

Making Change Happen

In October, a quaint coastal town in northern France hosted the sixth global meeting of the Women's Forum. Each year, the forum provides a platform for some of the world's foremost thought leaders, businesswomen, politicians and entrepreneurs to brainstorm solutions to the major societal issues shaping women's lives today

it all and I've raised three boys. I think women should have it all. Do men oppose being fathers and being professionals? No."

Irina Bokova, Director-General of Unesco, addressed the fact that to build a successful future, women needed to overcome obstacles both within themselves and in society. "We need to have more confidence in ourselves, but we also need to change the overall mentality of our societies and get rid of stereotypes."

SA was represented by Liesl

Gerntholtz, Director of the Women's Rights Division for Human Rights Watch, Daphne Mashile-Nkosi of Kalahari Resources and the widely admired Wendy Luhabe, author, social entrepreneur and founder of the

Women's Investment Fund.

Honoured as one of the 50 leading women entrepreneurs of the world, Luhabe's a staunch believer in the responsibility of female business leaders to help other women advance in business. "When you build a society and people want to be in leadership positions, they must be held accountable. I've used my own privilege to create opportunities for others. I've played my part as an entrepreneur. I believe female leaders in the corporate >



Wendy Luhabe



Aimee Mullins



Irina Bokova

Driven by the growing recognition of women's impact on all aspects of society, this year's forum attracted 1 300 prestigious participants (including a growing contingent of men) from as far afield as Beijing, China and San Francisco, USA.

The theme of this year's conference, "Change: Making it Happen", addressed five key areas of change: politics, economy, the environment, global health and

women's role in society. The two most recurring discussion topics of the conference were how to accelerate gender diversity at top management level through quotas of women on boards and the impact of gender diversity on business performance.

European Commission Vice-President Viviane Reding, an outspoken advocate of gender diversity, expressed her views on women's right to combine motherhood and career unequivocally: "I've done

environment must play their part as well. If you assume a CEO position, we expect to see women on all levels of your organisation and on your board. How can we expect men to be the champions of gender equality when women who're given the opportunity aren't prepared to be?"

One of the most powerful presentations at the conference came from American athlete and actress Aimee Mullins, best known for her inspirational outlook on life, despite the amputation of both legs, who reminded participants of the enormous potential that resides within us all to overcome adversity and shape our own destinies.

Then there was Marie Staunton,



the diminutive, unassuming CEO of Plan UK – the NGO behind the “Because I’m a Girl” campaign – who drove home the most important point of the conference with her passionate plea for support to secure the future of girls in developing countries. With her closing question – “Who gave you your first chance?” – she put a gentle

finger on the defining moment in every career woman’s life and spotlighted the fact that in developing nations, millions of girls still have a long way to go before they can ever hope to attend a conference such as the Women’s Forum. – **SABINE CLAPPAERT**

• For more on this global gathering, visit: www.womens-forum.com.

GLOBAL HOT TOPIC



As the world becomes more aware of the move towards a sustained environment, Added Value’s Global Director of Sustainable Marketing Practice, Leslie Pascaud, urges businesses to get on board too

While Africa’s not necessarily responsible for the beating the world’s environment is taking, this continent is among some of the worst-affected places on the planet. Years of exploitation have impacted on natural ecologies and our previous abundance of natural resources, in the form of minerals and commodities, is being rapidly depleted.

Nevertheless, SA is responsible for the African problem. According to Pascaud, our country accounts for about 50% of Africa’s CO₂ emissions

– a rate which will continue to rise unless we change our ways.

Pascaud’s on a mission to inspire SA’s brand owners to buy into responsible and sustainable branding. “The future of innovation will be sustainable,” she declares, adding that only businesses which embrace this will survive. For example, global motoring giant Toyota – which launched the hybrid Prius in 2001 – is at the forefront of sustainability in the motor industry due to forward thinking and environmental responsibility. “Customers are smarter and want to be a part of sustainable living. Businesses need to move in that direction. Those that don’t are limiting their life expectancy,” says Pascaud. – **GUGU MADUNA**

GREEN MACHINE