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Connecting Africa with the Siemens Profile Awards

As part of an initiative that has spanned almost a decade, Siemens, together with the Department of Science and Technology, is presenting the annual Profile Awards, a pan-African programme that aims to encourage the reporting of Science and Technology in the print and broadcast media.

Dirk Hoke, Siemens Africa CEO, says the theme for the 2009 Profile Awards is 'Connecting Africa', a slogan that encapsulates how these journalism awards have proved to be a useful forum for writers, producers and broadcasters from across the continent to meet and exchange information, discuss challenges faced by the various countries across the continent, and in the process, facilitate a multi-cultural perspective that reflects not only on the media but also in the application and interpretation of science and technology.

"Africa occupies an almost unique space in the global arena as a continent where countries with first world infrastructure and well developed industrial economies coexist with others where the per capita GDP is among the lowest in the world," he says. "Yet paradoxically this very inequality opens up exciting possibilities for those countries at the lower end of the scale to benefit from the technological development of those with more advanced infrastructure that are able and willing to share their resources, but more importantly, act as a conduit for the exchange of knowledge and information."

Indicative of the importance with which scientific reporting is viewed and how the practical application of technology can impact positively on the socio-economic transformation of the lives of ordinary people, Hoke says the South African Department of Science and Technology is once again co-presenting the Profile Awards.

"Considering the multilingual nature of the entries and the broad cross-continental representation, it is clear that the message of technology and how technological advancement can be used to great effect for the benefit of Africa's people is getting increasing attention," he says. "It is also pleasing

to note that the government too places as high an emphasis on this programme as Siemens does, recognising the importance of this kind of initiative to Africa's social and economic future."

With previous entries received from countries as far apart as South Africa and Egypt, Nigeria and Kenya, Hoke says what is clear is that the common thread that ties these entries together is the discovery and exploration by the media of the impact of science and technology on people's lives and how these can act as a catalyst to spur growth and development.

"The wealth of knowledge and the pace of new developments in Science and Technology across the globe is increasing exponentially at a rapid rate, so much so that the demand for information on these subjects is growing similarly quickly," he says. "As an indicator of this, since its inception, entries to the Profile Awards have grown enormously, with an increasing range of subjects, technology and projects featured and a noticeable improvement in the quality and content of coverage. It is also worth noting that the winners of both the category prizes as well as the Overall Profile Award have been drawn from countries as diverse as Egypt, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and South Africa."

Entries to the Profile Awards can be submitted in the categories of Industry, Healthcare, Energy, Student and Information Technology for work published or broadcast during 2009 before the closing deadline of the 31st January 2010. To enter, simply log on to the Profile Awards website at www.profileawards.co.za.

Siemens AG (Berlin and Munich) is a global powerhouse in electronics and electrical engineering, operating in the industry, energy and healthcare sectors. The company has around 420,000 employees (in continuing operations) working to develop and manufacture products, design and install complex systems and projects, and tailor a wide range of solutions for individual requirements. For over 160 years, Siemens has stood for technical achievements, innovation, quality, reliability and internationality. In fiscal 2008, Siemens had revenue of €77.3 billion and a net income of €5.9 billion (IFRS). Further information is available on the Internet at: www.siemens.com.