

# Africa Celebrates Progress and Looks to the Future

Leaders from the Africa region gathered during the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games for a passionate celebration of joy and accomplishment, and to savor the excitement of the challenges -- and successes -- to come. Africa Night, a reception to mark the extraordinary growth of the region, gave Special Olympics an opportunity to thank the devoted supporters who helped end the isolation and neglect of tens of thousands of people with intellectual disabilities.

Special Olympics Africa has experienced exceptional growth over the past several years. The region, consisting of Programs in 30 countries, has increased its number of total athletes from 32,000 in 2004 to nearly 82,000 in 2006, reflecting a 157 percent increase in just three years.

Mrs. Leah Tutu, one of the Africa Night hosts, observed, "Just as we faced and overcame discrimination based on color not so long ago in [South] Africa, we now face discrimination based on intellectual ability, and we will overcome that too."

The evening was also an occasion to welcome new supporters to the Special Olympics movement in Africa and to announce the launch of a Resource Development Initiative—the Special Olympics Africa Trust.

The World Games drew a prestigious contingent of African leaders, luminaries in the fields of sports, business

and entertainment, including Grammy and Oscar award-winning musician and composer Quincy Jones, who also wrote the 2007 World Games theme song; Special Olympics South Africa Ambassador Leah Tutu; Special Olympics South Africa Chairman Mathews Phosa; Zindiswa Nobutho Mandela; South Africa football player Lucas Radebe; Mvuso Mbebe, CEO, Content-SABC; Sylvia Nagginda Luswata, Queen of the Kingdom of Buganda, and Katrina Sarah Kirabo Mirembe Ssangalyambogo, Princess of the Kingdom of Buganda; Barbara Mogae, First Lady of the Republic of Botswana; and Special Olympics International Board Members Florence Nabayinda (Uganda) and Marie Dagnon-Yalo (Benin).

Major goals for the Africa region over the next five years include raising US\$20 million through the launch of the Special Olympics Africa Trust, increasing the number of athletes to 170,000, conducting a major football initiative in the region by 2010, developing a strong public awareness campaign and developing government partnerships in all of the Special Olympics Africa focus countries (South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda).

As Special Olympics athlete and Global Messenger Ephraim Mohlakane put it at the Africa Night reception, "Look out everyone. Africa is coming!"

(Clockwise, from left) Mathews Phosa, Mrs. Leah Tutu, Quincy Jones, Ephraim Mohlakane.



Photos: Ma Jun