



## THE BANKING COUNCIL

South Africa



### United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP FI)

UNEP FI is a unique global partnership between UNEP and the private financial sector. UNEP FI works closely with approximately 200 financial institutions to develop and promote linkages between the environment, sustainability and financial performance. Through task forces, working groups, training programmes and research, UNEP FI aims to address the opportunities and needs that sustainable development can provide to the financial and subsequently the larger stakeholder community.

For more information on the UNEP FI ATF see [www.unepfi.net/atf](http://www.unepfi.net/atf) or contact Niamh O'Sullivan ([niamh.osullivan@unep.ch](mailto:niamh.osullivan@unep.ch)), or Sean de Cleene, AICC ([sean@aiccafrica.org](mailto:sean@aiccafrica.org)).



UNEP Finance Initiative  
Innovative financing for sustainability

15 Chemin des Anémones  
CH-1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland  
Tel. (41) 22 917 8178 Fax (41) 22 796 9240  
email [fi@unep.ch](mailto:fi@unep.ch) website [www.unepfi.net](http://www.unepfi.net)

# African Task Force

“UNEP is encouraged by the examples from the African finance sector highlighting innovative uses of technology, micro-finance initiatives and a deepening appreciation of the positive impact that socially responsible investment can have. While capital markets across the continent are embryonic, the research reveals the great potential for the African financial sector to support the agenda framed by the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). The NEPAD agenda that so critically calls for development by Africans for Africa.”

### Dr. Klaus Töpfer

UNEP Executive Director,  
Extract from UNEP FI Tokyo Roundtable 2003 keynote speech.

## MISSION

The mission of the UNEP FI African Task Force (ATF) is to support and expand sustainable financial practice in Africa.

## BACKGROUND

On January 28th-29th 2002, UNEP FI held the third in a series of Regional Outreach events in Midrand, South Africa, which was hosted by the DBSA (Development Bank of Southern Africa).

Following the Regional Outreach Event the UNEP FI ATF was launched with one of its main objectives to promote UNEP FI's mission – of realising best sustainability practice across all financial sectors – within an African-specific context. Furthermore, it was envisaged that the ATF would have a direct role to play in the promotion of enhanced governance, transparency, accountability and reporting across the African finance sector.

## MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Cas Coovadia, Banking Council of South Africa, and Mr. Sean de Cleene, African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC), are Chair and Co-Chair, respectively, of the ATF.

They are assisted by a 15-member task force, made up of African financial sector representatives, and a smaller group of non-financial associates to meet the challenges of the agreed work programme.

With original membership dominated by institutions from Southern Africa, UNEP FI and the ATF are determined to encompass a broader geographical and professional range of African financial practitioners into its structure and activities within 2004 and beyond. Outreach activities are being undertaken, and partnerships are being forged, to introduce other financial institutions to the benefits of ATF involvement and to ensure that the ATF becomes a credible and efficient African initiative per se.

*“The challenges of sustainable development must be seen within the...African context. We need to be careful that we don't impose values of developed countries as far as sustainable development is concerned.”*

**Cas Coovadia**  
Banking Council of South Africa, ATF Chair.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The ATF aims to:

1. set sustainability priorities for the African financial sector,
2. establish general standards or codes of conduct on finance and sustainability in Africa,
3. facilitate the integration of a triple bottom line approach to the operations of the African financial sector.

## FEATURED WORK PROGRAMME ACTIVITY

### Sustainability Banking in Africa Report

One of the main activities of the ATF in 2003 was its involvement in the production of a Sustainability Banking in Africa Report, which was launched in the second quarter of 2004. The Report was produced by the AICC Centre for Sustainability Investing in partnership with UNEP FI and supported by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), Finmark Trust and Nedbank. The report acts as a benchmark discussion document outlining the challenges and opportunities for developing sustainable banking practices in Africa. It also serves as a key document to promote the work of the ATF in Africa.

Through the inclusion of five country case studies (Botswana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa) the report encourages active debate around the principles and practices of sustainable banking in Africa and paves the way to uncovering strategies and opportunities unique to the continent.

## CHALLENGES

### Sustainability in Africa

2002, as the inauguration year of the ATF, highlighted both the challenges and opportunities such a task force could present to all parties involved. Securing relevant interest and participation from a variety of financial sector representatives in a region only previously explored in a limited capacity by UNEP FI is quite a challenge. Attempting to achieve a balanced



*“The existence of initiatives such as UNEP FI's African Task Force are critical, if NEPAD and other similar frameworks for investment into Africa are not simply to become examples of finely worded rhetoric.”*

**Sean de Cleene, AICC,**  
ATF Co-Chair.

geographical basis simultaneous to this is an additional obstacle, but one which UNEP FI aims to overcome with a committed African Task Force.

To be committed to the task force means that members are genuinely concerned with and have an appreciation of sustainability issues, that they are aware of the interrelationship of these issues with their financial activities and are willing to improve their own organisation's sustainability performance while lending assistance to their counterparts to do likewise. In addition, it refers to a member's obligation to meet their individual responsibilities in a range of ATF structural, thematic and operational requirements so that the group may function efficiently as a whole.

Furthermore, the cultural dynamics around sustainability create different priorities for different regions. Within Africa, cultural issues play a significant role in shaping sustainability priorities. Understanding and respecting the African challenge of balancing “people, planet and prosperity” in a manner which makes sense to African communities will be critical to developing a meaningful, relevant and effective work programme for both the ATF and broader UNEP FI activities.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### The Pivotal Role of Finance

UNEP FI views the ATF as a valuable mechanism to promote an African “renaissance”. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Global Compact and the UN Millennium Development Goals, all inter alia reference economic renewal, scrutiny and good governance as being paramount to the progression of sustainable development within the developing world. The finance sector is pivotal to the advancement of such renewal and thus UNEP FI and ATF are in a prime position to be at the forefront of the operationalisation of sustainable development in Africa.

*“Financial markets are deeply concerned with sustainability-related activities because of the pertinent advice and counselling involved in the actions of companies, institutions, transactions and project finance deals. The ATF views itself as a partner in projects, a guide wherever help is needed, and as an initiator of networks to facilitate the transfer of experience and ideas.”*

**Michael Hölz,**  
Deutsche Bank,  
Chairman UNEP FI.