

Press Release

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Deans Create First Africa-wide Association of African Business Schools

Friday, October 28: Lagos, Nigeria - Deans and directors from more than 20 business schools across the continent established a new Africa-wide Association of African Business Schools (AABS) at a gathering in Lagos held October 11-13. Business school deans reviewed proposals for the association which grew out of discussions held at meetings earlier this year in Accra (March) and Dakar (June). The meetings were initiated through the pilot capacity-building programs of the International Finance Corporation's Global Business School Network (GBSN), which facilitates the enhancement of management skills in emerging markets by partnering with business schools to build local capacity for management training.

By training current and future business and community leaders in their home markets, business schools in Africa can play a critical role in laying the groundwork for vibrant economic and private sector development. The association will aim to support graduate business schools in fulfilling this role through capacity building, collaboration and quality improvement programs. Its programs will focus on developing the institutional capacity to teach leadership and other managerial skills to improve management of African organizations. The association will strive to enhance the relevance and contribution of business schools to policy discussions on African development, including contributing to research and policy development.

Similar to business school associations in other regions, the association will be membership based which will serve and promote the collective interests of member schools. It will interface with other global and regional business school associations and advocate for management education and training needs across Africa. The Lagos meeting was well attended by business schools from East, West, South, Francophone and English-speaking Africa, and initial governing board members were elected from Tanzania, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, and South Africa. Prof Erasmus Kajjage, dean of the Faculty of Commerce and Management, University of Dar es Salaam, and elected as a member of the governing board, said, "The association will help us work together to develop our schools and provide the kinds of management education and training programs our countries need."

The association intends to pursue activities that achieve results and build momentum. Prof Nick Binedell, elected as the association's first chairperson and director of the Gordon Institute of Business Science in South Africa, commented, "We decided to focus first on activities where we can have an impact in the short term, such as deans' workshops and faculty exchange, and expand our capacity building activities as the association grows." In the medium and longer term, the association will pursue more in-depth objectives such as establishing regional quality standards, creating a research network, and playing a larger role in African policy debate.

Leading up to the deans' meeting, Lagos Business School hosted a workshop focusing on the key management issues facing African business schools, including the enhancement of teaching methods and curricula. Held at the Lekki campus of Pan-African University, the workshop was jointly organized by Lagos Business School and the Gordon Institute of Business Science. Guy

Pfeffermann, former IFC chief economist and director of the GBSN, noted, "Stronger business schools can be important tools for contributing to economic growth in African countries. The new association will create opportunities for professional networking in three dimensions: North-South, South-South, and perhaps most important, among African schools themselves."

The deans' workshop and meeting form part of the Global Business School Network's (GBSN) African pilot programs financed by IFC. GBSN harnesses the experience of several of the world's top business schools in support of institutional capacity-building for African business schools. Strengthening these business schools will deepen and widen the pool of well-trained local managers, who play a crucial role in generating jobs, reduce reliance on expatriate managers, and help stem brain-drain.

About IFC

The mission of IFC (www.ifc.org) is to promote sustainable private sector investment in developing countries, helping to reduce poverty and improve people's lives. IFC finances private sector investments in the developing world, mobilizes capital in the international financial markets, helps clients improve social and environmental sustainability, and provides technical assistance and advice to governments and businesses. >From its founding in 1956 through FY04, IFC has committed more than \$44 billion of its own funds and arranged \$23 billion in syndications for 3,143 companies in 140 developing countries. IFC's worldwide committed portfolio as of FY04 was \$17.9 billion for its own account and \$5.5 billion held for participants in loan syndications. For information about IFC, see: www.ifc.org

About the Global Business School Network

IFC's Global Business School Network (GBSN) aims to strengthen the skills of managers in emerging markets by expanding opportunities for management education and training in these countries. Partnering with a network of business schools around the world, the GBSN is working to enhance the institutional capacity of business schools in emerging markets so that they can provide a stronger pool of management skills to local and regional firms, including small and medium enterprises. The GBSN acts as a facilitator, identifying needs at the local level, forging links between emerging market business schools and appropriate partner schools, structuring projects, and creating an ongoing network for the sharing of best practices. The GBSN is also linking schools in emerging markets with each other. Enabling communication and sharing of experience between these schools can bring substantial benefits to the institutions, their students, and their local communities. For further information, see: www.ifc.org/gbsn

About the Gordon Institute of Business Science

The Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) has rapidly grown to one of South Africa's leading business schools in the five years since it was established. GIBS has just been ranked within the world's top 40 schools for executive education for the second year, reflecting its focus on partnership with business. The school runs more than 50 programmes with partner companies each year in addition to its suite of open executive education courses. GIBS takes in 120 MBA students each year and runs a DBA programme. For information about GIBS, see www.gibs.co.za