



ENP News, 17 February 2011

African Development Bank Group - International Trade Law Capacity Building Program Launch in Kigali

The international Trade Law Capacity Building Project was formally launched in **Kigali** (Rwanda), on February 11, 2011, by Rwanda's President, Paul Kagame, and the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group President, Donald Kaberuka.

This major legal capacity building project is a joint program of the **African Legal Support Facility** (ALSF) and the Pan-African Lawyers' Union (PALU). It is designed to strengthen international trade law practice on the continent and build the rule of law in the service of economic development of African countries.

President Kagame declared that he could not refuse to attend and join in this initiative, as it 'meets expressed needs, since the capacity gap faced by African legal practitioners in complex international trade operations has been a proven fact for a long time'. This weakness results in 'Africans being often times denied significant return on investment they were entitled to.'

For his part, President Kaberuka recalled the AfDB's role in setting up the legal support facility, at a time when several states face the unscrupulous behavior of 'vulture funds'. He also commended members of the Pan African Lawyers Union: 'It is reassuring that you, eminent African lawyers, have come together to help strengthen stability and confidence in businesses in Africa. We share your laudable goals. Rest assured that we want to establish a strong partnership with you.'

Barrister Akere Muna, president of the Pan African Lawyers Union, warmly thanked AfDB's commitment to their endeavour, and clarified his organization's view of the partnership: 'We, African lawyers, affirm our commitment to contribute to the economic and social development of the continent. Law is the foundation of any developed and prosperous society. May this also apply to Africa.'

Mr. Muna explained that the partnership between PALU and ALSF means that capacity building and legal advice will target both public and private sectors.

More than 100 participants, mainly chairmen and members of several African countries' Bar Associations attended the formal launching. They extensively exchanged views during a High



Level Panel session in which the AfDB Group was represented by its General Counsel, Kalidou Gadio.

The launch was followed by the first East-African regional seminar, bringing together 40 participants for 3 days in **Kigali**. The five African regions will be involved, with four other regional seminars to be organized in 2011 and 2012.

These seminars aim at:

Building capacity to conduct international complex trade negotiations in Africa,

Building capacity to settle international trade disputes and assist in litigation with vulture funds in Africa, and

Establishing a trade law database of knowledgeable and experienced experts in Africa.