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## **SLOVENIA ESTABLISHES DIPLOMATIC MISSION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The Republic of Slovenia has announced that it is furthering its diplomatic relations with South Africa by establishing a Consulate in Cape Town.

Dr Prieur du Plessis, well-known local businessman and Plexus group chairman, has been appointed as Honorary Consul of Slovenia in South Africa.

“Slovenia and South Africa have much in common – in particular that both are relatively young democracies – and have a great deal to offer each other by means of bilateral interaction. South Africa already has a diplomatic mission in Slovenia. Through the local Slovenian Consulate, a two-way diplomatic channel has now been created to fully capitalise on what the two countries can offer each other,” said Du Plessis.

He has specifically been tasked with public relations and normal consular tasks, to provide assistance to Slovenian citizens in South Africa, promote all-round cooperation between Slovenia and South Africa, and expand links between the two countries in the fields of commerce, tourism, culture, science, education and sport.

“Slovenia offers many business opportunities and provides a perfect gateway to central and Eastern Europe, given its location and the high quality of professional services,” said Du Plessis. One of his first initiatives will be to take a South African business delegation to Slovenia to explore first-hand the investment climate and trade potential.

Several other joint projects between Slovenia and South Africa in the fields of cultural activities, education, literature and science have also commenced. Du Plessis is assisted by his wife, Isabel Verwey, who is also actively involved in Proud Partners, an organisation which uplifts previously disadvantaged communities through the provision of musical instruments and tuition.

“The capital city, Ljubljana, has been named as the UNESCO ‘World Book Capital’ for 2010. South Africa has been invited as a special guest to this occasion, affording South African authors participation on a world stage,” said Verwey. “Also, an international photographic competition for children will see the South African winner visiting Slovenia and vice versa, while an exchange project concerning music is being discussed.”

“I am excited at the prospect of building the links between Slovenia and South Africa as both countries and their people stand to gain handsomely from a broadened relationship between the two countries,” concluded Du Plessis.

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### **About Slovenia**

Formerly part of Yugoslavia, Slovenia has been a democratic parliamentary republic since 1991. It was the first of the 'new entrants' to join the European Union (2004) as well as the European Monetary Union (2007). The so-called "jewel of Europe" is a compact country, about half the size of Switzerland, and is bordered by Austria, Italy, Hungary and Croatia. It is 20 273 km<sup>2</sup> in size and has a population just exceeding two million.

Slovenia has been dubbed many things, including 'Europe in miniature', 'the sunny side of the Alps', 'the green piece of Europe' and 'Central Europe's best-kept secret'. Although it is a small country, it is very diverse, with areas of outstanding natural beauty ranging from rugged Alpine mountains to tranquil lakes, fairytale forests, valleys with lush vineyards and even a stretch of beautiful coastline on the Adriatic.

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