancing air connectivity across Africa and reducing the cost of doing business in the continent. The first plane for the Gabon hub landed in Libreville on the first day of the Forum. Inspired by President Bongo during discussions at NYFA 2013, FlyAfrica.com was launched 13 months ago in Southern Africa where the business model was tested and refined with the successful establishment of airlines in Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe. The second phase of the airline's roll out will include Gabon and other countries in East and West Africa.

During the closing session, a MOU was signed by: Pacôme Moubelet Boubeya, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Gabon; Frédéric Gassita, President of AMI; and Dr Larry Simpson, Provost, Berklee College of Music, to launch the African Music Institute (AMI). The campus, to be built on an extensive site in Libreville, will be a pan-African faculty of music and dance, and will include an auditorium and concert hall for the public, as well as educational and rehearsal spaces. Construction is slated to start on January 1, 2016.

L'Agence Française de Développement (AFD) signed a EUR10 million agreement with Gabon to fight against poaching and to protect the bio-diversity of the country. The agreement was signed by Annick Girardin, Minister of State for Development and Francophony, France, and Regis Immongault Tatagani, Minister of Economy and Investment Promotion of the Gabonese Republic.

The Francophony launched a regional fund for digital innovation to support young Africans who develop innovative digital applications. The announcement was made by Michaëlle Jean, Secretary General of the Francophony.

The laureates of the first-ever African Start-up Award were announced in the official opening ceremony. The Award, launched by the New York Forum Institute in partnership with Le Point and France 24, selected a top 50 and then awarded 4 laureates: 1st prize went to Gifted Mom from Cameroon (EUR 50,000); 2nd to GreenWize Energy from Kenya (EUR 30,000); 3rd prize to Tech-Innov from Niger and special jury prize from Appropriate Energy Savings Technology from Uganda (EUR 10,000 each).

Jose Manuel Barroso, former President of the European Union, launched the Europe-Africa

Forum, to promote private sector investment and PPPs between Europe and Africa, to be held in Cascais, Portugal, June 8-9, 2016.

Société de Transformation Agricole et de Développement Rural (SOTRADER) – a Public Private Partnership between the Gabonese Republic and its technical partner Olam International Ltd. - signed a contract with the Caterpillar group worth EUR160 million for the purchase of 475 bulldozers. The machinery will be used in the development of Gabon's SEED programme and is the largest single-order contract ever awarded to the manufacturer in sub-Saharan Africa. This will also create 200 jobs as well as training for Gabonese workers.

Also announced in the closing session: Gabon has become the 10th member of the Africa Finance Corporation (AFC). This will enable AFC to receive preferred creditor status in Gabon, lowering the investment risk and enabling the organisation to provide competitive financing solutions. To date, AFC has invested more than USD 2.5 billion in projects in 22 African countries, including developments in energy, telecommunications, transport and heavy industries.