

South Africa national day

Nation's achievements continue to increase

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AMBASSADOR OF SOUTH AFRICA

As South Africa celebrates the 19th year of Freedom Day, we are “mobilizing our society toward consolidating our democracy and freedom.” This theme takes into consideration the significant strides our young democracy has made.



2013 is a significant year for the people of South Africa. It is the eve of our 20th Anniversary. In 1993 when our interim constitution was approved we set a vision for ourselves, that South Africa would move from its colonial and apartheid past, to become a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous nation, a country in which all the people enjoy a better life. Only 20 years ago the rays of democratic light were slowly rising on our country's political landscape.

Speaking at the United Nations in 1993, former South African President Nelson Mandela said:

“We have, together, walked a very long road. We have traveled together to reach a common destination. The common destination toward which we have been advancing defines the very reason for the existence of this world organization. The goal we have sought to reach is the consummation of the yearning of all humankind for human dignity and human fulfillment.”

In terms of South Africa's international relations 2013 also marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which evolved to become the African Union (AU); and the 20th anniversary of the inception of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). In response to this we asserted without doubt that the 21st century would indeed be an African century. As a symbol of its seriousness, our continent evolved the OAU into the AU, confident that the new body would be the critical instrument we would use to achieve the goal of making the 21st an African century.

Confident in our assertion that this is the African century, we locate South Africa's contribution in the context of challenges we face to make that ideal a reality. We place specific focus on the need for us as South Africans to contribute to the consolidation of the continental and global consciousness required for this transformation, but remain mindful of the fact that the effort to achieve that consciousness will involve a struggle between the Afro-optimists and the Afro-pessimists.

South Africa's economy

South Africa's economy is diverse and remains one of the leading economies on the African continent. In a recent study by the international advisory firm Grant Thornton's Emerging Markets Opportunity Index, South Africa's economy was ranked the best emerging economy on the African continent. Furthermore, in the latest World

Bank report titled “Doing Business 2013,” South Africa ranks No. 1 in ease of getting credit — a position that South Africa occupied in 2012. In the same report, South Africa is ranked No. 10 in protecting investors.

South Africa's economy continues to remain globally competitive. In the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index 2011–2012, South Africa ranked No. 1 in strength of auditing and reporting standards; No. 1 in the regulation of its securities exchange; No. 2 in the efficacy of corporate boards; No. 3 in the protection of minority shareholders' interests; and, No. 4 in financing through the local equities market.

South Africa is investing 300 billion rand (\$35.6 billion) into expanding and improving its railways, ports and pipelines, as a catalyst to help unblock the world's greatest mineral wealth. Africa will also continue to be buoyed by the exploding global demand for oil, metals, minerals, food and other natural resources. Likewise the African continent, which is arguably one of the world's largest unexplored resource basins, has an abundance of riches, including 10 percent of the world's oil reserves, 40 percent of its gold ore and 95 percent of its platinum.

As globally competitive as South Africa's economy is, there are, still, a number of economic challenges that confront South Africa. Our government has developed the New Growth Path (NGP) policy document with the purpose of addressing these challenges and also responding to the challenges of regional integration. The main target of the NGP is job creation and the reduction of unemployment by 10 percent. Dovetailing with the NGP is the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, which aims to further unlock South Africa's economy by, among other initiatives, diversifying exports; benefiting our natural resources; encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation; and, linking the domestic economy to other fast growing economies.

In order to leverage South Africa's international engagements, the South African government has identified economic diplomacy as a significant tool in our foreign policy. It is against this background that South Africa hosted the Fifth BRICS Summit.

International relations

Contrary to popular misperceptions, South Africa's BRICS membership is warranted as South Africa is the largest African investor in the continent. Furthermore, South Africa's membership in BRICS brings more international partners to other African countries — Brazil, Russia, India and China. The Fifth BRICS Summit was convened in Durban from March 26 to 27 under the theme “BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration and Industrialization,” and was the first time that the summit was hosted on African soil. The BRICS Summit was a success not only for South Africa and the BRICS partners, but for the African continent as well.

Highlighting the significance of the African Agenda in South Africa's foreign policy, President

Jacob Zuma hosted the BRICS Retreat where he was joined by 15 African heads of state for discussions with the BRICS leaders. These included the chairpersons of the AU and AU Commission; the chairperson of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee; the heads of state and governments chairing the AU's eight regional economic communities; as well as the heads of state and government championing the AU/NEPAD Presidential Infrastructure Championing Initiative.

