

FNB Portside hosts SA-UK Forum

Peter Alkema: CIO FNB Business

*The views of Table Mountain from the top floor of our Portside building in Cape Town are **outstanding**.* Even more so when the British Prime Minister stood in front of them recently to open the SA-UK business forum. An historical, first ever visit to Africa for Theresa May she brought a high-profile delegation of political and business leaders looking to extend trade relations between the two nations. Importantly they all brought their cheque books ready to invest in various industries being showcased on the day. **The strict security measures required careful planning and our Cape Town teams had worked closely with British diplomats for weeks beforehand on a strictly “need-to-know” basis.**

[By the end of the day the fifth wealthiest economy in the world had pledged 8 billion pounds of investment and private sector financing to Africa.](#) The forum provided an opportunity for key clients and top executives from FirstRand to engage and showcase our country and continent. **Among those was FirstRand chairman Roger Jardine who spoke about our role as a corporate citizen and the significant contribution we make through financing, SME support, lending and innovative, integrated financial services across all segments of our client base.** Paulo dos Santos and John Campbell from RMB spoke about project Khokha, the SA Reserve Bank’s pilot blockchain project in which the **[Foundery](#)** played a crucial role.

FNB CEO Jacques Celliers took the stage after lunch to share his thoughts on driving sustainable economic growth through technology. South Africa has a proud heritage of innovation, and is home to some of the world’s greatest thinkers and entrepreneurs. He spoke about Cape Town’s vibrant software development community and Johannesburg’s world class research; both seeing **global companies like Amazon, Google and IBM already heavily invested.** *FNB aims to create a better world by helping businesses and government through its ecosystem of innovative banking services. **[Selfie authentication automates citizenship](#)** while *nav* offers an exponential buy-sell platform that is truly **[#smartHelp](#)**.*

Industries such as infrastructure and agriculture also benefit from innovation and this was an important theme for investors in the room looking for profitable development opportunities that need big cheques. Jacques spoke about RMB’s innovative funding arrangement of the R4Bn Roggeveld Wind Farm which achieved a record-breaking lowest renewable energy tariff. **Precision farming methods such as artificially intelligent tractors which behave like massive inkjet printer nozzles delivering smart weed control with “see and spray” technology.** Jacques then moderated a panel of experts who provided insights about their industries and talked up the value for investors to help industrialise Africa.

Against the backdrop of Table Mountain, we heeded the call to step up and help inspire investor confidence. From the basics to the big stories, every FirstRand citizen played a role on this incredibly important day and when it came time to commit, these high profile foreign leaders didn’t hesitate to get their cheque books out and start writing some big numbers. **Fortunately, in his keynote presentation Jacques hadn’t mentioned that cheques are being phased out in South Africa; however, after such a successful SA-UK forum we will gladly make an exception.**

Article republished from: <https://www.peteralkema.com/fnb-portside-hosts-sa-uk-forum/>