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The African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and the Development Centre of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

jointly with

The South African Institute of International Affairs and the National Treasury

cordially invite you to the

AFRICAN ECONOMIC OUTLOOK 2009 LAUNCH CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Date: 27th July 2009

Time: 12h15 for 12h30 – 14h30

Venue: National Treasury, Pretoria

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(Drinks and light snacks will be served)

Background

The 2009 African Economic Outlook (AEO) covers 47 African countries and includes a special chapter on Innovation and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Africa. The report finds the region gravely affected by the global economic downturn. Following half a decade of above 5 per cent economic growth, the continent can expect only 2.8 per cent in 2009, less than half of the 5.7 per cent expected before the crisis. The report anticipates growth rebounding to 4.5 per cent in 2010. However, growth in oil-exporting countries is expected to fall to 2.4 per cent in 2009 compared to 3.3 per cent for the net oil importers.



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The outlook further projects that the collapse of commodity prices and plummeting demand from OECD countries will have an adverse effect on Africa's budget balances, with the regional budget deficit for 2009 predicted to be around 5.5 per cent of GDP compared to a surplus of 3.4 predicted in the AEO a year ago. The 2009 AEO also finds that while official development assistance increased in 2008, there are concerns over downward pressure on donor aid budgets due to the ongoing economic crisis.

On a positive note, the 2009 AEO notes that Africa is better positioned to weather the crisis than it was ten years ago. Many countries have undergone prudent macroeconomic reforms in the past few years which have strengthened fiscal balances and reduced inflation to single-digit levels. Many have also benefited from substantial debt relief, with the result that debt service/export ratios are low.

On ICTs, the 2009 AEO concludes that despite low penetration rates for new technologies, innovative applications of ICT have been proliferating to areas such as e-banking, e-payments, e-agriculture, e-trade, e-government and e-education. Many of these new tools are helping to shape an improved business environment by contributing to market development, overcoming traditional infrastructure constraints and reducing business costs.

These broad dynamics will form the core focus of the launch.

Provisional Programme

Moderator: National Treasury Representative

12h30 - 12h40 Welcome and Introduction

National Treasury and European Commission Representatives

12h40 - 13h25 The 2009 Outlook: Africa and the crisis: impacts and ways forward

Federica Marzo, Economist, Africa and Middle East desk, OECD Development Centre

Discussant: TBC

13h25 - 14h10 The 2009 Outlook: Innovation and ICT: which benefits for Africa?

Iza Lejarraga, Economist, Research Department, African Development Bank

Discussant: Prof Alison Gillwald, Research Director, Link Centre, Wits University

14h10 - 14h30 Concluding Remarks

Peter Draper, Trade Programme Head, SAIIA



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