South Africa's successful hosting of the BRICS Summit further refuted the misperception that BRICS is waning in significance. BRICS countries represent 45 percent of the world's population, with a large amount of foreign reserves. As a collective entity, BRICS countries contribute \$2.5 trillion in resource wealth. In 2012 BRICS countries accounted for 11 percent of global foreign direct investment (FDI) flows and overall BRICS countries account for 17 percent of world trade. Further highlighting the significance of the BRICS bloc, it is forecast that trade between BRICS countries will be \$500 billion.

A major outcome of the summit, outlined in the eThekweni Declaration, was the announcement of the establishment of the BRICS-led development bank to address the challenges faced by developing countries on infrastructure development due to insufficient long-term financing and foreign direct investment, especially investment in capital stock. Other successes of the outcome of the BRICS Summit was the Declaration of the Establishment of the BRICS Business Council, which will consist of business associations from the BRICS member countries that will meet to discuss pertinent business issues; the Declaration on the Establishment of the BRICS Think Tanks Council,

which will act as a network for think tanks located in BRICS countries and provide policy options for BRICS.

As a self-respecting and ambitious country South Africa prides itself on its foreign policy. The centrality of the African agenda in the country's foreign policy is evident in South Africa's myriad engagements in Africa, which is premised on a firm belief that our socioeconomic development and peace and security is inextricably linked with the rest of Africa and forms an important factor in regional integration. It is for this reason that South Africa is part of the following multilateral peacekeeping missions on the African continent: African Union/United Nations Hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID); the United Nations Mission in the South Sudan (UNMISS); and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

South Africa recently concluded its second tenure as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), where the country sought to, among other objectives, contribute to achieving peace and stability on the African continent and other regions of the world; continuing to promote the importance of developing effective partnerships between the U.N. and regional organizations and sub-regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security; and working toward improving the working methods of the UNSC to make it a more legitimate, representative and effective body. The country continues its active participation in the U.N. through membership in the Peace Building Commission and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Bilateral relations

South Africa and Japan share a 103-year-old bilateral relationship that is primarily based on



High-tech: The seven-dish MeerKAT precursor array KAT-7 in South Africa is the world's first radio telescope array consisting of composite antenna structures. EMBASSY OF SOUTH AFRICA

mutual economic benefit, and among other aspects, people-to-people interaction. There are currently 108 Japanese companies with resident offices in South Africa.

According to the trade statistics released by the South African Revenue Service (SARS), in 2012 South African exports to Japan amounted to R50.6 billion. Most importantly, the bilateral economic relationship is poised for growth with the recently-signed memorandum of understanding (MOU) between South Africa and Japan to enhance Japanese investment into South Africa.

South Africa is greatly pleased by Toyota Motor Corp.'s recent development, whereby 50 percent of all Hiace vehicles utilized in South Africa will be constructed or assembled inside the country. This is a great step toward reaching the goal of localizing the South African taxi industry by two-thirds in 2015. The local taxi industry in South Africa is quite huge as it transports 60 percent of South Africans daily. Through its Hiace brand of vehicle, Toyota plays a significant role in the transportation market. Furthermore, Nissan Motor Co. recently announced that it will launch the Datsun brand of motor vehicles in South Africa later in 2014. This will essentially be a reintroduction of the Datsun brand to the South African mar-

ket, as it was widely popular in the past when it was in the South African market.

These two developments highlight the strategic importance of South Africa-Japan bilateral economic relations and the faith that Japan companies have in South Africa's domestic economy. We certainly hope that this faith will grow stronger in the future.

Throughout the years of South Africa's democratic dawn the country still remembers the assistance gained from the international community. Thus, it is within this light that Toshio Aki-niwa, the president of the Japan Asia Africa Latin America Solidarity Committee (JAALA), was awarded the Order of the Companions of O.R. Tambo for his contribution to the fight against apartheid.

Conclusion

As we celebrate and take stock of South Africa's myriad achievements, we do so in an important year, 2013, that also marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of the OAU/AU. As a country, we join our fellow African brothers and sisters in celebrating this august organization. We hope that the celebrations will auger well for the 20th anniversary of the upcoming fifth Tokyo International Conference on Africa's Development (TICAD V).

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of the Freedom Day

of the Republic of South Africa



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