

EU-AU Joint Session on Infrastructure for the Minerals Sector: the experience and potential of Natural Rubber explored

Brussels, 20 February 2015 – Yesterday and today, the European Union and the African Union met in Brussels to discuss the infrastructure needs of the raw materials industry in Africa, with a particular focus on the Minerals Sector.

Experts from Members of the African Union, the European Commission, International Institutions and the Industry had an extensive exchange of views on the success stories, the needs and the opportunities that investment in infrastructures can bring to this industry. In this context - and in the wider work of the EIP on Raw Materials - Mr Banga, President of the Board of Directors of [FIRCA](#) (Fonds Interprofessionnel pour la Recherche et le Conseil Agricoles), and Mr Sainte-Beuve from [CIRAD](#) were invited to bring their experience in the non-minerals sector, particularly on the development of the natural rubber (from Hevea Tree) in West Africa.

The participation of the rubber sector in today's debate is a useful contribution to raise awareness of both EU and African authorities on the opportunities that lie still untapped in many African countries beyond the mining sector.

During his keynote address, Prof. Paul Collier, from the University of Oxford, underlined the fact that transport infrastructure needs to be "multifunctional" and that the opening of transport corridors needs to benefit all productive sectors and not just mining.

A similar point of view was expressed by Mr Banga, who focussed on the difference made by natural rubber in the development of infrastructure in the Ivory Coast. He underlined how this infrastructure was not only specific to natural rubber (tree nurseries, collection centres etc.), but multifunctional, including roads, medical centres, schools etc. fighting poverty and providing real development for areas that are often remote and isolated. Similar comments were also made by other speakers and particularly by Mr Asamoah, from the African Development Bank, who stressed the need for infrastructure to be developed also for the agricultural sector.

Mr Sainte-Beuve made reference to the availability of great knowledge and state of the art competences in the field of natural rubber and echoed the need for such "soft infrastructure" to bring innovation and competitiveness also to other sectors and regions.

"No raw material can be considered in isolation, especially in regions where their economic viability and the development of entire regions is linked to the presence of infrastructures that are lacking or insufficient." said Ms Cinaralp at the end of the event. She also expressed the hope that the concept of "multimodality" of infrastructure could be extended to other needs of the raw materials' sector and that further synergies amongst industries could be found in the future.

ETRMA's membership include the following tyre manufacturers: APOLLO VREDESTEIN, BRIDGESTONE EUROPE, BRISA, COOPER TIRES, CONTINENTAL, GOODYEAR DUNLOP TIRES EUROPE, HANKOOK, MARANGONI, MICHELIN, MITAS, NOKIAN TYRES, PIRELLI AND TRELLEBORG WHEEL SYSTEMS. Furthermore, members include Associations in the following countries: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the UK. The industry provides direct employment for more than 360,000 people in the EU and supports another 800000 jobs in related sectors. ETRMA members' turnover in 2012 is estimated to € 46 b, of which up to 5% continues to be invested in R&D, annually.