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SKF celebrates 100 years of innovation in South Africa with customers, distributors, colleagues and staff

April 12th 1914 marked an auspicious day on South Africa's mining and industry calendar when SKF opened its doors at number 23 Pritchard Street, Johannesburg. This global knowledge engineering company, then known as SKEFKO (South Africa) Ball Bearing Company Limited, went on to become Africa's market-leading specialist in the delivery of innovative, world-class product and service solutions.

To celebrate this 100 year milestone, SKF South Africa (Pty) Ltd hosted a special customer day on 3rd November 2014 in the Solutions Factory based at the company's headquarters in Boksburg, Gauteng. The formal proceedings included presentations by SKF South Africa's Managing Director, Ian Cillié, who welcomed guests and introduced SKF President Industrial Market Regional Sales and Services, Vartan Vartanian. Special guest, economist Mike Schussler, gave guests a glimpse into the economic future of South Africa and the rest of the African continent. After key SKF customer, Vesuvius, shared their SKF experience, SKF Solutions Factory Manager, Sarel Froneman, invited guests on a guided tour through the Solutions Factory to experience SKF's engineering knowledge, core technologies and capabilities combined under one roof.

Extending a warm welcome to guests, Cillié said, "We are rightfully proud of our 100 year achievement and we want to share the celebration of this historical event with our customers; without your support this milestone would not have been possible. Cillié also gave special acknowledgment to SKF's authorised distributors. From appointing the first distributor in 1953, SKF went on to develop its distributor network. "As our partners, our distributors are SKF's route to market, delivering the SKF value proposition across Southern Africa."

2/...SKF SA_100 years

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Cillié sketched SKF's illustrious history and said SKF has seen incredible events over the century, including the birth of the country's young democracy. "Very few companies can lay claim to this rich heritage which bears testament to SKF's values and morals and what the company stands for. South Africa's political, business and infrastructure landscapes were very different a century ago. Doing business must have been tough; products arrived by steam ship and had to be transported along very narrow roads from the ports to Johannesburg."

Doing business has certainly not gotten easier as modern day presents its own unique challenges. "SKF has endured because tackling and solving challenges is what we do best. By doing a number of important things right we can do our job well, which is to help our customers save money by producing more using less. The future is all about driving costs down for the customer. By offering quality reliable equipment that delivers optimum performance to maximise uptime and productivity with the lowest operation costs, SKF can help customers gain a competitive advantage by seeing a return on equipment investment."

"So for us it is about developing total solutions," continued Cillié. "Our Solutions Factory, launched to the local market in mid-2009, encompasses our core technologies; the Bearing Remanufacturing Service Centre, Lubrication Application Centre, Maintenance Products Repair Centre, the Seals, Power Transmission and Mechatronics Customisation Centre and Machine Tool Spindle Refurbish Centre position SKF as the ultimate solutions provider to give our customers the competitive advantage – from production plants and mines to farms and construction sites."

"But in order to provide the right solution, it is imperative that we understand our customers' needs, monitor our products' performance and do preventative maintenance so that we can validate our solutions to deliver true customer value. "Our seamless integration of the SKF Support Roller System into minerals processing specialist, Vesuvius's infrastructure, is a perfect example of SKF solution management in partnership with the customer." Premium SKF products were used to improve running accuracy and stringent quality control procedures were implemented to warrant reliability of assembly."

3/... SKF SA_100 years

3/...SKF SA_100 years

"The superior reliability and performance of the Support Roller assembly added great value for Vesuvius by delivering high availability at low operating cost," attested Bennie van Rooyen, Mechanical Engineering Manager - Rotary Operations, at Vesuvius.

SKF continues to think long-term, investing in many global factories, technical centres and R&D to develop the most innovative and intelligent solutions to extend the entire life cycle of the product – from design, engineering and manufacture to final operation to ensure low total cost of ownership. R&D files two new patents every working day and SKF will soon be introducing mobility apps for Apple and Android. "We want to ensure that we continue to deliver these ongoing developments to the African market to keep our customers abreast of the very latest in technology," said Vartanian in his reaffirmation of the Swedish multi-national's ongoing commitment to the continent which he described as 'a special continent rich in resources and people'.

Only seven years after SKF was first established in Gothenburg Sweden in 1907, management saw the market potential and opportunities in Africa and raised the flag in South Africa. "Mike Schussler confirmed their incredible foresight as Africa is still regarded as the 'new frontier'," continued Vartanian. "While we are active in many industries, we know there is a lot more businesses who can benefit from SKF solutions. We want to be more active and develop a stronger presence in Africa by expanding the distributor footprint to bring the full impact of SKF knowledge to the African market." Vartanian added that South Africa has been earmarked for the establishment of SKF's next College Campus as part of the company's vision to equip Africa with SKF knowledge.

Cillié concluded by thanking SKF's Sweden's continued investment in South Africa and Africa and expressed confident optimism for SKF's next millennium. "SKF is the right company to partner with as we have a track record of providing the right solutions at the right time to facilitate customers in move their businesses forward."

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SKF is a leading global supplier of bearings, seals, mechatronics, lubrication systems, and services which include technical support, maintenance and reliability services, engineering consulting and training. SKF is represented in more than 130 countries and has around 15,000 distributor locations worldwide. Annual sales in 2013 were SEK 63,597 million and the number of employees was 48,401. www.skf.com

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