Media release: New tax research network launched

A new network of African tax researchers was launched in Cape Town this week at a meeting of about 160 tax professionals, officials, academics and researchers from 35 countries on the continent. It is a first for Africa.

The meeting, held at the Garden Court on Nelson Mandela Boulevard, saw the launch of the African Tax Research Network (ATRN) which aims to become the premier research organization on African tax issues in the world. The ATRN was formed out of the African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF) which represents about 40 tax administrations on the continent.

Over the course of three days, from Wednesday to Friday, delegates discussed topics such as the major drivers of revenue losses on the continent, how to improve tax administrations and how to finance Africa's development through the use of African resources.

The conference deliberated on about 45 academic papers dealing with tax issues. The best papers received special awards at the conference, and the aim is to publish the papers in an academic journal dealing with tax issues, which will be another first for the continent.

South African Revenue Service Commissioner, Tom Moyane, delivered the keynote address at the conference which was attended by revenue commissioners from several African countries.

Gershem Pasi, the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority Commissioner General and chairman of ATAF, said the conference went some way towards Africans seeking their own solutions to their problems.

“We tend to believe that the world owe us, but that is not true. We need to realize that, even if we were not responsible for a mess, we have to play a part in sorting it out.”

Professor Annet Oguttu, of the University of South Africa who chaired a session of financing Africa's development, said: "We cannot run away from being African. A baton has been handed to us and we need to hand it over to the next generation in better shape than how we received it.”

Ken Morris, the Commissioner General of the Botswana United Revenue Service, said the conference was well-structured and balanced.

"I was particularly impressed by the number of young academics who presented. This gives me hope for the future."

Morris said that the burning issue for tax people throughout Africa was “how to tax the untaxed”.

“We have to convince people that tax is for their own good. Paying tax should be everybody's obligation, but this will only happen when people see the benefits of their taxes.”

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