

AMBASSADOR KOLOANE SPEECH

FREEDOM DAY CELEBRATION, 25 APRIL 2019



CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY

Programme Director,

Excellencies,

***Foreign Defence Attachés accredited to The Kingdom of
the Netherlands,***

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour, on behalf of the South African Government, to address you on the occasion of our Freedom Day celebrations. Twenty-five years ago, we were able for the first time in our lives to exercise our democratic right to vote as equals before the law - for a government of our choice - marking our country's historic transition from the dark period of apartheid, to a free and equal society. 27 April 1994 marks the day on which racial discrimination formally came to an end in South Africa. On that day, we took our rightful place as a people deserving of respect and our dignity was restored.

With our then interim democratic Constitution embracing equal rights and opportunities for all, we ceased to be pariahs in the land of our birth. We had, at last, an opportunity to build a new and better life for all our

people. On 08 May 2019, our national and provincial elections will take place – the 5th national democratic election since our liberation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It was international solidarity that brought the apartheid regime to its knees. We recall the efforts of the international community, particularly our African brothers and sisters, who played an important role in the liberation of our country. It was through multilateralism and the role of the African Group at the UN in particular, that a number of resolutions denouncing apartheid were adopted; among others, UN General Assembly Resolution 1761; Security Council Resolution 181 which called on all UN states to stop the sale and shipment of arms, ammunition and military vehicles to South Africa; as well as the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid which came into force in 1976. Article 7 of the Rome Statute includes the crime of apartheid as a crime against humanity.

Ours was a long and bitter struggle for freedom and equal enjoyment of human, civil and political rights. Today, there are a number of peoples who continue to be denied their right to self-determination in violation of international law. Our late former President Nelson Mandela said, "*We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the*

Palestinians". South Africa on 25-26 March 2019 hosted the SADC Solidarity Conference with Western Sahara. It was international solidarity that brought down the barbaric system of apartheid, and it is international solidarity that will see the realisation of the aspirations of both the Palestinian and Saharawi peoples.

Ladies and gentlemen,

South Africa emerged from the ashes of apartheid as a strong proponent of multilateralism, the respect for international law, a commitment to human rights, inclusive dialogue and the pacific settlement of disputes. Our current term as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council is guided by these imperatives and by the Resolution of the AU to 'Silence the Guns' by 2020 in furtherance of Agenda 2063. We believe that peace cannot be achieved without the participation of women in peace negotiations, peacekeeping operations, post-conflict peace-building and governance. Moreover, we will use our term to prioritise gender-sensitive responses and programmes aimed at addressing the needs of women and girls who are victims of sexual violence.

We are saddened and convey our condolences to the Republic of Sri Lanka following terrorist bombings of several churches over the Easter Weekend that claimed the lives of over 300 people. South Africa will

continue to use its non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council to prioritise the fight against terrorism and extremist groups across the world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Through our Constitution, progressive laws and a concerted programme of social and economic redress over the past 25 years, we have made significant progress in transforming our country.

Today we live in a free society, where the human rights of all are protected and enforced. We have worked hard to give expression to the socio-economic rights entrenched in our Constitution, including access to housing, healthcare, education and water and sanitation. We have much to celebrate in our nascent democracy and, while we have achieved a great deal, we are conscious that our triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality continue to plague us. If we are to fulfil the promise made at the dawn of democracy in 1994, we need to transform our economy to ensure it benefits us all.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are determined to place South Africa's economy more firmly on the path to recovery. We are on a path of renewal and are in the process of dealing with domestic challenges that have impeded our development in

recent years. We are on an ambitious drive to industrialise, to attract investment, and to create more jobs for our people. South Africa is open for business. To this end, President Ramaphosa has initiated an annual Investment Summit. As the most diversified African economy, with a host of unique comparative and competitive advantages, South Africa is an investment destination and reliable trade partner. The Summit aims to expose domestic and international businesses to a unique investment case, and portfolio of investment projects across several sectors. We remain a gateway to the rest of Africa and a magnificent tourism destination. We are determined to attract 100 billion USD in investments over the next five years. We are pleased that the African Continental Free Trade Agreement has been ratified by a number of African countries, including South Africa. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement will bring together fifty-four African countries with a combined population of more than one billion people and a combined gross domestic product of more than US \$3.4 trillion.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are grateful to the Kingdom of the Netherlands with which we enjoy long-standing relations. We continue to engage in ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in education, student exchange, tourism, trade and culture, as well as investments and skills exchange in the agro-

processing, chemicals, automotive, water management, ICT and the creative industry, among others. In 2017, South Africa welcomed approximately 150 thousand Dutch tourists.

South Africa has eight major gateway trading ports and harbours. Our coastline is approximately 3000 km with marine geographical presence on the eastern, southern and western seaboard. We have launched Operation Phakisa which is an innovative approach to translate detailed plans into concrete results in the oceans economy, through targeting 6 priority growth areas, namely; marine manufacturing, marine transport, offshore oil and gas, marine protection and governance, and aquaculture. As a shipping Kingdom, there is potential for enhanced skills exchange, investment and cooperation with South Africa in these identified growth areas in the blue economy.

South Africa and the Netherlands renewed the Memorandum of Understanding on Water and Sanitation in 2018 to facilitate cooperation on water management. The focus is on integrated water resource management, youth empowerment, water efficiency, re-use and climate change adaptation, which are important for our water-stressed country.

We look forward to strengthening our cooperation in all of these areas.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, we are pleased that you have joined us to celebrate our 25 years of freedom and we invite you to enjoy the evening with us.

I thank you.