



INTRODUCTION

The Competition Commission (“Commission”) and Competition Tribunal (“Tribunal”) are proud to present the 18th Annual Conference on Competition Law, Economics and Policy (“Annual Competition Conference”). The theme for this year’s Annual Competition Conference is **“25 Years of Competition Enforcement: Looking Back to Look Forward”**. As part of the Annual Competition Conference, the Commission and Tribunal will host an academic workshop on the **3 September 2024**. The aim of the academic workshop is to provide a platform for practitioners, academics, policy makers, experts and other stakeholders to debate and explore developments in competition policy and enforcement in South Africa over the last 25 years, with a view to informing the approach(es) to competition enforcement going forward.

CONFERENCE THEMES

25 years ago, when the competition institutions were first introduced in the country, they were envisioned to not only serve consumers, but also those that had been excluded from the economy under apartheid and the economic development objectives of the country. The Competition Act has been amended over the years to make it effective in addressing complex ongoing issues, including the recent 2019 amendments. South Africa’s Competition Act drew heavily from global best practice and experience on the typical areas of contravention to fair competition, but also was amongst the first countries to incorporate public interest into both the purposes of the Act and the assessment criteria for merger control. This was later extended to abuse of dominance and market inquiries. As the competition authorities have geared to celebrate 25 years of their existence, it is prudent to look back to ponder whether the institutions have prioritised the right things, achieved the right balance in enforcement and moved the dial on achieving the ambitious objectives, what they got right, where they could have done better and what they got wrong. More importantly, it is crucial to reflect on how the insights gained from the developments over the last 25 years can inform the approach to competition enforcement going forward.

While any contribution that is relevant to the broad theme outlined above may be made, the Annual Competition Conference is also inviting contributions that focus on the following specific areas:

1. The evolution of cartel jurisprudence over the last 25 years and implications of characterisation on the future of cartel enforcement.
2. Has competition law been effective in dealing with exploitative and exclusionary abuses of dominance (including price discrimination) and what lessons can inform the next 25 years?

3. South Africa's merger control regime is renowned for its ability to balance competition and public interest considerations. What lessons have we learnt over the last 25 years and how do these inform the future of merger control in South Africa?
4. The 2019 Amendments to the Competition Act represented a major revision to the law aimed at strengthening enforcement to deal with persistent concentration and elevating even more the public interest role in our Act. How are the amendments likely to shape competition law enforcement going forward and what challenges are likely to arise in their implementation?
5. What has been the role and effectiveness of non-enforcement tools in resolving competition issues in markets? What has been the balance between enforcement and non-enforcement outcomes and what more can be achieved through the use of non-enforcement tools?
6. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), beyond climate change and environmental goals - Whilst the South African public interest factors incorporate aspects of the SDGs, how best can competition authorities integrate the issue of sustainability goals within their antitrust mandate?
7. Is there a need to align trade, industrial and competition law to ensure all tools are working together effectively to support competition policy (as opposed to simply the law), transformation and industrial development in South Africa? What lessons have we learnt over the last 25 years on the synergies achieved between competition law and industrial policy that have resulted in competitive outcomes.

CALL FOR PAPERS – OPEN

The objective of the Annual Competition Conference is to bring together renowned specialists in competition law and economics as well as key figures in business and government more broadly to debate and develop the understanding of key issues. The Annual Competition Conference is targeted at academics with an interest in competition enforcement and policy, policy makers and practitioners in the competition law and regulation space as well as competition and industrial policy makers more broadly. Academics, private practitioners and competition officials, both with a legal and an economic background, are encouraged to submit their research for inclusion in the conference program. We welcome all original research. Submissions for inclusion in the program (full papers) may be sent together with the author's address information to: HariprasadG@compcom.co.za The deadline for **submission of full papers** is **2 August 2024**. Decisions on **provisional acceptance** to the program will be communicated by **16 August 2024**.

MORE INFORMATION For more information, please visit the Competition Commission website: www.compcom.co.za