

## **Vienna – Investment Conference**

For the South African Embassy in Vienna the year 2011 started with a flurry of activity. In the context of the Government's framework of job creation, the Embassy hosted a trade and investment conference under the theme "Go South Africa: Forum on Investing and Doing Business with South Africa" on 25 January 2011. The event was held in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber.

The Embassy saw the conference, which focused on investment opportunities in South Africa broadly but with particular attention on the renewable energy sector, as the anchor of its economic diplomacy strategy for 2011. The focus on renewable energy was in recognition of Austria's strengths and advancements in the deployment of renewable energy. The idea of the conference had the full support of the Minister of Energy, Ms Dipuo Peters, following discussions held in 2010 between her and Ambassador Xolisa Mabhongo.

The Embassy invited South African Provincial Governments, various Municipalities, Trade and Investment Agencies and Business Organisations. It was attended by the Deputy Minister Energy, Ms Barbara Thompson, the Premier of the Eastern Cape Province, H.E. Noxolo Kiviet and a delegation from the Northern Cape Province led by MEC Ms Sylvia Lucas. Additional MECs from the Northern Cape and the Eastern Cape were also in attendance. Local government representatives included the Mayors of Ethekwini, West Rand and a Member of the Mayoral Committee from Johannesburg. The Investment Promotion Agencies of KwaZulu Natal, Western Cape, and Gauteng were also represented.

The Forum generated huge interest and 150 Austrian companies were represented. They listened to presentations outlining various investment opportunities that exist in different parts of South Africa as well as incentives offered by our government. Some of the 41 Austrian companies with presence in South Africa gave positive testimonials on their experiences of doing business in our country. Besides the presentations the South African delegation visited renewable energy facilities in Austria for demonstration of existing technologies.

The Provinces of Eastern Cape and Northern Cape had additional programmes which included tours to other Provinces of Austria. The delegation from the Eastern Cape visited the Province of Lower Austria for political and economic discussions. The two Provinces signed a twinning agreement in 1998 and the Embassy has, inter alia, prioritised its revival. A meeting at the Krems University of Applied Sciences in Lower Austria led to an in-principle agreement on cooperation with the Eastern Cape Province on tourism training.

The Northern Cape delegation visited the Province of Salzburg where meetings were held with various state agencies responsible for renewable energy and for tourism.

The conference resulted in several concrete follow-up ideas between members of the South African delegation and some Austrian companies and the Embassy will be facilitating these activities.