

THOUSANDS ATTEND ANNUAL INDABA TO LEVEL UP THEIR PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES AMID SOUTH AFRICAN CHALLENGES AND SHIFTING GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

A record 3,200 delegates attended the annual Smart Procurement World Indaba in Johannesburg to learn, share insights, and network. Among them were 1,000 public and private sector procurement specialists from across Africa and abroad. Running alongside the Indaba was the 14th Annual Absa Enterprise & Supplier Development Expo, the largest market access platform in South Africa, connecting SMME suppliers with key buyers and industry leaders. This year, the Expo and Visitor Open Day drew a record-breaking 2,200 attendees. Now in its 19th year, the event remains the country's leading platform for professionals in procurement, inbound supply chain, and enterprise development.

Organiser Smart Procurement asserts that this year's landmark gathering reflects the increasingly critical role that the procurement and inbound supply chain profession plays in economic growth, efficient public spending and the achievement of social development goals. "Procurement has entered a new era of leadership and impact," states Smart Procurement CEO Debbie Tagg. "It is no longer a back-office function. It is a strategic powerhouse driving agility, innovation and transformation."

Strategic procurement can also unlock national growth and private sector investment. This was the theme of an inspiring 2025 Indaba presentation by Transnet Engineering chief procurement officer Collette Yende. Infrastructure challenges like port congestion, poor roads and inefficient procedures are not insurmountable. Yende contends that strategic public procurement can unlock private sector investment in infrastructure. "Procurement should no longer just process orders or chase the lowest quotes," she told attendees. "It must position itself as a partner in shaping business outcomes. That means shifting focus from short-term buying to long-term sourcing strategies, building supplier ecosystems and embedding procurement in enterprise planning."

She urged delegates to align procurement with investors. "Investors and funders want assurance that capital is used responsibly. Procurement decisions must therefore consider ESG standards, governance and financial discipline. When procurement strategy is visibly aligned with investor priorities - such as transparency, sustainability, and risk management - it strengthens trust and secures future funding."

"Framework contracts lock in standard terms, pricing and service levels over multiple years, which reduces admin, ensures compliance and creates

predictability. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) can go further, aligning private investment with public infrastructure goals, while ensuring accountability through measurable outcomes," Yende said, noting that both models move away from ad-hoc tendering toward structured, predictable supply relationships.

She discussed success stories from South Africa and across our borders. "Renewable energy PPPs are a good news story. South Africa's Independent Power Producer programme attracts private investment and boosts energy access through PPPs. Kenya's digital procurement platform improves transparency and efficiency in government contracting processes. In Rwanda, PPPs are successfully developing critical transport and housing infrastructure."

The true impact of the Public Procurement Act was outlined in an indaba presentation by Worldwide Integrated Logistics MD Shaun Scott, a supply chain and procurement specialist who is the co-author of the Public Procurement and Supply Chain Management textbook. He explained that under the Act, the opportunity for exemptions has decreased, commodity complexity has increased and procedures are detailed. Scott stressed that the Public Procurement Act provides an ideal opportunity for the professionals to take real steps to improve the profession.

In his insightful indaba session, Michael Sudarkasa, chairman of Africa Business Group, explored how Africa's trade playbook should be redefined in a shifting global landscape. "Amid rising geopolitical tensions and shifting global alliances, we are finding new trading partners emerging, beyond the traditional links to the European Union and the United States. Expand your horizons and think East - Middle, Far and South," he told attendees. Possible new partners include India, China, Japan, the UAE, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, he said. Sudarkasa's advice to procurement professionals aiming

to level up their game was to explore Africa, to promote regional value chain development, invest in infrastructure, engage the diaspora and leverage new resources.

Attendees had high praise for this year's indaba, commending the important topics covered, the engaging presenters and the organisation. "Well done! The event was well organised. Speakers in the panels were effective and the topics introduced are well thought out," said Phumla Ndaleneni, deputy director of Demand & Acquisition Management at the Eastern Cape Provincial Treasury.

Sifiso Tshabalala, head of Procurement at the JSE said that he was impressed by the organisation, the exhibitors and the venue.

"The conference was an eye-opener and food for thought. I learned a lot and I can't wait for the next one," commented Mulisa Ramasimu, a young professional in training at Transnet SOE.

Massmart Procurement executive Chris Georgiou commended the event for its professionalism and the relevant topics, while Lerato Leseka, assistant director at North West Provincial Treasury, said that he is looking forward to the milestone 20th Smart Procurement World Indaba in 2026. "It needs to be televised," he enthused.

This year's indaba featured several important co-located events, including the fifth annual Sustainability Summit Africa, hosted in partnership with Deloitte; the 14th annual Absa ESD Expo; the Leaders Forum sponsored by MasterCard and Absa; and the Bidvest Women's Luncheon sponsored by Bidvest International Logistics.

The key event partners were Absa, Mastercard, Cell C, Addendum, Coupa, Ecovadis, Telkom and Zycus.

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ABOUT SMART PROCUREMENT WORLD:

Smart Procurement World (SPW) is the largest professional development platform for procurement and inbound supply chain, supported and endorsed by industry professional bodies. SPW achieves professional development for procurement and supply chain professionals while achieving economic development objectives in each region through enterprise, supplier development linking small business to supply chain.

Contact info@smartprocurementworld.com for event inquiries.



