Africans more optimistic than rest of world

On the eve of the World Economic Forum's Africa Economic Summit in Cape Town, a new survey has indicated that the people of Africa are more optimistic about the prospects for 2005 when compared with the previous year and with the rest of the world.
Over a half (55%) of the African respondents in the *Gallup International Voice of the People Survey* felt that 2005 would be a better year than 2004, compared with only 46% in the global sample.

Tunisia (72%) and Nigeria (60%) are particularly optimistic, with 46% of South Africans thinking that 2005 will be better than 2004. A further 32% of South Africans believed there would be no significant change.

Perceptions of economic prospects vary considerably across the countries, but when taken as a whole Africa is again more upbeat than the global sample. Almost half (49%) of Africans felt that 2005 would be a year of economic prosperity, against a global average of 30%. Again, interviewees from Tunisia and Nigeria were particularly upbeat. The vast majority of South Africans (77%) interviewed believed that this year's economic prospects would be better than or the same as last year's.

South Africans were particularly concerned with unemployment, with half believing that unemployment would increase in 2005.

The *Gallup International Voice of the People Survey* canvassed 10,500 Africans in six countries (Kenya, Cameroon, Nigeria, Morocco, South Africa and Tunisia) and represents the views of more than 12.5 million citizens.

Of particular interest for the Africa Economic Summit and the leaders of the G8 are African perceptions of the most pressing issues that global leaders should focus on in 2005.

Of these, the United Nations' Millennium Goal of eliminating extreme poverty and hunger is the most important to Africans, followed by overcoming AIDS and other serious health issues, encouraging economic growth and reducing wars and conflicts. These correlate with the ideals of the Commission for Africa that will be presented to the G8 leaders by Tony Blair in July.

Commenting on the findings, Haiko Alfeld, Director Africa for the World Economic Forum said, "This year could well be the Year of Africa: The convergence of interest in the continent, boosted by positive developments, strong growth in some countries, and the opportunity presented by the UK leadership of both the G-8 and European Union, have focused the world's attention squarely on mobilizing the necessary partnerships and resources for Africa. And these survey shows – if proof were needed - that the people of Africa are ready to take advantage of this unparalleled window of opportunity."