



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 30, 2014

MEDIA CONTACT:

Kimberley Baker

713-844-3638

kbaker@houston.org

GREATER HOUSTON PARTNERSHIP, MAYOR ANNISE PARKER LEAD HOUSTON DELEGATION ON SOUTH AFRICAN MISSION

To Discuss Trade, Investment Opportunities in Johannesburg, Cape Town

HOUSTON, TEXAS (U.S.A.) – The Greater Houston Partnership and Mayor Annise Parker will lead a delegation of elected officials and top business officials February 1ST to 8th to discuss commerce and investment opportunities. Discussions will focus on how to increase trade and investment between the Houston region and South African cities including Johannesburg and Cape Town.

State Sen. Rodney Ellis (D-Houston) and Houston Airport System Director Mario Diaz will be part of the Houston group that includes Houston-area companies, ranging from energy and aviation to real estate and international trade and investments. The delegation will host a “Doing Business with Houston” seminar for South African business people and investors. In addition, the group will meet with high-level government officials and business decision-makers. Mayor Parker also will be a part of an energy roundtable and other marquee events at the fifth biennial C40 Cities Mayors Summit.

“This will be the first visit of a Houston mayor to South Africa in more than a decade,” said Mayor Parker. “There is great potential to strengthen the economic ties between us, especially in the energy sector. With each trade mission, we also look to grow our aviation ties and promote the planned spaceport at Ellington Airport. Anytime we can improve the options for getting from Houston to other points in the world, we make it easier for businesses here at home that want to pursue new opportunities.”

A significant player in the international economy, Houston is home to 94 foreign consulates and the headquarters of 25 *Fortune 500* companies. It also has the world’s largest medical center, the Texas Medical Center, and is known as the “Energy Capital of the World” because of its large concentration of oil, gas and renewable energy companies.

Annual trade between Houston and South Africa totaled \$1.3 billion in 2012.

“Our economy is diverse and robust, and it matches up well with the types of industries that South African entrepreneurs and business people are pursuing,” said Greater Houston Partnership President and CEO Bob Harvey. “Houston is a top U.S. city in several industries including energy, medical, transportation and manufacturing.”

-MORE-



Houston and the Republic of South Africa have strong economic and cultural ties.

“South Africa is a great friend to Texas, and I’ve been privileged to visit the country numerous times during my career,” said Senator Ellis. “With a strong emerging market like South Africa, it makes sense from both a business and cultural perspective to have strong ties to the area. I look forward to working with South African leaders to ensure that our city and state are able to continue the solid partnership that has served both regions so well.”

The Houston/Galveston Customs District ranks as South Africa’s fifth largest U.S. gateway for international trade by value. The Houston region ranks as South Africa’s seventh largest U.S. gateway for air cargo trade by both value and tonnage.

“We already have a strong track record of training African aviation professionals from all three major airports in South Africa,” said Houston Airport System Director Mario Diaz. “We are looking forward to starting a vigorous dialogue with officials from South African Airways and the airport while we are in the Johannesburg area. We will also meet with members of the aerospace industry as we continue to pursue our spaceport license at Ellington Airport.”

More than 370 Houston companies report business or trade ties with South Africa. Of the 214 firms in the Houston region affiliated with subsidiaries in South Africa, 14 are headquartered in Houston. These include: CAMAC International Corp., Baker Hughes, Inc., National Oilwell Varco and Weatherford International. The South African company, Sasol Limited, operates two subsidiary locations in Houston: Merisol USA LLC and Sasol North America, Inc. The United States-Africa Energy Association is one of 30 international chambers of commerce and foreign trade associations located in Houston.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, almost 2,200 Houston-area residents were born in South Africa, and an additional 1,100 Houston residents have a South African ancestry.

“We are excited about the growth prospects this trade mission will bring for both our region and an important emerging market like South Africa,” said Harvey. “We believe that Houston presents a great opportunity for expanding South African firms looking to do business overseas,” said Harvey.

For more information on business and trade opportunities in Houston, visit www.houston.org.

###