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Itec, Minolco put differences aside

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THE dust appears to have settled between rivals Itec and Bidvest subsidiary Minolco on a dispute that stopped short of a major legal battle.

The conflict arose when global brands Konica and Minolta — previously distributed by Itec and Minolco respectively — merged last year. Itec and Bidvest were appointed as distributors of the merged brand.

Tempers flared at Itec recently, however, when Minolco published an advertisement claiming to be the exclusive distributor of the merged Konica Minolta range of products.

Minolco said in the advertise-

ment it had been "awarded the exclusive rights to distribute" because of its track record and distribution infrastructure.

When queried on the claim, however, Minolco MD Alan Griffith said the exclusivity referred to the product, meaning that his company would sell only Konica Minolta products.

Itec had threatened to take legal action, but founder and CEO Jacques Duyver said this week that his company decided later that it was "not necessary" to pursue the matter.

He said the two companies were not talking to each other.

A letter from the Japanese principal, Konica Minolta Business Technologies, dated August

30, set the record straight. It stated that both Itec and Minolco would remain distributors for the foreseeable future.

The letter said the two would have "similar access to new products and support".

Duyver said Minolco's exclusivity claim had not harmed his business. Both rivals said, in fact, sales had soared over the past few months thanks to the strong rand and consumer spending.

Duyver said there was space for two rival distributors in SA's market, and that competition between the two would be advantageous for the market.

Griffith said only time would tell if there would continue to be two suppliers in the region.