

## Event Review

### SwissCham – Luncheon

23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2010, held at  
the Johannesburg Country Club  
in Woodmead / Sandton

**Speaker: Mr. Bobby Godsell**

SwissCham members had the privilege of being addressed by Bobby Godsell, Chairman of Business Leadership South Africa (BLSA), at a luncheon held recently at the Johannesburg Country Club in Woodmead.

BLSA is an association of South Africa's largest corporations and multinational companies with a significant presence in South Africa, whose CEOs or Chairmen sit on the Council and Board of BLSA. Of these, 50 are top JSE listed companies and 30 are large private companies, some of whom are members of our Chamber.

In addition to his position as Chairman of BLSA, Godsell is also co-Chairman (with Zwelinzima Vavi, General Secretary of COSATU) of the Millenium Labour Council, a body facilitating social dialogue between South African business and labour leaders. He further is Chairman of JSE-listed Freeworld Coatings; Director of Housing for Africa (a company developing housing opportunities in the African continent) and Honorary Professor, Wits Business School, teaching philosophy of management courses.

Co-Author, with James Motlatsi of *“Do it! - Every South African's guide to making a difference”*. Previous publications include co-editing with Peter Berger, *“A future South Africa - Vision, Strategies and Realities”* and *“Shaping a future South Africa – A citizens guide to constitution making”*.



Mr. Bobby Godsell, Chairman of Business Leadership, South Africa



Dr. Jürg A. Schalch, SwissCham President

SwissCham President Dr. Jürg A.Schalch welcomed some 45 guests who had come to hear Bobby Godsell's message on the topic: **“Completing - renewing the South African Dream”**.

A special welcome was addressed to Mr. Charly Dufey from B&S Agencies , a new member of SwissCham.

The President then introduced Mr. Bobby Godsell.

Godsell began by making the point that South Africa celebrated a milestone in 2010 (apart from the Soccer World Cup), in that it was a hundred years since South Africa became a country with the formation of the Union of South Africa. During most of its existence, two white groups had squabbled over who the country belonged to – Boer or Brit – without taking the black population into consideration. The issue had finally been settled constitutionally and politically in 1994 with the decision that South Africa belongs to all races and genders who live in it.

The question, according to Godsell, is what now is the dream? He quoted what he called an almost throwaway line from President Jacob Zuma, who literally said: “He hoped to live long enough to see South Africa become a developed country, as he was tired of South Africa forever being referred to as a developing country”.

Godsell said that this should surely be a dream shared by 50 million South Africans: to have a society in which everyone is economically active; to have good Government schools that children can walk to; to have world class, affordable state hospitals and a society in which everyone is economically active. He said that in the next 25 to 30 years the economy would have to double or treble from its current \$10,000 per head to \$30,000 per head, so that there would be enough resources in society to meet the needs of everybody.



A survey had been conducted amongst the members of the BLSA, which asked them how the size of the economy could be doubled or trebled by the year 2040. Members were asked to look back to 1994 to see what had helped or hindered their business and to look forward and report what would have to change. Godsell stated that the 53 responses received to date revealed the most extraordinary story of corporate growth and transformation. From being in a laager or sheltered economy in 1994, BLSA member companies now have significant presences in 44 out of Africa's 53 countries. There has been expansion into Latin America and Asia and most of the companies have doubled in size.

In order to grow the economy, there would have to be focus on deepening the markets. In view of South

Africa's limited market, Godsell imagines that similarly to the EU, if there could be free movement of goods and people within the SADC and COMESA countries, there would immediately be a market of around 500 million people. Infrastructure in Africa would have to be addressed; railway systems and electricity supply would have to be rehabilitated, all of which would help to broaden the market.

Skills development is another important area to focus on, according to Godsell. He said that the education system needs to be overhauled so that it is not just preparation for university. A majority of pupils will need to follow a vocational stream where they can acquire skills, serve apprenticeships in a workplace, learning how to put the skills into practice and finally become useful economic citizens.

Godsell's third point is based on the US vision of "a country of laws, not a country of men". In other words, effective regulation where the rules are known and consistently applied. He emphasised the importance of having a national value system.

To achieve the dream Godsell believes, South Africa should become the Japan of the African continent and in doing so, would change the world's concept of Africa. Japan had been able to completely change its character and its place in the world's mindset and he believes South Africa is perfectly capable of doing the same.

Godsell asked if the risk of participating in this dream are any greater than the risks faced by the first Swiss missionaries, settlers and businessmen who came to this country. He concluded that the risks are always there but the reward of a developed South Africa would be substantial.





Daniela Maurer for  
SwissCham Southern Africa