

World's top businesswomen head to our shores

ORANGE and pink are the new power colours for top South African businesswomen.

At least that appeared to be the case when Community Investment Holdings executive chairperson Anna Mokgokong and Wiphold directors and businesswomen Louisa Mojela and Gloria Serobe got together this week to discuss an imminent meeting of the world's top women entrepreneurs.

They are all involved in bringing The Leading Women Entrepreneurs of the World (LWEW) annual summit to African soil for the first time.

The world's top women entrepreneurs, who own and run businesses with collective revenues of more than \$300-billion, are heading to SA this month for the summit, which will be held from September 8 to 13.

Mokgokong, honorary chair of the 2007 World Summit, said the summit was endorsed by the government and there would be a strong pres-

ence, in the form of sponsorship or speeches, from the Trade and Industry Ministry, Industrial Development Corporation, Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Speaker Baleka Mbete.

She said the event would showcase SA to the world's best women entrepreneurs, who may even consider buying property or investing in SA.

The women's group was founded on the basis that members had to be the company founder and operating in that company. The revenue threshold was \$35-million, or R100-million at the time. Since then, the criteria has changed, specifically with regards to ensuring membership in developing countries.

The current threshold is \$5-million annual sales if based in a developing country and \$20-million if based in a non-developing country.

There are only about 11 South African members of this elite group, and it is quite possible that there are



WOMEN ON TOP: Dr Anna Mokgokong, Gloria Serobe, Suzanne Ravenall and Louisa Mojela

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not many more women than that in SA who would fit the membership requirement, an indictment on the advancement of women in SA.

Mokgokong said there were very few women who would be able to join — those that “have taken the risk, gone through the pain and been role models”, adding that there

were, as in other countries, some attendant legacy issues.

Membership of the group is vital for women to operate in a global network. For example, if any SA member wanted to open or buy a business in another country, they would start off with a ready-made network, with people who were able

to tell them what banks or other services to use, and which of their own business links would be useful.

Mojela, who is deputy co-chair of the summit, said it has previously been held in places like London, Paris, Monaco, Bangkok, Sydney and Vancouver so it was a coup to have brought it to SA this year.

It is expected that women from over 50 countries will attend. All are members and family and friends of the LWEW, an organisation founded in 1997 to promote female entrepreneurial excellence.

SA businesswomen who have been inducted include Mokgokong, Mojela, Wendy Appelbaum, Felicia Mabuza-Suttle, Wendy Luhabe, Pam Golding, Aida Geffen and Anne Cointreau-Huchon.

● Each year Leading Women awards \$15 000 in business development grants to residents of the country holding the summit. — *Marcia Klein*