



18 - 23 FEBRUARY 2020
CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE

Opening ceremony of the 38th Asian Racing Conference in Cape Town

After an absence of 23 years, the Asian Racing Federation (ARF) returned to Cape Town, South Africa where delegates attending the 38th Asian Racing Conference (ARC) were warmly welcomed by Mr. Andrew Harding, ARF Secretary General, on behalf of ARF Chairman, Mr. Winfried Engelbrecht-Bresges, on Tuesday evening.

Due to the recent outbreak of the coronavirus in China, Mr. Engelbrecht-Bresges, Chief Executive Officer at the Hong Kong Jockey Club, has remained in Hong Kong to support the Club's staff of over 20,000 and the Hong Kong community.

Mr. Harding, who conveyed Mr. Engelbrecht-Bresges' apologies to the delegates said: "Winfried has asked me to pass on his very warmest regards to you all and to say how much he will miss catching up with you. He has also asked me to express his sincere thanks and appreciation to the National Horse Racing Authority of Southern Africa, most especially Mr. Ken Truter and his Organising Committee and key stakeholders, Phumelela Gaming and Leisure, Gold Circle, Kenilworth Racing and the Racing Association - for the prodigious work they have done to prepare for the conference."

Racing faces numerous challenges, with Mr. Harding pointing to, in an ever-evolving world, the importance of maintaining the visibility and relevance of racing, the threat from illegal betting, the impact of climate change, challenges to the integrity of the sport and animal welfare concerns.

"Given the global reach of these issues, it is clear that as an industry, we need to work together like never before and that organisations such as the ARF and the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA) will play an increasingly important role. Individual jurisdictions acting alone will take us only so far", said Mr. Harding.

He highlighted one such example of collaboration - the involvement of the ARF in the long-standing South African issue of African Horse Sickness (AHS), which has severely limited the country's ability to expand and compete internationally.

"The South African industry has laboured hard to overcome the barriers created by AHS and the ARF has been committed to assisting it. A great deal has been achieved and most recently the Hong Kong Jockey Club has been very pleased to provide seed funding for the development of a new vaccine. We hope that we are now very close to the movement of horses direct from South Africa to Europe, being restored."

Mr. Harding concluded by reminding the audience that the last ARC in Cape Town, in 1997, was just three years after the end of apartheid. Since then, South Africa has achieved greatness in the sporting arena, with the hosting of the 2010 Soccer World Cup and victory in two Rugby World Cups. Yet racing lags behind due to the inability of South African horses to travel internationally.



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“South African trainers and jockeys are already a highly successful export. Soon to be followed, I don’t doubt, by South African horses competing and winning on the world stage. And this is what makes the theme of this conference - ‘Unlocking Potential’ - so resonant. For as South Africa reminds us, our sport has huge potential if only we can confront the challenges and grasp the opportunities before us.”

Mr. Truter, outgoing Chairman of the National Horseracing Authority of Southern Africa, welcomed Mr. Louis Romanet, Chairman of the IFHA, Mr. Harding, Mayoral Committee Member for Economic Opportunities and Asset Management in Cape Town, Alderman James Vos, and delegates to South Africa.

He thanked Mr. Engelbrecht-Bresges for his dedication in assisting to address South Africa’s challenges, especially in relation to AHS and international horse movements. “I know I speak on behalf of all South Africans in this room when I express my deep gratitude for the effort and passion that Winfried has devoted to improve the racing industry in this country. I hope that the quality of this conference is at least some demonstration of that gratitude. It is my sincere wish that this conference will be a springboard from which we can launch the next era of strong, vibrant and successful racing and breeding in our great country.”

Delegates were treated to a truly South African spectacle with vocal performances by storyteller and poet Gcina Mhlophe, renowned Afropop band Mango Groove, the Ndlovu Youth Choir and an inspiring African Dance Troupe.

The Conference commences on Wednesday morning with the first plenary session on Wagering and Digitalisation.

For more information on the 38th ARC, visit <http://www.arcsa2020.com>