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The Competitiveness and Trade Expansion Program

For Immediate Release:

Eighteen African Firms to Market Their Goods at Major U.S. Apparel Show

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Eighteen African apparel firms will exhibit at the Source Africa Pavilion at the MAGIC apparel trade show in Las Vegas, Nevada from August 30th – September 2nd. The Pavilion is a collaborative effort of the USAID Competitiveness and Trade Expansion Program (COMPETE) East and Central Africa Trade Hub (ECA Trade Hub), the Southern Africa Trade Hub, the West Africa Trade Hub, and Enterprise Mauritius. Source Africa Pavilion exhibitors will hail from Ethiopia, Rwanda, Kenya, Mauritius, Madagascar, South Africa and Cameroon.

MAGIC, which stands for Men's Apparel Guild in California, is the largest trade show of its kind in the United States. It is held twice a year and hosts global buyers and sellers of apparel, footwear, accessories and sourcing resources. MAGIC welcomes over 100,000 persons to its semi-annual event. To plan for MAGIC, buyers interested in doing business in Africa have been matched with pre-screened factories that meet their needs. U.S. buyers will then meet with Source Africa Pavilion companies at an invitation only, buyer - producer matching event.

While challenges exist, Africa is seen as an emerging source location and a viable alternative for buyers wishing to diversify or shift production from Asia. "The MAGIC show is the premier venue for sourcing ready-made garments in the U.S. and the Source Africa Pavilion has consistently attracted the interest of sourcing agents and buyers," says ECA Trade Hub Director, Finn Holm-Olsen. "The Source Africa Pavilion has been a part of MAGIC for several years and our exclusive buyer matchmaking session is certain to produce business leads for our exhibitors."

The ECA Trade Hub provided assistance to the apparel firm IRIS Madagascar to attend MAGIC in August 2007. As a result, interest from U.S. buyers rocketed and the company reported exports valued at nearly \$600,000 in 2007. Prior to the ECA Trade Hub's intervention, the company had never exported to the U.S. Having established solid business relationships with a handful of U.S. buyers, the company's exports to the U.S. rose to over \$900,000 in 2008 and are expected to reach the \$1 million mark by the end of 2009.

The USAID COMPETE project works across East and Central Africa in collaboration with regional economic communities such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) to reduce barriers to trade and to help African companies become more competitive in the regional and global marketplace.

To gear up for this event, the ECA Trade Hub engaged a textile expert to work with promising apparel manufacturers in Ethiopia and Rwanda. This specialist worked with the companies to improve the technical aspects of production from uniform stitch length, to fabric dyeing, and fabric finishing meeting exacting standards for international orders. The ECA Trade Hub disseminates information and raises awareness about export preferences

under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Since 2000, 18 of 29 eligible African countries have exported ready-made garments duty free to the U.S. under AGOA.

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